

Participation in Public and Social Media Interactions

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Researching interactional forms and participant structures in public and social media

Jan Chovanec and Marta Dynel

1. Interaction and participation

Any communicative act presupposes the existence of interacting participants. This is why it is naturally amenable to interactional analysis, which can be performed from the perspective of the *pragmatics of interaction* (e.g. D'hondt et al. 2009). This broad field of research covers notions which are central to linguistic pragmatics and inhere in interaction. The pragmatics of interaction draws on the full spectrum of scholarly traditions, most importantly: sociology, conversation analysis, and linguistic pragmatics understood both in the narrow sense as arising from the philosophy of Austin, Grice and Searle (Levinson 1983), and in the broad sense as relating/interpreting/explaining any instance of language use with reference to the users and diverse contextual variables (Verschueren 1999).

The present volume contributes to this realm of study, its leitmotif being the notion of *participation*. Our aim is to consider how existing models of participation fit new modes of communication. We are interested in the interface between participation frameworks and various interactional practices not only in public media discourses but also in some of the new social media that appeared with the advent of *technology-mediated communication* (TMC).

The words “participation” and “participatory” have recently been enjoying substantial popularity, albeit used in different meanings. The specific sense given to “participation” throughout this book captures an individual’s involvement in an interaction, as originally defined by Goffman (Goffman 1964; cf. Sidnell 2009). Thus, a *participant* is any entity that can be assigned some role within a *participation framework* that captures the context of a particular act of communication as regards its *production* and/or *reception*. The technical term “participation framework” is used in reference to the totality of participant roles at the production and reception ends.

The concept of a participation framework constitutes one of the very basic components of interaction, arguably the most important one, since the meaning of a message, be it spoken, written or multimodal, is inevitably co-determined by the two crucial elements within the basic scheme of interaction, i.e. who communicates to whom. Also, the identification of covert producers and recipients beyond the actual interactants will add to our understanding of the interlocutors' local communicative performance. The notion of a participation framework proposed in this volume emphasises the dynamic, role-oriented description of interactants involved in the production and reception of discourse, stressing the complex nature of interaction that involves several communicative levels, as well as multiple embedded frames of interaction and intertextual traces of other (prior) discourses.

A pragmatic account of participation frameworks considers the configuration of participant roles with respect to an act of communication, which is understood here in a dynamic sense as the construction of meaning by specific interlocutors, typically on the basis of some formally realized linguistic input, and regardless of how the latter may be labelled in different scholarly approaches ("message" in communication studies, "text" in text linguistics, or "utterance" in pragmatics). An early predecessor of participation frameworks can be seen, for instance, in the scheme of communication proposed by Prague-school structuralists, whose approach can, in retrospect, be seen as "proto-pragmatic". It is particularly Bühler's (1934) organon model of communication, later refined by Jakobson (1960), that provided for a shift of focus of linguistics from language structure, as contained in the message component of his scheme of communication, to the interlocutors, i.e. the speaker and the hearer. The model also underlies the composition of a speech event as a *dyadic* communicative encounter, entailing a producer and a receiver, also referred to as the *speaker* and the *hearer* in linguistic research. The prototypical example of individualised reciprocity is the conversational dyad: one-to-one talk.

However, human interaction cannot be reduced merely to exchanges between two participants. Most linguistic research on participation beyond the communicative dyad takes as its point of departure Goffman's (1981)¹ work, which abounds in numerous apt observations on the nature of interactions. Goffman (1981) is concerned, among other things, with the production and reception formats of utterances. He labels the latter a "participation framework". This is because he is primarily interested in interactants other than the addressee, i.e. other recipients "participating" in the speech event. In contemporary scholarship, however, the scope of a participation framework is extended to systematically cover both the production and the reception ends of the communicative process. An exegesis of Goffman's preliminary discussions yields the first participation framework encompassing both ends of

1. This is a collection of earlier published essays.

interaction (cf. Dynel 2011). However, a sociologist, Goffman is interested more in the general set-up of the communicative act than in some problems that are central to the pragmatic linguistic perspective, such as the constant reconfiguration of the speech frame as a result of interlocutors changing roles in the course of an interaction, with producers becoming recipients and vice versa.

In various studies, the classic dyadic model of communication/interaction has been proven obsolescent in the context of the diversified communicative genres, whether private or public, and whether face-to-face or facilitated by the media and technology. Novel participation frameworks are known to have been proposed for various types of interaction, both everyday conversation (Hymes 1972, 1974; Bell 1984, 1991; Thomas 1986; Levinson 1988; Clark and Carlson 1982; Schober and Clark 1989; Clark and Schaefer 1987, 1992; Clark 1996; Verschueren 1999) and media discourse. Various studies have dealt with the role of the audience, such as television broadcast (e.g. Scannell 1991; Bell 1991; Fetzer 2006; O’Keeffe 2006; Weizman 2008; Lorenzo-Dus 2009; Dynel 2011a, 2011b; Lombardo in this volume), film dialogue and dramatic discourse (Short 1981, 1994; Bubel 2008; Clark 1996; Piazza et al. 2011; Desilla 2012; Rossi 2011; Brock 2011, in this volume; Dynel 2011c, 2011d, in this volume; Zago in this volume), or the various genres of computer-mediated communication (e.g. Morris and Ogan 1996; Baron 1998, 2010; Herring 1996, 2007; Yates 2000; Chovanec 2010, in this volume; Bou-Franch et al. 2012; Haugh and Chang in this volume). The numerous participatory patterns are explored to display what positionings are either assigned to, or assumed by, the individual participants; present or absent, ratified or unrated; and how that affects the way the interaction and/or communicative acts within it are understood by the participants. The configuration of participant roles is crucial for determining what meanings each hearer may derive. Therefore, pragmatic research can contribute to our understanding of the underlying regularities, irregularities and strategic utilisation of participation frameworks in various discourse genres. The ten chapters in this volume contribute to this field of research.

The overview of some of the scholarship on participation and interaction presented below is divided into sections representing public and social media, accounting for their subordinate genres discussed in this volume.

2. Public media

Public media, the epitome of which is the television broadcast (e.g. news, talk shows, political interviews, quiz shows, or drama), as well as films (which may be televised or screened in cinemas), can be conceived of as “podium events” (Goffman 1974: 539). Mediatized interactions are frequently internally complex, consisting of layers of embedded talk and additional frames of interaction between real as well

as fictional characters (in drama and film discourse). Regardless of what participatory framework applies to the interaction shown on the screen, viewers/audiences necessarily come into play as participants in a distinct interactional frame.

In public media, as the very name suggests, any audience is automatically ratified, with the speakers on the screen sending messages primarily to them and facilitating their recipientship (cf. Heritage 1985; Clayman and Heritage 2002; Scannell 1991; Goffman 1981; Bell 1991; Hutchby 2006; Lombardo in this volume). As Bell (1984: 177) notes, in televised programmes “the mass auditors are likely to be more important to a communicator than the immediate addressees.” It is then quite surprising that numerous researchers (e.g. Heritage 1985; Clark and Carlson 1982; Levinson 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991; Scannell and Cardiff 1991; Heritage and Roth 1995; Fetzer 2000; Weizman 2008; Tolson 2001, 2006; Hutchby 1991, 2005, 2006; Matheson 2005; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009) should have purposefully conceptualised audiences as “overhearers”, who are traditionally defined as unratified hearers (cf. Goffman 1981; Bell 1984, 1991; Levinson 1988; Clark and Carlson 1982; Schober and Clark 1989; Clark and Schaefer 1987, 1992; Clark 1996; Verschueren 1999; Dynel 2010). Interestingly, albeit using the term “overhearer”, the authors do concede that audiences are entitled to listen to televised discourse, which is produced for them (e.g. Bell 1984; Heritage 1985; Scannell 1991; Livingston and Lunt 1994; Fetzer 1999, 2000, 2006; O’Keeffe 2006; Hutchby 1991, 2006; Lorenzo-Dus 2009). Therefore, “overhearer” as a label for media audience may be deemed misleading (Scannell 1991; Hutchby 2006; O’Keeffe 2006; Lorenzo-Dus 2009; Dynel 2011a, 2011b). Hence, terms such as Goffman’s (1981) “imagined recipients”, Hutchby’s (2006) “distributed recipients” or simply “recipients” may seem preferable in reference to public media audiences. An individual could, theoretically speaking, be a non-ratified participant in the position of an overhearer/eavesdropper on a mass media interaction, but this would refer to overhearing or eavesdropping on a particular act of reception. The overhearer/eavesdropper status is valid with respect to the reception situation in a particular context, rather than with respect to the general existence of a broadcast aimed at public reception.

It is also viewers of films and series that happen to be considered “overhearers” (e.g. Kozloff 2000; Richardson 2010; Bednarek 2010; Piazza 2011; Rossi 2011; see Bubel 2008 for elaboration). This may indeed be true if the characters’ (diegetic) perspective is accounted for. However, as in the case of non-fictional media discourse, film talk is devised by the production team for the viewers to understand and appreciate, which is why the latter should be considered ratified participants and can be technically termed “recipients” (Dynel 2011c). On the other hand, viewers’ roles may be more diversified, depending on a number of discursual and cinematic factors (Brock this volume). In any case, viewers do not participate in

the characters' interaction per se and cannot perform the role of interlocutors, but are invited to actively follow the interactions on the screen. Because of their distinct form of recipientship, they frequently enjoy a different vantage point on the communicated meanings from the screen participants (Dynel 2011d, 2012, 2013, in this volume; Zago in this volume).

Regardless of how audiences are conceptualised, researchers appear to be unanimous that public media discourse resides in two levels of communication, which they capture under different notions. For instance, Scannell (1991) introduces the concept of *dual articulation* and lists several *communicative circuits* underlying televised programmes, which operate simultaneously. On the other hand, Burger (1984, 1991) pictures media communication as two concentric *communication circles*: the *inner circle* representing the screen participants, and the *outer circle* encompassing the audience. In a similar vein, Fetzer (2006) speaks of a *dual frame of reference*, conflating *first-frame interaction* of the interviewer and interviewee, and the *second-frame* or *media-frame* interaction comprised of the first-frame interacting with the media frame.

Also film interaction displays a complex internal structure of embedded frames with lower-order fictional participants, which is why the participation frameworks proposed for fictional discourse must cover various production and reception formats. Such participation frameworks must include both the *diegetic* level (the characters' level) and the *non-diegetic* level of broadcast (i.e. externally added sounds and the narrator's commentary), as well as the *extra-diegetic* level comprising the actual recipients. The literature on films abounds in diversified parlance and conceptualisations. For example, Piazza et al. (2011) mention the notion of a *double plane of communication*, whilst following in Vanoye's (1985) footsteps, Desilla (2012) claims that film discourse displays *double-layeredness*, with communication taking place on the *horizontal level*, i.e. among the characters, as well as on the *vertical level*, i.e. between the filmmakers and the audience. On the other hand, Brock (2011) differentiates between two levels of communication, presenting them graphically as two boxes, one enclosed within the other. The second level, represented as the inner box, embodies the communication among characters, while the first level of communication involves comedians (i.e. actors in a comedy) and the audience. By the same token, Rossi (2011:24–25) differentiates between two levels of communication: "artificial communication between the actors", and communication "between film authors and the audience". Collating the import of these (and other) approaches, a distinction must be drawn between the communicative level of screen participants, characters oblivious to the recipient's presence, and the level of the recipient, who interprets the character's interactions, which are devised by the production team, the "collective sender" (see Dynel 2011c).

On the whole, the viewers of public media are traditionally defined solely as receivers in *one-way communication*, for they cannot contribute to exchanges between participants on the screen (Morris and Ogan 1996; Jucker 2003). Also, film audiences typically do not have any possibility of discursively participating on the communicative level of the film. Recipients are then only receivers because their potential verbal production has no bearing on the main participation framework. However, on the whole, viewers' interaction entails actively accessing the medium ("interactivity"), and interacting with producers of the media product ("interaction"), while the latter also probe audiences' interests and interpretations ("feedback") (Jucker 2003). Also, viewers may discuss the media with one another (Fetzer 2000, 2006), forming a distinct type of interaction marked by a partial appropriation of content produced by other parties (cf. Ayass and Gerhardt 2012). Recipients of fictional and non-fictional media content then typically assume active participant roles in their micro-interactional contexts as well, thus performing the role of interlocutors on a different communicative level that is subsidiary to the main mediated (or screened) frame of interaction (Gerhardt 2008; Chovanec in this volume). Moreover, albeit traditionally relying on one-way communication from the producers to the audience, mass media now enable the previously passive audience to assume the role of producer and be involved in the first-level interaction in response to the primary media. The access into the media frame can be immediate or delayed, taking the form of phone-ins, emails, text messages, tweets and other communications mediated through social networks, where audience members can engage in extended interactions.

3. Social media

Modern technology has provided users with significant affordances that are changing some of the traditional patterns of participation: not only can textual and multimodal information be accessed and produced anywhere and anytime, but messages can also be transmitted, shared, recontextualised and modified with incredible ease.

These characteristics have not escaped the interest of scholars – there is plentiful research on diverse aspects of *computer-mediated communication* (CMC; cf. Herring et al. 2013), which should, these days, be rather substituted by the notion of TMC, i.e. *technology-mediated communication*, given the prominent role that mobile phones and other devices nowadays play in interpersonal communicative encounters on the Internet and elsewhere.

Social media genres subscribe to CMC/TMC and encompass, among other things: various forums, discussion boards, and blogs, as well as internationally popular social network sites: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and others. Interactions

in social media are characterised by speakers' and hearers' spatial separation, and indeterminate hearership, i.e. infinite numbers of potential participants at the reception end, usually unfamiliar with one another. Most importantly, this pertains to social media interaction, which can thus be regarded as "mediated quasi-interaction" (Chovanec 2010, 2011; cf. Thompson 1995; Talbot 2007). Computer-mediated interactions in social media exhibit the characteristics of both face-to-face and mass media communication, whilst their new forms never cease to challenge extant theory (Poole and Jackson 1993). For example, they rest on synchronous forms, such as online chats, and asynchronous forms, such as social network sites or online discussion boards.

Needless to say, most genres of CMC/TMC transcend two participants' dyadic exchanges, which can, however, be found in private interactions via e-mail and some other means of instant communication, and which invite new participation frameworks (e.g. Morris and Ogan 1996; Baron 1998, 2010; Herring 1996, 2007; Yates 2000; Bou-Franch et al. 2012). For example, based on the criteria of (a)synchronicity and the number of individuals involved, Morris and Ogan (1996) differentiate between four categories of "producers" and "audiences" (but actually capturing the participatory relationships between them): one-to-one asynchronous communication (e.g. e-mail); many-to-many asynchronous communication (e.g. electronic bulletin boards); synchronous communication that can be one-to-one, one-to-few, or one-to-many (e.g. chat rooms); and asynchronous communication involving many-to-one, one-to-one, or one-to-many source-receiver relationships (e.g. website browsing).

Social media grant contemporary audiences new participatory privileges. Audience members are not merely end-recipients of texts but they assume an active production role as well (Morris and Ogan 1996; Alexander 2011). The change of the traditionally passive recipient role into an active one combining the reciprocity and the production ends is facilitated by the advent of what has come to be called "Web 2.0" in the area of computer-mediated communication (O'Reilly 2005). Web 2.0 environment is characterised by a shift from static online content to dynamic co-creation. The recipients (readers, listeners) can participate and communicate either with each other (i.e. on the recipient level), with the producers (i.e. reversing the traditional one-way pattern of communication) or with other audiences (i.e. attaining the status of co-authors; cf. Chovanec in this volume, Adami in this volume). Accordingly, three types of audience participation can be distinguished: recipient-to-recipient, with no involvement of the original author; recipient-to-producer, giving rise to across-the-frame interactions; and recipient-to-producer-to-recipient, with the recipient attaining the status of a (co-)author whose voice is re-mediated to new audiences by means of a "loop input" through the original producer.

The public can also assume the role of producers of newsworthy content in genres such as blogging (Bruns 2008; Yus 2011; Riboni in this volume), yet it is debatable whether personal or diary blogs have a status comparable to institutionalised media discourses. In some blogs, audience participation is applied as an intentional strategy of co-creating a multi-authored narrative, as is evidenced in some cases where the affordances of the new media are exploited for the purpose of exploring the media's potential as new storytelling genres (cf. Alexander 2011). Though some blogs may be affiliated to existing media organisations and other interest groups, it is typically not just about any audience member who is allowed to contribute through blogging to the official site, and thus to reach the media audiences: that space tends to be provided to opinion leaders who have been "co-opted" to the other (production) side of the news site, having been cleared by the institution's gatekeepers (cf. Chovanec *forth*). Such select users also typically have their textual products constantly monitored, for instance by other users' online evaluations, thus earning bloggers "ascribed status" within the online community.

Considerable ink has been spilt on novel patterns of interaction in the three major online social media that have achieved immense global popularity over the past few years, namely: Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. These social sites count their users in the hundreds of millions and even billions (as of 1 January 2014, the number of monthly active Facebook users, for instance, was claimed to be 1,310,000,000,² i.e. 18.2 per cent of the of the world population of 7,200,000,000³). Despite the hype, however, the popularity of some of these sites may be waning. According to a recent report, Facebook is less popular with the current teenagers who are turning to new sites (particularly Twitter and Instagram, cf. Garside 2013; Bosker 2013). It is currently being predicted that "the age of Facebook" may soon be over, with estimates suggesting it may lose up to 80 per cent of users in the next few years (Cannarella and Spechler 2014).⁴

YouTube is a video-sharing website, dubbed a form of "post-television" (Lister et al. 2009; Tolson 2010). It affords virtual space for the whole gamut of user-generated videos, and it allows other users to assess videos (one of the indicators being their popularity shown by the number of views), reply to videos by dint of "video response" (see Adami in this volume), comment on videos, as well as reply

2. Out of this number, 48 per cent of Facebook users log in on any day. The statistics also claim 81,000,000 fake Facebook accounts. Source: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/facebook-statistics/>, accessed on 5 January 2014.

3. Source: http://www.geohive.com/earth/population_now.aspx, accessed on 5 January 2014.

4. Facebook appears to be losing appeal partly because of its being embraced by the older generations, which includes the teenagers' parents, who are thus, arguably, in some control of what their offspring do in the online and the real worlds.

to earlier posts (Jones and Schieffelin 2009; Moor et al. 2010; Lorenzo-Dus et al. 2011; Bou-Franch et al. 2012). A distinction can be made between active and passive participants (“lurkers”) in YouTube interactions, depending on whether or not they make use of the communicative tools the website affords (Moor et al. 2010; Bou-Franch et al. 2012). Given all this, YouTube rests on a distinct participatory framework (Dynel 2014).

Twitter is a social networking service enabling users to share and receive short messages via instant messaging, SMS texts or a web interface (cf. Yus 2011; Draucker in this volume). Because of the condensed form of tweets, which are limited to 140 characters, Twitter advertises itself as a service for *microblogging*. In contrast to Facebook and YouTube, the user-generated content in Twitter lends itself well to re-transmission. As with some other forms of computer-mediated communication, users are not only producers and recipients but also *carriers* of content produced by others (cf. Ayass 2012:6), which contributes to the characteristic *ripple effect* of remediated messages spreading among recipients (O’Keeffe 2012).

These are the “hot and cool” social phenomena that seem to rule the modern world, inviting analyses from various academic perspectives. As regards pragmatics, for example, interactions may be studied in reference to the various forms of relational and identity work (e.g. Locher 2006; Arendholz 2013; Garces-Conéjos Blitvich et al. 2013; Bolander 2013; Kádár et al. 2013; Haugh and Chang in this volume, Locher and Bolander in this volume). Another topic is the complexity of forms and means of interaction, with YouTube as a case in point.

Generally speaking, it appears that with many modern communication services and networks, where the platform is run by a specific company, the latter is prone to be seen as a “mediator” or “transmitter” of the content (cf. Draucker in this volume) and users may expect that mediator either to act as a gatekeeper, i.e. monitoring the flow of communication and interfering where appropriate, or to owe some responsibility to the users by responding to their calls to take some action against offending (mis-communicating) users. In that sense, the technical medium (here Twitter) is promoted into the position of a meta-participant, enabling the communication in a seemingly unconstrained and liberal way, yet getting involved when needed. This assigns the technical medium, which sports an institutional identity, the role of a ratified moderator, somewhat resembling a referee who has the ultimate power to punish offending players and, in the extreme case, even discontinue the game.

On a higher plane, most genres of social media are characterised by two features which have a bearing on the participation framework: the loss of control over one’s messages, and the easy transgression of the boundaries of what were traditionally separate communicative frames. Recipients of seemingly private messages are now capable of turning into transmitters, re-animating the messages authored

by others beyond the original communicative frame and participants. It might appear that ratification, which is associated with the way the speaker positions the recipients, essentially becomes meaningless because the reception format becomes a potentially endless network of chained message transmissions. While the speaker may formulate a message with some preferred ratified recipients in mind, the reality is such that he or she can no longer be certain that the message ends with them or, instead, makes a longer tour. Participation frameworks in modern media have to operate based on the following criteria as their constitutive features: (a) the potentially endless replicability of CMC/TMC messages, and (b) the potentiality that the basic communication format of one-to-one (or one-to-many), normally characterising private contexts, becomes reframed into one-to-all in public contexts.

Therefore, one of the central features of participation in social networks is the convergence between the private and the public sphere, manifested in the disappearance of the boundaries delimiting private utterances. Any communication mediated through social networks is potentially public due to the permanence and verbatim reproducibility of any online communication beyond its original context of production. Since messages can be dispersed through networks of mutually interlinked friends, for instance, the recipient status of the addressee changes: he or she can mediate the message further in a pass-along fashion to another recipient, the original addressee's new addressee(s). Through the multiplication effect, a chain of several generations of recipients is established as the message snowballs through social media. The adjoining participants within the chain of recipients are ratified and mutually known to each other; that relationship, however, does not apply between the original authors and the recipients once or more times removed in the chain. Ratification within the first wave of recipients frequently involves its absence in the next waves, where a message may (and typically does) reach unintended participants who might, should the author be in control of the recipient design situation, be exposed to the message only potentially in the role of an eavesdropper.

4. The content of this volume

The bedrock premise underlying this volume is that various media forms and genres offer new modes of communication, necessitating modifications in the overall participation frameworks and bringing to focus new interactional practices. The aim of the present book is thus to bring together the work of a number of researchers representing various fields of linguistics and provide them with a platform for addressing two related topics:

1. participation frameworks and interactional phenomena in traditional public media discourses (epitomised by television broadcast and the discourse of films and series), and
2. the nature of participation and interaction in novel discourses arising in computer-mediated and technology-mediated communication (notably social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, instant messaging and chat, blogs, or new forms of online journalism).

Specifically, the present volume investigates such issues as: the elaboration of the participation framework theory to account for new modes of public and private communication; the relationship between fictional, scripted and natural conversation; the status of TV viewers; the linguistic traces of (un)ratified participants beyond the dyad; the changing dynamics on the reception side of media discourse; and other topics underlying the interactional nature of modern media types and genres of what can be collectively identified as technology-mediated communication.

Methodologically, the articles subscribe to the pragmatics of interaction, whilst the theoretical grounding of each of the papers reflects the specific issues covered and the diversified aims pursued by the researchers in their effort to describe the multifarious nature of participation in modern, both public and private, interactions. The contents of the volume show a balance between papers that offer new theoretical extensions and those which focus primarily on case studies. All papers operate with data taken from diverse discourse domains that range from public to private genres, spanning institutional, artistic and personal texts. The studies aim to present cutting-edge research on data ranging from public, mass-mediated and quasi-authentic texts, to fully staged and scripted textual productions, including authentic, non-scripted private messages and comments, whether of a permanent or of an ephemeral nature. The analyses include textual products that are classifiable as news interviews, online sports reporting, sitcoms, comedy shows, stand-up comedies, drama series, institutional and personal blogs, tweets, follow-up YouTube video commentaries, and Facebook status updates. All the authors emphasise the role of context and pay attention to how meaning is constructed by participants in interactions in increasingly complex participation frameworks existing in traditional, as well as novel, technologically mediated interactions.

What transpires from many of the studies presented in this volume is that interlocutors often have multiple goals and purposes, adequately formulating their utterances in order to achieve specific effects not only on their interlocutors (located in shared as well as split contexts) but also on other discourse participants. The latter, who may be absent from the most immediate communicative frame, are to be found on other communicative levels and are often conceived of as the recipients of the communicated content. It is thus shown how individual speakers/writers, collective

senders (authors, producers, broadcasters, etc.), as well as other entities at the production end of the participation framework, fashion their use of language with respect to the complex reception end, which displays multiple communicative levels.

Due to the diversity of topics and approaches, the chapters relate to each other in several mutually overlapping ways. When considered thematically, they fall into three distinct groups. Thus, three chapters in the first of these potential groupings (Brock, Dynel, and Zago) address different aspects of televised and film discourse and the complexity involved within the two-level model that describes the communication between the interactants on the screen, on the one hand, and the producers and the audience, on the other. Another group of papers is made up of those that deal primarily with the domain of the media in the area of news discourse (Chovanec, Lombardo, and Riboni). These contributions document some of the recent technological developments and structural changes that are noticeable in the various genres, explaining how the role of the audience is changing on the reception and production ends of the participation framework. Finally, the remaining four contributions (Draucker, Haugh and Chang, Locher and Bolander, and Adami) address novel patterns of interaction and relational work in online social media and some of the discursive patterns emerging among interacting participants. Whilst the ten chapters could have been grouped in this vein – that is, according to the genres of mass and social media – the actual ordering of the papers as they appear in this book is motivated by their theoretical orientation related to participation.

The division of the book into three parts (on participation frameworks; on participation in interpersonal pragmatics; and on forms of participation) is thus meant to ensure more compactness as regards the authors' approaches. As a result, similar phenomena are traced in several papers across different genres. At the same time, however, the individual authors take slightly different views on their understanding of some of the participant roles. As editors, we decided to preserve this diversity rather than try to enforce a uniform conceptual framework for analysis. Arguably, the minor differences between the individual authors add to the cross-disciplinary and methodological dialogue that we wish to promote. For this reason, we have also included some papers that somewhat diverge from the topic of participation frameworks in order to extend the perspective on the issues covered.

The first part of the volume, **"Reconsidering participation frameworks"**, offers developments in participation frameworks obtaining for various media. The first chapter sheds new light on the viewer's role in televised humour genres, whilst the second one identifies the role of a broadcaster in Twitter interactions. The third paper, on the other hand, considers the emergence of the recipient as an active co-producer in online sports broadcasts, which stands as an example of a modern type of participatory journalism.

In the first of the papers, **Alexander Brock** systematically analyses the communicative level between the collective sender and the television viewer (CL 1) and between the characters (CL 2) in television comedies. He contributes to the debate on whether TV viewers are classifiable as overhearers or, rather, as ratified listeners, by reconciling these positions and arguing for the multifunctionality of viewer's roles. This is possible because the two communicative levels in fact construct two different positions for TV viewers, who appear both in the addressee role on the "real" CL 1 and in the overhearer (or eavesdropper) role on the "fictional" CL 2. Participation roles are thus fluid and dynamic since interlocutors may, in general, use a single utterance to simultaneously communicate several different meanings to various other participants. This conclusion is supported by indicating how the camera often constructs an implicit participant role for the television viewer in CL 2 interactions, and by elaborating on the specificities of participation frameworks in several genres of televised humour. In sitcoms, producers complicate the framework by involving the studio audience or adding canned laughter, sometimes even using camera shots that place the viewer directly in the position of a character in CL 2 (the so-called "point-of-view" shots). In candid camera comedy, the humour arises directly from the viewers' enjoyment of the mismatch between the participation frames: what the victim takes to be CL 1 (a genuine interview situation) is, in fact, a CL 2 situation involving an uninitiated victim and, ultimately, the TV viewers. Finally, in stand-up comedy, the comedian draws on selected aspects of his or her real-life identity and engages with a live audience, sometimes even a deliberately disruptive heckler, and the resulting product is then mediated to the viewer on CL 1.

In her article on participation structures in Twitter interactions, **Fawn Draucker** argues for the extension of the production side of a relevant participation framework by introducing the concept of a "broadcaster". This role, being distinct from the traditional roles of animator, author, and principal, refers to a party that mediates content to other recipients and is "followable" by the audience. As revealed by an analysis of tweets sent from institutional accounts of NHL sports teams, the production and transmission of messages via Twitter show intrinsic characteristics and cannot be easily subsumed within the existing roles of the animator/relayer: while the animator is responsible for the physical production of talk, the broadcaster distributes the talk to others. It appears that making this theoretical distinction in Twitter interactions is justified for a number of reasons. First, users hold the broadcaster responsible for the messages produced for the institutional account even where the tweets are produced by guests otherwise unaffiliated with the producer. Second, users may address broadcasters as if they were real and active participants in interaction. This indicates that broadcasters (in this case, the sports teams represented by the institutional accounts) are

perceived to have a more active role than merely providing or mediating their Twitter accounts as a channel for communication. Yet, when the opinions communicated by some individuals via the broadcasters' accounts meet with public disapproval, the broadcasters may try to distance themselves from the offending party, claiming non-responsibility.

Jan Chovanec examines the complex participation framework underpinning live online sports commentaries. The author takes as his bedrock premise Goffman's notion of embedded interactions and their participant arrangements, which he duly elaborates by identifying several distinct interactional frames in modern media. He dissects a number of interactional frames in the written commentaries and discusses their impact on the participant framework of the entire communicative act, which is shown to consist of a series of recursively embedded interactions. A distinction is made between horizontal interactions pertaining to the level of the interactants within a specific frame, and vertical interactions, which overstep the boundaries of the communicative frames and which may concern not only real but also fictitious and non-present recipients. Also, Chovanec argues in favour of modern media audiences' active involvement and active participation, particularly in case of live media genres that allow for the remediation of selected textual contributions or comments made by the audiences, with communication following the path of 'recipient-to-producer-to-recipient'. Audiences thus achieve the status of co-producers of media texts. Consequently, the traditional dichotomy between production and reception is not only weakened but the two sides of the process of communication become interconnected and even merged in often unexpected ways.

The second part of the book, entitled "**Participation and interpersonal pragmatics**", comprises four chapters that provide a combined perspective on the topic of participation and some issues central to interpersonal pragmatics. The first two chapters address relational practice in social media (troubles talk and responses to it in online discussion boards, and identity construction via humour on Facebook), whilst the other two concern the pragmatics of film talk (impoliteness in interaction, and the pragmatic functions of vocatives).

The chapter by **Michael Haugh** and **Wei-Lin Melody Chang** bridges the first part and the second part of the volume by proposing a new participation framework closely aligned to interpersonal pragmatics. Specifically, the authors elucidate a participation order underlying interaction on online discussion boards, based on the example of troubles talk and responses it generates in Taiwanese online parenting discussion. Responses to troubles talk can be construed as affiliative or disaffiliative vis-à-vis the moral order in which the understandings of participants themselves are rooted, and vis-à-vis the participation order that these interactions themselves instantiate. Focusing on the solicitation and display of solidarity and

empathy, the authors argue that prevailing emotional support is manifest in affiliative responses, such as mutual encouraging, mutual bemoaning, and empathic suggesting. In such cases, by taking the footing of troubles-recipient, respondents hold the initial poster accountable for troubles talk rather than seeking advice or complaining. On the other hand, in the rare cases of disaffiliative responses, accusing and advising come into play, shifting the participation footing of the user initiating the thread from a troubles-teller to a complainer or advice-recipient. Both are interpretable as displays of emotional support for the initial poster.

The second paper in this section focuses on the most popular social networking medium of today: Facebook. Adopting the perspective of interpersonal pragmatics, **Miriam A. Locher** and **Brook Bolander** tease out the workings of humour as a way of projecting personal identities within the networks formed by mutually interlinked users. The textual genre under investigation consists of status updates posted by users on the “walls” in their accounts. Status updates are seen as discursive acts of personal identity construction that are performed in a semi-private environment. Whilst the brief messages are not explicitly reader-oriented (for they are addressed to the whole group of the user’s “friends” rather than a specific addressee); about half of them actually elicit responses from one or more friends. What ensues is a brief conversational interaction made up of two or more turns and performed in front of the other friends who are silent participants in such communication. The research, based on two dense networks in the UK and Switzerland, shows that identity construction through humour is a relatively frequent act performed by Facebook users in their status updates. Such identity construction consists, above all, of the users’ appeal to shared knowledge of the in-group, irony, word play, and self-deprecation. The interactive potential of Facebook is still in a state of flux and developing. It seems that the most recent technological advances are changing the patterns of interactions among Facebookers, who now tend to share more multi-modal (rather than merely textual) content and who tend to depend on the different technical affordances available through PC and smartphone platforms which allow access to their accounts.

Marta Dynel explores the issue of verisimilitude, discussing to what extent film interactions are realistic with respect to the use of impoliteness, based on the example of *Dr House*, the titular character in the famous American television series. The author addresses the interactional workings of impoliteness on two levels of communication. Referring to the recent literature on impoliteness, she offers explanations for the main protagonist’s impolite behaviour, paying attention to the effects it generates from the point of view of the other interactants in the medical community of practice, as well as from the series recipients’ vantage point. Several factors are accounted for: impoliteness as a character trait, the speaker’s expert power, sanctioned but not neutralised impoliteness, and responses to impoliteness.

It is thus shown that idiosyncratic, albeit consistent, verbal behaviour displaying wittiness coupled with aggressiveness may make for a coherent and believable personality/character construction. Hearers, whether interlocutors or recipients, familiar with the impolite speaker will sanction his impoliteness, yet not ceasing to acknowledge its presence. Nevertheless, the speaker's impoliteness may induce different reactions in the hearers, ranging from outrage to amusement. The latter is primarily what the production crew mean the recipients to derive from House's facetious abrasiveness, which determines the ways in which impolite interactions are realised at the characters' level of communication.

The duality of communicative levels in film discourse is also the pivot of the next paper, whose findings also point to the verisimilitude of film talk. **Raffaele Zago** investigates the use of vocatives in a corpus of several contemporary films, paying attention to the pragmatic functions that these forms fulfil on the inter-character level and on the level of characters and viewers. The functions go much beyond the fundamental use of vocatives to summon the addressee's attention. Often, the interpretation has to be sought in the fact that film dialogue is intended for viewers on a different communicative level. Thus, vocatives serving the conventional function of summonses are often used, particularly in initial or stand-alone positions, in order to provide anchorage for the characters' identities, i.e. to make it clear to the viewer that another character enters the scene. However, non-summoning, expressive uses of vocatives between two characters engaged in a dialogue are by far the most frequent, typically occurring in end positions. In this case, the interlocutors rely on vocatives to qualify the interpersonal space between them, just as speakers do in an authentic unscripted conversation. A detailed pragmatic analysis yields numerous functions of vocatives, the most prominent being relational vocatives, which mark spontaneity and naturalness, and thus they contribute to the impression of a realistic interaction between the characters, and adversarial vocatives, which accompany various confrontational speech acts. Additional functions include: vocatives as mitigators, turn management vocatives, emphatic vocatives, insults and badinage vocatives. In respect of the viewers, vocatives increase audience involvement, mark narrative salience, and make for the impression of linguistic realism.

The third part of the book, "**Forms of participation**", brings together three contributions that tackle different means of participation in the media. The first paper concentrates on live 2-way exchanges in television news broadcast, whilst the second one deals with the practice of posting video responses on YouTube. The third paper discusses participation rhetoric in political weblogs.

In the first chapter, **Linda Lombardo** carries out an analysis of broadcast talk in live TV news bulletins, identifying important changes in live 2-way exchanges between news presenters and correspondents. The live exchange, which has

become the stable format of British evening news programmes, is an interactive genre that aligns the audience as ratified observers by various linguistic means, such as the use of direct address, pronominal reference and other forms associated with what has been variously called “fresh” or “lively” talk, with the aim of increasing the immediacy of the news and making the delivery more engaging. Various strategies of involvement bring the audience closer to the news, including the use of discourse markers, such as *now* and *well* that strategically engage the recipients. From a diachronic perspective, the data, collected over more than a decade, indicate that while the frequency of live exchanges remains stable, there has been a change in the structure of live exchanges in favour of shorter and less interactive sequences. There is a marked shift from longer 7-turn and 5-turn exchanges in the late 1990s to short 3-turn exchanges in the early 2010s. As a result, a loss of interactivity can be observed between news presenters and correspondents: the former now merely ask a question, the latter provide an answer, and the exchange is terminated in the next turn without any follow-up. It appears that the structural change is compensated for by the increased number of live links, which enhance “token interactivity” of the TV news genre. Another compensation is to be found in the online environment, which fosters new patterns of interaction, allowing the audience to become, to a limited extent, producers.

In her paper on YouTube interactions, **Elisabetta Adami** discusses the phenomenon of video responses, i.e. non-professional, home-made videos uploaded and shared by users in response to other popular videos. Applying multimodal discourse analysis to her data, she discusses video exchanges in terms of coherence and cohesion in order to identify the types of relatedness between the prompting video and the responding videos. Various aspects of the prompt are reused, and eventually recontextualised, in the asynchronous video responses, ensuring a coherent interpretation of the latter. It is shown that while the degree of relatedness, analysable in terms of “cohesive” multimodal links between the videos, is highly variable, it is the mere placement of the videos in a mutual prompt-response relationship (i.e., their adjacency) that stimulates the viewers’ relevant interpretation and inferencing processes. That is the case also where only implicit relatedness is involved or where any clues of relatedness are absent. More explicit video responses take up various aspects of the prompt, comment on the original author, or contain merely circumstantial reference, sometimes together with users’ additional textual comments and explanations. It is argued that the recontextualisation produces new meanings because the interactants creatively explore the affordances of the online medium. The exchanges appear to be governed by the users’ interactive cooperation that can be described as “variation-within-attuning”.

Giorgia Riboni takes a social perspective on participation, approaching it from the point of view of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, coupled with

political media communication research. She discusses political weblogs, a modern genre that plays a constantly increasing role in the process of agenda setting. She views it in the context of participatory democracy as a tool through which various stakeholders can present their unique viewpoints. Based on a corpus of blogs authored by citizens and political parties during the run-up to the US presidential elections, the analysis deals with the ways in which bloggers represent their authorial identity. The data indicate that while citizens' blogposts are much more personal, as evidenced in the frequency of the first person singular pronouns, official party blogs tend to be less focused on the authors' subjectivity, save for blogs written by professional politicians (members of Congress), who resort to very frequent self-reference in order to point out the projects in which they have been involved. Frequency lists and concordances further reveal that the stronger subjective-orientation of citizens' blogs is also confirmed on the level of word choice, since mental process verbs are systematically preferred. By contrast, in the party blogs under analysis, the choice of pronouns, verbs and modality indicate that such blogs use the linguistic means as a strategy of participation rhetoric. The political blog can thus be considered as a "tool of citizen empowerment".

Postscript

As attested by the variety of topics addressed in the individual papers in the present volume, there is yet a lot of interesting research to be done in the area of participation and interaction, as far as modern media and other technology-assisted kinds of interaction are concerned. Since so much of the research into participation frameworks owes a debt to the pioneering insights of American sociologist Erving Goffman, it may be fitting to conclude this chapter with a reference to the remarkably humble words he uttered in the introduction to his *Forms of Talk*, a collection of essays on footing and other issues related to the analysis of talk:

I ask that these papers be taken for what they merely are: exercises, trials, tryouts, a means of displaying possibilities, not establishing fact. (Goffman 1981: 1)

It is with these words in mind that we offer the present publication to the scholarly public: not as a claim to the universal and truthful application of the principles applied and described herein but as a tentative investigation in our collective effort to understand the complexity of the communicative situation, while simultaneously revisiting, reworking and extending the existing scholarship on interaction.

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PART I

Reconsidering participation frameworks

Participation frameworks and participation in televised sitcom, candid camera and stand-up comedy

Alexander Brock

In order to reconstruct the participation frameworks of three TV comedy sub-genres, this article follows the common differentiation into the fictitious characters' communication and the discourse between a comedy's production crew and the television audience. The TV viewer is conceptualised as the central and ratified empirical recipient. At the same time, it is argued that a fictitious overhearer's position is created for her/him on the level of the characters' communication, using camera position, sound and other technical means. Participation frameworks are reconstructed for sitcom, candid camera and stand-up comedy, which differ considerably from each other and are definitive for their respective sub-genre. Some manipulations of the basic constellations are also analysed, including meta-humour.

1. Introduction

There is a large body of research into participation roles in natural conversation (e.g. Goffman 1981; Levinson 1988; Clark 1992; Dynel 2010) and television/film discourse (e.g. Kozloff 2000; Bubel 2008; Piazza et al. 2011; Dynel 2011).¹ A consensus is appearing concerning the main participant roles in televised discourse and on the need to differentiate various levels (Gülich/Raible 1979; Brock 2004; Dynel 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), circles (Burger 2005) or layers (Clark 1996) of

1. In the following, I shall explicitly refer to televised discourse only, although film discourse follows very similar rules.

communication, most notably the communication between the *collective sender*² (Dynel 2011c: 1634) and the television viewer on the one hand, and the fictitious communication between the characters on the other. A few specific aspects, however, are as yet unresolved. One of them is the position of the television viewer within the participation framework. Should (s)he be conceptualised as an over-hearer (Bubel 2008) or as a ratified listener (Dynel 2011c)?³

I will make an attempt to reconcile the two positions by highlighting the specific pragmatic properties of the two basic communicative levels, i.e. the real one and the fictitious one. The television viewer is to be conceptualised as an addressee and indeed the central and intended recipient of the communicative system of the TV discourse. On the level of the characters' communication, however, (s)he is assigned one of a number of possible (fictitious) positions as well, not least to preserve the fiction: most commonly the role of overhearer, but occasionally also eavesdropper or even speaker.⁴ The role that the recipient is assigned on the level of the characters' communication is one of the elements that define the (sub-)genre or format of the product.⁵

In the next section, the relevant theory of participation roles is reviewed and discussed. Then three comedy sub-genres – sitcom, candid camera and stand-up comedy – are scrutinised with regard to their participation frameworks. Apart from their general participation patterns, some playful modifications are shown, too.

2. Even though the term *collective sender* disregards the complexity of responsibilities and creative interplay among the people involved in producing a comedy, its adoption seems justified here because (a) this article aims to identify general participation patterns rather than highly individual constellations, and (b) the black-box category *collective sender* seems realistic in a comedy's reception, at least for those members of the audience who lack specific knowledge about the production process of a specific comedy, e.g. whether some or all of the actors ad-libbed material during recording, etc.

3. An *overhearer* is defined by Goffman (1981: 132) as an unratified listener for whom the opportunity to listen has come about "unintentionally and inadvertently". Levinson (1988: 172) defines the overhearer as someone who is not a ratified participant, not addressed, not the intended recipient, but who is able to receive the message.

4. According to Goffman (1981: 131–2) an *eavesdropper* is an unratified listener who has "purposely engineered" to listen in.

5. I use the term *genre* for general, abstract properties of groups of texts, synonymously to *text type* and the term *format* for concrete realizations of genres. See also Brock (2009).

2. Participation in natural communication and television discourse

In discussing participation roles, researchers have chosen different perspectives. Bubel (2008) reconstructs film discourse from the spectator's point-of-view and shows that the whole film discourse, including its information management, is geared towards this specific position. Dynel (2010) also concentrates on the reception side and classifies various hearer roles, but she shows at the same time that some hearer categories are difficult to identify without taking the speaker's intentions and mental attitudes towards the hearers into account, for example when the difference between a ratified and an unratified hearer is concerned. In this article, a similar – though not identical – view is taken. Both the production and the reception side are considered, but neither side is favoured over the other or treated in isolation from it.

The next question is how much analytical detail is required for analysing participation roles in TV comedy communication. This obviously depends on the respective research question pursued, but also on the complexity of the interaction under scrutiny. There are cases of simple dyadic communication (Dynel 2010: 1), but TV comedies with writers, actors, large production teams, studio audiences, electronic transmission to a mass audience, etc. naturally have fairly complex participation frameworks. In the following, only those participation roles are introduced which are relevant to general patterns of TV comedy communication. Some of these roles are, of course, irrelevant to natural conversation.

In order to clarify participation roles in TV comedies, close attention must be paid to levels (Brock 2004; Dynel 2011b, 2011c) or circles (Burger 2005: 14) of communication. Communicative levels are areas or layers (Clark 1996: 354) of communicative settings, which come with certain options for participant roles.⁶ The central communicative levels for TV comedies are (1) the communication between the TV production crew, i.e. writer(s), actors, director, etc. (Bubel 2008: 68) and the TV audience, and (2) the characters' communication. The film production crew is referred to as the "collective sender" by Dynel (2011c: 1635), a term which I will use as well. Dynel's (2011c) term "recipient" for the TV viewer will not be used, as there are also (fictitious) recipient positions in the characters' communication. I shall stick to the term "TV viewer" for the recipient on the level of the TV discourse. To indicate the fact that the TV discourse is the primary and

6. My two communicative levels are very similar to Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996: 46) differentiation between *interactive* (my first level) and *represented* (my second level) participants: "The former are the participants in the act of communication – who speak and listen or write and read [...], the latter are the participants who are the subject of the communication, that is, the people, places and things [...] represented in and by the speech". See also Short (1989: 149, 1994: 950) for a similar model.

only real level of communication here, this level will henceforth be referred to as Communicative Level 1 (CL 1) (Brock 2004). The level of the characters' communication is called Communicative Level 2 (CL 2).⁷

It will be vital to bear the distinction but also the interactions between CL 1 and CL 2 in mind, when it comes to discussing participation roles, specifically the role of the TV viewer. Clearly, the two levels are isolated from each other due to their respective statuses as real and fictitious, but we shall see shortly that comedians find ways of manipulating participation roles and CLs in interesting ways.

What are possible participation roles on CL 2? Dynel (2011c: 1629) points out correctly that "at the inter-character level, hearers display roles the same as those recurrent in real interactions". We may add that the same goes for speaker roles. So, depending on the fictitious setting that is created for each comedy, we may have different participation roles on CL 2: In a sitcom showing friends in conversation we will find speakers, addressed recipients and unaddressed recipients (Goffman 1981: 133); in a comedy showing a lecturer at work, we will usually see the lecturer as the animator, i.e. the physical speaker, the author and the *principal*, i.e. "the party to whose position, stand, and belief the words attest" (Goffman 1981: 226) of the lecture, etc. In comedy, anything can be twisted for comic effect. So participation roles can be undermined, too, as we shall see, e.g. in the case of meta-humour. But still we expect – and mostly get – everyday type participation roles on CL 2, the fictitious level. This raises the question of why this should be the case. It is done to construct and uphold a sense and expectation of normality (Dynel 2011b: 43),⁸ which is necessary as a background against which comic manipulations of the viewers' expectations stand out as unusual, ill-fitting or at least unexpected, i.e. incongruous (Keith-Spiegel 1972: 7).

A few more remarks are necessary about the participant roles described in the research literature. Goffman's (1981) and Levinson's (1988: 172–3) categories seem to cover most, if not all, participation roles found in everyday conversation and beyond. They also point out in passing (e.g. Goffman 1981: 135–6; Levinson 1988: 167–8) that participation roles may not be constant throughout a speech event. By using plus/minus-distinctions, characterisations like [+PARTICIPANT, +TRANSMITTER, +MOTIVE, +FORM] for *author* (Levinson 1988: 172),⁹ however, suggest clearer distinctions and better analytical identifiability than may exist in

7. We shall later see that CL 2 may not only contain scripted communication among characters.

8. Kozloff (2000) differentiates various functions of film dialogues: The "creation of the diegesis" (Kozloff 2000: 34) and "adherence to expectations concerning realism" (Kozloff 2000: 47) correspond closely to the establishment of everyday participant roles to enable and uphold the fiction.

9. Levinson adopts this notation from phonology (Levinson 1988: 171).

reality. Take, for instance, the differentiation between an unratiſed overhearer and a ratiſed participant. In an excellent diſcuſſion of the borderlines between participant categories, Dynel (2011c) points out correctly with reſpect to the fact that overhearers (normally non-participants, becauſe they are unratiſed listeners) may be encouraged or intended (Goffman 1981; Dynel 2011c: 1629), that “if ſpeakers invariably intend to communicate meanings to overhearers [...], they muſt ſimultaneously ratiſy the latter” (Dynel 2011c: 1630). So, non-participants may turn into participants in the courſe of a ſpeech event. What is more, ſpeakers in public places may notice and deſire the overhearing participation of ſtrangers for certain paſſages of the ongoing diſcourſe, and reſent it during others. If we add the fact that attention to and deſire for other people’s participation are alſo matters of degree rather than absolute phenomena, we end up with the neceſſity to treat participation roles as fluid and dynamic.¹⁰

If a ſpeaker talks to more than one recipient category, e.g. addreſſed and unaddreſſed (third party) recipients and tolerated overhearers, at the ſame time, we have a multiple addreſs ſituation (Kühn 1995).¹¹ This term reflects not only the fact that there are various groups of recipients but alſo that the ſpeaker’s utterance uſually has different functions for each of theſe groups. For example, a man arguing with ſomeone elſe in a public place may want to win the argument with reſpect to the addreſſed recipient, but he may want to ſhow to the overhearing byſtanders what a forceful perſonality he has.

Now for participation roles on CL 1 of the TV comedy communication. Here we can mainly go with the deſcriptions in Bubel (2008: 68) and Dynel (2011c: 1635) for a ſimple model: On the production ſide, we have ſcript writers, directors, actors, camera operators, film editors, ſound editors and everybody elſe who adds to the product. Dynel’s (2011c: 1635) term *collective ſender* for everybody involved in the production is uſeful. On the reception ſide, there is the TV audience, here called the TV viewer. See Figure 1 for an illuſtration of participation roles on both communicative levels of televised comedy.

It muſt be ſtressed here that Figure 1 represents the ſimpleſt poſſible participation conſtellation for TV comedies. In reality, things are uſually much more complex. For example, the role of a ſtudio audience, whoſe reactions are added to the ſound-mix and thus audible to the TV viewers, ſhould be accounted for as well. The participation model in Figure 1 will be further developed and ſpecified in the next three ſections, where three comedy ſub-genres will be analysed.

10. Clark (1996: 14) alſo points out that there “are in reality ſeveral varieties of overhearers between” byſtanders and eavesdroppers.

11. Kühn’s term is *Mehrfachadreſſierung*.

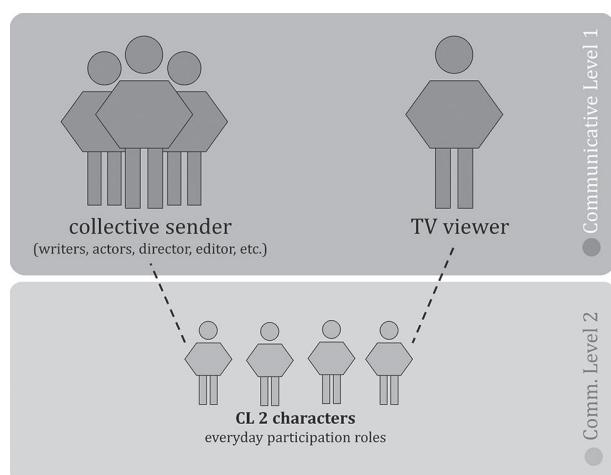


Figure 1. A simple participation framework for TV comedies

What, then, is the TV viewer's position in the participation framework? According to Figure 1, this should be clear: The whole comedy is specifically created for the viewer, so (s)he is fully ratified as the main recipient (Dynel 2011c: 1631). Note that the real recipient can only be invited and ratified by other real people. So CL 1 comprises a communicative contract between the collective sender and the real TV viewer. The subject of this contract is entertainment. There is no way around this characterisation of the TV viewer as a ratified participant on CL 1, and solid facts such as viewing figures and audience surveys attest to the reality of the CL 1 participation framework.

This seems to be a clear case, and yet may there be something in Kozloff's (2000) and Bubel's (2008) conceptualisation of the audience as overhearers? As we have seen, the viewer is a ratified participant on CL 1, and therefore cannot be an unratified overhearer at the same time, at least not on CL 1. But what about CL 2? Can the viewer cross the real-fictitious borderline and be present on CL 2 as well, as an overhearer? I would like to suggest that in standard comedies, a fictitious participation slot is constructed into the participation framework on CL 2 in order to accommodate the viewer. This is mainly done by camerawork, microphone position and cutting technique. Traditionally, sitcoms are filmed with three cameras, one for an establishing shot, the other two for shots of the characters (Mills 2009: 39). Camera height, distance and focus imitate the position of somebody present at the scene. As the camera is mostly ignored and rarely addressed but tolerated, the camera (and microphone) position along with the characters' ignoring the camera construct a participation slot which resembles

the position of a natural overhearer and which becomes the main (fictitious) identification point for the real TV viewer to slip into.¹²

But how can the lay viewers, ignorant of matters pragmatic, function in two different communicative roles and on two communicative levels all at once? We can because we learn at a very early age that fairy tales, films, stories and plays are not real, but that we can live in the fantasy world for a little while anyway, without giving up our position in the real world (Dyner 2011b: 53–4). This double reception role is especially obvious in the case of comedy. The viewer knows that the fictitious world on CL 2 can and will be undermined at any moment to produce humorous incongruities, but (s)he also knows that disbelief must be willingly suspended in order for the incongruities to have a breeding ground. On CL 1, however, the viewer is a keen observer of anything that may cause amusement.¹³ This double-layered reception must be possible, because otherwise comedy would not work.

And why should the collective sender take the trouble of constructing a participant's position for the CL 1 viewer into CL 2? Because this is an ideal way of overcoming disbelief and being drawn into the fictitious world. One consequence is that the fictitious CL 2 participant will fall for incongruities more easily than a distant observer. But there are other useful side effects, too. For comedies like *Friends* (1994–2004), for example, the attraction seems to lie not only in the humour, but also in the fact that the viewer as a CL 2 overhearer can imagine being in the same room with six beautiful people, who tolerate the overhearer's presence, only one step away from real friendship. Figure 2 shows a participation framework model including the viewer as a projected CL 2 overhearer (O).

As Figure 2 shows, the participant role of the overhearing viewer on CL 2 is a collaborative achievement of both the collective sender and the CL 1 viewer: The collective sender constructs the position with the help of certain production techniques, and the viewer plays along and delegates his fictitious self to CL 2, thereby willingly suspending disbelief. The CL 2 overhearer is of course a trick and not a real position, but then the whole participation framework on CL 2 is a trick, too, as is the rest of CL 2. I would also like to claim that CL 1, where the TV viewer is separated from the characters by the fourth wall, is the place where Bergson's "anaesthesia of the heart" (Bergson 1948:9) can thrive, whereas CL 2 is the place for empathy (Brock 2004: 318).

12. We shall see in Section 3 that the overhearer's position is not the only possible participation role for the viewer.

13. This reception on two levels, involving different goals, strategies, pragmatic maxims and knowledge patterns is discussed at length in Brock (2004: Chapter 5.2.1).

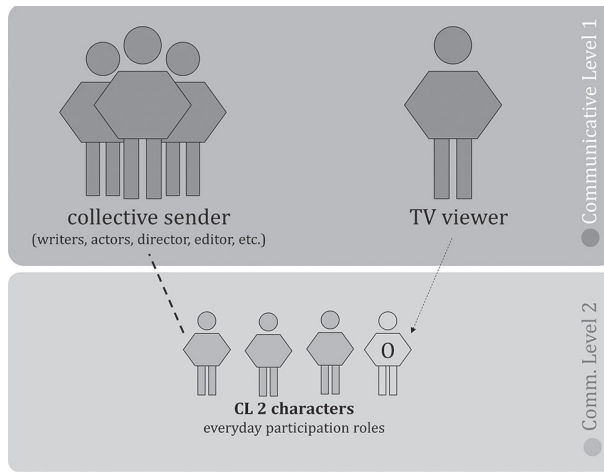


Figure 2. A participation framework for TV comedies with an overhearing CL 2 viewer

Before we can look at some specific comedy sub-genres and more specific constellations, there is one more aspect of participation constellations that goes for all comedy and should therefore be treated here. This is the case of meta-humour. The term *meta-humour* describes the case where the non-fulfilment of a humour expectation eventually produces humour. Nonsense jokes or some Monty Python sketches are examples of this (Brock 2004: Chapter 4.3.4), but meta-humour can also arise from everyday joking contexts. As the expectation of humour is a matter of CL 1, the viewer/recipient is now directly involved in the incongruity and no longer immunised by the borderline between CL 1 and CL 2.

Figure 3 shows that the viewers must see themselves as victims of the meta-humour and that they must distance themselves from their old, gullible selves from time 1, when they considered themselves to be involved in “regular humour communication”, expecting straight humour. This produces a renewed participation system in time 2, when the realisation sets in that meta-humour is aimed at. Here they rise to a *meta level* of communication.

To sum up the discussion in this section: Participation frameworks should be reconstructed to include both the production and the reception perspectives. TV comedy communication takes place on CL 1, the communication between the collective sender and the TV viewer, and on CL 2, the characters’ communication. Various additional meta-levels and fictitious participation positions can be constructed on the basis of CL 1 and CL 2. The TV viewer is a ratified addressee on CL 1, but a fictitious participation position is constructed into CL 2 for him/her to uphold the fiction and allow for empathy.

It is now time to look at sub-genre-specific participation frameworks.

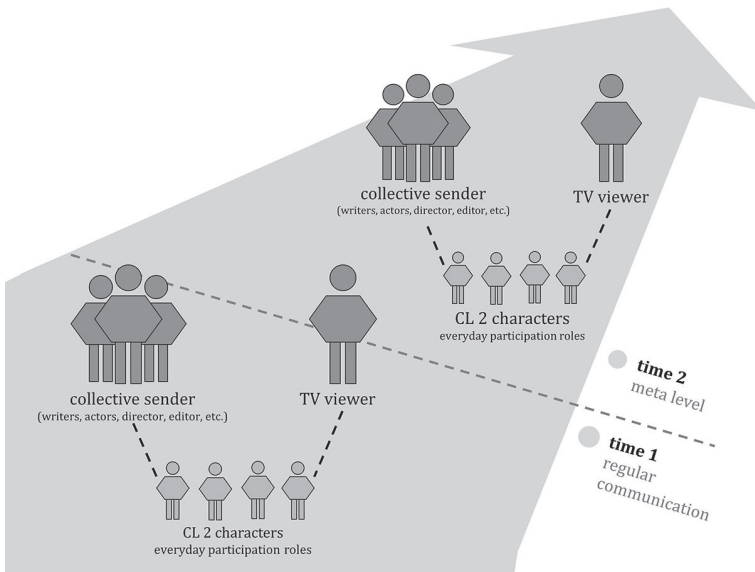


Figure 3. A renewed participation system as an effect of meta-humour

3. Participation in sitcoms

In sitcoms, actors portray characters who are shown in the process of problem-solving. The characters and settings are relatively stable. The local setting is often stage-like, e.g. somebody's sitting-room or a café. The programmes usually last 30 minutes minus the time for commercials.¹⁴

Figure 2 shows a participation framework which covers many cases of sitcoms. The typical case is indeed that characters communicate on CL 2 and that the camera – as described in Section 2 – constructs an overhearer position for the TV viewer into CL 2.

Now we must take the studio audience into account. In spite of the fact that a growing number of both British and American sitcoms are recorded without studio audiences and laugh tracks, the majority still have them. Here, studio scenes are recorded in front of a live audience, whose reactions are sound-recorded and later added to the sound-mix of the whole programme. Support acts by stand-up comedians before the recording and interactions between the actors of the sitcom and the audience are used to ensure enthusiastic studio audience reactions (Mills 2009).

14. See Mills (2009) for a discussion of the main features and variations.

Figure 4 shows a participation model which includes the studio audience. The studio audience and their reactions are clearly real and genuine. They see roughly the same as the TV viewers and are therefore also offered the same identification point on CL 2, the fictitious overhearer.¹⁵ That is why they appear close to the TV viewer in Figure 4. At the same time, we get the interesting situation that the studio audience's noises become part of the overall production input, which is subsequently broadcast to the TV viewer. This is indicated by the frame including the characters' communication and the studio audience.

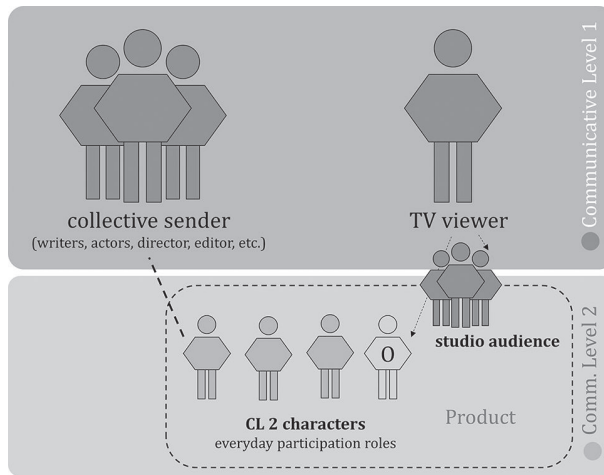


Figure 4. A participation model for sitcoms with audience laughter¹⁶

Now for another constellation: I argued in Section 2 that the TV viewer may be assigned the fictitious role of an overhearer on CL 2, as shown in Figure 2. Some sitcoms, however, allow the CL 1 viewer different points of identification on CL 2. Here is one example.

The British sitcom *Peep Show* (2003–12) uses point-of-view (POV) shots for both its main characters, while a simultaneous voice-over represents the respective character's thoughts.¹⁷ This way, the viewer seems to *become the character*.

15. Of course, the TV viewer sees slightly different things, because the studio audience can always see the whole stage and has no close-ups. Also, the studio audience can see cameras, sets, etc., which may spoil the fiction. Many thanks to Peter Schildhauer for pointing this out.

16. This model does not cover the case of *canned laughter*, where the adding of an independently pre-recorded laugh track to the final sound-mix is clearly an element of the production process and carried out by the collective sender.

17. In a POV shot, things are filmed from a character's perspective. The audience perceives the unfolding events through a character's eyes.

The POV shots are produced by strapping a camera to an actor’s head or holding it before his/her face. Figure 5 shows a screenshot from a POV perspective.



Figure 5. POV shot – main character is handed a tin-opener, *Peep Show*, Series 8, Episode 1

For a correct reconstruction of the participation system in *Peep Show*, it has to be added that the POV perspective is not only used when the respective character is talking, but also when he is being talked to. In addition, several shots use the customary camerawork for sitcoms as described in Section 2. This situation results in the following model:

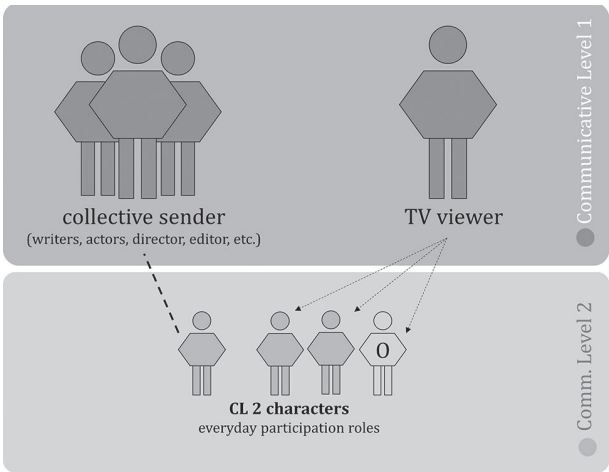


Figure 6. Participation model for *Peep Show*

We can see in Figure 6 that the TV viewer is occasionally offered various participation roles for identification on CL 2, but never all of them at the same time, of course. If we continue along this line, it becomes plausible to assume that, given sufficient inventiveness and technical skill on the collective sender’s part, any of the participation roles on CL 2 can become identification points for the CL 1 TV

viewer. For instance, when the camera assumes an eavesdropper's position, the TV viewer's fictitious alter ego becomes an eavesdropper, too, etc.

In the following, I would like to discuss two more examples from sitcoms which have little bearing on the general discussion of participation roles, but which show that the general constellations are just the starting point for the collective sender's creativity to twist and modify participation.

The first example comes from the British sitcom *The Mighty Boosh* (2004–7). At the beginning of each episode of the first series, the two fictitious actors Vince Noir and Howard Moon, played by the real actors Noel Fielding and Julian Barratt, stand in front of a red curtain, introducing the show (see Figure 7). In the programme, they play the two characters Vince Noir and Howard Moon, who are zoo-keepers. Fielding and Barratt also wrote the series.

In the production of *The Mighty Boosh*, Fielding and Barratt are authors in Levinson's (1988: 170) sense, i.e. both source and speakers, which is a different situation to many other sitcoms. In addition, a fictitious (CL 2) intermediate level is produced, where Vince Noir and Howard Moon, the fictitious counterparts of Fielding and Barratt, present their own show, in which they play the eponymous characters.



Figure 7. Noel Fielding and Julian Barratt as the actors Vince Noir and Howard Moon

The participation framework for this show can be depicted as in Figure 8 (cf. also Brock 2010).

Whereas *The Mighty Boosh* plays with a fictitious intermediate level in between CL 1 and CL 2, which really is part of CL 2, the next example from *Blackadder* manipulates the address system on CL 2, misleading the CL 1 viewer.

Situation: It is the beginning of an episode. After the opening credits we see Edmund Blackadder, in high agitation, shouting at both the Queen of England and her favourite, Lord Melchett. Both of them are listening with shocked expressions.

- 1 **Blackadder:** Get out! Get out, libidinous swine! And take that horse-slut, painted strumpet with you. May you both rot in the filth of your own fornication! (*pause*)
- 2 **Queen:** ... and what did you say to him?
- 3 **Blackadder:** Say, Madam? I said nothing. I simply pulled up my tights and jumped out the privy window. *Black-Adder II*, "Chains", 1986

Here, the communicative action obviously takes place on CL 2, with no apparent attempt at drawing CL 1 into it. In Turn 1, Blackadder seems to be directly addressing and scolding the Queen and Melchett. The Queen's question in Turn 2, however, establishes that Blackadder was not addressing them, but only re-enacting something that he was the addressee of earlier. So the shame of fornication is his own. In Sperber and Wilson's (1981) terminology, Blackadder was not using, but mentioning the propositions in Turn 1.

Even though the use-mention confusion seems to be a matter of CL 2 only, it is really something that points out an important fact on CL 1. The TV viewer, confronted with the beginning of the *Blackadder* episode, will invariably draw the conclusion from Turn 1 that Blackadder is scolding the Queen and Melchett. This is precisely because TV viewers rely blindly on recipient design (Sacks et al. 1974: 727), which Bubel (2008: 67) describes like this:

The film production crew has obviously constructed the dialogue in such a fashion that the audience can comprehend the exchanges with the help of the part of their world knowledge that overlaps with the world knowledge the production team projects onto the characters.

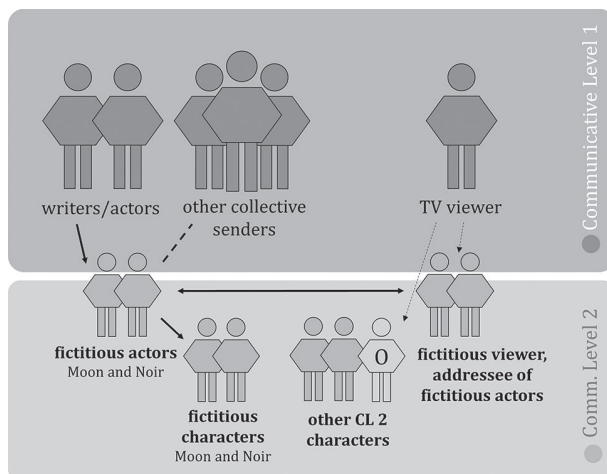


Figure 8. Participation framework for *The Mighty Boosh*, Series 1 (2004)

In the Blackadder example, this guarantee of recipient design that anything the TV viewer needs to know to contextualize messages correctly will be delivered in due course, is not fulfilled. One effect of this communicative trick may be amusement; the other an awareness that the TV viewer is at the mercy of the collective sender and that mechanical reception in Bergson's (1948) sense can lead to misunderstanding.

In this section, I have shown some constellations of participation roles in sitcoms. These are only a small section of the cases in existence, but they should suffice to get an idea of the range of possibilities.

4. Participation in candid camera comedy

Imagine the classical case of candid camera comedies: People are secretly filmed in difficult or slightly embarrassing situations. This often involves communication with somebody who pretends to be a "normal" person, but is actually a representative of the collective sender, aiming to set up a situation which exposes the victim. This is basically aggressive humour (Brock 2006) at the expense of somebody who does not know about the fact that what (s)he takes to be CL 1 is actually CL 2 and the input to a CL 1 that is TV communication. As the victim of the candid camera joke does not know about the TV situation, but the interlocutor (the spokesman for the collective sender) does, we have to develop a separate communicative model for each of them.¹⁸

The differential between the victim's and the collective sender's/aggressor's participation models is definitive for the candid camera sub-genre. It must be noted that in this case, the definition of CL 2 differs from the one given in Section 2, where it was characterised as the level of the *characters'* communication. The term "character" may still be roughly adequate for the representative of the collective sender, as (s)he has to work with a disguised identity and often acts out a specific part. The victim, however, participates as a real person, with her/his own biography, etc. This is why in the case of candid camera, CL 2 should be more generally characterised as the level of communication *within* television as opposed to CL 1, which is communication *via* television.¹⁹

18. The *spokesman* is defined by Levinson (1988: 172) as a person who is a participant and transmitter, not the motivator, but the person who devises the form of the message. The adequacy of this characterisation differs from show to show, of course, e.g. the spokesman may also be the motivator at the same time. As "spokesman" is Levinson's term, I take no responsibility for possible political incorrectness.

19. See also Burger's (2005: 20–1) circles of communication in media discourse.

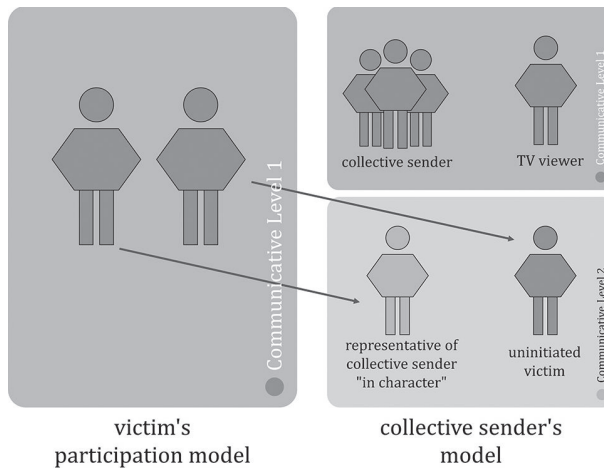


Figure 9. Participation frameworks for victim and collective sender/aggressor in a candid camera comedy

Since its inception more than 50 years ago, the candid camera sub-genre has seen a number of modifications, while its defining feature – aggressive humour based on the difference in the participation frameworks assumed by the various participants – has remained constant.

A popular format based on the same general genre characteristics is the one featuring *Ali G*, *Borat* and *Brüno*. The comedian Sacha Baron Cohen assumes these invariably stupid, racist and sexist characters to interview real people, mostly under the guise of doing a documentary or a general TV interview. Due to his apparent stupidity, the interviewees lower their defences in spite of the obvious presence of a camera. Thus he exploits the fact that the interviewees do not realise the aim of the interviewer and the fact that behind *Ali G*, *Borat* and *Brüno* there is Sacha Baron Cohen, coaxing them to say things they would not normally say in front of a camera – almost as if the camera were hidden, as in the original candid camera format. Due to the fact that the interviewees know about the TV recording, however, the participation model will have to look different from the one in Figure 9. There is still a discrepancy between Cohen and the interviewees as far as their participation framework is concerned, but it is considerably smaller than in the original candid camera format.

Figure 10 shows that the participation models of the collective sender and the victim differ only in the evaluation of the interviewer's role: Whereas the victim sees him as a bona fide participant, the collective sender installs him as a character, here *Ali G*, *Borat* or *Brüno*. Along with the disguise of the interviewer's real personality goes the concealment of his aim – the victim presumes that the

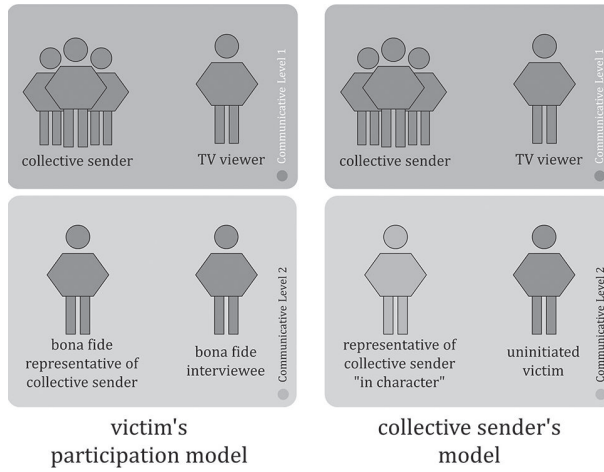


Figure 10. Participation frameworks for victim and aggressor in a Sacha Baron Cohen comedy

interviewer wants bona fide information, whereas Sacha Baron Cohen alias Ali G, Borat or Brūno seeks to create aggressive humour by playing out his small but crucial advantage of knowledge about his real personality and intentions. But is this really a *crucial* advantage? Yes, it is, because if the interviewees knew about Cohen's comic intent, the format would not work – the camera would, as it were, not be hidden enough. This is the reason why Sacha Baron Cohen, having worked as Ali G for some time, had to invent Borat and later Brūno – the previous characters had gained too much media notoriety and thus forfeited their communicative advantage of knowing more about the participation framework than the interviewees.

5. Participation in stand-up comedy

Due to my focus on televised comedies, I would like to describe main participant roles of *televised* stand-up comedy. There is a tradition on British TV of showing stand-up performances specifically produced for television. There, following the traditions of stand-up comedy, a comedian performs his act in front of a live audience in a club or larger hall. The whole performance is recorded, including shots of the audience and interactions between comedian and audience, and then shown on television.

Often, stand-up comedians write their own material or at least parts of it. In Levinson's (1988: 172) terminology, this makes them the *source* of that material. Many also use their own biographies as material for their routines: Billy Connolly

talks at length about his apprentice years as a welder; Eddie Izzard frequently relates to his dyslexia and his transvestism, etc.²⁰ The latter often performs his shows in women's dresses, with make-up and sometimes also with artificial breasts. But although stand-up comedians often use elements of their real selves on stage, their stage persona will always be a choice from and a stylization of the real comedian's biography and character traits.²¹ Here is a simple model of a televised stand-up show:

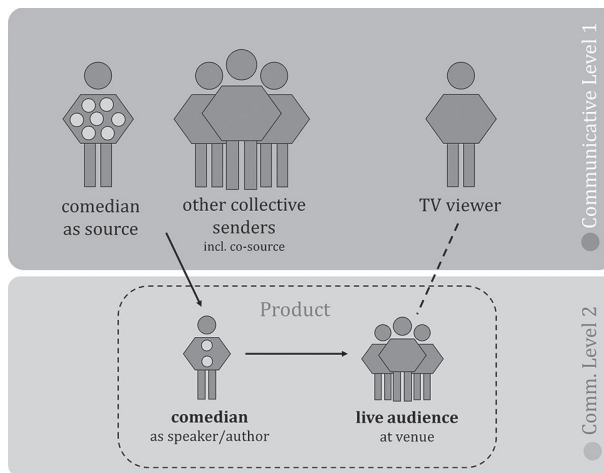


Figure 11. Participation model for stand-up comedy with comedian as source and author²²

In Figure 11, the comedian is both the source of the material and the one who later delivers it on stage, i.e. the speaker of pre-prepared routines, and the author (both source and speaker) of ad-libbed material.²³ As in sitcoms with studio audiences, the live audience's reactions go into the televised product.

The following figure represents a different situation.

20. The use of real biographical features constitutes a different case from, for instance, *Dame Edna*, a completely fictitious character created by the Australian comedian Barry Humphries.

21. According to Goffman (1959), the selective presentation of character traits also happens in everyday communication. In stand-up comedy, however, it is raised to a professional level.

22. The dots on the *comedian as source* indicate his/her personal traits. The smaller number of dots on the *comedian as speaker/author* show that the stage persona only uses a selection of personal traits.

23. See again Levinson (1988: 172) for the categories used.

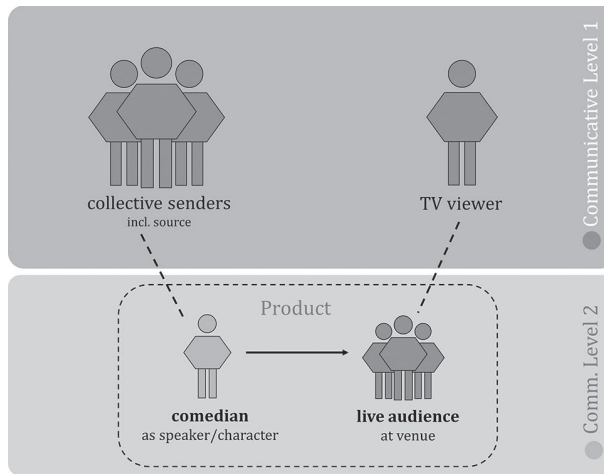


Figure 12. Participation model for stand-up comedy with comedian as speaker/character

Figure 12 reflects the case where a comedian does not write his/her own material and only acts as its speaker. In these cases, the stage persona is often closer to being a character, because traits and opinions are written for him/her rather than developed from his/her own characteristics.

One last constellation to be discussed here concerns the frequent case of audience participation in stand-up comedy. This is either instigated by the comedian (Rutter 1997, 2000:469) who may direct questions at members of the audience, or by hecklers, members of the audience who deliberately try to disturb the show by shouting comments or abuse at the comedian. In either case, the comedian immediately interacts with a member of the audience, and this interaction is a direct input into the show presented to the live audience as well as the TV viewer.

In Figure 13 we can see that the case of audience participation results in two products: one is the comedian’s performance plus his interaction with the heckler. This is Product 1, the one presented to the live audience. Product 1 plus the live audience’s reaction to it form Product 2, which is televised for the benefit of the TV viewer.

6. Concluding remarks

In this article, participation roles in three comedy sub-genres were scrutinised. In the theoretical discussion in Section 2, the main point is the suggestion that the TV viewer’s recipient role appears twice – on CL 1 as the central and empirical addressee of the whole televised discourse, and on CL 2 as an artificially produced

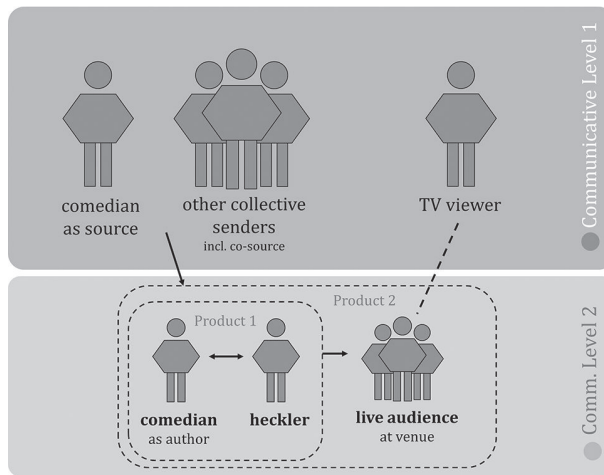


Figure 13. Participation model for stand-up comedy with heckler

participation spot, which creates a specific recipient perspective, such as over-hearer, eavesdropper or speaker.

In Sections 3–5, three comedy sub-genres were analysed with respect to their participation systems. Some general participation constellations of these sub-genres were identified. These constellations are among the defining criteria of these sub-genres.

In addition to general sub-genre features, a few specific format features and manipulations were analysed as well. Some important aspects, such as the dynamics of participant role negotiation in stand-up comedies, have been mostly neglected, however. Only if one sees the situations in Figures 11 and 13 as quickly following one another, can one develop a first idea of the complexity of things yet to discover.

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Participation structures in Twitter interaction

Arguing for the *broadcaster* role

Fawn Draucker

In offering a new platform for electronically-mediated interaction, the Twitter medium brings with it new implications for participation. Building on Goffman's (1981) production format, this paper argues for the role of *broadcaster*, a "followable" party that makes talk available to recipients, as a participant in Twitter interaction. Evidence from a corpus of tweets relating to the National Hockey League (NHL) is presented, showing that the broadcaster role can be separated from Goffman's traditional roles of animator, author, and principal. The broadcaster, however, is shown to be held responsible for talk produced for the account, even when the broadcaster is demonstrably distinct from other production roles. Additionally, the broadcaster is shown to be a potential target of address in tweets from other Twitter users. This evidence suggests that users see the broadcaster as an active participant in the production of talk, and should be included in participation frameworks for Twitter interaction.

1. Introduction

Internet-based social media have opened up many new channels of interaction for interlocutors that are not co-present in the same physical spaces. Interactions in these channels take place with participants being separated by the screens of their computers or mobile devices, and each new medium offers unique affordances for displaying or hiding participants on or behind those screens (Jones 2009). These affordances have implications for the resultant participation frameworks of interaction; here I investigate the transmission of talk in the Twitter medium and the roles available to participants in producing talk for Twitter accounts. Using data from organizational accounts related to the National Hockey League (NHL), I show that Goffman's (1981) *animator* role and Levinson's (1988) *relayer* do not sufficiently account for the complexity of roles involved in the physical production

and transmission of talk on Twitter, and suggest that a *broadcaster* role is also necessary for a more complete picture of the transmission of talk in this medium.

As Hymes (1972, 1974) notes in his discussion of ethnography of communication, there is a long tradition in studies of communication and interaction of using a dyadic construction of participation that focuses on a “speaker” and a “hearer”. Hymes goes on to suggest that “the common dyadic model of speaker-hearer specifies sometimes too many, sometimes too few, sometimes the wrong participants” (1974: 54). Goffman’s (1963, 1981) work on participation is commonly recognized as some of the earliest to move beyond the dyad, deconstructing the roles of “speaker” and “hearer” into roles of participation that he believed more accurately reflect the work that participants are doing in interaction, and many other scholars have since taken up approaches to the study of participation that challenge the dyadic construction.

In this paper, I focus on participants involved in the production of speech,¹ for which Goffman provides three production roles: *animator*, *author*, and *principal*. He describes the animator as “the sounding box”, “an individual active in the role of utterance production” (1981: 226). This participant represents the person that produces the talk in its physical form, whether that be spoken, signed, written, etc. Goffman’s author is the participant who “scripts the lines” or “the someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded”, that is, the participant that composes the talk (1981: 226). Finally, Goffman’s principal represents “the party to whose position the words attest... [or] whose position is established by the words that are spoken” (1981: 226). In many instances, these roles can be conflated in a single participant; however, situations often occur in which these production roles are distributed across multiple participants. A classic example is that of the speechwriter – a participant that crafts the words (as an author) that will be spoken by (and often attributed to) another participant (in the role of animator, and likely principal).

Levinson’s (1988) work on participation continued Goffman’s attempts to deconstruct speaker and hearer roles, using a matrix of features for participation. With regards to production, Levinson focuses on four primary features: whether or not the individual is involved in *transmission* of the message, whether or not the *motive* of the message can be attributed to an individual, whether or not the individual has a hand in creating the *form* of the message, and whether or not the individual is indeed a present *participant*, loosely defined as being present in some way for the interaction, including through technological means such as

1. Goffman also provides a framework for participants that receive (or are intended to receive) the talk, broadly identified as “recipients”. See Goffman (1981: 132–138, 226) and Levinson (1988: 172) for a more detailed break-down of recipient roles.

a telephone or computer-mediated channel (1988:172). Levinson suggests that an “ordinary speaker” will maintain all of these characteristics (i.e. +participant, +transmission, +motive, +form), and that Goffman’s traditional roles can then be deconstructed within this framework: Goffman’s animator (which Levinson terms a “relayer”) need only be +participant, +transmission, the author need only be +form, and the principal need only be +motive (1988:172). Differing combinations of these features ultimately allow for 10 different production roles (see Levinson 1988:172 for a chart detailing each of these roles).

Because of the way talk is distributed through a system of broadcasting and following on Twitter, however, the production frameworks proposed by Goffman and Levinson do not fully capture the functions of physical production and sharing of talk with their animator or [+transmission] roles, respectively. As Irvine (1996:136) suggests, attempts at a universal deconstruction of roles often miss the “more subtle types” of participant roles that arise from the context of an interaction. Returning to Hymes’ (1974) argument on the use of the speaker-hearer dyad, Irvine argues that deconstructive approaches to participation that are meant to be universal (such as those endorsed by Goffman and Levinson) will continue to specify “sometimes too many, sometimes too few, sometimes the wrong participants”; in turn, she recommends that specific participant roles should instead be determined more locally, as required for differing contexts of interaction (1996:134). In this paper, I show that the sharing of talk in the Twitter medium allows for a distinction in production roles relating to transmission that is not captured in earlier frameworks of participation, with the need for both a participant responsible for physical production of the talk (e.g. Goffman’s animator) and a participant responsible for distributing the talk to others (which I term here the *broadcaster* role). While such a distinction may not be relevant for studies of face-to-face spoken interaction, it can be important for understanding interaction in the Twitter medium, as it becomes clear that parties in a broadcast-only role may still be viewed as participants responsible for talk animated by others, even when this broadcaster is clearly distinguished from all other participant roles.

2. Mediated discourse and participation

2.1 The Twitter medium

In investigating interaction on Twitter, it is important to consider the role of the medium itself and the ways that users take up this medium in order to participate in an interaction. As Rowe and Wyss (2009:1) write, “It can now be said with confidence that the particular characteristics, features, and uses of [a] medium

strongly affect the nature and, usually, the resultant form of the communication.” Scollon (1998:6) continues along this line in his discussion of mediated discourse analysis, noting that “the focus is upon finding a common basis in social interaction for analysing the ways in which mediational means from languages to microphones, literacy to computers, news stories to telephone calls are appropriated by participants in social scenes in undertaking mediated action.” For Scollon, then, all discourse is mediated in some way, and therefore discourse studies should make an effort to understand the ways that participants make use of the medium in which they are interacting. Berglund (2009:187) discusses the characteristics of a medium as *modal affordances*, or “options for interaction that the environment provides for the participants residing in it, and especially those options that are acted upon by the individual”. Both Gibson (1979) and Hutchby (2001) argue that the affordances of a technology create frames for how people will potentially use that technology, and Baym (2010:44) continues this argument, noting that “the consequences of technologies arise from a mix of ‘affordances’ – the social capabilities technological qualities enable – and the unexpected and emergent ways that people make use of those affordances”. It is essential, then, to understand the relevant affordances of the Twitter medium when analyzing any resultant form of communication in that medium.

Twitter provides a social media platform known as “micro-blogging”. Micro-blogging, like other forms of blogging, makes use of mostly open-access platforms to allow users to broadcast information online from an account with a username of their choosing, in the form @username. Twitter users post short broadcasts, known as “tweets”, which consist of 140 characters or fewer and appear in a collected feed on the user’s profile page that can be viewed by other users. In addition to posting their own broadcasts, Twitter users can choose to receive a feed made up of the broadcasts of other tweeters by “following” them. Once User A chooses to follow User B, User B’s tweets will appear in a feed that User A can read, along with User A’s own tweets and the tweets of anyone else that User A has chosen to follow. While there are currently many different interfaces for accessing Twitter, most interfaces refresh the feed after a set amount of time, with new tweets appearing at the top, or allow the user to refresh the feed when they are ready. Unlike social networking sites such as Facebook, where one needs to have a reciprocal connection (a “friendship”) for information sharing, Twitter and other micro-blogging sites allow for non-reciprocal relationships – one user can follow the broadcasts of another without that user following in return.

2.2 Investigating participation in computer-mediated discourse

Many previous studies have identified the benefits (and limitations) of a wide range of communicative mediums in providing opportunities for participatory activities: from the role of Facebook and Twitter in engaging people in politics and journalism to promoting personal involvement in one's own health care and educational learning through mediums such as YouTube and Weblogs (e.g. Johannessen 2010; Gallant et al. 2011; Holton et al. 2011; Junco 2011; Vitak et al. 2011; Charitonos et al. 2012; Harrington et al. 2012; Dayter 2013). Other work has more specifically addressed the effects of one or more medium in shaping participation frameworks and social implications for interaction. Licoppe's (2004) work on mobile phone-mediated communication found that users felt more involved and connected with other participants when incorporating such technology into their daily communications routines. Marcoccia's (2004) work considers participation roles that arise in the conversation structures of online Internet newsgroups, and suggests that the features of these newsgroups have repercussions on the resultant participation in such interactions. O'Keeffe's (2006) analysis reveals the complexity of participation structures in live call-in radio talk shows, including ways that turn-taking in the talk is managed by participants and how relationships between speaker and audience are established through the possibilities presented by the multiple mediums involved (telephone, radio, etc.). Looking at the relationship between YouTube posting and commenting, Lange (2007) found that the larger a YouTube channel's audience grew and the more participants felt demands to be involved in production roles, the more inhibited they felt when it came to creativity and social expression. Myers (2010) shows that, in the absence of common gestural and visual cues used in face-to-face interaction, bloggers and blog commenters have negotiated participation by finding new ways to communicate concepts of the audience and addressivity in their online medium.

Additionally, much work has been done investigating aspects of reception and address on Twitter. Honeycutt and Herring (2009) show that Twitter's features for addressivity and tracing conversation (including use of the @ symbol to reply to other Twitter users) allow for what they call a "surprising degree of conversationality", and provide the grounds for Twitter to be used as a tool for collaboration. Marwick and boyd (2010) have shown the effects of Twitter's openness of access on power differentials in celebrity-fan interaction, while Pegoraro (2010) discusses the predominance of the @reply format in tweets from athletes, illustrating the potential for the Twitter medium to provide both one-to-one and one-to-many forms of communication. Deller (2011) and Murthy (2012) use Goffman's work on participation and interactivity to suggest that Twitter can help to democratize consumption, taking consumers from passive recipient roles to more active roles in both the production and reception of the information-sharing they choose to partake in.

This paper continues in the trend of investigating the effects of the affordances of the Twitter medium on participation; however, while earlier work on Twitter has focused largely on the reception side of participation frameworks, the investigation here focuses on production roles. The primary goal of this paper is to explore the participation status of the party established as the username of a Twitter account in its role of broadcasting the talk to others. This goal leads to two specific questions: (1) can a broadcaster role be distinguished from the more traditional animator, author, and principal roles for tweets, and (2) if the broadcaster can be separated from the more traditional production roles, should this party still be seen as a participant in interaction taking place on Twitter? To answer these questions, I present data from two Twitter corpora collected in 2012 and 2013 from accounts related to the National Hockey League, using a discourse analysis focused on the ways in which participant roles are established through linguistic choices made by tweeters.

3. The *broadcaster* as a distinct production role

The *broadcaster* role is defined here as a “followable” party that makes talk available to recipients (i.e. those that receive or are intended to receive the talk). This definition is intentionally specific to the Twitter medium, as it is meant to capture the fact that talk is distributed to other Twitter users primarily through the act of “following” users from whom one wishes to receive talk. While the act of following is not required for distribution (a user might come across talk by searching for a hashtag or seeing a retweet), it is always possible for a broadcasting party on Twitter to be followed by other Twitter users to facilitate distribution of future talk.² In Figure 1, the broadcaster of the tweet would be the Edmonton Oilers team organization, represented by the username “NHL_Oilers”, as the talk is made available to other Twitter users through the @NHL_Oilers account.



Figure 1. Tweet from Edmonton Oilers account @NHL_Oilers

2. Twitter users may choose to set their accounts to “private”, in which case other Twitter users must request permission from that account in order to follow it. These accounts are still considered here to be “followable”, however, because they are still able to be followed after permission is granted. All users that do not set their account to private have public accounts, which may be followed by other users at any time, without a request of permission.

In this example, the Oilers organization can be seen as the party responsible for transmission of the birthday message to the team's head coach; that is, we might say the tweet is "sent from" the Edmonton Oilers. Additionally, the Oiler's organization functions in other production roles here; the Oilers can be identified as the principal of this tweet, as the message appears to attest to the organization's desire to wish their coach a happy birthday. And although recipients of the tweet will know that some individual person or persons must have composed and typed out this tweet, the Twitter medium allows for these participants to be hidden behind the screen of the computer or mobile-device on which the tweets are produced and read, giving this participant the opportunity to reveal themselves in their talk or obscure their relationship to it. Therefore, while the recipients will be aware of this individual animator/author, he or she can be subsumed anonymously into the Oilers organizational identity (as this person presumably works as a team employee), allowing recipients to potentially assign the animator and author roles to @NHL_Oilers as well. For this simple tweet, then, it is seemingly not necessary to distinguish the broadcaster from other participants within the production framework. This is not always the case, however, and the following examples turn to tweets that more clearly suggest a separation between the broadcaster role and the animator, author, and principal roles.

One way for an account to make a distinction between the broadcaster and other roles is through the identification of an individual tweeting for an organizational account. Following Levinson's framework, in the tweet in Figure 1, @NHL_Oilers would be [+participant, +transmission], working as a relayer for the talk. However, Levinson's relayer is also responsible for the physical production of the talk, which, for a tweet, might be seen as the typing of the message. As noted above, the individual that is typing the tweet in Figure 1 cannot be identified – there is no reference to this person in the talk and they cannot be physically seen or heard by their audience. In this case, it is difficult to break down the relayer role any further, distinguishing the broadcasting party from the presumed animator. However, as seen in Figure 2, some team accounts choose to identify the animator (and usually author) of each tweet. Here, a digital signature in the form "BISH" is used by the animator of the tweet, team employee John Bishop. Bishop uses this signature here to identify that he is the one that has physically produced the tweet (and presumably authored the content of the tweet as well), and yet it is the @NHLBruins account that makes this talk available to other Twitter users through distribution of the tweet. While Goffman's framework provides no role for such transmission of a tweet, and Levinson's framework might conflate both Bishop and @NHLBruins into relayer roles, it is clear that the Bruins team and Bishop do not have the same relationship to the talk in regards to its production. Bishop can also be seen as the principal of the tweet, as recipients are likely to attribute the evaluations in the tweet to Bishop directly.

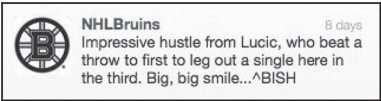


Figure 2. A tweet broadcast from Boston Bruins account @NHLBruins, identifying team employee John Bishop as the animator, author, and principal of the tweet through the digital signature “^BISH”

Figure 3 provides another example of a separation between the broadcaster and animator roles. In the tweet in Figure 2, John Bishop can be assigned the animator role, as well as the author and principal roles for the content of the tweet. In Figure 3, the animator of the tweet is again identified by a digital signature, here “^CS” for team employee Caryn Switaj. However, unlike the tweet in Figure 2, Switaj is distanced from the author and principal roles for the content of this tweet; both of these roles are attributed to team coach Claude Julien for this stretch of talk.

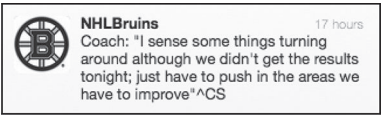


Figure 3. A tweet broadcast from the @NHLBruins account identifying team employee Caryn Switaj as the animator and team coach Claude Julien as the author and principal of the tweet’s content

Here, Switaj and the Bruins team account are producers of the tweet only in roles of distributing the talk to a Twitter audience, with Switaj reanimating the talk from a spoken to a written format and the Bruins organization being responsible for broadcasting this talk. While the Bruins and Switaj are both responsible for making the content of Julien’s speech available via Twitter, it is clear that the two participants provide different functions in this distribution. Additionally, the quotation format works to suggest that the words have not been composed by Switaj or the Bruins organization, but were composed by the original source, Coach Julien, and thus he also becomes the principal for these sentiments. (It is, of course, possible that someone else within the organization helped Julien to compose these quotes, or authored them in their entirety, but as there is no evidence to suggest that, this possibility will not be explored further here.)

The broadcaster role can also be distinguished from animator, author, and principal roles even when a specific individual writing the tweets is not identified. Figure 4 depicts a tweet from the Florida Panthers team account (@FlaPanthers).



Figure 4. A tweet from the Florida Panthers account, @FlaPanthers, showing a distinction between first-person references to the tweeter(s) as animator, author, and principal of the tweet and third-person references to the Florida Panthers

In this tweet, the tweeter(s) identify the Panthers team in the third person, using the hashtag #FlaPanthers and the personal pronoun “their” to refer to the Panthers. In turn, a first person reference, “we”, is used to refer to the group of tweeters for the account, setting this “we” up as the principal of the tweet. And while much like the tweet in Figure 1 there is no identification of a particular animator or author, the distinction between a first-person group of tweeters and the Panthers as a third-person party allows readers of the tweet to assign the anonymous person or persons that are responsible for composing and typing out the tweet to this “we” group that is distinct from the Florida Panthers team entity. This contrast of the first- and third-person references acts, then, to distinguish the account’s identity (as representative of the Florida Panthers team) from the account’s tweeter(s), distancing the Florida Panthers from the animator, author, and principal roles and establishing them solely in a broadcaster role, acting as the distributors of tweets written by another party.

Finally, Figure 5 provides an example of the separation of the broadcaster from other production roles through the process of “retweeting”, or rebroadcasting, the tweets of other users. Here the Bruins account can be seen rebroadcasting tweets originally broadcast by the @PGATOUR account, the official Twitter account of the primary men’s professional golf tournament organization in the United States and North America. The top tweet in Figure 5 has been animated by Bruins’ player Shawn Thornton, who also acts as the author and principal of the tweet, as indicated by the “^ST” digital signature (explained in the second tweet found in Figure 5).



Figure 5. Two tweets from @PGATOUR as retweeted by @NHLBruins. In the top tweet, @NHLBruins takes over the broadcaster role from @PGATOUR, while Shawn Thornton retains animator, author, and principal status. In the bottom tweet, @NHLBruins is again the broadcaster, while @PGATOUR can be assigned the principal role, with an unknown individual animating and authoring the tweet. Tweets shown here in reverse chronological order

In these retweets, the Bruins account has taken no action to reanimate the talk found in the original tweets; while Figure 3, above, illustrates a tweet in which Switaj has reanimated the speech from the team's coach in written form in order to share it with a Twitter audience, the rebroadcasting of talk in the form of retweeting as seen in Figure 5 does not require such reanimation. Instead, the Bruins account takes over only the role of transmitting the talk, presumably expanding the potential audience of the tweet to include fans of the Bruins team (as followers of the Bruins account) that may be interested in Thornton's tweets even if they are not following the @PGATOUR account. The Bruins are then able to take over the role of broadcaster from @PGATOUR without assuming the animator, author, or principal roles, which still belong to Thornton in the top tweet, and @PGATOUR and the unidentified individual tweeting for the account in the bottom tweet.

4. The broadcaster as a participant in Twitter interaction

As seen from the examples in Section 3, clear cases arise in which the interactional work performed by a broadcaster can be distinguished from the work performed by participants in animator, author, and principal roles. Yet the question remains as whether or not the broadcaster role should be understood as a participant role in Twitter interaction, or something closer to a channel of communication, through which talk becomes available to others. Marcoccia (2004: 135), in his investigation of participation frameworks in online newsgroups, defines the transmitter role (his correlate of Goffman's animator) as "the physical source of the message, that is, the computer which sends the message to the newsgroup, defined... by the electronic address of the sender". While Marcoccia assigns a participant status to this physical source of the message in his framework, this description of a transmitter is seemingly close to what one might call a "channel of communication", which Scollon describes as "any means by which a message is transmitted from a sender to a receiver" and notes that this definition "often refers to the mechanical or physical means of transmission" (1998: 80). Marcoccia's description of the transmitter in his framework matches up with this conception of a channel of communication, and raises questions about the participation status of the transmitter role (and, for this paper, the closely related broadcaster role). Should roles such as that of the transmitter (defined by the sender's electronic address) or its Twitter correlate, the broadcaster (defined in part by the @username of the tweeter), be seen as participants in the interaction or simply as conduits for passing the talk from the producing participant(s) to a receiving audience? Or to phrase this question using a specific example, is @NHLBruins seen by other participants as a channel in which they can receive tweets from John Bishop and Caryn Switaj, or is there evidence that Twitter users proceed with the interaction as if @NHLBruins is a fellow participant?

The concept of the participant is a complicated one, and as such neither Goffman (1981) nor Levinson (1988) provide a precise definition of what being a participant in an interaction entails. However, two factors seem to be shared in their understandings of participation: participants must have access to a shared channel of communication and must have some relationship to that shared communication. This first characteristic of participation is clearly met for broadcasters, as broadcasters in fact help to provide access to the talk for recipients. What may be less clear at this point is the relationship that the broadcaster has to the talk; if broadcasters simply provide access to the channel of communication, do they have a participant-worthy relationship to that communication? I argue that the examples below show that broadcasters are seen by other participants to have an active relationship to the talk and interactions they provide access to, as they are addressed by other participants in furthering the interaction and can be held responsible by other participants for the talk that they have transmitted.

4.1 The broadcaster as an available addressee

Figures 6–8 below show three tweets from fans that use the @username of the NHL team account as a vocative or other address term. In these tweets, one can see that the party that is usually in the broadcaster role for team accounts can be seen as a party that can be addressed by those that are tweeting at them. Goffman terms this role the “addressee”, or “the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over his speaking role” (1981: 133). While it is not possible for the producer of the talk to direct his visual attention to other participants in the Twitter medium, the broadcaster’s Twitter username can be used as a vocative form to direct talk to a particular recipient.

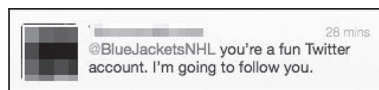


Figure 6. A tweet from a fan addressing the Columbus Blue Jackets account, @BlueJacketsNHL



Figure 7. A tweet from a fan in response to the Detroit Red Wings account, @DetroitRedWings

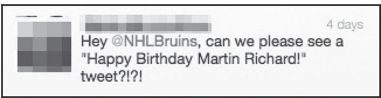


Figure 8. A tweet from a fan group requesting a tweet from the Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins)

In Figure 6, the tweeter identifies the Columbus Blue Jackets account by its username and directly addresses the content of the tweet to the Blue Jackets, noting that they have a fun Twitter account, so he or she will follow it. In Figure 7, a fan that has won a contest administered by the Detroit Red Wings account uses the account’s username as a vocative, to directly address the account and request information about claiming the prize for winning the contest. In Figure 8, a fan organization uses the username of the Boston Bruins account as a vocative, addressing the account in order to ask for them to tweet a birthday message to a specific fan. Despite the fact that many tweets from these accounts, particularly those from the @NHLBruins account, as shown above in Section 3, identify or in some way indicate a separation between the broadcaster and animator/author/principal parties in their talk, users still view the broadcasters as potential addressees and here address their messages to them instead of to other parties producing talk for the account. This action suggests that these tweeters see the broadcasting party as an active participant in the interaction, to whom the current tweeter can turn over the next “speaking role”.

In contrast, see the tweets in Figure 9, which include the broadcaster username as a means of directing the tweet to the attention of those running the Pittsburgh Penguins “Inside Scoop” account (@PensInsideScoop), but directly identify the animator/author/principal of previous tweets as the addressee of their responses (“meesh”, team writer Michelle Crechiolo in the first tweet, and “Sam”, team writer Sam Kasan in the second).

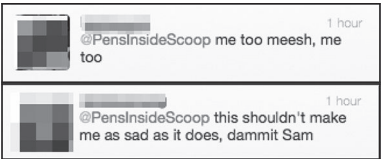


Figure 9. Two tweets from fans in response to tweets from the @PensInsideScoop account, with direct address to the individual animator/author/principal of the tweets to which they are responding

Unlike the tweets in Figures 6–8, in which the broadcaster username was used as an address term, the username of the Penguins account is included here simply to ensure shared access to the channel of communication: the @PensInsideScoop

account is not likely to be following these fan accounts, and therefore the username can be used to draw attention to the tweets, which are otherwise unlikely to be received by the intended addressees. A comparison of the tweets in Figures 6–8 with those in Figure 9 show that in the first set of tweets, the broadcaster is addressed by other tweeters, while in Figure 9 the individuals in the animator/author/principal roles are addressed. This distinction suggests that while the broadcaster username can be included simply to provide increased access to the channel of communication, (at least some) recipients do see the broadcasting party as an active co-participant in interaction on Twitter.

4.2 The broadcaster as a responsible party for the talk they transmit

In addition to the possibility for broadcasters to be seen as addressable participants in Twitter interaction, many recipients also assign the broadcaster a relationship of responsibility to the talk they broadcast. While the language in all of the examples in Figures 2–5 suggest a distinction between the broadcaster and the principal of the talk, many situations occur in which broadcasters are forced to take responsibility for the talk of others distributed by their account.

One such example comes from an attempt by the Los Angeles Kings account (@LAKings) to entertain their fans on Twitter by inviting guest comedians and bloggers to tweet from the Kings account during playoff games. This practice was well-received by fans, until local “shock jock” radio host Kevin Ryder took over the account and produced the tweet seen in Figure 10, which received backlash as an offensive “rape joke”, seen by many Twitter users to be inappropriate content for an NHL team account. This incident raised questions about the responsibility of the team to act as a “gate-keeper” for the content produced by others and broadcast through their account, asking whether or not such content should be understood to be sanctioned by the team when it is produced by a person that would likely not be viewed as a representative of the organization in other contexts.



Figure 10. A controversial tweet broadcast by the Los Angeles Kings (@LAKings), in which Kevin Ryder (@TheKevinRyder) is identified as the animator, author, and principal of the tweet

The tweet in question was broadcast by the Kings account during the second period of a game and clearly identifies Ryder as the animator, author, and principal of the tweet with the “-@TheKevinRyder” digital signature. Over two hours later, after the game was finished and many other tweets had been posted to the account (both by Ryder and employees of the Kings organization), the tweet was deleted from the @LAKings timeline and the following apology was issued from the Kings account: “We apologize for the tweets that came from a guest of our organization. They were inappropriate and do not reflect the LA Kings.” In this statement, the Kings organization attempts to distance itself from responsibility for the content of the offensive tweet; as they note, the tweet “came from” another party, which they use as an argument to remove themselves from any relationship of responsibility for the controversial content.

Other Twitter users, however, were not so quick to absolve the Kings organization for responsibility for the tweets. Responses to the King’s apology tweet came pouring in, expressing sentiments such as “Actually, they do [reflect the LA Kings]” and “Wow, @LAKings, badly done”. Many tweets specifically addressed the relationship between the broadcasting role of the account and responsibility for the talk produced for it, including tweets like “YOU are the teams ‘official’ feed.. Ergo tweets from y [sic] are your team’s ‘official’ statement” and “dear @LAKings, I am disappointed in you for handing over your twitter account to an obscene jerk & then not owning what he said while on it!” Even responses from fans that were not upset or offended by the controversial tweet indicated a relationship between the content of the tweet and the Kings organization, for example “@LAKings tweets have always been a bit off the cuff, not so politically correct, that’s why I follow. Get over the #DeletedLAKingsTweets”. Here, the author of this response is attributing the talk (and its “off the cuff” nature) back to the Kings organization, with no mention of Ryder’s role in regards to authoring the original tweet. These responses suggest that many recipients, both angry and accepting of the controversial tweet and its subsequent apology, attributed accountability for the talk to the Kings organization in their role as the broadcaster of the tweet. While there seems to be a general understanding in the responses that the Kings personnel was not monitoring or approving each tweet as it was being authored by Ryder, the responses do indicate an expectation that content produced for the account, even by guests that are not members of the organization, will still meet general standards held by the organization for their social media communications. Because the tweet came from the Kings account, recipients viewed them as having a relationship of responsibility to the content, despite an apologetic attempt by the Kings to distance themselves from the contentious assertion. This attribution of the talk to the LA Kings removes the Kings from a status as simply a channel of communication, passing along the talk of

others, and clearly establishes expectations for the Kings organization as an active participant in a production role. In contrast, there were no tweets attributing the talk to Twitter itself, which can be viewed as a more conventional example of a channel of communication here. Because the Twitter medium is viewed only as a channel and not as a participant, it is not blamed (or applauded) for the talk to which it provides access; conversely, @LAKings is seen by recipients to be more than just a channel of communication, and in turn the Kings organization is viewed to be a participant responsible for the production of the talk.

In addition to the perceptions of Twitter users, Twitter's Terms of Service suggest a legal relationship of responsibility for the talk produced for an account, noting that each account holder is "responsible for your use of the Services, for any Content you provide, and for any consequences thereof".³ These terms also note that by tweeting from an account, any person authorized to use Twitter's services "on behalf of a company, organization, government, or other legal entity" implicitly agrees to the Terms of Service on that organization's behalf.⁴ In this way, by giving Ryder permission to tweet from @LAKings, the LA Kings organization sanctions Ryder as a representative of the team while in the context of his actions tweeting from their account, and establishes the organization itself in a production role, as the broadcaster of the tweeted content.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have argued that the affordances of the Twitter medium that establish a system of broadcasting and following accounts for access to talk on Twitter have introduced the need for a new role in Goffman's traditional production format to properly analyze interaction on Twitter. This new role is that of the broadcaster, which is defined as a "followable" party that makes talk available to recipients. The broadcaster role can be distinguished from Goffman's animator, author, and principal roles in the interactional work that it does, and adds a new wrinkle to Levinson's concept of transmission in regards to the physical production and sharing of talk. In addition, the broadcaster role is shown to be viewed by other participants as not just a channel of communication, but instead as an active participant in interaction that can be addressed by others and held responsible for the content of the talk that it broadcasts.

3. Twitter Terms of Service, part 5 "Your Rights", paragraph 5. <https://twitter.com/tos>

4. Twitter Terms of Service, part 1 "Basic Terms", paragraph 2. <https://twitter.com/tos>

The introduction of the broadcaster role for production frameworks in the Twitter medium suggests that the modal affordances of a medium have a notable impact on participation and interaction. On Twitter, broadcasters have a relationship to the talk that is transmitted through their accounts that may not always be analogous to other mediums of communication. For instance, the example from the @LAKings account in Section 4.2 showed a responsibility for the talk assigned to the LA Kings organization, who allowed another party use their account for tweeting, that is not likely to be assigned to a telephone user that allows another party to use his or her telephone to make a call. Similarly, in face-to-face spoken communication, there are no affordances for distinguishing between an animator and a broadcaster. Any person that is animating talk by speaking (even if they are animating talk that is authored by or attributed to another party) is also necessarily responsible for the broadcasting of that speech, and as such, distinctions between a broadcasting party and an animating party cannot be made for such interactions. These differences, among others, are enough to suggest that the medium of communication and its affordances must be considered when determining participation frameworks for an interaction.

As Levinson (1988: 162, paraphrasing Goffman 1964) notes, “talk is properly analysed... only in the context of the participation status of each person present in the encounter”. In investigating communication in new (and traditional) media, then, it becomes important to understand the potential participation frameworks on a medium-to-medium basis, from both the production and reception sides. Without an understanding that participation frameworks may be affected by the medium in which the communication occurs, the picture of participation will be incomplete, and in turn investigations into the ways in which participants understand and manipulate the possibilities of their own participation are likely to be misunderstood. While many features of participation frameworks may be shared across mediums, it is only in understanding the differences (and the salience of these differences for users) that we can properly analyze participants’ relationship to their talk.

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Participant roles and embedded interactions in online sports broadcasts

Jan Chovanec

Many communicative events in the media are structurally rather complex, containing several levels on which utterances are produced, mediated and received. The present chapter applies and develops Goffman's notion of embedded interactions and their participant arrangements by identifying several distinct interactional frames found in modern media genres. Using data from online sports commentaries, the article documents how the individual frames of interaction are represented and linguistically reflected in the written text of the commentary and how the existence of such frames affects the participation framework of the entire communicative act. The analysis distinguishes between horizontal interactions, occurring on the level of the interactants within a specific frame, and vertical interactions, which cut across the boundaries of the communicative frames and which may be addressed to fictitious and non-present as well as real recipients. Since the modern media reach out to the audience by providing for their active involvement, the participant role of the audience as recipients is changing to the extent that they can become co-producers of parts of the media text. Thus, while participants are shown to have multiple roles, the distinction between the production and the reception sides of communication becomes blurred in those genres that encourage or provide for active audience participation.

1. Introduction

This article develops the notion of the embedding of speech encounters in the complex multi-layer representation of media events, with the aim of tracing how participant roles are transported and transformed in the process of producing online sports commentaries in modern Internet newspapers. The starting premise of the paper is Erving Goffman's observation that much of human talk (which is used here in the sense of any textual product, i.e. including written texts) contains

embedded instances of prior talk. What we are interested in, thus, is a particular instance of intertextuality that represents embedded interactions. This preoccupation is distilled in Goffman's statement that "we not only embed utterances, we embed interaction arrangements" (1981: 153).

The approach adopted here operates with the concept of the participation framework which covers both production and reception sides of the communicative encounter. Unlike Goffman's (1981) narrow definition of the participant as a role pertaining to the reception side only, the term *participant* is used here to refer to any individual who has a production or reception role within the framework (O'Keeffe 2006). The commonly accepted terms for the various participant roles include *principal*, *author* and *animator* on the production side (cf. Goffman 1981; Bell 1991) and *addressee*, *auditor*, *overhearer/bystander*, and *eavesdropper* on the reception side, distinguished according to a set of criteria including addressivity, ratification and knowledge of the recipient (cf. Bell 1984; Dynel 2011a). The various recipient roles come as a result of either the assignment of a particular status by the producer/speaker (in some cases the *collective sender*, cf. Dynel 2011b) or the self-positioning of the recipients themselves into a particular role regardless of the producer's/speaker's intent.

Verbal interactions between interlocutors constitute communicative frames that subsume the basic roles of speaker and hearer, as well as the attendant roles of third parties positioned as recipients of the interaction between the speaker and the hearer. The interaction is typically characterized by some shared situational context or the existence of some physical contact between the interlocutors, which enables communication between them through an open channel. It is these *frames of interaction* that can be embedded in each other. As Fetzer (2006) observes in her socio-pragmatic research of accountability in television interviews, there are usually two frames in media broadcasts: the first frame that involves the interlocutors in the studio and the second frame in which the performed interaction is received by the mass audience (see Section 3 below). In this conception, the audience, as the real recipient of the talk produced in the first frame, occupies a different frame from the speaker and hearer.

As I set out to demonstrate, the quasi-interactive relationship that is commonly established between the first-frame participants and the audience can also be extended to cover participants who are located in other frames that may be embedded in the first-frame event. Speakers' communicative acts can thus be oriented towards the audience as well as other fictitious and non-present recipients. Utterances designed in that way result in real or staged interactions established by means of crossing the frame boundaries and opening new momentary communicative sub-frames. It is also argued that the structuration of some media broadcasts in terms of the dual frame of reference, as is most readily applicable to

televised interviews and host shows, does not do a complete justice to many media texts that include embedded frames of interaction. The participation framework in some genres resembles a chain of three or even four embedded frames that can be established, for instance when interlocutors project the utterances of others or when some other verbal interaction is mediated.

2. Media discourse analysis and participation frameworks

In media discourse, the interest in the participant arrangement of broadcast speech events has been connected mainly with the communicative genre of the news interview, as traditionally analyzed from the point of view of conversation analysis (Clayman 1992; Greatbatch 1998; Clayman and Heritage 2002; Heritage and Clayman 2010). Much of the work deals with the interactional organization of the speech event as a dialogic interaction performed for the benefit of the audience.

Some specific features of broadcast talk have also been studied in connection with the constraints imposed upon the interaction by the communicative context of particular types of media, such as radio and TV talk (Tolson 2006), and programme types such as television news bulletins (Montgomery 2007). In connection with participant roles, linguists have dealt with diverse issues including, for instance, the news presenters' projection of objective and subjective personas (Lombardo 2009), the construction of multiple identities by interviewees (Lauerbach 2006), and the degree of accountability of speaker's narratives to the audience (Thornborrow 2000).

A number of recent studies have considered various aspects of participant roles in film discourse (Bubel 2008; Bednarek 2010; Dynel 2011a, b) and television broadcasts (Lorenzo-Dus 2009), noting the multi-party participant framework and the organization of the discourse on multiple levels (cf. also Haugh and Chang in this volume). Pragmatics has extended our understanding of the multi-layer participant arrangement and the staging of on-screen interactions for the benefit of the audience, who is positioned as an overhearing or even eavesdropping participant, yet assumes the role of the main recipient of the entire communicative act on the level between the producers and the audience. At the same time, modifications to Goffman's (1981) model stress the need for more balance between the production and the reception footings and the interpretation of some discursive phenomena, such as im/politeness, in a close conjunction with the participation order of interactions (cf. Haugh 2013: 62).

Media discourse analysis has likewise paid much attention to the interface between the audience and news reporters/other participants who make on-screen appearance. Due to the nature of media communication, the interaction between

those interlocutors is not direct: it is a specific kind of a mediated relationship that has been called para-social interaction (Thompson 1995) or mediated quasi-interaction (Talbot 2007). Various techniques, ranging from direct address to conversational forms, are used to create a situation that simulates the impression of direct contact and a distinct group identity between interlocutors who are removed in space and time (cf. Chovanec 2009b, 2011). We can also see an increase in sociability and interactivity of media content. Thus, for instance, informal conversational on-screen interactions between newsreaders and reporters on TV create a situation when “viewers are made to feel part of it, albeit vicariously” (Lorenzo-Dus 2009: 59). It has also been suggested that the positioning of the audience as discourse participants in televised talk leads to a situation of a “mediated conversational floor” in which the media text is constructed jointly by the producers and the implied audience as a “text-in-action” (Wood 2007).

In some media formats, such a shared conversational floor is more real than the mere fiction of co-presence constructed through specific forms and strategies. Many communicative events in the media are increasingly structured in ways that enable the active involvement of the audience, thereby giving rise to real interaction. Where the audience can use some technological means to access the first frame and interact with the first-frame interlocutors in real time, the entire participation framework is redrawn. If an individual member of the formerly passive audience gains access to the first frame, the original first-frame interlocutors are repositioned as the recipients of utterances originating from the audience. The verbal input provided by such audience members can then be further mediated to the audience, as commonly happens in phone-ins and discussion programmes where the audience is encouraged to get involved in various ways, e.g. by sending emails, text messages or through other forms of technology-mediated (also known as computer-mediated) communication and social networks. It is through such remediation (cf. Bolter and Grusin 1996) that audience members can assume the active (though limited) role of co-producers of media content.

3. Frames of interaction and broadcast media events

Before outlining the situation in sports broadcasts, let us describe the operation of the dual frames of reference in media interviews. Figure 1, based on Fetzer (2006: 183), generically represents the communicative situation found in many broadcast genres such as studio interviews, talk shows, etc. The figure shows the embedding of two frames. The first frame includes interactants who are involved in a dialogical exchange, e.g. the interviewer and the interviewee. Their talk is performed for the benefit of the studio audience (AUD 1). While their presence

is usually signalled by such behavioural phenomena as clapping, laughter, etc., the audience can also assume a more active role, e.g. when the dyadic interaction performed for their benefit refocuses more explicitly on the audience. This occurs, for instance, when the audience is directly addressed or when any of the speakers enter into a dyad with some audience member, momentarily redirecting the flow of communication and usually turning the main interlocutor into a third party – an auditor (i.e., a known and ratified recipient who is not being addressed). For the sake of simplicity, all interactions within the first frame are considered as horizontal, i.e. as occurring on the same communicative level between co-present participants. The second frame concerns the actual reception situation of the entire media product, i.e. its mediation to the audience (marked AUD 2 in Figure 1).

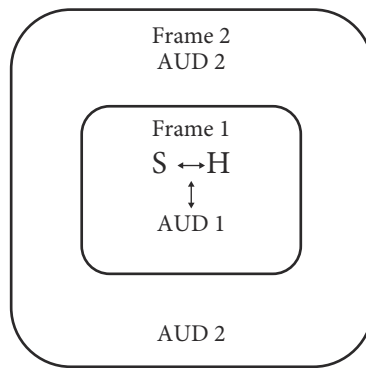


Figure 1. A generic representation of an embedded interactional frame in a classic broadcast format; S = speaker (interviewer), H = hearer (interviewee), AUD = audience

The complexity of the situation arises from the fact that any utterance produced by the speaker S is received by multiple recipients: (1) the hearer H as the speaker's conversational partner in a typically dyadic exchange; (2) the studio audience AUD 1, who are the real-time recipients of the dialogic interaction between S and H (or of S's monologic performance, as the case may be); and (3) the actual broadcast audience AUD 2, receiving the entire communicative act either live or at a later time. In this connection, a distinction needs to be made between the roles of recipient and addressee. *Recipient* is construed as an entity that receives an utterance, and *addressee* refers to a more specific recipient role of an addressed recipient (in Goffman's sense), i.e. the most immediate recipient positioned at the centre of the reception situation (cf. Bell 1984).

This conceptualization is most readily applicable to conversational exchanges, where it helps to distinguish the addressee from recipients having other roles (namely those of auditor, overhearer/bystander, and eavesdropper). However, the

problem of mapping roles onto actual discourse participants has long been recognized (cf. Levinson 1988; Irvine 1996).¹ Not surprisingly, there are some problems with this conception also in media contexts. Thus, for instance, the hearer (as the speaker's conversational partner in an interview, for instance, cf. Figure 1) may not automatically be the addressee of all utterances: the speaker may explicitly address (and talk to) the studio audience AUD 1 and, at times, also the broadcast audience AUD 2, thus repositioning the hearer into the role of an auditor. Another point to consider is that while the broadcast audience AUD 2 may be addressed only exceptionally, it can be viewed as the real, or ultimate, recipient because the entire first-frame interaction is meaningful only as far as it reaches its intended broadcast audience. That is, the set-up of the speech event may disguise the actual underlying configuration of participant roles.

With respect to the role of the broadcast audience, the communication in standard mass media formats is one-way only, with the audience being diffuse and without any mutual contact. Horizontal interactions are also possible within the second frame: they include individual audience members interacting verbally with each other, e.g. when two viewers comment on a programme in their homes. The boundary between the two frames is impassable: while first-frame participants can address the home audiences and try to be synthetically interactive with them in a number of conventional ways, the audience does not have any opportunity to access the first frame and communicate directly to the first-frame interlocutors. Some special interactive formats do allow for a limited extent of active audience participation, e.g. through phone-ins and messages sent to the first-frame interactants through various other technical means. However, such across-the-frame interactions are possible only in case of live broadcasts, i.e. when the first-frame interaction occurs at the same time as its mediation to and reception by the broadcast audience. Whenever a pre-recorded programme is broadcast (this includes a repeated broadcast of an originally live programme), the first frame cannot be accessed because the audience's possible reaction cannot reach the first-frame interactants. Thus, in a live broadcast, there is the technical possibility that roles may be switched, with the producers becoming recipients of the audience's messages. In non-live broadcasts, the first-frame interactants have solely production roles. They are recipients only with respect to each other and cannot be positioned,

1. Levinson (1998), for instance, while calling for the need to distinguish participant roles on the utterance-level from those on the speech-event level, suggests a more extensive classification of roles. This, however, has been criticised as a too static and all-purpose conception (cf. Sidnell 2009). As argued by Irvine (1996), participant structures are a "process" that is "constructed, imagined and socially distributed". In other words, "[i]t is not only an analytical problem; it is also a participants' problem, to which there are creative, if often evanescent, solutions".

within that communicative encounter, into the recipient role with respect to the audience.² The permeability of the boundary thus depends on the type of programme as well as the technical provisions that programme producers offer for the audience's access to the first frame. The crossing from one frame into another can be conceptualized as a vertical kind of interaction because it entails communication across hierarchically arranged but mutually dependent communicative levels.

All that indicates that a participation framework is not necessarily a static construct that arises from the way a particular programme is designed. Rather, a participation framework is the arrangement of participant roles that hold at a particular moment and with respect to the momentary and dynamic mutual positioning of interlocutors and recipients. This more dynamic view is upheld by Goodwin (2007), who stresses the fact that discourse participants construct the interactional arrangement in a moment-by-moment fashion. When considered from the point of view of its narrative structure and the representation of multiple voices in texts (cf. Bakhtin 1981), the local nature of participant roles – as enveloping particular utterances rather than entire speech events – becomes evident. In this context, Irvine (1996: 135) notes the fluidity of the participation frameworks by noting that “[a] communicative act has a relation to other acts, including the past, the future, the hypothetical, the conspicuously avoided, and so on, and these relations – intersecting frames, if you will – inform the participant structure of the moment.”

In sports broadcasts, the first-frame interactants usually consist of a commentator and a pundit who provide a verbal commentary on some sports event. They provide description of the events (play-by-play commentary), add explanation and insights (colour commentary), and engage in informal conversations consisting of small talk as well as a debate over various aspects of the sports event. There is no studio audience and the dialogic interaction is broadcast directly to the mass audience. However, the situation is more complicated because an additional frame may be embedded within the media frame: the interaction between players, coaches, referees and the spectators at the stadium (cf. Gerhardt 2008b: 56). The three frames thus reflect the three distinct settings of the stadium, the studio, and the home as the levels on which horizontal interactions can occur.

Online sports broadcasts offer an even more complex situation. As represented in Figure 2, Frame 1 is made up of the stadium interactions involving sportsmen and/or spectators, who are physically and temporally co-present at the scene of the sports event and, thus, liable to get involved in interactional encounters.

2. Should contact between the audience and the first-frame interlocutors occur, the relevant interactions would be outside of the broadcast media frame, i.e. subsequent to the entire speech event.

Frame 2 consists of the studio interaction between a TV commentator and a pundit. Frame 3 comprises the level on which the TV broadcast is received. Here, we find regular TV audiences as well as the online commentators, who are exposed to the verbal and visual input from the TV broadcast. However, the online commentator has the dual role of both a recipient of TV broadcast talk and a producer of live online text for the online audiences represented in Frame 4. The online text is usually produced by a single journalist but since he may represent in his commentary the dialogic interaction between himself and his colleagues, the potentially dialogic situation in Frame 3 is represented in brackets. The online audience is placed in Frame 4 by analogy with the placement of the broadcast audience in a frame of its own in the generic scheme of embedded interactional frames observable in the broadcast media (cf. Figure 1 above). It is also within that reception frame that further verbal reactions and interactions may occur between individual audience members. Those are typically at the ultimate end of the chain of recursively embedded communicative events since they are not communicated and taken up in any other higher-order frame (though they may exceptionally be communicated to third-frame participants, cf. below). Needless to say, the interactional encounter between the speaker and the reader – which becomes subject to mediation to recipients on the other levels – may, within each frame, involve dyadic interaction between two (or more) interlocutors as well as the speaker's monologue produced for the media audiences.

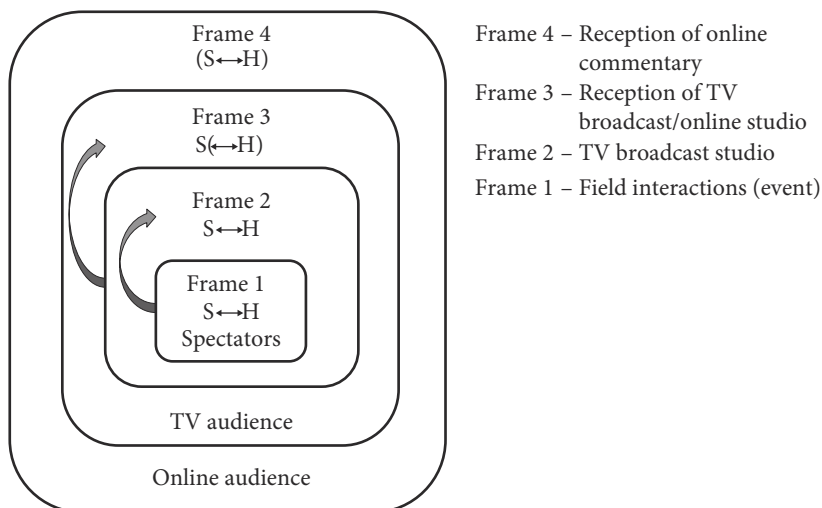


Figure 2. The recursive layering of embedded frames in online sports commentary (Frame 1 = stadium; Frame 2 = TV studio; Frame 3 = online studio; Frame 4 = individualized reception by online audiences)

Whenever a lower-level interaction is represented in the text of the sports commentary, the original interactional arrangement is embedded as well. Thus, when an utterance is produced by a player in the stadium, the original reception format of that utterance covers the addressee in Frame 1 (e.g., a fellow player). However, by virtue of embedding, the utterance can be received by a studio commentator in Frame 2. If he decides to mediate the utterance in his broadcast, he couples his recipient role with that of a producer who directs the mediated utterance at his TV audiences (or his interlocutor in the studio). That situation may, in turn, be repeated by the online commentator who will likewise position the readers of his text as the recipients of such a re-mediated utterance.

The next section documents (1) how interactions within the individual embedded levels are represented in the text of the online commentary; and (2) how vertical, across-the-frame interactions appear in the text as a result of the active participation of the online audiences communicating with the journalist responsible for the production of live written commentaries.

4. Material for analysis

The material analysed in this article is based on written commentaries of several football matches played during the World Cup 2010, as they appeared in the Internet version of the British daily newspaper the *Guardian*. The present account, focusing on the typical interactional patterns and participant configurations observable in the genre, uses data from online broadcasts of the last four matches from that championship (the two semi-finals, the third place play-off, and the final; see list of sources).

Written online commentaries constitute a relatively new genre (Jucker 2006; Chovanec 2006, 2008; Pérez-Sabater et al. 2008) that does not have a universally accepted name yet. Some scholars use the expression *live text commentary* to refer to a chronologically structured news text that is produced in an incremental fashion as a series of time-stamped posts, thereby pointing out the characteristic combination of the text's live production in real time and its existence in the written mode that contributes to its distinct character as regards the language forms used (Jucker 2006, 2010; Chovanec 2009a, 2010). Journalists and other media professionals, by contrast, use such labels as *minute-by-minute* or *match commentary*, or subsume the genre within the broader category of the *news blog* (although such a classification is not without its problems). It has been shown that some subtypes of the genre invite extensive audience participation and are, hence, intrinsically dialogical (Chovanec 2010; Steensen 2011). Based on an ethnographic study into the practice of online sports journalism, Steensen (2011: 696), for instance, notes

that the commentators intentionally use a lively and engaging style in order to “practice a ‘chat’” with the readers. The resulting style is characterized by features of “digital orality” that are commonly found in other genres of computer-mediated communication as well (cf. Paolillo and Zelenkauskaitė 2013).

The examples described in the analysis below consist of complete posts related to particular moments in the games. The posts – which form the basic structural units of online texts created in an incremental fashion – open with a time stamp or a brief descriptive caption. Unless the posts are too extensive, they are reproduced here in full in order to demonstrate how the features pointed out in the analysis relate to the surrounding verbal context.

The frames of interaction embedded in the online sportscasts are traced from the deepest level on which embedded talk is produced to the highest and broadest level on which the media text is received, as identified in Figure 2 above. Thus, the deepest level concerns interactions within the sports field, i.e. those that are germane to the actual event that is being covered. The next frame consists of spoken televised commentary. The third frame is made up of the online sports commentator(s) covering the event on the basis of the TV broadcast. Finally, the participation framework of the online sportscast culminates in the reception frame of the online audience. However, because of the media’s general trend towards participatory journalism, the audience from the fourth frame can communicate across the frame boundary with the online commentator, thereby significantly complicating the entire participation framework.

4.1 Interaction in the field

The deepest level of embedded frames is made up of utterances and interactions that either constitute or accompany the event that is covered and reported in the media frame. In the case of media broadcasts of sports events, this frame comprises interactions between players, referees, coaches and the audience, i.e. those parties whose co-presence allows them to interact directly. Since sport is an activity that classifies as a spectator event, the verbal element is merely auxiliary and rarely becomes mediated through the broadcast. In the media frame, however, traces of first-frame interactions are occasionally to be found, e.g. in the form of references to utterances produced by various participants. This section briefly outlines the following subtypes of interactions: the involvement of spectators, the verbal interactions between players, and the sports commentators’ utterances projected at first-frame interactants.

The spectators who are physically present at sports events enjoy the participation status of an audience. However, they also have a production role in the participation framework, albeit a very limited one, since they produce utterances that

are, individually or en masse, directed to and addressed at others, e.g. the players or referees. And such utterances can be mediated in the sports commentary. Thus, when a commentator makes a reference to the verbal involvement of the spectators, the participation framework is momentarily adjusted since the text comes to reflect the active production status of these first-frame participants. This situation is illustrated in Example 1 where the commentator reports on the spectators' emotive reaction to an act that should, in their opinion, have constituted grounds for a penalty kick:

- (1) **63 min:** Alonso, who's been quarterbacking brilliantly for Spain, whips a ball through the area from the left wing, 30 yards out. Ramos races to latch onto it. Podolski tracks back. Both fall over. There's a massive scream for a penalty, but nothing doing. Spain don't really complain, and there does seem next to no contact. We move on. (Ger v Spa, 63 min)

Here, the commentator does not explicitly ascribe the verbal reaction as originating from the audience. The audience's agency is left unspecified ("There's a massive scream for a penalty...") and needs to be inferred by the recipients of the online broadcast, i.e. the broadcast audience located in the media reception frame. The implicit nature of the participant roles related to the reported verbal reaction also indicates that the transportation of the interactional arrangements from embedded utterances into the media frame can be opaque: it may call on the recipients' cultural and contextual knowledge about the usual patterns of interaction.

At the same time, the online post in Example 1 above mediates another first-frame interaction, namely the verbal reaction of the Spanish football players ("Spain don't really complain..."). The recipients of this utterance (the online media broadcast audience) can likewise infer the embedded interactional arrangement that is imported through this utterance: the production role of the Spanish players and the reception roles of the referee (as the implicit addressee) and the other players and spectators (as the implicit auditors witnessing the complaints). Example 2 illustrates another similar instance when a verbal scuffle between players is mentioned by the sports commentator:

- (2) **27 min:** Sneijder cops a booking do, for his part in the kerfuffle that followed the high kick. His part seemed to entail a lot of gesturing and trash-talking. (Uru v Hol, 27 min)

Here, the commentator indicates the existence of an embedded interaction through the word "kerfuffle", again without actually reporting any utterances. The mediated interaction is encoded with respect to its physical nature ("gesturing") as well as its verbal component ("trash-talking"). Although the football player's utterance remains unrepresented, it is described evaluatively by the commentator

in terms of the speech act performed by it. In general, utterances from within the sports field are hardly ever available for reception beyond the actual interlocutors and, thus, they cannot be mediated by the sports commentators to their media audiences. In some cases, however, utterances originating in the first frame have some special significance and are either widely reported or speculated on.³

While the two examples above concern the reporting of interactions that are *horizontal* in the sense of occurring within the same frame, there are also *vertical* interactions when utterances are directed at participants located in different frames. It is possible for sports commentators to address their utterances to first-frame participants, as in Example 3:

- (3) **19 min:** Alonso strokes a delicious early-2005-at-Liverpool-era pass from the centre circle to the foot of Ramos out on the right wing. Ramos ridiculously tries to find the top-right corner from outside the area. Some respect, man! [...]
(Ger v Spa, 19 min)

The commentator produces an utterance that is seemingly addressed to the football player whose physical actions in the pitch are described only shortly before. The utterance (“Some respect, man!”) has an elliptical sentence structure, with the imperative form of the verb “have” colloquially elided. This construction, together with the informal address term “man”, positions the football player as the addressee of the utterance. However, that particular individual cannot evidently enjoy the real participant status of a recipient within that speech event because he occupies a different – embedded – frame. Consequently, he cannot physically receive the utterance. This vertical, across-the-frame interaction is then merely a fiction: it is a rhetorical technique whereby the commentator structures (designs) the local arrangement of roles within the overall participation framework of the speech event.

An even more complicated structuration of the speech event is presented in the following example:

- (4) **4 min:** The game’s stopped for a couple of seconds as some fool⁴ runs onto the pitch. “Look at me!” he’s demanding, like an even stupider version of Jeremy Kyle. No thanks, Jez!
(Ger v Spa, 4 min)

3. One of the most famous of such incidents involved the Italian football player Marco Materazzi and the Frenchman Zinedine Zidane during the final match of the 2006 World Cup. Materazzi verbally provoked Zidane, who retaliated by headbutting his opponent. For a description of the linguistic aspects of the incident and its reporting in the media, see Lavric et al. (2008) and Chovanec (forthc).

4. A typographical error in the original commentary (“tool” instead of “fool”) has been corrected in this transcript for the sake of clarity.

In this extract, the commentator refers to a spectator who has invaded the pitch (such individuals are known as “streakers”). Because the channel is physically closed, no communication between the first frame and the media frame can occur. The commentator merely witnesses the occurrence of the physical act of the streaker invading the pitch, which is possibly accompanied by some utterances as well. Interpreting the event as a communicative act, the commentator, without having any chance of knowing what the utterance (if any) may have been, decides to mediate this event to his readers through what is presented as reported direct speech (“Look at me!”). Although the commentator, as the actual author of the formulation, is effectively putting words into the streaker’s mouth, he designs the speech situation in such a way that it conveys the illusion of the commentator merely mediating (re-animating) the utterance to the media audiences. In other words, the communicative act by the streaker, which is a primarily horizontal interaction within the first frame, also reaches recipients in other frames on account of its remediation in the form of the fictitious utterance. As if that was not complicated enough, the commentator goes on to address the streaker in a quasi-personal way (“No thanks, Jez!”) without knowing his real identity.⁵ The commentator performs a vertical, across-the-frame communicative act patently aimed at one specific addressee, skilfully manipulating the participation framework to achieve the effect of conversational style. While he redirects his utterance from the audience to an individual recipient by singling him out with the address form (cf. Clayman 2010), this is merely a fake addressee since the real recipients are the media audiences.

4.2 Embedded TV broadcast as a media source frame for the online commentary

In general, commentators for radio and TV broadcasts are present in their offices either at the stadium or in their media’s headquarters, from where they describe the sports events as they are happening. Their verbalizations of the events, based on visual input provided to them by TV crews, are immediate, coming only with a minimal time lag. As a result, spoken commentary relies on diverse register-specific routines and formulaic expressions that help the commentators to cope with the time constraint under which their utterances are produced (cf. Ferguson 1983; Müller 2007).

5. The address form “Jez” is an abbreviation from Jezza, the nickname for the British talk show host Jeremy Kyle, to whose performance the streaker is likened.

In the online environment, however, commentaries are produced in a different manner. The commentators' verbalizations are not the first, immediate and unmediated descriptions of the events. Online commentators, who produce a written text that is posted online with a brief time lag (the web page automatically refreshes itself every minute or so), do not watch the raw (broadcast) data consisting of only the visual layer, to which they would be adding their own, first-hand verbal commentary in a manner similar to TV commentators. In actual reality, online commentators proceed by watching the match on TV. As a result, they are on the same level as all other TV viewers: there is no difference on this level between their participant statuses since they are all exposed, as ratified recipients, to a live TV broadcast that combines the visual input and the running commentary of a professional TV commentator and/or pundit. Unlike other recipients, however, the online commentator is in a privileged position because he also acts in the producer (author) role within another media frame, producing his own commentary for the benefit of a different audience. The TV broadcast thus provides a source frame, from which the online commentators occasionally lift some utterances made by their TV colleagues and redirect them to other audiences.

Online commentators thus do not have an entirely unmediated access to the events since there is an additional layer of talk – the verbal description of the events by their TV colleagues. Similar to all recipients of televised broadcast talk, the online commentators can *see* and well as *hear* what is going on. Any recipient who is simultaneously receiving a message in a dual channel, i.e. visually as well as verbally, may apply two contrasting styles when processing such a message. On the one hand, he or she may be inclined to understand and interpret the visual input in terms of the verbalizations of some other author. In such a “synergic” approach, the verbal description predisposes the recipient to “see” certain phenomena in the visual component of the message (e.g. by pointing them out, referring to them and naming them) and, thus, interpret and understand the visual input in a particular way. On the other hand, the dual verbal and visual nature of a TV broadcast may motivate the recipients to juxtapose the two channels: treating the audio and the visual tracks of broadcasts as autonomous and independent, they may notice (or even look for) possible discrepancies between the physical events and their verbal description.⁶ The latter – more analytical – reception situation of multimodal texts frequently gives rise to further talk produced on the level of the recipients (audience). Such an informal analysis of the performance of TV commentators is a frequent – and popular – topic for discussion between recipients, e.g. those who watch the broadcasts together in diverse environments (cf. Gerhardt 2008a, b; Ayass 2012).

6. The verbal and the visual channels can stand in several possible relations, e.g. supporting or contradicting each other (for text-image relations in media genres, cf. Meinhof 1994 and Bednarek and Caple 2012).

That is also the case in online commentary: the TV commentators' encoding of the events is reflected in the live written text that is being produced for a different audience. Such a situation is documented in Example 5, where the online commentator actually reports a part of a TV studio conversation. The embedded talk is a conversation between the BBC football commentator Guy Mowbray and a former football player Mark Lawrenson, who performs the role of a pundit, i.e. a sports commentator's conversational partner who provides colour description and expert analysis of the play. The post is divided into two parts (Examples 5 and 6) in order to facilitate its analysis:

- (5) 55 min: Guy Mowbray and Mark Lawrenson are having a childish argument on the BBC. "You can say that," Mowbray tells Lawrenson, apropos some opinion or other of Lawro's. "Just did," snaps the co-commentator. About a minute later, out of nowhere, Lawrenson asks Mowbray if anything is wrong. [...]

(Ger v Spa, 55 min – part 1)

The snippet of the conversation reported in the online commentary is largely unintelligible without the relevant context that is denied to the recipients of the online text. Thus, we only have the semantically vague direct speech quote "You can say that", to which the online commentator supplies a background that is equally vague: "... apropos some opinion or other of Lawro's". It is likewise difficult to work out what is actually meant by the reported speech utterance "... Lawrenson asks Mowbray if anything is wrong" that concludes the second, indirectly reported part of the conversational exchange between the two TV studio commentators. Arguably, the conversation is included for a different purpose than to convey information; after all, this is a significant stretch of text produced that does not provide any description of the sports event at hand but, instead, focuses on the discourse that builds around the match. The online commentator is being negative in his evaluation of the other commentators' work (cf. his encoding of their conversation as "a childish argument"). This is an act of disaffiliation from his professional colleagues, performed in order to enhance the value of his own text commentary. The negative evaluation, criticism and at times even denigration of the absent TV commentators can be read as a pseudo-conversational rivalry that is enacted across the boundaries of the respective communicative frames and, at the same time, as a form of male bonding with the audience performed through the negative presentation of absent others (cf. Chovanec 2006).

This interpretation is supported in the continuation of the post in Example 6, which reveals the author's critical stance towards the conversational interaction between the studio commentators:

- (6) **55 min:** [...] Last night on ITV, the solo flying Clive Tyldesley proved pretty much conclusively in Jim Beglin's absence that commentary is vastly improved without an idiot jabbering in the background. If there was any doubt, it's just been quashed now. On the pitch, incidentally, Spain are tapping it around a lot but, yes, they're getting nowhere. (Ger v Spa, 55 min – part 2)

Here, the online commentator draws on a different media frame – one that is entirely unrelated to the current match. In doing so, he praises the monologic performance of ITV's football commentator Clive Tyldesley, while simultaneously denigrating Tyldesley's pundit colleague Jim Beglin, who was not taking part in that broadcast. In a single post, we can see the commentator drawing on two separate media frames. The frames operate very differently in this live text commentary. Thus, the BBC frame from Example 5 is an embedded frame that the online commentator depends on for covering the same match: we thus have a truly recursive structuration of embedded frames that simultaneously focus on the same event. This situation contrasts with the ITV frame from Example 6, which, though embedded in the online commentary as well, is merely accidental and accessory. It has the same status as any other external communicative frame that is drawn on and incorporated in the live text report by the online commentator (cf. the next section).⁷

Just as a single live text commentary can draw on various media frames, so can a single media frame appear in several live text commentaries. The ITV frame mentioned above offers a good illustration of this point. The frame (encompassing some of the verbal interaction occurring therein) has only a marginal importance in the online commentator's coverage of the semi-final match between Germany and Spain – the ITV broadcast covers a different match. That same frame, however, has had a central role in the online commentary for the semi-final match between Uruguay and Holland, which was covered online in the *Guardian* newspaper on the basis of the very same ITV broadcast the day before, cf.:

- (7) **ITV intrigue:** A surprising number of you have written to ask why Clive Tyldsley [sic] is all on his lonesome in the gantry tonight. Know that the man himself explain [sic] at the start of the evening that habitual accomplice Jim Beglin was taken ill earlier today. Nothing serious, apparently, so don't go worrying yourselves. (Uru v Hol, half-time)

7. Needless to say, Example 6 does not mediate or represent Tyldesley's or Beglin's speech. Those commentators thus, technically speaking, do not have a participant role within the participation framework of the online commentary – unlike Mowbray and Lawrenson, whose utterances are mediated by means of a direct quote in Example 5. The former commentators are merely represented and commented on as participants belonging to a different frame.

In this post, the online commentator mediates the ITV commentator Clive Tyldesley's role as an author in an indirect quote ("... the man himself explain..."), thus constructing for him a distinct participant role in the framework of the entire online commentary. Once again, the embedded master frame containing Tyldesley's commentary for ITV becomes the target of negative evaluation, although criticism is also directed at yet another parallel media frame that does not provide the immediate input for the online commentator. Examples 5 and 6 thus actually represent an almost identical situation when the online commentator disaffiliates himself both from the TV broadcast that he relies on to cover the match (the BBC commentary by Guy Mowbray and Mark Lawrenson) and from an earlier TV broadcast of a different match (the ITV commentary by Clive Tyldesley from the previous day).

Example 8 indicates that the commentator's online text actually functions as a nexus in which various frames meet. Thus, the post below contains a reference to the embedded media frame – the broadcast that the online commentator follows ("Clive Tyldesley still reckons it was a scandal") – as well as the reception frame that includes TV viewers who are simultaneously readers of the live text commentary ("Several of you are telling me that upon repeating viewing..."):

- (8) **81 min:** Several of you are telling me that upon repeated viewing of the Holland's second goal, Van Persie was not offside when Sneijder took his shot. Not having seen replays, I can't confirm that. But for what it's worth, Clive Tyldesley still reckons it was a scandal. (Uru v Hol, 81 min)

As the last two examples indicate, some additional participants – the audience – may be involved in the online text. It is not only that the audience is directly addressed by the commentator (cf. "... so don't go worrying yourselves" in Example 7) but that their voice actually appears or is mediated in various ways within the commentary (cf. "Several of you are telling me..." in Example 8). However, before discussing the active participant role of the audience separately in Section 4.4, let us briefly address the nature of the production format within the secondary media frame, i.e. the textual production of the online commentary.

4.3 Interaction within the online commentary frame

Although live text commentaries are authored by a single journalist, whose name is subscribed at the top of the page together with other information about the technical aspects of the article, he cannot be easily credited as the sole producer of the entire text. In terms of the participant roles within the participation framework, the commentator is the author of the text, but if the authorship status of

the individual utterances is explored in a detailed way, a more complex situation emerges. As discussed in the previous section, there are embedded frames representing dialogic interaction or monologic utterances that transplant other participants with their specific production and reception roles into the resulting text of the commentary. Then, higher-level frames can be incorporated as well, as evidenced by the fact that the audience can communicate with the online commentator by email (and other media) and may have their comments included in the commentary (see next section). Both of these dimensions are, with reference to Figure 2, vertical since they are based on a hierarchical arrangement of the frames.

What remains is the secondary media frame in which the online text is produced. The authorship role has a horizontal dimension to it because other participants appear to be present when the text is formulated – this concerns the interactions that the online commentator has with his professional colleagues and fellow journalists. Those interactions can be contemporaneous with the production of the commentary or they can be echoes of previous conversations held between the commentator and his friends.

Example 9 is noteworthy in that it includes a direct quote but, in the absence of a reporting clause, it fails to specify the source of the quoted words. The inclusion of direct speech means that the author (the online sports commentator) surrenders his authorial voice and allows access in his text to another, external, voice that momentarily takes over the speaking role:

- (9) 12 min: Uruguay were on the back foot for a couple of minutes there, but they take some of the pressure off of themselves, Pereira making a couple of runs down the right, Suarez doing his best to show in the centre. “Klose must be disappointed to have a bad back. Though not as disappointed as Capello, who went through the whole tournament with a bad side.” I’d love to say Gary Naylor will be here all week, ladies and gentlemen, but we’re pulling up the stage tomorrow.
(Uru v Ger, 12 min)

In the subsequent sentence, the utterance appears to be attributed indirectly to Gary Naylor, who is a cricket commentator for the *Guardian*. The football commentators for the same newspaper have been referring to this person and his quotes, whether real or fictitious, in numerous online commentaries for almost a decade – Gary Naylor’s presence and statements are thus something of an insider game between the community of sports fans and other followers of the online commentaries. Although there has been some debate in the community as to whether Naylor actually makes the comments himself or whether he is a fictitious persona – a made-up pundit with whom the football commentator (otherwise working in isolation) may stage a quasi-conversational exchange – the real-life status of this individual is not that crucial. For our purposes, it is essential that the

football commentator either has – or imagines to have – a conversational partner, whose voice can be accessed and mediated to the audience. The accessed voice is deployed in the text as the commentator feels fit. Not only does the accessed voice achieve a more dynamic and realistic commentating position (approximating to the dialogic talk between a commentator and a pundit in a TV studio) but the other voice – real or fictional – can also be used as a ploy: the author lets the other voice express an idea that he may prefer not to encode himself. Thus, since the commentator, as the author of the online media text, is fully in charge of the writing of the commentary, the accessed voice can actually be used to animate the author's own opinions. The opinion expressed through the accessed voice can then be either supported or contradicted by the commentator.⁸

Such a situation is documented in Example 10, where the accessed voice seems to become merely the sounding box (cf. Goffman 1981:144) through which the author expresses (animates) the content he wishes to communicate to the audience but may decide not to do so directly. Here, the sports commentator has Gary Naylor comment on a side issue in an extensive stretch of direct speech. The lengthy, highly opinionated contribution is incorporated in the commentator's post for minute 36 of the match, which – interestingly – does not include much about the actual events of the current game, perhaps except for the initial note about the bad weather and the concluding remark on the general quality of the football players:

- (10) **36 min:** It is *tipping down* in Port Elizabeth. "Is the puffed-up Champions League all it's cracked up to be?" wonders Gary Naylor. "Apart from Spain's Barcelona contingent (who, if truth be told, have done a job and no more) the exciting players in this World Cup are hardly big name Champions League players. It's a handy excuse to claim that they're tired, but it could be that they just aren't any good. There's clearly a few gems for scouts to find outside the Nike advert clientele, if CL clubs can be bothered looking." This is the 2010 World Cup distilled, along with the ludicrousness of modern football, right there. Thanks, then, Gary! Job done! Bye! Time to close down the website!

(Uru v Ger, 36 min)

In his rejoinder, the commentator supports the critical opinion aired in the stretch of accessed voice and performs what is evidently a quasi-conversational turn fictively addressed to Naylor ("Thanks, then, Gary!"). This utterance – whether it

8. Where the speaker creates a fictitious interlocutor and masks his own utterances as those allegedly produced by such an interlocutor, one may describe the situation as *ventriloquized voice* (cf. Maynard 1997). In terms of participation frameworks, the speaker may thus use the fictionally created persona as the animator of his own utterances, without necessarily disclosing the speaker's own authorial role.

reaches its apparent recipient or not – is performed for the benefit of the real recipients: the mass online audience. The rest of the author's utterance is refocused from Naylor as the addressed recipient to the audience, who become the explicitly acknowledged recipients with the greeting and the suggestion that the commentary is over ("Job done! Bye! Time to close down the website!").

4.4 Audience as producers

As shown in the previous sections, the use of direct speech and the access to other voices taken from the commentator's own communicative frame, or from the TV media frame on which he relies for his verbal and visual input, results in a significant structural complexity. Other speaker roles are imported into the commentary and the participation framework on the production side of the scheme of communication is substantially enriched by the appearance of embedded frames of interaction.

Probably the most interesting phenomenon of the genre is the possibility that the audience may react in real time by sending emails (and other forms of computer-mediated communication) to the commenting author. There is, thus, actual participation of the audience, who change roles from passive recipients to active producers. However, most of the readers' involvement is offstage because the textual contributions by the individual readers are not available to each other. They are received only by the commentator, who selects posts worthy of inclusion in his text. In that way, the selected readers' messages are recycled to the mass audience, including their authors. The other readers (or the same readers) may then react again, via the mediating role of the commentator. What ensues are quasi-conversational exchanges rife with humour that articulate the online community's group identity and their focus on mutual entertainment (cf. Chovanec 2011, 2012). This pattern of interaction is illustrated in Example 11:

- (11) 37 min: "I've frankly grown tired of Spain's anti-football," writes Damien Neva. "I mean, if they'd just let Germany play rather than stifle their counterattacks with all that possession, then we'd have a really beautiful game." You've got that damn straight. Spain are playing a lot of their *tiki-bullshita*, and getting absolutely nowhere with it. Has Cesc Fabregas been embarrassed to talk about his time at Arsenal over dinner, or something? Germany have been far the more incisive side, albeit the bar's set low in a cagy game. (Ger v Spa, 37 min)

As regards participant roles, all accessed voices featured in the commentary thus become co-authors. As far as the active involvement of the audience is concerned, some of its members find themselves both in the role of addressees (of the commentator's utterances), authors (of utterances addressed to the commentator), and

then again addressees (of their own utterances incorporated into the text of the commentary). The audience interact across the boundaries of their frame.

To make things even more complicated, however, the audience can report on some other frames. This includes echoing the conversations they hold with their friends/wives in the privacy of their homes, or, more frequently, other televised commentaries that they may be following either via the Internet or on TV. Since the online audience is dispersed all over the world, they become exposed to frames of broadcast talk from very diverse channels. Example 12 illustrates how a reader mediates to other readers – via the online football commentator – coverage from the BBC, by quoting its sports commentator Guy Mowbray:

- (12) **74 min:** “On the BBC, Guy Mowbray just said ‘we’re certainly starting to see mistakes’, in a nice happy voice, as if that’s the best we could’ve hoped for,” writes Niall Harden, pouring himself a large gin, rummaging around in the drawer for the Gillettes, and running a hot bath. (Hol v. Spa, 74 min)

At times, the reported utterances, already doubly embedded, are followed up in the manner of quasi-conversation. In Example 13, the reader reports, via the commentator’s text, an utterance produced by a TV pundit (“Isn’t it strange, Forlan hitting corners?”). However, since the utterance is cast in the form of a question, the reader takes the opportunity to complete the adjacency pair by providing an answer (“No Craig, it isn’t.”). The reply is addressed to the absent pundit, who thus has to be acknowledged as a fictitious recipient: the utterance positions him as the addressee. Yet, the pundit is present in a different frame and, since no transgression of the frame boundaries is possible for the reader, the utterance remains addressed to him only rhetorically – as a quasi-interaction staged for the real recipients, i.e. the online audience:

- (13) **39 min:** [...] “Craig Burley is a terrible co-commentator,” opines David Keith. “Sorry if this isn’t a witty comment, just need to vent. ‘Isn’t it strange, Forlan hitting corners?’ he asks. No Craig, it isn’t.” Hopefully this World Cup will be the death of the pundit. Clive Tyldesley was great the other night on his own, after Jim Beglin cried off ahead of the Holland-Uruguay semi. Can we stick with that model, please? Of course, I’m not for people losing their jobs, so I’d be happy enough if the pundits stayed put and started saying something interesting. But I’m not holding my breath. (Uru v Ger, 39 min)

When considered as a whole, the post has two distinct parts: the first is authored by the reader and the second by the online commentator. In his own section of the post, the commentator also uses a rhetorical question (“Can we stick with that model, please?”) which is likewise performed for the benefit of the online audience, yet seems to be addressed to non-present recipients – most likely the

TV programme directors responsible for appointing the studio cast. As long as that reading is plausible, the said utterance would actually be addressed to a non-present party that holds – with respect to the entire communicative situation of a TV sports broadcast – the background role of the principal. At the same time, however, by fictitiously addressing a non-present third party, the author (i.e., the commentator, as well as the reader just several sentences before him) momentarily restructures the participant framework of his text, as if positioning the audience into the role of auditors (i.e., ratified but unaddressed recipients) or bystanders/overhearers (unratified and unaddressed recipients). That is, of course, mere fiction since the audience *are* the true addressees of the talk. It appears useful to distinguish between “true” addressees and “pretend” addressees, with the latter being those participants who are positioned through the speaker’s utterances as addressees. Their status can be documented with specific formal linguistic means (e.g. vocatives, address forms, imperatives, etc.), yet it is evident from the overall participation framework that such pretend addressees are physically inhabiting a different, subordinate frame and do not have any chance whatsoever of becoming actual recipients (or true addressees) of the speaker’s utterances.

All this attests to the fact that interactants may routinely design the configuration of recipient roles for their utterances in quite complex ways. Let us illustrate the complexity with one more example to demonstrate how several recursively embedded frames of reported speech transplant the participation frameworks from the original speech events into the media text. Thanks to the pattern of embedded reported speech, the brief post that makes up Example 14, thus, includes representations of up to four communicative frames:

- (14) 44 min: Spain win a corner down the right. It’s wasted. This hasn’t been much of a half of football, this. “Martin Tyler and Efan Ekoku have been discussing how they noticed none of the Spanish players sang the national anthem and are using this as an example of divisions in the camp,” reports James Curley. “I think someone should point out the Spanish anthem has no words to sing.”
(Ger v Spa, 44 min)

The example suitably sums up the whole discussion of the multi-level recursive structuration of frames. In the post above, the most deeply embedded frame consists of the first frame, i.e. the verbal behaviour of players in the field. In this particular case, there is no actual interaction between interlocutors, just the expectation on the part of the second-frame recipients in the media frame that some non-addressive verbal production should occur, namely the singing of the national anthems – a standard feature of the ritual observed during the opening ceremony of major international football matches. This first-frame act (or, rather, the absence of any verbal act) is commented on by the TV commentators Martin Tyler and

Efan Ekoku, covering the game for ESPN. They belong to a specific media frame with its own audience – one that is different from the online sportscast audience of the live coverage produced by the *Guardian*. However, one of ESPN's viewers (James Curley) is simultaneously participating in both media frames and mediates the ESPN commentators' discussion to the *Guardian*'s commentator Scott Murray in an email. In the last frame, the commentator quotes the email writer and redirects his utterance at the mass audience made up of all readers of the *Guardian*'s live online sportscast.

What we witness within this complex participation framework is that the original first frame is discursively transformed and re-mediated in a ping-pong fashion between other participants who alternate between various recipient and producer roles. This situation is represented in Figure 3, with an arrow pointing from the online audience inhabiting Frame 4 to the producer located in Frame 3.

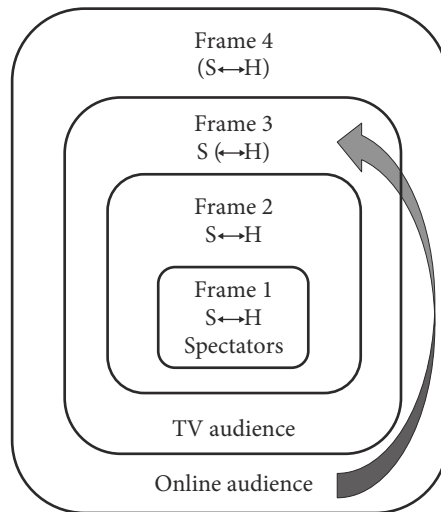


Figure 3. Across-the-frame interaction in broadcast media contexts: audience accessing the media production side

The interaction between the individuals constituting the online audience and the online text producer (the journalist) has a private nature until the journalist decides to incorporate a given reader's textual contribution in his online commentary. It is only then that the select member of the online audience assumes the status of the producer for the benefit of the rest of the online audience on account of the mediation of that contributor's message to them. Such a cited message is frequently further commented on or referred to by other audience members in their feedback contributions to the journalist and may turn out to be cited as well.

As a result, coherent exchanges between some of the online audience members can occur, though only through the textual intervention of the journalist mediating and animating their messages for each other (see Figure 4). The resulting quasi-dialogical structuration of the entire text of the commentary that runs across extensive stretches of other discourse is reminiscent of the threading of posts in asynchronous chat communication (cf. Chovanec 2009a, 2011).

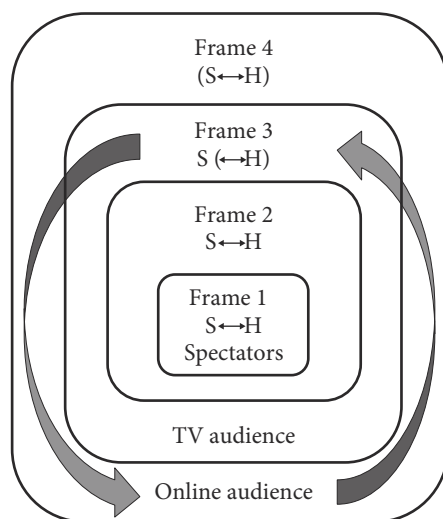


Figure 4. The remediation of reader comments back to the online audience

5. Conclusions

As shown by the analysis of online sports broadcasts, the participation framework relating to the coverage of media events can have a rather complex structure consisting of several levels of embedded frames. The inclusion of such embedded frames enriches the media text by importing the interactional arrangements of other speech events and extending the number of participants, particularly on the production side of the framework since media texts typically mediate prior utterances made in other interactional arrangements. However, as shown in the analysis, remediation concerns also those participants who, while traditionally enjoying recipient roles within some of the frames, occasionally make some verbal or non-verbal intervention that momentarily assigns to them the role of producers, e.g. when spectators' reactions are reported and discussed in the media frame.

The analysis of media texts with such multi-frame structures reveals several patterns that have a more general applicability for the study of participation arrangements of diverse speech events. First, the nature of embedding precludes the flow of communication – or the openness of the communicative channel – from the higher-level to the lower-level frames, unless some means for bridging the divide is purposefully provided by the producers who are in control of the speech event. Thus, participants on the higher levels can have access to the mediated utterances in the embedded frames but not vice versa: the flow of communication is one-way.

There are some exceptions, though, when higher-level participants can communicate with lower-level participants, e.g. through some technological means. In this connection, it is crucial to distinguish between live programmes and non-live programmes. Arguably, the participation frameworks have a different character in each case: in live programmes, the frames are usually contemporaneous (although the intertextual inclusion of prior frames that predate the media frame is common as well) and the audience may have some technical means for accessing the embedded frames, establishing contact with the interactants and interacting with them directly in real time. That is, most typically, the case with viewers' phone-ins to broadcast interviews and other programmes. By contrast, non-live programmes rely on pre-recorded content and are much less tied to a specific historical moment at which the programme is broadcast and received by the audience. The extreme case is film discourse where the communicative act is endlessly replicable to multiple audiences. There is also no possibility for higher-level participants to interact with any of the participants in the embedded levels.

As the foregoing indicates, there are two distinct patterns of interactions possible: (1) horizontal interactions between interlocutors within the same frame, and (2) vertical interactions that occur across the frame boundaries, i.e. when the communicative situation is locally redefined and a recipient becomes vested with some (limited) production status which turns any of the participants in the other (embedded) frames into recipients of their utterances. The embedding and the impermeability of the communication with respect to the lower-level (embedded) frames has further implications related to the fact that some participant roles arise from the conscious design of participants in the producer role. Thus, speakers can direct their utterances (as well as accounts of their own interactional arrangements, e.g. reporting their private conversations or introducing other mediated frames) to real participants in the embedded frames or even to non-living people and other entities, neither of whom has any chance of becoming the actual recipients of such utterances. Still, they are positioned into the role of fictitious addressees through the conscious design of the producer. Such quasi-frames constitute a rhetorical strategy aimed at increasing the interactivity and dialogism of the text,

with the real recipients being the audience, who are momentarily positioned into a role whose status approximates that of bystanders.

In media participation frameworks, participants can hold multiple roles and be simultaneously involved in or exposed to multiple frames. What modern technology has achieved is that the recipients' former passive role of simply receiving content "at the end of the line" has changed: they can either re-animate messages and utterances through social networks, tweets, etc. or use the means available to access – where possible – the production side of the communicative act. The modern trends towards "participatory journalism" and the greater involvement of the audience thus result in a significant reconfiguration of traditional participation frameworks found in media communication towards a more complex situation of layered network relations and embedded interactional arrangements.

Sources

The text uses material from the following live text commentaries (minute-by-minute match reports) from guardian.co.uk; the online version of the British daily newspaper the *Guardian* – full texts are available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/>

- Hol v. Spa: Holland v Spain, World Cup 2010 final; commentary by Scott Murray
- Uru v. Hol: Uruguay v Holland, World Cup 2010 semi-final; commentary by Paul Doyle
- Ger v. Spa: Germany v Spain, World Cup 2010 semi-final; commentary by Scott Murray
- Uru v. Ger: Uruguay v Germany, World Cup 2010 third place play-off; commentary by Scott Murray

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PART II

Participation and interpersonal pragmatics

Troubles talk, (dis)affiliation and the participation order in Taiwanese-Chinese online discussion boards

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Online discussion boards are a common forum in which everyday users share troubles, elicit various forms of empathy and sympathy, and also seek advice from others. One challenge facing participants, as well as analysts, is the interpretation of expressions of discontent or dissatisfaction as either troubles talk, complaining, seeking advice, or some combination of these, given that each of these social actions/activities invokes a distinct preference structure and presumed differences in what counts as an affiliative or disaffiliative response. In this paper, drawing on an analysis of threads in a Taiwanese online parenting discussion board, we propose that one way in which participants navigate this complex array of preferences and (dis)affiliative responses is through the instantiation of a locally situated participation order, which is both afforded and constrained by the interactions that are mediated via online discussion boards. We further argue that emotional support can be indicated through both affiliative responses, such as mutual encouraging, mutual bemoaning, and empathic suggesting, as well as through disaffiliative responses, such as accusing and advising. We conclude that soliciting emotional support constitutes an important relational practice in online parenting discussion boards, whereby a warrant for sharing troubles with acquaintances and even strangers is established for these kinds of interactions.

1. Introduction

The way in which relationships are constituted via various forms of technology or computer-mediated communication has become the subject of increasing interest. One key issue of interest in pragmatics is the question of how participants figure out what it is they are doing, and how their relationships with others are constituted or construed via different forms of computer-mediated communication

(CMC). More broadly, we have the question of what this talk, accomplished in this way, *means* for those participants, and what this talk is taken to be *doing* from an emic-insider perspective. One area that has seen an increasing amount of work in studies of relational aspects of CMC is the way in which it is used as a means of sharing troubles and eliciting various expressions of empathy or sympathy, as well as seeking and giving advice about such troubles (e.g. Eisenclas 2011, 2012; Kouper 2010; Kupferberg 2013; Locher 2006; Morrow 2006, 2012; Pederson and Smithson 2010; Sillence 2013; Smithson et al. 2011).

Such work has inevitably been grounded in particular sociocultural assumptions about these social actions or activities, namely, troubles talk, complaining and soliciting advice, on the one hand, and commiserating and advising, on the other. For example, despite potentially being perceived as supportive of the advisee, (unsolicited) advice is generally claimed to be potentially face-threatening amongst speakers of English (Kouper 2010; Locher 2006; Morrow 2006) and Spanish (Eisenclas 2011, 2012), in both institutional and non-institutional settings online. It is also claimed that troubles talk and advising are seen by participants as distinct activities, and so their conflation can be regarded as problematic (Smithson et al. 2011, see also Jefferson and Lee 1981). On the other hand, Morrow (2012) has argued that giving advice amongst Japanese speakers in an online discussion forum is seen by those participants as a means of bonding and empathising rather than being face-threatening. This claim echoes prior research which has found that offering advice in face-to-face settings can be seen as an expression of friendliness, concern, and interest in the other person amongst Chinese speakers (Hinkel 1994, 1997; Lii-Shih 1988; Xie 2013), and consequently, rather than being treated as potentially face-threatening, offering advice is seen as a means of achieving relational connection or solidarity. Claims about particular social actions or activities are thus rooted in a particular set of assumptions, which do not necessarily hold in the same ways across various languages and cultures.

However, despite the apparent existence of such broad, abstracted tendencies across languages and cultures, it is also evident that the nature of the social actions or activities that are being enacted on a particular occasion is something that has to be worked out by participants in locally situated interactions. Whether something counts as troubles talk, complaining, soliciting advice, or some combination of these, and consequently whether offering advice in response could be perceived as face-threatening or, alternatively, as a form of emotional or relational support, is thus something that the participants themselves have to determine in such interactions. The practical question for participants, and the analytical question facing researchers, then, is just how do participants reach understandings amongst themselves of what interactional and relational work is being accomplished in locally, situated settings.

In this paper, we propose that in order to accomplish analyses that are meaningful to those participants whose practices we are examining, not only do we need to examine their moral underpinnings in the sense proposed by Garfinkel (1967), but also the underlying participation framework and footings of participants within it, in the sense initially proposed by Goffman ([1979]1981). Our position is that not only is a specific participation order constituted through talk, but that this locally instantiated participation order is also, in part at least, constitutive of what that talk is taken to mean by those participants. We further argue that participants' responses to such troubles talk can be framed by participants as affiliative or disaffiliative (Jefferson 1988; cf. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich et al. 2013), vis-à-vis that locally instantiated participation order.¹ We build our claims on close examination of data taken from online discussion boards in Taiwan, where the primary language in question is (mainstream) Mandarin Chinese as it is used in Taiwan.

We start this paper by first reviewing work that has examined relational practices and emotional support in the context of online discussion boards, and how such practices and forms of support have been conceptualised. In the course of this review, we argue that participants engaging in troubles talk are often contending with multiple preferences, given the way in which troubles talk is often also interpretable as advice-seeking or complaining.² This relatively extensive review of the multiple, potentially intersecting social action trajectories that are occasioned by expressions of discontent or dissatisfaction with a particular situation is argued to be critical for grounding our subsequent analysis of the participation order, given our analysis of participation footings is made with respect not simply to talk (cf. Goffman [1979]1981), but the social actions instantiated by participants through such talk. We then briefly discuss the dataset we draw on in our analysis, namely, threads focusing on troubles talk from an asynchronous discussion forum focusing on parenting issues based in Taiwan, and then analyse characteristics of the participation order, which is co-constituted through interactive threads on this

1. While affiliation has been broadly defined as a stance enacted through social action that is "supportive of social solidarity" (Heritage 1984:269), in this paper, (dis)affiliation is conceptualised more specifically vis-à-vis the affective stances of participants, and so refers to "actions with which a recipient displays that s/he supports the affective stance expressed by the speaker" (Lindström and Sorjonen 2013:351). It thus contrasts with the notion of "alignment", which refers to actions that support the progressivity of prior actions (Stivers 2008:31–32; cf. Steensig and Drew 2008:9).

2. The notion of preference refers to "culturally shared" inclinations or tendencies in the design of responding and initiating actions (Pomerantz and Heritage 2013:210). Preference structure refers more specifically to the way in which responding or initiating actions can be designed as either "preferred" (i.e., actions that are implemented with a minimum of delay or with upgrading) or "dispreferred" (i.e., actions that are minimised, delayed or avoided) (Pomerantz 1984).

discussion board. This is followed by an analysis of displays of emotional support in response to troubles talk in these interactive threads. Our contention is that while such threads are initiated by posts broadly recognisable as troubles talk, the ways in which responses to this troubles talk can be construed as affiliative or disaffiliative is mediated both vis-à-vis the moral order in which the understandings of participants themselves are rooted, and vis-à-vis the participation order that these interactions themselves instantiate. We conclude by briefly outlining the implications of our study for research into relational aspects of CMC, and for pragmatics more broadly.

2. Troubles talk, advice, and emotional support in online discussion boards

There has been increasing recognition that not only synchronous forms of CMC, such as online chat, but also asynchronous forms of CMC, such as social network sites and online discussion boards, constitute settings where various forms of relational and identity work can arise (e.g. Locher 2006; Planchenault 2010; Arendholz 2013; Garcés-Conejos Bltovich et al. 2013; Bolander 2013; Haugh et al. *forth.*; Kádár et al. 2013; Shum and Lee 2013). One key locus of inquiry has been the ways in which the (sometimes transient) communities that coalesce around particular online discussion boards or networks offer emotional and relational support for members. Much of this work has revolved around either studies of trouble talk or advice.

Troubles talk involves the expression of some degree of dissatisfaction or discontent with a particular situation by a participant, followed by (dis)affiliation with those troubles by a recipient (Jefferson 1988).³ However, rather than seeking to attribute responsibility for that state of discontent to someone or some (institutional) group (Heinemann and Traverso 2009: 2381), or seeking to construe the said behaviour as a form of moral transgression, as is the case when a speaker is taken to be complaining (Drew 1998: 303; Edwards 2005: 8), the focal object of troubles talk is primarily “the teller and his experiences” (Jefferson and Lee 1981: 411). Troubles talk is also argued to differ from complaining in regards to what counts as an affiliative response. In the case of troubles talk, an affiliative response is one where the troubles-recipient displays emotional reciprocity (Jefferson 1988; Jefferson and Lee 1981), while disaffiliative responses include “giving advice”, incipient “entry to

3. Strictly speaking, these interactional moves constitute only part of the broader activity of troubles telling (Jefferson 1988). The third move in the “delivery” of troubles, within the broader troubles talk activity, at least in face-to-face interactions, involves the troubles-teller “letting go” by producing an emotionally heightened version of the troubles talk, or going on to elaborate further on the troubles themselves, rather than his or her emotional response to them (Jefferson 1988; Jefferson and Lee 1981).

closings" (i.e. sequence-closing implicative responses), and other-attentive "topic restarts" or "topical disjuncts" (Jefferson 1984; Heritage 2011). In the case of complaining, however, an affiliative response involves a recipient indicating agreement with the moral stance embodied in the complaint (Drew and Walker 2009), namely, that the anger or indignation (implicitly) expressed by the one formulating the complaint is justified (Couper-Kuhlen 2012), while a disaffiliative response involves construing the complaint as unwarranted.

Emotional reciprocity or support in the case of troubles talk has been analysed as a combination of "empathy", where the troubles-recipient "resonates" feelings and understanding by "demonstrating an understanding of another person's situation and/or feelings and communicating that understanding back to the person so that they feel understood" (Pudlinski 2005:267) and "sympathy", where the troubles-recipient displays "congruent feelings", thereby indicating "emotional identification" with the troubles-teller (Pudlinski 2005:267). There are various ways in which troubles-recipients indicate this empathy-sympathy, according to Pudlinski (2005), including emotive reactions (e.g. "oh boy"), assessments (e.g. "that's not fair"), formulating the gist of the trouble, reporting one's own reaction or expressing one's own feelings about another's trouble, as well as naming the troubles-teller's feelings. Heritage (2011) proposes that troubles-recipients can increase or decrease the degree of empathic affiliation by designing responses as more or less in "tune with" the experiences of the troubles-teller. "Parallel assessments", for instance, involve troubles-recipients "describing a similar, but depicularised, experience" (Heritage 2011:168), "subjunctive assessments" involve suggesting "that if the recipient were to experience the things described they would feel the same way" (Heritage 2011:169), while "observer responses" involve the recipient claiming "imaginary access to the events and experiences described" (Heritage 2011:171). He contrasts such formulations with "response cries" where the troubles-recipient "evoke[s] and claim[s] a degree of empathic union and affiliation" (Heritage 2011:176).

Much of the work on troubles talk in online discussion boards has revolved around various forms of identity work (e.g. Chan 2008; Kupferberg and Hess 2013; Lamerichs and Te Molder 2003; Pederson and Smithson 2010; Stommel and Koole 2010), although the different ways in which such emotional support is solicited (Chang 2009), as well as the ways in which troubles-recipients offer affiliative responses (González-Lloret 2011; Smithson et al. 2011) has received passing attention. Chang (2009), for instance, in a study of initial posts to a psychosis support group on an online discussion board in Taiwan, found that posts containing direct appeals for support were more likely to initiate threads with subsequent supportive posts, than posts framed as indirectly soliciting support through hinting or complaining.

More commonly, however, emotional support has been studied in the context of seeking and offering advice in online discussion boards. Advice itself is generally conceptualised as offering information and recommendations, as well as proposing a preferred future course of action that is (nominally) perceived by the advice-giver to be of benefit to the advice-recipient (Eisenclas 2011: 53; Heritage and Sefi 1992: 368; Kouper 2010: 3), where the latter, in the case of troubles talk, is also the troubles-teller. However, seeking advice differs from troubles talk, at least ostensibly, in that the former is said to involve a focus on “the problem and its properties”, while the latter involves a focus on “the teller and his experiences” (Jefferson and Lee 1981: 411). Just like complaining, then, seeking and giving advice is an inherently “moral” activity, as opposed to the primarily “affective” undertaking of troubles talk.

According to Shaw and Hepburn (2013), for instance, giving advice involves both deontic and epistemic claims on the part of the advice-giver. The deontic claim enacted through offering advice refers to the way in which “giving advice imposes and prescribes that an action *should* be done rather than claiming that it will be done” (Shaw and Hepburn 2013: 348), and so it constitutes an implicit claim to a (deontic) entitlement on the part of the advice-giver to be prescribing such a course of action. It can thereby also imply “blame” or “fault” on the part of the advice-recipient in some instances (Shaw and Hepburn 2013: 360).⁴ The epistemic claim enacted through offering advice, in contrast, refers to the fact that “by giving someone a piece of advice, the advice giver also treats themselves as more knowledgeable than their recipient on that matter” (Shaw and Hepburn 2013: 348), and so giving advice implicitly constitutes a claim to epistemic authority. In non-institutional, everyday settings, however, the advice-giver generally lacks “a clear institutional warrant to give it” (Shaw and Hepburn 2013: 345), and so interactional work is required to ground the inherently moral activity that giving advice constitutes. In many instances, advice-givers thus make (implicit) claims to expertise or ground the credibility of their advice in their own personal experience (Sillence 2013: 480).

Notably, offering advice in response to an exposition of troubles also creates a different action trajectory to that of a troubles talk sequence, given an aligning response to the giving of advice is one that somehow attends to the efficacy of that advice (i.e. either accepts or rejects it), and where, for the most part at least, what is made relevant as an affiliative response is a display of acceptance, or at least

4. This follows from the way in which blaming sequences themselves generally arise in two parts, with the first constituting the “announcement or report of an ‘unhappy incident’”, and the second “an attribution of responsibility for the ‘unhappy incident’” (Pomerantz 1978: 115). In the case of advice-giving that follows troubles talk, the advice can be interpreted as implying that the advice-recipient is responsible for those troubles.

appreciation, of that advice (Goldsmith 2000; Shaw and Hepburn 2013; Waring 2007). Offering advice in the context of troubles talk thus involves participants negotiating their way through multiple preference structures (Pomerantz and Heritage 2013), given that troubles talk affords displays of emotional reciprocity as contingently relevant, even when giving advice is the primary business of the interaction (Heritage and Lindström 2012).

In studies of advice in online discussion boards, various forms of emotional support have generally been treated as adjunct or pre-advice moves that are designed to reduce the potential face-threat associated with giving advice, even when that advice has been (ostensibly) solicited by the troubles-teller (Eisenclas 2011; Locher 2006; Morrow 2006). For the most part, offering advice has thus been treated by analysts as a “delicate” action that needs to be framed in ways that reduce the potential threat to the face of the advice-receiver (Morrow 2006: 546; cf. Morrow 2012). These include affect displays (e.g. “good luck”, “take care”), displays of empathy or sympathy, expressions of encouragement, sharing personal experiences, assessments (including praising), disclaimers and hedges, and, in some instances at least, referrals to professional help (Eisenclas 2012; Locher 2006; Morrow 2006; Sharkey et al. 2012; Sillence 2013). Other adjunct moves to advice, which is generally treated as the head act of the speech event in such analyses, include attempts to establish credibility through claims to expertise (Locher 2006; Sillence 2013). In addition, the syntactic structure and degree of “(in)directness” of the advice head act itself has also been studied (Eisenclas 2011), with a distinction generally being made between “direct advice” (e.g. “you should...”), “hedged advice” (e.g. “Why don’t you...”; “Aren’t you...”), and “indirect advice”, where the latter encompasses instances in which users describe their own personal experiences (Kouper 2010; Sillence 2013).

Other studies have focused on the ways in which the advice (and concomitant emotional support) is solicited. These include, building on Goldsmith’s (2000) work on advice solicitation in face-to-face interactions, requests for advice, requests for opinions or information, problem disclosure, and announcements of a plan of action (Kouper 2010; Sillence 2013; cf. Chang 2009). Problem disclosure constitutes an indirect or implicit way of advice solicitation, although Goldsmith (2000, 8) suggests that “the way in which a problem is announced may influence its hear-ability as solicitation of advice”. It follows, then, that posts to online discussion boards that involve expressing some form of trouble, problem or dissatisfaction/discontent, may be interpretable to potential recipients as troubles talk, advice-seeking, complaining, or as some combination of those.

Conversation analysts have argued, however, that troubles telling, complaining, and advice-seeking constitute three distinct interactional activities (Drew and Holt 1988; Jefferson and Lee 1981). In the case of troubles talk, the preferred response

is claimed to be a display of emotional reciprocity on the part of the troubles-recipient with the troubles-teller. In the case of complaining, in contrast, the preferred response from the complaint-recipient is argued to be a display of affiliation (i.e. agreement) with the complainer's stance, while in the case of advice-seeking, the preferred response is said to be for the advice-giver to proffer advice to the advice-seeker. Yet in studies of "problem disclosure" in online discussion boards, it has been found that in some instances a combination of two or more of these social actions can co-occur. Vásquez (2011), for instance, claims that complaints often co-occur with advice, while others have argued that offering emotional support and advice are often conflated in online discussion forums (Lamerichs and Te Molder 2003; Pederson and Smithson 2010; Smithson et al. 2011). Smithson et al. (2011:492) argue that this is, in part, a function of the fact that "the difference between support and advice is unclear, with advice giving viewable as a specific way of offering support", and consequently "advice giving is a common response to troubles telling". Indeed, Feng (2009) proposes a model of "supportive interactions" where emotional support is generally followed by problem inquiry and subsequently advice, thereby treating advice as inherently supportive, or at least supportive if so framed by the advice-giver. The line between troubles talk and complaining is also somewhat blurred in practice, given troubles talk sequences are often initiated through what Boxer (1993, 1996) terms "indirect complaints", where the latter refers to the expression of some degree of dissatisfaction or discontent about a particular situation that is attributed to either oneself or someone who is not present (Boxer 1996:219). Through commiserating with indirect complaints, recipients are able to imply agreement with the moral stance embodied in the indirect complaint, and in this way, orient to the expression of dissatisfaction or discontent as a form of complaining, and yet also treat it as an opportunity to indicate relational connection or solidarity (see, e.g., González-Lloret 2011:313).

This complex field of social actions, (dis)affiliative responses relative to a particular social action trajectory, and multiple preferences is summarised below in Figure 1, which offers a partial summary of research to date on (dis)affiliation vis-à-vis troubles talk, advice seeking, and complaining that is relevant to the analysis that follows. The solid arrows indicate preferred responses, while dotted arrows indicate dispreferred responses. It is important to note, however, that this figure does not represent predictions about what participants will necessarily do in particular, locally situated interactions, but rather indicates elements of the "seen but unnoticed" set of expectancies that constitute the moral order (Garfinkel 1967:36), which grounds, in turn, the recognisability of particular social actions or activities. In this way, it sketches the possible social action trajectories that underpin the participation footings the users themselves enact through talk, and responses to that talk, in locally situated contexts.

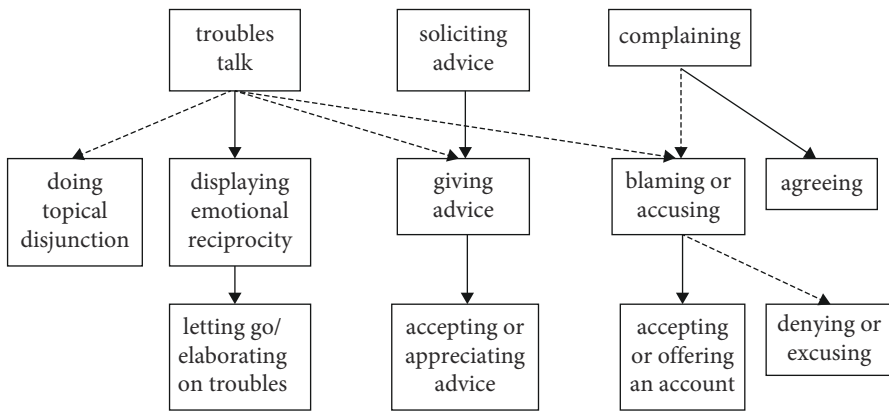


Figure 1. Multiple preference structures underpinning troubles talk, advice-seeking and complaining

As illustrated in this figure, responses that are designed as disaffiliative with respect to troubles talk, such as giving advice or blaming, can be analysed as the recipients treating the expression of dissatisfaction or discontent on the part of the prior speaker as either soliciting advice or complaining/moaning, thereby invoking a different preference structure. In this way, then, we can see how expressing some form of trouble, problem, dissatisfaction or discontent can instantiate multiple preferences in interaction.⁵

The potential equivocality of problem disclosure, expressing discontent, dissatisfaction and the like by participants, particularly in non-institutional or mundane interactions thus constitutes an analytical problem not just for us as analysts, but also a practical problem for the participants themselves. One of the questions facing participants in online discussion boards is whether through such problem disclosure an initial poster is doing troubles talk in order to solicit emotional reciprocity (i.e. displays of empathy or sympathy), or alternatively, it constitutes an instance of complaining in order to solicit agreement with their moral stance, or it is an attempt by the one disclosing the problem to solicit advice from other users. While in some cases it may indeed be the case that what is being sought is some combination of these, it nevertheless constitutes an interpretative problem that participants themselves must figure out, which of these, or combination of them, the initial turn is designed to elicit. As Smithson et al. (2011:499) point out, “the activities of asking for advice or giving advice may have been secondary

5. It is important to note that these aspects of the moral order are invoked with respect to the footings that participants themselves enact through their talk, and responses to that talk, a point we shall return to consider further in the following section.

to the activity of connecting and providing empathy, and may be used as tools to this end". The puzzle facing participants is thus often to figure out which actions constitute the primary focus of that thread, and what actions are in fact secondary, or only in service of accomplishing that primary interactional business.

In the remainder of this paper, we argue that not only do such interpretations, and the subsequent responses that are grounded in them, have implications for the participation order which is instantiated through interactions in online discussion boards, but that such questions are very often resolved through the instantiation of a particular participation order by those participants. In other words, the locally instantiated participation order is, in part, constitutive of what that troubles talk is taken to mean by those participants, and so influences not only how they respond to it, but, more importantly, is constitutive of how those responses are themselves interpretable to participants in the context of that thread.

3. Troubles talk and the participation order in online discussion boards

Online discussion boards are nowadays a common forum in which users enact troubles talk sequences, through sharing troubles, thereby eliciting various expressions of empathy or sympathy, as well as seeking and giving advice about such troubles. Much of this work has focused on the pragmatics of troubles talk and advice in online interactions in English or Spanish (e.g. Eisenclas 2011, 2012; González-Lloret 2011; Kouper 2010; Locher 2006; Morrow 2006; Pederson and Smithson 2010; Sharkey et al. 2012; Sillence 2013; Smithson et al. 2011), with far fewer studies of troubles talk in other languages such as Chinese or Japanese (e.g. Chang 2009; Morrow 2012). Our focus here is thus deliberately on analysing troubles talk in a non-Western setting. In this section, we first briefly describe the dataset in question, namely, troubles talk threads from a Taiwanese online parenting discussion board, and how such troubles talk gives rise to multiple preference structures. We then deconstruct the participation order that is both afforded by an online discussion board, and constrained through its locally situated instantiation by users.

3.1 Troubles talk in a Taiwanese online parenting discussion board

The data in question is drawn from an online parenting discussion board, *baobao huati* ("baby topics"), which is an asynchronous discussion forum hosted by BBH (*Baby Home*) (<http://www.babyhome.com.tw/mboard.php>) in Taiwan. BBH is a commercial website designed for parents, although it mainly attracts mothers, at

least in regards to users of the discussion board. It offers information, shopping links and social networking opportunities, and is the largest and most popular site of its kind in Taiwan. The messages on discussion boards in *BBH* are posted in threads, which are organised by topics. In most cases, a thread on a particular topic is started within a larger thematic grouping, and subsequent messages are oriented either to the initial message or subsequent postings. In the case of *BBH*, themes are restricted to those that are of specific interest to parents, including “baby topics”, “toddler learning”, “nurturing children”, “private talk after delivery”, and so on. Within these thematic groupings, threads are posted on specific topics. Users of *BBH* do not have any public profiles, and so remain anonymous unless they choose to disclose personal information about themselves in the posts the users themselves make on discussion threads. Moreover, since these threads are available to be viewed publicly without any account or log-in required, and posts can be added by simply creating an account through email, they cannot be considered communications of a closed or private group, where particular ethical considerations would apply (Ess and AoIR 2002; Eysenbach and Till 2001; Markham and Buchanan 2012; Rodham and Gavin 2006).

45 threads from the “baby topics” forum, sourced over a period of ten days in January 2011, were examined. A key focus of participants in threads in the baby topics forum was found, from this preliminary analysis, to be the sharing of troubles in relation to looking after babies. A typical example of the initial post of a troubles talk thread, where the poster, C. C. & Sean, describes “troubles” and expresses “discontent”, is reproduced below:

- (1) Thread 1, Post 1: C. C. & Sean, 2011-01-17 13:28
Header: *Baobao yizhi shengbin.....xinqing zhencha*
‘Baby keeps being sick....very bad mood’
 - 1 *Wo jia DD yisui yige duoyue le*
‘My baby is one year and one month old’
 - 2 *Zhousui hou yoshi ganmao liubishui, meitian yong xibiqi fenzhan le yige duo xingqi*
‘After [he became] one year old, he had colds and also a running nose. [He] has fought [with the sickness] by using a nasal system compressor every day for more than one week’
 - 3 *Houlai you ranshang changweixing ganmao (nuolao bingdu)*
‘Later on [he] got a stomach flu (norovirus)’
 - 4 *Erqie hai liangci...nuoluo bingdu zenme zheme duoxing a*
‘Also [he] got it twice.....how come there are so many [different kinds of] norovirus’
 - 5 *Xianzai haizai laduzi...zaijiashang ta erkouchuang zuipuole yige dong*
‘Now [he] still has diarrhea...plus he has oral thrush [and] ulcers’

- 6 *Meitian zhineng he baixifan liandou bianshou le*
'Everyday [he] can only have plain congee [His] face has become drawn'
- 7 *Zhejitian wo gen DD dou meineng haohao shui*
'Baby and me can't have a good sleep these days'
- 8 *Duiyu ziji xianzai haizai weimunai zhejianshi gandao hen huaiyi...*
'I am very suspicious about the matter [of whether] I can still do breast feeding...'
- 9 *Laogong zai dalu chuchai ye ganmao shengbing le...*
'[My] hubby is on a business trip in China, and also has a cold and is sick'
- 10 *Xinqing zhencha...zhezong rezi shenme shihou caihui jieshu a..*
'Very bad mood...when will this kind of life end?'
- 11 *Xianzai shengsheng tiren dao xiaohai jiankan shi duome zhongyao....aiai*
'Now [I] deeply understand it is so important to [keep] a child healthy....
sigh sigh'
- 12 *You mama ye zhengzai wei shengbing de baobao fannao zhong ma??*
'Are there any mothers who are also worried about [their] sick baby?'

In the course of this initial post, the user, who is the mother of a one-year old baby boy in Taiwan, first relates how her son has been constantly getting sick and not eating well (lines 2–6), and that not only the baby, but also she herself, have not been able to sleep well recently (line 7). After implying she thinks that her baby might be getting sick so often because of breastfeeding (line 8), she reports that her husband is away in China on a business trip and is also sick (line 9), thereby implying that he is not able to help her out, while also reinforcing her sense of frustration that the whole family is sick. After outlining these troubles, the user then expresses her discontent with her current situation (line 10), her regret that perhaps she hasn't been able to look after her baby better (line 11), thereby implying that she may be partly to blame, followed by an appeal to hear from others who have similar feelings (lines 12).

While the post as a whole is broadly interpretable as an instance of troubles talk, there are potentially multiple action trajectories being launched through it. The troubles talk itself is implemented through C. C. & Sean's formulation of her current situation as involving ongoing difficulties (e.g. dealing with the baby being sick, worrying about the baby's health, not getting enough sleep, and so on), with an explicit mention of her bad feelings arising as a result of these troubles. The long and detailed reporting about these ongoing difficulties arguably affords a display of empathy/sympathy, or "emotional support" as a contingently relevant next response by other users (Jefferson 1988; Sillence 2013; Smithson et al. 2011). However, there are nevertheless elements interpretable as soliciting advice that feature as part of this initial post. In line 8, for instance, C. C. & Sean seeks an explanation for, or opinions about whether the ongoing sickness of

her baby might have something to do with breastfeeding (Kouper 2010). And in line 12, she not only appeals for others to share their problems, but also implicitly seeks advice as to what she might do to alleviate her troubles (Chang 2009). An affiliative response to these (partly implicit) appeals for opinions and experiences could thus involve giving advice about the ongoing sickness of her baby (that is, either offering explanations for or solutions to these troubles). There is also an element in this initial post that is interpretable as a form of “complaining” (*baoyuan*), when she bemoans her bad mood and her sense of helplessness in the face of these ongoing troubles (line 10), although she is not necessarily seeking to blame anyone for those troubles (cf. Vásquez 2011). An affiliative response to this bemoaning would involve expressions of agreement with C. C. & Sean’s implicit (moral) stance that her “complaints” are indeed justified. In this way, then, we can see how in practice a single post can instigate multiple preference structures, as we discussed in the previous section.

The fact that participants in the “baby topics” online discussion forum engaged in such troubles talk was an interesting finding in itself, in light of Pomerantz and Mandelbaum’s (2005: 162) prior claim that not only does troubles talk constitute an opportunity to enact intimacy amongst participants, it is itself a “category-bound activity” in that “it is regarded as appropriate for incumbents of the categories of family members and friends and inappropriate for incumbents of the categories of acquaintances and strangers”. In online settings, such as the parenting discussion board we analysed, users commonly designed their responses to troubles talk in ways that positioned themselves as “experienced in” or currently “experiencing” the troubles in question, thereby creating a warrant for engaging in troubles talk with others who are, nominally at least, only acquaintances or even strangers. Such a warrant was also arguably provided through the participation order that was co-constituted through these troubles talk threads, a point to which we now move to consider.

3.2 Deconstructing the participation order in online discussion boards

One key element underpinning the locally situated instantiation of the participation order in interaction is the “participation framework”. This refers to the ways in which reciprocity of talk can be configured by participants (Goffman [1979] 1981; cf. Levinson 1988; Dynel 2011a, 2011b; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004), that is, how participants are positioned in regards to interpreting and responding to talk; for example, treating a participant as a direct addressee (where one is expected to respond to current talk), as a side participant (where one has the right to, but is not expected to respond to current talk), or as an overhearer (where one is not

expected to respond to current talk and is not considered to have the right to either) (Goffman [1979]1981). In regards to the participation frameworks that were instantiated through these discussion threads, the first point to note is that posts made in discussion threads were directed at, and thus designed for, users who participate in the discussion board, either through reading posts or by making posts themselves. While initial posts in threads are not directed at any particular users, they were nevertheless designed to allow users to take up multiple different reception roles (Burgess and Green 2008; Dynel 2014; Lorenzo-Dus et al. 2011; cf. Maroccia 2004: 140), including as addressees, side participants, and (ratified) over-hearers, for instance.⁶ This design is evident from the way in which the initial posts are formulated with the type of users who are likely to scan or peruse threads in “baby topics” in mind, namely, parents who have babies themselves, or who have had them in the past. These thread-initiating posts thus occasion what Morris and Ogan (1996: 43) term “one-to-many interactions”.

However, specific users can subsequently elect to position themselves as direct addressees (i.e. users who construe themselves through their responses as participants that are expected to respond to troubles talk), side participants (i.e. users who respond in subsequent posts in a way that does not indicate they are construing themselves as participants who are necessarily expected to respond to the troubles talk), or as part of the ratified “overhearing” audience (i.e. users who are assumed to be reading the posts, but do not respond to the troubles talk) (cf. Goffman [1979]1981), or what Bell (1991) terms “auditors”. In responding to an initial post, or responses to that post, users thereby instantiate a more locally situated participation framework involving producers and recipients of talk-in-interaction, for instance, as troubles-tellers and troubles-recipients. Such interactive exchanges across posts in a thread thus constitute “one-to-one” interactions (Morris and Ogan 1996: 42–43), although they are nevertheless observably couched in a way that is sensitive to the omnipresent “one-to-many” nature of the participation framework in which such ostensibly dyadic exchanges are embedded.

This “double articulation of interaction” thus involves both one-to-one exchanges where users occupy particular participation footings as “persons” (Goffman [1979]1981; Haugh 2013), as well as one-to-many exchanges, where reciprocity is distributed across the body of users who are assumed to be scanning or perusing the threads in that discussion board (Bou-Franch et al. 2012: 503),

6. The participation framework instantiated through interactions in online discussion boards is thus somewhat different from that instantiated through broadcasts of interactions on television or film, where there is designedly one level of communication (and layer of meanings) between the characters, and (potentially) another distinct one for the “ratified”, overhearing audience (see Dynel 2011a, 2011b; Lorenzo-Dus 2009).

and so users are occupying participation footings as “parties” (Schegloff 1995) (e.g. “experienced” mothers, “worried” mothers, and so on).⁷ Notably, this array of one-to-one and one-to-many interactions over the course of a thread can also implicitly create a sense that many-to-many exchanges are being enacted (Bou-Franch et al. 2012), as the participation footings of “troubles-teller” and “troubles-recipient”, for instance, are collectivised or communalised across the users.

These ongoing, dynamic shifts between “polylogic” and “dyadic” participation frameworks are thus afforded by the way in which dyadic participation frameworks can be recursively embedded, as represented in Figure 2.

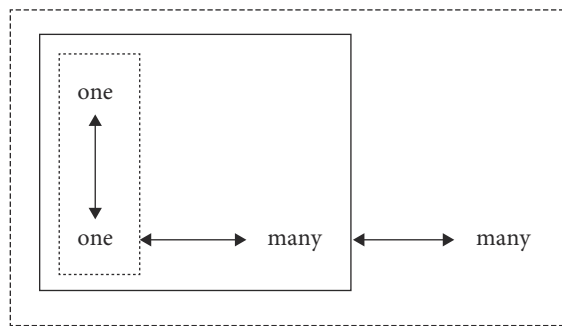


Figure 2. Recursively embedded participation frameworks in online discussion boards

In that way, then, the participation framework co-constituted through topical threads in these online discussion boards is similar in many respects to that of multi-party face-to-face interactions, and so it constitutes a “polylogue” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004). However, the persistent record of interactions in online discussion boards also affords responses to posts made much earlier in long threads (Bou-Franch et al. 2012), as well as supporting multiple encounters between participants beyond that which is generally afforded in face-to-face interactions (Herring 2010). The participation framework afforded by this online discussion board is thus one where sequentiality is arguably realised both through the forces of adjacency and nextness (Sacks 1987; Schegloff 2007), as well as in guise of “networked” sequentiality (Bou-Franch et al. 2012: 515).

7. The distinction between persons and parties is taken from Schegloff (1995: 33), who argues persons can form parties with respect to “interaction-specific contingencies and conduct”, including “their relative alignment in current activities, such as the co-telling of a story or siding together in a disagreement, or their several attributes relative to a momentarily current interactional contingency, for example, whether they are host or guest, whether...they are the newly arrived or pre-present”.

In the following sample thread, for instance, we can see how a posting of an expression of dissatisfaction or discontent, which we discussed in prior section (Example [1]), is initially positioned within a one-to-many participation framework, and so occasions a number of subsequent posts (see the Appendix for the translated content of the remainder of this thread).

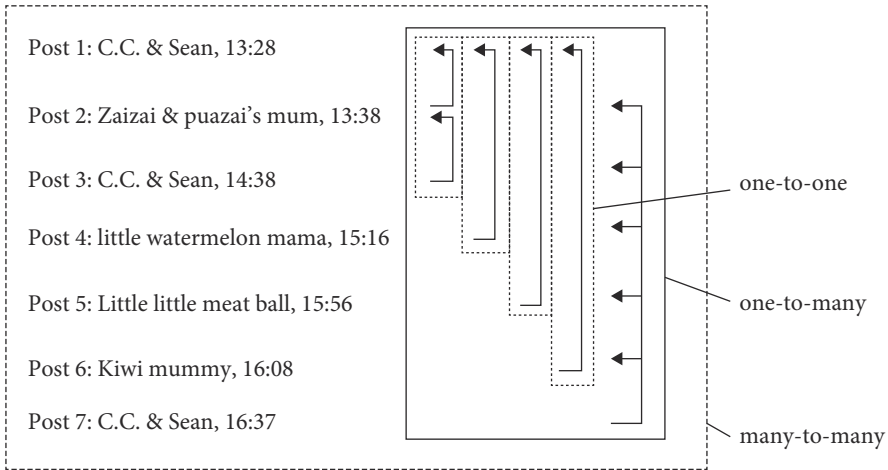


Figure 3. Participation frameworks co-constituted through Thread 1

Posts 2 and 4–6 are explicitly framed as one-to-one, given C.C. & Sean is designed as the addressee of displays of “emotional support”, although they are also implicitly embedded within a one-to-many participation framework. Notably posts 1–3 also collectively constitute a one-to-one exchange embedded within a broader one-to-many participation framework, given post 3 involves the troubles-teller, C.C. & Sean, thanking the troubles-recipient for her display of emotional support. Finally, in post 7, C.C. & Sean collectively thanks all those who have offered emotional support, and so, once again, instantiates a one-to-many participation framework. Naturally, the longer the thread in question, the more complex the array of recursively embedded participation frameworks that can be instantiated by the participants, although variations on the basic pattern represented above in the case of Thread 1 were commonly found across the troubles talk threads that were examined in this study.

A second key element underpinning the participation order involves participation footings. These refer to the locally realised configuration of production and reception roles (of users) vis-à-vis particular social action trajectories (Haugh 2013), and so it is a notion that builds, in part, on Goffman’s [1979]1981)

proposals about speaker footings. Goffman ([1979]1981), in his seminal work, argued that the folk linguistic notion of “speaker” needs to be decomposed into a number of distinct “footings”, including those of animator, author, principal, and figure. According to Goffman ([1979]1981), an animator refers to the person(s) producing an utterance (or the talk more generally), an author refers to the entity that creates or designs the utterance or talk, a principal is the party responsible for the utterance or talk, while a figure is the character portrayed within the utterance or talk. Yet while this set of speaker footings has proven useful in accounting for numerous pragmatic phenomena, there have nevertheless been various critiques of it (e.g. Goodwin and Goodwin 2004), and thus attempts to develop them further (e.g. Bell 1991; Levinson 1988).

Our proposal is that these “speaker footings” do not simply encompass a speaker’s stance or alignment vis-à-vis particular utterance(s) or talk (i.e. what he or she is saying) (Goffman [1979]1981:128), as we have already noted in our definition of participation footing, but they can also encompass his or her alignment or stance vis-à-vis a particular trajectory of social action. In other words, speaker footings encompass production roles vis-à-vis particular social actions, such as “troubles-teller” in the case of troubles talk, “advice-seeker” in the case of seeking advice, and “complainer” in the case of complaining. Building on the distinctions between animator (or producer), author, principal, and figure, then, we can decompose the production footing of “troubles-teller”, for instance, into the producer, author, principal and figure of the troubles talk in question. In order to analyse “speaker footings”, then, we need to attend to the way in which production footings arise vis-à-vis different social action trajectories, both in terms of their particular “social” roles (e.g. troubles-teller versus troubles-recipient), and in regard to their alignment vis-à-vis those social actions (e.g. as animator but not author or principal). Participants can, of course align themselves with multiple footings simultaneously, or leave their alignment vis-à-vis these social action trajectories somewhat equivocal, and indeed, such equivocality may be perpetuated by other participants in some instances. These footings can also be interpreted in different ways by other participants, or may be resisted or disputed by respondents.

On this view, then, the “hearer” can also no longer be treated as “cognitively and linguistically simple”, which Goodwin and Goodwin (2004:225) point out as a key flaw in Goffman’s ([1979]1981) original proposal that the notion of footing is only applicable to the speaker. It is thus proposed, following Haugh (2013), that the notion of speaker (or production) footing needs to be complemented by the notion of recipient (or reception) footing, where:

the animator (or producer) who engenders the talk (and conduct) has a counterpart in the various recipients (potentially) attending to that talk or conduct. The role of the author who constructs the talk has a counterpart in the interpreter or interpreters who can develop their own understandings of the talk. The role of the principal who is socially responsible for those meanings or actions is necessarily complemented by the accounter or accounters who (explicitly or tacitly) hold the principal responsible. And, finally, the production role of figure, namely, the character that is depicted in the talk, is also a potential target when the character depicted is co-present, or when an utterance is attributed to someone other than the speaker. (Haugh 2013: 62)

In the case of troubles talk, for instance, this means the reception footing of “troubles-recipient” can be decomposed into the recipient, interpreter, accounter, and, in some cases, target of the troubles talk, with the same holding true for the footings of “advice-giver” and “complaint-recipient”. In other words, the rich and nuanced range of production footings available to “speakers”, or producers, of talk are paralleled in those available to “recipients” of that talk.

While this array of production and reception footings might appear at first glance to be somewhat complex, it allows us to account for the way in which troubles talk can move into advice-seeking or complaining depending, in part, on the subsequent responses of users to what is ostensibly designed as troubles talk. It thus arguably constitutes a necessary extension of Goffman’s original proposals. Jefferson and Lee (1981:410), for instance, claim that “the proffering of advice in the course of a Troubles-Telling, with its new, and reversed, set of categories and their attendant rights and obligations, may implicate an altogether different form of talk; i.e. not a Troubles-Telling”, but rather “advising”, where the relevant categories are “Advice-Seeker and Advice-Giver”. In other words, by offering advice in response to troubles talk, participants can, in effect, transform their footing from that of troubles-recipient to that of advice-giver. In examining the array of participant footings that have been proposed here, it becomes apparent that while a participant may be positioned by the prior user’s turn as a troubles-recipient, he or she may interpret this troubles talk as implicitly seeking advice (interpreter footing), and by offering such advice, hold the prior user accountable for seeking advice rather than simply seeking emotional support (accounter footing), in which case the figure is no longer a troubles-teller but rather an advisee, with the attendant deontic and epistemic claims an adviser-advisee relationship entails. Or alternatively, a subsequent user may interpret this troubles talk as an instance of complaining (interpreter footing), and by blaming or accusing the troubles-teller hold him or her accountable for unjustified or unwarranted complaining (accounter footing), in which case the figure

is no longer a troubles-teller but potentially a “moaner” or “whinger” (with the latter constituting a moral stance in and of itself, as Edwards [2005] argues).

In the following section, we move to examine in further detail how the participation framework and participation footings are co-constituted through responses to troubles talk in online discussion boards. It is argued that the instantiation of such locally situated participation orders assists participants, in part, to navigate their way through the complex field of social actions/activities and related preference structures that troubles talk inevitably invokes.

4. Emotional support and (dis)affiliation in online discussion boards

As we discussed in our review of prior work on troubles talk and advice in online discussion boards, troubles talk can shift into advice seeking or complaining. Given that troubles talk in online discussion boards can thus simultaneously launch multiple preference trajectories, the response of other users to the initial post in a thread proves critical to understanding what the initial poster is taken to be doing. However, our analysis of threads from the Taiwanese online parenting discussion board indicated that no matter whether responses to troubles talk were interpretable as affiliative or disaffiliative with respect to troubles talk, they nevertheless constituted, for the most part, instances of emotional support for the troubles teller. In order to substantiate this claim, we first discuss in this section instances of affiliative responses to troubles talk, before going on in the second section to examine disaffiliative responses. We propose that the latter, whilst recognisably disaffiliative, nevertheless offer emotional support for the troubles-teller, albeit by shifting the participation footing of the troubles-teller to that of advice-recipient or complainer (or possibly moaner). It is concluded from this analysis of (dis)affiliative responses to troubles talk in online discussion boards that troubles-tellers are engaged in a recognisable relational practice, namely, soliciting emotional support.

4.1 Affiliative responses: Displaying solidarity empathy and empathic suggesting

Affiliative responses to the posting of troubles talk generally fell into two ways of expressing empathy with the troubles-teller’s situation. The first form of affiliative response to troubles talk involved expressions of what we here term “solidarity empathy” (cf. *tonglixin*, lit. ‘same principle heart’). This involves the display of a

specific form of empathy-sympathy, where the user “demonstrates an understanding of the other person’s situation and/or feelings” and also “displays congruent feelings” and “emotional identification” with those feelings (Pudlinski 2005: 267). However, this understanding and emotional identification with the feelings of the troubles-teller is grounded in a claim that one is currently experiencing, or has previously experienced, such feelings oneself. It is thus more strongly affiliative than expressions of empathy grounded in, for instance, parallel or subjunctive assessments (Heritage 2011). Solidarity empathy was enacted by users through “mutual encouraging” (cf. *huxiang guli*), where they emotively exhorted not only the troubles-teller, but also themselves, to not give up and lift up their *qi* (‘spirit-energy’) in dealing with those troubles, as well as through “mutual bemoaning” (cf. *huxiang baoyuan*), where they claimed to be experiencing, or to have experienced, the same troubles and concomitant feelings of dissatisfaction or helplessness as the troubles-teller.

In the following post, for instance, a user responds to troubles talk about dealing with a sick baby, with encouragement (line 1), which she then explicitly frames as mutual (line 2), followed by mutual bemoaning (lines 3–4).

(2) Thread 1, Post 2: Zaizai & puzai’s mum, 2011-01-17 13:38

- 1 *Mami jiayou~*
‘Mummy jiayou~’
- 2 *Huxiang mianli yixia hei*
‘Encourage each other’
- 3 *Wojia liangzhi zuijin yizhi chixu zai shengbingzhong, youqi shi shige duoyue de DD,*
‘My two [children] also keep getting sick recently, especially the ten-month old baby.’
- 4 *bishui gen shuilongtou yiban tingbuliao, zhende hao toutong wo*
‘[His] running nose is like a water tap and doesn’t stop. [It] makes my head ache’

Zai&Puzai de mama (abbreviated as “Zaipu ma”) begins her response by encouraging C.C. & Sean with the common Chinese expression *jiayou* (line 1). While this literally means to “fill up with petrol”, it is used idiomatically here to mean that the recipient should “be stronger” or “hang on” in a difficult situation. It also has connotations that the speaker is cheering on the recipient (like supporters at a sports game), and in this way the speaker is displaying emotional support for the troubles-teller (Morrow 2006). She next asserts that they should “encourage each other” (line 2), thereby signalling that she also feels the need for this kind of encouragement and emotional support, and so the encouragement is mutual (i.e. directed at them both). Zaipu ma then describes how her own two children

keep getting sick, especially the younger baby, and how this gives her a headache (lines 3–4). The latter implies that she also feels really worried about her children. In making a claim to be experiencing the same worries as C. C. & Sean, Zaipu ma thereby displays affiliation with C. C. & Sean’s troubles. However, this affiliative response is not simply an expression of empathy for C. C. & Sean’s situation (Jefferson 1988: 428). It is also interpretable as a display of solidarity, as Zaipu ma claims to understand C. C. & Sean’s feelings of helplessness and bemoaning of her situation, because she herself is experiencing such feelings as well. In other words, the bemoaning of their troubles is treated by Zaipu ma as something in which they are mutually engaged. In this way, then, the respondent not only indicates solidarity empathy, thereby implicitly taking a participation footing as troubles-recipient, but also implicitly casts them both as a party of “worried mothers”, a move that was subsequently ratified by other users in the same thread.

Similar expressions of solidarity empathy were commonly found across responses to troubles talk in the threads we examined. In a subsequent post in the same thread, for instance, emoticons were deployed to raise the intensity of the mutual bemoaning.

(3) Thread 1, Post 4: Little watermelon mama, 2011-01-17 15:16

- 1 *Wo baobao yeshi gangman zhousui~biti kuai sange libai le haimeihao ><*
‘My baby is just one year old~[he has been] having [a] running nose for three weeks and hasn’t recovered from it yet ((painful))’
- 2 *Wo yijing kangle sanjian yiyuan le haishi yiyang~~*
‘I have [taken him] to see [doctors] in three [different] hospitals and still the same~~((crying))’

In line 1, ‘><’ is used to indicate a feeling of pain, while in line 2, an emoticon representing crying is used to indicate a feeling of sadness and despair. In this way, the extent to which the user is taken to be bemoaning her situation is not only increased (Dresner and Herring 2010), but also the user’s emotive stance in relation to those troubles is also intensified (Vandergriff 2013). The latter also arguably constitutes a textual equivalent of vocal “response cries” (Goffman [1978]1981), whereby the troubles-recipient “evoke[s] and claim[s] a degree of empathic union and affiliation” (Heritage 2011: 176) with the troubles-teller.

The second form of affiliative response to troubles talk involved expressions of what we here term “empathic suggesting” (cf. *jianyi*), where through descriptions of their own personal experiences in dealing with troubles, users imply suggestions about how the troubles-teller might deal with their own troubles. “Suggestions” arguably differ from “advice” in that the former only involve the assumption that “it *can* be good if you do this” (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014: 164, emphasis added),

while the latter involves the more directive assumption that “it *will* be good if after this you do this” (Wierzbicka 2012: 329, emphasis added). In suggesting rather than giving advice, then, users maintain their primary footing as troubles-recipient, in that any advice that could be read as implied by the suggesting (which is itself only implied by describing personal experiences), is left up to the troubles-teller to extract (see also Eisenclas 2011: 56). These suggestions are, moreover, implied through the troubles-recipient sharing experiences about the same troubles the troubles-teller has related, and in that sense are implicitly grounded in a claim to understanding those troubles. In other words, empathic suggesting is grounded in personal experiences which are perceived to be shared. In that sense, it also implicitly reinforces displays of solidarity empathy.

In the following post, for instance, a user is responding to a post where the troubles-teller has described her difficulties in staying home by herself all the time to look after her baby, and her feelings of anxiety and discontent about that situation (see the Appendix for a translation of the first post in this thread).

(4) Thread 2, Post 4: Daughter of the sun, 2011-01-10 17:32

- 1 *Ban ma yao jianqiang wo*
‘Board mum, be sturdy’
- 2 *Wo gen ni hen xiang*
‘I am very similar to you’
- 3 *Xiangsheng chang chuchai yi ci liang xingqi zuoyou*
‘[My] husband is often on business trips for about one [or] two weeks’
- 4 *Wo ye-shi quanzhi mama*
‘I am also a full-time mum’
- 5 *Meiyou gongpo*
‘[I] have no in-laws’
- 6 *Suoyi zhiyao xiansheng chuchai*
‘So once [my] husband is on business trip’
- 7 *Wo dou xuanze hui niang jia*
‘I choose to go back my parents’ home’
- 8 *Suiran yeshi ziji dai xiaohai*
‘Although I still look after the kids by myself’
- 9 *Zhishao bijiao renao*
‘At least it’s more bustling’
- 10 *Xiayu tian buxiang zhengtian zai jia*
‘[If I] don’t want to stay at home all day in rainy days’
- 11 *Ye keyi daiqu guang baihuogongsi huo da maichang*
‘[I] can also take [my kids] to browse around department stores or big shopping centres’

The respondent begins by expressing encouragement for the troubles-teller (line 1), which she then mutualises (lines 2), thereby displaying mutual encouragement (*huxiang guli*). She then alludes to having the same troubles as the troubles-teller, in that she also has to look after her baby on her own without help (lines 3–5). The subsequent description of what she does in dealing with such troubles (e.g. going to stay with her parents or going out to department stores) is thus grounded in a feeling of sharing similar feelings in regards to such troubles. Given these descriptions are implicitly formulated as ways of feeling less lonely and bored, they also imply suggestions as to how the troubles-teller could deal with her difficulties (Kouper 2010; Sillence 2013). However, since these are not prescribed as a definitive course of action, and the interpretation of such implied suggestions (i.e. what the troubles-teller *could* do) as advice (i.e. what the troubles-teller *should* do) is left up to the troubles-teller to determine, they constitute instances of empathic suggesting. Such empathic suggesting is also arguably emotionally supportive, as through sharing her own personal experiences, the troubles-recipient indicates her caring and concern for the troubles-teller is something she is invested in personally, given their shared experiences of those troubles.

In other cases, however, empathic suggesting is more akin to empathic advice that effects a shift in the respective participation footings of the users (although the latter is nevertheless still interpretable as affiliative with the troubles talk). In a subsequent post by the initial troubles-teller in Thread 1, for instance, the initial poster, C. C. & Sean, thanks Zaizai & puzai's mum for her display of solidarity empathy, and reciprocates this mutual encouragement (line 2), thereby ratifying their collective identity as “worried mothers”.

(5) Thread 1, Post 3: Author: C. C. & Sean, 2011-01-17 14:38

- 1 *Zaipu ma*
'Zaipu's mum'
- 2 *Xiexie ni....women yiqi jiayou ba.....*
'Thank you....let's *jiayou* together....
- 3 *Dangzuo baobao zai cun dikangli lou.....*
'[Let's] take [this] as babies are saving up [their] immune system....'

However, C. C. & Sean goes further in offering an account that allays their worries about their babies being sick (line 3). This volitional modal form (cf. Eisenclas 2011) constitutes a form of “empathic advice”, as it implies that they should therefore worry less about their babies being sick. C. C. & Sean thereby shifts her prior participation footing as a troubles-teller to also, at the same time, being both an advice-giver as well as an advice-recipient. As a consequence, the participation footing of Zaipu ma is also implicitly shifted from that of troubles-recipient to advice-recipient. However, while responses from users can subtly effect shifts in

their respective participation footings, here from troubles-teller to advice-giver as well as advice-recipient in the case of C.C. & Sean, and from troubles-recipient to advice-recipient in the case of Zaipu ma, such a response is nevertheless still affiliative in that the prior display of solidarity empathy by Zaipu ma is evidently being reciprocated here.

Notably, our claim that empathic suggesting differs from giving advice contrasts with previous studies that have analysed responses to troubles talk in online discussion boards. Smithson et al. (2011:498), for instance, claim that “while *SharpTalk* posters (and moderators) did engage in troubles-recipient behaviour, the tendency to proffer advice was strong, and activities of emotional reciprocity often seemed to be ways into offering advice, rather than standing alone as responses to troubles-telling”. And Kouper (2010:16) also claims that through sharing personal examples “advice givers established their authority and yet avoided responsibility and shifted the agency of advice, because they did not explicitly tell advice seekers what to do”. In our analysis, however, we have claimed that empathic suggesting differs from giving advice in two key ways. First, the former involves personal, subjective assumptions about what the troubles-teller can do, while the latter involves moral claims about what the troubles-teller should do. Second, the suggestions that are implied by users in this context are grounded in implicit claims to understanding the feelings of the troubles-teller, given they build on claims to be sharing (or to have shared in) the same experiences (as opposed to ones that are similar or analogous).

In the following section, we move to consider responses that are evidently disaffiliative with respect to the trajectory of the initial post as initiating troubles talk, and the participation footings of troubles-teller and troubles-recipient that are implicitly assumed therein. It is argued, however, that such disaffiliative responses can nevertheless still constitute displays of emotional support for the troubles-teller.

4.2 Disaffiliative responses: Accusing and advising

While the vast majority of posts in troubles talk threads were recognisably affiliative, there were a small number of instances where responses were disaffiliative.⁸ Such disaffiliative responses involved instances where users resisted the initial

8. While this claim is primarily based on our qualitative analysis of the threads, a sample of the 91 responses found across 9 threads were coded separately by the two authors and agreement on this coding reached through subsequent discussion. Approximately 9% of the responses in troubles talk threads involved disaffiliative advising or accusing, while 81% involved affiliative mutual bemoaning and encouraging or empathic suggesting. The remaining 10% of responses contained both affiliative and disaffiliative elements.

poster's claim to be engaging in troubles talk, and recast it as complaining or moaning. This was sometimes also accompanied by such users offering advice about how the initial poster might change her way of thinking, and thus feelings of discontent, about her current situation.

As we noted in section two, offering advice is an inherently moral activity that is (implicitly) grounded in claims to epistemic authority (i.e. being more knowledgeable than the other in relation to the matters in question) and deontic entitlement (i.e. the right to prescribe some course of action should be done). We also noted how giving advice subsequent to troubles talk can imply "fault" or "responsibility" on the part of the troubles-teller, thereby blaming them for their current troubles. Finally we noted that in recasting troubles talk as complaining, and thereby accusing the troubles-teller of unwarranted moaning about their troubles, users can also resist the initial poster's moral stance that his or her current situation is deserving of sympathy.

In the following extract, which is taken from a longer post, a user is responding to an initial post, where *erinerin1231* has described her feelings of discontent about having to stay at home by herself all the time to look after her baby (see Appendix for a translation of the initial post to which this is responsive). However, rather than offering emotional support through affiliative responses, we can observe here how the assumed participation order is challenged and transformed through disaffiliative accusing and advising by the user, yet emotional support is nonetheless proffered.

(6) Thread 2, Post 17: Xiao bai-101, 2011-01-11 08:57

- 1 *Cai shi ge yue jiu shou bu liao le*
'[You] can't even stand [your] ten-month [old baby]'
- 2 *Na zai da yi dian hui pao hui tiao le zenme ban?*
'What [are you going to do] when [he/she] grows older?'
- 3 *Ruguo ni zhen de ai ta, kuai ba ta dang cheng ni "shenghuo" zhong de yi bu fen*
'If you really love him/her, make the baby [really] part of your "life"'
- 4 *Buran ni haiyao he ta gongdu ni wanghou de xia ban beizi ne*
'You will still need to live together with him for the rest of your life'
- 5 *Wo hen huainian he wo jia gege baby de shi hou*
'I really miss the time when I [looked after] my baby'
- 6 *Zuo gongche, da jiejun de sichu pao*
'[We] went to many places by bus and MRT'
- 7 *You hen duo difang douyou women de zuji*
'[We] left our footprints in many places'
- 8 *Xianzai gege qu du youzhiyuan le*
'Now my older boy goes to kindergarten'
- 9 *Jie zhe wo ye xiang dai zhe meimei sichu zouzou*
'Now I also want to take my baby girl to go around'

- 10 *Wo ye hen ai wo de nuer, suiran wo dui wo jia zhe ge meimei hai bu tai "shouxi"*
'I also love my daughter very much, although I am still not very "familiar" with my baby girl'
- 11 *Dan wo haishi hen le dang quanzhi mama (suiran jiashi zuo de bu zenme yang)*
'I am still very happy to be a full-time mum (even though I don't do much housework)'

In this post, Xiao bai-101 first challenges the (moral) grounds for erinerin1231's prior assertion of troubles, namely, her feelings of dissatisfaction about having to look after her baby all the time (lines 1–2). She then offers "sincere advice" (cf. *zhonggao*), which is formulated through both a "rhetorical" question that challenges erinerin1231's prior stance that her situation constitutes troubles in lines 1–2 (Koshik 2005), as well as through a subsequent imperative embedded in conditional formulation in line 3 (Eisenchlas 2011), and encouragement (*guli*) that erinerin1231 embrace her situation more positively (line 4) (Eisenchlas 2012; Locher 2006; Morrow 2006). Subsequently, Xiao bai-101 relates her own personal experiences in the same situation, which she claims to have enjoyed rather than being troubled by (lines 5–9). In this way, then, Xiao bai-101 implicitly accuses or blames (cf. *zeguai*) erinerin1231 herself for these claimed troubles, by locating the source of these feelings of dissatisfaction in the mindset of poster herself, rather than it being a function of her situation. In doing so, she construes the initial post in this thread by erinerin1231 as an instance of unwarranted complaining or moaning, rather than legitimate troubles talk. The tone of this accusation, however, is softened somewhat in the subsequent two lines, where Xiao bai-101 presumes that erinerin1231 nevertheless loves her baby despite her complaints (line 10), and also implies that she herself is not a "perfect" stay-at-home mother either (line 11).

Notably, the moral claims implemented through these disaffiliative responses by Xiao bai-101 were not grounded in shared experiences per se, but rather in implicit claims to expertise arising from her own personal experiences of a similar situation (cf. Sillence 2013). In other words, through disaffiliative responses, this particular user enacted a shift in participation footings from troubles-teller and troubles-recipient to expert advice-giver and inexperienced advice-recipient, respectively. Yet while these responses were evidently disaffiliative with the prior troubles talk on the part of erinerin1231, both the accusing (*zeguai*) and advising (*zhonggao*, lit. sincere telling) achieved through this post are grounded in a presumption of sincerity and concern for the other. As we noted previously, while advice is generally seen as potentially face-threatening in English-speaking

cultures, Chinese speakers see “advice-giving in a positive way as an expression of friendliness or concern” (Morrow 2012: 258; see also Hinkel 1994, 1997; Lii-Shih 1988; Xie 2013). In this case, the accusing and advising are framed as a display of concern for erinerin1231’s situation, even though erinerin1231’s construal of her situation as involving troubles is resisted by Xiao bai-101.

While erinerin1231 did not respond directly to Xiao bai-101’s post (consistent with recurrent practice in this online discussion board), she did conclude the thread by thanking everyone for their encouragement and emotional support (lines 1–2), and also related how she had acted upon advice that she take her baby outside somewhere, instead of staying home all the time (lines 3–4).

(7) Thread 2, Post 23: erinerin1231 11-01-2011 23:23

- 1 *Zaici xiexie dajia wennuan de guli*
‘Thanks for everyone’s warm encouragement again’
- 2 *Zai hanleng de dongtian li zhenshi beiganwenxin*
‘I feel so warm in such a freezing winter’
- 3 *Jintian guqi yongqi diyici yong beidai beizhe baobao*
‘Today [I] screwed up my courage using straps to carry my baby’
- 4 *Zuo jichengche zhuang jieyun canjia le yixie mummy pengyou zai Y17 de juhui*
‘[I] took a taxi and transferred to the MRT to attend a gathering with some mummy friends at Y17’
- 5 *Yilushang suiran youdian chili*
‘Although [I] felt a bit tired on the way’
- 6 *Danshi women muzi duiyou hen kuaile de yitian*
‘We, mother and son, had a very happy day’

Erinerin1231 also reported feeling happy about going out with her baby despite it being a bit tiring (lines 5–6), thereby indicating an evident change in her mindset and mood. Thus, although accusing and advising can be characterised as disaffiliative with respect to troubles talk, they are, in this case, nevertheless still arguably emotionally supportive of the troubles-teller, as we can see from the troublers-teller’s subsequent response.

4.3 Soliciting emotional support as relational practice

As we have already briefly noted, the vast majority of responses to troubles talk in the threads we examined were affiliative, involving various combinations of mutual encouraging, mutual bemoaning, and empathic suggesting, while disaffiliative responses, such as the one we examined in the previous section, were found

to arise only occasionally (see footnote 8). Yet while these affiliative responses were nominally directed at the troubles-teller who initiated the thread, the way in which the participation framework in online discussion boards affords the recursive embedding of one-to-one exchanges within one-to-many, and ultimately many-to-many exchanges – as we discussed in Section 3.1 – means that reciprocity of these displays of emotional support was distributed across not only those directly participating in the threads, but also the body of users who are assumed to be scanning or perusing the threads in that discussion board (Bou-Franch et al. 2012). By collectively expressing the same experiences and feelings as shared across these troubles talk threads, those users were able to communalise a feeling of emotional support across the broader participation framework of users who are either “experiencing” or “experienced in” such troubles. As Kuo (1999:528) argues in relation to troubles talk in face-to-face interaction between young Taiwanese women, this kind of mutual display of feeling “togetherness in their plight” also reinforces a sense of a “common bond” emerging between these participants, a finding that can be extended to participants in online discussion boards.

This communalised sense of emotional support is afforded, as we have noted, by the participation framework that online discussion boards engender. In this way, then, soliciting emotional support through troubles talk constitutes a relational practice by which a loose relational network can be co-constituted over time. As Kouper (2010:15) notes in her study of peer advice in an online discussion board, “sharing personal information” can serve “multiple purposes... including *community building* and maintenance and *emotional work*” (emphasis added). It is in that sense that soliciting and offering emotional support in online discussion boards arguably constitutes an important relational practice by which a warrant for sharing troubles with nominal acquaintances, and even strangers, is thereby established.

5. Concluding remarks

In this study, we have examined troubles talk, and responses to it, in threads from an online parenting discussion board in Taiwan. We have argued that affiliative responses involve users displaying solidarity empathy through mutual encouragement and mutual bemoaning, as well as through empathic suggesting. In such cases, by taking the footing of troubles-recipient, respondents hold the initial poster accountable for troubles talk rather than seeking advice or complaining. In the smaller number of instances of disaffiliative responses that we were able to identify in our analysis, although the participation footings of the user initiating

the thread were evidently shifted from troubles-teller to complainer or advice-recipient, instances of accusing and advising were nevertheless interpretable as displays of emotional support for that initial poster.

In the course of our analysis, then, we have observed not only how a particular, locally situated participation order can be instantiated through a particular set of relational practices in an online discussion board, but also how this locally instantiated participation order is, in part, constitutive of those relational practices. This participation order encompasses both the configuration of participation frameworks instantiated through these threads, that is, where one-to-one reciprocity is recursively embedded in one-to-many, and ultimately many-to-many exchanges, as well as the various participation footings enacted by users, such as troupers-teller and troubles-recipient, complainer and complaint-recipient, and (experienced) advice-giver and (inexperienced) advice-recipient. We have argued that it is the instantiation of such locally situated participation orders that enables users, at least in part, to navigate their way through this complex field of social actions/activities and related preference structures. It follows that in order to better analyse social actions/activities, as well as relational practices in CMC environments, we need to examine the broader participation orders in which they are co-constituted. It is important to note, however, that in outlining the importance of the participation order for analysing interactions in online discussion boards, we are not meaning to generalise about all forms of computer-mediated communication, and so this discussion is not intended as a one-size-fits-all approach. There are various modes of CMC, and these all need to be examined vis-à-vis the participation order in their own right.

There is also yet another analytical challenge we face in examining participants' understandings across cultures. Given that we have been focusing on data from Chinese in this paper, the use of an analytical metalanguage grounded in English arguably carries with it potential problems. We have thus endeavoured to make reference to Chinese metalanguage where appropriate, and also tried to explain our use of terms in an attempt to ensure we are in fact tapping into what these practices *mean* for those participants. It is our contention that further studies on the pragmatics of CMC interactions in non-Western languages that eschew unreflective use of terminologies inherited from English are in order. This study is intended as a modest contribution to that ongoing endeavour.

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Appendix

Thread 1: 'Baby keeps being sick....very bad mood'

Post 2: Zaizai & puzai's mum, 2011-01-17 13:38

'Mummy *jiayou*~

Encourage each other

My two [children] also keep being sick recently, especially the ten-month old baby. [His] running nose is like a water tap and doesn't stop. [It] makes me headache'

Post 3: C. C. & Sean, 2011-01-17 14:38

'Zaipu Mum

Thank you....let's *jiayou* together.....

[Let's] take [this] as babies are saving up [their] immune system....'

Post 4: little watermelon mama, 2011-01-17 15:16

'My baby is just one year old~[he] is having running nose for three weeks and hasn't recovered from it yet ><

I have [took him] to see [doctors] in [different] three hospitals and still the same~~((crying))'

Post 5: little little meat ball, 2011-01-17 15:56

'We family three [people] also keep being sick, maybe [because] the weather is changeable, *jiayou*!'

Post 6: Kiwi mummy, 2011-01-17 16:08

'Like we family five [people] were all sick. My son was the most serious one, and he was hospitalised the week before the last week for one week.

After [he was] discharged from the hospital, he got flu again, this was really.....all family was exhausted.

We *jiayou* together~ fighting with the virus'

Post 7: C. C. & Sean, Complement message at 16:37 on 2011-01-17

'Thanks for mummies' messages

Everyone let's make effort together.....

[I] also hope every baby is healthy'

Thread 2: 'I love my son very much...but I can't put with [it]'

Post 1: erinerin1231, 2011-01-10 17:18

'Maybe outsiders think [being] a housewife is relaxing..but I can't put up with [it]

[My] husband sometimes is on business trip to China for one week..I [stay behind] alone with [my] baby

During the sunny days I can still go out to have a walk

But it often rains in *Xizhi*

I want to look for a babysitter...[I] feel reluctant to do so in my heart

My mum needs to help my brother look after [his] kids

My mother-in-law has passed away

I don't have any helper at all

Looking for a babysitter for my own reasons

Am I being very selfish?

My husband always wants me to stay at home

But my feeling [is that]

It is very sweet to be together with [my] baby

But I sometimes cry out when I feel anxious

Am I not being satisfied?'

Humour in microblogging

Exploiting linguistic humour strategies for identity construction in two Facebook focus groups

Miriam A. Locher and Brook Bolander

Research within interpersonal pragmatics highlights the relational aspect of language in use (Locher and Graham 2010). While this focus has especially been dealt with in politeness research, it can also be fruitfully combined with the study of identity construction through language (see Locher 2008). The use of humour is such a means of identity construction since showing a sense of humour in interaction is valued in many contexts. This chapter reports on a project on Facebook status updates (see Bolander and Locher 2010; Locher and Bolander 2014). It thus provides insights into identity construction in an interactive Web 2.0 social network site, where the participation framework is such that status updates are written in a semi-public environment in front of an audience of ratified Facebook friends, who can decide to move from the role of overhearer/eavesdropper to participating actively. We conducted a qualitative discourse analytic study of how humour is used in status updates by participants of two Facebook focus groups. These humorous acts of microblogging (Zhao and Rosson 2009; Yus 2011; Zappavigna 2012) are contrasted with different types of identity construction in the other status updates. While some but not all convey that they have a sense of humour, others also evoke identities in connection with other personality traits, as well as making pastime, work, and relationships claims.

1. Introduction

In the introduction to this volume, Chovanec and Dynel (p.7) state that social media “grant contemporary audiences new participatory privileges. Audience members are not merely end-recipients of texts but they assume an active production role as well (Morris and Ogan 1996; Alexander 2011).” In our chapter, we work on data derived from Facebook, a social network site, which offers a

dynamic participation framework that allows its users to take on and perform the roles of producers, transmitters, and overhearer/eavesdroppers (Goffman 1981). When we started our linguistic project on Facebook practices in 2009 one of the main driving forces was that we found the status updates of our friends humorous. We enjoyed reading them and reported chuckling about them to each other. Example (1)¹ is taken from our English data (to be further described in Section 3):

- (1) Status Update (SU): Lauren is wondering where on earth the [name] lecture theatre is ... she's starting to wonder whether it is a [name of university] version of the room of requirement as it's not mapped! (10:22 am)

Reaction to SU 1: unfortunately not Lauren i had lectures there last year. Head to [name] south, over beside the room where you can collect video recording equipment from, you know where that is? And head up the stairs, it'll be on the right in a corner. Sorry not as exciting as your idea..... (10:31 am)

Reaction to SU 2: Lol to the max. Wooo Harry Potter! (10:54 am)

Lauren uses a Facebook status update (SU) to broadcast to her friends list that she cannot find the lecture theatre at her university where she is required to be. We interpreted this SU as containing humour since Lauren, rather than simply asking “where is the lecture theatre?”, creatively makes an analogy to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry from the Harry Potter book series by J.K. Rowling, which contains a room named ‘the room of requirements’, and which, crucially, does not appear on any maps of the castle, and hence cannot be found easily. Through the mere act of posting this SU, Lauren ratifies all the members of her friends list as recipients. These very recipients, in turn, can choose to remain in the position of overhearers or they can decide to become active participants and engage in interaction by becoming producers of messages themselves, thereby creating dialogues or polylogues (Marcoccia 2004). The first reaction to this status update begins by making a brief allusion to the humorous element of the SU (“unfortunately not”) and then proceeds to explain where the lecture theatre is located. The response finishes with another allusion to the humorous content (“Sorry not as exciting as your idea.....”) and thus reveals that the reference has been understood. The second comment reacts to the humorous content by naming Harry Potter explicitly and thus revealing that the writer has understood the reference to the series as well. By doing this, the reference is also made transparent for non-initiated readers of the interaction. The writer further displays that the sense of humour of the SU writer is appreciated (“Lol to the max. Wooo”), thereby both

1. All examples have been reproduced as presented on the Facebook walls; we have not corrected orthography, errors, etc. but have changed all names and references to places.

positioning the SU writer as having a sense of humour, and indicating that this is a positive trait. This is done publicly in front of other Facebook friends.²

These kinds of interactions sparked our interest in what Facebookers actually do on the platform and what kinds of practices they engage in (see Bolander and Locher 2010; Locher and Bolander 2014). In what follows, we will return to our data and our original motivation to delve into the language of Facebook users and elaborate on the role of humour within the interactive practices observed. In a first step we will discuss humour in computer-mediated communication in general (Section 2), and will then turn to the social network site Facebook and our data in particular (Section 3). We will then link this topic to the study of linguistic identity construction (Section 4) and will illustrate our observations with examples from two Facebook focus groups (Section 5). In the final section, we will elaborate on current Facebook practices linked to humour.

2. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) and humour

It is important to state from the start that we do not wish to argue for a particular type of generic Internet humour that is fundamentally different in function from humour found in face-to-face interaction. Just as the search for Netspeak (Crystal 2001), i.e. a particular type of Web language different from face-to-face interaction, was thwarted by the quickly developing scope of computer-mediated practices that ultimately no longer allowed one to speak of only one particular variety of CMC language (see Locher 2014 for an overview of the development), we also cannot make any sweeping generalizations about the use of humour on the web. Instead, we would like to point to the multifunctionality of humour, and related to this to the many different sites where humour occurs on the web; we thereby do not claim to provide an exhaustive overview.

Acknowledging that computer-mediated communication is used for different purposes and offers different interactive possibilities (from information encyclopaedias run by professionals and those run by the general public, private and

2. When we look at the time stamps included in Example (1), we can also make a point in arguing that the first commentator, who responds within nine minutes of the original question, interprets the SU as a request for help, while the second commentator, who responds 32 minutes later is probably too late to be of help and is rather reacting to the humorous sense of exasperation displayed in the SU. In our data, there is no guarantee that SUs get a response since there is no uptake in fifty per cent of all 475 SUs. This statement is not only true for all SUs in general but also for all SUs that were tagged as containing humour. It is important to state as well that Facebook writers are aware of the fact that their status updates may not receive a response since users do not have to be logged on at the same time to use the site.

business email correspondence, to chat and voice interaction, virtual worlds and social network sites, etc.), it is not surprising that the use of humour surfaces in these different locations as well. We can potentially find humour in all of these sites, although the likelihood that humour occurs in a factual encyclopaedia article is lower than the likelihood that it can be found within social interaction among individuals. The use of humour, in other words, is not appropriate for every communicative genre and the same restrictions but also the same possibilities for creative output apply as in face-to-face interaction. While there is much “accidental” humour, i.e. humour that emerges in interaction, there are also sites explicitly dedicated to the sharing of humour. Indeed a crude Google search reveals that there are many compilation sites which collect jokes of all types, funny videos and comedy contributions and cartoons. There are also sites which offer (hospital) clown services or discuss the functions of humour in therapy, and there are many proposals on how best to define humour.

Despite this obvious computer-mediated humour outlet, Zappavigna (2012: 151–152) argues that “internet humour has not been widely studied in linguistics”. She maintains that the main direction of research is to investigate the function of affiliation, i.e. humour “as developing solidarity (Baym 1995)” (Zappavigna 2012: 152). The sources of studies reporting on this affiliation function of humour in different computer-mediated contexts are, among others, Baym (1995), Cappelli (2008), Danet et al. (1997), Del-Teso-Craviotto (2006), Nastri et al. (2006), North (2007), Oring (2008), Page (2012), Petroni (2009), Schnurr and Rowe (2008), Shifman and Lemish (2010), and Vandergriff and Fuchs (2009). For example, Zappavigna herself (2012, Chapter 6) works on the ‘fail’ meme on Twitter and reports on how interactants develop a shared practice and sense of humour.

In Section 5, we will explain what definition of humour we adopted and how we analysed humour in the interactions observed. In the next section, we will turn to the use of humour on Facebook since we wish to explore how humour surfaces in the practices of two specific Facebook focus groups and how these findings can be linked to linguistic identity construction.

3. Facebook: A network of relationships and our data

Facebook is a social network site, which was established in 2004 for Harvard college alumni, and which has been available to everyone since 2006 (Boyd and Ellison 2007). In 2008 its slogan was “Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life [...]. It’s free and anyone can join” while in 2014 it is “Connect with friends and the world around you on Facebook” (facebook.com). Like other social network sites, as defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007), Facebook is

[a] web-based service [...] that allow[s] individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users ['friends'] with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

(Boyd and Ellison 2007)

Facebook can be described as a social environment where users befriend other users who they usually know in offline life (Zhao et al. 2008). While this comment is certainly true for the two focus groups that are part of this empirical study (see below), there are also interest "groups" on Facebook that one can join and where the members do not have to know each other from offline contexts (see also Yus 2011; West and Trester 2013; Locher 2014 for overviews of how Facebook works).

The participation framework of Facebook has developed over time. Today the platform offers multiple options for communication and activities that Facebook users can engage in (see Yus 2011; Jucker and Dürscheid 2012; Herring 2013; Locher 2014): Users write status updates and comments, upload their own pictures and video clips, share and pass on material they find noteworthy,³ chat with friends who are also logged in and write (e-mail) messages, etc. Facebook users thus find themselves in the roles of producers or transmitters of content addressed to their friends lists (or the general public if their profiles are not private) but they also take on the role of ratified recipients who can choose to remain overhearers or become active producers/transmitters in turn. Facebook is thus an example of the Web 2.0 development (Yus 2011: 93; Lee 2011: 112). In this context, Zappavigna (2012) points out the social function of Web 2.0:

The social web, or Web 2.0, are popularized terms used to signal a shift toward the internet as an interpersonal resource rather than solely an information network. In other words, the social web is about using the internet to enact relationships rather than simply share information, although the two functions are clearly interconnected.

(Zappavigna 2012: 2)

This comment is also reflected in the two Facebook slogans quoted above and it allows us to make the link to identity construction, which will be explored in the next section.

In early 2009, we downloaded the profile information and all the activities documented on the walls of those people who had given us consent to participate in our research, after having been contacted via our personal friends list (74 individuals in the case of the Swiss network) and via an academic contact in the UK, who invited students of a British university to join the study (58 individuals)

3. As Chovanec and Dynel (this volume: 9–10) point out in the introduction: "Recipients of seemingly private messages are now capable of turning into transmitters, re-animating the messages authored by others beyond the original communicative frame and participants."

(for considerations on ethics see Herring 1996; Eysenbach and Till 2001; Ess and the AOIR ethics working committee 2002; Markham, Buchanan, with contributions from the AOIR ethics working committee 2012). Within both groups, we selected one anchor person and nine friends, who were chosen on the basis of the number of mutual ties; thus creating two dense networks. FG-S is constituted by a group of ten individuals who were living in Switzerland at the time of data collection, mainly students and young professionals, while FG-UK is a group of ten students who were studying in the UK at the time of data collection. Since we asked to download activities that had already happened in the past (beginning of December 2008 until end of January 2009), the informants gave us consent to work with material that was not written with the researchers in mind (thus we avoided the observer's paradox). The status updates in FG-UK are written almost entirely in English, while those of FG-S are more multilingual. Even there, however, the status updates are written in *lingua franca* English in the vast majority (81.9%) and the display of different languages occurs predominantly in the reactions to status updates and the ensuing mini-dialogues (see Locher and Bolander 2014 for a discussion of these findings).

A tally of all activities pursued by the 20 Facebook users showed that the most dominant activity in both focus groups was to write status updates (SUs), which were triggered by the prompt "What are you doing?" at the time. FG-S wrote 227 SUs (47%) and FG-UK 248 (37%), out of a total of 481 and 673 activities, respectively (Bolander and Locher 2010). Hence we opted to primarily study these text-based practices and to pay less attention to other (increasingly) important multi-modal activities. Other frequent activities for FG-S users were the use of applications (18%), the acceptance of gifts, etc. (11%) (all registered as system messages⁴), and the commenting on somebody else's status updates or photographs (9%). FG-UK, on the other hand, showed the use of applications in 13%, commenting in 23% and playing games in 16%.⁵ In the next section, we turn to the link between microblogging and identity construction in order to start our analysis of the status updates in our data.

4. In 2008 and 2009, the information on the walls shows comments and status updates, but also system messages such as information on uploading photographs or playing games, while in 2013, messages on activities such as playing games are filtered into a different space on the Facebook interface.

5. As already mentioned, the participation framework in Facebook has changed over time. Our impression is that Facebook users in 2014 use Facebook differently; e.g. they upload video clips, photographs and memes to a much greater extent than in the past. The options of engaging in synchronous chat or writing non-public messages to Facebook friends within the platform do not appear on the wall/newsfeed of the interactants and are thus not part of our data collection.

4. Microblogging and identity construction in Facebook

Working within interpersonal pragmatics (Locher and Graham 2010: 1), we are particularly interested in the relational aspect of language and how we can link the study of this inherent aspect of language in general (Watzlawick et al. 1967) to identity construction (see Locher 2008). With respect to away messages in instant messenger, Nastri et al. (2006) report that “[t]hrough posting away messages, users can express their identity and maintain their sense of connection to their friends and family by providing them with a window into their lives” (Nastri et al. 2006). For Twitter, Zappavigna (2012: 14) points out that “people use Twitter and other microblogging services to share their experiences and enact relationships rather than to simply narrate the mundane details of their activities, as has been claimed in the popular press” (see also Zhao and Rosson 2009; Yus 2011). Zappavigna (2012: 38) is quite explicit in linking microblogging with “an ongoing performance of identity” and she sees the motivation for writing tweets in

the human desire for affiliation: we exist within communities of other voices with which we wish to connect. The stances we adopt and observations and evaluations we share all exist relative to the meaning-making of the other members of our social network and to all other potential networks of meaning. In other words, we perform our online identities in order to connect with others.

(Zappavigna 2012: 38)

Social network sites are particularly interesting to look at through a relational lens. In the case of Facebook, we follow Sundén (2003: 3) who argues that “[p]rofiles [and status updates, ML/BB] are unique pages where one can ‘type oneself into being’” (Sundén 2003: 3). West and Trester (2013: 142) refer to this as “self-presentation” in the Goffmanian sense (see also Boyd 2011).

To study this identity construction in a systematic way we follow Bucholtz and Hall (2005), and Davies and Harré (1990) in adopting the concept of “acts of positioning” as a starting point for our analysis. This means looking at the (explicit and implicit) stance that people project through their language choices, i.e. at how they position themselves vis-à-vis others. For example, considering Example (1) again, Lauren positions herself as somebody who goes to university (looking for a lecture hall), who reads Harry Potter, and who has a sense of humour. By explicitly naming the university and the name of the lecture hall, she is appealing to an in-group of people who have access to this information. At the same time she is excluding other Facebook friends who are not familiar with her university. The same argument about in-group knowledge can be made about the Harry Potter series, as already explained above. Lauren thus engages in relational work, which is defined by Locher and Watts (2008: 96) as “all aspects of

the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice". It is important to stress that she is doing this "publicly" in front of her circle of Facebook friends.

Over time, Facebookers can build up particular identities with the information they reveal in their profiles and the status updates and the activities they share.⁶ In the profile pages people can tick pre-given system categories such as gender or age, or they can add personal information on their birthday, education, employment, interests and favourite music/TV shows/etc. In the case of SUs and comments people can be more creative and use explicit (the SU contains a lexeme which evokes a particular role, e.g. "professor", "fiancée") and implicit acts of positioning (the SU only implies that one belongs to a particular identity category; e.g., by describing the act of grading an individual evokes the role of a teacher).

What we wish to explore in this chapter is the use of humour as a means of identity construction within the SUs of our data set. Nastri et al. (2006), who work on English away messages in instant messenger, report Baron et al.'s (2005) finding that "away messages often incorporate humour in an attempt to showcase personality, and that the participants in their study appeared to value the use of humor in away messages". Humour is indeed a valued character trait as evidenced in many cultural practices. To name just a few of many possible examples, the president of the United States has to show that he has a sense of humour at the White House Correspondence Dinner or at cameos in the show *Saturday Night Live* during the presidential campaigns, and dating ads highlight humour as an important trait a potential partner should have (Marley 2010: 458). However, humour displays are multifunctional and can come in many different guises. In the next section, we will explore the ways in which humour surfaced in the status updates of our Facebookers.

5. Humour in two Facebook focus groups

Let us now turn to the definitions of humour and the methodology that we adopt in our study. In her overview of humour research, Schnurr (2010: 311) aptly summarizes the challenges of humour studies as follows:

6. In Bolander and Locher (in press) we explore whether the reactions to the SUs of the users of our two focus groups confirm or challenge the identity claims made in the SUs. We found that both focus groups engage predominantly in face-maintaining and face-enhancing behaviour and thus confirm rather than challenge identity claims.

Humour is a versatile linguistic strategy. It is not only an excellent means of reinforcing solidarity, but may also be used to “do power”, as well as to express resistance and to challenge interlocutors. However, which specific functions a particular instance of humour performs is not always straightforward, and most instances of humour are multi-functional and serve different interpersonal functions simultaneously. In identifying the functions of a humorous occurrence, researchers may rely on various clues including response strategies and speaker’s intonation (Holmes 2000; Mullany 2004; Schnurr 2009). (Schnurr 2010: 311)

While doing power with humour and expressing resistance and challenging humour are functions of humour discussed in Schnurr (2010), she claims that creating, maintaining and reinforcing solidarity is the “most typical function of humour, which all instances accomplish to some extent” (2010: 311). As mentioned above, Zappavigna (2012: 152) argues that developing solidarity is the most important humour function reported in Internet research. What is particularly intriguing for our data is that we are dealing with a participation framework which encourages a semi-public performance of humour in front of an audience of Facebook friends. When humour builds upon shared knowledge, it creates closeness and an in-group feeling and also maintains a group identity. In the same vein, the same instances of humour can also exclude those friends who lack access to common ground (e.g., those who have not read *Harry Potter* in the case of Example (1)). Since Facebookers can connect people from different networks of offline life (e.g. family members, travel companions, school and university mates, work colleagues, etc.) around their own persona, it is easily possible that the witnessed humour will not be understood by everybody who reads the SU. If the SU writer does not wish to exclude Facebook friends, he or she is thus faced with an interpersonal challenge (to be discussed further below).

For our analysis of humour, we systematically analysed the 475 SUs in the two focus groups and established firstly whether or not humour occurred and secondly what categories of humour emerged. Tagging humour is not an easy task; in our case we opted not to label an SU as humorous if we had doubts. Our procedure for deciding was ruled by either clear evidence through linguistic means (see the examples of word play, irony, etc. below) or background knowledge that warranted the SU to be taken humorously (see Hay 2000; Nastri et al. 2006). This background knowledge extended beyond our own personal ties to our informants, to knowledge gleaned from interactions between the informants themselves. Reactions to SUs, or instances in which ratified recipients choose to become visibly engaged in and thereby construct or maintain a dialogue or polylogue (Marcoccia 2004), provided a particularly fruitful means of assessing the presence/absence of humour. In this sense, we acknowledge that humour constitutes a form of “situated performance” (Baym 1995) which is under “joint construction” (North 2007). In the context of chats, North (2007) points out that

Successful humour in these discussions is a joint construction, in which participants encourage each other both by signalling their appreciation through emoticons or other graphic symbols, and by adopting and building on other people's humour. 'Playing along' is an important strategy for supporting humour online as it is in face-to-face interaction (Hay 2001). (North 2007: 547)

While we explored all responses to SUs in light of humour, the fact that only fifty per cent of the SUs received an uptake/comment (Bolander and Locher in press), means that we cannot always draw on the interactive element in classifying an SU as humorous.

Table 1 shows the ten humour categories that our Facebookers employed and that we tagged systematically in the data: Appeal to shared knowledge/in-group, canned jokes, dialogic character, disaffiliative humour, hyperbole, irony, personification, self-deprecation, understatement, and word play. (Instances of vulgar humour were absent.) Examples for each are also provided in Table 1. The category labels refer to forms employed for humorous effect in our data and were developed and observed bottom up. This is not to say that the same forms cannot be used for other non-humorous purposes as well. Furthermore, the same SU could be tagged with more than one humour category. While in theory any act of humour creates an in-group and out-group in that potentially some people might not understand the humour involved, we used the label 'appeal to shared knowledge/in-group' as a separate category for cases when particular groups of people are singled out in order to create affiliative humour. This is the case in (2) in which Claire announces that her confinement to her room is over without revealing why she had to stay there in the first place. Only members of an in-group would know that her confinement was work related, a fact which she reveals later. Her withholding the reason for her confinement, the use of "finally", the exclamation marks and the smiley :D give the SU a playful, humorous rather than a purely informative stance. In other cases the SU is so opaque that only in-group knowledge makes the humorous intent transparent (see (8), where we know that Peter has done none of the things he mentions). Example (3) is one of the rare cases of a canned joke based on word play and in (4) a dialogic character is imitated in the SU, which is argued to create a humorous effect. In (5) Rose's housemate Tony is explicitly named and singled out and thus made the butt of the humour. The capital letters (hyperbole) and the smiley suggest that this SU is intended as humorous (mitigating the force of the complaint). In (6) Rose celebrates that the heating system is working again (after previously having complained about it being freezing). The repetition is argued to make the announcement humorous rather than just informative. Example (7) is an instance of easily detectable irony, while (8) needs background information in order to assess that Peter would never engage in the activities he describes. In fact, from previous SUs we know that Peter is on holiday in Miami, so the context

allows us to draw this conclusion. In (9) we see an instance of personification which creates a humorous effect, since the mundane item of a book is usually not personified. We classified (10) as an act of self-deprecation on the basis of the content and the ellipsis dots. In (11) we argued that the understatement of the workload (“a meer” [sic]) and the afterthought (“for today anyway”) qualify the SU as humorous. Finally, (12) and (13) contain humorous word play.

Table 1. Humour categories and examples in alphabetical order (multiple labelling is possible)

Type	Example	# of reactions
Appeal to shared knowledge/in-group	(2) Claire can finially leave her room!!!!!!:D	3 (1 potentially confirming humour: “were you stuck in your room?!”)
Canned jokes	(3) Rose: What did the duck say when he’d finished shopping?..... Put it on my bill please!.:D.	3 (all confirming humour: “oh dear – they don’t get any better Rose;-))
Dialogic character	(4) Rose can’t believe it...everyone else has exciting post...what do I have?! – A flipping internet bill!	2 (no humour confirmation)
Disaffiliative humour	(5) Rose could hear Tony’s shower singing from 2 floors away, 2 WHOLE floors!:.).	1 (confirming humour: “Dont you appreciate my singing?! haha x”)
Hyperbole	(6) Rose the heating’s working the heating’s working the heating’s working the heating’s working the heating’s working the heating’s working.	6 (1 confirms humour: “YAY YAY YAY YAY BIG HUGE FABBY CELEBRATIONS THE HEATING IS WORKING!!!!!”)
Irony	(7) Peter ignores facebook by updating his status.	0
	(8) Peter has applied laser hair removal, botox and gallons of protein-enhanced smoothies.	2 (1 confirms humour: “ha gwüsst die 30 mache dr angscht:”) [‘I knew you’re afraid of turning 30:’)7
Personification	(9) Sarah is tackling the books... and they are winning:-(.	4 (2 confirm humour: “Go books:P”)

7. In Locher and Bolander (2014), we argue that the display of multilingualism beyond the use of lingua franca English is another strategy available to individuals to engage in identity construction. In our data it was only the members of the FG-S who drew on different languages for this purpose, especially in the mini-dialogues which emerged in the comments sequences.

Table 1. (continued)

Type	Example	# of reactions
Self-deprecation	(10) Lauren is very excited that her holiday starts in 5 days and her birthday is in 6:) she is less excited by discovering the trail of toothpaste she has on her arm...	0
Understatement	(11) Lauren can see a light at the end of the tunnel – a meer 650 words to go and half a presentation to finish and she is done (for today anyway).	0
Word play	(12) Frank is pacing backwards through life	2 (no humour confirmation)
	(13) Andrew is about to get cracking... or crack up...one or the other.	1 (humour uptake: “Or smoke some crack? Eat some Cracking?”)

Out of the 12 examples presented in Table 1, only nine received an uptake in the form of comments (see the third column). (This is more than the reactions received on average: of the 96 SUs tagged as containing humour, only 52 received a reaction in the form of comments.) This information on interactive uptake helped us to confirm our understanding of the humorous nature of the SU in seven of the nine instances. For example, one reaction to (3) was “oh dear – [the jokes] don’t get any better Rose;-)”, and one comment in response to (5) was “Dont you appreciate my singing?! haha x”. In both cases, two individuals other than the researchers confirmed that the SU can be interpreted as containing humour. In two cases, the comments did not refer to the humorous nature of the SU so that no confirmation could be derived from them. In those cases where no uptake by friends was available at all, we relied on textual information and on background knowledge for our classification, as exemplified and described above.⁸ (While the like button was already in place in 2008, this information on uptake was unfortunately not retained in the process of securing data.)

We agree with Schnurr (2010: 310) that “counting instances of humour is not straightforward but is inherently difficult, and poses a range of questions, such as how to count extended sequences of conjoint humour, which typically contain numerous instances of different types of humour”. We might add that the results of counting instances of humour do not necessarily tell us whether performing humour is salient or not. However, for our purposes of studying acts of positioning

8. We reached a coding agreement of 80 per cent for the presence or absence of humour in the SUs. The disagreements were resolved after discussion between the two authors.

in light of identity construction, we have combined the qualitative acts of tagging instances of humour with the quantitative dimension in order to establish what the groups and the individuals within the groups do. Table 2 shows this frequency list after our systematic analysis of the 475 SUs. It reveals that 96 SUs (20%) were interpreted as containing humour. This frequency is surprisingly similar to what Nastri et al. (2006) report for their corpus of away messages where one in five messages also contained humour. Our original impression that humour is important for our Facebook contacts is confirmed despite the fact that 20 per cent might not seem like much at first glance.

Since we allowed for multiple labelling of humour categories within the same SU, we find 114 acts of positioning that entailed a humour type within the 96 SUs (Table 2). Overall, appeal to shared knowledge/in-group (28%), irony (22%), word play (17%) and self-deprecation (17%) accounted for 77% of all instances. When comparing the two groups, however, we get a slightly different distribution. For example, FG-UK used self-deprecation (16%) more often than FG-S, and exclusively used dialogic character and understatement. At this stage, we should stress that we can only report on distribution tendencies that are valid for the 20 individuals that make up the two focus groups. We would hesitate to argue that “the Swiss” or “the English” in general use these humour categories more or less often based on our sample. We do, however, see differences for our two groups, which may or may not be related to geographical space.

Table 2. Humour categories and frequencies*, ordered according to frequency

	FG-S		FG-UK		Total	%
	#	%	#	%		
Appeal to shared knowledge/in-group	10	21	22	33	32	28
Irony	16	34	9	13	25	22
Word play	9	19	10	15	19	17
Self-deprecation	3	6	11	16	14	12
Disaffiliative humour	3	6	4	6	7	6
Hyperbole	2	4	5	7	7	6
Personification	3	6	1	1	4	4
Dialogic character			3	4	3	3
Canned jokes	1	2	1	1	2	2
Understatement			1	1	1	1
Total	47	98	67	97	114	101
%		41		59		100

* Several categories can co-occur in one SU. FG-S had 35 SUs and FG-UK 61 SUs that contained one or more acts of humour.

Turning from the focus on humour to the identity construction of individual Facebookers more generally, we need to discuss the acts of positioning that entail humour in connection with the other acts of positioning used in the SUs. There is thus an interactive element between all the acts of positioning that Facebookers use in their microblogging practice.

In Locher and Bolander (2014) we report that we found five broad identity categories that our Facebookers evoked. In addition to having a sense of “humour”, we found “work” claims (references to workplaces and roles, student life, etc.), “relationship” claims (friendship claims, family claims), “pastime” claims (references to free time activities such as reading, shopping, going out), and “personality” claims (references to a Facebooker’s state of mind or character traits like being sad or happy).⁹ Several of these identity categories can be evoked at the same time so that we allowed for multiple labelling within the same SU. The category “humour” is special in so far as it co-occurs with the other acts of positioning. This is because any of the claims in categories “personality”, “pastime”, “work”, and “relationship” could potentially be made in a humorous way. Since we felt that humour was of particular interest to the practice observed and because having a sense of humour can be constructed as a feature of an individual’s personality, we tagged it separately. Our analysis showed that the 475 SUs entailed 1100 acts of positioning. The results are summarized as follows:

[T]he systematic coding of the data showed that personality acts of positioning were the most prominent, followed by pastime, humour, work and relationship. For both focus groups the order was the same as were, strikingly, the frequencies of the acts. Thus, in FG-S (N=451), 45% of the SUs contained identity claims about personality; in FG-UK (N=649) the frequency was 46%. Similarly, pastime was 27% in FG-S and 25% in FG-UK, humour was 10% in both focus groups, work 8% in FG-S and 10% in FG-UK and relationship was 9% in both. For both groups, highlighting components of one’s personality emerges as a particularly important act which individuals perform through the authoring of SUs.

(Locher and Bolander 2014: 166–167)

Having found differences in the distribution of humour types between the two focus groups, yet similarities in the extent to which humour appears as an identity category relative to other categories, we will now turn to have a closer look at the individual level, by exploring what a number of individuals do on the Facebook platform. We have chosen those four individuals who use humour most. Together they account for over half of the instances of humour (70 out of 114; 61%). Table 3 shows the distribution of their acts of positioning within the five main categories. Peter is a member of FG-S, while Rose, Claire and Lauren belong to FG-UK.

9. The coding agreement rate was at 80 per cent and any remaining problems were resolved after discussion between the two authors.

Table 3. Individual identity compositions of four persons

Person/Category	Personality	Pastime	Humour	Work	Relationship	Total
Peter, #	41	18	21	5	1	86
%	48	21	24	6	1	100
Rose, #	67	54	18	12	7	158
%	42	34	11	8	4	99
Claire, #	72	40	20	4	16	152
%	47	26	13	3	11	100
Lauren, #	67	28	11	25	11	142
%	47	20	8	18	8	101

As with the general patterning for the groups as a whole, Peter, Rose, Claire and Lauren show most acts of positioning within the category “personality” (between 42–48%). When looking more closely at these acts of positioning and establishing whether – most generally – a positive/happy or rather negative/unhappy personality is projected, we find a predominance of “happy” claims, albeit in different distribution (Peter: 62%; Rose: 62%; Claire: 70%; Lauren: 52%; per cent not visible in Table 3).

The distribution of the other categories differs slightly from person to person. In addition to personality claims, Peter uses humour in 21 of his SUs; he makes use of a number of different categories, drawing on irony, appeal to shared knowledge/in-group and disaffiliative humour in particular. He also depicts himself as having a large variety of different interests in music, books and nightlife (21% “pastime”) and evokes being a student in 6%. Taken together, his identity construction is varied.

In the case of Rose, next to predominantly displaying happy personality claims, she uses humour in a self-deprecating sense (5 of the total of 14 occurrences in the corpus) and also employs disaffiliative humour (3 of the total of 7 occurrences in the corpus). As there are individuals who do not evoke these categories at all, her use of these categories is striking. Like Peter, Rose shares her pastime interests in TV shows, food, music, travel and computer-related issues (34%). The relationship claims are friendship claims (6 out of 7), and she projects a student identity (11 out of 12).

Claire projects a clearly happy identity in the category “personality” and especially foregrounds humour achieved by appealing to shared knowledge/in-group. Her pastime interests (26%) cover nightlife, pets, food and travel. Her relationship claims (11%) most often evoke friendship and she projects a student (work) identity (4 out of 4).

Finally, Lauren, next to creating a less happy personality than the others (only 54%), especially appeals to shared knowledge/in-group and irony for humour effects, and writes about theatre and musicals (pastime). Importantly, she lets her

readers share two events that took place during the two months of data collection. On the one hand, she evokes the category of student by writing 22 SUs that refer to essay writing and an impending deadline she must meet; on the other hand, she got engaged during this time and evokes the relationship category of fiancée numerous times.

What we can see from these brief numerical accounts of the distribution of acts of positioning is that each individual produces a slightly different patchwork of identity claims. Over time, we would argue, the repetition of these claims, which are made publicly in front of and for the benefit of the Facebook friends, will result in a more solid understanding of a person's identity construction, both with respect to humour, as well as in regard to other identity claims.

6. Conclusion and outlook

In this chapter we explored the role of humour within acts of identity construction in status updates written by members of two Facebook focus groups ($N = 20$). We found that the groups drew on different categories of humour, of which appeal to shared knowledge/in-group, irony, word play and self-deprecation were the most prominent. We were able to establish differences between the two groups and also point out idiosyncratic preferences.

Our general analysis of acts of positioning revealed that the two groups evoke five main categories of identity acts in very similar distribution: personality, past-time, humour, work and relationship claims. The distribution of humour differed when looking at the individuals rather than the groups, and we could detect slightly different combinations of the main types of positioning claims. Overall, we argue that we can only understand the role of humour when also looking at the other acts of positioning and when taking into account what people write over longer periods of time. When Facebookers produce a single status update containing a humorous act of positioning, they might not necessarily succeed in projecting a sense of humour or be accepted as having a sense of humour. However, when these acts are repeated over time, such an impression is more likely to arise.

While we argued for a combined qualitative coding system with quantification, we do not wish to claim that the numbers speak for themselves with respect to humour. Our tendency to under- rather than over-represent humour may have skewed the numbers. This under-representation results from the fact that our methodology might well have missed a number of humorous status updates that were too opaque to us; not being members of the target group of the humour, and thus lacking certain background knowledge, we may have overseen instances of humour. In addition, we may have missed instances of humour that occurred

over stretches of interaction. This is due to the fact that humour often only becomes evident over time when writers develop small stories (Georgakopoulou 2007) over several status updates that contain humorous elements when followed in sequence, or when mini-dialogues develop between commentators and status update writers. For this reason, we would like to underline that we can only report on tendencies for our two focus groups.

For our understanding of identity construction the participation framework and the interactive possibilities that Facebook provides are crucial (see Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Facebookers can take on the roles of producers, transmitters, and overhearer/eavesdroppers. Even when there is no visible uptake in the form of friends hitting the like button, sharing a post or writing comments, it is essential to acknowledge that the status updates are written in a semi-public space and are meant to be witnessed by Facebook friends. With respect to the participation framework, all individuals who are privy to the SU in question are ratified participants, i.e., both overhearers and eavesdroppers as pointed out by Marcoccia (2004). Following Zappavigna (2012: 38), we wish to highlight that “the stances we adopt and observations and evaluations we share all exist relative to the meaning-making of the other members of our social network and to all other potential networks of meaning”. Facebook writers are often confronted with the challenge of addressing a list of friends which is actually composed of groups of people from different offline circles. As a consequence, the potential of creating out-groups, even when addressing the Facebook in-group at large, is quite high. With respect to status updates, in-groups/out-groups can be created at the level of content, but also via code-switching practices, when individuals switch to languages that are not spoken by everybody and/or when they make use of multiple graphological systems (see Androutsopoulos 2012). This clearly warrants research on how status update writers deal with the potential face-threat of excluding friends. Two technical means of dealing with this are, in fact, provided by the platform itself. One allows status update writers to make their contributions visible to pre-defined groups of friends only (Zuckerberg 2010). The other is the provision of the “translate” option for status updates, with which Facebook has been experimenting since 2011 (Eldon 2011).

The technological advances in Facebook since we collected our data in 2008/2009 have been quite substantial. As mentioned before, our hunch is that Facebookers upload photos/memes/video clips more frequently and comment on them more often than in the past. In general, the interactions have become more multi-modal, which warrants the development of innovative methodologies for studying them (see Thurlow and Mroczek 2011; Herring 2013). The fact that many users nowadays only access the interface via their smartphones rather than their computers is also likely to create shifts in interactional patterns since the desktop

and smartphone interfaces differ in what they display as interactive options. For example, while the “share” button allows a user to indicate that the content is worth sharing with others (i.e. topping the “like” button which signals appreciation), this option was not yet, in summer 2013, available on the smartphone interface. It remains to be seen how these technological differences and advances influence identity construction patterns online – including the display of humour.

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Impoliteness in the service of verisimilitude in film interaction

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This paper addresses the issue of impoliteness in the context of the verisimilitude of film discourse. Taking as its departure point the notion of participation framework encompassing two levels of communication underlying film interaction and drawing on the recent developments in the relevant scholarship on impoliteness, the present article puts forward a number of hypotheses about how impoliteness, albeit extremely frequent and superfluous, is plausibly rendered and does not strike viewers as being inconceivable given the way it is realised on the characters' level of communication. To this end, a few pragmatic factors are discussed: impoliteness as a character trait, the speaker's power, sanctioning impoliteness within a community of practice, and the nature of hearers' reactions to impoliteness.

1. Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate on the *verisimilitude of film discourse/film talk*, here understood as characters' verbal interactions in films, series and serials, their generic differences regardless. Albeit prefabricated and scripted, fictional interactions in contemporary films (as well as drama) do resemble everyday talk in various ways and are amenable to the same linguistic models and tenets as their real-life counterparts, which many authors claim or tacitly acknowledge (e.g. McHoul 1987; Piazza 1999, 2006, 2011; Bubel 2008; Quaglio 2009; Richardson 2010; Alvarez-Pereyre 2011; Dynel 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2013a). While some interactional phenomena seem to be inherent in film talk (but not in real-life interactions), they are still plausible (cf. Palmer 1987; Bednarek 2010) or, at least, not entirely implausible from the viewer's vantage point. A case in point is characters' lavish and ruthless use of creative *impoliteness*, understood as intentional, and frequently boosted, face-threat geared towards causing offence

(see Culpeper 1996, 2005, 2008, 2011; Culpeper et al. 2003; Bousfield 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Bousfield and Culpeper 2008), which does not seem to be so commonplace in real-life talk, at least not in some communicative contexts.

Some media discourse types, including film talk, abound in impoliteness, which displays increased frequency untypical of real interactions. Also, serving viewers' entertainment (Culpeper 1998, 2001, 2005, 2011; Dynel 2012, 2013c), impoliteness in film talk is frequently couched in unconventional means of expression, and thus it shows greater creativity than most everyday impoliteness (Culpeper 2011; Culpeper in Dynel 2013b). Therefore, at first blush, it shows little plausibility, understood as a stochastic or normative notion (Palmer 1987). However, firstly, the frequency of occurrence of impoliteness is not necessarily a determinant of verisimilitude. It is each instance of impoliteness that is individually recognised by viewers. Hardly do they ponder on the totality of impoliteness uses. Even if they did, they could rationalise that the interactions on the screen shown in the space of 30 minutes – 2 hours are just a select sample of the interactions the characters hold in their fictional lives, which need not be so impolite taken as a whole. The same holds for the viewer-researcher (dubbed *metarecipient*) who is not preoccupied with quantitative findings but the workings of each isolated manifestation of impoliteness. Secondly, even a most uncanny utterance need not strike viewers as being inconceivable, as long as they may rationalise it somehow, for instance attributing it to the speaker's frame of mind or exceptional wit, which is also the case with real interactions. Preoccupied with the fictional reality, viewers construe the plausibly portrayed identity of a consistently impolite character, whom they tend to judge, whether or not consciously, in the light of real-life language norms. The fictional speaker's production of impoliteness and fictional listeners' reactions thereto must sound convincing. Ideally, recipients should not perceive the character's impoliteness as entirely implausible, and hence inconceivable, even if exceptional, which is what the production crew aims to achieve when constructing a continually impolite character.

The present study of impoliteness takes account of two *communicative levels* constituting the *participatory framework* underlying *film interaction* (Dynel 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; see also Brock in this volume). On the first level of communication, called the *inter-character/characters' level*, interactions are held by fictional interlocutors alternately performing the roles of the speaker and ratified hearers, sometimes in the presence of unrated hearers (overhearers). In terms of the participatory framework, this level of communication resembles real-life interactions in various ways (Dynel 2010a, 2010b). Among other things, characters engage in impolite talk as speakers and hearers in dyadic or multi-party interactions (see Dynel 2012). Importantly, just as ordinary language users evaluate everyday communicative behaviours as (im)polite, so do fictional interactants, as well as the viewers in front of the television screen. These evaluations are captured by the notion of *first order (im)politeness*, as opposed to *second order impoliteness*, i.e. the evaluation performed

by researchers (see Watts et al. 1992; Eelen 2001; cf. Craig et al. 1986). Support is here given to a view that the second order (etic) view must capitalise on first order (emic) evaluations (e.g. Locher and Bousfield 2008; Bousfield 2010).

The viewer, dubbed *recipient* (Dynel 2011b), is conceptualised as a ratified hearer, yet not an interlocutor, but a participant in film interaction on a level of communication external to the inter-character level. Engaged in the interpretation of characters' interactions, the recipient typically follows the inferential path devised by the *collective sender*, i.e. the film production crew (see Dynel 2011a, 2011b). In terms of pragmatic effects, the recipient's perception of impoliteness may differ significantly from the way hearers on the inter-character level of communication, whether or not the *targets*¹ of face-threat, interpret an impolite utterance. The viewer may find it entertaining (cf. Dynel 2012).

From the metarecipient's (theoretical) vantage point, which subscribes to second order impoliteness, this paper elucidates the workings of impolite exchanges in fictional interaction in the context of their verisimilitude, taking account of the two communicative levels typical of film interactions. Assuming as the departure point recent developments in the theory of impoliteness, this paper will present a number of hypotheses about how impoliteness is plausibly rendered in fictional interactions, epitomised by extracts from "House". Essentially, it will be argued here that impoliteness as a component of verisimilar film discourse should be submitted to the same criteria as its real-life counterpart.

2. Setting the scene: Impoliteness as a personality trait

The following discussion on the interactional workings of impoliteness in fictional discourse is illustrated with examples culled from a television drama series entitled "House" (2004–2012). In each episode, Dr House and his team (whose members change a few times in the span of the eight seasons) are preoccupied with a peculiar medical case. The series must have gained popularity not only thanks to the medical detective stories but also, if not primarily, thanks to the eponymous protagonist, a quick-witted and overtly impolite diagnostician.

Whilst no formal statistics have been compiled, a generalisation may be safely made that Dr House's interactions are riddled with impoliteness, which he performs in the presence of different hearers, mostly in the medical community of practice: his patients, team members, employer, and friend. House's constant deployment of impoliteness is a matter of his personality trait (Infante and Wigley

1. The target of impoliteness may be a chosen hearer or a non-participant in an interaction, whilst the other hearers recognise it, yet they are not meant to take offence (see Dynel 2012 on the workings of impoliteness in multi-party interaction).

1986). On the other hand, such a disproportionate use of impoliteness across contexts is hardly conceivable as a real person's communicative behaviour, because it is circumscribed by etiquette, which the maverick doctor blatantly disregards, not fearing any interpersonal or legal repercussions. House can speak his mind unrestrained, producing unmitigated and frequently gratuitous impolite utterances, which, as he must be fully aware,² may offend his interlocutors. Used to his abrasive demeanour, most of the hearers on the inter-character level seem to take his propensity in their stride, even if they do recognise it (see Section 4). Taking it for granted and not questioning it, they tacitly attribute House's communicative predilection to his handicap and the constant muscle pain in his thigh.³ So do the regular viewers of the series, i.e. interactants on the second communicative level. The recipients who have watched at least a few episodes of the series must have developed a cognitive model of House as a quirky character, which is why they will scarcely be surprised at his/her idiosyncratic impoliteness and unparalleled wit. To maintain the character's consistence and plausibility, the film production crew need to guarantee that House displays the same character streak (Culpeper 1998). A claim may hence be made that impoliteness serves coherent character construction (cf. Kozloff 2000; Culpeper 1998, 2011; Bednarek 2010, 2011).

Interestingly, on rare occasions, Dr House appears to be less uncouth and may even be considered polite, which is so untypical of him that it arouses the other characters' suspicions concerning the underlying causes of his (temporary) metamorphosis, which is duly convincingly explained, also for the viewer's benefit. In the example below, two characters discuss House's bizarre politeness.

(1) [Dr Wilson, House's best friend, enters Dr Cuddy's office.]

1. Wilson: You slept with House.
[Cuddy, who is standing behind her desk, puts down the file she was looking at.]
2. Wilson: He asked permission before taking my bagel, took the case without a fight, honored the parents' request for an MRI.
3. Cuddy: Yes, those were my terms for sleeping with him.
4. Wilson: He's in a good mood.
5. Cuddy: Sex with me would explain that, but it doesn't explain why I'm not curled up in a ball weeping in shame. (She sits down) I did not have sex with House.

2. On the understanding that, a character belonging to a fictional reality can have inner cognitive states. In any case, such can be ascribed to him/her by the viewers.

3. Nonetheless, as a few characters report, House had been the same even before he started suffering from the condition.

6. Wilson: If you two aren't keeping something from me that means he's keeping something from both of us. That can't be good.
 7. Cuddy: Or he's just in a good mood, this is not a crisis. Maybe you can get back some of that money he owes you?
 8. Wilson: (considering what Cuddy just said) Hmm.
 9. [Cuddy looks concerned, while Wilson leaves the office.]
- (Episode 16, season 5)⁴

Having noticed a drastic change in the way House relates to others, Dr Wilson decides to share his worries with Dr Cuddy and attempts a potential explanation (1 and 2). In the light of Cuddy's replies (3, 5), which dismiss his assumptions as being wrong, he is even more apprehensive (6, 8), and so is she (9), even though she ostensibly discounts the problem (7). (Incidentally, it turns out later that House is using medication which poses life threat.) This interaction testifies that it is the absence, rather than presence, of impoliteness (both non-verbal and verbal, the latter being the focus here) in a character's standard behaviour that may be conspicuous to the hearer accustomed to House's uncouth behaviour. This, however, will not be the case of clinic patients who meet him for the first time and have not been forewarned of his nature, as the example below illustrates.

- (2) [House enters the clinic room to find a boy standing there.]
 1. House: How're you doing?
 2. Patient: Okay.
 3. House: Great. I'm doing good, too. I get to knock off an hour early today. You know why? Because I kissed my boss's ass. Do you ever do that? I think she just said yes 'cause she wants to reinforce that behaviour. Wants me to kiss a lot of other people's ass, like she wants me to kiss yours. What would you want? A doctor who holds your hand while you die or a doctor who ignores you while you get better? I guess it would particularly suck to have a doctor who ignores you while you die.
 4. Patient: I should go.
 5. House: You think it's going to come out on its own? Are we talking bigger than a breadbasket? 'Cause actually, it will come out on its own, which for small stuff is no problem. Gets wrapped up in a nice soft package and plop! Big stuff, you're going to rip something, which speaking medically, is when the fun stops.
 6. Patient: How did you –

4. The transcripts follow the spelling conventions of American English, given the origin of the series.

7. House: You've been here half an hour and haven't sat down; that tells me its location. You haven't told me what it is, that tells me it's humiliating. You have a little birdie carved on your arm, that tells me you have a high tolerance for humiliation, so I figure it's not hemorrhoids. [pause] I've been a doctor 20 years, you're not going to surprise me.
8. Patient: It's an MP3 player. (Episode 3, season 1)

After a conventionally polite conversational token (1), about which House cannot usually be bothered, he makes a diatribe against Cuddy (3), his employer, the target of his criticism not participating in the current interaction. Although he does not seem to be overtly attacked but only challenged with the closing question, the patient expresses his intention to leave (4). Thereby, he indicates his recognition of the fact that House is clearly giving vent to his anger, possibly sensing a potential offence that the doctor may give to him should the interaction continue, the reason for which is revealed as the interaction develops (5–8). House presents his “diagnosis” (5) in a light-hearted manner, which might cause offence to the addressee (from the recipient's perspective, deserved, given the patient's silliness (8)). Nonetheless, the patient is more intrigued than offended given the doctor's insightfulness and ability to infer what the patient already knows (6). It seems that House's expertise eclipses his vice of impoliteness, and wins the patient over to House's side. Also, from the patient's vantage point, House's impoliteness is explainable if he interprets House's conduct as a reaction to his having undergone self-humiliation in front of his employer (3).⁵

Incidentally, this example illustrates that House does not have absolute power. He is subservient to his boss, at least in some contexts, and dominant with respect to the patient. Power is indeed one of the concomitants of impoliteness.

3. Power

Power is inherent in almost all interactions, even those not organised institutionally (Watts 1991; Locher 2004; Limberg 2008, 2009). Power gives an individual freedom of action, regardless of any potential imposition of his/her will on others, who thus cannot object (Watts 1991). This is related to the fact that power is also one of the components in the evaluation of weightiness of a face-threatening act, as conceptualised by Brown and Levinson (1987). Contrary to Brown and Levinson's (1987) conceptualisation, power is necessarily dynamic (Harris 2001;

5. I would like to thank Jan Chovanec for pointing this out to me.

Mullany 2008) and is negotiated in interaction, whereby participants shape and present their identities (Locher 2004). The speaker's power is a factor which legitimises his/her use of impoliteness (see Eelen 2001; Harris 2001; Watts 2003; Mills 2003; Locher 2004; Bousfield 2008a; Limberg 2008, 2009; Mullany 2008). As Culpeper (1996, 2008) observes, impoliteness is more likely to emerge in cases of power imbalance, which is validated in the context of a number of discourse types (e.g. Kasper 1990; Bousfield 2008b).

Beebe (1995) argues that impoliteness (in his parlance, "instrumental rudeness") is deployed for the sake of two main communicative goals: to assert one's power or to get power over the interlocutor. Specifically, the speaker's aim is to vent negative emotions and to assert one's power, viz. to appear superior, for instance via insults and putdowns, and to get power over actions or in the conversation (Beebe 1995). What appears to be of relevance is Watts's (1991) differentiation between *legitimate* and *expert* power. The former depends on organisational structure, while the latter stems from an individual's expertise.

Referring to the exemplification data, one may venture to claim that Dr House exercises hierarchy-based power over his subordinates but builds power over his employer and patients. He has legitimate power over his team and wields expert power as a specialist in medicine in any interaction, regardless of the type of interlocutor (a team member, employer, friend, or patient). It seems that his expertise outweighs his vices, notably his abrasive candidness or impudence, which he thus employs with impunity. House has an "acerbic, brutally honest demeanor. His behavior often borders on antisocial, but House is a brilliant diagnostician whose unconventional thinking and flawless instincts afford him a great deal of respect."⁶ He garners respect from, and enjoys power over, the interactants on the first level of communication, which recipients must also acknowledge.

- (3) [Dr Cuddy's handyman had an accident while repairing roof. She has pangs of conscience, as she knew he wasn't feeling well and wanted to go home. House, who has been asked to diagnose the symptoms, enters the conference room, sucking on a lollipop.]
1. House: Cervical MRI, work up for DIC, and start him on a heparin drip.
 2. Cameron: Who?
 3. House: You want to know his name? [throws file down on the table]
I'm sure it's in the file.
- [Cuddy enters.]

6. <http://www.fox.com/house/about/>, last accessed 15 May 2013.

4. House: Or you could ask her. She's his oldest, bestest friend. They were in Cub Scouts together.
 5. Cuddy: I'll get started on the blood tests.
 6. House: You haven't been a real doctor in ten years, you'll make a mess all over the sheet.
 7. Foreman: I'll do it.
 8. Cuddy: You have clinic duty. I still know how to handle a patient.
- (Episode 3, season 2)

The interaction above starts with House delegating work to one of his subordinates (1), Dr Cameron, by means of a directive. Albeit unmitigated, this utterance should not be considered impolite, thanks to the speaker's legitimate power (see Section 4). However, House's reply (3) to Dr Cameron's question (2) does display a degree of superfluous face-threat, which the speaker could easily avoid by merely stating that they have a new patient. When Dr Cuddy, Dean of Medicine, has entered, House chooses her as the target of a biting utterance but addresses it to Cameron (4). Taking cognisance of what has happened to the patient, House means to exacerbate Dr Cuddy's remorse. In order not to lose face, the target disregards the attack, though, committing herself to helping reach a diagnosis (5). House then casts doubt on her expertise, questioning her ability to perform what is admittedly one of the easiest medical procedures (6). Recognising this impoliteness, another participant takes the floor, trying to salvage the situation (7), but Cuddy assumes the speaking role again, fending for herself (8).

As this example bears out, whilst some proportion of House's impoliteness can be attributed to his expert or legitimate power (over his subordinates), some of its manifestations bear no relevance to his expertise or hierarchical organisation in the workplace. This is salient when the topic of an impolite utterance is not related to any medical diagnosis or other professional matters, which manifest themselves, for instance, in blunt authority-based requests. House tends to use his power illegitimately, causing exacerbated face damage, for instance, by dint of insulting remarks. His use, or rather abuse, of power in such cases appears to be a matter of deprecating an individual and causing heightened face-damage with a view to displaying his superiority and building power over his interlocutors. So frequently does he do it that interactants who meet him regularly are impervious to, and seem to make light of, his verbal attacks. Therefore, a query arises as to whether his impoliteness should be regarded as impoliteness in a second order approach.

4. Is this really impoliteness?

Post-modern or *discursive* approaches to (im)politeness (e.g. Eelen 2001; Mills 2003; Watts 2003) emphasise the role of context in determining what is (im)-polite, rather than regard chosen communicative acts or language forms as being inherently associated with (im)politeness. Context encompasses particular circumstances in which an utterance is produced, determining whether an utterance can be considered *appropriate* in it. Therefore, impoliteness can be defined as inappropriateness of communicative behaviour relative to a particular context or subjective perception of interactional norms' infringement as subjectively seen by interlocutors in a particular context (see Meier 1995; Kienpointner 1997,⁷ Watts 2003; Spencer-Oatey 2005; Holmes et al. 2012; Culpeper 2012). (In)appropriateness is distinguished in the light of behavioural expectations, contractual requirements, rule specifications, and interpersonal conventions (Spencer-Oatey 2005). Consequently, impoliteness amounts to "breaches of norms that are negatively evaluated by interactants according to their expectation frames" (Locher and Watts 2008: 81). Thus, given that interlocutors and recipients alike expect an individual, here a character in a television series, to be consistently verbally aggressive and perceive this as a peculiar norm determining appropriate communicative behaviour in the workplace, a question may arise if it should actually be conceptualised as impoliteness, understood as a second-order label.

4.1 Unmarked face-threatening utterances

The vexing issue of appropriateness can be viewed in the context of *politic behaviour* (Watts 1989, 2003), also called *unmarked behaviour* (Watts 2005; Locher and Watts 2005). Whilst politic behaviour is usually related to, and discussed in regard to, politeness, a question arises as to whether it can include also parallel non-salient manifestations of what is normally deemed impoliteness. Politic behaviour is part of *facework/relational work* (Watts 2003, 2005; Locher 2004; Locher and Watts 2005, 2008) which covers "the entire continuum from polite and appropriate to impolite and inappropriate behaviour" (Locher 2004: 51). Watts (2003: 144) defines politic behaviour as that "which participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" and which is "is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e. as non-salient" (Watts 2003: 19). By contrast, salient or marked behaviour is that which goes beyond "what is expectable" (Watts 2003: 19) resulting in politeness (positively marked behaviour) or impoliteness (negatively marked behaviour).

7. He uses the label "rudeness", though.

Interactants judge messages as polite, impolite or appropriate in an ongoing interaction on the basis of their expectations and norms construed and acquired on the strength of their experience in similar situations. Usually, individuals forming a social group who interact in a range of social situations will have developed similar expectations, which is why they tend to arrive at compatible judgements of the situation at hand. An important provision is that norms are renegotiated, and judgments may change over time (Watts 2003; Locher and Watts 2005).

In the light of the above, one may wonder whether accustomed to an interactant's (here, Dr House's) predilection for employing exacerbated face-threat, hearers (on both levels of communication) find it unmarked/politic. However, if recognised by hearers, it is here argued, aggressive/face-threatening behaviour cannot be unmarked and non-salient, and thus appropriate, even if it is not unexpected. As a matter of fact, being braced for an interactant's verbal aggression (and being baffled by his/her unexpected courtesy, as discussed in Section 2) does not necessarily involve not being surprised by each of its manifestations, which appear unannounced and exhibit unlimited forms. Therefore, such utterances should still be classified as impoliteness, rather than politic behaviour (see Section 4.2).

This does not hold only for what is here called *unmarked face-threatening utterances*⁸ which mirror *conventional politeness formulae* (Watts 2003), i.e. verbalisations considered merely politic, rather than polite. In a similar vein, vis-à-vis unmarked politeness and its formulae, Terkourafi (2008) distinguishes *unmarked rudeness*⁹ which is realised by dint of conventionalised impolite expressions expected in contexts conventionally perceived as face-threatening. The epitome of conventional unmarked face-threatening utterances is the superior's use of imperative mood or unmitigated negative evaluation towards subordinates (e.g. turn 1 in Example 3, or turn 4 in Example 4). The use of unmarked face-threatening utterances is most pronounced in institutional power structures, which allow for the indication of legitimate power (discussed in Section 3) by those higher in the hierarchy (e.g. an employer towards an employee, a police officer towards a detained person, or an army sergeant towards a recruit) when giving commands or orders or voicing criticism. This, technically speaking, can scarcely count as prototypical impoliteness (cf. Culpeper 2011). Legitimate power paves the way for communicative behaviour which might be deemed face-threatening but is used for coercive purposes and is sometimes rewarded (Harris 2001). It may be conceived as the realisation of

8. However, such non-salient/unmarked forms should not be mistaken for what Culpeper (2010, 2011) dubs *conventionalised impoliteness formulae*, viz. expressions in which context-specific impoliteness effects are conventionalised, but which are typically considered markedly impolite.

9. Terkourafi (2008) uses "rudeness" as a label for intentional face attacks, here termed "impoliteness".

Brown and Levinson's (1987) *bald-on-record* strategy, originally encompassed by the politeness framework. Impoliteness, by contrast, is usually regarded as "abuses of power, that is, cases where a person or group exerts power over another person or group beyond what is considered legitimate" (Culpeper 2011: 200).

Nevertheless, even in institutional power structures, the level of appropriateness/what is legitimate may sometimes be difficult to determine, and, from the perspective of the target, certain verbal acts may not be fully justified, and thus they appear to be inappropriate/impolite (Limberg 2008). This concerns threats, for instance. Limberg (2008: 166) states that "despite official authorisation of this strategy one would expect that the target of a threat would be likely to assess the exploitation of institutional power through the use of verbal threats as face-threatening (i.e. impolite or rude) because his/her action-environment is severely restricted." What seems to be central to this assessment is not only the context but also the means of expression, which may involve mere bluntness, dubbed unmarked face-threat, or may be tantamount to exacerbated face-threat, which cannot possibly be legitimated.

- (4) [Dr Chase calls House from prison, where the former has gone to investigate the case of a prisoner whom the team are diagnosing.]
 1. Chase: This is Chase.
 2. House: [from the hospital desk near Diagnostics] Did you beat any confessions out of anybody?
 3. Chase: I haven't spoken to any inmates.
 4. House: Does anybody do their jobs anymore?
 5. Chase: I've decided Clarence's life isn't worth risking mine for.
 6. House: I appreciate your candor. Did you even go to the prison or are you just out playing polo?
 7. Chase: I'm searching both Clarence's cells. I figure, if he's on something, it's stashed somewhere. (Episode 1, season 2)

Most of this interaction between House and his subordinate, Dr Chase, conforms to ordinary conversational norms in the workplace, which both the interlocutors and the recipients of the series must recognise. The rhetorical question House asks (4) is indicative of legitimated/unmarked face-threatening utterance, rather than impoliteness, for it is in the employer's capacity to delegate work to his subordinates, however uncanny the duties may be. However, questioning Dr Chase's commitment to his duties, House resorts to a personal barb (6), implicitly referring to the former's background (English/Australian upper crust). This cannot be easily embraced as a supervisor's normative verbal behaviour, but the target appears to neglect it entirely in his response (7), which works as a testament to his having sanctioned the comment, on the grounds of it being typical of House. The recipient will also recognise the barb, albeit (most likely) sanctioning it.

4.2 Sanctioned/legitimated (not neutralised/unmarked) impoliteness

Utterances motivated by legitimate power are only part of the many manifestations of face-threat with which the discourse in the fictional workplace of “House” is inherently replete. Several researchers observe a similar phenomenon prevalent in various discourse types. Tracy (2008) calls it *reasonable hostility*, as well as *situation-appropriate face-attack* in local governance meetings, while Harris (2001) invents the term *conventionalised aggression* to capture verbal conflicts in the British parliament, which need not be seen as inappropriate, and thus overtly impolite, by participants. Similarly, Watts (2003) proposes the concept of *sanctioned aggressive facework*, which operates on neutralising face-threatening acts in interactions among family members, friends, competitors (e.g. in politics) or hierarchically organised interlocutors (e.g. military services). In Watts’s (2003) view, sanctioned aggressive facework involves legitimised occurrence of behaviour that would otherwise be perceived as impoliteness.

By the same token, Mills (2002, 2003, 2005) champions a view that (im)politeness resides in individual assessment of norm observance/violation within a given *community of practice*¹⁰ and depends on the context, rather than being intrinsic to utterances. Mills states: “Impoliteness can be considered as any type of linguistic behaviour which is assessed as intending to threaten the hearer’s face or social identity, or as transgressing the hypothesized Community of Practice’s norms of appropriacy” (2005: 268). Mills (2002, 2003, 2005) avers that in certain communities of practice (epitomised by the army), which negotiate their own norms and rules, aggressive behaviours conform to *norms of appropriacy* and they can hardly be regarded as impoliteness. Specifically, highly conflictive face-attacks/aggressive behaviours are not found impolite by participants (first-order impoliteness), and hence they should not be classified as impoliteness from a scholarly perspective (second-order impoliteness). This claim is premised on an assumption that “impoliteness only exists when it is classified as such by certain, usually dominant, community members, and/or when it leads to a breakdown in relations” (Mills 2002: 79). This argumentation appears to be tenuous. It is typically the dominant speakers that produce face-threatening acts towards hearers lower in the hierarchy (e.g. soldiers of lower ranks) and it is also these speakers, in Mills’s view, that consider their communicative practices to conform to the prevalent norms. However,

10. The concept of a “community of practice” was first advocated by Lave and Wenger (1991) and subsequently popularised by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (e.g. 1992, 1998), who define it as “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour” (McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464).

the targets of face-threat should also be able to decide what counts as impoliteness, i.e. inappropriate behaviour, even if, due to lack of leverage, their evaluations may not have a bearing on their relations with dominant community members.

Moreover, disputing Mills's approach, Culpeper (2005, 2011) convincingly contends that *sanctioning/legitimizing* aggressive behaviour does not correspond with *neutralising* it. The hearer may still regard it as being impolite (cf. Bousfield 2007), since the "high salience of impoliteness behaviors makes it very difficult for targets to neutralize them by factoring in context" (Culpeper 2005:69). Culpeper (2005) corroborates his postulate with recurrent ritualised impoliteness central to some television programmes, with *The Weakest Link* as a case in point. Albeit inherent in this television genre, which Culpeper (2005) discusses in the context of Levinson's (1992) activity types, impoliteness cannot be neutralised in context, inasmuch as participants do recognise it and sometimes also take offence at it. Culpeper (2011) marshals diversified socio-psychological research, adducing evidence in favour of the reasons why individuals may be offended by sanctioned impoliteness.

On the whole, even if sanctioned/legitimated, blatant verbal aggression is usually not neutralised in context, which is why it should still be conceptualised as impoliteness (Culpeper 1996, 2005, 2011; Bousfield 2007, 2008a, 2010). While Watts (2003) uses the labels of sanctioned or neutralised face-threat as synonymous, Culpeper (2011) emphasises that legitimization/sanctioning should not be mistaken for neutralisation. In his view, the latter notion pertains to verbalisations based, for instance, on *mock impoliteness*¹¹ (Leech 1983), which is orientated to rapport and solidarity, or accidental impoliteness, by dint of which the speaker does not mean to offend the target, nurturing a positive attitude to him/her. Here, neutralisation covers unmarked face-threatening utterances originating in the speaker's legitimate power in the workplace (cf. Section 4.1). As a result of neutralisation, the target will not perceive, let alone take offence at, the face threat (Culpeper 2011). By contrast, legitimizing/sanctioning impoliteness does not mean neutralising it, for it is still recognised as genuine face threat and may give rise to the hearer's being insulted, inasmuch as the context cannot override its salience. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that even if language users within a given community of practice or participants in an activity type hold backgrounded expectations of face-threatening acts, they do not consider them implementations of a paramount norm, let alone take them for granted. Accordingly, little support is here given to Schnurr et al.'s (2008) claim that in the workplace, impolite messages communicated on an everyday basis by members of the work

11. As argued elsewhere (Dynel 2015), mock impoliteness has nothing to do with impoliteness per se, and the mere face-threatening form of an utterance does not suffice as evidence that mock impoliteness is a type of impoliteness, namely neutralised impoliteness.

groups or communities of practice higher in the hierarchy can be conceptualised as politic behaviour, merely because the targets do not show offence in their replies. Albeit perceived as nothing out of the ordinary, genuinely impolite utterances prevalent among interactants do not lose their status of impoliteness.

The reception of (im)politeness depends on different types of norms. Culpeper (2008: 30) propounds four types thereof: “personal norms” (consequent upon the entirety of an individual’s social experiences); “cultural norms” (pivoted on an individual’s experiences of a particular culture); “situational norms” (based on an individual’s experiences of a given situation); and “co-textual norms” (dependent on an individual’s experiences in a given interaction). Consequently, salient impoliteness, whether verbal or nonverbal, is judged in the context of cultural and personal norms, which “can engulf local norms which might otherwise ‘neutralise’ a judgment that it is impolite” (Culpeper 2008: 31; Culpeper 2005). It is thus suggested that general cultural norms, as well as personal norms deeply ingrained in an individual’s mind, can override situational and co-textual ones. As a result, an interactant may still recognise the impoliteness of an utterance which subscribes to the current activity type or a situational/co-textual norm within a given community of practice.

On the other hand, it is fair to say that the categories of norms Culpeper (2008) proposes may overlap or may be interdependent. For example, cultural norms actually feed an individual’s personal norms, based on his/her personal experience of a given culture. More importantly, the total of situational norms an individual has garnered may have a bearing on his/her personal norms. As already claimed with regard to the exemplification data at hand, this will be the case with House’s team members, his employer and best friend, each of whom may regard his impoliteness as a norm, in the light of their previous interactions with him. This personal-situational norm underlying most interactions with House is significantly different from, but subordinate to, those pertinent to their interactions with other individuals in the same community of practice. Those form a general normative backdrop against which the second-order norm for interactions with House cannot be neutralised, even if it can be sanctioned.

The same applies to the regular viewers of the series, hearers on the second communicative level, who will take most of House’s impoliteness in their stride. They are generally accustomed to the main character’s impoliteness, having been surprised by it only initially, watching the first episode. However, they must still recognise it. By way of contrast, patients, who are not familiar with House’s propensity towards using impoliteness, cannot typically sanction it. Although their reactions may vary, most testify to the patients’ being shocked and/or taking offence at House’s impolite turns. Two examples below illustrate what has been said so far in the context of multi-party interactions in which House’s co-workers acknowledge the face-threat his actions and utterances give rise to.

- (5) [The team are now focused on a case of an emancipated woman, who is devoted to her professional career. House enters the patient's room. He slams his cane on her bed tray, waking her up. He grabs the ultrasound gel and opens her gown to squirt some on her belly. She tries to push him away.]
1. Patient: Hey, who are you?
 2. Thirteen: [entering] This is Dr. House. He's too brilliant for introductions. [looking at House] False positive.
 3. House: You're too busy to be running a Day Care Center in your abdomen.
 4. Thirteen: False positive. (Episode 1, season 5)

When House bursts into the patient's room and, without much ado, commences an examination, startling the patient, who does not even know who he is (1), Dr Hedley (called Thirteen) attempts to salvage the situation (2). She must appreciate the fact that House's violation of rudimentary etiquette norms by invading the woman's personal space, which she finds typical of him, is a major imposition on the patient, who considers it face-threatening. Expecting House not to answer, Thirteen responds to the patient's question by means of a wittily biting utterance, whose target is House (the third party). While she may indeed praise his expert power, she simultaneously criticises his dubious etiquette. Then she addresses him, presenting the result of her earlier examination, which, in her view, renders House's current testing useless. House, however, seems to neglect both the jibe and the diagnosis (3), implicitly suggesting that the foetus must be hidden somewhere outside the patient's abdomen (which later turns out to be the case). The patient (whose response remains unknown to the (meta)recipient) may consider this utterance impolite, for it implicitly criticises her devotion to work.

- (6) [House's patient, a 10-year-old autistic boy called Adam, is screaming and fighting as the nurses are trying to make him breathe from the mask to sedate him. Waiting to perform a biopsy, Wilson heaves a sigh. The boy's parents, Sarah and Dominic, are also waiting. House enters the room.]
1. House: For the love of god, can't somebody shut that kid up? Got people trying to work around here. [looking at Wilson] Why don't you show him a teddy bear or something?
 2. Dominic: Who are you?
 3. House: Somebody you'll never send a gift to.
 4. Wilson: This is doctor House, your son's doctor.
 5. House: [He picks up the gas mask.] High test please. [To Adam.] Hey, hey, hey! [He puts the mask to his own nose and starts loudly breathing from it for Adam to see.]
 6. Wilson: Out of Vicodin?

7. Sarah: What are you doing?
8. House: Eating the red berries. [He keeps breathing from the mask and then tries to put the mask on Adam's nose and mouth. Adam isn't fighting as hard against it but is still protesting. House looks very high and keeps blinking a lot. He breaths from the mask again and then tries it on Adam. This time Adam accepts and is knocked out within seconds.]
9. Sarah: He trusted you.
10. House: No, that wasn't trust. That was self-preservation.
11. Dominic: No, that was huge. It was like a conversation.
12. House: [Tries to get up and unsteadily hangs on to the overhanging lights.] Monkey's afraid to eat the red berries until he sees another monkey eat them. Monkey see, monkey do, that's all it was. Your kid's still just as messed up as when we admitted him.

[Wilson starts the biopsy as House walks away and makes a huge stumble into a trolley in his highly unsteady state.]

13. [Wilson makes a face to the parents as if to say, 'It's ok'.]

(Episode 4, season 3)

On entering the room, admittedly with a view to helping out, and thus nurturing good intentions, House contributes an overtly impolite utterance (1), which clearly transcends a doctor's legitimate manifestation of power over a patient or a colleague. This invites one of the parent's question about his identity, and hence implicitly, the reason for his intrusion (2). In his impolite and vague reply, House suggests that he will not be appreciated (3). Admittedly, recognising the face threat of House's utterance stemming from its unintelligibility, Wilson introduces him (4). Further, reacting to the questions (6 and 7) asked by Wilson and the patient's mother, respectively, House produces an ambivalent reply (8), which cannot be understood, as the speaker seems to have envisaged. This deliberate promotion of misunderstanding may be thought of as impoliteness, which the interlocutors disregard, all the same, in the light of House's success in persuading the boy to inhale the sedative. Both parents are amazed by, and grateful for, what they consider to be a communicative success (9 and 11). House, however, bluntly debunks their claims (10 and 12). He is brutally honest, comparing the boy's reaction to animal instinct, rather than a social skill, and bluntly points to his abnormality. Since their non-verbal responses are not shown on the screen, it is difficult to surmise what the parents' feelings are, but owing to their lack of reply that would indicate offence, a statement may be ventured that they sanction his behaviour, holding him in high regard and having already developed a co-textual norm for his means of relating to others. As House staggers out of the room, Wilson's non-verbal message to the

parents (13) may be perceived as a reassurance that everything is fine and a suggestion that they should take no heed of House's state or abruptness.

Both of these examples indicate that patients and their families who encounter House may be shocked, or at least surprised, by his brusque manner, which violates the prevalent cultural-situational norm, according to which doctors exhibit benevolent bedside manner. They need not, nevertheless, show offence, while their genuine feelings can only be conjectured by the recipient and metarecipient. On the other hand, even if familiar with the prototypical, courteous communication in the workplace, doctors acquainted with House appear to have grown used to his curtness and learnt to respond to it. They tend to offer explanations of House's behaviour to new patients, if they think that the latter may have been offended by him. Such explanations performed for the sake of the characters (listeners on the first level of communication) may also be of use to recipients (hearers on the second level of communication), especially those who are not the regular viewers of the series.

4.3 Sanctioned/legitimated impoliteness in close relationships

Another problem which needs to be addressed is the workings of sanctioned impoliteness in intimate or close relationships, such as friendship, epitomised by House and Wilson's. Birchler et al. (1975) claim that verbal aggression, here conceptualised as impoliteness, may occur more frequently in intimate relationships, such as those of spouses, in comparison to strangers' interactions. This generalisation may not be sufficiently substantiated. Even if the speaker can predict what will be the most offensive to the hearer and whether and what retaliation will ensue, it is unfounded to claim that impoliteness is more prevalent in such relationships (Culpeper 1996), for friends and family members typically show positive affect to one another, rather than negative affect, which is the one that promotes impoliteness (cf. Culpeper 1996). On the other hand, close relationships do not exhibit restrictions typical of more distant relationships and formal interactional contexts. This is why impolite utterances may indeed be frequent in close relationships, yet they do not carry the face-threat they would if performed in more formal contexts and/or by interlocutors distant from one another. In close relationships, individuals may speak their mind without bothering much about the offence they may be causing but trusting that they will be forgiven. Consequently, as Culpeper (1996) also observes, in the relationships of equals, retaliation is a natural response, which results in *culminative impoliteness* (Mills 2003, 2005; Bousfield 2007; Limberg 2008). On the whole, impoliteness among friends may be regarded as being sanctioned. This manifests itself in House's interactions with his bosom friend, Wilson.

- (7) [House is walking up to Wilson's car in the outdoor car park at night. Earlier, Wilson has agreed to lend house a copious amount of money. Also, House has shied away from a dinner with his parents, on the pretext that he has a prior engagement with Wilson, which the latter appears to have rectified.]
1. House: You bastard! [Wilson turns around and sees House] You invited my parents to dinner.
 2. Wilson: Geez Cameron's got a big mouth!
 3. House: Hah! Not as big as yours!
 4. Wilson: Hey! You used me to avoid seeing your parents.
 5. House: Well what do you care?
 6. Wilson: I don't, I just thought it might be interesting to find out why.
 7. House: You could have just asked.
 8. Wilson: You would have lied!
 9. House: And you would have believed me, which would have kept us both happy! [Wilson looks utterly confused] You want your money back? Is this what this is about?
 10. Wilson: No! [pause] Wait, what... have you got the money?
[House rests his cane against the car and digs in his pockets for something]
 11. Wilson: If you have the money then why did you need the loan?
 12. House: I didn't. [takes out his chequebook and starts writing a cheque] Just wanted to see if you could give it to me. I've been borrowing increasing amounts ever since you lent me 40 dollars a year ago. A little experiment to see where you draw the line.
 13. Wilson: [dumbfounded] You're [splutters] you're trying to... objectively measure how much I value our friendship?!
 14. House: Hey, it's 5 grand. You've got nothing to be ashamed of. [tears the cheque out of his chequebook] So what do you say? One little phone call and one big cheque?
 15. Wilson: [takes the cheque and puts it in his wallet] Fine. Thanks. Now, be a grown-up and either tell mommy and daddy you don't want to see them, or I'm picking you up at 7 for dinner [gets into his car]
 16. House: [shocked] What do you mean? You just said that...
 17. Wilson: I lied. I've been lying to you in increasing amounts ever since I told you you looked good unshaved, a year ago. It's a little experiment, you know, see where you draw the line. [closes the car door and starts his car up] (Episode 5, season 2)

This interaction opens with a blunt exchange between the two friends involving an invective (1), as well as mutual reproaches and accusations (3–9). Each of the interlocutors speaks his mind, not employing any mitigation and even attacking the other. Bosom friends, they seem to sanction each other's candidness, not showing

any offence. Further, in the light of House's revelation (12), which sheds new light on their relationship, Wilson seems to lose his bearings (13). However, after House's attempt at blackmail (14), he regains composure (15) and proposes an alternative, which throws House off balance (16). Wilson wittily turns tables on House, copying the rhetoric of the latter's earlier confession, even if blatantly not telling the truth.

Incidentally, it must be underscored that sanctioned impoliteness in friendly relationships should not be mistaken for mock impoliteness (Culpeper 1996, 2005; Haugh and Bousfield 2012; cf. Leech 1983), which is considered to be a form of politeness and a testament to camaraderie, even if it should also intimately communicate some face-threatening meaning (cf. Dynel 2015).

5. Hearer's responses to impoliteness

As the majority of examples presented in the previous sections corroborate, the targets of impoliteness in "House" are rarely shown to take offence at it or be outraged by it. Either no reactions are presented (and offence cannot be ruled out), or interlocutors reply otherwise. A hypothesis may be postulated that in film talk, the targets of impolite utterances rarely respond as if they are offended, in order to foster the entertainment of viewers, who will not ponder what the targets' reactions might actually be (Dynel 2013a, 2013c). Having empathy with characters, recipients would not, in all likelihood, be able to appreciate the humour of the bulk of House's impoliteness.

Fictional interactants' reactions vary, just as responses to impoliteness in real-life talk do. Bousfield (2010) champions a complex classification of rudeness and impoliteness, dependent on four binary criteria: the speaker's intent/projectability; the speaker's awareness of possible face-damaging effects of his/her utterance; the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intent; and the hearer's actual taking offence. Hearers' responses will depend on the topic of impoliteness, its manner of materialisation, and an individual's sensitivity, as well as particular interactional factors specifying which norms will be the determining ones.

Whilst interlocutors will typically appreciate Dr House's intention to cause offence, they react in various ways not indicative of any offence having been taken. For instance, the hearers may disregard the impoliteness if they value the speaker's expert power (Example 6) or recognise mitigating circumstances that explain the speaker's bad manners (Example 2). Example 3 and 4 testify that other doctors have learnt to cope with Dr House's impoliteness without losing face, even if his crude remarks should be personal. On the other hand, another possible reaction to impoliteness is the target's anger, which does not signal defeat, though (Example 5). Sometimes, the hearers may also reciprocate impoliteness (Example 7).

On occasion, House's interlocutors cannot embrace and sanction his uncouth behaviour and they do communicate a message that they have been offended, which is shown to recipients. This is also meant to lend some plausibility to interactions involving sensitive empathetic characters, for example Dr Cameron (cf. Example 8). In such cases, personal norms for default polite behaviour reign supreme in the fictional hearers' (and possibly also recipients') minds, suppressing co-textual and situational ones.

- (8) [Dr Cameron enters House's office. House is staring at a file in his hand.]
1. House: Somebody left this on my chair. It's clever. Forces me to either deal with the file or never sit down again.
 2. Cameron: Cindy Kramer. I told her you'd see her.
 3. House: You shouldn't have told her that. She's got metastatic squamous cell lung cancer, six months, tops.
 4. Cameron: Have you even looked at the x-ray?
 5. House: No, just guessing. It's a new game. If it's wrong, she gets a stuffed bear.
 6. Cameron: A spot on a x-ray doesn't necessarily mean that she's terminal.
 7. House: I love children. So filled with hope.
 8. Cameron: It could be pneumonia. It could be sarcoidosis.
 9. House: Could be, if she didn't already have swollen hilar lymph nodes on the other lung.
 10. Cameron: Could we at least brainstorm for other ideas? [He takes the x-ray and puts it up on the light board.] Thank you. [He begins to write on the board.] I still think it could be pneumonia and sarcoidosis, but we should check for tuberculosis and definitely rule out congestive heart failure. [She looks to see that House has written "denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance" on the board.] The five stages of dying.
 11. House: Exactly. Personally, I think it's all just new-age crap, but from your tear-filled, puppy-dog eyes I think I've made my point. Now go tell Cindy whatever-her-name-is that she's dying. (...) (Episode 1, season 2)

This interaction exhibits many face-threatening utterances made by Dr House, who displays indifference to Dr Cameron's empathetic feelings and to the terminally ill patient, a non-participant in this interaction. Some of House's turns may be regarded as mere bluntness in the presentation of medical facts, coinciding with unmarked face-threatening utterances (3 and 9). However, other utterances may be perceived as impoliteness, since House seems to criticise Cameron's question (4) and idea (6) by dint of sarcastic irony (5 and 7). Cameron's emotional non-verbal response, which House explicitly acknowledges (11), is indicative of

the fact that she cannot take kindly to House's decision. It is, however, difficult to determine whether she is personally offended by his abruptness or whether she sympathises with the patient whom he is not willing to help and for whom he shows no concern, not bothering even to remember her surname (11). Whether or not Cameron finds herself the target of House's impoliteness, she does react emotionally to it. Scenes such as this one lend plausibility to the interactions in the series, showing that sometimes the protagonist's impoliteness may carry interpersonal repercussions.

6. Conclusions

This theory-driven paper aimed to tease out the workings of impoliteness on the two communicative levels in film interaction in the context of its verisimilitude and amenability to the same analysis as real-life impoliteness. Film discourse happens to be saturated with creative impoliteness, as typified by "House", and its main function is to entertain recipients. This is why targets are rarely shown offended (even if they are indeed), which may pose a problem for researchers. This limitation aside, impoliteness should be plausibly rendered in terms of the character's consistence and interactional phenomena. Whilst recipients may easily acknowledge that a character's talk is rife with witty impoliteness, they do (typically unconsciously) filter its instances through their view of real-life impoliteness, which the collective sender must acknowledge. Therefore, impoliteness in both fictional discourse and real discourse lends itself to analysis along the same pragmatic criteria. The discussion on impoliteness in film interaction focused on a few pragmatic issues germane to real-life impoliteness.

Impoliteness may be a matter of a personality trait, which helps hearers who regularly interact with an impolite individual develop expectations of his/her communicative behaviour. This is also relevant to regular viewers, who grow used to the character's impoliteness. Ample use of impoliteness may be heavily dependent on the speaker's legitimate power and/or expert power. These are concomitant factors facilitating the occurrence of impoliteness towards different targets. A query may arise about whether verbal aggression frequently performed by a speaker in a community of practice should actually be classified as first-order and/or second-order impoliteness. In contrast to hearers who have had no experience with a speaker showing a particularly brusque speaker, interactants (both interlocutors and recipients) familiar with an individual who frequently deploys impoliteness are used to it to such an extent that they may take its presence for granted, even though they do not cease to acknowledge it. Moreover, based on earlier interactions, hearers to impoliteness, at the two communicative levels, may actually

presuppose it and will be struck by the speaker's unexpected, and hence salient, politeness. On the other hand, they are also familiar with tacit norms underpinning most interactions in the (medical) community of practice, the norms from which the impolite speaker deviates. In reference to the rich scholarship on verbal aggression inherent in chosen communities of practice/discourse types, it was argued that prevalent blatant face-threatening acts should be classified as sanctioned/legitimated but not neutralised impoliteness. This is because the speaker's utterances transcend communicative practices in the workplace in terms of both content (comments irrelevant professionally) and form (not merely unmitigated requests or criticism of a subordinate). It is only unmarked face-threatening utterances produced by a speaker with legitimate power that need not count as impoliteness. Otherwise, even in close relationships, such as friendship, the speaker's candidness may be treated as sanctioned impoliteness. Whilst they may recognise the speaker's offensiveness, listening interlocutors' reactions to impoliteness are diversified, which depends on several factors, such as the nature of the speaker-hearer relationship, the hearer's sensitivity, and the form and topic of an impolite utterance.

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“That’s none of your business, Sy”

The pragmatics of vocatives in film dialogue

Raffaele Zago

The present paper attempts to throw light on the utility of vocatives within the twofold participation framework of film dialogue. This is done through a case study investigating the pragmatic functions and positions of vocatives in the famous films “Erin Brockovich”, “One Hour Photo”, and “Sliding Doors”. The paper identifies various types of vocatives at the inter-character level, namely summonses, relational vocatives, adversarial vocatives, emphatic vocatives, turn management vocatives, mitigators, insults, badinage vocatives and vocatives validating the addressee’s identity. It will be underlined that, at the inter-character level, vocatives typically act as illocutionary force enhancing devices, and that, in this respect, film dialogue makes the most of a tendency attested in naturally-occurring language, i.e. the preponderant use of vocatives to perform functions which go far beyond the mere identification of the addressee. The functions and positions of vocatives will be discussed in their implications for the recipient design. In particular, it will be argued that vocatives facilitate viewers’ suspension of disbelief, contribute to viewers’ involvement, foster the comprehensibility of the plot, and signal crucial scenes.

1. Introduction

Vocatives represent strategic components in the interactional fabric of everyday human relations. As address forms having social and pragmatic content, they perform the essential function of defining and shaping the interpersonal space between the interlocutors. Any choice of vocative, indeed, enables speakers to express a certain attitude vis-à-vis their addressees along a continuum from intimacy to impoliteness (Dunkling 1990). This interpersonal role becomes even more strategic in films, “narrative condensations” (Pavesi 2008:80) where vocatives foster the explicitation and qualification of the relationships among fictional characters, thus acting as effective carriers of pragmatic and narrative information.

The present paper thus sets out to illustrate the importance of vocatives within the complex participation framework of film dialogue (Bubel 2008; Dynel 2011).

First, after a brief preliminary description of the English address system, a modified version of McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) classification of vocatives will be used to document the various pragmatic functions served by vocatives at the inter-character communicative level. In this respect, a number of significant tendencies will be underlined, particularly the preferential use of vocatives to perform functions other than the mere identification of the addressee, their proliferation in adversarial environments and, more generally, their role as boosters of illocutionary force (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2008). It will also be underlined that certain functions of vocatives are typically associated with certain positions.

Second, the investigation will aim to throw light on the workings of vocatives at the recipient’s level, i.e. their contribution to the unidirectional, highly constrained stream of communication from characters to viewers. In this respect, it will be pointed out that vocatives facilitate viewers’ suspension of disbelief by simulating orality, generate viewers’ involvement by enhancing adversarial talk and conversational dynamicity, promote the comprehensibility of the plot by foregrounding core lines and by indicating to whom a given character is talking, and finally mark crucial scenes through their proliferation. In other words, the paper will aim to show that vocatives are an integral part of the recipient design, that is, they belong to the rich system of linguistic ploys adopted for the viewer’s benefit in film dialogue.¹

The aforementioned issues will be exemplified here through a case study analysing the pragmatic functions and positions of vocatives in the successful films *Erin Brockovich* (2000), *One Hour Photo* (2002) and *Sliding Doors* (1998), henceforth EB, OHP and SD.

2. A definition of English vocatives²

In the address systems of many European languages, social distance and common ground are mainly encoded through the opposition between a polite V pronoun, e.g. Italian *lei*, and an informal T pronoun, e.g. Italian *tu* (Brown and Gilman 1960; Helmbrecht 2011). A notable exception is represented by English, where the original distinction between the T pronoun *thou* and the V pronoun *you* has been

1. For a comprehensive description of the recipient design in film dialogue see Dynel (2011), who also proposed the terminology used in the present paper to indicate the two communicative levels of films, namely the “inter-character level” and the “recipient’s level”.

2. The definition of vocative, the various types and the accompanying examples used in this section are based on Brown and Ford (1961), Zwicky (1974), Davies (1986), Dunkling (1990) and, most of all, Leech (1999).

lost, with the disappearance of *thou* and the maintenance of a socially underspecified or neutral *you* (Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003). This well-known diachronic change resulted in a process of re-encoding of socio-pragmatic meanings, which have flowed from the pronominal area of the English address system into the heterogeneous area of vocatives.³

After a review of the relevant literature, it seems appropriate to define vocatives as address forms exhibiting three fundamental characteristics. First of all, they typically consist of lexical forms, mostly nouns conveying various degrees of formality/intimacy (e.g. *Paul, mate, dad, sir, Mr Jones*) but also adjectives generally carrying an affectionate or teasing connotation (e.g. *dear, lazy, silly*).⁴ Second, vocatives are peripheral elements, i.e. they are neither syntactically nor intonationally integrated into the utterance structure, thus behaving like inserts such as interjections, discourse markers, hesitators or expletives (Biber et al. 1999), with which they also share functional affinities. To put it in positional terms, vocatives occur initially (e.g. *Doug, do you want some more ice-cream?*), medially (e.g. *What have we lost at home, Paulie, this season?*), finally (e.g. *Come on, Sam!*) or as standalone items (e.g. *Mom!*). The final position tends to be significantly more frequent than the other positions in spontaneous spoken English (Leech 1999; McCarthy and O’Keeffe 2003), a finding which characterises vocatives as tags, that is, “retrospective qualifications” signalling a given attitude to the addressee (Biber et al. 1999: 1080), as is also typically the case in film dialogue. Lastly, apart from occasional exceptions, vocatives lack pre-modification.

The English address system is thus centred on vocatives whose rich and socio-linguistically varied repertoire of forms compensates for the lack of a T/V distinction. In particular, vocatives perform a variety of pragmatic functions, and the specific pragmatic value of each vocative is heavily modulated depending on the cotext of occurrence, as the following sections will illustrate in greater detail.⁵

3. Vocatives can take many forms (Zwicky 1974; Davies 1986; Leech 1999): (1) terms of endearment, e.g. *dear, honey, darling*; (2) family terms/kinship terms, e.g. *mum, dad*; (3) familiarisers, e.g. *guys, man, mate*; (4) familiarised first names, e.g. *Chris, Jackie*; (5) first names in full, e.g. *Jennifer, Thomas*; (6) first names + last names, e.g. *William Bright*; (7) last names, e.g. *Abercrombie*; (8) titles + last names, e.g. *Mrs Johns, Mr Graham*; (9) occupational titles alone, e.g. *Doctor, Father*; (10) honorifics, e.g. *sir, madam*; (11) insults, e.g. *you son of a bitch*; (12) nicknames, e.g. *bighead*; (13) identifying noun phrases, e.g. *you with the glasses/you wearing the red coat*.

4. A further class consists of pronouns, either standalone with a generally peremptory connotation (e.g. *Be quiet, you!*) or variously post-modified (e.g. *you idiot!*). Vocatives are, however, prototypically nominal items.

5. It goes without saying that the value of a vocative also depends on the context of occurrence. This is treated, among others, by Braun (1988) and Clyne et al. (2009).

3. The pragmatics of vocatives in film dialogue: Relevant literature, data and methodology

Films are characterised by a participation framework involving the horizontal communication among characters, and the vertical communication between characters and viewers (Bubel 2008; Dynel 2011). Given this twofold structural configuration, film dialogue differs from spontaneous conversation in being subject to a number of communicative requirements: films have indeed to narrate a story in a limited amount of time, advance the plot without negotiation between actors and viewers, describe characters, involve viewers, and sound natural to facilitate viewers' immersion in the fictional world portrayed on the screen (Kozloff 2000). The present paper suggests that vocatives, which constitute a salient feature of film dialogue, are instrumental in meeting these communicative requirements. In the first place, as part of the fundamental process of verbal fabrication of diegesis, the repeated use of vocatives is functional to the introduction and identification of the various characters. Through this expedient, viewers are constantly reminded of who the current participants in the fictional communicative event are, and an effective anchorage of identities between film and audience is ensured (Kozloff 2000; Rossi 2011). But vocatives do much more than introducing characters. They perform illocutionary and attitudinal functions which greatly enrich the interpersonal stratum of the unfolding narrative. A pragmatic investigation of these neglected features of film dialogue seems thus in order, and is carried out here via a discussion of vocative usage in EB, OHP, and SD.

The films under study were taken from the English component of the Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue, a parallel corpus developed at the University of Pavia and comprising original American and British films accompanied by their aligned dubbed translations into Italian.⁶ The Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue was chosen as source of data as it accords with the present paper's intention to focus on contemporary conversational films, i.e. films portraying realistic conversational environments and aiming to simulate contemporary spontaneous spoken English (vs. science fiction films or westerns). In particular, EB, OHP and SD were selected for analysis in that they offer numerous examples of vocatives used in diverse kinds of interactions (e.g. between partners, between parents and children, between friends, between employers and employees, etc.), thus being representative

6. The Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue, whose creation was funded by the Alma Mater Ticinensis Foundation, currently consists of 24 films, for a total of approximately 500,000 words. The Corpus also includes a small additional component currently comprising 6 original Italian films (58,176 words). For a more detailed description of the design of the Corpus, see Freddi and Pavesi (2009: 95–100) and Freddi (2013).

specimens of the dynamics of address typical of film dialogue. The transcripts of EB, OHP, and SD were analysed manually in order to find all the occurrences of vocatives. This led to the identification of 470 vocatives, 161 of which in EB, 158 in OHP, and 151 in SD. Such vocatives belong to the following main categories: terms of endearment, kinship terms, familiarisers, first names, first names + last names, titles + last names, occupational titles alone, honorifics, insults, with a significantly marked prevalence of first name address.

This study is essentially qualitative in its aim to describe how vocatives work within the participation framework of film dialogue. Some basic quantitative information will also be provided so as to underline the functions and positions which seem to be prevalent in vocative usage on the screen.

Since the films under investigation – and, more generally, most of comedies and thrillers – aim to reproduce orality, the literature dealing with vocatives in spontaneous spoken English represented a useful reference point to design the methodology for this analysis. Not surprisingly, in such literature, summoning the addressee's attention is the first function to be acknowledged. It could be pointed out, indeed, that this function is the most basic and, arguably, the most easily identifiable. At the same time, with an increasing degree of analytical precision, previous works recognise other functions which go beyond the mere summoning of the addressee. For instance, Zwicky (1974: 787) underlines that vocatives can be used "to maintain or emphasize the contact between speaker and addressee". Similarly, Davies (1986) talks of an expressive function of vocatives, and Leech (1999) points out that vocatives serve to establish, maintain, or reinforce social relationships. It is with McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003), though, that a more in-depth description of vocative usage has been offered. In their insightful study based on the 5-million-word Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) and on a 55,000-word corpus of radio phone-in calls, the two authors found that only a limited number of vocatives were actually necessary to establish reciprocity, i.e. to set the directionality of a given utterance by specifying who the intended addressee was (e.g. "summonses").⁷ In the great majority of cases, indeed, vocatives performed a variety of pragmatic functions other than the identification of the addressee. In particular, they: co-operated with positive face boosters such as greetings, compliments or thanks ("relational vocatives"); marked those points of the discourse where topics were launched, expanded, shifted, changed, or validated ("topic management vocatives"); co-occurred with ironic utterances which aimed at fostering intimacy and solidarity among interactants ("badinage vocatives");

7. The labels used by McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) to designate the various functions of vocatives are reported here in parentheses.

functioned as pragmatic downtoners of potentially face-threatening acts, such as disagreements, refusals, or imperatives (“mitigators”); were used for turn-taking purposes (“turn management vocatives” and “call management vocatives”).

For the analysis of EB, OHP and SD, a modified version of McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) functional classification was developed. More specifically, as a first step, McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) classification was applied to the three films in a top-down fashion. This in turn led to the identification of additional types of vocatives which were not present in McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) data. The most frequent type is represented by those vocatives which tend to proliferate in adversarial environments, i.e. conflictual exchanges where characters display oppositional stances on the issue they are discussing. A similar phenomenon has been thoroughly documented in the genre of political news interview, for example by Rendle-Short (2007), who found that vocatives were often employed by politicians within confrontational sequences to ensure the success of an interruption, to resolve overlapping talk, and to delay dispreferred responses, as well as by Clayman (2010), who observed that vocatives were recurrently deployed by interviewees in responsive actions that were disaligning in some way, namely topic shifts from the agenda pursued by the interviewer, non-conforming responses to yes/no questions, and disagreements. The high frequency of polemical address in the films under study – a significant finding which suggests that conflict is a driving force of film dialogue – called for the identification of a specific type of vocative, here labelled as *adversarial vocative*, whose function is to enhance the illocutionary force of the co-occurring confrontational utterance.⁸

Another type similar to the adversarial vocative in its enhancing role, though less frequent, is the *emphatic vocative*, a label created here to designate those vocatives which, in the films under investigation, put the co-occurring utterance into focus, or boost the emotional charge of such utterance thus contributing to present it as particularly heartfelt.

The three films also include a few occurrences of insulting vocatives (e.g. *You bastard!*; SD) as well as vocatives used to validate the addressee’s identity at first encounters (e.g. *Erin Brockovich?* said to Erin by the postman; EB), types which were added to those already present in McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) study.

Finally, while McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003) assign only one function per vocative so as to facilitate the quantitative classification of their data, the

8. A prototypical example of adversarial vocative is offered in the title of this paper, i.e. *That’s none of your business*, Sy (OHP). For the importance of conflict in film dialogue, see Piazza (2011).

qualitative approach adopted here admits the possibility for a vocative to perform more than one function simultaneously. In particular, 59 multifunctional vocatives were found.⁹

In sum, the methodology used for the analysis of EB, OHP, and SD is reliant on McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003) for what concerns relational vocatives, summonses, mitigators, turn management vocatives and badinage vocatives.¹⁰ At the same time, when applied to film dialogue, McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) functional taxonomy was integrated with adversarial vocatives, emphatic vocatives, insulting vocatives, addressee’s identity validation vocatives and multifunctional vocatives.¹¹

The common thread which links most of the aforementioned functions is offered by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008) in her analysis of French address practices in TV political debates. She found that, when accompanying linguistic acts belonging to the ritual of politeness (i.e. greetings, thanks), address terms increased the polite charge of the co-occurring utterances; similarly, when accompanying face-threatening acts (i.e. complaints, reprimands) within adversarial environments, address terms typically reinforced the threat. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 85) concluded that address terms acted as “chameleon-like linguistic items”, i.e. devices which not only shared but also amplified the illocutionary force of their cotexts, an observation that seems also applicable to film dialogue, as the following section will attempt to show.

9. An example is *Oh, baby, don’t play with that!* (EB), said by Erin Brockovich to her young son Matthew, who is glancing through some important documents. This occurrence of *baby* belongs to three different functional categories: (1) it is a summons in that it attracts Matthew’s attention; (2) it is a relational vocative in that it acts as a positive face booster; (3) it is a mitigator in that it softens an imperative. The multifunctionality of English vocatives is also acknowledged by Davies (1986: 93) and Leech (1999: 108).

10. In the films under study, the acts of mitigating (mitigators), emphasising (emphatic vocatives), and sharpening (adversarial vocatives) tend to coincide with the introduction of a new topic or the linear elaboration of a given topic through the successive turns of the characters. Hence, McCarthy and O’Keeffe’s (2003) topic management function is considered here as inherent in the categories of mitigators, emphatic vocatives and adversarial vocatives.

11. The fact that the categories here called *adversarial* and *emphatic* have also been found in news interview talk (Rendle-Short 2007; Clayman 2010) suggests that such address modes are typical of media discourses whose participation framework goes beyond the classic speaker-hearer dyad and includes the audience as the third participant.

4. Analysis of the pragmatic functions of vocatives in EB, OHP, and SD

This section illustrates the main results obtained from the analysis of vocative usage in EB, OHP and SD. The different functions of vocatives are presented in decreasing order of frequency with the exception of summonses, which are the third most frequent group in the films under study but are discussed first in that the figures obtained for them serve as an introduction to the rest of the analysis. Starting from the premise that film dialogue is specifically conceived for the viewer's benefit (Dynel 2011), the discussion of the following functions attempts to underscore the various ways in which vocatives work within the recipient design.

4.1 Summonses

Summonses are those vocatives used to establish contact with the addressee, as in Example 1, where, while working at Masry & Vititoe's legal office, Erin goes to her colleague Anna's desk, summons her attention, and then asks her a question. Due to their function, summonses typically occur in initial or standalone position, often prefaced by inserts with the same attention-getting role such as *hey*.

(1) EB¹²

Erin: **Anna?**

Anna: mm? (Erin's question follows)

On the whole, the presence of summonses in the three films is not negligible (90 occurrences). This is plausibly due to the fact that, as part of the aforementioned process of anchorage of identities between film and audience (Kozloff 2000), summonses specify to whom a given character is talking. A first basic function of vocatives within the recipient design is hence that they establish the directionality of talk at the inter-character level for the viewer's benefit. However, even including multifunctional cases (16 occurrences) in the total count of summonses, the result which clearly emerges from the data is that the great majority of vocatives (77%, i.e. 364 out of 470) do not serve the purpose of attracting the addressee's attention but perform other pragmatic functions. Most vocatives, indeed, occur when the directionality of talk is clear, that is, when interactants are already paying attention to each other. Typically, this happens in exchanges involving only two characters who look at each other while talking. In short, film dialogue seems to appropriate the non-summoning uses of vocatives found in spontaneous spoken English (McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003) and makes the most of them to variously qualify the interpersonal space among characters, as will be illustrated below.

12. See the Appendix for the transcription conventions.

4.2 Relational vocatives

Relational vocatives co-occur with greetings, leave-takings, offers, thanks, apologies, agreements, compliments, and other positive face boosters specifically oriented to managing social relationships. Through their deictic redundancy, i.e. the fact that they stress the dialogic link with an already established addressee, relational vocatives boost the communicative intent of the conversational acts they accompany. Example 2, where the photo technicians Sy and Yoshi are serving their client Nina, can be useful to illustrate some of the main types of relational vocatives: in particular, it provides two examples co-occurring with greetings, one example co-occurring with a compliment (*you're one of our best customers*), and one example co-occurring with thanks.

(2) OHP

Yoshi: hey, Mrs Yorkin!

Nina: hey, Yoshi, how are you?

[...]

Sy: Mrs Yorkin. you're one of our best customers. I'll have 'em for you by the time we close

Nina: thank you so much ((sigh))

Sy: no problem!

Nina: I'll go get some shopping done!

Sy: we'll see you in forty minutes!

Nina: thanks, Sy!.. bye! ((leaves))

In addition to first names and titles + last names, illustrated in Example 2, other typical cases of relational vocatives are terms of endearment and familiarisers, used instead of the addressee's first name with the aim of expressing affection or friendliness. In other words, these address terms are intrinsic positive face boosters, and therefore inherently relational vocatives. Also, they may perform other functions simultaneously: for instance, terms of endearment are likely to act as mitigators, as in Example 3, where Erin, who is attending an important meeting, resorts to *honey* to soften the disaligning impact of her utterance *I'm a little busy here*, which runs contrary to George's desire to leave the meeting (*I'm bored*).¹³

13. Due to the radical contextuality and cotextuality of address forms, even terms of endearment can occasionally acquire rude or insulting connotations, in much the same way as polite forms of address can be used impolitely, a phenomenon defined by Braun (1988) as "the ambiguity of politeness". The analysed films offer some instances of this inversion. For example, in *Are you getting EVERY WORD OF THIS DOWN, HONEY, or am I talkin' too fast for you?* (EB), the vocative *honey* is an adversarial, hence marked, term of endearment used by Erin as an angry response to the behaviour of her colleague Brenda, who is enjoying the quarrel taking place between Erin and her employer Ed.

(3) EB

George: I'm bored

Erin: +ok*

George: +so are the* kids

Erin: ok. um–, well–, I'm a little busy here, **honey**. I mean, we invited all these people here, Ed and I have to–, hey!, I'm sorry!, ok, you know what?. I have an idea!, please!, please!, I have an idea!. can you just–, can you take her? she's getting very heavy, and I can do my work faster if you take her...

Relational vocatives constitute the most frequent group in McCarthy and O'Keeffe's (2003) CANCODE data, a finding which suggests that these address forms are constant, quasi-obligatory elements in casual interactions among familiar interlocutors, for whom the absence of such vocatives might sound unnatural in spontaneous spoken English (Pavesi 1996: 118). With 121 occurrences, relational vocatives represent the largest group also in the films under study, a result which can easily be explained as a reflection of their quasi-obligatoriness in spontaneous spoken English. To put it differently, in film dialogue relational vocatives function as markers of spontaneity and naturalness, especially in those exchanges defined by Kozloff (2000: 47) as "verbal wall-paper", i.e. dialogues which do not contribute to the advancement of the plot but are designed to give an impression of realism through the representation of ordinary conversation activities (e.g. Example 2). Such simulation of orality is a manifestation of the recipient design: in particular, by making film dialogue resemble spontaneous conversation, relational vocatives play a part in facilitating the viewers' suspension of disbelief. Also, relational vocatives such as first names, terms of endearment and familiarisers represent effective ploys for the construction of intimacy and solidarity among characters (e.g. Example 3).¹⁴

4.3 Adversarial vocatives

Adversarial vocatives occur within confrontational speech acts such as disagreements, criticisms, accusations, refusals, menaces, orders, polemical warnings, etc. Especially when repeated, they represent interactional tools whereby speakers attempt to assert or reassert control over addressees (Pavesi 1996: 127). As

14. This equally applies to the language of fictional television (Quaglio 2009: 113–115; Bednarek 2011: 200–202). Vocatives acting as markers of orality and as familiarising techniques have also been observed in other media discourses, e.g. live text commentary, where, as argued by Chovanec (2009, 2011), they are among the linguistic features used by journalists to construct casual pseudo-conversations with readers.

such, these vocatives sharpen the polemical impact of the co-occurring utterances. A number of occurrences are found in Example 4, where the disturbed photo technician Sy, protagonist of OHP, is fired. In particular, the example includes various final-position adversarial vocatives which act as retrospective enhancers of illocutionary force, together with some initial-position or quasi-initial-position occurrences which function as launchers of divisive topics, i.e. they prominently introduce the substance of the controversy. The latter function is performed by the vocative alone (*Sy, there's been some discrepancies in the click count*) or in cooperation with the prefaces *the problem is* and *the question is*.

(4) OHP

Bill: what's with the getup, Sy?

Sy: it's wednesday, Bill. I was doing the srs

Bill: Sy, there's been some discrepancies in the click count

[...]

Bill: we're not talking about a few innocent math errors, Sy. the NET clicks all zero out. they always zero out. the PROBLEM is, Sy, that the shutdown clicks don't correspond at all, I mean-. they don't even come close to matching the amount of prints that we sold

[...]

Bill: so, the question is, Sy, WHERE did ALL those unaccounted for prints go?

Sy: well, what kind of discrepancy are we talking about, Bill?

Bill: we're talking about HUNDREDS of prints!, Sy

Sy: ((laughing)) oh!. that's not possible, Bill!

Bill: oh, no. I've done the math!. and the p o s confirm it, too!

Sy: well, I don't know anything about it!

Bill: oh, I think you DO, Sy..

Sy: well, I don't, Bill

Bill: look, Sy, I've got a family. I'm not losing my job over this.. ((sigh)) I'm letting you go

[...]

Sy: you CAN'T do this!

Bill: it's done, Sy. I talked to Sims at district. now, you finish out the week, and clear out your locker. and if you do something like fuck up today's prints I-

Another representative scene, among the many others which could be mentioned, is given in Example 5, where Helen, the protagonist of SD, suspects that her boyfriend Gerry is having an affair as she found two brandy glasses in their bedroom. Not only do the vocatives occurring in this example serve to introduce divisive topics (*Gerry? How did one of my Waterford Crystal brandy glasses get into the laundry basket?*) and strengthen assertiveness (*No, I'm certain, there were*

two glasses, Gerry), but they also function as “secondary interjections” (Bruti and Perego 2008) or secondary expletives expressing a feeling of disappointment, as in the case of *Gerry! Ease up, will you?*, and especially in *Gerry! For God’s sake, I asked a simple question!*, where the vocative has the same function of the following expletive *for God’s sake*.

(5) SD

Helen: **Gerry?**.. how did one of my Waterford Crystal brandy glasses get into the laundry basket?..

[...]

Gerry: oh, hang on!, no, wait a minute. no, I COULD say. there was a bottle and ONE glass, because if-if you–

Helen: no, I’m certain, there were TWO glasses, **Gerry**

Gerry: [...] I mean, JESUS! come on!, let’s-let’s– SPOIL the moment properly, shall we?. what are you trying to say?. am I shagging a brandy drinker?. yes?

Helen: **GERRY!**, ease up, will you?, for CHRIST’s sake!, I’m only asking!

Gerry: no!. women never ask. no, they don’t ASK!, they INSINUATE!. and YOU are INSINUATING! [...]

Helen: **Gerry!**, for God’s sake, I asked a simple question!. there’s no need to become Woody Allen!

While the results obtained for summonses and relational vocatives indicate a general trend of alignment of film dialogue with spontaneous spoken English, the picture emerging from adversarial vocatives is radically different. Adversarial vocatives, indeed, do not seem to be particularly prominent in spontaneous conversation (Leech 1999; McCarthy and O’Keeffe 2003), yet they are significantly frequent in the analysed films, where they constitute the second largest group (97 occurrences). A likely explanation is that film dialogue makes the most of the utility of these vocatives both at the inter-character level and at the recipient’s level.¹⁵ More specifically, as inter-character boosters of polemical utterances, adversarial vocatives are instrumental in the construction of conflict, and the construction of conflict is in turn a strong generator of viewers’ involvement (Piazza 2011). At the same time, adversarial vocatives flag the salient points in the characters’ controversies (e.g. *Sy, there’s been some discrepancies in the click count* in Example 4), thus assisting viewers in following the plot.

15. It has also to be pointed out that adversarial interactions are difficult to elicit. As a consequence, they might be under-represented in the corpus-based investigations considered here (i.e. Leech 1999 and McCarthy and O’Keeffe 2003). I am grateful to Monika Bednarek for this suggestion.

Finally, Examples 4 and 5 give the opportunity to underline a general property displayed by vocatives in the three films under study, namely their discontinuous distribution. In EB, OHP and SD, vocatives tend indeed to proliferate in certain, typically significant, scenes (e.g. Examples 4, 5), while being infrequent in, or even completely absent from, other scenes.¹⁶ The overall effect is that such concentrations of vocatives somehow act as indicators of narrative salience, i.e. play a part in signalling the importance of a particular scene within the film.

4.4 Emphatic vocatives

Emphatic vocatives (39 occurrences) can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises vocatives which put the following portion of the turn into focus. An example can be found in SD after Helen tells James that she cannot start a relationship with him due to the too recent end of her relationship with Gerry (Example 6): here, the core part of James' long reply is highlighted through the use of the vocative *Helen* and the discourse marker *listen*:

(6) SD

James: wait, hold, hold!. your friend ANNA thinks I'm cute?, your friend ANNA thinks I'm cute?... shit!, I just blew- wait!.. ((he takes a glance at the price list of the bar)) ((sigh)) two eighty five, two eighty-five on the wrong girl!.. **Helen**, listen!. sometimes we are plonked into people's lives, when they just need to be cheered up and reassured, and it turns out that for some reason it's your job. we don't know why. and your case it's MY job. but, I'll be honest, the fact that I find you moderately attractive, just makes the job easier on my part!. my intentions are completely honourable!, I have no desire to overstep the mark, seriously!. do you prefer diamonds or sapphires?. sorry!, nothing

The second group comprises vocatives generally placed in final position and expressive of emotional involvement. In Example 7, for instance, the vocative conveys the depth of James' feelings for Helen together with the intensifier *really*. Similarly, in Example 8, the vocatives cooperate with a number of other linguistic items (e.g. *I've bloody done it!*; *It was such a mistake!*; *It's such a good feeling!*; *Oh, God!*; *Whoo God!*) to communicate Gerry's high excitement and relief for the end of his affair with Lydia.

16. On the discontinuous distribution of vocatives in spontaneous spoken English, see Leech (1999: 116–117). On the discontinuous distribution of address terms in French TV political debates, see Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008).

(7) SD

James: no. I really like her, **Clive**. I'm confused. I feel a bit lost suddenly

(8) SD

Gerry: I've done it, **Russell!**. I've BLOODY DONE IT! [...] the affair!, the affair!. the SORDID affair with Lydia!. I've blown her out!. in Dorset!. I was decisive. but fair. I've just got back. oh, GOD!, I feel like I've got out of jail!. no more DECEIT, no more LYING to Helen!, it was SUCH a mistake!. "never go back", **Russell!**. but it's over!. WHOO! God!, I can't tell you it's such a good feeling!

As can be seen from the above examples, emphatic vocatives are fundamentally similar to adversarial vocatives in their enhancing role yet occur in contexts whose illocutionary nature is radically different: indeed, while the former are used when characters "speak from the heart" and convey a range of positive emotions, the latter sharpen divisive utterances.¹⁷ Both types can be included among the "linguistic markers of emotionally-loaded language" (Quaglio 2009: 105), i.e. linguistic features which, in spontaneous spoken English and even more frequently in films and TV series, are associated with the expression of emotional or emphatic content, other examples being intensifiers (e.g. *so*, *really*), interjections (e.g. *wow*) or expletives (e.g. *damn*, *fuck*). Notwithstanding such difference in illocutionary nature, in terms of the recipient design the functioning of emphatic vocatives is analogous to that of adversarial vocatives, namely: (a) they act as initial-position focussing devices directing viewers' attention to the following, typically crucial, point made by the character (e.g. Example 6); (b) they act as final-position enhancers of emotionally-loaded language, with *characters'* emotional involvement being ultimately a trigger for *viewers'* emotional involvement (e.g. Examples 7, 8).

4.5 Turn management vocatives

Turn management vocatives (25 occurrences) typically co-occur with questions and tag-questions, and their function is, once again, that of reinforcing the utterances they accompany. More specifically, they amplify the soliciting intent inherent in questions and tag questions, thus fostering inter-character conversational

17. In his aforementioned study on vocative usage in news interview talk, Clayman (2010: 173–179) found that vocatives were often used by interviewees when speaking sincerely or "from the heart". In other words, vocatives contributed to present the co-occurring utterances as particularly heartfelt, i.e. acted as devices to simulate emotionality so as to add credibility to the interviewees' replies.

dynamicity and the dialogic development of the plot in the interest of viewers' involvement. Vocatives of this type are often multifunctional, e.g. they co-occur with confrontational questions and hence perform a turn management and an adversarial function, as in Example 4 (*What's with the getup, Sy?*; *So, the question is, Sy, where did all those unaccounted for prints go?*; *Well, what kind of discrepancy are we talking about, Bill?*) and Example 5 (*Gerry, how did one of my Waterford Crystal brandy glasses get into the laundry basket?*).

The three films also comprise a small number of turn management vocatives occurring at interruptions, as in Example 9, where a weaker conversationalist (i.e. Ed) repeats the name of the dominant conversationalist (i.e. Erin) in an attempt to take the turn. The rarity of such vocatives in the three films is arguably due to the fact that scriptwriters tend to avoid interruptions and overlaps at the inter-character level so as to promote comprehensibility at the recipient's level.¹⁸ In this respect, it could be argued that while, in the other cases considered in this paper, the recipient design manifests itself in the frequent presence of particular types of vocatives (e.g. adversarial vocatives), in the case discussed here, it is the scarcity of one particular type of vocative that can be considered a manifestation of the recipient design.

(9) EB

Erin: boy!, do I know how you feel!. the first time I heard that number, woof!,
I said "you've got to be kidding me!. FORTY GODDAMN PER CENT?"

Ed: **Erin**–

Erin: "I'm the one that's injured!, and this– JOKER sits at a desk all day!, and
he wants to walk away with almost HALF my reward?"

Ed: **Erin**, can I–

Erin: but then–. I asked him, what HE makes if I don't get anything

Finally, the films under study include a few vocatives used for turn management purposes on the phone, as *Mrs Yorkin* and *Duane* (Example 10), occurring after Nina was put on hold by Duane:

(10) OHP

Duane: ((on the phone)) **Mrs Yorkin?**

Nina: ((on the phone)) yes, **Duane**

18. This is not to say that the situation found in Example 9 is completely unlikely in film dialogue.

4.6 Mitigators

Mitigators (15 occurrences) are downtoners of face-threatening acts. More specifically, they are normally placed in initial position and serve as hesitators which delay face-threatening utterances, thus softening the divisive impact these utterances would have if introduced abruptly. A prototypical case is provided in Example 11, where Ed adopts a hesitating strategy to soften his formulation of Erin's dismissal. This strategy involves the vocative *Erin*, the discourse marker *look*, the hesitator *uh*, and the indirect expression *I don't think*, all expedients which transform Ed's face-threatening statement into an apparent general evaluation or advice.¹⁹

(11) EB

Ed: +that's enough!*. look, **Erin**, this, uh, incident aside, I don't think this is the right-. place for you, ok?, so, uh-, what I'm gonna do is make a few calls on your behalf and find something else

Since mitigators, emphatic vocatives and adversarial vocatives are different results of the same phenomenon, i.e. the "chameleon-like" nature of address terms (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2008:85), the distinction of mitigators from the other two groups was not always immediately evident in the transcriptions, and therefore had to be disambiguated on the basis of audiovisual cues, namely prosodic features (e.g. differences in pitch and speed of articulation) as well as paralinguistic features (e.g. facial expressions, gestures).

Overall, together with emphatic and adversarial vocatives, mitigators can be described as tools of the pragmatics of alignment/disalignment, that is, they are actively involved in the negotiation of the characters' positions and stances, thus fuelling the interactional dynamics of the films under study. Also, as vocatives typically occurring in the initial position, they perform the same focussing function which has already been illustrated above with respect to emphatic and adversarial vocatives, a focussing function which draws viewers' attention to key segments of the interactions among characters.

19. A similar strategy occurs in Example 4, where, after a series of confrontational turns, Bill switches to a mitigating tone when he is about to fire Sy (*Look, Sy, I've got a family. I'm not losing my job over this. I'm letting you go*).

4.7 Less frequent functions: Insults, badinage, addressee's identity validation

The vocatives of EB, OHP, and SD perform three other minor functions, namely insults (9 occurrences), badinage (8 occurrences), and addressee's identity validation (7 occurrences).

Insults are not unanimously considered vocatives.²⁰ The position adopted here was to include them into the vocative category by analogy with terms of endearment, whose status of vocatives is undisputed. Indeed, it seems plausible to view terms of endearment and insults as opposite ways of doing the same thing, i.e. of qualifying the interpersonal space between the interlocutors. In films and TV series, in particular, insults (e.g. Example 12) function both as markers of emotionally-loaded language and as markers of informal orality (Quaglio 2009):

(12) SD

Helen: ((crying and beating him)) **you BASTARD!. you BASTARD!. you USELESS, SHAGGING BASTARD!...** I come home and catch you up to your NUTS in LADY SHAGGING GODIVA?! [...]

Badinage vocatives occur in humorous conversations which generally involve teasing a familiar interlocutor. In some cases, the instrument of teasing is the vocative itself, either because it is affectionately insulting (e.g. Helen playfully addressed as *You drunken eejit* by her dear friend Anna in SD), or because it is an ironic substitute for the unmarked vocative normally used to address the interlocutor (e.g. Ed addressing his wife as *Mrs Masry* in EB). In other cases, the vocative seems to boost the ironic charge of the utterance to which it is attached, as in Example 13, where Erin explains how she will obtain some important documents from the Lahontan Regional Water Board:

(13) EB

Ed: yeah, I know how those things are run, they're a MESS!. what makes you think you can– just walk in there and–. find uh– what we need?

Erin: they're called BOOBS, Ed!

Both insults and badinage vocatives, hence, involve viewers, though in different ways – the former by being carriers of conflict, the latter by being carriers/boosters of humour.

Finally, addressee's identity validation vocatives (7 occurrences) consist of interrogative first names+last names which are used to check the identity of the addressee at first encounters, as in the following case:

20. In the literature consulted for the present study, insults are classified as vocatives by Zwicky (1974), Davies (1986), Bruti and Perego (2008) but not by Leech (1999).

(14) OHP

Nina: ((opens the door)) yes?

Detective Van Der Zee: **Nina Yorkin?**

Nina: yes

Detective Van Der Zee: hi. I'm detective Van Der Zee, of the Evans County Threat Management Unit. this is detective Outerbridge

5. The positions of vocatives in EB, OHP, and SD

This section provides some generalisations about the positions of vocatives in the films under study.²¹

As regards the positions within interactional exchanges, vocatives can be divided into three groups: (1) summonses and vocatives used to validate the addressee's identity at first encounters typically occur in the opening sequences; (2) relational vocatives, generally co-occurring with greetings and leave-takings, concentrate in the opening as well as in the closing sequences; (3) all the other categories, i.e. adversarial vocatives, mitigators, turn management vocatives, emphatic vocatives, insults, and badinage vocatives, normally occur in the body of the exchanges.

Moving to the positions of vocatives in the C-unit, the following hierarchies were found:²²

Monofunctional vocatives

FINAL POSITION (210) > INITIAL POSITION (126) > STANDALONE POSITION (69) > MEDIAL POSITION (6)

Multifunctional vocatives

FINAL POSITION (30) > INITIAL POSITION (24) > STANDALONE POSITION (3) > MEDIAL POSITION (2)

21. Deciding the position of vocatives is not always a straightforward matter. Apart from the possible limitations in the orthographic transcription, the fact that vocatives are often preceded by various discourse-marking items can pose problems to the analyst, who can either classify these vocatives as medial or include them into the initial category. McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) opt for the second solution, arguing that such discourse-marking items are turn-prefaces rather than parts of the turn proper. Hence, in their view – which is adopted in the present paper – it is analytically more satisfactory to assign the following vocative to the 'prefaced initial position'.

22. "A C-unit is a unit of spoken English grammar which [...] is essentially the spoken analogue of a written sentence" (Leech 1999: 108).

As can be seen, both in the case of monofunctional vocatives and in the case of multifunctional vocatives, the final position is the most frequent and the initial position is the second most frequent, in line with the results obtained by both Leech (1999) and McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003) in spontaneous conversation. Film dialogue, then, does not simply incorporate vocatives, but it reproduces the positional pattern with which vocatives are most frequently used in ordinary spontaneous conversations – i.e. the final position. Coupled with the many other markers of orality routinely present in films (e.g. interjections, intensifiers, etc.), this contributes to the construction of credible on-screen dialogue. Linguistic credibility is a dimension of the recipient design, that is, one of the cinematographic strategies relied upon by scriptwriters to make viewers “nurture the feeling of reality” (Dynel 2011: 1635) in the interest of letting viewers be absorbed in the fictional world portrayed on the screen.

A closer look at the results obtained for monofunctional vocatives reveals that the final position is particularly frequent in the case of relational, adversarial, and emphatic vocatives: in other words, in EB, OHP, and SD, vocatives tend to retrospectively reinforce small talk as well as emotionally-loaded talk. On the other hand, as was easy to predict, summonses typically occur in the initial position or as standalone vocatives. The initial position is prevalent in the case of mitigators: indeed, as illustrated above, mitigators act as hesitating expedients which preface and soften the introduction of face-threatening content. As regards turn management vocatives, they tend to occur at the end of questions as soliciting devices or, less frequently, in turn-initial position as interruptions. Finally, insults tend to occur as standalone vocatives, and this is always the case for the validation of the addressee’s identity, while no particular position prevails in the case of badinage vocatives.

In short, while the initial and standalone positions are essentially dedicated to the identification of the addressee (summonses, addressee’s identity validation), the final position tends to be used to enhance the charge of the utterance (relational vocatives, adversarial vocatives, emphatic vocatives). There is, hence, a clear link between certain positions and certain functions of vocatives.

6. Vocatives within the recipient design: Recapitulating the main functions

As stated in Section 4, this paper has been based on the assumption that, within the twofold participation framework of film dialogue, the inter-character level represents an elaborate system of linguistic – as well as visual and musical – ploys which are carefully pre-planned and programmatically deployed to meet the

communicative needs of the audience. In other words, every nuance of the inter-character level is “a testament to the recipient design” (Dynel 2011: 1636). The analysis presented above has underlined that one specific manifestation of the recipient design can be found in vocative usage. By way of recapitulation, the current section brings together the main recipient-design issues raised in Sections 4 and 5. Through the analysis of EB, OHP and SD, it has been pointed out that vocatives are implicated in the recipient design in the following respects:

1. *Simulation of orality*: vocatives are one of an integrated series of orality markers employed in film dialogue for the purpose of linguistic realism, other examples being interjections, discourse markers or expletives. This is particularly evident for relational vocatives in those exchanges defined by Kozloff (2000: 47) as “verbal wall-paper”, that is, sequences which do not advance the plot, but are intended to convey an impression of spontaneity and naturalness through the representation of ordinary conversation activities (e.g. Example 2). The approximation to spontaneous spoken language is one of the cinematographic expedients used by scriptwriters to facilitate viewers’ immersion in the fictional world portrayed on the screen.
2. *Strengthening of adversarial talk*: amplifying the illocutionary force of polemical utterances, and making the most of the terseness typical of film dialogue (Guillot 2010), adversarial vocatives have the crucially important effect of enhancing the incisiveness of the characters’ talk. By so doing, the exchanges between the characters have a strong impact on viewers, whose involvement is constantly fuelled via recurrent confrontational lines either launched or retrospectively boosted by adversarial vocatives.
3. *Foregrounding of core segments of the dialogues*: vocatives placed in initial position often serve a foregrounding purpose, i.e. they put the following portion of the turn into focus. While, at the inter-character level, this focussing technique can have an adversarial, emphatic, or mitigating effect, at the recipient’s level, it highlights the core passages in the dialogues between the characters, thus significantly contributing to an effectively succinct presentation of relevant information and to a clear advancement of the plot.
4. *Signalling of narrative salience*: the very presence vs. absence of vocatives is in itself significant. In particular, with their discontinuous distribution, vocatives seem to function as indicators of narrative salience, i.e. markers of fundamental scenes. This aspect is quite prominent in EB, OHP and SD, where after long periods of absence or sporadic presence, vocatives tend to proliferate in emotionally-loaded, crucial scenes in which they essentially perform an adversarial or emphatic function (e.g. Examples 4, 5).

5. *Enhancement of conversational dynamicity*: together with frequent questions and the quick shifting of short turns, vocatives are among the features which lend film dialogue its eminently dialogic nature. In particular, making explicit and constantly stressing the dialogic link between the characters, vocatives foster interactiveness and conversational dynamicity, essential requirements to keep the audience's attention alive and guarantee an absorbing development of the plot.
6. *Establishment of the directionality of talk*: vocatives make it clear to whom a given character is talking, at the same time putting viewers on notice that another character is about to enter the scene.

7. Conclusions

This paper has aimed to underscore the usefulness of vocatives within the complex participation framework of film dialogue via an investigation of the various pragmatic functions and positions of vocatives in "Erin Brockovich", "One Hour Photo", and "Sliding Doors".

The investigation has illustrated that, at the inter-character level, the great majority of vocatives occur when the directionality of talk is clear, that is, when characters have already established contact with their addressees. In other words, mirroring a tendency attested in naturally-occurring language, film dialogue gives precedence to the relational, attitudinal and expressive uses of vocatives over their mere identifying role. In particular, vocatives tend to boost the friendly or polite charge of small talk, strengthen emotionally-loaded talk, foster mitigating sequences, amplify the soliciting intent of questions and tag questions, and act as enhancers of humour. In short, to put it in Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (2008: 85) words, they exhibit a "chameleon-like nature", i.e. they not only share but also amplify the illocutionary force of their cotexts in film dialogue.

The investigation has also highlighted a prominent trend for vocatives to concentrate in confrontational environments, a phenomenon here described through the label of *adversarial vocatives*. Confrontational situations are a driving force of film dialogue: through verbal conflict, crucial points of the narrative are explored, characters' identities are revealed, and their interpersonal relationships are articulated and renegotiated, thus generating the audience's involvement (Piazza 2011: 45–103). Being abrasive interactional tools to affront interlocutors, adversarial vocatives are instrumental in the fictional construction of conflict, and hence represent ploys on which scriptwriters capitalise for dramatic purposes.

The expressivity of address modes in film dialogue seems also evident from another trend underlined in this work, that is, the preponderance of final-position vocatives. In line with what happens in spontaneous conversation (Leech 1999; McCarthy and O’Keeffe 2003), the final position is not generally chosen to attract the addressee’s attention, but typically used to increase the illocutionary force of a given utterance, with vocatives functioning as retrospective tags which signal an attitude to the addressee (Biber et al. 1999: 1080–1082).

Looking at the identified pragmatic functions of vocatives from a recipient-design perspective – which is an inevitable interpretative step to take in that any element of film dialogue is there for the audience – the article has argued that vocatives perform the following types of recipient-design work: (a) they facilitate viewers’ suspension of disbelief by simulating orality; (b) they generate viewers’ involvement by enhancing adversarial talk and, more in general, conversational dynamicity; (c) they promote the comprehensibility of the plot by foregrounding the core segments of the dialogues among characters and by specifying to whom a given character is talking; (d) they provide some sort of indication of the importance of certain scenes through their proliferation.

Characters address each other frequently in films. This paper has attempted to show that they always do so for viewers, their ultimate recipients.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions (based on Bonsignori 2009: 200)

=	latching
+some*	overlapping
+1some*	multiple overlapping in succession
((laughter, sigh, etc.))	comments
((laughing, sighing, etc.))	comments preceding the whole utterance
((laughing, sighing, etc.)) +some*	comments preceding part of an utterance
"some"	reported speech, titles, reading out
(XXX)	unintelligible speech
CAPITALS	emphasis, stress, loud voice tone
,	intonation break without pause
.	brief pause (1 second)
..	medium pause (from 1 to 2 seconds)
...	long pause (3 or more seconds)
?	interrogative tone
!	exclamatory tone
–	hesitation, interrupted speech
-	false start, self correction

PART III

Forms of participation

A participation perspective on television evening news in the age of immediacy

Linda Lombardo

In a context of intense media competition and a contemporary culture of talk, traditional TV news has devised ways to make news more interactive and closer to the TV audience. In British TV news programmes, the live exchange between news presenter and correspondent has been identified as a key site for discourse in a dialogic mode (Montgomery 2007; Tolson 2006). This study adopts a participation framework approach to analyse the live exchanges in a corpus of BBC evening news programmes over time. Findings indicate that while the frequency of live exchanges is sustained, they become shorter and less interactive, at the same time as other strategies are adopted to give the impression of extensive, immediate reporting. What emerges is an overriding concern with giving the appearance of “liveness”, sacrificing the interactive format of the traditional live exchange. The “token interactivity” which results may not encourage the kind of audience participation that facilitates understanding and retention.¹

1. Introduction

In the age of advanced communication technology and the Internet, TV journalism is still considered to be “clearly among the most influential knowledge-producing institutions of our time” (Ekstrom 2002: 274). According to Cushion and Lewis (2010: 92), “Most of the people still get their news from TV most of the time.” The rise of 24-hour news television has exploited technological changes and the use of user-generated material as well as the potential for increased interactivity. Inevitably, these developments impact significantly on the form and content of traditional broadcast news discourse (Thornborrow and Montgomery 2010) and on what audiences expect from broadcast news (Cushion and Lewis 2010).

1. This article reports the results of a study carried out by Louann Haarman (University of Bologna) and myself, presented jointly at the Esse Conference in Istanbul, 4–8 September 2012.

In order to orient, engage and hold viewers in an information overload context of intense competition and in what has been called “a contemporary culture of talk” (Tolson 2006), traditional TV news has devised ways of making news delivery more interactive and closer to the TV audience (for example, by accessing the voices of ordinary people or “vox pop” and through the use of seemingly unscripted interviews and live exchanges). It has been noted that in the traditional TV news programme in the UK the extended interview with political or public figures has been largely replaced by the live 2-way exchange between the news presenter (NP) and the reporter (R),² which is performed on behalf of the audience and is a key site for discourse in a dialogic mode (Montgomery 2007; Tolson 2006). Furthermore, the live exchange orients to the normative values of ordinary talk where interlocutors have equal status and discourse rights (Scannell 1996; Fairclough 1995). Even though reporters in a live exchange are not expected to ask questions they are nonetheless given an important role and asked to interpret, assess and evaluate, and even predict developments in the news.

Although it is clearly a form of institutional discourse, the 2-way live exchange nevertheless exhibits linguistic features: of “fresh talk” (Goffman 1981), where the speaker comes across as speaking as him or herself while speaking on behalf of a wider entity; of what has been called “lively talk”, in the form of informed speculation or dramatic reconstruction for the benefit of the TV audience (Tolson 2006); and of “doing being interesting” (Montgomery 2007), that is, sounding lively and engaging with respect to the already established facts of the story. The 2-way exchange is also used to increase the reality and the immediacy of news by collapsing constraints of time and space. It makes the account of the world which is presented relevant by aligning the audience as ratified observers, addressing them directly at the opening, supplying background information to create common ground, and using pronoun forms such as *you*, *we*, *our* to establish a relationship and to indicate shared values and identity (O’Keeffe 2006). Thompson (1995) speaks of mediated quasi-interactions, applicable to watching television or listening to the radio (Talbot 2007: 84), in that even while the communication is one-way and monological, these quasi-interactions can contain features and structures typical of dialogue and conversation. In the live exchange moreover, interactivity between NP and R is a way of constructing a sense of interpersonal closeness which viewers are made to feel part of vicariously.

In a context of growing pressures toward communicating effectively – which entails improvisation and conversation as preferred mode of delivery, as well as making information appropriate for a given audience – the trend toward the

2. The reporter in the 2-way live exchange is usually referred to as a “correspondent” or an “editor” and given a title, such as “our White House correspondent” or “our economics editor”, but for practical purposes here will be called simply “reporter”.

2-way live exchange in TV news reporting was expected to continue. In this study we adopt a participation framework to analyse the news presenter–reporter live exchanges in a corpus of BBC evening news programmes over time. The role of images and sound in conveying a feeling of dynamism and unmediated viewing, reducing the distance between viewers and what and who appears on the screen (Lorenzo-Dus 2009: 60), is also explored.

2. The corpus and the methodological approach

To carry out this study, we selected from our corpus of BBC evening news³ one 6-day week at 4-year intervals in each of the following years: 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. There were a total of 24 programmes, and each programme lasted approximately 30 minutes and contained an average of 4,383 words. After transcribing the programmes, we viewed them and studied the transcripts in order to isolate and subsequently classify all the live exchanges (between the news presenter and reporter on the scene of the event) and live links (in which a reporter simply speaks live from the scene of the event), noting as well any other strategies which seemed geared toward greater interactivity and audience involvement and were relevant to the participation framework. Separate mini-corpora were constructed of all the live exchanges and of all the live links. Table 1 shows the number of live exchanges and live links in the data for each of the 4 years.

Table 1. Number of live exchanges and live links by year

Year	No. of live exchanges	No. of live links
1999	10	0
2003	11	3
2007	10	6
2011	11	5

In analysing our data we make reference to Goffman's (1981, 1979) theoretical framework, but applying this framework to contemporary TV news is not an automatic operation given the complexity of the concept of audience in broadcasting. In Goffman's production format (1981: 144) the speaker can be not only "animator" ("an individual active in the role of utterance production") but also "author" ("someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded") and "principal" ("someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told,

3. See Haarman and Lombardo (2009) and Lombardo (2009) for related research on BBC News.

someone who is committed to what the words say"). Within the participation framework, participants in an interactive speech event can be speakers or hearers, and the latter can be "ratified", that is fully entitled to listen to the speaker, or "unratified", i.e. the bystander or the eavesdropper. A ratified hearer can be an "addressed recipient" or an "official hearer" who is not addressed. Goffman's definition of "ratified participant, addressed recipient" in two-person talk is the following: "the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over his speaking role" (1981: 133). For the broadcaster, Goffman notes that, except for an eventual studio audience, the audience can only be made up of imagined recipients, who cannot assume a speaking role. In TV news the audience is addressed both verbally and visually when headlines and news are reported by the news presenter. In a live exchange or a live link the reporter is addressed verbally and visually by the news presenter and is expected to respond. However, in introducing the exchange the news presenter first addresses the audience, the primary intended recipient on whose behalf the exchange, and indeed the entire news programme, are conducted. This change of address can be seen from the following example: (NP speaks to camera) "Our diplomatic correspondent Brian Hanrahan joins me from there". (NP turns away from the camera to look at R on the big screen and says with his back to the camera) "Brian, is this just a hiccup or is this UN resolution in real trouble tonight?" (BBC June 5, 1999).

Goffman has been faulted for under-analyzing the hearer roles (Goodwin 2007; Dynel 2010) as he categorized the hearer into static categories in relation to the speaker and failed to capture the interactive work of speaker-hearer in creating communication. With regard to the audience in TV news, they are "ratified participants" and sometimes explicitly "addressed participants" even though they are not expected to assume a speaking role (although, as we shall see, this may change with the web affordances made available also to traditional TV news programmes). Others have expanded the hearer roles (see, for example, Levinson 1988) but not primarily applied to TV news.

To summarize, the following are participants (speaker and ratified hearer) in TV news:

- the news presenter in monologue and dialogue
- reporters in standard on camera or voiceover report
- reporters in a live two-way exchange or a live link, who are addressed verbally and visually by the news presenter and expected to respond
- experts or ordinary people whose voices are accessed by news presenters or reporters
- the audience, who are addressed verbally and visually by the news presenter, and who are the primary intended recipient of all presentation and interaction.

Having identified the news presenter-reporter live exchange as the most interactive site and one in which NP appears at times to embody all 3 speaker meanings, it is also instructive to examine the language typical of it in greater detail. According to Goffman, there are two techniques by which a radio or television announcer produces a sense of spontaneity: through a projection of apparent personal belief in what is said, and through the simulation of “fresh talk”, defined as “the extemporaneous, ongoing assembly and encoding of text under the exigency of immediate response to one’s current situation and audience” (1981: 146). And “fresh talk commonly presents congruence among animator, author, and principal” (Goffman 1981: 229), so that the speaker shows commitment to and appears to be responsible for the content of what s/he says. The linguistic features of “fresh talk” or “lively talk” or “doing being interesting” are the following: hedging and vague language (like de-intensifiers), pause fillers and repetition, discourse markers, modality (especially in the form of adverbial expressions), personal pronouns, questions, the alternation of strong assertion and downgrading (also through the use of scalar expressions and quantifiers), “modalising” propositions in hypothetical conditionals, and in general more colloquial and idiomatic speech (Haarman 2004; Montgomery 2007; O’Keeffe 2006; Tolson 2006).

These features appear not only in spoken broadcasting but also in written journalism. For example, Chovanec (2009) shows how spoken interaction is simulated in the written discourse of live text commentary, where the journalist online reports and comments on an event “live”, making it available as a written text on the Internet in almost real time: “Spoken features and the pseudo-conversational structure of the reports are devices whereby the authors of the texts create a sense of immediacy in their reports, on the one hand, and construct and enhance the illusion of an interpersonal speech event, on the other” (Chovanec 2009: 109). In our case, we have an interaction, the live exchange, which excludes the audience from direct participation, but which nevertheless encourages their involvement in the dialogue. As we shall see, the above mentioned language features, and other characteristics of spontaneous interactive speech, are recurrent in our mini-corpus of live exchanges.

Let us return for a moment to the current context of television news, which as we have seen is dominated by three main factors:

1. the need to attract audience due to highly competitive and rapidly evolving modalities of news delivery;
2. social and cultural expectations of participation in the public sphere (e.g. via TV talk shows, radio call-ins, web blogs, etc.);
3. a continuing trend toward conversationalisation, personalisation, immediacy, drama and authenticity.

Within this broader context, we are concerned in the present study with strategies for attracting and involving the audience, and we focus on the live exchange as the key site for a more interactive, “spontaneous”, immediate and presumably engaging mode of news presentation, which brings the audience closer to the news. It also seems to be the site best suited to extending the public space since it is the most investigative, openly evaluative and interpretative. The aim of the study then is to discover and analyse eventual differences in the frequency and mode of delivery of live exchanges over time and in relation to specific news items (e.g. war/conflict vs. politics), and to identify eventual other strategies pertinent to the participation framework. Once identified, these overall tendencies will allow us to hypothesize about their significance in a context of growing competition for audience participation and a perceived need for extending and informing the public sphere.

3. The live exchange in the data

Live exchanges were relatively frequent in the data. Overall, they were much more frequent than the other interactive format, studio comments by correspondents, of which there were very few (an average of one over the entire week of news coverage in each of the four periods under examination). Another interesting format, reporters’ studio maxi screen presentations, which are more personal and less formal than a traditional news report and quite didactic in approach, were present in our data only during the week of news in 2007. The live exchange on the other hand, in addition to being quite frequent, involved more “spontaneous” and engaging language, and the more speaking turns it included the more probing and in-depth its treatment of the news item seemed to be. Not surprisingly, the live exchange tended to occur in our data in relation to important and complex issues requiring ongoing coverage, for example: in 1999, the conflict in Kosovo; in 2003, a major political event (Blair’s cabinet reshuffle following the Iraq war); in 2007, the Iran hostages crisis; in 2011, the uprising in Libya.

Example 1 which follows is typical of a 7-turn NP-R live exchange in the data from 1999. The subject is the peace talks on Kosovo. The tags in the examples indicate as follows: NP = News Presenter, R = Reporter, VOX = ordinary person, VO = voice over, CAM = to camera. Underlined segments of live talk in live exchanges and links include: the opening and closing in direct address; the NP’s opening question; markers of spontaneous talk, such as repetitions, fillers, self-corrections, reformulations; discourse markers, such as *well* or *now*; alternation of strong assertion and downgrading; explicit evaluation; speculative language with modality; colourful/idiomatic expressions; presence of *I*, *you*, *we*, *our*.

- (1) <NP> Now back to the main news. The diplomatic moves to draw up a UN resolution to restore peace in Kosovo have been stalled by the Russians. The meeting of the foreign ministers of the world's eight most powerful countries in Bonn has been suspended until tomorrow. Our diplomatic correspondent Brian Hanrahan joins me from there. Brian is this just a hiccup or is this UN resolution in real trouble tonight?
- <R> Well the hope is that it's a hiccup, I-I think it's what's rather delicately being put as a as a Yeltsin problem, because what happened earlier today is is that most of the problems went away, Mr Ivanov said he thought he could agree to the three that were left, there were some difficulties there, but he said no I can agree some words on this but I have to send them back to Moscow in order to be sure. When he sent them back to Moscow the reply came back there was nobody available to take the decision, and he'd have to wait till tomorrow. So on the face of it it looks like just a a technical problem but remember Mr Chernomyrdin got into trouble when he went back to Moscow uh having gone a little further than some people had wanted and it may be this Ivanov is either playing very cautious or that he's worried that there is a group in Moscow that will try to block what he's agreed today.
- <NP> Are these outstanding issues absolutely central to the deal or are they merely details?
- <R> They're pretty central. Uh they concern I'm not sure of the exact detail but we we think they concern the the way in which the military force which will be in Kosovo will report to the United Nations and also what kind of powers it will have. But also uh it's a question of whether or not the war crimes- whether there should be a reference to the war crimes tribunal and a call for it to investigate war crimes there. These are these are all sensitive points, they're perhaps not sticking points but they're certainly very sensitive points and uh uh given the the the history of of of Russia and and its difficulties on this uhm it may be that what will come back is is another negotiation. But people have been full of Mr praise Mr Ivanov today saying they do think he does want to get a deal.
- <NP> But does anybody still think that Milosevic can be trusted to keep to his end of any deal?
- <R> Well there seems to be growing impatience with it uh if if you believe what people are saying uhm uh the fact that he has tried to wriggle out of an agreement he made only a couple of days ago uhm ha- has simply hardened opinion with the idea that there really isn't any point giving way to him. This this is perhaps a test of NATO's nerve, test of everybody's nerves, NATO's response at the moment is to stay very very tough indeed and and say that uh he is giving way.
- <NP> Right. Brian Hanrahan in Bonn, thanks very much. (June 5, 1999)

Like this one, all the live exchanges in our data involve NP asking R either a direct question or for specific information. In Example 1, when introducing the live exchange, NP says “our diplomatic correspondent”, where *our* is potentially inclusive of the TV audience who watch the programme regularly and seems to trigger the positioning of viewers as ratified hearers/observers. NP and R are in direct address in an interactive style, which is more engaging and constructs the viewers’ role as party to a “performance”. NP asks direct probing questions (calling for explanation, interpretation, and prediction on the part of R) in a clearly evaluative style (alternating strong assertion and downgrading with words like *just* – “just a hiccup”, *real* – “in real trouble”, *absolutely* – “absolutely central”, *merely* – “merely details”). R hedges and uses vague language: “on the face of it it looks like just a technical problem”. NP uses a colourful expression characteristic of spoken style: “just a hiccup”. R also uses expressive language: “to wriggle out of an agreement”. R uses fillers (*well*, *uhm*, *uh*) and engages in frequent repetitions and occasional self corrections and reformulations, all of which are indicative of “spontaneous” speech or “fresh talk”. R’s use of first-person pronouns helps to maintain the interactive format: “I think”, “I’m not sure”, “we think”; also in his use of the imperative in direct address to the NP: “but remember”. Use of *but* by NP serves to expand dialogic space by entertaining other points of view: “but does anyone still think...?” In closing the exchange NP says “Brian Hanrahan in Bonn”, for the benefit of viewers, signalling the end of the “performance”.

In her/his follow up questions NP gives the appearance of playing all three of Goffman’s speaker roles: animator or the one who makes the utterance, author or the one who creates the text, and principal, the one whose position is expressed and who is committed to the words of the text. This of course is the most natural state of affairs in face-to-face conversation (Goffman 1981:229). The overall effect is that of engaging viewers, positioning them in a participant role in an exploration of the significance of the facts reported, also with respect to future possibilities. What is presented is immediate in terms of time (up to the moment) and space (on location in Bonn, where the talks are being held). In Dynel’s (2010:11) work on polylogues in a TV sit com she proposes dividing ratified hearers into either the “addressee” or “another interactant”, which she calls the “third party”: “[...] the speaker may overtly address one participant, while intending to communicate meanings primarily to another ratified hearer”. In the live exchange NP is clearly acting in the name of and for the benefit of the TV audience, which can also be seen from her/his physical positioning as s/he places the audience behind her/him (“on her/his side”) and turns to the big screen on which R appears.

Although 7-turn exchanges exemplify more fully the potential of NP-R exchanges, they were much less frequent in the data than 5-turn exchanges, which were predominant in the 2003 and 2007 data but also present in the 1999 data. Example 2 is typical of the 5-turn exchange.

- (2) <NP> First tonight, let's join our political editor Andrew Marr in the central lobby of the Palace at Westminster. Andrew.
[Marr delivers standard report, terminating with VO 'If no one's leading, who would want to follow?']
- <NP> Andrew, lots of words, lots of documents, lots of debate. Do we now have a very clear idea of what the Chancellor actually wants?
- <R> Well we don't. I think that it is the great mystery. Is Gordon Brown who feels the delay of the last six years has been very good for Britain economically, really ready to go out there and campaign vigorously and enthusiastically for British membership of the Euro any time soon. Well, we'll find that out perhaps tomorrow when he sits beside Tony Blair for a press conference. But that really is what today is NOT answered.
- <NP> And the intriguing possibility – put it no more strongly than that – of a referendum maybe by late next year, is that very likely, moderately likely, how would you gauge it?
- <R> Less than moderately I'd say Hew. I mean, Tony Blair would love to see that. He would- He thinks that despite all the problem despite the fundamental economic problems still there, that Britain could see a referendum in 18 months' time. He knows that there are problems in the world economy and so forth, but he thinks it could be done. I have to say, he looks a bit of a lonely optimist on that one just at the moment. I think the likelier thing is that this issue of the Euro and the convention, the other great question over Europe, will be wrapped together by Labour and made a question for the whole British people, basically are we going to be European as a country, are we going to be in or out, and that will dominate a general election in say 2005. And the Euro question probably won't be settled until after that. As I say, today makes it slightly likelier that we will join the Euro, but it's an awful long way off.
- <NP> Andrew. Many thanks. (June 6, 2003)

The language used and the participation framework created are very similar to the 7-turn exchange shown in Example 1. Both NP and R use highly evaluative language; there is probing (“how would you gauge it?”), interpreting (“he looks a bit of a lonely optimist”), hypothesizing (“I’d say”), predicting (“slightly likelier [...] but it’s an awful long way off”); there are also signs of spontaneous production and use of more expressive and informal language. R uses a pseudo-cleft construction (“that really is what today is NOT answered”) to highlight evaluative information. NP asks direct questions of R. R uses focusing questions to speculate, in a highly communicative style.

As can be seen from these two examples, the live exchange exhibits interactive, seemingly spontaneous (“fresh”, “lively”) language orienting to normative

patterns of ordinary talk, and encourages audience involvement through informed speculation, clearly evaluative language, and personal perspective and involvement. As mentioned before, because of their very engaging and involving features, emphasizing immediacy and completeness of coverage, delivering information in a more dialogic mode in a more informal, spoken, register, it was thought that live exchanges would increase over time in news delivery. This was also in view of the fact that traditional TV news is called upon to compete with the immediacy of 24-hour rolling news and with more participatory forms of news presentation on the web.

In a further exploration of the “fresh talk” aspects of NP-R exchanges, we did a search with the software *Wordsmith Tools* 6.0 (Scott 2012) and found that the words *well* and *now* were the top two keywords, which means these words were used significantly more frequently in the live exchanges than in the overall news programme. They are particularly interesting in move initial position where they are used as discourse markers. Examining these words in context can shed further light on why the discourse in the exchanges has a distinctly conversational tone.

There were 69 occurrences of *well*, 58 of them used in initial position, and this usage was frequent in the talk of both NP (20 occurrences) and R (38 occurrences) although with slightly different functions. Move initial *well* in NP talk is described by Haarman (2004:75) as “signalling sequentiality and coherence with the preceding text, while marking a transition or shift in talk to a different context or mode, usually from a taped voiceover (VO) actuality report to the live exchange.”⁴ This contextualization is highly functional both for the TV audience and the reporter in a live exchange, who is preparing to speak. Notice how it works in Example 3 from our data, where the shift is from one live exchange to another:

- (3) <NP> Jeremy Bowen in Tripoli, thank you very much. *Well* the crisis in Libya has meant that tens of thousands of migrants many of them Egyptian workers are trying to flee the country. Most are stranded on the border with Tunisia and aid agencies are struggling to provide them with sufficient food and shelter. The United Nations has started putting up tents to shelter some of them. *Well* Ben Brown joins us now from the Libya Tunisia border. Can you gauge how many people are there Ben?
(February 28, 2011)

Initial *well* can also be used by the NP to signal a shift to a new but related topic as in Example 4:

4. See also Schiffrin (1987) on the use of *well* in a variety of discourses.

- (4) <R> [...] One thing the American officials do agree on is that the failure to capture Saddam Hussein or to find his remains is encouraging these fighters to carry on their attacks against American troops, and indeed encouraging ordinary Iraqis to continue sheltering them.
- <NP> *Well* Nick just to add to the administration's difficulties there's another development today in the search for the ever-elusive weapons of mass destruction.
- <R> There's been a steady drip of embarrassing leaks from the US intelligence community this week. (June 13, 2003)

Initial *well* in R talk in the live exchange tends to have a slightly different function: "*Well* [...]" can function interpersonally as a hedge or mitigating marker, before the reporter's move of non-compliance with the request (i.e. to answer the question as posed)" (Haarman 2004: 80). Note this usage in Example 5:

- (5) <NP> Well now that all the moves have been announced at Cabinet and Ministerial level, what do you make of the shape of the new government?
- <R> *Well* as far as the big changes of yesterday were concerned they look less like a strategy and more like a reaction to the fact that the Health Secretary and the Lord Chancellor were on their way out of the door. Now today there's been some changes lower down the batting order, some new blood brought in, new talent invested in for the future and all Prime Ministers have to do that from time to time but overall I don't think anyone can say this really has been the most inspiring or inspired of reshuffles. (June 13, 2003)

Haarman (2004: 81)⁵ concludes:

The reporter's use of initial *well*, then, is one element whose presence helps characterise the live exchange as a particular kind of 'conversational' news discourse. Its frequency points up the extemporaneous and interactive quality of the exchange, but also reveals a recurrent necessity to negotiate common ground and presuppositions with the newsreader.

Moving on to the second most key word, *now*, it was used most frequently in live exchanges as an adverb (54 occurrences out of a total of 63), emphasizing the immediacy of the news reporting (Example 6):

- (6) <NP> The Queen is to pay a state visit to Ireland. She's the first British monarch to go to Dublin for a hundred years. Our Ireland Correspondent Mark Simpson is there for us *now*. Mark, why has it taken so long? (March 4, 2011)

5. See also Owen (1983), Jucker (1993) and Smith and Jucker (2000) for interactional uses of initial *well*.

According to Biber et al. (1999: 801), “In news generally, *now* marks a change from previous events, showing the latest newsworthy event or telling readers what they can expect next” (Example 7).

- (7) <R> It remains to be seen *now*, I think, whether the complaint from Miss Middleton’s lawyers will be withdrawn. (March 30, 2007)

The remaining 9 occurrences are uses of initial *now* as discourse marker. Quoting Biber et al. (1999: 1088):

Now as an utterance marker seems to have the function of clearing ‘a bit of conversational space’ ahead. It often marks a return to a related subject, and at the same time a new departure. [...] it serves to seek or provide additional background information while at the same time continuing the current topic of the conversation.

In the data at hand it seems to be part of the reporter’s interpretative and speculative role (Examples 8–10):

- (8) <R> I think on balance Hew, if I was a pro-Euro campaigner I would not be very happy with what’s happened today. *Now* I know that Tony Blair wants to get this country into the Euro [...] (June 9, 2003)
- (9) <R> [...] I saw a lot of their armour and their tanks and clearly in that area they have a great deal of force and armour on the streets. *Now* where does this leave Colonel Gaddafi? (March 5, 2001)
- (10) <R> But still for a twenty five year old woman, on her own, on her way to work, it must be pretty unpleasant. *Now* what of course her lawyers are hoping is that newspaper editors will desist from publishing these photographs taken of her when she is in her own private time. (March 30, 2007)

To conclude, both *well* and *now* in initial position are interaction signals which have a discourse management function in that they “signal a transition in the evolving progress of the conversation” and “an interactive relationship between speaker, hearer, and message” (Biber et al. 1999: 1086). We’ve seen from the examples how they create interactive discourse in the live exchange, while adverbial *now* stresses the timeliness of the information reported. These linguistic forms strategically engage and involve the audience by bringing them into closer contact with the news and its producers. Having examined in some detail the live exchange, we will now look at our findings with respect to our research aims.

4. Findings regarding the tendency toward live exchanges and other audience engaging strategies

In examining our data, we wanted to explain why instead of increasing, the number of live exchanges remained the same over the 4 time periods (a total of 10 or 11 exchanges in each of the four years). We found however that these exchanges themselves became increasingly shorter (from 5 or 7 turns to 3 or 5 turns to practically all 3 turns). And the live links with no real exchange between NP and R which appeared in the data beginning in 2003 increased as the live exchanges became shorter; they doubled in number in 2007 as 3-turn live exchanges began to predominate and decreased only slightly from there in 2011 when virtually all live exchanges consisted of 3 turns only. The results are presented in the bar graph in Figure 1.

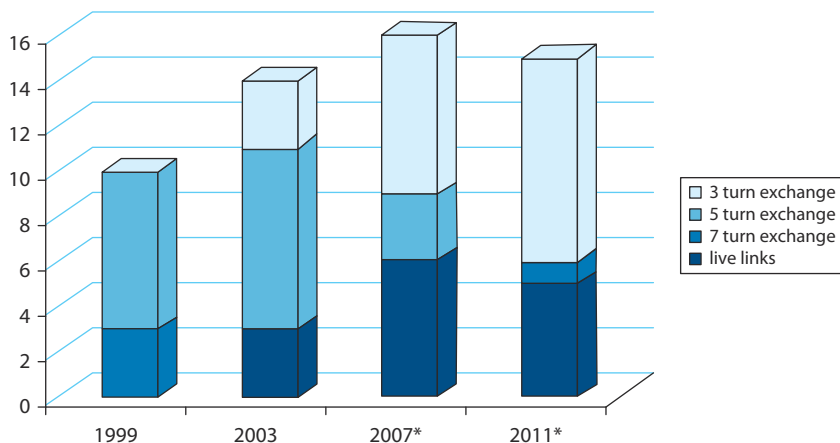


Figure 1. Frequency and type of live exchanges and number of live links in the 4 study periods⁶

The decrease in the number of speaking turns within the exchanges resulted in a loss of interactivity between speakers as R only responds to NP's opening question and there is no follow up by NP. Example 11 is typical of the 3-turn exchange.

- (11) <NP> Well, let us talk to our Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen, who is at the Foreign Office this evening. Jeremy, this immediate crisis is over. But where does Iran stand now then on the international stage?

6. In the 2007 and 2011 data sets we also find the introduction of extensive headlines, news summary and previews, and solicitations to consult the website.

<R> Well, do not forget there is a big overarching crisis going on and that is about Iran's nuclear plans. Do they want to try to get a nuclear weapon? Britain and America say yes. Iran says no. And now the Americans believe that the way of dealing with this is being tough. But the question that comes out of the resolution of this particular crisis, and at the moment I am afraid there are more questions than answers, but the question is, should engagement work? Should they try that? Should that channel of communications that was opened up between London and Tehran that helped resolve this crisis, should they work hard to keep that open? Will Iran answer flexibility with flexibility? And confrontation with confrontation? That no one really knows. But there are plenty of Iran watchers around today, who are saying why not try? Give it a chance.

<NP> Jeremy Bowen, many thanks.

(April 5, 2007)

The interactive format is maintained and the language used is similar to the 5 and 7-turn live exchanges but much abbreviated, both on the part of NP and R. For example, NP asks only a generic opening question with no real use of evaluative language and there are no specific probes as there is no follow up to what R says. R is evaluative and here also uses focusing questions to indicate and speculate on various possibilities.

As we can see, the interactivity is lost after the third turn as NP asks no further questions after the first prepared opening question, giving the impression of not really engaging with R in a more spontaneous way but rather letting her/him have her/his say and then closing the sequence and moving on to the next item with no further comment or evaluation, and so with less commitment to the content of what is said (NP as animator and author but not as principal). It seems logical that less interactivity in the exchange amounts to less "encouragement" of audience participation.

At the same time, along with the abbreviated, 3-turn live exchanges which characterize the 2007 and 2011 data, there is a significant increase over time in the number of live links to communicate liveness and authenticity but with no real exchange between NP and R, as can be seen from Example 12.

- (12) <NP> Ben Brown on the Libyan Tunisian border thank you very much. The rest of the news now. And the former British Airways computer expert has been found guilty of plotting with a wanted terrorist to blow up a plane. Rajib Karim used his position at BA to plan an attack with a radical preacher who was associated with Al Qaeda. Well let's go live now to Sophie Hutchinson who is at Scotland Yard. Sophie.

- <R CAM> Yes well this case investigated by the metropolitan police centres on a computer software engineer. Rajib Karim was today found guilty of four counts of terrorism including planning catastrophic attacks on BA's computer system, but also deadly plans to blow up a plane and cause wholesale loss of life.
- <R VO> Rajib Karim a British Airways employee and radicalised Muslim, he was encouraged by this extremist cleric to see his job with the airline as a golden opportunity to attack the west. To Karim's colleagues at the BA office where he worked in Newcastle he was a quiet respectful man. But he lived a double life. A talented computer engineer on his home PC he used sophisticated encryption and enciphering codes to communicate with extremists around the world. He contacted this man Anwar al-Awlaki a radical cleric hiding in Yemen.
- < Anwar al-Awlaki> 9/11 was the answer of the millions of people who suffer from American aggression.
- <R VO> He's probably the most wanted terror leader in the world after Osama Bin Laden, an American citizen, he speaks directly to angry young Muslims in the west.
- <Mustafa Abulhimal, Qu' Iiam Foundation> Anwar al-Awlaki in his relatively short career in the violent world of extremes in today [sic] he managed to unfortunately inspire a significant number of individuals in the States or in Europe.
- <R VO> Anwar al-Awlaki told Karim to use his job at BA as a front in the holy war saying I pray that Allah may grant us a breakthrough through you. With that in mind Karim applied to become an air steward to cover the striking BA workers. He was turned down due to lack of experience. He then offered to plant a bomb on an airliner, writing I can work with the brothers to find out the possibilities of shipping a package to a US bound plane. Police arrested him before an attack could be mounted. But although Karim's terror plans never took off, the cleric who inspired him is still out there, offering leadership to young extremists.
- <R CAM> Well the metropolitan police are very pleased with today's verdict. They say that the computer messages between Karim and the radical cleric were some of the most sophisticated they have ever had to decipher and decode. So it has been a huge amount of work for them. Karim will be sentenced now on the 18th of March.
- <NP> Sophie Hutchinson thank you very much. (February 28, 2011)

Here we see a typical example of the live link being used essentially as a technique to signal immediacy and on-the-spot reporting but in reality serving merely as an engaging frame for a standard voiceover report with actuality clips. In fact, the reporter's standard voiceover report accounts for most of the item. Even in the opening and closing on camera there is limited interaction between NP and R: direct address but no question. NP tends to function only as animator, not as principal and perhaps not as author. In place of a specific question for information or evaluation, her/his opening is more generic and formulaic, e.g. "Let's go live to" or "Our reporter is at".

Apparently the live link serves a different purpose from the live exchange. If the rush to break the story first is a driving factor in 24-hour rolling news with its focus on live news, then the need to create a sense of the here-and-nowness of news becomes paramount in traditional TV news, with the reporter reporting live from the location where the event took place, even though nothing newsworthy is happening there at the moment. Presence at the scene also makes the news appear more authoritative. Overall, there seems to have emerged a strategy of focussing on the appearance of "liveness" through the live link while at the same time sacrificing the interactive format and the probing nature of the live exchange as well as the use of more spontaneous sounding language. Interpreting this finding, we can say that, given the 30-minute time slot for this evening news programme, the preference seems to be to include as much news as possible without losing the appearance of offering instantaneous reporting. In fact, the shorter 3-turn exchanges may actually seem more dynamic in the sense that they allow for more rapid switching from one news item to another, although within the exchange itself there is only a kind of "token interactivity".

5. Other audience engagement strategies

Along with the abbreviation of the live exchange and the appearance and consolidation of the live link, other strategies have been introduced to attract and engage viewers. First of all, beginning with the data in 2007 and 2011, the opening headlines became longer and more elaborate, often including brief clips of reporters in action, or politicians speaking. Similar to trailers for fictional series, they aim to capture the viewers' immediate interest by giving the impression of extensive and professional coverage of events. Example 13 is a good illustration of this.

- (13) <NP> Colonel Gaddafi cracks down on opposition attempts to mount fresh demonstrations in the Libyan capital. Security forces use tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters in Tripoli.

- <R CAM> All the anger on the streets here is not on its own. They're going to bring the government down. To do that they'll need more help from inside the regime itself and bigger numbers on the streets.
- <NP> Rebels in the east of the country push forward insisting they won't be defeated by Gaddafi
- <VOX> If he is not going to leave we are going to kill him.
- <NP> Also on tonight's programme a ship carrying a hundred million pounds in Libyan currency is seized at Harridge.
- <Saif Gaddafi> Libya is the most democratic state in the world.
- <NP> Colonel Gaddafi's son and his links to a top London university, its director quit after accepting funding from Libya.
- <NP> Labour holds onto their seat in <Unclear> Central, a disaster for the Lib Dems as they lose their deposit.
- And the queen will make a state visit to Ireland, the first by a British monarch for a hundred years. Here in the South hundreds of jobs are set to go on the Isle of Wight but how will it impact on patient care. And controversial construction in the national park. Development plans for this historic building.
- (March 4, 2011)

These headlines are over a minute long and each story is accompanied by visuals. A variety of voices are included: the reporter being jostled by anti-Gaddafi protestors fleeing tear gas in the Libyan capital; a rifle-wielding insurgent in the road; Gaddafi's son making a statement and the amused reaction of his audience. These clips from upcoming stories foster a sense of proximity and connection right from the outset of the programme. Particularly dynamic is the clip of the reporter speaking in loud and hurried tones, his reporting interrupted by protestors running past him and almost colliding with him while explosions can be heard in the background. The camera operator is apparently also jostled so that the image moves around and sometimes the camera only films part of the reporter's body, all of which gives the viewer the impression of being on the scene. Likewise, the grinning anonymous insurgent brandishing his gun and speaking to the camera gives viewers access to a direct participant in the news. Beginning the programme in this way gives the viewer the impression of immediate access to what's happening.

In addition to extensive and dynamic headlines, another innovation beginning in 2007 is the mention of news items already covered and those to come (what we call "summing up and coming up"), a "user-friendly" strategy directed at the viewers to help them to "fix" cognitively the items already reported, while arousing interest in what is to come (Example 14).

- (14) <NP> The time is quarter past six. Our top story tonight, Colonel Gaddafi tells the BBC that the people of Libya love him and foreign pressure on him to stand down doesn't matter. And coming up,
 <R CAM> and I'm in Hollywood post Oscars with what they're calling here, a royal flush. (February 28, 2011)

Montgomery (2007: 199) sees the more extensive use of headlines at the beginning of the news programme today, as well as the use of trailers halfway through, as signposting devices to direct the audience. Certainly the "summing up and coming up" will help to orient viewers, in particular anyone who has missed the beginning of the broadcast. In this sense, it satisfies the expectation of instant news which is the prerogative of rolling TV news which constantly re-cycles the top stories.

The last innovation identified, beginning with the 2007 data, is a solicitation to consult the website (Example 15), which is of course the most obvious and efficacious strategy to encourage direct audience participation and maintain engagement.

- (15) <NP> Okay Ben Brown on the Libyan Tunisian border, John Simpson in Ajdabija in eastern Libya thank you both very much. And of course you can follow all the developments in Libya on the BBC website. That's at BBC dot co dot uk slash news. (March 3, 2011)

The amazing growth and pervasiveness of the web and in particular of live news reporting available from both institutional and non-institutional sources – via webcam, mobile devices, also on YouTube, blogs, etc. (see Chovanec 2010 and Jucker 2011), has led to the appropriation by traditional news providers of the affordances offered by the web to enable viewers to interact and respond online, by accessing selected items and expressing personal comments.

6. Conclusions

As this study shows, increasing competition with 24 hour rolling news' focus on live reporting, real time images and breaking news has made it necessary for traditional TV news programmes like the BBC Evening News to find other ways of attracting and engaging viewers by creating a sense of immediacy through live links, extended headlines, news summary and previews, and invitations to go to the website for updates and more in-depth coverage and eventually to make comments.

On the one hand, our analysis of live exchanges has revealed that they have not increased over time, and that their presumed function has come to be realised also through these other strategies for assuring audience engagement and participation.

At the same time, the increase in live links, in itself an attempt to bridge time and space, has ironically resulted in a significantly abbreviated live exchange with reduced interactivity – a kind of “token interactivity” – and less discourse in a conversational or dialogic mode. However, a sense of dynamism is maintained as there is a more rapid switching from one news item to another. Overall, there seems to be a concern with giving the impression of “liveness” through truncated live exchanges and live links at the expense of the extended live exchange. Consequently, the interactive format and the probing nature of the longer live exchange are sacrificed, as well as the use of more spontaneous sounding language and the impression of commitment on the part of NP, who no longer speaks as principal or even author of the text. The kind of “token interactiveness” created in the shorter exchanges and the live links may have a negative impact on the TV audience, the main recipient of the programme. To the extent that the extended live exchange of the past, with its greater contextualization and narrative structuring of the news, increased understanding and retention, there may be today the risk of a news overload without sufficient reflection on its significance. It should be said though that in this age of visual primacy enhanced visuals made possible by the new technologies can take the viewer into the news-in-the-making and provide important cues for its interpretation.

While there have been criticisms of 24-hour rolling news (Cushion and Lewis 2010) because of its obsession with the new, with going live and with being present at the scene, there is little doubt that it has altered what audiences expect from traditional broadcast news and will continue to reshape the style of reporting on other network news channels. Since most people still get their news from TV most of the time, and many of them are still tuning in to the traditional news programmes, it will be important to monitor future developments on this front.

Returning to Goffman’s (1981) participation framework, in view of the findings of this study we can more fully appreciate the complexity of the role of the audience in today’s TV news. Clearly the audience constitute an “addressed recipient”, addressed both verbally and visually by the news presenter. As we have seen, they are also positioned as “ratified hearers/observers” of the NP-R live exchange, briefed by the news presenter where called for and further aligned with her/him as sharing common values. And of course the audience are the primary recipient of all presentation and interaction in the news programme. It should be said that the appropriation of technological affordances offered to broadcast news institutions by the web gives a voice to the audience, no longer necessarily “imagined recipients”, but potentially full participants who can also take on a (limited) role in producing language. This would compensate in part for the loss of interactivity in the live exchange in that the audience could take on a speaking role, albeit a virtual

one, in the sense of responding online in some way to what has been presented on the news programme. Whether or not their responses would, as in real life interaction, be able to shape what others (in this case, newsmakers in traditional TV news) do or say is not clear, but certainly the further evolution in the style and format of TV news will be geared toward making the audience feel as much as possible like direct participants in the interaction.

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What I can (re)make out of it

Incoherence, non-cohesion, and re-interpretation in YouTube video responses

Elisabetta Adami

The present paper examines patterns of relatedness in exchanges built by the video responses to one of YouTube “Most Responded” videos. The analysis shows the presence of a diversified range of patterns, as a result of the interactants’ creative use of the video response option, which affords text-production through copy-and-paste. The results trace a continuum from fully cohesive and coherent exchanges to exchanges presenting no clues of relatedness, with a great variation in-between the two poles. Videos often respond incoherently, disregarding the meaning, diverting from the topic or foregrounding a background element of the video they respond to. In other cases, responses are created through the reuse of previously made texts, so that their recontextualization reconfigures or scatters cohesive ties, producing a marked implicitness in the exchange. Interactants accept (and at times praise) incoherent and non-cohesive semiotic chains thus acknowledging and reinforcing emerging conventions in video-interaction. Interaction through videos seems driven by the participants’ interested reinterpretation, transformation, and recontextualization of texts, thus shaping distinctively the requirements for successful communication in the semiotic space.

1. Introduction

Since 2006, video uploaders on YouTube have been able to link their videos as “video responses” to other videos, thus establishing video exchanges. This new form of interaction is asynchronous, like email exchanges, and public, like forum discussions or comments to blog posts or videos, but it consists of videos rather than writing alone – and as such it requires investigation. Although YouTube videos have been increasingly subject to research (e.g., Burgess and Green 2009; Jones and Schieffelin 2009; Lange 2008a, 2008b; Simonsen 2013), interaction on YouTube has been analysed only with reference to written comments posted to videos (e.g.,

Bou-Franch et al. 2012; Lorenzo-Dus et al. 2011). Except for the author's previous work (Adami 2009, 2010), video responses have so far been investigated only quantitatively (Benevenuto, Duarte et al. 2008; Benevenuto, Rodrigues et al. 2008). As in the case of asynchronous computer-mediated exchanges based on writing (cf. Herring 2006, for a review on studies on coherence in private and public forms of text-based CMC), one aspect demanding observation is the degree of coherence in video exchanges, along with the extent of explicitness or implicitness with which it is established, i.e., the degree of cohesion in the exchange. The present paper aims to trace emerging conventions in the use of the video response option by investigating the patterns of cohesion and coherence that video responses establish with one of the "Most Responded" videos on YouTube.

Rather than relying exclusively on writing, video exchanges are multimodally orchestrated (Kress 2010); therefore the analysis will adopt a social semiotic (Hodge and Kress 1988; van Leeuwen 2005) multimodal approach. Since its early works (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006[1996]), multimodal analysis has used Halliday's (1978) functional linguistic framework, adapting it for the description of all semiotic modes, like still and moving image, gesture, proxemics, facial expression, etc., and their intertwining in multimodal texts. In video exchanges, this approach is particularly needed in the analysis of cohesion, since cohesive ties (Halliday and Hasan 1976) can be established trans-modally, i.e., what is spoken in a video can be shown as an image in its response, thus establishing a multi- or inter-modal cohesive tie of repetition (cf. van Leeuwen 2005, for a framework on cohesion in multimodal texts; Tseng 2013, for cohesion in films).

Video responses can be produced through the re-use of a previously made video, i.e., by recontextualizing as a response a video that was made for another purpose and uploaded in a previous moment. Consequently, as shown in the analysis, cohesive ties in video exchanges are extremely varied and coherence can be markedly loosened, to a much greater extent than what observed for written computer-mediated exchanges (cf. Herring 2006). Hence, the two notions of cohesion and coherence need to be integrated within a framework that can account for marginally related exchanges, and for cases conflicting with traditional views of cohesion. By definition, coherence defines a text as such (in its "making sense", Halliday and Hasan 1976); this holds true also for dialogic exchanges (Van Dijk 1980). Following Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is a semantic feature which provides texture to a text. Grammatical and lexical cohesive ties among elements of a text establish semantic relations that enable us to interpret the meaning of one element in relation to another. A text can have coherence without establishing it through cohesive ties, i.e., when its meaning (or the meaning of any of its elements) is implicit and requires interpretation of the context; cohesive ties construct explicitness, in that they express a text's coherence explicitly. Consider the following two examples:

- (1) It started to rain. I ran home.
- (2) It started to rain. So, I ran home.

In Example 1, the semantic relation between the event expressed in the first sentence and the action in the second is implicit. The text is coherent (it makes sense) in that we infer a cause-effect relation between the two sentences, but coherence is not cohesively expressed. In Example 2 instead, the conjunction *so* expresses through a cohesive tie the logical connection between the event expressed earlier and the action introduced by *so*. From Halliday and Hasan's definition of the two notions, it derives that a text can be coherent and non-cohesive but not vice versa, given that cohesion is a textual semantic expression of coherence.

Yet, as will be shown in the analysis, the patterns of relatedness in video exchanges encompass cases of responses that are – paradoxically – cohesive but incoherent, e.g. when videos disregard the topic of their responded-video (and are thus incoherent with it) but, at the same time, they relate to some background elements of the responded video, through cohesive ties of, e.g., repetition. To be able to account for these instances, the framework here uses the social semiotic notion of *prompt-response* (Adami 2010; Kress 2010) for the analysis of the patterns of relatedness of video responses to the responded video.

In this framework, “communication is always a *response* by one participant to a *prompt*” (Kress 2010: 35); while an initial move “sets the ground” (2010: 162) which “shapes” (2010: 36) the range of possible prompts, interpretation of the prompt as such (out of a range of possibilities) is driven by the meaning-maker's interest which drives also the shaping of the response. In video exchanges, any element of a video can prompt a response, not only the most salient or the topic-related one. Hence, the type of “relatedness” between two videos in an exchange is here defined by the existence of an element in the response taking up (and thus making salient) any implicit or explicit element of the prompting video. The notion of relatedness is broader than Halliday and Hasan's cohesion (1976); while the latter is a surface semantic relation expressing coherence (thus a means to construct texture, to link explicitly one concept to another in a text), a responded-prompt can construct relatedness also within incoherent exchanges. This enables the analysis of those “cohesive but incoherent” instances of video exchanges mentioned earlier.

The analysis of relatedness in the exchanges provides insights into ongoing conventions in video-interaction emerging as a result of the participants' creative uses of the affordances of the medium. The corpus analysed is composed by 613 videos posted as responses to the video titled *Best video EVER!* (uploaded by *istchriscrocker* on 17 March 2008).¹ The video initiating the exchanges will be

1. The early results of the analysis on selected examples of the corpus have been published in Adami (2014).

labelled as the prompting video or initiating video. After describing the prompting video, the analysis examines the responses. It organizes them according to the type of relatedness which they configure in the exchange; then it discusses exemplary instances for each type.

The initiating video and the ample vagueness of its content were chosen specifically to the aims of the present analysis; in order to map the widest possible range of relations in the video exchanges, the selection has focused on an initiating video whose form and content offers a wide gamut of possible prompts. As will become clear in the description of the video (cf. Section 2), the enigmatic, apparently insignificant yet extremely provocative representation of the video was specifically designed to be as vague and “phatic” (Jakobson 1971) as possible; thus prompting a maximum range of deviations from traditional interacting patterns.²

2. The prompting video: *The Best video EVER!*

The initiating video was posted on 17 March 2008 by the YouTube profile *itschriscrocker*. Its video-maker and featuring character is a controversial “YouTube celebrity”, Chris Crocker. Twenty-year-old at the time and based in Los Angeles, USA, Chris Crocker is a popular videoblogger³ who became particularly famous thanks to the video *Leave Britney Alone*, where CC⁴ featured (allegedly) crying and pleading viewers to stop gossiping on the mishaps of the singer Britney Spears, ChrisCrocker’s declared idol. The videoblogger’s popularity hinges on the controversial persona of ChrisCrocker, whose aesthetics revolves around homo- transsexuality. The use of make up, cross-dressing, and blond bleached hair enhance the character’s androgynous traits. CC often videoblogs on sex-related issues using explicit language and a provocative rhetoric, while communicating sensuality through kinesics and face expressions (e.g., “pouts” at close-shot in front of the camera). CC’s dramatic style in addressing viewers constructs a relation of power asymmetry, of the celebrity-fan type, in an “either adore me or hate me” fashion, luring CC’s followers and fans and insulting CC’s haters.

The prompting *Best video EVER!* was uploaded at a time when the character had reached the peak of fame (with a descending phase possibly about to start).

2. Nevertheless, similar patterns are witnessed also in threads initiated by more topic-specific videos and screened more closely by the initiator (Adami 2010).

3. For an analysis of videoblogs and the videoblogging culture, cf. Griffith and Papacharissi (2010).

4. In consideration of the character’s declared gender ambiguity, reference to Chris Crocker will avoid gender-specific pronouns; the acronym CC will be used instead.

Posted with a description “*1 million views for each blink*”, the video features Chris Crocker at a close-shot wearing a green blouse and leaning on a whitish blanket (the same background used in the video *Leave Britney Alone*, which made CC popular), as shown in the two screenshots in Figure 1. The video lasts only four seconds, in which Chris Crocker looks self-confidently into the camera, smiles silently and blinks twice, while undistinguished environmental noises are merely audible. The video’s saturated colours, with enhanced contrast effects and lighting, recall the “sensory modality” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: Chapter 5) of glamour shootings and glossy magazines’ photos, endowing CC with an aura of star-system membership. The frivolous blinking is the video’s salient element, i.e., a quite insignificant action.

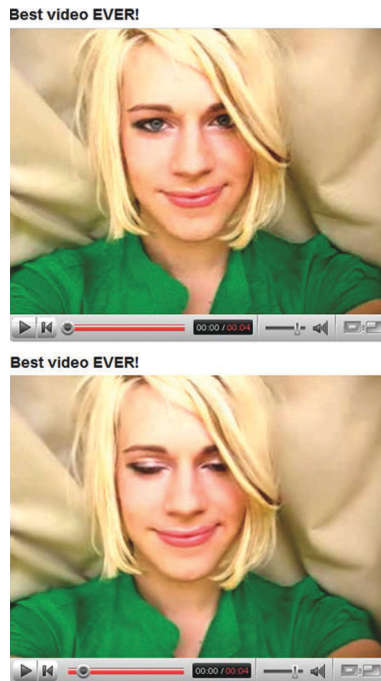


Figure 1. Snapshots of *Best Video EVER!*

The video’s vague meaning is reframed by its paratext. While the video shows an apparently insignificant performance, the title *Best video EVER!* announces its exceptional quality, thus functioning as a view-catcher. The description “*one million views for each blink*” (i.e., a prediction asserted as a given fact) combines with the facial expression in the video in communicating CC’s confidence in the character’s popularity. CC’s self-assurance is quite well grounded, as a comment suggests, after stressing the view-catcher function of the title:

Well... naturally we're gonna look because of the title. Next time, tell people all you're gonna do is blink and THEN see how many views you get. I bet you'll still»¿ get a million =]

The video's overall effect is a provocative teasing; viewers can indeed realize the clash between the title and the content of the video only after watching it and thus after contributing inevitably to augment the number of views foretold in its description. Hence the posting of the video is a manifestation of self-awareness both of CC's celebrity status and of viewing practices on YouTube.

About three weeks after its upload, the video had already gained more than the foretold one million views per blink; on 4 April 2008, when data were collected,⁵ it recorded 2,824,650 views, 31,847 text comments and 613 responses, and featured as the 19th YouTube's "Most Responded Video of All Times".

As a further evidence of the view-catcher function of the title, after the video had abundantly reached its target number of views, its title changed into a more topic-related *Watch Chris Crocker Blink*, while the following explanation of the motives for its posting appeared as an integration to the description:

The point of this video is to show the people who say I am not popular anymore & the people that say I have to be outrageous to get the attention I do- this is to show them that not only am I still popular, but I don't have to do anything other than blink.

3. The video responses

From 17 March 2008, the day it was posted, to 4 April 2008, the day the data were retrieved, CC's *Best Video EVER!* collected 613 video responses. As detailed in Table 1, among the 613 responses, eight are set to private, i.e., only invited friends can watch them (this may be a strategy used by respondents to obtain the initiator's friendship). Seven responses were later removed by their uploader and one was removed due to copyright violation.

Table 1. Viewable vs. inaccessible responses in the thread

Responses	613
Set to private	8
Removed by the user	7
Removed for copyright infringement	1
Viewable responses	597

5. The data for the present study were collected soon after the foretold number of views was reached, in order to capture the responses uploaded as the first reactions to its posting. As of August 2013, the video had reached 7,630,784 views, 57,221 comments and 574 responses.

The 16 inaccessible responses excluded, the remaining 597 relate in different ways to the initiating video. Table 2 lists six different categories, arranged according to the degree of relatedness in the exchanges, following the sequence: explicit > implicit > no clues. The first four labels identify responses presenting explicit elements of relatedness to the initiating video or its author/character. Explicitly related responses can take up the salient action of the prompting video, shaping the exchange as an “adjacency” pair; they can “comment” on the video or on its author/character; they can establish relatedness through “transformation”, by parodying or remixing the initiating video or its author/character; finally, they can make a “circumstantial reference” to CC, while diverting from the topic/content of the initiating video. The last two labels present no reference to either the prompting video or CC; in these cases the relation between the response and the prompting video can be “implicit” (and its establishment is done through inference) or there might be “no (explicit nor implicit) clues of relatedness” in the exchange. Each type is analysed in Sections 3.1–3.6 below.

Table 2. Types of relatedness in the video exchanges

Type of relatedness	No. of videos
Adjacency	125
Comment	97
Transformative re-use	83
Circumstantial reference	17
Implicit relatedness	104
No clues of relatedness	196
Total	622

A few responses fall into more than one category. As detailed in the discussion below, at times a response constructing an “adjacency pair” with the initiating video may display also elements of “spoofs” and thus count also as a parody among the “transformative re-uses”; this happens, for example, when the respondent faces the camera and blinks while wearing a blond wig, thus simultaneously responding to the salient action of the prompting video and parodying Chris Crocker. The polyvalence of some responses is in line with the multiple moves found in text-based computer-mediated exchanges (cf. Herring 2006) and explains the fact that the total in Table 2 outnumber the responses.

3.1 Adjacency pair: Attuned responses

A large number of videos (125) deploy the same multimodal pattern of the initiating video, i.e., very short and silent videos with a variously represented character facing the camera and responding to the salient action of the initiating video. The featured character can blink in his/her turn, once, twice or multiple times (Figure 2); s/he can respond negatively (Figure 3a), i.e., not blinking by keeping the eyes wide open, or evasively, by, e.g., wearing sunglasses (Figure 3b), preventing the verification of the factuality of the blinking (a verbal equivalent could be “maybe”). Further, the salient action can be responded to at a superordinate or more abstract level of meaning by showing the character performing other equally insignificant actions, such as drinking, eating, smoking or showing a fork (Figure 4). Finally, responses can disregard the blinking and take up the smile as a prompt, thus making it salient by showing a character with an exaggerated smile at the camera (Figure 5).

These responses shape the exchange as an adjacency pair (as in greetings exchanges, e.g., a wave gesture responding to another one), differently modulated on the basis of the type of response to the salient action.

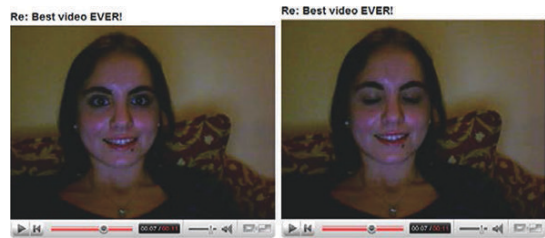


Figure 2. Positive adjacency

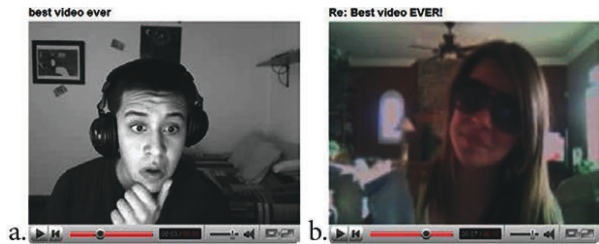


Figure 3. Negative (a) and evasive (b) adjacency

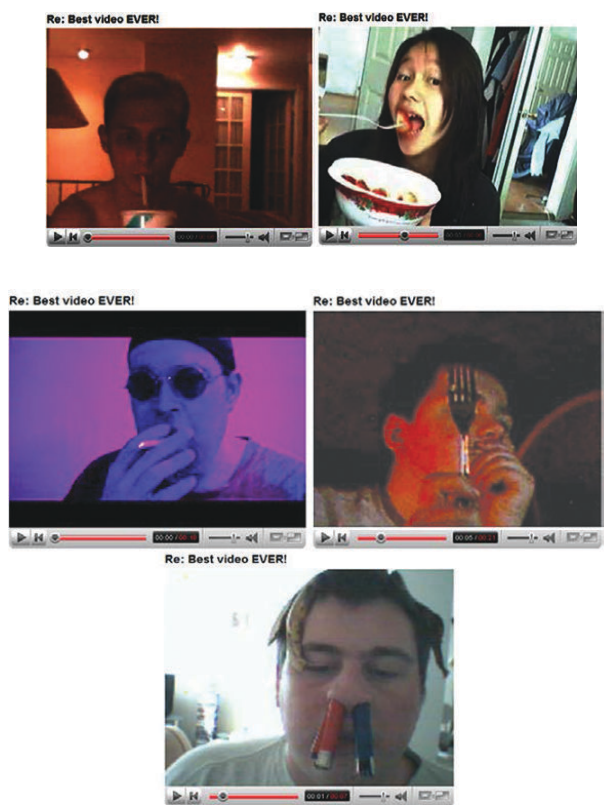


Figure 4. Superordinate adjacency (insignificant actions)

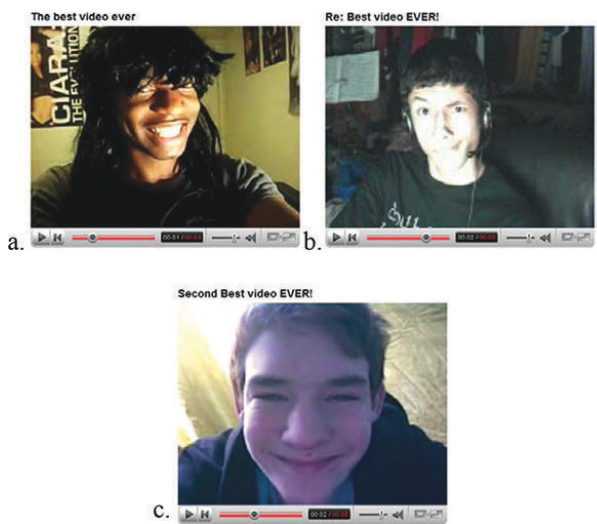


Figure 5. Smile as a salient prompt for adjacency

Responses constructing adjacency pairs take up the ideational meaning of the initiating video with no reference to its interpersonal one (i.e., to prove CC's celebrity). The blinking/smiling ones respond literally to the prompt, while the others take up a superordinate level of meaning, i.e., the insignificance of the blink. In all cases, responses take up the video's salient sign (either the blinking or the smile) as a prompt, constructing a cohesive exchange with it, through a varied cohesive tie of repetition/superordinate. Although cohesive, it is hard to consider the exchanges as coherent. Indeed Halliday's notion is inherently semantic, while responses here "attune" in form (of signifiers) more than in content. In most cases, the meaning of these responses is not identifiable. Affectively, the blinking in the response could either signal cooperation/solidarity with the initiator (as a corresponding wave of the hand or thumbs up) or could be meant to ridicule CC in a parroting effect (the same holds also for the exaggerated smile in the snapshots in Figure 5). Responses might be also motivated by the sheer pleasure of imitation (for imitation as a frequent YouTube practice, cf. Burgess 2008; Willett 2009), hence respondents might not be interested in manifesting an explicit attitude towards CC. Implicitness too is often present in YouTube videos, which might be intentionally ambiguous and vague (Willett 2009). Overall, the communicative function seems to be essentially phatic, prioritizing attuning while producing variation out of a very limited matrix, often independently of the underlying meaning of the represented signs. In most cases, the challenge to "making it different" drives the response; so the form, the performance itself becomes the sign, in a pleasurable challenge to transform the initiator's signs into/for a new representation. Similarly to street dance performances, variation-within-attuning is a newly-shaped form of cooperation in these exchanges.

Communication hinges on a differentiated-and-attuned participation, which takes up and transforms the initiator's text in a new performance. Respondents support the initiator with the mere posting of a response, thus contributing to enlarge the interaction and make the prompting video more visible. Indeed, in spite of the initiator's power to censor responses to the prompting video, CC has accepted these responses even when the salient action performed could be considered as an insult towards CC, as when featuring a finger gesture (thus also functioning as a comment to the prompting video, cf. the next section).

3.2 Comment: From coherence to topic deviation

97 responses comment on or evaluate the prompting video or its character/author, mainly in the genre of videoblogging (Griffith and Papacharissi 2010), with the respondent speaking in front of the camera. Comments can focus on (selected elements of)

the video and/or its author or CC's videoblogging history. Depending on the (more or less background) elements that they select as their responded prompt, commentaries construct more or less coherent exchanges with the initiating video.

Coherent commentaries can either focus on the character or on the initiating video, provided that they respond to salient elements of the communicative function or topic of the video. So, a few respondents criticize CC's thirst for fame, thus coherently commenting on the underlying function of the video. A respondent (Figure 6) performs a typical "award nomination" scene; he opens an envelope and, before clapping, announces the following:

and the award for the most likely to overdose on his own ego goes to ... Chris Crocker for his egotistical ramblings

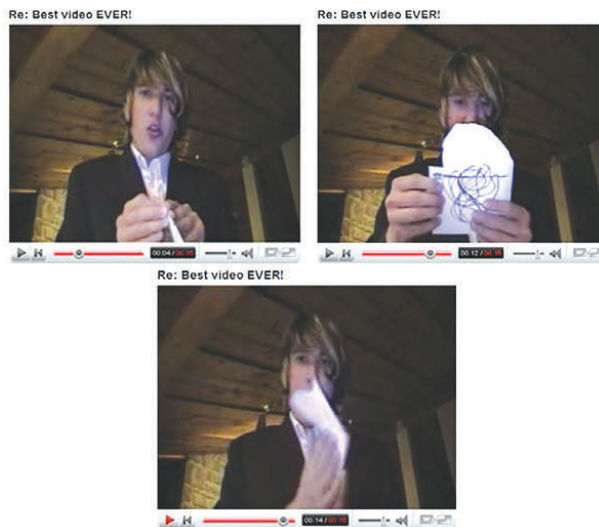


Figure 6. Nomination-enactment response

Other responses focus on the video's alleged "bestness", either praising or criticizing it. When they explicitly refer to and acknowledge its title, they establish a cohesive tie of repetition, e.g., a response featuring a boy sat in a corner, looking at the camera and saying

hey, Chris that was THE best video ever

Some are less cohesively tied. So, for example, among the detractors questioning the video's alleged "bestness", three contrast it with *Magibond*, a popular videoblogger whose "signature videos" portray her staring silently at the camera. A very short video shows a respondent wearing a Guy Fawkes mask (Figure 7) saying only:

I am not going to judge but you are not no 21 year old Japanese girl named Magibond you'll never be Magibond

In so doing, the respondent points to CC's copied performance and lack of originality, thus undermining implicitly the *Best video EVER!* title of the initiating video.



Figure 7. The Guy Fawkes-masked respondent who comments on CC not being Magibond

Responses referring to Magibond take up the silent staring of the initiating video (rather than the blinking) as a prompt to which to respond by pointing out its non-novelty; at the same time, they express intertextually their experienced status in the semiotic space of YouTube (i.e., we know all the main genres here and we can point out similarities and differences). Intertextual references and meta-references to YouTube genres abound in videos; this produces enjoyment in referring implicitly to elitist knowledge (i.e., only experienced viewers can understand the intertextual reference).

All Magibond-related responses are coherent with the title of the video (by questioning its declared “bestness”), although they disregard the salient action of the blinking, like the smiling responses in the adjacency pairs discussed earlier. Through reference to Magibond, CC's staring is made salient as the responded-prompt and is associated with the title. The truth value of the latter is undermined by implicitly referring to the non-novelty of the former (the implied meaning could be verbalized with something like “your video can't be the best because your silent staring is not new; you're copying Magibond”). In the response in Figure 7, the relation between the intertextual reference to Magibond and the initiating video is implicit and needs to be inferred. This reinforces the enjoyment of the exchange for those grasping the implicit reference; the reward resides in the feeling of being part of the few who could understand not only the intertextual reference but also the consequent coherence of the exchange. Viewers who could not understand the intertextual reference would indeed discard the response as unrelated.

Commentaries can take up other background elements of the initial video as their responded-prompt; for example, a girl focuses on CC's make up, inviting CC to

just keep the make up the way you are cause in the best video ever that is possibly the best make up that I have ever seen done

In this case, the response deviates from the topic or salient action of the initial video and focuses on a background element, cohesively tying it through repetition with the title (i.e. *the best make up that I have ever seen done*).

While this response signals its breaking of coherence, by opening with "Hi Chris Crocker, I just wanted to say", other commentaries do not present any marker of topic deviation. It is the case of a response titled *Re: They Kiss Again Episode 14 Part 4 of 9*, showing a man's eye filmed at a close-shot while a voice says

hmmm I'm disappointed about the lack of ninjas in this video ahhh

Like subject fields in email replies, the form "*Re:+[title of the responded-video]*" is automatically assigned to a video when it is uploaded as a response, hence, as indicated in its title, the video was moved from another exchange and recontextualized as a response to CC's. To a comment questioning the relatedness of the video to its title, the respondent makes explicit that the response is to be intended as addressed to the responded-video and not to the one indicated in its title:

Commentor: what does this video have to do with the title??

Respondent's reply: what are you talking about!? surely you meant what does it NOT have to do with the VIDEO. There is not ONE ninja in the whole video. Did anyone watch this and not notice that! I don't respond to titles, just videos, FYI.

After watching CC's video, the participant has moved his previously-made response recontextualizing it as a response to the *Best Video EVER!*, without editing the response title, which still refers to the episode of *They Kiss Again* (a Taiwanese TV series sequel based on the Japanese manga *Itazura na Kiss*). By re-using previous material to respond to CC in a creative way, the respondent has produced an amusing nonsense; indeed the absence of *ninjas* is true but irrelevant, as that of any other possible absent unrelated entities.

The recontextualization practice afforded by copy-and-paste techniques of text-production produces new meaning and reshapes intra- and inter-textual cohesion and coherence, in the same way as when we rearrange files and folders on our computers according to a new relatedness rationale. Recontextualized in the new exchange, the comment expressed in the response is re-interpreted as related to CC's video, thus producing surreal humour. At the same time, it scatters the original cohesive function of its title, thus disorienting viewers who encounter

the video from other paths, such as through keyword search of the Taiwanese series title (leaving the title unedited might be a strategy aimed at enhancing the hypertextuality of the video through keyword co-occurrence with the title of a quite popular TV series).

In sum, videos can be used as pretexts for a creative response. The recontextualization of pre-existing material can be employed to produce unexpected meanings and effects, as a result of the interactants' creative exploitation of the affordances of the video response option to their interests. Responses can not only take up various elements of the initiating video as their commented prompt; they can also comment on selected features of its character/author, such as CC's past video production or any of its topics (e.g., Britney Spears). Many comment on the character's sexual orientation; while some distance themselves from gay-haters when criticizing CC, homophobic responses are appallingly numerous. Even when responses employ hate language against CC, ChrisChrocker has maintained them in the thread. This suggests CC's interest in gaining visibility through participation, rather than consent. When commenting on a CC-related prompt, such as CC's devotion to Britney Spears, responses disregard the meaning of the initial video, while never announcing their topic deviation (with devices such as *by the way* or *totally unrelated but*). Although in the presence of incoherent exchanges (or non-signalled instances of topic deviation), written comments to these responses never question their relevance to the responded video. As witnessed in the response mentioning Magibond, implicitness is frequent. This functions as a challenge to viewers, who are supposed to search for relatedness by activating a series of implicatures (if they want to). The reward in watching these exchanges resides in grasping the often trivial implicit reference, as testified to by parodies and remixes, discussed in the next section.

3.3 Transformative re-uses: Remixes, parodies and recontextualizations

83 responses reuse the prompting video, or any of its elements, including its main character and/or past video-production. 49 of these responses post remakes either of the initiating video or of other CC's videos; they can repost the video as is or edited, or they can embed it in their original material, in the form of a *mashup* (Simonsen 2013), more or less modifying the original shots (e.g. the remix of the video *Leave Britney Alone* in Figure 8a). Instead of (or along with) snapshots of CC's videos, 34 responses use original material, enacting a parody, typically featuring a character personifying CC through a transformed repetition of CC's selected signifiers, e.g., by wearing make up and a blond wig, imitating CC's verbal rhetoric and using a blanket as the video background (Figures 8b and 8c).

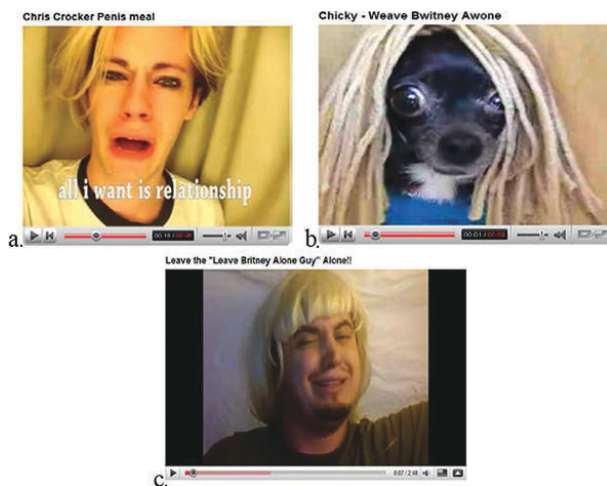


Figure 8. Parodies of ‘Leave Britney Alone’ through remix (a) and original material (b) and (c)

These responses are cohesive with the initiating video, through direct quotations for those reposting CC’s material (Figure 8a), through ties of repetition of the video’s and/or its character’s salient elements for those using their own original material (Figures 8b and 8c). However, in spite of their cohesion, they most often produce incoherent exchanges. This happens not only when the remake refers to other CC’s videos, as in the ones shown in Figure 8, but also, and almost paradoxically, when the response refers explicitly to the initiating video, as in the case of a response reposting the *Best video EVER!* with a slightly edited title: *Best video EVER! The Blink!* This would seem a most cohesive and attuned response, yet maximal cohesion does not produce coherence in this case. Indeed, the uploader’s channel *ViewsTester* posts other people’s videos with the declared aim of testing YouTube’s indexing system. So, the initial video’s large number of views and its design intended to achieve them function as a prompt to a respondent interested in monitoring the popularity-indexing system on YouTube. Again, the respondent uses CC’s initiating video to his purposes, so that identical coincidence in form thus not determine coherence in meaning, similarly to when quotations are used “out of context” mis- (or re-)interpreting their meaning.

Responses can remix various shots of CC’s videos, thus creating mashups. Some of these are presented as an homage to CC, like a video titled *Baby...you’re the best*, with a mashup of CC’s videos on a unique soundtrack and the following typed message at the end:

congratulations chris for 100,000 subscribers and for entertaining us all

Some are ambiguous in their interpersonal meaning, such as a response, titled *itschriscrocker in 30 seconds*, constructed as a slideshow of snapshots of CC's videos typifying CC's most characteristic pouting and provocative expressions. The snapshots are not modified, so that the mashup can be appreciated as honouring CC by CC's fans, while, simultaneously, it can be enjoyed by CC's detractors as a negative exposure of CC's provocations (on the frequent affective ambiguity of YouTube parodies, cf. Willet 2009). Once again, the meaning-maker's interest drives the specific interpretation of the video, regardless of the uploader's intended meaning in posting the mashup.

One response remixes CC's shots, while CC's words synch with the tune of the very famous *Chocolate Rain* video (for the viral success of *Chocolate Rain*, featuring a rather slim teenager singing with an usual bass and adult-like voice, cf. Burgess 2008). By pairing and mixing the two YouTube celebrities' artefacts and video memes, the video response plays with YouTube meta-references. This is another instance of an entirely self-referential practice where intertextuality plays a major role in the enjoyment. Yet the response is again incoherent with respect to the responded video, disregarding its content/topic while merely relating to it by parodying its character.

Many of the remakes of CC's videos were uploaded on YouTube (as either independent videos or as responses to others) before the posting of *The Best Video EVER!*, while they were later linked as responses to it. Although not augmenting significantly the views of a video (Benevenuto, Duarte et al. 2008), the response link is a costless option which opens a further gateway to the remake and can be used together with others (such as keyword co-occurrence, which displays "related videos" in the respective section on any video page) to have one's video featured on another video's page. Considering that a video can be linked as a response to only one video at a time, when a responded-video is removed, or is no longer new and no longer attracts many views, a response might be better linked to another, more recent, popular or differently-related one, as in the commentary on the Taiwanese TV series above.

Again the analogy with the rearrangement of files and folders on a computer seems particularly apt in these cases; YouTube participants too may be willing to rearrange the links to their uploaded videos according to renewed interests. The mobility of the response-link explains partly the incoherence of these exchanges. The selection and recontextualization of a (snippet of) text into a new context can reshape or scatter patterns of coherence. In its turn, the frequency of recontextualizing practices generates new conventions and expectations, enhancing participants' acceptability of incoherent exchanges. In sum, in the elitist pleasure for implicit intertextuality, reuse and coherence fragmentation, video-interaction is a typically post-modernist interactive practice, which has escaped the confines of artistic avant-gardes and has become everyday sign-making.

3.4 Circumstantial reference: Topic deviation and recontextualization

Unlike the responses discussed so far, in which CC is the focus of the video, 17 responses refer to CC only circumstantially, as if by incidental mentioning. It is the case of the response shown in Figure 9, filming a pc screen with a scrolling *MSWord* document explaining “how to get to heaven”, as announced in the title. The scrolling text, which “wants to spread the word of God”, introduces its author in relation to CC:

maybe you have seen my comments on the Cris Crocker

After this one reference to CC, the scrolling text discusses the topic of the video. The exchange thus constructed is incoherent since the initiating video and the response are not related in terms of any content. Relatedness is marginally established, since it only consists of the circumstantial mentioning of the initiator.



Figure 9. Circumstantial reference to CC in a scrolling Word document response

Another response features a man asking the

YouTube community to stand up because now there's no more funny videos, we need to wake up

He talks about YouTube partnership programme (*"I'm not making a living out of it"*); he presents himself as gay and against gay-hate on You Tube, but all he

can't see is these assholes that can't see past their mirror. I don't have a problem with Chris Crocker being gay I have a problem with him being an asshole

After this unique reference to CC, the videoblogger focuses on the topic of the video, announced in his opening, and criticizes at length a series of video genres on YouTube, concluding with *"stop uploading crap like this people... youtube community line up!"*. Here again, disregarding the topic of the initiating video, the

reference to CC is used as a pretext to establish a relation in the exchange, while developing an entirely different topic, which concerns the respondent.

As discussed for the parodies, many of these videos were created and published on YouTube before the posting of the initiating video. Then, using the video response option to their purposes, respondents have selected CC's latest popular video to link theirs as a response, prompted by their marginal reference to CC. These responses exemplify further the changing patterns of cohesion resulting from the mobility of the response-link; they indeed present the cohesive element as a circumstantial element rather than focus, i.e., in a marked position for a coherent exchange.

3.5 Implicit relatedness

104 responses make no reference to either the initiating video or its character/author. Their relation in the exchange can be inferred by interpreting the response as taking up implicitly a background element of the initial video or its character. The establishment of the relatedness in the exchange requires a large amount of inferential work since no cohesive element is present to make the relation explicit.

Two of these responses have St. Patrick's Day as their topic. A Second Life animation (Figure 10a) represents "*3 friends*" who "*go out on st. patricks day and get drunk*", as expressed in its description. The response titled *St. Patrick's Day Wishes!* (Figure 10b) features a young man wishing a happy St. Patrick's Day to viewers, while pointing to his emerald-green shirt and mentioning it in speech. These responses can appear as related to the initiating video only if viewers realize that the latter was posted on 17 March and that the colour of CC's blouse has the emerald-green nuance associated to Irish celebrations on St. Patrick's Day. The date of posting and/or the colour of CC's blouse in the initiating video are re-interpreted as signifiers of St. Patrick's Day. This way, responses disregard the main topic of CC's video, while relating implicitly to a background element, making it their salient prompt.

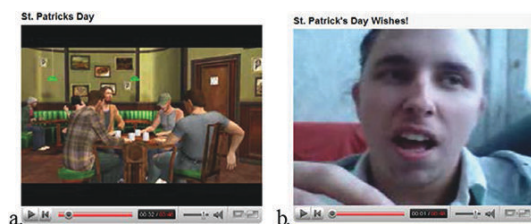


Figure 10. St. Patrick's day-related responses

Responses can relate through inference also to an element of CC, such as CC's sexual orientation. This can be done either ideationally or interpersonally. In the former case, responses are argumentative videoblogs never mentioning CC but discussing homosexuality, arguing either pro or against it. They take CC's declared sexual orientation as the prompt to link a response on the topic. The initiating video and its notorious character are taken again as a pretext, as the starting point of access to a forum discussion on gay-related issues, so that the discussion extends to other levels when these respondents receive other video responses in their turn.

The interpersonal use of the implicit relation to CC's sexual orientation is exemplified by the many responses featuring characters with a gay or drag queen aesthetics who videoblog on their experiences, or dance and pout in front of the camera. These are usually quite established videobloggers who have a frequent posting activity and a fair network of subscribers to their YouTube channel. They use the homosexuality-related prompt interpersonally, rather than making it their topic as in the previous case; they use the prompting video as the starting point of access to a gay-oriented meeting place. With the aim of reaching a non-heterosexual audience for their videos, all these respondents seemingly link their video as a response to a very recent one uploaded by a YouTube profile whose sexual orientation is a salient element of the character's popularity. The response in Figure 11, which advertises gay-friendly places in Toronto, further exemplifies the use of the response link to target a specific audience.



Figure 11. Gay-friendly Toronto ad as an implicitly related response

Besides the character's sexual orientation, responses can take up CC's fanaticism for Britney Spears as their prompt, as in those re-posting Britney Spears' music video-clips or TV appearances. In this case CC's fanaticism for Britney Spears prompts the linking of a text related to the singer as a response to the initial video, possibly assuming that CC's audience includes Britney Spears' fans.

In sum, when assessing how to make the best use of the response link, all these respondents have selected CC's video, among the several thousands available, on the basis of given "criterial aspects" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 13) of the video or its character. Coherence is not sought for in these exchanges, except by those viewers who insist in finding clues for coherence, *if* interested in doing so. Responses establish relatedness in a very loose way, following individualized interests in exploiting whatever element the initial video may prompt as a relation. Clearly, in the absence of any explicit cohesive tie, the relation here lies more in the eyes of the beholder. As Halliday and Hasan argue, "it is almost impossible to construct a verbal sequence which has no texture at all – but this, in turn, is largely because we insist on interpreting any passage as text if there is the remotest possibility of doing so. We assume, in other words, that this is what language is for" (1976: 23). Nevertheless the strength of the assumption is weakened in video-interaction because of the frequent presence of incoherent exchanges and the looser ties binding authors, viewers and participants in the semiotic space. If, as the writer did for the purposes of the present work, viewers are interested in retrieving any possible relatedness between the two texts, they will activate all necessary inferences in order to find even the remotest clue for connection. If they are interested in, e.g., watching responses criticizing CC, they will not spend much effort to activate any inferential process and will rather discard these responses as unrelated to the initial video but also, and foremost, as irrelevant to their interest. In other words, both respondents and viewers are driven by specific interests in their interpretation (of the relatedness) of the exchanges.

3.6 No clues of relatedness

Almost one out of four responses (196) presents no clues of relatedness, either to elements of the initiating video or to CC's. Some respondents explicitly declare their purpose in linking their unrelated videos as a response to a very popular one:

this is not a response to this featured video. I'm just abusing it to get views [*type-writing on screen*]

At times written comments question the coherence of the exchange, as in the following one, further replied by the video respondent:

Comment: Why is this a video response to Chris Crocker's video? This is totally a different topic...

Respondent's reply: why did dinosaurs evolve from water?

Against the comment's expectations for a coherent exchange, the respondent upholds the right to post unrelated responses to his/her purposes. The counter-question asks the interlocutor to guess the answer, by reproducing the *why*-structure of the comment's question; in its argument, the provocative rhetoric relies on a discourse of evolutionary biology, implied in dinosaurs evolving from water. Rather than an exceptional breaking of rules, incoherence is presented as a natural communicative phenomenon, supporting the acceptability of the ongoing individualized practices in video-interaction, i.e., the use of an apt situation (i.e., a prompt) as the chance for developing (evolving) something completely different, according to one's interests.

Unless any relation is disclaimed by the uploaders themselves, as in the examples just discussed, a coherent interpretation of the exchanges is always possible, i.e., that these video responses are meant to be the respondents' "Best video EVER!". The title of the initiating video can be taken as an implicit reference to these responses, especially for those reposting widely famous YouTube videos, like the *Hippo and Dog* animation (Figure 12a), the *Numa Numa* dance, or the *Bad Day At The Office* (Figure 12b). This interpretation is occasionally made by viewers, e.g. a written comment "*a lot better than CC*" to one of these unrelated responses. Although implicitly established, for the absence of cohesive ties with the video's title both in the response and in its paratext, coherence in the exchange would be achieved through a coherent "best video" counter-response.



Figure 12. Viral videos reposted as responses

Irrespectively of the respondent's intentions – either to post a "bestness"-related response or to exploit an apt situation to get "dinosaurs evolve from water" – different viewers will perceive relatedness differently, because of their varied interests and depending on the path through which they access the response. Given that implicitness is widely practised in these exchanges, one can hardly establish whether these are meant to be adequate responses or simply fulfil their uploaders' interest in augmenting the hypertextuality of their videos, by linking them to a popular one.

In all cases, CC has maintained these responses in the thread. Although not even remotely related, these interactions are successful as far as they fulfil both the respondents' and the initiator's interests, since the two are compatible. Indeed the respondents' linking of their videos to a popular one to enhance their hypertextuality contributes to increase the visibility of CC's video, enlarging its thread and making it charted among the most responded ones.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the patterns of relatedness in the exchanges established by the 613 responses to one of the Most responded videos on YouTube has highlighted different degrees of relatedness in the exchanges. These are determined by the combination between the level of salience of the responded-prompt and the explicitness of its reference. The analysis has tracked a relatedness *continuum*, encompassing (a) fully cohesive and attuned responses; (b) coherent + cohesive, coherent + non-cohesive, and incoherent + cohesive commentaries; (c) cohesive but incoherent remakes and parodies; (d) incoherent responses with marked (circumstantial) cohesion; (e) non-cohesive but implicitly related responses; (f) responses displaying no explicit or implicit clues of relatedness with the initiating video.

The wide range of acceptability of the responses is influenced by the vague meaning of the initial video and its phatic function. It was indeed the main reason driving the selection of the initiating video, so as to map out the widest possible range of relatedness; yet more topic-specific videos attest similar patterns in their exchanges (Adami 2010), although lower in number in their incoherent and unrelated instances.

Interactants construct more or less related exchanges and use the response option to their purposes. Unlike spam in email, which has given rise to anti-spam software tools,⁶ totally incoherent exchanges can be acceptable if the semiotic activity driven by the interactants' diversified interests has compatible effects.

In the instances analysed, texts are conceived as resources to be transformed, reused, (mis)interpreted and (mis)quoted in the responses. As happens often in remixing and sharing artefacts-as-texts in many digital environments (on remix cultures cf. for example Jenkins 2006; Manovich 2005), interaction is conceived

6. This does not exclude a future enhancement of the interface to filter unrelated responses, depending on the website owners' interested interpretation of the participants' practices. For a study equalling unrelated responses to spam, cf., Benevenuto et al. (2008). This aims at detecting spammers (i.e., policing the uploaders' behaviour) rather than spam content in the texts, by reason of the admitted subjectivity in defining spam in responses.

as a creative response to selected prompts of a text. What matters in an exchange is what would-be respondents can make out of a video, rather than its author's intended meaning; so the success of a text is given by its prompting potential. This is actualized by a series of transformative semiotic acts which enlarge the chain of semiosis "passing on" the transformed sign, in a transformative "Chinese whispering" game, in which the driving rule is maximum transformation rather than fidelity to the original.

In a generally conscious, acknowledged and pursued reinterpretation, video-interaction is a loose form of individualized participation, in terms of a transformative response to a prompt, a participatory form of interested contribution and follow-up. In a public space such as YouTube, where one can "broadcast" oneself, successful communication may lie less in understanding a text's meaning and in interacting coherently and more in enlarging the chain of semiosis through further creative reinterpretations, transformations and re-uses. The pleasure of transforming other people's signs in new texts, together with the challenge of exploiting the medium and its representational possibilities, seem to be the main driving motives; so any element, even (sometimes more crucially) the remotest one, can prompt a response. Many video responses – often the most intriguing ones – seem to defy coherence on purpose, by exploiting the remotest ambiguity of the text, conceived as a chance for making a new, unexpected, often distorted and incoherent meaning out of the videos they respond to, in order to produce differentiation and catch viewers' attention.

The analysis has highlighted the extent to which the affordance of copy-and-paste facilitates an interested selection, transformation, assemblage, re-use and recontextualization of previous signs and texts, reshaping traditional patterns of cohesion and coherence. In all digital environments, both in formal and informal contexts, sign-making produced through copy-and-paste is deeply influencing acceptability in the patterns of explicitness vs. implicitness, and coherence vs. marked relatedness. As one of the profound changes in semiosis and communication of the present times, it needs further and more thorough investigation. So do the forms of interaction in these new public online spaces.

Forcefully-limited in scope and focus, the present analysis seems to indicate that a newly shaped form of public online participation lacks a traditionally conceived communality, in favour of an enhanced individualization; so, the notion of community sounds like an ideological discourse rather than an apt metaphor to describe these agglomerated networks of sign-makers who link, move and transform each other's texts according to their interests. Their individualized semiotic acts within chains of semiosis instantiate newly conceived values of agency and participation. These semiotic trends reflect (and contribute to) more profound social, economic, political and cultural dynamics, while their future developments

and implications are difficult to foresee. They do require investigation and, given the increasingly multimodal forms of interaction afforded by digital media, social semiotic notions such as the one of prompt-response may be more adequate to the analysis of the acts-as-texts of these post-modern “rhetors” (Kress 2010: 26) and their interest-driven loose forms of individualized participation.

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Enhancing citizen engagement

Political weblogs and participatory democracy

Giorgia Riboni

This chapter discusses the function of blogs as tools enhancing citizen participation in political communication. Adopting the perspective of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, a set of blogs from the US presidential election campaign are analysed in order to determine the frequency of reference to the candidates, the parties, as well as the bloggers themselves. The analysis of pronoun choice, verbs and modality indicate that blogs enhance participation rhetoric. The data further indicate that citizen bloggers attach more importance to individual political figures than party bloggers do. The tendency to refer to the candidates rather than to their political affiliation may be explained as evidence that people not belonging to parties interpret politics as a struggle between different politicians and not between different ideologies. Since the language representation of the political scene in citizens' blogs shows distinct traces of the ongoing process of personalization of politics, the political blog can be considered as a "tool of citizen empowerment".

1. Political weblogs and online participation

The development of the Internet has brought about a significant change in the information environment in which political communication takes place. The Web genre of blogs, in particular, has been playing a new, unique political role (Woodly 2008: 109) as it favours participation, helps mobilize opinions, and organizes citizens' activities. This study addresses the issue of how blogs are exploited for political ends by different social subjects such as parties and citizens, who have been using blogging platforms as a tool to consolidate/modify the process of agenda setting.

Participation in America has been steadily declining since the Sixties (Pole 2010: 3). However, presidential election turnout rates, which had been dropping since the 1960 Kennedy election, registered a significant increase in 2004 and in 2008 (McDonald 2013). While there may not necessarily be a link, it is to be

noted that the 2004 presidential race witnessed the explosion of blogging as a means of mobilizing the electorate and that in the course of the 2008 elections these platforms also played a role (Pole 2010: 3). To what degree they determined the electoral outcome is still to be seen, but it cannot be denied that blogs have produced a remarkable change in the prevailing notions of political communication and participation (4).

Thanks to the new forms of Internet-based communication, political organizations and single citizens have become capable of spreading information to the people directly. Mainstream media (for which the acronym MSM has been coined) have been traditionally carrying out a mediating function between political parties and the electorate, with the result that both sides have always tried to bypass them when possible. Weblogging platforms represent an inexpensive tool to create and autonomously disseminate content. This has determined the partial loss of the gatekeeping function on part of powerful media corporations and has provided social actors that had traditionally played a marginal role in the political debate with unprecedented ways of participating. The democratization of technology has produced a greater Web penetration and, as a consequence, “in many instances, the power-hold of geography over who and how individuals participate is diminished” (2010: 5).

Weblogs are an interesting object of study because their analysis gives the possibility of entering into direct contact with the author’s own discursive construction of the world. The political blogosphere (collective noun used to indicate the electronic space containing all political blogs and their interconnections; cf. Bruns and Jacobs 2006: 5) therefore represents a sort of virtual arena where different framings and representations of the political scene and its protagonists compete and interact. In particular, parties and organizations on the one hand, and single individuals on the other, are particularly prolific bloggers as they want their messages to circulate as widely as possible, thus possibly influencing the political debate. One of the typical characteristics of the blogging genre is its diaristic, subjective element: citizen and party bloggers present their own, unique viewpoints and oppose them to those circulated by the mainstream media and to the power groups associated to the latter. Whereas traditional news is generally perceived as “neutral” and “objective”, blogs tend to be grounded in strong ideological assumptions (Hennessy and Martin 2006), thus suggesting that no representation of political figures or events – including those circulated by mass media – is unbiased and impartial.

The supposed objectivity of MSM is challenged not only by the strong subjective component of the blogging genre, but also by its high degree of interactivity. As a matter of fact, political weblogs not only circulate the views of their authors,

but also give readers the possibility of exchanging opinions and make their voices heard thanks to the comment feature.

One of those categories that has mostly benefited from the spread of blogging is citizens. As a matter of fact, although “embedded within the regulative regimes of the market or the state” (Chouliaraki 2010: 227), blogs have become an instrument of “discursive citizenship”, a way of experiencing and enhancing citizenship drawing on discourse resources and not solely on the legal or institutional framework. Citizens’ adoption of the blogging genre rhetorically suggests that the people and the electorate are a vital component of the political life of their country. Single individual bloggers are primarily driven by two motivations: “(1) a desire for self-expression on political issues (i.e. a form of political expression) and (2) a desire to influence the distribution of social goods and social values (i.e. a form of political participation)” (Wallsten 2005).

Political parties have taken up blogging for similar reasons, but they have also started using these platforms because motivated by the possibility of appearing accessible and modern in a historical moment in which their credibility was at a low point. Differently from traditional offline genres, blogs are more dialogic in nature and provide many-to-many communication. As a consequence, by adopting blogging, parties have been able to show voters that they are interested in interacting with the people, listening to their requests and having them participate in the political life.

As single citizens and parties lie at opposite ends of the communication process, a comparison between their blogs provides a useful tool in order to investigate the different discursive constructions of the political situation. Relying on critical discourse analysis, this chapter aims at highlighting differences between the representation of politicians and events to be found in citizens’ and political parties’ blogs, with the objective of identifying if and how their different language encodings of reality interact and influence each other. As it builds on a previous research investigating political parties’ representation of the protagonists of the 2008 American presidential elections (cf. Riboni 2011), this analysis instead mainly focuses on citizens’ discursive/rhetorical choices underlining in what ways they diverge from those of party bloggers’.

The first step in the study provides a methodological framework, offering a review of the main concepts that characterize linguistic constructionism, critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. The central sections consist in the examination of the rhetorical devices utilized by political parties and citizens in order to express their own voice and make it “audible” in the blogosphere. Finally, a comparison is made between the two different categories of blogs and their descriptions of the electoral campaign.

2. Methods and aims

The main theoretical premise to this research is linguistic constructionism (cf. among others, Schotter 1975, 1984; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Davis and Gergen 1985; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Gergen 1991, 1994; Edwards 1991, 1994, 1997, 2005); according to this theory, language is not simply a label which reflects external reality, but it actively “constructs” it. It is through words and discourse that people can make sense of what surrounds them and communicate it to others at the same time.

Politics and discourse are very strongly intertwined: political information processing and political participation are mainly accomplished through discourse and communication (van Dijk 2002:203). The discursive construction of candidates is therefore crucial in the course of electoral campaigns, where victories are often determined by the ability of the different political subjects to influence the preference of undecided voters.

In this chapter, the linguistic/discursive analysis of bloggers’ representation of their authorial identity and of the protagonists of the 2008 American elections relies on a methodological toolkit including critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics (CL). Instruments of the former are applied to investigate public identities such as those of the presidential runners because it adopts a critical stance to explore the ways in which people linguistically encode reality and the ways in which these different representations of the world interact.

As regards corpus linguistics, over the last few years, critical discourse analysis has increasingly relied on the help of the automated interrogation routines typical of this analytical approach as “[q]uantitative work with large corpora automatically excludes single and possibly idiosyncratic instances, in favour of what is central and typical” (Stubbs 1996:233). As a matter of fact, recent studies have highlighted the difficulties of distinguishing the critical investigation of texts from their interpretation (cf. Simpson 1993; Widdowson 1995) on the one hand, and the possibility of combining qualitative and quantitative analytical tools to prevent the shortcomings of both approaches on the other (cf. among others, Stubbs 1996, 2001; Garzone and Santulli 2004; Baker et al. 2008). The joint application of the methodologies of CDA and CL therefore guarantees a more objective examination of the texts and can be used to examine the content of American political blogs.¹

An ad hoc corpus consisting of blogposts published on twenty American political weblogs (ten kept by citizens and ten kept by parties and Congress people) in the course of the 2008 presidential campaign was collected for this study. All the texts considered were posted online during the 18 weeks before the elections and in the following two.

1. The software used to process the collected blogposts is Wordsmith Tools 4.0.

The ten citizens' blogs chosen for this analysis were selected on the basis of their popularity: a blog read by a wide audience is more likely to influence both the genre and the discursive community generated by it. As Bateman maintains, "using a genre to structure communication serves both to reproduce the genre and, whenever changes are introduced into the communication, to modify the genre" (2008: 191). In order to identify the leading citizen bloggers a cross comparison was made between the specialized websites of Alexa (www.alexa.com), an Internet company which provides information about web traffic and ranking, and the blog search engine Technorati (www.technorati.com), which measures the "authority" of websites calculating how much linked they are.

Parties' and Congress people's blogs were not collected on the basis of their popularity, but on the basis of their political creed: five are written by members or staff of the Republican Party, five are kept by Democrats. The corpus includes posts from the official Republican and Democratic weblogs of the same state (California and Kansas) but no material from the House of Representatives from the same state would match the required selection criteria, therefore I had to collect blogs from different parts of the United States (Minnesota, Georgia, California and Tennessee).

Whereas parties' and Congress people's blogs can be subdivided into two groups according to their affiliation, citizens' blogs do not always show a clear preference for Republicans or Democrats with the consequence that it is often impossible to catalogue them (close reading of the blogging entries has however highlighted that most bloggers privilege the neo-liberal area school of thought in their posts and are therefore closer to the Republican Party).

The tables below schematize the content of the corpus. As it can be noted, about 10,000 tokens were collected from each blog, for a total of approximately 200,000 tokens. However, since blogposts can vary hugely as regards length and frequency, I had to select a different number of entries so that the same amount of data could be obtained.

Table 1. Citizens' blogs

Blog	Frequency	Tokens
Powerline	1 post a week	9,154
Classical Values	1 post a week	10,215
Crooks and Liars	1 post a week	8,561
Liberal Values	1 post a week	11,763
Newshoggers	1.5 posts a week	10,544
Balloon Juice	3 posts a week	11,565
Buck Naked Politics	1 post every other week	8,765
Lies.com	2 posts a week	9,239
The Gun Toting Liberal	2 posts every three weeks	10,381
FiveThirtyEight	2 posts every three weeks	12,159
Total tokens		102,346

Table 2. Political parties' and Congress people's blogs

BLOG	Frequency	Tokens
Democratic Party	2 posts a day (twice a week)	9,143
Kansas Matters	All posts published in the 20 weeks considered in the study	9,823
Party Lane	2 posts a day	8,458
Mike Honda	2 posts a week	9,673
Steve Cohen	1 post a week	12,333
Republican Party (GOP)	2 posts a week	9,300
The Trunkline	2 posts a week	11,849
California Republican Party	2 posts a day (twice a week)	9,369
Michele Bachmann	2 posts a week	10,556
Jack Kingston	All posts published in the 20 weeks considered in the study	10,013
Total tokens		100,517

3. The blogger's voice: The use of the first person singular

A preliminary investigation of the corpus was conducted with the help of frequency lists, generated by one of the application of the Wordsmith Tools software suite, which provides valuable information as regards the distribution of words within texts (Sinclair 1991:30).

Tables 3 and 4 contain a selection of the first 35 most frequently occurring lemmas of each subcorpus (grammar words, which are normally to be found at the top of frequency wordlists but do not give any information as regards the main themes discussed in blogs, were ruled out).

Self-mention of the blogger and the protagonists of the 2008 election are to be found in the top content words, which suggests that they represent the main topic of discussion in the collected blogs.

The presence of first person pronouns, especially the singular, is noticeable among the most repeatedly occurring words of both blog categories. "I" and "we" are used in texts as a form of self-mention and, whereas their frequent use may not be a specific feature of political blogs, it appears worth investigating nonetheless. First person pronouns represent a way in which authorial presence is projected onto the text: such a presence assumes an important metadiscursive value, as it constitutes "a clear indication to the reader of the perspective from which ... [the authors'] statements should be interpreted" (Hyland 2005:148). By explicitly mentioning themselves through the use of the first person, bloggers tend

Table 3. Frequency wordlist of citizens' blogposts

N	Word	Freq.	%
11	I	317	0.8
12	ON	742	0.72
14	AS	575	0.66
15	THIS	567	0.65
16	WITH	521	0.61
17	MCCAIN	594	0.58
18	HAVE	579	0.57
19	BE	575	0.56
20	OBAMA	566	0.55
31	YOU	397	0.39
21	THEY	389	0.38
33	WHO	374	0.37
34	WE	359	0.35
35	OR	351	0.34

Table 4. Frequency wordlist of parties' and Congress people's blogposts

N	Word	Freq.	%
16	I	543	0.54
17	WE	535	0.53
18	WITH	527	0.52
27	MCCAIN	350	0.35
28	AN	346	0.34
29	NOT	346	0.34
30	MORE	328	0.33
31	HIS	323	0.32
32	WAS	323	0.32
33	YOU	321	0.32
34	THEIR	314	0.31
35	OBAMA	310	0.31

to emphasize their unique voice and standpoint and juxtapose it to the alleged "impersonality" and neutrality of mainstream media.

An interesting aspect that emerges from the comparison of the two lists is the different percentage frequency of "I" and "we". In parties' and Congress people's blogposts "we" is almost as common as "I", whereas in citizens' entries the first person singular occurs more than twice as often as its plural counterpart. This dissimilarity can be explained considering the diverse role played by citizen bloggers

on the one hand, and party bloggers on the other: while the former call attention onto their subjectivity, the latter are inclined to minimize the importance of their own persona as they do not write in a personal capacity but they either represent the Republican or the Democratic party.²

Unlike bloggers who are hired to keep political parties' weblogs, Congress members tend to alternate posts or paragraphs in which their own voice prevails with posts in which they speak on behalf of their party.³ A close reading of the corpus material confirms that "I" is nearly absent in those written by professional bloggers and it occurs almost exclusively in the entries published by Congress members.⁴ The latter use the first person singular to tell their readers about the projects in which they are involved or to express their own view point about the political situation. The following examples indicate both usages of "I" which can be found in the blogposts published by Congress people:

- (1) *I also supported* an economic stimulus package to invest in infrastructure and energy technologies for the future, which would create jobs and boost our economy in the long term (taken from Mike Honda's blog);
- (2) Additionally, this week *I announced* a \$460,379 grant for Crichton College and a \$379,355 grant for Memphis Bioworks Foundation. Crichton plans to strengthen its ability to produce highly qualified urban educators for Memphis by improving the credentials and resources of its teacher education program, and this federal support will go a long way toward helping them realize their goal (taken from Steve Cohen's blog).
- (3) Today *I introduced* the Promoting New American Energy Act to accelerate tax depreciation for renewable energy investments and other energy technologies (taken from Michele Bachmann's blog).
- (4) *I am optimistic* about this program because the ability to speak another language has become a high-value commodity, and *I hope* that students in the 9th District take the opportunity to participate in these new programs and develop the skills that will guarantee them access to a quality higher education and good jobs in the future (taken from Steve Cohen's blog).
- (5) Partisanship aside, *I think* we can all agree that Pelosi should get back to work in Washington to deal with our energy crisis. Book sales are the last thing she should be concerned about (taken from Michele Bachmann's blog).

2. However, professional bloggers hired by political parties normally sign their own entries.

3. This is true of all the blogs kept by Congress members with the exception of Jack Kingston's (R-GA): his blogposts are written and signed by his "spokesblogger".

4. If the blogposts written by Congress members were excluded from the corpus, "I" and "we" would not have comparable frequencies.

- (6) *I am furious* at the Administration's negligence and the Russian roulette recklessness of lenders and investors who put us in this predicament (taken from Mike Honda's blog). [emphasis added]

The first three examples highlight the importance of the diaristic, autobiographical component typical of the blogging genre and present in political blogs, too: reading this kind of narrative, voters have the possibility of enjoying a first-hand account of the political life of their country and vicariously experience it. Instead of getting information from the MSM, readers can receive updates on the electoral campaign directly from its protagonists. The last three examples contain small extracts of posts in which the Congress members/bloggers express their opinions or feelings; in this second set of examples the subjectivity of the politicians manifests itself similarly to that of citizen bloggers. As a matter of fact, both categories of authors exploit the blogging genre to comment events and spread their opinions in the political blogosphere.

The investigation of citizens' posts confirms the assumption that the main social action accomplished through the use of blogs is indeed communicating one's views and thoughts about the political scenario. Verbs of opinion and feeling such as "think", "know", "can", "see", as well as "be" followed by an adjective expressing a state of mind are to be found among the most frequently occurring right collocates of the pronoun "I" (cf. concordance lines below).

N	Concordance
389	, particularly on television. Take, for instance the contrast on NAFTA. I mean, I think that the bigger issue is credibility in where one is coming from, are th
390	that he was uncertain how many houses he and his wife, Cindy, own. I think — I'll have my staff get to you," McCain told Politico in Las Cruces, N.
391	fact that we are exploiting those reserves would have psychological impact that I think is beneficial." * January 2008: A lot of this is psychological. "A lot
392	about it, Neil. And obviously the way it's been going up is just terrible. But I think psychologically — and a lot of our problems today, as you know, are psyc
393	oke back, or the way she has conducted herself in office the last 12 months. I think we all know that answer. 5 days until the primary... Posted by Chri
394	ength." "What's that mean?" "If she gets 25 percent of the vote or more, I think there's significant meaning in that," said Schier. Well, she did. A
395	do using his executive authority without waiting for congressional action, and I think we will see the President do that." What's being considered? Acco
396	to have abandoned the "new politics" the old Obama used to espouse. However, I think it's also worth noting that in my estimation, Obama's support for hundre
397	I think it's more than a coincidence that many are sporting Obama gear. I think we can all agree that less supply and more demand is not a workable solu
398	focus to promoting this extraordinary book... doing local signings and speeches. I think we'll see an uptick." WOW! So, are we to take from that that befor
399	icans for Prosperity shot on Tuesday at a MoveOn.org protest on drilling. I think it's more than a coincidence that many are sporting Obama gear. I think
400	r hungry markets instead of relying on foreign sources." She goes on to say: "I think some in Congress have misconceptions about what ANWR [the Arctic
401	fact that we are exploiting those reserves would have psychological impact that I think is beneficial." [McCain Town Hall, (Fresno, CA), 6/23/08] McCain: "And
402	spends over \$13,000 of taxpayer money a month on her re-election campaign!" I think Boyda should take her own advice in 2006 when she said "[w]asting taxpay
403	you promise not to use Robo-calls, then use them, you have broken a promise. I think when Boyda calls spending taxpayer dollars on campaign pieces 'just plai
404	in Congress, committed to lower taxes and reduced government spending and I think Lynn Jenkins is the perfect choice for Congress." I'm also pleased t
405	pick became evident in the first few moments of Palin's speech when she said, I think as well today of two other women who came before me in national election
406	ama: "When we strengthen our rural communities, we lift up our entire nation." I think that people who live in rural areas can feel confident that I'm not a ne
407	id is rendered to another lawyer who may be impaired in the practice of law. I think we can fairly conclude that what Mr. Morrison was doing in the D.A.'s of
408	till, an obvious contemporary issue came to mind. Is Iraq a hard call? he said. I think it's not that hard, because I have had no doubt. It hasn't been a strugg
409	o marry "is wrong and inconsistent with the values this country holds dear." I think we're on firm legal footing and legal grounds, and certainly I believe v
410	broken promises, can we really trust her with another two years in Washington? I think not." Report from the Clerk of the United States House of Representat
411	t the standard of being a successful president, being an exceptional president. I think he is a transformational figure. He is a new generation coming into the
412	The John McCain-Phil Gramm Economic Plan: It's All In Your Head MCCAIN: "I think, psychologically -- and a lot of our problems today, as you know, are ps
413	60-36%. Wow. Is there any doubt who is the statewide leader of Kansas now? I think not. Second, check out the numbers from the 1st, 2nd and 4th Congress
414	he "the situation in Afghanistan in precarious and urgent," McCain responded: "I think it's serious. . . . It's a serious situation, but there's a lot of thing
415	lk. Its not a huge amount of money... a little psychological boost, that's what I think it would help." [Your World with Neil Cavuto, 4/16/08] McCain: "Now, as
416	estart our credit markets failed in the House by 228-205. When I cast my vote, I thought about the family in San Jose about to lose their home. I thought about
417	bama - he is not the second coming of the Lord. With his world tour started, I thought it would be a good time to point out Barack Obama's creative positions
418	vism right in the heart of the Bay Area. When I spoke at least year's event, I thought the organizers would have a hard time outdoing themselves this year, b
419	cast my vote, I thought about the family in San Jose about to lose their home. I thought about the retiree whose pension is evaporating after decades of toil,

Figure 1. Concordances for "I think/thought"

N	Concordance
11	ed together to do what's right for the country. While this is bitter medicine, I am convinced that it is what had to be done. As Mick Jagger of The Rolling St
12	owing statement in response to recent developments in the financial crisis: "I am encouraged that Secretary Paulson has deemphasized the purchase of toxic pa
13	effort to end the practice. You can view that speech HERE. This Saturday, I am excited to attend two of the great fall traditions in Memphis: the Southern
14	ics design company. No doubt, we should not have been here in the first place. I am furious at the Administration's negligence and the Russian roulette reckles
15	a good deal of positive news on a couple of different fronts this week. First, I am glad to announce that Federal Express Corporation was awarded a \$1.37 billi
16	ics by presiding over a trial in which lawyers from both sides gave him money. I am glad to participate on this Task Force, and I don't take this appointment I
17	Report Card. I was one of only 36 House members to receive the top score, and I am grateful for their recognition. Throughout my legislative career, I've adv
18	Housing Homeless Vets and Grants for Memphis Friday, 11 July 2008 This week, I am happy to report that the Senate passed H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements
19	disability or a senior citizen as a separate crime with increased penalties. "I am honored to receive this award from the NJACP, and I look forward to continu
20	romote America's competitiveness in the world market." Lynn Jenkins added: "I am honored to have the support of the U.S. Chamber and am prepared to fight fo
21	The bureau strives to lend a voice to agricultural producers at all levels. "I am honored that Georgia Farm Bureau feels that I am a friend to the Georgia fa
22	nearly 1200. The number of foreclosures currently listed in San Jose is 5,799. I am hopeful that this legislation will address our housing crisis in a comprehe
23	nds.' Such was their love, a love so sublime that only God's love surpasses it. I am in awe of it as much as I am in debt to it. May God bless their souls. 9/1

Figure 2. Concordances for “I am + adjective”

Concordance lines show up that in citizens’ (and oftentimes also in Congress members’) blogs an important role is played by the emotional dimension of politics and not only by the expression of views.

After exploring self-mention through use of first-person singulars, in the next section I will mostly focus on the use of the pronoun “we” in both parties’ and citizens’ blogs.

4. The collective voice of the party: The use of the first person plural⁵

As already discussed, there exists a remarkable difference between the percentage frequency of first-person plurals in citizens’ and in parties’ and Congress people’s blogs: the second category of bloggers use “we” almost as much as “I”, whereas citizens markedly prefer the first person singular.

The analysis of the referential meanings of the pronoun “we” in parties’ and Congress members’ blogs can shed some light upon the communicative purposes for which they are exploited. Exclusive “we” indicates the text producer and the people belonging to his/her group and not the recipient: party and Congress bloggers use this pronoun exclusively to refer to themselves and not their voters, as in the following example:

- (7) Today is Governor Dean’s 60th Birthday and we wanted to do something for Governor Dean that included you [...] Post your wishes here, or sending them in using this form, and we’ll give them to the Governor (taken from ‘The Daily Kos’).

5. This section is loosely based on Riboni (2011).

Nevertheless, in parties' blogs first-person plural mainly occurs inclusively. Inclusive "we" is often exploited in political communication because it allows engaging with the audience, making them feel involved:

- (8) After eight years of broken politics in Washington – *we* are ONE DAY away from change in America (taken from the Kansas Democratic party blog).

Sometimes, however, the referential meanings of "we" are ambiguous. Therefore, establishing whether or not the audience is incorporated in the first person pronoun seems unfeasible. As suggested by the extracts below, this uncertainty of reference is often turned into a means of persuasion as it provides an effective way of connecting with the readers, who may or may not be alluded to through the use of "we" (Dieljtens and Heynderickx 2007:236; cf. also Maitland and Wilson 1987; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Blas Arroyo 2000; Pyykkö 2002; Iñigo-Mora 2004; Bull and Fetzer 2006):

- (9) Look behind you. *We* can't afford more of the same.
 (10) Then again, *we've* seen this before from John McCain (taken from the Democratic Party blog).

The collective dimension of first-person plurals is further emphasized by the right collocate "all" which, together with modal verbs, represents one of the most common lemmas occurring together with "we" (cf. list below).

N	Word	With	relation	Total	tal Left	tal Right	L5	L4	L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
1	WE	we	0,000	565	15	15	7	6	2	0	0	535	0	0	2	6	7
2	THE	we	0,000	193	84	109	16	16	24	28	0	0	0	26	23	36	24
3	TO	we	0,000	149	33	116	8	8	11	6	0	0	1	37	35	23	20
4	THAT	we	0,000	100	51	49	4	1	3	3	40	0	0	9	15	18	7
5	AND	we	0,000	99	64	35	9	8	7	5	35	0	4	1	7	13	10
6	HAVE	we	0,000	84	7	77	0	3	3	1	0	0	54	15	5	3	0
7	IN	we	0,000	79	25	54	4	8	10	3	0	0	3	11	14	11	15
8	A	we	0,000	79	19	60	4	4	7	4	0	0	0	19	17	13	11
9	OF	we	0,000	68	36	32	9	9	11	7	0	0	0	0	0	12	20
10	ARE	we	0,000	65	8	57	3	2	1	0	2	0	51	0	1	3	2
11	OUR	we	0,000	57	14	43	2	2	9	1	0	0	0	18	15	4	6
12	FOR	we	0,000	49	15	34	7	4	4	0	0	0	0	7	12	5	10
13	WILL	we	0,000	45	4	41	1	1	2	0	0	0	29	1	1	6	4
14	ON	we	0,000	45	23	22	7	6	7	3	0	0	0	2	5	7	8
15	THIS	we	0,000	42	18	24	3	2	7	6	0	0	0	8	9	1	6
16	ALL	we	0,000	36	4	32	0	3	1	0	0	0	12	11	3	0	6
17	CAN	we	0,000	31	3	28	0	1	0	0	2	0	23	1	2	1	1
18	AS	we	0,000	31	28	3	1	4	2	2	19	0	1	0	0	1	1
19	IT	we	0,000	30	15	15	3	6	2	2	2	0	0	6	5	4	0
20	MUST	we	0,000	30	2	28	1	1	0	0	0	0	25	1	1	1	0

Figure 3. Collocates of "we" in parties' and Congress members' blogs

A final (and less widespread) referential meaning of the first person plural is semantically equivalent to "you (singular)/you (plural)/he/she/one/everyone" (Dieljtens and Heynderickx 2007:239).

- (11) While Democrats and Republicans have worked together to get our economy back on track, *we* must not forget the catastrophic choices of the last eight years – choices that led to financial meltdown, massive job losses, a disastrous energy policy that prioritizes oil company profits over people, skyrocketing health care costs, a costly war that should never have been waged, and a surplus turned into a deficit that will burden generations to come (taken from Steve Cohen’s blog).

The use of “we” in Example 11 provides a way of implicitly suggesting to readers what they should do as the blogger appears already aware of the “catastrophic choices” made in the course of the previous eight years. The preference for “we” instead of “you” seems to indicate that the blogger wants to formulate his request (i.e. that the audience do not forget the ruinous policies of the Bush administration) avoiding potential face-threat to text-receivers.

As in this example, “we” often collocates with modal verbs, especially those of will or intention, necessity, possibility and obligation (cf. the collocate list above). The combined use of modality and first-person plurals represents a language strategy which allows bloggers to make readers feel involved in the party projects and plans. As hinted before, participation rhetoric appears particularly convincing if conveyed through the use of blogs since this genre is publicly perceived as a tool of citizen empowerment (cf. Trippi 2008). If convinced of the importance of their contribution, single individuals can partake in electoral campaigns not only by providing financial support but also by engaging in volunteer work or influencing the vote of those around them. Participation rhetoric lies at the basis of the famous Democratic slogan “Yes we can” which appeals to the enormous potential of the American people who can become protagonists and bring about change. This slogan well represents the importance that political parties discursively attached to citizens’ collaboration and work (cf. Figure 4).

N Concordance	
1	e to know that this isn't about a bailout of Wall Street, it's a buy-in so that we can turn our economy around and we can help people who are saving for their p
2	be dramatically lower. If we increase our supply domestically while doing what we can to conserve, the prices will have no where to go but down. Friday, Au
3	to thaw the frozen credit markets. It's imperative that we do everything that we can to get banks lending again, and Secretary Paulson's decision (thanks to t
4	ior Department Secretary has the right to revoke the lease. SHAM 2 It says we can't export oil from Alaska. Not a bad idea, but the problem is we haven't
5	ing in America. But it turns out the women of America aren't finished yet, and we can shatter that glass ceiling once and for all. McCain chose Sarah Palin,
6	n have Democrats scratching their heads. In financial reports just released, we can see the Republican Party of San Diego County outspent the hapless San
7	s they dispel. "We can't drill our way out of our energy crisis." "Actually, we can ." "Oil companies are sitting on 68 million acres of oil leases and refu
8	ing the opinions and ideas of these participants back to Capitol Hill. Together we can improve our educational system and ensure a brighter tomorrow for our nat
9	country where we have said no to failed policies of the last eight years. Today we can hold our heads high. The hard work and dedication that you have shown ove
10	bailout of Wall Street, it's a buy-in so that we can turn our economy around and we can help people who are saving for their pensions and retirement, for the edu
11	ndered to another lawyer who may be impaired in the practice of law. I think we can fairly conclude that what Mr. Morrison was doing in the D.A.'s office and
12	current Congress, the biggest voter skipper by a huge margin. So, I wonder when we can expect Roberts' formal endorsement of Obama for President. Meanwhile, S
13	eaucrats in Washington deciding how we live here in California. That's "change" we can do without. A new ad released this morning from the McCain-Palin team
14	home for them. But we have a planet to save. We have an economy to grow. And we can do that if we keep our balance in all of this and not just say but for dr
15	have to drill off shore. We have to do it. It's out there and we can do it. And we can do that. The oil executives say within a couple of years we could be seei
16	"My friends, we have to drill off shore. We have to do it. It's out there and we can do it. And we can do that. The oil executives say within a couple of year
17	transactions. The list goes on and on, and it comes down to one word: jobs. So we can create jobs in our country. "I also want to say that later when this
18	Condolences Thanks to Lindsay Hopkins, South State Director of the "Yes We Can! California D8" campaign for sending this great photo from Saturday's ra
19	It Work Smarter, The Administration No Comments » An economic stimulus we can believe in November 18th, 2008 by Press Staff The Atlanta Convention a
20	act. \$30,000,000 At a total impact of 55 million - that's an economic stimulus we can believe in. Posted in Putting Georgia First No Comments » November is
21	uce an accurate estimate of how much this decade-long project will really cost. We can assume expenses will continue to rise, and that, if the polls indicate it
22	hed nothing – but the ensuing statement is, too. Partisanship aside, I think we can all agree that Pelosi should get back to work in Washington to deal with

Figure 4. Concordances for “We can”

Interestingly, whereas modal verbs are among the most common right collocates of first-person plurals in parties' and Congress peoples' blogs, the same cannot be said for citizens' blogs (cf. Figure 5).

N	WORD	TOTAL	LEFT	RIGHT	L5	L4	L3	L2	L1	*	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
1	THE	186	77	109	12	20	28	13	4	0	20	24	27	25	13
2	AND	80	53	27	12	3	17	6	15	0	4	3	3	6	11
3	THAT	76	44	32	2	8	6	3	25	0	8	7	9	4	4
4	HAVE	40	10	30	3	4	1	1	1	0	15	4	5	4	2
5	THIS	33	13	20	1	2	3	4	3	0	3	4	6	2	5
6	FOR	31	14	17	1	8	3	2	0	0	2	6	5	1	3
7	NOT	31	13	18	4	4	2	2	1	0	8	4	1	2	3
8	WHAT	30	17	13	1	0	1	1	14	0	3	3	3	1	3
9	KNOW	26	9	17	2	1	0	4	2	0	14	2	0	0	1
10	OUR	26	6	20	2	0	2	2	0	0	5	4	3	5	3
11	MCCAIN	25	9	16	1	2	3	1	2	0	2	4	4	4	2
12	WE'RE	23	3	4	1	2	0	0	0	16	1	0	2	1	0
13	WITH	23	10	13	5	1	4	0	0	0	3	2	5	2	1
14	BUT	22	12	10	1	1	1	2	7	0	1	0	3	1	5
15	ARE	21	12	9	0	4	4	0	4	0	1	2	2	2	2
16	ALL	20	11	9	1	2	4	0	4	0	4	2	0	0	3
17	ABOUT	19	6	13	0	2	1	3	0	0	2	6	5	0	0
18	NOW	19	13	6	1	3	0	5	4	0	2	3	0	0	1
19	OBAMA	19	7	12	1	3	0	2	1	0	3	1	2	3	3
20	YOU	19	8	11	3	2	0	3	0	0	4	1	2	3	1

Figure 5. Collocates of "we" in citizens' blogs

This may indicate that participation rhetoric does not play a relevant role in this second category of weblogs. This noticeable difference between parties' and citizens' blogs leads me to conclude that, even though both groups are used to realize the same communicative purposes (i.e. expressing and circulating opinions), the reasons that underlie their choice of blogging may be similar, but not identical. Whereas single individuals blog to spread their views, find their public voice and juxtapose it to the "impersonality" of mainstream media, parties keep a blog to stress the importance of collaborative action, thus obtaining votes, economic support and grassroots volunteer work: the use of, respectively, the first person singular and plural highlights that the subjective dimension prevails in citizens' blogs, while the collective dimension permeates parties' and Congress people's blog.

After dealing with bloggers' authorial projection onto the analyzed texts, in the next section, I will turn to the investigation of the discursive construction of Barack Obama and John McCain in order to examine comparatively how citizens and political parties linguistically and rhetorically represent the two presidential candidates in their posts.

5. The discursive construction of presidential candidates
 in the political blogosphere

Since citizens and parties lie at opposite extremes of political communication, comparing their descriptions of the 2008 electoral campaign and its protagonists can give an insight into the ways in which their representations of the world differ.⁶

In order to highlight the peculiarities of citizens' blogs I generated the keywords of the corpus of citizens' blogposts using the corpus of political parties' blogs as a reference.

Table 5. Keywords of citizens' blogs

N	Word	Freq.	Ens.txt %	Freq.	IE~1.txt %
1	BUT	500	0.49	229	0.23
2	IS	1.350	1.32	901	0.90
3	IT	912	0.89	566	0.56
4	OBAMA	566	0.55	310	0.31
5	HE	523	0.51	281	0.28
6	HIM	135	0.13	34	0.03
7	MCCAIN	594	0.58	350	0.35
8	KEATING	42	0.04	0	
9	SEÑOR	40	0.04	0	
10	I	817	0.80	543	0.54
11	REALLY	95	0.09	22	0.02
12	THEY	389	0.38	217	0.02
13	BARRY	34	0.03	0	
14	IF	286	0.28	144	0.14
15	BLACK	52	0.05	5	
16	A	2.198	2.15	1.757	1.75
17	LIKE	200	0.20	89	0.09
18	SOME	202	0.20	92	0.09
19	NOT	540	0.53	346	0.34
20	WHAT	284	0.28	151	0.15
21	ELITE	28	0.03	0	
22	T	242	0.24	123	0.12
23	THERE	218	0.21	108	0.11

6. The discursive constructions of Obama and McCain in parties' and Congress people's blogs were analysed in Riboni (2011). As a consequence, this section does not focus on the language strategies adopted by bloggers as to make their preferred candidate appear the one to vote, but it is instead centred around the most salient features of citizens' descriptions of the presidential runners and around the most interesting differences emerging from the comparison of political parties' and single individuals' representation of the electoral campaign and its protagonists.

Table 5. (*continued*)

N	Word	Freq.	Ens.txt %	Freq.	IE~1.txt %
24	DO	210	0.21	103	0.10
25	OR	351	0.34	207	0.21
26	CLINTON	85	0.08	24	0.02
27	CONSERVATIVE	63	0.06	13	0.01
28	POLLSTERS	25	0.02	0	
29	PANAMA	25	0.02	0	
30	PALIN	144	0.14	60	0.06
31	RIGHT	156	0.15	69	0.07
32	POINT	85	0.08	26	0.03
33	SO	269	0.26	151	0.15
34	MAINSTREAM	23	0.02	0	
35	ERROR	23	0.02	0	
36	GO	108	0.11	40	0.04
37	NSERVATIVES	35	0.03	3	
38	ACTUAL	28	0.03	1	
39	AL	37	0.04	4	
40	SORT	34	0.03	3	
41	MIGHT	86	0.08	28	0.03
42	FLORIDA	27	0.03	1	
43	SULLIVAN	21	0.02	0	
44	MEDIA	81	0.08	26	0.03
45	DON	77	0.08	24	0.02

As can be observed from the table, the names of Barack Obama and John McCain rank among the most common keywords. This means that the names of presidential candidates occur significantly more in citizens' than in parties' and Congress members' blogs. As a matter of fact, whereas in this second category of blogs their percentage frequency is 0.31 ("Obama") and 0.35 ("McCain"), in citizens' blogs their occurrence is almost double (0.55 and 0.58 respectively). Such numerical data seem to indicate that citizen bloggers attach more importance to individual political figures than party bloggers do. The tendency to refer to the candidates rather than to their political affiliation may be explained as a sign of the fact that people not belonging to parties interpret politics as a struggle between different politicians and not between different ideologies. Consequently, it may be possible to hypothesize that the language representation of the political scene in citizens' blogs shows distinct traces of the ongoing process of personalization of politics.

The analysis of the concordance lines of both "Obama" and "McCain" seem to confirm this hypothesis as when these surnames are followed by the verb to be they often collocate with either adjectives or nouns referring to personality traits and which do not stem from a rigorous political assessment of the candidate.

N	Concordance
9	McCain might commit? It has already been established this year that John McCain is an unethical liar by the manner in which he has run a Rove/Clinton sty
10	n by this poor choice. All this raises again—yet again—the question of whether McCain is temperamentally suited for the presidency. As the conservative David
11	ually Steve. That's right. Barack Steve Obama. Here's another revelation, John McCain is on to something. There was a point in my life when I started palling a
12	term. But the long term will be deeply affected by each man's long-term vision. McCain is still trying to make the original concept work; Obama isn't. He's abou
13	e ready for all sorts of attacks from all different directions. Of COURSE Señor McCain is qualified to run for the presidency and of COURSE Barry Obama is a
14	nd at some point, whether you support it or not). ... "The Democratic Daily: "... McCain is one of those people who are flat out so dumb that they think that we l
15	I might just sit this one out." DemFromCT of The Daily Kos says "... John McCain is all about gimmicks and campaign stunts, not results. ...", DDay of
16	s the 2012 primary calendar is formed. In other news: Politico notes that McCain is vetting Eric Cantor (R-VA). I'd love to take 4-1 on both candidates th
17	Obama's speech, McCain's pick, the Republican convention. Assumption: McCain is better off having the most information when he makes his final choice,
18	ets Problem?" The question hardly fits into the existing media narrative — John McCain is a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War. He shouldn't, the argument
19	staying in Afghanistan and to using military force as the main effort there as McCain is - perhaps even more so when you consider what he has said about
20	eller reminds in no uncertain terms), Obama is being seen as the elitist, while McCain is not. McCain hailed from the most militarily elite background possible,
21	term, that due to brainwashing by the Communists during the Vietnam war, McCain is a danger not only to the nation, but to himself as well. That's probab
22	reported remarks by Greenspan that clearly indicate he doesn't think John McCain is the one to steer America and the world through that collapse. "Un
23	Sept. 20, Page One)(WaPo) And also: Conservatives who insist that electing McCain is crucial usually start, and increasingly end, by saying he would make
24	, 2008 I really don't care to spend the next few weeks arguing whether or not McCain is lying about his Christ/Cross/guard moment and will let others chase af
25	issued? At any rate, you might begin to wonder why the media still pretends that McCain is different, and not just another peddler of Rovan filth. Well, there i
26	ssue that most certainly is not McCain's forte moves front and center. In fact, McCain is reeling on the economic issues, what with Gramm being chucked
27	y that you can avoid anticipating what is going to come. Everyone is aware that McCain is different on these issues," said Jessica Echard, executive director of

Figure 6. Concordances for “McCain is” in citizens’ blogs

N	Concordance
3	24/7/2008 Quote of the Day Digby discusses the latest right wing meme: Obama is too young to be president. Well I agree with Digby: I think, frankly,
4	n has spent the last several weeks making a focused, concentrated argument that Obama is not qualified to be president. That the arguments he's been using have
5	re what that says about the writer (or me), but it's worth a read anyway. What Obama Is Not Asking About McCain Saturday, August 9th, 2008 McCain has spent
6	ut that other guy. I'd like to think it's not going to work. I'd like to think Obama is too smart to fall into the trap of talking about Sarah Palin's lack of
7	en the nature of our political campaigns, that that is not a very high bar. But Obama is clearing it. Just as McCain's tactics represent a new low.) I don't kn
8	podcasts 22 through 26, and it reminded me of how big a mess the new President Obama is going to have to clean up. Posted in lies.com by jbc Permalink No
9	man at the end of the clip, takes the mic back from her, and tells her no, that Obama is a "decent family man," I found myself feeling proud of McCain. Which i
10	it in front of McCain: "I'm scared to bring up my child in a world where Barack Obama is president." McCain replies, "Well, I don't want him to be president, e
11	else is responsible for those who shriek at Palin's rallies, who proclaim that Obama is an Arab and who wish him harm. This campaign is more crass and more vir
12	, but she does a good job of summing up the differences: Compare and contrast. Obama is just a man, I know. He will inevitably disappoint, if only because no o
13	t qualified" claims from the Clinton campaign, or the "we don't know who Barack Obama is" gambits from the McCain campaign, have never resonated even slightly w
14	its lyrics make a pretty cool meta-commentary on the subject of the ad. 2) How Obama is this: Even when he's doing a negative ad, he still can't resist using T
15	— Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton — distanced themselves from liberal orthodoxy. Obama is, by contrast, a garden-variety liberal. He also has radical associates
16	rats which Republicans have used with success for years: The core case against Obama is pretty simple: he's too liberal. A few months ago I asked one of McCain
17	ar short of redistribution of the wealth. On irony of this is that in many ways Obama is actually making a fairly conservative argument. A key point he makes th
18	for the poor. The far right might object to this, but this is hardly socialism. Obama is bound to support things which the far right oppose, and even things whi
19	that Pro-Life. This analysis could be extended, but it seems clear to me that Obama is the conservative in the 2008 election. A couple of nitpicks: I don't c
20	original concept work; Obama isn't. He's about damage control. In this respect, Obama is more of a realist and conservative than McCain. And the possibility Oba

Figure 7. Concordances for “Obama is” in citizens’ blogs

The above examples underline that the parameters used by citizens to evaluate presidential runners are not the same as those of political parties. Concordances show that citizens do not assess Obama and McCain on the basis of their programs, but rather on the type of person that they are. Their competence as a possible future president is therefore seen as linked to their personal characteristics and not to their political creed and affiliation.

Citizens’ blogs seem to stress some aspects of the candidate which are almost totally absent in parties’ blogs: one of them, as can be observed from the list of keywords where the adjective “black” ranks among the 10 top lemmas, is the ethnicity of aspiring presidents, which is completely ignored in official parties’ blogs. The latter desire to appear “politically correct” and do not mention the fact that, for the first time in the history of the United States, one of the candidates is African-American. Democratic bloggers do not write about Obama’s ethnic background as they do not want to focus their readers’ attention on it but rather

on his qualities as a leader. Republicans, on the other hand, adopt a very cautious line to protect themselves from any possible accusation of racism, but this choice somewhat distances them from the electorate: far from worrying about whether their audience may consider them racially prejudiced, citizens frequently mention the element of novelty introduced by Obama's belonging to the African-American community and they evaluate the possible impact that this can have on the electoral outcome (cf. Figure 8).

N	Concordance
1	t several days -- is that the polls did a rather poor job of accounting for the black vote. Not only did essentially every "undecided" African-American voter wi
2	t Virginia and Montana, which are nominally closer in the polling. And if these black voter registration numbers are replicated throughout the South, Elizabeth
3	. I think they might be. In their past two surveys of Georgia, SurveyUSA pegged black voter turnout at 25-26 percent. This is a pretty safe assumption, since it
4	now. A related question is whether the pollsters are underrepresenting the black vote in their turnout estimates in states like Georgia. I think they might
5	ting is underway in Georgia, and according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, black voters do not represent 30 percent of Georgia's early voter turnout. Inste
6	ey'd increased in the entire month of September. So suppose that by tonight, black voters have increased to 30 percent of Georgia's registered voter pool. Pl
7	African-American nominee might be just a little bit of a motivating factor for black voters. Suppose that African-Americans represent 29.0 percent of Georgia's
8	. In 2004, also according to statistics from the Georgia Secretary of State, black voters made up 25.4 percent of election day turnout (this means that they
9	Now, that might not seem like all that big a difference. But suppose that the black vote is split 95/5 between Obama and McCain, and the nonblack vote is spli
10	stration is up materially from 2004. Here are the numbers. In November 2004, black voters represented 27.4 percent of Georgia's active registered voter pool.
11	egistration and turnout by the race of the voter. Those statistics suggest that black voter registration is up materially from 2004. Here are the numbers. In

Figure 8. Concordances for "Black vote*" in citizens' blogs

Another aspect which plays a marginal role in political parties' and Congress people's blogs and which is very often commented upon by citizen bloggers is the alleged élite origin of the candidates ("élite" is the 21 most common keyword of the citizens' corpus). Bloggers do not agree on which of the candidates is more detached from the grass roots: some maintain that, in spite of his belonging to a minority, Obama has always been a member of the élites, whereas McCain is genuinely close to the electorate (cf. Example 12). Others affirm that the latter cannot but be linked to power, élite groups as the Republican Party is traditionally considered as "the party of the rich" (cf. Example 13):

- (12) However, every Democratic presidential candidate since Bill Clinton is elite, except for his wife – but only when Hillary is compared to Obama and only when it became clear she couldn't win. Today, there are only two parties: Republican and elitecraft.
- (13) Similarly, (as Ms. Heller reminds in no uncertain terms), Obama is being seen as the elitist, while McCain is not. McCain hailed from the most militarily elite background possible, and Obama's roots were for the most part middle class (taken from the blog 'Classical Values').

The social background of Obama and McCain seems to occupy a central position within citizens' blogs, where many attempts are made to establish whether the two presidential runners are really members of an élite. Such a concern about the candidates' origin stems from the worry that a possible future president belonging to the privileged class may not act in the interests of his whole nation, including

lower classes, but only benefit a restricted power group. In citizens' blogs a link is made between Obama's and McCain's social background and their possible future policies, as if the latter might be determined by the aspiring presidents' social rank and not by their ideological affiliation. Political party programs, which are the expression of such ideological affiliation, are not widely considered.

This hypothesis is confirmed by data in the following table; the list of negative keywords (i.e. words that are salient in the reference corpus and not in citizens' blogposts) contains items referring to the issues around which parties organized their campaign and that played an important role in their programs.

Table 6. Negative keywords of citizens' blogs

N	Word	Freq.	Ens.txt %	Freq.	IE~txt. %
104	DRILLING	9		58	0.06
105	CARE	20	0.02	82	0.08
106	ACT	21	0.02	84	0.08
107	PLAN	42	0.04	125	0.12
108	WEEK	48	0.05	136	0.14
109	CALIFORNIA	15	0.01	76	0.08
110	VOTED	18	0.02	84	0.08
111	SENATOR	70	0.07	174	0.17
112	REPUBLICAN	137	0.13	272	0.27
113	PROVIDE	8		64	0.06
114	HELP	39	0.04	127	0.13
115	WILL	274	0.27	459	0.46
116	MILLION	30	0.03	111	0.11
117	SPEAKER	7		63	0.06
118	JACK	6		61	0.06
119	GOVERNOR	18	0.02	91	0.09
120	BILL	69	0.07	183	0.18
121	VOTE	83	0.08	208	0.21
122	GAS	23	0.02	105	0.10
123	JOBS		8		710.07
124	FOR	956	0.93	1.299	1.29
125	PRICES	10		78	0.08
126	ON	742	0.72	1.056	1.05
127	PRODUCTION	3		58	0.06
128	HEALTH	14	0.01	89	0.09
129	PM	5		67	0.07
130	TAXES	9		81	0.08
131	CONGRESSIONAL	7		76	0.08
132	CONGRESSMAN	4		67	0.07
133	FAMILIES	11	0.01	89	0.09

Table 6. (*continued*)

N	Word	Freq.	Ens.txt %	Freq.	IE~txt. %
134	CLICK	3		69	0.07
135	HOUSE	66	0.06	214	0.21
136	LEGISLATION	6		94	0.09
137	ECONOMIC	33	0.03	167	0.17
138	ECONOMY	20	0.02	140	0.14
139	TAX	32	0.03	169	0.17
140	COUNTY	4		96	0.10
141	CONGRESS	34	0.03	182	0.18
142	POSTED	33	0.03	190	0.19
143	OIL	27	0.03	177	0.18
144	OUR	171	0.17	526	0.52
145	ENERGY	24	0.02	296	0.29

Citizens do not seem to feel that these questions are particularly important or relevant to the political and economic life of their country. Specifically, they do not care much about the energy and taxation issues as demonstrated by the significant number of negative keywords that have to do with them (cf. Table 6). Interestingly, energy sources and taxes were the most important concerns of the Republican party, but they were perceived as of secondary importance by citizens/bloggers and, very possibly, by the electorate (cf. Riboni 2011).

As already discussed, it is impossible to establish to what degree weblogs condition electoral results, but it seems noteworthy, nonetheless, that the party which lost the elections devised its campaign on issues that were not picked by citizen bloggers and, possibly, by the majority of voters.

6. Concluding remarks

This chapter has conducted a data-driven analysis of the most salient features of citizens' descriptions of the 2008 presidential candidates and of the most significant ways in which such descriptions differ from those of political parties and Congress people's blogs.

Both categories of bloggers started using these kinds of Internet platforms because they could be exploited to bypass the mediation of traditional media and communicate with the electorate directly. Citizens' adoption of the blogging genre has to do with their desire to play a more active role in the political life of their country and to provide an alternative source of news and opinions to that of MSM. As a consequence, their blogs are ideologically charged and steeped in subjectivity.

Political parties, on the other hand, are an expression of a collectivity and aim at involving citizens in the hope of obtaining their vote, their financial support and, possibly, their volunteer work. Congress members' blogs contain both narratives in the first person singular, which may be interesting for the electorate as they provide a first-hand account of their political life, and instances of first-person plurals which represent the official voice of the party.

During the 2008 campaign both party and citizen bloggers described the events and the protagonists of the electoral strife. However, whereas the former used blogs as a sort of echo chamber of their political programs, the latter gave prominence to the personality of candidates and their representation of the campaign did not seem to be influenced by the issues discussed by parties. A significant discrepancy between what Republicans deemed important and what really counted for the electorate may have ultimately contributed to their electoral defeat.

Citizen bloggers focused their attention to the personal characteristics of both Obama and McCain and evaluated them accordingly, not on the basis of their ideological orientation. Attributes such as ethnic background and social origins, which were largely ignored by party bloggers, appeared to play a decisive role in the blogs of common citizens. Just like their subjectivity represents the main filter through which the electoral campaign was described and commented upon in their posts, in the same way the subjectivity of candidates seems to have prevailed over other elements such as political affiliation and ideology.

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This book deals with participation frameworks in modern social and public media. It brings together several cutting-edge research studies that offer exciting new insights into the nature and formats of interpersonal communication in diverse technology-mediated contexts. Some papers introduce new theoretical extensions to participation formats, while others present case studies in various discourse domains spanning public and private genres. Adopting the perspective of the pragmatics of interaction, these contributions discuss data ranging from public, mass-mediated and quasi-authentic texts, fully staged and scripted textual productions, to authentic, non-scripted private messages and comments, both of a permanent and ephemeral nature. The analyses include news interviews, online sports reporting, sitcoms, comedy shows, stand-up comedies, drama series, institutional and personal blogs, tweets, follow-up YouTube video commentaries, and Facebook status updates. All the authors emphasize the role of context and pay attention to how meaning is constructed by participants in interactions in increasingly complex participation frameworks existing in traditional as well as novel technologically mediated interactions.

"This is such a timely volume, given that participation has become a hot topic because it is so relevant to public and social media. The volume contains a wealth of riches: varying contexts (e.g. sports commentaries, news, weblogs, sitcoms, film), methods (from qualitative analyses to corpus-based analyses) and theoretical perspectives (from humour to impoliteness). I cannot imagine but that any reader will be inspired by something here."

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"In an ever-changing world of public and social media, this volume is an important conceptualisation of how new modes of communication generate new ways of interacting. What endears me most to this book is that it works through the newness and complexity of mediated discourse, in its many forms, by drawing on a reliable framework, namely participation frameworks. For scholars of media discourse, pragmatics and social interaction, this will become a core and trusted text."

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