

Telecinematic Discourse

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Volume 211

Telecinematic Discourse. Approaches to the language of films
and television series

Edited by Roberta Piazza, Monika Bednarek and Fabio Rossi

Telecinematic Discourse

Approaches to the language of films
and television series

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Analysing telecinematic discourse

Roberta Piazza, Monika Bednarek and Fabio Rossi

The collection of articles in this book offers an exploration of the language used in fictional/narrative film and television from various perspectives and discussing different kinds of data. In so doing, the book attempts to understand, describe and define such language in its relation to real life and in consideration of its functions within the fictional narrative: how special if at all is the language of cinema and television (what we may call *telecinematic discourse*)?

This volume therefore gathers a variety of contributions to the systematic analysis of telecinematic discourse from different analytical and methodological approaches, and establishes a link between fictional/narrative cinema and television through seeing them both as examples of integrated multimodal (verbal and visual) fictional narratives. While bringing together film and television discourse in a single edited volume aims to highlight analogies, similarities and overlaps between the two media (see for instance the cross-references between chapters), this is not intended to deny the intrinsic differences between them. Products for cinema and television follow specific conventions and fulfil viewers' expectations in different ways on all levels, which can be seen for instance in the contrast between a single isolated narrative experience in the case of film versus a more consistent and/or repeated exposure to a televisual narrative in the case of television. This collection, however, tries to capture the textuality inherent in both fictional and narrative cinema and television. Both media produce texts which are defined by the "boundaries" or "clear frames" "within which the various elements of sound and image 'cohere', 'make sense' or are cohesive" (Bell 2001: 15).

Further, both film and television discourse are regulated by that double plane of communication that characterises any screen discourse (and, to a different degree, theatre discourse) between the subjects in the story and the external viewers as the chapters by Rossi, Bubel and Brock in this volume explore.

It is connections such as these (and others discussed in this volume) that have encouraged us to reflect jointly on the nature of the big and small screen or

“telecinematic discourse”. The rationale behind this volume, therefore, is the urgent need we felt for a treatment of fictional cinema and television from various linguistic perspectives. While it is an upcoming research topic in linguistics (e.g. Stokoe 2008; Quaglio 2009; Wodak 2009; Bednarek 2008a, b, 2010, 2011; Kozloff 2000; Iedema 2001; McIntyre 2008; Short 2007; Rossi 2006b; Piazza 2006a, b, 2010, 2011; Richardson 2010), research has so far not been brought together in a collection, and, compared to the traditional focus of stylistic research (literary texts), telecinematic discourse remains under-described.

By way of a first introduction to telecinematic discourse, consider Example (1) below:

(1) *GAS STATION/GROCERY SHEFFIELD*

At an isolated dusty crossroad. It is twilight. The Ford sedan that Chigurh stopped is parked alongside the pump.

INSIDE Chigurh stands at the counter across from the elderly proprietor. He holds up a bag of cashews.

Chigurh: *How much?*

Proprietor: *Sixty-nine cent.*

Chigurh: *This. And the gas.*

Proprietor: *Y'all getting any rain up your way?*

Chigurh: *What way would that be?*

Proprietor: *I seen you was from Dallas.* [Chigurh tears open the bag of cashews and pours a few into his hand.]

Chigurh: *What business is it of yours where I'm from, friendo?*

Proprietor: *I didn't mean nothin by it.*

Chigurh: *Didn't mean nothin.*

Proprietor: *I was just passin the time.*

Chigurh: *I guess that passes for manners in your cracker view of things.* [A beat.]

Proprietor: *Well sir I apologize. If you don't wanna accept that I don't know what else I can do for you.* [Chigurh stands chewing cashews, staring while the old man works the register.]

Proprietor: *... Will there be somethin else?*

Chigurh: *I don't know. Will there?* [Beat. The proprietor turns and coughs. Chigurh stares.]

Proprietor: *Is somethin wrong?*

Chigurh: *With what?*

Proprietor: *With anything?*

Chigurh: *Is that what you're asking me? Is there something wrong with anything?* [The proprietor looks at him, uncomfortable, looks away.]

Proprietor: *Will there be anything else?*

Chigurh: *You already asked me that.*
Proprietor: *Well ... I need to see about closin.*
Chigurh: *See about closing.*
Proprietor: *Yessir.*
Chigurh: *What time do you close?*
Proprietor: *Now. We close now.*
Chigurh: *Now is not a time. What time do you close.*
Proprietor: *Generally around dark. At dark.* [Chigurh stares, slowly chewing.]
Chigurh: *You don't know what you're talking about, do you?*
Proprietor: *Sir?*
Chigurh: *I said you don't know what you're talking about.* [Chigurh chews] ... *What time do you go to bed.*
Proprietor: *Sir?*
Chigurh: *You're a bit deaf, aren't you? I said what time do you go to bed.*
Proprietor: *Well ...* [A pause] ... *I'd say around nine-thirty. Somewhere around nine-thirty.*
Chigurh: *I could come back then.*
Proprietor: *Why would you be comin back? We'll be closed.*
Chigurh: *You said that.* [He continues to stare, chewing.]
Proprietor: *Well... I need to close now.*
Chigurh: *You live in that house behind the store?*
Proprietor: *Yes I do.*
Chigurh: *You've lived here all your life?* [A beat.]
Proprietor: *This was my wife's father's place. Originally.*
Chigurh: *You married into it.*
Proprietor: *We lived in Temple Texas for many years. Raised a family there. In Temple. We come out here about four years ago.*
Chigurh: *You married into it.*
Proprietor: ... *If that's the way you wanna put it.*
Chigurh: *I don't have some way to put it. That's the way it is.* [He finishes the cashews and wads the packet and sets it on the counter where it begins to slowly unkink. The proprietor's eyes have tracked the packet. Chigurh's eyes stay on the proprietor.] ... *What's the most you've ever lost on a coin toss?*
Proprietor: *Sir?*
Chigurh: *The most. You ever lost. On a coin toss.*
Proprietor: *I don't know. I couldn't say.* [Chigurh is digging in his pocket. A quarter: he tosses it. He slaps it onto his forearm but keeps it covered.]
Chigurh: *Call it.*
Proprietor: *Call it?*
Chigurh: *Yes.*
Proprietor: *For what?*

- Chigurh: *Just call it.*
- Proprietor: *Well – we need to know what it is we’re callin for here.*
- Chigurh: *You need to call it. I can’t call it for you. It wouldn’t be fair. It wouldn’t even be right.*
- Proprietor: *I didn’t put nothin up.*
- Chigurh: *Yes you did. You been putting it up your whole life. You just didn’t know it. You know what date is on this coin?*
- Proprietor: *No.*
- Chigurh: *Nineteen fifty-eight. It’s been traveling twenty-two years to get here. And now it’s here. And it’s either heads or tails, and you have to say. Call it. [A long beat.]*
- Proprietor: *Look ... I got to know what I stand to win.*
- Chigurh: *Everything.*
- Proprietor: *How’s that?*
- Chigurh: *You stand to win everything. Call it.*
- Proprietor: *All right. Heads then. [Chigurh takes his hand away from the coin and turns his arm to look at it.]*
- Chigurh: *Well done. [He hands it across.] ... Don’t put it in your pocket.*
- Proprietor: *Sir?*
- Chigurh: *Don’t put it in your pocket. It’s your lucky quarter.*
- Proprietor: *... Where you want me to put it?*
- Chigurh: *Anywhere not in your pocket. Or it’ll get mixed in with the others and become just a coin. Which it is. [He turns and goes. The proprietor watches him.]*

(<http://www.gointothestory.com/2009/03/great-scene-no-country-for-old-men.html>, last accessed 26 July 2010)

No Country for Old Men, from which the above excerpt is taken, is a 2007 American crime thriller adapted for the big screen by Joel and Ethan Coen from the homonymous novel by Cormac McCarthy. Protagonist Chigurh, initially hired to recover money from a drug deal gone awry, soon acquires all features of a heartless asocial killing machine. The above coin toss scene from the film indicating Chigurh’s dissociative and solipsistic attitude to anyone around him has recently become an example of the trope of the killers’ alienation in the genre, in terms of the recurring theme of the psychological deviance that characterises murderers’ and criminals’ minds and its manifestation through language.¹ What is of interest here is the strong reliance of the scene on language. Script writer Scott Myers’s online comments capture the essence of the moment in the narrative – a narrative

1. Cf. Gregoriou (2007) for a study of deviance in crime fiction.

marked by the exasperating length of the dialogue between the two men as preparatory to the coin toss which shows that “Chigurh’s sense of who deserves to live and who deserves to die extends to everyone he meets”:

The old man’s intrusive questions, his innocent way of engaging customers in casual talk, but especially the admission that he has acquired the garage through marriage, somehow make him the perfect target for Chigurh’s violent justice distribution. For some mysterious reason the way the old man has become the garage proprietor strikes Chigurh as a dishonest cheap way of making headway into life and triggers the toss coin test that the man luckily passes. The coin therefore takes on a magical function and, having travelled twenty two years to save an old man from sure death, now deserves to be treasured separate from all other less significant coins.

(<http://www.gointothestory.com/2009/03/great-scene-no-country-for-old-men.html>, last accessed 26 July 2010)

While Myers’s comments are illuminating, our interest in this scene lies in the way tension and fear develop from Chigurh’s breaking of casual harmony or phatic communion² (Malinowski 1923) in spite of the gas station proprietor’s attempts to establish it. Power is clearly one-sided as Chigurh imposes himself as the only question-asking and topic-selecting interlocutor, after the proprietor’s unsuccessful attempt to talk about such futile subjects as the weather in Dallas (“Proprietor: Y’all getting any rain up your way? Chigurh: What way would that be? Proprietor: I seen you was from Dallas.”). Irony as the echoic repetition (Wilson and Sperber 1992) of the old man’s words expressing detachment and distance is another predominant feature of Chigurh’s language and the main tool for a characterisation of this subject for the benefit of the other characters in the film and for the viewers.

A sequence like the coin toss scene from *No Country for Old Men* can work as an introduction to this volume on the discourse of film and television for at least two main reasons. Firstly, it introduces us to the use of discourse in film as a tool for characterisation, e.g. as way of entering the mind of a character, or his/her “mind style” (Fowler 1977) – in this case the madman, the assassin, the alienated and feared other. Chigurh deliberately avoids the cooperative discursive construction that conjures up harmony and solidarity by for instance taking the proprietor’s idiomatic expressions *ad literam* and refusing to draw any implications, while clearly sticking to his own agenda. Secondly, a scene like the above reveals the importance of discourse in film (and television), where it can fulfil a number of specific functions: beside contributing to characterisation, it defines narrative genres and engages viewers.

2. Cf. Dwyer (2010), as an initial investigation of the topic.

Despite this multi-functionality of discourse in fictional narratives, following the commitment to the visual of such theorists as Arnheim, Eisenstein and Kracauer, Epstein and Germaine Dulac, film discourse was ignored for decades and viewed solely as an accompaniment to images. The community of film critics and academics perceived cinema as speechless even after the appearance of the talkies so that a comment by theatre and film “master” Mamet (as reported by Kozloff 2000: 8) has become emblematic of such an attitude: “Basically, the perfect movie doesn’t have any dialogue. So you should always be striving to make a silent movie.”

Before making any further comments on telecinematic discourse, we will briefly consider an example from the language of contemporary fictional television.

(2) SHELDON AND LEONARD’S APARTMENT

Penny: [popping her head round] *Hi, hey. I’m running out to the market, do you guys need anything?*

[...]

Sheldon: *I need eggs. Four dozen should suffice.*

Penny: *Four dozen?*

Sheldon: *Yes, and evenly distributed amongst brown, white, free range, large, extra-large and jumbo.*

Penny: *Okay, one more time?*

Sheldon: *Never mind, you won’t get it right, I’d better come with you.*

Penny: *Oh, yay!*

PENNY’S CAR

[...]

Penny: [talking about Sheldon being fired] *Well, maybe it’s all for the best, you know I always say, when one door closes, another one opens.*

Sheldon: *No it doesn’t. Not unless the two doors are connected by relays, or there are motion sensors involved.*

Penny: *No, no, I meant ...*

Sheldon: *Or the first door closing causes a change of air pressure that acts upon the second door.*

Penny: *Never mind.*

Sheldon: *Slow down. Slow down, please slow down.*

Penny: *We’re fine.*

Sheldon: *Look, you’re not leaving yourself enough space between cars.*

Penny: *Oh, sure I am.*

Sheldon: *No, no. Let me do the math for you, this car weighs let’s say 4,000lb, now add say 140 for me, 120 for you.*

Penny: 120?

Sheldon: *Oh, I'm sorry, did I insult you? Is your body mass somehow tied into your self worth?*

Penny: *Well, yeah.*

Sheldon: *Interesting. [...]*

THE SUPERMARKET

Sheldon: *This is great. Look at me, out in the real world of ordinary people, just living their ordinary, colourless, workaday lives.*

Penny: *Thank you.*

Sheldon: *No, thank you. And thank you, ordinary person.
[...]*

Sheldon: *[as Penny selects vitamin supplements] Oh boy.*

Penny: *What now?*

Sheldon: *Well, there's some value to taking a multivitamin, but the human body can only absorb so much, what you're buying here are the ingredients for very expensive urine.*

Penny: *Well, maybe that's what I was going for.*

Sheldon: *Well then you'll want some manganese.*

ON THE STAIRWELL OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING

Sheldon: *That was fun. Maybe tomorrow we can go to one of those big warehouse stores.*

Penny: *Oh, I don't know Sheldon, it's going to take me a while to recover from all the fun I had today.*

Sheldon: *Are you sure. There are a lot of advantages to buying in bulk. For example, I noticed that you purchase your tampons one month's supply at a time.*

Penny: *What?*

Sheldon: *Well think about it, it's a product that doesn't spoil, and you're going to be needing them for at least the next thirty years.*

Penny: *You want me to buy thirty years worth of tampons?*

Sheldon: *Well, thirty, thirty five, hey, when did your mother go into menopause?*

Penny: *Okay, I'm not talking about this with you.*

Sheldon: *Oh, Penny, this is a natural human process, and we're talking about statistically significant savings. Now, if you assume 15 tampons per cycle and a 28 day cycle, are you fairly regular? [Penny shuts door in his face.] Okay, no warehouse store, but we're still on for put-put golf, right?*

(The Big Bang Theory, 1: 4, The Luminous Fish Effect, transcript from <http://bigbang-trans.wordpress.com/series-1-episode-4-the-luminous-fish-effect/>, last accessed 26 July 2010)

The Big Bang Theory (CBS 2007–), from which the above excerpt is taken, is an American sitcom about two physicist-“nerds”, Sheldon and Leonard, their equally nerdy friends Howard and Raj, and Sheldon and Leonard’s new neighbour Penny, a pretty blonde who wants to be an actress but works as a waitress. A main source of humour is the stereotypical nerdiness of the characters and the contrast between the nerds on the one hand, and Penny, on the other. Similar to the film extract (Example (1)) above, the sequence shows how interactional discourse gives viewers insight into characters’ minds, in particular Sheldon’s assumption of superiority and complete lack of social skills. In contrast to Chirgurh in Example (1), Sheldon’s avoidance of cooperative and harmonious discourse – e.g. insulting Penny (*Never mind, you won’t get it right, I’d better come with you, ordinary people, just living their ordinary, colourless, workaday lives*), taking idiomatic expressions *ad literam* (“Penny: Well, maybe it’s all for the best, you know I always say, when one door closes, another one opens. Sheldon: No it doesn’t. Not unless the two doors are connected by relays, or there are motion sensors involved.”), explicitly judging her weight, talking about a taboo topic, criticising her food choices etc. – is not meant to be taken by the audience as deliberate. Indeed, in a later episode, Sheldon has to be explicitly told that giving Leonard a gift for his birthday is “a non-optional social convention”, which he accepts readily enough and by which he then complies. In other words, Sheldon is unaware of social conventions but at the same time he is not unwilling to follow them. Therefore, his character may be an “other” but presumably a non-threatening other, someone that we laugh at rather than fear. A linguistic analysis of im/politeness (e.g. Bousfield 2007a, b, 2008; Culpeper 1996, 1998; Mandala this volume) and other forms of linguistic deviance would provide many insights into how Sheldon and the other “nerds” are construed in this series and why the dialogue makes us laugh. Such issues are the concern of several chapters in this volume and illuminate how the linguistic analysis of telecinematic discourse can be a worthwhile endeavour. As with film discourse, television discourse has not received much attention in linguistics. This appears to conform to a general tendency where, despite its importance, popular culture is overlooked in various linguistic sub-disciplines (cf. Pennycook 2007:9 on Applied Linguistics). However, more recently, linguistics and stylistics have shown an interest in the study of both film and television discourse and this volume is intended as a contribution to this emergent interest.

To repeat, the two discourses of cinema and television, representing a hitherto virtually unexplored area of research in stylistic pragmatics, are deliberately approached jointly in this volume in light of what we posit as a strong correspondence and analogy between them, which does not overlook their obvious differences. The core issues that are explored and that run through the various chapters of the book contribute to the cohesiveness of the volume despite the diversity

of the contributions. As mentioned earlier, the first of these concerns the nature of telecinematic discourse, marked by an emphasis on **the relationship between represented and interactive participants**, as the diegetic characters and the viewers respectively (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). Both film and television products operate along this double plane; however, while film construes this complex relationship as an isolated experience – with the exception of films with sequels (e.g. James Bond films, the Harry Potter films, the *Twilight* films) – televisual characters establish a rapport with viewers through the persistence and regularity of the broadcast. The **interface between the verbal and the visual** discourse is another ingredient in both cinema and television. Visual texts are analysed as “meaningful and cohesive units framed within the medium and genre(s) at issue” (Bell 2001: 15), be it an episode from *The Wire*, where verbal and visual information is integrated to facilitate viewer comprehension (see Toolan this volume), or the scene of the discovery of the boxed cut off head of Tracy in David Fincher’s 1995 *Seven*, in which the three participants’ degree of knowledge combines with their different spatial location and with the camera’s individual close-ups on each of them (see Piazza this volume).

The issue of **the definition of characters** in film and television is another of the core topics explored in the volume. A dynamic conceptualisation of characters is generally typical of approaches to characterisation both in film and television in that narrative subjects are construed in relation to the surrounding context and in response to the other narrative subjects or *represented participants* (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001); yet these two media exhibit their idiosyncratic ways of realising characterisation. In the case of film, the narrative subjects are construed within a free-standing textual unit but in the case of multi-episode TV programmes the construal of the subjects needs to be considered with respect to their serial nature. This has an important impact on the way characters are portrayed through discourse; therefore film narratives may involve a transformation of characters within the concentrated time span of the narrative to a greater extent than televisual narratives where characters may remain rather stable to ensure the continuity of a rapport between *represented* and *interactive participants* or viewers. More specifically, character development clearly depends on the nature of the telecinematic narrative to which they contribute.

Another relevant issue is that concerning the **relationship between real life and fictional discourse** in which the latter is to be interpreted as an example of a re-presentation. From such a perspective, telecinematic texts provide a re-creation of the world and the time, place and discourse within it. This re-creation or re-presentation is always in line with the specific socio-cultural conventions of the society in which telecinematic texts are produced. It is also in line with a particular “media logic” (Iedema 2001: 187), which differentiates these products

from non-media artifacts. This issue – of how discourse is represented – relates to both film and television discourse and is consequently approached by contributors in both sections of the book. Representation in film and television can also concern the construal of ideologies through discourse, and in fact, much research in Cultural/Media Studies discusses notions such as race or gender (see Mandala and Paltridge et al. this volume). An investigation of this other aspect of representation thus concerns the role of film and television in reproducing or challenging established beliefs, norms and value systems.

These topics (the nature of telecinematic discourse in terms of its double planes, its multimodality and its relationship to real life discourse, issues of characterisation) are some of the themes that are explored in this volume. Others, including the special role of humour and emotionality, pedagogic uses of telecinematic discourse, effects of adaptation, and structural features of film trailers, provide further insight into the complex code of telecinematic discourse.

While the chapters offer unique contributions to various themes within telecinematic discourse, they share the same interest in investigating features of the discursive representation in the two media with a clear focus on textuality, the diegetic level of narrative and multimodality. This volume is also deliberately open methodologically in that it offers various perspectives and analytical frameworks to approach the complexities of telecinematic discourse. These include pragmatics, corpus stylistics, multimodal discourse analysis, conversation analysis, cultural studies and cognitive stylistics, with each chapter offering new viewpoints, methodologies and foci on the language of fictional film and television.

In terms of data, the volume provides detailed analyses of a wide variety of cinematic and televisual texts ranging from different types and genres of films (realistic comedies, horror, drama, crime, adventure) to film trailers that advertise those very films, as well as sitcoms, “dramedies” (drama and comedy hybrids), crime dramas, sci-fi, and other television genres. Furthermore, contributions are not solely devoted to British and American culture but also to other cultures such as Italian.

This volume is divided into two parts, cinematic discourse and televisual discourse, which follow relatively similar thematic threads and develop similar or adjoining topics (e.g. the nature of telecinematic discourse, characterisation, mind style). This makes it easier for the reader to identify similarities between the two media and encourages comparisons between them.

Rossi (*Discourse analysis of film dialogues: Italian comedy between linguistic realism and pragmatic non-realism*) opens Part I with a discussion of the topic of discourse representation in film that investigates the relationship between cinematic and real-life language in a small corpus of Italian films. This opening chapter blends features of qualitative and quantitative analysis as Rossi deploys corpus

analysis to compare scripted film dialogue with Italian corpora of unscripted real-life dialogue. Rossi makes the claim that the “dubbesse”, or the language that in Italy traditionally accompanies foreign as well as Italian films, imposes a further layer or screen between the represented and interactive participants. The results show the smaller fragmentation and greater coherence, cohesion and conciseness of film discourse vis-à-vis authentic language, along with other differences concerning for instance turn length or interruptions.

This topic of how film dialogue relates to authentic language is further explored in Alvarez-Pereyre’s contribution *Using film as linguistic specimen: Theoretical and practical issues*, which introduces one of the sub-themes of the volume, that of the pedagogical relevance and functionality of cinema for language learning. The chapter is organised as an argumentative piece that starts from the assumption that films are used for pedagogical purposes. Although he explores the hypothesis of the semiotic discrepancy existing between spontaneous and telecinematic discourse (viewed as social artifact), Alvarez-Pereyre demonstrates the relevance in a pedagogic context of audiovisual texts due to the fact that they exemplify a broad range of communicative situations, linguistic registers and the co-presence of the visual and verbal code. In support of his view, this author reminds us how the lack of spontaneity of film discourse is shared by numerous other texts frequently used in the classroom.

The next three chapters deal in different ways with the notion of “mind style” (Fowler 1977) as the term traditionally used in linguistic stylistics to refer to the linguistic features that allow us to penetrate the subjectivity of a character or the community to which s/he belongs. In her contribution *Multimodal realisations of mind style in Enduring Love*, Montoro analyses the deviant “unconventional” mind of Joe Rose in the filmic adaptation of McEwan’s *Enduring Love*, who develops a *post-traumatic mind style* observable in his actions and behaviour. She explores the potentialities of the written text and traces their visual realisation on the big screen, thus combining a traditional and a multimodal analysis. The focus of the chapter is on epistemic modality, expressing the “degree of certainty the speaker has that what s/he is saying is true” (de Haan 2006: 29) and how this translates visually to the language on screen. Such devices suggest the state of confusion and psychological unrest suffered by the novel’s and film’s main character.

Along similar lines, Piazza’s chapter *Pragmatic deviance in realist horror films: A look at films by Argento and Fincher* attempts to characterise the villain’s mind in realist horror films in which killers live side by side with psychologically mainstream people. The study is based on Gricean and post-Gricean pragmatic approaches, as it analyses the killers’ discourse against the framework of the Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975) together with the notion of Relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986), which reflects the speakers’ informative intention

and views communication as aiming “to enlarge mutual cognitive environments” (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 193). Serial killers’ speech in horror films is defined as deviant in that it defies the characters’ and viewers’ presumption of relevance and informativeness both on a verbal and visual level. The claim is that through the language produced by the killers, viewers access the mind of those deviant subjects and the way they interact – or do not interact – with their opponents and victims. The chapter also continues the exploration of the “unnatural” essence of fictional discourse in relation to real-life and points out how the discourse of horror puts on hold the normal implicature and inference-drawing process that takes place in authentic conversation.

Bousfield and McIntyre’s chapter (*Emotion and empathy in Martin Scorsese’s Goodfellas: A case study of the “funny guy” scene*), together with Kozinski’s *Quantifying the emotional tone of James Bond films: An application of the Dictionary of Affect in Language*, address the issue of the representation of emotions in film. Bousfield and McIntyre in particular analyse how fear is portrayed in a scene from Martin Scorsese’s *Goodfellas*. Fear derives from the lack of empathy between two characters in an asymmetrical relationship and from the ensuing misunderstanding of the more powerful of the two. Like many chapters in the book, Bousfield’s and McIntyre’s micro approach to the study of how emotions are expressed in film captures the linguistic, paralinguistic and kinesic manifestations of that feeling in the two characters. The analysis, grounded in impoliteness theory and pragmatics, shows how one particular instance of the discourse of fear involves a complex interaction mainly managed by the stronger of the two characters, Tommy: he betrays the expectations of less powerful Henry and towards the end of the exchange attempts to manipulate him one final time by pretending that what he uttered to that point was a joke.

Differently from Bousfield and McIntyre who focus on a specific scene, Kozinski offers a macro analysis of film discourse in a chapter that blends methodologies from the disciplines of psychology and discourse analysis. Her study is a corpus-based approach to the representation of emotionality in the James Bond series; this is based on the Dictionary of Affect in Language (DAL), a model devised by psychologists for quantifying emotion that measures the main emotional characteristics of words in natural language. The study therefore deals with the issue of how audiences share the emotions of the characters they see on screen both during the cinematic experience and afterwards. This investigation of emotional language is based on 22 official James Bond films, in which several lead actors play the famous spy, and on Austin Powers parodies. Kozinski shows how the two sets of films are differently characterised by the expression of emotionality thus posing the questions whether the success of the series may be explained with the consistency in its emotional language.

Maier's chapter *Structure and function in the generic staging of film trailers: A multimodal analysis* provides a useful closing to the first part of the volume with a study of the narrative structure of comedy film trailers, thus offering a reflection on the discourse "about" telecinematic discourse. Given that they belong to a mixed promotional genre where several semiotic modalities coexist, the trailers are examined from a multimodal perspective in conjunction with insights from film and genre studies. The multimodal analysis of the generic structure of 12 comedy trailers starts from a revisitation of Labov's narrative model with the purpose of showing how information is organised and presented and to what purpose. Like other chapters in the volume, Maier investigates the relationship between the viewers and the characters on screen and considers the additional layer of the non-diegetic voiceover, which addresses the audience directly by bringing them closer to the film fictional narrative, and the non-diegetic reality of the film makers.

The first chapter of Part II (Toolan's "*I don't know what they're saying half the time, but I'm hooked on the series*": *Incomprehensible dialogue and integrated multimodal characterisation in The Wire*) investigates televisual dialogue using the example of the much-praised television programme *The Wire*. Toolan's chapter combines both quantitative (corpus) and qualitative analysis along with audience research to show how the multimodal integration of verbal, visual and aural modalities enables viewers to enjoy the at first glance "incomprehensible" dialogue in the series. In this way, the study relates to the theme of the (in)authenticity of fictional discourse discussed in Part I, with Toolan arguing that TV dialogue is artfully constructed, unnaturally coherent and a "selective simulation of natural realistic speech". Toolan's chapter is also a good segue into the following three chapters on characterisation, as it includes a detailed discussion of how characters are construed multimodally.

The following three chapters deal in different ways with the construal of televisual characters. In her contribution, *The stability of the televisual character: A corpus stylistic case study*, Bednarek makes use of a 1 million word corpus of dialogue from the "dramedy" *Gilmore Girls* to explore the "stability" of televisual characters in a corpus linguistic case study analysing key words and clusters. She discusses both "diachronic" and "intersubjective" stability in analysing the extent to which a character's (Lorelai) language changes across seasons and depending on whom she is talking to. She finds that Lorelai's dialogue remains relatively stable diachronically with some intersubjective changes, particularly with respect to interpersonal meanings. While Bednarek questions the extent to which a corpus linguistic approach can offer a full picture of character development, she points out that these findings confirm assumptions made in Media/TV studies and that the advantage of stable characters from the point of view of the television industry is that they "allow high degrees of viewer interaction, engagement, and potential

for bonding and identification". She concludes that nevertheless particular televisual characters "may well undertake a 'journey' within particular series or serials". In other words, while "stable" characters may turn out to be the norm in televisual narratives, exceptions to the norm can occur and thus televisual characters in a particular series can show aspects of development or change over time.

Mandalá's chapter (*Star Trek: Voyager's Seven of Nine: A Case Study of Language and Character in a Televisual Text*) demonstrates this latter aspect (character development) by drawing on politeness theory. In a case study of the *Star Trek: Voyager* character Seven of Nine she investigates the character's transformation from alien to more human, demonstrating this through an analysis of negative politeness, positive politeness and repairs of interpersonal rifts. Changes in Seven of Nine's language over time clearly indicate that the character changes. Examples are her increased use of mitigated or softened speech acts, her growing understanding of the important role of small talk and humour, and her increasingly complex face work in general. This and other linguistic behaviour demonstrates her growing recognition of the importance of human relationships and also shows her changing social skills, allowing her to be seen as more human.

The next chapter by Bubel on *Relationship impression formation: How viewers know people on the screen are friends* also concerns characterisation, focusing in particular on relations between characters and how these offer models of female friendship/bonding to viewers. Using conversation analysis and discussing extracts from *Sex and the City*, Bubel demonstrates how friendship relations between the four main characters Miranda, Carrie, Charlotte and Samantha are negotiated through micro-level interactions. In particular, she argues that there are "continually shifting patterns of structural alignment / disalignment as well as interpersonal affiliation / disaffiliation" rather than simple patterns of alignment. This complexity allows for criticism and disagreement and construes different kinds of friendships between the four characters, with Miranda and Carrie as "core" and Charlotte and Samantha as more "marginal" members of the friendship group in *Sex and the City* (as reflected in shifting alignment patterns).

The four women in *Sex and the City* are also the focus of the next chapter (*Genre, performance and Sex and the City*) by Paltridge, Thomas and Liu, although these authors discuss the series from a Cultural Studies perspective exploring "performative, rather than linguistic, aspects of the show". This chapter thus allows readers to compare and contrast different approaches to the analysis of telecinematic discourse and offers a brief glimpse into research outside linguistics that considers data from the same TV series from a different perspective. Drawing on Judith Butler's notion of performativity (e.g. Butler 2004) the authors comment on a number of extracts from *Sex and the City* to show how gendered identities are performed through the genre of casual conversation. They

note in particular how the female characters “comply with, but also resist, particular social and cultural gendered roles for women.” This chapter also emphasises the importance of considering cultural values and norms in discussing televisual products.

Finally, the last chapter in this volume by Brock (*Bumcivilian: Systemic aspects of humorous communication in comedies*) is devoted to the study of humour in TV comedies. Brock draws on the notion of instantiation and the incongruity theory of humour to explore the creation of humour at various levels of language in terms of linguistic deviance or incongruity. He discusses extracts from various kinds and types of comedies ranging from *Black-Adder* to *Extras* to *The Mighty Boosh* and considers incongruity at the levels of phonetics/phonology, morphology/lexicon, syntax, semantics, linguistic varieties and text/discourse. Drawing on the conceptualisation of telecinematic discourse as involving two planes or levels of communication, Brock notes that some apparently non-systemic, i.e. incongruent or deviant instances of language, indicate alternative language systems and that viewers enjoy this creation of alternative worlds. Brock also discusses to some extent the interaction of the two levels of communication, e.g. in terms of their mutual influence on each other.

As can be seen, each chapter contributes to a discussion of the main features of two specific types of discourse representation. In so doing, this volume proposes a multifaceted insight into the *diegetic* – as it revolves around narrative – as opposed to *mimetic* – as referring to other non-narrative and non-fictional genres – discourses of two fictional media (film and television) by offering a reflection on several topics that are common to both. Some of the insights that these chapters offer us about telecinematic discourse are summarised below.

Firstly, it is clear that each product (film or TV series) is unique – for instance, character development is different in *Gilmore Girls* compared to *Star Trek: Voyager*, and the dialogue/narrative and characterisation in a programme such as *The Wire* or *Sex and the City* is quite specific. In a similar way, Joe Rose’s obsessive neurosis in *Enduring Love* is expressed by a language that in being deviant is close to that of serial killers, but both are very different from the popular polished language of other film types and genres (e.g. realistic Italian comedy). However, the uniqueness of telecinematic products does not rule out the presence of many commonalities between them. These include the scripted nature of telecinematic discourse in general vs. real life discourse as a topic that is relevant to both media. For instance, despite its uniqueness, dialogue in *The Wire* is similar to other television (and film) discourse in that it features constructed, simulated natural speech and is “unnaturally coherent and focussed” (Toolan this volume). What aspects of telecinematic discourse are particular/unique to a specific cultural product (film or TV programme), what aspects are shared among certain film/TV genres, and

what aspects are characteristic of telecinematic discourse as a whole needs to be teased out in linguistic research.

Secondly, linguistic deviance in telecinematic discourse has important functions and many different effects ranging from the construal of somehow “anti-social”, “abnormal” or “not quite human” characters (but of different types, e.g. nerds in *The Big Bang Theory*, alien Borg in *Seven of Nine*, the asocial killer Chiburgh in *No Country for Old Men* or the mafioso Tommy in *Goodfellas*), to the creation of humour in general. It is an area for future research to consider in more detail which factors lead to viewers’ perception of characters as threateningly abnormal or funnily abnormal or somehow non-human or just as temporarily rude, etc. With respect to Example (2) above from *The Big Bang Theory* it was suggested that intentionality of character behaviour might be a factor. However, there may be other factors involved, for instance multimodal aspects (e.g. non-verbal character behaviour but also the use of shot conventions). Culpeper (e.g. 2001) suggests that we draw on schemas to infer characters and that norm-breaking can be considered in this context. For instance, Sheldon’s general behaviour in Example (2) above arguably instantiates a stereotypical “nerd” schema.

Several chapters demonstrate the importance of language in telecinematic discourse and the richness of the findings that a linguistic analysis of dialogue can offer. Others also point to the significance of other modes/modalities and to the insights a multimodal analysis can contribute. An example can be the investigation of emotions in film, as in the case of post-traumatic anxiety (Montoro this volume) and fear (Bousfield and McIntyre this volume). This is also clearly relevant in television discourse (see e.g. Bednarek 2010, 2011), even though it has not been directly addressed in the contributions to this volume.

More indirectly, through applying different analytical frameworks and methodologies, each chapter gives readers an insight into the various perspectives that these frameworks can offer. We believe that telecinematic discourse is a complex phenomenon that can only benefit from being explored from such differing vantage points.

To conclude, the chapters in this volume offer a first reflection on discourse representation in cinema and television, but there are still many issues left unexplored. Given the complexity of telecinematic discourse in general and the richness of cinematic and television texts in particular this is only to be expected. We hope that readers will find this volume a useful contribution to the fields of pragmatics, corpus linguistics, stylistics and narratology and that it will give new impetus to investigating new kinds of multimodal data, in particular concerning the multimodal discourses of the big and small screen. The key issue explored in this volume which is clearly worthy of further study is the nature of fictional dialogue and the representation of real-life discourse it offers: how real, if at all

real, is telecinematic talk and how real or unreal are the speakers who produce that speech on the big and small screen? And how does this impact on the audiences of telecinematic texts? On that note, it may be appropriate to end with two well known lines from Peter Weir's (1998) *The Truman Show* – based on the story of a man who unknowingly spends all his life from birth in the studio of a reality TV show:

(3) Truman: *Was anything real?*

Christof: *You were real. That's what made you so good to watch ...*

(4) Christof: *We've become bored with watching actors give us phony emotions. We are tired of pyrotechnics and special effects. While the world he inhabits is, in some respects, counterfeit, there's nothing fake about Truman himself. No scripts, no cue cards. It isn't always Shakespeare, but it's genuine. It's a life.*

PART I

Cinematic discourse

CHAPTER 2

Discourse analysis of film dialogues

Italian comedy between linguistic realism and pragmatic non-realism*

Fabio Rossi

This chapter attempts to establish a relationship between the pragmatic non-realism of Italian cinema and dubbing (Rossi 2006a, b). Up to a few years ago, dubbing was systematically employed both in Italian and non Italian films. Building on a corpus of realistic films from 1947 to 1960, i.e. *L'onorevole Angelina*, *Totò a colori*, *Poveri, ma belli*, *La dolce Vita*, the Italian film discourse is discussed from specific standpoints. The film sample was selected to include realistic features, such as an extensive use of dialects and foreign languages and a lower class register. The pragmatic differences between film and real life language are illustrated via a corpus of spoken Italian (Cresti 2000) and fragments of a documentary (*Anna*, 1975). In contrast to what happens in spontaneous speech, the analysed films exhibit a low frequency of dialogue “drawbacks”, such as hanging or shifting topics, self-repair, redundancy, overlapping and interrupted utterances. In a similar vein to written language, film dialogues present a high degree of coherence, cohesion and conciseness, bearing traces of the (written) screenplay. It follows that film dialogues appear more akin to literary language than to orality and spontaneous speech, and belong to the pole of “distance” (from real dialogues) rather than that of “closeness” (Koch 1997, 2001).

1. Introduction

As many scholars have already pointed out (Barthes 1997; Berliner 1999; Kozloff 2000; Mittmann 2006; Rossi 2002a, 2006b, 2007), film dialogues cannot be considered a faithful reproduction of real life exchanges (for a different point of view,

* Maria Grazia Sindoni really improved the style of this chapter. I am grateful for her careful reading. I would also like to express my gratitude to Anthony Harris, Roberta Piazza and Stefania Taviano for their language review.

cf. Alvarez-Pereyre this volume). Even when dealing with realistic films in terms of the context they represent, language varieties and acting style, some aspects always reveal the scripted form of film language. This chapter argues that such features of scripted dialogues are mainly related to pragmatic issues and media constraints. Despite some exceptions, as in the case of films shot as documents of reality, featuring a high degree of acting improvisation (cf. Berliner 1999 on Casavetes, or the Italian video-documentary *Anna*, 1975, discussed below), both art and commercial cinema have confirmed such an anti-realist tendency, particularly in the past decades.

To illustrate this claim, four Italian comedies from 1947 to 1960 will be discussed and compared with a corpus of spontaneous language and, when required, with other films. Especially in the first part of this chapter, data collected in a six film corpus (1948–1957: Rossi 1999) will be also used and discussed, to provide evidence for the film analysis. Even though film critics have often emphasised the tendency in cinema to faithfully reproduce the social and linguistic context of the time (especially in the comic genre, more attuned to realism than melodrama: Napolitano 1986),¹ the selected time span (1947–1960) shows that such an illusion of perfect realism is in fact significantly transgressed on the discourse level.

The Italian film genre system is less stable and codified than the American one (on the limits of the concept of genre cf. Altman 1999); as a consequence, the films analysed in this chapter are not easily classifiable:

1. *L'onorevole Angelina* (*Angelina: Member of Parliament*), 1947, by Luigi Zampa, with Anna Magnani, is a realistic film combining comedy and drama. It features the story of a group of women, in post-war Rome, who founded a political party against social iniquity;
2. *Totò a colori* (*Toto in Color*), 1952, with the famous comedian Antonio de Curtis aka Totò (Rossi 2002b, 2003a; Caldiron 2003), by Steno and Mario Monicelli, is a typical *pastiche* of theatre pieces, combining popular farce, comedy, realism and expressionism;
3. *Poveri, ma belli* (*Poor, But Handsome*), 1957, by Dino Risi, a semi-realistic film halfway between the so called “Neorealismo rosa” (a hybrid genre: Neorealism, melodrama and comedy) and “Italian style Comedy” (Rossi 2006b: 407–488);

1. I am aware that the concept of “realism” applied to art forms such as films is always relative and related to historical, social and geographical filters (Bordwell and Thompson 2001; see also Alvarez-Pereyre this volume). For a discussion on the abridged realism of Neorealist films and the higher degree of realism in comic genres, see Rossi (2006b).

4. *La dolce vita* (*The Sweet Life*), 1960, by Federico Fellini (cf. Rossi 2010), an example of “dramedy”, i.e. Italian comedy, melodrama and art film.

To show that the non-realist features encountered in the above mentioned films cannot be merely explained as tokens of the Italian film agenda of that time, this chapter includes the analysis of *Manuale d'amore* (*Manual of Love*), 2005, by Giovanni Veronesi, a film of different episodes combining melodrama and comedy.

In this chapter, the comparison between film and spoken real life language is based on Emanuela Cresti's corpus of dialogues (Cresti 2000), consisting of about 7 hours (that is to say almost the same amount of time of the four films here analysed) of 49 real dialogues, for a total amount of about 60,000 words (59,845), recorded between 1973 and 1997. When required, references will be made to a larger corpus (about 300,000 words): C-ORAL-ROM (Cresti and Moneglia 2005).

The basic unit of discourse is the utterance, that “is the linguistic counterpart of a *speech act* [...] [that] is identified [...] through a heuristic method that is based on the perception of prosodic cues” (Moneglia 2005:2). An utterance can be formed by only one tone unit or more. “Tone units (or prosodic envelopes) are separated by prosodic breaks”, that can have terminal or non-terminal intonation (F_0). There is a “relation between tone units and *information units*” (Moneglia 2005: 15; see also Cresti 2000: I 41–75).

Every transcription of an oral production (also in audiovisual texts) should indicate text division into utterances and tone units. In this chapter, films have been transcribed according to Cresti's and Moneglia's slightly modified CHAT code (Cresti 2000: II 7–9 and Moneglia 2005: 25–27; Rossi 1999: 21–31), as in Table 1.²

The obvious limitations of this research concern the use of a recent corpus for the analysis of films produced in 1947–1960. However, we need to consider the

Table 1. Transcription symbols

//	indicates the end of a statement
/	indicates the end of a non-conclusive tone unit
< >	includes sections of overlapped text
...	indicates a hesitation or an interrupted utterance
()	includes transcriber's comments

2. For the differences between “shooting script”, as the written text of the screenplay, and “film final dialogue”, as the oral text actually uttered by the actors in the film, see Kozloff (2000: 67). Final film transcription provides the unique access to the spoken film language. In this chapter, relevant portions of transcribed text are underlined. For Cresti's examples, the original transcription code is used. Dialogue translations are mine and follow common written conventions instead of the symbols here described.

absence of corpora collected before 2000 and two additional points: (i) an analysis of realism in film dialogues required data drawn from (first) realist films, such as those selected for this paper (the first realist strand in the Italian cinema is between 1947 and 1960); (ii) secondly, although an evolution of the Italian language is undeniable, such a change is of limited proportions in comparison to other national languages; therefore the language of the films under discussion is not too far from the current standard Italian language.

2. Film dialogue and dubbing

All Italian films between 1938 and 1989 were dubbed in Italian, including those already shot in Italian; needless to say, dubbing foreign films had started much earlier (at least in 1932). Such a practice was adopted for productive, historical and aesthetic reasons. To begin with, shooting outdoors was common by the 1940s in Italian Neorealist films, as opposed to Hollywood films that were entirely shot indoors. Until some decades ago, live recording was very difficult because of background noise. Dubbing outdoor scenes was almost always necessary to make them audible to the audience. Secondly, in Neorealist cinema, several Italian actors were not professional and were cast because of their cinematic presence. Directors tended to dub the scenes in which they acted live. Lastly, dubbing fulfilled the expectations of the Italian audience which soon became used (mainly because of the large number of American films imported and dubbed in Italy) to the vocal aesthetics of a beautiful voice, with a theatrical intonation and conforming to the Standard Italian pronunciation, devoid of regional or dialectal influences.

Post-synchronisation, although also present in other countries (for instance, it was normal in France until 1960: Marie and Vanoye 1983: 54), was pervasive in Italy until 1989, and still common especially in some TV movies. Conventions and rules (including the exaggerated politeness and fluency) of Italian “dubbese” (from foreign language to Italian and from Italian to Italian) have influenced the language of national cinema itself, even in non-dubbed films (on dubbing cf. Pavesi 2005; Mittmann 2006; Rossi 2006a, 2006b: 265–344; Massara 2007; Freddi and Pavesi 2009).

Dubbing is a further element of detachment from reality in the “screen-to-face discourse framework” (Bubel 2006, 2008). Bubel draws on Goffman (1981) and Kozloff (2000) who identified the spectator with the overhearer. The level of film communication is at least double: on the one hand, there is artificial communication between the actors; on the other hand, there is communication between the film authors and the audience, as Figure 1 shows (for a similar model cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 46; Romero-Fresco 2009: 43–50 and Brock this volume).

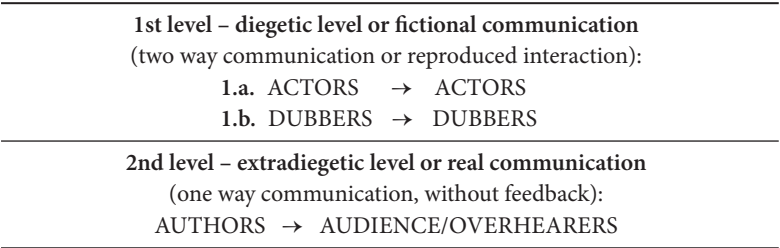


Figure 1. Levels of film communication

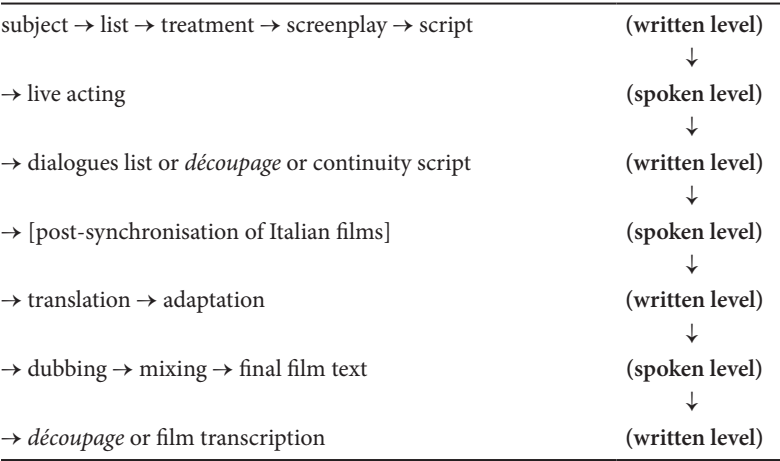


Figure 2. Steps from written to spoken levels in film process

The above mentioned two levels of enunciation are also typical of theatre communication (Trifone 2000: 10–12), with an important difference: in theatre, the audience tends to accept the fact that the author speaks through the actors, whereas a higher degree of realism is expected in screen conversations (Marie and Vanoye 1983: 56–57).

Dubbing is an additional layer creating a distance between diegetic and extradiegetic levels (see line 1.b. in Figure 1). Everything in films creates a distance between the time when the dialogues were written and the time of their oral reproduction, as shown in Figure 2.

As Gregory observed, the scripted nature of film dialogues turns them into paradoxical and hybrid oral-written texts, “written to be spoken as if not written” (Gregory 1967: 188; see also Lavinio 1986: 16; Nencioni 1976; for the main differences between spoken and written language, cf. Halliday 1989). The scripted, mediated and multi-authored nature of film language and the use of dubbing

contribute to produce cinematic discourse as a compromise between two different poles: not only written and spoken, but also private and public, formal and informal, mimetic and fictional, reflecting the authors' intentions and audience's expectations (Rossi 2003b).

Another element contributing to the pragmatic and textual non-realism of film dialogues is the function of *disclosure*, also described by Bubel (2008:66): "If relevant information is considered closed to overhearers [i.e. the cinematic audience], it must be included in the utterance, so that correct conjectures can be made, even though this information might be redundant for the ratified participants [i.e. the actors]". This is why film dialogues are at times full of paraphrasing (i.e. glosses, described below), and therefore redundant, as opposed to spontaneous conversation (Mizzau 1998:87–94; Chiari 2002). Furthermore, the written and time-constrained nature of film dialogues determines their conciseness and lack of elements of verbosity and vagueness typical of spontaneous face-to-face dialogues. It will be shown how the films in this research exhibit low frequency of dialogue "drawbacks", such as hanging or shifting topics, self-repairs, repetitions, interrupted utterances and words, overlapping and false starts. Cases of topic and turn negotiation are also rare and always fictional (Kozloff 2000: 74). On the contrary, utterances often present a high degree of coherence, cohesion and conciseness, which bear traces of the (written) screenplay.

The contrast between excessive redundancy, on the level of information, and excessive conciseness, on the level of form, in the film dialogues when compared to spontaneous conversation is also attested in many screenwriting manuals, which request to be "never [...] repetitious", as well as "never [...] obscure" (Kozloff 2000: 28; cf. Piazza this volume for infringement of conversational rules in thriller films).

Most of these features are typical of all kinds of film language, not just dubbed and not just Italian, and also fictional TV (Bednarek 2010 and this volume). However, dubbing further complicates the picture.

3. Film analysis

The sections that follow explore some typical phenomena of film language, analysed in the above mentioned film corpus and in other films I shall be discussing later. These phenomena include fluency, discourse markers, verbal tenses, allocution, repetitions, glosses, use of the telephone and overlapping.

In this chapter, a qualitative method has been adopted, in order to show the identity of film language. However, a quantitative method has also been employed, when required. Phenomena such as allocution, discourse markers, verbal tenses

and moods, glosses, etc. and their co-occurrence have been analysed to shed light on their specific context of use. Not all of them (e.g. repetition strategies, glosses and telephone use) can be accounted for from a purely quantitative analysis.

3.1 Fluency

Anna Magnani, playing the main role in *L'onorevole Angelina*, is, as usual, excellent in performing double roles (in this film, for instance, she is a plebeian but also a very clever, albeit extemporary, politician): she shows dignity when she plays working class characters and genuine simplicity when she interprets characters from a higher social position. For this reason her language is hybrid, it has traces of the Roman dialect as well as literary structures. However, this is not what is striking in her final speech, when she announces that she wants to leave politics; it is the almost total lack of hesitation, fragmentation, repetition, self-repairs, fillers and pragmatic markers that distances her speech from spontaneous conversation:

- (1) *Vedete/ mentre stavo dentro/ me so' venute in mente tante idee// Il governo dovrebbe fa' fa'/ alla gente/ la galera obbligatoria// Come 'l servizio militare// Hm/ eh già! Un po' perché/ tutti quanti/ 'n'annetto almeno ce lo meritiamo// E un po' perché lì dentro/ te se rischiarano le idee// Così io/ lì/ me so' accorta che so' solamente una come voi// Una ch'ha passato la vita a mette assieme il pranzo co la cena/ a combatte co le finestre senza vetri/ co l'umidità/ co tutti i guai che sapete meglio de me// E anche se/ come dite voi/ è merito mio/ se cj abbiamo 'na casa/ che manco ce sognavamo d'avercela/ ho capito che questo non è el sistema/ pe fà l'onorevole// Per quello che me riguarda/ poi/ me so accorta che/ per fà la politica/ la famiglia m'andava per aria// E io ai regazzini miei ce tengo! Io me li vojo tirà su come me pare! E poi/ anche senza diventà onorevole/ cj ho da fa tanta de quea politica/ a casa! Fra 'n marito/ i guai/ i regazzini... Certe discussioni/ che a la cammera manco se le sognano! Io so sicura/ che non rimpiangerete se lascio il posto a qualcuno più bravo/ più preparato de me// A qualcuno che ve possa veramente/ aiutà! A qualcuno che co più calma/ co più sistema/ non se lascerà fregà// Perciò... perciò ve dico addio! Ve saluto! Però/ quando me chiamerete pe baccajà/ sarò sempre pronta/ perché/ questa è l'unica cosa/ che me viè naturale// Così er partito nostro non se sciojerà/ no! Ma manco ala cammera/ andrà// Resterà fra noi/ baccajeremo in famiglia// Così saremo tutti quanti onorevoli// Ma onorevoli sul serio/ però!*

'You see, while I was in prison, lots of things came to my mind. The government should force people to go to prison. Like the military service. Hm, well, for one thing because we all deserve at least one year of prison. And also

because when locked inside one clears up one's mind. So, there I realised that I am just like you, a woman who has spent her life struggling to put lunch and dinner on the table, fighting against broken windows, against damp, against all the troubles that you know better than I do. And even though, as you say, it is thanks to me if we have a home, that we could have never dreamt of, I have understood that this is not the way to be a politician. As far as I am concerned, then, I realised that to be a politician I had to neglect my family. My children are dear to me! I want to raise them as I please! And then, even without becoming a politician, I have a lot of politics to do at home! My husband, all kinds of troubles, the boys... Fights that politicians can't even imagine! I am sure that you are not going to miss me if I leave my place to someone who is clever than me, with more experience. Someone who can really help you! Someone who is more patient, who has better skills who is not fooled. Well... well I say goodbye! Goodbye! But when you call me to fight, I will always be there, because this is the only natural thing to me. This way our party will not be dissolved, no! It won't even go to the Parliament. It will stay with us, we will argue in the family. This way we will all be politicians. True politicians, though!

(L'onorevole Angelina)

Angelina's speech has been compared to the language of politicians, barristers and university professors as the next closest group, in Cresti's corpus. Such a speech displays features that are much closer to a spoken conversation than Angelina's "improvised" sermon:

- (2) *chi è/ Ercole? Ercole/ è uno dei due fratelli/ che erano stati mandati/ appunto/ in più o meno/ esilio [!]/ a/ Napoli/ anche Borso/ è eh/ muore/ senza figli// eh/ Borso/ tra l' altro/ non si sposa mai [!]/ a differenza di/ eh/ Lionello/ ma/ par che/ il legittimo bagaglio/ gli sarebbe mancato [!]/ ma/ Borso/ muore/ senza figli/ e prepara [!]/ saviamente/ prima di morire/ la successione// richiama cioè/ i due/ fratellastri/ i due unici figli legittimi/ di Nicolò Terzo/ dal loro esilio napoletano/ e/ affida/ a/ Ercole/ il governo di Ferrara/ e/ a/ Sigismondo/ il/ governo/ di/ Reggio [!]/ preparando/ ecco/ in maniera/ indolore/ la/ eh/ successione//*

'Who is Ercole? Ercole is one of two brothers who were sent into exile, exactly, more or less, to Naples. Borso is also, h'm, died childless. H'm, Borso, moreover, never married, unlike, h'm, Lionel, but, it seems that he would miss the legitimate luggage, but Borso died childless and prepared wisely, before his death, his inheritance. He calls his two siblings, indeed, the only two Nicholas the Third's legitimate sons, from their Neapolitan exile, and entrusts Hercules the government of Ferrara, and Sigmund the government of Reggio, preparing, well, painless, his, h'm, inheritance.'

(Cresti 2000: II 91, the speaker is a university professor giving a lecture)

- (3) *prima di tutto/ anche per/ mettere a punto/ mi pare/ doverosamente/ quelle che io/ credo siano state/ alcune imprecisioni/ di trascrizione/ perché ho letto i verbali dei giorni passati/ ho trovato/ delle parole ... allora/ lo domandiamo a Brusca/ se/ quello che intendeva dire/ certi nomi che ha pronunciato/ son come/ io li ho visti tras [//] li ho letti trascritti/ o se sono/ un attimo diversi// allora/ mhm/ ho letto/ mhm/ la frase/ le parole/ per meglio dire/ repertorio del maxi/ “può darsi volesse dire/ riapertura del maxi”?*

‘First of all, even to perfect, it seems to me, dutifully, the ones that I think have been some inaccuracies in transcription, because I read the minutes of the past few days, I found some words... then let’s ask Brusca, if, what he meant, the names he pronounced, if they are such as I’ve seen them trans... I read them transcribed, or if they are a little different. H’m, then, I read, h’m the sentence, the words, rather, “repertoire of the big”, maybe he meant “reopening of the big trial” [i.e. the big trial against the mafia]?’

(Cresti 2000: II 373–374, the speaker is a barrister during a trial)

Even if the speakers of these two extracts are well educated and both situations are very formal and ritualised, there are visible repetitions (*muore/ senza figli ... muore/ senza figli* ‘died childless ... died childless’), self repairs (*per meglio dire* ‘rather’), hesitations determined by difficulties in information packaging, fragmented words and phrases (*tras*, interrupted and corrected in *trascritti* ‘transcribed’), broken tone units (with or without typical markers of hesitations, like *eh, ecco* ‘well’, *mhm*) and some hanging topics (*anche Borso/ è eh/ muore/ senza figli* ‘Borso is also, h’m, died childless’; the entire first utterance in the barrister’s speech is another example). On the contrary, Angelina’s speech is immaculately fluent.

A comparison between Angelina’s speech and extracts from Cresti (2000) reveals that Magnani’s tone units are usually much longer than spontaneous tone units, even if film utterances are usually shorter. It cannot be overstated that real language (including monologues) is much more fragmented than film language. See the following example, from *L’onorevole Angelina*:

- (4) *Quelli vengono pe impicciasse// Te schiaffano una bella fotografia alta un metro sui giornali/ co sotto scritto/ ecco la sora Angelina// Guardatela quant’è bella/ quant’è disgraziata// I fiji so’ pieni de croste e de pidocchi/ so’ sette in famija/ dormono in du stanze/ non cj hanno na lira/ e a merenda se magnano le unghie dei piedi// Sai che piacerone che te fanno! Te senti proprio sollevata/ dopo! Almeno servisse a qualche cosa! Tanto semo condannati a miseria a vita/ ’n c’è niente da fà/ qua!*

‘They came here to meddle. They slap a beautiful one meter large photograph of you in the newspaper, that below reads “here is Mrs. Angelina. Look at how beautiful, how unfortunate she is. Her children are full of scabs and lice, there

are seven of them in the family, sleeping in two rooms, they have no money at all and eat toenails as a snack". You know, they really do you a favour! You feel just relieved, afterwards! If only this was useful! But we are condemned to a life of misery, there's nothing to do, here!"

This long turn contains up to 20 syllables per tone unit (*Te schiaffano una bella fotografia alta un metro sui giornali* 'They slap a beautiful one meter large photograph of you in the newspaper'), whereas the average length of a real (unscripted) speech unit is 4–5 syllables (until a maximum length of 11 syllables), with 2–3 words per unit (Cresti 2000: I 149 and 233; Moneglia 2005: 59–61). In other words, tone units may be significantly longer in scripted dialogues than in real conversations. In Italian films the average length of an utterance is 4 words (Rossi 1999: 297–302), compared to 6 words for real speech utterances (Cresti 2000: I 149 and 233; Moneglia 2005: 59–61). Long utterances in real language are usually full of broken tone units (e.g. consisting of hesitations, self-repairs, etc.), often consisting of a single word (see, for instance, the first utterance of the barrister's example cited above, Example (2), with units such as *se* 'if' or *mi pare* 'it seems to me'; many single brief word tone units in the professor's speech: *eh, ma, e, a*, etc., Example (3)). Such considerations account for the higher speed of film speech when compared with spontaneous speech (Rossi 1999: 297–313; Cresti 2000: I 231–232). An example may be detected in the long and fast running utterance by Angelina, delivered without any uncertainty or hesitation: *I fiji... unghie dei piedi*// 'her children... as a snack', in Example (4).

With regard to turns, their average length in films is 8,35 words per turn, 1,92 utterances per turn (Rossi 1999: 297–318), compared to 13,67 words per turn and 2,12 utterances per turn in Cresti (2000: I 233). Even though film units (utterances and turns) are usually shorter than spoken units (apart from tone units, which are longer in film language) we can also find very long turns in films to let the virtuoso talents of the stars stand out (Kozloff 2000: 60–70), as we have seen for Magnani/Angelina's final speech.

As far as interruption is concerned, in Rossi (1999: 300, 374–376) the number of interrupted utterances amounts to 2,4% of the total number of utterances, whilst in Cresti's corpus it amounts to 17% (Cresti 2000: I 229–237; percentage increases in Moneglia 2005: 62). Cresti's and Rossi's counting of interruptions is slightly different, because Cresti includes each case of hesitation, retracting, self-repair, etc. Considering the frequency of the transcription sign "... " (indicating every kind of hesitation/interruption) in Rossi's corpus (Rossi 1999: 298), the percentage hardly amounts to 5% (of the total amount of utterances), thus a quarter less than in Cresti's and Moneglia's corpora.

3.2 Discourse markers and verbal tenses

The most formal features in Magnani's final speech (Example (1)) are the connective *per quello che me riguarda* ('as far as I am concerned': *me* being a Roman dialect form for *mi* 'literally: to me') and the anaphoric and well balanced discourse markers *un po' perché... e un po' perché* ('for one thing because... and also because'). They are both closer to the written than to the spoken pole, because they indicate a perfect control on the packaging of information and the organisation of discourse in different and ordered parts.

The canonical use of the future without a modal function (there are 9 occurrences, in the Italian dialogue of Example (1)) contributes to bringing the same passage closer to written rather than spoken language (Bazzanella 1994: 108–121). The number of verbal tenses and moods in film language, in comparison to spoken and written language (Rossi 1999: 348–371), shows that film language is closer to the written than to the spoken pole.

Other discourse markers, in *L'onorevole Angelina*, seem to pertain more to the written than to the spoken language. Discourse markers are more interesting than other parts of speech, because words like *vedi* 'you see', *capisci* 'you know', *per quello che mi riguarda* 'as far as I am concerned', etc. are more likely to be associated with drama, dialogues in novels and film scripts, than with real life exchanges, as a symbol of reproduced spoken language, or pseudo-spontaneous speech (for drama cf. Trifone 2000: 115–119; for discourse markers in spontaneous speech cf. Bazzanella 1994: 145–174). More than the number of single lexical items or syntactic features, the analysis of specific discourse markers shed light on the difference between film and spontaneous dialogues.

Take as an illustration of this, the first utterance of Magnani/Angelina's speech:

- (5) *Vedete/ mentre stavo dentro/ me so' venute in mente tante idee//*

'You see, while I was in prison, lots of things came to my mind.'

The inchoative marker *vedi*, *vedete*, *vede*, (singular and plural, or courtesy 3rd person instead of the 2nd, all translated as 'you see'), apparently so typical of the spoken language, is actually more frequent in novels and in drama (many occurrences in Pirandello and in Goldoni: see LIZ and Pattara 1995: 300–301) than in real face-to-face conversations: in Cresti's corpus, most occurrences are actually in formal and ritualised conversations, such as doctor/patient, employee/customer, and the like:

- (6) *no/ vede/ ora/ quello che io voglio/ eh/ chiarire/ perché non so/ chi in Comune vi abbia detto/ che già c'era lo sgravio//*

'No, you see, now, what I want, h'm, to make clear, because I don't know who told you, in public offices, there was already a tax benefit.'

(Cresti 2000: II 325, the speaker is an employee in the tax office)

The marker *vedi* is used to call the listener's attention to a specific topic and usually stops the dialogic flood, introducing an argumentative section in one's speech; it indicates a good planning strategy on the part of the speaker, therefore it does not suit plebeian and impetuous Angelina. Some other samples from the film complete the picture:

- (7) *Vedete/ io preferisco annacce cosi/ co la robba mia//*

'You see, I'd rather go there only with my own stuff' (L'onorevole Angelina)

says Angelina, refusing her friends' offer to wear their jewels.

- (8) *Vede/ signora/ ho l'impressione che non gli interessi molto/ di andarci// Eh/ mi scusi/ commendatore/ ma vede/ quel ragazzo/ è proprio di famiglia//*

'You see, madam, I feel he doesn't care to go there [i.e. skyng]. Well, I'm sorry, sir, but, you see, that boy is absolutely like one of the family [i.e. he is as obstinate as you are]'

(L'onorevole Angelina)

says the accountant to Filippo's wealthy parents, who are worried because their son is in love with poor Angelina's daughter.

Other instances of *vedi* in the corpus of the films analysed in this chapter play a similar function:

- (9) *Ma vede/ cara signora/ la musica è questione di gusti//*

'But you see, dear madam, music is a question of taste.' (Poveri, ma belli)

- (10) *Perché vede/ loro son rimaste vicine alla natura*

'Because you see, they have remained close to nature.' (La dolce vita)

Another film discourse marker is *capisci/capite/capisce?* ('do you understand?'). It may be more associated with drama and literature than with spontaneous language and is used at the end of an utterance under the guise of a false question which performs the role of a statement instead:

- (11) *Ma lei non lo sa/ maresciallo/ i danni che m'hanno fatto// M'hanno rotto il bancone/ m'hanno sfasciato tutti i vetri/ m'hanno portato via due quintali de pasta bianca/ capisce?*

'But you do not know, sergeant, the damages they've caused. They've broken my counter, smashed all my windows, taken two kilos of white pasta, do you understand?'
(*L'onorevole Angelina*)

While in spoken Italian *capisci* is quite rare (only 3 examples in Cresti 2000), it is very frequent in literature and drama (cf. many occurrences in LIZ, for instance in Fogazzaro and Pirandello).

Similarly *del resto*, 'moreover, actually, after all, etc.', a discourse marker used to move in between sections, is frequent in written texts, but less so in spoken language, while other markers (*e* 'and', *poi* 'then', *infatti* 'indeed', *tanto* 'moreover, actually') are preferred instead:

- (12) *Del resto io sono il padre// Vi posso dare un consiglio/ no?*
'Actually I am the father. I can give you some advice, can't I?'
(*Poveri, ma belli*)

Del resto features 5 times in *La dolce vita*:

- (13) *È il mio mestiere// Del resto/ un po' di pubblicità...*
'It's my job. Actually, a little publicity...'
- (14) *L'unica autentica donna/ è l'orientale// Del resto// Dov'era Eva?*
'The only real woman is an Eastern woman. After all, where was Eve from?'

twice in *Totò a colori*:

- (15) *Del resto/ in questa casa/ sei solo tu che mi capisci//*
'Anyway, you're the only one who understands me, in this house'
- (16) *Del resto/ guarda/ io son stufa/ rotta morta/ a pezzi/ non ne posso più!*
'Anyway, listen, I'm sick and tired, I'm shattered, I can't take it any more!'

once in *Poveri, ma belli* and none in *L'onorevole Angelina*. In Cresti (2000), significantly, the only occurrence of *del resto* appears on a TV show where formal language is used.

Many discourse markers, which are very frequent in spontaneous conversations (*allora* 'then', *appunto* 'exactly, just', *cioè* 'that is, i.e.', *dunque* 'so', *ecco* 'here's, well', *infatti* 'indeed', *insomma* 'in short', *intanto* 'meanwhile', *quindi* 'so, hence'; also the olophrastic forms *sì* 'yes' and *no* in all their functions), are quite rare, or absent, in film language but have a high frequency in Cresti's (2000), as Table 2 shows.

Table 2. Frequency of discourse markers

Title (time)	<i>allora</i>		<i>appunto</i>	<i>cioè</i>	<i>dunque</i>	<i>ecco</i>	<i>infatti</i>	<i>insomma</i>	<i>intanto</i>	<i>quindi</i>	<i>sì</i>	<i>no</i>
Cresti 2000 (7 h, 12')	215	73	226	15	169	31	102	19	150	700	572	
<i>L'onorevole Angelina</i> (1 h, 28')	20	1	0	1	28	0	2	5	0	70	118	
<i>Totò a colori</i> (1 h, 32')	38	3	0	10	49	1	8	7	0	279	255	
<i>Poveri, ma belli</i> (1 h, 38')	35	1	2	1	12	0	2	2	0	72	88	
<i>La dolce vita</i> (2 h, 46')	40	0	0	2	62	0	4	6	2	163	190	
All films (7 h, 24')	133	5	2	14	151	1	16	20	2	584	651	

As already mentioned, the total time of the four films is almost the same as in Cresti's corpus. The absence of some discourse markers (*appunto*, *cioè*, *infatti*, *quindi*) in some films seems the most marked feature. Much more than single features is the sum of all the markers (i.e. their co-occurrence) that distinguishes our corpus from Cresti's. *Totò a colori* is the film most consistent with Cresti's data. It is not surprising, since it is the only undubbed film, also featuring a high component of improvisation (Rossi 2002b, 2003a).

Regarding the frequency of *sì* and *no*, the context of use of these forms is more relevant to our discussion than the total number of occurrences. In the films of our corpus, *sì* and *no* are used almost only to state and deny something, whilst in the spoken language they are often used as fillers, markers of hesitation or as a way of introducing a turn.

A comparison with a videotaped documentary (outside the corpus), *Anna*, 1975, by Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli, provides further evidence as regards the differences between film and spontaneous speech. *Anna* was shot within a purely realistic agenda to show the real life of a young drug-addicted pregnant woman and other marginal people:

- (17) Sarchielli: *No/ ma io ti volevo domandare a te/ con la storia te tu hai lavorato per... per l'unione/ insomma/ un'organizzazione politica/ un po' capisci/ se c'era una possibilità/ per questa ragazza/ come diceva anche Ivano/ <di...>*

Woman: *<Cioè>/ di un'assistenza//*

Sarchielli: *Sì//*

Sarchielli: *'No, but, I've just wanted to ask you, just you, as you worked for... for the union, I mean, for a political organisation, a little... you know, if there was the possibility, for this girl, as Ivano was saying too, to...'*

Woman: 'That's it, to get some help'
 Sarchielli: 'Yes'.

The totally realistic nature of this speech (unlike other speech in our corpus) is proven by the use of *no* and *ma* 'but' as markers of the beginning of a turn, the pronominal pleonasm *ti... a te* ('you, to you'), hesitation, planning and self repair phenomena (*per... per* 'for... for', *insomma* 'I mean', *capisci* 'you know'), interruption (*di...* 'to...'), syntactic incoherence, the popular use of generic words and locutions (*con la storia...* 'as'), let alone the use of dialects such as the repetition of the subject *te tu* ('you... you'), which is typical of Tuscan dialects.

A foray into the other corpus analysed in this chapter, the C-ORAL-ROM (Cresti and Moneglia 2005), is intended to expand the analysis. The following are the first 20 adverbs in the spoken corpus: *non* 'not', *sì* 'yes', *no*, *ci* 'we, us, here', *poi* 'then, later', *come* 'how, as', *più* 'more, anymore', *cioè* 'that's, i.e.', *qui* 'here', *ecco* 'here's, well', *insomma* 'in short', *lì* 'there', *così* 'so', *bene* 'well', *sempre* 'always', *allora* 'then', *proprio* 'even exactly, actually', *quindi* 'so', *po'* 'a little', *quando* 'when'. The following are the first 20 forms in the written corpus cited by Cresti, Panunzi and Scarano (2005: 106): *non*, *come*, *ci*, *su* 'on, above', *dopo* 'later', *prima* 'before', *ancora* 'yet, still', *quando* 'when', *poi* 'later', *sempre* 'always', *ieri* 'yesterday', *dove* 'where', *molto* 'much, very', *oggi* 'today', *fino* 'until', *invece* 'instead', *mai* 'never', *oltre* 'beside', *quasi* 'almost', *forse* 'maybe'. As can be observed from this brief comparison, the number of markers (i.e. *sì*, *no*, *cioè*, *ecco*, *insomma*, *allora*, *quindi*) in the spoken corpus is strikingly scarce in cinema, whereas they are completely absent in the first 20 positions of the written corpus. They are often used as phrasal adverbs (i.e. sentence modifiers instead of verbal modifiers: Ferrari 2005: 36–37).

In conclusion, an analysis of discourse markers in the corpora shows their closeness to the written pole, even though a complete lexical frequency list of the four films could provide a sound basis for such an argument.

3.3 Allocution

The frequent use of proper nouns in an allocutive function is another peculiarity of the films under discussion. In spontaneous dialogues, if interlocutors are familiar with each other and belong to the same class, they usually do not call each other by name. In Cresti (2000), proper nouns (first names or surnames) as allocutive forms are found almost only if someone directly addresses someone else, during introductions and greetings or in very ritualised conversations, such as public mediated dialogues (trials, TV shows, public debates), school lessons, service encounters. Film dialogues, on the contrary, use proper nouns everywhere, to give audience elements to understand the situation, to remind them that a fictional conversation

is taking place here and now, who the protagonists are and to ensure the affective liaison between overhearers and fictional characters, in a sort of “anchorage of identities” (Kozloff 2000: 34; see also Mizzau 1998: 91; Berliner 1999: 3; Pavese 1996, 2005: 53–54).

L'onorevole Angelina, where allocutive names are very frequent, is one of many examples of this feature. Many characters use the allocutive form *Angeli* (Roman dialect for *Angelina*), that occurs 72 times, that is to say, on average, almost once per minute! Angelina calls her husband by name (*Pasquà*, for Pasquale) 12 times.

In conclusion, proper nouns used in an allocutive function seem to be a marker of a dialogic situation, typical of film language: “movie dialogue obeys its own customs. We accept it according to the terms of the cinema, not of reality” (Berliner 1999: 3).

3.4 Repetition and other discourse and rhetorical strategies

The least realistic elements in *La dolce vita* are conciseness, cohesion, coherence and the perfect latching of dialogue turns. In the following scene, from the first part of the film, a journalist, Marcello (Mastroianni), and a wealthy woman, Maddalena (Anouk Aimée) tease each other in a half ironic and half melancholic dialogue:

- (18) Marcello: *Sa qual è il suo guaio? Di avere troppi soldi//*
 Maddalena: *E il tuo di non averne abbastanza// Hm// Intanto eccoci qua/ tutti e due//*
 Marcello: *Questo non è mica un guaio// Siamo rimasti così in pochi/ ad essere scontenti/ di noi stessi [...]*
 Marcello: *Senta/ lei non dovrebbe preoccuparsi// Con tutti i quattrini che ha/ anche se casca/ casca in piedi//*
 Maddalena: *Credi proprio?*
 Marcello: *Ah sì!*
 Maddalena: *Io non riesco neanche a reggermi/ in piedi!*
 Marcello: ‘You know what your problem is? You’ve got too much money’
 Maddalena: ‘And your problem is that you don’t have enough. H’m.
 Meanwhile, here we are, the two of us’
 Marcello: ‘That’s not a problem. We’re among the few people left to be unhappy about themselves’
 [...]
 Marcello: ‘Look, you shouldn’t worry. You’re so rich, if you fall, you land on your feet’
 Maddalena: ‘You really think so?’

Marcello: 'Oh, yes'

Maddalena: 'I can't even stand on my feet'. (La dolce vita)

In terms of repetition, anaphora such as *have too much/not enough money, problem and feet* are not simply a case of dialogic repetition, typical of spontaneous conversation (Bazzanella 1994: 207–222), but a refined rhetorical strategy, revealing the written nature of this dialogue. Dialogic repetition in spontaneous conversation is aimed at compensating planning difficulties, memory gaps and is one of the most fundamental strategies to pinpoint cohesion. On the contrary, repetitions in *La dolce vita* are carefully planned. It is as if the protagonists always had their answers ready or a pun handy, without hesitation, with the sole purpose of involving the audience. Repetition reflecting planning difficulties are very rare in films, where repetition for “aesthetic motivations” is more frequent (Kozloff 2000: 84); these follow the example of theatre dialogue, in which the anaphoric reference to the interlocutor's words is a kind of discourse deixis, a form of connection to the interlocutor's speech (Spitzer 2007: 250; on repetition, see also Tannen 2007: 48–101).

The most realistic scenes in *La dolce vita* are those where multilingualism is present, for example the scene with the actress Sylvia Rank, interpreted by Anita Ekberg, who speaks English while some journalists ask her questions in Italian, English and French. Although more overlapping and negotiation would have been expected, the scene appears quite realistic. Paradoxically, Fellini, a master of fiction and metacinema, is more realistic in those scenes where fiction is emphasised. The scene where the beautiful and ignorant Hollywood star Sylvia, unable to reply to the journalists' questions, asks assistant Edna to help her remember the scripted answers, is both funny and linguistically reliable (the dialogue in Example (19) is in English in the original):

(19) Journalist: *Miss Rank/ which was the happiest day/ of your life?*

Sylvia: *What was the answer for that question/ Edna?*

Edna: *It was a night/ dear//*

Sylvia: *It was a night/ dear//* (La dolce vita)

This short dialogue is sufficient to cast a metacinematic light on the entire film. It is as if Fellini wanted to warn his audience that in films vivacity of lines and linguistic realism are always and only a result of fiction and possible because dialogues are scripted and dubbed (on Fellini's enthusiasm for dubbing cf. Rossi 2010). Moreover, it is the strategy of the audience's involvement as overhearers (Bubel 2006, 2008; Kozloff 2000), through the use of paraphrase (glosses) and other techniques of disclosure, that leads us to perceive the dialogue planning in all films through a metacinematic perspective.

Another scene of *La dolce vita*, which is not unlike the previous one, but even more sarcastic in its metalanguage, features the lack of authenticity and insincere faith behind certain religious attitudes:

- (20) Director: *Dunque/ dopo il segnale/ vi ricordate/ che cosa dovete fare?*
 Woman: *Chiedo 'a grazia//*
 Director: *Brava/ brava// Pronti/ allora? Via!*
 Women: *Madonnina santa! Facetece la grazia! La grazia/ sì!*
 Director: *Più forte! Tu/ laggiù/ perché non chiedi la grazia? Tutte/ dovete gridare!*
 Women: *Madonna santa/ facce la grazia! Facce la grazia!*
 Director: *Più imploranti! Più imploranti!*
 Women: *Faceteje la grazia!*
 Director: *Bene// Allora/ adesso sono le sette// Ci vedremo fra/ un paio d'ore// Per il momento/ andate a mangiare qualcosa// Tante grazie// Arrivederci a stasera/ eh? Buon appetito a tutti!*
 Director: 'Right, remember what you are going to do, after the signal?'
 Woman: 'I beg for mercy'
 Director: 'Good. Good. Ready? Go'
 Women: 'Holy Mary! Have mercy on us! Mercy! Please!'
 Director: 'Speak up! Hey you, there, why aren't you praying? You are all meant to shout!'
 Women: 'Holy Mary! Have mercy on us! Have mercy on us!'
 Director: 'More convincingly! More convincingly!'
 Women: 'Have mercy on her!'
 Director: 'Ok. Now, it's 7:00. We'll meet in a couple of hours. Now grab a bite to eat. Thank you. See you this evening, eh? Bon appetit.'

(*La dolce vita*)

The scene shows a director filming a reportage on the alleged miracle of two children who have seen the Madonna. To make everything more realistic, the director uses some women (actresses) talking to the Virgin: for Fellini, the only way to reproduce (even linguistically) reality is to recreate it.

3.5 Glosses

Nothing should remain totally incomprehensible in cinema. Especially in films for a large audience, dialogue lines need to be explicit, without requiring too much effort into interpretation. The setting of frames in films is usually much easier compared to written texts (Rossi 2006b:24–27), thanks to the function of disclosure, already discussed in §2. Glosses are meant to clarify any obscure

elements or lines to overhearers, for instance in the case of multilanguage scenes, as in the following turn by Marcello to Sylvia in *La dolce vita*:

- (21) *Ah/ Sylvia/ be careful/ because... è pieno di buche/ lì/ eh? Sylvia/ let's go/ now//
È meglio andar via/ adesso//*
'Ah, Sylvia, be careful because... it's full of holes, there, ok? Sylvia, let's go, now.
We'd better go now.'

Whereas the code-switching in the first part of the line is perfectly realistic, because Marcello does not speak English very well, his repetition of the second part of the line in Italian, after having uttered it in English, is unexpected. The utterance *È meglio andar via/ adesso* 'we'd better go now' cannot be addressed to Sylvia, who does not speak Italian. So, clearly he is translating for the audience.

Glosses are not only used in multilanguage contexts. Outside the four films studied, in *Paparazzi*, 1998, by Neri Parenti, an end of the century Italian comedy, a sort of patchwork of disconnected gags, some photo-reporters ("paparazzi") try to photograph very famous television personalities. One paparazzo realises he is in front of a famous showman and a showgirl. Talking aloud to himself, he exclaims:

- (22) *Ah! Claudio Lippi e Luana Ravegnini! La coppia più bella della televisione! Che bomba! Che bomba!*
'Ah! Claudio Lippi and Luana Ravegnini! The golden couple of television!
What a scoop! What a scoop!'

Only Lippi and Ravegnini are present, so nobody can be the addressee of the line, except the audience, who is helped by the paparazzo's words to identify the actors.

In *Poveri, ma belli* a bus driver, Alvaro, and a good-for-nothing, Salvatore, share the same bed: the former is a lodger working the night shift and sleeping during the day, the latter is the owner who sleeps in Alvaro's bed at night. At the beginning of the film, Alvaro goes home in the morning to find Salvatore still sleeping. When Salvatore wakes up, he cries: "Ma a te/ il turno di giorno/ non te lo danno mai?" 'Why don't you ever get the day shift?' Alvaro then answers:

- (23) *E metti che me lo danno? Che letto v'affittate? No/ dico/ se mi danno il turno di giorno/ voi perdete l'inquilino// O ti dovessi credere/ che io la notte/ vengo a dormire abbracciato con te?!*
'And, what if I get it? What bed would you rent? I mean, if they gave me the day shift, you'd lose your lodger. Or else do you think I'd be willing to share a bed with you?!'

The first part of the line is sufficiently informative for Alvaro and Salvatore; therefore the rest is useful only for the audience, still unaware of the relationship between the two men till that moment.

In conclusion, glosses have the function of knocking down the fourth wall and speaking directly to the overhearers beyond fiction (more examples of glosses are in Rossi 2006b: 151, 155, 171 *et passim*; see also Caffi 1990: 23–39).

Images can also function as glosses providing extra information to the audience. The last part of *I soliti ignoti* (*Big Deal on Madonna Street*), 1958, by Mario Monicelli, another film outside the corpus, is devoted to the attempted robbery organised by a group of inexperienced thieves. One of the funniest scenes of the film is the demolition of the wall that is supposed to lead to the bank. However, when the wall collapses, the thieves (and the audience) suddenly realise they are in the kitchen of the flat, not in the bank! In order to explain the situation and provoke laughs, the director uses a clever trick. A few seconds before the wrong wall collapses, one of the thieves (Peppe, played by Vittorio Gassman) asks another (Capannelle, played by Carlo Pisacane) for a glass of water; Capannelle goes to the kitchen. The shot of Capannelle in the kitchen prevents the audience from a delayed understanding, and is a sort of anticipated non verbal gloss.

3.6 The telephone

The telephone is another element that discriminates between real and cinematic conversations. On the one hand, the telephone adds a touch of realism to the reproduction of daily life. On the other hand, telephone scenes seem to respond to two different requirements beyond their mimetic use, that are intrinsic to the language of cinema as a medium: (i) they fill knowledge gaps in the audience; (ii) they emphasise metalinguistic aspects of films, by introducing another element of interference and a filter between reality and fiction. In both cases (especially the latter), the telephone seems to be used as a symbol rather than as a token of realism.³

One of the gags in *Totò a colori* exemplifies the use of the telephone to provide information for the audience. In the scene, the musical producer Tiscordi mistakenly takes the composer Totò for a nurse. The joke is possible thanks to some ambiguous words, such as *opera* ('piece of music', but also, in general, 'every kind of manual activity'), *introduzione* ('musical *ouverture*', but also 'insertion', e.g. of a syringe), *mano* ('hand', touch of a composer, or touch of a nurse using a syringe).

3. Rossi (2010) discusses the latter case of telephone conversations as a metalinguistic tool in *La dolce vita*.

It is also possible thanks to a telephone scene, before Totò arrives, revealing that Tiscordi is waiting for a nurse. Terrified of injections, Tiscordi is reassured by a friend doctor's telephone call that works as a narrative *deus ex machina*, clarifying the situation to the audience:

- (24) Doctor: *Pronto// Sei tu/ Tiscordi? È andata bene l'iniezione?*
 Tiscordi: *Ah/ sei tu// Ah/ sì sì// Ah/ ho un bel dottore/ sì! Un bell'amico/ sei! Come le altre cinque/ mi hai mandato! Una macellaia! Una macellaia! Cosa/ vuoi mandarmi la settima infermiera? Eh/ no! No/ basta/ basta! No/ non ne voglio più sapere! Eh! Come? Questa volta è un infermiere? Un maschio? Ah/ uno specialista// Ah sì? Ah/ specialista// Va bene/ e mandami... e mandami questo specialista/ allora//*
 Doctor: 'Hello? Is that you, Tiscordi? Did the injection go well?'
 Tiscordi: 'Ah, it's you! Ah, yes, yes! Ah, great doctor you are! And such a good friend! The one you sent me was like the previous five! A butcher! A butcher! What? Do you want to send me a seventh nurse? Eh no! No, enough is enough! No, no more of this! Eh? What? Will it be a man, this time? A male nurse? Ah, an expert. Really? Ah, an expert. Ok, so send me... send me this expert, then.' (Totò a colori)

In *I soliti ignoti*, the thief played by Vittorio Gassman cheated on his accomplices: he told them he was unable to get the keys of the flat they wanted to break into. The truth was that he had given the keys back to the concierge, to do a favour to his beloved housemaid working in the same flat. While Gassman and his companions are hiding in the flat, during the robbery, the concierge makes a phone call to the flat owner, telling her that a tall boy had given the keys back. The men in the group are now aware of Gassman's betrayal. In this case, the audience already knew all about the keys, but Gassman's gang did not suspect anything until then. For plot clarity, a quarrel between Gassman and his partners becomes necessary to make it clear to the audience how ridiculous the group was. Once more, the telephone helped the director to clarify the plot without introducing new characters (we do not see or hear the owner of the flat speaking to the concierge). Moreover, the excellent outcome of this scene is emphasised by the fact that the characters are at one with the audience, because they overhear the phone call as the spectators do.

Cinema telephone callers often raise their voice asking the interlocutor to repeat what s/he said, as if they did not understand well. More than a realistic reproduction of telephone interference, such a device seems to provide further clarification for the audience. Hence it is once more a kind of gloss.

In the example below, from *L'onorevole Angelina*, the police officer repeats the interlocutor's words and makes clear to the viewers that Angelina and the other women have occupied the houses:

- (25) Policemen: (*speaking on the phone*) *Che dite? (to the sergeant) Telefonano da Pietralata/ maresciallo//*
 Sergeant: (*speaking on the phone*) *Sì/ pronto// Come? Stanno occupando cosa? Provvedo subito//*
 Policemen: 'What are you saying? They are calling from Pietralata, sergeant'
 Sergeant: 'Yes, hello? What? Are they occupying what? I'll take care of it instantly.'

In the following scene, from *Poveri ma belli*, Giovanna's questions, fictionally due to a telephone interference, allow the repetition of important information for the audience: Salvatore is "staging" a fake suicide, to convince Giovanna to love him:

- (26) Giovanna: (*waking up and answering the phone*) *Pronto// Chi è? Come? Non ho capito// Chi?!*
 Boy: 'Sto Salvatore è stato qua// Ha detto che andava... andava... (*Salvatore gesticulates*) *a buttarsi al fiume// S'ammazzava// S'ammazzava! E che ne so/ perché// M'ha detto d'avvertì soltanto voi/ che forse v'avrebbe fatto piacere//*
 Giovanna: *Ma/ dove ha detto che andava?*
 Boy: *Aspettate/ me pare che ha detto... ha detto... (in a soft voice to Salvatore) Dove te butti?*
 Salvatore: (*in a soft voice*) *A Ponte Nuovo//*
 Boy: (*on the phone*) *A Ponte Nuovo// (to Salvatore) Ha riattaccato//*
 Giovanna: 'Hello? Who's speaking? What? I didn't understand. Who is it?'
 Boy: 'This Salvatore has been here. He said he was going... going... to throw himself to the river. He was going to commit suicide. He was going to commit suicide! I don't know why. He told me to warn only you, since maybe you'd be pleased'
 Giovanna: 'Where did he say he was going?'
 Boy: 'Wait, I think he said... he said... Where in the river are you going to throw yourself?'
 Salvatore: 'From New Bridge'
 Boy: 'New Bridge. She hung up.'

3.7 Avoided overlapping

It has been discussed how the lack of overlapping is one of the most non-realistic features of cinema conversations (Kozloff 2000: 76). When characters speak they seldom overlap each other, because mostly everything in cinema must remain “within the dominant code of intelligibility” (Kozloff 2000: 121; see also Berliner 1999: 4 and Toolan this volume). Crowd scenes are rare in dubbed films, and when there are outdoor sequences (e.g. *Poveri, ma belli*), much more buzzing and noise would be expected.

A visual and acoustic convention in some crowd situations serves the purpose to show different characters speaking, one after another, without overlapping. As in *L'onorevole Angelina*, when Anna Magnani joins her friends restrained by policemen. Everyone shouts insults at her feeling she is responsible for the police arrival. Instead of the confused noise that would occur in a real situation, in this fictional scene Angelina and the audience hear one insult after another, while the camera gradually moves to the faces of those who utter them. Angelina passes through the crowd neatly arranged in rows and the camera moves back on her. It is a sort of visual and acoustic linearisation of a mass scene, made possible by the dubbing. It is only at the end of these clear lines that we hear overlapped shouts and buzzing. This is a good example of how often the pragmatics of discourse gives way to the conventions of the medium.

4. A contemporary example

Although the non-realistic characteristics discussed in this chapter so far are typical of Italian cinema of the 1900s, they can also be found in contemporary films such as *Manuale d'amore*, 2005, by Giovanni Veronesi. In the following scene, Ornella is furious with her husband because she has just found out he has betrayed her:

(27) Ornella: *Ti ho visto! Ti ho visto/ che la baciavi// Le davi le slinguazzate nell'orecchio// Mi fai schifo/ con quella faccia da finto buono// Da imbecille/ da mollusco// Con che coraggio/ hai potuto tradirmi/ con quella faccia da protozoo!*

Gabriele: *Che dici! Ma aspetta/ fammi parlar... Ti... Ti spiego un attimo// Guarda che non è come pensi// Proprio...*

Ornella: *Non mentire/ Gabriele! Non mentire!*

Gabriele: *Ti prego/ aspetta/ posso spiegarti// Fammi parlare// Perdonami/ ma certe cose possono succedere!*

Ornella: *Amore... Amore! Amore un cazzo! Amore un cazzo! Amore un cazzo! Amore un cazzo! Adesso sai cosa faccio? Non solo non ti perdono/ ma io me ne vado da qui! Faccio le valige! E vado fuori dai piedi! Perché se questa casa fosse stata mia/ io ti avrei preso per quel gecko che hai in mezzo alle gambe/ e ti avrei già buttato giù dalla tromba delle scale// Invece/ siccome questa stamberga/ di merda/ te l'ha comprata/ quella strega di tua madre/ coi soldi della pensione/ di quel decerebrato di tuo padre/ hai capito/ allora io da te non voglio niente! Niente/ hai capito? Non voglio niente/ di tuo! Hai capito? Lurido porco! Minchione!*

Ornella: 'I saw you! I saw you kissing her. You were licking her ear. You are disgusting, with that innocent face of yours! Your idiotic fish face! How dare you betray me, with that amoeba face?'

Gabriele: 'What are you talking about! Wait a minute, let me speak... I'll explain in a moment. Listen, it's not like you think. Not at all...'

Ornella: 'Don't lie, Gabriele! Don't lie'

Gabriele: 'Please, wait, I can explain everything! Let me talk! Forgive me! These things can happen!'

Ornella: 'Love... Love! Love my ass! Love my ass! Love my ass! Love my ass! Do you know what I am going to do, now? Not only will I not forgive you, I'm leaving! I'll pack my suitcases and get out of your way! Because if this house were mine, I'd have grabbed you by that lizard you've got between your legs and I'd have thrown you down the stairs. Instead, as this shit hovel has been bought by your mother, the witch, with your brainless father's pension money, you know, then I don't want anything from you! Nothing, you understand? I don't want any of your stuff! Understand? Filthy pig! Idiot!'

The artificial lexicon (*mollusco* 'fish face', *protozoo* 'amoeba', *stamberga* 'hovel', *decerebrato* 'brainless'), the elegant syntactic structures (*non solo... ma...* 'not only... but'; *se questa casa fosse stata mia/ io ti avrei preso...* 'if this house were mine, I'd have grabbed you'), the lack of hesitation and interruption, the perfect fluency, the length of utterances and tone units, the use of allocution with a proper noun (*Gabriele*) draw Ornella's speech closer to theatre or literary language than to real life conversations. All the more so in the case of a conflict.

Despite the fact that *Manuale d'amore* is almost non-dubbed, it features typical rules and conventions of dubbese, which may be considered pervasive of all Italian cinema.

5. Conclusions

Cinema discourse hinges on a subtle balance between realism and fiction, media constraints and an illusion of spontaneity. In this chapter, we have tried to show how the most pragmatically implausible aspects of film dialogues result from the scripted nature of film language and dubbing. Italian audiences, accustomed to the practice of dubbing, are likely to expect a way of speaking that significantly diverges from real life conversations. Overlapping dialogue lines, hesitation and other features of spontaneous speech would produce a feeling of bad editing or of poor quality acting in the average Italian audience. Film dialogue conventions seem to be, at least from this point of view, very similar to theatre dialogue conventions. Paradoxically, but not unlike what happens in the cinematic iconic code (cf. the practice of editing and the shot-reverse shot system, so unnatural and nevertheless preferred by the average audience rather than uncut scenes), in the cinematic verbal code an excess of realism is considered alienating and, *vice versa*, artificial dialogues are perceived as more believable and acceptable.

Although used to improve intelligibility, dubbing often results in masking reality. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes it is only thanks to dubbed crowd scenes that we have the impression of being fully immersed in a choral scene, as in the market scene of Piazza Vittorio or Porta Portese in Rome, in De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette*, 1948, an entirely dubbed film. Paradoxically, those scenes appear more realistic (i.e. full of buzzing and noise) than those non-dubbed in the above mentioned *Anna* (so long and with so little small talk).

Even the mimesis of reality is a subtle game of conventions and negotiations between the authors and the audience. The reproduction of reality is always a compromise: authors pretend to offer the audience a piece of reality, with an "illusion of spontaneity", which the audience feigns to believe, thanks to the "suspension of disbelief", necessary "to collaborate in this fiction" (Kozloff 2000: 16, 47). Yet "film dialogue [...] is never realistic; it is always designed 'for us'" (Kozloff 2000: 121). As a consequence, film dialogues seem to be closer to literacy or theatre than to orality and spontaneous speech and belong to the pole of "distance" (that is to say emotional and referential detachment and other elements listed below) rather than to the pole of "closeness", as in Table 3.

It is impossible to establish a clear-cut opposition between written and spoken language. It is much more useful to proceed according to a prototype model (Bazzanella 1998, 2002a), whereby features are not exclusive (i.e. yes/no), but preferential (i.e. more or less characterising), in a given linguistic variety, and much more than single occurrences or absence of features, it is important to consider "co-occurrence pattern among features" (Biber 1988: 13).

Table 3. Immediacy/distance diagram in place of spoken/written diagram (based on Koch 1997, 2001)

Immediacy		Distance
1.	Private communication	Public communication
2.	Familiarity of the participants	Unfamiliarity of the participants
3.	Emotional involvement	Emotional detachment
4.	Reference to the EGO-HIC-NUNC	Elements far from EGO-HIC-NUNC
5.	Referential immediacy	Referential distance
6.	Face-to-face interaction	Distance in space and time
7.	Maximum cooperation of the participants	Minimum cooperation of the participants
8.	Dialogue	Monologue
9.	Spontaneity	Planning
10.	Free topic	Fixed topic

Table 4. Film language in comparison to written and spoken language

Linguistic features	Written	Spoken	Film
Uniformity of linguistic units (turns and utterances)	–	–	+
Interaction	–	+	±
Length of linguistic units (turns and utterances)	+	–	–
Overlapping and other dialogic drawbacks	–	+	–
Planning, coherence and cohesion	+	–	+
Morpho-syntactic complexity	+	–	±
Lexical density	+	–	±
Use of dialects	–	+	±
Genre polarisation	+	+	–

In conclusion, linguistic realism, or a lack of it, is a pragmatic issue rather than a question of grammar or style, in films as well as in other forms of reproduced speech. Table 4, that derives data from Rossi (1999, 2006b) and in the film studied in this chapter, summarises a number of trends identifying film speech as an autonomous linguistic register.

CHAPTER 3

Using film as linguistic specimen

Theoretical and practical issues

Michael Alvarez-Pereyre

This chapter assesses the limitations and the gains of using fiction films as specimens for the study of language. It argues that the conditions of possibility of film use are dependent on the focus and the framework of linguistic investigations. The dialogues' lack of spontaneity is regularly cited as an argument against studying film speech, but since many non-spontaneous corpora are indeed used in linguistics, this issue requires a detailed discussion. The actual differences between film speech and naturally-occurring interactions are grounded here theoretically. Arguments drawn from social studies and art theory explain how the filters of representation and artistic creation can pose essential quantitative and qualitative problems to studies interested in spontaneous speech (some of these arguments also explain why foreign language teachers have enthusiastically embraced the use of films and TV-series in the classroom). From these limitations, the chapter turns to the possible advantages of film corpora for studies tackling linguistic-pragmatic strategies in dialogue, as illustrated by qualitative and quantitative analyses. It concludes with recommendations based on the types of linguistic objects and approaches, indicating in which cases the use of films can pose essential problems, and in which cases it can prove a good crucible for qualitative studies, as well as an accessible workbench to elaborate quantitative hypotheses.

1. Introduction

Any instance of language can be viewed alternatively as *artifact* or as *specimen* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 3).¹ While the former point of view considers the

1. I wish to thank participants of IPRA 11, and particularly the editors of this book, as well as Pierre Cotte and Frank Alvarez-Pereyre, for useful comments and discussions. This research was partly run under Université Paris-Sorbonne grant n. 15955-2005 and benefited from the financial support of CELTA and ED V, whose help I gratefully acknowledge.

language instance as “an object in its own right”, the latter views it as an “instrument” to study the system of language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 3). As an *artifact*, the language instance can be assigned social, political, historical, artistic (etc.) value and importance. A certain value of the language instance seen as *specimen* may also be assessed, corresponding to its heuristic potential, i.e. its ability to lead us to linguistic (within which I include “pragmatic”, with no opposition of the terms) knowledge, as compared with other available specimens of language.

Movies (in this chapter I focus on artistic-commercial narrative films, and do not tackle films made specifically for research or educational purposes) are routinely analysed as *artifacts* resulting from an artistic and social activity. When studying dialogue, film criticism usually assesses its contribution to the unraveling of the plot, to the construction of atmosphere and characters’ psychology, etc. Social studies, on the other hand, tend to focus on the social constructs films reflect and propagate – for instance regarding “minority” group behaviour. The main question of this chapter is: can artistic-commercial films be used as linguistic *specimens* to draw conclusions, not on the work of art (or its components) or on the cultural representations it carries, but rather on language and its use? In other words, what is the heuristic value of films as far as linguistics is concerned?

Admittedly, linguistic research based on films is scarce (with the notable exception of audiovisual translation studies, see among others Orero 2004; Díaz Cintas and Anderman 2009). Yet, the question of a possible use of film corpora in linguistics remains important for at least three reasons. First, language-teaching methods rely increasingly on extracts from films and television series, which teachers and publishers celebrate as “authentic” material (e.g. Higuchi 1997; Rice 2007). The films, assuredly, are not fakes, and no one would deny that *Titanic* (or *Friends*) are “in English”. However, from a linguistic point of view, the question remains of what is authentic about telecinematic “dialogues”.² These are most typically written, learned, rehearsed, playacted in an unnatural environment (by fits-and-starts in front of a small army of technicians), cut-and-pasted during the editing process and often post-synchronised, i.e. re-recorded in a sound studio (see Rossi 2006b and this volume for a complete list of these “steps”, and Purcell 2007, especially Chapter 1 and Appendix A, on the technical aspects of dialogue

2. The word “dialogue” commonly refers both to real-world and to theatrical and telecinematic verbal exchanges. The polysemy of the term (the *Oxford English Dictionary* and dictionaries in various languages list both meanings in the same entry) conceals essential differences regarding the way flesh-and-blood speakers *use* language in life and while acting. Thus, from the point of view of telecinematic linguistics, it may be safer first to posit a (methodologically-inflicted) relationship of homonymy.

editing). Can we explain what makes language teachers so enthusiastic and linguists so reluctant when it comes to using film dialogues in their work?

Second, a number of linguistics (not just language) teachers *do* quote movie utterances in the classroom. The obvious practical advantage is that the students have often seen the films or can easily have access to them, and may therefore refer to specific situations in which the cues (usually) make sense. Is this habit of quoting movie utterances just an *ad hoc* practice, acceptable in a teaching environment for the sake of clarity, or could one consider using film dialogues more systematically and avowedly – and if so on which bases?

Third, ethical and practical issues render the recording of spontaneous interactions difficult, if at all possible. Could readily-available recorded material in the form of artistic-commercial films prove “good enough” substitutes – and for what type of linguistic research?

To answer these questions, this chapter first asks in what senses we may view films and film dialogues as artifacts and specimens of language (Section 2). It then focuses on the problems of using films for the study of language interactions (Section 3); a clear empirical description of the problems can be found in Rossi (this volume) and I will focus here on their theoretical sources. The chapter then turns to the advantages one may find in using films for research on language and its use (Section 4). The case is thus not made here for a universal use of films in linguistic research. I argue, rather, that the relative importance of the problems and advantages will greatly depend on the type of linguistic research one is conducting, i.e. on the framework adopted and on the object of inquiry.

2. Films as “artifacts” and “specimens”

Films are the product of complex, usually collective processes which involve financial, technical, artistic, social, political, interpersonal, ethical, and countless other types of considerations. Researchers interested in one aspect of cinema or another can view films alternatively as artifacts or specimens. Thus, film criticism and social and cultural studies routinely alternate points of view, analysing movies as artifacts worthy of a monographic study, or studying these artifacts as specimens of broader artistic and social phenomena (aesthetic trends, expression of social biases, etc.). Treating films as social and artistic artifacts is possible because social and artistic activities are not specified semiotically, i.e. the film as a whole can be said to constitute a social and an artistic product.

2.1 The status of films as linguistic artifacts

It is not obvious, however, whether it makes sense to speak of films as *linguistic* artifacts. Doing so amounts to abstracting the linguistic signs from the semiotically heterogeneous and interdependent (or “synthetic”, in the words of Lotman 1973: Chapter 13) construction that constitutes the film, and assuming we are still faced with a totality in its own right.³

Referring broadly to the use of *films* (and not “film dialogues”) as linguistic specimens, as I do here, is therefore, first and foremost, a loose way of saying that their *individual* language and language-related elements (dialogue segments, body language, etc.) will be considered from a linguistic point of view. In addition, the expression has the advantage of hinting that non-linguistic elements from the *cinematic apparatus* might prove useful to the linguistic inquiry (see Section 4).

2.2 The status of film dialogues as linguistic artifacts

Individual cues and dialogues found in films may be considered linguistic artifacts in at least three senses:

- a. *in the actual, historical sense that they are the product of the linguistic activity of script- and dialog-writers, directors, actors, editors, censors, etc.* (this group is sometimes globally termed the “author” of the dialogues, as in Samouillan 2004: Introduction). This is the point of view commonly adopted by social, cultural and historical studies of cinema, as well as film criticism and theory (when assessing the merits of a film, a cinematic trend, etc.).
- b. *in the fictional sense* (cf. Searle 1975) *that they are produced by the diegetic characters’ activity of speaking.* This is the face-value point of view commonly adopted by language-teaching methods, by linguistics teachers quoting cues as examples, and by spectators who exchange views about the film; and
- c. *in the fictional sense* (Searle 1975) *that they are produced by the narrative activity of the film’s implied telling-authority* (the equivalent of the “narrator” in literature).

3. The editing, which most typically breaks time and space continuity between dialogue sequences, draws a wedge between the “totality” of transcribed film dialogues and the “totality” of, say, a transcribed piece of academic discourse: both transcriptions sever the multimodal ties with the process of speaking, but the latter may be said to preserve a certain unity of time, space and action of enunciation which the former usually does not. The film’s semiotic texture constitutes a compact whole only as a *cinematographic* product expressed contiguously on the same medium – not by dint of *diegetic* properties of the interactions intercepted.

Individual cues may actually be considered linguistic artifacts in at least one additional sense (the usefulness of which will become clear in Section 4):

- d. *the “empathic” sense whereby the authorial body of scriptwriters, director(s), actors, etc., is making linguistic choices they feel relevant for the characters in the specific situations imagined.*

The next section focuses on the problems – essentially related to points (a), (b) and (c) listed above – film dialogues pose to linguistic inquiry.

3. The problems of “incorporating” film dialogue

3.1 Scope of the problem

Despite the skeptical tone above, there is at least one way in which film dialogues can be studied quite straightforwardly from a linguistic point of view. That is if one is investigating what can be called “filmspeak”, i.e. *the way people (are made to) speak in films*.

Filmspeak as a specific genre is perhaps best studied in comparison with what it looks like, i.e. “naturally-occurring” interactions (insofar as we are able to record them) in settings comparable to those found in the films.⁴ Research is still needed in this area, though accounts are found on Italian cinema (Rossi 1999, 2006b and this volume), on French cinema (Bernet 1995; Abecassis 2005; *Glottopol* 12; Chion 2008) and on a small number of television series (Quaglio 2008, 2009; Bednarek 2010 and this volume; Bubel 2006 and this volume). Other studies investigate film dialogues and film genres against the backdrop of pragmatic theories elaborated on everyday language (Piazza 2006a, b, 2008 and this volume).

Filmspeak is also the natural object of audiovisual translation studies (Orero 2004; Díaz Cintas and Anderman 2009; Armstrong and Federici 2006; etc.). Indeed, these do not investigate the translation from, say, “English” to “Italian”, but rather the translation from *English filmspeak* to either *Italian subtitle-speak* or to *Italian filmspeak* – or, more accurately, to *Italian dub-filmspeak*, which has a history and codes of its own, as shown by Rossi (2006b: Chapter 5). What must not be forgotten – though it often is, as underlined for instance by Gambier (2009: 18), and as illustrated by the high proportion of researchers who candidly accept filmspeak as close enough to “reality” to enable them to describe a particular dialect –

4. I use the term *genre* to refer to differences related to the media and their cultural purposes, *register* to refer to differences related to the settings and *dialect* to refer to differences related to the users (see for instance Eggins and Martin 1997).

is that the language of the source film is no more “real” than that of the target: English filmspeak is already, from a certain point of view, a *translation* of “the English out there”, in the sense that it is a *representation* of interactions.⁵

Here lies a crucial part of the problem if one wishes to use film dialogues as potential specimens of not just “filmspeak” but of “the language” spoken in a certain place at a certain point in time. The problem, it should be emphasised, is *not* that we are dealing with non-spontaneous language – a large part of what comes under the scrutiny of linguists is not spontaneous, without it being a problem. The study of academic discourse, for instance, includes a mass of written texts as well as lectures, which cannot be considered *spontaneous* in any strict sense (though there are probably *degrees* and *modes* of spontaneity, as pointed out for instance by Gregory and Carroll 1978: Chapter 4). The difficulty with films lies in the fact that their dialogues *present themselves* as spontaneous *and* yet, in most cases, *are not spontaneous* in any strict sense.⁶ There is therefore an essential *duality* in the fact that film dialogues generally look spontaneous, and yet are not.⁷ Again, this duality is only an obstacle to the study of *spontaneous language interactions* through films and TV series. But the study of filmspeak as a genre in its own right (see above, and this volume), or the analysis of the structural-functional system of language thanks to instances found in films (see Section 4), are not ruled out.

The “duality” of filmspeak is ultimately rooted in the processes of representation and fictional creation. The challenge it poses to the study of spontaneous interactions will become clear as we go back to studies tackling films as artifacts resulting from a social (Section 3.2) and artistic (Section 3.3) activity determined by the filmic medium and practices (Section 3.4).

The non-linguistic studies discussed in the rest of this section will enable us to predict and account for differences regarding *what is said* (words, lexico-grammatical structures, discourse markers, back-channels, repairs, etc.); *how*, *where*,

5. In another sense, it is a creation in its own right. There is also a part of actual interception in the cinematic process in general, and more specifically when post-synchronising. Any attempt to define *filmspeak* as the result of a transformation applied to a written script, to naturally-occurring interactions, or to any other type of pre-existing language object, greatly simplifies it.

6. The boundary between representation and action may become blurred in acting methods such as the “System” initiated by Stanislavsky (e.g. 1936) and developed in the USA by Lee Strasberg and the Actors Studio. Yet, because of the complex processes that lead to their eventual existence onscreen, film interactions cannot be taken as spontaneous *a priori*.

7. The expression “written to be spoken as if not written” (Gregory and Carroll 1978: 42ff.) aptly captures the “paradoxical” (Rossi 1999: 49) status of filmspeak, though it hides the fact that the production of telecinematic discourse is essentially incomparable with what we usually understand as the activity of “writing”. See N. 5.

when and *by whom it is said* (intonation, gesture, setting, age, gender, dialect, etc.); *why it is said* (beliefs, desires, intentions, causes, etc.); and *what effects it produces* (perlocutionary effects). I have heard many people over the years dismiss the dialogues of artistic-commercial films as likely candidates for linguistic analysis on the ground that they are not spontaneous (which indeed they are not); but few researchers have cared either (a) to *describe how* film dialogues differ from “spontaneous interactions” (but see some of the works quoted at the beginning of this section, and this volume), (b) to *explain why* they do so and in such ways, and (c) to determine the exact scope of the problem (i.e. to identify what poses a problem to linguistics and what does not). The last two points are the objects of this section and the next (Section 4).

3.2 Films as social artifacts

Social and cultural studies usually relate filmspeak to the actual conditions of its production, laying the emphasis on the way people and interactions are represented in film.

The idea that the representation of the world through any medium raises issues of faithfulness is neither new nor controversial. Convincing arguments regarding the deceitfulness of representation can be found from Plato’s eidetic revolution (*The Republic*, Book X) to the countercultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Althusser 1970). The contribution of social and cultural studies has been to show that the way characters (are made to) speak in films tends to reflect and propagate social constructs. This has been established especially as regards the behaviour of “minority” groups, with numerous studies on the representation, in American films, of women (e.g. DiBattista 2001; Rule 2001; Kord and Krimmer 2004), African-Americans (e.g. Bogle 2001 [1973]; Entman and Rojecki 2000: 199ff.), inhabitants of specific regions (e.g. Orso 1993) or foreigners (e.g. Vasey 1992, 1997). Though speech is only one cue contributing to the characterisation of a person or a group, the studies mentioned emphasise that it is one consistently used to define characters and their relationships.

This issue is complex, because sometimes the authorial body wishes to consciously criticise or discuss ideological modes of representativeness, as illustrated recently by *Crash* (directed by Paul Haggis, 2004) or *Borat* (directed by Larry Charles, 2006);⁸ or it may wish to create an image of, say, the way women *could* or

8. Sacha Baron Cohen famously said that he created the character of Borat not to criticise Kazakhstan but to criticise “people who can believe that the Kazakhstan that I describe can exist” (Strauss 2006: 2); the full title of the film is quite eloquent (*Borat: Cultural learnings of America for make benefit glorious nation of Kazakhstan*). In *Crash*, stereotypes are both represented and

should speak and behave, as illustrated by the emergence of the “fast-talking dame” in the US-American cinema of the 1930s and 1940s (DiBattista 2001; Rule 2001) and of various types of “action chicks” more recently (Inness 2004). Financial interests may also interfere, and films are routinely scrutinised from a “foreign” point of view (in terms of the nationality of villains, of the general portrayal of foreigners, etc.) to make sure they remain commercially viable when exported (Vasey 1992:623). In other words, in cinema, speech representation is a politico-social, economic and cultural stake, and whether through the reflection, the creation, or the correction of social constructs, films have a tendency to deal with representational *types*, not with people as they speak. This poses an inescapable problem to linguists who wish to study any dialects (including standard ones) through their filmic representation.

In fact, social constructs and expectations regarding speech are related not just to the people portrayed, but also to specific filmic parameters such as *genres* and *narrative practices*. For instance, filmmakers and critics alike acknowledge that the rhythm of dialogues tends to change greatly whether the film is a comedy (typically with a faster pace) or a drama (Allen and Björkman 1993:32–33; Prunes, Raine and Litch 2002:4–I.c “Rhythm”). Correlations between specific modes of speech-representation and film “clusters” (Nichols 2006) can even be found at the level of *micro-genres*, as illustrated by Bordwell’s (2006:169) remark that “overlapping and simultaneous dialogue” are “a convention of newspaper movies” (these are films centring around investigative reporters, such as Hawks’ *His Girl Friday* (1940), Howard’s *The Paper* (1994), etc.). Any research on the texture of speech (especially speed, turn-taking, overlapping, etc.) would therefore need to factorise such extralinguistic elements as filmic genre in order to come close to spontaneous interactions. Other *narrative practices* associated with genres, aesthetic schools or particular TV series may influence the way exchanges are represented. Thus, Quaglio (2009:35) noted that greeting-exchanges were over-represented in *Friends* when compared to a corpus of “natural conversation”.

We must actually look even beyond specific film clusters. Indeed, following Althusser (1970), cultural studies have argued that narrative cinema *per se* may have a particular way of structuring the world, with an emphasis on the individual subject as a driving force of history:

The dominant narrative cinema came to be seen as serving an ideological function that confirmed the individual as a subject. The nature of the star system, the system of continuity editing, and narrative realism worked to make stories of

discussed, the latter for instance when an (African-American) director asks his African-American actor to stop drifting towards Standard English when acting.

individual characters and their fate appear to simply tell themselves as a natural expression of an obvious fact: individuals are the key creators of social structure and historical change. (Nichols 2006)

The emphasis films give to individuals, their actions and their words as driving the course of events may affect the representation of interactions, because a fair amount of teleology is brought in the process. In “real life”, for instance, we often don’t know where we are headed conversationally, so exchanges may drag on, die out and restart whereas they typically do not in films (compare the verbal battles you may have witnessed on the street to those found in films such as *Good Will Hunting* (directed by Gus Van Sant, 1997): many more invectives remain unanswered in the former than in the latter).

Any research interested in the length of conversational turns, the modes of turn taking and the cohesion of naturally-occurring conversation may thus be fooled by the presence of *actantial models* (latent, culturally ingrained patterns determining the way characters and objects interact) in films (Propp 1968 [1928]; Greimas 1966: 172ff.; Hébert 2006). Some of these models are very general (see Nichols’ quotation above), others are more specifically related to a country, a genre, a school, a filmmaker, or even an actor (Moulet 1993). Their influence on the structural properties of the plot has been the object of studies for decades (e.g. Wolfenstein and Leites 1950) but more research is needed on their implications at the micro level of dialogue.

3.3 Films as artistic artifacts

The fact that cinema is (or rather *can be treated as*) an art form creates yet another essential distinction between filmspeak and naturally-occurring interactions. This can be shown with a simple example: in *The Devil’s Advocate* (directed by Taylor Hackford, 1997) a dark, powerful character (played by Al Pacino) receives the young hero (Keanu Reeves) in his top-floor New York office. After alluding to the fact that he might have something to offer, Pacino’s character says *Walk with me*, before leading the way to the terrace (min. 22). The obvious, situational meaning can be paraphrased by a large class of utterances, including (1) in extension (i.e. as a list of the set’s elements), and corresponding to (2) in intension (i.e. as the definition of a core property of the set’s elements).

- (1) {*Walk with me ~ Come with me ~ Let me show you something ~ I want to show you something ~ Have you seen the view from the terrace? ~ etc.*}.
- (2) {*Any means by which this speaker may get this hearer to accompany him on the terrace*}.

Note that (2) is phrased situationally (*this speaker*, etc.), because not *all* means imaginable may be used by anybody in any context. Part of the object of pragmatics, sociolinguistics or discourse studies is precisely to determine which means tend to be used considering such contextual parameters as age, gender, hierarchy, participants' agenda, interaction history, etc. In films, however, these are not the only factors determining the choice of a particular formulation. Indeed, a different – and, arguably, *non-linguistic-pragmatic* – question arises, namely whether some utterances might be a better choice than others in the light of *artistic* considerations. Here, *Walk with me* has the particularity of hinting at a symbolic dimension, as the phrase has done in English from (at least) the times of the *King James Bible* to the present day:

- (3) *These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.* (King James Bible, Genesis 6:9)
- (4) *Remember, today we still have that choice, to walk with Satan or walk with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* (Fox 2006)

For the film to bring out these Biblico-ethical overtones even as spectators discover Pacino's character is a good way both to subtly reveal his longer-term intentions (he wants the young man to join his empire) and to instill the idea that the job interview taking place might have a signification beyond earthly matters. A crucial point is that the linguistic paradigms (1) and (2) are not impervious to artistic use. In other words, what Jakobson (1960) defined as the "poetic" (sometimes also called "aesthetic") function of language has a major influence on verbal choices in cinema: the creative process of filmmaking attributes different values to the balance of diegetic possibilities, not simply according to what makes sense in the interactional situation but also according to what makes sense at a higher level of artistic coherence.

Film dialogues are therefore usually created and interpreted within a *double semiotic structure*. At the core of our contemporary definition of art is the idea that any identifiable elements that make up the film (locations, objects, colours, words, sounds, points of view, cinematic effects, etc.) have been *chosen* by a creative authority (where there is no choice, there is no art, as pointed out for instance by Lotman 1973: Chapter 1). Speech elements are often chosen at the expense of other candidates because, on top of their usual – i.e. situational, diegetic, linguistic-pragmatic, *primary* – meaning, they also have a supplementary ("poetic", "aesthetic", "artistic") signification. This "*secondary semiotic value*" (Lotman 1973: 9, N. 1) corresponds to an extra-diegetic signification of linguistic events at a higher level of film structure, within a "*secondary semiotic system*" as defined by Barthes (1957: 187) and schematised in Figure 1.

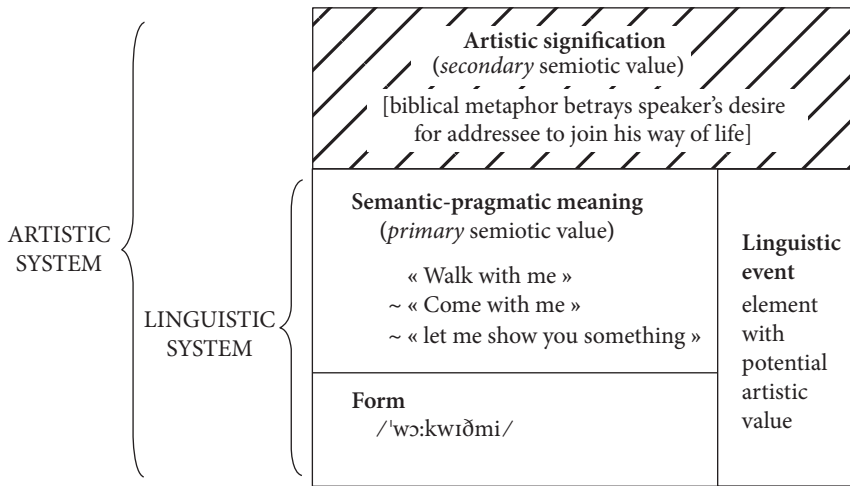


Figure 1. A double semiotic structure (freely adapted from Barthes 1957: 187)

Thus, the *lexicogrammatical* choices made in films should not be expected to adequately reflect those of naturally-occurring interactions, even in seemingly similar settings. A sentence such as *Walk with me*, regardless of its actual frequency in American offices, becomes, in the *Devil's Advocate*, one of the only choices available to fulfill a function which goes beyond the linguistics of naturally-occurring interactions. To be sure, spontaneous conversation also includes allusions of this kind, and everyday linguistic choices routinely make use of the poetic function of language. But what exists in the form of isolated moments (“islets”) in everyday conversation becomes an overarching superstructure in cinema (see below).

One may argue that such artistic skewing of natural probabilities may be not an essential feature of film narration, but only a defining characteristic of *some* aesthetic schools. While differences are to be expected from one film, director, school, country, etc. to another, this feature is nonetheless found in countless so-called “realistic” movies, and Chion (2008: Chapter 10) showed that even films from the French Nouvelle Vague were not impervious to the editing of diegetic speech in the light of artistic-symbolic considerations. Furthermore, artistic choices exploiting (and inducing) a secondary semiotic value of linguistic items can be found because they are *posited* by film criticism as a methodological creed: the development of film studies has indeed consecrated the existence of cinema as “art” largely thanks to the underlying assumption of a coherent artistic level of structure in each work (Braudy 1976: Introduction; Nichols 2006). One must therefore consider the possibility of “artistic skewing” *a priori*.

3.4 Filmmaking and its impact on filmspeak

Let us now turn to some established industry practices which take filmspeak further away from naturally occurring interactions.

Speech “normalisation”

Narrative films are, most usually, commercial enterprises. This explains a general tendency for universal outreach, the most salient linguistic aspect of which is speech “normalisation”.⁹ The *texture* of speech is affected, with a propensity to minimise phenomena such as backchannel (e.g. *uh-huh*), repair, overlapping, simultaneous speech and unclear words. We may also expect to find results similar to those reported by Quaglio (2008, 2009), according to whom such filtering also affects linguistic features associated with vague language, such as hedges and vague reference, which are less represented in the TV series *Friends* than in his conversational corpus.

Such normalisation affects, more generally, the character’s *vocabulary*. This becomes conspicuous when technical terminology is involved: often, only a few terms are retained, usually because they are necessary for the plot to unfold and/or because they give the situation the desired “local color” (Hugo 1996 [1827]: 74–75). Affected by redundancies and glosses for the benefit of the audience (the presence of an uninformed character sometimes providing some intra-diegetic “justification”), these words are not distributed as in their natural setting. The same can often be said of the way *information* is shared, especially at the beginning of movies (where, typically, the setting, the plot, the list of characters and their relationships are established). An example of unnatural information sharing is offered in (5) from *Slm0ne* (directed by Andrew Niccol, 2002: min. 7):

- (5) Viktor: *Well/ Not everyday you’re fired/ by the mother of your own child//*
Elaine: *Viktor/ You and I both know that I kept you on/ after the divorce/ for old times’ sake/ and so you could still hold your head up in front of Lainey// [...].* (*Slm0ne*, min. 7)

Examples like (5) not only show that *lexical* as well as *informational* distribution in films cannot be relied on to be representative of naturally-occurring interactions. They also warn us that it is artificial to identify, even for the sake of comparison, the “settings” out there to the “settings” onscreen: the latter are “genred”, i.e. redefined by cinematic parameters and practices.

9. Rossi (personal communication) characterises as “normalised” “every kind of text closer (than other texts) to the linguistic norms codified by grammars (or phonetics books)”.

The educational benefits of “normalisation”: Film dialogues as educational linguistic specimens

Speech “normalisation” is a reason to discard film dialogues as suitable specimens of the language spoken at a certain time and place. However, it also partly explains why foreign language teachers choose film and television dialogue as valuable classroom material. Indeed, telecinematic discourse presents listeners with a unique combination of two features: the grammar is that of spoken language and yet many of the potentially disturbing characteristics of everyday speech are leveled out.

Both features work in favor of spoken language learning, though in opposing ways. The fact that telecinematic discourse confronts learners with *spoken language skills above the level of the sentence* (Murdoch 1999: §2) is rarely noted¹⁰ but crucial. It must not be mistaken for the idea that students have to learn how to jump from “sentences” to paragraphs: for the very notion of “sentence” is in fact highly problematic when it comes to describing connected speech, and the meaning-making unit of spoken language seems to be, rather, the phonological paragraph (Halliday 1987; McCarthy 1991: Chapter 4; Brazil 1995: 2ff.; Pouder 2011). Indeed, people tend to speak in oft-interrupted sequences made up of increments of various (and heterogeneous) semantic, formal and pragmatic types, and these increments can often be chunked into “sentences” only at the price of much planning down and patching up (Alvarez-Pereyre 2009 and forthcoming: Section 3.1.3). Exposure to spoken language is therefore not a way to help student adapt written- and sentence-based learning to a speaking environment: it is a necessary experience to acquire linguistic skills which cannot be acquired otherwise.

In contemporary films and TV series, the core lexicogrammar is (or at least approximates) that of *spoken* language – especially in the sense that meaning is constructed at the level of phonological paragraphs, not of uttered sentences. At the same time, some of the potentially disturbing phonological variations (speed, loudness, etc.), some of the so-called “dysfluencies” (Meteer et al. 1995) of spoken language, and lexical specialisation tend to be leveled, so that learners are exposed to a somewhat simpler, typified version of speech which is fitter for learning. This may explain the widespread and successful use of telecinematic discourse as language learning material.

10. Advocates of film use in the classroom tend to focus on the proximity of the scenes depicted with everyday situations (McDonough and Shaw 1993: 43) or on the acquisition of linguistic competences related to “contextual, paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements” (Rossi 2006b: Chapter 4, Note 4). See Murdoch (1999: §2) for a good overview of the reasons that make telecinematic discourse a suitable language teaching material.

The limits of normalisation

Speech normalisation does not entail, however, that everybody speaks the same in films: “normalisation” is no “neutralisation”. It is rather a way to ensure clarity, to make distinctions more readable and relevant: the representation of diversity and otherness, for instance, does not necessarily involve many signs, but these signs tend to be salient and immediately recognisable (Maurice Chevallier was thus famously asked to bring out his French accent in English-speaking movies, because he did not sound “French” enough).

Normalisation does not mean verging on *commonness* either. There is rather in films a propensity to *avoid* what is felt as commonness thanks to “effective dialogues” (to use a catchphrase found in many scriptwriting guides, e.g. Kempton 2004; Davis 2008). Quantitative research on films is needed but, as far as TV series are concerned, Quaglio (2008:202–208) found that language was “much more emotionally loaded” in *Friends* than in his conversational corpus, as evidenced by a much higher frequency of adverbial intensifiers (*so, totally*) and expletives (*dammit, bastard*). More generally, the creators of filmspeak strive to be inventive, especially with striking expressions to be hopefully recycled into “pop” language (Savan 2006) and immortalised in “best film quotes” catalogues (e.g. Fennell 1991; Corey and Ochoa 1995; etc.).

The “grammar” of film

The last extra-linguistic influence on filmspeak I will discuss is sometimes called the “grammar” or “language” of film (Lotman 1973: Chapter 3; Arijon 1991; etc.): the set of devices – editing patterns, shot types, etc. – which shape up the film and contribute to its signification (though these devices have no stable meaning of their own, as pointed out by Metz (2003 [1968–1972]: Chapter 3) in his criticism of the phrase “film language”). The clearest example of this interference is the standard practice of editing out the beginnings and ends of dialogues. For instance, in *Minority Report* (directed by Steven Spielberg, 2002: min. 68), a dialogue is cut right after a woman tells a policeman: *And now you can leave* (they are in her living-room, and in a real-life situation, more words would probably be exchanged afterwards). The accumulation of trimmed interactions in films poses a problem to corpus studies interested in discourse cohesion, move structure, etc.

Crucially, though, the dialogues offered to the audience cannot start and end just anywhere. When exactly, and why can dialogues be cut out? Narrative considerations matter (in the example above, enough has been said for the general plot to continue unfolding), as well as questions related to filmic reception (incompleteness can be a powerful “hook” to the next scene, to use Bordwell’s 2008 term); in any case, linguistic considerations are central, for one cannot cut the exchange or the turn just anywhere. Thus, even though films cannot be used reliably

to investigate features of *naturally*-occurring interactions, they can actually shed a particular light on language and its use, because the way filmmaking reworks language makes movies essentially *metalinguistic*.

4. Using film as linguistic specimen: The advantages

The end of this chapter discusses the advantages of using films as linguistic specimens. I will try to illustrate *what* can be done with a filmic corpus and to explain *how* and *why* it can be done.

4.1 Production as imprimatur

Firstly and simply, films can prove useful for linguistic research because they provide (mostly) acceptable facts of language. True, since film cues are most usually written, rewritten, rehearsed, etc. (see Section 1), they cannot be received as spontaneous; but the twist is that, precisely for the same reason, they cannot be easily discarded as a “mistake” or an irrelevant use on the part of the speakers – they have typically received, from pre- to post-production, the repeated *imprimatur* of a number of people who tend to leave little to chance. Films therefore provide us with a pool of utterances that have been validated by native speakers.

This comes in handy when looking for easy-to-share, recorded examples that can open up “narrow” theories by documenting the existence of a specific form, or its availability to fulfill a particular function. For instance, films record a number of speech segments which back up a *functional* (as advocated by Bolinger 1989: 408–418) rather than a strictly *syntactic* (as relayed for instance by Quirk et al. 1985; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 942–943) approach to English tags, as in Example (6) from *Mystic River* (directed by Clint Eastwood, 2003: min. 48–9):

- (6) *Do you want me to leave you alone? – No, just stay here for a minute, if that's cool? – Yeah, sure, Jimmy, 'ts cool.*

The segment *if that's cool* is pronounced with the same speed and intonation as *will you* could have been. The response (*'ts cool*) points to a general property of *answerability*, such that, following Bolinger (1989: 408–418), a broader (and, in fact, *open*) class of tags may be acknowledged. In such a class, the syntactic reflex of the type found with auxiliaries may be only one, particularly grammaticalised (and perhaps thereby more central) realisation of this property of answerability, realised in other cases only semantically or even simply intonationally (examples of which can be found profusely in Vanier's 2004 *The Last Trapper*).

One step further, the weight of non-spontaneous choices might be of interest for the study of the way lexicogrammatical structures construct their meaning. As acknowledged in (d) of Section 2.2, the authorial body of a film tends to empathise with the characters portrayed in the imagined situations, and to look for the most relevant linguistic choices for them. The very fact that the lexicogrammatical structures have been, *carefully and non-spontaneously*, chosen to fulfill the particular functions assigned, makes them extremely good specimens for the study of the relationships between forms, meanings, and functions. I will try to illustrate this with Example (7) below.

4.2 The heuristic value of language dramatisation

As noted above, many cinematographic elements in a film are not linguistic signs. What was presented in Section 3 as a weakness – the interference of extralinguistic elements – can actually prove to be a plus, because these elements often shed useful *metalinguistic* light on the facts of language. Elements from the cinematic apparatus can provide useful clues on the relationship between the form, meaning and functions of lexicogrammatical structures. The example given here deals specifically with the dramatisation of speech through directing and acting, but the point is that any cinematic parameter can shed light on language, because good filming (and possibly bad filming as well, see Section 4.4), like good writing, “does not distort the mechanisms of language but rather amplifies and reveals them” (Cotte 1998: 1, my translation).

In a saloon scene in Eastwood’s *Unforgiven* (1992: min. 113), Eastwood’s character addresses a group of men, growling:

- (7) *Any man don’t wanna get killed <0.8s> better clear on out the back //*
(*Unforgiven*, min. 113)

The pause, during which the character glares around, emphasises the fact that from a semantic-pragmatic point of view, the noun phrase *Any man don’t wanna get killed* functions in Example (7) as a threatening *protasis*: far from simply referring to the addressees of the piece of advice, this noun phrase warns them that *if* they (are men who) do not want to get killed, they had better obey the suggestion that follows. This points out to an essential difference between the subjects of directive as opposed to descriptive clauses. Let us compare (8) and (9):

- (8) *The people in the front row are pretty wealthy.*
(9) *The people in the front row clap your hands!*

“Third-person” imperative clauses as Example (9) do not mean to say “*there are people in the front row and I am asking them to clap their hands*” but, rather, “*if you are among the people in the front row, then I am asking you to clap your hands*”. Third person subjects in imperative clauses (and in a number of declarative requests like Example (7)) *trigger* a process of referent identification in a conditional and interpersonal way, which is radically different from what the same surface noun phrases do in descriptive declarative clauses (where the referent is posited in an existential and impersonal way). This distinction bears important consequences on the grammatical theory of expressions of the addressee in English, so that the use of a general term “subject” may be considered misleading (Cotte 1998: Chapter 13; Alvarez-Pereyre forthcoming: Chapter 7).

Examples like (7) show how good directing can be receptive to the subtleties of linguistic meaning and use them for the benefit of the film. Making a protasis out of a noun phrase, as Eastwood does here, is possible because there is *already*, in the grammar of this kind of “subject”, an “if, then” instruction. Thus, whatever innovation and “transgression” artistic creation brings to language necessarily rests within the realm of its structural-functional potential – and the more a film pushes the inside of the envelope, the more it may reveal subtle linguistic features.

4.3 A workbench for quantitative hypotheses?

For the reasons described in Section 3, quantitative studies of film and television dialogues cannot be used to draw reliable conclusions on spontaneous language interactions, as confirmed by the rare quantitative comparisons of corpora of both types (e.g. Quaglio 2009; Bednarek 2010). This is especially true as far as the *texture* of speech is concerned (accents, rhythm, interruptions and overlapping, backchannel, repair, etc.), but for deeper levels of feature, checking rough tendencies on a database originally set up for qualitative research might provide useful hints. Where previous corpus-work lacks, it may warrant further research on more appropriate corpora.

I will illustrate this point with the results of a preliminary frequency test run on a database of imperative clauses extracted from contemporary North-American films (the sample used in the study, made of 594 simple imperative clauses, corresponds to an initial sample of about 700 imperatives, from which *Let/Make* periphrases and aspectual structures of the type *Start/Keep/etc. V-ing* were excluded). A deeply-rooted view holds that “the prototypical imperative utterance consists of no more than a single bare verb” (Wurff 2007: 84). However, one imperative verb out of two in the filmic corpus studied had at least one object, with a tendency (over 70%) in favor of situational definiteness (*Look at this, Listen to me,*

Close the door, etc.). In the objectless imperative clauses, a great number of obligatory adjuncts were found, usually defining the site where the action should take place or end (*Sit over there*, *Get out of the pool*, etc.). Also found were a great number of particle verbs which followed a similar pattern (*Sit down*, *Come in*, etc.). All in all, verbs without an object thus turned out to be also prone (in about 70% of cases) to be followed by a syntactically obligatory element defined with reference to the situation. In the absence of any results from existing corpus-based studies of the English imperative (these typically leave complements outside the scope of investigation, see De Rycker 1984; De Clerck 2006), such preliminary findings justify further research on the way imperative clauses, contrary to the prevailing *doxa*, actually have a rich complementation which, one can surmise, serves the purpose of focalising the attention of the addressee on key situational parameters of the actions projected (Alvarez-Pereyre forthcoming: Section 5.2).

4.4 The good, the bad and the ugly specimen

Do all films shed light on language equally? If the cinematic apparatus *can* cast metalinguistic light on language, does it entail that *any* film provides equally valuable cues on language and its use? Or is it a matter of degrees? And are good films more useful than bad ones?

Great filmmakers may evidence a keener understanding of language and its use within a work of art, but it is not obvious that bad filming should be discarded for the purpose of linguistic research. Nor does “realism”¹¹ necessarily guarantee better linguistic specimens: even an extremely unrealistic voiceover reproducing the *inner thoughts* of a character can shed useful light on language. Thus, in *Carlito's Way* (directed by Brian De Palma, 1993: min. 25), the character played by Pacino remembers the day he found his nephew lying dead, and his narratorial self “tells” the dead nephew:

(10) *Oh, Jesus, Jesus Christ, look at you... you told me they were friends [...].*

Both *Look at you* and *Look at yourself* are common in English, but Pacino's use of the former is meaningful: the reflexive pronoun *yourself* would be the (logical) recognition that the intended experiencer and patient of “looking” are the same person. Avoiding the reflexive pronoun is a good way of asking the addressee of

11. Itself a highly fluctuating notion, as pointed out by Kawin (1987: 552): “Realism. (1) A representational style that attempts to present a state of affairs without distortion; (2) a style, quite up to date, that attempts to present the world to an audience as they already see and normally conceptualize it.”

the request (the nephew) to “split” his self between the old, passive (and in fact dead) object of contemplation and the new, active (and virtually alive) self who would join Pacino’s external point of view. This implicit request for “splitting”, present in many uses of the phrase *Look at you*, is made particularly salient here by the fact that the gap between the narration (Pacino’s voiceover as he remembers) and the diegesis (the scene in the past) doubles, or *echoes*, the splitting of the self that is requested.

Echoes of this type are not rare in films, as part of the artistic process arguably consists in the weaving of a “fractal-like” convergence of meaningful elements at all levels.¹² This coherence (or “global rhyming effect”, in the words of Bellour 1975) across levels of structure and semiotic boundaries can prove useful when it comes to detecting particular features of the language facts one is studying: it makes them salient, by giving them an additional, extra- and metalinguistic meaning in context.

In practice, such investigations can be run by (a) (re)watching films; (b) systematically stopping whenever specimens of the language facts under study are found; and (c) asking how the structural specificities of what is uttered contribute to the particular shaping of what is going on – not just linguistically at the level of the diegesis but “artistically” at the level of the film, possibly as an echo of other, non-linguistic-pragmatic choices. If such a convergence can be found, it is only because of specific properties pertaining to the language facts under study; this methodology can therefore help establish or discover the presence of meaningful properties of language structures.

5. Conclusions

Filmmaking involves numerous extra-linguistic and extra-diegetic considerations (social, artistic, commercial, technical, etc.) which bear upon linguistic choices, turning film dialogue, from the point of view of naturally occurring interactions

12. In fractals, whatever the level of observation, repeating patterns and the same amount of detail can be seen. A simple, non-linguistic example of what I mean by “fractal” construction is given by a charity-dinner scene from the beginning of *The Fugitive* (directed by Andrew Davis, 1993). The character played by Harrison Ford sees his wife at the other end of the room but is prevented from reaching her because a colleague stops him to talk to him. As appears later in the film, this colleague is the cause of the woman’s murder and the couple’s destruction. The fractal process consists here in embedding a reduction of the whole story (macro level) into one of its scenes (micro level): at both levels, the colleague gets in between the husband and wife. I use the word “fractal” metaphorically when speaking of the convergence and echoes of semiotically distinct elements.

and dialect studies, into a denatured and renatured, Frankenstein-like semiotic construction. A non-spontaneous discourse given as spontaneous, filmspeak therefore poses too many essential problems to be fit for research eventually interested in naturally occurring interactions (in spite of what some studies claim).

Yet, human language realises itself in many more contexts and under many more forms than in naturally-occurring spoken interactions; and the primacy of the latter is only justified within its own particular framework and for the purpose of research tackling its specific objects. Language instances produced by other human endeavours can yield, with no less legitimacy, insight into the structural, functional and cognitive aspects of language and its use.

One specific advantage of telecinematic discourse is that part of the extra-linguistic interferences which affect it are of *metalinguistic* value: the particular, non-linguistic signs produced by the filmic medium and practices have a structuring power which may (and is perhaps prone to) converge with linguistic choices. These metalinguistic processes, though rarely explicit, are always present and, as I hope to have shown, usable for research. This, added to the “paradoxical” (Rossi 1999: 49) combination of matured thought (in the actual genesis of the dialogue) and language in action (because of the type of dialogue), presents us with language specimens in which the meaning construction of linguistic structures may become particularly salient.

The reflections reported in this chapter can be summed up as follows (the results can generally be extended to TV series, even though, as was discussed at the IPrA 2009 conference, a better appreciation of the differences between filmspeak and TV-series-speak is needed):

- Due to numerous extra-linguistic interferences, films are not, *a priori*, appropriate specimens for the study of the language spoken in a certain place at a certain point in time (Section 3).
- Films (and TV series) *are*, quite naturally, appropriate specimens for the study of the language genres of “filmspeak”, “TV series-speak”, “dub-filmspeak”, etc. (Section 3.1).
- Films *are* appropriate linguistic specimens for the study of social representations, narrative conventions, etc. (Sections 3.2 and 3.3).
- Thanks to its particular combination of spoken grammar and normalised texture, telecinematic discourse provides highly suitable linguistic specimens for the teaching of spoken language (Section 3.4).
- Because it is repeatedly scrutinised by native speakers during the various phases of production, telecinematic discourse tends to provide a pool of linguistic structures acceptable for theoretical research (Section 4.1).

- Films shed metalinguistic light on language, thus providing particularly good specimens for the study of the system of language and its use (Section 4.2).
- Films may be used to formulate quantitative hypotheses, especially regarding linguistic structures, though the results cannot be straightforwardly extended to spontaneous interactions (Section 4.3).
- The assumption that “good” filming provides better specimens for linguistic research than “bad” filming should be further investigated (Section 4.4).

CHAPTER 4

Multimodal realisations of mind style in *Enduring Love*

Rocío Montoro

Mind style is the term traditionally discussed in stylistics to refer to the linguistic features that project the peculiarities of characters' cognitive make-up. As stylistics mainly focuses on written forms, mind style has generally been discussed in relation to its textual manifestations although new research is emerging which is redressing this lack (Gibbons 2010; Nørgaard 2010). When considering textual forms, scholars identify many and varied linguistic indicators as markers of mind style. In this chapter I look into the way both verbal and multimodal markers are exploited in Ian McEwan's novel *Enduring Love* (1997) and its homonymous cinematic adaptation by Roger Michell (2004) to create particular mind styles. This chapter argues that tools traditionally discussed in stylistics can shed light on the way multimodal discourse functions and also that the inclusion of multimodal formats can refine existing stylistic frameworks and models.

1. Introduction

In this chapter I analyse the concept of mind style, a mainly textual phenomenon that describes the way in which the psychological and cognitive make-up of fictional minds is projected. My aim is twofold as I initially look at how mind style, that is, the way in which in a text a character's mind is projected, is realised verbally in literary fiction and secondly I focus on its multimodal transposition onto a cinematic format. I consider which verbal signs are used as mind style indicators but, in particular, I investigate their multimodal counterparts as they manifest in gestures and via prototypically cinematic devices. Incorporating a multimodal approach can shed light on the way mind style works, the verbal and non-verbal choices available for its projection and the way those options are used, dismissed or translated from the written to the film medium. I finally suggest that a multimodal approach can aid our understanding of how certain stylistic

phenomena originally considered as mainly textual can explain the way film narratives work.

This chapter is a study of Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997) and its homonymous film adaptation by Roger Michell (2004) as both versions illustrate the multifarious nature of mind style realisation. As far as verbal markers are concerned, modal forms, especially epistemic modality, feature prominently, albeit not exclusively. Regarding multimodal realisations, I first highlight the meaningful role of actors' gestures to encode characters' mind style, and secondly, I discuss how prototypically cinematic techniques are used to take full advantage of particular mind style projection. *Enduring Love* (1997) tells the story of how a fortuitous balloon accident in which several people try to save a young boy's life ends up affecting the people who try to help, but in particular, it has a devastating impact on Jed Parry and Joe Rose (Joe Morrissey in the film). The psychological idiosyncrasy of the former is marked from early on in the story whereas Joe Rose develops a type of *post-traumatic mind style* reflected in the way his actions, general behaviour and way of thinking change. In the film Joe Rose is a philosopher and academic while in the novel he is a successful writer of scientific articles for a popular audience. His partner, Claire (Clarissa in the novel), is a famous sculptor in the film version and a Keats scholar in the novel. Joe and Claire's conventionality is underscored in both media. Jed Parry, on the other hand, does not conform to the social or psychological normality embodied by these two individuals and we learn about his oddities as the narrative unfolds. He has no job, lives off some money left to him by his late mother and lacks the social skills necessary to function in society. After the accident in which all the characters find themselves involved, Parry develops an obsessive fixation with Rose who, according to his disturbed mind, also reciprocates his love. Parry's condition is eventually described as erotomania or De Clérambault syndrome which invites a characterisation of this individual as psychologically unconventional. The damaging effect of Parry's obsession creates an interesting case of linguistic and subsequent multimodal post-traumatic mind style for Joe Rose. Due to the pressure under which Parry's behaviour puts Rose, the prototypically conventional man of science that Rose was is transformed into an individual consumed by doubts, hesitations, worries, preoccupations and suspicions. In what follows I first discuss how mind style has traditionally been described to then investigate what verbal markers illustrate the two main characters' psychological characteristics.

2. Mind style: Verbal realisations

The concept of *mind style* has been of special interest to stylisticians since its coinage by Fowler who states that it “refer(s) to any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self” (Fowler 1977: 103). Fowler’s later assessments (1986, 1996) highlight the connection existing between this notion and that of point of view, in particular the so-called “ideational point of view” which encompasses “the system of beliefs, values, and categories by reference to which a person or a society comprehends the world” (Fowler 1986: 130). More specifically, mind style for Fowler originates in the way the ideational content of texts is linguistically expressed, which illustrates Fowler’s indebtedness to Halliday’s Systemic Functional approaches to language:

Language serves for the expression of content: it has a representational, or as I would prefer to call it, an ideational function [...] the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness.

(Halliday 1971: 327)

Fowler conceives mind style as the linguistic projection of the workings of people’s minds and defines it as follows:

I have called it mind-style: the world-view of an author, or a narrator, or a character, constituted by the ideational structure of the text. [...] I will illustrate ideational structuring involving three different types of linguistic features: vocabulary, transitivity, and certain syntactic structures. (Fowler 1996: 214)

This initial work has been subsequently reconsidered by other scholars – Black (1993), Bockting (1994), Leech and Short (1981, 2007), Margolin (2003), Semino and Swindlehurst (1996) and Semino (2002, 2007) – who have progressively expanded on the linguistic forms that can project mind style. Thus, to Fowler’s initial “vocabulary, transitivity and certain syntactic structures”, Bockting (1994) adds “attributive style” and Black (1993), Semino and Swindlehurst (1996) and Semino (2002, 2007) contribute with “metaphorical patterns”. Of special interest for a fully integrated multimodal perspective is Bockting’s assessment concerning the likely scope of markers that can potentially encode the psychological make-up of a character:

The linguistic choices that form our material must concern the whole field of linguistics: phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax and pragmatics, as well as various para- and non-verbal signs.

(Bockting 1994: 160)

Because of the multimodal nature of the data analysed in this chapter, Bockting underscoring the relevance of “para- and non-verbal signs” confirms that stylistic tools can also be of use in research on multimodal cinematic formats (see also Piazza’s chapter in this volume).

A further issue to point out in a study of mind style is the type of fictional mind that theorists describing this stylistic issue tend to focus on. Most mind style studies opt for the description of those linguistic markers that seem to project a psychologically unconventional mind (see Piazza this volume). Despite the fact that many of these scholars acknowledge that mind style analysis needs not be limited to a consideration of unconventional characters (see Bednarek this volume, for more work on characterisation), it appears that the latter are far more saliently marked from a linguistic and psychological perspective than others (Montoro 2010). For instance, Leech and Short (1981, 2007) claim that mind style indicators do not necessarily have to reflect unorthodox and idiosyncratic world-views but can encapsulate “natural and uncontrived” (Leech and Short 2007: 151) positions too. Despite this admission, however, they still select the mentally disabled protagonist of Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* to illustrate the actual linguistic workings of mind style projection; thus, the closer characters are to the psychologically unorthodox end on a normality-to-unconventionality cline, the stronger the force of the mind style is. Conventional characters somehow lack the psychological or cognitive depth necessary to show how such conventionality is demarcated. This paper, however, claims that the transition from being initially unaffected by cognitive, mental or psychological idiosyncrasies to eventually becoming a disturbed individual can also encode a mind style worthy of attention, as is the case with Joe Rose. Joe Rose’s transformation in the story is marked by the state of constant confusion, uncertainty and general psychological upheaval that the balloon incident described above inflicts upon him. Linguistically, the novel encodes such bewilderment primarily in the form of epistemic modality defined as the “degree of certainty the speaker has that what s/he is saying is true” (de Haan 2006: 29). The linguistic encoding of epistemic modality expressing “the speaker’s attitude to status of the proposition” (Palmer 2003: 7) is generally acknowledged to be conveyed primarily by modal verbs, *could*, *may* or *must* among others. Despite the core role of these forms, other possibilities include modal lexical verbs (*think*, *suppose*, *believe*), adjectival constructions of the type *be sure to* and *it’s certain that*, epistemic modal adverbs such as *arguably*, *maybe*, *perhaps* or *possibly* (Simpson 1993), as well as modal nominal expressions, *if*-clauses and questions (Perkins 1983). Most of these forms seem to find a way onto the extract below:

If Parry had been trailing me all day, then he knew where I lived. If he hadn’t, then my mental state was very frail. But it wasn’t, fundamentally, and he had,

and I had to think this through. I could put down his late-night call to stress and solitary drinking, but not if he had been following me about today. And I knew he had because I had seen the white of his trainer and its red lace. Unless – and the habit of scepticism was proof of my sanity – unless the redness was imagined, or visually conflated. [...] The unreliability of such intuition I was prepared to concede. [...] Like many people living a safe life, I immediately imagined the worst. What reason had I given him for murdering me? Did he think I had mocked his faith? Perhaps he had phoned again. (McEwan 1997: 47)

This extract is from the beginning of the novel once the balloon incident has taken place but before the mental instability of Jed Parry has been ascertained. As a consequence, Joe Rose is unaware of Parry's actual intentions, cannot establish for certain whether the latter is in fact displaying some suspicious stalking behaviour or whether this could simply be a figment of his own imagination. The clash between his logical thinking as a man of facts and the sudden mental upheaval that his suspicions and doubts are causing is reflected in the abundance of epistemic modal structures such as the series of hypothetical constructions introduced by *if* and *unless*, the modal lexical verbs *knew* and *imagined*, the modal nominal expressions *scepticism*, *unreliability* and *intuition*, the epistemic adverb *perhaps* and the interrogative sentences.

Contrary to Joe Rose's state of bewilderment and mental confusion, and somewhat surprisingly if we consider that this character is the one suffering from some kind of psychological affliction, Jed Parry's voice linguistically projects a calm and composed individual who is particularly certain about his convictions. In McEwan's original novel, this De Clérambault sufferer's obsessive voice becomes especially clear in the numerous letters he sends to Joe Rose. Epistemic modality vanishes from Parry's language and is instead replaced with plenty of "*verba sentiendi*", "evaluative adjectives" and "verbs of knowledge". Fowler (1986, 1996) defines *verba sentiendi* as "words denoting feelings, thoughts, and perceptions, primary signals of a subjective point of view" (1986: 136–137). Combined with "evaluative adjectives" and "verbs of knowledge", they emphasise the personal and biased position of the speaker. Such a combination of markers endows Jed Parry's voice with a completely different stylistic flavour to that of Joe Rose:

Dear Joe, I feel happiness running through me like an electrical current. I close my eyes and see you as you were last night in the rain, across the road from me, with the unspoken love between us as strong as steel cable. I close my eyes and thank god out loud for letting you exist, for letting me exist in the same time and place as you, and for letting this strange adventure between us begin. [...] You knew our love from the very beginning. You recognised in that glance that passed between us, up there on the hill after he fell, all the charge and power and blessedness of love. (McEwan 1997: 93)

Verba sentiendi such as *I feel happiness, blessedness of love, unspoken love*, evaluative adjectives *strange*, alongside verbs of knowledge like *knew* and *recognised* leave no doubt about Jed Parry's conviction that Rose loves him. The subjective perspective of Jed Parry is reinforced by overlexicalisation as the constant religious and romantic references indicate in the following excerpt and throughout the novel: "To bring you to God, through love. [...] I know that the Christ is within you. [...] The purpose is to bring you to the Christ that is in you and that is you. That's what the gift of love is all about" (McEwan 1997: 66). It seems, thus, that both characters' mind styles are distinctively depicted verbally. The following section analyses how the post-traumatic state which typifies Joe Rose's behaviour and the psychologically disturbed mind of Jed Parry are multimodally realised in the film adaptation of the novel.

3. Mind style: Multimodal realisations

This section describes how the mind styles of Joe Rose and Jed Parry are multimodally realised in the film adaptation of the novel. In order to do that, however, it is important to first highlight that the novel also contains verbal indications of certain aspects of the characters' behaviour that the film subsequently incorporates in multimodal form; that is, the novel initially marks in textual form some behavioural patterns particularly characteristic of Jed Parry that the film subsequently incorporates as part of the multimodal projection of mind style. In the novel, the most obvious verbal reference to the non-verbal manifestation of Parry's unconventionality is his unorthodox understanding of what he considers to be love messages sent to him by the object of his affection:

Speaking of touch and the wet grass reminds me. When you came out of your house yesterday evening and you brushed the top of the hedge with your hand – I didn't understand at first. I went down the path and put out my own hand and fingered the leaves that you had touched. I felt each one and it was a shock when I realised it was different from the ones you hadn't touched. (McEwan 1997: 96)

Unlike the quotation above in which Parry writes a letter to Joe Rose and describes his love via *verba sentiendi*, evaluative adjectives and verbs of knowledge, the extract here describes verbally the unconventional behaviour of a character that seems to attach a special significance to activities such as brushing one's fingers against the leaves of a hedge. Joe Rose eventually comprehends the extent of Jed Parry's delusion when the latter makes explicit his particular way of reading messages into every single move that he witnesses the former make. Although

Parry writes in his letters to Joe Rose: “I ignored what you were telling me with your eyes and your every gesture” (McEwan 1997: 94), he overcompensates for this apparent negligence with his stalking behaviour towards Rose. My choice of novel and its film transposition is, thus, justified by the marked role that gestures seem to play in the representation of mind style. Jed Parry’s conviction of Joe Rose’s presumed reciprocal love is based on the secret gestural code that Joe Rose, allegedly, uses to communicate with him. Such random acts as drawing and closing curtains, or an unintentional gentle brush of the hedge by Rose outside his house, are loaded with significance for Parry. As I describe below, gesture scholars argue that speech-accompanying gestures confirm, emphasise and highlight meanings already encoded in the verbal component of the utterance. In *Enduring Love*, however, Parry is actually “reading” hidden meanings and secret codes in kinesic movements which would not, under normal circumstances, be used to convey the type of romantic messages Parry is convinced he is being sent.

In order to look at the way gestures encode mind style in the film, we need to look at which types of gesture are actually employed. For this purpose research in the area of gesture studies seems relevant. Cassell and McNeill (1990, 1991), Cienki (1998, 2008), Cienki and Müller (2008), Duncan, Cassell and Levy (2007), Haviland (2000, 2007), Kendon (1980, 1995, 2004) and McNeill (1992, 2000a, 2000b, 2005) are some of the researchers describing the role of gestures accompanying the verbal expression of information. As Cienki explains, “in the broad sense, ‘gesture’ can refer to any wilful bodily movement” (Cienki 2008: 6). More specifically, Sweetser (2007) describes gestures in connection with their cognitive origin:

Speech-accompanying gesture offers another way of getting at the less conscious aspects of the cognitive processes involved in language. By gesture, I here primarily mean what Kendon calls *gesticulation* – movement of hands and body in flexible visual-gestural patterns which accompany the auditory track of spoken language. [...] An interesting fact for cognitive science is that co-linguistic gesture is neurally co-processed with language, in tight language-specific neural routines. (Sweetser 2007: 203)

If, as Sweetser argues, “speech-accompanying gesture offers another way of getting at the less conscious aspects of the cognitive processes involved in language” (2007: 203), then cinematic adaptations of written narratives could be particularly useful to illustrate how cognitive phenomena that would typically emerge verbally in written forms manifest multimodally in other media.

As far as the different types of gestures encoding a particular mind style, I am using the classifications proposed by McNeill (1992, 2000a, 2000b, 2005) and by

Kendon (2004) as they complement each other.¹ As McNeill (1992: 37) states, the main point of reference for gesture classification tends to be the “Kendon continuum” (McNeill 1992: 37) which identifies four different gesture types distinguished according to whether speech² is being produced or not: “gesticulation, emblems, pantomime and sign language” (McNeill 2000a: 2). Gesticulation specifically describes those wilful body movements produced simultaneously with speech, so I will be focusing primarily on how these are used in the film. Emblems, on the other hand, are characterised by the optionality of speech features: “an example of an emblem is the OK sign – made by forming a circle with the forefinger and thumb in contact at their tips, while the rest of the fingers extend outward – used for expressing approbation” (McNeill 2000a: 2). Pantomime and sign language, finally, are exclusively used when speech is obligatorily absent, so they will not be analysed in this paper.

Several subclassifications for the general category of speech-accompanying gesture (a category equivalent to Kendon’s gesticulation) have been put forward, as well as reworkings and fine-tunings of the original proposals. McNeill, for instance, organises the various gesture types in a four-part taxonomy that includes “iconic, metaphoric, deictic (pointing), and beat gestures” (McNeill 1992: 76). An iconic gesture “bears a close formal relationship to the semantic content of speech [...] (and) displays, in its form and manner of execution, aspects of the same scene that speech also presents” (McNeill 1992: 78). Iconics, thus, encode a kind of kinesic similarity with the linguistic content of the utterance. Metaphoric gestures, on the other hand, represent meanings which are symbolic in nature. McNeill states that:

Some gestures involve a metaphoric use of form – the speaker appears to be holding an object, as if presenting it, yet the meaning is not presenting an object but rather that she is holding an ‘idea’ or ‘memory’ or some other abstract ‘object’ in her hand. (McNeill 2005: 39)

Deictics, the third gesture type identified by McNeill, are primarily illustrated by the pointing hand (see Piazza 2010 and 2011), in a way similar to how verbal deictics function too, but this pointing can potentially be implemented by other parts of the body too:

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1. McNeill did in fact base his taxonomy on the original proposal by Kendon (1988).
 2. As McNeill (2000a) explains, this is but one of the possible continua along which gestures can be placed. Because of space constraints, I will not look at what McNeill defines as “continuum 2: relationship to linguistic properties”, “continuum 3: relationship to conventions” and “continuum 4: character of the semiosis” (McNeill 2000a: 3, 4, 5).

Deictic gestures are pointing movements, which are prototypically performed with the pointing finger, although any extensible object or body part can be used, including the head, nose, or chin, as well as manipulated artifacts.

(McNeill 1992: 80)

The capacity that parts of the body other than the hands have for conveying meaning plays a significant role in *Enduring Love* when realised by certain cinematic techniques. Camera angles are skilfully exploited so that not simply the hands but most of the two characters' upper body parts encode different meanings too as I describe below. Finally, beats are generally presented as the least formalised and organised type of gestures, which does not necessarily entail that they can be used less effectively:

Beats are [...] mere flicks of the hand(s) up and down or back and forth that seem to 'beat' time along with the rhythm of speech. However, they have meanings that can be complex, signalling the temporal locus in speech of something the speaker feels is important with respect to the larger discourse (Cassell and McNeill 1990; McNeill 1992), the equivalent to using a yellow highlighter on a written text. A beat may accompany the first mention of a character or highlight words whose occurrence is relevant for a larger narrative purpose. (McNeill 2005: 40–41)

In *Enduring Love* beats are, indeed, utilised to indicate moments of great significance, especially for Parry; in fact, all of the above gesture varieties are represented in the film. By using iconic gestures, for instance, Parry allows Rose and the cinema audience access into his idiosyncratic cognitive make-up. When, after a series of unfortunate encounters, Rose finally agrees to go to lunch with Parry, he is confronted with the extent of Parry's psychological unconventionality as he learns of the apparent messages he has unknowingly been addressing to his stalker; that is, it is at this point that Rose realises that even the simple gesture of drawing the curtains is interpreted as a token of meaningful, intentional communication and not simply a routine habit. What, for Rose, was a mundane action is an event fully loaded with romantic meaning for Parry who verbalises these beliefs by concurrently accompanying his words with a series of hand gestures that mimic the actual action of drawing curtains.

As the camera focuses in close-up on Parry's gesturing to Rose, the film audience is also steered towards focusing on his hands. Parry's hands are held in a particular way so that they resemble the actual position they would have when opening curtains, in what can be, consequently, classified as iconic gesture. In this connection, the film permits a multiplicity with regard to the expression of perspective or point of view not present in the novel because of the substantial number of close-ups of Parry's hands. Cinema spectators are encouraged to focus on the specific part of Parry's body that is apparently communicating the version

of events he believes in. His point of view, consequently, is expressed via his voice, his linguistic choices and his hands, the latter expertly shot on an angle that prevents diverting the audience's attention away from them.

Metaphoric gestures also play a part in the film although these embody abstract rather than concrete meanings and it is mainly Rose that incorporates them into his speech. Since Parry's conviction of the romantic ties between the two characters is unquestionable, metaphoric gestures seem to prove more useful for Rose who is instead characterised by his attempts to process the bewilderment caused by Parry's harassment. In the lunch scene of the film described earlier Rose reacts to Parry's declaration of love by conveying his confusion in metaphoric gestures. As the two characters are sitting opposite each other, Rose refers to the presumed "link" between the two of them by moving his hand backwards and forwards on a horizontal plane, index and middle fingers extended. Unlike iconic moves, metaphorics refer to non-tangible, symbolic meanings such as the romantic notion of being tied up to somebody as if an actual physical thread connecting the two people existed. Other instances occur when Rose discusses his work with his agent and refers to the fact that his profession has never allowed him to build anything, that he has only ever formulated ideas. Uttering the word *ideas* is accompanied by having both hands up in front of him, as if he was literally holding an object, which materialises the conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE OBJECTS.³

Deictics are generally combined with such verbal expressions as *here* or *there* as when Rose is urging Claire to come to the window so that she can see Parry "out there" in the rain waiting for a sign, for which Rose is using the prototypical pointing finger.

Finally beats are given prominence thanks to cinematic techniques such as the close-ups of hands previously discussed. The certainty with which Parry describes the secret code that Rose is apparently engaged in to communicate with him is highlighted by the constant use of beat gestures. Parry's hands move, just slightly, up and down, concurrently with verbal references to Rose's love. As McNeill argues, beats emphasise "something the speaker feels is important" (McNeill 2005:40) so these small flicks of the hands underscore the perspective of the speaker and his certainty in connection with his and Rose's feelings. Contrary to Parry, quick cuts of the camera to Rose's face illustrate his utter

3. Until the formal inception of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphors were generally described as tropes, embellishing devices very much pertaining to the domain of language. More recently, though, the exclusive verbal realisation of conceptual metaphors has been brought into question by studies such as that of Cienki (1998, 2008), Forceville (1996, 2002, 2006, 2007), and Whittock (1990).

incredulity in relation to what he is witnessing. That is, in the medium mainly described in this section, the film, Rose's facial expression (frowning) accompanied by a shaking of the head, embodies the same state of bewilderment that had been marked verbally by epistemic modality in the novel and helps confirm the antithetical evaluation of the situation by the two characters; it further endorses a characterisation of Parry as inherently unconventional and of Rose as seriously psychologically traumatised.

Kendon (2004), on the other hand, argues that gestures can not simply emphasise the propositional content of utterances but also be used to perform actions and, hence, add further meanings:

Speakers also use gestures as part of the way in which they 'do things' with utterances. A speaker always produces an utterance to achieve something. As a participant in a conversation I may complain, evaluate, disagree, refuse, plead, assert, maintain something in opposition, mock, attack, retreat, show deference, ignore, exhibit scepticism, give an honest answer, ask, and many other things. As has long been noted, gesture often plays an important part in carrying out such actions. (Kendon 2004: 225)

Kendon highlights that gestures are capable of encoding meanings besides those already occurring in the verbal component of the utterance, some of which seem to be closely linked to the type of evaluation, assessment and subjective perspective typically projecting distinct mind styles. Poggi (2003) echoes Kendon's claims by underscoring the plurality of meanings in gestures:

My hypothesis is that, in whatever communication system (animal and human, verbal and nonverbal), it is possible and often useful to distinguish at least two classes of meanings: one concerning Information on the World (the concrete or abstract events we communicate about, their actors and objects, time and space relations among them) and one concerning Information on the Speaker's Mind (why we want to talk of those events, what we think and feel about them, how we plan to talk of them and so on): to sum up, information on the SPEAKER'S BELIEFS, GOALS AND EMOTIONS. (Poggi 2003: 119)

Gestures, therefore, can shed light on the way speakers perceive particular situations by, for instance, offering "evaluation" or "exhibiting scepticism" (Kendon 2004: 225) in a way similar to how they would with words, aspects which would all support a multimodal take on the study of mind style.

In this respect, Kendon's classification of gesture types proves useful to illustrate further instantiations of how the various mind styles are realised in the film mode. Kendon (2004: 228) discusses what Morris et al. (1979) call the *R-family* gestures to refer to those types in which the thumb and index fingers are touching

forming a slightly circular shape, as if it was a ring. These gestures are capable of conveying several meanings, among them confirming the “exactness” or “precision” of an assertion as proven in the film when they occur almost simultaneously with beats. In the lunch scene above, Parry uses *R-type* gestures to underscore the effectiveness of the curtain moves that, in his mind, clearly give away the extent of Rose’s love. Beats, that is, those “mere flicks of the hand(s) up and down or back and forth” (McNeill 2005: 40), smoothly slip into *R-type* moves with thumb and index together and slight vertical strokes accompanying the verbal content; they, consequently, further stress the exactness and precision with which Parry assesses the effectiveness of curtain manipulation which was initially encoded verbally in the novel and is now gesturally represented in the film. Kendon says:

It is as if the R-gestures are brought into play whenever, for the speaker, ‘making precise’ or clarification seems necessary or important in gaining the agreement, the conviction or the understanding of the interlocutor. (Kendon 2004: 241)

These gestures, thus, would both embody Parry’s assessment of the situation and expect Rose’s acquiescence and agreement. Parry’s reading of the situation, naturally, clashes with Rose’s, whose incredulity and confusion is expressed by what Kendon (2004), in turn, calls the Open Hand Prone gestures (OHP):

Gestures of the Open Hand Prone [...] are used in contexts where something is being denied, negated, interrupted or stopped, whether explicitly or by implication. (Kendon 2004: 248)

Rose expresses his disquiet verbally by responding to Parry’s claims with the words “this is fucking stupid”, while also holding both hands in front, palm up and vertical, facing Parry so that the latter understands his rejection. Needless to say, Parry is set in his ways and neither the verbal nor the gestural content of his interlocutor’s speech has any clear effect on his decision. Kendon also describes the Open Hand Supine (OHS) (Kendon 2004: 264) gestures, again particularly employed by Rose. The Open Hand Supine moves “have in common the idea that it is a gesture of offering or giving, or a gesture of showing readiness to receive something” (Kendon 2004: 264) and are characterised by open hands and forearms facing upwards. Rose is seen gesticulating to Parry in this way outside the bookshop where the latter first displays some signs of instability. Rose offers his apologies for having misled him, if that has been the case, and shows his desire to reconcile and forget that the incident ever took place. Yet, Parry fails to grasp such meaning and simply continues harassing Rose instead.

Analysing gestures, thus, confirms their significant role as encoding multi-modal instantiations of mind style in film narratives. This chapter, however, has

also argued that studying the film medium can back up the fact that stylistic phenomena such as mind style do indeed manifest in formats other than the written so we need to consider how purely cinematic techniques can help encode multimodal mind styles too. That is, if a multimodal transposition of written narratives is to become fully illustrative of mind style projection, then film techniques need to also shed light on how such encoding of mind style features is achieved to complement markers of a verbal and gestural nature. I propose to call these techniques *cinematic mind style indicators*. As far as Parry's unconventional mind style is concerned, for instance, the iconicity of his gestures enhanced via the close-ups on his hands has already been discussed. A second aspect that clearly defines Parry's mind style is his stalking behaviour – an element in which the novel and film versions differ. In McEwan's original novel the De Clérambault sufferer's obsessive voice is heard in the numerous letters he sends to Rose, as discussed above. The film, however, does away with the epistolary sections of the novel and replaces the constant pressure Joe Rose is put under because of Parry's letters with the latter's actual physical presence at the various spots frequented by Rose. For instance, the first time Parry's behaviour alerts the audience to his unconventionality, Rose is at a bookshop, initially totally unaware of the presence of Parry. Parry calls Rose's attention by using the summons *psst*, immediately followed by the flash of a camera, which tells us of the presence of an individual whose identity is, at first, kept from the audience. The angle of the medium shot in which this scene is filmed gives us a frontal image of Rose and eventually an indication of what appears to be Parry's hair. This technique, whereby the camera is positioned right by Parry, not always focusing on Joe Rose and signalling to the audience the presence of an individual whose identity is not immediately made explicit, is recurrently used throughout the film. As a result, it underscores the suffocating presence of Parry and the consequent harassment he is inflicting upon Rose.

On other occasions, scenes are purposely filmed as if the camera had taken on the persona of the stalker too, for they are shot through gaps (in furniture, for instance) which let cinema viewers peek through and have both an on-focus perspective of the background and a blurred view of the foreground. This is also the case in a different scene in which, eventually, Jed Parry is openly portrayed to the audience and Rose himself as the latter's stalker. This scene is shot through the spokes of a bicycle wheel, resulting in a composition highly suggestive of a hunting episode with Parry as predator and Rose as prey.

In direct contrast to Parry's cinematic portrayal, close-ups on Rose's face prevail and his hands are more rarely shown. During the various conversations he has with Parry, Rose is very often seen shaking his head, nervously smiling and mumbling or literally unable to speak. His facial features also tend to appear contorted

in a deep frown and his mouth sometimes falls open as if to utter something. These gestures are, thus, indicative of the general confusion experienced by this character and indicators of epistemic modality. Rose's *cinematic post-traumatic mind style*, however, is even more illuminating and requires some attention. The individual who, at the beginning of the story, embodies the prototypical idea of social and psychological conventionality, is actually the one whose transformation is more blatant. Such is the case that the same stalking behaviour characterising Parry becomes part of the psychological make-up of Rose. His state of confusion is such that he begins to mistrust everybody, including Claire, stops eating, cannot work as he becomes an absent-minded person and generally turns into a rather unstable individual himself. The film version of McEwan's novel greatly aids the portrayal of this transformation. From the moment we come to learn about Rose's changes, the same camera angles suggestive of hunting scenes previously associated with Parry are now employed for Rose. The scene which clearly marks the transition from conventional to post-traumatic mind style for Rose is the one in which he is seen rummaging through Claire's sculpting tools in her workshop. The scene starts off with the camera positioned behind a bookshelf so that when Rose enters the room the audience witnesses his movements from behind, which suggests a type of *cinematic stalking* behaviour. Moreover, shooting angles are so pervasively indicative of preying episodes and hunting scenes that both the film narrator (Bordwell 1997) and, by default, the cinema audience take on a pseudo-stalking role too.

The final stage in Rose's transformation, the one in which the uncertainty, confusion and puzzlement at what has occurred in his life peaks, materialises the moment that Parry finally goes to visit Claire and threatens her.⁴ From the moment Rose learns that Parry is with her, cinematic techniques focus on representing a state of heightened mental confusion mixed with fear and anger at his stalker. Cinematographically, this section marks a stark contrast with the rest of the film. The most immediate difference comes from the virtual absence of words. Joe is seen running, driving and getting into his flat but there are only a few words spoken. Secondly, these scenes are filmed at a kind of unreal pace as they are shot either in slow motion or speeded up, both techniques projecting a distorted and subjective representation of the passing of time. Thirdly, all the frames are out of focus, again aiding the sense of confusion felt by this character. Further cinematic devices suggesting Rose's confused state of mind are the constant shaking of the camera as if it were held by some person following him, and the nearly comedic sound of Rose's footsteps. All of the above depict a bewildered character, not

4. There are important differences between the novel and the film in this respect but for the purposes of this paper I am only discussing what takes place in the latter.

because of the verbal content of his speech, or the gestural features accompanying his utterances, but due to how the visual and audio modes are manipulated. The above also prove that only by implementing a multimodal analysis can the full extent of mind style projection be wholly understood.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, I want to underscore that phenomena typically discussed in stylistics and pertaining to the domain of written discourses can shed light on other forms of textuality. My work on mind style illustrates that a traditional definition of this device whereby through a series of verbal markers writers project the psychological and cognitive make-up of fictional characters needs further refining and broadening when applied to discourses other than the written one. Thus, when this traditionally verbal, prototypically written phenomenon is considered in relation to multimodal forms, such as the film adaptation of a novel, markers other than the verbal equally emerge as mind style projectors.

For instance, the incorporation of insights from the research on gestures into the analysis of a film adaptation of a novel has highlighted that the verbal indicators of the confusion generally characterising Joe Rose, on the one hand, and the conviction with which Jed Parry displays his love for the former, on the other, have found their multimodal counterparts in the way each character encodes their meanings in gestures. The film further succeeds in projecting multimodal realisations of mind style via prototypically cinematic techniques. In sum, this chapter has addressed the applicability of stylistic tools to data other than the fictional, written text and has suggested that such an enterprise can produce particularly enriching results especially, although not exclusively, as far as the adaptation of novels to the big screen is concerned.

Pragmatic deviance in realist horror films

A look at films by Argento and Fincher*

Roberta Piazza

In horror films the link between words and images is the key to the relationship between the “represented” and “interactive” participants, as the film characters and viewers respectively (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). This paper claims that, like crime novels (Gregoriou 2007), horror films are characterised by a communicative “deviance” expressed by the deliberate disregard of the cooperative maxims, resulting in an interaction that lacks in relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986) both on the verbal and visual planes. The discourse of four films by Italian director Argento, all exhibiting a similar pattern of narrative development, is analysed. The killer’s speech in David Fincher’s *Seven* is also discussed to suggest that it is possible to extend the analysis to other national cinemas. In the opening of the films discussed the verbal message is insufficiently informative, hence pragmatically deviant, as the killer engages in a series of uncooperative and impolite moves (Culpeper 1996, 1998; Bousfield 2007a): s/he displays a disembodied voice, does not reply to interlocutors, does not let them talk, avoids answering questions and generally projects a disguised identity. On the visual level, similar techniques lead to a violation of the quantity maxim: the killer’s fuzzy profile, the camera allowing access to only parts of his/her body (as a synecdoche of the entire person) convey a deviant and unsatisfactory message to participants. In the moment of the crime resolution, towards the end of the films, the pragmatic violation persists in the killer’s excessively informative explanation of the motives behind his/her actions. Throughout the films, the information is purposefully “concealed”, “disguised” (so that participants are encouraged to draw wrong conclusions) or, conversely, openly “disclosed” (Bubel 2008) to represented and interactive participants in different ways through the process of “frame refreshing” (Gregoriou 2007) as the revisitation of details and actions associated with the killer.

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1. Introduction

This chapter takes a genre approach to the discourse of film. Pursuing a line of inquiry that I have developed elsewhere (Piazza 2006a and 2011), this study aims to refine the concept of the “realist horror genre” (Jackson 2002: 32) – or “slashers”, centred on serial killers – by focusing on the plane of discourse that is generally ignored by the research in film studies. The aim is to show that a characterisation of the discursive mechanisms of horror can contribute to an understanding of that genre, in addition to the features on which film studies usually focus, such as the narrative structure and the iconography or the recurring images of a film, the actors’ dresses, their accoutrements (knives, guns, gloves stockings, high-heel boots), setting, lighting, editing and the like. The study is based on four films by Italian horror *auteur* Dario Argento; the final brief discussion of David Fincher’s 1996 *Seven* is not intended as a comparative study but only meant to suggest that the stylistic analysis proposed here can be extended to other expressions of the horror genre.

At the core of the study is the notion of “discourse representation”, intended as the reproduction, in a fictional context, of talk that can be associated with a particular film type. Although scripted film discourse is not based on systematic sociolinguistic observation of real-life talk (Murphy 1978), many scholars (Murphy 1978 himself; Burton 1980; Tannen and Lakoff 1994; Bubel and Spitz 2006, among others) find that its mimetic nature and pragmatic plausibility can shed light on the interactive mechanisms of authentic talk. Other scholars on the contrary, e.g. Rossi and Alvarez (both in this volume) stress how distant film discourse can be from real-life and Toolan (this volume), although in the context of an exploration of a TV series, highlights how fictional talk can be unnaturally uncooperative in curious and engaging ways. Within such a framework, this investigation of the horror genre takes the research on real-life dialogue as the basis on which fictional discourse can be analysed. In contrast to other methodological approaches that characterise fictional discourse against corpora of authentic speech (Quaglio 2009; Bednarek 2010 and partly Rossi this volume), this chapter uses pragmatics to interpret the killers’ discursive deviance and their norm-diverging speech. Discourse therefore is presented as the key to the interpretation of the killers’ identity and their positioning vis-à-vis the conventional (to use Montoro’s term in this volume) individuals that surround them.

Like other contributions to the volume, this chapter is rooted in linguistic stylistics, an area of investigation “that takes into full account the reader as an actively mediating presence, and hence it is able to describe the reader’s responses with some precision” (Gregoriou 2007: 19). Stylistic analysis, which develops on a

linguistic and, at times multimodal, plane Bordwell's (1997) cognitivist approach, acknowledges the readers' agency in the process of textual comprehension; this interpretation of the text recipients' role suits well the notion of genre that is explored in this chapter through the analysis of discourse. Although such critics as Easthope (1979/80) view genre as an abstract and provisional concept that transforms itself in each individual new manifestation, viewers contribute to a generalised definition of genres, in as far as they have clear expectations about film types and their features.

Following Iedema (2001), Jewitt and Oyama (2001), Hodge and Kress (1988) among others, this chapter interprets texts as *re-presentations* of the world and textual analyses as "attempts" to describe "a field of *potential* meanings" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 135) activated by the producers and interpreters of those texts. Any interpretative exercise therefore takes into account the "resources" (also in terms of the analytical models available to the investigator) that are embedded in the specific culture observed. In brief, this stylistic study of discursive practices in horror films takes into account both the viewers' agency and the cultural parameters within which the analysis is carried out.

2. The context of the study. The notion of deviance in killers' discourse

As discussed in the introduction, this chapter explores the way killers are portrayed as marginal and deviant subjects through the use of a discourse that diverges from the conventional norms of cooperation.

The killers' psychotic traits and their unconventional mind (Montoro this volume) which make them socially inadequate individuals are therefore reflected in their "linguistic deviance" (Gregoriou 2007; also see Brock on linguistic norm breaking in this volume).

This study, therefore, approaches the horror genre from the perspective of the identity that the killers project through discourse in relation to the majority of conventional speakers. As this is a stylistic analysis of film, in addition to forms of verbal deviance characterising the killers, this chapter points to a number of indicators of visual deviance that make the representation of the unconventional characters more complete.

The reading proposed in this chapter of a linguistically dissonant and pragmatically disturbed discourse characterising the killers in horror films does not intend to deny that in real life or indeed in other fictional contexts violations of Grice's maxims or in general of the principle of relevance are natural triggers for

interpretive inferences.¹ What this study suggests is that in terms of discourse representation, horror films seem to emphasise a language that is intended to sound diverging and unconventional. This can be viewed as a consequence of the lack of real contact between killers and their victims/antagonists. In other words, killers, generally portrayed as marginal individuals, isolated due to their unconventional mind, have a heavily intermittent relationship with their victims/opponents or hardly interact with them. Such positioning of killers as social outsiders weakens the normal implicature and inference-drawing process that occurs in every day exchanges and reduces the killers' representation to that of excluded individuals whose discourse is discordant and unconventional hence deviant.

3. Methodological framework and choice of data

The Argento films under study (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, *Sleepless*, *The Nine Tails' Cat* and *The Stendhal Syndrome*) were produced in the 1970s and late 1990s. Following the analysis of these classics of Italian horror the discussion later extends to a consideration of an example of American film not as an attempt at an actual comparative study but only to invite considerations about the applicability of the present analysis to a broader context.

This study combines a verbal-pragmatic investigation that follows gricean (Grice 1975) and post-gricean models (Sperber and Wilson 1986) with a parallel focus on multimodality. For this, the chapter mostly relies on Kress and van Leeuwen's work (1996) that reads visual images along Systemic Functional lines (e.g. Halliday 1978, 1993, 1994) and transfers such linguistic concepts as modality or transitivity to the plane of visuals. In tracing the development of the killers' identity, the paper focuses on their behaviour at the beginning and the conclusion of the film.

4. The analysis of linguistic and visual deviance

4.1 The opening of horror films

In line with what happens in crime novels, at crucial moments killers interact with conventional subjects who are their victims or antagonists; this is often part of a rehearsed farce the criminals put on to divert suspicions. Deviance both on

1. I am indebted to one of the two anonymous reviewers for pointing out the need to clarify this aspect of the study.

the verbal and visual planes marks the moments of contact between these marginal subjects and mainstream individuals. The following sections illustrate the range of pragmatic manifestations of such deviance that, to an extent, correspond to what Gregoriou (2007), with reference to horror fiction, and, originally, Fowler (1977) call “mind style”, reflecting a character’s psychological life and world view as projected through a text. Mind style (see Montoro this volume) reflects the “idiosyncratic tendency certain people are prone to” (Gregoriou 2007: 71) – if not their mental disorder – identifiable through the subject’s own language and the speech of other relevant characters. The approach to mind style in this chapter, however, is different from other studies, including Montoro’s in this volume in that, instead of focusing on such specific discourse indicators as modality or particular lexical verbs, it takes a micro-pragmatic approach (Mey 1993) that aims to highlight killers’ uncooperativeness. Not all horror films present a killer’s mind as immediately interpretable as in Argento’s slashers; however, the realist horror films examined in this chapter propose a narrative model that ends up with the triumph of normality over deviance hence a criminal psyche that, to an extent, can be explained by conventional parameters. In order to trace any substantial changes in the killers’ communicative behaviour the analysis focuses on the opening and final narrative moments in the film separately.² The killers’ pragmatic deviance explored in this chapter is closely connected to the concept of their inherent lack of cooperation with other speakers; therefore, the following section discusses this central feature of the killers’ speech.

4.1.1 *Inward-looking discourse focused on the self and oblivious to the others*
 When the killers engage with their interlocutors, their discourse is blatantly inward-looking, focused on the self and oblivious to others. This is suggested by the use of pronouns that are indicative of the killers’ interpersonal relationship with their interlocutors and the way addressees are positioned (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 115). The killers’ insistence on the first person pronouns foregrounds their inability and unwillingness to recognise “representational diversity” (Forguson and Gopnik 1988: 230), that is the perception of other individuals as having a different subjectivity from their own. The insistence on self-generated topics whose choice is entirely dominated by the killers also seems to correspond to what, albeit in the totally different environment of Facebook, Ong et al. (2010) define “narcissism” that is a form of communication centred on self-presentation and

2. As Mick Short has suggested (personal communication), a closer analysis would benefit from the tracing of the development that occurs to the killer’s personality throughout the film narrative but for practical reasons in this chapter I am contrasting only the opening and closing of a film as moments in that transformation.

encouraging extraversion.³ Although it refers to much more than just pronouns, White's (2002 and 2003) notion of "dialogic contraction" and "monoglossic" discourse as a restricted form of speech that does not entertain other alternatives usefully describes the self-referentiality and narrow scope of killers' language.

The killers' notion of self is intrinsically linked by opposition to the concept of the "other" and both define the villain's identity and subjectivity. Although outside the linguistic domain, Todorov (1984) discusses a typology of relations to the other from value judgement to indifference. In the middle there is "the action of *rapprochement* or distancing in relation to the other" (Todorov 1984: 185), as in the case when subjects identify the others with themselves and impose their own image on to them. The killer's self and his/her identity are construed in a similar fashion by an assimilation of the other mostly through a monologue that is the true locus of sameness in that the other is not perceived as a proper interlocutor but as the tool for the recognition of the self and for his own enunciation (Islam 1996: 78).⁴ "Self" and "other" determine identity and subjectivity; in their linguistic expression these are connected to deixis (Fludernik 1993: 42) that, through pronouns (*I, you*), demonstratives (*this, that*), place and time adverbs (*here, there, last year*), points to a referent in a given context and linguistically shapes the self-other relationship.

In Argento's 1996 *La sindrome di Stendhal* (*The Stendhal Syndrome*, 1996), while on the phone to his victim, the killer's obsession with himself is conveyed by the possessive determiners (Excerpt 1), which are highlighted in bold for easier recognition.

Excerpt 1

Killer: *Pronto, Anna. **Mi sei mancata. Ho pensato molto a te. Anche io ho letto quel libro, sai? Il mio sentimento è così profondo da rasentare la pietà. Tutto questo parla chiaramente alla mia anima. Se solo potessi dimenticare. È questo che Stendhal scriveva. E tu Anna puoi dimenticare? Puoi dimenticare me?***

'Hello, Anna. I've missed you. I've thought a lot about you. I've read that book **myself** you know. **My** feeling is so profound that it borders on pity. All

3. Thanks to my student Eva Arnaiz for bringing Ong et al. (2010) to my attention.

4. Islam (1996) explains the concept of the fake otherness with the encounter of Prospero and Ariel on a deserted island. Prospero salutes Ariel as his servant and gains his self-recognition as a lord in return. Ariel therefore is not a real interlocutor and "[h]is voice is emplaced in a mock dialogue to service Prospero's desperate need of recognition" (Islam 1996: 78).

this speaks clearly to **my soul**. **Oh if only I could forget**. That's what Stendhal wrote about. You Anna, can you forget? Can you forget **me**?⁵

As a reflection of the killers' insistence on their own internal world, in their self-centred speech most of the verbs are mental process verbs of perception (see Kennedy 1982, for a Functional Systemic classification of verb phrases) and the few action verbs often suggest limited dynamism. As in some cases indicated by the research on real-life conceptualisations of self versus others (e.g. McGuire and McGuire 1986), the use of verbs that pertain to the affective rather than the cognitive domain (i.e. *like, feel, miss* rather than *believe, know* etc.) and the concentration on self-orientated verb forms (first person or second person but still with a self orientation) signal an egotistic/narcissistic view and convey the criminals' solitary and isolated condition as in Excerpt 2 again from *La sindrome di Stendhal* (*The Stendhal Syndrome*):

Excerpt 2

Killer: [...] *No, presto, sveglia, ti ho osservato a lungo mentre guardavi quei quadri. Hai avuto quella sensazione così forte, l'hai provata anche tu, ammettilo.*

'[...] No, hurry-up, wake up. **I observed you** for a long stretch while you were looking at those paintings. You had that strong sensation; **you felt it too**, admit it.'

The psychotic killer's discourse of Argento's film contains a series of pronouncements of absolute and non-negotiable nature, which falsely entertain alternative views while in fact excluding them: "You had that strong sensation; you felt it too, admit it" / "I know you are always on my side and I love you too". By uttering these pronouncements to a silenced interlocutor, the killer construes a reality that is impossible to refute through a statement that rules out any other alternative, an example of what White (2003) calls "monoglossic" discourse.

Labov and Fanshel (1977) draw a useful distinction between A-events, or events in the A-speaker's biography or known only to A and not necessarily to B, and B-events that, on the contrary, refer to the B-speaker's reality. In normal conversations, speakers use A-events to give information, express feelings, demonstrate or refer (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 61) and expect to be reinforced and acknowledged by the other speaker. An A-speaker cannot cover B-events without fear of contradiction; in fact, "if A makes a statement about B events, then it is heard as a request for confirmation" (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 100). However, the

5. The translations of film excerpts in the chapter are mine.



Figure 1. Frontality as a token of high modality in *La sindrome di Stendhal* (*The Stendhal Syndrome*)⁶

pattern of a speaker producing B-events is frequent in the criminals' one-sided interaction with their victims in which A-events and B-events are both assimilated into a unified nebulous whole.

The verbal concentration on self is emphasised by a frequent use of visual high modality. On a linguistic verbal plane, modality – either high or low – expresses the greater or lesser degree of “affinity” with the proposition that a speaker is uttering, in other words “the extent to which producers commit themselves to, or conversely distance themselves from, propositions: modality therefore expresses the speakers’ degree of ‘affinity’ with the proposition” (Fairclough 1992: 142). In Kress and van Leeuwen’s adaptation of Systemic Functional parameters to visual images, the verbal concept of modality is reinterpreted and adapted to the reading of images. Modality therefore is translated into speaker’s “frontality” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 159), which, in combination with close-up shots, appropriate sharpness of details and “colour rendition” (van Leeuwen 2010), conveys the speaker’s self-assertiveness as in the frame of the killer from *The Stendhal Syndrome* (Figure 1).

4.1.2 *Killer’s discursive unidirectionality*

The killers’ concentration on the self that was discussed in the previous section is enhanced by their tendency to unidirectionality. This additional feature of the killers’ talk can be interpreted as a failure of relevance (Sperber and Wilson’s 1986). As is known, differently from Grice’s cooperative maxims, Relevance Theory does

6. Thanks to my son, Daniele, for all his support with Photoshop.

not assume the existence of specific maxims; rather it relies on the speakers' general informative intention and on a presumption of relevance according to which simply "achieving successful communication is a sufficient aim in conversation or other verbal communication" (Mey 1993: 80). A speaker is communicatively successful if his/her informative intention is adequately conveyed to the interlocutors, and thus s/he manages to persuade, inform, reassure etc. them. Relying on a presumption of relevance, we expect texts to make sense i.e. to be relevant as this reduces the hearer's cognitive effort (Chilton 2004: 21).

One methodological concern of this study has been the way to assess the degree of over/under informativeness in the killers' messages. In my reading of Sperber and Wilson (1986) I found little guidance as to ways to discern in specific terms between over and under informative discourse. Furthermore, the "presumption of relevance" of which these authors speak, in terms of the hearers' willingness to process inferentially speakers' messages in an economic way adds little if anything to the measurement of the degree of relevance of a message that was needed for this study. The additional interpretation of relevance as a comparative and quantitative concept does not help much either because it is not indicative of any practical way of measuring relevance.

In light of these considerations, the present study has adopted the following basic criteria that have allowed establishing the level of relevance of propositions in the film script: (i) a textual/external/extradiegetic parameter; and (ii) an interactional/internal/intradiegetic parameter. With regard to the former textual criterion, it is the task of the interactive participants who are to a degree external to the diegesis of the film to assess the level of informativeness. In *The Nine Tails' Cat* for instance the audience is able to note that the killer's discussion of chromosome mapping, being the second instance of speech on that topic addressed to the same interlocutor (and to the interactive participants) is not strictly relevant. The intradiegetic interactional criterion, on the contrary, gauges informativeness on the basis of the interlocutors' reactions. As a way of illustration, in *Seven* detective Mills' reaction to the killer's utterances (*Huh/Fuck up you piece of shit/Shut up*) is an indication of their irrelevance to him as is in the case of the turns produced by the blind detective in *Nine Tails' Cat* (*Drop all that/All this is of no interest to me*). These two criteria have allowed the classification of pragmatically deviant utterances that is discussed in the next section.

It will be shown how the killers' non-relevant communication can be said to impose a strain on the viewers' decoding process. The killer's verbal message is insufficiently informative hence pragmatically deviant, uncooperative and impolite (Culpeper 1996 and 1998; Bousfield 2007a): the killers' performance frequently makes use of a disguised identity and a disembodied voice, especially on the telephone, which ignores interlocutors or does not let them talk. The discursive

unidirectionality applies to the killers' refusal to play the normal role of respondents when they are the recipients of their victims' or opponents' talk. Silence, generally accompanied by brutality, as the token of psychotic disregard, is the killers' unmarked reply throughout the horror narrative.

Some instances of monologicistic speech, usually concluding with the criminal's act of violence, betray the victim's hopeless illusion that they will be able to engage in an interaction with the criminal. The camera's focus on the victim visually confirms the complete asymmetry of the victim-killer interaction, yet the discourse level seems to suggest some degree of commonality due to the victim wrongly assuming familiarity with the criminal.

In Excerpt 3 the car-guardian in *Non ho sonno* (*Sleepless*, 2000) has tracked down the serial killer with the help of a gold fountain pen the criminal left behind next to his latest victim's body. It is evident that the two speakers share a certain communality of references and information (cf. A-events in Labov and Fanshel 1977) which characterises their communication as intimate.

Excerpt 3

Car-guardian: *Eccomi qua, si ricorda di me? [Softly] La notte ... che diavolo le aveva fatto quella puttana? No, scusi, sono fatti suoi. Senta, la dedica mi ha aiutato, ma mi ci è voluto per trovarla. Adesso me lo merito un premio, non crede? Ci mettiamo d'accordo e io tengo la bocca chiusa. È perfetta, non l'ho toccata, c'è ancora tutto l'inchiostro, provi, provi, ecco, non non ho carta, ma provi qui, la prego, provi. [Offers his own hand to write on.] Che sta scrivendo, che vuol dire? ah-----*
[He is killed.]

'Here I am, do you remember me? [Softly] **The night** ... what the hell had **that bitch** done to you? Oh sorry, it's your business. Look, **the inscription** helped me but it took me a long time to find you; now I deserve a prize, **don't you think? We'll make a deal** and I'll keep my mouth shut. It's perfect, I haven't touched it, it still has all the ink, try it try it, here, I- I have no paper, but try it here [Offers his own hand to write on], please do try it. What are you writing? What does it mean? ah-----

[He is killed.]'

The killer's reply in a different modality – writing – and his sentence *sono un bambino cattivo* ('I am a naughty child'), incomprehensible to the guardian as well as the viewers, is irrelevant to the victim's question. This goes against the familiarity implied in the car-guardian's speech, in which the use of anaphora suggests that

the two interlocutors share a memory of past events: “*the night*” refers exophorically to the night of the murder, similarly “*that bitch*” is the criminal’s victim. The guardian’s choice of such a derogatory term is meant to establish a communality of reference with the villain in that *bitch* ratifies the misogynous vision shared by the two men according to which a morally disturbing woman may deserve and be responsible for the violence she is subjected to. Therefore, the criminal physically punished the woman by murdering her and the guardian subscribes to that vision by condemning her again with his insult. Other items such as “the inscription” and “I’ll keep my mouth shut” further confirm the two men’s communality of reference. However, the two men’s intimacy does not guarantee the fluency and bi-directionality of the communication and the car-guardian’s monologue is marked by self-answered questions (“What the hell had that bitch done to you? Oh sorry eh it’s your business / (...) now I deserve a prize, don’t you think? We’ll make a deal and I’ll keep my mouth shut”).

Examples of this pattern are numerous and Excerpt 4 from *Il gatto a nove code* (*The Nine Tails’ Cat*, 1971), in which a kidnapped child aimlessly asks the killer about her destination (she refers to her uncle as her “little biscuit”), confirms the one way victim-killer communication (Figure 2):

Excerpt 4

Child: *Andiamo dal mio biscottino? Perché non mi rispondi?* [The girl is dragged out of the taxi to another car.] *Se non me lo dici non salgo.* [She is slapped in the face.]

‘Are we going to my little biscuit? Why aren’t you answering me? [*The girl is dragged out of the taxi to another car.*] If you don’t tell me I won’t get in. [*She is slapped in the face.*]

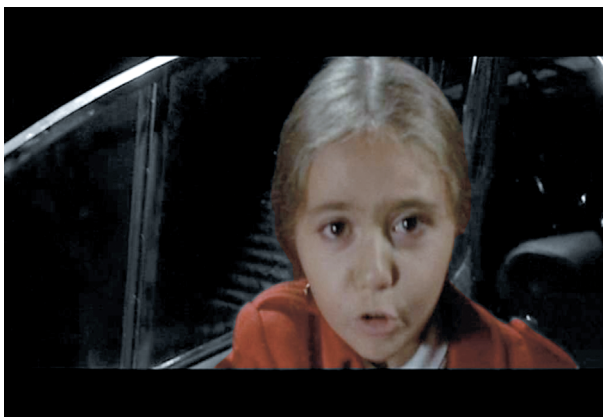


Figure 2. The child’s unresponded query in *Il gatto a nove code* (*The Nine Tails’ Cat*)

4.1.3 *Insufficient and irrelevant linguistic and visual information*

Aside from moments when the killer ignores a querying victim, there are instances, similar to the use of disembodied voices, when the killer's words are altered and incomprehensible. In *The Stendhal Syndrome*, for instance, the audience witnesses a unidirectional exchange in which the still unaware female victim produces a monologue only interrupted by the killer's very short comment. Such a line that the woman understands is unintelligible to the interactive participants, the audience, who can only infer it through the victim's reply (5).

Excerpt 5

Victim: *No, io non mi aspetto davvero assoluta sincerità dagli uomini. Dico, ti sembra per caso il tipo che CREde nelle favole? Però vorrei almeno un minimo di educazione ogni tanto*

[Killer's voice is incomprehensible.]

Sicuro, certo che vorrei baciarti anch'io. Lui invece non mi voleva mai baciare.

'No I don't expect guys to be completely honest with me; do I look like someone who believes in fairy tales? Still a girl appreciates a gentleman now and then.

[Killer's voice is incomprehensible.]

Sure I'd like to kiss you too. He instead never wanted to kiss me.

Such information failures on the verbal level are often mirrored by equivalent failures on the visual plane as in the cases for instance when the audience only gets a glimpse of the killers but not their whole clear image. Contrary to what happened in the previous instance in which the killer's voice was incomprehensible only to the viewers but not to the character on screen, in these cases the interactive participants are instead favoured with more visual information than the represented participants (or most of them) who do not have any access to such important details. Therefore the discrepancy between the information provided to the represented and interactive participants acquires particular significance in this genre. In *Il gatto a nove code* (*The Nine Tails' Cat*) for instance the viewers or "interactive participants" (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) have a more comprehensive vision of the scenario in which the killer operates. First, they only see the serial killer's eye, his cigarette and the butt he throws away while spying on his next victim, or the shadow his razor casts on a wall; then, thanks to a photographer who blows up a negative, the criminal's hand and arm become visible as he pushes an unaware man under the train (Figure 3).

In being a partial representation of a whole, the visual manifestations of the killer's identity are a form of metonymy. The eye stands for the killer's entire



Figure 3. The killer's hand appears in a blown-up negative in *Il gatto a nove code* (*The Nine Tails' Cat*)

body and his hand or even the cigarette butt he flings away are an extension of his anatomy. However, being metonymic representations such imprecise visual signs fail to convey the necessary amount of information and being a failure of relevance, they impose a deliberate cognitive strain on the audience. This is the case in *La sindrome di Stendhal* (*The Stendhal Syndrome*, 1996) when the rapist's shadow is projected on the wall, too nebulous and undefined to reveal the killer's profile or in *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, 1970) when the interactive participants cannot see the killer but are given the close shot on her gloved hands.

In conclusion, in the opening stages of Argento's horror films, both the interactive and represented participants are the recipients of a discourse that lacks in relevance in being insufficiently clear and deliberately uninformative. As a result, through their speech serial killers are portrayed not solely as socially but also as linguistically deviant subjects.

So far we have discussed features of killers' discourse in the opening stages of a horror film; the next sections will follow the switch that occurs towards the end of these films.

4.2 Later stages in the narrative

As Carroll (1990) observes, in the final stage of films with a typical "discovery plot", following the onset of criminal activity, discovery and confirmation, "[h]umanity marches out to meet its monster and the confrontation generally takes the form of a debacle" with often more than one conflict (Carroll 1990: 102). With a few

exceptions,⁷ and especially in the present case of “realistic horror films” that portray a relatively comprehensible killer’s mind, in the final stages of the narrative, the moment of resolution and revelation generally discloses the motives behind the villain’s murdering frenzy.

One of the claims of this chapter is that in horror films the scripted discourse is designed to accompany and prepare the narrative developments expressed by the visual. Being accounts of events that involve a particular type of logical transformation (Branigan 1992), narratives involve a specific “pattern” and “purpose”. Due to the force of the narrative design and its intentionality, the final pattern “turns out to be a reshaping of the initial state” (Branigan 1992: 8–9). In the horror films observed, such a conclusive reshaping of the power allocation is crucial to asserting the societal triumph over the villain’s transgressive behaviour that the audience has witnessed all along. The narrative *dénouement* generally involves the villains relinquishing their power to the opponents who herald the now restored societal order. Such a transformation is marked by a change in discourse from the initial unidirectionality and one-sidedness, characterising the discourse produced by and addressed to the killer in the initial stages, to an apparent bidirectionality.

The final revelation, in which the villains abandon their original reticence and give in to an interrogator, is, however, a pretence communication between two interlocutors that is clearly directed to the “overhearing audience” (Bubel 2008). At that stage, the villain’s opponent discursively behaves like a “report elicitor” (Heritage 1985: 100)⁸ retrieving all useful information from the killers by eliciting it or formulating it in a way that calls for confirmation on their part, with the purpose of clarifying the narrative events for the audience. At this stage, therefore, horror discourse appears changed along two main patterns: (i) speech-deprivation in terms of language *about* rather than *by* the killer, and (ii) over-informativeness as a token of “marked disclosure” functioning as a deliberate leakage of information to the audience (Piazza 2011). From a narrative perspective, the option is between an intradiegetic dialogue, which is “homodiegetic” if it is uttered by secondary agents in the narrative (Genette 1980) and an “autodiegetic” dialogue if produced by the killers themselves.

At the end of *L’uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*), the interpretation of the killer’s deviant behaviour is provided by the

7. In the Argento’s films analysed, instead of the final showdown, at times the heroes are “unable to master either the visual or the textual elements under investigation” (Mendik 1996: 45) and the interpretation of facts offered leaves the spectators suspended.

8. In Heritage (1985) the term is in contrast to “report recipient” that displays verbal expressions of “affiliative alignment” such as tokens of surprise, empathy, association with the hearer etc. (*mm, hm, oh, really?*)

characters around her not by the killer. During a TV interview, which discloses to the audience – both the intradiegetic TV spectators and the extradiegetic film viewers – the motives behind the killer’s actions, psychiatrist and police advisor Reinaldi reveals that the killer had been a rape victim. That tragic experience had turned her from a passive victim of violence to an individual deriving her agency from inflicting pain on others. In this instance, in which the killer is absent, the conventional winning characters have appropriated the account of her story and her space on screen, thus officially relegating her to the role of disturbing “other”.

In alternative to such a discourse deprivation, killers can produce speech that breaks the norm of relevance in being overinformative. In *The Stendhal Syndrome* (1996), for instance, in the conclusive stage of the first part of the narrative, the killer reveals how he was at the Pitti museum in Florence where the detective, who is also the rape victim, went (Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6

Killer: *Drin drin drin anche a me piace fare le telefonate. Mi piace moltissimo Anche a Firenze, ricordi? [...] Sì, mi piace molto fare le telefonate e quella volta ci sei cascata. Ti tenevo già d'occhio a Roma, lo sapevo che cosa volevi, volevi me eh ti piaccio non è vero? Lo so che sei sempre dalla mia parte e anch'io ti amo.*

‘Drin drin drin, I like to make phone calls too. I like it very much. Even in Florence, remember? [...] Yes, I like making phone calls very much, and this time you fell for it. I was already keeping an eye on you in Rome, I knew what you wanted, you wanted me didn’t you? You like me, don’t you? I know you are always on my side and I love you too’.

Although clearly addressing his opponent (and victim in this case), the killer confesses his perverse mind by producing a monologue that does not expect any response. In a dialogic situation in which the killers verbally engage with their antagonists overinformativeness is equally identifiable. In *The Nine Tails’ Cat*, the killer, a genetic scientist, explains to journalist and detective Giordani his medical findings. The scientist’s detailed explanation is provided through a proper mini-lecture supported by visuals in the form of two wall panels to which the speaker points as he explains to Giordani the difference between a normal XYX chromosome sequence and an abnormal XYX one, the latter of which indicates a predisposition to anti-social behaviour, violence and aggression. Such an explanation given to the audience or “interactive participants” via the “represented participants” or the “people ... depicted in the images” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 119) later clarifies the killer’s motives and functions as “frame refresher” (Gregoriou 2007) in that it revives the viewers’ memory of past events. However,

at this stage the killer's speech infringes the supermaxim of relevance in being a repeat of previously provided information: prior to the above scene the laboratory director's daughter had given the very same information about the chromosome sequence discovery to the very same detective. The chromosome map is the key to the mystery, yet in this specific narrative context, it can be argued that it is a violation of the quality maxim (Grice 1975) or in general of the principle of relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986) on the part of the killer (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7

Killer: *Lei forse saprà che la tabella cromosomica di ognuno è composta da geni che hanno la forma di X e Y. [He points to the cromosomic map on a wall panel.] Come esemplificazione si è stabilito uno schema che ha la forma di un triangolo come questo, vede? costituito da file degradanti di geni X e Y. Questo triangolo termina con una X e una Y. Soltanto in rarissimi casi lo schema si chiude con una X seguita da due Y. Bene, pensi che recentemente in America un gruppo di studiosi ha preso in esame tutti i detenuti di un penitenziario e ha fatto per caso una scoperta sensazionale. Degli oltre 200 maniaci e assassini che sono stati esaminati, un'altissima percentuale possedeva la triade XYY che di solito è molto rara. Quindi questa triade XYY indica una naturale tendenza alla criminalità o almeno una predisposizione a una aggressività abnorme.*

'You may know that everyone's chromosome map consists of genes in the shape of X and Y. [He points to the chromosome map on a wall panel.] Scientists have represented it as a triangle-shaped pattern, like this you see? It consists of a V-shaped row of X and Y genes. This triangle ends with an X and a Y. In very rare cases the pattern ends with an X followed by two Ys. Recently a group of American scientists examined all the prison inmates and just by chance made an extraordinary discovery. Out of the over 200 maniacs and killers under study a very high percentage of them were endowed with the XYY triad, which is usually very rare. Therefore, this XYY pattern indicates a natural tendency towards criminality or at least a predisposition to an abnormal aggressiveness.'

Coupled with the final scene in the film when the killer engages in unsolicited explanations (Excerpt 8), such exchanges contribute to a representation of the killers as speakers producing discourse that is irrelevant in being inappropriate to a particular narrative moment and context. Lines b, d and f, that underscore in the interlocutor's responses the irrelevance of the killer's speech, are emphasised in bold for easy identification.

Excerpt 8

- a Killer: *No no dovevo dovevo farlo, non avevo scelta; anni di studio per poi scoprire che avevo io stesso la triade di essere un asociale predisposto all'omicidio, mi avrebbero cacciato dall'istituto*
- b Arnaud: *Cosa ne hai fatto della mia Lori eh? parla*
- c Killer: *Quella notte aprii l'armadio, cambiai la scheda con un'altra negativa, nessuno se ne sarebbe mai accorto. Ma Calabresi sapeva sapeva e cercò di ricattarmi, e l'ho dovuto uccidere lo capisci?*
- d Arnaud: *Lascia stare tutto*
- e Killer: *e pure gli altri [...]*
- f Arnaud: *Questo non mi interessa, dimmi che ne hai fatto di Lori?*
- g Killer: *L'ho uccisa.*
- a Killer: 'I had to I had to do it, I had no other choice. Years of study to find out that I myself had the triad in my genes, that I myself was an asocial individual predisposed to homicide. They would have kicked me out of the research institute'
- b Arnaud: 'What did you do to my Lori, tell me'
- c Killer: 'That night I opened the file cabinet, replaced my positive card with a negative one, no one would have ever found out. But Calabresi knew that, he knew and tried to blackmail me. I had to kill him, do you understand?'
- d Arnaud: 'Drop all that'
- e Killer: 'And all the others too [...]
- f Arnaud: 'All this is of no interest to me; tell me what you did to Lori'
- g Killer: 'I killed her.'

In conclusion, in the final revelation phase of the film the preference for a representation of killer's talk as monologicistic discourse seems to repropose the solipsistic discursive self-reflexivity and disengagement that killers showed when confronting their opponents in the initial moments of the film narrative. This seems to be the pattern of discourse that characterises the films under study in which the serial killers are portrayed as possessing a unconventional or psychotic mind. In conclusion, similar to Montoro's investigation of Purdy's obsessive personality in this volume, by focusing on two distinct moments of the film narrative, this analysis has highlighted the deviant mind style of killers within the genre context of Argento's realist horror films.

4.3 Beyond Italian cinema

It is possible to hypothesise that the discursive patterns of horror are not only germane to Argento's cinema but characterise also other interpretations of the genre. This point needs to be duly explored, therefore the following discussion is only meant to be suggestive of the possibility of adapting the approach adopted in this study to different data.

Focusing on a serial killer whose actions follow seven capital sin-inspired morals, David Fincher's 1996 *Seven* is a good candidate to verify whether the discursive patterns in Argento's films may be found in other contexts. In the conclusive scene the killer (Kevin Spacey) confesses to young detective Mills (Brad Pitt) of being a sinner himself ("It seems that envy is my sin"). Mills shows very little interest in this overly informative discourse until the killer's mention of his wife; following this, instead of replying Mills' direct question, the killer provides irrelevant details (Excerpt 9).

Excerpt 9

Killer: *When I said I admired you I meant what I said. You make quite a life for yourself, detective*

Mills: **Huh**

Killer: *You should be very proud*

Mills: *Fuck up you **piece of shit** [...]*

Killer: *I wish I could have lived like you did*

Mills: **Shut up** [...]

Killer: *Did you hear me, detective? I'm telling you how much I admired you (0.1) and your pretty wife*

Mills: *What?*

Killer: *Tracy*

Mills: *What did you fucking say?*

Killer: *It's disturbing how easily a member of the press can purchase information from the men in your precinct. I visited your home this morning **AFTer**⁹ you left. I tried to play husband I tried to taste the life of the simple man.*

Detective Somerset: *Wait*

Killer: *It didn't work out so I took a souvenir, her pretty head [...] Because I envy your normal life*

Somerset: [to Mills] *Put your gun down*

Killer: *It seems that envy is my sin*

Mills: *Oh what's in the box? What's in the fucking box?*

9. Caps indicate louder voice hence emphasis.

- Killer: *I've just told you [...] She begged for her life, detective*
 Somerset: [to killer] *Shut up*
 Killer: *She begged for her life and for the life of the baby inside her (0.2) [to Somerset] He didn't know.*

As in Argento's films, here the killer is being overinformative hence apparently not immediately relevant to the context as suggested by his interlocutor's visible annoyance. On the multimodal plane, as in other cases discussed previously, this is accompanied by frontality as a token of high visual modality, suggesting the killer's adherence to the propositions he is uttering (Figure 4). In Fincher's horror thriller as in Argento's films, the portrayal of the killer is that of an individual who does not pragmatically relate to the surrounding reality either verbally or visually and is narcissistically inward-looking.

In conclusion in *Seven*, as in the other films discussed in this chapter, the manifestations of deviance result from the violation of the pragmatic norm of relevance. While in real-life discourse pragmatic violations naturally trigger implicature, the discourse of horror film seems to emphasise the lack of cooperation between the various subjects in the film narrative and portray the killer as deviant. Pragmatic failure (Thomas 1983: 84) – or what is alluded to as a possible pragmatic failure – as the inability to detect the intended illocutionary force of an utterance, therefore, allows us to project into the mind style or mental self (Fowler 1977) of the killer.



Figure 4. Killer's frontality as high modality in *Seven*

5. Conclusions

In line with other contributions in this volume (e.g. Toolan) that point to the special nature of fictional discourse, this chapter has interpreted killers' talk in realist horror genre as using a language that consistently violates the Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975) and, in showing limited relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986), requires the interactive and represented participants' high cognitive effort. The deviant discourse of horror film, as has been discussed, involves both the plane of words and images. As Gregoriou observes, "[l]anguage is not independent of the mind"; therefore, when novelists or script writers "employ deviant linguistic structures to portray the criminal mind, they are in fact allowing the readers access to the criminal's conceptualisation of reality" (Gregoriou 2007:79). Through the representation of horror discourse, this chapter has proposed a characterisation of the serial killers as subjects that are different and unconventional in that they do not align with conventional mainstream discourse practices.

The exploration of the discourse of horror film has also offered a reflection on the difference between fictional and real-life talk. While in authentic non-scripted exchanges pragmatic infringements are simply the trigger for implicature-drawing processes on the basis of an expectation of cooperation and relevance amongst speakers, the discourse of horror suggests a pragmatic deviance that derives from the hiatus between killers' individual mental self (Fowler 1977:103) and the conventional minds of their opponents or victims. This chapter suggests that in slasher films scriptwriters' choice goes in the direction of a discourse representation that both verbally and visually exploits the notion of distance and uncooperation between conventional and unconventional interlocutors thus suggesting pragmatic failure. Such a detachment that informs most exchanges impairs or even blocks what in real-life is the expectation and presumption of relevance, balanced informativeness and readiness to "disambiguate" the expressions that are not straightforward (Mey 1993:81), thus determining a conversational behaviour in which implicature-drawing is limited or absent.

CHAPTER 6

Emotion and empathy in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*

A case study of the “funny guy” scene

Derek Bousfield and Dan McIntyre

This chapter examines how the emotion fear is generated through the linguistic, paralinguistic and kinesic actions of multiple characters in the “funny guy” scene from Martin Scorsese’s 1990 film *Goodfellas*. The scene in question takes place in *The Bamboo Lounge* restaurant-bar and features Tommy, a mafioso, relating a humorous story to his compatriots. Henry, a friend of Tommy’s, laughs and compliments Tommy on his story. Tommy reacts surprisingly badly to this and begins to behave in a threatening manner. Henry displays a number of traits that suggest he is frightened by Tommy’s outburst and afraid of what it might lead to. We use insights from im/politeness theory, theories of characterisation and work on multimodal stylistics in order to account for how we recognise Henry’s fear in this scene. We claim that the interplay between linguistic and non-linguistic elements is essential for conveying Henry’s fear and invoking this emotion in the viewing audience. Our analysis reveals the necessity of analysing both the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of film, and we propose this as a methodological necessity for future work in Film Studies, Cultural Studies and some branches of Stylistics.

1. Introduction

In this chapter we consider the concepts of emotion and empathy and how they are invoked in dramatic discourse via a combination of sociopragmatic and multimodal stylistic analysis. In so doing we aim to make a contribution to the development of a stylistics of film. The film that we have chosen to analyse is Martin Scorsese’s *Goodfellas* (1990), in particular one distinct scene where we claim that the emotion fear is displayed by a character called Henry and is likely to be experienced vicariously by the viewing audience. Our main aim is to examine how the fear emotion is constructed linguistically and paralinguistically. When Henry

(played by Ray Liotta), a close associate of Tommy's, laughs at a story that Tommy (Joe Pesci) tells, and comments positively on Tommy's storytelling abilities, Tommy becomes irrationally angry and begins to act in an intimidating manner until the tension is resolved and he backs down. Throughout the extract, Henry's fear is palpable for the other characters in the scene as well as for the viewing audience, making for a tense piece of drama. Our analysis focuses on uncovering the source of the fear emotion in this scene, how it is exhibited by Henry and how it is potentially felt and empathised with by the viewing audience. We draw on research in im/politeness (Bousfield 2007a, b, 2008 and Culpeper 1996, 1998) and characterisation (Culpeper 2001) to inform the linguistic elements of this analysis, as well as work on the nascent area of the stylistics of film (see, for example, McIntyre 2008; Piazza 2010) in order to account for the multimodal interplay between language and image in the excerpt. By considering such multimodal elements of the scene we are able to suggest how the fear emotion (and related emotions such as dread anticipation, etc.) may be generated not simply in particular characters but in viewers themselves, thereby taking account of the complex discourse structure of drama. More specifically, we look at how the character Tommy creates fear and how his supposed closest friend Henry exhibits fear (and how dread anticipation is likely to be instilled in the audience as a consequence). In doing so we demonstrate the necessity of engaging in multimodal analysis in the stylistic analysis of film.

2. *Goodfellas*

Goodfellas (directed by Martin Scorsese, 1990) is a gangster/mob movie set in New York from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. It is told primarily from the perspective of the first-person narrator Henry, who is part-Italian-American, part-Irish-American and who, within two minutes of the film's beginning, tells the audience, "As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster." The film purports to be a fictionalised account of the real life one-time Mafioso Henry Hill, now a member of the US Witness Protection Programme.

The scene that we analyse is set in a restaurant-bar called *The Bamboo Lounge*. The scene is not in the published screenplay (Scorsese and Pileggi 2000) of *Goodfellas* as it is one which arose through improvisation by the actors as a way of exploring their characters and the relationships between them. As such, the dialogue is highly naturalistic. The fact that the scene does not appear in the screenplay of the film makes a multimodal analysis of its performance all the more necessary. This is in opposition to the usual methodological approach taken by stylisticians of drama, which is to analyse the dramatic text alone (see Short 1981:81). This

approach is taken on the basis that the script is the only aspect of drama which remains stable from performance to performance. Of course, this approach does not hold to the same degree with film drama, where, with the odd exception, there is only ever one production of a film (see McIntyre 2008). And in the case of *Goodfellas*, since there is no published text of the scene we are interested in, we are forced to focus our analysis on the actual performance. The same would hold true for any film which includes in its final “cut”¹ scenes which arose out of improvisation or which were amended following consultation between the director, the actors and the writers.

Because there is no published version of the scene we are focusing on, we have based our analysis on a transcription that we made ourselves from the film. This is reproduced below. We then provide a multimodal analysis of the scene, focusing initially on a pragmatic analysis of the dialogue as a first step to understanding the changing and highly charged relationship between the characters. Following this, we analyse the non-linguistic aspects of the scene, including elements of *mise-en-scène*. Finally we discuss the findings from these two analyses in our conclusion, where we also make some suggestions concerning the future direction of a stylistics of film.

2.1 The “funny guy” scene

[Context: The scene takes place inside The Bamboo Lounge restaurant. It is night time and the restaurant is full. Tommy, Henry, Anthony, Frankie and others are seated at a table and are enjoying drinks in the restaurant/bar. Tommy is regaling those in his immediate circle with a personal anecdote. Everyone in the group is a self-confessed *Goodfella*, that is, a gangster – either a full member of the Mafia or affiliated with it.]

Example (1)

- a. Tommy: *Wha-What's really funny is the fucking bank job away in Secaucus. I'm in the middle of the fucking weeds, laying down. H'comes over, he says, 'What are you doing?', I said, 'I'm resting', 'Here?!? You're resting?!?' Like I'm on the fucking beach in the park. I said, 'I'm resting!' I know I'm resting, 'I'm resting.' They pull me in, they start giving me all kinds of*

1. Though, of course, the notion of a “final cut” becomes increasingly problematic in an era which embraces – for apparently financial rather than aesthetic reasons – “theatrical” and “director’s” versions of what is, essentially, the same movie. As such, in the absence of improvised scenes, Short’s argument – that the published screenplay is the stable text – still holds true, generally.

questions. You know, this and that. He says 'Oh, er, what are you going to tell us, tough guy?' I said, 'My usual. Zero. Nothing. Why tell you?' The fuck. (Group laughter) He says, 'No, you're gonna tell me something today, tough guy.' I said, 'Alright, I'll tell you something, go fuck your mother.' (Group laughter. Tommy makes punching motions towards his own head.) Bing! Pow! Boom! Bing! You saw the paper Anthony, my head was up like this. (Group laughter) So now I'm coming around, you know, I'm starting to come out of it and who do I see in front of me? This big prick again. He says, 'Oh, what d'you wanna to tell me now, tough guy?' I said, 'Bing, what are you doing here? I thought I tell you to go fuck your mother.' (Group laughter) I thought he was gonna shit. (Group laughter. Tommy makes kicking motions under the table.) Pow! Ping! Buff! The fuckers. (Group laughter) Gee, I wish I was big just once. (Group laughter) They were big cops. (Group laughter)

- b. Henry: (Laughing) Funny. You're really funny. You're really funny.
- c. Tommy: What do you mean I'm funny? (Group laughter)
- d. Henry: (Still smiling, group laughter subsides) It's funny, you know. It's a great story. It's funny. You're a funny guy.
- e. Tommy: You mean the way I talk? (Group laughter stops)
- f. Henry: It's just, you know. You're just funny. It's... You know, the way you tell the story and everything.
- g. Tommy: Funny how? What's funny about it?
- h. Anthony: Tommy, no, you got it all wrong, he's-
- i. Tommy: Whoa whoa whoa, Anthony. He's a big boy. He knows what he said. What d'you say? Funny how?
- j. Henry: (Quietly) Just...
- k. Tommy: What?
- l. Henry: Just, j-you know. You ... you're funny.
- m. Tommy: Let me understand. Let me understand this. Maybe I'm a little fucked up, but I'm funny how? Funny like I'm a clown? I amuse you? I make people laugh? I'm here to fucking amuse you? What do you mean, funny? Funny how? How am I funny?
- n. Henry: Just, j-you know, how you tell a story. What?
- o. Tommy: No, no, (low laugh – not amused) I don't know. You said it. How do I know? You said I'm funny. How the fuck am I funny? What the fuck is so funny about me? Tell me! Tell me what's funny!

(They stare at each other for three seconds).

- p. Henry: (With hand up, palm towards Tommy, laughing) Get the fuck out of here, Tommy.

- q. Tommy: *The motherfucker! I almost had him.* (Group laughter) *You stuttering prick, you.* (Group laughter) *Frankie, was he shaking?* (Group laughter) *I wonder about you sometimes, Henry. You may fold under questioning.* (Group laughter).

3. A multimodal analysis of the “funny guy” scene

We have dubbed this the “funny guy” scene for reasons that should be clear from Tommy and Henry’s linguistic behaviour. The scene is 2 minutes, 30 seconds long and is dominated by the interaction of Tommy and Henry with minimal linguistic input from other characters. We begin with what appears to be a jocular, comedic, storytelling activity type with Tommy driving this through his narrative monologue (see Levinson 1992 on activity type theory generally, and Culpeper and McIntyre 2010 and McIntyre and Culpeper 2010 for discussions of how characters’ behaviour in relation to the norms for particular activity types can generate particular stylistic effects).

We can infer via bottom-up processing (Culpeper 2001:28) that Tommy’s goal within the storytelling activity type is to entertain the other characters. When he says, “What’s really funny is...” we can infer from the adverbial *really* the illocutionary intent to be humorous as well as the likely amusing and entertaining perlocutionary effect of his tale-telling. The adverb *really* works not only as an emphatic booster (see Holmes 1984) to emphasise the humorous nature of the tale that is about to be told, but also, partially because of the boosting, appears to be an implicature (Grice 1975) via a flout of the maxims of manner and quality. The implicature generated here is that what has previously been said in the character-to-character interaction has not been as funny (from Tommy’s perspective) as what Tommy is about to say – in effect it is a conventionalised rhetorical device signalling the continuation of the storytelling activity type. Hence, we can also infer that previous funny/humorous interaction has taken place, that humorous storytelling activity types are the order of the interaction in general, and our involvement as audience members begins *in medias res* in relation to the humorous storytelling activity type in which the characters are engaged. This sets both us, and Henry up, schematically, for a greater fall when the scene in question changes with alarming rapidity from turns b to c onwards into an adversarial, highly challenging and apparently threatening activity type.

Further, while one main purpose of the activity type here appears to be for Tommy to regale his confederates with an amusingly told tale of a previous attempt at robbery where Tommy’s plans were foiled, additional goals of this activity type appear to be to demonstrate to the listening group (and, indeed, the film’s

audience) that Tommy is the type of *mafioso* who will not, himself, cooperate with the legal authorities and who is capable of remaining stoic, defiant, and highly aggressive in the face of adversity and brutality. We are likely to use top-down processing (Culpeper 2001:75–76) from this and other previous scenes to relate Tommy's general role and demeanour to a general "mafioso" schema, and to develop a schema for Tommy's character specifically.

The activity type begins to change from one of humorous storytelling to one of aggressive challenge in turns b and c. This change arises as a result of the linguistic behaviour of Henry (turn b) – who compliments Tommy (complimenting is seen as a "positive (approval) face enhancing strategy" by Brown and Levinson 1987:66²) – and from Tommy's irrational response to this compliment (in turn c; detailed and discussed, below). Given the linguistic behaviour of both Tommy in the storytelling activity type and the threatening activity type, and Henry in the threatening activity type, we are likely to tune our schemas for both these characters as specific types of gangster. Specifically, we are likely to take note of their individual characteristics and the fact that they appear to have the kind of peculiar friendship in which immediate danger, violence, fear and threat are possible. Oddly, the threat of such negative elements does not destroy the friendly relationship that exists between them.

3.1 Discoursal interaction

In his discussion of power relations between dramatic characters, Short (1996:206) suggests that powerful characters typically take the most and the longest conversational turns, initiate conversational exchange, control the topic of conversation, interrupt other characters and allocate turns to others. In the funny guy scene, Tommy fits this schematic pattern, being the one who drives both the tale-telling activity type and the threatening/challenging activity type. We can see that

2. Brown and Levinson (1987:66) do indicate that a compliment may be taken, by the hearer, as a negative face-threatening strategy in some cases – but only in those where the complimenter is seen to covet the goods or other "belongings" of the hearer who "owns" them. What is not considered by Brown and Levinson is that a compliment, especially if repeated (as in this case), may be perceived as positive face-threatening (Piazza personal communication) interactional turn, in that the complimenter is (or could be perceived as) expressing surprise at the complementee's ability (of which the complimenter had not previously considered the complementee capable). However, neither the context, nor the intonational patterns of Henry would support either interpretation in this case. Therefore we are left with the interpretation that Henry is genuinely complimenting Tommy's storytelling skills. As such, the compliment should have been interpreted as a positive face enhancement. That it was not interpreted as such by Tommy is clearly irrational.

Tommy asks Henry a total of 18 questions over seven turns (making an average of 2.57 questions per turn). Given that the general structural expectation is that each question (which is not rhetorical) requires (and sets up a “slot” for) an answer (Levinson 1983: 303–308, 336; see also Sacks et al. 1974; Sacks 1992), the fact that Tommy asks more than two questions per turn is structurally and pragmatically deviant. The interpretation we can make, based on this, is that Tommy is not giving Henry time and linguistic “space” to answer – itself a threat to Henry’s negative face wants (the desire to be unimpeded by others according to Brown and Levinson 1987: 62). The analysis of the questions that are asked by Tommy in each turn is as follows in Table 1.

The questions are all identified (in the case of turn c, retrospectively, given the way the exchange unfolds) as “(Type ii)” or “Response Seeking” face-threatening challenges (see Culpeper et al. 2003: 1559 and Bousfield 2007b: 12–16 for a wider discussion of challenges), as opposed to “(Type i)” or “rhetorical challenges”.

Response-seeking challenges are those where the addressee is required to account for previous actions which have (in the challenging addresser’s eyes) been responsible for, or risk being responsible for, face loss of the challenging addresser. Impoliteness from the challenging addresser stems from the previous actions of the addressee being viewed as face-threatening antecedent events which thereby act as the “trigger” for impoliteness (see Bousfield 2007a: 2191). By forcing a response the challenger not only threatens the face of the challengee by uttering the challenge, but also forces the challengee to damage their own face if they respond by giving an answer in the way the question demands (usually via *conducivity* see Piazza 2002; Quirk et al. 1985 and Woodbury 1984 on “controlling questions”). Challenges show disapproval (and are thus positive face threats) and indicate that the antecedent events causing the speaker to issue the challenge should not be repeated (hence threatening the addressee’s negative face wants – i.e. the desire to be unimpeded by others).

In this scene the antecedent event appears to be Henry’s contribution in turn b: “Funny, you’re really funny, you’re really funny”. We would not normally recognise this as a generic or prototypical face-threatening antecedent event. However, in contrast to the norm, Tommy appears to interpret it as face-threatening towards him. From Tommy’s response, we are thus likely to tune our specific schema for his character, building on our already generic “gangster” schema which would have been activated prior to this scene. The additions to our schema for Tommy are likely to include the fact that Tommy is dangerously irrational as an individual, with an imbalance in face-sensitivities (he appears to value his own much higher than other people’s and consequently does not fully recognise the need to maintain others’ face wants as a way of maintaining his own).

Table 1. Linguistic analysis of Tommy's turns

Turn and linguistic instantiation of question	Type of question/turn and function.
c. What do you mean I'm funny?	[1 question – response seeking – requests elaboration/details]
e. You mean the way I talk?	[1 question – request for clarification given apparent misunderstanding]
g. Funny how? What's funny about it?	[2 questions – both response seeking, the second is a re-iteration of the first which extends the scope of the question by requesting details]
i. Whoa whoa whoa, Anthony. He's a big boy. He knows what he said! What'd you say? What's funny?	[Following Tommy's aggressive response to Anthony's attempt at "third-party intervention" (see Bousfield 2007b:2202) to diffuse the aggressive situation, Tommy asks 2 questions of Henry – collectively they are response seeking, the second clarifies the precise nature of the response sought, but we should note that his response to Anthony infantilises Henry (especially where Henry is an authorised overhearer to Tommy's response to Anthony) – this, itself, is impolite about a present third party]
k. What?	[1 question – response seeking - request for clarification to Henry's sotto voce turn]
m. I'm funny how? Funny like I'm a clown? I amuse you? I make people laugh? I'm here to fucking amuse you? What do you mean, funny? Funny how? How am I funny?	[8 questions – response seeking and requests for clarification – note the intonation makes them questions rather than the grammatical structure which make them look like they are assertions (with questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 here in this turn) Archer (2005) suggests that such questions are highly controlling (with only tagged declaratives, as in "You're a bit of a space cadet, aren't you?", being more controlling and, hence more powerful)]
o. No, no, (low laugh – non amused) I don't know. You said it. How do I know? You said I'm funny. How the fuck am I funny? What the fuck is so funny about me? Tell me! Tell me what's funny!	[3 assertions, 3 response-seeking questions, 2 imperatives]

Most of the questions are re-iterations of prior ones given that Tommy would appear to view Henry's responses to his questions as pragmatically, or socio-cognitively dispreferred (see Bousfield 2007b: 25-29). Dispreferred answers from Henry allow Tommy the chance to give a re-iteration (Sacks et al. 1974, Silverman 1998) of his prior turns and, hence, allow him to re-iterate the positive and negative face threat effects that his questions have on Henry. This means that the face threats are layering up as the exchange unfolds.

We should note that throughout the scene both Tommy and Henry repeat the same propositional content, in the case of questions (from Tommy) and answers (from Henry). Often they even utilise the same lexical and grammatical structures. The fact that they do not vary in what they are saying, or even attempt to change what they are trying to communicate, suggests a social as well as linguistic *impasse*. The rising sense of offence that Tommy is displaying appears to herald an increasing likelihood of ensuing violence (see Wee's 2004 argument about the increasing strength of communicative acts in the face of apparent intransigence or other failure to progress to a linguistically mediated diplomatic resolution).

We can further note that, despite what we might predict, Henry's attempts at politeness as a diplomatic way of saving face and calming the situation actually seem to have the opposite effect on Tommy by exacerbating the situation. Henry uses the phrase *you know* five times, a phrase which is a politeness strategy to enhance Tommy's positive face, in that it is a tactic designed to indicate that the speaker (Henry) and hearer (Tommy) are social co-operators. Hence Henry's use of *you know* is an attempt to claim common ground between himself and Tommy. Brown and Levinson (1987: 103) consider this a positive face enhancement. Henry also claims Tommy is funny five times, primarily as a way of attempting to enhance Tommy's face (see above for our discussion of compliments). Note, however, that he finally stops using this attempt at face enhancement (in turn n) when it has become clear that Tommy is objecting to being called *funny* (possibly as the word *funny* is polysemous; *funny* can mean both *hilarious* and *strange*; it may well be on this latter possible interpretation that Tommy is licensing his own behaviour in response, since to be funny in this sense is out of sync with his projected Mafioso persona). Overall, Henry's communicative contributions in turns d, f, l and n (and potentially, j) can be seen as "polite" attempts to enhance Tommy's face – all of which are met with repeated, re-iterated challenges which are, through repetition and elaboration (not to mention intonational enhancement) increasingly aggressive in terms of their illocutionary force. Conversely, Henry's impolite "Get the fuck out of here, Tommy!" in turn p is re-constructed as "banter" by virtue of Tommy's immediately following turn.

3.2 Paralinguistic and non-linguistic elements of the scene

In order to support our interpretation and explanation so far, we now turn to the paralinguistic and non-linguistic elements of our analysis. Table 3 is a transcript of the audio-visual aspects of the scene and how they correspond with the dialogue.

Table 2. Analysis of Henry’s responses to Tommy’s questions

Henry’s response	Type of turn and im/politeness function
d. It’s funny, you know. It’s a great story. It’s funny. You’re a funny guy.	4 assertions which appear designed to enhance Tommy’s sense of positive face (his desire to be approved of by others, according to Brown and Levinson 1987:62). This is coupled with the use of positive face enhancement “you know”
f. It’s just, you know, you’re just funny. It’s... you know, the way you tell the story and everything.	Note the use of minimisers, here: “just”. This is a classic lexical token often used to minimise (perceived) face threat. Again, we have the use of “you know” used, as in turn d. The core proposition – which operates to compliment Tommy, is still in effect here as Henry is attempting to express his admiration (not to mention disambiguate his apparently confusing earlier turns in b and d)
j. Just...j-	Again, there’s a <i>sotto voce</i> use of this classic minimiser
l. Just, j-you know. You ... you’re funny.	And again, we begin with, both, the minimiser “just” and the appeal to cooperation “you know” – both of which are politeness tokens. The compliment is re-iterated in brief “you’re funny”
n. Just, you know, how you tell a story. What?	We should note, here, that Henry finally stops using the word “funny”
p. Get the fuck out of here, Tommy!	The one, true, instance of impoliteness on the part of Henry towards Tommy (where he uses taboo language – threatening Tommy’s positive face) and the colloquial American English phrase “get out of here!” which we can, perhaps, paraphrase as “I’m not continuing with this, you’re playing a game with me!” which is threatening to Tommy’s negative face, both of which are boosted by the use of Tommy’s name. Ironically, it is this that “breaks the spell” and allows both Tommy and Henry a face saving “get out” of this exchange by returning them to a variant of the previous AT – of humorous jocularity used for social bonding purposes.

Table 3. Audio-visual transcript of “funny guy” scene

Shot no.	Time (min. and s)	Shot description	Linguistic audio	Paralinguistic visual	Paralinguistic audio	Non-linguistic visual
1	0.00	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: What's what's really funny is the fucking bank job away in Secaucus. I'm in the middle of the fucking weeds, laying down. He comes over, he says, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm resting.' 'Here?!? You're resting?!?' Like I'm on the fucking beach in the park. I said, 'I'm resting!' I know I'm resting, 'I'm resting.' They pull me in, they start giving me all kinds of questions. You know this and that. He says 'Oh, er, so what are you going to tell us, tough guy?' I said, 'My usual. Zero. Nothing. Why tell you?' The fuck. He says, 'No, you're gonna tell me something today, tough guy.' I said, 'Alright, I'll tell you something, go fuck your mother.'			Tommy waving his hands as he talks – gesturing to indicate, e.g., distance (... 'away in Secaucus' ...) and proximity (... 'here!' ...).
2	0.29	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (Point Of View [POV] is that of Tommy).	Tommy: Bing! Pow! Boom! Bing!	0.31: Tommy makes punching motions towards his own head.	0.29: Group laughter.	
3	0.32	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: You saw the paper Anthony, my head was up like this. So now I'm coming around, you know, I'm starting to come out of it and who do I see in front of me? This big prick again. He says, 'Oh, what d'you wanna tell me now, tough guy?' I said, 'Bing, what are you doing here? I thought I tell you to go fuck your mother.'		0.45: Group laughter.	

Table 3. (continued)

Shot no.	Time (min. and s)	Shot description	Linguistic audio	Paralinguistic visual	Paralinguistic audio	Non-linguistic visual
4	0.46	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Tommy: I thought he was gonna shit.		0.46: Henry laughing uproariously. Tommy laughing. Group laughter.	Henry leaning slightly back, right hand across his stomach, left hand holding a cigarette in front of his face.
5	0.50	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: Pow! Ping! Buff! The fuckers. Gee, I wish I was big just once.		Henry laughing. Group laughter.	Tommy picks up his glass.
6	0.58	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Tommy: They were big cops. Henry: Funny. You're really funny. You're really funny.		Henry laughing. Group laughter.	1.01: Tommy drinks.
7	1.02	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: What do you mean I'm funny?		Henry laughing. Group laughter.	1.03: Tommy puts down his glass. Henry flicks ash into ashtray as his laughter subsides – not looking at Tommy.
8	1.06	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Henry: It's funny, you know. It's a great story. It's funny. You're a funny guy.	1.10: Henry glances at Tommy.	Henry laughing. Group laughter subsiding.	
9	1.11	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: You mean the way I talk?		Group laughter stops.	1.11: Henry picks up his glass and drinks.

Table 3. (*continued*)

Shot no.	Time (min. and s)	Shot description	Linguistic audio	Paralinguistic visual	Paralinguistic audio	Non-linguistic visual
10	1.13	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Henry: It's just, you know. You're just funny. It's... you know, the way you tell the story and everything.	1.20: Henry's palms up, arms extended towards Tommy.		Anthony scratches below his right eye with his left hand.
11	1.21	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: Funny how? What's funny about it? Anthony: Tommy, no, you got it all wrong, he's.... Tommy: (1.26) Whoa whoa whoa, Anthony. (1.28) He's a big boy. He knows what he said. What d'you say? Funny, how? Henry: Just... Tommy: What? Henry: Just... I-, you know. You ... you're funny. Tommy: Let me understand. Let me understand this.	1.26: Tommy points at Anthony with his left hand. 1.28: Tommy motions towards Henry.		1.26: Tommy looks at Anthony. 1.30: Tommy looks at Henry.
12	1.32	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Tommy: Maybe it's me, I'm a little fucked up maybe. But I'm funny how? I mean funny like I'm (1.43) a clown? I amuse you? I make you laugh? I'm (1.46) here to fucking amuse you? What do you mean, funny? Funny how? How am I funny?	1.43: Tommy motions towards himself. 1.46: Tommy points to himself with both hand and then flings his hands outwards, motioning to Henry.		Tommy staring at Henry.

Table 3. (continued)

Shot no.	Time (min. and s)	Shot description	Linguistic audio	Paralinguistic visual	Paralinguistic audio	Non-linguistic visual
14	1.51	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Henry: Just, j- you know, how you tell a story. What?			Henry looking at Tommy.
15	1.56	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: No, no, I don't know. You said it. How do I know? You said I'm funny. [2.00] How the fuck am I funny? [2.02] What <i>the fuck</i> is so funny about me? Tell me! Tell me what's funny!	Tommy and Henry are looking a low, non-straight at each other.	Tommy gives a low, non-amused laugh.	
16	2.08	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Henry: (2.11) Get the fuck out of here, Tommy!	2.11: Henry's hand up, palm towards Tommy.	2.11: Henry laughing.	
17	2.14	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: Motherfucker! I almost had him. I almost had him. You stuttering prick, you.	2.14: Tommy pointing at Henry.		
18	2.19	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).	Tommy: Frankie, was he shaking?			Tommy looks at Frankie.
19	2.23	Medium close-up. Tommy centre-frame facing towards camera, Henry in right foreground facing Tommy.	Tommy: I wonder about you sometimes, Henry. You may fold under questioning.	2.23: Tommy wags finger at Henry.		
20	2.28	Over-the-shoulder medium close-up on Henry and two other mobsters either side of him (POV Tommy).		Group laughter.	Henry laughing uproariously.	Henry leaning back and holding his right hand up to his eye as he laughs. Tommy drinks, face serious.

4. Audio-visual transcript of “funny guy” scene

In terms of paralinguistic information, the above transcript indicates that laughter is a significant feature of the scene in question. This necessitates some attention. It would seem that the group laughter in shots 2 to 8 functions as choral support and approval of Tommy's story-telling (and, by implicature, his role and behaviour in the events that he relates). However, it is also noticeable that the group follow Tommy's lead in laughing at the story. It would seem that the group members rely on Tommy's own evaluation of his behaviour to guide their reaction to it. It seems likely that there is an implicit understanding that Tommy's addressees have no authority to explicitly evaluate Tommy's story and behaviour. If this is the case, then Henry's verbalised evaluation of Tommy's character constitutes a misinterpretation of the power relations that exist between the men, even though his evaluation is complimentary. In this respect, Henry's compliment constitutes a positive face threat since it breaks an unspoken agreement concerning the relative balance of power in the group. Tommy deals with this face threat by responding aggressively to reassert his dominance. To explain the degree to which Tommy's behaviour generates fear in Henry and the viewing audience, it is necessary to consider also the multimodal (i.e. non-linguistic) aspects of the scene.

The complex discourse structure of drama and the analysis of dramatic performance necessitate taking into account the viewpoints of what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) call interactive and represented participants. In film drama, the former are the viewers and the latter are the characters. In the funny guy scene, the creation of empathetic emotion in the interactive participants appears to stem from the fact that the camera position and camera shots generate a sense of being in the same physical location as the represented participant.

All the camera shots in the scene are medium close-ups. For the audience, this has the effect of suggesting physical closeness to the characters. Furthermore, there are only two camera positions used in the scene: an over-the-shoulder shot from Tommy's point of view and an over-the-shoulder shot from Henry's point of view. For the audience, then, there is a sense of being physically close to the characters and of seeing events from the viewpoint of the characters seated around the restaurant table. We are essentially in the same position as those characters witnessing Tommy and Henry's exchange. The over-the-shoulder shots from both characters' points of view allow the audience to see the reactions of those around Tommy and Henry, and suggest an external point of view generally (note that the over-the-shoulder shots are not first-person point of view shots; if they were, the camera would represent one character's vision literally and we would not see that character in shot).

The importance of these camera shots and positions to the creation of empathetic emotion in the viewing audience lies in the fact that they generate a sense of being involved in the fictional world. Stockwell (2005), in a discussion of how readers can come to feel emotionally involved in a fictional world, explains this effect in terms of text world theory (Werth 1999), wherein the fictional world is called the text world and the real world is referred to as the discourse world. Stockwell explains that:

Where a text forges a close identification of a text-world counterpart with a discourse world participant, the potential for empathetic engagement and strong emotion [...] is generated. (Stockwell 2005: 149)

The camera shots and positions in the funny guy scene do just this. The medium close-ups generate for the audience the sense of being in the same physical space as the characters in the scene, and the over-the-shoulder shots forge an identification with the characters close to Tommy and Henry.

It is worth examining the set-up of shots in more detail since this appears to be key to the generation of empathetic emotion for the interactive participants. In the shots from the point of view of Henry, Tommy is centre-frame facing towards the camera while Henry is in the foreground to the right, facing Tommy. Tommy's position in the centre of the frame is consistent with his status as the centre of attention in the scene. His character therefore has a high salience (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) and the interactive participants (i.e. the viewing audience) are likely to pay considerable attention to him and what he says because of this. The over-the-shoulder shots from Tommy's point of view are medium close-ups on Henry and the two other mobsters either side of him. It is significant that, in contrast to the shots of Tommy, Henry is not the main represented participant in the frame, which, relatively speaking, downgrades his salience. This positioning of Henry as a weaker character than Tommy is also seen in Henry's paralinguistic behaviour throughout the scene. The remainder of our analysis focuses on this behaviour in relation to the dialogue in the scene. In the quotations that follow, bold type indicates paralinguistic action and numbers in square brackets indicate the time into the scene at which dialogue and paralinguistic action occurs.

In shot 10 (one minute and thirteen seconds into the scene), the following dialogue and action occur (Example (2)):

Example (2)

[1.13] Henry: *It's just, you know. You're just funny. It's... You know, the way you tell the story and everything*

[1.20] Henry's palms up, arms extended towards Tommy. Anthony scratches below his right eye with his left hand.

In the dialogue we can already note the hedging that Henry is engaging in to mitigate the strength of what he has said concerning Tommy's storytelling being funny. At one minute twenty, he extends his arms towards Tommy with palms up. This seems to be some kind of physical appeal to Tommy as well as being conventionally associated with the expression of lack of knowledge (in this case, perhaps, lack of knowledge as to why Tommy has become angry at what Henry intended as a compliment). At the same time, Anthony scratches below his right eye. If this has a communicative significance, it may be to indicate nervousness.

After Henry's turn comes the following action in shot 11 (Example (3)):

Example (3)

[1.21] Tommy: *Funny how? What's funny about it?*

Anthony: *Tommy, no, you got it all wrong, he's....*

Tommy: [1.26] *Whoa whoa whoa, Anthony. [1.28] He's a big boy. He knows what he said. What d'you say? Funny, how?*

[1.26] *Tommy points at Anthony with his left hand.*

[1.28] *Tommy motions towards Henry.*

Here, Anthony attempts to defuse the escalating situation by contradicting Tommy's assessment. Tommy interrupts Anthony's explanation, thereby demonstrating substantial discursive power which is supported by his paralinguistic behaviour. His pointing towards Anthony may be interpreted as a face-damaging "challenge" (Culpeper et al. 2003; Bousfield 2007b), while his motioning towards Henry may be interpreted as an indication of condescension.

The effect of Tommy's discursively powerful behaviour can be seen in the way the Henry then responds to it (Example (4)):

Example (4)

[1.32] Henry: *Just...*

Tommy: *What?*

Henry: *Just... Just, you know. You ... you're funny.*

Tommy: *Let me understand. Let me understand this.*

Henry turned slightly to the left, his right shoulder angled towards Tommy.

[1.34] *Henry shrugs, arms out towards Tommy, palms up.*

The first point to note here is Henry's body language. He is turned slightly to the left and his right shoulder is angled towards Tommy, almost as if forming a protective barrier. In effect, Henry is attempting to make himself smaller and less of a target. This is the paralinguistic equivalent of linguistic mitigation against a face threat (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987). Henry's appeal to Tommy continues

in the way that he again extends his arms towards Tommy and shrugs, indicating lack of knowledge and thereby reducing his own social status in comparison to his interlocutor. At this stage in the interaction, it appears that Henry's efforts to downplay his comments are not being successful (Example (5)):

Example (5)

[1.38] Tommy: *Maybe it's me, I'm a little fucked up maybe. But I'm funny how? I mean funny like I'm [1.43] a clown? I amuse you? I make you laugh? I'm [1.46] here to fucking amuse you? What do you mean, funny? Funny how? How am I funny?*

[1.43] Tommy motions towards himself.

[1.46] Tommy points to himself with both hands and then flings his hands outwards, motioning to Henry.

Tommy's aggressive dialogue here is further emphasised by his paralinguistic behaviour. During the course of this shot he points to himself and to Henry, thereby emphasising that this spat is just between the two of them. In effect, this is a dismissal of the notion that anyone else should be involved in the argument (cf. Anthony's efforts to intervene in shot 10). At one minute 46 seconds in, Tommy flings his hands outwards, motioning towards Henry. The force of the action in combination with the aggressive language makes this a violent motion with hostile intent.

In shot 15, Tommy's aggressive behaviour appears to be reaching a peak (Example (6)):

Example (6)

[1.56] Tommy: *No, no, (low laugh – not amused) I don't know. You said it. How do I know? You said I'm funny. [2.00] How the fuck am I funny? [2.02] What the fuck is so funny about me? Tell me! Tell me what's funny!*

[1.56 to 2.05] Tommy increasingly emphasises hand and head motions directed at Henry. He is staring right at Henry and leaning forward (as if ready to pounce).

Here, Tommy stresses the phrase *the fuck* as an illocutionary force indicating device which emphasises the aggressive intent behind his language. His equally hostile body language is sustained throughout this shot.

In shot 16 there is then a pause from 2.08 to 2.11 when Henry finally says "Get the fuck out of here, Tommy!". Here, Henry raises his hands in front of him with his palms facing outward in a conventional display of surrender. This downplays the illocutionary force of his impolite utterance and allows it to be interpreted by Tommy as banter. Whether Henry is certain at this point that Tommy's aggression

was a joke is unclear; indeed, it is possible that at this point not even Tommy has decided how to play things out. Nonetheless, Henry's confident linguistic behaviour combined with his body language indicating that Tommy has won the upper hand allows both characters a way to back down without losing too much face. At this point, the audience too is likely to breathe a sigh of relief.

5. Conclusions

Goodfellas is a powerful piece of cinema and our analysis of one of its constituent scenes is intended to go some way towards demonstrating why. What makes the "funny guy" scene so intense is the combination of the characters' linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour and the audience's likely response to this. The fear emotion is invoked in Henry through Tommy's extreme impolite linguistic behaviour. This is at odds with what we expect schematically; that Tommy should treat a compliment from Henry as a face-threatening antecedent event is extremely unusual. Henry's fear is made apparent visually through his body language. This is emphasised by his mitigating linguistic behaviour. The camera positions taken up within the scene, and the specific camera shots used, serve to create the illusion of close proximity between the participants in the discourse world and those in the text world. The explicit point of view shots then align the interactive participants with the view of characters seated at the table at which Tommy and Henry are conversing. That the audience should empathise with Henry seems likely given that Tommy's behaviour is at odds with our schematic norms for conversation, while Henry's is in accordance with them. Furthermore, Tommy's positioning centre-frame emphasises his characterisation as attention-seeking and aggressive.

This analysis of fear in the "funny guy" scene has relied on a combination of analytical tools and frameworks. Politeness theory (including frameworks for the analysis of impoliteness) has enabled the identification of the linguistic source of the fear emotion in Tommy's aggressive discourse; analysis of the performance of affect (cf. Goodwin and Goodwin 2000; and Bednarek this volume) has shown how that fear is displayed by Tommy; and consideration of camera shots has suggested a means by which that fear is transferred empathetically to the viewing audience. In sum, only a multimodal analysis of performance is able to locate the source and effect of the fear emotion in this scene (though we would not claim our analysis to be exhaustive). A simple analysis of dialogue would stop short of being able to do this. For this reason, we advocate the multimodal analysis of drama in those cases where a single performance exists and constitutes a methodologically stable object of analysis.

CHAPTER 7

Quantifying the emotional tone of James Bond films

An application of the Dictionary of Affect in Language

Rose Ann Kozinski

The Dictionary of Affect in Language, a tool for quantitative analysis of emotional, cognitive, and structural features of written texts or transcripts of spoken interaction, is here described and applied to the twenty-two James Bond films and the three Austin Powers parodies. This chapter takes a corpus approach and explores similarities and differences in emotional measures and other characteristics by comparing films on factors of genre and lead actor. Statistical analysis reveals striking differences between the Bond films and the Austin Powers parodies, variations in emotional measures amongst the Bond groups and a general shift in language over time.

1. Introduction

Through film or television we meet characters and experience stories that stir our emotions and often continue to do so long after the initial experience has passed. This interesting phenomenon makes the emotionality of these media a compelling subject for academic study. Although emotion is conveyed, either directly or metaphorically, through both language and images, this discussion centres specifically on the emotional characteristics of scripted dialogue. The series of James Bond films has been selected for analysis because it has a long history of popularity around the world. Not only does this provide some degree of familiarity for most readers, but a variety of lead actors playing the same character over many years and the existence of a series of parodies leads naturally to certain research questions involving emotional measures. Is the success of the series due to consistency in emotional language? Are there measurable differences based on the actor in the lead role or is plot more influential? What is the influence of

genre on emotional measures when characters and plot are similar? This chapter explores these questions using a quantitative approach to the analysis of emotion in language.

Academic analysts may interpret a film or series of films from the standpoint of a particular critical theory such as Feminism or Marxism. Another approach might be a linguistic analysis that characterises the style of a given genre of film by, for instance, looking at the frequency of certain words or phrases. “Seeing” a film through multiple perspectives that are both contrasting and complementary enhances understanding of how cinematic communication is constructed. In the social sciences, viewing a phenomenon through multiple theoretical approaches or analytical methods is referred to as “triangulation” (Downward and Mearman 2007:80). The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate a method for dialogue analysis that can function as complementary to other forms of stylistic study. The Dictionary of Affect in Language (DAL) allows emotional aspects of dialogue to be quantified and makes it possible to apply the advanced statistical tools of the natural sciences to the analysis of emotion in a text. In the field of psychology, feeling, emotion, mood and temperament are classed together under the term *affect* and distinguished from *cognitive* functions such as perception and judgment (English and English: 1958). For the purposes of this discussion, emotion and *affect* will be viewed as equivalent and emotion will serve as a general term. The DAL has been devised to quantify the two main emotional characteristics of words along with one specific cognitive property.

In this chapter I consider several approaches to the challenge of quantifying emotion then explain the theoretical basis of the DAL. Next, after briefly reviewing the history of James Bond films, an exploration of the entire series of James Bond films together with the Austin Powers parodies is used to demonstrate DAL analysis.

2. Quantifying emotion

Emotional situations, expressions or overall emotional tone can be described qualitatively by using words that denote emotion. For instance, a scene in which lovers reunite may be called *rapturous* or the aftermath of a battle may be “somber”. Quantification requires that an emotion be expressed as a number rather than a word, and this presents several challenges. Values can be assigned to linguistic expressions of emotions based on frequency and/or intensity but some initial decisions must be made. Counting frequency of occurrence is a relatively simple matter but the analyst must first decide which words are emotional and therefore ought to be counted. One approach is exemplified by the *We Feel Fine*

project (www.wefeelfine.org, last accessed 16 September 2010). This “exploration of human emotion” by Jonathan Harris and Sep Kamvar quantifies emotional expression in internet blogs around the world. It takes a contextual approach to defining emotion in natural language by using the phrases *I feel* or *I am feeling* as cues and searching the rest of the sentence for words matching a list of about 5,000 words (mainly adjectives and adverbs) that convey emotion, sensation or opinion. To express the definition more in the style of mathematics and computer science (disciplines in which the two artists are also experts): *If* a word is on the list of 5,000 words *and* it appears in a sentence containing the phrase “I feel” or “I am feeling” it is an emotion and is counted.

A categorical approach to defining emotional expression is reflected in Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) (liwc.net/index.php, last accessed 16 September 2010). This is a software application developed by psychologist James Pennebaker et al. (Pennebaker, Booth and Francis 2007) as a psychometric tool for the analysis of expressive text. It uses a dictionary of words which have been selected according to categories and sub-categories such as Linguistic Processes (pronouns, prepositions, negations), Psychological Processes (Social processes such as family, friends; Affective processes such as anger, certainty; Cognitive processes such as insight, certainty) and Personal Concerns (achievement, religion). There are over 70 sub-categories in total and some words are included in multiple categories (example: *they* is categorised under third person plural and as social processes). Words in the target text are matched to the dictionary and the percentage of words in each category is reported.

The frequency count approach may also be applied to words or expressions that do not directly name or denote emotions but are usually associated with emotional expression. Words such as *hell* or *damn* along with stronger *swear words* usually signal negative emotions. Bednarek (this volume) uses a similar technique that relies on word count to analyse expressive character identity.

Once a list of emotional words has been set up it may be possible to rate each word for emotional intensity. This opens up additional possibilities for statistical analysis because words within the same category can have different values for intensity. The Affective Norms for English Words list (ANEW) (Bradley and Lang 1999) provides ratings on three dimensions for about 1,000 words selected for extreme emotionality. A similar approach to quantifying intensity is used in the DAL but the DAL targets the emotional undercurrents of commonly used words and recognises emotional shading in all words (Whissell 2008a for a comparison of ANEW and DAL).

The theoretical foundation for the DAL includes the work of three psychologists: Charles E. Osgood, Robert Plutchik and James Russell (Whissell 2009: 509) and addresses concepts relating to both the nature of emotion and layers of

meaning for words. Osgood's work on meaning in language includes implied meaning (connotation) along with primary meaning (denotation) (Osgood 1962:27). Plutchik's (1980) model of emotions uses the metaphor of a colour wheel with emotions blending and changing from related emotions to opposite emotions and back. Milder and stronger intensities of emotion are also included in this model (Plutchik 1980: 157). Russell's model characterises emotion as having only two cardinal dimensions: *Pleasantness* (or "valence") that refers to a positive-negative continuum and *Activation* that refers to a passive-active continuum (Posner, Russell and Peterson 2005: 884). Recent studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging have shown that this model reflects the different sets of brain structures that "light up" when processing emotion-denoting words (Posner et al. 2009) or emotional faces (Gerber et al. 2008).

Given that any word may have some degree of emotional connotation, that emotions blend into a cyclical continuum and that emotion can be parsimoniously described in terms of Pleasantness and Activation, it becomes possible to quantify the emotional characteristics of *any* word by rating it on these two dimensions. Categories of emotion are no longer an issue because *all* words are considered to have some degree of Pleasantness and Activation. With reference to the James Bond corpus, this means that intensity ratings are not limited to words that are denotative of emotional states such as *panic* (Low Pleasantness and High Activation) or *comfort* (High Pleasantness and Low Activation). Words with an emotional connotation such as *nightmare* (Low Pleasantness and High Activation) and *evenings* (High Pleasantness and Low Activation) also have intensity ratings. The DAL values for words are the averages of many volunteers who rated individual words without context on a scale of 1 to 3. Some examples of denotative/connotative word pairs from the Bond corpus with identical rating are: *happy, toys* (Pleasantness = 3.0, Activation = 2.75), and *bore, loser* (Pleasantness = 1.0; Activation = 1.25). The DAL word list contains 8,742 words and therefore provides emotional scores for about 90% of the words in most texts (Whissell 2009).

In the analysis that follows, the 4,500 to 7,500 words that made up each film-script were averaged to produce a score for the film. A few excerpts from James Bond and Austin Powers films are presented below to demonstrate the process on a small scale. Average values follow each statement (P = Pleasantness, A = Activation). All words except *hijack* and *hostage* have DAL scores and contribute to the statement's average.

Example (1)

Bond: *Do you expect me to talk?* (P = 2.06, A = 1.86).

Goldfinger: *No, Mr. Bond. I expect you to die* (Goldfinger). (P = 1.88, A = 1.75).

Example (2)

Vesper: *It doesn't bother you, killing those people?* (P = 1.67, A = 1.85).
 Bond: *Well I wouldn't be very good at my job if it did* (*Casino Royale*).
 (P = 2.08, A = 1.65).

Example (3)

Dr. Evil: *Oh, hell. Let's just do what we always do. Hijack some nuclear weapons and hold the world hostage* (*Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*).
 (P = 1.78, A = 1.83).

Example (4)

Vanessa: *Women want him and men want to be him. He's every bit an international man of mystery* (*Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*).
 (P = 1.99, A = 1.70).

Words that are high in Pleasantness are equally likely to be low or high in Activation. The same is true for words that are low in Pleasantness. The two dimensions are not related and are therefore said to be orthogonal. This means that a word or text's values for the two dimensions can be plotted on a graph similar to a map with high and low Pleasantness corresponding to North-South and high and low Activation corresponding to West-East. Carrying the map analogy further, those few words that are both highly Pleasant and highly Active (northeast in the analogy) are termed *Cheery*. Some words are highly Active but rated neutral for Pleasantness (east on the map). Those that are rated low in Pleasantness and highly Active (southeast) are termed *Nasty*. The same pattern continues all the way around the imaginary compass rose with words low in Pleasantness but neutral for Activation, low in Pleasantness and low in Activation (*Sad*), low in Activation and neutral for Pleasantness, high in Pleasantness and low in Activation (*Soft*) or high in Pleasantness and neutral for Activation. These eight extreme areas can be viewed as categories for which frequencies can be tallied as well.

Along with the two emotional dimensions (Pleasantness and Activation), the DAL also quantifies a separate, cognitive dimension. This is termed Imagery, and refers to ease of forming a mental picture. Volunteer raters used a 1 to 3 scale for this dimension also. Examples are *tree* (Imagery = 3) and *otherwise* (Imagery = 1). Table 1 provides examples of words from the James Bond corpus with extreme ratings. High and Low Imagery words that also fit the Cheery, Nasty, Sad or Soft categories are presented.

A DAL-based investigation of text provides fifteen quantitative variables that can be entered for statistical analysis. Pleasantness, Activation, Imagery and Word Length are based on the average of the scores for each word in the text matched

Table 1. Examples of DAL words scoring high or low in Pleasantness and Activation. Lowercase words are low in Imagery (abstract). Uppercase words are high in Imagery (concrete)

	Low Activation	High Activation
High Pleasantness	virtue	spectacular
	forgive	promises
	MOONLIGHT	KISS
	FLOWER	TOYS
Low Pleasantness	meaningless	wrong
	lacking	objections
	SCAR	WEAPONS
	PALE	BLEEDING

to the DAL word list (every word in the text is scored for Word Length.) Percentages of words belonging to the extreme categories (High/Low Pleasantness, High/Low Activation, Cheery, Nasty, Sad, Soft, High/Low Imagery) are also reported. Percentage of words in a special category based on a list of 206 “Very Common” words is also reported (see Whissell 1998:600).

The DAL contains widely-used words from the Brown University Corpus (created primarily from print sources), together with transcribed interviews on various topics, essays, oral storytelling, and fiction. A “widely-sampled” corpus of 350,000 words from media sources (newspapers, magazines, television, novels, popular songs, textbooks, religious writing) and other varied texts (commentaries, transcribed discussions, essays and autobiographical accounts) provided comparative averages that serve as reference points for the three main measures (Pleasantness, Activation, Imagery), the ten derived measures (High/Low Pleasantness, High/Low Activation, Cheery, Nasty, Sad, Soft, High/Low Imagery), Word Length, and Very Common words. The DAL has been used to analyse a wide variety of natural language from plays of William Shakespeare (Whissell 2007, 2010) and religious texts (Whissell 2008a) to the lyrics of Bob Dylan (Whissell 2008b) and the dialogue of adult, animated television series (Kozinski 2009).

3. **The James Bond film series**

The series of James Bond films was selected for a demonstration of DAL analysis. This choice is justified not only because it includes 22 films from the same production company featuring the same central character who has been portrayed by 6 different actors across a span of 45 years; the Bond films are such a well known

series around the world that many readers will be familiar with at least some of the films and actors.

The James Bond character was created by Sir Ian Fleming as a central character for a series of novels. The very early films were adaptations of Fleming's novels but later films used original plots. Although certain screenwriters (notably Richard Maibaum and Tom Mankiewicz) had long associations with the film series and contributed to many screenplays, none of the films is the product of a single writer. The majority of the films are credited to at least two writers and the two with a single screenwriter credit (*Live and Let Die*, Tom Mankiewicz; *Moonraker*, Christopher Wood) were based upon novels by Ian Fleming.

The popularity of the character and almost five decades of sustained interest in stories about his adventures, even as the nature of those adventures has changed with a changing world situation, indicates that it is the James Bond hero who stimulates the imaginations of those who write his stories. The tendency to choose a particular actor to portray the character over several films suggests that the style and technique of this performing artist may also influence script decisions made by the writers and producers. Fans of the series commonly categorise the films by the actor playing James Bond and, since this also groups the films chronologically, it is a logical (though not the only possible) basis for classifying the films for analysis.

Sean Connery was the first actor to portray the character and utter the famous self-presentation "Bond. James Bond." which is now ranked 22nd on the American Film Institute's list of 100 most memorable movie quotes. After the success of the first film, *Dr. No*, in 1962, Connery continued in the role for another four films (*From Russia With Love*, 1963; *Goldfinger*, 1964; *Thunderball*, 1965; *You Only Live Twice*, 1967). George Lazenby played Bond in the sixth film (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1969), but Sean Connery was coaxed back for the seventh (*Diamonds Are Forever*, 1971) in what was now clearly a successful series. Roger Moore took over the role for the next seven films (*Live and Let Die*, 1973; *The Man With the Golden Gun*, 1974; *The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977; *Moonraker*, 1979; *For Your Eyes Only*, 1981; *Octopussy*, 1983; *A View to a Kill*, 1985). Timothy Dalton was cast as Bond in the next two films (*The Living Daylights*, 1987; *License to Kill*, 1989), after which the series went into a six year hiatus. In 1995, Pierce Brosnan became the fifth Bond, appearing in the next four films (*GoldenEye*, 1995; *Tomorrow Never Dies*, 1997; *The World Is Not Enough*, 1999; *Die Another Day*, 2002). The current Bond, Daniel Craig, has portrayed the Bond character in the first two films of a three picture contract: *Casino Royale* (2006) and *Quantum of Solace* (2008).

Only the twenty-two films produced by Eon Productions are considered "official" James Bond films. The original James Bond, Sean Connery, also starred in

the unofficial Bond film *Never Say Never Again* (a 1983 remake of *Thunderball*) and David Niven portrayed an aging Bond in the 1967 spoof *Casino Royale*. The popularity of the James Bond series contributed to the production of other serious spy-genre films and television series as well as numerous parodies, including *The Man Called Flintstone* (1966) starring the animated character Fred Flintstone. The 1997 Mike Myers parody *Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery* was so successful that two more films followed (*The Spy Who Shagged Me*, 1999; *Goldmember*, 2002). The fact that these three films pay comic tribute to the James Bond series by using familiar characters and plot motifs from that series makes them an appropriate choice for comparison against the original Bond films in the analysis that follows.

This chapter presents only an initial exploration in order to demonstrate DAL analysis; however, since the James Bond series provides a large number of films and consistencies in the production company and the representation of the main character in spite of the casting of different actors, several interesting research questions can be asked. It is possible that the success of the series lies partly in achieving a consistent emotional tone. Can DAL analysis detect any statistically significant difference in the main emotional measures between the films? Are there significant differences when films are grouped according to the actor portraying James Bond? (On the topic of character consistency, cf. Mandala this volume.) Do the language measures show any trends over time? Since the Austin Powers parodies resemble the James Bond films with regard to central and supporting characters as well as plot features, are there significant differences in emotional tone between the “spy dramas” and the “spy comedies”?

4. DAL analysis

The corpus analysed was obtained from uncut cable television broadcasts of the films or DVDs. It consists of the entire text of closed-captioned dialogue and lyrics appearing in all twenty-two official James Bond films plus the three Austin Powers parodies. Closed captions in North America are similar to “subtitles for the hard of hearing” and differences do not affect dialogue transcription. A total of 159,288 words were entered into the analysis. Averages were computed for individual films and films were grouped according to the lead actor. The grouped texts are referred to by the name of the actor for convenience, however, it must be stressed that all dialogue in the film was included, not only that of James Bond. The average matching rate to the DAL was 88.2% for the Bond films and 84.4% for the Powers films. This means that of the approximately 6,400 words in each

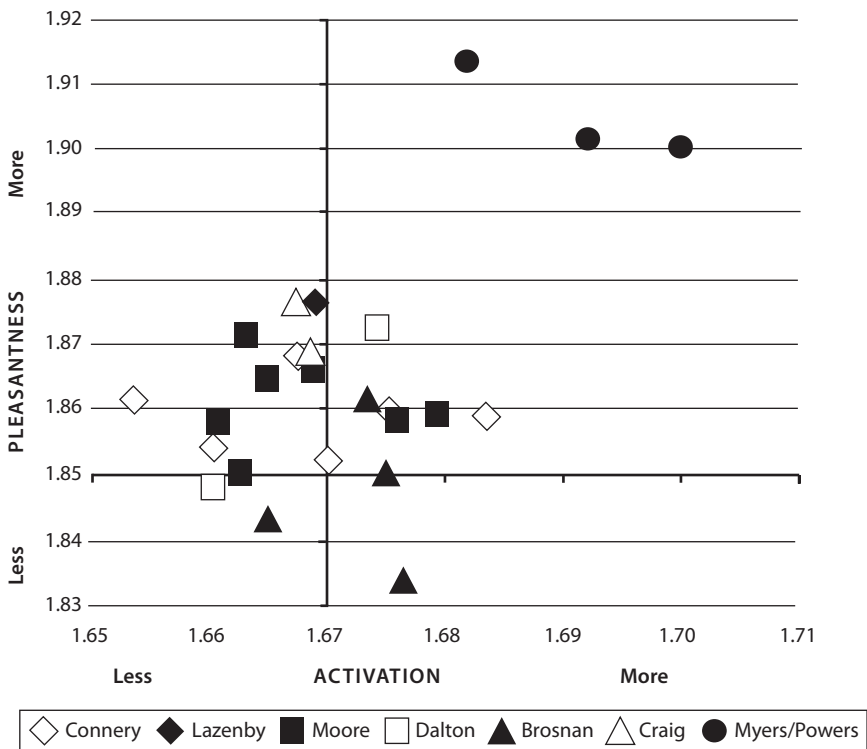


Figure 1. Scatterplot of all films. Axes are population norms

film, about 5,500 could be scored for Pleasantness, Activation, Imagery and Word Length, and could be counted as a member of an extreme category or as a Very Common word.

A simple and useful initial step in DAL analysis involves representing the averages for the two main emotional measures as if on a map. The comparative average values for Pleasantness and Activation serve as reference midpoints. This “mapping” often makes large differences clearly evident, and statistical comparisons of means can confirm less obvious results. Figure 1 presents a map of the 22 James Bond films and the 3 Austin Powers parodies.

The map shows clearly that the 22 James Bond films form a group that is unmistakably distinct from the three Austin Powers parodies. Statistical analysis of films grouped by lead actor confirms with a high degree of confidence ($p < .0001$) that the “spy comedies” are higher in Pleasantness and Activation than any Bond group. Amongst the Bond groups there was no significant difference in average Activation. For Pleasantness, however, the Craig and Lazenby averages were higher and the Brosnan average was lower than all others. This indicates that when

film-to-film variations are averaged, the Bond groups are statistically indistinguishable in Activation and three out of six Bond groups cannot be differentiated for Pleasantness. It can be said, then, that the typical “tone” of all combined dialogue in a James Bond film is slightly above the norm for Pleasantness and very close to the norm for Activation. This may, however, reflect dramatic genre rather than a specific series. A similar pattern of high Pleasantness and Activation for dialogue in comedies has been noted in television series (Kozinski, unpublished data) in contrast to action-drama dialogue only slightly above norm in Pleasantness and close to the norm in Activation.

A more detailed understanding of differences in emotional tone can be gained by examining differences in proportions of words falling in the extreme categories but it is not necessary to analyse all ten categories. This is because functional words such as *and*, *than*, *is*, *who*, *too* tend to have low Activation scores, and early DAL experiments showed that words rated as high in Activation and closer to either extreme of the Pleasantness dimension are judged as more emotional (Whissell and Berezowski 1986: 1157). Differences in emotional tone can be discerned by considering only four or five of the extreme categories. The proportions of Cheery (e.g. increase; tasted), High Activation (e.g. energy; escape), Nasty (e.g. destroy; resist), and Low Pleasantness (e.g. stolen; prison) words for each lead actor group were chosen for statistical comparison. Results are shown in Figure 2. The values plotted are expressed in percentages above or below the reference average. Although the values plotted are points, a line graph more clearly represents patterns among the measures.

Figure 2 indicates that dialogue texts of four of the six official Bond groups (Connery, Moore, Dalton, and Craig) have similar percentages of all four categories of highly emotional words. Cheery and Highly Active words are about 15–20% lower than the reference norm but Nasty and Low Pleasantness words are about 10–20% higher than the norm. This pattern on the graph appears as: plateau – sharp rise – plateau. This pattern is distorted for the Brosnan group and entirely absent for the Lazenby film.

In the Brosnan group the percentage of Cheery words is similar to the other Bond groups although there is a greater percentage of Highly Active words (only 5% less than the norm). A large difference is seen in the percentage of Nasty and Low Pleasantness words which in the Brosnan group shoot up to 40 and 35% above normal respectively compared to a 10–20% elevation in the other four Bonds. This means that the lower average for Pleasantness in the Brosnan films noted on the Figure 1 map is due to an abundance of Nasty and low Pleasantness words rather than a relative scarcity of Pleasant words. The Lazenby film is similar to the Connery-Moore-Dalton-Craig group in percentages of highly Active words and low Pleasantness words, but where the others are about 20% below

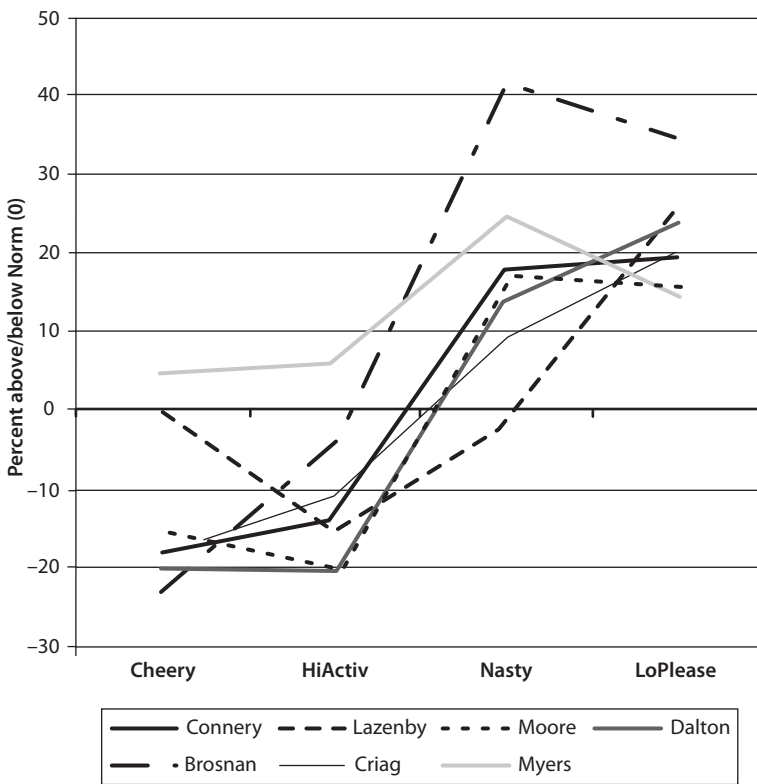


Figure 2. Proportions above or below normative values for four categories of words at emotional extremes

normal for Cheery words and 10–20% above normal for Nasty words the Lazenby film is almost exactly at the norm. A higher percentage of Cheery and fewer Nasty words in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* is not too surprising since in this film James Bond falls in love and marries.

The pattern for the Austin Powers group provides some explanation for the large differences in emotional tone seen on the Figure 1 map. The higher values for Activation are due to higher percentages of Cheery, High Activation and Nasty words. All three of these extreme categories involve words rated as especially active. The relative abundance of Nasty words makes the high average for Pleasantness even more puzzling, however, because these words are rated as extremely low in Pleasantness. A partial explanation comes from the fact that Austin Powers comedies include proportionately more Cheery words; actually 5% above the reference point rather than about 20% below. The remainder of the explanation is found in the percentage of highly Pleasant words (not shown in Figure 2). Six of

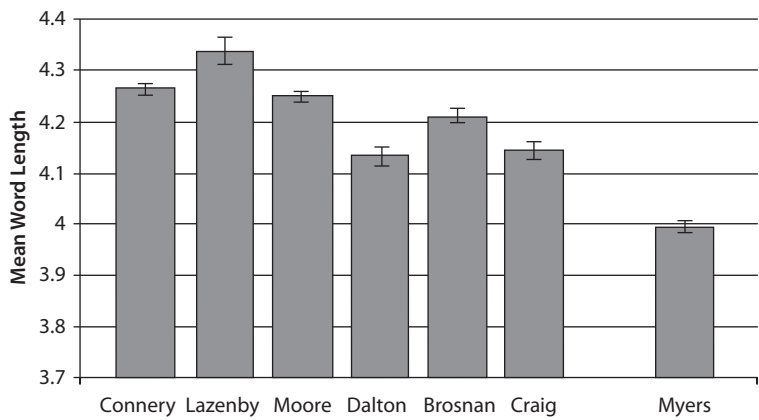


Figure 3. Average word length for Bond film groups and Austin Powers films. The reference norm is 4.3

the Bond groups are within about 5% of the reference level (the Brosnan group is 15% below) while the Powers groups soars to 38% above normal. No statistically significant difference in Sad words amongst any of the Bond groups or Powers could be detected. Proportions of this category were roughly 10% below normal.

There are indications that aspects of plot contribute to differences in the cognitive characteristics of dialogue. It is noteworthy that amongst the official Bonds, the language in the Lazenby and Craig films is strikingly lower in Imagery (more abstract) than any of the others ($p < .0001$). All three of these films include the tragic end of a romance as an important element of the plot. A closer analysis might confirm whether increased reference to abstract feelings occurs when the famous lover and man of action actually falls in love with one woman.

With regard to the question of trends over the lifetime of the film series, the DAL measures of language structure reveal a shift which may reflect technology-driven changes in film distribution. Proportions of Very Common words were higher in the three most recent official Bond groups than first three, with the Craig films markedly higher than any others ($p < .0001$). Average Word Length for the six official Bond groups (in chronological order) is presented in Figure 3 and a trend toward shorter words in the three most recent groups is apparent. The shift toward shorter and more common words is roughly concurrent with the widespread adoption of the DVD format. There may be an explanation for this that has to do with the recent change in film distribution around the world. When the early James Bond films were distributed theatrically in non-English speaking countries, local actors would be hired to dub the dialogue. Films today receive rapid international theatrical release and can be purchased for home viewing on a

Table 2. Results of Cluster Analysis with film names and distinguishing characteristics of each category

Class	Pleasantness	Activation	Imagery	Films
Early	Low to Medium	Low	Medium	<i>From Russia With Love; Diamonds Are Forever; Live and Let Die; The Man With the Golden Gun; The Living Daylights; GoldenEye</i>
Middle	Medium to High	Medium to High	High	<i>Dr. No; Goldfinger; Thunderball; You Only Live Twice; The Spy Who Loved Me; Moonraker; For Your Eyes Only; View to a Kill; License to Kill; The World is Not Enough; Die Another Day</i>
Late	High	Medium	Low	<i>On Her Majesty's Secret Service; Octopussy; Casino Royale; Quantum of Solace</i>
Unique	Very Low	High	High	<i>Tomorrow Never Dies</i>

DVD that may contain several different language tracks or sets of subtitles. A shift to simpler language would facilitate translation and consistent meaning for simultaneous worldwide distribution. If so, this may be an influence on the language that reaches a global audience of millions. Investigation of this question would require the analysis of a large sample of films covering a span of decades. The low mean Word Length seen for the Austin Powers group (contemporary with both Brosnan and Craig) does not contradict this hypothesis, but the fact that this mean is lower than any Bond group may reflect a genre difference.

The potential for discovery by advanced statistical analysis with DAL values is demonstrated in the exploration of trends over time that appeared to be cyclical. Although the averages for Pleasantness and Activation appear to be fairly stable across time, this is not because they are static. The film-by-film values for the three fundamental measures (Pleasantness, Activation, Imagery) all seemed to show a pattern of increase followed by a sharp fall, and a subsequent new rise. This cycle roughly coincided with the introduction of a new actor as James Bond in the series. Cluster Analysis is a statistical technique that classifies items on the basis of similarities and differences on several measures. Using the Pleasantness, Activation and Imagery scores, Cluster analysis defined three classes of films, apparently based on the life cycle of an actor in the role of James Bond. These “Early”, “Middle”, and “Late” Bond films are summarised in Table 2. The Early films form the group of six films in the left of the field in the Figure 1 scatterplot. The Late films are most of the small group next to the upper end of the Pleasantness axis. The Connery film *Goldfinger* is similar to the Late films in Pleasantness and Activation, but higher in Imagery (not depicted in the scatterplot). The Brosnan film

Tomorrow Never Dies has a combination of extreme characteristics that sets it apart from the other categories.

All the Early films are either the first or second film in a new Bond group. The Late films seem to signal the culmination of a cycle and a return to the Early tone. Three cycles can be seen over the lifetime of the Bond series. The first begins with the second Connery film (*From Russia with Love*) and climaxes with the Lazenby film (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*). Three films mark the beginning of the second cycle: *Diamonds are Forever*; *Live and Let Die*; and *The Man with the Golden Gun*. Connery's return to the role in *Diamonds are Forever* made him both a "previous" and a "new" Bond and could be responsible for the protracted beginning of this cycle. The penultimate Moore film, *Octopussy*, is the film marking the end of the second cycle. The next Early film is the first Dalton film, *The Living Daylights*. The sharp rise in Pleasantness for the second Dalton film suggests that these two films alone could be viewed as a completed cycle, particularly since the first Brosnan film is an Early film. However, the second Dalton film, *License to Kill*, is not classified as a Late film, so perhaps *The Living Daylights* should be considered a false start to the third cycle, an idea that may be supported by the six year hiatus in the series that followed *License to Kill*. The first Brosnan film, *GoldenEye*, is clearly the first film in the third cycle. Surprisingly, both Craig films fit the Late criteria rather than Early as might be expected especially since the first Craig film, *Casino Royale*, restarts the Bond story by beginning before the hero gets his license to kill. Love may be the explanation. The first cycle ended with Bond's tragic marriage in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and Craig's two films have both included a painful love affair as a plot feature. It remains to be seen whether, for the first time, a new cycle begins after the introduction of a new Bond or whether the Craig films will mark an extended ending of the cycle that began with Brosnan.

5. Summary and future directions

In the previous analysis section, the corpus of official James Bond films and Austin Powers parodies has been explored using the measures provided by the Dictionary of Affect in Language. It has been shown that the comedic parodies have an emotional tone that is distinctly Pleasant and Active. By contrast, the Bond films show some variation in Pleasantness when grouped by lead actor but are generally slightly above reference levels for Pleasantness and, on average, are very close to reference for Activation. Within the Bond corpus, several DAL measures can be used to characterise differences between films grouped by the actor in the lead role, particular plot features or trends over time that may be related to changes in the form of product distribution. The DAL measures can also be used

in sophisticated statistical techniques which make it possible to discern a subtle, cyclical pattern within the dialogue over the long life of the film series.

The level of analysis presented in this chapter, by way of metaphor, might be likened to a satellite survey as opposed to a foot search. Analysing the entire dialogue of a film without regard for the individual speaker allows for relatively rapid overall comparison of many films; however, a closer analysis is required to explore some questions stimulated by the initial exploration. Since the DAL method quantifies most words, it can be used with small samples of text for more minute analysis to complement qualitative or close analytic methods (see Bousfield and McIntyre this volume). Character comparisons such as hero vs. villain are possible and dialogue can be analysed by act or scene in order to quantify the emotional dynamics of the narrative structure (Whissell 2007, 2010). Paltridge et al. (this volume) raise some interesting questions regarding gender in televisual dialogue. Given that the James Bond films span decades before and after the feminist movement, a linguistic comparison of female characters, both female villains and “Bond girls”, over the decades might be revealing. Similar to horror films (Piazza this volume), Action films contain unnatural dialogue. Scene by scene analysis using the DAL could examine the dynamic rhythm of non-action scenes that are heavily expository and high-action scenes when improbably witty or glib remarks are common. Extending the exploratory, corpus-based approach, earlier Bond parodies could be examined (*Casino Royale*, *Get Smart* [television]) along with other spy series written for film (*Matt Helm*, *Harry Palmer*) or television (*I Spy*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*).

The DAL was created by applying psychological theory to the problem of quantifying emotion. It eliminates the problem of categorising emotional words by making it possible to measure the main emotional characteristics of the majority of words in any sample of natural language. As the analysis of the James Bond films and parodies has demonstrated, the DAL can be applied to a large corpus to provide a rapid description of overall emotional tone and harness statistical techniques to reveal basic differences and subtle patterns within a text. More detailed analysis can continue with the DAL quantification complementing qualitative methods for the exploration of cinematic or televisual texts.

CHAPTER 8

Structure and function in the generic staging of film trailers

A multimodal analysis

Carmen D. Maier

This chapter discusses the generic structure of 12 comedy film trailers and explains how the promotional goals of trailers influence the way in which their generic staging is multimodally structured. Given that trailers are designed to sell and tell a story, it is argued that the specificity of these trailers' generic structure lies in their dynamic interplay between narrative and promotional structures.

The chapter proposes a model of analysis that emerges from the interdisciplinary intersection between multimodality, genre theory and film studies. The analysis draws upon and extends these theoretical frameworks by examining the interdependencies between semiotic modes in a distinct generic structure in which each functional stage achieves a specific communicative purpose.

1. Introduction

In spite of their increasing importance in promotional campaigns and in spite of their intriguing structure, film trailers have rarely drawn the attention of academic research (Maier 2006: 3).

In this chapter, I explore the generic structure of 12 comedy film trailers. My exploration is based on the idea that film trailers are a mixed promotional genre characterised by a distinct generic structure in which each functional stage fulfills a specific communicative purpose through multimodal means. Although the present multimodal analysis is focused on comedy film trailers, this approach can be applied in the future to a range of film trailers promoting films that belong to other film genres than comedy. In this way, the role of the film genre in the generic structure of trailers can also be accounted for in comparative analyses of film trailers promoting films that belong to various genres.

The paper begins with the presentation of the interdisciplinary multimodal model of the study and its data, while the next part discusses the research findings.

2. The interdisciplinary methodological framework and data

I have argued elsewhere that “film trailers are multimodal texts in which several semiotic modes are combined, and parts of texts created for other purposes are transferred, rearranged and supplemented in order to attain a promotional purpose” (Maier 2009: 159). Trailers’ complex multimodal organisation determines the need of theoretical perspectives that can account for the way in which staging patterns are created both through language and its combination with other semiotic modes. I have therefore sought inspiration in three research areas: multimodality, genre theory and film theory. What follows is an explanatory overview of the methodological framework.

The approach adopted in this chapter derives from an understanding of trailers as multimodal texts making meaning in multiple ways. In a multimodal text “several meaning-making resources beside language are employed in order to fulfill the communicative purposes of the text” (Maier 2006: 5). Researchers in multimodality (Baldry 2000a, b; Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; van Leeuwen 2005a, 2005b; Iedema 2003; O’Halloran 2004; Kress 2010 etc.) continuously acknowledge the unified role of all modes as meaning-making resources. O’Halloran adds that meanings are derived “from systems in flux”:

For it is not only the culmination of choices made across semiotic resources in their interaction with other resources that makes meaning, but also the temporal and spatial unfolding of those choices. (O’Halloran 2004: 109)

I use this multimodal perspective in this chapter to explore how generic structure is organised when different semiotic modes functionally interrelate.

In combination with the multimodal approach, genre analysis provides the main method for identifying and explaining trailers’ macro patterns and functional structure. The notion of genre considered in this paper is not the same as that conceptualised by film theory, where generally speaking, the focus is more on content. I employ that notion of genre from film theory only when I delimitate my data, namely when I choose film trailers that have been created in order to promote only comedies and not other film genres like thrillers or horror films. The semantic and functional concept of genre pursued in the multimodal analysis of data stems from systemic functional linguistics, social semiotics, and discourse

studies, and refers to the functional structure of trailers and not to the genre of the films advertised. According to van Leeuwen,

In systemic-functional linguistics, genres are characterized in terms of their functions, in terms of what they *do*, initially as more or less unavoidable templates for communicative action, more recently as *resources* for communicative action that can be combined in different ways, some clichéd perhaps, other more original.

(van Leeuwen 2005b: 74)

The approach to genre in this analysis derives from the fact that a clear correlation may be found between linguistic structure and the strands of functional meanings embedded in each generic stage. The semantic and lexico-grammatical structure of the non-diegetic voiceover constitutes the first and fundamental criterion for establishing the nature and the length of a trailer's generic stages. Unless otherwise specified, the term *voiceover* in this paper is equated with the *narrator's non-diegetic commentaries*; they are non-diegetic in the sense that they are not part of the film's story itself. Certainly, voiceover belongs to sound aspects. According to Bordwell and Thompson, non-diegetic sound in general comes "from a source outside the story world", while diegetic sound "has a source in the story world" (Bordwell and Thompson 2001: 305). An example of a diegetic voiceover in trailers is where the voice of a character from the film is used in a trailer to comment on what s/he does in the film's story.

As indicated above, it is the communicative functions that distinguish genres, so that it seems reasonable to assume that it is the non-diegetic voiceovers which organise a trailer's generic structure because they prominently carry out and reflect its promotional purposes. Their relevance for establishing generic functions is always the same even though the units of linguistic structures vary in length from clauses to phrases or words. The non-diegetic voiceover represents a necessary but insufficient criterion for determining a film trailer's generic structure. After the stages have been roughly defined and delimited by the communicative purpose and the extent of each stretch of non-diegetic voiceover, other criteria have been taken into consideration. The next step is to establish the boundaries of each stage and this involves the examination of the changes which occur in visual, verbal and aural modes, in those parts of the text where boundaries have been tentatively marked for the semantic and lexico-grammatical changes appearing in the non-diegetic voiceover. Resources signalling a boundary between two stages may be multimodal or otherwise and may involve, for example a change in the music, a visual transition, and/or the start/end of a fragment of dialogue. Significantly, all these "signals" may also mark the opening or closing of a scene, and hence they may be considered boundary frames for generic stages only when accompanied by semantic and grammatical changes in voiceover.

When categorising the functional stages that appear in a film trailer, I have applied Labov's analytical model of narrative structures (Labov 1972, 1982, 1997, 2001; Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov and Fanshel 1977) in which each verbal element plays a function in the narrative. Labov summarises the structural organisation of a fully developed narrative:

A complete narrative begins with an orientation, proceeds to the complicating action, is suspended at the focus of evaluation before the resolution, concludes with the resolution, and returns the listener to the present time with the coda.

(Labov 1972: 369)

Although the narrative structure identified by Labov can be found in a large range of applications (Maier 2006:47), the model as such was not intended to account for complex genres. It has been possible to apply it extensively because, as van Leeuwen emphasises "Labov was describing a semiotic resource, not a particular kind of text" (van Leeuwen 2005a: 126). In this paper, the extension and alteration of Labov's framework has been necessary to render the diversity of the film trailer's stages that are characterised by promotional as well as narrative purposes. All the generic stages in trailers have been labeled on the basis of their communicative functions:

The process of giving suitable label to each functional stage requires the researcher to identify the fundamental functional relationship between all the generic stages in comedy film trailers. This relationship is created by the trailer's overall purpose: to promote the film. All the stages in the trailer are designed to fulfill a fundamental function: they are meant to persuade the viewer.

(Maier forthcoming)

All the generic stages in trailers are *Promotional* stages because each of them consistently contributes to the achievement of the promotional purpose. Yet, they contribute to that achievement through different informative means. Thus, in my explanation of the generic structure of trailers, the nature of the information that is revealed in each stage distinguishes some *Promotional* stages from others. Normally, this information will be either diegetic or non-diegetic, so there are two categories of *Promotional* stages: explicit and implicit. *The Explicit Promotional* stages (*Promotional Identification*, *Promotional Recapitulation*, *Promotional Interpretation*, *Promotional Recommendation* and *Promotional Information*) include the stages that mainly contain information about the non-diegetic context of the film: viewers, names of actors, director and film, date of release and other information regarding the making of the film. These stages may also include information regarding the film's content, i.e. diegetic information. *The Implicit Promotional* stages (*Prologue*, *Orientation*, *Complication* and *Evaluation*) are the

stages in which *only* diegetic information is disclosed: characters, situations, relationships and events. Owing to the trailer's promotional goals, the structure that has been outlined by Labov and Waletzky as the prototypical "overall structure of narratives" (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 26), cannot fully account for the structural organisation of trailers.

In the beginning of this chapter, I have mentioned that apart from multimodality and genre analysis I also employ approaches from film theory. In connection with explaining the role of the voiceover in structuring the film trailer and delimiting each functional stage, film theory offers relevant points of view. Kozloff considers that voiceover narration can be formally defined as "oral statements, conveying any portion of the narrative, spoken by an unseen speaker situated in a space and time other than that simultaneously being presented by the images on the screen" (Kozloff 1988: 5). I extend her definition to include the oral statements conveying portions of the promotional discourse of the *Explicit Promotional* stages in trailers. Kozloff's findings also facilitate my description of the unifying role of voiceover in trailers because she claims that the overt presence of the narrator "allows for any number of shifts of focalisation without strain" as s/he has "a privileged vantage point" (Kozloff 1988: 80).

When addressing the issue of how the genre trailer is structurally organised so as to be in keeping with specific communicative goals, Bordwell's adaptation of the classic formalist distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet* to film proved useful. According to Bordwell, "the *fabula* embodies the action as a chronological, cause and effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a special field" (Bordwell 1997: 49). In the same time,

the *syuzhet* (usually translated as plot) is the actual arrangement and the presentation of the *fabula* in the film. It is not the text in toto. It is a more abstract construct, the patterning of the story as a blow-by-blow recounting of the film could render it. (Bordwell 1997: 50)

Bordwell suggests that in films, certain pieces of *fabula* information are chosen to be presented while others are withheld in order to guide the viewer's narrative activity. Furthermore, by delaying the revelation of some information in films, the *syuzhet* can arouse anticipation, curiosity, suspense, and surprise. If, according to Bordwell, any *syuzhet* selects those *fabula* events to be presented in a film and combines them in particular ways, I suggest that we deal with a sort of an extremely "rarefied *syuzhet*" in trailers because it supplies such little story information (Bordwell 1997: 54). I use Bordwell's perspective to suggest that, in a film trailer, certain pieces of the film's *syuzhet* are primarily selected and recombined to maximise the viewer's expectations and curiosity concerning various aspects of the film and not just the film's story. I suggest that in a film trailer, the delays are

prolonged beyond the boundaries of the trailer's generic structure because a trailer does not disclose any outcomes as a film usually does in the end. Due to genre expectations, the viewer is aware, and even made aware by the voiceover that certain information is supposed to be revealed only in the film. However, the effects of such delays in trailers are similar to those discussed by Bordwell with regard to film narrative. When elaborating on how the film's *syuzhet* and style interact to cue and channel the viewer's construction of the *fabula*, Bordwell also shows that "a film may contain cues and structures that encourage the viewer to make errors of comprehension" (Bordwell 1997: 39). Whereas in films errors in comprehension are usually corrected as the narrative progresses, in trailers, doubts are raised and left unsolved so as to trigger the viewers' keener expectations and persuade them to see the whole film later on.

The 12 trailers that have been selected for my multimodal analysis promote the following comedies: *Along Came Polly*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Bringing Down the House*, *Freaky Friday*, *The Hot Chick*, *Maid in Manhattan*, *Something's Gotta Give*, *Sweet Home Alabama*, *Two Weeks Notice*, *View from the Top* and *What Women Want*. All these comedy trailers are accompanied by a voiceover.

3. Types of generic stages

What follows is a description of the main characteristics of the organisational potential of generic stages in 12 comedy trailers. I have adapted Labov's model by addressing the specificity of this promotional genre in which both narrative and promotional stages are encountered. With minor deviations and exceptions, the generic structure of comedy film trailers seems to display the following sequence of stages:

$$[(\textit{Promotional Identification}) * (\textit{Prologue})] \wedge \textit{Orientation} \wedge \textit{Complication} \wedge (\textit{Promotional Identification}) \wedge (\textit{Evaluation}) \wedge [(\textit{Promotional Recapitulation}) * (\textit{Promotional Interpretation}) * (\textit{Promotional Identification}) * (\textit{Promotional Recommendation})] \wedge \textit{Promotional Identification} \wedge \textit{Promotional Information}.$$

With a few changes, the structural formula that I have devised to describe the generic sequencing of trailers primarily follows systemic functional linguists like Hasan (1985) and Eggins and Slade (1997: 292). Consequently, I have also chosen a linear sequence, placing the optional stages within brackets (). In order to indicate how the stages are ordered with respect to each other, I use the $\wedge$ symbol. A

Table 1. Types of generic stages and their functions

Types		Functions
<i>Implicit Promotional</i> (diegetic information)	<i>Prologue</i>	Appetiser
	<i>Orientation</i>	Contextualisation
	<i>Complication</i>	Introduction of disruptive action
	<i>Evaluation</i>	Interpretations of events/ outcomes
<i>Explicit Promotional</i> (non-diegetic & diegetic information)	<i>Promotional Identification</i>	Foregrounds meaning of film company, director and actors
	<i>Promotional Recapitulation</i>	Introduces new orientative information from an evaluative point of view
	<i>Promotional Interpretation</i>	Explains possible impacts of film upon viewers
	<i>Promotional Recommendation</i>	Advises the viewers
	<i>Promotional Information</i>	Introduces extra non-diegetic information about Internet address, release dates, etc.

domain of sequencing is marked by []. The symbol * is meant to show that those stages can occur in either sequence.

Certainly, only an ideal trailer would contain all the generic elements mentioned above as, in actual reality, trailers display various combinations of parts of this prototypical generic structure. The comedy trailers analysed below with non-diegetic voiceover include both deviations vis-à-vis the number or sequencing of structural elements and their internal organisation in scenes, as well as other deviations such as stages embedded in each other. Scenes from the film can be embedded in any of the above stages with the exception of the first *Explicit Promotional* stage. A discussion of the different functions of the scenes and the *Explicit Promotional* stages in particular is given in Section 3.2.

Table 1 provides the descriptions of all generic stages found in the 12 comedy trailers together with their specific functions.

3.1 Types of implicit promotional stages

In the *Implicit Promotional Stages*, diegetic information about characters, situations, relationships and events is disclosed.

The *Prologue* stage is an optional opening stage in comedy trailers and usually suggests the tone of the story or presents a representative situation that could

trigger the story's subsequent development. This stage usually consists of one or several scenes marked by the absence of the non-diegetic voiceover. These scenes may also be considered as belonging to the *Orientation* stage because they also provide details about characters, places or events. Nevertheless, in this study, the first scene or scenes in a film trailer are considered as belonging to a *Prologue* stage for two reasons. First, the selected scenes in the *Prologue* stage usually have a representative character as far as the story is concerned and are primarily meant to assure the viewer that the story will be worth seeing. Second, it is only in the *Orientation* stage that the commentary of the voiceover starts a story with the presentation of the main characters and the revelation of their names.

In the *Prologue* stage of *Freaky Friday*, the viewer is offered a glimpse of the hectic mornings in the life of a family composed of a stressed mother, a typical teenage daughter and a young boy who enjoys teasing his older sister. The *Prologue* stage is inaugurated aurally with the ringing of the alarm clock, followed by the hasty beat of the music, and the nagging voice of a woman trying to wake someone up. The fast editing is aurally counterpointed to music, the rhythm of characters' movements is carried over from one shot to the other, and their short exclamations are echoed by enhanced diegetic sounds. All the modes contribute to the creation of the hectic atmosphere in a matter of no more than 12 seconds. A sense of inevitability is also built up. At the end of this *Prologue* stage, the viewer knows enough to expect climactic developments.

In spite of its limited length and absence of non-diegetic voiceover, the *Prologue* stage succeeds in accomplishing its persuasive function in the trailer. By creating a certain atmosphere, by disclosing a salient feature of a character and by making a promise about the dramatic development, the *Prologue* stage functions as an appetiser. The scenes from the *Prologue* stage enhance the viewer's expectations from the very beginning of the trailer as they disclose only enough diegetic information to create a certain atmosphere and raise several questions about what will happen to the characters in a specific situation.

Orientation is an obligatory stage in trailers whose function is to contextualise the story. It usually introduces such elements as specific settings, relationships between particular characters or opening situations that are decisive for the events happening in the *Complication* stage. The whole context that is sketched in the *Orientation* stage makes it possible to understand the rest of the trailer. On the non-diegetic level, the most frequently used types of orientating remarks in trailers focus on the characters in the story, the ongoing events or situations, and general conditions prevailing at the time of the narrated events. With the exception of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Maid in Manhattan*, in the *Orientation* stage of all the other trailers under study, the non-diegetic voiceover begins with the disclosure of the main character's name: "Ruben Feffer made a career out of avoiding

risks" (in *Along Came Polly*), "For lawyer Peter Sanders life was all work and no play" (in *Bringing Down the House*), "Melanie Carmichael has it all" (in *Sweet Home Alabama*), "Harry Sanderson was every man's fantasy (in *Something Gotta Give*)", etc.

In *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Maid in Manhattan*, the voiceover inaugurates the **Orientation** stage with more general information leaving the name of the character to be disclosed later on: "In every life there comes a time" (in *Bridget Jones's Diary*), and "At Manhattan's Beresford hotel where the rich and famous can always be seen" (in *Maid in Manhattan*). By starting with the temporal or spatial co-ordinates of the events to follow, the voiceover suggests that this information has a vital influence on the rest of the story. In other trailers, although the main character is singularised by being given a name, the characterisation of his/her situation or way of life is general enough to accommodate many specific variations. For example, "manic Mondays, a special talent", or "a life which was all work and no play" are clear cases of general characterisations which are not confined to singular existences as they are meant to allow the viewers' possible identifications with the main characters.

When elements of generality are supposed to characterise ongoing events or prevailing conditions in a character's life, the main verbal devices are: continuous forms of verbs as in "she's dating the son of the New York's mayor" (in *Sweet Home Alabama*) and "a boss who's driving her to the edge" (in *Two Weeks Notice*), and temporal adverbs like "ever since Donna was a child" (in *View from the Top*) and "he always made the safe choice" (in *Along Came Polly*). These verbal devices are meant to give the viewer the impression of having known the character for a long time. The identification process is thus intensified through these verbal devices. As illustrated above, the **Orientation** stage in comedy trailers allows viewers to deduce who the main character is, and gives them some relevant clues as to the circumstances that might trigger a crisis in his/her existence. At the same time, the persuasive purpose of this stage is attained through a permanent combination of general and particular in the information flow.

The **Complication** stage of comedy trailers introduces an action or several actions that disrupt the main characters' lives. In most trailers, the **Complication** stage is usually connected to the previous stage through the explicit adversative conjunction *but*. For example: "But he's about to discover what women think" (in *What Women Want*), "But a curse is about to turn her into a Mister" (in *The Hot Chick*), "But on Friday, that's all about to change" (in *Freaky Friday*), "But before she can tie the knot, she needs to tie up one loose end" (in *Sweet Home Alabama*), etc. The adversative *but* is meant to undermine the expectations that viewers have maintained up to that moment because it implies a "violation of expectation" (Peterson and McCabe 1991: 35).

With the exception of the *Complication* stage in *The Hot Chick*, the non-diegetic voiceover commentary is maintained at a very general level, arousing the viewers' expectations in this way too. For example, the disruption to be expected is suggested by the vagueness inherent in such phrases as "one loose end" (in *Sweet Home Alabama*) "something new" (in *Something Gotta Give*) or "going places" (in *View from the Top*). On the visual level, the story's events are disclosed in the following shots. In *Maid in Manhattan*, the metaphoric element of generality is intensified through a reference to the non-diegetic reality of the film viewers because they are directly addressed by the non-diegetic voiceover: "But when you least expect it, fate can open a door". The verbal metaphor from the voiceover is visually coupled in the following shots with the concrete door that opens the room of the hotel and facilitates the first meeting between the main characters. In both *What Women Want* and *Freaky Friday*, the supernatural element that disrupts the existence of the main characters is verbally revealed in the non-diegetic voiceover through verbs that generally introduce a sense of unpredictability: *discover* and *change*. Then, through powerful visual and aural effects, the supernatural event is disclosed. The fact that there is no clear connection between the non-diegetic voiceover and the shots disclosing the supernatural event triggers viewers' curiosity. The discussion of the main characteristics of several *Complication* stages suggests that viewers' expectations are monitored in new directions by promising unpredictable events. The persuasive effect of the promises is enhanced through the use of the explicit adversative conjunction *but* and through the interplay of general and specific at the intersection of voiceover and the accompanying or following shots.

Evaluation in trailers is a stage that can provide not one but several clarifications and interpretations of what has been presented in the previous stage or the outcome of those events. There are trailers in which the *Evaluation* stage is not marked as a separate component by the voiceover, but the boundaries of the stage are marked by the dialogic context. Thus, clarifications and interpretations may belong to the voiceover or to some of the characters in a way that highlights each other's characteristics and choices, or the events from different, sometimes contrasting, points of view. In the present data, the most obvious example of several *Evaluation* stages is represented by *What Women Want*, where the main character's situation is contrastively evaluated both by himself and his psychiatrist. The contrastive aspect of the evaluation is visually marked by the way in which the shots in the two *Evaluation* stages have been chosen: while Nick's hasty and desperate evaluation of his own situation is visually demonstrated through shots revealing the adverse consequences of his circumstances, the psychiatrist's calm evaluation is visually exemplified through the images of a beautiful woman's legs.

The explanation for the presence of several *Evaluation* stages in comedy trailers may be found in the fundamental generic purpose mentioned before, namely, to promote a film. Labov and Waletzky (1967: 29) claim that the *Evaluation* stage “is typical of narratives of personal experience”. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to understand that by confronting the viewer with several “personal” interpretations of the events and characters in the story, the *Evaluation* stage in particular successfully enhances the viewer’s curiosity and expectations.

Furthermore, according to Rothery and Stenglin “evaluation in narrative has the potential to function differently from similar stages in other story genres in that it can give significance retrospectively and prospectively” (Rothery and Stenglin 1997: 240). A retrospective stance is taken in the voiceover in the *Evaluation* stage of *Sweet Home Alabama*: “She thought she had everything she wanted”. In *View from the Top*, the evaluation of the main character’s future has a clear prospective angling: “It won’t be fast, it won’t be smooth, but this small town girl is about to get a taste of the big time”. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, *The Hot Chick*, *Bringing Down the House* and *Maid in Manhattan*, the opening of the *Evaluation* stage is marked through the temporal adverb *now*, foregrounding the significance of the events in the *Complication* stage. According to the temporal perspective of the evaluative stance, the *Evaluation* stage is meant either to build up expectations about the outcome of the events, or make the viewer consider various possible outcomes. For example, in *Bringing Down the House*, the expectations are built up in a climax through the repeated use of the present continuous: “Now, she’s taking over his life, winning over his friends, and opening his eyes to the facts of life”. Generally, triple progressives function as evaluative correlatives indicating the extension or continuation of each evaluated action. Suspense is visually enhanced by the exemplifying shots which accompany the voiceover. In *The Hot Chick*, after the main character is transformed from a girl to a man by witchcraft, the viewer is confronted with two possible but rather unlikely outcomes: “Now, she’s got to reverse the spell or live like this for ever”.

Defining the *Evaluation* stage as “that part of the narrative that reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative”, Labov and Waletzky point out that “the fundamental definition of evaluation must be semantic, although its implications are structural” (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 32). The main factors that semantically define this stage in trailers are lexical intensifiers (Labov 1972: 378). For example, at the voiceover’s level: “the luckiest man on earth” (*What Women Want*), “too good to be true, a man who’s so wrong” (*Bridget Jones’s Diary*), “live like this for ever” (*The Hot Chick*), “the girl that was invisible is all he can see” (*Maid in Manhattan*), “a taste of the big time” (*View from the Top*). These lexical intensifiers manipulate the understanding of the accompanying or following

scenes either by enhancing their evaluative meaning or by subverting them. Thus, a third level of evaluation is achieved through the contrast between those two when the voiceover's evaluative commentary undermines the meanings of the scenes. Generally speaking, the *Evaluation* stage is supposed "to create tension and suspense" in different types of narratives (Peterson and McCabe 1991:42). In trailers, the overall effect of the *Evaluation* stage has a similar but fairly enhanced effect due to an incomplete generic structure. Through different means at the level of all three modes, in trailers, the *Evaluation* stage highlights an unavoidable need to solve a disruptive crisis or a problematic situation. Thus, through the combination of the retrospective or prospective meanings of the *Evaluation* stage viewers are definitely left wondering about the different possible outcomes after viewing the trailer.

3.2 Types of explicit promotional stages

In each of the *Explicit Promotional* stages, the trailer's diegetic level is transcended due to both the voiceover's interference and its content. In the *Explicit Promotional* stages, diegetic information is meshed with non-diegetic information concerning the film company, director, actors, date of film release and so on.

Unlike the *Orientation* stage, the *Promotional Recapitulation* has the function both of presenting the main character(s) in the new situation(s), and evaluating specific aspects of the story or the whole story as such. This seems in keeping with Labov and Waletzky's who observe that "when orientation sections are displaced, we frequently find that this displacement performs another function, evaluation" (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 27). In trailers, the fact that the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage usually follows an explicit *Evaluation* (which is semantically defined by direct evaluative statements) might enhance its evaluative aspect. Vis-à-vis the *Orientation* stage, the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage also has a stronger persuasive purpose that is achieved through its stronger evaluative character, and a higher degree of generality. For example, when the main characters' names are disclosed in the *Orientation* stage, the characters are generally presented as belonging to a certain category of people in the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage. A few examples are discussed later on. Furthermore, in the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage, the story is presented first of all as the product of a certain film company. Hence, the stronger persuasive purpose is also attained through naming the film company, because the *singularisation* of a famous film company has a clear evaluative purpose. For example: "From Warner Brothers Pictures comes a comedy" (in *Two Weeks Notice*), "Touchstone Pictures presents the story" (in *Bringing Down the House*), "Paramount Pictures and Icon Productions present the story"

(in *What Women Want*), and “Fox Searchlight Pictures presents the international smash hit” (in *Bend It Like Beckham*). The persuasive effect of this *singularisation* is enhanced because the naming of the company implies the evaluative presupposition that every viewer is familiar with the achievements of that company. The film’s content is summarised under an evaluative label: “a comedy”, “the story of a man’s man” or “international smash hit”. The authority of the didactic pronouncement of the voiceover is increased precisely by preceding the summary of the film’s content with the film company’s name and the evaluative labels mentioned above. The voiceover informs the viewers about how the film makers intend the film to be understood.

In the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage of *What Women Want*, a higher degree of generality is attained through the non-diegetic voiceover: “Paramount Pictures and Icon Productions present the story of a man’s man who’s listening to what women want and getting in touch with his feminine side”. In the voiceover, the name *Nick Marshall* from the *Orientation* stage is replaced in the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage by the metaphoric expression *a man’s man*, giving certain male viewers the possibility to identify with the character. By combining this characterisation with a scene from the film in which the character describes himself as “the one guy on earth”, the singularity of his situation is once again enhanced. Through the interplay between generalisation and singularisation, the distance between diegetic and non-diegetic reality, namely between characters and viewers, is diminished. Similarly, by mentioning film companies’ names, in the context of the non-diegetic reality, the distance between film makers and viewers is diminished. In the next *Promotional* stage to be discussed, the *Promotional Interpretation* stage, these strategies are repeated and together with other new strategies contribute to advancing the merging of stages discussed above.

The *Promotional Interpretation* stage offers the viewers a promotional explanation of the possible impact of the film on their reality. This explanatory process is meant to diminish or even abolish the distance or the boundaries between the reality of the film’s characters and the viewers’ reality. At the same time, by mentioning the name of the film company or director, the boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic reality are abolished and so do, on the non-diegetic level, the boundaries between the reality of film making and viewers’ realities. In *Bend It Like Beckham*, the direct temporal indication *this spring* makes a reference to the film’s release date that coincides with the precise moment in viewers’ lives when they are supposed to carry out the specified actions: “This spring is about knowing what’s right, following your heart, and finding the strength to bend the rules”. By temporally making the transition from the diegetic reality of the characters to the non-diegetic reality of both viewers and film makers, the voiceover prepares

viewers for the next three *-ing* clauses which, thanks to the personal pronoun *your*, seem to refer only to the viewers' reality. The words *this spring*, *knowing what's right*, *following your heart*, *finding the strength*, *to bend the rules* are visually repeated. The tension between singularisation and generalisation is working in this sentence as *the heart* is singularised by the preceding personal pronoun *your*, while the expressions *knowing what's right* and *finding the strength to bend the rules* have a more diffuse meaning.

In *Maid in Manhattan*, a single *wh*-clause is used in the **Promotional Interpretation** stage, but its persuasive effect is supposed to be much stronger due to the words that surround it: "This Christmas, no matter who you are, destiny will find you". By temporally pinpointing the action through the words *this Christmas*, the voiceover makes a direct reference to the film's release date and to when such a thing could happen in viewers' reality. Together with the direct temporal indication, the certainty implied in the words *no matter* and the aurally intensified abstract noun *destiny* create a sense of urgency and implacability at a very general level, although the personal pronoun *you* singularises each of the members of the audience. In this trailer, the interplay between generalisation and singularisation is meant to have a more powerful persuasive impact because, in a premonitory way, it explicitly implies that whatever the viewers' situations are, every one of them will be affected by viewing the film. The merging of only two realities is verbally accomplished: the film making reality (through the words *this Christmas*) and the viewers' reality (through the personal pronoun *you*). The merging of this non-diegetic reality with the characters' diegetic reality is only indirectly implied.

The **Promotional Interpretation** stage has a powerful persuasive effect due to the fact that space and time other than that presented by the images on the screen (namely the space and time of the non-diegetic voiceover, film makers and viewers) are unified in the **Promotional Interpretation** stage. Furthermore, the persuasive effect is explainable through the voiceover's acknowledgement of the viewer. Kozloff claims that when the viewer's own experience and personhood are acknowledged in voiceover, "the spectator is placed less as a voyeur and more as an invited confidante" (Kozloff 1988: 129). Besides, as with the persuasive strategy in the **Promotional Recapitulation** stages, by mentioning the film companies' names in the **Promotional Interpretation** stage, the voiceover also gives an evaluative indication about who facilitates the rewarding experience viewers will enjoy and learn from when seeing the film.

The **Promotional Identification** stage introducing the companies' names is usually placed in the first part of the trailer before, after or sometimes in lieu of the **Prologue** stage. The **Promotional Identification** stage is absent in only one trailer, *Freaky Friday*, where the name of the film company is mentioned only

once, at the beginning of the *Promotional Interpretation* stage. Both the *Promotional Identification* stage introducing the actors' names and the stage introducing the film's name are usually placed after the *Evaluation* stage or the *Promotional Recapitulation* stage where such a stage is present. The voiceover's commentaries are represented by elliptical constructions when they appear in the *Promotional Identification* stages because they function as aural labels. The *Promotional Identification* stage introducing the names of the companies is either represented by shots in which the companies' logos are displayed and where the visual information is accompanied by the voiceover's mentioning of the companies' names, or by shots in which the companies' logos are displayed without verbal commentary, or only by the voiceover's words. The *Promotional Identification* stage introducing actors' names also has several variations: actors' names can be displayed on the screen and the visual information is accompanied by the voiceover's uttering of these names, or the voiceover may simply utter the names of the actors who appear in the accompanying shots. While the other types of *Explicit Promotional* stages are rather short (1 to 2 shots), this type is usually longer as it includes scenes in which the named actors "perform". The shots following each of the names primarily have the role of revealing some representative moments in the actors' performance. When comparing these shots/scenes with the scenes from those *Explicit Promotional* stages in which the name of the film company is disclosed, we should note that scenes following the naming of the film company are mainly meant to highlight the specificity of the films made by that company. The shots/scenes following each of the actors' names are mainly meant to reveal recognisable traits of the acting performance, as well as new or even surprising ones. One example is Renneé Zellwegger's performance in *Bridget Jones's Diary* where she skilfully impersonates a drunken Bridget singing at a party in front of a crowd. At the same time, it should be stressed that these shots from the *Promotional Identification* stages can also introduce new aspects of the characters' traits and new moments from the film, helping the viewer in her/his activity of inferring other scenes, or making more sense of the story's cause- and- effect chain. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that the main difference between the scenes that are included in the *Promotional Identification* stages, and those which are a part of other stages in the trailer is motivated by their different functions: the former are included in the trailer mainly to promote the actors, while the latter are meant to help the viewer in anticipating a possible story for the film. The scenes included in the *Promotional Identification* stages are chosen to primarily highlight the actors' performance rather than the characters' tribulations. Hence the scenes are points in the trailer when the promotional and narrative elements combine.

The *Promotional Information* stage provides information about the people involved in the making of the film, soundtrack availability, the Internet address of the film's homepage, Internet keyword and release date. It is usually placed at the very end of the trailer, its position being motivated by the decisive role that this kind of practical information plays in enhancing a trailer's overall effect as a promotional text. The encouraging and persuasive promise *coming soon*, or more precisely *coming this Christmas* may also appear in this stage. Sometimes, the verbal text is either superimposed on the last shots taken from the film, or it is written on a black screen. When visual effects are used, they usually keep to the style of the other captions from the other stages in a trailer.

The *Promotional Recommendation* stage is optional, usually the only stage in which the viewer is directly addressed by the voiceover. Direct address is realised through imperative constructions (e.g. in *View from the Top*: "From Miramax Films get ready to spread your wings and fly high"). The semantic sphere of the recommendation is an extension of the story's theme about a girl becoming a stewardess. Viewers' possible future identification with the main character is implied and simultaneously promised in this *Recommendation* stage. The imperative clause also strengthens the relationship of unequal power between the voiceover as an expert and the viewers who have to be advised as well as informed and entertained. The following shots reinforce the meaning of the words uttered by the voiceover and written on the screen in different ways. The words *from Miramax Films* are followed by a comic scene selected from the film in which one of the stars, Mike Myers, is giving a representative performance. The words *get ready to spread your wings* are intensified by one of the characters' assurance in the following shot: "You can have everything you want". In a similar way, the words *fly high* are followed in the next shot by the same character's cordial reception: "Welcome aboard!"

4. Conclusions

The multimodal genre analysis of the generic structure of 12 comedy trailers has illustrated how information is revealed and structured, what types of information are chosen to be revealed or not, and the functions of those choices. It has been demonstrated that the functional relationship existing between all the generic stages of trailers is given by the trailer's overall goal: to promote the film. The analysis has pointed out that the film's story is re-presented and re-invented in the trailer. Both the re-ordered fragments of the film and the voiceover's commentaries contribute to this. In these comedy trailers, viewers are involved in an

implicit dialogue with the voiceover who provides them with two different kinds of information: diegetic (in the *Implicit Promotional* stages) and non-diegetic (in the *Explicit Promotional* stages). The introduction, clarification and interpretation of the story's events from the *Implicit Promotional* stages are combined with the presentation of those who contributed to the making of the film in the *Explicit Promotional* stages. Among the four *Implicit Promotional* stages, *Orientation*, *Complication* and *Evaluation* are found to be obligatory stages. The contextualising function of the *Prologue* is usually taken over by *Orientation* in the trailers in which the *Prologue* is absent. While *Orientation* offers the viewers a glimpse of specific elements of the film's story, the *Complication* stage introduces the disruptive event(s). The *Evaluation* stage has a special persuasive role in the generic structure as it can appear several times in the structure of a trailer, and it can be marked both by voiceover and dialogic context. Apart from including contrastive elements, it can take either a retrospective or prospective stance in order to manipulate the viewers' curiosity and expectations.

The persuasive form and content of the voiceover minimises or even abolishes the distance between viewers and the diegetic reality of the characters and non-diegetic reality of film makers in the five *Explicit Promotional* stages: *Promotional Recapitulation*, *Promotional Interpretation*, *Promotional Identification*, *Promotional Recommendation*, and *Promotional Information*. The *Promotional Recapitulation* takes the *Orientation*'s contextualising function to another level of persuasion by introducing a higher degree of generality as far as the diegetic information is concerned, and also a higher degree of singularisation by naming the company that made the film. The persuasive commentaries of the voiceover minimise the distance between viewers and the film makers' non-diegetic reality by indicating the implicitly well-known names of those who offer the film's rewarding experience to viewers in the *Promotional Identification* stages. At the same time, the persuasive commentaries minimise the distance between the viewers and the diegetic reality by facilitating or only promising the viewers' identification with characters and their situations especially in *Promotional Recommendation* stage. Even the possible impact of viewing the film on the viewer's reality is explained and promised in some comedy trailers in these stages.

It has also been shown that in almost all the stages of the trailers, the combination of non-diegetic voiceover with the accompanying or following shots is characterised by the permanent interplay between general and particular in the information flow. This interplay also facilitates the viewers' possible identifications with the characters and their situations through the specific means of visual, aural and verbal modes.

As a multimodal genre, trailers still raise many engaging and as yet unanswered questions for which further research is needed. Based on this model of multimodal analysis, a comparative analysis of trailers and the films they advertised could also provide interesting results concerning the persuasive strategies employed in trailers. An overall exploration of the social practice of promoting a film could be undertaken with the methodological tools of social semiotics. The analyses of the sequence of promotional activities and other multimodal texts – from posters to web pages of films – could definitely facilitate the understanding of trailers' persuasive role in that context.

PART II

Televisual discourse

CHAPTER 9

“I don’t know what they’re saying half the time, but I’m hooked on the series”

Incomprehensible dialogue and integrated multimodal characterisation in *The Wire*

Michael Toolan

This paper analyses and discusses dialogue in the hugely-celebrated HBO series, *The Wire* (2002–2008). One paradox that particularly interests me is that the dialogue is “involvingly incomprehensible” or, to be more precise, that it is quite difficult to understand fully, but no less absorbing and enjoyable for that – if anything, the reverse! Looking chiefly at one short scene (the discussion of the rules of chess, in episode 3 of series 1), I comment on how the interplay of verbal and visual and aural modes means that the “degradation” of the verbal channel – of the dialogue traditionally held to be crucial to effective communication of character and theme – is not, in this TV narrative, an obstacle. Since my comments are predicated on the assumed “opacity” of the dialogue, I present a relatively simple but workable empirical method of probing some aspects of film-dialogue comprehensibility, and report on results from a pilot study. I also argue, with some quantified evidence, that comparatively extensive lexical repetition (reflecting thematic or ideational repetition) compensates or “repairs” where dialogue may be significantly less than fully understood. And I emphasise that for comprehension of dialogue in *The Wire* the viewer-listener must attend to all the integrated means of communication at play in an unfolding exchange. As Rossi (this volume) and others note (e.g., Kozloff 2000; and now Quaglio 2009 and Bednarek 2010), fictional dialogue has a noticeable scarcity of a number of almost inescapable features of natural dialogue. One fundamental consideration lies behind both the relative rarity, in fictional film dialogue, of unresolved topics, incomplete exchanges, ignored or misheard turns, self-repairs and recycled utterances; and the relative prominence in that dialogue of coherence, focus, and teleological efficacy (see also Altman 1992; Chion 1994). That consideration is the overarching narrativity of the construct: the talk’s role in telling a story, in representing individuals experiencing change. This, more than the dialogue’s fictionality or artistic status, or the fact that film dialogue is

usually scripted before it is spoken and filmed (i.e., exists first as writing), seems to be responsible for the succinct focussedness of most dialogue in film narratives. The implicit priority accorded to narrativity in turn reflects the wider communicative context of (commercial) TV series generally: the need to entertain or otherwise enrich viewers and be attractive to advertisers and sponsors.

1. Introduction

This paper analyses and discusses one scene – at once memorable and typical – from the first series of the hugely-celebrated HBO series, *The Wire* (2002–2008). One question I particularly dwell upon relates to the experience, repeatedly confirmed anecdotally in conversations with other British and even American viewers, that a significant proportion of the characters' dialogue is impenetrable to them, but that this seems not substantially to impair viewers' enjoyment of the drama. I will offer some commentary on how the interplay of verbal and visual and aural modes means that the "degradation" of the verbal channel – of the dialogue traditionally held to be crucial to effective communication of character and theme – is not, in this TV narrative, an obstacle. Since my comments are predicated on the "opacity" of the dialogue, I present a relatively simple but workable empirical method of probing *some* aspects of film-dialogue comprehensibility, and report on results from a pilot study. I also argue, with some quantified evidence, that comparatively extensive lexical repetition (reflecting thematic or ideational repetition) compensates or "repairs" where dialogue may be significantly less than fully understood. And I emphasise that for comprehension of dialogue in *The Wire* the viewer-listener must attend to all the integrated means of communication at play in an unfolding exchange. I therefore discuss a number of those means, which are cotemporally integrated with the verbal "stream" in the total speech situation. The theoretical background to my approach is chiefly the argument for the situated determination of communicational meaning propounded by integrational linguistics, as set out in the work of Roy Harris (e.g., Harris 1998).

As Rossi (this volume) and others note (e.g., Kozloff 2000; and now Quaglio 2009 and Bednarek 2010), fictional dialogue has a noticeable scarcity of a number of almost inescapable features of natural dialogue (unresolved topics, incomplete exchanges, ignored or misheard turns, self-repairs and recycled utterances, and so on); by the same token it has noticeably more coherence, focus, and teleological efficacy than natural dialogue (see also Altman 1992; Chion 1994). The key reason for this is the priority accorded, by those devising this dialogue, to the overarching narrativity of the construct: the talk's role in telling a story, in reporting individuals experiencing change. This, more than the fictionality, artistic status,

or (normally) prior existence in writing of the product seems to be responsible for the succinct focussedness of most dialogue in film narratives. And the implicit priority accorded to narrativity in turn reflects the wider communicative context of (commercial) TV series generally; it is vital that such series entertain or otherwise figuratively enrich the lives of viewers, and are deemed attractive to a large viewership as well as advertisers and sponsors.

2. *The Wire*: An overview

The Wire is an American television drama series, comprising five seasons of twelve episodes each, first broadcast on the cable network HBO from 2002 to 2008. It rapidly developed a devoted viewership, who admired the unfashionable urban setting (Baltimore: mostly the projects, bars, beaten-up neighbourhoods, unglamorous police offices), the vivid characters and their earthy expressive language, and in particular the almost Shakespearean conflicts that drew together the disparate subcommunities depicted: police detectives, drug gangsters and their subordinates, stevedores, politicians, and lawyers (all with families, relationships, scars and blindspots). The five seasons in turn focussed on a particular subgroup, and the police's dealings with it, within this urban mix: the drugs gangs in the first series for example, the stevedores in the dying docks in series two. But mostly the same characters continue to figure across the whole set of 60 episodes, and story lines similarly continue; in these respects *The Wire* is serial-like, but without the more formulaic elements (such as "cliffhangers" and season finales) of some serials. Everything is narrated with a creativity of cinematography, pacing, and use of sound that won great acclaim. In this chapter I focus on a striking aspect of that creativity and originality: the dialogue of the characters which – when we can follow it – feels as arresting and suggestive as the dialogue in a good play, but sometimes seems almost casually relayed to us, constructing a naturalist or realist effect at the expense of "clarity" of the signal. In short, the dialogue is rich and important (as we know if we resort to subtitles or replaying of scenes) but it is often barely comprehensible in real-time first-time viewing, and sometimes incomprehensible. This is not just a matter of obscurity of the content (problems of Gricean cooperativeness – between the dialogue writer and the audience, rather than between characters within the drama) although it is partly that; it is also a matter of qualified Gricean cooperativeness on the part of the film-makers relative to us as audience – their calculated decisions about such factors as acceptable levels of clarity of speech, the matching of speech with its speaker in frame (or the contrary), and the inclusion of simultaneous "interfering" ambient sounds. Now all this might have prompted frustration and irritation in viewers, and been

denounced as a kind of “amateur” or ill-judged realism. A few have so reacted. But – and this is where my interest begins – the overwhelming majority of viewers have come to admire the sometimes-incomprehensible dialogue, and salute it as one of the innovative strengths of the series.

What Kozloff (2000) calls “linguistic opacity”, where the viewer struggles to understand characters’ speech in film narrative, is not a new phenomenon, particularly in feature films as distinct from the TV series. Kozloff even suggests that “some degree of linguistic opacity may define the gangster film in toto, although the extent to which an individual viewer will struggle depends upon the viewer’s own linguistic proficiencies” (Kozloff 2000: 215). Kozloff makes one of my points better than I can when she says that such films’ audibility problems are not technical flaws in production; rather, the viewer’s frustration is “part of their aesthetic” (Kozloff 2000: 215). But following while not always understanding the dialogue of *The Wire* is different again from the effect in a 100-minute film. The first series alone, extending over thirteen 50-minute episodes, which is only marginally more comprehensible in the final episodes than in the first, creates a more *entrenched* effect of persistent incomplete understanding than anything achieved by the dialectally-removed character speech encountered by the mainstream-dialect user in a consumed-at-one-sitting narrative feature film. In the latter, our comprehension problems continually demonstrate or perform our outsider status. There is some of that effect in *The Wire*: we are thereby repeatedly reminded that we are not *really* inward of this world and these protagonists are not – to use the series’ parlance – our bitches, prepared to adjust their speech or behaviour to accommodate our needs as “visitors” or “overhearers” (Bubel 2008). But that seems to be only a small part of most viewers’ reaction, who, at the same time, do *not* feel excluded, but rather can be found enthusing on hundreds of weblogs and in thousands of cafes about how *involving* they find the storylines and characters, and about how they appreciate the psychological depth and sociological plausibility of characters such as McNulty, Stringer Bell, Bubbles, D’Angelo, Kim, and the rest.

Of course not *everyone* loves *The Wire*, but even those on the customers’ review area of the amazon.co.uk website (last accessed 26 July 2010) who very much did not, and took the trouble to say why, say things that I find revealing and supportive of my topic. Nine of 179 customer-posted reviews give *The Wire*’s first season a 1-star rating (146 give it 5 stars). Here are typical comments from 3 of those 9 most sharply-negative reviews:

Awful even if you do understand what they are saying

Again this is not in widescreen it’s 4:3 and even with the subtitles on I couldn’t understand the language on this. It’s very slang afro caribbean english and if you don’t understand what they are saying you will find it hard to watch (You

feel me!) If you watch it you will know what I mean. I wanted to buy the rest of the set but as I did not get through the whole of the first season I am very happy that I decide just to buy 1 season. Not my cup of tea and a lot of people I have spoken to also say they find the language hard to understand in this.

Simply awful

The show is so slow paced, the actors are all one dimensional and every episode is like a repeat of the last with about 10 seconds of actual action. All this is topped off with language that is unnecessarily difficult to understand.

Interpreter required

I have tried to get into this series – got as far as episode 5 with 6 and 7 still to play – can't say I actually understand the lingo – of the cops or of the crims, or what is going on most of the time – though the latter are worse than the former. The internal political ins and outs are a different planet for me. What is going on? I can understand on the surface, what is going down in the police department – but not the under surface, just enough to know that there is graft and sleaze – but what is the motive for this? I haven't a scubby doo.

These critical reactions are thought-provoking not least since some of their substantive points are quite similar to those of the series' admirers: both constituencies agree, for example, that the pace is slow and, especially, that "the lingo" is extremely hard to understand. For the critics (a small minority, recall) this is an irredeemable failing; for the admiring majority, such difficulties are an enrichment, a paradoxically welcome obstacle, like metaphoricity in Shakespeare or atonality in modern music.

The comprehension difficulties that viewers of the series attest are interestingly different from those that we may encounter when trying to follow the medicalese in *ER* or *House*, or popular programmes using or simulating the specialist varieties of the counter-intelligence or forensic psychology communities. Those comprehension difficulties relate to register or variety rather than dialect, i.e., use, rather than user. Viewers' difficulties following the interaction in *The Wire* chiefly relate not to specialist or technical language, but to what we are given to understand are the everyday ways of speaking of the drug dealers, politicians, and police officers depicted. A closer analogy then might be with the feature film *The Full Monty* (1997), portraying the everyday lives of some unemployed Yorkshire steelworkers (who form a male striptease dance act in order to earn money and restore some self-esteem); their regional accents were so difficult that in the USA a number of American cinemas had special leaflets printed containing translations of some of the British slang left in the U.S. version of the film so that audiences would be able to follow the dialog more easily (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119164/trivia>, last accessed 26 July 2010). The point about *The Wire*

is that we follow it without subtitles. Or at least, native speakers of the language mostly do; or at least they normally would and, I submit, the makers of the series will have expected that fluent English speakers in the United States and beyond would not, as the default means of viewing, resort to subtitles. That I believe to be the case notwithstanding the widespread anecdotal evidence of some native speakers (“even in America”) watching the series with subtitles, and the publication on various blogs, printed news outlets, and books (e.g., Busfield and Owen 2009), of “guides” to the series, often with special attention to its idioms and jargon. There would be challenging theoretical implications if it was agreed that the default and normal way of watching a given film was with subtitles, in the same language as the characters’ speech, to aid comprehension (currently only standard and expected of those with hearing impairment). A host of interesting new questions concerning the integration in viewer/listener reception of the speech and the writing (along with secondary questions about the size and choice of font in the writing, the spacing, the positioning on the screen, departures from verbatim transcription, and whether to mark pauses and pitch and volume changes in the transcript), to say nothing of the alienation effects of subtitling, would come to the fore. It is therefore quite important to this essay that viewing *The Wire* with English subtitles is *not* regarded as the default or standard means of consuming it, with the subtitles as intrinsic to the artifact and its effect (analogous to the “final authorial copy-text”, as most authoritative version of a literary classic), any more than the surtitles at a performance of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* can be regarded as integral to the opera – even if it were the case (which I very much doubt but cannot prove or disprove) that more native speakers than not view *The Wire* with subtitles on.¹

The series’ many fans who are not first-language speakers of English evidently, by contrast, do have recourse to subtitles, as is evident from the numerous impassioned contributions on the topic of Subtitles and Languages in the “Customer

1. Many months after completing this essay I found an article in the archive of *The Independent* newspaper online edition, for Mon. 17 Aug. 2009, reporting the denunciation, by one of *The Wire*’s writers, of those who resort to subtitles to watch the series (Akbar 2009). The article reads, in part:

The seasoned detective fiction writer George Pelecanos, who has worked extensively on *The Wire* [...] said those who watched with subtitles in order to comprehend every sentence spoken were missing the point entirely.

“We wrote it so audiences would have to work at it!” he said in an interview with *The Independent*. “We were not going to compromise in making it immediately accessible for everyone. It [subtitling] kind of reminds me of scenes from that [1980 disaster film spoof] comedy, *Airplane!*, when two black guys speak, and subtitles appear on the screen”.

Discussions" forum within the Amazon.co.uk web pages. But evidently those fans are mostly using subtitles in their respective native languages, rather than English. (A particular bugbear for some discussants is that while users of a dozen major languages are afforded subtitles, there are none for Spanish readers. This allegedly relates to the fact that Spanish distributors have exclusive rights over Spanish dubbing/subtitles.)

Fascinated absorption in a discourse that we "don't quite understand" is not a new puzzle but as ancient as riddles, code-breaking, and linguistics. But in *The Wire* the attraction is chiefly of a particular kind summarisable, I propose, in terms of realism: the barely comprehensible ways that its characters speak feels "more real" than the fluent, "transparent" speech encountered in most previous comparable shows (Kozloff 2000; Bednarek 2010; see also, on the issue of realism in fictional language, the chapters by Rossi and Alvarez in this volume). Even – as I will argue – if the sound quality has been deliberately degraded, from the high standards that can routinely be achieved in film-recording today, on location as well as in the studio. But story-telling and characterisation in *The Wire* are not done by speech alone, or even chiefly, this being multimodal narration. The realism of the incomprehensibility is more than compensated for by the other modes of communication (especially the non-speech ambient sounds, diegetic or non-diegetic, and the visual semiotics).

There are some ironies in the reported "incomprehensibility" of the dialogue, in that much of the plot in the first series hinges upon a police team's efforts to enhance their monitoring of the incriminating conversations of a network of drug-dealers who are under surveillance: an undercover police officer joins the gang and functions as an insider, but wearing a "wire" for the covert recording and transmission of their talk. Hence the title of the five-series whole, *The Wire*, and the strapline in capitals on the cover sleeve of the first series in DVD format: "LISTEN CAREFULLY". The wire enables the police to record and follow – not without difficulty and the need for interpretation of the messages by officers adept at their slang and code – the gangsters' incriminating conversations at a level of clarity and comprehensibility otherwise unachievable. Indeed there are a number of scenes in which the grizzled experienced officer Lester sits in front of sophisticated digital recording equipment – much like a linguist in a phonetics lab – monitoring and interpreting the gangsters' payphone conversations. Lester is their overhearer, struggling to understand their partially coded messages. As we are too; but we are also overhearers of Lester and his exchanges with his colleagues, so that he acts doubly as interpreter – for his colleagues within the story and for us, observing from without.

Everything hangs on the wire, on enjoying exceptional access as intimate overhearers and voyeurs of the gangsters' inside stories; the police frequently use

cameras in the story too, “shooting” the gangsters on the street, or in their cars, or transferring “product”. (A caveat to add is that as each series unfolds, we grasp there are “gangsters” in every sub-community: among the police, the lawyers, the politicians, the stevedores and their union, and so on). This desire to get in on the *secrets* behind appearances, revealing what is really going on or down, is an ancient basis of interest in narrative. We viewers, in turn, crave and depend on exceptional “wired” access – to private interactions between Bunk and McNulty, *and* between Kima and her partner, and Avon and Stringer, and D’Angelo and Wallace – that none of these pairs, lacking a wire on all other parties, enjoys. And yet as noted the language, especially, of some of these interactions is deliberately and mainly realistically hard to “decode”. We struggle to follow these exchanges rather as the officers Lester and Prez struggle to decode the Barksdale gang’s code.

3. Measuring comprehensibility

The claim that one dialogue sequence (actual or fictional) is less comprehensible than another, while easily attested informally and intuitively, draws us into deep theoretical and methodological issues when a more objective demonstration is attempted. Comprehensibility will always be partly contingent upon the “priming” of the situated viewer or addressee, including their familiarity with or cultural proximity to the target discourse and its conventions. A typical contemporary British twenty-year-old might well find a Pinter play more comprehensible than a Shakespeare one, on first encounter; but if they have studied the latter intensively the perceived difference might drastically reduce. Attempting to *measure* different “levels” of comprehension is highly controversial, and no single methodology is accepted as best and most robust. Any claims I will make must necessarily be comparative, with uncertain validity beyond the given group of situated viewers whom I tested.

The comprehension measure I decided to use involved showing to subjects a brief scene from *The Wire* involving a small number of distinguishable conversing characters, mostly in shot. The subjects were given in advance my transcription of the scene,² from which, at five distinct points, segments of one-speaker

2. Transcription conventions were kept minimal (e.g., no marking of overlapping or latched speech, no marking of pauses or pause-length other than by ellipses), so that the text presented to Subjects looked similar to a standard playscript: each new turn begins on a new line, prefaced by the speaker’s name, sometimes with paralinguistic glossing given in square brackets; standard orthography was used except where non-standard speech was quite marked (e.g., *dat* for *that*).

talk averaging 10 words in length had been excised and replaced by a continuous underline. While I am confident that my transcription is inaccurate in places, any errors do not extend I believe into the "blanked-out" segments, the basis of the test. Those segments were also sufficiently spaced out that the procedure did not become a test of fast writing. The subjects' task was then in effect a comprehension/transcription one: the scene was played to them twice, and they were asked immediately to record the characters' missing words at the appropriate points in the transcript as accurately as possible. My own transcript of the scene's entire dialogue, whose accuracy had been accepted by 2 judges, functioned as the "target transcript". A numerical rating (maximum score of 5) was given for those items in the subjects' transcriptions that matched with the *lexical* items in the target transcript by being full repetitions or synonyms of those items, together with a count of those items that bore no evident paraphrase relation with the lexical items in the target text (or absence of transcription altogether). Similar procedures were applied to derive "comprehension scores" for what I submit are approximately equivalent segments of dialogue in another roughly comparable recent TV series, the UK six-part series interweaving crime, the police, politics, and journalism called *State of Play* (2003).

The mechanism is undoubtedly crude, but I would argue it remains within its obvious limitations potentially revealing, as a means of getting beyond the anecdotal and the unworkably subjective, in measuring one kind of comprehension. Because this is such a segregationist manoeuvre, focusing on ability to reproduce (in writing) just the speech line of the chosen scene, I would not at all want to claim that a high score in recall/transcription necessarily manifested high comprehension, or that a low score was sure proof of low comprehension. Comprehension of film narrative is too complex for one to be able to make such claims other than tentatively and with multiple qualifications. Even if one could be more confident in the measuring of comprehension, one would surely hesitate to correlate this with enjoyment, which many might feel was the main purpose of watching *The Wire*. One might – who knows? – find high comprehension accompanying low levels of enjoyment, and vice versa. But adequate comprehension, including dialogue comprehension, seems to be a core criterion invoked in film appreciation, wherever there *is* a soundtrack carrying the speech of characters continually in shot and, from the visual information, evidently speaking. Arguably, and perhaps surprisingly, someone who attends a showing of *Citizen Kane* with the visual mode narration removed (as a blind person does) can "get" a fuller understanding of the film than someone who does so with all the sound narration removed (as a deaf person does). This reduces to saying, not uncontroversially, that a blind person will tend more fully to understand a typical feature film than a deaf person. And this might generalise to saying that the totally deaf are more

removed from the audiovisual mainstream than blind people are. Drawing in his recent novel *Deaf Sentence* on his own experience, David Lodge has said as much. If these generalisations have any validity, they also point to the aural mode actually being more essential in film and TV narratives than the visual mode; and while the aural mode may comprise various kinds of sound, by far the most discursively rich and critical, usually, is the representation of understandable human speech. (The above *are* only generalisations and will not fit all cases; they do not fit foreign language films where the speech may be wonderfully clear to the listener, but the latter can make limited sense of it and relies heavily on the visual mode for the subtitled translations as well as for the story-world representation.)

4. Test materials

Here below are the printed materials which I gave to subjects, except that in the versions below, underlined, are the actual wordings I treated as the targets: those 10 segments (5 per film clip) were removed, and just the underlining remained at those points, on the sheets distributed to the subjects. The clips I played (twice) to subjects can be found on the internet at (for *The Wire* clip) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1HUITKvDUI&feature=related> (12 seconds in) and (for the *State of Play* clip) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFMwIMJjuQs&feature=related> (last accessed 26 July 2010).³ As will be evident below, I re-named D'Angelo's two co-conversationalists for ease of identification by transcribers. My instructions to subjects are provided in an Appendix to this chapter.

- (1) D'Angelo comes up to a table on a lot in the projects where his two friends are sitting in the morning sun, playing checkers with a chess set.

D'Angelo: *Yo! What's up with the Shop?*

Cornrow: *No re-up.*

D'Angelo: *Why not?*

Hoodie: *Becuz, we had a rare cast. Stringer say we have a new package tomorrow.*

D'Angelo: *New package?*

Hoodie: *Yeah. Yeah man unless we stepped on shit we get our head beat ... things agitated.*

3. Some comparative figures relating to the two brief episodes: *The Wire* clip comprises 141 words in 50 seconds, hence runs at nearly 3 words per second. There are 5 gaps, 45 words in total, with a 9-word average: 6, 11, 13, 6, and 9 words. *The State of Play* clip contains 184 words in 90 seconds, thus only 2 words per second. The 5 gaps total 43 words, with an 8-word average length (14; 8; 12; 7; and 5 words).

- Cornrow: *Well look at 'em... they're still buying it though.*
Hoodie: *Yeah they buying twice as much and only getting half as high.*
Cornrow: *Hmh..*
D'Angelo: *Yo what was that?*
Cornrow: *Mmh?*
D'Angelo: *Castle can't move like dat, yo, castle move up and down and sideways,*
like..
Hoodie: *Nah, we ain't playing dat.*
Cornrow: *Yuh, look at de board, we playing checkers...*
D'Angelo: [sniggering laugh] *Checkers?*
Cornrow: *Yeah, checkers.*
D'Angelo: [laugh] *Yo, why y'all playing checkers on a chess set?*
Cornrow: *Why you give a shit? Ain't we got no checkers...*
D'Angelo: [sitting down] *Yeah but, yo, chess is a better game, yo.*
Hoodie: *so?*
D'Angelo: [now seated, snickering] *Nah, hold up, hold up. Y'all don't know how to*
play chess, do you?

4.1 State of Play

This TV drama is a thriller set in London, in which a politician's life descends into chaos after his research assistant is found dead, probably murdered. The politician's name is Stephen Collins, and that of his dead research assistant is Sonia Baker. In this clip, a number of young newspaper journalists are sharing information in the Editor's office, trying to piece together the facts and motives. The dialogue I want you to pay attention to starts within ten seconds of the opening of this clip.

(2) [voiceover, while young man walks through open office]

- Editor: *For god's sake ... he looks like he's trying to catch a bus!*
[door opens, Dan enters conference room]
Dan Foster: *Sorry, are you..waiting for me? I just had to double-check some stuff.. the chronology of Sonia Baker's employment records ... right. The interview with Stephen Collins happened on the 10th of April, alright. The letter confirming she got the job was posted on the 25th of April, but ... [wheezy laugh] a whole month before any of that on the 25th of March, she told Sheena Gough she was going to work for Stephen Collins.*
Cal: *Could Sheena Gough have got the dates mixed up?*
Dan Foster: *That was my first thought, but this was discussed at Sonia's birthday party.*

- Helen: 25th March.
- Dan Foster: *Exactly what I asked, specifically, the job with Stephen Collins? Yes!*
- Editor: *And Stephen Collins told you that he never met her, until she came to work in his office.*
- Cal: *Yeah.*
- Helen: *I just spoke to his previous researcher Judy Mitchell. She was unexpectedly offered a better job at the COI.*
- Cal: *Fine ... If Collins shoe-horned her into that job... No hang on ... If Stephen Collins lied to me, ever ... No ... you ... I know what you're thinking. What if she blackmailed him? Don't yuh? Don't yuh?*

Twenty-four subjects were tested, all educated young adults, almost all unfamiliar with both series; four were non-native speakers of English. As indicated earlier, each subject's transcription for each of the 10 segments was rated, with regard to the *lexical* content of the target, for accuracy of sense; i.e., reasonable paraphrase lost the subject no marks. A mark out of 5 was given for each segment (on the grounds that there were roughly five lexical items in each blanked-out segment). Often, even the non-native speakers scored 5 out of 5 per segment, so that total scores, per clip were often not far from the maximum score of 25. The latter, of course, may not equate with total comprehension, but suggests that if these "spot checks" of verbal understanding are reliable, any difficulties did not stem from the linguistic code alone. A typical output for the test is the following in Table 1.

Scores of 5 out of 5, to reiterate, do not mean that Subject 11 produced a "perfect" transcription for 9 of 10 segments. To take segment 4 of *The Wire* as an example, the subject wrote *playing checkers on a chess board* whereas as can be seen above D'Angelo actually says *playing checkers on a chess set*; but such close paraphrase was judged as signalling comprehension (the Subject's wording actually makes more sense than D'Angelo's). Subject 11, by my rating system, only had significant difficulties with the first *Wire* segment, where they wrote: *have a new* [undecipherable: *bag?*] *the wall*. This was judged sufficiently far from the target (*we have a new package tomorrow*) to be scored at 2 out of 5.

As might have been expected, anything markedly slang or vernacular or idiomatic caused most difficulty, even in the slower-delivered *State of Play* dialogue. Thus when at the end of the latter scene Cal speculates *If Collins shoe-horned her*

Table 1. A typical output for the test

Subject	11					
total	/25					
<i>The Wire</i>	2	5	5	5	5	22
<i>State of Play</i>	5	5	5	5	5	25

into that job, this caused aberrant transcripts even in otherwise good transcribers: *If Collins hold onto that job; so if Collins, she want the job ...* But some transcriptions I decided to treat as reflecting "full" comprehension, thus marked at 5, even if a strange nonce-word was used; e.g., one native speaker among the second set of subjects who transcribed this sentence as *if Collin's shoe-holed her into that job* was still scored at 5.

Total scores, across the 24 subjects – where a perfect score per clip would be 600 (25 marks × 24 subjects) – were 548 for *State of Play* (91% accuracy) and 494 for *The Wire* (82% accuracy). There were only small deviations, in individual subjects' scores, from these averages – with the exception of the four non-native subjects, who had lower scores on both clips (one of them being the only informant to have a lower score for *State of Play* than for *The Wire*: 9 out of 25 vs. 10 out of 25). And we must note that all these scores are based on a test condition that in at least one respect is profoundly unlike the normal situation: each clip was shown to the Subjects *twice* over, in rapid succession. On a once-only presentation, scores for both clips might have been significantly lower, and there might have been a larger gap between the scores on the two clips.

My prediction was that the paraphrase score for passages from *The Wire* would be significantly lower than for *The State of Play*, and to that extent would reflect lower levels of comprehension of the dialogue, even though one might easily argue that comprehension of the entire communicational *event* is effected by the integration of several modes and numerous factors, with "transparency" of the dialogue being only one of these. After completing the tests, Subjects routinely remarked on the "difficulty" of *The Wire's* dialogue, while saying they found that in *The State of Play* clip quite easy to follow. Some such checking procedure is useful to discount the possibility that, for instance, *The Wire* is *perceived* as easy even if transcription scores are depressed, which would have been an interesting but counter-intuitive finding.

In practice I have been able to do no more here than arrive at what could be a step on the way to identifying a notional figure reflecting incomplete dialogue-comprehension: where viewers score higher than 90% on tests such as the one described, reasonably full dialogue-understanding might be assumed; where they score below 85%, something less than full understanding may be indicated.

5. Scripted repetition as aid to comprehension

If the incomprehensibility of a significant amount of the characters' speech is partly confirmed, I believe it is also partly mitigated by a higher level of duplication of speech moves than would ordinarily be found in TV series of this kind.

Even with multiple story lines, 600+ minutes of film per series allowed plenty of scope for such repetition, as did the slowness of pace, the “piece by piece” building of the plot itself and the case being made by the police in the story, who are working to “checkmate” Avon Barksdale. The duplications, in simple terms, often enable a viewer to grasp the sense on the second encounter despite missing it the first time. And yet the duplications feel quite naturalistic or life-like; and indeed they may be, even though we know they are scripted and designed to meet genre-related narratological goals: the craftedness of everything in the script and filming need not preclude the dialogue also being life-like.

Many kinds of repetition are a core characteristic of workplace discourse and everyday conversation (see, e.g., Holmes’s and Stubbe’s 2003 study of workplace discourse) but normally is minimised in theatre dialogue and film dialogue (so that their presence – e.g. in the plays of Pinter, Beckett and Mamet – is noticed as exceptional). My claim rests on there being more repetition of phrases and sentences in *The Wire* (to aid comprehension) than in comparable TV crime series. Now counting repetition of moves or phrases, particularly where partial reformulations may well be involved, is not easy to do, even with text-analysis software (which works best at counting identical forms). Still, single-word repetitions may be a pointer, and I lack the space for a more thorough corpus stylistic analysis here (but see Bednarek 2010: Chapter 4, for an interesting corpus-analytic examination of the language of a TV series). If one takes all the dialogue in a single 50-minute episode of *The Wire* (such as “The Cost”, from series 1, retrievable from <http://www.siliconvalleyfrogs.com/thewire/ep10.html>, last accessed 26 July 2010) and produces a frequency list of its 5,000 words, it is apparent that there is a high rate of repetition both of the main character’s names and of key lexical items. Wmatrix analysis (Rayson 2009) identifies the following as the 13 most repeated lexical items in the transcript, listed here with their number of occurrences and percentage of the entire episode’s word-count after each item:

got 39 .63, *know* 35 .56, *right* 29 .47, *shit* 28 .45, *get* 26 .42, *man* 26 .42, *yeah* 23 .37, *like* 20 .32, *see* 19 .31, *go* 19 .31, *male* 19 .31, *want* 18 .29, and *fuck* 18 .29.

As a group – and of course the cut-off after 13 items is fairly arbitrary – these 319 instances comprise 6.38% of the 5,000 words of dialogue in this episode. This may in part reflect a deliberately limited vocabulary size (and re-use of relatively core vocabulary; on some aspects of this topic, see Webb and Rodgers 2009a and 2009b). By comparison, in a 50-minute episode of *House* or *State of Play*, or of 5,000 words of dialogue in realist-naturalist theatre, how repetitively used are the 13 most frequently-used lexical words, and what percentage of the whole episode’s word-count do they comprise? To effect a quick comparison, I downloaded from

the internet (<http://www.tvtdb.com/house/transcripts/2x05.php>, last accessed 26 July 2010) the no-doubt imperfect transcript of a randomly selected one-hour episode of the *House* series, called "Daddy's Boy" (originally aired 8 Nov. 2005: episode 5, from series 2). After stripping away all the non-spoken material, including character-identifications and scene directions (approx 1800 words), the remaining transcript comprises approximately 6,000 words and is reasonably comparable in extent of words to a *Wire* episode. Using Wmatrix to analyse the text, the following emerged as the top 13 lexical items, with frequencies indicated:

just 42 .55; *know* 28 .37; *need* 20 .26; *yeah* 19 .25; *well* 19 .25; *all* 19 .25; *got* 18 .24; *get* 17 .22; *dinner* 16 .21; *one* 16 .21; *son* 16 .21; *right* 15 .20; and *kid* 15 .20.

These 260 tokens amount to just 4.33% of the 6,000 words. Thus, for these two comparable episodes at least, *The Wire*'s most repeated lexical items are noticeably more repeated than *House*'s are: despite being one-sixth shorter, its commonest lexis is more repeated in absolute terms (319 items to *House*'s 260 tokens) and is a larger proportion of the relevant whole (6.38% compared to *House*'s 4.33%).⁴

A look at any sequence of dialogue also shows how the repetitions are not evenly distributed across the episode, but cluster in handfuls of adjacent turns, where they facilitate the viewer-listener's comprehension. Consider the following brief exchange, from *The Wire* episode mentioned above, "The Cost", episode 10, where I have highlighted the local repetitions of lexical items and names by bolding. Here, a detective named Troy "Wig" Wiggins visits the surveillance team in their underground offices, to tell them he has arrested a man called Blocker who is offering information about Avon Barksdale in hopes of escaping prosecution. Wig is immediately recognised by Kima Greggs, a former colleague:

(3)

Wig: *Been hell looking for you people. What the hell's the name of this unit anyway?*

Greggs: *What up, Wig?*

Wig: *Aw, **shit**, Kima in the house. What up?*

Greggs: *State Police, C.I.D., out of Pikesville. Name of Troy Wiggins, but pay no attention to the man, 'cause he about 90–95% pure **bullshit**.*

4. The transcripts have similar type-token ratios (approximately 5 tokens per type), but my interest here is not in whether an episode from *The Wire* is more or less lexically repetitive in general than episodes from other TV series. Rather, I am interested in whether the *most repeated* lexical words or phrases in *The Wire* are more repeated than is the case in a reference episode and by extension, typical TV dramas.

- Wig: *Kima, she just talk like that 'cause I had her when she was good.*
- Greggs: [who is openly lesbian] *Shit, you motherfucker turned me the other way.*
- Wig: *Shit, a-ight. Here's the thing, boys and girls. I'm doin' a reverse buy down in Arundel, right? And I get this Westside asshole nibbling on four ounces?*
- McNulty: *A whole four ounces?*
- Wig: *I know, he ain't much, but... I get him in the boat and he starts floppin' around, sayin' he can buy weight from some motherfucker name of Barksdale. I never heard of no Barksdale. And the computer has Avon Barksdale as an active Baltimore city target. So, I go down to city narcotics and Dawson, he sends me down here to see y'all.*
- McNulty: *So, what's the name of your fish?*
- Wig: *Wendell O. as in, oh-shit-I-tried-to-buy-from-a-state-police Blocker.*
- McNulty: *That wouldn't be Orlando Blocker would it?*
- Wig: *Yeah. U on it?*
- McNulty: *Orlando.*

This extract demonstrates the verbal flair of the characterisation, in the way that (the audience having actually seen Wig entrap Blocker earlier in the episode) Wig here describes the business of luring “this Westside asshole” into “nibbling” on four ounces of drugs, and goes on to talk of getting him in the boat where he flops around, thus using an extended metaphor of catching a fish without actually using the word *fish*. That core term of the vehicle is only supplied, subsequently, by McNulty. So room is made, in the diegesis, for entertainingly creative language use in the course of informing dialogue, which extends to a disambiguation of Blocker’s middle initial (not as Oscar, as in orthodox police radio communications, but the more amusing “O. as in, *oh-shit-I-tried-to-buy-from-a-state-police*”). And that playful “decoding” of the O. cleverly summarises and repeats in literal terms the core of the story Wig has just narrated using an extended figure.

In this section I have suggested that in *The Wire*’s dialogue there is a relatively extensive resort to repetition (especially of most frequent lexis and to some extent of the speech moves within which that repeated lexis appears) which compensates for or mitigates the otherwise threateningly high level of difficulty, if not incomprehensibility, that viewers may encounter as they process the characters’ speech. The following section turns to some of the non-verbal features which are carefully deployed in the dialogue scenes, and explores how these, too, help viewers to understand what is going on.

6. The multimodal integration of the dialogue

In this section I want to turn at least briefly to some of the important *non-verbal* semiotics that are profoundly integrated with the verbal signs and participate with them in creating the interactions and events that the viewer observes. I do not pretend that what follows is either full or adequate as a multimodal analysis (see recent work by McIntyre 2008 and Piazza 2010 for good examples of this, supplementing authoritative overviews such as Kress 2009; Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; and Bordwell and Thompson 2001; also notable is the comprehensive volume edited by Harper, Eisentraut and Doughty 2009; even though, despite its title, it does not explore speech or dialogue in film). Rather this section is an attempt to identify some of the non-verbal cotemporal phenomena which most directly combine with the verbal material, to signify. Here I look again at the "chess lesson" episode, the opening of which was used earlier in the comprehension-transcription test, continuing my transcription (see Note 1 for conventions) where the earlier passage left off. The non-verbal accompaniments to the talk exchange are critical to the viewers' understanding of its import.

(4)

- D'Angelo: [now seated, snickering] *Nah, hold up, hold up. Y'all don't know how to play chess, do you?*
- Bodie: *So?*
- D'Angelo: *So? So nothing man. Look I'll teach y'all, if y'all wanna learn* [starts moving the pieces back to the starting-positions in chess]
- Bodie: [waving his right hand horizontally over the table, as if to stop D'Angelo interfering] *Come on, man, Nah, come on ... We right in the middle of a game*
- Wallace: [moving both his hands forward over the chess board as if to remonstrate with Bodie's hand, and looking straight at Bodie] *Calm down, chill out I wanna see this!*
- Bodie: [making "street" gestures now with both his hands, including a "diving" motion with his left forearm, before slouching back on his chair, signalling acquiescence] *No!*
- D'Angelo: [firmly, but not confrontationally] *Y'all can't be playing no checkers on no chess board, yo*
- Bodie: [now alone in shot, Close-up] *A' yite! A' yite! Alright, man!*
- D'Angelo: *Now look. Check it. It's simple ... It's simple.* [D'A alone in shot here for the next 10 seconds] *See dis?* [he picks up and kisses the king; camera remains CU on D'Angelo, while his head turns to address now Bodie, now Wallace, while camera pans slowly to the left]. *Dis de king pim, ayite? Now*

he da man! You get the other dude's king, you got the game. But he trying to get your king too, so you gotta protect it. [change to shot with Wallace and D'Angelo in MCU] *Now the king,* [cut to CU of D'Angelo's hand on the King on the board] *he move one space, any direction he damn choose cuz,* [cut to same Wallace and D'A shot in MCU as before, D'Angelo facing towards Bodie] *he's the king. Like dis, dis, dis. Alright? But he aint got no hustle. The rest of these motherfuckers on the team, they got his back and they run so deep, he really ain't gotta do shit.* [over the last 10 words here, we hear the sound of a helicopter overhead, possibly involved in surveillance, which may prompt viewers to think of how police helicopters involved in surveillance and tracking have a different kind of "hustle", designed to protect officers on the streets]

Bodie: [alone in shot, MCU] *Kinda like your uncle.*

D'Angelo: [now alone in shot, MCU] *Yeah, like my uncle.*

Wallace: [alone in shot, MCU, broad smile and nod of understanding/appreciation]

D'Angelo: [MCU, in shot, but with Wallace, leaning in, partly visible on left side of frame] *Now you see this?* [He picks up the Queen, moves her freely around the board]. *This the Queen. She smart, she fierce. She move any way she want as far as she want. And she, is the go-get-shit-done piece* [he uses the Queen to knock over one of the opponent pieces, with audible "clink", thus showing what 'getting shit done' entails...]

Wallace: *Remind me of Stringer.* [laughter]

D'Angelo: *And this over here is the castle, it's like the stash, it move like this and like this.*

Bodie: *Dogs, stash don't move, man!*

D'Angelo: *Come on, you think, how many times we move the stash house this week? A right? And every time we move the stash, we gotta move a little muscle with it to protect it.*

Bodie: *True, true. You right. All right, what about them little bald-headed bitches right there? All right.*

D'Angelo: *These right here? These are the pawns. They like the soldiers. They move like this. One space forward only. Except when they fight, and then it's like, like this* [demonstrates sideways movement]. *And they like the front lines. They be out in the field.*

Wallace: *So how do you get to be the king?*

D'Angelo: *It ain't like that. See, the king stay the king. A 'ight? Everything stay who he is, 'cept for the pawns. Now if a pawn make it all the way down to the other dude's side, he get to be queen. And like I said, the queen ain't no bitch. She got all the moves.*

Bodie: *A 'ight. So, if I make it to de udder end, I win.*

D'Angelo: *If you catch the other dude's king, and trap it, then you win.*

Bodie: *Alright, but if I make it to the end, ... I'm top dog.*

D'Angelo: *Nah, yo, it ain't like that look. The pawns, man? In the game? They get capped quick. They be out the game early.*

Bodie: *Unless they some smart-ass pawns.*

In my transcription above, by including comments on shot composition and characters' movements, I have tried to indicate how important the latter are to the conveying of the content ostensibly carried in their verbal contributions alone. Facial expressions are usually singled out at this point, and they are certainly important in the dialogue above. But here I would particularly emphasise the importance of *hands*, especially D'Angelo's hands, touching the chess pieces, holding them up, moving them around, knocking them over, as a vehicle of communication. I invite the reader to watch the chess scene (e.g. on *youtube*), and imagine the whole being performed with D'Angelo's hands invariably out of shot. A hugely different, and diegetically-impooverished, effect would be achieved.

As the immensely catchy theme-music concludes, with the blues singer repeating "Way down in the hole", the scene opens on the "hole" that is the by now familiar to us low-rise housing projects of the Baltimore west side: ugly rows of town-houses, separated by untended grassy areas, around which a scattering of young men is sitting out in the sun, apparently idling away the time. A music track is playing (quite different from the theme music): a simple insistent rhythm and an indeterminate melody which plays over a panning shot. Then the camera fixes on D'Angelo, who is walking towards and calling out (*Yo! What's up with the shop?*) to his two subordinates, whose names are Wallace and Bodie. By the time that the sixth turn of talk has been reached (*Yeah. Yeah man unless we stepped on shit*) the music track has ceased – it has run for less than 20 seconds – and only the "natural" ambient sounds of the projects can be heard around the dialogue. As shifts in the non-speech sound accompaniment suggest, sounds and changes in accompanying sound can serve many purposes. They help narrate the mood and mood-changes that are also being conveyed in the dialogue, such as a shift in event focus, or an adjustment in the dialogue from the routine to the crucial, or from the public to the intimate, or from one predominant character emotion to another.

Similarly indirectly contributory to grasp of the characters' speech will be whether or not a speaker's turn of talk is delivered and heard when the speaker is in frame or not, and whether, in frame, they are shown in medium close-up or not, with some at least of their face (and lips) visible. The simplest or default option, arguably, is for the speaker to be in frame, in MCU, full face shot from the front; that applies when Bodie says *they buying twice as much and only getting half*

as high. But when D'Angelo challenges his two assistants, saying *Yo what was that?* and adding *Castle can't move like dat, yo, castle move up and down and sideways*, all three men are in shot, together with the chess board, the latter set up on a broken (backless) chair. This greatly assists the audience's interpreting of D'Angelo's *that* and *dat*. But the shift in shot possibly also helps the audience recognise the topic shift (from talking about the drugs business to talking about chess).

From the camera's perspective, now medium long-shot, Wallace (on a low stool) and Bodie (hunched over, on a kitchen chair) are facing each other to the left and right, respectively, of the chess/checkers board, with D'Angelo standing and looking down from the other side of the board. This reflects and meets specific diegetic considerations: the viewer needs to see D'Angelo noticing that the men are moving these chess pieces in incorrect (for chess) ways. So a framing in which Wallace's movement of the castle is notionally visible, along with D'Angelo's bodily protest reaction – his right hand moves to reinforce his remonstrance that *Castle can't move like dat* – is desirable. These things could be done with rapid cuts between shots more tightly focussed now on Wallace, now on D'Angelo, and so on, but that treatment arguably would make the engagement too personal or intimate, and as if the camera, unlike D'Angelo, knew in advance that Wallace was going to move the castle incorrectly. Less “knowing” camera movements ensure that we do not notice the “deviant” chess-playing before D'Angelo does. In addition, D'Angelo's point is in part that if you play with chess pieces on a chess-board in the public arena of the housing estate then you should do the right thing and play the much better game, chess. The more inclusive, wider-angle shot is thus part of the dialogue along with D'Angelo's words and Bodie's. Aligned with D'Angelo, the camera sites this exchange in the context of the housing, the bright glare of the sun, the barren unloved setting, and all this motivates D'Angelo's implicit argument that there is more to be learned, more to be got out of using chess pieces to play chess than merely to play checkers. The particular ways that the camera frames D'Angelo, integrated with the content of his words, indicate his character – and present him as someone not content with “what is given” in West Baltimore project life.

The “parable” that follows, in which D'Angelo explains to Bodie and Wallace how most of the pieces can move and what they can do, is already celebrated in *Wire* lore. Bodie and Wallace, in particular, repeatedly see telling analogies between how the chess pieces function and how elements in Barksdale's drug-trafficking “kingdom” function: Barksdale as the king who may get trapped but “stays the king”; Stringer as the Queen with “all the moves”, the castle as the stash, the pawns as the foot-soldiers who “be out the game early” unless, as Bodie remarks, “they some smart-ass pawns”. It is a classic opportunity for character-reflexivity, bringing texture and depth to the entire exchange. Checkers, by contrast, takes

little time to explain, has no hierarchical complexity or division of functions as in chess, so that it *could not* be used in or be the vehicle for an insightful reflection on the drug-dealing hierarchy. And that is why, taking everything into consideration and allowing the needs of special clienteles as exceptions (the very young, the mentally-impaired, those in some form of recovery) D'Angelo is right to affirm that chess "is a better game". Even while Wallace asks the otherwise reasonable question *Why you give a shit?* There is a richness and a "fit", between language, gesture, attitude and character, and the developing trajectories of these characters lives (some of which, of course, is only confirmed many episodes later) which is anything but accidental. All this amounts to saying there is a *design* in every interacting mode or strand of semiosis, from the variably comprehensible dialogue to the framing and focussing and length of shots within which that dialogue is embedded; and because the design here does not *feel* contrived or calculated or formulaic to the viewer, the whole is treated in some quarters as art.

7. Conclusions

TV film dialogue in *The Wire*, no less than in previous and other contemporary serials, is an artfully-constructed selective simulation of natural realistic speech. It is "unnaturally" coherent and focussed, although I suggest this is at first less apparent to us, as we struggle to catch the meaning of turns of talk that are "thrown away" or indistinctly delivered, rather than theatrically pointed up and demonstrably spoken *to* and *for* the viewer (Chion 1994). The artful design and coherence link back to a very simple fundamental goal (which by definition cannot precede and govern genuinely casual natural conversation between different parties each with their own agenda): the telling of a narrative, one which might absorb, entertain, inspire, and move the viewer. Those who have devised this dialogue have treated its function in the overarching narrativity as primary: the talk's role in telling a story, in reporting individuals experiencing change. That, more than the fictionality, artistic status, or (normally) prior existence in writing of the product seems to be responsible for the succinct focussedness of most dialogue in film narratives. I make this claim, about plot-and-character considerations as primary cause for the partial reconfiguring of filmic speech away from natural speech, because it is easy to find or imagine examples of dialogue that are fictional, or artistic, or written, or all three, but are still prolix, rambling, repetitive, or directionless. And it is also easy to find examples of dialogue with claims to being nonfictional which have the kind of coherence and focus we find in film narratives (e.g. direct speech recall in autobiographies). At the core of any story or narrative (the terms are interchangeable for me) are situated individuals undergoing change, conditions we

summarise as “characters + plotted events”. Consider again the “checkers to chess” scene examined earlier; at first glance this appears to be a free-standing “set piece”, a little bravura section that might have appeared anywhere in the first half-dozen or more episodes of the series. But on further reflection, almost every speaker turn contributes, in the course of describing the pieces’ functions, summary indications of the present and future experiences of a variety of people in the Barksdale gang: it is radically proleptic as well as characterising. It is characterising, too, of the three men speaking: D’Angelo, a maverick “good person” among the drugs gang at least as much as McNulty is among the police, whose words may suggest that he yearns for unrealistic levels of change (*do* his lieutenants switch to playing chess, the better game, at his enjoining?) and harbours doomed aspirations; Bodie, thoughtful also but self-protective, a good listener and learner, a likely survivor; and Wallace, the quick but frustrated learner (more hostile than Bodie to D’Angelo’s interference at first, but rapidly more interested in learning the chess moves than Bodie is). These characterisations have to come early in the series, so as not to be redundant, besides helping to establish characters whom the audience can begin to understand and care about, and even feel some empathy for. And why are the men playing checkers? Because the drug supply has run low, itself a motivation for action, and they are idling. In multiple respects, the scene and its dialogue fit very fully and richly the narrative demands for event- and character-development (see further the chapters in this volume by Bednarek and Mandala on character development and by Bubel on character relations).

As a result of its crafted coherence, TV/film dialogue is usually exceptionally Griceanly cooperative (relevant, brief, orderly, informative, truthful) – it is more Gricean than ordinary conversation, made to be such as is required in the known direction of the narration being undertaken. Piazza’s chapter (this volume) shows how horror films regularly and strategically violate those pragmatic maxims. *The Wire*, too, creatively resists our pragmatic conversational norms. Its dialogue is frequently less than fully cooperative, but in ways that are neither perverse nor alienating nor frustrating (for a significantly large – not all! – viewers), but curiously engaging and enjoyable. Where decoding the bare speech stream on its own frequently fails, the integration of richly-exploited signifying in multiple modalities takes over the task, together with a discreet use of forms of repetition and recapitulation, dispersed through the narrative discourse.

Appendix

Instructions to subjects:

Please listen carefully to the first few turns of talk in this scene from *The Wire*.

The talk begins at about 12 seconds into the clip, right after a couple of sweeping camera pan shots of low-rise houses and grass.

You will see that 3 characters are involved: D'Angelo, a man who walks up to two of his gang members and remains standing while they are seated, either side of a chess board. The two seated males are easily distinguished by appearance: one (who speaks most) is wearing a hoodie, the other is bareheaded, with his hair trimmed in what is often called a "cornrow" style. For convenience they are named accordingly below. D'Angelo speaks first, then Hoodie (Bodie) speaks, then Cornrow (Wallace) says something, and then Hoodie replies. I will play the clip twice only, and immediately after the second playing, I would like you to write down as fully as you can, in the incomplete transcripts below, exactly what the characters said at those points where I have put blank underlining.

The stability of the televisual character

A corpus stylistic case study

Monika Bednarek

This chapter analyses characterisation through television dialogue, using a corpus stylistic (Wynne 2006) approach, in particular using key word and cluster analysis (Scott and Tribble 2006). The focus is on exploring *from a linguistic perspective* the assumption made in Media/Television Studies that televisual characters are relatively stable, i.e. that they do not change drastically (Huisman 2005: 178; Pearson 2007: 56). In a case study of the “dramedy” *Gilmore Girls* (Warner Brothers 2000–2007), I analyse the in/stability of the televisual character with respect to two main aspects: (1) How much does a character’s language vary diachronically (across seasons)? (2) How much does a character’s language vary according to who s/he is talking to? The corpus stylistic analysis thus explores the degree of diachronic and intersubjective stability in televisual characters. The findings are discussed in terms of characterisation in the analysed series, the nature of televisual data and narrative, the mainstream nature of TV series, and audience engagement with TV characters.

1. Introduction

This chapter investigates how televisual characters are construed through language, in particular the extent to which a televisual character’s dialogue changes in the context of a particular series, both between seasons and when addressing different characters. A corpus linguistic key word/cluster analysis is used to explore diachronic and intersubjective character stability in the “dramedy” (i.e. comedy-drama hybrid – see Ross 2004), *Gilmore Girls* (Warner Brothers 2000–2007), which is used as a case study.

Characterisation is a crucial feature in fictional television programs, as noted by script writers and academics alike. As a script writing book suggests:

Stories become complex through the influence of **character**. It's character that impinges on the story, dimensionalises the story, and moves the story in new directions. With all the idiosyncrasies and willfulness of character, the story changes. Character makes the story compelling.

(Seger 1994: 149, bold face in original)

Researchers in Media Studies have also noted the importance of characters for fictional TV narratives, because they contribute to the code of realism, plot and narrative development (Pearson 2007: 49). Reviewing previous studies on the relation between audiences and television programmers, Cohen (1999) summarises as follows: "In fictional programs, only through involvement with characters do viewers come to care about stories which otherwise lack relevance to viewers' real life"; "the plot of the serial revolves around a set of characters with which the audience is meant to develop strong relationships"; "it is the cast of characters, rather than the events, that are the show's main vehicle for influencing audiences" (Cohen 1999: 327).

It is all the more surprising that only a few studies concern televisual characterisation, whether in Media Studies (cf. Pearson 2007) or in linguistics, even though stylistic studies of characterisation in other types of texts (such as novels, plays or films) exist (e.g. Bennison 1998; Taavitsainen 1999; Culpeper 2001; Hubbard 2002). All in all, televisual characterisation (including the construal of relations between characters) is a highly neglected topic of research, with only a few recent exceptions (Bubel 2006, this volume; Bubel and Spitz 2006; Mandala 2007, this volume; Wodak 2009; Bednarek 2010).¹ In this chapter I aim to explore televisual characterisation with the help of corpus linguistics, or, more precisely, corpus *stylistics* – here broadly defined as the application of corpus linguistic methodology to the analysis of diegetic fictional texts. Corpus stylistics is still in its infancy (Wynne 2006; Fischer-Starcke 2007), and current research mainly concerns "classic" authors such as Austen (Graves 1999; Hubbard 2002; Starcke 2006; Fischer-Starcke 2007; Bednarek 2008a; Widdowson 2008), Dickens (Mahlberg 2007, forthcoming), Shakespeare (Culpeper 2002b) or Conrad (Stubbs 2005). While a few corpus linguistic investigations of television series exist (Rey 2001; Mittmann 2006; Quaglio 2008, 2009), they are not concerned with characterisation per se but rather focus on other aspects of television dialogue (compare also Toolan's analysis of dialogue in *The Wire* in this volume), although Baker (2005) is a notable exception, exploring the construction of identities in *Will and Grace* from a corpus linguistic perspective.

1. A recent welcome addition to linguistic research on television dialogue, including a chapter on character, is Richardson (2010), unavailable at the time of drafting this chapter.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the notion of the “stable” televisual character; Section 3 describes the corpus used in the case study as well as the series itself (*Gilmore Girls*), and introduces key word/cluster analysis; finally, Section 4 details the results of analysing diachronic and intersubjective character stability in the series. It will be seen that assumptions made in Media/Television Studies on the nature of televisual characters are partially confirmed by the linguistic case study, pointing to the usefulness of a linguistic, empirical perspective on television series that draws on relevant research outside linguistics.

2. The “stable” televisual character

While not much research exists on televisual characterisation in Media/Television Studies, researchers have made a number of general comments on this issue (for an overview see Bednarek 2010). Most importantly for this chapter, televisual characters have been described as relatively stable. For instance, Huisman (2005) notes that sitcom characters “usually change little over time” (Huisman 2005: 178), although long-running programs may show developments in characters and/or relationships with other characters. Talking about a character in *Crime Scene Investigation*, or *CSI* (CBS 2000–present), Pearson (2007) elaborates on this aspect as follows:

The repetitive nature of the television series dictates a relative state of stability for its characters [...] In television, it’s more accurate to talk about character accumulation and depth than it is to talk about character development. The long-running American television drama can create highly elaborated characters of greater accumulation and depth than any contemporary medium.

(Pearson 2007: 56)

Thus, Media/Television studies argues that television characters are relatively stable, that they do not change drastically, but that some biographical and personal development, or elaboration of character, is possible. This stable nature of televisual characters may be caused by the fact that they need to sustain a whole television series. In the remainder of this chapter I use corpus linguistic methodology to investigate the extent of the stability of the televisual character. I do this through a case study of a character in the dramedy *Gilmore Girls* (Warner Brothers 2000–2007), which will now be briefly introduced.

3. A corpus stylistic study of characterisation

3.1 Corpora used in this study

Gilmore Girls is an American television dramedy about a mother and her daughter living in a small town in the East of the United States. The series, which ran from 2000 to 2007, has had considerable international and commercial success, as well as being recognised by the television industry and having inspired academic research. The series is described as follows on the official website at The CW:

Set in a storybook Connecticut town (Stars Hollow) populated with an eclectic mix of everyday folks and lovable lunatics, *GILMORE GIRLS* is a humorous multigenerational series about friendship, family and the ties that bind. [...] [T]he series revolves around thirty something Lorelai Gilmore and her college-age daughter, and best friend in the world, Rory. Lorelai has made her share of mistakes in life, but she has been doing her best to see that Rory doesn't follow in her footsteps. That may be easier said than done, considering that the two share the same interests, the same intellect, the same coffee addiction and the same eyes.

From the beginning, this unique mother-daughter team has been growing up together. Lorelai was just Rory's age when she became pregnant and made the tough decision to raise her baby alone. This defiant move, along with Lorelai's fiercely independent nature, caused a rift between her and her extremely proper, patrician, old-money parents, Emily and Richard. However, Lorelai was forced to reconcile with them when she found herself in desperate need of money for Rory's tuition.

Continuing to add to the unmistakable style of Stars Hollow is a colourful roster of town characters, including Lorelai's best friend and business partner Sookie St. James, Miss Patty, the local dance teacher and social commentator, Michel Gerard, the haughty concierge of the Dragonfly Inn, and Kirk, the town's jack-of-all-trades and master of none. Rory's two best friends are her intense classmate Paris Geller and childhood pal Lane Kim, who just married fellow musician, Zack, in a typically quirky Stars Hollow celebration.

(<http://www.cwtv.com/shows/gilmore-girls/about>, last accessed 28 September 2007)

As a dramedy (similar to e.g. *Sex and the City*, see Bubel this volume; Paltridge et al. this volume) *Gilmore Girls* incorporates both "drama" and humor (see Brock this volume on humor in comedies). The series is discussed in more detail in Calvin (2008) and Bednarek (2008b, 2010), and further information on the series is also easily accessible on the internet.

In order to study characterisation in *Gilmore Girls* I made use of a specialised corpus comprising data from the series, referred to as GG. GG comprises ca 1.1 million words of manually edited online fan transcripts (not the original scripts)

of all *Gilmore Girls* episodes;² it includes dialogue only (speaker names and other additional information such as descriptions of settings, gestures, facial expressions or camera movements were removed). This was automatically split into various sub-corpora:³

- Lorelai (all of Lorelai’s dialogue)
- Lorelai_with_Chris.txt (all of Lorelai’s dialogue addressed to Chris)
- Lorelai_with_Emily.txt (all of Lorelai’s dialogue addressed to Emily)
- Lorelai_with_Luke.txt (all of Lorelai’s dialogue addressed to Luke)
- Lorelai_with_Richard.txt (all of Lorelai’s dialogue addressed to Richard)
- Lorelai_with_Rory.txt (all of Lorelai’s dialogue addressed to Rory)
- Lorelai_with_Sookie.txt (all of Lorelai’s dialogue addressed to Sookie)

The subcorpora are also separated according to season, so that it is possible to study Lorelai’s dialogue in season 1, season 2 etc. respectively.

3.2 Key word/cluster analysis

There are a variety of corpus linguistic methods that can be employed in corpus stylistic analysis (see Stubbs 2005 for an overview). This chapter makes use of key word and cluster analysis (Scott and Tribble 2006), and occasionally draws on concordance analysis (e.g. Sinclair 2003). A *key word* is a word that occurs with unusual frequency (more or less frequent) in a given text or collection of texts when this is compared with a reference corpus. That is, *keyness* is defined in terms of statistical “unusuality”.

A *key cluster* is similar to a key word but concerns longer syntagmatic structures rather than single words or word forms. Such “multi-word strings of two or

2. While these transcripts are not 100% accurate, they are much more accurate than the subtitles. Quaglio (2008), who also uses fan transcripts, notes that they are “fairly accurate and very detailed, including several features that scripts are not likely to present: hesitators, pauses, repeats, and contractions” (Quaglio 2008: 191–192).

3. The splitting of the files into sub-corpora was undertaken by computational linguist Mark Assad on the basis of the speaker identification provided in the corpus (speaker name in capitals followed by colon), as shown in Example (1):

Example (1)

LORELAI: *Hi, Drella, hi. I was just wondering, um, could you be, uh, nicer to the guests?*

DRELLA: *I’m sorry. Did you not want a harp player?*

On account of the amount of data, the sub-corpora could not be manually checked for correctness.

more uninterrupted word-forms” (Stubbs and Barth 2003:62) have been studied under various names (dyads/tryads, clusters, phrases, lexical bundles, n-grams, chains) in corpus linguistics with a focus on different aspects such as linguistic variation, discourse structure or evaluation (e.g. Biber et al. 1999; Stubbs and Barth 2003; Stubbs 2005; Mittmann 2004, 2006; O’Keeffe et al. 2007; Mahlberg 2007; Römer 2008). Following Culpeper’s (2001, 2002b) analysis of the key words of Shakespearean characters, I shall consider both key words and key clusters in the context of televisual characterisation.⁴

Scott and Tribble (2006:55) suggest that the words in a key word lists can be classified as either indicating “aboutness” or style, and Bednarek (2008a) divides key words into three kinds: *content keywords*, *style keywords* or *socio-cultural keywords*. Drawing somewhat on functional approaches to language we can also classify key words/clusters according to the kinds of meanings they appear to express: ideational (aboutness: content and socio-cultural environment), textual (e.g. cohesion; structural relationships within the text) or interpersonal (construing relationships between speakers). Finally, key words/clusters can be classified according to more formal variables such as word class or grammatical category (Scott and Tribble 2006:72). In this chapter I will use a combination of functional and lexicogrammatical categorisation of key words/clusters.

4. Characterisation in *Gilmore Girls*: A corpus stylistic case study

4.1 Lorelai: An example of a “stable” televisual character?

As stated above, the aim of this chapter is to explore variation in character dialogue. The character of Lorelai was chosen for the case study because she is the main character in *Gilmore Girls*, as far as dialogue is concerned, both in terms of quantity of turns and of tokens (n° of running words) (Bednarek 2010). Two aspects of variation will be analysed:

- How much does Lorelai’s language vary across seasons 1 to 7?
- How much does Lorelai’s language vary according to who she is talking to?

The corpus stylistic analyses thus investigate both *diachronic* and *intersubjective* stability.

4. Key words/clusters software (here: Wordsmith, Scott 2009) compares lists of words or clusters in two corpora (the node and the reference corpus), identifying key words/clusters through tests of statistical significance.

Table 1. Key words (# and spelling variants excluded; $p = 0.000001$; no minimum frequency)

	Positive key words and 2-word clusters	Negative key words and 2-word clusters
S1	<i>Rachel</i>	<i>Kirk</i>
S2	<i>ugh</i>	<i>Lorelai, going to</i>
S3	<i>Lorelai, Jess, wanna, Rory</i>	<i>want to</i>
S4	<i>Jason, during</i>	–
S5	<i>Logan</i>	<i>wanna, gonna</i>
S6	<i>Paul, Anka, going, during, going to, Paul Anka, June third</i>	<i>gonna</i>
S7	<i>gonna, know, snakes, rocket, Christopher, you know, want to, I mean</i>	<i>going to</i>

In a pilot study (Bednarek 2009a), I explored these two aspects of variation using the standard default settings of Wordsmith, that is a minimum frequency of 3, and Dunning's Log Likelihood statistics with a p value of 0.000001. Firstly, to investigate how Lorelai's language changes over the seasons, key words and clusters were produced of Lorelai's dialogue in individual seasons (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 respectively), with the reference corpus comprising her dialogue in all seasons. The results indicated that Lorelai's language does not vary much across seasons, as there were only a few positive (more frequent in node corpus) and negative (less frequent in node corpus) key words and clusters per season (Table 1).

The differences between seasons mainly relate to names of characters (e.g. *Rachel, Kirk, Logan*) and variants of *want/wanna* or *going/gonna*, the latter of which might be the result of inconsistent transcription. They do not seem to indicate a big shift in Lorelai's language across seasons.

To investigate how much Lorelai's language varies according to what other character she talks to, Wordsmith was again applied to different GG sub-corpora. Lorelai's complete dialogue was used as a reference corpus, whereas node corpora include files with dialogue addressed to (a) Christopher, (b) Emily, (c) Luke, (d) Richard, (e) Rory, (f) Sookie. Different relationships with Lorelai are enacted by these characters: Christopher is Rory's father and Lorelai's friend/partner/husband; Emily is Lorelai's mother; Luke is Lorelai's friend/partner; Richard is Lorelai's father; Rory is Lorelai's daughter, and Sookie is Lorelai's best friend. The analyses showed that there is slightly more variation than when considering Lorelai's dialogue across seasons, with key words/clusters classifiable as names (e.g. *Chris, GiGi, Sherry, Luke, Michel*), terms of address (*dad, mom, honey*), reference to family roles (*dad, mom*), pronouns (+ human: *he, her, she's, you*), interpersonal markers (*hey, hi, thanks, um*), and content words (*snakes, diner, seventy*). However, some of these only occur a few times (e.g. *snakes*: 12 x; *seventy* 7 x), are not

“dispersed” across texts, and purely reflect what the characters talk about in one episode. For instance, all twelve instances of *snakes* occur in episode 7.4, where Lorelai and Christopher talk about the movie *Snakes on a Plane*. This key word certainly does not reflect a recurring change in Lorelai’s language when talking to Christopher. Again, not many key clusters can be found, with the only key cluster (*mom I*) occurring in Lorelai’s dialogue with her mother.

Thus, the analyses using standard Wordsmith settings seem to indicate a relative stability of the character of Lorelai, but is the low p value setting appropriate? The Wordsmith help page notes: “In the case of key word analyses, where the notion of risk is less important than that of selectivity, you may often wish to set a comparatively low p value threshold such as 0.000001 [...] so as to obtain fewer key words.” I take this to mean that in most searches a p value of 0.000001 still results in a considerable number of key words. These analyses, then, appear to indicate that the language of the televisual character Lorelai does remain fairly stable, in particular when considering her dialogue across seasons. In other words, no significant “style shift” (Bell 1991: 104) – “variation within the speech of an individual” (Bell 1991: 104) – can be detected in terms of key words and clusters.

While this finding might be the result of applying a quantitative, statistically-based methodology to characterisation, it may also be tied to the data investigated. For instance, Lorelai and her daughter Rory are supposed to be best friends. This may result in Lorelai’s style not shifting greatly when talking to her. It may also be part of Lorelai’s character identity that she does in fact not talk very differently to, say, her mother and father, than to other characters. Consider Example (2) in this respect:

Example (2)

Lorelai: *Hi Dad.*

Richard: *Lorelai.*

Lorelai: *Swell party.*

Richard: *Uh, yes, it’s mostly your mother’s doing.*

Lorelai: [laughs] *So, um, what just went down there?*

Richard: *Down where?*

Lorelai: *Just now, the handshake with the man in the gray flannel suit – did you score a deal?*

Richard: *Well, one doesn’t score deals in the insurance business, Lorelai. One builds relationships based on trust and fulfilling the client’s needs.*

Lorelai: *Sorry.*

Richard: *Mr. Lundquist and I, uh, just*

Lorelai: *Uh, Mr. Lundquist?*

Richard: *Yes.*

Lorelai: *Lundquist from Aero International?*

Richard: Yes.

Lorelai: *You bagged the Swede?*

Richard: *Well, just as I didn't score a deal, I also haven't bagged the Swede. We simply talked, we came to an agreement, we shook hands (2.20, Help wanted).*

In this example, Lorelai does not change the informal way she speaks (*what just went down, score a deal, bagged the Swede*), although she talks to her “proper” father, Richard, who plainly has difficulties understanding what she means. Despite this being made explicit in Richard’s turns (*down where?; one doesn’t score deals*), she continues not to shift her style (*You bagged the Swede?*). Thus, the relatively low occurrence of intersubjective style shift may in fact contribute to characterising Lorelai, construing a particular aspect of her identity in that she does not “accommodate” much (see Bell 1991 on accommodation and audience design).

Further, the results may have to do with the fact that *Gilmore Girls* is a rather mainstream, conventional television series. The idea of a stable identity, which is at odds with postmodern conceptions of identity that emphasise the dynamic, localised, and fragmented aspects of identity construal (e.g. Hall 2000), seem to sit well within “mainstream”, popular and Western notions of identity. Such conceptions of the subject assume that “[h]uman beings are held to be fully centred and unified individuals with an inner core” (Barker and Galasiński 2001: 40). Traditional mainstream, as opposed to “postmodern” texts, then, would *not* “threaten notions of the fully formed or whole ‘character’” and would *not* construe “fluid, split or fractured subjects” (Thornham and Purvis 2005: 161) but rather maintain character stability.

A further reason for the low occurrence of style shift might lie in the nature of televisual data as such. A television series only features a limited number of settings, topics, and participants (Quaglio 2009). The main characters of *Gilmore Girls*, for instance, are not very socially diversified, and when we consider the potential contexts in which Lorelai’s dialogue with the investigated characters takes place, there are, presumably, many similarities in terms of power/status, contact/solidarity and the type of interaction (casual, spoken). Further, all dialogue is similar in terms of being a scripted version of casual conversation, which is designed for the audience or the “overhearers” (Bubel 2006, this volume), who are, however, ratified and intended to be there (Lorenzo-Dus 2009: 162). In terms of overhearer design, a stable character arguably helps viewers to identify with television characters, creating viewer loyalty. Scriptwriting teacher Vorhaus proposes that “once you have them [the audience] on the ride, you can’t change the rules” (Vorhaus 1994: 56). Contemporary television series are frequently character-driven, and, at least with respect to sitcoms, it has been proposed that “audiences return to a sitcom each week precisely to see their favourite characters doing pretty much

the same things they did last week and the week before that" (Vorhaus 1994: 120). A stable character also adds to serial stability: with respect to *Gilmore Girls* in particular, producer, creator and writer Amy Sherman-Palladino has stated that "[i]t's very important that *it feels like the same show every week*, because it is so verbal. It's not about car crashes or vampires or monsters or suspense. It's really about *people talking to each other and the way they talk to each other*, which is very specific. It's a little bit more work" (Sherman-Palladino 2005, my italics).

To conclude Section 4.1, while the original key word/cluster analyses suggest a relatively high degree of character stability, it is worth exploring in more detail the variation that does occur, both with respect to diachronic and intersubjective stability. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 revisit both aspects through a follow-up analysis of Lorelai's dialogue using modified software settings.

4.2 Diachronic character stability re-visited

In order to explore character stability in further detail, the p value was adjusted to 0.05 in a follow-up analysis of diachronic and intersubjective stability. A minimum frequency threshold was also applied to ignore low dispersion key words/clusters (see above).⁵ Table 2 on p. 196 shows a potential categorisation of resulting key words and clusters that distinguish Lorelai's dialogue in different seasons.

As a detailed investigation of all key words/clusters is beyond the scope of this chapter, especially since some have very high raw frequencies and an analysis

5. The frequency thresholds used for analysing Lorelai's dialogue across seasons were set as follows:

- key words: raw frequency ≥ 50 (about 0.1%)
- key 2-word clusters: raw frequency ≥ 40 (about 0.08%)
- key 3-word clusters: raw frequency ≥ 20 (about 0.04%)

Using minimum frequencies is an alternative to the time-consuming option of looking up each key word/cluster's dispersion with the help of Wordsmith's *Concord* programme. As clusters occur less frequently than words, the threshold for clusters was lower. In all searches only the top 50 in terms of keyness (both positive/negative) were analysed, and the following settings were used:

- Index: default settings (but minimum frequency = 2, no thorough concordancing, cluster size 2–5);
- Cluster settings: default (but all words, cluster size first 2–2, then 3–3, minimum frequency: 1, omit any containing #).
- Key word settings: default (but p value set to 0.05 and frequency/keyness thresholds applied)

The spelling variants *ok/okay* were excluded from the analysis.

based on extrapolation is not ideal, I will only offer some general hypotheses based on Table 2; and a selected analysis of some lower frequency content key words.⁶

Firstly, the shift in terms of names is presumably related to the focus of particular seasons. For instance, season 1 (*Dean* positive, i.e. more frequent, key word, *Luke* negative, i.e. less frequent, key word) is more focused on the Rory/Dean relationship and how Lorelai deals with it, than the Lorelai-Luke relationship. Similarly, *Jess* and *Dean* are positive key words in season 2 because the focus is on the Rory/Dean/Jess development. In season 6, *Paul* is a positive key word because Lorelai's dog is called Paul Anka. Such key words arguably reflect more a change in the narrative focus than a change in the character's identity itself. They may also reflect changes in relationships between characters: Rory is a negative key word in season 6 because this is a season where Lorelai and Rory fight, and do not talk as much with each other as in other seasons. The positive key word *honey* in season 7, where Lorelai and Rory reconcile, may also have to do with their changing relationship (see Section 4.3). The change in pronouns (+ human) may also be related to this shift in narrative focus (see Section 4.3). That is, certain pronouns will be positive key words in a particular season (e.g. *she*, *her* in season 1; *we*, *we're* in season 4), while others will simultaneously be negative key words (e.g. *they*, *we*, *we're*, *he* in season 1; *I*, *me*, *her* in season 4) because different characters are referred to more frequently as a result of shifting narrative focus.

Further, variants occur as positive and negative key words respectively (e.g. *hey* positive, *hi* negative; *yeah* positive, *yes* negative; *gonna/wanna* positive, *going*

6. In order to classify the items in Table 2 clearly in terms of ideational, interpersonal or textual meaning, further analyses would be necessary. For instance, while some linguistic items (e.g. *please*, *honey*) are classifiable as interpersonal markers, others (e.g. primary verbs, pronouns, names, references to family roles) could be used with interpersonal, ideational or textual meaning. Thus, names and references to family roles (*dad*) may be interpersonal terms of address (examples from *Gilmore Girls*: *Mom*, *I'm pregnant!*; *Rory ... this is to commemorate all those articles of ours that you carefully, thoughtfully ripped to shreds*) or indicate an ideational topic (examples from *Gilmore Girls*: *As I was saying, in recognition of Rory's hard work and devotion to the daily news, we have a few tokens of our appreciation*; *Yeah, my mom's not really into baking or booms*). That is, they can either be used when talking about other characters or when addressing other characters.

Key words/clusters such as *look*, *come*, *tell me* can also be used in various patterns both ideationally (e.g. *He wanted to tell me about...*) and interpersonally (*Tell me!*). *That* could potentially indicate interpersonal meaning when used in its indexical function (e.g. *this* vs. *that*) or logical (ideational) meaning when introducing reported speech/thought. Yet other features can express textual and interpersonal meanings simultaneously (e.g. discourse markers). Thus, the classification in Table 2 is hypothetical, with only those key words/clusters categorised as interpersonal markers that seem reasonably and frequently associated with construing interpersonal relationships between characters.

Table 2. Key words and clusters in Lorelai's dialogue across seasons

Potential categorisation	Key words and clusters
primary verb (<i>do, be, have</i>)	<i>is, was, did, didn't, has, have, don't, do, to be</i>
pronouns (+ human) [plus primary verb]	<i>she, she's, he, he's, her, him, I, me, you, we, they, we're; I was, you are, I had, I am, I don't, I have, do you</i>
pronouns (– human) [plus primary verb]	<i>it, it's, this, this is [that]</i>
names	<i>Dean, Jess, Lorelai, Rory, Jason, Kirk, Luke, Michel, Paul, Paul Anka</i>
reference to family roles	<i>my mother, dad</i>
interpersonal markers (terms of endearment, greetings, politeness markers, intensifiers, markers of agreement, evaluative language, interjections, mental process verbs, discourse markers, negation, <i>wh</i> -questions)	<i>honey, hello, hey, hi, please, could, really, yeah, yes, right, good, have to, have to go, because, oh, [like], wanna, want, want to, I don't want, thought, know, don't know, you know, I mean, mean, ugh, uh, no no, why don't you, why</i>
content (time, place, people, things, actions)	<i>tonight, here, there, now, life, guy, coffee, house, look, come, tell me</i>
other grammatical (prepositions, articles, conjunctions, <i>going to</i> , quantifier)	<i>if, at, for, of, the, a, to, into, down, back, gonna, going, going to, not going to, I'm going to, so, [that], one, of the</i>
other	<i>if you, if I</i>

to, want to negative). This may have to do with who characters talk to most in a particular season (see Section 4.3). In other words, many changes seem to concern not the development of the character itself but rather the development of character relationships. Arguably, television series incorporate both stable and changing elements: “stable” characters encounter new and changing environments and happenings, and changes in their relationships with other characters may occur. In other words, television series offer

a mixture of familiarity – the freedom from the need to make an intellectual effort, to think oneself into each new episode – and novelty: the recurring characters who will have become as familiar as members of one's own family, will, each week, appear in new and different situations and circumstances. (Esslin 2002: 37)

The most extreme example of this is an animated series like *The Simpsons*, where the characters do not even age. It is interesting that notions of novelty and predictability are also important in the relation between friends (see research cited by Bubel this volume) as they seem to be in the relation between audience and TV series/character(s). Audiences have indeed been said to form “parasocial” relations with television characters (e.g. Cohen 1999).

Other key words may have to do with the nature of the narrative in television series, where what comes earlier in the course of a series is important in establishing characterisation. For instance, *coffee* is a positive key word in season 1. Of the 64 occurrences, the majority are associated with Lorelai either wanting coffee (*Coffee, please; I need (some) coffee* (6x); *can I just have some coffee; I would love some coffee; please can I have coffee; I'm going to find coffee*) or offering it to others. If we look back at the official description of *Gilmore Girls*, Lorelai's (and Rory's) taste for coffee is in fact important for characterisation: "the two share the same interests, the same intellect, the same coffee addiction and the same eyes". Instances of *coffee* also include innovative uses, which contribute to characterising Lorelai, such as:

- *Oh finally, the coffee cavalry arrives*
- *Coffee hunt*
- *This is a coffee morning*
- *Oh yeah, I'm Mrs coffee.*
- *... Luke's where the happy coffee is*

That *coffee* occurs more frequently in season 1 than in the following seasons does not indicate a change in Lorelai's character. Rather, early episodes and series are particularly important in establishing characters and in setting up the behaviour that comes to characterise them (Bubel 2006: 63; Pearson 2007: 42). This set up of character need not be reinforced to the same extent in later seasons.

4.3 Intersubjective stability re-visited

Let us now "revisit" and explore intersubjective stability in more detail. Table 3 shows a potential categorisation of the top 50 (in terms of keyness) positive/negative key words/clusters with respect to intersubjective stability, with a *p* value of 0.05 and a minimum frequency of 0.1%.⁷

7. As characters have more or less talking time, the corpora differ in size:

- Lorelai-Chris: (15,792 tokens)
- Lorelai-Emily: (32,556 tokens)
- Lorelai-Luke: (51,674 tokens)
- Lorelai-Richard: (10,104 tokens)
- Lorelai-Rory: (103,378 tokens)
- Lorelai-Sookie: (29,240 tokens)

This means that proportional (rather than raw) frequency thresholds were used for limiting low dispersion: [Note continues on p. 198]

Table 3. Key words and clusters relating to intersubjective stability

Potential categorisation	Key words and clusters
primary verb (<i>do, be, have</i>)	<i>be, did, is a, got, had</i>
pronouns (+ human) [plus primary verb]	<i>she, you're, she's, her, they, we, he, he's, him, I'll, your, you, my, you don't, I, you are, we're, I don't, he was, and he, he was, are you</i>
pronouns (– human) [plus primary verb]	<i>this, that, it's, that's</i>
names	<i>Chris, GiGi, Christopher, Sherry, Sookie, Jackson, Rory, Rory's, Dean, Yale, Luke</i>
reference to family roles	<i>Mom, dad, you and dad</i>
interpersonal markers (terms of address/ endearment, greetings, politeness markers, intensifiers, markers of agreement, evaluative language, interjections, mental process verbs, discourse markers, negation, <i>wh</i> -questions)	<i>mom I, mom you, mom this is, dad I, hi mom, hey dad, hi dad, honey, hello, hey, please, can, very, all, [so], really, just, yeah, yes, right, sure, I'm sure, I love, I love you, I have to, I got to, because, need, I need, fine fine fine, great, good, oh, I want, I want to, don't want to, want, wanted, and I know, I know that, you know, mean, I mean, well, um, uh, not, no, what, what's, why, when</i>
content (time, place, people, things, actions)	<i>business, woman, dinner, work, ask, tell, to go, come, [there], here, night, time, home, day, food, inn, the inn</i>
other grammatical (prepositions, articles, conjunctions, <i>going to</i> , quantifier)	<i>something, at, a, and, the, going to, gonna, for, five, five thousand dollars, seventy five thousand, and a half, the, an, if, [so]</i>
other	<i>one is a</i>

What has been said about the classification of key words/clusters in Table 2 (see Note 6) also applies to Table 3, with linguistic items needing more investigation and certain items being ambiguous between realising e.g. ideational and interpersonal meaning. Again, I will only briefly comment on some of these key words/clusters.

-
- key words: proportional frequency $\geq 0.1\%$ (10 occurrences per 10.000 words);
 - key 2-word clusters: proportional frequency $\geq 0.08\%$;
 - key 3-word clusters: proportional frequency $\geq 0.04\%$.
- As this corresponds to a low minimum raw frequency for small corpora, dispersion is not entirely ensured for these (Lorelai-Richard and Lorelai-Chris dialogue).

Content words

Content words may often concern typical topics of talk between certain characters, for instance *dinner* in Lorelai-Emily dialogue (Lorelai and Rory spend every Friday evening dinner with Emily and Richard); *business*, *work* in Lorelai-Richard dialogue (Richard runs his own business) or *food*, *(the) inn* in Lorelai-Sookie dialogue (Sookie is a chef, who co-owns an inn with Lorelai at some stage). Such content words can be related to different aspects of characters such as the work environment, profession or areas of expertise and interest.

Names

It is not surprising that names (whether as ideational topic references or as interpersonal terms of address) are key words in Lorelai's dialogue with individual characters. For instance, when talking to Christopher, Lorelai's key words include his name *Chris/Christopher*, his (other) daughter's name *GiGi* and his girl-friend's name *Sherry*. This is simply because Lorelai talks to Christopher and addresses him by name, and because she is more likely to talk with him about his daughter/girl-friend than with other characters.

Reference to family roles

Similarly to names, references to family roles (*mom*, *dad*) can be used ideationally or interpersonally. (The key clusters *mom I*, *mom you*, *mom this is*, *dad I*, *hi mom*, *hey dad*, *hi dad*, however, clearly point to an interpersonal usage and have thus been classified as interpersonal markers.) While *mom*, *dad* are ambiguous, the 3-word cluster *you and dad* points to an interpersonal *and* ideational usage, that is, it is used by Lorelai to address her mother (Emily) and refer to her father (Richard), though sometimes Richard may be present and thus also be indirectly addressed (see Figure 1, concordance line 4).

N Concordance

- 1 EMILY: But what about us? LORELAI: Hey if *you and dad* want a party, it's fine by me. Buy
- 2 LORELAI: All that running around Stars Hollow, *you and dad* were looking for a house for me?
- 3 we changed it. LORELAI: So Mom. Do you think *you and Dad* are getting back together? EMILY:
- 4 How are you? LORELAI: I'm fine. Can I talk to *you and Dad* for a minute? RICHARD: Your
- 5 to be insensitive. It just seemed like a thing *you and Dad* were going through. I figured you'd
- 6 way do we go, upstairs? LORELAI: No, mom, *you and dad* aren't upstairs. You're in our nicest
- 7 want to get away from each other, Mom? Are *you and Dad* fighting? EMILY: Stop it! You know!
- 8 EMILY: Then bump someone. LORELAI: Can't *you and Dad* just talk about it? EMILY: No, you
- 9 practical joke. LORELAI: No, it was a chance for *you and Dad* to do something special. EMILY:
- 10 No, I like it fine. You've just never played it. *You and Dad* always play classical music.
- 11 from Sookie's wedding. There's a great one of *you and Dad* dancing. I put 'em in an album for
- 12 Oh, hey Mom, uh, Sookie wanted to know if *you and Dad* would like to come to her wedding.
- 13 going back to that room. LORELAI: I'm guessing *you and Dad* had it out about the job thing?
- 14 this, but um, is something going on between *you and Dad*? EMILY: What are you talking

Figure 1. Concordances for *you and dad* from a corpus including speaker names

Both *mum* and *dad* are positive key words only in Lorelai's dialogue with her parents – not surprisingly, as she is likely to either address them with *mom/dad* or to mention one to the other. Thus *you and dad* is a positive key cluster in Lorelai's dialogue with her mother.

Pronouns

The frequency of certain pronouns presumably relates to the ideational use of names and references to family roles, as third person personal pronouns are typically employed to anaphorically refer to already introduced participants. For instance, *she*, *she's* and *her* are positive key words in Lorelai's dialogue with Christopher where female names are also positive key words. Similarly, Lorelai's dialogue with her best friend Sookie features the key words/clusters *he*, *he's*, *him*, and *he*, *he was*, which seems to suggest that they often talk about male characters, with the clusters *and he* and *he was* simultaneously indicating a narrative. The telling of stories has frequently been connected to involvement or friendship, and the telling of (inter)personal matters seems to occur frequently in *female* friendship, including the talking through of crises or troubles with partners (cf. Bubel 2006, this volume). The key words/clusters with the male singular pronoun may thus work to construe Lorelai and Sookie as friends. The construal of character relations can be explored in more detail in a qualitative analysis of television dialogue (Bubel this volume).

In summary, names, references to family roles, and pronouns give insight into the personal relationships between Lorelai and other characters by reference to who she talks to and about.

Interpersonal markers

Interpersonal markers include a variety of devices that are used to negotiate relationships with others (terms of address/endearment, greetings, politeness markers, intensifiers, markers of agreement, evaluative language, interjections, mental process verbs, discourse markers, negation, *wh*-questions). Many of them can reasonably be linked to alignment practices (establishing affiliation or disaffiliation between speakers), e.g. discourse markers, accounts, orientation to affective stance, self-disclosure, terms of address/endearment, questions (Bubel 2006). Evaluative (including emotional) language further reflects the close relationships between characters in *Gilmore Girls*, which is also the case in a number of other TV genres such as domestic sitcoms (cf. Quaglio 2009 on *Friends*). It is not surprising that the majority of key words and clusters for intersubjective stability fall into this category. That is, interpersonal markers are crucial in characters positioning themselves with respect to other characters because it is precisely their

N Concordance

- 1 Oh! yeah. Here. Open it You did it, babe. You got in. No, *honey*, that was a joke. They have an open spot. You're gonna
- 2 that's just mean. So, Rory's golfing adventure. Tell me! Oh, *honey*, I brought you some of Sookie's chocolate cake to
- 3 told me. You couldn't tell me? You tell me everything. Oh, *honey*, you once told me that you loved 'Saved by the Bell'.
- 4 the vein in the forehead. Whoo!! How DO we work together? *Honey*, what's wrong? I'm so sorry. Do you know him? NO?
- 5 birthday. So, now tell me. why Miss Lemonhead today? Oh, *honey*, an A- is awesome. Happy birthday. little girl. I can't
- 6 right here, mister. So do you want something to eat? Hey, *honey*, hold on ... Hey. Can I come in? How are you doing?
- 7 she checked on that with you. Oh, man. I'm so sorry. Oh, *honey*, why didn't you tell me? Rory, I appreciate you wanting
- 8 much stuck in the Hollow tonight. Absolutely. All right, now, *honey*, tell Grandam that you arrived there not a member of the
- 9 Take a guess. Angry, frustrated, nauseous? Pretty much. *Honey*, you knew i was gonna date him, right? This isn't a total
- 10 It was a great date, World Series level. But it was just a date. *Honey*, I promised myself a long time ago that I was gonna

Figure 2. Ten concordances for *honey* from GG corpus

linguistic function to do so. Note also that a number of stylistic studies have already investigated the way in which characters' social behaviour contributes to the construal of character identities (e.g. Bennison 1998; Culpeper 2001; Bednarek 2010 and Mandala this volume).

Among the identified interpersonal markers I will briefly discuss terms of address, as we have already encountered them above. That is, we have seen that names and references to family roles can be used as interpersonal terms of address. Together with terms of endearment (e.g. *honey*), they can be classified as *familiar* terms of address (Bubel 2006: 153). In her conversational analysis of *Sex and the City*, Bubel (2006) shows how televisual characters exhibit different frequency patterns in their use of first name address and endearments. This also concerns "the recipients of these forms of direct address" (Bubel 2006: 165). This is also the case in *Gilmore Girls*, as the corpus stylistic analyses show. We have already seen this with names/references to family roles above. Let us now look at *honey* as a term of endearment. This is a key word in Lorelai's dialogue with Christopher and with Rory. For example, the special relationship between Lorelai and Rory is shown through the keyword *honey*. Of the 275 occurrences of *honey* in Lorelai's dialogue, 141 are addressed to Rory. Figure 2 shows ten example concordance lines from the GG corpus.⁸

A closer examination of the concordance lines shows that *honey* often occurs in the co-text of other features related to intimacy, such as expressions of emotion (*oh, honey* – 22 occurrences); familiar greetings (*hi, honey; bye, honey; night, honey*); other familiar terms of address (*Rory, honey; sweetie, baby, cookie, honey*)

8. It must be remembered that this corpus does not comprise Rory's dialogue or speaker names, rather it includes only Lorelai's language addressed to Rory. For instance, the line *No, honey, that was a joke* is in fact a response to Rory's question *You didn't ... with the principal, did you?* (episode 1.01, *Pilot*).

or positive evaluations (*that's fantastic honey; very pretty honey; good thinking honey*). That is, it frequently works as an affiliative practice for Lorelai and Rory.⁹

Hence Bubel's (2006) study of *Sex and the City* and the above analyses of *Gilmore Girls* suggest that terms of endearment are used in scripted television dialogue both for construing characters' individual style (certain characters prefer particular terms of address), *and* for construing relations between characters. Whether or not this is a conscious decision on the part of script writers is an open question, although there is some evidence that "the bulk of the process [of script writing] occurs below the level of conscious awareness" (Mandala 2007: 67).¹⁰

5. Conclusions

Televisual characters' identity is construed via multimodal, including linguistic, behaviour (Culpeper 2001; McIntyre 2008; Bednarek 2010; Toolan this volume), through what has been called "textual cues" (Culpeper 2001: 163) or "surface structure" (Culpeper 2001: 37). The focus in this chapter was on linguistic behaviour (repetition and variation) as discovered using corpus linguistic key word/cluster analysis. Firstly, the analyses suggested that the character Lorelai's dialogue does not change significantly across seasons, and is hence diachronically rather stable. However, it is an open question whether or not a change in identity/personality (whether scripted or "real") would be reflected in statistically significant and automatically identifiable changes in language, i.e. can be discovered using key word/cluster analysis. Clearly, there are limits to automated large-scale corpus analyses

9. A familiar term of address, even a term of endearment, can also be combined with a disaffiliative practice such as a command, signaling affiliation at the macro rather than the micro level (Bubel 2006: 161–162). This also occurs in the *Gilmore Girls* data, e.g. a co-occurrence of *honey* with imperatives or disagreements.

10. One further point to be noted is that some of the key words seem to differ in terms of in/formality (e.g. *hello* vs. *hi, hey; going to* vs. *gonna; yeah* vs. *yes*). They are clearly important in firstly distinguishing characters from each other (Bednarek 2010) but they might also be significant in terms of how characters speak to each other because of the way dialogue is "designed" for the hearer (see Bell 1991 on audience design). For instance, the colloquial *hey* and *great* are negative key words in Lorelai's dialogue with her "proper" parents Emily and Richard, and *hello* is a positive key word in her dialogue with Emily; *you are* (more formal than the contracted *you're*) is a negative key word in Lorelai's dialogue with her daughter Rory; *very* is a negative key word in her dialogue with friend/partner and diner owner Luke. On the other hand, *yeah, sure* and *you know* are, surprisingly, negative key words/clusters in Lorelai's dialogue with Rory. Further research would be needed to explore this inconsistency and to investigate the role of in/formality in characterisation further (see Culpeper 2001: 182–188).

and semi-automated small-scale corpus linguistic as well as manual text analyses provide different perspectives on discourse data (Bednarek 2008b, 2009b). Further studies are needed to explore this issue. For instance, it would be possible to collect dialogue from a character who clearly does undergo transformation between seasons (e.g. Shane in *The L-Word* or Joel Fleischman in *Northern Exposure*) and apply key word/cluster analysis to their dialogue in order to see if this transformation is reflected in changing key words and clusters between seasons. Further analyses could also explore different forms and genres of television – e.g. series vs. serial (Pearson 2007); sci-fi (Mandala this volume) vs. dramedy – and different characters – e.g. children, teenagers, adults – in terms of stability and change.

A second finding concerns intersubjective stability. Here it was found that while Lorelai's dialogue was still relatively stable, there was more style shift to be found in her dialogue when addressing different characters than across seasons. The results also suggest that it is interpersonal meanings that shift most in a character's dialogue. Again, it is by no means clear whether key word/cluster analysis is the best methodology to reveal intersubjective style shift, and other methodologies (such as Conversation Analysis, Bubl this volume or politeness theory, Mandala this volume) could be fruitfully applied to study interactions between characters.

In summary, and discounting transcription errors, corpus/software mistakes or the inadequacy of tests of statistical significance, we have seen that Lorelai is construed as a relatively stable character in terms of diachronic and intersubjective style shift. In particular, while there is some intersubjective variation in terms of ideational topics and interpersonal positioning, there is much less of a diachronic shift in Lorelai's dialogue across seasons, and that which occurs reflects changes in her relationship with other characters or can be linked to the nature of *Gilmore Girls*/television series. While there is a possibility that the findings are limited to the character of Lorelai, they do confirm assumptions made in Media/Television studies on the nature of characters in television series in general, namely that television characters are relatively stable, and that they do not change drastically, although some biographical and personal development is possible in most series. It is therefore hypothesised that this linguistic stability is the norm for many contemporary television characters, even though further investigations with more varied data are needed to confirm this hypothesis. Certain characters may well undertake a "journey" within particular series or serials (Mandala this volume). Overall, however, stable characters are presumed to be frequent in mainstream television, as they allow high degrees of viewer interaction, engagement, and potential for bonding and identification. Stable and "unique" (see Bednarek 2010) characters allow viewers to emotionally engage and identify with who is portrayed on the screen. Characters attract viewers to television narratives,

and are a way of creating the engagement of viewers, which is crucial in the contemporary television landscape. Australia's Channel Ten chief programmer David Mott says: "If you don't create viewer engagement, they just won't be bothered." (Idato 2009: 3).

Finally, analysing the language of televisual characters is important not just because of the intrinsic insights it gives into characterisation in televisual narratives but also because of the potential impact of television dialogue on viewers (cf. also Brock this volume):

Since a large percentage of films and television programmes consumed by viewers worldwide are originally produced in the United States it seems legitimate to expect that they will exert a certain degree of influence both in the language – usually via translation – and in the attitudes of millions of people across the globe. Whilst aiming to mirror society, audiovisual productions invite their audiences to find resemblances in the characters they see on screen in a process of identification, which in turn, triggers a mimetic attitude in some viewers.

(Díaz Cintas 2009: 7–8)

CHAPTER 11

Star Trek: Voyager's Seven of Nine

A case study of language and character in a televisual text

Susan Mandala

Arguing that work in cultural studies has limited the study of televisual character in various ways, this paper outlines an alternative, linguistic method of studying character in television drama by presenting a case study of one particular construct, Seven of Nine in the television series *Star Trek: Voyager*, one of the later offerings from the *Star Trek* franchise. Starting from the observation that linguistic behaviour is often a clue to character (Culpeper 2001; Bennison 1993; Toolan 1988), this study applies Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of linguistic politeness to Seven's language across three seasons (78 episodes) of the series. The analysis reveals that manipulations in the expression of positive and negative politeness serve to humanise the cybernetic Seven, making manifest for the audience internal changes in her character that allow her gradual and successful integration into the community that is the Voyager crew.

1. Introduction

The study of televisual character has, to date, largely been dominated by cultural studies (see also Bednarek this volume). As Wagner and Lundeen have noted, work in this discipline often unfolds through a process of interrogation whereby forms of popular culture are investigated "in order to unmask their covert political agendas" (Wagner and Lundeen 1998: 15). While such work is often illuminating, it is not, as Wagner and Lundeen go on to point out, without its limitations, one of which is a tendency to privilege readings linked to "power-related dimensions of human difference" (Wagner and Lundeen 1998: 18) such as gender and race. While laudable, this political preoccupation in cultural studies can carry

with it an unfortunate side effect, the tendency to “bend” texts so that the analysis fits a pre-determined stance (Wagner and Lundeen 1998: 17).¹

The tendency to evaluate texts in relatively narrow terms has left its mark on the study of televisual character. Take, for instance, the way work in cultural studies has dealt with one particular character, Seven of Nine, in the *Star Trek* spin-off series *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995–2001, CBS/Paramount Television). *Voyager* recounts the adventures of the starship Voyager. Flung far into space on its maiden journey, Voyager’s mission is to find its way home to Earth. The principal characters are the captain, Katherine Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), the first officer, Commander Chakotay (Robert Beltran), security chief Commander Tuvok (Tim Russ), helmsman Tom Paris (Robert Duncan McNeill), chief engineer B’Elanna Torres (Roxann Dawson), the young ensign Harry Kim (Garrett Wang), a morale officer/head chef named Neelix (Ethan Phillips), and a computerised, holographic (but nevertheless very human) medical officer known mostly as “the Doctor” (Robert Picardo).

Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) joins *Voyager* in season four’s opening episode *Scorpion*, Part 2 (4.1),² debuting as a representative of the Borg, a technologically advanced race of cybernetic humanoids and Voyager’s most constant threat. Existing as a ruthlessly efficient Collective, the Borg reproduce through the brutal process of “assimilation”, forcibly transforming others into Borg like themselves. In this way, they are able to “assimilate” (and thus eradicate) entire cultures. Assimilated beings such as the once human Seven cease their existence as individuals and become instead drones, units devoid of “all diversity, all individuality, and all feeling” (Wagner and Lundeen 1998: 136) who exist simply to carry out the will of the Collective.

As a Borg drone in *Scorpion*, Part 2 (4.1), Seven attempts to assimilate Voyager and her crew. It is during this conflict that Janeway is forced to separate Seven from the Borg, an act that allows her human physical and psychological self to re-emerge after eighteen years as a cog in the Collective (Roberts 2000: 215). She joins *Voyager* as a series regular from this point, and her struggle to redeem her lost humanity as a “recovering Borg” (Wagner and Lundeen 1998: 95) becomes a major theme for the remaining four seasons of the show.

While Seven has received a fair amount of discussion in the cultural studies literature (e.g., see Dove-Viebahn 2007; Consalvo 2004; Jackson and Nexon 2003; Graham 2000; Neumann 2003; Roberts 2000) these investigations mostly

1. While Wagner and Lundeen (1998) make this point in relation to the *Star Trek* franchise, it can be argued that it may apply more generally to work in cultural studies, as well.

2. The notation following an episode name refers to the season in which the episode occurs, and the order in which it appears. Thus, 4.1 refers to the first episode in season four.

follow suit in the discipline and take gender or race as their starting point. This has imposed a rather “flat” (Forster 2000), one-dimensional reading of Seven’s character. While she is assessed as “complex” (Kavanagh et al. 2001: 139; Consalvo 2004: 179), “contradictory” (Consalvo 2004: 179), “compelling” (Kavanagh et al. 2001: 139), and “central to many storylines” (Kavanagh et al. 2001: 139), these judgements are made almost exclusively in relation to race and gender. She is seen as interesting, but only because she represents part of Captain Janeway’s “absent sexuality” (Dove-Viebahn 2007: 604), or for the way she is “slashed” with Janeway in fan fiction (Bowring 2004: 397),³ or because she exhibits strength through hybridity as part of a “feminist heterotopia” (Dove-Viebahn 2007).⁴ She is contrasted with other *Star Trek* heroines for the way she represents “a contemporary version of powerful femininity that neither emulates masculine authority nor reverts to archaic feminine stereotypes” (Kavanagh et al. 2001: 139); she subverts traditional notions of “gender, power and sexuality” (Wagner and Lundeen 1998: 96); she has “a body that is feminine to excess,” but a personality that is masculine (Consalvo 2004). As “simultaneously Borg/human/female,” she is both “colonized and colonizer,” “abused and abuser” (Kavanagh et al. 2001: 139). With her visible Borg components standing metaphorically for racial characteristics (according to Roberts 2000), she is the mulatta figure in whom “race and gender are presented and contested” (Roberts 2000: 206).

Such readings, while legitimate contributions, suppress other, equally salient readings. Roberts (2000), for example, exclusively concerned with Seven as a “diversely raced female” scientist (Roberts 2000: 217) in *The Omega Directive* (4.21), pays no attention to what is arguably the primary theme of the episode, her first personal experience of religious belief. Consalvo, determined to categorise Seven as masculine, asserts that she is not given to displays of emotion (Consalvo 2004: 184), even though such displays are among the first human attributes to return to her after her separation from the Borg. She spends most of *The Gift* (4.2), her first full post-Borg episode, either furious or distraught, and other emotions soon become apparent as well. Seven’s feelings of guilt and remorse are the subject of several episodes (*Retrospect*, 4.17; *Living Witness*, 4.23; *Survival Instinct*, 6.2; *Memorial*, 6.14), and audiences are also privy to her experience of profound grief (*Drone*, 5.2), terror (*Infinite Regress*, 5.7), paranoia (*The Voyager Conspiracy*, 6.9), awe (*The Omega Directive*, 4.21), loneliness (*One*, 4.25), and pride (*Drone*, 5.2; *Someone to Watch Over Me*, 5.22).

3. *Slashing* refers to the way heterosexual characters are put in homosexual relationships by authors of fan fiction.

4. For Dove-Viebahn (2007), Voyager represents a “feminist heterotopia,” a matriarchal society which thrives by embracing difference.

The focus on gender and race in much of the previous work on Seven has also deprived analysis of her journey as a character, her transformation from brutal and unfeeling Borg drone to trustworthy crewmate and friend (on friendship relations in other television dramas, see Bubel this volume). While she begins as a feared enemy, she winds up married to another member of the crew (reported in the final episode, *Endgame*, Parts 1 and 2, 7.25–26) and along the way experiences parenthood,⁵ demonstrates a consistent rapport with lonely or frightened children,⁶ and shows herself willing to support her friends at cost to herself on many occasions (see, for example, *Year of Hell*, 4.8 and 4.9; *Mortal Coil*, 4.12; and *Latent Image*, 5.11).

Clearly, there is more to Seven than has thus far met the critical eye. In this chapter, I want to move away from readings of Seven that are limited to issues of gender and race and look instead at the rehabilitation of her character from enemy to friend. To do this, I will be looking at her language, in particular the way she interacts with others. While the value of linguistic analysis in understanding character has been demonstrated several times in stylistics (e.g. Culpeper 2001; Bennison 1993; Toolan 1988), the link between represented language and characterisation is not of great interest in cultural studies and has largely been ignored in studies of Seven. By tracing the development of Seven's character through changes in how she interacts linguistically with others, I aim to demonstrate one way that our understanding of televisual character can be taken forward.

I have proceeded by viewing all episodes from seasons four, five, and six, and then identifying scenes with Seven from early, late, and mid-way through the 78-episode span for transcription and in-depth qualitative analysis. Changes in Seven's interactional competence were charted by applying Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of linguistic politeness to the data. Before the findings are discussed, a more extensive account of Brown and Levinson's framework and its use in the current study will be helpful.

Brown and Levinson's (1987: 55) theory of linguistic politeness is an attempt to account for why speakers regularly and naturally diverge from "maximally efficient communication", why, for example, we tend to say things like "If it's not too much trouble, would you mind helping me for a bit?" instead of just "Help me". Their answer is that we use language to address "face concerns". "Face" refers to

5. When a "random convergence of technologies" (*Drone*, 5.2) causes the birth of a Borg drone with some of Seven's own genetic material, she and the drone bond as parent and child.

6. Evidence of this trait is found in numerous episodes, many of them involving Naomi Wildman, the child of a crewmate (e.g. *Bliss*, 5.14; *Dark Frontier*, 5.15–5.16; *Infinite Regress*, 5.7; *Survival Instinct*, 6.2), but some involving others, such as the abandoned Borg children (*Ashes to Ashes*, 6.18; *Child's Play*, 6.19; *Collective*, 6.16).

the “public self-image” (Brown and Levinson 1987:61) all of us seek to project and protect, and consists of two sets of wants, the want to be free from imposition (negative face wants), and the want to be liked (positive face wants) (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). As Brown and Levinson explain, “face is something that is emotionally invested” (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). It “can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be continually attended to in interaction” (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). While speakers may not have explicit knowledge of face or its maintenance through face work (the enactment of linguistic politeness), they nevertheless instinctively engage in face work when they speak, and expect that others will, as well (Brown and Levinson 1987:55–57).

As Culpeper (2001), Bennison (1993) and Short (1989) have further shown, audiences bring such real world expectations of talk to bear when they encounter represented talk in dramatic dialogue. Following Short (1989), I take televisual dialogue to exhibit the same embeddedness as dramatic dialogue (see also Brock this volume; Bubel this volume). As characters speak to each other, the language they use conveys “additional messages” about them to the audience (Short 1989: 149). When these “additional messages” involve the representation of linguistic politeness, audience are, as Culpeper (2001) and Bennison (1993) have demonstrated, provided with textual clues that invite them to make inferences about characters’ personalities and motives.

Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory is not only suited to the study of televisual character in general, but also to the study of Seven’s character in particular. As Brown and Levinson themselves have noted, “linguistic realisations of politeness” tell us a great deal about “the quality of social relationships and the course of their development” (Brown and Levinson 1987:231). When people are in social relationships “where the possibility of change exists”, they “monitor” those relationships, and use language to “adjust” them (Brown and Levinson 1987:231). As a Borg on her way to becoming human once again, Seven is in just such a situation. Voyager’s journey back to Earth is at the same time her journey back to humanity and as she makes this journey, “the possibility of change” enters into her relationships. I argue that when Seven speaks to the other members of Voyager’s crew, her dialogue displays for us her developing ability to “adjust” these relationships “in the desired direction” (Brown and Levinson 1987:231), and also, as a result of this, her gradual integration into the Voyager “family” (Captain Janeway’s term for her crew). The discussion will begin with the expression of negative politeness represented in Seven’s dialogue, move on to consider the representation of positive politeness, and conclude with a discussion of more complex face work from Seven in scenes that depict her repairing interpersonal rifts.

2. Negative politeness

Negative politeness, as Brown and Levinson (1987: 129) explain, is “the heart of respect behaviour”. When we are negatively polite in language we address negative face wants by using language to let our interlocutor know we regret imposing on them. Thus, if we are making a request we may apologise for doing so (“I’m terribly sorry to bother you, but ...”), or avoid putting our interlocutor on the spot by phrasing the request impersonally (“Is the tea ready?”), or minimise the imposition it involves (“Could I ask a small favour?”). At the beginning of season four just after her debut, Seven’s speech acts typically conform to the Borg pattern. As I have argued elsewhere (Mandala 2010), the Borg do not consider it necessary to accommodate the needs of their interlocutors (linguistically or otherwise), and so their speech acts are typically “bald on record” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 60), delivered with “maximum efficiency” and devoid of any politeness devices, negative or positive:

- (1) *You have entered grid nine two of subjunction twelve. Proceed* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1);
- (2) *Irrelevant. You must comply* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1);
- (3) *Your primitive communication is inefficient* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1).

These utterances, typical of Borg speech, either express the Borg will or assert their view as undisputed fact with little or no regard for their interlocutors’ face needs. As a Borg drone at the start of her journey, many of Seven’s early discourse moves were delivered this way in Borg-style. Her initial lack of negative politeness is evident not only in her informatives:⁷

- (4) *I speak for the Borg* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1);
- (5) *A multikinetic neutronic mine. Five million isoton yield* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1);
- (6) *All remaining bioships in the Delta Quadrant are returning to their realm* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1);

but also in her requests and criticisms, acts that have even greater potential to threaten face (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65):

- (7) *Do not engage us in further irrelevant discourse* (Scorpion, Part 2, 4.1);

7. My speech act classifications in this paper generally follow Tsui’s (1995).

(8) *You will reverse course and take us to it* [the nearest Borg ship]
(*Scorpion*, Part 2, 4.1);

(9) *You are individuals. You are small and you think in small terms*
(*Scorpion*, Part 2, 4.1).

That Seven's early bald-on-record interactional style poses a barrier to full social integration is evident in the way other members of the crew censure her linguistic behaviour. Ensign Kim tells her she must "learn to phrase things a bit more diplomatically" (*Concerning Flight*, 4.11), both the Doctor (*One*, 4.25) and the captain (*Retrospect*, 4.17) tell her she cannot simply say whatever she happens to think at the moment she thinks it, and B'Elanna tells her she is rude:

(10) B'Elanna: *You're just – you're rude.*

Seven: *I am rude.*

B'Elanna: *Yes. You order people around, you do things without permission, and whether you realise it or not you come off as a little insulting. You don't even say please or thank you [...] (Message in a Bottle, 4.14).*

These judgements – the need to be more diplomatic, to refrain from making certain utterances in certain situations, to avoid the appearance of bossing people around – are essentially reactions to Seven's early tendency to disregard the negative face needs of her interlocutors. By season five, however, Seven's expression of negative politeness begins to show evidence of improvement. She now mitigates requests with *please* ("Captain, this is Seven of Nine. *Please* report to astrometrics at once", *The Fight*, 5.19), minimises impositions ("Ensign, I require *a moment* of your time", *Bliss*, 5.14), couches face-threatening acts as general truths ("The doctor often instructs me to *look before I leap*", *Bliss*, 5.14), indicates reluctance to impose ("May I ask you a personal question?", *Bliss*, 5.14), and softens directives with hedges and modal verbs ("*I believe we should* work together to escape this anomaly", *Bliss*, 5.14). Seven's improved use of negative politeness signals not only that she has indeed "learn[ed] to phrase things a bit more diplomatically", but that she has developed an awareness of the need to respect the feelings of others when it is necessary to impose on them or risk offense.

Further evidence of Seven's growing sensitivity towards others occurs in *Dark Frontier* (5.15). In the first half of this two-part episode, Captain Janeway puts forward a proposal to steal Borg technology and is surprised when Seven makes no comment at her briefing. In an interchange following the meeting, the Captain pursues a comment from Seven, whose response demonstrates very careful attention to the Captain's negative face needs, and, via her rank as captain, expectations:

- (11) Captain: *I thought you'd be a little more vocal. Any thoughts?*
Seven: *Your plan is ambitious. There are many variables. But it can succeed*
(*Dark Frontier*, 5.15–5.16).

Here, Seven is tactful, a judgement that is made available to us through her dialogue in the way she deals with the captain's question. She offers deference by keeping the focus of her criticism on the plan rather than the captain personally, and softens the criticism by including a positive comment (*But it can succeed*). The use of the adjective *ambitious* is also indicative of respect behaviour since it can have either positive or negative connotations. In effect, Seven goes "off-record" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 226) with her criticism here by leaving her utterance open to interpretation. While a still mostly Borg Seven might simply have said: "You are reckless. It is foolish to attempt this", the now more human Seven does not risk offence by confronting her Captain with a direct insult but instead gently leads her to consider the possible weaknesses in her plan.

3. Positive politeness

While negative politeness is primarily about deference and respect, positive politeness is about solidarity and sharing (of wants, attitudes, perspectives, and so on) (Brown and Levinson 1987: 101). When we are positively polite, we address positive face wants by using language to show our interlocutors that we like them, value them, and want to listen to them (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129). Thus, we may compliment our interlocutor, address them with an endearing nickname, express agreement with them, or take the time to chat with them just for the sake of it. As Brown and Levinson (1987: 103) explain, "positive politeness utterances are used as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103) and can serve "as a kind of social accelerator where S [a speaker], in using them, indicates that he wants to 'come closer' to H [a hearer]" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103). Put simply, positive politeness is the language of human warmth and fellowship. As such, its expression in Seven's dialogue is particularly important as a marker of her progress towards full integration into a human community, and it is significant that these devices, either through absence or inclusion, emerged as more salient in the analysis than the negative politeness devices.

In her first episode Seven, still very Borg-like, generally shows disdain for the wants that positive politeness satisfies and spurns the offers of goodwill that express it (on talk and the expression of goodwill, see Tsui 1995: 152). In the

following exchange, for example, she snubs an introduction by reclassifying the expressive that realises it as an informative, and then challenging that informative for reporting facts already known:⁸

- (12) Janeway: *I'm Captain Janeway. This is Lieutenant Tuvok.*
 Seven: *We are aware of your designations* (*Scorpion*, Part 2, 4.1).

While such introductions may seem inconsequential, they are important pieces of talk. To disregard an introduction is to disregard the positive face needs of those introduced. As watching audiences will instinctively know, introductions are gestures of trust and openness, an offering of one's self. Rejecting someone's introduction is for all intents and purposes the same as rejecting them, the conversational equivalent of simply pushing past and walking away.

Giving Seven dialogue that makes little or marginal use of positive politeness devices early on is an effective way of indicating that the cooperative impulses from which they spring are still alien to her. Indeed, it is very likely that Seven's initial reluctance to receive or reciprocate positive politeness may have led commentators such as Consalvo (2004) and Roberts (2000) to conclude that she was "brusque" and "business-like" (Consalvo 2004:186), "cold" and unsympathetic (Consalvo 2004:184), lacking in social skills (Roberts 2000:216), and uninterested in "creating or maintaining personal relationships" (Consalvo 2004:186). Considering the dialogue above, it might be tempting to agree. What is important to realise, however, is that Seven develops from this point. She comes to show considerable sympathy for others, establishes and maintains relationships, and acquires a number of social skills entirely lacking in her Borg personae. In a number of instances, such developments become apparent in Seven's increasing facility with the expression of positive politeness. A good demonstration of this is her struggle with small talk. At first, she is, as Consalvo (2004:186) has suggested, entirely "contemptuous" of it. For her, it "serves no purpose whatsoever" (*One*, 4.25), and she does not understand why anyone would want to spend time discussing such trivial things as who argued with whom (e.g. see *Concerning Flight*, 4.11). Unsurprisingly, Seven's first encounters with small talk do not go well:

- (13) Harry: *You said the Borg got this stuff from species 259. Who are they?*
 Seven: [Silence]
 Harry: *Guess the Borg meet a lot of people, don't they?*
 Seven: [Glares at Harry] (*The Gift*, 4.2).

8. The analysis here follows Tsui's (1995) work on reclassifications in English.

In response to Harry's two positively polite attempts to open a friendly conversation while they work, Seven offers nothing but attributable silences (Sacks et al. 1974), one of them aggravated with an angry glare.

Eventually, however, Seven does master small talk, and her efforts in this regard are made explicit in *One* (4.25) late in season four. In the first half of the episode, we see Seven struggling with small talk in a simulation the doctor has designed for her:

- (14) B'Elanna: *Have some dinner. The potato salad isn't half bad.*
 Seven: *I do not require nutrition at this time. I would like to talk with you.*
 Harry: *Okay.*
 Seven: *Ensign Kim, w+hat is your place of origin?*
 Harry: *You mean where am I from? Well I was born in South Carolina, but I grew up*
 Seven: *Lieutenant Torres, explain why you became a member of the Maquis [...]* (*One*, 4.25).

As this extract shows, Seven's attempts to participate in the talk come across as awkward and inappropriate, in large part because of her failure to attend to positive face. In reply to B'Elanna's positively polite invitation, for example, Seven issues a face-threatening rejection (*I do not require nutrition at this time*). The rejection is aggravated by Seven's failure to redress the injury it does to B'Elanna's positive face. She does not, for instance, thank B'Elanna and then decline, or apologise, or soften the rejection with a counter offer. She simply refuses B'Elanna's hospitality.

Seven fares no better in her efforts with Harry. When she asks for his "place of origin", notice that Harry in his reply recasts her elicitation before responding. What he does here is reformulate Seven's bald-on-record elicitation as the formulaic opener "Where are you from?", a widely used gambit in American English that realises positive politeness by introducing a safe topic (Brown and Levinson 1987: 112) from which speakers can then expand into further talk. When Harry begins to expand in just this way (*Well I was born in South Carolina but I grew up*) Seven cuts him off just as he is warming to his subject because she does not yet understand that small talk is not about gathering information, but about seeking and sharing common ground, a strategy of positive politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987: 118).

In the second half of the episode, after a serious ordeal that leaves her painfully isolated and near death while the rest of the crew is in stasis, Seven finally comes to understand why her fully human crewmates gather on a regular basis to talk, as it appears, about nothing. That is, she learns that "small" talk is not small at all, but a forum for what Malinowski called *phatic communion* (see Burton 1980),

talking to maintain social contact and goodwill with others. Evidence of her new-found understanding emerges in her next, unsimulated attempt at small talk. Towards the end of the episode, after the emergency is over, Seven sees B'Elanna, Tom, and Harry having a meal and decides to join them.

- (15) B'Elanna: [...] *Have some soup. It's actually edible.*
 Seven: *I don't require nourishment at this time. I [pause] felt the need for companionship.*
 [The others are surprised and bit nervous, but accommodating]
 Tom: *Well, after a month with the Doc for company I can understand it.*
 Harry: *Yeah, uhm, what was that like, anyway, just the two of you?*
 Seven: *The Doctor was very helpful. I cannot fault him.*
 B'Elanna: *Well, we owe you one.*
 Tom: *Yeah, just think, we could have died in those coffins.*
 Seven: *I suspect you would have found a way out before then, Lieutenant.*
 Tom: *What do you mean?*
 Seven: *Lieutenant Paris refused to stay confined. On four separate occasions, the Doctor and I had to put him back into his stasis unit.*
 Harry: [starting to laugh, and joined by the others] [...] (One, 4.25).

In contrast to her previous failed attempts, Seven demonstrates in this extract her understanding that small talk is primarily social. While her utterances are overly formal in grammatical and lexical terms, their pragmatic function as positive politeness devices is nevertheless evident.⁹ Significantly, we do not see her putting the others in her debt (see Tsui 1995; Brown and Levinson 1987) by explicitly accepting B'Elanna's expression of gratitude (*Well, we owe you one*). This would have introduced an asymmetry into the interaction more in keeping with Seven's former stance of Borg superiority over her crewmates. Instead, we see Seven displaying camaraderie by engaging the others in banter with a humorous anecdote about Tom (his tendency to escape from the stasis pods). As Brown and Levinson point out, joking in this way "is a basic positive politeness technique" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 124) that puts listeners at ease in tense situations (Brown and Levinson 1987: 124) and draws interlocutors together by referencing "background knowledge" they share in common as members of the same community. Seven's story about Tom serves both of these purposes. She takes a metaphorical step closer to the others by expressing the same fond indulgence of Tom as the others

9. As an ex-Borg, Seven's language is, in terms of lexis and grammar, generally more formal than that of her human crewmates, even in informal situations, and this remains relatively constant for her character. As I show here, it is changes in her pragmatic usage that signal greater integration into the social group that is the Voyager crew.

and, in being humorous, puts her relationship with Tom, Harry, and B'Elanna back on an equal footing. Her story is a signal to the others that they need not worry about being in her debt – it “tells” them, and the listening audience, that her risk on their behalf was a willing act of friendship.

As the preceding discussion has shown, displays of banter are more than an opportunity for humour in *Voyager*. They also indicate social acceptance, and it is arguably for this reason that Seven is shown using and understanding banter on several occasions. In a later instance also involving Tom in season five, for example, we see Seven reciprocating banter. Seven, Tom, and Naomi Wildman, Seven's young *protégé*, are returning from an away mission when Naomi expresses some disappointment.

- (16) Naomi: *But this was my first away mission and I didn't get to do anything.*
 Seven: *I disagree. You familiarised yourself with this vessel.*
 Naomi: *Well, can't we make first contact with somebody? Or get in a space battle?*
 Tom: [in a child-like voice] *Yeah, can't we?*
 Seven: [Smiling, responding to both of them] *Another time perhaps* (Bliss, 5.14).

Tom's echo of Naomi's request (*Yeah, can't we?*) is a positive politeness device, a form of banter offered to Seven in which he invites her to join him in both his self-mockery, and his recognition of the universal naivety of childhood. It is clear that Seven understands his purpose, as she returns the banter by including Tom in her response to Naomi, gently humouring the young girl as the child she is, and her crewmate as the child he is pretending to be. Seven's ability to understand and return positively polite banter at the character-character level of discourse (Short 1989) sends a further message to the audience about in-group membership here: Seven the former Borg is now Seven the accepted crewmate.

In a more serious interaction in season six, Seven again uses banter, this time to support the positive face needs of the Doctor. In the episode *Equinox*, Part 2 (6.1), the Doctor's “ethical sub-routines” are altered by an enemy force, and he becomes willing to forcibly extract information from Seven in a procedure that will leave her seriously impaired. While making the necessary preparations with Seven strapped helpless on the operating table, he hums a tune, a snatch from “My Darling Clementine”. When eventually restored to normal at the end of the episode, the Doctor attempts a reconciliation between himself and Seven: “Regarding the (pause) unpleasantness aboard the *Equinox*, I hope you don't think less of me.” This initiating move is inevitably a difficult one, especially for the Doctor, whose positive face is particularly vulnerable. Having been willing to cause Seven serious harm, it is likely that he has irreparably damaged their friendship, and she

could reasonably reject not only his offer of reconciliation, but also any further friendship with him. Seven, however, does not do either of these things. Instead, she uses the positively polite strategy of fulfilling the Doctor's expressed want (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129), in this case his want for forgiveness, by offering reassurance: "Your programme was altered". Seven then effects a full restoration of their friendship by initiating banter with a joke about the Doctor's singing.

- (17) Seven: [assuming mock seriousness] *You were off key.*
 Doctor: *I beg your pardon?*
 Seven: *My Darling Clementine, third verse, second measure.*
 Doctor: *That's impossible!*
 Seven: *Your vocal modulations deviated by .30 decibels. I can assist you with that as well.*
 Doctor: [smiling in recognition of the joke] *Really. Holodeck two. Tomorrow. 1600 hours. Just you, me, and a tuning fork.*
 Seven: [returning the smile] *I look forward to it (Equinox, Part 2, 6.1).*

As Brown and Levinson (1987: 124, 228) note, jokes can be used to re-rank threats to face and impositions as much smaller than they in fact are, and this is what is reflected in the dialogue above. Through the strategy of banter, Seven focuses on the Doctor's singing and in so doing waves away his transgression, re-ranking his attempt to maim her as a minor accident of little consequence. As Seven jokes with the Doctor, her positive politeness indicates further information about her returning humanity, her capacity to forgive and her noble generosity of spirit.

Also relevant to Seven's journey is the positive politeness strategy of fulfilling an interlocutor's particular want by giving gifts (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129). Such gifts are not only physical items that we would normally associate with gifts, but also relational and interactional. In language, we can give the gifts of "sympathy, understanding [and] cooperation" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129). Seven's ability to both recognise the need for such gifts and to fulfil them is a powerful way of indicating a very significant step forward on her road back to humanity. In *Latent Image* (5.11), for instance, Seven demonstrates the ability to recognise the want of her interlocutor, and a willingness to accept inconvenience to herself to fulfil it. In this episode, the Doctor asks Seven for help. Her initial response is negative and she requests that he return the following day, since she is busy "re-calibrating the reflector dish". When the Doctor expresses disappointment at this, however, she changes her interactional behaviour, realising his request is more serious than she first assumed. She ceases her work, pays full attention to the Doctor, and invites elaboration ("State your request") (see Note 9). When the Doctor reveals that he wants her help performing a self-diagnostic to address worrying gaps in his memory banks, she re-arranges her work and agrees to help ("I will

assist you. In one hour”), accepting cost to herself as less important than responding to the Doctor with the gift of understanding.

A more extended example of such support occurs with Neelix in the episode *Memorial* (6.14). Neelix is one of many crew members to be affected by an alien device that causes people to experience memories of committing grievous atrocities. While they have not in actual fact done the deeds they “remember”, they are forced to cope with them as though they have, and this leads them to experience debilitating guilt. As an ex-Borg responsible for many grievous and atrocious acts of assimilation, Seven recognises Neelix’s struggle with remorse and demonstrates in her positively polite speech acts her desire to fulfil his need for support. She makes a positively polite offer:

- (18) Seven: [approaching Neelix] *Your favourites – Talaxian stew and tera-nut soufflé. The soufflé has collapsed slightly but its nutritional value is still intact;*

and follows this with the gifts of reassurance:

- (19) Neelix: *Naomi must be terrified of me after what happened in the galley.*
Seven: *She’s concerned about you. She told me she wants to visit you;*

and understanding:

- (20) Neelix: *How do you manage to keep going, knowing that you’ve done such horrible things?*
Seven: *I have no choice.*
Neelix: [Aghast] *Guilt is irrelevant?*
Seven: *On the contrary. My feelings of remorse help me remember what I did and prevent me from taking similar actions in the future. Guilt can be a difficult but useful emotion.*
Neelix: *It’s certainly difficult.* [pause] *Is that chocolate mixed in there with the tera-nuts?*
Seven: *I altered the recipe slightly. I hope you don’t object.*
Neelix: [Reaching for the food] *Not at all* (*Memorial*, 6.14).

In reply to Neelix’s question about her previous acts, Seven performs the positively polite act of sharing her personal experience of guilt and how she copes with it. Neelix may still be suffering, but he knows he does not suffer alone or in vain. Comforted if not cured, he finally accepts Seven’s original offer, and in doing so reciprocates her gesture of friendship.

One of the most moving demonstrations of Seven’s growing ability to respond conversationally to the interpersonal needs of others occurs in *One Small Step* (6.8). In this episode, the crew discover the remains of an early flight to Mars.

Assigned to the away mission sent to salvage the wreckage, Seven finds both the physical remains of the pilot, Lieutenant Kelly, and his final log entries. When she plays them, she finds herself unexpectedly drawn into his story, discovering that what he wondered most about as his death approached was who won the World Series (a significant tournament in the sport of baseball).

Later, during a ceremony to honour Lieutenant Kelly, Seven feels the need to speak. After briefly addressing the crew, she places her hand on the casket and quietly addresses the long deceased pilot, saying, *The Yankees. In six games*. While this is in one sense “one small step”, a simple answer to a simple question, it is in another sense “a giant leap”, a profound demonstration of Seven using language to offer the gifts of understanding and sympathy. Seven’s linguistic gifts can be considered to carry even more weight here because of the extra effort implied in giving them. In order to answer the question, Seven would have had to find out the result of a game played centuries ago that she knows little about. As Brown and Levinson (1987:93) note, “the more *effort* S expends in face-maintaining linguistic behaviour, the more S communicates his sincere desire that H’s face wants be satisfied.” In answering Lieutenant Kelly’s question, Seven fulfils not only his face want, but what turns out to be his last request. The watching audience at this point share the perspective of the rest of the crew, who are looking on during Seven’s demonstration and are visibly touched by her gesture, responding instinctively to her positively polite act.

4. Repairing interpersonal rifts

The ability to appropriately employ strategies of positive and negative politeness is not only a matter of saying the right thing at the right time to the right person – it is also an indication of one’s personal investment in a social group. Seven’s growing investment in the community that is the Voyager crew is clear to see in her developing facility with expressions of politeness. This ability and its significance become especially evident during the inevitable interpersonal rifts that occur from time to time between Seven and the others during her gradual integration into the Voyager crew. Consider, for example, a relatively early interchange from season four (*Scientific Method*, 4.7). B’Elanna and her engineering team have been trying to run a diagnostic, but keep failing because of a problem in the power supply. When B’Elanna goes to investigate, she finds Seven re-routing power.

(21) B’Elanna: *We have lost HOURS of work because of this!*

Seven: *There is no need for anger. I had no intention of causing a problem.*

B'Elanna: *What, 'sorry' isn't in the Borg vocabulary? You need to check with me before you touch the power systems. Understood?*

Seven: *Understood. I am unaccustomed to working in a hierarchy. In the Collective, there was no need to ask permission.*

B'Elanna: *If you're gonna be a member of this crew, get used to it. Procedures exist for a reason. We've got to work together. Follow the same set of rules (Scientific Method, 4.7).*

B'Elanna's opening criticism indicates that Seven's unauthorised action has injured her negative face. Seven's behaviour has imposed on her time, inconvenienced her and her team, and demonstrated a lack of courtesy. Apologies are typically called for in such situations (see Tsui 1995: 190), but Seven does not understand this at first, and indicates instead that B'Elanna's outburst has injured her positive face ("There is no need for anger. I had no intention of causing a problem"). That B'Elanna does indeed consider the apology to be missing is evident when she explicitly pursues one ("What, *sorry* isn't in the Borg vocabulary?"). The situation escalates when B'Elanna issues a command ("check with me before you touch the power systems"). While Seven indicates compliance, the interpersonal rift, the injury to B'Elanna's negative face, has still not been repaired. Seven tries to address this, but again fails because she does not understand the nature of B'Elanna's interactive want. As she did earlier, she seeks to repair her own positive face by explaining her behaviour ("I am unaccustomed to working in a hierarchy. In the Collective, there was no need to ask permission"). With B'Elanna's face want still not satisfied, the conflict escalates further, this time with a string of commands, until B'Elanna suddenly stops in mid-turn ("Follow the same set of rules"). When she carries on, her renewed turn shows a change in her interactional stance:

(22) *I was given that lecture once. By Captain Janeway when I first joined this crew. If I could adjust to Starfleet life, so can you (Scientific Method, 4.7).*

Rather than continue with commands, she offers Seven a gesture of positive politeness by referring to her own difficulties in learning to work with a new crew on a new ship in a new environment. It is at this point, significantly, that Seven realises what is needed:

(23) *Of course. I am [pause] sorry for the inconvenience (Scientific Method, 4.7).*

The apology is clearly awkward for her (as indicated by the preceding pause), and is issued in her characteristically formal style (see Note 9), but it is sincere and the interpersonal rift is finally repaired.

In a later echo of this interchange with B'Elanna, Seven shows further progress in using politeness devices to heal interpersonal rifts. In *Bliss* (5.14), Seven,

the Doctor and Naomi are the only crew members not to be affected by an entity that attacks Voyager in order to digest the ship as a food source. In order to save the ship and the rest of the crew, one of the things that Seven has to do is to incapacitate B'Elanna with a phaser rifle (an imposition if ever there was one). Seven enters engineering, unnoticed by B'Elanna, rifle at the ready. She might have simply stunned B'Elanna at this point, quickly, cleanly, efficiently, all very Borg. She chooses instead, however, to delay the blast until B'Elanna notices her, giving her the chance to issue a negatively polite apology for the imposition she is about to commit:

(24) B'Elanna: *Seven?*

Seven: *I'm sorry* [Stuns B'Elanna with the rifle] (*Bliss*, 5.14).

Seven, more human than Borg at this point, experiences guilt at the prospect of having to hurt B'Elanna – even if necessarily, temporarily, and in the long run for her own good – and simply cannot bring herself to harm her without apologising.

Seven's increasingly complex face work during interpersonal rifts continues to provide audiences with evidence of her re-emerging humanity in seasons five and six. In *The Disease* (5.17), for instance, Harry struggles with a doomed love affair, and Seven at first dismisses his experience as a “series of biochemical reactions that trigger an emotional cascade, impairing normal functioning”. Over the course of the episode, however, Seven realises that she might be wrong. Even more significantly, she recognises that she might have hurt Harry's feelings. In the final interchange, she seeks him out to engage in the face work necessary to repair their relationship. After thanking him for completing some of her duties (an expression of negative politeness), she expresses positive politeness by speaking from his point out view:

(25) Seven: *You are attempting to distract yourself from your emotional damage* (*The Disease*, 5.17);

(26) Seven: *A treatment to relieve your condition was available, and yet you refused* (*The Disease*, 5.17).

As an offer of reconciliation, she then risks injury to her own face by admitting she was wrong and ends the interaction with the positively polite get-well ritual (Goffman 1967), poignantly delivered and dramatically offset by a preceding pause:

(27) Seven: *I assumed that romantic love was a human weakness. But clearly it can also be a source of strength. Perhaps my analogy was flawed. Love is not a disease* [pause]. *Get well soon* (*The Disease*, 5.17).

Such displays of interpersonal concern, unimaginable from the Borg drone she was, manifest as positive politeness and are clear indications of Seven's returning humanity.

The episode *Virtuoso* (6.13) presents us with some very sophisticated face work from Seven, once again in the service of healing an interpersonal rift. In this episode, Voyager is aiding members of an alien species to whom music is unknown. When they overhear the Doctor singing, they invite him to introduce music to their home world. He accepts, becomes an overnight celebrity, and decides to leave Voyager to pursue life as a musician on the alien planet, feeling that they truly appreciate him and his talents. When he makes his goodbyes, an upset Seven accuses him of ending their friendship. Her hurt feelings emerge as expressions of contempt that injure the Doctor's positive face by criticising and ridiculing his expressed wants: "You simply crave attention, applause, fan mail" (*Virtuoso*, 6.13).

Later in the episode, after the Doctor has returned ashamed and embarrassed to his old position on the ship (the aliens having lost interest in him), Seven realises the nature of her interpersonal error, and takes steps to correct it.

(28) Seven: *I have something for you.*

Doctor: *What is it?*

Seven: *Fan mail.*

Doctor: *Delete it. I don't want to read another word.*

Seven: *Then I'll read it for you.*

Doctor: [Annoyed] *Seven.*

Seven: *Dear Doctor. I regret that your last performance was not as successful as you'd hoped. There are still those who appreciate your unique talents and admire you as an individual. I'll always consider myself your loyal fan.*

Doctor: [Touched, realising who has written the letter] *Who's it from?*

Seven: *It's signed Seven of Nine, Tertiary Adjunct of Unimatrix 01*
(*Virtuoso*, 6.13).

In seeking to heal the rift between herself and the Doctor, Seven finds that she is in a communicatively tricky situation. Her goal is to repair a friendship that matters to her, but doing so entails the production of speech acts that are themselves face-threatening, and as such may make matters worse. What to do? Seven's demonstrated solution, the fan mail conceit, allows her to effect the reconciliation in a way that shields them both from further potential loss of face. All of the acts realised in the letter are risky. The opening consolation potentially threatens the Doctor's face, since it makes reference to an experience over which he still feels embarrassment. The following compliments risk Seven's face, since they leave

her vulnerable to the Doctor's possible rejection (he may still resent her earlier behaviour). The faux fan mail, in allowing Seven and the Doctor to carry on as though they were talking *not to* each other, *but about* a third person, mitigates these threats by establishing distance. In addition, it underlines Seven's sincerity because, as noted earlier, of the amount of effort its preparation indicates (Brown and Levinson 1987: 93). As the rift is repaired, Seven (and the Doctor) demonstrate a very human understanding of the redemptive power of friendship.

5. Conclusions

Seven's transformation from alien foe to human friend is in many ways remarkable. Introduced as an enemy, she becomes, over the course of the three seasons studied here, a valued and participating member of the Voyager family. She is not simply "raced" or "gendered", as much of the previous work on her would have us believe, but *humaned*. This fundamental change in her character is made manifest through changes in her language, improvements in her use of negative and, more dramatically, positive politeness devices that allow audiences to infer in Seven both a growing awareness that human relationships require mutual respect, and an increased capacity to negotiate them "towards greater closeness" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 231). As this case study has shown, the analysis of televisual dialogue on linguistic grounds has much to contribute to the understanding of character development in television drama (see also Bednarek this volume).

Relationship impression formation

How viewers know people on the screen are friends

Claudia Bubel

This chapter investigates the linguistic construal of friendship relations between characters in the TV series *Sex and the City* (SATC). Many viewers consider the relationship between the four SATC protagonists as an epitome of female friendship, raising the question which cues in the on-screen dialogue comply with notions of friendship. Since friendship is considered a process in which antagonistic tendencies such as autonomy and connectedness are constantly negotiated with the aim of striking a healthy balance of association and dissociation (Baxter and Simon 1993), these negotiations form the focus of this chapter. Based on analyses of transcribed verbal interchanges between the four protagonists of the TV series *Sex and the City*, I investigate the process of relationship impression formation (Bubel 2006), in which viewers perceive relational cues, i.e. utterances from the screen dialogue that signal association or dissociation, and compare them to their concepts of interpersonal relations. Refining the concept of alignment (Goffman 1974, 1979) I show that the negotiation of friendship is accomplished on the micro-level of talk-in-interaction through continually shifting patterns of structural alignment / disalignment as well as interpersonal affiliation / disaffiliation (Bubel 2006). Continual shifts on the micro-level function to achieve an appropriate balance permitting criticism and disagreement and establishing unique ties between individuals within a friendship network. I hypothesise that, due to shared background knowledge between the producers and viewers of screen dialogue, viewers can identify not only explicit alignments such as “you are my friends” but also implicit alignments e.g. through the use of laughter. I interpret the emerging pattern of alignments between the four SATC women as indicative of friendship relations, in which two characters (Carrie and Miranda) form a core pair.

1. Introduction

“I couldn’t help but wonder...” Carrie Bradshaw muses in every episode of the American television series *Sex and the City* (SATC) and poses a question central to her life as a New York single woman (see Paltridge et al. this volume for a description of the show). Most of her questions and some of the answers she finds in interactions with three female friends.

SATC’s spotlight on a tightly knit friendship group was not only emphasised in many critics’ reviews, but also appreciated by its fans, and the four characters, Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha, have been widely regarded as an epitome of female friendship (cf. Jermyn 2004). Experiencing the company of close female friends regularly myself, I could easily relate to these fictional women’s exchanges. Still, I couldn’t help but wonder: how exactly does the audience in front of the screen know that these four women are friends?

Understanding that interpersonal relationships are predominantly managed through talk, I propose – in accordance with a conversation-analytical approach – that it is through scripted and acted out talk that interpersonal relationships on the screen can be imagined and appreciated (cf. Clark 1996: 359). The audience in front of the screen can be considered as overhearers in the sense of Goffman (1976, 1979): they listen in on the characters’ talk and as lay discourse analysts try to make sense of what they overhear and to work out the relationships between the characters.¹

In the following, I will first briefly sketch the central components and tensions of friendship and subsequently elaborate on the process of recognising the characters’ relationship as friendship, which I have labelled *relationship impression formation* (Bubel 2006). I will then present a concept of alignment which accounts for the construction of relationships on the macro-level of social organisation through shifting alignment patterns on the micro-level of talk-in-interaction. Analyses of alignment patterns in dialogue transcribed from the television series shed light on the workings of explicit and implicit textual cues and ultimately provide a detailed relational picture of the fictional friendship group.² This relational picture suggests the impression that the audience gains from watching SATC.

1. A detailed account of the audience as overhearers and the model of screen-to-face discourse that bears out this assumption can be found in Bubel (2006, 2008) and Bednarek (2010).

2. The underlying corpus for this research comprises transcriptions of 127 conversations of varying length between two or more of the female protagonists of SATC ranging from season 1 to season 6. For a more detailed description of the corpus see Bubel (2006).

2. Friendship

Friendship differs from most other human relations in Western culture insofar as it is voluntary. Unlike family, we freely choose our friends; unlike colleagues, there is no institutional frame in which we meet them; and unlike married couples, there is no legal bond between our friends and us. Nevertheless, friendship is considered a primary relationship and has gained significance with the increase of flexibility and diversity in the construction of personal lives. For some individuals the friendship group has even replaced the family as a social support system.³

Reviewing social science literature,⁴ the following partially interrelated attributes for friendship ties in Western cultures emerge: equality, similarity, reciprocity, intimacy, enjoyment, trust, understanding and acceptance, solidarity, social support, self-clarification, being oneself, voluntary interdependence, as well as (positive) affect. Not all of them are necessarily present in a specific friendship and some may be more significant than others. Idiosyncratic deviations depend on such factors as the friends' age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, social background and individual preferences.

The presence or absence of these attributes is continually negotiated in friends' interactions. Since negotiating always implies process, I conceptualise friendship as a process rather than a state. This process is rooted in friends' persistent efforts to achieve equilibrium between the antagonistic tendencies of autonomy versus connectedness, closedness versus openness, and novelty versus predictability (cf. Baxter 1990 and Baxter and Simon 1993). The degree of intimacy in a friendship relation, for example, is negotiated along the openness versus closedness dialectic and the degree of similarity is based on the equilibrium between novelty and predictability. In essence, friendship is a dialectic process of calibrating an appropriate balance between association and dissociation (cf. Simmel 1955), and hence all friendship ties are in a constant state of flux.

The key site for the negotiation of friendship – and in fact any other interpersonal relationship – is conversational interaction. Micro-analytic research in relational communication has succeeded in connecting relationship components such as intimacy and power to details of conversation, pinning down exactly how

3. This is reflected in the focus of various US American and British sitcoms on friendship groups (e.g. *Friends*, *Will and Grace*, *Black Books*, *Men Behaving Badly*).

4. Allan (1989), Blieszner and Adams (1992), Bradac (1983), Davis and Todd (1985), Duck (1991), Fehr (1996, 2004), O'Connor (1992), Reohr (1991), Wilmot and Shellen (1990).

participants in a conversation “do relationship.”⁵ Although there is no one-to-one connection between specific verbal or paralinguistic details and social ties, we can recognise relationships when we observe them in our surroundings or acted out on a screen through a process of relationship impression formation.

3. Relationship impression formation

I regard the process of relationship impression formation as analogous to the process of character impression formation described by Culpeper (2001, 2002a). Both involve “the interaction between the text and the interpreter’s background knowledge” (Culpeper 2001: 28). The text can be defined broadly as the complete audiovisual event on the screen, or narrowly as the dialogue between the characters. Both senses of the term “text” are relevant in the perception of character relationships, and I will discuss in this chapter both nonverbal cues present in the audiovisual event and verbal cues in the dialogue between characters.

The fact that individuals interact in an audiovisual event already signals that some relationship between them exists. For instance, the frequency with which the four *SATC* protagonists are seen to converse is interpreted as them being in a close relationship. Furthermore, the frequency of the various constellations in which they interact points to what kind of close relation they have with each other. The most frequent dyadic constellation is Carrie plus Miranda, suggesting that these two are closer to each other than they are with Charlotte and Samantha.

Aside from the frequency and exclusivity of their meetings as well as non-verbal cues such as hugging, the women’s verbal behaviour in each other’s presence, i.e. the text in the narrow sense of the word, is the key source of textual cues on their friendship relation. Since conversation is considered the most important tool in the construction of relationships in real life, it is feasible that the scripted dialogue between characters is the most important site for the co-construction of their interpersonal relationships by the film production team and the overhearing audience.

When for example overhearers of a screen conversation identify terms of endearment in an interaction between two characters, they integrate this textual cue with their prior knowledge of people in relationships – real-life and fictional – who display this feature. On the basis of this knowledge they draw inferences

5. Examples of such studies are: Hopper and Drummond (1992) on achieving intimacy through telephone openings; Norrick (2004) on accomplishing relationship status through joint storytelling; Tannen (1984, 2007) on involvement strategies; and specifically on female friendship relations work by Coates (amongst others 1994, 1996, 2000) and Branner (2003).

such as that the characters like each other and are close. Furthermore, the process of character impression formation is cyclic, so that the viewer's prior knowledge affects the perception of textual cues (Culpeper 2001). Likewise, if the viewer knows a relationship that has the qualities of the one on the screen, they are more likely to recognise specific textual cues. Such cues can be implicit or explicit (as further discussed below).

This line of argument is all the more justified, if one takes into account that significant research has been done on the basis of overhearers' intuitions about recorded naturally occurring conversations played to them (e.g. McGregor 1990; Fox Tree 2002). Planalp, in particular, conducted a series of experiments, in which native speaker judges were asked to differentiate between audio-recorded conversations of friends and those of acquaintances. The judges guessed correctly in about 80% of the cases (Planalp and Benson 1992; Planalp 1993; Planalp and Garvin-Doxas 1994).

Other relevant research uses the opposite procedure, i.e. have someone write conversations between specific types of interlocutors. These constructed conversations then yield insights on speech stereotypes (e.g. Popp et al. 2003). This type of research also exploits the fact that based on former experiences individuals have expectations of conversations between specific types of interlocutors. These social-cognitive processes correspond to those involved in the construction of screen dialogue, which can be considered a more conscious mutation of this phenomenon: the film production team constructs screen dialogue on the basis of their world knowledge and the world knowledge they anticipate their implied audience to have. In the case of relational communication components of screen dialogue, script writers base the textual cues they include in the dialogue on the part of world knowledge that concerns prototypes of interpersonal relations. Aside from the knowledge of real world relationships and prevailing stereotypes, the film production team is also influenced by prior knowledge of other fictional relationships such as the friendship relations between the protagonists of other television series (e.g. *Friends*).

One caveat here is that screen talk is not like real conversation, but rather "a canonical approximation of spontaneous talk in interaction" (Boxer 2002: 18; cf. also Alvarez-Pereyre this volume; Rossi this volume). Writers and actors do not mirror all features they expect of real conversation and may display others to a greater degree than found in real talk (Quaglio 2009; Bednarek 2010). However, stylistic analyses also show that in other respects constructed talk is very close to natural dialogue, in particular with respect to some pragmalinguistic phenomena (see Pratt 1977; Rose 2001; Alvarez-Pereyre this volume). On the basis of this pragmalinguistic consistency, various scholars (Bubel and Spitz 2006; Hall and Daniels 1992; Murphy 1977; Tannen and Lakoff 1994) argue that it is worthwhile

to investigate constructed dialogue in order to advance the understanding of the internalised model of communicative competence, the “schema for the production of conversation” (Tannen and Lakoff 1994: 139; cf. also Spitz 2005). This warrants a focus on the relational aspects of constructed dialogue to gain insights into the schema for the interactional construction of interpersonal relationships and to account for the process of relationship impression formation.

4. Recognising friendship through talk

Detailed, qualitative analyses show how the four *SATC* women do friendship and what patterns of friendship emerge from their behaviour, thereby connecting the macro-level of social organisation to the micro-level of talk-in-interaction.

I consider the macro-level to encompass relationship histories and their interpretation, current impressions of relationships and expectations of them. This conception of macro-level structure may appear ethereal, but – as already mentioned above – friendship is not institutionalised and thus less clearly manifest in social structure. By contrast, the micro-level is tangible through specific interactional practices, which orient towards and simultaneously negotiate the components of friendship appropriate in a specific group, resulting in retrievable patterns in the interaction order, so-called “alignments.”

I argue that through shifting alignment patterns the four protagonists of *SATC* continuously re-negotiate their interpersonal ties at the macro-level. Due to the consistency of naturally occurring conversation and scripted talk on the pragmalinguistic level, the patterns of relational communication emerging from this analysis serve as textual cues for the audience in front of the screen.

4.1 Alignment

The concept of “alignment” originates in symbolic interactionism and pertains to the orientation of the self towards others and the situation (cf. Blumer 1969; Goffman 1974, 1978, 1979; Stokes and Hewitt 1976). This orientation can simultaneously have various coordinates such as self-presentation and cultural membership (cf. Morris and Hopper 1987). Aligning processes are central to social interaction and can be described as follows:

Social interaction is conceived as a process in which people orient their conduct toward one another and toward a common set of objects. In this mutual

orientation of conduct, an effort is made by participants to *align* their individual acts, one to another, in the creation of joint or social acts.

(Stokes and Hewitt 1976: 843)

Stokes and Hewitt (1976) distinguish two senses of alignment. The first concerns the lining up of participants' utterances and moves, which is necessary to achieve intersubjective understanding and create joint or social acts (cf. Nofsinger 1991: 112). I will refer to this sense of alignment as "conversational alignment." The second phenomenon to which the concept can be applied is the relationship between ongoing interactions and a common set of objects, which I label "cultural alignment."

4.1.1 *Cultural alignment*

Of special interest for the study of cultural alignment are interactions in which participants perceive a discrepancy between what is happening and their cultural expectations or schema, i.e. the "recognized and preferred ways of thinking, feeling and acting" (Stokes and Hewitt 1976: 843).

This normative component of alignment is also relevant with respect to a more localised unit of culture based on mutual values and beliefs, a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), which the fictional group of four friends can be considered. The following excerpt shows how misalignments with respect to friendship norms and components are attended to.⁶

6. My transcriptions follow the conventions established by Dressler and Kreuz (2000). Their model system is based on a survey of various transcription conventions for discourse analytical purposes.

Table 1. Transcription conventions

she's out.	Period shows falling tone in the preceding element.
oh yeah?	Question mark shows rising tone in the preceding element.
nine, ten.	Comma indicates a level, continuing intonation.
DAMN	Capitals show heavy stress or indicate that speech is louder than surrounding discourse.
°dearest°	Utterances spoken more softly than the surrounding discourse are framed by degree signs.
says "oh"	Double quotes mark speech set off by a shift in the speaker's voice.
(2.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate timed pauses.
..	If the duration of the pauses is not crucial and not timed: a truncated ellipsis is used to indicate pauses of one-half second or less.
...	An ellipsis is used to indicate a pause of more than a half-second.
ha:rd	The colon indicates the prolonging of the prior sound or syllable.
<no way>	Angle brackets pointing outward denote words or phrases that are spoken more slowly than the surrounding discourse.

Transcription 1. SC_7.1 WOMEN WE HATE

- 1 C {*answering the phone*}
hello?
- 2 M hi,
I'm trying to get hold of a Miss Carrie Bradshaw?
she used to be a friend of mine?
- 3 C yeah.
good morning.
- 4 M wait,
I think I recognise that voice.
- 5 C god,
I can't believe it's been so long.
I've been I've been meaning to call you,
I've just been ..
- 6 M fucking your brains out?
- 7 C yeah well that's the least of it.
.. you know what,
I don't think that I have been hit this hard since,
... no you know what?
I'm not going to compare it to anything else,
because everything else has always ended.
- 8 M so will I actually get to see you some time?

>watch out<	Angle brackets pointing inward indicate words or phrases spoken more quickly than surrounding discourse.
bu- but	A single dash indicates a cut-off with a glottal stop.
[and so-] [why] her?	Square brackets on successive lines mark beginning and end of overlapping talk.
and= =then	Equals signs on successive lines show latching between turns.
H	Clearly audible breath sounds are indicated with a capital <i>H</i> .
.h	Inhalations are denoted with a period, followed by a small <i>h</i> .
.hhh	Longer inhalations are depicted with multiple <i>hs</i> .
h	Exhalations are denoted with a small <i>h</i> (without a preceding period).
hhh	A longer exhalation is denoted by multiple <i>hs</i> .
.t	Alveolar suction clicks are denoted with a period, followed by a small <i>t</i> .
()	In the case that utterances cannot be transcribed with certainty empty parentheses are employed.
(hard work)	If there is a likely interpretation, the questionable words appear within the parentheses.
((desperate whisper))	Aspects of the utterance, such as whispers, coughing, and laughter, are indicated with double parentheses.
{ <i>camera focuses on Charlotte</i> }	Voiceovers and other relevant filmic aspects are indicated within braces.

- 9 C yeah absolutely.
how about tonight?
- 10 M yeah tonight'll work.
- 11 C all right.
so I'll call Charlotte and Samantha and see if they're free,
cause Big's got this dinner thing,
so you know we didn't have any plans anyway,
and I'll [(come)]
- 12 M [go:d.]
will you listen to yourself.
- 13 C .. yeah I know.
I've become one of those women we hate.
- 14 M yes you ha:ve.
I can't talk now,
I'll call you later.
okay?
- 15 C all right.
bye.

This excerpt consists of a phone call between Carrie and Miranda. Carrie has spent much time with her new flame, Mr Big, and has not seen her female friends for a while. Right from the start of the conversation Miranda's playful distancing moves signal that Carrie's behaviour, her completely gearing her plans towards her boyfriend's activities, is misaligned with the expectations and norms of female friendship subscribed to in the community of practice under analysis. This distancing behaviour culminates in Miranda's interruption in turn 12: "[go:d] will you listen to yourself." Her expletive signals a negative affective stance and is followed by an indirect corrective device in the shape of a directive evocative of other-initiated repair mechanisms in the sense of Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977). Miranda thereby triggers a correction of Carrie's behaviour without spelling out her friend's wrongdoing. On the cultural plane, she invites membership categorisation (Sacks 1972a, b), i.e. the labelling of a person or collectivity. Such labelling is possible because membership categories are inference-rich, conventionally associated with specific activities or characteristics – in this case women's subordinating themselves to their male partners' schedules.⁷ Carrie makes the category explicit in turn 13: ".. yeah I know. I've become one of those women we hate." and it is confirmed by Miranda in the next turn: "yes you ha:ve" (14). Carrie's admission of guilt as well as her expletive (5), dysfluencies (5, 7), hesitations

7. This is in line with the analysis by Paltridge et al. (this volume) of how typical gender roles are challenged in SATC (see also Bubel 2005).

(5, 7, 13) signal her negative affective stance towards what has happened. This together with her greeting (3) and the display of her willingness to meet up with her friends show that she is trying to realign throughout the conversation.

4.1.2 *Conversational alignment*

While cultural alignment uses explicit cues in the form of membership categorisation devices, conversational alignment can be considered as a variety of implicit cues that achieve specific relationships on the macro-level.⁸ I distinguish two types of conversational alignment. Firstly, there is alignment on a structural plane, i.e. along the lines of Goffman's (1979) participation framework: For each utterance, participants align as ratified speakers, addressees, and side participants. Secondly, there is alignment on the interpersonal plane, which establishes affiliation or disaffiliation. Affiliation and disaffiliation are micro-level processes intertwined with face-work/politeness and politic behaviour (Brown and Levinson 1987; Goffman 1967; Watts 2003; cf. also Ylänné-McEwen 2004). Affiliation presumes that participants have a protective orientation towards the interlocutor's face and towards maintaining a state of equilibrium. Threatening the interlocutor's face and disturbing the equilibrium, on the other hand, leads to disaffiliation.

Alignments on the structural plane have repercussions on the interpersonal plane, an interrelation which typically shows in cases of disalignment. Nofsinger (1991: 113) considers speakers' responses one of the most obvious indications of how participants align to each other. If the participant does not respond at all and thus disaligns on the structural plane, the questioner may take offence. The disalignment on the structural plane may therefore cause disaffiliation on the interpersonal plane, disturbing the equilibrium between the interlocutors and threatening the fabric of their macro-level relation.

The various planes of conversational alignment can be illustrated with the help of the excerpt analysed above (SC_7.1). First, Miranda pretends not to recognise her friend's voice. Thereby, on the structural plane, she cancels out the typical sequential order of telephone openings between friends (cf. Hopper and Drummond 1992; Schegloff 1979). This has repercussions on the interpersonal plane: Carrie indicates that she perceives Miranda's turns (2 and 4) as disaffiliating moves and attempts to realign in turn 5.

Second, Miranda refuses to affiliate with Carrie by completing her friend's turn with a different orientation to what is said (6). Antaki, Díaz and Collins show that "completions are evaluated by the original speaker for their fidelity to the participant status in which the original utterance was given" (Antaki, Díaz and

8. Cf. also Culpeper's use of explicit and implicit cues in character impression formation (2001).

Collins 1996:154). Consequently, conversationalists can accept the content of a completion, but reject the interlocutor's suggested authorial stance to it. In this case, Carrie does not accept Miranda's suggested stance, which reduces her interaction with Big to a purely physical relationship. This is accomplished by shifting back to what is more important to her, the emotional involvement. In this co-constructed turn, structural and interpersonal alignments diverge. While the completion is disaffiliating on the interpersonal plane, on the structural plane, utterance completions generally achieve alignment (cf. Lerner 1991). In order to function as an affiliating move, the completion has to be made taking the same authorial stance to what is expressed.

Finally, there is another major disruption on both planes of organisation in turn 12. On the structural plane, Miranda interrupts Carrie. On the interpersonal plane, this move is disaffiliating, because it silences Carrie, which according to Brown and Levinson (1987) threatens both her negative and positive face. Her freedom of action, more specifically of speech, is restricted; and simultaneously, her friend signals that she is not interested in sharing what Carrie is about to relate.⁹

Miranda's promise to call later (14) at the end of the conversation is a consolidatory move in the sense of Laver (1981) finally accepting Carrie's realigning moves and ensuring a continuation of their relationship.

4.1.3 *Alignments and social relationships*

In summary, there are three interrelating planes of alignment, which pervade any interaction. The cultural plane can have repercussions on the conversational plane, while conversational alignment can simultaneously shape cultural expectations. Conversational alignments are organised on two different planes, the structural and the interpersonal, which frequently interrelate. Alignments on all three planes establish micro-relations, which in turn constitute macro-relations such as friendship (cf. Figure 1 on p. 236).

4.1.4 *Alignments in multi-party conversation*

The alignment practices described above occur in both two-party and multi-party conversations. Multi-party conversations, however, provide for much more intricate alignments on every plane. Typically, interactional teams or ensembles

9. Sequences such as these typically function on two levels: firstly, they entertain the viewer and secondly, they signal the women's relationship status on the macro-level (cf. also Stokoe 2008).

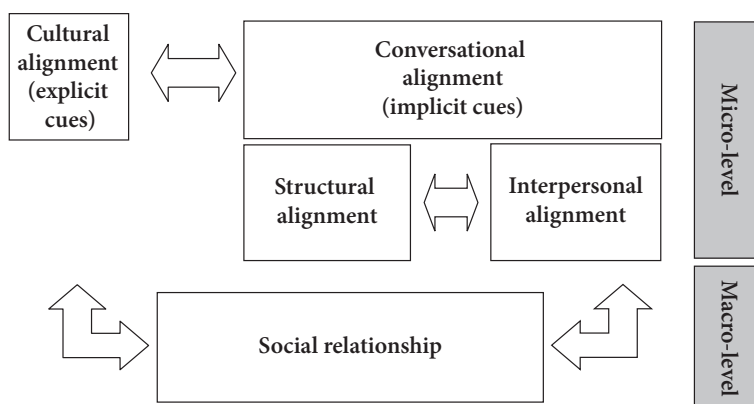


Figure 1. Alignments and social relationships

(Gordon 2003; Lerner 1993) are formed or made relevant.¹⁰ These may be relatively enduring social units (e.g. a married couple), associations occasioned by the overall organisation of the speech situation (e.g. hosts), or momentary collectivities, for example, participants who display the same opinion (cf. Lerner 1993).

The following analyses will show that macro-level friendship relations are not necessarily constituted through affiliative alignments on the interpersonal plane and a lack of disalignment on the structural plane. On the contrary, the friendship between the four women is constructed through constantly shifting alignment patterns, catering for the demands of the association/dissociation dialectic. Neither do the alignments on the three planes always run parallel; but at times diverge as in the case of Miranda's utterance completion with the wrong authorial stance (SC_7.1).

4.2 Shifting and diverging alignments in *Sex and the City*

The following analyses will reveal how alignments shift throughout the conversations, constituting "micro-moments of transforming social structure" (Glenn 2003: 165) and providing viewers with explicit and implicit cues to character relations. The first excerpt under analysis takes place while the four women are having lunch, a "chat-and-chew" (Sohn 2004: 102) sequence typical of the TV series. Miranda is buying a flat for herself and encountering difficulties as a single woman.

10. A related phenomenon of multi-party conversations is that they frequently split up into two or more conversations. These schismings (Egbert 1997) do not occur in my corpus, presumably since simultaneous conversations would be hard to follow on the TV screen.

Transcription 2. SC_17.3 BUYING A PLACE ALONE

- 1 M I'm telling you,
if I was a single man,
none of this would be happening.
- 2 S if you were a single man,
I'd date you.
- 3 M I've got the money.
I've got a great job.
and I still get,
"it's just you?"
- 4 C you know,
they're threatened.
buying a place alone means you don't need a man.
- 5 M I DON'T.
- 6 Ch everyone needs a MAN.
that's why I rent.
if you own and he still rents,
then the power structure is all off.
it's emasculating.
men don't want a woman who's too self-sufficient.
- 7 S I'm sorry,
did someone just order a Victorian straight up?
- 8 C [((laughs))]
- 9 M [((laughs))]
- 10 Ch ((narrows lips to thin line and tilts her head))

In an instance of troubles talk (Jefferson 1988) Miranda is relating the difficulties she encountered in buying an apartment as a single woman. Samantha structurally and interpersonally aligns with her friend by repeating Miranda's words ("if you were a single man") as well as attending to her positive face – giving "a gift to the hearer" (Ylänne-McEwen 2004: 529): "I'd date you" (2). Likewise, Carrie affiliatively aligns with Miranda by orienting to her friend's criticism of the estate agents with an explanation: "you know, they're threatened" (4). Carrie then elaborates on what they are threatened by and Miranda emphatically agrees with a heavily stressed deictically shifted alter-repetition ("I DON'T"; 5) responding to Carrie's evocation of the categorisation "woman-who-does-not-need-a-man." The repetition again signals structural alignment, mirrored on the interpersonal plane through the emphatic agreement.

Conversely, Charlotte strongly disagrees with Miranda and Carrie: "everyone needs a MAN" (6), an oppositional move aggravated by lexical cohesion. Furthermore, the use of the generalising pronoun "everyone" constitutes an extreme case

formulation, legitimising her claim (cf. Pomerantz 1986). Charlotte then gives a detailed account of why she does not buy an apartment but rents, further disaffiliating from her friend Miranda, whom she categorises as “woman who’s too self-sufficient”(6).

Charlotte’s argumentative move is followed up by a counter-challenge from Samantha, who displays disaffiliation from Charlotte and simultaneously affiliative alignment with Carrie and Miranda: “I’m sorry, did someone just order a Victorian straight up?” The utterance has multiple layers, because Samantha sets up a theatre frame with the help of a shift in voice quality: she assumes the role of a waitress who is unsure whether she has properly understood the order. Though the “Victorian” might feasibly be a drink, the common association of the word with antiquated ethics and demeanour unlocks another plane of interpretation, namely that Samantha considers Charlotte’s behaviour outdated. Samantha’s disagreement with Charlotte is further aggravated by the use of “I’m sorry,” which indicates that she cannot believe someone said something so reactionary. Her utterance is thus strongly disaffiliative.

Carrie and Miranda react with laughter, obviously enjoying Samantha’s performance as well as understanding her message and agreeing with her (cf. Hay 2001). The laughter patently signals affiliation with the producer of the laughable (cf. Glenn 2003), thereby establishing an interactional team aligned against Charlotte. The viewer is here presented with diverging ideological positions on gender roles (see further Bubel 2005; Paltridge et al. this volume).

Charlotte’s non-verbal reactions then show that she gives in: she purses her lips, which is a sign of tension, and tilts her head displaying submissiveness (cf. Givens 2005). These non-verbal cues re-establish alignment with her friends. In spite of this realignment the excerpt reveals Charlotte to be a somewhat marginal member of the friendship circle.

The following extended four-party conversation displays a different set-up. The episode takes place at Carrie’s place, where the four women meet up to gorge on Chinese take-away and chat. Miranda has dated a so-called modeliser, i.e. a man who mainly dates models, and the four women are discussing models and beauty ideals.

Transcription 3. SC_2.2 MODELS

- 1 M they’re stupid and lazy,
and they should be shot outside.
- 2 S I’ve been out with a lot of guys,
and they say that I’m just as beautiful as a model,
but I WORK for a living,

- I mean I'm like
 ... well I'm like a model who's taken the high road.
- 3 M the adVANTages given to models,
 and to beautiful women in general.
 are so unfair,
 it makes me want to puke.
- 4 S sweetheart,
 you shouldn't say that.
 [you are so cute.]
- 5 C {waving to indicate that they should come to the table}
 [come on.]
 [come o:n.]
- 6 M [cute doesn't cut it] in this town.
 what's cute compared to supermodel?
- 7 {voiceover Carrie: there's nothing like raising the subject of models among four
 single women to spice up an otherwise dull Tuesday night.}
- 8 Ch um they have this distant sexy look.
- 9 M it's not sex,
 it's starva:tion.
- 10 S that's starvation in the BEST restaurants.
- 11 M yeah.
 what I want to know is,
 <when did all the men get together,>
 and decide that they would only get it up,
 for giraffes with big breasts.
- 12 S [((laughs))]
- 13 Ch [in some cultures,]
 heavy women with MOUStaches are considered beautiful.
- 14 (1.0)
- 15 S and you're looking at ME while you're saying [this?]
- 16 M [we] should just admit,
 that we live in a culture,
 that promotes impossible standards of beauty.
- 17 C yeah.
 except men think they're possible.
- 18 M yeah.
- 19 Ch I just know,
 no matter how GOOD I feel about myself,
 .. if I see Christie Turlington?
 I- I just want to give up.

- 20 M oh I just want to tie her down,
and force-feed her lard.
but that's the difference between you and me.
- 21 S [((laughs))]
- 22 Ch [((laughs))]
- 23 C what are you talking about?
look at you two.
you're beautiful.
- 24 Ch um
I hate my thighs.
- 25 M oh come o:n?
- 26 Ch I can't even open a magazine without thinking,
"thighs.
thighs.
thighs."
- 27 M well I'll take your thighs and raise your chin.
- 28 C I'll take your chin and raise your m-hm
(with her mouth full) {*pointing to her nose*}
- 29 (5.0) {*all look at Samantha*}
- 30 S what?
- 31 C oh come on.
- 32 Ch hey.
- 33 S I happen to love the way I look.
- 34 M you should.
you paid enough for it.
- 35 C [((laughs))]
- 36 Ch [((laughs))]
- 37 S [hey.
I resent that.]
I do not believe in plastic surgery.
... well not yet.
- 38 C I find it fascinating,
.. that four.. beautiful flesh and blood women,
could be intIMidated by some unreal fantasy.
I mean look.
{*gets a magazine and holds up the cover*}
°look at this.°
is this really intimidating to any of you?
- 39 (1.0)
- 40 Ch I hate my thighs.

- 41 M pass the chicken.
 42 S you know,
 I have that dress.

The scene starts with a harsh judgement by Miranda (1), setting the agenda for the ensuing discussion. Samantha structurally aligns with Miranda through the lexical opposition of “lazy” and “work for a living” (2). When Miranda continues to voice her indignation in very graphic terms (“it makes me want to puke”). Samantha responds with a term of endearment, “sweetheart,” and an attempt to soothe her with the help of a compliment: “you shouldn’t say that. you are so cute” (4). This can also be considered a face-saving move by denial in the sense of Guendouzi (2004), i.e. a typical move in response to an interlocutor’s critical or negative evaluation of her own appearance.

These moves at first sight promote affiliative alignment. At close inspection, however, the situation is more complex: Samantha’s paying a compliment and giving comfort also establish her in a superior position vis-à-vis her afflicted friend (cf. Wolfson 1983:91). I argue that the term of endearment, “sweetheart”, here functions to redress this imbalance, securing affiliation and creating the equality central to friendship.

Miranda’s response in turn 6, evades Samantha’s compliment. This runs counter to the preference organisation of conversation and can thus be considered disaligning, yet, it also minimises self-praise – the opposing social pressure – and can therefore be viewed as a result of the interactional dilemma interactants are confronted with when faced with a compliment (cf. Holmes 1986; Pomerantz 1978). Miranda’s move, however, also indicates that Samantha’s attempt at soothing her has failed.

In turn 8, Charlotte enters the discussion by attempting an explanation for the worshipping of models: “um they have this distant sexy look.” Miranda opposes this statement, disaffiliating on the interpersonal plane, though there is structural alignment through Miranda’s using Charlotte’s lexis in her refutation: “it’s not sex, it’s starvation” (9). Note that Samantha then picks up the term “starvation” to elaborate on Miranda’s argument: “that’s starvation in the BEST restaurants” (10). This leads to an extended affiliative sequence between Miranda and Samantha, which includes Miranda’s affirmative marker “yeah” (11) and Samantha’s appreciative laughter in turn 12.

Charlotte’s anthropological contribution to the topic of beauty ideals (13) can be considered as an attempt to affiliate with Miranda, who brought up the topic, but causes a one-second silence (14), indicating that Charlotte’s response is unexpected.

Samantha glosses over the silence with a humorous response implying that Charlotte considers her a heavy woman with a moustache (15). This is an attack on Charlotte for something she obviously did not do, thus signalling a play-frame and counting as bonding rather than biting (Straehle 1993). Miranda overlaps with Samantha's humorous quip to elaborate on beauty ideals thereby aligning with Charlotte on both the structural and interpersonal plane (16). Carrie chimes in with an affirmative marker and another elaboration of the topic, likewise an affiliative move (17). Miranda's positive response to Carrie's elaboration in turn 18 concludes this affiliative sequence.

In turn 19, Charlotte moves the topic from an abstract discussion of beauty ideals to her concrete feelings of inferiority when she compares herself to a model. Miranda responds to this with a change of perspective: instead of just feeling bad at the sight of models, she wants to do something about it. Her humorous description of treating a model like a fattened goose elicits simultaneous laughter from Samantha and Charlotte (21–22). The laughter on Charlotte's part signals that notwithstanding the explicitly stated difference between her and Miranda they are still aligned affiliatively.

At this point, Carrie re-enters the conversation with another face-saving move by denial in the sense of Guendouzi (2004): "you're beautiful" (23). Charlotte rejects this interactional gift and justifies her feelings of inferiority by pointing to a specific blemish: "I hate my thighs." (24). This is taken up in a denying move by Miranda: "oh come o:n?" (25), eliciting further substantiation by Charlotte (26). Miranda's reaction to this ("well I'll take your things and raise your chin") can be considered a supportive matching comment. Such moves are "attempts to create discursive solidarity" (Guendouzi 2004: 1643) and thus also establish affiliation. The formulaic phrasing "take and raise" is a mocking reference to bidding in a card game and is taken up by Carrie's turn (28), which further extends the affiliative sequence. The card game metaphor, nonetheless, also has a competitive element and can be considered an instantiation of striving for autonomy in the face of closedness.

Since three of the women have now disclosed their flaws, the need for reciprocity in such vulnerable situations requires of Samantha to do so likewise. Consequently, when she does not comply, her silence is noticed: Miranda, Carrie and Charlotte react non-verbally to this absence by intensely looking at her (29). Her refusal to join in with her friends' self-disclosure is then commented on by a humorous remark on the part of Miranda: she implies that Samantha has had plastic surgery although Miranda is fully aware of the fact that her friend never has (34). Her quip elicits laughter from Carrie and Charlotte who clearly affiliate with Miranda (35–36). In cooperatively disaffiliating from Samantha, the three women form an interactional team. Samantha responds to Miranda's imputation

by declaring a negative stance towards this, but qualifies this declaration in tag position, thereby tuning into the jocular key: “[hey. I resent that.] I do not believe in plastic surgery... well not yet” (37).

Carrie then shifts back to a serious key by summarising the whole discussion (38). She underlines the absurdity of their situation by presenting the front page of a fashion magazine, showing a skinny model. Her question “is this really intimidating to any of you?” is biased towards a negative answer, yet elicits a repetition of “I hate my thighs” from Charlotte (40) and an abrupt topic change from Miranda (41). Samantha, on the other hand, seems to focus on a totally different detail of the photograph, namely the dress worn by the skinny woman (42). So she presents herself as the only woman not affected by the model on the magazine, disaffiliating from Charlotte and Miranda.

To conclude, the preceding analysis demonstrates that alignment patterns change from interaction to interaction. While SC_17.3 BUYING A PLACE ALONE allows for the claim that Charlotte is a somewhat more marginal member of the friendship group, this excerpt presents Samantha as misaligned with her friends’ expectations and more marginal at the macro-level. The alignment patterns between the three other participants seem more evenly distributed with each of them at one point disaligning and then realigning with her friends.

These analyses demonstrate that implicit alignment processes at the micro-level allow for the balancing of association and dissociation and construct the relationship between the four women at the macro-level. Shifting alignment patterns also indicate that Miranda and Carrie form the core of the friendship group while Charlotte and Samantha are somewhat more marginal.

I will now turn to an example of explicit textual cues, which confirms this intra-group differentiation. The four women are at a café, and Samantha is eager to discuss a very intimate detail of her life.

Transcription 4. SC_39.1 FUNKY SPUNK

- 1 S I’m dating a guy with the funkiest tasting spunk.
- 2 (2.0) {Charlotte looks at Carrie, Carrie looks at Miranda, Miranda looks at Carrie}
- 3 (4.0) Charlotte gets up and leaves}
- 4 M and she’s never coming back ((melodramatic intonation pattern))
- 5 S well I’m sorry,
but who else can I talk to about this?
- 6 C may I suggest NO-one. ((smiling))
- 7 S you’re my girlfriends,
help me.
- 8 C {raises her eyebrows and smiles}

- 9 S have you ever had this problem?
- 10 M not really.
but I have to admit,
it's never exactly been a trip to Baskin Robbins.
- 11 C ((laughs))
- 12 S well this guy is very sour,
like .. asparagus gone bad or something. ((pulling a face))
- 13 C {addressed to waitress} can I cancel my rice pudding?
thanks.
- 14 S beautiful guy,
great in bed,
it's so disappointing.
it's like getting a bad bottle of Beaujolais Nouveau the first day
of season=
- 15 M =it has a lot to do with nutrition.
I once dated a smoker and it affected how his tasted.
- 16 C they should put that on the side of the packet,
if they wanted to cut back sales.
- 17 S maybe there is something he could eat that would make it sweeter.
- 18 C maybe you should write to Martha Stewart.
- 19 M "dear Martha,
funky spunk,
help."
- 20 C "dear funky spunk,
try;,
.. a hint of mint"
- 21 M ((laughs))
- 22 S no,
no no no,
it's not just asparagus,
it's asparagus and something else,
- 23 C {pulling a face that expresses disgust}
- 24 S {snaps her fingers}
I know,
Chlorox
- 25 M well at least it gets your whites whiter.
- 26 S this is serious {putting her hand on her chest}
I almost gagged=
- 27 C oh that is serious.
- 28 S what am I going to do:?
- 29 M just don't give him head again.

- 30 S hm
 .. I never even thought of that.
- 31 C what?
 casual head is back now?
- 32 S oh it's fine.
 he's healthy and I don't swallow.
- 33 C well as long as you are in the centre for disease control,
 I'm fine with it.
- 34 S of course he just loves getting head,
 but then,
 what man doesn't.
- 35 M you know,
 if the whole come situation were reversed,
 do you think men would get anywhere near the stuff?
- 36 S hm maybe?
 .. if it tasted like beer.
 [((laughs))]
- 37 C,M [((laugh))]

Samantha's disclosure is followed by a very long, six-second silence, in which the three other women exchange glances and Charlotte gets up and leaves the café. These strongly disaffiliative moves are aggravated by Miranda's staged voiceover comment: "and she's never coming back." (4). In turn 5, Samantha apologises in an attempt to realign with her two remaining friends, giving an account in the shape of a rhetorical question: "well I'm sorry, but who else can I talk to about this?" Carrie responds to Samantha's rhetorical question: "may I suggest NO-one." According to Goffman (1976:271) such appropriate answers to rhetorical questions function as a quip, an interpretation supported by Carrie's smile, which contextualises humour and establishes a teasing frame.

Samantha, however, does not tune in to the jocular tone and instead reacts to the content of Carrie's suggestion. She implores her friends: "you're my girlfriends, help me" (7). Her relational gloss is triggered by what she perceives as a misalignment with the community of practice's friendship norms and functions to evoke the equivalent of a standardised relational pair (Sacks 1972a): the intimate relationship which female friends conventionally have – a relationship in which such delicate, taboo issues can be discussed and in which help is provided. The categorisation device therefore emerges out of the business of talk, namely getting help from her friends and shapes the ensuing interaction.

The explicit alignment device also initiates affiliation on the interpersonal plane by signalling that Samantha considers her interlocutors to be in a close relationship with her, i.e. she makes an interactional gift to Carrie and Miranda.

Her attempt at affiliation is met with raised eyebrows on Carrie's part. Still, she accompanies this facial expression with a smile, again contextualising play. Samantha reacts to this mixed message with a serious question: "have you ever had this problem?" (9). Instead of eliciting a reciprocal self-disclosure, however, her question is met with a negative answer and an ironic remark from Miranda (10). The juxtaposition of a sexual practice with eating ice cream again contextualises play and elicits an aligning laughter from Carrie (11).

In the ensuing exchange, Carrie continues to indicate disgust and to establish a play frame, which allows a humorous treatment of the topic (13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 31). She only briefly aligns with Samantha in turn 27 to concede that she is in serious trouble. Nonetheless, this is then followed by a disaffiliating side-sequence, in which Carrie displays disapproval of Samantha's frivolous sexual activities (31–33). Miranda's alignment is less disaffiliating: She gives advice and displays a reciprocal self-disclosure (15, 29). Still, she keeps shifting back to aligning with Carrie and dealing with the topic humorously (18–21; 25). In spite of this resistance, Samantha elaborates on her trouble (12, 14, 17, 22, 24, 34) and insists on the seriousness of the issue (26). The fragment ends with an affiliative sequence initiated by Miranda: "you know, if the whole come situation were reversed, do you think men would get anywhere near the stuff?" (35). The discourse marker "you know" here invites her friends to recognise the relevance and implications of what follows (Jucker and Smith 1998: 194) and thus proactively establishes alignment. Miranda then adroitly shifts perspective with a compound yes/no question, which establishes a joint opponent: men in general. This finally elicits a humorous response from Samantha, turning their joint opponent into the butt of a joke (36). The resulting shared laughter at their joint opponent re-establishes affiliation between the three women.

Overall, the alignment patterns in this exchange confirm the impression yielded before: Samantha and Charlotte are more marginal members of the friendship circle, whereas Carrie and Miranda form the core friendship pair.¹¹

5. Conclusions

Detailed analyses of alignment practices reveal that the women on the screen shift between aligning and disaligning, between affiliation and disaffiliation. Moreover, they show that the complexity of these shifting alignment patterns increases with the number of speakers. Interactional teams emerge and change in the course of

11. Further analyses corroborating this impression can be found in Babel (2006).

the conversation. I have argued that these shifts in alignment patterns accomplish micro-transformations of social structure, which in turn construct social relations on the macro-level. Due to the dialectic of association versus dissociation inherent in close relationships, there is no simple correlation of affiliation on the micro-level and friendship maintenance on the macro-level. In the community of practice under analysis, continual shifts between the one and the other function to achieve an appropriate balance between openness/closedness, connection/autonomy, and predictability/novelty. These practices of talk-in-interaction also permit criticism and disagreement and establish unique ties between the individual women within the friendship network. Hence, the shifting alignment patterns on the micro-level allow the conclusion that Miranda and Carrie constitute a core friendship pair, and that Charlotte and Samantha are more marginal members.

I suggest that the processes in the mind of the overhearer compare to this analytic route. Based on the shared background knowledge between the sitcom production team, the fictional speakers and the audience in front of the screen, overhearers from this audience recognise activities such as troubles talk as indicative of friendship relations. Since these activities are made up of verbal practices, it is predominantly the underlying communicative competence that permits these inferences. Overhearers need to recognise explicit cues such as the evocation of the category “friend” and implicit practices such as asking and responding to rhetorical questions or reformulating another’s contribution as constituting these activities. Put more abstractly, they need to recognise the shifting of affiliating and disaffiliating moves as striking a balance between association and dissociation. From the emerging patterns the overhearer can then also infer the group’s inner differentiation.

Detailed analyses of fictional talk-in-interaction can hence pin down the specific (implicit or explicit) textual cues that allow television viewers to make such inferences. Future studies in audience research are required to corroborate the hypothesis that the viewers follow this path in inferring specific types of relationships between interactants on the screen.

CHAPTER 13

Genre, performance and *Sex and the City*

Brian Paltridge, Angela Thomas and Jianxin Liu

This chapter explores the television series *Sex and the City* from a cultural studies perspective, and, in particular, through the notions of genre (Miller 1994) and performance (Butler 1990). It considers the ways in which the lead characters, Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte, construct particular identities as they engage in the genre of casual conversation. The chapter argues that what, to some people, may seem natural in their interactions is a result of what Butler (1990: 33) calls “a set of repeated acts” and a “repeated stylisation of the body”. *Sex and the City*, we argue, provides an example of its lead characters doing gendered (and other identities) as they participate in the genre of casual conversation.

1. Introduction

In this chapter, we examine extracts from the television series *Sex and the City* in terms of both genre and performance. The focus in this chapter is on performative, rather than linguistic, aspects of the show (see Bubel this volume for an analysis of linguistic aspects of *Sex and the City* dialogue). We thereby aim to add an interdisciplinary aspect to the analysis of television dialogue in this volume, bringing in the perspective of Cultural Studies. In particular, we focus on the ways in which the genre of casual conversation is used as the lead characters, Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte, perform particular social (and other) identities in their interactions with each other. Through the use of the genre of casual conversation social, cultural and political values are created, transmitted and, for some viewers of the show, challenged. The lead characters negotiate dimensions of their gendered identities as related to sexuality, social class membership, ethnicity, and group affiliations. In particular, the ways in which they present themselves as well as how they interact both construct and reaffirm their views of themselves as, among other things, independent successful professional New York City women of a certain age and certain social class. Indeed, what, to some people, may seem

natural in their interactions is a result of what Judith Butler calls “a set of repeated acts” and a “repeated stylisation of the body” (Butler 1990: 33). The show, thus, provides an illustration of how gendered identities are both performed and reproduced, and at times challenged, through what its lead characters say and do, through the ways in which they present themselves to the world and through the values and assumptions that underlie their performances.

In the chapter, we first give a brief introduction to the show *Sex and the City*, its origin, and its influence. We then explain why the notions of genre and performance have been brought together in this chapter. Butler’s (1990, 1993, 2004) concept of performativity is central to this discussion. The notion of genre and its function in the show is also explored. The performances enacted in the show through casual conversations will be discussed by referring to the instances from the data and, in particular, the concepts of genre and performativity.

2. *Sex and the City*: A description of the series

Sex and the City is a TV series adapted from a book with the same title written by Candace Bushnell (1996), which was a collection of essays based on her mid-nineties columns for the *New York Observer* about urban dating. As a best seller that attracted a large readership, the book “chronicles the cultural elite, a perversely poignant universe of Manhattan nightspots and Hampton beach houses inhabited by glamorous but cynical women and rich soulless men” (Sikes 1998: 37). Each episode of the show is structured around Carrie Bradshaw, a New York-based journalist in her thirties, researching for her column, with each of the lead characters providing a unique perspective on dating and their sexual experiences. The formula for each episode of the show includes regular meetings by the four lead characters, Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte as they negotiate and renegotiate meanings of romance and identity in their pursuit of both sex and Mr Right, “an arduous task” as di Mattia (2004) points out for women in a post-feminist age. In di Mattia’s view *Sex and the City* shatters women’s expectations of “what Mr Right actually looks like when, and if, he comes along” (Halliday 2004).

Over its six seasons, the show has gone from a cult hit to an award-winning success, with viewers across the globe. An example of a socio-cultural phenomenon, the series has contributed to current cultural discourses related to fashion trends, discussions of sex, sexuality and relationships, debates on modern femininity and the single woman. As a TV show, *Sex and the City* has its own set of conventions, norms and values which are part of the predictable pleasures (Kellner 1980) its audience came to expect. A show such as *Sex and the City*, Lacey argues, is “easy” for its audience because it offers a “familiar structure, that

can be read without much difficulty" (Lacey 2000: 244). It takes certain ideas for granted, indeed, "as if there were no alternative" (Huckin 1997: 82) to the views that are expressed in the show. Understanding the social and cultural context in which the series is set is critical to understanding the identities that are being articulated and negotiated by the four central characters in *Sex and the City* as well as the ways in which they perform when they engage with each other.

3. Gender, performance, performativity

In this chapter we draw on Judith Butler's conception of performativity as a theoretical perspective to explore and explain gendered performances in the show. Gendered identities, in this view, are socially constructed, rather than "natural". People "are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk" not "because of who they (already) are" (Cameron 1999: 144). Social identities, thus, are, not pre-given, but are formed in the use of language and the various other ways we display who we are, what we think, value and feel. A person learns, for example, how to do and, in turn "display", being a woman in a particular social setting, of a particular social class. People perform particular identities through their use of language and other ways of expressing themselves in their interactions with each other. Mostly, this is done unconsciously as we repeat acts such as gestures, movement and ways of using language that signify, or index a particular identity. These acts are not, however, natural nor are they part of the essential attributes of a person (Cameron 2009). They are part of what people acquire in their interactions with each other.

Kulick (2003) points out that performance is not identical with performativity. Performance is what a subject does; whereas, performativity is the process through which the subject emerges (Butler 1993). Performance, thus, is one dimension of performativity. Kulick adds that performativity is not a one-off and mono-dimensional representation. It is concerned with not only what is performed by a person but also how it is performed in relation to time and space; that is, not just what a person does, but when and where they do it.

Gendered norms, in Butler's view, originate from heterosexual conventions across cultures and societies, and have become institutionalised in one way or another. They, further, are reified, rectified, or reversed in the process of performance. Heterosexuality, Butler argues, helps engender identities and relations such as femininity, masculinity, and binary divisions between them, as well as a hostility to homosexuality (Lloyd 2007). It also extends a sexually normalising ideology onto ordinary social occurrences, something which the conversations in *Sex and the City* at times reflect, and at other times, resist, or reject.

An important feature of *Sex and the City* is how the lead characters present themselves to each other as they engage in their interactions and how, in this process, the information they “give off” about themselves (Blommaert 2005) contributes to the establishment of particular gendered (and other) identities. They do this as much by the clothes they wear as how they behave when they talk to each other. König (2004), for example, describes *Sex and the City* as a fashion editor’s dream. As Akass and McCabe explain:

The *Sex and the City* girls are the epitome of glamour and style. Their knowledge of what clothes to wear and which restaurants and bars to frequent is underpinned by the spectacle of their taut Caucasian bodies, shiny hair and flawless make-up. (Akass and McCabe 2004a: 190)

The taut, toned bodies of Carrie and her friends and the clothes they wear, in Ochs’s (1992) term, indexes both their gender and their sexual desire. Their performance constructs them in a way which signifies (their view of) desirable Western women, of a certain social class, in a certain physical and social setting. These performances, then, are not just linguistic, they are multimodal (Bednarek 2010) in that they draw on a large number of non-linguistic resources such as ways of dressing, ways of looking, body posture, gesture as well as the setting, lighting and way in which the scene has been directed. As Baker points out, “the way a person stands, the way they style their hair, their clothing, their gaze, their walk, etc., ... all contribute towards [their] gendered performance” (Baker 2008: 73). The discussions that take place in *Sex and the City*, further, are very culture-based. They are located in a particular place and a particular time. It is not at all the case that the ways in which the lead characters talk, and the values they express in their talk, is the same across languages and cultures and indeed across social groups within the same language and culture. Higgins et al. (2002: 75), for example, discuss traditional expectations of sex and women across cultures saying that, in the West for example, for many years, “sex for any other purposes than procreation was seen as a mortal sin, and many classical stories of lovers who broke the rules (for example, Romeo and Juliet) came to a sad ending.” In contrast, the sexually assertive woman is the norm in *Sex and the City* and is an important part of the identities that are displayed throughout the show. These identities, further, become “sedimented through time” (Butler 1990: 20) as a result of these repeated performances and become “naturalised” even though they are not, in any sense, natural or inevitable.

Interestingly, even though the leading characters in the show take an active role in their pursuit of sex and many of the other things they want from life, they move back into a conservative position when it comes to a proposal of marriage.

The following example, where Miranda asks Carrie why she accepted Aidan's proposal of marriage, illustrates this:

Example (1)

Miranda: *I'm going to ask you an unpleasant question now. Why did you ever say yes?*

Carrie: *Because I love him ... A man you love kneels in the street, and offers you a ring. You say yes. That is what you do (Change of a Dress, 4: 15).*

Here, Carrie has waited for Aidan to propose, not the other way round. It seems that the agency as well as the control in the situation is her boyfriend's rather than hers. The conversation emphasises her deference to her man in the marriage proposal situation and the submissive role she takes on, or performs, in the case of engagement. As Butler argues, the practices which constitute us "as gendered subjects also provide the possibility of agency and resistance" (Jagger 2008:89). Carrie could resist and take the power for herself in this position, but in her performance of a single woman being offered a proposal of marriage, she does not. As she says, "That is what you do", showing her awareness of particular gendered and social norms and, indeed, a certain kind of ideological conservatism (Negra 2004), in the particular situation she is describing. The extract in Example (1) also shows the importance of casual conversation for the performance of gender, something that we will now discuss with respect to the notion of *genre*.

4. The genre of casual conversation and its use in *Sex and the City*

Genres are "global linguistic patterns which have historically developed for fulfilling specific communicative tasks in specific situations" (Chilton and Schaffner 2002:19). In Yates, Orlikowski and Okamura's view, genres are "socially recognized types of communicative actions ... that are habitually enacted by members of a community to realize particular social purposes" (Yates et al. 1999:84). Genres are situated and dynamic, at all times responding to social situations and occasions (Miller 1994; Devitt 2004; Frow 2006). As Frow argues,

genre matters as it is central to human meaning-making and to social struggle over meanings. The category of genre is a privileged object of study because it supposes that questions of meaning and truth are always questions of form and of the situation of utterance; because it has to do at once with systems and with historical change; and because it ranges over every level of the symbolic order, of our social world and of every other. (Frow 2006: 11)

Frow points out that genre creates effects of reality and truth. In his view, the semiotic frames within which genres are embedded implicate and specify layered ontological domains, implicit realities which genres form as a pre-given reference, together with the effects of authority and plausibility which are specific to the genre.

Many of the interactions between the four lead characters in *Sex and the City* could be described as examples of the overarching genre of casual conversation which may include the sub-genres of story-telling, anecdotes, chat or gossip. That is, the interactions are socially recognised as being instances of the genre of casual conversation. They are habitually performed, and have a shared communicative purpose. The use of this genre, of course, is not surprising given the nature of relationship between the four lead characters and the very social location of many of the interactions in the show. There are a number of features that seem to be typical of casual conversations. The telling of stories and exchange of gossip are especially typical features of casual conversations (Warren 2006; Thornbury and Slade 2006). Both of these are features of the lead characters' conversations in *Sex and the City*. As the snapshot (Figure 1) illustrates, many of the conversations between the four lead characters are in a casual setting, during lunch (or brunch), over drinks, or sometimes, in a bedroom.



Figure 1. Conversation between the four lead characters in *Sex and the City*

The lead characters' conversations often involve telling stories and gossiping about each other's and other people's activities. The story telling provides viewers with a history of the participants' lives as well as an insight into their views, judgments, and specifically, their ideologies (Warren 2006). Gossiping, further, is used as a strategy for creating solidarity and intimacy while details of other people's private lives are shared (Eggins and Slade 1997). All of this develops and maintains in-group relations, and contributes to the maintenance of solidarity and rapport among the four lead characters (see Bubel this volume for a conversation analysis of friendship relations in the show).

Eggins and Slade (1997) point out that as people engage in casual conversations they do more than just kill time and "chat" with each other. Rather, through their use of casual conversation, they negotiate social identities as well as negotiate, clarify and extend interpersonal relations as they take part in this performance. As Eggins and Slade argue:

Despite its sometimes aimless appearance and apparently trivial content, casual conversation is, in fact, a highly structured, functionally motivated, semantic activity. Motivated by interpersonal needs continually to establish who we are, how we relate to others, and what we think of how the world is, casual conversation is a critical linguistic site for the negotiation of such important dimensions of our social identity as gender, generational location, sexuality, social class membership, ethnicity, and subcultural and group affiliations. (Eggins and Slade 1997: 6)

Further, as they continue, "the apparent triviality of casual conversation disguises the significant interpersonal work it achieves as interactants enact and confirm social identities and relations" (Eggins and Slade 1997: 16).

Eggins and Slade describe this as the central paradox of casual conversation. As they argue, casual conversation is the type of talk in which people feel most relaxed, most spontaneous and most comfortable, yet casual conversation is a critical site for the social construction of reality. Speakers establish solidarity through the confirmation of similarities, and they assert autonomy through the exploration of difference. The construal of friendship, for instance, is characterised by a negotiation of autonomy versus connectedness (Bubel this volume). In the case of *Sex and the City*, each of the four female characters knows each other extremely well. Although they are the best of friends, they are each quite different and are from quite diverse backgrounds. As they meet together, they share their life experiences, negotiate their understandings of (among other things) life, love, men and sex, and "do friendship" (Bubel 2006, this volume) with each other. The following Example (2) shows two of the characters, Samantha and Carrie, constructing in-group solidarity and intimacy in casual conversation.

Example (2)

Samantha: *Thank God you're here.*

Carrie: *I have something to tell you.*

Samantha: *Aidan left you?*

Carrie: *I'm engaged.*

Samantha: *Fuck you. Let's have a drink and celebrate. Two Rubies, please.*

Carrie: *He switched the ring on me.*

Samantha: *The bastard.*

Carrie: *And look, it's a really good ring.*

Samantha: *I've seen it.*

Carrie: *What?*

Samantha: *Somebody had to help the poor guy.*

Carrie: *So, now you want me to get married?*

Samantha: *No, but if you're gonna ruin our lives... I'd at least like to look at a nice piece of jewellery.*

Carrie: *Thank you (Just Say Yes, 4:12).*

Here the content of the conversation helps construct the relation between the two characters. Carrie tells Samantha about her engagement to Aidan while Samantha confesses to having helped Aidan pick out the ring for Carrie. Samantha's swearing (e.g., *Fuck you; the bastard*) is a salient feature that indexes the intimacy between the two friends, as do their recreational practices such as their preference for types of alcohol (e.g., *Two rubies*). Their attitude towards the symbolic role that the engagement ring plays in the course of marriage, further, establishes not only personal, but also cultural connections. As the negotiation of friendship in *Sex and the City* is discussed in detail in Bubel's chapter, we will focus our discussion now on the performance of gender through casual conversation.

5. The performance of gender in *Sex and the City*

In this section we discuss how the lead characters in *Sex and the City* perform gendered identities, and in so doing, comply with, but also resist, particular social and cultural gendered roles for women. In the following extract, Carrie tells how she had just discovered an engagement ring in her boyfriend, Aidan's, overnight bag. She then went into the kitchen and vomited. She is telling her friends about this incident.

Example (3)

Charlotte: *You're getting engaged!*

Carrie: *I threw up. I saw the ring and I threw up. That's not normal.*

- Samantha: *That's my reaction to marriage.*
 Miranda: *What do you think you might do if he asks?*
 Carrie: *I don't know.*
 Charlotte: *Just say yessss!!!*
 Carrie: *Well, it hasn't been long enough has it?*
 Charlotte: *Trey and I got engaged after only a month.*
 Samantha: *How long before you separated?*
 Charlotte: *We're together now and that's what matters. When it's right you just know.*
 Samantha: *Carrie doesn't know.*
 Carrie: *Carrie threw up.*
 Samantha: *So it might not be right... (Just Say Yes, 4: 12).*

A key cultural value is foregrounded in this conversation: if a man asks a woman to marry him she should "Just say yes" (the title of the episode). Other values are backgrounded, or rather omitted, such as Carrie's views on Aidan's occupation, ethnic background and social class, possibly because the audience of the show already knows this (not because, in this case, they are not relevant). Similarly, in the conversation between Carrie and Samantha (see Example (2) above), as long as the right ring is chosen, the default is for Carrie to accept Aidan's proposal and celebrate with her Mr. Right. Other women may be accomplices in reinforcing this convention (such as Samantha helping Aidan choose the ring), or coercing Carrie into acceptance of Aidan's proposal (such as Charlotte's emphatic utterance of *yessss!!!* and the account of her own experience of marriage). The sorts of gendered norms built into a conversation such as this are the result of lifelong socialisation, and are often unconsciously followed. Here, they are barely questioned.

Sometimes compromise may be a way of dealing with gendered norms. In Example (4) Carrie has been invited to spend the weekend in Aidan's country house which she found both inconvenient and boring in comparison with the city. In the end, the couple has to compromise so that Aidan's country house could still be an option for their weekends away.

Example (4)

- Carrie: *Actually, the country's looking pretty good to me right about now.*
 Samantha: *Really, so, you'll be back next weekend?*
 Carrie: *Not next weekend, no.*
 Miranda: *So, when are you going back?*
 Carrie: *You gonna finish that pie? [Then in a voiceover to viewers] In the end, of course, Aidan and I compromised. He spent money on air conditioning. And I spent enough time in Suffern to realize ... that city girls are just country girls ... with cuter outfits (Sex and the City, 4: 09).*

Although compromising is a common practice that can happen in any kind of relationship, the interesting part of this conversation lies in Carrie's shift from the inclusive "Aidan and I" to the singular pronoun "I", in the end admitting (though reluctantly) that "city girls are just country girls ... with cuter outfits". In this kind of relationship, it seems, women are supposed to concede and compromise to keep their relationship afloat.

On occasion, older gender norms can be revived in response to new situations or agendas. The following scene in which Charlotte discusses the decision she made to have a baby provides an example of this.

Example (5)

- Miranda: *Hello?*
Charlotte: *You were so judgmental at the coffee shop yesterday.*
Miranda: *Excuse me?*
Charlotte: *You think I'm one of those women.*
Miranda: *What? One of what women?*
Charlotte: *One of those women we hate who just works until she gets married.*
Miranda: *Charlotte, it's 8:15.*
Charlotte: *That's not a response.*
Miranda: *It's an 8:15 in the morning response.*
Charlotte: *The women's movement is supposed to be about choice. And if I choose to quit my job, that is my choice.*
Miranda: *The women's movement? Jesus Christ, I haven't even had coffee yet.*
Charlotte: *It's my life and my choice.*
Miranda: *Okay, Charlotte? This isn't about me, this is your stuff.*
Charlotte: *Admit it! You were being very judgmental (Time and Punishment, 4: 07).*

Charlotte choosing to quit her job to concentrate on motherhood is particularly relevant here as she takes on particular gendered norms in response to her situation. As she does this, however, she refashions these norms by drawing on her right to choose in order to legitimate her role in her marriage, and in turn, society. She presents herself as someone who is free to make choices even if those choices might, to some, seem somewhat traditional. Miranda's decision to keep Steve's baby in Example (6) below, however, shows how she resists what, for some, are gendered norms.

Example (6) (*at an ice-cream stall*)

- Steve: *You're what?*
Miranda: *I'm pregnant. And it's yours.*
Waiter: *That'll be \$6.*

- Steve: *You sure?*
 Miranda: *I've only had one shot in the last few months and it was you.*
 Steve: *I'm the only guy you've had sex with?*
 Miranda: *It's been a slow summer. Okay, we're done here.*
 Steve: *I guess it's good to know that my one ball is still working. So, what now?*
 Miranda: *I'm gonna have it.*
 Steve: *No way! When we were together, I wanted to have a baby, you weren't ready.*
 Miranda: *I'm still not ready, but when am I ever gonna be ready?*
 Steve: *Man, I just went into so much debt opening my bar. I'm thinking maybe I should sell it.*
 Miranda: *No. You don't have to do anything. I'll take care of the baby and support it ... And you can visit whenever you want, but it's not gonna be your problem. It's my decision, and it's just something I want to do for me.*
 Steve: *Then why did you wanna talk to me about it?*
 Miranda: *I just thought you should know (Just Say Yes, 4: 12).*

Here Miranda is a reflection of contemporary practices of femininity, playing out the role of single motherhood by suggesting she take sole responsibility for the child she is carrying. As Akass and McCabe note:

[*Sex and the City*] is predicated upon a comedic play between gender identities and cultural performance... Carrie follows a script for a role produced in fantasy, and in the process has fun playing with the artificiality of a patriarchal signifying system that defines the female self. (Akass and McCabe 2004a: 178)

In this excerpt it is Miranda who is confronting and playing with the artificiality of patriarchy, and Steve is performing several kinds of masculinity. On the one hand, he exposes his fears of not being able to physically father a child and on the other hand he questions his ability to be a financial support for the child. By the end of the conversation, it seems he accepts that his role is not going to be significant. Although it could be argued that Miranda has the stronger career, there is a strong sense of conventionality that constraints their relationship.

6. *Sex and the City* and the creation and mediation of femininity

What, then, is the impact and significance of the above-discussed performances of gender in *Sex and the City*? Film and television play a strong role in the creation and transmission of cultural values. Kellner (1980: 74) discusses the role of television in establishing and, indeed, "dictating" conventions of cultural production

and reception. Television programs, he argues, consist of coded sets of formulae and conventions which indicate culturally accepted ways of doing things. The audience comes to expect these conventions, he says, and a code, or cultural model (Gee 2004) for the kind of program develops which tells people “what is typical or normal” from the perspective of the particular Discourse (Gee 2004: 40). This code then becomes “enshrined in production studio texts and practices” (Kellner 1980: 74) and is repeated in further productions of the particular genre.

Concerning *Sex and the City*, the same-sex friendships in the show provide a forum for the sharing of confidences and the joint construction of what is “normal”. In fact, it is through the spoken articulation of desires, desires which reflect variation and difference from traditional notions of heterosexual womanhood, that *Sex and the City* successfully deconstructs the concept of femininity, celebrating and normalising variation. Italian feminist theorists have worked to free the sense of female difference in feminist positions (Curti 1998). To achieve this, Curti argues that it is not at the political level that such variation needs to be conquered, but “through the practice of relation among women” (Curti 1998: 22). As Akass and McCabe (2004a) assert, *Sex and the City* provides spaces for confessional discourses (e.g., Carrie telling her friends she threw up when she thought she was going to be proposed to) among the four women, and through this process of confession, the women define and ascribe meaning to each other’s experiences. The conversations take place when the four women meet over brunch, lunch or cocktails. They are part of the formula for each episode and provide the context for this confessional space. As Blommaert (2005) argues, the information people “give off” about themselves, and in turn, their identities, depends very much on the context, occasion and purpose of the discourse. It also depends on the space, place and time of the interaction. As he says, people both speak in and from a place. Place, he argues, “defines people, both in their eyes and in the eyes of others” (Blommaert 2005: 223) as well as attributes certain values to their interactions. In this sense, *Sex and the City* provides an excellent example of its lead characters doing gender (and many other identities) through their living and working in the metropolitan place and space, New York.

Furthermore, the fact that the show includes aspects of comedy situates the confessionals in humour. As Akass and McCabe argue:

Humour is used to undercut female investment in patriarchal fantasies, through revealing the constructed-ness of the fairy tales, cultural myths and consumerist discourses which construct them as Other – glamorous supermodels or damsels awaiting rescue by Prince Charming... these women are prepared to be the joker, butt and listener of the joke as they laugh at themselves being taken in by the patriarchal fiction and daring to speak out about the uncertainty and problems it inspires for them. (Akass and McCabe 2004a: 185)

Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha mediate many roles and variations of femininity as they engage in the genre of casual conversation: women as single, woman as professionals, women as mother, women as wife, women as sexually assertive, women as lover (of both men and women), women as friend and various combinations of these. In doing so, they have inhabited the spaces of imagination (Cowie 1997) of their female viewers as women all over the world have linked their own narratives with the fiction on the screen – in comparison, contrast, confrontation, identification or as a form of therapy.

Sex and the City therefore forges the way for a new cultural model of femininities: one that celebrates difference and variation, and a plurality of discourses of desire. McRobbie (2004: 264) labels this as a “a new gender regime”. In her discussion of post-feminism and popular culture, she describes the female characters in TV shows such as *Sex and the City* and movies such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* as dramatically different to those found in similar shows of a pre-feminist era. She claims:

The new young women are confident enough to declare their anxieties about possible failure in regard to finding a husband, they avoid any aggressive or overtly traditional men, and they brazenly enjoy their sexuality, without fear of the sexual double standard. In addition, they are more than capable of earning their own living, and the degree of suffering or shame they anticipate in the absence of finding a husband is countered by sexual self-confidence. Being without a husband does not mean they will go without men. (McRobbie 2004: 264)

In this new gender regime she argues, women endorse an “ethic of freedom” and personal choice. They are also free to pursue their desires – sexual and otherwise – as they establish their feminine identities through their various performances as they take part in the genre of casual conversation.

7. Conclusions

This chapter is clearly just a single reading of *Sex and the City*. People from other cultures and with different social, cultural and political points of view will read *Sex and the City* in quite different ways from how we have read it here. For some people, a show such as *Sex and the City* mirrors social realities and identities. For others, it challenges social and political realities. A range of social and political issues such as abortion, death, sexual taboos, pregnancy, career advancement, financial independence and motherhood, are discussed, debated and explored throughout the show, not just the search for “Mr Right”. What may seem natural and unsurprising to some people as they view a show such as *Sex and the City*, is

by no means “natural” and for many people, may be far from unsurprising. And it must be remembered that, in some parts of the world, shows such as *Sex and the City* are only available to those who can afford to pay for them, such as in the US where it appears on the pay cable television channel HBO. It is also important to point out that, as Negra (2004) suggests, some of the concerns it discusses “would be utterly unrecognisable to whole groups of American women”, and others. Notwithstanding, *Sex and the City* provides an excellent example of its lead characters doing gender (and many other identities) as they negotiate, clarify and extend their multiple gendered identities in their conversations about living in the particular place and space of the City.

CHAPTER 14

Bumcivilian

Systemic aspects of humorous communication in comedies

Alexander Brock

In television comedies, the system of the English language, defined here as a set of choices from conventionalised language elements (Halliday 1994: xxvi) is used to create humour. From this perspective, humorous communication first appears as a phenomenon of *instantiation* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 26–29), which uses, but does not immediately affect, the language system. In the light of the incongruity theory of humour (Morreall 1989), according to which humour arises from ill-fitting elements introduced into a context of expectation, a first – expectable – pattern of the language system in humour is the following: the audience's expectation in humorous discourse is built up by using the resources offered by the English standard language, whereas the incongruous element is beyond “normal” language. In a discussion of examples from phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, linguistic varieties and text patterns – taken from various TV comedies – it becomes apparent, however, that this is but one pattern in many: alternatively, there are incongruities which are firmly based on our language system, and there are some that represent alternative language systems, which in turn indicate alternative worlds. A further section shows that different language systems can be assumed for various levels of communication and carriers of incongruities. In comedy as well as in real life, each speaker has their own variety, marked by different systemic options. Finally, it is shown how the fictional communication of the characters in a comedy may influence the sub-systems of English. Words and phrases from comedy may enter our language, and knowledge of specific comedy patterns may become part of our communicative repertoire, which may endanger the emergence of humour, if incongruities become too predictable.

1. Introduction

There are good reasons for a discourse analyst to investigate the systemic nature of the language of comedies: one is given by Halliday (1994: xxii):

Discourse analysis has to be founded on a study of the system of the language. At the same time, the main reason for studying the system is to throw light on discourse – on what people say and write and listen to and read.

The obvious argument is that if discourse should be studied in connection with the language system, then this should of course include the discourse of television and film comedy.¹ Comedy is defined here as professional discourse aiming at the amusement of the recipients.

The other reason for studying systemic aspects of comedies is more humour-specific: in humour research, the view is wide-spread that humour is created when the conventional, predictable flow of discourse is interrupted by an unexpected or ill-fitting element. In the British TV comedy *Look around You*,² for instance, the scientific term for “iron in its most basic form” (*Look around You*, “Iron”, 2002), is given as “bumcivilian”. This word can be seen as belonging to the fictional language of this television comedy. In linguistic terms we could say that it is not part of the English lexical paradigm, and therefore its occurrence may be amusing.

This description suggests a simple first pattern to be investigated: the fictional language of comedy is characterised by language elements that are not *instantiations*³ of the sub-systems of English.⁴ These non-systemic elements are the source of humour.

In order to refine this statement, it is necessary to clarify two aspects: what exactly do we mean by system, and what is the humour-theoretical background against which non-systemic elements can be seen as funny?

Let us consider the language system first. Halliday develops his view of the language system(s) in connection with what he calls the system network – a

1. The medial differences between television and film do not concern the point of this chapter and are therefore neglected.

2. *Look around You* is a parody which uses the language and visual style of TV education programmes of the 1970ies.

3. The term *instantiation* is borrowed from Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 26), who argue that: “The system of a language is ‘**instantiated**’ in the form of text” (my emphasis – A.B.).

4. This assumption of course allows for non-systemic language use in others communicative spheres, too, such as poetry, advertising, non-humorous film dialogue (Kozloff 2000) and even everyday communication.

configuration of subsystems of a language. He sees the system as “the paradigmatic ordering of language” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 22) and points out (Halliday 1994: xxvi):

The system network is a theory about language as a resource for making meaning. Each system in the network represents a choice: not a conscious decision made in real time but a set of possible alternatives, like “statement/question” or “singular/plural” or “falling tone/level tone/rising tone”. These may be semantic, lexicogrammatical or phonological.

For the user, linguistic systems as sets of possible alternatives also constitute sets of expectations in that they enable us to predict conventional continuations at any given point in the discourse. Thus, an article opens up a slot to be filled by nouns or nominalised adjectives, etc.

It is easy to see that “sets of possible alternatives” can also be found in other areas of language and communication: for instance, social, regional or other varieties of a language, defined as “any form of a language seen as systematically distinct from others” (Matthews 1997: 394), are systemic in two ways: firstly, the variety is internally constituted by a specific set of alternative choices – of sounds, lexical items, pragmatic elements, etc. Secondly, all the varieties of a given language form a set of meaningful alternatives, determined by social circumstances and simultaneously expressing them (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 27). The choice of a certain stylistic variety, say elevated over colloquial, is pragmatically meaningful, just as in phonology the choice of a voiced initial consonant in *bit* as opposed to *pit* marks a different semantic content. Text types and discourse patterns can also be seen to form sets of alternatives on a more global level of linguistic analysis – what Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 27) call *register*. They are often less rigorously definable and discrete than, say, the phonemes and inflectional morphemes of a language, but they are still alternative linguistic phenomena and, moreover, more conspicuously present and observable to the lay person than for instance a pair of distributional allophones. We shall see in the next section how humorists manipulate their audience’s knowledge of systemic properties of text types.

The second aspect that needs clarifying is the humour-theoretical background of this investigation. The literature on humour is extensive and different theories exist (e.g. bisociation, incongruity, superiority, relief, surprise and cognitive shift theories). In this chapter, one specific theory is used, as it seems to best suit the purposes of this investigation. This is the *incongruity theory* (cf. Morreall 1989; Attardo 2008), which is the humour theory most broadly accepted among linguists and other social scientists. Keith-Spiegel (1972: 7) explains:

Humor arising from disjointed, ill-suited pairings of ideas or situations or presentations of ideas or situations that are divergent from habitual customs form the bases of incongruity theories.

Some authors describe the emergence of humorous incongruities as phases, where the *exposition* (Ulrich 1977:315) or *setup phase* (Attardo 1997:410–411) raises a certain expectation in the recipient, which is then destroyed by a cognitively ill-fitting element, the *punch line* or *disjunction* (Brock 2004:66), resulting in humour.

Using the terminology introduced above, it is now possible to reformulate the initial pattern mentioned above: whenever the audience of a comedy expects the use of conventional elements of the English language system, non-systemic elements⁵ appear as unexpected, ill-fitting and therefore incongruous. These non-systemic elements can be sources of humour. So, when in the spoof news programme *The Day Today* (1994)⁶ a women's rights campaigner speaks out against the implantation of artificial embryos into women's wombs and in this context uses the word *de-encouragise*, this word-formation is clearly outside the English language system: the system of English allows for two *alternative* noun-to-verb derivations of *courage* by prefixation – with *en-* for the positive meaning *encourage*, and with *dis-* for the negative meaning *discourage*. The derivation of the negative meaning from the positive verb as a base by means of a parasynthetic formation (adding a prefix and a suffix like *-ise* at the same time; cf. Plag 2003:40) is not part of the current English derivational system.

In the example just described the humour is clearly triggered by non-systemic language use. But is this enough to conclude that all linguistically produced incongruities are generated this way? Apparently not, because some humour simply exploits the potential of the system to produce incongruities (e.g. polysemy, homonymy), while leaving the system itself intact. Other humour uses language as a vehicle, but is not based on playing with language at all, and therefore does not affect the system either.⁷

And what is the semiotic effect of the non-systemic *de-encouragise*? It seems to constitute an “empty signifier”, a linguistic form with vague or unspecifiable

5. *Non-systemic elements* can be defined as elements that are not part of the systemic paradigms of Standard English, and therefore do not form instantiations of the English language system.

6. *The Day Today* is a 1990ies TV satire which uses the format of news shows to frame sketches of various content. One of its characteristics is the attention paid to minute (linguistic) details.

7. This can be seen in the following example from *The Mighty Boosh*, a bizarre sitcom, where two Goth girls are invited to the show's heroes' flat. One of them, the repressed funk-jazz fan Howard Moon, tries to impress the women with dark and sinister facts. He says casually:

meaning (Chandler 2002:74). This does not, however, mean that it poses a serious communicative problem for the audience, because they can easily recognise a social pattern: new words coined by political pressure groups are a fairly common phenomenon. But in order to see if all system manipulations are as easily interpreted by the audience, more examples have to be considered.

In the following section, cases of humorous manipulation of the language system are presented, starting from the straightforward and moving on to more complex cases. Then, based on the examples, a complex model of systemic aspects in TV comedies is developed which goes beyond postulating that the audience's expectation is built up with the help of systemic elements and the incongruity is triggered by non-systemic elements.

2. Manipulating the language system for humour – examples

In this section, I present examples of a range of system manipulations in comedy. The examples concern phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, language varieties and text/discourse patterns.⁸

2.1 Phonetics/phonology

In Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (book version 1992), Pontius Pilate has a serious speech disorder. He produces utterances like the following (Chapman et al. 1992:53):

- (2) Pilate: *To pwove our fwriendship, it is customawy at this time to welease a wong-doer fwom our pwisons.*

(1) Howard Moon: *Killed a swan yesterday* [women are unimpressed] ... *did a shit on it* [women are still unimpressed] ... *right on it* (*The Mighty Boosh* 2, "Nanageddon", 2005).

The incongruity of his communication is not based on our expectation concerning the systemic paradigms of the English language, but on social expectations concerning the content of conversation. It must be stressed at this point that incongruity alone is not a sufficient condition for humour. See e.g. Piazza (this volume) who looks at pragmatically deviant discourse of serial killers in horror films. Such pragmatic deviance can also be called incongruous.

8. Even though Halliday's definition of the language system forms the theoretical basis of this chapter, the linguistic terminology used here does not always follow Halliday's.

A possible labio-dental realisation of /r/ in some Cockney speakers (Hughes et al. 2005:76) and children notwithstanding, [w]-sounds are not possible allophones of /r/ in Received Pronunciation (RP), which is the variety Monty Python's Pontius Pilate uses. We thus have an unrealistic constellation of allophones, obviously geared towards producing many amusing homophones, as in Pilate's defence of his friend Biggus Dickus against the Jewish crowd, where he states that Biggus "wanks as high as any man in Wome" (Chapman et al. 1992:56).

Another case of non-systemic language use is Monty Python's three men who respectively speak only the beginnings, middles and ends of words (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2:33). They are invited to say "Good evening" together to the television audience (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2:33):

- (3) Mr Sm: G ...
 Scot: ... oo ...
 Mr Ith: ... d
 Mr Sm: eve ...
 Scot: ... ni ...
 Mr Ith: ... ing.

For one-syllable words, we can formulate the rule that Mr Sm only pronounces the syllable onset, Scot the peak and Mr Ith the coda. Thus, all three characters deviate in specific ways from the full realisation of the general English syllable structure.

2.2 Morphology/lexicon

In addition to the non-canonical word-formation *de-encourage* analysed above, many other non-systemic language items and forms can be found in comedies.

In the above-mentioned TV programme *Look around You* ("Germs", 2002) a voiceover narrator explains that germs originated in Germany. This way it is suggested that the lexeme *germ* was formed by clipping (Bauer 1983:233) from the word *Germany*, which is clearly a false etymology. Similarly the Word *Maths* – in reality a case of clipping from *Mathematics* – is presented as an acronym of "Mathematical Anti-Telharsic Harfatum Septomin" (*Look around You*, "Maths", 2002).

Inflectional morphology is manipulated in *Look around You* ("Water", 2002), when the narrator says "Water, water, what hast thou **donst**?", thereby producing a word-form of *do* that never really existed in the history of English. In *The Day Today* (Part I, episode 1, 1994), an interviewer refers to the "immediately future".

The lexicon of English consists of a set of alternatives for each form class. In comedies, we find many examples of lexemes which in reality are not part of this

set. Apart from defective derivations like the ones discussed above (*de-encourage* and others), there are other words which lack a real background. In *Look around You*, *iron* is called *iron de Havilland* (*Look around You*, “Iron”, 2002) after “the father of iron chemistry”, and it may occur in the form of *bumcivilian*. The programme also mentions lab equipment with names such as *Jane Grey’s pipe*, *Bakerloo bell jar*, *gribbin*, *Ravenscroft pan* or *Bestal Heim plate*. Calcium is referred to as *Ginny*, *Ninny* or *Peter’s Peg* (*Look around You*, “Calcium”, 2002). A specific way of making a liquid react with a gas is called *mafipulation*, and the *Helvetica Scenario* (*Look around You*, “Calcium”, 2002), marks a state where the *Queen Atom* leaves the molecule and the entire structure comes tumbling down. In contrast, the programme’s narrator asks the spectators to find a word for a “uniformly curved line that somehow joins up with itself”, effectively claiming that there is no word for such a curve. (*Look around You*, “Maths”, 2002). So, according to the programme the English word *circle* does not exist. With all these examples, the English lexicon is undermined by introducing elements into the communication which could be part of the language system but are not, and by claiming that some very established words do not exist.

2.3 Syntax

Monty Python present Mr Burrows, a man who says words in the wrong order. He produces sentences like the following (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2: 189):

- (4) Burrows: *Well, now, not going to bush the doctor about the beat too long. I’m going to come to point the straight immediately.*

Burrows here produces perfect instantiations of all the sub-systems of the English language except for the fact that the syntactic word-order is highly deviant. The text is, however, carefully constructed as to show this syntactic deficiency, while retaining the overall comprehensibility.

2.4 Semantics

In another Python sketch, a Hungarian with a faulty Hungarian-English phrase-book enters a tobacconist’s and reads out his requests, which come out all wrong. Although he believes he is using normal shopping terminology and phrases, he says sentences like: “My hovercraft is full of eels” (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2: 16) or “If I said you had a beautiful body would you hold it against me? I am no longer infected.” (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2: 17). His Hungarian-English dictionary gives combinations of signifiers and signifieds which are outside the

English language system and thus leaves the Hungarian with serious semantic problems.

The following example lies on the borderline between semantics and syntax and at the same time constitutes a massive deviation from the discursive norms of politeness: in an alternative version of Dickens's *Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Blackadder turns, overnight, from the nicest man in England into a monster. When Mrs Scratchit (sic) comes to beg for food, unaware of his transformation, the following dialogue ensues (*Blackadder's Christmas Carol*, 1988):

- (5) Scratchit: *Ah, Mr Ebenezer ... I was wondering if you had perhaps a little present for me? Or had found me a little fowl for Tiny Tom's Christmas?*

Blackadder: *I've always found you foul, Mrs Scratchit – and more than a little.*

This gag works on the semantic contrast that comes with two alternative syntactic interpretations of Blackadder's response (terminology after Burton-Roberts 1997):

- (6) *Blackadder has found Mrs. Scratchit a little fowl*
 subject V indirect object direct object

The above interpretation of *find* as a ditransitive verb produces the meaning "Blackadder has found a little fowl for Mrs. Scratchit."

- (7) *Blackadder has found Mrs. Scratchit foul*
 subject V direct object object complement

The interpretation of *find* as a complex-transitive verb – along with the homophonic transformation of *fowl* into *foul* –, however, produces the meaning "Blackadder considers Mrs. Scratchit to be foul." This amounts to a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1987: 25) against Mrs. Scratchit, which goes beyond all norms of politeness known to speakers of English.

2.5 Varieties

Varieties can be seen as sub-systems of a language, with specific phonological, morphological, syntactic and pragmatic properties. There is a great body of research on the social basis of varieties. One example is the connection that is seen between the social and regional distribution of accents and dialects (e.g. Hughes et al. 2005: 10), where regional accents/dialects will be more pronounced the lower the speaker is on the social scale. In a Monty Python sketch we find a rather

subtle manipulation of this social-regional interplay (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 1: 22): Ken returns home to Hampstead some time after leaving his parents to find his fortune in a Yorkshire coal-mine. His father is a famous playwright, disappointed that his son is wasting his life on coal-mining. So far, everything seems to be in order. But their language varieties (as well as their general behaviour and dress code) do not match the social situation, because it is the father who speaks with a heavy Yorkshire accent and uses expressions like “All right, woman, all right I’ve got a tongue in me head – I’ll do t’talkin.” His son, the Yorkshire coal-miner, however, speaks with a clear RP accent. Thus, the varieties or sub-systems of the English language are reproduced more or less faithfully, but their social distribution is well outside the set of given expectations.

2.6 Text/discourse

Text or discourse types can be regarded as sets of alternative communicative structures, each characterised by certain options and restrictions. The audience’s expectations based on these options and restrictions are manipulated in comedies to produce humour. Here are some examples.

Monty Python present their *Communist quiz*, which follows all the text patterns of a television quiz, with a presenter and contestants, who are asked questions on sports, politics, and popular music. Where the show deviates heavily from the TV quiz pattern is in the contestants, all of whom are deceased Communist leaders or philosophers – Karl Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara and Mao Tse-tung (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2: 19). Predictably, the contestants do very well on the politics questions, but fail miserably on questions like “The Hammers – the Hammers is the nickname of what English football team? The Hammers?”

Look around You faithfully follows the discourse patterns of a 1970ies education programme, except for some lapses, which go against our expectation of such programmes: when a scientist conducts an experiment which involves boiling eggs and leaking egg white (*Look around You*, “Water”, 2002), the voiceover narrator unexpectedly says: “Make sure you look out for the release of the new albumen. It’s out now.” This feeble pun on *albumen* and *album* obviously does not fit into an education programme.

The spoof news programme *The Day Today* (Part I, episode 1, 1994) reports on Prince Charles’s idea to spend some time in prison, “sharing his cell with an old school-friend [...] in order to highlight the plight of Britain’s gaols”. The programme thus adopts the form of a news programme, but its reports blatantly fail to fulfil the requirement of factuality usually attributed to this television genre. This stark discrepancy between textual form, expected content and actual content

seems to be a powerful formula for the generation of humour, since over the last 30 years many comedians (Monty Python, Rowan Atkinson, Smith & Jones, etc.) have used the news format.

A different kind of text type manipulation can be found in *Blackadder the Third* ("Amy and Amiability", 1987). Blackadder has fallen into the hands of a female highwayman and awaits his death in a forest. The scenery does not look very realistic. Blackadder remarks:

- (8) Blackadder: *Oh God. What a way to die. Shot by a transvestite on an unrealistic grassy knoll.*

With his complaint about an "unrealistic grassy knoll", i.e. the quality of the scenery, Blackadder clearly breaks the fiction. We know that fictional characters are not expected to be aware of shortcomings in the sets that represent their world.⁹ Breaking the fiction is a well-used device in the theatre as well as in television comedy, but in spite of its frequency, audiences still seem to be well aware of the fact that it deviates from the norms of these genres.

One last example of text-type manipulation shows that with large-level units such as text or discourse patterns, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether the use is within the expectations given by the system or not. In the Blackadder episode "Potato" (*Blackadder 2*, 1986), Sir Walter Raleigh tries to entertain Queen Elizabeth I with tales of his sea journeys.

- (9) Raleigh: *Maybe I could distract you with the tale of the time I fell into the water and was almost eaten by a hammerhead shark.*
Queen: *Yes. All right, try that one.*
Raleigh: *Well, Ma'am. I fell into the water, and was almost eaten by a shark. And the funny thing is, its head was almost exactly the same shape as a hammer!*

Raleigh clumsily gives away the central point of his narrative in the abstract,¹⁰ which renders the narrative itself futile, as it is fundamentally identical to the abstract. One could say that this narrative deviates from the ideal text pattern so much as to be outside the properties defining it. On the other hand, anyone can recognise what Raleigh was aiming at. In a prototypical organisation of text type

9. In Kozloff's (2000) terminology describing the functions of dialogue in narrative film, we could formulate that Blackadder's remark fails to fulfil the functions of "creation of the diegesis" (Kozloff 2000: 34) and "adherence to expectations concerning realism" (Kozloff 2000: 47).

10. Labov (1982: 226) defines abstract as "a brief summary statement of the substance of the narrative as viewed by the narrator" which precedes the narrative proper.

patterning (Sandig 2000), Raleigh's narrative would probably inhabit a fringe position.

For this text as well as for others, it is difficult to determine their (non)systemic status. This, however, does not mean that there are no systemic choices on the text level. It only means that the paradigms of higher level systems such as texts are more open and sometimes less clearly definable than those of, say, the phonemes of a language. Even for lower level units it has been shown that borders are often difficult to draw, which accounts for the ongoing popularity of prototype theory for modelling linguistic units.¹¹

3. Systemic or non-systemic use – levels and carriers

At the end of Section 1, the question was asked whether *de-encourage* – incongruous against the expectation of the systemic *discourage* – constituted a case of use without a system, i.e. non-systemic use, an empty signifier.

In order to address this question, one thing has to be made clear first: we can only ever see a system by observing its instantiation and reconstructing the systemic properties behind it (see also Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 26–27). How difficult it is to catch a glimpse of the system behind use is shown by the large number of linguists in the world still busy describing various language systems. So when we read or hear *discourage* and call it systemic, we recognise the fact that this instance of language use conforms with what we know the system to be like. It is therefore an instantiation of the system. When we hear the word *de-encourage*, however, this form is not readily endorsed by a system known to us. In this case, we might hypothesise that a process is set in motion which Assmann (1988: 239) would call “Wilde Semiose” (wild semiosis) – a creative process of generating new meaning, as the recipient is faced with a mismatch between signifier and signified and with a sign seemingly without a system. It is my claim here that the sign is ultimately not left dangling without a system (as shown in Figure 1), but that part of the wild semiosis involves looking for a system that the sign in question may be part of. Alternatively, it may involve constructing such a system. As a result, *de-encourage* is not seen as non-systemic, but as belonging to an alternative system (Figure 2), in this case the language variety of a specific social movement.

11. Other systemic aspects on the text level to be mentioned here are incongruities based on expectations with respect to the organisation of adjacency pairs in conversation (Stokoe 2008) and the manipulation of comedy patterns for humorous effect. The latter case constitutes meta-humour. It appears for instance in comedians' parodies of each other's comedy style.

discourage	de-encourage
=	=
systemic use	non-systemic use?

Figure 1. Non-systemic incongruities?

<i>discourage</i>	<i>de-encourage</i>
=	=
Use based on Standard English	Use based on an alternative system

Figure 2. Two forms – two systems

Part of the attraction in processing humorous language seems to be to guess at the system behind forms like *de-encourage* or *bumcivilian*.¹² These forms can be seen as *pars pro toto*, as indicators of whole alternative systems. Ideally, a single word deviating from our language system may trigger the creation of a complete alternative world to ours in the mind of the recipient. In the case of *bumcivilian*, it is the world presented in *Look around You*, a world where molecules contain queen atoms, where iron was discovered by a Mr. de Havilland, where children count iron filings for a hobby and where water has the chemical formula H20 (H twenty). This situation is reflected in Figure 3 which differentiates between the communication between comedians and audience and the communication among the fictional characters within a comedy. As the fictional level of communication is the input of the real television communication, it is shown as contained within the latter.

Equipped with the differentiation of two levels of communication, we can now see that the system manipulations in *Look around You* take place on the fictional level of communication and create an alternative world to ours. This world is characterised by a slightly different language system representing – among other things – different scientific facts which are true in that world. Text/discourse type manipulations like the quiz format in Monty Python’s “Communist Quiz” sketch or the news format as in *The Day Today* also create new worlds which are supported by all fictional characters of the respective show/sketch, because they are all involved in the specific discourse.

But differentiating between our language system and the language of comedy is only one step. A more detailed differentiation is necessary for cases like Monty Python’s Mr Burrows, the man who says words in the wrong order. Here it is not

12. See also Bubel (this volume), who describes the audience in front of the screen as “lay discourse analysts trying to make sense of what they overhear”.

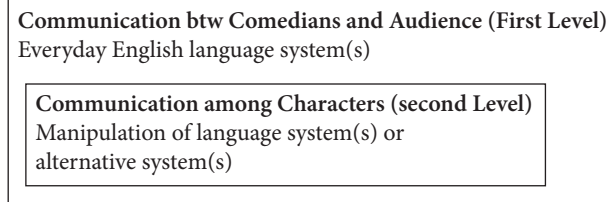


Figure 3. Two levels of communication¹³

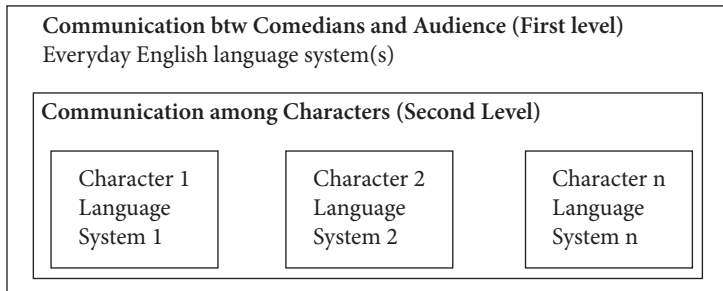


Figure 4. Various characters' language systems

the whole fictional world's language that is characterised by an alternative word order, but one isolated person – Mr. Burrows – has an idiolect marked by a specific word order. Similarly, the three men who respectively speak only the beginnings, middles and ends of words each have their own phonological system. So we are dealing with three different language systems within the fictional world, or four to be precise, because the TV show's presenter seems to have our system of Standard English (Figure 4).

In theory, each character would have their own language system. This should come as no surprise if we consider that in real life each person has their own idiolect, too. The difference is, however, that on the fictional level, there are hardly any restrictions on how striking and unusual these systemic idiosyncrasies may be.

13. 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, Clark (1996: 353ff.) for a layered model and Bubel's (2008) critical evaluation of the communicative models mentioned here. See also Brock (2004) for complex reception models of humorous communication.

Once the idea of individual language systems is established, they are open to further manipulation. With Monty Python's man who speaks only the ends of words (Chapman et al., volume 2:32–33), the following dialogue develops:

(10) Interviewer: *Mr Ith, don't you find it very difficult to make yourself understood?*

Mr Ith: *Yes, it is extremely difficult.*

Interviewer: *Just a minute, you're a fraud!*

Mr Ith: *Oh no. I can speak the third and fourth sentences perfectly normally.*

We can see that Mr Ith's seeming deviation from his own idiolect – only speaking the ends of words – is really a sign of a more complex system than initially indicated.

To finish this section, it is important to point out that the humorous manipulation of the language system is possible because of two general strategies of discourse interpretation: (1) the recipient assumes the validity of standard language systems by default, i.e. unless some information suggests otherwise. This is a property of human language processing necessary for humour as well as for any other communicative activity. In humour, however, it is particularly important, because here it allows the recipient to build up an expectation of normality without which incongruities could not be perceived as such. (2) On registering an element which does not fit into a standard language system, the recipient – as part of the interpretation process – tries to construct a context for the ill-fitting form which makes it meaningful and coherent. This context may consist of an alternative language system. Thus, the recipient may extrapolate from a single form to create a fully-fledged language system alternative to our standard one. The result is a process that takes the world of our experience as a starting point, but ultimately constructs an alternative world, instigated maybe by a single odd language item.

4. When comedy enters our language system

The two levels of communication indicated in Figure 3 may be interpreted as two clearly divided planes of communication – after all, one of them is real, the other fictional, scripted, artificial. But in fact, there are many ways in which the levels interact and feed on each other: knowledge of real (first level) communication determines our expectations for the fictional (second level) communication, to be destroyed there by the punch-line; the punch-line on the second level fulfils our expectation of humour on the first level, etc. But there is at least one transition

between the two levels of communication that should not be possible: deviant language elements on the second level which constitute incongruities should not be allowed to penetrate into the everyday language system on the first level, because if people started using words like *de-encouragise*, *iron de Havilland* or *Peter's peg*, the sub-systems of our language would be seriously destabilised.

And yet there are two different ways in which incongruous system elements may be transferred into our systemic repertoire on the first level of communication. The first one is by quotation of punch-lines, stock phrases or running gags: *spam* in its meaning of "large numbers of unwanted e-mail" is based on a Monty Python sketch where spam is a multiple ingredient of almost all dishes mentioned by a waitress in a café (Chapman et al. 1990, volume 2: 27); phrases like "This is an ex-parrot" (also based on Monty Python and famously used by Margaret Thatcher), "the only gay in the village" (from *Little Britain*) and "I have a cunning plan" (from *Blackadder*) have attained idiom status and are used in many different contexts, often with meanings at least partly different from the original ones. "The only gay in the village", for instance, is a term originally used by the character Daffyd, a gay young man from a Welsh village in a serial sketch from *Little Britain*. Now it is also used in various serious contexts on gay websites and in discussion forums.

This incidental incorporation of incongruous comedy elements with accompanying re-analysis is, of course, no threat to either the systems of our everyday language or of humorous communication. On the contrary, we can see it as an enrichment. However, there is a second aspect of transferring humorous structures to the first level of communication which is more serious due to its consequences for the humorous communication itself. This aspect needs further explanation.

The recipient of a comedy on the first level of communication can only process humorous communication successfully by applying knowledge of humorous text patterns, e.g. sketch comedy, sitcom, stand-up, etc. This generic knowledge provides basic orientation in the humorous discourse and tells the participants about general properties of the discourse, e.g. where to expect incongruities. This knowledge, however, does not normally contain the exact nature and content of these incongruities. This way, easy interpretation becomes possible, but crucially the punch-line is not given away, because humour – as many researchers claim – should contain an element of surprise (e.g. Keith-Spiegel 1972; Clarke 2008: 27). This is shown in Figure 5.

If, however, as shown in Figure 6, the recipients of a long-running comedy become so familiar with it that not only its general structures, but also the typical architecture of its incongruities become part of their text-pattern knowledge on the first level of communication, incongruities may become highly predictable and hence no longer surprising. One could say that a specific kind of humour

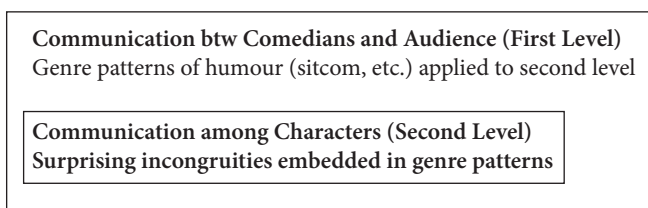


Figure 5. General humour patterns on first level, non-systemic incongruities

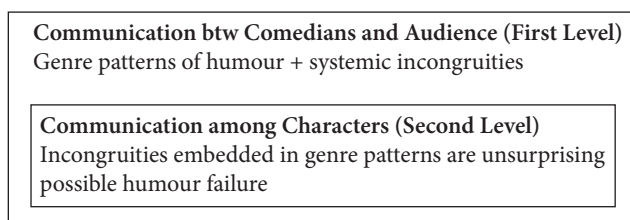


Figure 6. Systemic incongruities on the first level of communication

“dies” as soon as its incongruities become systemic, as it becomes boring for the audience.¹⁴

Many comedians are very good at delaying this process by manipulating certain dimensions of the ongoing discourse, but in the end the text pattern always catches up with its creators. This is where a comedy usually stops being successful and a new format has to be found. An example of highly predictable comedy patterns is given in Ricky Gervais’s *Extras* (Series 2: 2006): Andy Millman, a former film extra, writes a sitcom called *When the Whistle Blows*, which is produced by the BBC. However, in the production, his original idea is corrupted and he ends up with a predictable formula comedy full of stock phrases and sexual innuendo, which is commercially successful, but artistically doubtful. Millman himself is unhappy with his product because of passages like the following (Gervais and Merchant 2006: 460):

- (11) Ray: *Bloody hell, Kimberly, are you still doing that time sheet? Hurry up.*
 Kimberly: *It’s complicated, Mr Stokes.*
 Ray: *Are you having a laugh? Is she having a laugh?*
 Kimberly: *You know it gives me a headache if it’s too hard.*

14. Other types of humour, as represented by formula sitcoms such as *Friends*, may actively use intertextual references to similar types of comedy and to their own previously-shown programmes to create *familiarity*.

Ray: *Funny, that's what my wife said to me yesterday. I said 'Don't flatter yourself, love, that's not hard, it died years ago, that's rigor mortis.'*

When the Whistle Blows uses an abundance of catch phrases like “Are you having a laugh?” or “I don’t get it”. In addition, any word that can be given a sexual meaning is ruthlessly – and very predictably – exploited for innuendo, such as the word *hard* in the example above. In this way, the authors of *Extras* draw a caricature of a run-of-the-mill formula sitcom, which may give their audiences the pleasure of easily-digested humour and familiar structures, but not the sparkle of unexpected communicative turns and incongruities. Of course there are many US-type formula comedies that work on the same patterns for many years. Their success, then, will be simply due to the fact that their audiences appreciate other things than surprising incongruities.¹⁵ For that type of comedy, systemic incongruities should not be a dilemma for the comedians, but possibly even a stabilising factor. If this is true, then this should be an argument against a universal theory of humour.

5. Conclusions

This investigation has shown that the initial pattern – an expectation phase based on the instantiation of standard systems and an incongruity brought about by non-systemic language use – only represents one humour-inducing pattern in many and that the reality of humorous communication is far more complex. Most notably, the occurrence of forms that do not fit into the systemic paradigms of our standard language trigger a re-contextualisation of these forms, which may involve reconstructing an alternative language system from the few incongruous forms given. If these forms are understood as instantiations of alternative systems, they can provide access to those alternative systems and also to alternative worlds. From this point of view, a word like *bumcivilian* turns out to be much more than an isolated fictional lexical item. In this way, the human tendency not to discard seemingly deviant utterances, but to provide alternative contexts that render them coherent, is exploited to create alternative language systems with extremely little effort. These alternative systems provide a contrast for our own language, the rules of which become more apparent by comparison. After all, it is much easier to state what something is not than what it is.

15. See Bednarek (this volume) and *familiarity* vs. *novelty* as alternative motivations for viewing programmes.

Another result of our discussion is the fact that humorous text patterns also form systems of text types.¹⁶ However, their systemic status may pose a threat to successful communication, when not only the general text patterns, but also the humorous incongruities become conventionalised and hence predictable. In that case, at least the surprise element in the humorous process is eliminated, and eventually the humorous communication may fail altogether.

16. See Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 27).

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