

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 communion<sup>2</sup> (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.

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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,

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