



International Workshop

PROGRAMME

The Analysis of Fictional Dialogue in Film and Television Series: Between Narratology and Pragmatics

Keynote Speakers:

Jonathan Culpeper, University of Lancaster
Julia Leyda, Free University of Berlin

Organized by the Department of English and the
Department of American Studies, University of Innsbruck, Austria

26 – 27 November 2015, Innsbruck, Austria
Claudiana, Herzog-Friedrich-Straße 3

Thursday, 26 November 2015

09:30-10:30 – Registration

10:30-10:45 – Opening and Greetings

Sebastian Donat, Dean of the Faculty of Language and Literature,
University of Innsbruck

Gabriella Mazzon, Head of the Department of English, University of Innsbruck

11:00-12:00

Plenary Talk I

“Activity Types and Fictional TV Dialogue: A Contribution to Pragmatic Stylistics”

Jonathan Culpeper (University of Lancaster)

Chair: Gabriella Mazzon

12:00-13:30 Lunch Break

13:30-15:00 Panel I

Chair: Reinhard Heuberger

Yan Huang (University of Auckland), “A Fictional Dialogue in *Seinfeld*: Speech Acts, Neo-Gricean Conversational Implicatures, and Impoliteness”

Tobias Auböck (University of Innsbruck), “‘I Prefer ‘Mr. Soprano’: Terms of Address and Power Relations in *The Sopranos*”

Narine Vlasyan (Chelyabinsk State University, Russia), “Role and Functions of Discourse Markers in TV Series Dialogues”

15:00-15:30 Coffee Break

15:30-16:30 Panel II

Chair: Johannes Mahlkecht

Raffaele Zago (University of Pavia), “A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Film Dialogue: Colloquialisation and beyond”

András Hlavacska-Márton Petykó (Eötvös Lorand University), “A Cognitive Semiotic and Pragmatic Analysis of the ‘Mind Is a House’ Conceptual Metaphor in Two Contemporary Horror Films”

16:30-18:00 Seminar Paper Session: Linguistics

Chair: Gabriella Mazzon

Matej Antolovic, TBA

Marina Wasle, “Face-off in the Lyon’s Den: Face-work and Power in the TV-series *Empire*”

19:30 Social Dinner (Ottoburg)

Friday, 27 November 2015

9:30-10:30

Plenary Talk II

“*Breaking Bad: A Recessionary Western*”

Julia Leyda (Free University of Berlin)

Chair: Cornelia Klecker

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:30 Panel III

Chair: Robert Spindler

Roberta Hofer (University of Innsbruck), “A Guide to *The Kingdom*: Meta-Commentary in Lars von Trier’s TV Series”

Christian Stenico (University of Innsbruck), “Diagnosis: Narrator – The Use of Voice-Over Narration in *Scrubs*”

Julia Möseneder (University of Innsbruck), “D3bugging 3lliot Alders0n: Misdirection and Manipulation in *Mr. Robot*”

12:30-14:00 Lunch Break

14:00-15:30 Panel IV

Chair: Sibylle Baumbach

Monika Bednarek (University of Sydney), “A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Fictional Dialogue in Contemporary US TV Series”

Elisabeth Senff (University of Innsbruck), “Conversational Aspects of Deontic Modality in *Downton Abbey*”

Rebecca Goss (University of Innsbruck), “Narrative Complexity in *How I Met Your Mother: A Love Story Reversed*”

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:30 Seminar Paper Session: Narratology

Chair: Mario Klarer

Manuela Adrigan, “‘Sssh...’: Serialized Small Screen Horrors – *American Horror Story* and the Re-Invention of Horror on Television”

Thomas Hörl, “Reduction of Complexity in the Vampire Genre - *Buffy Had It All*”

17:30-18:00 Conference Closing – Summary and Outlook

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTES

Thursday, 26 November 2015, 11:00–12:00

Jonathan Culpeper, “Activity Types and Fictional TV Dialogue: A Contribution to Pragmatic Stylistics”

I begin this paper by taking a look at what I think are some of the key ways in which speech act theory, conversational implicature and (im)politeness can contribute to the understanding of fictional dialogue. I argue that extant studies using these theories tend: (1) to be rather atomistic, slicing off one part of what is going on and ignoring the whole, and (2) to import contextual features in an ad hoc way, i.e. they lack a theory of context. After briefly noting the importance of associative or knowledge-based inferencing, I introduce, and somewhat develop, the notion of activity types (e.g. Levinson 1979). To illustrate, I describe the constituents of the 'real life' interview activity type. Finally, I tackle the main part of the paper, which offers analyses of interview activity types constructed in various film and TV dialogues. I show how the dialogue works, especially how it contributes to characterisation, humour, and absurdity.

Professor Jonathan Culpeper works at the Department of Linguistics and English language of the University of Lancaster. He has worked and published extensively on pragmatics, English language (especially historical aspects) and stylistics. Specializing on Early Modern English and on corpus-based research, he has achieved substantial advances in historical dialogue analysis, cognitive stylistics and historical pragmatics. He has formulated a very successful theory of impoliteness in his book *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence* (2011, CUP), and has worked intensively on fictional and dramatic dialogue.

Julia Leyda, “Breaking Bad: A Recessionary Western”

Breaking Bad premiered in the US in 2008, the middle of the Great Recession. The central character, Walt, is a high school chemistry teacher in the Southwestern city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who lives in a lower-middle-class suburban home with his family. The drama originates in health and money problems: Walt learns he has terminal cancer, inflaming his financial anxieties – he has already been working after school at a car wash to supplement his meager income, and with his diagnosis comes the added blow that his health insurance will not cover his treatment. He decides that since he is already dying, he might as well make money illegally so that his wife and children will be provided for after he dies; he starts producing methamphetamine and thus becomes embroiled in the violent world of drug dealing and organized crime. The critically acclaimed series portrays through its story arc and its visual style Walt's decline and the irrevocable damage done to his family, drawing on many narrative and visual conventions first crystallized in the cinematic Western. This talk draws connections between *Breaking Bad*'s immediate cultural context – the financial crisis triggered by the housing crash and subsequent recession – and its aesthetic intertext – the Western genre – by reading two key aspects: the critique of masculinity articulated through reference to the Western in the show's characterization and narrative, and the socio-spatial matrix of gendered power relations expressed through the interplay of interior and exterior in the show's mise-en-scene.

Julia Leyda is Guest Professor at the John F. Kennedy Institute's Graduate School of North American Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, where she is also a Fellow in the German Research Foundation's Research Unit “Popular Seriality – Aesthetics and Practice.” Her current research interests include the financialization of domestic space in US screen culture, the aesthetics and affects of cuteness, and theories of post-cinema. Recent books include *Interviews: Todd Haynes* (UP of Mississippi, 2014) and *Extreme Weather and Global Media* (co-edited with Diane Negra, Routledge, 2015). She is now working on a monograph on representations of financialization, debt, and the home in the US real estate bubble, under the working title *At Home with Financialization in Recessionary US Screen Culture*. Other current projects include three edited collections in various stages of preparation: *Theorizing 21st-Century Film* with Shane Denson (REFRAME Books, forthcoming 2015), *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness* (with Joshua Dale, Joyce Goggin, Anthony McIntyre, and Diane Negra, forthcoming 2017), and *An Indelible Mark: Women in the Work of Todd Haynes*, with Theresa Geller.

PANELS

Thursday, 26 November 2015

13:30-15:00 Panel I

Yan Huang (University of Auckland), "A Fictional Dialogue in *Seinfeld*: Speech Acts, Neo-Gricean Conversational Implicatures, and Impoliteness"

This talk presents a pragmatic analysis of a short fictional dialogue between two characters in the American TV sitcom *Seinfeld*. The dialogue centers around asking and telling/non-telling time. My analysis is conducted from the perspectives of speech acts, especially indirect, speech acts, Gricean and neo-Gricean conversational implicatures, especially I-implicatures, and impoliteness within the classical Brown and Levinson 'face-saving' model of politeness. It will be shown that a combined pragmatic analysis can provide better insights into the dialogue than any singular pragmatic analysis.

Tobias Auböck (University of Innsbruck), "'I Prefer 'Mr. Soprano': Terms of Address and Power Relations in *The Sopranos*"

Since the English language does not offer its speakers pronouns to distinguish between polite and familiar forms of address (as opposed to German with *du* and *Sie* or French with *tu* and *vous*), English speakers have to use other strategies for this purpose. Usually, different terms of address have taken over this distinguishing function, and there is a vast difference between calling someone "Prof. Heisenberg," "William," "Bill" or "Snookums." Both the speaker's and the addressee's social position as well as their relationship and even the presence of bystanders will determine what form of address to use. But this process works both ways. Given the terms of address used, one can determine the (power) relations behind them.

This paper aims to analyze the language of address and its corresponding power relations in *The Sopranos*, a show that is all about power. Power within the family (both the mafia family and the biological one), legal and illegal power over employees, as well as overt and covert power over the general population. This interwoven power network is difficult to untangle, but the terms of address used provide insights for viewers to determine immediately who is giving out thumbscrews and who gets to sit on the receiving end of this unpleasant experience.

The approach underlying this study was originally developed by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman. Their findings, including the division of pronouns in some European languages into T and V pronouns (from French *tu* and *vous*), function as a basis for contemporary research even today. The question of how this is applied in *The Sopranos* and what it tells us about power relations visible in the show is going to be the central part of this paper.

Narine Vlasyan (Chelyabinsk State University, Russia), “Role and Functions of Discourse Markers in TV Series Dialogues”

As numerous text-based studies have shown, discourse markers occur more frequently in dialogic genres than in monologic ones. Viewed as a class of signals helping communicators to manage the conversation, DMs are a set of linguistic items that function in cognitive, expressive, social, and textual domains [Deborah Schiffrin, 2003]. They are mostly used for cohesion of different parts of discourse, providing logical connections, as well as expressing the speaker's attitude to the subject of conversation, showing agreement/disagreement with the message and providing feedback.

DMs abound in speech of different heroes in movies and TV series, with far more examples of DM usage found in lines of protagonists. In terms of cinematographic dialogic discourse, pragmatic focus of DMs shifts from purely discursive to partly figurative, making a discourse marker perform an image realisation function.

15:30-16:30 Panel II

Raffaele Zago (University of Pavia), “A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Film Dialogue: Colloquialisation and beyond”

The present work investigates film dialogue using Multi-Dimensional Analysis (Biber 1988 et seq.), a statistical approach which identifies co-occurrence patterns among a wide set of POS-tagged linguistic features, thus permitting to capture the fundamental dimensions of variation within a given corpus. The chief purpose of the investigation is to test the hypothesis of the colloquialisation of film dialogue over time, a hypothesis which has been suggested (e.g. by Kozloff 2000) but not examined empirically. In order to address such research question, American films from the 1950s and the 1960s will be compared with their remakes from the 1990s and the 2000s, respectively. The 'remake approach' adopted here is intended to guarantee situational comparability (i.e. homogeneity in terms of situational contexts and inter-character relationships) among the films which are contrasted in the interest of a reliable testing of colloquialisation. The corpus of originals and remakes under study comprises approximately 166,000 words and was constructed following various criteria (e.g. selection of realistic films; inclusion of a balanced number of comedies and crime films, etc.). The illustration of such criteria will offer the opportunity to consider relevant issues in the building of – small – corpora of film dialogue. A number of film extracts will be reported to document the overall finding of the study, i.e. the fact that a certain strengthening of colloquiality has occurred in the remakes. At a more general level which goes beyond colloquialisation, the study will point to interpersonal/interactional features (e.g. mental verbs, questions, interjections, stance adjectives, etc.) and narrative/informational features (e.g. nouns, activity verbs, etc.) as building blocks in the language of films.

András Hlavacska–Márton Petykó (Eötvös Loránd University), “A Cognitive Semiotic and Pragmatic Analysis of the ‘Mind Is a House’ Conceptual Metaphor in Two Contemporary Horror Films”

This paper discusses a cognitive semiotic and pragmatic analysis, which investigates the mind is a house conceptual metaphor in two contemporary horror films, namely *The Orphanage* (2007) directed by J. A. Bayona and *The Babadook* (2014) directed by Jennifer Kent. Our aim is to reconstruct the complex mental process the viewers carry out when they interpret the two above-mentioned horror films. We seek to explain how the viewers choose between a supernatural and a psychological interpretation in order to find a sufficiently relevant interpretation for the films.

From a cognitive semiotic (Zlatev 2012) and pragmatic (Schmid 2012) perspective, films can be approached as planned, recorded and edited sequences of audio-visual and linguistic signs, which are interpreted by the audience (Buckland 2000). This approach claims that interpretation is a complex mental process, by which the viewers construct a mental model establishing relationship between the film and their previous knowledge. As films are sequences of complex multimodal signs, this mental model tends to be a coherent narrative, which consists of subsequent scenes (Bordwell 1989).

In case of horror films, it is rather common that this narrative includes different supernatural creatures, such as ghosts or monsters and their activities within a certain house. In order to find a relevant interpretation for such a film, the viewers decide whether these supernatural creatures actually exist in the reality of the film, or they appear only in a character's mind. In the first case, the viewers find a supernatural interpretation for the film, while in the latter case, they find a psychological interpretation.

In case of numerous horror films, the supernatural interpretation is a relevant one, which creates a coherent narrative. However, we argue that the two analysed films are different, i.e. in their case, only a psychological interpretation creates a coherent narrative. We also argue that in order to construct a psychological interpretation, the viewers interpret the house, the supernatural creatures in the house, the events in the house and the utterances related to them as linguistic and non-linguistic metaphorical representations in these films. They use the mind is a house conceptual metaphor, and thereby they create a coherent narrative, in which the supernatural creatures and the events in the house are understood as representations of mental states and processes in a particular character's mind. In order to support our argument, we will present a multimodal semiotic and pragmatic analysis (Fahlenbrach 2015) using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses 2002/2010). In this analysis, we will examine the audio-visual signs and the linguistic utterances in the two films, which are related to the house and the supernatural creatures as well as their activities in it.

Roberta Hofer (University of Innsbruck), "A Guide to *The Kingdom*: Meta-Commentary in Lars von Trier's TV Series"

As recently announced, Danish film director and enfant terrible Lars von Trier is working on a new TV show, *The House That Jack Built*, predicted to finish in 2016. Already in 1994, however, he released the mini TV-series *Riget* (English: *The Kingdom*), which in eight episodes over four years tells of the unsettling events in Copenhagen's National Hospital.

Even though he is known for his provocative cinema productions, Lars von Trier explores many important filmic concepts also in his television series – some even for the first time. *Riget*, in many ways, must thus be considered an important piece of television work, in von Trier's oeuvre, as well as regarding the style of TV entertainment in general. *Riget* not only permanently oscillates between genres (comedy to tragedy to horror), it also introduced many unusual diegetic and paratextual storytelling devices, such as a mysterious spoken preface, a comical post-commentary by von Trier himself, or even an accompanying spoof music video clip with the director dancing.

This paper analyzes the way in which auteur von Trier builds his narration, and the para-diegesis around it, isolating many of the themes, concepts and techniques, which would continue to cement his signature style of filmic storytelling and as an auteur filmmaker. By contrasting von Trier's original TV series with a later, Americanized TV adaptation by Stephen King, it becomes especially apparent why the former must be considered a highly creative and innovative piece of television, whereas its remake lacks the narrative finesse to withstand closer analysis.

Christian Stenico (University of Innsbruck), Diagnosis: Narrator – The Use of Voice-Over Narration in *Scrubs*

Television in general, and the genre of the sitcom in particular, have long been viewed as uncomplicated mass-produced entertainment without big aspirations in regard to innovation or change. This has changed recently, with more and more programs that focus on increased quality and complexity, as is evidenced by the large amount of research on both quality television and narrative complexity. The medical sitcom *Scrubs* is among this new kind of series, which is not afraid of challenging its audience with deviations from the usual sitcom formula and increased complexity in its storytelling. Its most important narratological feature is the use of voice-over narration by its protagonist, which does not only give the audience an insight into the character's mind, but can also serve as a source of structure for the series as a whole. The aim of this paper is to analyze the functions of this narrator figure using theories of filmic and television narratology as well as concepts from theatre studies and highlight the ways in which *Scrubs* differs from the usual sitcom format.

Julia Möseneder (University of Innsbruck), "D3bugging 3lliot Alders0n: Misdirection and Manipulation in Mr. Robot"

The summer television season of 2015 had one rather surprising entry: USA Network, usually known for its more light-hearted cost, presented its viewers with a dark hacker drama that almost felt predictive in its topicality. Unusually shot and even more unusually narrated, Mr. Robot reached critical acclaim before it even premiered its first episode.

The story is narrated to the viewer by the protagonist, Elliot, who sets up his narration by greeting us with a casual, "Hello, friend." The story is told from his perspective, which means we experience what Elliot thinks, sees, and hears, and given that he is a mentally ill social outcast with a drug problem, his trustworthiness must constantly be called into question. On a visual level, the show plays with camera angles and shortsighting to make the viewers feel as lonely, lost, and unbalanced as its main character. The camera lies to us, sometimes plays with us, and does nothing to reassure us that what we see is actually real. Due to the show's narrative techniques, we are complicit in his lies, victims of his delusions, and oftentimes unable to verify the information we are given. Thus, the show engages in many small instances of misdirection, successfully hiding its end mind-game.

This paper examines the narrative features presented in the show and will establish that with its unique montages, unconventional voice-over narration, and new way of delivering asides, Mr. Robot gives its viewers an innovative show with a cutting-edge narrative concept.

14:00-15:30 Panel IV

Monika Bednarek (University of Sydney), "A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Fictional Dialogue in Contemporary US TV Series"

This paper makes use of a new corpus of dialogue transcribed from over 60 contemporary US television series: The Sydney Television Corpus (SydTV). SydTV is a small, specialised corpus which has been designed to be representative of the language variety of contemporary US American TV dialogue. Contemporary is here defined as the year of first broadcast falling between 2000 and 2012. This specific time frame was adopted because the first decade of the 21st century was characterised by the global rise of American TV series, and the 'golden age of television' that characterises US TV series from this period is still on-going. US American is defined as having the United States as country of origin. TV dialogue is defined as the actual dialogue uttered by actors on screen as they are performing characters in fictional TV series. TV dialogue hence does not cover screen directions, and may differ from the dialogue presented in official pre-production or shooting scripts. About half of the corpus comes from comedy genres and the other half from drama genres, since this is one of the major distinctions made in the TV industry. Based on the rise and importance of so-called 'quality' television, about half of the corpus comes from Emmy- or Golden Globe-winning or -nominated series, and the other half does not. This paper presents the first findings of salient language features in this

corpus, based on analysis of word frequency, supplemented by qualitative investigations using concordancing. Analyses will also consider linguistic variation across the files contained in SydTV. Previous research into TV dialogue as a language variety has been somewhat limited, in that data come from individual TV series (e.g. Quaglio 2009, Bednarek 2010) or a smaller range of different programs (e.g. Bednarek 2012, 2014). In using data from a much wider range of contemporary TV series, this paper will make an important contribution to the linguistic study of television series.

Elisabeth Senft (University of Innsbruck), “Conversational Aspects of Deontic Modality in *Downton Abbey*”

Locher (2008: 509) stresses that “[a]s social beings we express, communicate, and, ultimately, negotiate our identity through many different channels” – one of the most important being language. Based on this observation as well as the recent trend within sociolinguistics and pragmatics to recognize mediated language performance in movies or TV-shows as a valuable source for linguistic variation and change, this study traces the negotiation of social relationships and identities in conversations between characters in the British TV-series *Downton Abbey*. As the characters in the series are of different social ranks, their relations are found to be strongly negotiated when communicating and reacting to expressions of obligation. Therefore, the present study investigates the strategies used by characters of different social ranks to mark deontic modality. A qualitative analysis of selected episodes suggests that characters prefer indirect strategies for expressing obligation; the choice of strategies itself is highly context-dependent.

Rebecca Goss (University of Innsbruck), “Narrative Complexity in *How I Met Your Mother*: A Love Story Reversed”

This paper seeks to discuss the innovative narrative techniques used in the television series *How I Met Your Mother*, which is one incarnation of recent more complex narrative in American prime-time television. Since complexity has revamped the traditional storytelling format in television in the past two decades, I will give a brief definition of the term “narrative complexity” in order to then analyze selected episodes of the series and identify the most effective narrative tools and stylistic devices that are used in order to understand its plot and narration. I will thereby illustrate that even though the plot twists and turns the ultimate promise to reveal the identity of the mother is eventually fulfilled. Furthermore, *How I Met Your Mother* is a prime example of the ever-changing form of television narrative; and therefore, with its entertaining and alternative storytelling this television series leaves a lasting impression.