

Computer-mediated communication as telecinematic discourse

Sociolinguistic work on functional aspects of telecinematic discourse have been well established in recent years, most notably by Richardson (2010), Bednarek (2012; 2018), or Queen (2015). The main focus in most of these studies is on dialogue as a spoken resource (Bednarek 2018). Conversely, this does not account for character or narrator language that is displayed in modes beyond the spoken word.

While it has been acknowledged that, as a visual medium, the semiotic resources of TV series ultimately include multimodal cues (Androutsopoulos 2012; Bednarek 2018), these have rarely been systematically investigated alongside spoken dialogue (but see, for example, work by Landert (2017) or Toolan (2012)).

In this study, I focus on computer-mediated communication (CMC) as stylized character-authored language that is visually included on screen and embedded in the narrative. As Ilbury (2020) argues, CMC is a rich sociolinguistic resource, providing dynamic opportunities for identity construction, enregisterment, stylization and performance of personas. As such, a display of CMC in scripted fictional television might be considered a relevant linguistic resource alongside spoken language.

Examples from a variety of television series show how CMC creatively combines multimodal cues (platform framing, emoji, interactions) in order to contribute to the overall narrative, characters, intertextual aspects, and how these instances map onto existing functional frameworks of television language.

In sum, this study provides a first systematic overview of potential functions of CMC within the context of fictional television series, arguing that written-on-screen communication contributes to meaning-making in significant ways and might be considered a part of what we consider telecinematic discourse to be.

References

- Androutsopoulos, Jannis. 2012. Repertoires, characters and scenes: Sociolinguistic difference in Turkish-German comedy. *Multilingua* 31(2–3). 301–326.
- Bednarek, Monika. 2012. Constructing “nerdiness”: Characterisation in *The Big Bang Theory*. *Multilingua* 31(2–3). 199–229.
- Bednarek, Monika. 2018. *Language and television series: A linguistic approach to TV dialogue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ilbury, Christian. 2020. “Sassy queens”: Stylistic orthographic variation in Twitter and the enregisterment of AAVE. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 24(2). 245–264.
- Landert, Daniela. 2017. Stance in fiction. In Miriam Locher & Andreas Jucker (eds.), *Pragmatics of fiction*, 489–514. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Queen, Robin. 2015. *Vox popular: The surprising life of language in the media*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Richardson, Kay. 2010. *Television dramatic dialogue: A sociolinguistic study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Toolan, Michael. 2011. "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*. In Roberta Piazza, Monika Bednarek & Fabio Rossi (eds.), *Telecinematic discourse: Approaches to the language of films and television series*, 161–183. Amsterdam: Benjamins.