

○ **M. BEDNAREK, *THE LANGUAGE OF FICTIONAL TELEVISION: DRAMA AND IDENTITY*.**

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The Language of Fictional Television: Drama and Identity makes an invaluable contribution to the field of applied linguistics, particularly to the emergent area of telecinematic discourse, in which the linguistic aspects of cinema and television are investigated. The book addresses televisual discourse, i.e. the language of television, by looking at general issues regarding fictional television, its contextualisation and position within the wider society, and its audiences. The more specific issues taken up in this book relate to the particular genre of dramedy (which Bednarek explains is a hybrid genre consisting of “drama” and “comedy”), and are exemplified through a combination of a corpus linguistics and a multimodal discourse analysis of the TV series *Gilmore Girls*.

The book opens with a succinct introduction to the topic, motivation for the book, issues to be examined, theoretical approaches and methodological strategies employed, as well as a neat overview of the structure of the book. The two main sections of the book, each consisting of several chapters, examine fictional television from two diverse aspects: dialogue and drama in the first section and character identity in the second.

The first section offers a broad analysis of fictional television series in terms of their communicative context, genre, audience and dialogue. Thus, Chapter 2 presents a useful overview of television in general and television series in particular, starting with the necessity for analysis, given television’s use as a reference point for the negotiation of identities. Furthermore, television has attracted much academic attention and is now being widely researched from numerous perspectives and in various disciplines. Therefore, this section briefly cites major works and scholars in the field and the history of academic approaches to television. The chapter then looks at different forms and genres in television, defining the basic concepts and elements of fictional television, such as: television series and serials. Following this, the chapter discusses the most important features of fictional television from four different aspects: communicative context, multimodality, the code of realism and character identity. These four aspects can be observed in the sample analysis that Bednarek performs on dialogue in the *Gilmore Girls*.

Chapter 3 furthers the discussion with regard to the genre of ‘dramedy’. Bednarek elaborates on the reasons for choosing *Gilmore Girls* as a case study and familiarises the readers with background information about this series - its form, genre, characters, setting and production

—before embarking on the task of examining the dialogue, communicative context, multimodality, code of realism and character identity. The second section of the chapter explores and exemplifies the construal of the audience of this series, by conducting a multimodal analysis of the DVD cover of the series, with particular attention to the type of language used in the cover text.

In the process of the analysis of the dialogue in *Gilmore Girls*, the topic of Chapter 4, Bednarek employs two different but complementary methods, corpus linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis. Within the corpus linguistics methodology, she also employs corpus stylistics, which she explains is of particular importance to the study of fictional dialogue and whose roots she identifies in the analysis of fictional (literary) texts. Bednarek's analysis of fictional television dialogue is compared to corpora of naturally occurring everyday language with a view to showing how they differ and how fictional television dialogue is used to create drama and character identity (p.1). Thus, she engages in investigating and comparing the most frequent words, clusters, phrases and emotive interjections used in the series with spoken American English represented by the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English ('SB') and the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC). She also provides a succinct and useful comparison between her own and others' research into corpus analysis of scripted television dialogue (Mittmann, 2006; Quaglio, 2008, 2009).

The second part of the book takes a closer and more in-depth look at character identity over four chapters. The first, Chapter 5, concentrates on television dialogue and characterisation, by discussing one of the key functions of dialogue – revealing and constituting characters and their identity. Bednarek begins her quest into the realm of fictional television characterisation by referring to the established disciplines that discuss characterisation, i.e. literary studies, stylistics, narratology, media studies and cognitive stylistics, leading up to the actual analysis of the *Gilmore Girls* characters and relying on corpus stylistics as a method.

The perspective that Bednarek adopts on television character identity here is in terms of evaluative and emotional preferences of the major characters, which she further elaborates upon in Chapter 6, by exploring expressive character identity from two points of view: linguistic and multimodal. The concept of expressive character identity is defined and explained as 'a kind of scripted identity that is related to the emotionality and the attitudes/values/ideologies of characters in fictional television genres' (p.118). This chapter focuses only on the linguistic aspect of expressive identity, which is accomplished by investigating interjections and other verbal signals showing emotion, affect and evaluation in the scripted speech of the *Gilmore Girls* characters.

In the next chapter, the focus is turned towards multimodal performance and a more in-depth analysis of the characters' expressive identity, which involves other features besides

language, such as: *mise en scène*, nonverbal behaviour and acting, hand and arm gestures, head movement, gaze and facial affect. Bednarek conducts her analysis on a single scene from the series, which shows a break-up between the principal character and another major character, and which she chooses as salient owing to its high level of expressivity. The chapter ends with a short discussion concerning expressive identity in interaction, or expressive sequences, a concept which Bednarek draws from Goodwin and Goodwin (2000), and which has verbal behaviour in speech at its core. She masterfully applies the expressive sequences (joking, blame and breaking-up sequences) to the previously multimodally analysed scene to draw conclusions regarding the construal and expression of the expressive identity of the two characters in the particular scene.

The final chapter in this book discusses at length yet another aspect of expressive character identity – ideology and shared attitudes. As ideology in terms of television is a complex concept, Bednarek concentrates solely on one aspect of it, i.e. the ideology of food – particularly meat-eating – and its links to the characters' identities, in light of the emphasis given to meat-eating throughout the series. Bednarek does this by means of corpus linguistics, i.e. by analysing frequencies of and concordances for lexical items concerning meat-eating and its representation vis-à-vis vegetarian and vegan practices. Bednarek also provides a successful link between this particular ideology as represented on television and in society more generally. Lastly, she discusses the aspect of bonding and/or identification that audiences forge with the characters in this or any other TV series, leading to conclusions regarding the importance of investigating fictional television language, and the impact of television in terms of building cultural citizenship, globalised ideologies and identities.

While providing answers to some significant questions regarding the language of fictional television, Bednarek poses other crucial questions, including: 'What aspects would a more representative corpus of television dialogue reveal about differences between the language of fictional television and spontaneous language? Could linguistic analysis of the kind described in this book result in better handbooks for scriptwriters? What influence is there of televisual language on spontaneous language? How do expressive features/resources not closely investigated in this book contribute to the construal of expressive character identity and what kinds of identities do they construe? Are there a finite number of expressive character identity types? What is the relation of these to "real-life" identity/personality types and how do audiences react to different expressive character identities?' (pp.230-232).

Although at times the lack of detail about some aspects of the series leaves an impression of incompleteness, the book represents a highly valuable resource and reference for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students, and all others who are interested in exploring the language of television series, the ideologies that underlie them and the impact those ideologies have on audiences. It can serve as good guide to conducting linguistic investigations of television and as a source of various topics in and approaches to fictional television.

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