

Language and Television Series

This book offers a comprehensive linguistic analysis of contemporary US television series. Adopting an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approach, Monika Bednarek brings together linguistic analysis of the Sydney Corpus of Television Dialogue with analysis of scriptwriting manuals, interviews with Hollywood scriptwriters, and a survey undertaken with university students about their consumption of TV series. In so doing, she presents five new and original empirical studies. The focus on language use in a professional context (the television industry), on scriptwriting pedagogy, and on learning and teaching provides an applied linguistic lens on TV series. This is complemented by perspectives taken from media linguistics, corpus linguistics, and sociocultural linguistics/sociolinguistics. Throughout the book, multiple dialogue extracts are presented from a wide variety of well-known fictional television series including *The Big Bang Theory*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Bones*. Researchers in applied linguistics, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, and media linguistics will find the book both stimulating and unique in its approach. The companion website (www.syd-tv.com) contains a wealth of additional material.

Monika Bednarek is Associate Professor in Linguistics at The University of Sydney, Australia. She is the author of five books including *The Discourse of New Values* (2017) and *The Language of Fictional Television* (2010). She is co-editor of the international, peer-reviewed journal *Functions of Language*.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-47222-7 – Language and Television Series
 Monika Bednarek
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE APPLIED LINGUISTICS SERIES

The authority on cutting-edge Applied Linguistics research

Series Editors 2007–present: Carol A. Chapelle and Susan Hunston
 1988–2007: Michael H. Long and Jack C. Richards

For a complete list of titles please visit: www.cambridge.org

Recent titles in this series:

Intelligibility, Oral Communication, and the Teaching of Pronunciation
John M. Levis

Multilingual Education
 Between Language Learning and Translanguaging
Edited by Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter

Learning Vocabulary in Another Language
2nd Edition I. S. P. Nation

Narrative Research in Applied Linguistics
Edited by Gary Barkhuizen

Teacher Research in Language Teaching
 A Critical Analysis
Simon Borg

Figurative Language, Genre and Register
Alice Deignan, Jeannette Littlemore and Elena Semino

Exploring ELF
 Academic English Shaped by Non-native Speakers
Anna Mauranen

Genres across the Disciplines
 Student Writing in Higher Education
Hilary Nesi and Sheena Gardner

Disciplinary Identities
 Individuality and Community in Academic Discourse
Ken Hyland

Replication Research in Applied Linguistics
Edited by Graeme Porte

The Language of Business Meetings
Michael Handford

Reading in a Second Language
 Moving from Theory to Practice
William Grabe

Modelling and Assessing Vocabulary Knowledge
Edited by Helmut Daller, James Milton and Jeanine Treffers-Daller

Practice in a Second Language
 Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology
Edited by Robert M. DeKeyser

Feedback in Second Language Writing
Edited by Ken Hyland and Fiona Hyland

Task-Based Language Education
 From Theory to Practice
Edited by Kris van den Branden

Second Language Needs Analysis
Edited by Michael H. Long

Insights into Second Language Reading
 A Cross-Linguistic Approach
Keiko Koda

Research Genres
 Exploration and Applications
John M. Swales

Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning
Edited by Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey

Exploring the Dynamics of Second Language Writing
Edited by Barbara Kroll

Understanding Expertise in Teaching
 Case Studies of Second Language Teachers
Amy B. M. Tsui

Criterion-Referenced Language Testing
James Dean Brown and Thom Hudson

Corpora in Applied Linguistics
Susan Hunston

Pragmatics in Language Teaching
Edited by Kenneth R. Rose and Gabriele Kasper

Cognition and Second Language Instruction
Edited by Peter Robinson

Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes
Edited by John Flowerdew and Matthew Peacock

Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition
 Foundations for Teaching, Testing and Research
Carol A. Chapelle

Language and Television Series

A Linguistic Approach to TV Dialogue

Monika Bednarek

*The University of Sydney
and
Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies,
University of Freiburg*



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-47222-7 — Language and Television Series
 Monika Bednarek
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108472227
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108559553

© Monika Bednarek 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bednarek, Monika, 1977- author.

Title: Language and television series : a linguistic approach to TV dialogue / Monika Bednarek.

Description: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Series: The Cambridge applied linguistics series | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018022338 | ISBN 9781108472227 (hardback : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781108459150 (paperback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Television broadcasting—Language. | Dialogue in television programs. | Dialogue analysis. | Discourse analysis.

Classification: LCC PN1992.8.L35 B42 2018 | DDC 808.2/25014—dc23
 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018022338>

ISBN 978-1-108-47222-7 Hardback
 ISBN 978-1-108-45915-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Series Editors' Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
PART I INTRODUCTION	1
1 <i>Television Dialogue</i>	3
2 <i>Linguistic Approaches to Telecinematic Discourse</i>	18
PART II A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO TELEVISION SERIES (FATS)	33
3 <i>Functions Relating to the Communication of the Narrative</i>	35
4 <i>Other Functions of TV Dialogue</i>	54
PART III DATA AND APPROACHES	79
5 <i>Corpora and Corpus Linguistic Methods</i>	81
6 <i>Other Approaches</i>	104
PART IV ANALYSES OF SYDTV	119
7 <i>Salient Features of TV Dialogue: A Corpus Linguistic Approach</i>	121
8 <i>Key Words, Variation, and Further Insights into TV Dialogue</i>	155
9 <i>Non-Codified Language in SydTV</i>	179

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
PART V	TV DIALOGUE IN PEDAGOGY	205
10	<i>‘Take That Pencil and Just GO!’: TV Series and Scriptwriting Pedagogy</i>	207
11	<i>Consuming Television Dialogue: A Case Study of Advanced Learners in Germany</i>	218
PART VI	CONCLUSION	235
12	<i>Conclusion</i>	237
	<i>Appendix</i>	251
	<i>Endnotes</i>	263
	<i>References</i>	277
	<i>Index of TV Series</i>	295
	<i>General Index</i>	297

Figures

1.1	What a whiteboard in the writers' room might look like (author's own photo of a whiteboard for <i>Shameless</i> , hanging in the room dedicated to screenwriting at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood)	13
3.1	Introducing characters in <i>Community</i>	47
4.1	Still from <i>Nashville</i> showing an advert for FosterMore	68
4.2	Still from <i>Homeland</i> showing a fictional newscast	71
5.1	Non-English dialogue mixed with English dialogue (<i>The Shield</i>)	86
5.2	Example of subtitled dialogue (<i>Lost</i>)	86
5.3	Example of voice-over dialogue by a character (<i>Nurse Jackie</i>)	86
5.4	Example of voice-over by a narrator (<i>Pushing Daisies</i>)	86
5.5	Example of dialogue from TV (24)	86
5.6	Example of dialogue that is sung (<i>New Girl</i>)	87
5.7	Example of dialogue that is recited (<i>Gilmore Girls</i>)	87
5.8	Example of characters speaking in unison (<i>My Name Is Earl</i>)	87
5.9	Example of characters speaking in overlap (<i>It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i>)	87
5.10	Example of interruption (<i>Suits</i>)	87
5.11	Example of repeats (<i>Veep</i>)	88
5.12	Situating this research project	92
5.13	Extract from GraphColl visualisation for <i>ain't</i>	101
5.14	Sorted concordance lines for <i>apologize</i> in SydTV-Std (including speaker names)	102
5.15	Concordance plot for the word <i>mistake</i> in the <i>Gilmore Girls</i> episode	103
6.1	Jane Espenson (left) and the author (right) after the interview (author's own photo)	112
6.2	Five-point Likert scale	116
6.3	Five-point scale	116
7.1	<i>This is my</i> used as a routine formula in introductions	133

viii *List of Figures*

7.2	Twenty instances where <i>hi</i> is used as a greeting, selected from twenty different TV series	134
7.3	Twenty-five random instances of <i>here</i> , selected from twenty-five different TV series	136
7.4	Twenty-five random instances of <i>kidding</i>	138
7.5	Twenty-five random instances of <i>doctor</i> , <i>Miss</i> , <i>Mr</i> , <i>Mrs</i> , <i>Sir</i> , with file names	139
7.6	All instances for <i>Miss</i> in SydTV-Std (excluding the verb)	141
7.7	Twenty-five random instances for <i>ass</i>	143
7.8	Twenty-five random instances for <i>bitch</i>	143
7.9	Twenty-five random instances of <i>date</i>	145
7.10	Twenty-five random instances of <i>blood</i> , with file names	146
7.11	Twenty-five random instances of <i>no</i>	149
8.1	<i>Penthouse penthouse</i> in <i>Workaholics</i>	162
8.2	Collocates of <i>ain't</i> in SydTV (MI3, 5:5, min f = 2; stat >= 9 [default])	172
8.3	Multiple negation in SydTV	173
9.1	Concordance for <i>bieber*</i> or <i>belieb*</i> in <i>Workaholics</i>	187
9.2	Word forms related to computer-mediated communication (SydTV)	200
11.1	Responses for the statement <i>My English teacher has used/shown examples from English-language TV series in the class-room</i>	224
A.1	Questionnaire in German	257

Tables

3.1	A new functional approach to television series (FATS)	37
5.1	SydTV: genre and quality (token definition: hyphens do not separate words; ' not allowed within word)	83
5.2	SydTV: textual time (token definition: hyphens do not separate words; ' not allowed within word)	84
5.3	Summary of other corpora used in this book	94
6.1	List of the scriptwriting manuals surveyed in this book	111
6.2	Interviews with Hollywood scriptwriters	113
6.3	Example of the classification scheme used to analyse questionnaire responses	118
7.1	Results from corpus comparison (Sketch Engine)	122
7.2	Number of positive key n-grams in SydTV-Std and the LSAC (reference corpus: AmE06)	125
7.3	Key items in SydTV-Std (abbreviated table)	130
7.4	Raw frequency and range for five key items	140
7.5	Key items pointing to interrogatives and negation	147
7.6	Key items that include <i>talk/talking</i> or <i>tell/told</i>	150
7.7	Most and least frequent key words	151
7.8	Key words and log ratios	151
7.9	Highest and lowest log ratios	152
8.1	Variation in range	157
8.2	Key words that occur across fewer than twenty files	158
8.3	Number of key words according to dispersion values	164
8.4	Key words with a WordList dispersion value lower than 0.8	164
8.5	Information on three low-dispersion key words	165
8.6	Concordance plots of the three key words in the episodes with the most occurrences	165
9.1	Raw and normalised frequency and range for variants for plural <i>you</i>	181
9.2	Comparison of word forms across three corpora of American English	195

x	<i>List of Tables</i>	
9.3	Comparison of the word forms <i>tweet</i> , <i>blog</i> , and <i>email</i> (SydTV vs. COCA/F)	199
11.1	Responses to the item: <i>When I watch fictional English-language TV series (for example, Big Bang Theory, NCIS, The Mentalist, The Blacklist, CSI, Bones, Girls, Brooklyn 99, Game of Thrones, House of Cards...), I typically do so in the following way (on TV, Netflix, iTunes, Amazon, computer, internet, DVD...)</i>	223
11.2	Responses for the item: <i>I would show examples from English-language TV series (for example Big Bang Theory, NCIS) when I teach English to others (in the future) or I have already done so (e.g. work experience in a school, tutoring...)</i>	223
11.3	Responses for the statement: <i>The language spoken by TV characters in English-language series is similar to the language spoken by 'real' speakers</i>	225
A.1	List of all episodes included in SydTV	251
A.2	Corpus size (in number of words) of SydTV and SydTV-Std depending on token definitions	253
A.3	Composition of SydTV in number of episodes and words according to WordSmith ('tokens in text'), showing the variables of textual time, 'quality' vs. 'mainstream', and drama vs. comedy (token definition: hyphens do not separate words; ' not allowed within word)	253
A.4	Variants and their standardised forms	253
A.5	Information on standardisation	254
A.6	Unclassified key items	259
A.7	Other responses to questionnaire items	259
A.8	Words/expressions listed by students in the questionnaire in response to item 11	260

Series Editors' Preface

Television series made in the United States are sold around the world and constitute a major influence on how English is used. Monika Bednarek's book is a fascinating study of dialogue from a corpus of programmes from sixty-six US series ranging from gritty drama to light comedy. Most readers of this book will be familiar with at least some of these programmes. TV series of this type have been the subject of academic research from perspectives such as media studies, but this is one of the few books to investigate the language of such series.

The book examines dialogue in TV series from a number of angles. Bednarek offers a detailed categorisation of the functions of such dialogue, including narrative-related functions such as progressing the plot or filling out character, and medium-related functions such as endorsing products or engaging audience emotions. The discussion and illustration of these functions reminds us that TV dialogue is an important part of a carefully crafted artefact designed to inform, entertain, and influence. The book then addresses the issue of how similar TV dialogue is to naturally occurring language, taking a corpus linguistics approach. TV dialogue needs to sound convincingly real without necessarily replicating actual features of natural interaction. An investigation of how this is done is supported by studies of key words and phraseology. Bednarek also presents a close study of what she calls non-codified language. The analysis reveals words and phrases that are invented for individual series, as well as neologisms that are at the leading edge of language change, existing in the community but not yet codified in any dictionary. The role of TV dialogue in supporting such change is fascinating.

Bednarek goes beyond the study of the dialogues as text or corpus (the dialogue as product) by conducting interviews with writers and producers to investigate how scripts are written and produced. This analysis gives an insight into the degree of intentionality and awareness on the part of the producers that lies behind the artefact of TV dialogue. In the final section of the book she also considers the role of TV dialogue in two pedagogical situations: the training of script-writers and the learning of English as a foreign or additional language. The latter is based on questionnaires completed by students of English in Germany. The value, and limitations, of TV dialogue as a pedagogic resource is explored in this chapter. In addressing the production

xii *Series Editors' Preface*

(by writers) of dialogue and its consumption (by viewers), Bednarek closes the circle around the dialogue itself.

This book has much to say to researchers into language education who are interested in the influence of television on language learning and its potential as a pedagogic resource. Researchers into the role of dialogue in narrative will also find much of interest here. The book also informs researchers who take an applied linguistics approach to the media or who wish to extend their research in that direction. A key feature is that the methodologies used are described in detail, allowing the studies to be replicated on other data. The book offers unique insight into a topic that is popular in every sense, and is a welcome addition to our series.

Acknowledgements

There are many people and institutions that have been instrumental in assisting me with the production of this book. I would like to acknowledge and thank them all most sincerely here. I am grateful to Susan Hunston and Carol Chapelle for commissioning the book for the Cambridge Applied Linguistics series and to the whole Cambridge University Press production team for seeing the manuscript through to publication. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers who provided feedback on earlier draft chapters of the manuscript, and Susan Hunston, who reviewed the final manuscript. Thanks also go to the participants for feedback and suggestions at various research seminars and conferences where parts of the research have been presented over the last few years.

The corpus that I analyse in this book – the Sydney Corpus of Television Dialogue (SydTV) could not have been built without school and faculty funding provided by The University of Sydney. I want to thank the research assistants who helped with building the corpus over several years: Cassandra Liardét (née Fawcett), David Lesslie, Samuel Luke, Ganna Veselovska, and Charlie Revett. I am also grateful to Georgia Carr for assisting with the transcription of interviews and editing the book manuscript. Throughout this project, Mike Scott provided help on WordSmith, implemented features, and fixed bugs – I am incredibly grateful for his support. Thanks are also due to the Sketch Engine team for assistance in exploiting SydTV with Sketch Engine, and to Joel Nothman for advice on Excel. Oral historian Tina Wright provided helpful information on the transcription of the data for the Charlotte project.

The research leading to these results has received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) under REA grant agreement no. 609305. I wish to express my thanks to the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), University of Freiburg, Germany, for awarding me an FCFP External Senior Fellowship. Much of the groundwork and writing for this book was undertaken in late 2015 and early 2016 during my fellowship. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity and would like to thank Bernd Kortmann and Cristian Mair for fruitful discussions around standardness and corpus

xiv *Acknowledgements*

linguistics. A big thank you is also due to Roland Muntschick for general research assistance and analysis of questionnaire results.

The remainder of the writing was mostly done during my sabbatical in the first half of 2017 at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I would like to thank the Department of Linguistics for inviting me to come to UCSB as a Visiting Scholar and Mary Bucholtz for being my faculty sponsor, discussing language use in TV series, and commenting on earlier draft sections of this book. I am extremely grateful to John Du Bois for giving me access to the Longman Spoken American Corpus, for information on the corpus contents, and advice on transcription. I would also like to thank Stefan Gries for a helpful conversation about corpus statistics, and the participants at the SocioCult research seminar for their advice on dialogue lines in African American Vernacular English. The University of Sydney provided institutional and financial support during my sabbatical, for which I am very grateful.

I also wish to thank the university lecturers in Germany who helped me with undertaking questionnaires at the Universität Mannheim (Ira Gawlitzek, Rosemarie Tracy); Universität Augsburg (Christian Hoffmann); Universität Heidelberg (Beatrix Busse, Sandra Mollin); Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich (Renate Bauer, Susanne Handl, Jennifer Arendholz); Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg (Christian Mair, Brigitte Halford); Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Universität, Aachen (Stella Neumann); and Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (Brigitta Mittmann, Cordula Glass, Michael Klotz).

I am extremely thankful, too, to the five Hollywood scriptwriters/showrunners whom I interviewed for this book: Jane Espenson, David Mandel, Doris Egan, Bob Berens, and one writer who preferred to remain unidentified. Special thanks are due to Jane Espenson, who was so generous with her time and assistance. I also appreciate the help from Javier Barrios and Hilary Swett regarding access to official final scripts archived in the Writers Guild foundation's Shavelson-Webb library in Los Angeles. Copyright for all material analysed in this book remains with the original authors/creators and is used exclusively for criticism and scholarship.

Most of all I want to thank Helen Caple, who acted as a sounding board for ideas, read draft chapters as well as the final manuscript, and always gave me valuable feedback. She also had to endure countless hours of television watching, and the fact that I could never turn off my analytical media brain. Without her love and support in all ways, writing this book would have been so much more difficult!

Spoiler Alert

In this book I discuss and analyse examples from many US television series. Readers should be aware that in this process plot elements from some series may be revealed.