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'Read less, more TV': A corpus linguistic perspective on television discourse

This paper engages with data from one of the most popular types of texts that we encounter: the discourse of fictional television. With a few recent exceptions (e.g. Rey 2001, Mittmann 2006, Quaglio 2008, 2009, Bednarek 2010), corpus linguistics has so far not attended to the language of television series. This is despite the fact that in many countries we spend more hours watching television than consuming other media. In Australia, for instance, the average time spent watching television is more than 3 hours every day (Dick 2010). Other reasons for studying television dialogue include its influence on viewer's language (Mittmann 2006) and its function as 'transmodern teacher' (Hartley 1999), with fictional television series offering models to viewers of how things are done (Wodak 2009). Indeed, the linguistic study of television discourse can be seen as an important emerging area of research, with current studies (e.g. Baker 2005, Babel 2006, Wodak 2009, Richardson 2010, Toolan in press) drawing on existing research in (critical) discourse analysis, conversation analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and stylistics. In this paper I aim to show how we can approach the study of television dialogue from a corpus linguistic perspective. To do so I introduce short case studies on various television series drawing on my own and others' research. These case studies focus respectively on the following areas of research:

- The difference between television dialogue and unscripted language (e.g. research on *Gilmore Girls*, *Golden Girls*, *Friends*, *Dawson's Creek*);
- The linguistic construal of characterisation (e.g. research on *The Big Bang Theory*, *Lost*);
- The construal of mainstream ideologies (e.g. research on *Gilmore Girls*, *The West Wing*);
- The construal of gender and sexuality (e.g. research on *Will & Grace*, *Star Trek*)

Rather than describing each case study in detail, my paper focuses on how these studies demonstrate the value of a corpus linguistic exploration of television dialogue. At the same time, I will argue that the study of television discourse is best approached from different perspectives and profits from bringing together both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A final point I will make concerns the advantages of drawing on such research in the teaching of linguistics in general and in teaching corpus linguistics in particular.

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