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Panel description

The appropriation of media texts

This panel seeks to explore the multifarious ways in which media texts are appropriated in everyday life. Appropriation encompasses all the locally specific ways in which people integrate media in their daily lives, making sense of them. Texts here refers to all modes of communication available in a certain medium, be it written or spoken language, pictures or sound.

On the one hand, there is an extensive body of research on media texts in various disciplines such as media studies or linguistics. Research interests range from the investigation of all types of media (e.g. television, newspapers, computer-mediated communication) to the analysis of different genres (e.g. news, soap opera, sports commentary, chat rooms). On the other hand, linguistics has developed (or embraced) a number of tools which describe language in common face-to-face encounters (such as ethnomethodology, interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis). This panel intends to bridge the gap between these two strands: it will explore how actual people use media texts in their lives, how they assign meaning to specific texts, and construct identities and social realities with the help of them. Hence, the focus of the panel will be the linguistic behaviour of the media users, not the media texts themselves.

The panel will explore how the meaning of media texts is negotiated by their users. This issue covers both the immediate reception situation and reference to media texts in later talk or computer-mediated communication (CMC). The panel thus investigates communicative (verbal, extra-verbal and para-verbal) practices during the reception process including the interplay between the primary media text and the talk at home. Also, influences of the media on everyday conversation will be dealt with. Due to the nature of media texts, multimodality will be another issue. Furthermore, the panel seeks to explore how social realities, participant roles, identities, and communities of various kinds are constructed with reference to media texts.

The presentations in the panel range fairly widely over the domain of appropriation of media texts. Topics include micro-analyses of talk during the reception situation such as moral communication or the gaze behaviour of television viewers. Furthermore, presentations will illustrate how watching television can be a creative process, for instance when audiences invent their own games betting on the outcome of sitcoms. Another contribution illustrates how the use of CMC allows media fans to expose their true feelings about a television show. Finally, in a number of talks, references to films or television shows will be presented as a resource in family talk building public/private intertextuality to create alignment.

The media studied include television, CMC, and film. The papers are mainly based on corpora consisting of naturally occurring conversation (one contribution using a web-site as data). The languages studied include English, German, and Swedish.

Panellists:

Ruth Ayaß (Klagenfurt University, Austria),

Alla Tovaes (Howard University, Washington, DC),
Cornelia Gerhardt (Saarland University, Germany),
Cynthia Gordon (Emory University, Georgia),
Kristy Beers Fägersten (Högskolan Dalarna, Sweden)
Margaret Toyé (Queen's University, Belfast)