

Preface

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**The Discourse of Online Sportscasting: Constructing
meaning and interaction in live text commentary**

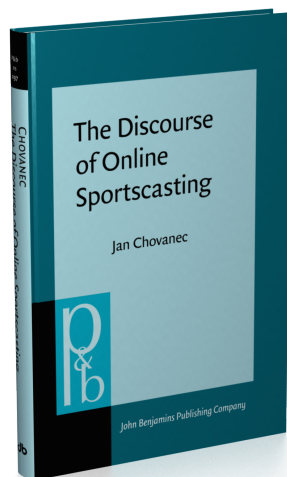
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Preface

It is a truism that modern technologies have brought about sweeping changes in many areas of society. Over the past thirty years, computer technology has resulted in an unprecedented compression of space and time. Instant technology-mediated contact has become the rule not only in interpersonal communication but also in various public domains, such as journalism. The internet has revolutionized the way people can exchange information and communicate with each other. Being online and communicating, or simply being involved through various social networks or mobile-phone applications that have lately been gaining popularity has been one of the most recent developments in the area of technology-mediated communication.

Not surprisingly, the advent of technology-mediated communication (i.e., computer-mediated and other forms of machine-assisted communication) has had an immense impact on human verbal interaction. New forms of communication have appeared, followed by new discourses, genres and styles. Some of the technical innovations – emailing, texting and online chat, to name just a few – have quickly become so indispensable for personal and professional communication that it is nowadays almost inconceivable to imagine the world without them. Others, such as tweeting and instagramming, have come to enjoy immense popularity with many politicians and celebrities, who use these forms of social media to inform the public and the media of anything they deem newsworthy.

The new possibilities offered by technology have led to the emergence of new patterns of interaction, as well as new genres. Traditional media, for instance, have been forced to adapt to the new situation. Most established newspapers went online in the 1990s and started producing electronic versions of their news reports. While they initially exploited the potential of the medium as regards its hypertextuality, i.e. linking a given news report into a complex network of related texts, they gradually moved towards experimenting with new styles of bringing news to their audiences. One of the most innovative news formats is live online reporting – events are reported as they unfold, almost in real time, and updates on the story are brought within the space of minutes. Live blogging, as the format is sometimes known, has now become the predominant way of breaking news, and has seen the emergence of live text, i.e. a verbal description produced in the written mode almost contemporaneously with the events described. In some online newspapers, this is even accompanied by live videos from the location.

The present book is one of the first systematic investigations into the emerging genre of live text commentary (LTC) from a pragmalinguistic perspective. It describes the structural properties of the genre and focuses on the ways LTC can enhance interaction between the news producers and the audience. Analysing a corpus of online sports commentaries, the study notes how the discourse of live text commentaries has emerged as a hybrid genre, combining elements of live spoken broadcasting, informal spoken conversation, as well as online chat. Since the audience are allowed to make limited textual contributions, the resulting texts emerge as heteroglossic encounters replete with pseudo-dialogical exchanges. The interaction between the participants results in the fragmentation of factual content, giving rise to multi-linearity manifested through the existence of several intertwined topical threads, and a complex narrative structure consisting of two relatively independent layers. It is argued that this emergent genre results in the need to reconsider traditional participation frameworks for media discourse, since the technology allows for readers' direct involvement in across-the-frame verbal interactions and their co-construction of the entertainment which the genre provides.

Adopting a broad pragmatic perspective, this work is a contribution to the analysis of media discourse that is inspired by genre analysis. It reflects some of the changes arising in the media landscape as a result of participatory journalism and the modern trend towards the greater involvement of readers. While the present book addresses a mainstream media genre that is already becoming institutionalized, there are new communicative situations that are constantly emerging out of the novel patterns of the audience's reception, mediation and participation in media texts, such as the tendency towards the simultaneous reception of information from multiple official and unofficial channels. Though some aspects of such 'second screen' reception situations are considered with respect to LTC as well, it is inevitable that there is much research waiting to be done to deal with the fascinating new realities of texts, discourses and communicative situations found at the interface between the official media, the diverse means of technology-mediated communication, and the communicatively empowered discourse participants.