CHAPTER

7 Spoken Genres: Legal Discourse, Jokes, Sports Commentary and Advertising

Conversation and classroom interaction mainly involve the *interacting* discourse mode. This chapter will start by examining an example of legal language which also draws on *interacting* and will then turn to examples such as jokes, sports commentary and advertising which use other discourse modes such as *describing*, *instructing* and *narrating*.

7.1 Courtroom discourse

A lawyer defending an alleged rapist is questioning the alleged victim. As we examine the extract we might first consider how the lawyer *constructs* the witness through his questions, and how we ourselves might perceive the woman if we were on a jury considering this case. (The length of pauses is indicated in brackets, a dot for a short pause with longer pauses in seconds; overlapping speech is indicated with square brackets. Otherwise the text, including the 'spelling', is as in the original.)

1.	Defence lawyer:	O.K. you went outside and you waited for at least ten minutes for one of these friends to emerge, is that correct?
2.		(1.2)
3.	Witness:	Mmhmm
4.	Defence lawyer:	Who were you waiting for?
5.		(3.9)
6.	Witness:	I dont remember who it was.
7.	Defence lawyer:	Aren'tchu just trying tuh come up with an excuse for why you had to wait outside there?
8.		(0.6)
9.	Witness:	No
10.		[[
11.	Defence lawyer:	Weren't you in fact waiting outside for somebody to go pardying with (.) anybody
12.	Prosecution lawyer:	Objection yer honour
13.	Judge:	Overruled
14.	Witness:	No

(adapted from Matoesian, 1993: 161)

Forensic linguistics: language and power

Before we look in detail at this exchange, we can consider where it stands in terms of genre. Courtroom discourse could be said to be a general *register*, with the use of legal jargon, formal ways of turn-taking and so on, but within it we can also identify particular *genres* with clear beginnings and ends. A whole court case could in fact be analysed as a genre in these terms, and so could the exchange on which the text above appears to be modelled, which we could call a Cross-Examination, in which a lawyer has a chance to question a witness.

The linguistic approach to studying such legal discourse comes under what is now called Forensic Linguistics (Coulthard 2000; Coulthard and Johnson, 2007). This area of study, which began with the work of linguists such as Malcolm Coulthard, (whose work with Sinclair on classroom discourse was discussed in Chapter 6,) has expanded in recent years to cover many aspects of language and the law, including police interviews (see Heydon, 2005), police language in other areas (see Rock, 2007), the language of law reports, or the ways in which various participants (such as judges, lawyers and the public) interact linguistically inside and outside the courtroom.

One reason why this area is of increasing interest is the intrinsic relation in legal matters between *language* and *power*, a relationship whose importance can be seen in the exchange above. This link between language and power has surfaced at various times during the analyses in this book. We have already noted, for example, that power relations operate in Classroom lessons and in Conversation, and later chapters will consider its role in News reports, in Political Speeches and in numerous other genres and discourse settings. In the law court it can be pivotal, of course, in the sense that poor uses of or responses to language could mean imprisonment or worse. To take the courtroom exchange above, which will be examined in more detail shortly, the power is clearly in the hands of the lawyer, and the woman is relatively powerless (at this point in the trial) to put her point of view as she would wish to.

Cross-examination

If we examine the sample text more closely, we can usefully start with the function of the genre, which in the case of the Cross-Examination is essentially to *persuade* a judge or a jury in a law court. Even though some of the background is unclear, it is apparent at once from the exchange that the lawyer is attempting to persuade the jury essentially by 'constructing' the woman as promiscuous and irresponsible through the focus and content of his questions. Furthermore, his strategy is to present events in such a way that the woman cannot easily contradict him, for example:

> O.K. you went outside and you waited for at least ten minutes for one of these friends to emerge, is that correct?

This of course is only the first part of the lawyer's plan, leading the witness towards a particular point. Instead of asking an open question, he frames his utterance rather as a statement with a short question tacked on, in a common strategy in legal language, known as a Confirmation question (Gibbons, 2003:102), and furthermore it is what we would call a Yes/No question because the witness can only answer 'yes' or 'no'. Both of these aspects of the question, its structure or syntax as essentially a statement, and the Yes/No element at the end, serve to restrict the woman's freedom to speak, and therefore have significant power implications. If the lawyer had instead asked the woman freely to describe what she did, she might have put it in a way which did not suit his case – which is exactly why lawyers adopt such strategies in their questioning.

The lawyer then pursues the strategy of constructing the woman as 'loose' and 'partying', so as eventually to put part of the blame for the rape on her, and thereby get his client acquitted. He comes eventually to this question:

> *Weren't you in fact waiting outside for somebody to go pardying with (.) anybody*

This constructs her as someone out for fun, and even promiscuous, since she is depicted as waiting for 'anybody' to go partying with. Of course it is put as a question, because the rules of a cross-examination imply *interacting*, but the lawyer in fact means it to come across as a description which he hopes will stick in the jury's mind. The opposing lawyer tries to object, but the judge allows the question to stand, so that although the woman answers 'No', the damage is already done. The lawyer has succeeded through his questioning strategies in creating a negative impression of the woman's behaviour in the jurors' minds.

Questions and questioning

This is a short examination of a small piece of data with relatively little context, but it serves to make the point that questioning strategies are an aspect of turn-taking and turn-giving which can be used to gain power.

Table 7.1 Questioning strategies and power

	Type of question	Power and effect	Example
1	***'WH'** questions* – questions constructed with the question words who, where, what, why, how	Relatively free, allowing a wide range of responses, but can contain presupposition	Who owned or took weapons to the hotel? (Gibbons, 2003:104) Would you care to tell me how the heroin came to be in your house tonight? (Gibbons, 2003:103)
2	***Yes/No*** questions, or polar questions	To restrict and channel the listener to the questioner's advantage	Did you burgle a house last night? (Gibbons, 2003:104)
3	***Either/or*** questions	To restrict options to suit the questioner	Was it a large club or a small club? (Gibbons, 2003:104)
4	***Referential*** questions	To teach or show knowledge. This question is not a genuine request for information since the questioner already knows the answer, and it is common in classrooms and education generally.	Why did they build Pyramids? (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975:82)
5	Questions as ***command***	Not a genuine question	Are you going to keep interrupting me? (Coulthard and Johnson, 2007:15)
6	***Confirmation*** questions, i.e. seeking confirmation (statements with positive agreement tag; see Gibbons, 2003:102)	Restrictive, as the questioner is able to construct the situation to her or his advantage.	You started work at 7 am. Is that correct? (Coulthard and Johnson, 2007:15)
7	***Rhetorical*** questions, i.e. questions posed for effect, which do not expect and do not usually have, an answer	Restrictive, as no answering move is allowed or expected	Where is the evidence in that case, that a 14 minute stop on the road after three and a quarter hours is sinister? (Author's data from lawyer's final summing-up)

Table 7.1 summarises the ways in which certain types of questions allow certain answers, and therefore involve different power strategies, varying from open questions to closed confirmation questions. Other question types also exist, of course, beside these, but this sample suffices to illustrate some of the main ways in which questions can control, restrict or guide listeners in particular directions. Although they can do so in a wide range of genres and situations, of course, each one is illustrated here with an example from legal settings, with the exception of Referential questions, where we see again the teacher from the lesson analysed on pp. 113ff.

Ideology in language

The discussion above centred around a lawyer accusing the woman witness in a rape case of waiting for somebody 'to go partying with', with the implication that this activity was somehow problematic. But why is it so bad to go partying? The reason of course is that the lawyer was drawing on a particularly conservative *set of ideas* about women's behaviour, namely that they should not go partying with 'anybody', they should not drink too much, they should not have many sexual partners – and if they do, it is implied that they are somehow partly to blame if they are raped. This is obviously unfair, and raises a number of serious questions about the legal system, about the position of women and about equality, but it is undoubtedly a set of ideas which does exist in many societies and which is powerful.

The very reason for its power is because of the connected *set of ideas* which it appeals to, the naturalised *ideology* about women's behaviour. The word 'ideology' is often seen to relate to politics, but such networks of ideas can relate to any aspect of society, not only the political. The lawyer in that example used language to 'ignite' this set of ideas, hoping that the ideological framework itself would then impact in powerful ways on the minds of the jury. In these ways, language can gain its power by calling up in its support a whole system of ideas, beliefs and values like a military general summoning up an invisible army.

What is an ideology?

The reason for this is that *ideologies* are rather like the schemas and scripts considered in Chapter 3, because they are complexes of concepts which we accept implicitly to be true, and act on them accordingly. As was discussed in Chapter 3, schemas and scripts can seem to be neutral mental devices to help

us understand the world, but of course they can also include implicit *values* and *beliefs* which affect our world view in powerful ways, and ideologies are no different. They are sets of concepts which can act on us powerfully, and they intersect with language in interesting ways.

To use the classic example, if we hear the word 'terrorist' our mind brings up pictures of aggressive, unhinged men causing mindless violence, whereas if we hear the word 'freedom fighter' we imagine strong, courageous people fighting for right and justice, defending the poor and oppressed. Each word conjures up, in these ways, not only one picture, but a host of values, emotions and beliefs, a complex mental network which then affects our whole view of the person being described. The implication of this for a newspaper journalist, say, is that by choosing one of these two words instead of the other, s/he is not simply choosing a bland descriptor, but is calling up a powerful *ideology* in support of one world view or the opposite, influencing the reader to love the individuals concerned or fear and loathe them. Choice of language can therefore evoke powerful ideological forces to influence readers and listeners and it is this link between *language choice* and *ideologies* which obliges the discourse analyst to take ideology into account.

Ideologies are 'the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and value-systems which are shared collectively by social groups' (Simpson, 1993:3). In other words we treat them as if they are obviously true, and 'just common sense'. We do not usually critique them. Part of their strength lies in the fact that they are an invisible *and assumed* network of beliefs and values. To the people who hold these ideologies, they are not only 'the basic principles that govern social judgement' (van Dijk, 1998:24–5), but they also 'appear to be logical and natural' (Jones and Peccei, 2004:38), and they appear logical and natural partly because they are socially shared. 'Everybody knows' that terrorists are evil, so if a man is described as a terrorist, he 'must be' evil. If no-one else questions the pattern of beliefs and ideas, we take them as true. In short, one of the reasons why language is a loaded weapon is that, when we read and listen, we tend to respond to the language and its associated ideological networks of values and beliefs without questioning them.

We can set out some of the features of ideologies as follows, so as to help us to take account of them in future analyses:

1. Ideologies are mental networks of ideas and notions, linked with *values* and *beliefs*.
2. Ideologies are shared by groups of people, and this implicit *consensus* is part of their power.
3. Because they are shared, ideologies are often assumed and *invisible* – accepted as 'just common sense', 'naturalised'.

4. Ideologies tend not to be often questioned; anyone questioning them is treated as being crazy or a troublemaker.
5. Ideologies are frequently polarised into 'Them' versus 'Us' (van Dijk, 1998:25).
6. Ideologies are central to group identity because they frequently help to 'constitute the social identity and define the interest of a group' (van Dijk, 1998:25).
7. Ideologies are not necessarily logical, for example we can often hold *several different competing ideologies at once*, and operate with them differently in different situations.
8. Our *behaviour* relating to ideologies can be contradictory. We may have a strong set of beliefs about the need to save the environment, for instance, but we might at the same time use the car for unnecessary journeys without a second thought, because 'I'm in a hurry'.
9. Some ideologies can be clearly *political* in nature (so we can speak of Marxist ideology, for example) but at the other end of the scale they can be relatively apolitical notions.
10. Ideologies can be invoked in language by terms such as 'terrorist' or 'Nazi', but everyday words can also carry ideological implications (for example, 'housewife', 'chairman').

It is important in particular to note that language and ideology are closely intertwined, to the extent that we could analyse any text to discover its ideological underpinnings, looking, for example, at particular patterns of words, particular metaphors, and other clues as to the ideological position of the text. We have seen a simple example in a legal context, and will consider other examples as we proceed.

Presupposition and implicature

> Would you care to tell me how the heroin came to be in your house tonight? (Gibbons, 2003:103)

In this piece of legal questioning, there is an interesting example of presupposition at work. The speaker is making an assumption or *presupposition* – there was heroin in the house – and this is then embedded into the question in a way which makes it very difficult to deny. As with ideologies, *presuppositions*, when embedded in this way into statements and questions, are powerful precisely because they are not explicit, but relatively invisible and assumed. 'Presuppositions are background assumptions embedded within a sentence or phrase. These assumptions are taken for granted to

be true regardless of whether the whole sentence is true' (Jones and Peccei, 2004:44).

The jury in the heroin case has therefore been manipulated, by means of this embedded presupposition, into assuming – believing without question – that there was heroin in the house. If the witness wants to contradict this, she or he must say something like: 'No, there wasn't any heroin in the house'. However, because by doing so s/he will have failed to offer the *preferred response* to the initial question, which was expecting a factual answer, it will then appear to the jury as if s/he is being aggressive or unreasonable – so either way the witness is at a disadvantage. This is the power of embedding a presupposition into an apparently simple question. (Incidentally, the most well-known example of this linguistic device is the question 'Have you stopped beating your wife yet?', because if the respondent answers 'yes', it means he did beat her before, and if he answers 'no', it means he still beats her, so he is guilty either way. The question is 'loaded'.)

Presuppositions (or 'presumptions', as some writers call them; see Chilton 2004:81) occur not only in questions. Definite noun phrases also presuppose the existence of their referents, and comparative adjectives, such as *fairer*, may logically presuppose a current state of unfairness (Jones and Peccei, 2004: 42). This sentence from a police interview contains an obvious presupposition:

> What I intend to ask you is some questions about the murder of P Q about 11 o'clock on the 16th of November. (Gibbons, 2003:144)

Clearly, this statement *presupposes* that there was a murder, and that all the details which are mentioned about it are true.

Implicatures are different from presuppositions. They are the result of speakers deviating from interactional norms ('Gricean maxims'; see Grice, 1975) with the result that the hearer draws some inference from this behaviour. Implicatures are 'much more dependent on shared knowledge between the speaker and hearer and on the surrounding context of the discourse' (Jones and Peccei, 2004:44). The important point for us is the way in which writers make use of such assumed knowledge, whether it is *presupposition* or *implicature*, in ways which can conceal power strategies (as in the law court.) The analyst must be aware of such features when dealing with texts.

So far this chapter has examined courtroom discourse, which we discussed in terms of ideology and presupposition. Many of the examples were relatively serious, sober and legalistic, so it is perhaps time to consider something a little lighter – namely jokes.

7.2 Jokes

Having looked at *interacting* as used in Conversation, in Classroom lessons, and in Courtroom Exchanges, we turn to a genre which can draw also on other discourse modes, namely Jokes. Jokes are of interest in our discussion of genres because they are hugely varied, which means that they offer insights into the flexible ways in which listeners and readers deal with genres and texts in practice. They also illustrate several of the features of genres we have discussed in previous chapters. Here is an example, reminiscent of the joke cited on p. 65:

> There were these three men lost in the desert, hot and tired, when one of them saw a lamp in the sand. He picked it up, rubbed it and out popped a small genie. 'I am the genie of the lamp', it said 'but I am only a little genie, so I can't take you out of the desert. I can give you each only one small wish.'
>
> 'Well', said the first man, 'please can I have a water bottle which never runs dry?'
> So the genie clicked its fingers and the water bottle appeared.
> 'Well', said the second man, 'please can I have an electric fan which never stops?'
> So the genie clicked its fingers and the fan appeared.
> 'Great', said the third man, 'please can I have a car door?' The genie stopped and looked at him. 'A car door?'
> 'Yes please', said the man.
> 'OK' the genie shrugged, then clicked its fingers and a car door appeared in the sand.
>
> When the genie had vanished the three men set off through the desert again, the first man sipping his water, the second cooling his face with the fan and the third man carrying the car door. The first man looked puzzled and turned to the third man. 'I don't understand. Why did you want a car door?' he asked.
>
> 'Well', said the man, 'When it gets hot I can open the window.'

Why is this joke funny? What genre and sub-genre does it relate to? A similar joke, about three men on a desert island, was discussed in Chapter 4, and although the first one was in the present tense and the second in the past tense, they clearly share several features, including the fact that:

- they both involve three men, one stupid and two normal
- they both concern a tricky situation
- in both, a possible solution presents itself
- both end in an unexpected or sad or foolish way.

This demonstrates the fact that jokes, like other texts, can share 'family' features with each other and can therefore be put into 'family groups' according to those resemblances. At a very general level, it is therefore useful to refer to the *genre* of Jokes and then to divide the class into what could be called various *sub-genres*, according to the characteristics which they share. The joke above, for example, could be seen as drawing on the sub-genre of 'Three men' jokes, as we can call it, since texts which draw on this sub-genre seem to share the features we identified above. *Genre*, in other words, is a broad overarching category mainly linked with a particular function, but then within any broad genre there might be other more detailed family resemblances which could be identified as *sub-genres*. As is the case with genres, the boundaries of the class of sub-genres will be necessarily 'fuzzy'. The central point is that they share a main function (humour in this case) and that each sub-genre will share enough prototypical features to allow us to recognise them and respond quickly. The key is not 'fit with analytical categories' but utility and function in the real world.

Jokes and discourse modes

Besides again illustrating the essential 'fuzziness' of genres and sub-genres, jokes also illustrate the ways in which the various *discourse modes* operate in respect of genres. Part of the way in which we respond to jokes derives from the various discourse modes which they draw on. For example, when my son comes up to me and says 'Knock, knock', I draw on my prior intertextual knowledge, and realise that this is an opening move and part of an *interacting discourse mode* which calls for my response. For this reason I respond at once, saying 'Who's there?', and then the joke continues. If I fail to realise that the mode is *interacting*, the joke will fail.

However, when someone says to me 'There were these three men on a desert island', it would be socially wrong of me to stop him and interact, asking him exactly which desert island it was, or who exactly the men were. If I did so I would miss a joke and lose a friend. I do not do this because when I hear the opening line I again draw on my intertextual knowledge, this time of texts in *narrating* mode, and jokes in particular, and know that I should just listen. If I start to *interact* I will be breaking an unwritten social and discourse rule, as well as risking personal injury.

This points again to the value of drawing on discourse modes as a way of understanding, explaining and even organising genres. It is clear that a

central characteristic of some genres and sub-genres is the discourse mode they draw on.

Other discourse modes in jokes

Here is another example – which discourse mode is involved here?

How to cook a steak

First you place a steak in a large frying pan, and set it to low heat. Then while it is cooking, add two cups of apple cider with a dash of cinnamon. You then add a cup of best brandy, a dash of vodka, and cook the steak gently in the sauce for five minutes. Finally add a cup of whisky, then throw away the steak and drink the sauce.

When we read the title of this text we draw on our intertextual knowledge to expect a recipe. Our suspicion is then apparently confirmed by features of the *instructing* mode, including discourse signals such as *'first', 'then', 'finally'*, along with jargon and grammar typical of recipes. The last line, however, surprises us. The humour (as with the Zombie text discussed on page 44) comes from the surprise when our genre expectations are overturned – it is not a recipe for the steak, but for a drink, albeit an odd one. Jokes frequently derive their humour from setting up expectations in this way, deriving either from settings we know from elsewhere or from other genres, and then confounding those expectations in a humorous way. As Alexander (1997:15) puts it,'a crucial process for the joke ... may be the perception, on the part of the listener, of an incongruity between the punchline and what comes before'. To put it in terms of the heuristic, the *function* of the joke is humour, and the main *feature* in the text which works towards that function is the disruption of our genre expectations.

Responding to jokes

We have already noted (see p. 67) that although narrative structure typically contains a setting, then a *disruption* of some sort, and finally some sort of *resolution* which is typically happy, a defining feature of jokes is that they may contravene this structure in systematic ways. With this in mind, here is a third joke of the 'Three men' sub-genre. Consider to what extent it fits or does not fit with the 'standard' narrative structure set out on p. 70:

There were three men in prison, due to be executed. The first man said 'I have an idea – copy me.' The next morning he was led out by the soldiers and was standing by the wall. The soldiers raised their rifles ready to execute him, but the man suddenly shouted out 'Flood, flood', at which the soldiers took fright and threw down their rifles. The man jumped over the wall and ran away.

The two other men saw what happened, and the next morning the second man was led out and put against the wall. Just as the soldiers were ready to fire he shouted out loudly 'Earthquake, earthquake'. Again the soldiers took fright and dropped their guns, so the man was able to escape.

The third man thought carefully about this and smiled to himself. The next morning he walked out cheerfully and stood against the wall. When the soldiers raised their rifles, the man shouted out 'Fire!' ... So they did.

This joke is similar to the 'Desert Island' joke in obvious ways – it has three men, one of them stupid, whose plan fails. When we hear it we therefore have expectations of what will happen (if we know this type of joke), and the humour comes from the third man's (expected) stupidity.

In terms of narrative structure, this type of joke shows part of the classic pattern we discussed in Chapter 4, but there are also differences. It does not start with a stable situation which is then disrupted, but with an already 'disrupted' problem situation – the men are in a difficult situation already, looking for a resolution. One analysis of this type of joke can be set out as follows:

Classic narrative structure	'Desert island' joke / 'Prison' joke
1. Stable initial setting introduced	-None given
2. Disruption of setting	-Both jokes start at this point (no background information)
3. Realisation of disruption	-Minimal
4. Attempt at resolution	-Plan or possibility of escape -(This stage is repeated three times)
5. Resolution and equilibrium	-None – both end in failure

Part of the joke's humour is because we already know, from our intertextual knowledge and our knowledge of the *narrating* discourse mode that these jokes diverge from 'normal' narratives. The stupid third man also diverges from our expectation of 'normal' behaviour, and it is these types of divergence which help to generate the humour. In short, the humorous effect

our intertextual knowledge of other stories and other jokes.

If we attempted, then, to define this sub-genre of jokes, we could do so by reference to their content (three men, one of them stupid, a tricky situation and so on) and also by reference to aspects of their narrative structure, in that amongst other things they omit the classic first stage (the setting) and then repeat the *attempt at resolution* stage three times. This example demonstrates therefore the way in which *genres* can be defined in relatively broad terms, by means of their function, (in the case of Jokes it is the function of humour), whereas when we look at the level of *sub-genre* we can often be more precise and detailed about the content and structure of the class, including the precise *configuration of the discourse modes* and other features they draw on.

7.3 Discourse signals revisited

Part of our response to texts is to identify – speedily and without conscious awareness – the discourse mode genre, so that we can respond appropriately, and we do this partly by spotting discourse signals, in ways discussed earlier (page 67) . To take some further examples, can you guess which genres are signalled by these opening discourse signals?

1. Here is the news
2. Silence in court!
3. First, chop the onions finely
4. Chapter 1
5. Hello, can I speak to Jim please?
6. Dear Sir

As I typed the last of these, my computer immediately put a message on screen asking me if I wanted help in composing the letter, which demonstrates the way in which many discourse signals are clear clues as to the genre in question, even to the extent that machines can now recognise them. The others are of course from the radio or television news, from a hearing in a court of law, from a recipe, from a book (perhaps a novel), from a telephone conversation and from a formal letter.

It would be straightforward to generate further examples – signals which indicate the opening of a genre, or a particular stage in a genre, or a topic switch, or a conclusion. These signals are a constituent part of the genres of which they form a part. We recognise and create genres in part through finding and using such discourse signals, and when we analyse discourse in any actual text it is useful to look out for and identify patterns of [illegible] which may be typical or atypical of one or other genre.

7.4 Sports commentary

Although different genres may draw on different modes, one is frequently dominant. In recipes, for instance, the *instructing* discourse mode plays the major part. We can now examine a spoken genre whose main aim is *describing*. It seems quite typical of the genre – which is not difficult to identify – but a number of features are perhaps unexpected. I have emphasised parts of the text.

1. And welcome to the horse racing extravaganza here **at number 12 Cheltenham Terrace** and the runners and riders for the **Reservoir Nags** Handicap are under starter's orders...
2. ...and they're away!
3. ...and it's **Mr Red, Mr Orange, Mr Green, Mr Yellow and Mr Black** carrying the hopes and dreams of so many as they come up to the first foot marker now...
4. ...and Mr Red has the early running closely followed by Mr Green, Mr Red the favourite as they come round this **superbly crafted course**, the going officially described as a **bit plasticky** and Mr Orange struggling now on the far side..
5. ...and Mr Red is down!...Mr Red **being dragged** by Mr Green, this is dreadful...
6. ...and Mr Orange is really being **quite crap** now! Make sure you don't put your money on him **when you buy this fantastic racing game!**
7. ...and Mr Red is back on his hooves and steaming ahead putting the rest of the field to shame now!...
8. ...and here's the finish line **helpfully marked 'Finish'**.
9. ...and at the line it's Mr Red the winner, half a length ahead of Mr Yellow!

(www.iwoot.com)

This text clearly draws on the genre of Sports Commentary, but it also has a number of odd features. If we have ever heard such race commentaries we will have certain expectations. Its *function*, of course, is to inform us about a race as it happens, and also to motivate us and to add excitement – its aim is more than purely descriptive. In terms of its *features* – how it achieves that function – it has a clear structure, beginning at the start of the race

and ending soon after, with standard *discourse signals* indicating the start (line 2: *and they're away!)* and the end of the race (line 9: *and at the line it's Mr Red the winner*). In terms of the linking of actions, it is also typical. 'A ... characteristic of commentary is the way in which clauses are linked together. A very small number of conjunctive elements are used to link clauses together, often rather loosely' (Delin, 2000:40). In this text this is achieved by the additive conjunctives (Jeffries, 2006:186) *'...and...and...as ...and...as...'* The text draws primarily on the *describing* discourse mode but it also has elements of *narrating*, as the description is of an ongoing event rather than a static person or a place. We therefore expect the following features, and to some extent, as listed in the column on the right, they are apparent in this text:

Description of the setting before the event begins – Where are we? Who are the participants? What is the atmosphere and context?	*And welcome to the horse racing extravaganza here at number 12 Cheltenham Terrace and the runners and riders for the Reservoir Nags Handicap are under starter's orders... Names of runners during race*
Discourse signals	1.2: *...and they're away! (start)* 1.9: *and at the line it's Mr. Red the winner*
Use of **deictic reference** to highlight the 'here and now' (see p.91)	*here, now, this*
Additive conjunctions	*...and...and...as...and...as...*
Emotive, exaggerated **lexis and phrasing** to generate excitement	*extravaganza, carrying the hopes and dreams of so many, this is dreadful!*
Extensive use of **progressive participles** (Jeffries, 2006:88) to emphasise current ongoing action	*carrying, struggling, being dragged*
Highly varied **intonation**, extensive variation in **pitch** patterns and movement (high to low and low to high), breathless phrasing	*Not observable in this transcript*

It is apparent from the analysis summarised here that this text fits the genre of Sports Commentary fairly closely. However, the text also has a few oddities, as it is not really a genuine horse racing commentary at all. In fact it is part of a television and web advertisement for a children's plastic horse racing game which humorously parodies real commentaries (and can be found on the YouTube website). What alerts us to the fact that it is a spoof or parody is precisely the features which deviate from the genre norm. The deviations, highlighted in bold in the text above, signal that it is a parody and not a genuine commentary, in a sort of *intertextual style-mixing*:

a. the odd location – a home address (but an intertextual pun on a real horse racing track at Cheltenham)
b. the unusual name of the race – 'Reservoir Nags Handicap' (perhaps an intertextual pun on the film 'Reservoir Dogs')
c. the unusual naming of all of the horses by their colours
d. humorous references to the fact that the course is made of plastic ('superbly crafted', 'plasticky')
e. odd events – a horse being 'dragged' by another, as the plastic horse falls over
f. Lexis from the wrong register and genre ('crap' is an informal and mildly 'dirty' word and would not be used in authentic race commentaries to describe a horse)
g. explicit reference to the product being offered: 'this fantastic racing game'

So just as it can be useful to study 'deviant' examples of conversation, as was noted in Chapter 6, it can be illuminating to study parodies like this one because they not only highlight what is typical of the genre – as there must be enough features there for us to recognise the genre clearly – but they also offer clear features which are not typical of the genre, and may even come (intertextually) from other genres, for humorous or other purposes.

7.5 Summary

The previous chapter examined two genres which predominantly use the interacting discourse mode, namely Conversation and Classroom lessons. This chapter has examined three other spoken genres which use a mix of modes, namely courtroom Cross-Examinations, Jokes, and Sports Commentary, as well as elements of Advertisements. We have considered the ways in which texts combine modes for different effects and borrow intertextually from other genres in creative ways, for example in parody. This serves to reinforce a central theme of this book, namely the inherent flexibility and dynamism of everyday texts in their attempt to achieve their main functions, as well as the ways in which they draw flexibly on our genre expectations.

In addition, the discussion has progressively introduced and expanded on a range of approaches, issues and tools which are important when analysing types of discourse. Issues addressed in this chapter included the following:

- question types and patterns, for example in legal settings
- presuppositions and implicature

- ideology
- narrative structure, and deviations from narrative expectations
- intertextual style-mixing

These form part of the analytical toolkit which will be discussed in full in Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 8

Written Genres: News Reports, Personal Ads, Texting and Online Gaming

Chapters 6 and 7 have examined a variety of spoken texts, and drawn out the range of features which such texts employ in order to achieve their various aims or functions. This chapter turns to examine written texts, starting with News Reports, which naturally employ the *reporting* discourse mode, then turning to Personal Advertisements, and finally to two written genres which are highly interactive, namely Texting and Computer Gaming.

8.1 News Reports

In Chapter 4 the *reporting* discourse mode was characterised in terms of its deixis, since (unlike *narrating* mode) its principle time reference is what Smith (2003) called Speech Time, referring to the time (and indeed place) at which the speaker or writer is currently located. Events in *reporting* mode are then reported in relation to that Speech Time, giving rise to frequent use of deictic expressions which have full meaning only with reference to knowledge of the reporter's location in time and space.

Given that different News Reports often present contradictory accounts of what is happening in the world, it is of value for all readers to develop the ability to critique and evaluate the ways in which such stories present the news. The apparent *function* of such reports is to inform, and examination of the *features* could arguably elucidate how the information is conveyed. But often the information is contested, so the analyst has the additional task of analysing how reports offer divergent accounts of disputed events, and then of asking the third question (*Why?*) which has until now remained somewhat in the background. In simple terms, the analyst needs to develop critical tools to tease out conflicting approaches and representations of events, so as to identify any bias or distortion through language.