

## **The speech action of commenting across discourse types**

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Commenting is a kind of verbal behavior that is omnipresent in human communication. In everyday conversation, we frequently comment on our own and others' contributions to discourse, on shared perceptive stimuli, and on all kinds of situations. With the advent of social media and multimodal communication channels, it seems that commenting has gained an even more important role in social interaction. Comments can be made by speakers using a broad variety of linguistic forms, ranging from graphematic means (e.g., round brackets) to particular word classes (e.g., sentence adverbials) and sentence types (e.g., exclamative sentences), as well as non-linguistic means such as emojis or gestures. Comments may also take the form of whole genres, e.g., in legal, academic, or news discourse (Ehrhard-Macris & Magnus 2021).

Most scholars would agree that by commenting something, a speaker performs a kind of speech act (e.g., Posner 1972), or, more broadly speaking, speech action (Sbisà & Turner 2013: 1). Searle (1965: 221) mentions the verb *comment*, alongside verbs such as *assert*, *warn*, *order*, and *apologize*, to illustrate basic types of illocutionary acts. It is far from clear, though, how the presumed speech act(ion) of commenting is to be defined. While most speakers will be able to apply an intuitive, everyday notion of commenting, a common linguistic definition is lacking. For example, it may seem that a comment in the form of a declarative sentence such as *This was a stupid thing to do* is some kind of representative speech act. However, the evaluative component puts it close to the class of expressives. Meta-discursive comments, on the other hand, seem to fall into Austin's (1962) class of expositives. Other approaches take comments to be higher-order speech acts (Grice 1989: 362), might treat them as one of multiple simultaneous functions of interactional turns (cf. Levinson 2017: 203), or as larger (inter-)actional patterns or communicative practices (cf. Sbisà & Turner 2013: 5).

This panel aims at bringing together scholars from various pragmatic frameworks who investigate the speech action of commenting from various methodological, empirical, and theoretical perspectives and across different discourse types, media, and languages, in order to shed more light on the theory and practice of this pervasive, but highly under-researched speech action. Research questions to be addressed in this panel include:

- How can we linguistically define the speech action of commenting?

- In which kinds of contexts, discourse types, or media do speakers comment on which kinds of stimuli, and what do speakers communicate by their comments in these contexts?
- How is commenting realized linguistically on different levels of description? Are there particular linguistic indicators of commenting speech actions?
- How can we distinguish comments from speech acts such as assessments, replies, explications, conclusions, criticisms, appraisals etc.?
- What is the functional relationship between single-utterance comments and larger units (texts, genres) such as commentaries?
- In what ways are comments related to interpersonal phenomena such as humor, (im-) politeness, or stance-taking?

## References

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