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Couplings:
Analysing British TV in Linguistics and Cultural Studies

Abstract: This paper brings together linguistics and Cultural Studies by focusing on a key area of contemporary visual culture: TV programmes and films are prime examples of multi-coded texts that not only necessitate joint analyses but, in some cases, seem to actively demand them. Our case study is a British sitcom, *Coupling* (BBC, 2000-2004), where topics negotiated range from (gendered) social relations to constructions of British identity. The episodes are structured in such ways that they presuppose both linguistic and cultural competence for viewers to meaningfully engage with them. Moreover, TV sitcoms employ strategies that mark privileged moments in which such competence is demanded (the most obvious being the laugh track). The essay analyses such moments of competence, and, in the process, attempts to draw out the critical potential that resides in joining cultural and linguistic perspectives.