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CHANGING CHANNELS

MEDIA LANGUAGE IN (INTER)ACTION

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Preface

Media discourse provides innumerable sources of texts for analysis of language in use. It spreads across both the spoken and written code, and within each, contains a variety of interactions between journalist and reader, newscaster and listener, newscaster and viewer. It is also an excellent source for top down analyses of, for example, information and rhetorical structuring, and bottom up analyses of lexical and grammatical choices involving the manipulation of language, more or less spontaneous forms of spoken language, and so on.

The focus of this study is on the forms of interaction between participants in a news event, the gathering, reporting and retrieval of information, the more or less active role of these participants according to the channel, and the language that is used within the discourse of news reporting in general, and more specifically in the news texts themselves. Let us first make an initial distinction between text and discourse. Bell and Garrett (1998: 3) define text as 'the outward manifestation of a communicative event' and refer to Cook (1992: 1) for his definition of discourse:

> [I]t is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation, through what medium; how different types of communication evolved and their relationship to each other.

It is with these particular distinctions in mind that this volume takes shape. Due to its very nature, media language covers an infinite number of contexts, and news is represented through various forms of communication. Media language is about people communicating to people in different situations about an infinite number of news events, each developing and evolving on a daily basis. The interaction that takes place in the relating of news is not just between the newsreader in the studio and the listener or viewer at home, or the news editor at the news desk and the reader at home, on the train, … News is made up of any number of interactants all giving their contribution to the news story (the on-location correspondent, the expert on the spot, the politician interviewed, the eye witness on the street, and so on), and each will relate their part in the story according to the context in which they find themselves, and according to who their direct addressee is at the time and place in which they participate. As a consequence then, the text, or the outward manifestation of the communicative event, will be used to analyse the discourse in and around which it revolves. With particular reference to this volume, this will mean the analysis of the numerous occurrences of spoken and written text in media discourse, a subject that has received increasing attention over the past few years.

Bell and Garrett (*ibidem*: 3) enumerate the reasons for an increasing interest over the years in media discourse in general:

> Firstly, media are a rich source of readily accessible data for research and teaching. Secondly, media usage influences and represents people's use of and attitudes towards language in a speech community. Thirdly (and related), media can tell us a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes projected through language and communication: for example the use of foreign languages in advertisements (Haarmann, 1984; Chesire and Moser, 1994), in radio disc jockey style-shifting (N. Coupland, 1985), and in the television portrayal of the elderly (Robinson and Skill, 1995). Fourthly (and again relatedly), the media reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and social life.

Media language, as I have chosen to approach it, encompasses three main areas of language research: discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis. Discourse analysis comprises the study of all naturally occurring spoken and written language: it will serve this particular research to identify the different forms of spontaneous and prepared speech characteristic in the relating of news, as well as the more formal kinds of written text in news reporting; the cohesive devices that hold a text together are also precious elements in discovering the organisational features of spoken and written discourse. Critical discourse analysis, with its emphasis on lexical and grammatical choices in the manipulation of language for communicative purposes, is essential in order to identify the unequal relations of power that emerge in the ways of speaking and writing not only in society at large, but in the informative kinds of texts that will be our subject of study. And finally, conversation analysis will be a useful tool in studying the kinds of spoken interaction that are a common feature in radio and TV news broadcasts; it will serve as a yardstick with which to measure and compare emerging patterns in the various kinds of more or less spontaneous talk that make up news interviews as well as talk between newsreaders and reporters. In brief, this volume aims to approach media language from these different angles in order to highlight the characteristic linguistic features of each channel of communication and the interaction involved.

The organisation of the text

The text begins with an introductory chapter describing the various channels of information (the newspaper, the radio, the television and the Internet) in the chronological order in which they have made their impact on the news scene, highlighting in particular the technical similarities and differences each provides, the restrictions that the medium imposes on the news provider, the advantages and disadvantages of each according to the way the news may be presented and received.

Each of the following chapters provides a close analysis of the individual medium, focussing not only on the lexico-grammatical choices involved in the exploitation of language for the specific communicative purposes of relating the news event, but also on the forms of interaction that each makes use of or is restricted to. The final chapter, which discusses the providing of on-line information, focuses on the development of the 'interactional' relationship between the giver and the receiver of news, and particularly on the fact that the roles tend to merge due to the introduction of hypertext.

The title of the book may be misleading. Channel commonly refers to a radio or TV station (e.g. BBC1, BBC 2, CNN), and I have deliberately used the term loosely to mean channel of communication as distinct from medium (speech or writing). We normally spend at least some small part of our day switching from radio to television to newspaper in any order, and now even to the Internet, to find out what is going on in the world around us. Hence, rather than reverting to the more common term in Italian of 'zapping', I have preferred to remain closer to the common British collocation of changing (or switching) channels, which is what I and so many others do to retrieve information about the world at large, according to a number of contingent factors such as, among others, time, place and personal preference. Indeed, by changing channels we are witnessing, and we are ourselves involved in, the developing of media language in (inter) action.

1.

THE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION
LANGUAGE AND THE SHAPING OF NEWS

Every day we are, even of our own accord, bombarded with news, whether we pick up a newspaper, turn on the radio or television or access Internet. The fact that we will choose one of these channels of information rather than another may depend on a number of factors, such as where we are, what we are doing at the time, the amount of time we have available, our purpose of accessing news, and so on. It may also be that we have a preferred means of keeping up to date with events during the day, such as snatching a quick glimpse at the newspaper headlines at the breakfast table, or tuning in to brief radio bulletins on the hour or accessing an Internet site before starting work, during a coffee break, or making a point of watching the main evening news on television. Whatever our preferred means, very often we will make use of more than one channel available (e.g. newspaper and radio, TV and Internet), again according to our purpose and possibly to the time available. Whatever the channel [1], the news events will differ in their presentation according to the spoken or written medium in which they are reported. Indeed, as Hartley (1982: 5) points out, the way in which the news is reported will reflect the conditions of representation imposed on it by the channel of communication:

> […] it must be said at once that the news, whether heard on radio, read in newspapers or seen on television, gains much of its 'shape' from the characteristics of the medium in which it appears.

This statement highlights the theme underlying this volume, that is, the particular shape of each channel of information and the interrelated forms of spoken and written interaction involved. Such a theme involves discussing media language not only from a linguistic point of view, as, for example, in answer to Hartley's (*ibidem*: 5) question '[…] how far news comprises an autonomous sub-system of language by itself, and how far it is merely one of the variations in a larger system', but it will also discuss how, from a technological point of view, the channel imposes choice and/or compromise on the presentation of newsworthy events [2]. Central to the discussion will also be the interplay of the various forms of interaction between participants in the reporting of news in the individual media context, that is, between the newscaster [3] or newswriter on the one hand, and the newsreader/audience on the other.

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[1] I will refer to channel as the means of communication (press, radio, TV and Internet), and use medium to distinguish between the spoken and written forms of communication.

[2] One of the most obvious examples is that the newspaper and television can exploit text and image in their message while radio cannot.

[3] The term 'newscaster' is used in the sense of the person reporting the news on radio and television as well as 'newsreader'.

Kress (1986: 395) also comments on the relevance of language and form in his own research into media texts:

> In all this work there is some assumption that the structures and uses of language have here a particular form, something that enables us to pinpoint *the* characteristic and definitive use of language in media. To some extent this is a well-motivated assumption. For if a language varies in its formal aspects according to particular social settings – a matter which is now thoroughly documented and beyond argument – then the institutional contexts of the media and of particular media-organs should give rise to specific, and identifiable characteristics of language. Indeed, I believe that this can be done, for particular media-organs; say, for a specific newspaper, radio station, or television station.

However, Kress (*ibidem*: 396) later modifies his position by stating that, instead of identifying the specific features that characterize language in media, 'it may be more productive to ask about the characteristic strategies for the deployment of linguistic resources which may be indicative of language use and form in this area'.

What I will be trying to do throughout this work is not just to examine the language strategies and language use in the various technological frameworks that condition their deployment but more particularly to comment on the numerous forms of interaction that are pieced together in the presentation of a newspaper article or a radio or TV news bulletin. This is just one of the many ways that media language can be analysed. There are a number of other reasons why researchers have studied some areas of it, as listed by Bell (1991: 4):

- accessibility of media as a source of data for some language feature they want to study
- interest in some aspect of media language in its own right, such as headline language
- interest in the way the media use some language feature also found in ordinary speech
- taking advantage of how the media communication situation manipulates language in a revealing way, for instance in news copy editing
- interest in media's role in affecting language in a wider society
- interest in what language reveals about the media's structure and values
- interest in what media language reveals as a mirror of the wider society and culture
- interest in how media language affects attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues.

This volume aims to take inspiration from these studies and build on the earlier works of scholars whose research interests have focussed on the language of the various media, whether it be the printed press, radio, television or the Internet, in particular, (in chronological order) Goffman (1981), Hartley (1982), Montgomery (1984), Coupland (1985), Jucker (1986), Greatbatch (1988), van Dijk (1988), Bell

(1991), Clayman (1991), Crisell (1994), Fairclough (1995), Boyd (2001), to name just a few and at the risk of omitting many other important contributions. However, in order to be able to develop my own particular niche in this area of research, it will be necessary to give a brief overview of the main characteristics of the four major channels of mass communication and collocate spoken and written language use according to the inherent conditions governing its choice in news discourse.

1. CHANGING CHANNELS

From the very beginning of civilization, news has always been transmitted by word of mouth, and only subsequently, from spoken word to pen and ultimately from spoken word to keyboard. The concept of newsworthiness has also increased to include more than just the covering of distant wars, reports of which took months to reach the homeland. Even today, newsworthy events involving accidents, catastrophes and such like are passed on by word of mouth to be subsequently transmitted in other electronic forms of communication that reach their audience even in the space of a few seconds. The immediacy and sense of urgency with which events are reported in the twenty-first century has become a common feature of everyday news with on-the-spot reporters giving the latest update on the story. It is only on satellite TV where there may be a slight delay between the question in the studio and answer from the correspondent on the other side of the world that we note a slight technological hitch, but the sense of bringing the audience to the event and to witnessing it direct is there. Thus, we have the concept of breaking news that has become a familiar caption on our television screens, especially on satellite TV transmitting news twenty-four hours a day.

But what about the intermediate stages through which modern news reporting has passed to reach its present form in each of the four channels of information we will be focussing on? Allan (1999) gives a useful overview of the various forms and techniques of news reporting over the years, from newspaper to radio to television to Internet. Some of the basic features indicating language choice are easily identifiable in his work, starting with the early days of the telegraph when news was communicated as succinctly as possible and conditioned by the so-called **inverted pyramid**, with the most important parts of the news being transmitted first to be followed by background information or fillers. Far gone are the days of the anonymous BBC radio newsreader broadcasting once a day and reading alone from the studio without any supplementary interviews or on-the-spot reports. Television too has passed from the lone relating of events with still images to on-the

spot correspondents interacting with the newsreader in the studio in a single news item from the bulletin. And now we are well settled into the era of commercial radio and TV stations, broadcasting day and night, organising the news bulletins cyclically as news stories are introduced and constantly updated. The Internet too has offered the paper press an opportunity to produce on-line and digital versions of their daily editions, thus allowing them to become more immediate and dynamic through their Web sites, in the sense that they too can report and give an update on news stories which until its emergence were always 'yesterday's news'. As we shall see in later chapters, the reader now has the chance to keep up to date, checking 'on the latest' as soon as it occurs [4]. Radio and TV networks likewise have web sites that are structured in such a way as to give access to the latest news bulletin broadcast or provide links to twenty-four hour news programmes. These websites also include more written text and links to stories that the reader can access, just as s/he does when connecting up to a newspaper website.

The essential nature of each channel, whether reporting yesterday's news or news of a few minutes ago, the news headlines, the news summary, news in brief, editorial comment, conditions not only the way the message is relayed but also its content. Just as importantly, it imposes certain strategies that the newswriter/newscaster must use to convince the reader/audience to read on or remain tuned to the station, or to click for further related information.

Halliday's (1989) categorisation of **field**, **tenor** and **mode** are particularly significant in accounting for the linguistic choices that the channel of communication imposes:

Field: the nature of the situation in which the communication takes place and its content. The media offer us an institutional situation, be it the news reporter's desk at the newspaper's headquarters, the radio or TV news station; it is quite clear who the participants are (the writer and the reader) and what their purpose is – that of the providing and receiving of information.

Tenor: the social relationships of the participants, including age, sex, power and social identity. Again this is quite clear in the context of the media; in the paper press we have a more or less formal register according to whether the particular paper is classified quality or popular; radio and TV stations will reflect a more or less formal register in the spoken language according to the way the audience is addressed – the commercial radio and TV stations are more likely to use a more familiar direct language, while the BBC for example will adopt a more formal tone. Nevertheless, as we shall have occasion to see, certain characteristics of the spoken language will tend to be exploited, such as abbreviations of subject-verb (he's, they'll) in all stations, due to the very nature of the channel with its restrictions of the time available in which the news is to be presented.

[4] See in particular with catastrophes and wars with updating on the number of victims.

Mode: the means of transmission, basically the spoken or written code; whether the language is planned or unplanned, particularly identifiable in various parts of the radio or TV news bulletin – the reading from a written script by the newsreader in the studio in comparison to the more spontaneous reporting of the 'on the spot' reporter; the possibility or not of immediate feedback: in the case of the media press, it is not often possible unless the reader/listener/viewer phones in to the newspaper office or radio/TV station. The mode in our case is predominantly one way with the provision of news without any expectation of an immediate response to the provider of information. There is also the question of distance over time and space as we shall have occasion to note throughout this work. News is always reported to a public who are present elsewhere – the written channel of the paper press implies always the relaying of its product over time: the newspaper reaches its reading public on the day following its composition; the spoken channel is technically able to report events as they happen or immediately after, but with the reporter even on the spot, thus narrowing the distance and involving the audience more closely. The television offers almost instant written updating of the world's latest events in the form of teletext. Similarly the Internet offers immediate updating both in the written and spoken form through the use of hypermedia.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, fundamental to all channels of communication regarding the distribution of news is the concept of **newsworthiness**, that is, what is considered worthy of being included in the newspaper, on the radio or TV news broadcast or on the Internet. Many factors have been identified over the years as being particularly relevant to the value that news is accredited with (Hartley 1982; Allan 1999). Fleming (2002: 98) also reports a personal communication from a journalist, which provides us with an initial indication of what gets into the news and what does not:

> News is not the 'random reaction to random events' […] but the end result of an institutional process that gives precedence to certain topics, events, people and places over others.

Let us just briefly summarise the main criteria that are used in the selection of news coverage and see how the particular characteristics of the news story are selected for their news value in relation to the audience and the audience's expectations [5]:

Relevance: somehow, whether directly or indirectly, the event reported will be considered to affect the lives of the reader/listener/viewer.

Timeliness: the emphasis of the news is always on what is happening now or has only just happened, again giving a sense of relevance to the audience about what is going on in the world around them.

[5] The categories are those summarised by Fleming (2002: 99) who in turn quotes, among others, Hartley (1982).

Simplification: stories need to be told using a simple unambiguous form and structure that is easy for the reader/listener/viewer to understand – that is not to say that certain 'liberties' will not be taken with the language to attract readership, especially in the headlines.

Predictability: in spite of many unpredictable events such as tragic incidents (e.g. road accidents, natural disasters), many stories deal with events that are known about in advance and noted in the reporter's diary. These might be national anniversaries, state occasions, celebrity weddings, and so on. In such cases, the reader/listener/viewer might turn to the media for a report.

Unexpectedness: as indicated above, much news is about events that were not expected in any way and may often shock for their tragic nature, or, on the other hand, delight if the news reports a 'positive' event.

Continuity: many stories are continual updates of previous events that have hit the news, such as an ongoing war, the state of unrest in a country, rescue activities following a natural disaster, developments regarding investigations into a murder; updates on a party political conference, and so on.

Composition: one aim of all the media is to offer a wide selection of news stories in each edition or bulletin so as to offer a balance between national and international news, the more and the less serious events.

Elite people: while stories of human interest relating to ordinary people are included in the news when they are of particular relevance (see above) to the everyday man, newspapers like to cover stories about celebrities and well known people in the world of politics, sport and entertainment in general.

Elite nations: likewise, important countries such as the USA and Europe will receive wider coverage than developing nations who will hit the headlines only if one of the above factors comes into play (e.g. natural disasters, political uprising).

Negativity: while the categories above relate both to good and bad events happening in and around the world, bad news is generally considered to be of more interest to the public. As a result, bad news which makes a 'good story' is favoured. And certainly the media press would never say that no news is good news!

The above are the categories of newsworthiness which will be reflected in the following kinds of stories presented [6]:

Emergencies: these deal with highly dramatic events where human life is at risk, such as forest fires, sea rescues, accidents and so forth. Serious injuries and deaths caused by road, train or plane disaster also get frequent coverage.

Crime: crimes always get good coverage both in local newspapers (the many incidents of petty theft and burglary in local newspapers) and in the nationals

[6] See Boyd (2001) for a more detailed commentary. In any case the categories are his.

(murders, sensational bank robberies). The more serious the crime the more extensive coverage it will claim.

Government matters: anything to do with the national government and party politics will reach news desks practically on a daily basis, for the very fact that it is of national interest affecting the audience as representatives of the country.

Planning and developments: this category comprises big projects and plans, such as the British bid to host the Olympic Games, major engineering constructions (tunnels, bridges) in strategic places around the country, and such like. The amount of coverage will depend on the extent to which the news affects the reader as part of the nation or of a particular region.

Conflict and controversy: all events indicating conflict, from the situations in Northern Ireland and the Middle East to street demonstrations and clashes during a G8 meeting reach the newspapers not only in terms of reporting the event itself but also in subsequent articles of comment regarding pressure groups and their reactions.

Industry: human employment, including striking for more pay, better work conditions, or due to the threat of redundancy, is always a topic of interest affecting the lives of the readers.

Health: likewise, health makes news, whether it be a breakthrough in cancer research, an outbreak of disease in some part of the world, the environment or healthy living.

Human Interest: the tabloids in particular are full of human interest stories, ranging from a National Lottery win to something extraordinary happening to an ordinary person.

Personalities: personalities from all walks of life hit the news – the romances of the Hollywood stars, a member of the Royal Family officially opening the wing of a new hospital, and so on.

Sport: sport is practically a permanent fixture in the newspaper and will receive more or less coverage according to the day of the week. The Sunday papers are full of the previous days' events. Likewise on radio and television, more time will be allotted to the sports results in Britain on a Saturday and Formula One car racing on a Sunday. Many male readers will turn straight to the sports news on opening the newspaper, whereas they will have to wait until the second part of the radio/TV programme – a feature that will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Seasonal news: this includes seasonal shopping at Christmas, the winter and summer sales, summer holidays, as well as seasonal employment and unemployment.

Special local interest: obviously local newspapers will focus their reporting on events of local interest, new shopping precincts, facilities that have been built or rebuilt, the impact of local industry, and so on. Similarly, local radio and TV stations will provide extensive coverage.

Weather: whatever the media, there is always space for an update on the weather conditions round the country and forecasts for today, tomorrow and the week ahead. In times of crisis (sudden flooding, cloudbursts, heavy snowfall), radio and TV are able to give immediate updates.

Traffic: radio and TV have come into their own over the last few years by having the technical means of keeping their audience informed about the state of the rush hour traffic and possible hold-ups on main roads and motorways due to accidents or roadworks or weather conditions. Radio also has specific traffic information channels that drivers can tune into while travelling.

Animals: stories on animals appear particularly at Christmas when pets are given as presents and during the summer considerable numbers are likely to be abandoned.

The order in which all these kinds of news stories are reported will depend on their importance, the **hard news** topics coming before the **soft news** in any of the media. Nevertheless, broad categories such as International, Home, Business and Sports news, will find their regular slot on the page or in the programme rather than randomly presented (i.e. sports and entertainment news at the end of the paper or radio/TV programme).

Having covered *what* goes into the news and *why*, let us now make some preliminary technical distinctions on *how* language is used in the media to present it. First of all, the newspaper press traditionally provides written language to be read. This implies that there will be a time lapse between the writing of the first draft and the completing of the final version for print by more than one author as well as before the reading of it by the intended reader. The story will follow a coherent thread according to its own peculiar discourse structure and it will be grammatically cohesive, thus 'hanging together' as a meaningful whole. The time lapse is also indicative of the fact that written language is planned. The written text may be accompanied by a visual one (a photo) which enhances the meaning of the story or explains it in some way; the text and image may be interdependent, with the headline referring to the content of the picture; in some cases the one cannot exist without the other. More precisely, while, for reasons of space, a news story may be without a visual, it will be impossible to find a visual without its relevant caption or headline in the newspaper. The written language of the newspaper also reports the spoken, that is, the words of the participants in the news story, a description of events by an eye witness, the opinion of an expert. They will not be in the form of a transcript unless the reporter chooses to give a direct quotation, but in some reported form summarising the content of the message but nevertheless attributing any source of information to the participants on the page.

Radio news is generally classified as falling into the category of language written to be spoken. However, while this is true, there are a number of other important considerations to be made. Modern radio news comprises at least three

sub-categories of the spoken language: prepared, semi-spontaneous and spontaneous speech that can all be pieced together into one news story to form a coherent whole. Whilst, for example, the newsreader in the studio will be reading aloud from a prepared script, albeit with a simple language structure that aids listener comprehension, he may hand over to an outside correspondent who will be speaking from notes, who may in turn set up an interview with an expert who will be speaking spontaneously. So we see emerging a series of participants, the same perhaps as those on the written newspaper page, but whose words are their own, uttered with their own voices and reported or imitated by a second person. The advantage of radio news reporting is that the newsreader in particular can exploit intonation patterns to provide the listener with an added means of decoding the message. Due to the identifiable contours of the newsreader's speech as s/he begins and ends a news item, it is also an indication that the listener is tuned to the news programme as Crystal (1995: 249) in fact, notes when defining the **indexical** function of intonation in news reading. So radio language is made up of planned, semi-planned and unplanned speech. The newsreader will invariably not make a mistake, the outside correspondent is likely to make some false starts and hesitations as is the interviewee, whether s/he be an expert or man in the street. The fact that radio language is spoken and directly involves a number of participants, takes us closer to the forms of address typical of speech and often essential where there is no visual element. For example, the newsreader will present the outside correspondent, address him/her by name and they will engage in a supposedly authentic conversation reflecting some but not all of the features of casual conversation as we shall note later when we deal more specifically with participant interaction.

Television news consists of many of the features of the spoken language identified above. However, not only do we find the written to be read aloud or to be elaborated upon from notes, but also the written for the viewer to read, as exemplified by the various captions appearing at the bottom of the screen with supplementary information, such as the name of the reporter or interviewee who may not have been named or presented by the newsreader in the studio. So again, as with the newspaper, albeit with a different purpose, we have the added medium of the written language interacting with the visual (still or moving) text. Clearly the language of the newsreader(s) is written to be spoken, with all due care being given to exploit the potential of intonation to denote, clarify or stress particular meaning. The newsreader is seen to be addressing the camera (and thus the audience), but s/he will be referring to the sheets of paper either on the desk at which s/he is sitting or in his/her hands as s/he stands, or s/he will be reading directly from the teleprompter, again simulating spontaneous speech. Similar to radio broadcasts, there will be a piecing together of different kinds of planned, semi-planned and spontaneous speech within a news bulletin, or indeed within a single news item with the added component of the visual, either of the TV studio in the background or the correspondent on the spot, and so on. A further form of

television news not to be underestimated is that of teletext where news is reported as soon as it has come into the studio and been checked for authenticity. Here, we have written text to be read silently or possibly read out by one viewer to another in the same room. It is a very distinctive and essential text, reminiscent of written newspaper headlines, but due to its immediate publication, it will often appear with typing errors only later to be corrected as the news item passes into the day's archives on another page.

The interplay of language in news media is becoming more complex as technology offers the means for instant news reporting in all its forms. The final channel we must therefore discuss is that of the Internet where we find communication and interaction with all the above-mentioned features at work. Like television, the Internet is not just a visual medium in the sense that we read written text from our computer screens, but it is also a spoken one with easily accessible downloadable audio and video files. There is a wealth of textual interplay in news web-sites offering instant links from written to audio and video that can be accessed in the order the user chooses. Audio and video files are incorporated whole from the original radio or TV station, and thus they will obviously contain the identical spoken and written features of the particular channel. On the other hand, while the written text will comprise all the language features of the printed news story, previously planned and written for silent reading [7], it may also assume a particular structure to fit the computer screen and be attractive or less tiring to the user's eye. The text will also be surrounded by links (hot words or icons) to access further information, thus presenting different forms of the written medium in the same place to give guidance to the reader in his/her search for further information.

[7] Indeed, it may present the very same text and inherent discourse structure, being the digital version of the printed paper.

3.
THE RADIO

Radio is traditionally known as the blind medium, since by its very nature it cannot exploit the visual medium in the same way as the newspaper to relay its message. Indeed the visual is left to the listener to imagine for him/herself according to what s/he hears from the news presenter in the studio, the outside correspondent and the noises s/he can make out in the background during live on-the-spot reporting.

Radio transmits today's news at regular intervals. It is a channel that can interrupt its programmes to report even the most recent of newsworthy events occurring just minutes earlier, the so-called 'breaking news', as exemplified by instant reporting of international disasters, deaths of pre-eminent people, and so on.

Radio news has a fixed order, the more traditional or institutional being that of BBC Radio Four or BBC World with headlines, bulletin and summary which obviously cannot be changed by the listener, who must follow the programme through from beginning to end (see *Figure 2*).

- ⇨ Time Signal (beeps)
- ⇨ Programme Introduction
- ⇨ Greeting
- ⇨ Headlines
- ⇨ News Bulletin – series of news reports
- ⇨ Summary Headlines
- ⇨ Final Salutation

Figure 2 – The fixed order of the BBC Four Radio news programme.

Consequently, should sports enthusiasts have tuned in for the latest football results, they will have to wait for the sports slot towards the end of the bulletin to hear what they want to hear.

Further to this, Crisell (1994: 85) notes the problems posed by the non-selective listener and the need to keep his/her attention:

> But order in radio news is less rigid in the sense that the sequence in which the items are broadcast is not necessarily the same as the order of their importance. The non-selective listener, who wants an overall perspective on the news, is likely to assume that the most important items will come first, the less important later. But while this is generally the rule it sometimes gives way to another rule of sound broadcasting, especially in the more expansive 'news background' and current affairs programmes – that that inattentive organ, the ear, must be offered fresh stimulus through variety. The reader can introduce her own variety by turning the pages and turning back again: the

listener must have her variety introduced for her, which means that the sequence and indeed the choice of items are partly dictated by the nature of the medium.

Radio news programmes vary in length from station to station, from a few minutes on a local radio station to thirty or more on a national network such as the BBC, or non-stop in the twenty-four hour variety, such as ITN News Direct. News bulletins will also vary according to the time of day, with the main longer news programmes fixed at set hours in the early morning, over the traditional lunchtime period and in the evening. Although they broadcast on a continual basis, commercial stations (such as ITN News Direct) nevertheless respect some form of set format with fixed kinds of news at fixed moments during the hour, such as 'Travel News on the Ones' and weather updates. In this particular channel, there is a continual interspersing with adverts and Radio station recalls (the frequency for tuning in) as well as teasers for future news items to be reported. There will also be regular time updates as the programme progresses. *Figure 3* gives a summary of a commercial radio's organisation of news starting on the hour.

⇨ Programme presentation (including Radio frequency)
⇨ Greeting and Time Update
⇨ Main Headlines
⇨ Programme recall (Radio frequency)
⇨ Travel News
⇨ Main News Story
⇨ Advert
⇨ News Story
⇨ Programme recall (Radio frequency)
⇨ Time Update
⇨ Advert
⇨ One or more News Stories
⇨ Advert
⇨ Teaser for future news items
⇨ Travel News
…

Figure 3 – The order of ITN News Direct (starting on the hour).

For reasons of the time slot that is allocated to the broadcast, news stories will be edited. There is always far more reportage than is transmitted. While editing is not such an evident process in the newspaper for the linguistic reasons we have

noted above, there is possibly greater evidence of the piecing together of news in the oral channel. This is partly due to the number of different voices heard but more specifically to the sudden interruption of continuous speech, betrayed, for example, by the rising intonation pattern of the speaker, indicating that s/he has more to say. It is also easy for the ear to note that an initial utterance in a report or a recorded interview is not the one originally pronounced at the beginning of the participant's contribution. Again, an unusual pattern typical of mid-utterance will indicate the splicing together of the relevant pieces compiled for transmission. This editing is frequent for example, in long political speeches or police reports on a particular accident. However, such cutting and splicing confirms that there is a certain amount of planning and preparation going on behind the scenes of a news programme in its reporting of the day's news. Indeed, whereas the newspaper is conditioned in its reporting by restrictions of physical space on the page, the radio is equally limited by the more frequent time restrictions imposed on the numerous editions throughout the day, unless of course, the news is of such import that subsequent programmes will run late. Sound quality may also vary from one news bulletin to the next due to the piecing together of parts of previous news bulletins read by the same reader.

Listening to the radio is not necessarily a solitary activity. People may often listen alone but also in company and they also invariably listen while carrying out some other unrelated activity in the house, in the car, jogging in the park, and so on. Eavesdropping can generally be considered legitimate especially if the radio is switched on in a public place, while we commented on the fact that it was not so acceptable to look over someone's shoulder to take a peek at their newspaper. The fact that people nowadays listen to the radio and do something else (far gone are the days when the whole family gathered round the radio set during the second world war to listen to the news) is one of the reasons why the intonation and the stressing of content words is so important in this channel. With the spoken word being so transient the listener is in difficulty if s/he misses an important part of the message (e.g. a number, a statistic, a name, etc). The channel does not allow him/her to say 'Can you repeat that? I didn't quite catch what you said' and unless s/he has recorded the programme what s/he has missed is irretrievable or at most lost until the next bulletin or until s/he possibly turns to another channel to recover the missing information.

What we will be noting in Chapter Three is the interaction between the number of different participants appearing in the news bulletin (newsreader in studio – news reporter outside – expert – man in the street, etc), and how the various kinds of interaction are pieced together, still to make a coherent and cohesive text, even though they all occurred at different times in or out of the studio and can be recognised audibly as being pieced together. Our discussion will also focus on the types of recurrent forms of talk, language written as a continuous piece of discourse to be read aloud by the newscaster, language written in note form to serve

as a basis for a semi-spontaneous report by the outside correspondent, language that is semi-prepared orally by the expert who is given a rough idea of the questions he will be asked, and the spontaneous language of the vox populi, the man in the street. Particular notice will be taken of the linguistic means used to hold the various pieces together, usually the task of the newsreader in the studio. Changing of voice is also important in helping the listener to follow the news, rather than hearing the same one throughout the programme as it appeared to be the norm in the early days of radio newsreading.

4. THE TELEVISION

Television comprises many of the same technical features identified in the radio channel, the main difference obviously being that television, as indeed the term itself implies, is not a blind medium of communication. Like radio it provides today's news, news that may have only just reached the studios. It has immediate links to the outside world and to the reporter on the spot, so that viewers have a sense of being present at the event themselves or at least of being brought closer to what is happening at a distance. Very often, they will find the caption 'Breaking News' fixed or running across the bottom of the screen. Television transmits at regular intervals during the day or on a twenty-four hour basis and like radio can interrupt its programmes for an unexpected news bulletin. Its programmes are of different length, with the main evening programmes of the BBC and ITN, for example, scheduled for thirty minutes. On some channels, two news programmes are broadcast one after the other, the first, for example, being of a more local or regional nature, and the second containing the national and international news [8]. TV news programmes are now being slotted into other lighter more entertaining programmes, such as the familiarly named Breakfast Television, which also feature a wide range of topics of newsworthy interest to do with health, the environment, women's rights, and so on. Hence the concept of '**infotainment**' [9].

[8] Both BBC and ITV, for example, transmit regional news on a local network at 6 o'clock in the evening followed at 6.30 by the national bulletin. Hence also the importance of timing – regional programmes must finish simultaneously for the switch over to the national network.

[9] A new term coined to express the entertainment quotient in news reporting. See also Graber (1994) and the glossary at the end of this volume.

4.

THE TELEVISION

WATCHING TODAY'S NEWS OF TODAY

INTRODUCTION LOOK AND LISTEN

Like radio, television news enters into our lives and our daily routine. Each station's familiar loud signature tunes and opening visuals set them apart from the other programmes of the day and announce an interruption in the ongoing forms of entertainment transmitted. The ticking clocks in the studio or frames of Big Ben indicate temporality and in particular the immediacy and recency of news; the London cityscape with the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben and/or familiar monuments, a revolving globe, a map of Britain, and so on, all expressing spatiality, give the news its geographical context. Not only do these images connote today's actions and events from home and abroad, but also the viewers are located as the audience within the national or world community created. Allan (1998: 123) characterises the beginning of a television news programme with a number of recurrent features, the sense of 'news now', a forthcoming threat of potentially bad news, despite the bright colours accompanying the loudly played signature tune:

> […] the opening sequence may be read not only as a means to establish a sense of urgency for the newscast, but also as a way to anchor a declaration of 'nowness' and 'liveness' for its claim to authoritativeness. The commencement of the newscast signifies, by definition, the imminent threat of potentially distressing information (most news, after all, is bad news), thus the opening sequence needs to announce its realignment of televisual flow at a number of different levels.

The authoritative nature of the news programme is also transmitted to the news presenter and the studio from which the programme is broadcast. News presenters are sitting at a desk with a number of papers in front of them and a pen in one hand. In some TV studios there is also a computer further along the desk. Allan (*ibidem*: 124) describes the link between this institutional set up and the audience:

> Connotatively representing an institutional form of legitimised debate and controversy, the news studio may be read as the public embodiment of democratic principles and values which the newsreader, in turn, claims the right to represent on 'our' behalf.

Further to its institutional nature, it is useful to remind ourselves that news presenting, whether it be on radio or television, is characteristic of what can be termed 'public language'. News reading from the radio or TV studio is given in the form of a monologue [1], with a more or less formal register according to the station and

[1] Bakhtin (1981), quoted by Allan (1998: 124), however, defines this term of address as 'dialogic' due to the 'co-presence' of the audience who is also addressed by eye-contact.

the audience it targets, and its language is specifically structured and elaborated in accordance with the medium through which it will be relayed. Kress and van Leeuwen (1990: 47) provide a useful summary:

> Public language […] is the language used in more or less formal address. Here language becomes more monologic: listeners no longer participate in the way they do in the other styles of speech. Speech is no longer improvised, but thought out in advance, perhaps even fully or partially written out. Information and other forms of 'non-verbal expression' become as formal, as much subjected to control as the syntax and word-usage. Speech must be fully explicit, meanings fully articulated verbally. Colloquialisms are out of place and a more formal vocabulary must be employed.

As we shall see in the following pages, television news presenters recognisably address their audience generally adhering to these 'norms', albeit with some exceptions according to the pragmatic purposes of the ongoing communication and to the numerous forms of interaction that are inserted into the programme, as well as to the TV station they represent. What must obviously be taken into consideration regarding television news broadcasting is that there is the added element of the visual, bringing with it a wealth of significances in its own right as well as in support of the spoken word. Indeed, the combination of the spoken and the visual offers a powerful means with which to provide information of what is happening in and around the world. The way in which information is presented orally and visually will affect the way in which it will be decoded and interpreted by the viewer. As a consequence, in this chapter I shall be returning to analyse television news programmes in a similar way to the previous ones but including numerous considerations on the role and function of the visual component.

Over the years television news reporting has had an increasing impact on audiences, in particular as far as the technological development of broadcasting is concerned. In the early stages of the BBC in the late nineteen forties and early fifties, news reading was a rather anonymous affair, with little interaction of any kind, being based on the model of the cinema newsreel with the presenter's voice talking over the film, a far cry from the transmissions and communicative techniques now available in the early twenty-first century. Scannell (1996: 14) describes the initial decisions and subsequent modifications that the BBC was forced to introduce, in particular with regards to the news presenter:

> The BBC preferred, at first, not to have a newsreader in vision to read the news because it was felt that to do so would personalize a discourse that was supposed to be impersonal, impartial and objective. So an anonymous male voice read the bulletins over a visual sequence of charts, still photographs and caption. This was soon found to be not 'good television', and a newsreader was placed in front of a camera to read the news. But this too, failed, as the newsreader's head flickered up and down from the script to camera and back, leading one of the British tabloids (the *Daily Mirror*) to run a centre-page spread with photographs of the newsreaders with eyes downcast beneath a banner headline, THESE ARE THE GUILTY MEN.

Technical solutions were subsequently devised in the form of the tele-prompter or auto-cue, with the text being scrolled just below the camera lens, so that the news presenter would appear to be looking directly into the camera. This effect of a direct gaze at the audience became, as Scannell (*ibidem*: 14-15) calls it,

> a technically achieved and humanly accomplished device that contributes to the task of producing news-telling as a real-world interactive occasion between the institutions of broadcasting and each and every viewer, thereby securing the effect, for each and every one of them, of 'I am being told'. It is only one tiny instance of how the meaningfulness of programmes is organised by those who make them as there-to-be-found by those for whom they are made.

It was not really until the advent of commercial television (Independent Television News – ITN) in Great Britain in 1955, that notable changes and innovations were introduced to bring a different kind of worldview to the home audience. Drawing from the American model, ABC and CBS in particular, commercial television began to avail itself of outside reporters gathering and reporting back news on the spot. As Corner (1995: 59) explains:

> Resulting from the use of location camera teams, this mode was increasingly able to offer proximities, immediacies and kinds of involvement very different from the distanced, self-conscious modes which had been conventionalised in the depictive style of newsreel cinema films and then adopted by early television news.

The BBC was soon compelled to follow suit, thus resulting in an overall revolution in news presentation 'over the air' in Britain. More recently, certain international conflicts, such as the Gulf War, for example, provided TV news stations with the opportunity to further transform their means of information communication, with at times almost instantaneous coverage. What emerges is the idea that viewers are made to feel that they are witnessing the event as it happens. Indeed the Gulf War came to be known as the 'television war', and the concept of 'breaking news' really came into being. Corner (*ibidem*: 53) claims that television has become the predominant medium for news reporting, since it has taken a central place in daily broadcasting and created an identity for itself and the channel it represents:

> Over many parts of the world, television has become the dominant medium of journalism, routinely used by viewers as the primary and most trusted source of public information. In the schedules of television stations and networks, the main news programmes are 'flagship' productions, sharpening channel identity and playing a strategic role in attracting the audience for other programmes. Television news is the single most important route through which the medium directly impacts upon international and national public life.

Like radio, television involves getting news out fast; it forms part of the so-called 'stop-watch culture' (Bell 1998) where newsrooms are constantly operating against the clock, producing a number of stories just in time for the deadline of going

out 'live'. A basic characteristic, like radio, is that the programmes always go out live, in the sense that there is a news presenter or presenters in the studio reading the news bulletin live, during which will be interspersed recorded reportage that has been prepared in time for the programme. There will also be on-the-spot live coverage from reporters who have reached the scene of the newsworthy event to witness developments, inform viewers and give first-hand comment. So television has taken its place alongside the newspaper and the radio in the daily routine of keeping their viewers up to date with what is happening around them at home and abroad and as soon after it happens as possible.

The combination of sound and visual together in television broadcasting has numerous implications, reflecting the characteristic features of objectivity, immediacy and the authoritative nature of the channel, as Casey *et al.* (2002: 146-147) point out:

> It has been argued that the *conventions* and *semiotics* of news presentation heighten the idea of news as a transparent window on the world by making a claim to *objectivity*, immediacy and authority. Graphics and music at the start of bulletins often connote an air of being up-to-the-minute, allude to state-of-the-art technology and reference significant icons such as Big Ben or the White House alongside images of the globe itself. Opening announcements are strident and heralding, while presenters tend to dress fairly formally (early BBC news presenters wore dress suits) and engage the viewer in a steady, serious gaze. Earlier accounts noticed that newsreaders tended to be male, reflecting and leading a social assumption that masculinity equates to authority. Even contemporarily, women newsreaders tend to be of a certain age and style which emphasises conventional 'attractiveness', with older women noticeable by their absence […]. The ambience of television, then, is one of formality, sincerity and neutrality, bolstering the ideological claim that television news is essentially truthful. [2]

The added visual is far from a negligible element, for news editors exploit it in a number of ways. The most significant that I will mention now is that of the 'infotainment' quotient, the inclusion of a dramatic element into news reporting, aided and abetted by the image on the screen. Graber (1994: 483) claims that framing is 'deliberately dramatic so that policy-relevant aspects of news are often overshadowed by entertainment features' and she quotes Reuven Frank, one-time executive producer for NBC's nightly news programmes in the 1960's, who sent the following memo to his editorial staff, emphasising the 'dramatic effect' that news reports should contain in order to arouse and hold the audience's attention:

> Every news story should, without any sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle and an end. These are not only the essentials of drama; they are the essentials of narrative.

[2] Italics in the original.

I shall return to this concept of 'infotainment' in the course of the analysis of some news excerpts and extend it to other forms of presentation reflected in the choices of language as well.

1. THE TV NEWS PROGRAMME COMBINING AUDIO AND VISUAL

Adding now the visual component, we can say that not only does television have a distinctive sound (repeating a number of radio features) [3] but a distinctive look as well, as clearly summarised by Corner (1995: 55-56) into two modes, indicating the two main places from which reporters speak to the audience:

a. Studio modes

1. Presenter's to-camera speech (from behind newsdesk and perhaps with background image).
2. Presenter voice-over used with stills, film or graphics.
3. Presenter interview with interviewee at newsdesk or, via link-up, at another location.
4. Archive film with presenter voice or original sound.

b. Location modes

5. Reporter's to-camera speech in 'stand-up' exposition (with varying framing, composition and shot types).
6. Reporter's speech and actuality sound in ongoing participant-action sequences (e.g. reporter in flood relief boat; with emergency convoy; trapped in ambush; attempting to gain access to premises).
7. Reporter's voice-over filmed sequences in which reporter is not shown.
8. Filmed sequence, actuality sound, no speech. Such sequences may involve visual effects of a non-naturalistic kind, for instance rapid, associative editing and various forms of 'symbolic' shot.
9. Reporter's voice over still image (telephoned report; the convention here is the reporter's face superimposed in the corner of a shot of the report's location).
10. Reporter interview with both people in shot.
11. Reporter interview with only interviewee in shot and reporter's questions edited out.
12. Interviewee voice-over used with film.
13. Interviewee seen as social actor, carrying out activities with relevant dialogue and/or interviewee voice-over.

[3] In particular, prominent content words and indexical intonation patterns, slight pausing from one news item to the next.

The above list offers a variety of combinations of the intertwining of the 'written to be spoken' texts characteristic of the media and the accompanying visual footage that either supports or complements them. Frequent is the formula of the news presenter or reporter speaking off screen while still or moving images play their part in the encoding and subsequent decoding of the communication (see 2, 4, 7, 9, 12). On the other hand, also worth noting are the occasions when the news providers are actually portrayed on screen and when they are not (1, 3, 5, 10), according to whether their presence is necessary or whether they will be filmed with a background still or moving image, graphic, and so on. Haarman (1999a: 17-18), in fact, extends the above list to include other recurrent combinations that comprise video clips, wraps and packages, some of which will be the subject of discussion in later sections with examples from my own material:

- The newsreader in the studio reads the title of the first news item. On screen behind the newsreader there may be an inlay – a photograph or graphic image which represents the subject of the item in some way.
- The newsreader may deliver the news item him/herself from the studio, or give a brief introduction to a report from a correspondent or reporter on location.
- A videotaped report with voice-over, either spoken by the reporter on location or recorded elsewhere, gives additional information regarding the event. During the videotaped report there may be
  - live sound (the noises of firearms or bombs, for example) to increase the impression of immediacy and authenticity;
  - interviews with ordinary people (vox pop) or experts conducted on location or in the studio;
  - archive films referring to past events; and
  - graphics in the form of maps and diagrams.
- (Optional: at the end of the report, the newsreader passes immediately to another news item, or).
- The reporter on location, speaking to the camera, usually outdoors, concludes the report by offering his/her own conclusions and/or predictions about future developments and signs off ('Tracy Brown, QED News from Arabashi, Africa').
- (Optional: the newsreader may ask questions of the reporter on location regarding the present situation and possible developments, especially in the case of breaking news).
- The newsreader (thanks the reporter and) introduces another news item.

Thus Haarman's list highlights those features that are also present in radio news (the background noise that is so essential for listeners to be able to contextualise and create an image in their own minds) as well as those that are not. She reiterates the advantage of the medium, the fact that graphics, for example, may be added to reinforce the message by giving the viewers a chance to both see and hear.

We can see emerging two basic kinds of news coverage, as also identified by Raymond (2000): live and on location, which he calls location newsreading, and real time, unfolding live coverage, from 'diary events' such as official ceremonies

and political conventions to unforeseen, unpredictable events such as natural disasters (forest fires, flooding, earthquakes and so on). The fundamental difference between the two forms of coverage is whether the whole event is recorded live or whether it is pieced together with previously recorded material, although the news presenter in the studio hands over to the outside reporter and also asks questions of him/her 'live' to gain in-depth answers. An example of this is the following:

(1)

Newsreader woman:	And of course the events of three weeks ago across the Atlantic sparked controversial calls to introduce a national identity card, calls that were today given the surprise backing of the Chairman of the Metropolitan Police authority. Lord Harris was speaking at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton. *Well our political correspondent, Simon Harris, is in Brighton now, Simon.*
Simon Harris:	Lucy, it's not the natural inclination of Labour Party members to support ID cards but the Chairman of the Met Police Authority, himself a Labour Peer, thinks the idea can be sold on security grounds especially if they offer something else too.
Lord Toby Harris:	Well, if there's going to be a national system of ID cards then, what I'd like to see, is the GLA using that as perpetually an access for Londoners to better public services, so a- a Londoner carrying their ID card will get a discount on er public transport, a discount on access to er public cultural events, perhaps even a discount on on London Zoo.
Newsreader woman:	Simon, terrorism wasn't the only thing on the agenda today, was it?

Carlton TV London Tonight October 2001

In this first example (1), the news presenter in the studio sets up the news item and hands over to the political correspondent, Simon Harris, covering the Party Conference, informing viewers that he is on the spot at the time of speaking (Well our political correspondent, Simon Harris, is in Brighton *now*, Simon). Simon Harris takes over commenting on what she has said and then uses his turn to introduce the prerecorded video clip of an interview with Lord Toby Harris, who is not specifically named although his position (Chairman of the Met Police Authority, himself a Labour Peer) is mentioned. Lord Harris's name appears at the bottom of the screen, again a helpful device not only to inform viewers but also a time-saver for the reporter [4]. At the end of this clip the news presenter in the studio takes over to put a further

[4] This is the first instance we have met where the viewer is doing several things at the same time: listening and watching the moving images of the screen, and reading the captions.

question to the correspondent (excerpt 2). The video clip technique is repeated a second time, here with two wraps around the salient parts of the Chancellor Gordon Brown's edited speech and an interview with Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, after which the correspondent signs off and hands back to the studio:

(2)

Simon Harris:	Lucy, rows over public private partnerships threatened to dominate this conference until the attacks on America, but normal service of a sort resumed today, with renewed spats between Ken Livingston and the Government over the Underground. The Mayor was making his first appearance inside the Labour Conference since the party kicked him out. Well, *the Chancellor was making a keynote speech for the conference defending the government's policy on the Tube.*
	(Edited video clip of Chancellor framed at the rostrum giving his speech)
Gordon Brown:	We are requiring that the private sector accepts its responsibilities tied into a proper partnership to raise capacity, improve safety, enhance reliability and insure that the 13 billions we are investing from public money, delivers the best public services and promotes the public interest.
Simon Harris:	Well Gordon Brown rarely puts his head above the parapet when it comes to the Tube even though many people think he's the architect and the staunchest defender of the plan. Well, Ken Livingston was not impressed by this rare comment from the man who controls the underground's purse strings.
	(Video clip of interview with Ken Livingston whose sideways standing position in front of the camera indicates that he is being interviewed)
Ken Livingston:	Only 55% of the money put in by the fare payer and the taxpayer will actually be spent on modernising the underground. There's a rate of return on that contract of 35%, plus all the extra costs of borrowing, whh-which are more expensive for private firms than the government. So it's a very bad deal financially and I think the House of Commons Committee who'll is going to investigate this, will come up with a very damning report.
	(Simon Harris completes the wrap and hands back to the studio)
Simon Harris:	Rows over the Tube will take er, go back to the back-burner tomorrow, as the international situation returns

centre stage with the main speech of the conference from the Prime Minister. Lucy, back to you.

(Newsreader woman takes over)

Newsreader woman: Simon in Brighton, thank you

Carlton TV London Tonight October 2001

Real time, unfolding live coverage is clearly evidenced by the language accompanying the moving images, as seen in the following example with several time references (e.g. 'right now') together with deictic references indicating the precise location ('there it is'):

(3)

(Headline and Lead-in by news presenter in the studio)

Newsreader woman: *This is the scene right now* in Trafalgar Square where a standoff between the police and demonstrators and police is coming to a head. *Let's take you to a view from the air where you can see,* there it is, er police corralling the protesters on the ground, *Tim Donovan is there, amongst them down at ground level in Trafalgar Square,* Tim.

(On-location reporter takes up the commentary)

Tim Donovan: The police say that *the protesters can stay here for now* but *they must disperse within the next half an hour.*

BBC TV May 2003

The time references indicate that what the camera is filming is happening at that very moment: 'This is the scene right now', 'here for now', 'within the next half an hour'. The studio newsreader also implicitly requests a switch to an aerial view by directing the attention of the viewers: 'Let's take you to a view from the air where you can see […]'. What she is doing, practically, is monitoring the scene of what is happening now or what will happen in the very near future, showing that she has not completely prepared her script, as the hesitation (er police coralling) in the middle of her utterance confirms, before handing over to the on-the-spot reporter: 'Well, let's go straight to Trafalgar Square and Tim Donovan, Tim what's the latest there now?'. Note also that her utterance is extemporaneous, as seen with the insertion of 'there it is', before her hesitation, which also indicates that she is looking and speaking at the same time. Her speech also reflects a 'run on' where it is difficult to distinguish any pause boundary from one sentence to the next, as would be expected if the speech had not been so spontaneous. She also hands over with a simple 'Tim' which is needed to complete her utterance.

The language of news presentation can be deceptive by creating only the impression that the viewers will be watching ongoing coverage. Expressions like

'We go now to […] for the latest on […]' may refer to an on-location live coverage including pre-recorded video clips and wraps rather than extemporaneous commentary of ongoing events happening at the time of viewing. This deception was particularly apparent in the BBC coverage of the May Day demonstrations from which the above example was taken. The programme included both kinds of location newsreading, live and recorded, where the reporter introduced video clips of pre-recorded material as well as unfolding coverage, but since the whole report referred to the day's events, some of it came across as if it was live and being described on the spot. The following excerpt (4) continues on from the previous one which consisted of the only headline introducing the TV programme:

(4)

(Newsreader greets viewers after the headline and film coverage depicting the scene at the time of speaking)

Newsreader: Good evening, welcome to the programme. *Protesters in Trafalgar Square have been told they have less than half an hour to disperse before they face arrest*. But as things stand police are still outnumbering those on the streets, traditional May Day activity was low key, most of the marching passed without problem, some minor scuffles erupted around the Strand as demonstrators staged a sit-in outside the offices of US giant Lockheed Martin, and police tried to move them on. So, what message then from this somewhat muted activity: have police learnt how to get it right? Have we not yet seen the end? Or have the protesters started to lose their edge? Gareth Turby *reports from inside the crowd*.

(On-location newsreading)

Gareth Turby: A few hundred demonstrators had gathered in High Holburn, this location chosen because it's close to the London offices of the American multinational Lockheed Martin. All was peaceful for some minutes, […] but then scuffles broke out.

(Video clip of the demonstration)

Gareth Turby: So *what the police are trying to do here* is keep the protesters penned in one area, and *it's when the protesters try to break out that the trouble is starting*. The police quickly regained control but one man who seemed to be helping to organize this protest claims the police tactics were provoking problems.

(Interview)

Man: We'd prefer if the police didn't cordon them in, erm, I mean just from the police point of view it doesn't make sense because that's when problem starts, people don't like being shut in places.

(Description of the demonstrations)

Gareth Turby: Other protesters then began to simply walk around this cordon and police reinforcements quickly moved on. Within half an hour a large demonstration was moving down The Kingsway and on to The Strand where it peacefully passed without incident a location that was thought as a potential flash point, a building used by the oil company Shell. And further down the Strand another demonstration of police tactics, using two lines to break up the march into smaller groups. This demonstrator was moved on but not arrested.

(Description continues)

BBC TV May 2003

There are two on-location reporters, Tim Donovan and Gareth Turby, and the news presenter in the studio introduces them both. The headline is used as a lead in to outside coverage. As for the news bulletin itself, after greeting the viewers, the news presenter sets up the news item in the normal manner, preparing also a series of questions that viewers will presume will be answered in the on-location coverage. She also uses a 'present perfect tense' (have been told) followed by a 'present tense' (they have less than half an hour) indicating an ultimatum that is still valid at the time of speaking. Furthermore she continues with two more present tense forms (as things stand police are still outnumbering those on the streets) again indicating the present validity and relevance of the utterance. To complete the lead-in to the extended coverage, she uses a series of questions in the present perfect form, relating to an up-to-the-moment time. At which point Gareth Turby begins his report, setting up in turn the video clip of various moments of the demonstration throughout the day that he wraps round. He uses the 'present progressive tense' indicating an ongoing action on the part of the police (what the police are trying to do here). There then follows an unusual change in tense (it's when the protesters try to break out that the trouble *is starting*) that reflects a spontaneous utterance characterised by an irregular use of a verb form. More appropriate would have been: 'it's when the protesters try to break out that the trouble starts' indicating a general statement regarding security measures during demonstrations. However, from this point on, the reporter turns to using a description with a past tense, thus projecting the video clip into recorded material: (The police quickly regained control). The description that follows after the video clip is also all in the past tense. The two descriptions of the demonstration are therefore clearly distinguished by the language of the commentary. In the second case (example 4), the describing verbs are all in the past tense in contrast to the present tenses in the first.

This particular coverage of the May Day demonstrations in London is confirmation of the drama effect mentioned earlier. Graber (1994: 504) quotes a TV di-

rector taking part in her research project who comments on these dramatic aspects of news stories:

> Audience research indicates that dramatic aspects of stories, particularly when they are visually presented, carry more punch than non-dramatic elements because they engage emotions as well as thoughts. As one director explained it: 'A story showing screaming demonstrators and a Congressman working in his Washington Office is balanced in favor of the demonstrators because a visual of people […] how they protest, singing, chanting, sit-ins, interviews with people […] is a heck of a lot more powerful, is a heck of a lot more exciting than your local Congressman sitting at his desk in Washington, DC'.

2. THE INTERACTANTS

There are a similar number of interactants in the TV news programme with respect to its radio counterpart: the news presenter or presenters in the studio (often called anchors following the American term), the outside reporter or correspondent, news experts or editors in specific fields (Business or Sports Editors), experts from other institutions (Universities, Health Authorities), elite persons (politicians, celebrities), vox populi, without forgetting of course the viewer/audience.

News presenters and reporters address the viewer by looking and speaking directly into the camera and thus create a co-presence with the audience. Consequently, shared personalised space is created in the impersonality of the studio. As Morse (1986: 62) observes:

> The impression of presence is created through the construction of a shared space, the impression of shared time, and signs that the speaking subject is speaking for himself [or herself], sincerely.

Allan (1998: 124-125) observes that this dialogic relation is hierarchically structured:

> The *direct* address speech of the newsreader (note that the 'accessed voices' will be restricted to *indirect speech* and eye-contact) represents the 'news voice' of the network: she or he stands in for an institution charged with the responsibility of serving a public interest through the impartiality of its reporting.

In addition to other factors such as assertive body language, formal clothing, clear pronunciation, the newsreader's authoritativeness also portrays a sense of credibility and integrity. Stam (1983: 28) summarises his/her behaviour and the sense of dialogue that is created:

The newscaster's art consists of evoking the cool authority and faultless articulation of the written or memorized text while simultaneously 'naturalising' the written word to restore the appearance of spontaneous communication. Most of the newscast, in fact, consists of this scripted spontaneity: newscasters reading from teleprompters, correspondents reciting hastily-memorised notes, politicians delivering prepared speeches, commercial actors representing their roles. In each case, the appearance of fluency elicits respect while the trappings of spontaneity generate a feeling of unmediated communication.

2.1. The news presenter(s)

The news presenter or anchor in the studio is first of all the viewers' main point of reference. S/he is the person that mediates throughout the programme and sets up news stories handing over the turn to outside reporters and taking it back again. The news studio is the headquarters on which all news reporting depends, and it is the news presenter alone that holds the link not only between him/herself and the viewer, but also him/herself and colleagues on location. As a consequence, we can say that the news presenter is the central authoritative figure of the programme having the possibility and capacity to speak both to the audience and to the reporters on location. In Two-ways or Question-Answer sessions, the reporter's stance slightly changes since s/he is responding to questions posed by the news presenter, and not so directly communicating with the audience. In short, the speech of the news presenter in the studio is unidirectional when addressing the viewers and bi-directional when engaging in talk with colleagues on location or experts invited into the studio, since s/he becomes, in turn, listener.

5.

THE INTERNET

RETRIEVING NEWS OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY

INTRODUCTION
THE BOTTOMLESS HOLE OF INFORMATION

The Internet has been described very aptly as a bottomless hole of information [1]. Such a description is credible when we come to think of the wealth of information that is made available on the Internet and accessed by simply clicking on links of hot words and icons, which in turn allow the user to delve deeper and deeper into other levels of text as his/her thirst for knowledge is stimulated. While the newspaper is practically a self-contained document limited to internal references to what may be found within it, its on-line version takes the reader elsewhere in numerous directions (backwards, sideways, downwards) through its hierarchical structure to information that may be retrieved, more likely than not, from previous editions. Indeed, McGann (1995) appropriately labels the Internet in general as an 'archive of archives'.

Graddol (1994: 41) maintains that most texts can be regarded as communicative artefacts, and that, as such, they are a product of a technology. Media texts, then, reflect the technology that is available for producing them. However, the reader will not find it difficult to recognise that any print medium has its own characteristic style: newspaper stories are written in columns, academic journals make use of footnotes, advertisements visual elements as much as text, and so on. Boyd (2001: 410) notes how teletext, which we studied in the previous chapter and classified as a very elementary form of the structure of the Internet site, which sent the viewer to subsequent pages of news as and when it happened, has been totally superseded, both due to questions of speed in the retrieval of information and the limited graphics: 'In recent years Teletext has been eclipsed by the Internet. It's slow, hard to access and its graphics are crude and boxy'.

In the present chapter then, we come to examine the kinds of news text present in the last channel of communication that provides information to the masses: the Internet. Tanjuakio (2002) comments on the evolution of journalism from its very first forms of communication to the present state of the art and puts on-line journalism into a clear perspective:

> The evolution of print did not occur in an overnight surge of changes but over a long period of time facilitated by the changes in technological advancements. These technological advancements and evolution of print also affected the changes in the societal functions of print media.
> Gutenberg's invention of the moveable type revolutionized the print medium and aided an advancement of technology in the production of other forms of print media. Now, in the digital age, the quick diffusion of new technologies has increased the popularity of computers and the Internet. This has caused more producers of print

[1] See Zhang and Yang, Disruptive Technology and Newspaper Industry. IBM Electronic Newspaper, file://A.\IBM%20Electronic%Newspaper.htm. Accessed 28.07.2004

> media to turn to the Internet as the new medium of journalism but not necessarily abandoning print. Print media has not died; instead it adapted to coexist with their on-line counterpart. On-line journalism is the result of the evolution of print and more specifically in the evolution of journalism through mediamorphosis.

She continues, by quoting Fidler (1997), to emphasise the fact that technology presents an evolving rather than revolutionised form of news reporting.

> By studying the communication system as a whole, we will see that new media do not arise spontaneously and independently – they emerge gradually from the metamorphosis of old media. And that whenever forms of communications media emerge, the older forms usually do not die – they continue to evolve and adapt.

Tanjuakio further develops Fidler's idea of mediamorphosis, by identifying traditional newspapers and magazines as the old media and on-line journalism as the new media, since the latter has extended journalism beyond the confines of the printed page to include a convergence of various forms of interactivity: hypertext, audio and video segments as well as feedback and other content matter, all of which would otherwise be impossible to include in a print medium. Furthermore, in the last few years, newspapers have not only developed an on-line version of their daily editions, but also a digital one that readers are encouraged to subscribe to. What is the difference between the three forms in which the newspaper appears? Why are there three versions offered? The answer is given in a promotional letter from an editor of the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers, Emily Bell, who outlines the advantages of the digital versions as follows [2]:

> Dear reader
> We would like to introduce you to the Guardian and Observer Digital Editions, an innovative new subscription service that combines web-based delivery with the look and feel of the printed newspapers. We have a wide and growing national and international audience for our website, Guardian Unlimited, and now we are offering online readers the opportunity to experience our excellent daily and Sunday newspapers complete with original page layouts, photographs and graphics.
>
> Subscribers to the Digital Editions will be able to see Guardian and Observer articles, images and adverts as they appear in print, through a web-based interface developed by our in-house team. […]
>
> We think the design and ease of use of our new service is better than most other web-based newspapers on the market, and we hope you will agree that the Digital Editions provide the perfect solution for overseas readers who are unable to browse the full range of Guardian and Observer sections and supplements. News, comment and features pages, and photographs and graphics, are clickable for easier reading, and you can flick through the pages on your Mac or PC just as if you were turning the pages of a printed paper. You can also print articles, email them to a friend, view pdfs

[2] Letter published on March 9th 2004 at www.theguardian.co.uk, the *Guardian* website.

> of articles and pages, and search the two-week archive (13 editions of the Guardian; four editions of the Observer). […]

The emphasis then is on providing a user-friendly version of news to all and sundry, wherever they may be, at home or abroad. *Figure 35* presents the digital edition of the *Guardian*, whose on-line version issued on the same day will be analysed later in the chapter. This digital version would appear, according to the letter, to be a perfect replica of the original printed one, which never reaches the newspaper stalls in and around Europe, for example. Consequently the overseas subscriber now has access to the complete edition that is distributed in Britain. Not only does it seem that the digital version is just as easy to read as the paper one, because the reader can browse from one section of news to the next, just by clicking on headlines and hotwords, but it also offers added services which make it more interactive, such as access to earlier editions and the possibility of e-mailing interesting articles to friends. Thus other reading situations and purposes are made possible by the provision of two different forms of on-line news. What we can also read between the lines is that the newspaper editors themselves wish to maintain the basic format of a newspaper and encourage the reading habits that are typical of the traditional news reader. Indeed, what is clear too from *Figure 35* is that the reader is given the same dense format as with the traditional printed version, far different from the well spaced out paragraphs of the on-line version which is the subject of this chapter.


theguardian
Challenge to Bush in new stem cell breakthrough
Investigator found dead at Basra base

Figure 35 – The digital version of the Guardian.

Our analyses in previous chapters have taken a chronological pathway according to the introduction of the different channels of communication into the world of news gathering and retrieval. As claimed in the preceding paragraphs, the potential of the Internet has now converged them all – print, audio and video – onto the computer screen. The personal computer is now becoming a permanent fixture in many houses, not only for the young at school and university, but also for other people from all walks of life who may well have access to the Internet in their places of work, but nevertheless wish to be connected from their homes to their favourite sites, some of which may be the newspaper or radio/TV home pages.

The Internet offers an ever increasing data base of material for all purposes, entertainment and pleasure as well as infinite sources of information. For the purposes of our discussion, we will be studying those websites that are the on-line versions of newspapers. As we shall see, the information these websites provide is not necessarily limited to the same news that appears in the newspaper; rather they often offer accessibility through links to a number of other external sources of information. In spite of the wealth of material available at the click of a mouse, the pages of on-line news need not necessarily be disconcerting due to the innumerable choices it offers the user for retrieval of information in a very short space of time.

Even with the Internet, time appears again to be of the essence both for the provider and receiver of on-line news. The provider of information wants to get the news out quickly, just as the radio and TV stations do, and the receiver similarly wants fast access according to the time s/he has available and to the purposes of gaining information. Boyd (2001: 404) notes the reaction of CNN to the success of their own website, quoting Tiven, Vice President of Television Systems, on the guiding principles behind it:

- Reliability – in journalistic and technical terms – is a must. Without this, everything else is useless.
- The Internet would use elements of television and newspapers, but become something new.
- Content is the big driver, not the screen tricks.
- Dynamic content – news, especially breaking news – will build a steady clientele.
- The content must be deeper and wider than television because this is a new medium and not just repurposed television material.
- Screen speed is critical to keep users happy, because everyone wants to go faster.