

REPORTING THE 'EVENTS OF THE DAY': USES AND FUNCTION OF REPORTED SPEECH

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News is about the 'events of the day' or, rather, those events that the gatekeepers allow to slip through their gates. There is a continuous process of selecting facts whose sources and political implications have been studied intensively by media sociologists. Sociolinguists and linguists are interested in the fact that the gatekeepers' mediating function affects the linguistic form of the events reported. Gatekeeping is one of the key factors that lead to what may be called news style*.

People, times and places are the major elements in the 'events of the day'. People as either agents, patients or on-lookers — but above all as *speakers*. Virtually nothing can become the raw material for news unless it is related by someone through the medium of speech which must entail the speaker's subjective angle of seeing things. Besides, using the formal structures of language the speaker engages in the performance of such speech acts as saying, warning, explaining or telling, and in relating the events to the moment of speaking through time and space.

Constructing the news out of the 'events of the day' so related can be seen as an on-going process of transforming speech on the formal-structural, semantic and pragmatic levels. And this process only comes to a stop when a version is achieved that is deemed adequate by the professionals to resolve the tensions within which news is produced and to fulfill the media's political tasks.

A number of questions arise here. How do broadcasters intervene in this process or, to put it more precisely, what are the linguistic options they

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can draw upon in 'reporting'? What are the functions of these options in relation to media objectives, audiences and the like? What usage patterns and functional clusters emerge? These questions are at the heart of this paper that looks at one of the major options, i.e. reported speech, in some detail. I will begin with the least abstract, linguistic, level and gradually move up to more abstract issues relating to media ideology.

1. To begin with I will locate reported speech in the context of all the available options for reporting. There are six, which are illustrated in (1) to (6) below. The first and most obvious one is to write a text (or "story") based on original speech but without attributing any of its structural or semantic components to another source explicitly, cf (1). The complete opposite is to quote directly as either a constituent of such a text or a sound or synchronous film insert, cf (2). The use of reported speech is somewhere in between: it integrates the form of original speech into a new speech context created by a second speaker, cf (3). Free indirect speech (cf (4)) is closer to direct quotations (than is reported speech) because it preserves more of the formal features of the source sentence. Note the lack of a reporting clause (e.g. *I asked him*) and the word order which is the same as in 'normal' questions in the example below (Quirk et al., 1972). Another possibility is the use of partial quotes introduced by attributive clauses such as *what he called*, cf. (5). Finally, there are countless open-class lexical items such as *point out*, *report (on)*, *announcement* which help to attribute speech content (but not the form) to a source, cf (6).

- (1) These new proposals would appear to go at least some of the way to remove one of the main obstacles to a transfer of power: the future of the Rhodesian armed forces and the guerillas they now confront. There had been speculation until today... (BBC 2.9.77)
- (2) The unarmed protesters burst into the residence at nine this morning ... Outside, more Iranians shouted "Freedom for political prisoners" and "Stop the executions". (ITN 24.8.81)
- (3) a) President Reagan has confirmed that he's going ahead with the controversial plan to sell five AWACS radar planes to Saudi Arabia. He says the sale will protect American oil interests from threats of Russia and Libya. (ITN 24.8.81)
- b) (1) Reports from France say Britain is to rejoin the European Airbus project. (2) But the Government says this is premature. (3) The French Transport Ministry said British Aerospace would join the consortium ... (BBC 24.10.78)
- (4) (... and the dealer here claims that they [i.e. ferrets, G. L.] make ideal pets if properly looked after.) But would he expect them to attack a baby? (followed by an interview answer) (BBC 24.10.78)

- (5) The Prime Minister has warned that excessive wage claims above the Governments 10% limit will lead to, what he called, "the cancer of unemployment". (ITN 2.9.77)
- (6) a) It was him the Rhodesians voted for, and his wife was quick to point that out as she led her husband ... (BBC 2.9.77)
- b) Our correspondent Ian Smith reports on Mr. Smith's election night victory. (BBC 2.9.77)
- v) As the Unions met, BL was announcing more job losses at Longbridge where 500 men will go or be redeployed ... (24.8.81)

Talking about options may cloud the fact that broadcasters do not always have a choice. When, for instance, an item is important enough to be broadcast but some fact is still unconfirmed a source attribution may be necessary as a safeguard against allegations of false reporting. Or, alternatively, if a politician has coined a phrase or catch word likely to be picked up in subsequent debates. Often outside material has already precluded options as to the form of a story.¹ But in general broadcasters are free to choose or, at least, are able to make alterations to outside material, as witness the insertion of *controversial* in (3a).

Previous studies on news language have ignored the significance of these particular options. Apart from a few exceptions such as Kress (1983), who mentions direct quotes, the news has been looked at as if it consisted of texts such as (1). I will focus my attention on reported speech and related cases in (6) that are often difficult to distinguish from it. Free indirect speech will be ignored as quantitatively insignificant.

Reported speech is, as I will show, an essential ingredient of news language. From a linguistic perspective, it is a complex area that involves word order, grammatical mode, tense, time adverbials etc. From a non-linguistic perspective it deals with speech, people and time. A study of the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic features may shed light on the problem as to how the media deal with source material.²

2. The functions of language in a mass media context have not been investigated at all in earlier research (Crystal and Davy, 1969) but are of central concern to more recent interdisciplinary approaches (Kress and Hodge, 1979; Fowler et al. 1979). It is no longer enough to simply describe usage patterns, the questions have to be raised as to why language is the way it is, what it does or is meant to do. From this perspective the following three aspects

¹ Cf Kress (1983) on the ideological functions of partial quotes and Bell (1983a) on the linguistic changes occurring during the 'editorial chain'.

² I will omit as much of the linguistic detail as possible. Cf Quirk et al. (1972) and Ziogesar (1976).

of media output and of the professional skills in which language has a significant function³ have attracted the most attention:

- (1) content: the relationship of language with extra-linguistic reality
- (2) presentation: the relationship of language with appropriateness (in a given context)
- (3) channel: the relationship of language with media-specific constraints on communication

A survey of the relevant studies reveals at least two critical issues that will also be taken up here. The first has to do with the linguistic levels studied in each of the three areas. For instance, lexis and grammar have been the hobby-horse of the first area but have been largely ignored in the second. 'Language and appropriateness' has mainly looked at the selection and subsequent codification of standard accents (e.g. educated southern English in the BBC, Leitner, 1980, and in New Zealand radio, Bell, 1983, or of conversational styles, Leitner, 1983b). Studies on channel have maintained that large sections of the audience experience severe comprehension difficulties ('communication barriers') and has sought to relate them to the surface grammatical complexity of news language (Strassner, 1975) ignoring, so far, the more substantive political issue, which is taken for granted in the first type of study, as to whether implicit ideological messages are perceived at all. As there is little reason to assume that linguistic levels are inherently geared to one of these functions⁴ this paper widens the focus of presentation to a specific area of grammar. I will suggest that grammar is subject to the same attitudes on style as a realization of media objectives as are phonology and conversational behaviour.⁵ The second problem emerges if one poses the question whether, and to what extent, results gained in any one of the three areas support each other. For instance, if one gives credit to Strassner's findings, a very definite stance in the politically particularly sensitive first field becomes arguable. Moreover, excessive claims are often made by reducing the functions of language in the media to just the one under investigation, brushing aside its polyfunctionality.

The Glasgow University Media Group's *More Bad News* (1980) is a case in point. As it is the only study that looks at reported speech at all it is appropriate

³ The term 'functional' is problematic. As each of these three areas deals with rather complex relationships I think that it may be justified.

⁴ But of Hudson (1980) for an interesting discussion of the sociopsychological differences between various linguistic levels. He argues, for instance, that phonology is used as a criterion of group membership whereas grammar, which is governed largely by considerations of correctness, serves as an expression of education and social status.

⁵ Bell (1983b), Kress (1983) and Bonney/Wilson (1983) also discuss grammatical aspects of presentation. Overall this is still a largely unexplored area.

to reiterate briefly their position. Their central conclusion is this:

The effects of this [i.e. the use of different types of reported speech, G. L.] work in contrary directions: the indirect, unattributed quotation creates a more neutral and factual impression while the attributed quotation gives an impression of immediacy, actuality and possibly directness. The stylistic features and the question of whether they represent consistent styles of presentation on each channel are less important than the fact that reported speech can be used in a variety of intentional or simply functional ways for impression management. (Glasgow University Media Group 1980: 164)

I have discussed their linguistic and semiotic approach elsewhere (Leitner, 1983a). The point here is that although mode of presentation is recognized as such it is totally discarded as a legitimate and separate area of study and as an important consideration to broadcasters in order to prove bias in the linguistic encoding of content.

No one would deny that reported speech can be used in this way. In fact further evidence will be provided below. But the matter is a little more complex than the Glasgow group believes. A comparison of the following two versions of the same event will make the point.

- (7) a) The Employment Secretary, Mr. Booth, has warned that people who reject the findings of the Scarman inquiry into the Grunwick dispute will have much to answer for. (ITN 2.9.77)
- b) The Employment Secretary, Mr. Albert Booth, has said that those who rejected the findings of the Scarman report would have much to answer for. (BBC 2.9.77)

The two versions differ in a number of ways, e.g. *warn/say*, *Scarman inquiry into/Scarman report*, which call for an explanation. The most important difference with regard to referential bias is this. In (7b) the tense in the reported clause is shifted according to accepted grammatical rules (Quirk et al., 1972) from the present to the past and the future to the future-in-the-past (i.e. *rejected*, *would*) whereas there is no such shift in (7a). Tense concord can only be avoided if the reporting speaker believes the original statement to be true, sympathises with the speaker etc. Although one might wish to argue this point in the case of ITN, the implication that the BBC's formulation is objective would conflict with the Glasgow Group's other findings on the BBC's use of language. It would also leave unexplained cases like (3b) above.

There is more to reported speech (and other areas of grammar) than the referential function. It serves content, presentation and channel and does so *simultaneously*. Within presentation it is useful to distinguish a local and a textual subfunction. If this assumption is plausible a new dimension is added to the study of bias because claims on the effect of media language will have to assess the relative weight of each function in both encoding and decoding.

I will give special attention to the interaction of mode of presentation and content and adopt a very cautious attitude on the problem of effective bias.

3. The following analysis was a limited one. It was based on seven programmes of the BBC's and ITN's main evening news bulletins of the same day dating from the years 1977, 1978 and 1981. The overall duration was roughly seven hours, cf. Kirchner (1982) for a more extensive discussion. After transcription the number of sentences containing reported speech was calculated and compared with the total number of sentences in order to assess the significance of the area under investigation and possible differences between the two channels. Interviews and synchronous film/video inserts, which account for a fair portion of the news, were, however, excluded for methodological reasons.

It was found that approximately one out of six sentences (444 out of 2238 i.e. ca. 16.7%) made use of reported speech. There is a high degree of variation between and within news bulletins. Thus, two had as little as 7.1% while one had as much as 28%. Another one, which contained about 17% of reported speech, did not make use of it in the last ten minutes, which were not heavily loaded with interviews and synchronous film. Such variation should be considered in future research. No significant differences between the BBC and ITN were found, a finding that compares favourably with that of the Glasgow University Media Group (1980). (The total number of occurrences and percentages are indicated in the tables below).

In all, fifteen grammatical elements were studied ranging from the traditional ones, like tense, to textual cohesion. The more important ones yielded a fairly straightforward picture that tends to disguise the multiplicity of the functions of reported speech, cf. Table 1 and 2.⁶

As I will confine myself to (local and textual) presentation and content, it

⁶ The calculation of the figures was not without problems. Some of them had to do with the delimitation of reported speech from lexicogrammatical ways of source assignment. (6c) above is, for instance, difficult to categorize. Others were connected with syntax and in particular with coordination and subordination. In (i) reported speech is deeply 'embedded' (subordinated), in (ii) two instances of reported speech are coordinated.

(i) The three men met ... as the continuing count made it clear that Mr. Smith had more than achieved the two-third majority he needs for constitutional change, a mandate which, as Mr. Smith himself stressed, leaves him free to go ahead ... (BBC 2.9.77)

(ii) But the Department of Industry said that was below the Government target and both the Telecommunications and Postal sides said they needed to borrow more money. (ITN 26.8.81)

For simplicity's sake they were counted as one instance for the overall count. But examples like (ii) were counted twice with regard to tense concord etc.

Table 1: Some overall findings

| | |
|--|-----|
| reported speech as an independent sentence (cp (3) with (8)) | 92% |
| reporting clause proposed (i.e. <i>He said ...</i>) | 93% |
| source given or implied (e.g. names, pronouns) | 91% |
| tense in reporting clause past (cf (3b (1)) or present (cf 3b (2)) | 81% |
| tense concord applied (cf (7b) vs (7a)) | 93% |
| reporting verb <i>say</i> or <i>tell</i> | 59% |

Table 2: Verbs of saying and their frequencies

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|-------|----------|---|------|
| say | 229 | 51.6% | admit | 7 | 1.5% |
| tell | 36 | 8.1% | demand | 7 | 1.5% |
| claim | 21 | 4.7% | ask for | 7 | 1.5% |
| warn | 15 | 3.4% | reject | 6 | 1.4% |
| ask | 14 | 3.2% | argue | 6 | 1.4% |
| report | 11 | 2.5% | announce | 6 | 1.4% |
| others: insist (5), explain, dismiss (4), make clear, call for (3), allege, reveal, condemn, agree on, re-emphasize, promise, (be) report(ed) to say, criticize, assure, recommend etc. | | | | | |

may be useful to illustrate briefly what is meant by channel in the context of reported speech. The grammatical structure of the following example clearly violates very basic requirements of an oral/visual medium.

- (8) Today, the Foreign Secretary (1) was talking to a man of whom he's gone on record (2) as saying he'd like to see dismissed (1 ctd) to tell him that that was exactly what was going to happen. (BBC 2.9.77)

Note here the occurrence of two intertwined instances of reported speech, the rather complex (if slightly colloquial) introduction of the first one (*was talking to ... to tell*) and the generally complex structure.

3.1. The interaction of sources with verbs of saying: content and textual functions

The indication of sources and the use of verbs of saying would in themselves be illuminating, cf. Bonney/Wilson (1983: 309 f). Compare, for instance *The Employment Secretary, Mr. Albert Booth* (7b) with *Reports* (3b) and with (9).

- (9) In California they're proposing to prosecute everyone who smokes in public (ITN 30.10.78)

Their interaction, however, reveals even more interesting tendencies that support the view that British TV news, in line with many other media, favour the status quo and a pro-authority ideology. (10) and (11) illustrate this.

- (10) The employers said ...
 The National Enterprise Board say ...
 The Leyland management say ...
 Police say ...
 Sir Keith Jones said ...
- (11) Leaders of more than a 100.000 nurses warned ... They claimed ...
 The Trade Unions claim ...
 Fire Chiefs claim ...
 The anti-smoking lobby claim ...

In the vast majority of cases *say* is used with people in authority and *claim* with those with little or less authority. The former sometimes *warn* or *emphasize* but they rarely *claim* or even *threaten*. That tendency is further accentuated in texts such as (12) where the speech of people of different degrees of authority is reported or in (3b) above where there is no significant difference and *say* is used three times.

- (12) The employers said ... Their [(i.e. the workers' G. L.)] unions claim...
 Doctors say ... Mrs Millener's relatives claim ...
 Kenya says ... Uganda claims ...

Linguistic practices like these assign to participants in a story particular roles (authority, claimant etc.) and role attributes (trustworthy, doubtful etc.) that they may not necessarily have had in reality. They may, thus, reinforce the common bipolar interpretation of events (i.e. pro/con) and lead to ideologically biased readings of reality.

Problems for such an interpretation of this pattern arise out of stories like (13), where people in no authority *say* something (cf also (24)).

- (13) Health Officials in the West Midlands say they're still waiting to hear from a woman who claims she had a baby six months after an abortion. Mrs. E. Wilding says she's very happy with her new daughter ... but she's thinking of taking legal action ...
 (Reporter:) Mrs. Wilding says she was admitted to Birmingham Women's Hospital ... after she was told her baby had died two months into pregnancy ...

One might argue that in the first instance Mrs. Wilding is saying something about herself and not the hospital (authorities). If the above-mentioned tendency was refined slightly there would not be a clash at all. But this would leave the second instance unaccounted for. It seems promising to look for stylistic and textual features: once the basic pattern is established in a story even people in less authority can *say* something. But more quantitative data would be required.

3.2. Time reference, tense and adverbials: local and textual presentational functions

I have already mentioned that tense concord and, by implication, tenses and adverbials such as *today* or *now* can play a role in conveying referential bias. I will now illustrate their presentational functions which are simply to convey the impression of actuality and to integrate the 'events of the day' into an extended present time sphere. The intended result is 'immediacy', 'on-the-spotness' and the like. There are several grammatical elements which contribute to this end: tenses and time adverbials in the reporting clause and tense concord. Table 3 gives a quantitative picture of the findings in this area.

Table 3: Aspects of time reference

| TENSE IN THE REPORTING CLAUSE | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| a) present tenses | 181 | 40.8% |
| b) past tenses | 179 | 40.3% |
| c) present perfect (e.g. <i>has gone</i>) | 72 | 16.2% |
| d) past perfect (e.g. <i>had gone</i>) | 3 | 0.7% |
| e) other (futuro etc.) | 9 | 2.0% |
| TIME ADVERBIALS IN THE REPORTING CLAUSE (total 64, i.e. 14.4%) cooccurring with | | |
| a) present tenses | 6 | 9.4% |
| b) past tenses | 47 | 73.4% |
| c) present perfect | 9 | 14.1% |
| d) future | 2 | 3.1% |
| TENSE CONCORD (total of 471) | | |
| a) applied | 364 | 77.2% |
| b) not applied | 30 | 6.3% |
| c) not applicable (i.e. no finite reported clause) | 78 | 16.5% |

(1) Tense in the reporting clause

Given that events are normally over when they are reported the mere balance between the present and the past with each taking up roughly 40% is significant enough. A scrutiny of the uses of the present perfect further accentuates the 'presentness' of news reporting.

Semantically speaking, the present perfect brings past events into the time sphere of the present. Although the perfect is unlike the past in that it does not co-occur with past time adverbials such as *yesterday* (note that it would be wrong to add *yesterday* to the first example) it can also be regarded with regard to reported speech: like the past it may trigger tense concord as in (7b). But as (7a) showed it need not to do so. It seems to have an ambiguous position between present and past tenses when it is used in the reporting clause. In news language, however, concord is practically never applied. In fact there are only three instances out of 72 where there is concord; in 37 there is no concord and in the remaining 32 cases there is no finite reported

clause so that the question does not arise, cf *BL have announced the long-awaited deal ...*. In other words, in British TV news the present perfect is treated as a present, and not as a past tense in line with ordinary colloquial speech. The percentage of present tenses thus rises to about 57%.^{7, 8}

(2) Time adverbials in the reporting clause

Time adverbials occur with the present, past and future tenses but the fact that about 3 out of four occur with the past is striking.

A closer look at the semantic functions of adverbials adds another piece of evidence to the claim of actualization. Four functions can be distinguished:

(14) Mr. Callaghan *then* went on to say ...

(15) There are now 42,000 people in British jails, a figure that the former Home Secretary, Mr. Roy Jenkins, said *in 1975* would bring the prison service to crisis point.

(16) ... *only a month ago* a judge dismissed his appeal ...

(17) *today; a few minutes ago; a while ago; this evening* etc.

The adverbial in (14) indicates time relationships between events, that in (15) that there is a (factual) contrast between an earlier statement and the present situation. (*Only*) *a month ago* in (16) refers to a fairly distant past, as does, incidentally, *in 1975*, and the examples in (17) to a very recent one. It is the last group that accounts for the majority of cases, many of which include the moment of speaking in their sphere of reference (cf. *today, this evening, now*).

One might conclude from this evidence that, if a past tense is, or has to be, used in the reporting clause an effort is made, in most cases, to relate the reported speech event as closely to the moment of speaking as possible. The fact that about 40% of reported speech is reported in the present tense, which doesn't allow for adverbials easily, supports this interpretation.

⁷ Cases like (7b) above, where tense concord is applied, will, obviously, require an explanation. It would seem that considerations of correctness, to be mentioned again later will play a rather important role. Note that it is not mentioned in Quirk et al. (1972).

⁸ Two types of example that appear to show concord must be mentioned here as they occur in a variety of contexts. The first one involves modal verbs, the second event sequences.

(i) a) They've said they may call on to her members of their unions too.

b) The Union APEX has now proposed that the reinstatement ... should be staggered.

(ii) A court has been told that a warden sat in office.

Concord would change *may* to *might* and make the sentence ambiguous. One must assume that concord is avoided for this reason. For similar semantic reasons one must assume that *should* was used in the original statement. In (ii) *sat* is used as that event precedes another one.

(3) Tense concord

Concord is not limited to tense. For instance, if someone says *I liked this game yesterday* he might be reported (on the same day) as *He said he (had) liked that game the day before*. Apart from the obvious pronoun switch *liked* may become *(had) liked, the that, yesterday the day before*. Not all of these changes are obligatory and whether or not they are made depends on the context of reporting. I will restrict the discussion to tense and, in particular, to the lack of concord.

The low percentage of 6.3% would suggest, at first sight, that it is really a very minor feature comparable to free indirect speech and should be set aside. But if it is put into its proper perspective its true significance emerges. First of all, the figures. The question of concord only arises in the case of a past tense reporting verb (and in the future), i.e. in 179 instances (that is in 40.3%). The figure must be reduced further as there are 43 instances where there is no finite reporting clause. This leaves 136 cases with 30 (i.e. 21.3%) not showing concord. It should also be borne in mind here that the present perfect in reporting clauses is treated as a present tense.

Secondly, there are some minor but important patterns where concord is applied regularly, cf (18 and (19).

(18) Did his victory strengthen, I asked him, his ability to produce an internal settlement independently of the Anglo-American proposals?
+ interview answer (BBC 2.9.77)

(19) The judge finally told the jury that he was adjourning till Thursday so that the many documents could be reconsidered. (BBC 24.10.81)

(18) illustrates textual cohesion within a story that is made up of different types of input. Cases like this normally take the form of questions reported by the original speaker himself or the news presenter and they are regularly followed by an interview answer as a synchronous film insert. Occasionally, statements are made by the newscaster which anticipate or summarize the pragmatic force (or content) of the interviewee's answer and, thus, have a similarly cohesive function:

(20) Earlier, Mr. Grantham told Nick James why he wanted other unions to cut off supplies to the company. + interview answer.

Example (19) illustrates a particular type of story, namely legal matters, where 'objective' presentation results in the total adherence to grammatical rules.

In the remaining areas of news reporting concord can genuinely vary without referential ideological implications and a more extensive quantitative analysis than the present one would seem useful. From the available data two tendencies suggest themselves. The first is that if the nature of

the event allows it concord may be avoided. This is the case, for instance, with very recent or still on-going events

- (21) Reports have been coming in during the last half hour of a shooting incident... . Police told us a short while ago that full details are not yet clear but they've mounted a large-scale search... (ITN 26.10.78)

One must assume that the search is still going on. The example also illustrates the second tendency, i.e. that lack of concord does not imply the agreement of the speaker with the reported speech event. What is there that the news presenter could agree with? But (22) makes this point even more forcefully and provides another strong argument against the reduction of the functions of grammar to the referential one.

- (22) Leaders of more than 100,000 nurses warned the Government tonight that the standard of care ... is now dangerously low... . They claimed their pay is so low that it should be considered a special case. (BBC 30.10.78)

Note that the reporting verbs *warn* and *claim* mark the nurses' leaders' low power status and an argument for concord avoidance along the traditional lines would result in a latent contradiction. But if no case can be made for speaker's agreement the only remaining answer is that it is another aspect of the actualization of the news.

Concord avoidance raises numerous linguistic questions that I cannot go into here. What should be mentioned is, firstly, that concord avoidance extends the semantic range of traditionally accepted avoidance, Quirk et al. (1972). As broadcast media in Britain are normally slow — and deliberately so — in responding to, or initiating, language change these facts are quite significant. One would also expect that considerations of correctness work against the spread of such changes and support a very formal level of style, facts that seem to be borne out by the low overall percentage and the total 'success' in some areas.

(4) Position of the reporting clause

Reported questions and functionally similar statements were two clear examples of textual cohesion in the present corpus. The positioning of the reporting clause is another one. Table I showed that mid and end position occurred in only 7%. Mid position, as in (18), creates a sense of liveliness and involvement in the story but end position is usually a linking device comparable to reported questions. This tendency is particularly strong if the relationship between reporting and reported clause is not one of subordination (marked by an optional *that*) but one of coordination (marked by *as*), cf. (23). It is significant to note that in most cases an interview or a

correspondent's report follows:⁹

- (23) a) The Rolling Stones' singer, Mick Jagger, who's in London, was delighted to hear the news, as he told Martin Lewis. + interview (ITN 24.10.78)
b) It's the first major fault in Voyager's journey, an amazing fact, as David Wilson explains. + Report (BBC 26.8.81)

To sum up at this point. The evidence presented so far makes it quite clear that reported speech and related lexico-grammatical means serve content and presentational functions and that a view like the one advanced by the Glasgow group is absolutely untenable. As far as presentation is concerned reported speech or, more precisely, the grammatical elements that figure in it are used to create textual cohesion within a story that is made up of various types of input. More importantly, it is used to create a narrow temporal time sphere around the moment of speaking which serves as the 'locus' for 'the events of the day', cf. Harweg (1972) for similar observations.¹⁰

It would be difficult, and indeed artificial, to assign any one of the elements studied uniquely and unambiguously to any one of the three functions that were distinguished in section 2. There is no doubt that they serve them *simultaneously*. To give two illustrations. Textual considerations were considered necessary to explain certain aspects of the interaction of sources with verbs of saying, whose referential function is otherwise beyond doubt. The choice of the present or past tense in the reporting clause is not just a presentational device, a point to which I will return immediately, but also connected with the lexical meaning of reporting verbs. While *say* and *tell* do not seem to favour any particular tense, *believe* tends to occur more frequently with the present. Beliefs, although they have to be verbalized before they can be reported, are naturally less tied to time than 'sayings'.

On a higher level of interpretation one can conclude that presentation and content do not just stand side by side but interact with each other as well. As far as reported speech is concerned, we may reasonably infer that the presentational intention of actualization not only makes the explanation of events more difficult — that would require a broader historical approach and a different use of, for instance, time adverbials — but also blurs the fact that events are developing over time and are connected with each other in complex temporal ways. The widespread habit of merely sequencing reported

⁹ Reported speech, in its narrower technical sense, requires a subordinating relationship between the reporting and the reported clause. Coordinated clauses are on the border to the lexicogrammatical ways mentioned in section 1. However, it is worth mentioning here that a strictly formal analysis of news language would not capture all the features relevant to it. A more functional, notional approach is definitely preferable.

¹⁰ Harweg (1972) is an interesting text analysis of radio news.

speech events according to surface criteria of balance and neutrality and of leaving unreported their argumentative and situational context may well reinforce these deficiencies. (24) is a striking case:

(24) Trade Unions opposed to the 10% [i.e. limit on pay rises, G. L.] say the motion [i.e. against it, G. L.] will be overwhelmingly carried. Our industrial editor says that even if the 12 month-rule [i.e. for the duration of pay settlements, G.L.] is endorsed by Congress ... And the Conservative leader, Mrs. Thatcher, said today that people who'd had a "rotten deal", that is her own words, ... should get more than 10%. (ITN 2.9.77)¹¹

Depending on the area of the news, i.e. economy, home politics, foreign affairs or human interest, presentational practices such as the ones identified may accentuate referential bias found in the content area.

4. This study was based on the final stage of the process of transforming actual speech, i.e. the bulletin-as-broadcast. It sought to reveal underlying encoding intentions of the broadcasters in the area of content and presentation on the basis of a systematic analysis of their encoding practices. The approach is thus similar to that of, for instance, Kress (1983), Bell (1983b) and the Glasgow University Media Group (1980) and related to a redefined notion of Content Analysis. The fact that the polyfunctionality of language could be demonstrated clearly in one small, but important, field should be of interest to media sociologists and sociolinguists alike. The study also raises several broader issues. The question of bias and of its perception by the public has already been alluded to. So has the role of the media in language standardization and change. I will take up two problems, a discussion of which will help locate output analyses such as this one within the wider context of media studies.

The first one concerns the link between language and the relevant media-specific conditioning factors. I have so far argued that reported speech patterns are direct reflections of such presentational norms as immediacy, actuality, on-the-spotness and the like. There is, however, ample evidence that broadcasters are not normally concerned with details of linguistic form at the production stage of a bulletin. No one would bother about sentence complexity, the difference between reported speech in its narrow technical sense and related lexico-grammatical constructions. For this, and other, reasons it is necessary to look for a more complex concept to link language and media which also has the advantage of reflecting more closely the professional practices.

¹¹ Note here that *say* is used in all three cases. It is unclear whether differences in authority are implied here. At any rate, different kinds of authority will have to be distinguished.

In an analysis of British phone-in programmes (1983b) I argue that output analyses describe language practice (or *performance*) and that they need to be complemented by ethnographic, institutional studies. These should aim to illuminate the intended overall approach to a given topic within a given programme format and directed at a specific target audience. In other words, their goal is the *norm*. Language patterns as performance would have to link up with the norm first before they become fully meaningful.

Several such concepts have been put forward so far. Strassner and his collaborators defined news language as an elaborated code in the Bernsteinean sense of the term which, by virtue of its surface grammatical complexity, excludes large sections of the audience from public life. The Glasgow group called it a restricted code (with reference to Bernstein), which conveys referential ideological bias due to its lexico-grammatical redundancy and predictability. Harweg (1972) drew attention to a number of text structural features such as its narrow time sphere, which is in blatant contrast to its all-encompassing spatial extension. Cardiff (1980) looked at the distinction of the 'serious' and the 'light' from an historical perspective and at its ramifications in various types of programmes such as talks, news, interviews, discussions.

It is this approach that seems most closely related to the study of presentational norms. It would allow for a style concept that is flexible enough to permit topic-related variation that was observed with legal matters (the 'serious') and with the anti-smoking lobby (the 'light') (cf (9)) and be able to account for the often-observed dramatic build up of news bulletins. As far as reported speech is concerned it would be necessary to identify its place in the 'serious' and the 'light' and to locate the individual observations made above more precisely. A study of its role in non-media styles of speech would provide the necessary background to a more profound understanding of the relationship of language, media and society.

In the course of this investigation, and this is the second point, I accepted a number of media sociological hypotheses which are by no means uncontroversial. If they are in need of modification linguistic observations may well appear in a different light. To give one example. I took it for granted that the broadcasters *qua* gatekeepers are fully responsible for the content and presentation of their output and that, as a result, a more or less coherent news style will be observable. Bonney/Wilson (1983: 309 ff) have recently argued that much of today's news output derives directly from such sources as press releases, press conferences, press offices whose main, sometimes sole, objective is to feed the media with ready-made material. This could lead to much less coherency in both areas but Bonney/Wilson maintain that this is not so. Even so, the sociolinguistic interpretation of linguistic observations would have to take note of the fact that coherence is a product of both media-internal

and media-external sources. And the question arises why so many media-external sources have such a vested interest in re-confirming an established pattern of presentation.

I said at the beginning that the news is about 'the events of the day' and posed the question as to how the broadcasters intervene in the process of transforming speech. The answer is, I believe, quite clear by now. They do so, and apparently quite successfully, by translating the media concept of the news into linguistic (and visual) form. *News* is presented in such a way that it is interwoven with, or *part of the events of the day* and involves the audience in this "daily drama".

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