

Broadcast news, the live 'two-way' and the case of Andrew Gilligan

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It was a mistake. It was the kind of mistake that does arise in live broadcasting. . . . but it was a live broadcast and once the words are out of your mouth, the – you know, I did not go back and look at the transcripts. (Andrew Gilligan, in evidence to the Hutton Inquiry)

This article is about changing discourses of the news in mainstream public service broadcasting.¹ It is also concerned with the consequences of these changes for specific individuals working in real time to deliver the news. These two concerns come together in what might be called the case of Andrew Gilligan.

The background to the Gilligan case is as follows. In September 2002, amidst wide concern about impending war with Iraq, the British government, in an effort to inform public debate, published a dossier summarizing the available intelligence and included within it a claim that not only did Iraq possess weapons of mass destruction but that some of these were deployable within 45 minutes. On 18 March 2003, the government won a debate in Parliament authorizing the use of British forces in the military invasion of Iraq – a debate in which some MPs, it seemed, were influenced by the 45 minutes claim. Two days later British and American forces invaded Iraq. The moral, legal and strategic arguments, however, did not stop with the invasion, not least because the coalition forces subsequently failed to find any weapons of mass destruction whose supposed existence had buttressed the case for war. Some commentators asked, indeed, in the weeks that followed, whether war had been prosecuted on the basis of a false prospectus.

In May 2003 a BBC journalist, Andrew Gilligan, reported on radio that he had been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up the

dossier that the government probably knew that the 45 minutes figure was wrong 'even before it decided to put it in'. Downing Street, in short, had ordered the dossier 'to be sexed up'.

Britain, by then, as a member of the US-led coalition, was a nation uneasily at war; and relations between the BBC and the government began to deteriorate as they typically do under the stress of hostilities. The BBC's distinctive position as a national public service broadcaster is designed to insulate it equally from market pressures and from state control. It is established by Royal Charter, periodically renewed, which provides it with revenue raised through a public levy, thus insulating it from the direct pressures of the market. The Charter also provides a mechanism for insulating the BBC from direct state control. The Director General of the BBC, for instance, is appointed and overseen by a Board of Governors not by a government minister. In news programming, its commitment to balance and impartiality is incorporated in the Charter. And its independence is a cherished part of its commitment to broadcast quality programmes 'in the public interest'. Thus, by fiscal and institutional arrangement, as well as by ethos and tradition, the BBC is provided with a complicated set of buffers between itself and the raw exigencies of state control or brute commercial pressure.

In time of war, however, its commitment to the public interest is subject to a range of interpretations. At one end of a spectrum, the public interest can be interpreted in partisan national terms and at the other end by reference to some transcendent commitment to truth. Governments of the day tend to interpret the public interest in patriotic terms and tend to want the BBC to do likewise. The BBC by contrast has tended to espouse a transcendent commitment to truth, as long as this does not too blatantly undermine the national interest ('The British Voice of Truth' as one Director General described it).² The resultant contradictions provide an enduring recipe for conflict. During the Falklands War, for example, the BBC was criticized for even-handedly balancing information from the Ministry of Defence with reports from America and Argentina ('Totally offensive and almost treasonable', complained a Conservative MP). Margaret Thatcher, who made her displeasure clear on several occasions, declared in Parliament: 'I know how strongly many people feel that the case for our country is not being put with sufficient vigour on certain - I do not say all - BBC programmes.'³ Her interpretation of the public interest identified it very much in patriotic terms. As Harris (1994: 86) comments:

The BBC is rarely popular with Prime Ministers, especially Prime Ministers in time of war. As long ago as the Second World War, Winston Churchill . . . described the Corporation as 'an enemy within the gates doing more harm than good'. At the time of the Suez crisis, Anthony Eden was incensed by what he saw as the BBC's unpatriotic behaviour.

It was hardly unusual, therefore, that relations between the Blair government and the BBC deteriorated during the build-up to war in Iraq. Alastair Campbell, Downing Street's then Director of Strategy and Communications, frequently criticized the BBC's coverage, believing that the organization was dominated editorially by those sympathetic to the anti-war movement and that its coverage in consequence was less than fair to the government's case. But relations became particularly acrimonious when the BBC broadcast Andrew Gilligan's claim about the dossier.

His claim was made in the course of BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme – a prestigious news magazine programme broadcast daily from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. The programme features a mix of news summaries, reports, features and mostly serious interviews. The presenters of *Today* are experienced and respected journalists; and leading politicians are commonly interviewed on the programme. It has some claims to set the hard-news agenda for the day. On 29 May 2003 at 6.07 a.m., immediately following the opening news headlines, in the course of an interview with presenter John Humphreys, Andrew Gilligan declared:

... what we've been told by erm one of these senior officials in charge of erm drawing up that dossier was that erm actually the government probably knew that that 45 figure was wrong even before it decided to put it in

Alastair Campbell responded by issuing an immediate rebuttal of Gilligan's claim; and within the space of little more than an hour the *Today* programme acknowledged this in the following way: 'we've had a statement from 10 Downing St that says it's not true . . . "Not one word of the dossier was not entirely the work of the intelligence services." ' From this point forward the positions of the BBC and the government became entrenched. The government insisted that it had no reason to doubt the intelligence claim about a 45 minutes capability; the BBC insisted that the essential core of Gilligan's story – that the intelligence community was uneasy about the 45 minutes claim – was true. The government treated Gilligan's story as an accusation of lies and distortion. The BBC backed the story as an important contribution to the public debate about the justification for war. Alastair Campbell demanded a retraction from the BBC. The BBC refused to rescind Gilligan's claim.

These acute tensions provoked a search for the source of Gilligan's claim. A respected government weapons scientist, Dr David Kelly, reported to his superiors that he had met with Gilligan on more than one occasion and that he might, therefore, be the source of the claim. He was interviewed by his superiors at the Ministry of Defence; and by 9 July his name had become public knowledge. Following these revelations, he was interviewed on 15 July by a Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee. With public pressure mounting on David Kelly, he left his Oxfordshire home on 17 July and failed to return. His body was found the next day.

The Blair government responded to widespread concern at the apparent suicide of Dr Kelly by rapidly establishing an independent inquiry under a senior judge, Lord Hutton, who on 21 July defined his remit as 'urgently to conduct an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly'. The inquiry took evidence in open session from many figures and examined in close detail the roles of the government and the BBC in Kelly's death.

Hutton's report, published at the end of January 2004, confirmed that Dr Kelly took his own life but found little fault with the government. Hutton did, however, find much to question in the editorial practices and policy decisions of the BBC as they relate to Gilligan's broadcast at 6.07 on 29 May 2003. He found that Gilligan's allegation was unfounded, that the BBC failed to ensure proper editorial control over the crucial broadcast, that the BBC failed properly to investigate the background to Alistair Campbell's complaints, failed to check Gilligan's notes – which did not support the wording of his broadcast – and so on. Following publication of the report, both the Director General of the BBC and the Chair of the Board of Governors resigned. Alistair Campbell also resigned from his government post in order to spend more time on personal projects but made it abundantly clear in a televised and much-quoted statement that he considered himself and the government to be completely vindicated by Hutton. The report itself had a mixed press. *The Independent* newspaper, for instance, regarded it as a 'whitewash' because it found no fault with the government. The *Financial Times*, on the other hand, regarded its criticisms of the BBC to be justified.

It is not the purpose of this article to contribute to the debate about Hutton but to explore the role of a subsidiary player in the cycle of events – an element which has largely (though not completely) escaped scrutiny – and that is the changing discourse of the news itself. Hutton does allow the question of wording some limited space in his report – a small walk-on role.

Where a reporter is intending to broadcast or publish information impugning the integrity of others the management of his broadcasting company or newspaper should ensure that a system is in place whereby his editor or editors give careful consideration to the wording of the report and to whether it is right in all circumstances to broadcast or publish it. . . . I consider that the editorial system which the BBC permitted was defective in that Mr Gilligan was allowed to broadcast his report at 6.07 a.m. without editors having seen a script of what he was going to say and having considered whether it should be approved. (Hutton, 2004: 181)

Hutton's approach, however, rests upon the notion that the news generally is a carefully scripted discourse. On the occasion of Gilligan's broadcast, however, as evidence presented to the enquiry seemed to establish, there was no script. Gilligan himself admitted under cross-examination in respect of his specific allegation about the government:

It was a mistake. It was the kind of mistake that does arise in live broadcasting. . . . it was a live broadcast and once the words are out of your mouth, the – you know, I did not go back and look at the transcripts.

To some it might seem surprising that, despite the premium on the accuracy of news discourse, Gilligan should be broadcasting live without a script. However, as any close inspection of news discourse clearly shows, there is a considerable amount of live, unscripted material in news programmes – and this from presenters, reporters and correspondents, not to mention interviewees and eyewitnesses. Indeed, issues of the ‘scripted-ness’ of news discourse are much more complex than Hutton allowed for. They interact, for instance, with questions of ‘liveness’ and the general exigencies of delivering the news; they interact with topic, with variable validity requirements and the greater need for certainty, for instance, if making a serious allegation; and they interact with the differences of status and role-identity amongst accessed voices on the news. (Senior correspondents, for example, are more likely than reporters to speak unscripted.)

Even now there is some confusion about what actually occurred in relation to the script on the morning of 29 May 2003. The BBC, for instance, conducted their own internal review into the implications the Hutton inquiry. Although their report remains confidential they issued a press release stating:

In relation to the broadcast on the Today programme, on 29th May 2003, we are satisfied that a core script was properly prepared and cleared in line with normal production practices in place at the time, but was then not followed by Andrew Gilligan. We consider the BBC’s evidence to the Hutton Inquiry could have been clearer in this respect. (BBC, 2004)

This is starkly at variance with Gilligan’s own evidence to the Hutton inquiry. Having emphasized under cross-examination by his own counsel that he considered his broadcast to be an allegation of spin, of exaggeration, rather than dishonesty, he is asked: ‘if you had seen it as an allegation of out and out dishonesty, would you have done anything different in preparing the story?’ He answers:

Yes. There is a process, a BBC process. Everything has to be scripted. The scripts have to be approved by the lawyers and everyone, including the presenters, has to stick to the scripts and that is for every appearance on the programme. . . . The reason this was not done in this case was it was simply perceived as a different beast. This is a political charge essentially.

It is difficult to reconcile this answer with the outcome of the BBC’s own, post-Hutton, internal review.

Clearly, however, not only what was said, but how it was said, and with what degree of preparedness, continue to trouble discussions in the aftermath of Hutton. This article will show that if there was a script it was

hardly Gilligan's fault if he departed from it. Gilligan's questionable allegation was produced in interview as part of a live two-way, the general purpose of which is to avoid 'scriptedness'. In order to establish this, the article will examine the role of the live two-way exchange in broadcast news. It will demonstrate that there are marked differences between the discourse of the unscripted, live two-way and other scripted sections of the news. In particular, it will show that the linguistic choices of the live two-way (particularly selections in linguistic modality) project a different approach to the truth conditions of its discourse with less emphasis on precise veracity than is found generally in the news. Into the space between two kinds of discourse Gilligan's allegation fell, with serious consequences for him, for the BBC and, of course, for Dr David Kelly.

Live discourse, scripted discourse and the news

There is much debate about 'liveness' and broadcasting. While some argue that 'liveness' is a quintessential property of television as a medium, others maintain that it always remains an ideological effect (see Altman, 1986; Auslander, 1999; Feuer, 1983). For the purposes of this article I wish simply to maintain that in broadcast news the 'liveness' of an item signals not so much a particular ontological status for the material on view but rather a distinctive condition under which discourse can be produced. Thus, when what is being spoken by reporters or correspondents is coincident with its moment of reception by the broadcast audience, it is marked as such in various ways both to indicate and determine a particular kind of verbal performance. An obvious marker of this condition is the use of a caption 'LIVE' in the corner of the screen. It is also routinely oriented to verbally in phrases such as 'we now go live to John Simpson in Baghdad'. Curiously enough, news presenters such as Peter Sissons do not read the news in the studio with a big red caption 'LIVE' alongside them, even though one assumes that they too are speaking contemporaneously with the moment of reception. Indeed, we assume that the studio presentation of broadcast news is *not* pre-recorded even while we routinely assume that a report from the field by a correspondent *has* been pre-recorded, unless marked to the contrary. So when liveness is invoked as a category within news it indicates more than simple contemporaneousness. It signals more than anything the lack of a precise script. It is not just the person or the scene that is presented to us live. It is the discourse from the scene or in which the scene is embedded that is live.

The increasing use of live discourse on the news overlaps with another tendency that several researchers (Cameron, 2000; Fairclough, 1995; Pearce, 2002; Scannell, 1996) have noted and commented upon – the increasing adoption in public and institutionalized forms of discourse of

conversational or dialogic modes. Broadcast news is no exception: increasingly it is delivered through interactional exchanges – from dual presenters on early morning news in the UK to the increasing use of pundits, experts and correspondents interviewed in or from the studio. A range of different formats is implicated in these changes. Of particular relevance to the Gilligan case, as we shall see, is the use of the two-way exchange between the news reader/presenter in the studio and the correspondent/reporter in the field. These blend the tendency to conversationalize the news with an increasing emphasis on live, unscripted talk.

The focus in what follows, therefore, is upon this particular format – the live, ‘two-way’ exchange. A standard sequential position for a live ‘two-way’ comes at the end of a major or significant news item in a broadcast news programme. The news presenter/reader gives the headline details on the item. On television there routinely follows an edited news report from a reporter/correspondent featuring footage from the site of the news event which adds information visually and verbally to that already supplied by the presenter. On completion of the report, the studio news presenter may either move to the next item or conduct a short exchange live from the studio with a correspondent at the scene.

Practitioners – news editors, journalists – call these latter inserts simply ‘two-ways’, with the title hinting at some of the technical demands of integrating live material from ‘on location’ into the studio-regulated flow of the news. The link with location has to be established; the reporter/correspondent placed on stand-by; then the link at a distance has to be activated at a precise point in the programme. Until fairly recently the technical demands of such a link must have been forbidding. But the rapid development of electronic and digitalized methods of transmission have greatly simplified the process.

Although these conversational exchanges could be seen as driven by the more general shift in public discourse to informality, in the case of news there is a widely held opinion that its role is closely tied to issues of ‘reality’, ‘actuality’, ‘immediacy’. Implicitly they seem to carry connotations of ‘an update’, and occasionally they will even be referred to as such. In a related way, they can be seen as dramatizing an important spatial distinction in television news. There is the space or site of the enunciation of the news, the studio, the iconography of which often emphasizes a particular geographic position from where the news comes to us as from a relatively stable deictic zero point. (Opening graphics of Big Ben, for instance help to situate the ‘here’ of the studio as London.) And, in contradistinction, there is the space or site of the action of the news: the world beyond the studio from where reports ‘come in’.

The format of television news promotes a constant counterpoint between these two kinds of space – the site of enunciation and the site of action – with the voice of the reporter or correspondent providing a bridge between

the two. In this way news provides a fundamental illustration of what is taken by some to be a core property of the modern media of communication, 'time-space distancing' (see, for example, Thompson, 1995). Prior to the modern era there was (roughly) a proportional relationship between time and space: the further away an event, the longer it took for news of it to arrive. The modern media have eradicated this proportional relationship. Information crosses the globe instantaneously. The time it takes for news to travel is no longer a function of distance, and 'the news' makes great play of this quality, insisting absolutely on the recentness of what it chooses to report. In this respect 'the news' is the mediated genre that makes the most of a central property of the modern mass media. And within the genre of 'the news', the live 'two-way' is that sub-genre that most emphasizes the capacity to collapse the deictic spaces of the news between the 'there-then' of the event and the here-now of its enunciation.

The discourse of the live two-way compared with the discourse of news presentation

This way of understanding the role of the live two-way clearly has much to commend it. But properties other than immediacy come into play if we look closely at the particulars of its performance – properties as much to do with 'naturalness' and 'spontaneity' as with 'facticity' and 'truth'. Indeed, there are some quite marked differences between the discourse of the 'two-way' exchange and the discourses of news presentation and reportage. These differences may be illustrated by considering a fairly typical example of news presentation alongside an example of the live two-way. Here first is a short piece of news presentation read by Anna Ford as an entire news item within a BBC news programme.

Example 1

International observers have questioned the fairness of the weekend Parliamentary elections in Russia. The United Russia Party which was created last year to support President Putin won a convincing victory. Hardline Russian Nationalist parties also did well. But it was a disappointing result for the Communist Party and for pro-Western liberal groups.

Every indication on the recording suggests that the piece is read to camera by Ford. There are no disfluencies: no hesitations, no fillers, false starts or self-corrections. The delivery is measured, with no signs of extempore performance. The item does contain some evaluative expressions – for example, 'convincing victory', 'disappointing result' – but overall it carries no sense of being the personal point of view of an individual or group. Instead, the simple set of categorical assertions or averrals are projected in the 'institutional voice' (Lehman, 1983) of the news organization –

impersonal, authoritative. Propositions are not qualified by marked modality choices. ('International observers have questioned', not – for example – 'International observers have *apparently* questioned.')

Students of ideology might want to point out that it offers a less than ringing endorsement of the election result: the item leads, for instance, not on the victory of Putin but on possible irregularities in the election; and the remainder of it is rhetorically structured around an opposition between victory versus disappointment and between the United Russia Party and hardline Nationalist parties on the one hand and communist and pro-Western parties on the other. Nonetheless, whatever the ideological baggage being carried around the edges of the piece, it projects a kind of facticity at its base – as if the facts that it reports are unlikely to be questioned or even questionable.

Compare this with the following example of a live two-way from a similar BBC news programme in which the presenter/newscaster, Peter Sissons, interacts with two BBC correspondents – John Simpson and Andrew Marr.

Example 2

PS: well I'm joined now from Sedgefield by our political editor Andrew Marr and from the world summit in Johannesburg by our world affairs editor John Simpson

John / on this issue does the US have any friends in the world besides the UK

JS: well you wouldn't think so Peter if you go the rounds of the diplomats and the politicians here

uh you'd think that they're all solidly against it .

but . hh you get the feeling actually that that's partly because they . know . the folks back home want them . to be against it want them . to be talking ag_ about it

er there's a lot of worries about what might happen to the western alliance for instance . er . if the bombing starts .

but . the Americans certainly believe that once the thing starts to get into place then quite a lot of the governments that seem to be opposed to it at the moment will be . in favour

what . you hear . sometimes wistful British er diplomats and uh erm more importantly politicians saying is that it's so extraordinary that probably the world's worst dictator with the world's worst record should . be . one of the most popular people here

if Saddam Hussein had turned up here today he'd have got a rr rip-roaring reception

and er that is er uh slight problem for the Americans and the way they've been handling the whole thing

...

PS: John Simpson thank you

Andrew Marr in Sedgefield there are very few ifs and buts now about Tony Blair's position on Iraq but he has left himself this small UN get-out clause will he push Washington for one more UN try

AM: yes I think that's one of the messages here today

erm he has a real problem as the person who always claims that he can bridge the Atlantic on these matters .

everybody in Europe erm everybody around the world is insisting that the United Nations must matter whereas the Americans just simply see this as another way of putting it off another form of delay and faffing around giving Saddam Hussein more time

and Tony Blair's answer to that appears to be the United Nations will matter does matter so long as it is part of the solution

so long as they're gonna try and enforce international law and their own resolutions quickly and clearly

and this is not just another excuse for delay

so that will be the message to the United Nations I think

one last throw

...

PS: Andrew Marr John Simpson thank you

Broadly, what distinguishes the discourse of the live two-way from the surrounding discourse of a news programme is the intrusion of 'authorial stance' as well as features of what linguists are referring to as 'evaluation' (see Hunston and Thompson, 2000). These include *Markers of propositional attitude/Personal point of view*, exemplified by the following:

Example 3 [AM]

I think [that's one of the messages here today]

Example 4 [AM]

[that will be the message to the United Nations] *I think*

Example 5 [AM]

my instinct is that [he will do what he thinks is right in the circumstances]

as well as by phrases/expressions such as 'quite honestly'. Note, for example, how unlikely such formulations would be in standard newscasting from Ford:

**Example 1a*

Quite frankly hardline Russian Nationalist parties also did well, *I think*.

Another important characteristic of the live two-way that distinguishes it from studio news presentation may be found in marked *Modality* choices.⁴

The simple averrals of standard news presentation use unmarked modality (e.g. 'Tony Blair visited Iraq today'). Live two-ways, by contrast, are rich in marked modality choices signalling variations in the speaker's 'degree of commitment to the factuality of statements' (Saeed, 1997: 125). In the live two-way these are carried by *Adverbial expressions* (actually, certainly, probably, possibly, perhaps . . .) rather than auxiliary verbs (might, may):

Example 6 [JS]

you get the feeling *actually* that [[that's *partly* because [they . know . the folks back home want them . to be against it]]]

Example 7 [JS]

what . you hear . *sometimes* wistful British er diplomats and uh erm more importantly politicians saying is that [it's so extraordinary that *probably* the world's worst dictator with the world's worst record should . be . one of the most popular people here]

Example 8

perhaps the most interesting conversation I've had in the last twenty-four hours

Again, it is important to note that these formulations would be out of place in routine newscasting. It would be unusual for Anna Ford's account of the Russian election to include the following:

**Example 1b*

And *certainly* hardline Russian Nationalist parties also did well.

Another way of 'modalizing' propositions within the live two-way is to advance them as part of *Hypothetical conditionals*, which sketch the circumstances in which a proposition might apply.

Example 9 [JS]

if Saddam Hussein had turned up here today he'd have got a rr rip-roaring reception

Example 10 [JS]

well you wouldn't think so Peter [that America has any friends] if you go the rounds of the diplomats and the politicians here

In any case the live two-way often handles material in a more speculative, conjectural fashion than in newscasting. Propositions, for instance, may be presented as part of a general ongoing universe of discourse – as 'what people are saying/thinking'. Effectively the correspondent puts forward a proposition but attributes it to someone else's speech or thought in a kind of propositional ventriloquism. Here is the BBC's John Simpson:

Example 11

what . you hear . *sometimes* wistful British er diplomats and uh erm more importantly politicians saying is that . . .

And here is Andrew Marr:

Example 12

and Tony Blair's answer to that appears to be [the United Nations will matter does matter so long as it is part of the solution so long as they're gonna try and enforce international law and their own resolutions quickly and clearly and this is not just another excuse for delay]

Example 13

we were all sitting there today looking for any sign of a flinch or a hesitation or [hey you know it's a little bit more than I uh expected and I'm gonna give it a bit more time]

Finally, in the live two-way we find a greater degree of colloquial and idiomatic speech than in studio presentation, as exemplified by the following phrases from Example 2, hardly any of which are likely to found in studio presentation:

go the rounds of
 . the folks back home
 they'll . do anything and *open any door*
 Tariq Aziz for instance has been er *schmoozing people*
 another form of delay and *faffing around*

Thus, the differences between news presentation and the live two-way may be summed up as follows. Even though the use of autocue may have reduced the visibility of the script so that the news reader seems to speak directly to camera, news presentation axiomatically is scripted: it is clear that this is not an 'off-the-cuff' or even memorized performance. In a live two-way, by contrast, correspondents are relatively 'unbuttoned'. They speak as if they are licensed to project a particular point of view as personal observers of a scene. And whereas news presentation offers a series of apparently established 'facts', the live two-way can afford to explore possibility and to indulge in conjecture.⁵

FIGURE 1

Live two-way	News presentation & report
Unscripted	Scripted
Informality	Formality
Marked modality	Unmarked modality
Statements of possibility	Statements of fact
Interpretative (Reaction/comment)	Descriptive
Personal Voice	Institutional Voice
'Now'	'Then'
'There, in the field'	'Here, in the studio'

Truth values and further properties of modality in the live two-way

Inasmuch as the live 'two-way' is a distinct subgenre of discourse, different not only from the 'news presentation' of the studio (iconically the site of news assembly) but also from news reports – pre-recorded, scripted, edited – it performs a different role in relation to the news. It is not just that two styles of discourse surface in broadcast news, depending on whether material is delivered live and extempore or scripted for reading aloud. The complementary distribution of features relating to modality signal different kinds of truth-conditional status for the two kinds of discourse. Since routinely 'the facts' have already been supplied in news presentation and news report, the role of the two-way is to offer something else – to provide a element of 'mild spice' in the form of 'what if . . .', 'maybe', some vague rumour, unattributed gossip, displaced or imagined sentiments. And the different 'truth-conditional status' of the live two-way is very much evident in the modality choices themselves.

These repay close attention because they oscillate in a distinctive fashion on a moment-by-moment basis from strong to weak and back again. Whenever a strong assertion takes place it is usually matched by some kind of 'hedge' (Lakoff, 1972; Stubbs, 1996). Thus a strong concluding assertion, such as 'so *that will be the* message to the United Nations' is followed by a personal point of view marker: '*I think*' amounting to a kind of counterpoint between 'pushing' a claim and 'pulling' it.⁶

Example 14

so that will be the message to the United Nations {push} I think {pull}

A similar alternation may be seen in the following example:

Example 15

it's gonna happen {push} quite {pull} quickly

The wider context for Example 15 is complex. The claim by the BBC's political editor, Andrew Marr, is taken from a programme that pre-dates the invasion of Iraq and is prefaced by a passage of indirect speech reporting Blair's view about 'regime-change' in Iraq.

Example 16

he [Blair] could not have been more unequivocal or absolutely clear that Saddam Hussein's regime has got to go

and it's gonna happen {push} quite {pull} quickly

something {pull} pretty {pull} substantial and serious is gonna happen {push} this winter

The precise way in which modality is operating here may be elucidated by contrasting the utterance with what seem to be⁷ its underlying propositions:

An invasion will happen
 An invasion will happen quickly
 A substantial and serious invasion will take place this winter

Presented in this fashion, stripped of most of the modal modifications of real-time utterance, the bare propositions carry the force of categorical assertions. Indeed, sequenced in this way, it is as if they operate by moving up a scale of increasing rhetorical intensity. By contrast, in the form they take in Example 16, the force of the assertions is modulated by the 'hedging' (Lakoff, 1972; Stubbs, 1996) that takes place – the use of indefinite reference (something, it) and 'de-intensifiers' (pretty, quite). It is difficult to be precise about the overall effect but what seems to be at issue is a blend of *both* assertiveness and tentativeness in which a strong assertion will be 'pushed' or promoted, only to be almost immediately downgraded or 'pulled'; alternatively 'hedging' will be upgraded with a 'push'. Other examples of this type are as follows:

Example 17

but . the Americans *certainly* believe {push}
 that once the thing starts to get into place {pull}
 then *quite a lot of* {pull} the governments that *seem to be* {pull} opposed to it
 at the moment
 will be . in favour {push}

Example 18

that's a kind of awesome list when you er put it out like that {push + pull}

Example 19

and Tony Blair's answer to that {push}
 appears to be {pull} the United Nations will matter does matter {push}
 so long as it is part of the solution {pull}

Example 20

uh you'd think that {pull} they're all solidly against it {push}.

The use of scalar expressions to support *push* versus *pull*

The alternation between 'pushing' an averral and 'pulling' it is paralleled by use of scalar expressions and quantifiers (all, some, any, none) to state something either forcefully or guardedly. Here is a forceful statement:

Example 21

we were *all* sitting there today looking for *any* sign of a flinch or a
 hesitation . . .
 and there was *none* of that (= equivocation)

Interestingly, these cannot count as literal or precise descriptions of states of affairs. Who, it might be asked, is meant by 'all'? And was there absolutely not the slightest sign of hesitation? Instead, the adoption of expressions such as 'all' or 'none' that come from the extreme end of scales of size, number or frequency underscores the strength of the averral: they help to make the point in as strong a fashion as possible.

A similar use of the extreme ends of a scale may be seen in the following:

Example 22

everybody in Europe erm *everybody* around the world is insisting that the United Nations must matter

Again, as a matter of literal fact, this overstates the case but helps to make the point emphatically. Thus, at the extreme ends of scales we have expressions such as:

Example 23

Tariq Aziz has been er schmoozing people *ever since* he's arrived

Example 24

everybody in Europe erm *everybody* around the world is insisting that the United Nations must matter

Example 25

we were *all* sitting there today looking for *any* sign of a flinch or a hesitation and there was *none* of that

Example 26

they're perfectly happy to have *anybody* in there
and they'll . do *anything* and open *any* door.

Thus, the use of 'all', 'none', 'everybody', 'always' helps to increase the force of averrals. Conversely, however, averrals can be weakened or downgraded by drawing upon expressions from the middle ranges of quantifying scales. Weaker expressions – because they are less determinate and do not occupy the extreme ends of quantifying scales – are:

Example 27

quite a lot of the governments

Example 28

you hear . *sometimes* wistful British er diplomats

Example 29

a little bit more than I uh expected

As with the patterning of modal 'push' versus 'pull', it is important to stress that there is no mechanical alternation between the choice of a full

versus an intermediate scalar expression. Equally, however, the discourse of the live two-way eschews an even plane of certainty or forcefulness. Instead it rings the changes from moment to moment. And in doing so it foregrounds or dramatizes the relationship of the correspondent to the topic and the shifting relationship of the discourse to the world. Overall, if the discourse of the news reader is shaped and delivered under the constraint of 'doing facticity' (sounding objective and unbiassed), the discourse of the live two-way is about 'doing being interesting' (sounding lively and engaging) in relation to a facticity already established.

Issues of identity in the live two-way

In this respect the institutional position of a speaker such as John Simpson or Andrew Marr (and, as we shall see, Andrew Gilligan) is significant. Routinely they speak, as we noted above, from where the news is happening rather than from the studio (where the news is enunciated). This is always reinforced iconically by careful choice of background image and ambient sound. The framing of their position underscores both a literal and a metaphorical distance from the news institution itself; and this gives them an ambiguous status. Does the correspondent belong to the institution or not? As 'world affairs' or 'political' editor, they are clearly not simple reporter-journalists. Indeed, there is a trace of deference in references to their veteran status. They are invoked as figures in their own right, speaking separately from the institution, embodying in their voice and person an independent insight and authority. They are interviewed on air, invited to explain, to conjecture and to comment; and they are then thanked for their contribution – as if the institution had no idea in advance what they might have been thinking.

Thus, the live interaction between the institution in the person of the newscaster and these semi-independent free-floating individuals licenses, in the accounts of the latter, a different relationship to the material of the news and to its truth value. Consider, for instance, the little re-duplication 'surprise surprise' in the example below:

Example 30 [AM]
erm my instinct is that
he will do what he thinks is right
in the circumstances
which is
surprise surprise
to stand alongside the Americans

Andrew Marr could have said:

Tony Blair is standing and will stand alongside the Americans

He could have said:

Tony Blair will do what he thinks is right – stand alongside the Americans

Instead he says:

erm my instinct is that

[Tony Blair will do what he thinks is right – stand alongside the Americans]

In other words he projects the key proposition embedded inside a truth conditional health warning – ‘this is only my judgement’.

But he also adds ‘surprise surprise’, which means by convention the opposite of what it says: although I (Andrew Marr) projected the proposition as a revelation of my own distinctive point of view (‘my instinct is that . . .’ – after all, that’s the warrant for my having highly expensive air-time), I know that you (Peter Sissons) think the same thing too. I’m not telling you anything new; we share the same view.

So it’s a little act of truth conditional solidarity. And although this remark is manifestly for Peter Sissons in the first instance, there’s no doubt that it is an interpolated aside not just for Sissons but for a wider (knowing) audience beyond. Thus we can see that the point of the live discourse is not necessarily to be scrupulously factual and informative. Its role is to extemporize and to improvise on the factual basis already supplied and to move from what we know already to what might be the case as the events of the news unfold. The discourse of the two-way and the discourse of news presentation are of two quite different kinds. In this respect, note, of course, that it would be grossly inappropriate for newscaster to slip an interpolation like ‘surprise, surprise’ into standard news presentation. For example, to use Anna Ford again:

**Example 1c*

The United Russia Party which was created last year to support President Putin won a convincing victory, *surprise surprise*.

Equally, however, it tends to be correspondents with a certain degree of achieved status (‘our world affairs editor’, ‘our political editor’) who have won the right to the kinds of licence that the two-way affords, especially when the live two-way occupies the particular sequential position within a news item of allowing the speaker not just the latest but the last word.⁸

Gilligan's live two-way

Let us return to the utterance by Gilligan quoted at the start of this article:

what we've been told by erm one of th::e. senior officials in charge of . erm drawing up that dossier was that erm . actually the government probably . knew that that 45 figure was . wrong even before it decided to put it in

It is clear that it displays all the hallmarks of a live two-way discussed earlier. It may be otiose to quote the whole exchange from the *Today* programme but for the sake of completeness, here it is:

Example 31

John Humphreys: The government's facing more questions this morning over its claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq

our defence correspondent is Andrew Gilligan

this in particular Andy

is Tony Blair saying they'd be ready to go within 45 minutes

Andrew Gilligan: that's right

that was the central claim in his dossier which he published in September

the main erm case if you like against er against Iraq

and the main statement of the government's belief of what it thought Iraq was up to

and what we've been told erm by one of the:.

senior officials in charge of . drawing up that dossier was that erm .

actually the government probably.

knew that that 45 figure was wrong even before it decided to put it in

what this person says is that a week before the publication date of the dossier it was actually rather a bland production

it didn't the the draft didn't say very much more than was public knowledge already

and erm Downing Street

our source says

ordered a week before publication

ordered it to be sexed up

to be made more exciting erm

and erm and ordered more facts to be er to be discovered

John Humphreys: when you say 'more facts to be discovered' does that suggest that they may not have been facts

Andrew Gilligan: well erm our source says that the dossier as it was finally published made the Intelligence Services unhappy erm because to quote erm the source he said there was basically that there was there was there was unhappiness because it didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward that's a quote from our source and essentially erm the 45 minute point er was was probably the most important thing that was added erm and the reason it hadn't been in the original draft was that it was it was only erm it only came from one source and most of the claims were from two and the intelligence agencies say they don't really believe it was necessarily true because they thought the person making the claim had actually made a mistake it got had got mixed up

John Humphreys: does any of this matter now all this all these months later the war's been fought and won

Andrew Gilligan: well the 45 minutes isn't just a detail it did go to the heart of the government's case that Saddam was an imminent threat and it was repeated four times in the dossier including by the Prime Minister himself in the foreword so I think it probably does matter clearly you know if erm if it if it was if it was wrong things do things are got wrong in good faith but if they knew it was wrong before they actually made the claim that's perhaps a bit more serious

John Humphreys: Andrew
many thanks
more about that later

The hallmarks of the live two-way are evident not only in the central claims but throughout the exchange. There are many of the disfluencies of extempore speech, including *pause fillers* and *repetitions* ('the main erm case if you like against er against Iraq', 'well erm our source says', 'clearly you know if erm if it if it was if it was wrong', 'erm and the reason it hadn't been in the original draft was that it was it was only erm it only came from one source', 'and essentially erm the 45 minute point er was

was', 'erm because to quote erm the source'). We also find *pseudo-cleft constructions* ('what this person says is that . . .'), *colloquial idiom* ('it got had got mixed up', 'what it thought Iraq was up to'), *markers of propositional attitude*, such as 'so I think it probably does matter', and *hypothetical conditionals* ('but if they knew it was wrong before they actually made the claim that's perhaps a bit more serious').

In addition there is the use of marked modality choices exhibiting the kinds of 'push' + 'pull' alternations identified above:

Example 32

the main erm case {push} *if you like* {pull} against er against Iraq

Example 33

what this person says is that a week before the publication date of the dossier it was *actually* {push} *rather* {pull} a bland production

Example 34

so I think {pull} it probably {pull} does matter

Example 35

clearly {push} you know if erm if it if it was if it was wrong

things do things are got wrong in good faith

but if theyknew it was wrong before they *actually* {push} made the claim

that's perhaps {pull} a bit more {pull} serious

Example 36

was that *actually* {push} the government *probably* {pull} erm knew that that 45 figure was wrong

The *Today* programme comes on the air at 6 a.m. and runs without interruption until 9 a.m. In this respect it is different from many UK broadcast news programmes. It includes extensive interviews with people 'in the news', particularly politicians, and has some claims to set the (hard) news agenda for the day. Nonetheless its verbal formats for news overlap considerably with television news, in particular in distinctions between the live two-way and news presentation and report. Here, for example, are the opening news headlines from 6 a.m., read by Corrie Corfield:

Example 37

Tony Blair will set foot on Iraq soil today – just seven weeks after Saddam Hussein was swept from power. His visit comes amid continuing controversy about the likelihood of weapons of mass destruction being found. The US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, has suggested that the weapons might have been destroyed before the fighting began. This report is from our political correspondent John Pienaar, who's travelling with the Prime Minister . . .

And here, for example, is a news report broadcast by Gilligan soon after 7 a.m. later that same morning, after a headline and following short introduction by the news reader, Corrie Corfield:

Example 38

Corrie Corfield: A senior official involved in preparing the government's dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction has told this programme that the document was rewritten just before publication – to make it more exciting. The official claimed that the intelligence services were unhappy with the changes. Andrew Gilligan reports:

Andrew Gilligan: The dossier published in September last year was launched in the Commons by the Prime Minister himself. It received saturation coverage. In the preface, Mr Blair stated explicitly that some of some of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction could be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them. One senior British official has now told us that the original version of the dossier produced by the intelligence services added little to what was publicly known. But one week before publication, said this official, the dossier was transformed on Downing Street's orders. The 45-minute assertion was one of several claims added against the wishes of the intelligence agencies, who said it was from a single source which they didn't necessarily believe. The official told the BBC that most people in intelligence were unhappy with the dossier because it did not reflect the considered view they were putting forward.

This is a much tighter piece covering broadly the same ground but in less than half the number of words of the earlier 6.07 broadcast. There, by comparison, Gilligan reproduces the common patterning of live two-ways: he adopts a looser, less formal, more speculative, unbuttoned approach to the material, displaying many of the characteristics of the live two-way that we have already described – the same displacement of claims onto unattributed sources, a kind of spicy rehearsal of hearsay and uncertain oscillations through fluctuating modality choices in its truth-conditional status.

The comparison between the later scripted item and the earlier unscripted one highlights two kinds of problem with the 6.07 broadcast. Indeed, Gilligan's live two-way at 6.07 was doubly problematic. First of all, in status and identity terms, live two-ways, as we have seen, tend to be associated with senior journalists – those entitled 'editors', rather than 'reporters' or 'correspondents'. If we consider the two-way exchanges at Example 2 we can see that Marr is introduced as 'our political editor' and Simpson has the even loftier title of 'world affairs editor'. Their senior status warrants the kinds of speculative question that are addressed to them: 'as a Baghdad veteran John how do you read Iraq's various statements about UN inspectors; do they ever intend that they should return?' or to Marr 'will [Blair] push Washington for one more UN try?' It is rare for reporters or correspondents to be asked to perform in this speculative mode. Second, it is rare for this speculative mode of discourse to occur without a preceding report establishing the 'facts of the case' on which to hook it.

In general, live two-ways typically *follow* a scripted report. Admittedly, they may on occasion be used to introduce a scripted report but it is most unusual for them to occur *without* a scripted report. In the case of the

Gilligan's 6.07 item, however, this, unaccountably, is what happened. In effect, the 6.07 two-way encouraged the discourse of opinionated improvisation in the position normally occupied by a tighter news report. (It is noticeable that all Gilligan's pieces on the topic later that day begin in scripted form.) In short, there was a misalignment of discourse to situation. For whatever reason, Gilligan slipped into or was positioned into the wrong sub-genre of news discourse for what was at stake: basically, he found himself using a soft discourse for a hard topic. As he himself admitted to the Hutton inquiry, with hindsight, it would have been better to have scripted the 6.07 item.

The 'fall-out' from the two-way

In the event, of course, the 6.07 two-way was treated in terms of uptake exactly as if it were a report. The government (in the person of Alistair Campbell) and government counsel to the Hutton inquiry treated what Gilligan had said as part of a veridical discourse of truth and facticity. Within minutes of the live two-way the *Today* programme had received an instant rebuttal from Downing Street, which was noted by *Today* when they returned to the item at 7.32. Much later, its factual inaccuracies were to be painfully unravelled under extended cross-examination by government counsel to the Hutton inquiry. In fine detail and contrary to the wording of the broadcast, Dr Kelly did not work for the Intelligence Services; Dr Kelly did not use the words 'sexed up' (except in response to their use by Gilligan); Downing Street did not order changes to the dossier; the 45-minute warning was a late addition not because it was 'single-sourced' but because the intelligence only became available late. Just to give the flavour:

Mr Sumption QC: Why did you describe him [Dr Kelly] as your Intelligence Service source?

Andrew Gilligan: I do not know. It was a mistake. It was the kind of mistake that does arise in live broadcasting.

Mr Sumption QC: Is that right?

Andrew Gilligan: It is extempore. That was the only time in all my broadcasts, and there were 19 of them on this subject, that I described him in this way. That is a mistake that I have already admitted to.

...

Mr Sumption QC: That statement [a press release] that none of the reports had ever described him as a member of the Intelligence Services was wrong, was it not?

Andrew Gilligan: Yes, it was. One of 19 had described him as such, but it was a live broadcast and once the words are out of your mouth, the – you know, I did not go back and look at the transcripts.

Gilligan's defence – that it was a live broadcast – provokes some sympathy when the routine licences of other live broadcasts are examined. At another point in cross-examination, however, he uses an alternative defence. As we noted at the beginning of the article, he maintains that it was not intended as an allegation of dishonesty. If it had been intended as such it would have been managed very differently as an item:

There is a process, a BBC process. Everything has to be scripted. The scripts have to be approved by the lawyers and everyone, including the presenters, has to stick to the scripts and that is for every appearance on the programme.

'The reason this was not done in this case', claimed Gilligan, 'was it was simply perceived as a different beast.' It was not considered as an allegation of dishonesty. 'This was a political charge essentially.' This is how he elaborated its status under cross-examination by his own counsel:

This was an allegation of spin, of exaggeration. Politics is an arena in which such allegations are the stock in trade. And this came as part of a continuing debate over the authenticity of some of the information in the dossier. And even on the morning of the broadcast for instance, there were two or three articles in the newspapers, before I had said a single word, explicitly accusing the government and the Prime Minister of lying over the dossier. So there was a continuing and lively political debate. This did not start it and did not set it off. This was regarded by all of us as a contribution to that debate.

There is some tension here between the two lines of defence. It is not the normal function of broadcast news reports to take up sides in debate in the way that an article (say, an 'op ed' piece) in a newspaper might. If Gilligan thought to make a implicit comparison between what might be done in a newspaper article and what might be done in a BBC news item then it is one that elides the discursive differences between the two and their quite contrasting truth conditional statuses. (Just as also there are important differences between a politician alleging dishonesty of another politician and a journalist doing so.)⁹

Other news professionals were not slow to reinforce this point. The reaction of the Deputy Editor of ITV News, Deborah Turness, is instructive (even allowing for ITV's competitive relation to the BBC).

I can't possibly conceive of a case in which we would commit the same errors as the BBC. . . . If we have an exclusive and the journalist hasn't checked with the person we are accusing, or approached the government or the department, for a statement, then the ITN lawyer will ask why. . . . Because our lawyers legal everything that goes out on the programme, things tend not to slip through the net. . . . The lawyer is in the newsroom, looking at scripts and he's also in the edit room looking at packages. (*UK Press Gazette*, 3 October 2003: 13)

Clearly, therefore, some quarters of the public sphere (and not just Alistair Campbell) chose to treat the original 6.07 item as a veridical, scripted

discourse of truth. And it is difficult – despite Gilligan’s protestations – to fault them in this.

Indeed, if in the heat of the inquiry there was some confusion in Gilligan’s lines of defence there is, even now, some residual confusion in the BBC’s own account. In May 2004 they completed their own confidential internal inquiry. Their short public statement asserted, in defence of their editorial processes, that there had after all been a script which ‘was properly prepared and cleared in line with normal production practices at the time, but was then not followed by Andrew Gilligan.’ Not only is this claim clearly at variance with significant sections of Gilligan’s evidence to the inquiry (which the BBC did not question at the time), it is also at variance with the transcribed discourse of the programme. Scripted reports are introduced in the following manner: ‘This report is from our political correspondent John Pienaar who is travelling with the Prime Minister . . . ’; or, after the 7.0 a.m. news summary, ‘Andrew Gilligan reports . . . ’. When the 6.07 item involving Gilligan is first introduced by the presenter John Humphreys, it is not as if a report is expected. Instead it is introduced as follows:

The government’s facing more questions this morning over its claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq
our defence correspondent is Andrew Gilligan
this in particular Andy
is Tony Blair saying they’d be ready to go within 45 minutes

In view of this conversational opening it seems disingenuous for the BBC to claim that Gilligan departed from a script when none at this stage was being introduced. Indeed, Humphreys proceeded directly into a live interview as if that was all that was expected.

Conclusion

Some would see the Gilligan allegation, as did Hutton, as a straightforward failure of journalistic practice analogous to the subsequent mistakes at the *Mirror* newspaper: Gilligan’s notes, after all, did not fully confirm his story and there were important errors of fact. But while it is crucial to uphold core journalistic values and practices (such as, for instance, double-checking sources to ensure accuracy), an additional and very real complication in this case is engendered by widespread and far-reaching changes in the forms of public discourse and by the pervasive pressures towards informality, dialogue rather than monologue, improvisation rather than script (see, for example, Cameron, 2000; Fairclough, 1995; Montgomery, 1999) The discourses of the news are neither homogeneous nor static. They

amount to an evolving system of discourses in the process of change. And the kinds of change in process amount, for instance, to subtle alterations in the alignments of discourse around axes of truth, sincerity, sociability and personality. As Scannell demonstrates conclusively in *Radio Television and Modern Life*, in the broadcasting of talk the media have aspired as much to entertainment and sociability as to truth and the correspondence to fact (Scannell, 1996). In its increasing emphasis on the person, on dialogue and on conversation as a mode of delivery, news discourse has registered and projected those changes discernible in many areas of public life. In the live two-way we can see a quite particular instance of those broader changes at work. But, like all change, it produces uncertainty about its status, and most particularly about what kinds of validity claims most properly apply to it.

Of course, the BBC's procedures will be overhauled in the wake of its own internal inquiry following the Hutton report.¹⁰ Most likely there will be specific recommendations about the use of the live 'two-way'. There might quite possibly be a temporary reduction in its use. But in an age where considerable resources are devoted to the production of news at the same time as audiences for specific outlets are increasingly difficult to attract and to hold, dialogue and unscripted, live informality – with all its attendant risks (and precisely because of them) – will continue to surface. Gilligan has paid a price for journalistic mistakes. Just like the tango, however, it takes two to make a two-way. Not only the two-way but a much broader context of improvisation made Gilligan's mistakes possible – one far too pervasive easily to be brought to book.

Notes

1. The article was first presented as a paper at the 12th Ross Priory International Seminar on Broadcast Talk, University of Strathclyde, October 2003, although some of the ideas were developed at an earlier Ross Priory seminar on 'Liveness'. (<http://www.media.uio.no/personer/arntm/Ross/>) and at a symposium on discourse at the University of Birmingham. I am grateful to members of the Ross Priory seminar for their discussion of the material, especially Trudi Haarman, who quite independently adopted a similar approach to similar material. I'm also grateful to Paddy Scannell, Deborah Cameron, Malcolm Coulthard, Philip Schlesinger, Michael Stubbs and Andrew Tolson, who provided written comment at various stages as the article developed. Its faults, of course, remain my own.

2. Alasdair Milne, in an interview in the London *Standard* during the Falklands War, 12 May 1982 (cited in Harris, 1994).

3. Prime Minister's questions, 11 May 1982.

4. To be more precise, the concern here is with *epistemic* rather than with *deontic* modality. Epistemic modality is variously understood in terms of ways of

limiting or increasing the strength of an assertion, ways of limiting or increasing the amount of commitment to the truth/accuracy/probability of the proposition, or ways of signalling the degrees of knowledge regarding factuality. Deontic modality by contrast is concerned with the encoding of obligation (see Coates, 1982; Perkins, 1983; Stubbs, 1996).

5. And this despite the way in which the BBC's Producers' Guidelines have long counselled against this outcome when interviewing correspondents. The current version (unchanged since at least 1996) of the guidelines stipulates:

It is entirely right to call upon correspondents to express their judgement based on their knowledge of a subject, but entirely inappropriate to ask them about things of which they cannot be sure, or on which they can only speculate. Producers should establish in advance exactly how much a correspondent will be able to move a story on or clarify it. (BBC Producers' Guidelines Online, p. 183)

The examples discussed here suggest that this advice is honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

6. I am indebted to conversations with Fabio Crestani for the terms 'push' and 'pull', which are drawn from the field of Information Science where they are generally used to describe different ways of managing information in relation to a user (see Agosti et al., 2001). A search engine such as Google allows a user to 'pull down' information. More sophisticated mechanisms will be able to offer or 'push' information to a user on the basis of previous searches. The usage in this article, applied to modality choices, is somewhat different. It seeks to capture what at first sight seems a less than rational aspect of certain kinds of speech performance in which a speaker will first raise, then lower, the strength of an assertion in the course of making it. (The reverse is also possible). I think it is a feature of the public performance of un-scripted speech. The tension between overstatement and understatement lends colour and interest to the performance. Live two-ways often sound more interesting than informative. A related phenomenon has been noted by Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberg (1997) in relation to responses in political interviews. She distinguishes on the basis of modality choices between the confident politician and the non-committal politician but she also notes that 'upgrading' (overtone) and 'downgrading' (undertone) can occur within the same turn.

7. The underlying propositions are not always easy to recover because of a crucial characteristic of live speech in this sub-genre, namely, intermittent 'vagueness' (see Channell, 1994).

8. Reporters do perform two-ways, especially for regional items, but in these cases they tend to be more closely integrated with the body of the report.

9. In September 2003, for example, the then leader of the Tory Party, Iain Duncan Smith, in his conference speech to the party faithful accused the Prime Minister of lying about his role in the Dr Kelly affair: this did not provoke demands by Blair for a retraction or threats of a libel action. And opinion pieces in newspapers similarly may be allowed to pass without reaction. But the claim that the government was lying (if that was the claim) in a generic discourse type that purports to be about rhetorically unadorned facts rather than opinion could not easily pass off simply as a 'contribution to political debate'.

10. In the event the BBC published the Neil report, which made a number of recommendations about journalistic practice and the training of its own journalists.

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