

The language of youth crime: a systemic functional linguistic and critical discourse study of BBC radio news

Edward Haig

Introduction

During 2007 the problem of youth crime became a major focus of attention for the mass media in Britain. Newspapers published numerous stories about the criminal behaviour of young people and the threat they posed to British society. The kinds of youth crime that were reported on included a wide variety of behaviour judged to be problematic, ranging from minor acts of antisocial behaviour such as graffiti-writing and public rowdiness to violent assaults and murder. A particular concern was with teenage gangs and their use of weapons such as knives and guns. In London, the police were said to have identified over 200 teenage gangs, some of which were composed entirely of girls. In the first half of the year alone, 25 teenagers had been killed in gang-related attacks involving guns or knives. The use of illegal drugs and alcohol by teenagers were also highlighted as serious social problems.

At the same time, the media also reported the results of public opinion surveys that seemed to show that record numbers of British people were very worried about youth crime. The surveys showed that people were so worried that they were too afraid to confront young people who behaved badly in public or even to walk in the streets after dark. Many parents were said to be afraid of their own teenage children. The media claimed that the scale of the youth crime problem was bigger than ever before and that the moral values of British society had never before been so seriously threatened.

However, there are reasons for doubting whether the problems really were as new or as serious as the media suggested. Firstly, as for the newness of the problems, in fact, media reports about youth crime have a very long history in Britain. For example, there were many such reports during the Victorian age and from the 1950s there have been a number of periods when public concern about young people and youth crime has been particularly high (Pearson 1983). In cases where the media is seen as playing a major role in the propagation of such fears these periods have been referred to as 'moral panics' (Cohen 1972). The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the way in which media reports of youth crime contribute to moral panics through a detailed linguistic analysis of one radio news bulletin.

As for the scale of the current youth crime problem, it is difficult to know exactly how big it is. The official government statistics about crime showed that levels of violent crime had actually been *falling* for a number of years and that in most parts of Britain people were *less* likely to be the victim of a violent crime than in previous years. However, official statistics are not as unambiguous or objective as people sometimes think. Particularly in the case of youth crime in Britain for a number of reasons the figures are unreliable and consequently there was much debate about the real extent of youth crime. Nevertheless, it seems at least possible, based on the statistical and research evidence, that there was a gap between the reality of youth crime and the way in which British people perceived youth crime.

Media and Youth Crime

In modern societies people increasingly rely on the mass media for their information about the world. Rather than observing people and events directly or learning about them by talking to other members of their local communities, people use newspapers,

television, radio and, increasingly, the internet as their source of information. Because of this important role that the media plays in modern society, the ways in which the media report on things and events have a significant influence on how people understand and think about the world. This in turn influences how people behave. If, for example, the media continuously emphasize the untrustworthiness or corruption of politicians then citizens are likely to come to see politicians in that way and may lose respect for politicians and the political system. This may have damaging consequences for the democratic health of the political system if, for example, fewer and fewer people bother to vote in elections. Conversely, if the media presents politicians in a generally favourable and uncritical way then citizens may regard them in the same way too. This also has risks for democracy if in fact the politicians are not as commendable as the media presents them to be.

Of course, the power of the media to influence people's views and behaviour depends very much on how much people trust the media. If people regard the media as untrustworthy, perhaps because they think that the media are under the control of the government and are being used as a tool of propaganda, then people may be less likely to accept the media's version of reality. Because trust is an essential factor in the relationship between the media and their audiences, conventional media organizations make great efforts to gain and keep the trust of their readers and viewers.

In Britain, the main national radio and television broadcaster is the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). The BBC was founded in 1922 and has since grown to become the largest broadcasting organization in the world. It has a particularly important role in British society because it is the nation's public service broadcaster. Reflecting its unique importance as a public

service broadcaster, the BBC is required by law to be fair and objective in its news and current affairs reporting. It is funded by means of the television license fee paid by viewers and listeners and therefore does not need to rely on advertising like commercial broadcasting companies do, although it does increasingly engage in commercial activities to supplement its income. Over many years the BBC has built up a very high reputation and is widely trusted, not only by British people but also by people in other countries who listen to *BBC World Service* radio or watch *BBC World News* television.

Reflecting the BBC's high reputation as a broadcasting organization and the professionalism and skill of the individual journalists who work for it, the way in which the BBC's radio news programmes reported on the problem of youth crime during 2007 was generally moderate and balanced. Indeed, compared to the sensationalistic way that some British newspapers covered this issue, the BBC radio news coverage was extremely responsible. However, the apparently orthodox liberal journalistic ethics that this coverage reflects is itself not without its problems. These problems can be divided into three kinds, all of which relate in fundamental ways to the *language* of the news. Firstly, problems related to the *format* of the news programmes themselves. Secondly, problems related to the way in which youth crime was *represented* on the programmes. And thirdly, problems related to the *types of people* who appear in the programmes. In the terms of the approach to language that I have adopted in this paper, namely Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), these three problems relate to three socially significant dimensions of language: genre, discourse and style (Fairclough 2003). In this paper I shall concentrate on the first and third of these dimensions since it is the format of radio news programmes and the discourses of presenters and other voices featured therein that I believe are the

most important and yet least understood aspects of the ideological work that BBC radio news performs.

The Genres of Radio News

The concept of 'genre' offers a useful way of thinking about programme formats. A genre is a particular type of text. The word 'text' is used in media studies in a very general sense to mean not only written texts such as books, magazines or newspapers but also television and radio programmes. In each kind of media, every individual text represents an example of a particular genre or combination of genres. For example, in films, there are various genres such as comedy, romance, horror and adventure. When we watch a film, we can usually tell fairly quickly what genre it belongs to. We are able to do this because each genre has characteristic features and rules and texts are produced according to those rules. For example, comedy films usually involve main characters who are amusing and who get involved in various humorous situations. There may be some violence, but it will not be shown in a serious or shocking way and the ending of a comedy film is likely to be a happy one. The characteristic features of a genre reflect the purpose which that genre is designed to serve. The purpose of the genre relates to the effect it is intended to have on the audience. In the case of comedy films, the purpose is to entertain the audience and make them laugh. Though the purpose of that, of course, is to make money.

The BBC currently has five main national radio stations, in addition to many local and one international station. Each station has a unique identity and this is reflected in the kinds of programmes that they broadcast and the kinds of target audience they are intended for. For example, BBC *Radio 1* broadcasts pop music programmes for young people, *Radio 2* broadcasts easy-listening music for older people, and *Radio 3* broadcasts

classical and jazz music. All of these stations include news programmes but again these vary according to the station. In this paper I shall focus on the news broadcast by *Radio 4*, which is the station regarded as providing the most serious and authoritative news and current affairs programming.

In the second half of 2007, during which the recordings for this study was made, the way in which each radio station's news programmes represented the problem of youth crime was quite similar, albeit with some interesting variations. For example, all of the stations reported the news about youth crime but some stations reported the problem in much more detail than others. Moreover, stations varied in the way in which they balanced the 'entertainment' and 'information' aspects of their programmes. These differences show that 'the news' is not a completely objective fact but is something that is manufactured by media organizations. Though this is inevitable it is also problematic because it can lead to bias in the reporting of youth crime, even in reports as apparently objective and balanced as those of BBC radio news programmes.

The *Today* Programme

Of all *Radio 4*'s many news programmes, the *Today* programme is widely regarded as the most important. Broadcast six days a week, from 6 to 9 am on weekdays (from 7 am on Saturdays), it is the programme which 'sets the agenda' for the day's news both within and beyond the media itself. It is the programme on which senior politicians are most likely to appear when they wish (or are compelled) to talk to the nation and it's presenters have a reputation for being highly skilled interviewers who can ask tough questions and hold powerful individuals and organizations to account on behalf of the nation.

For this paper, rather than discuss the format or generic structure of the programme as a whole I have chosen to analyse in detail one very short excerpt from one news bulletin. It was broadcast at 8 am on Thursday 23 August 2007, the day after a particularly tragic youth crime incident had occurred. At about 7:30 pm the previous evening, a young boy had been shot dead by another boy outside a pub in Liverpool. The victim, Rhys Jones, was only eleven-years-old at the time and in fact was completely unconnected to any gangs or criminal groups. His killing, subsequent police investigations revealed, was simply a case of mistaken identity as the boy who fired the fatal bullet, a member of a local gang, was trying to shoot another boy who was a member of a rival gang.

Media, Crime and Language

Social problems such as youth crime have been investigated from a wide range of academic perspectives. On the whole these perspectives have been restricted to the established fields of sociology, psychology, politics, economics and law (Hale et al. 2005). More recently, however, the specific issue of the media's role in such problems has been investigated from the perspectives of media and cultural studies (Jewkes 2004, Greer 2008, Presdee 2000). At the same time, linguists and discourse analysts, particularly those working in the tradition of critical theory, have been paying increasing attention to media language (Montgomery 2007, Talbot 2007). There has been some convergence of these various perspectives (see for example Wykes 2001) but it remains the case that mainstream research on crime has paid little attention to the potential contribution of linguistics, apart from the very specialized field of forensic linguistics (Olsson 2004). One likely reason for this neglect is the formidable intellectual challenge presented by linguistic terminology. For this reason, central to the efforts of linguists towards forging links with other disciplines has

been the attempt to present linguistic analysis in more accessible form. A particularly good example of this is Fairclough (2000), which is a forceful critique of the language of New Labour by a leading exponent of CDA but which is written in an admirably clear way. Nevertheless, every discipline creates and needs its technical vocabulary and there are inevitably losses as well as gains in translating into less specialized language. The approach to this problem that I have adopted in this paper is to present the linguistic analysis in a relatively high degree of detail but, I hope, to have discussed the significance of the results in more accessible language.

Textual Analysis

The first aim of this analysis is to describe as fully as possible the linguistic structure of the text according to Michael Halliday's systemic functional model of language (Halliday 1978, Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Secondly, and in accordance with that model's social semiotic orientation (which views culture as meaningful and language as being functionally related to its cultural context), the analysis aims to account for the structural features thus identified in terms of the contextual variables of register (the context of situation) and genre (the context of culture) that the text is designed to realize. Finally and based on this account of registerial and generic features, the analysis seeks to relate the structural features to aspects of the higher ideological dimensions of context that influence the ways in which BBC radio news reports on the problem of youth crime.

The Hallidayan model of language is an immensely rich and complex one combining both theory and description. Unfortunately, for reasons of space I have not been able to provide an introduction to this model. For my analysis of linguistic structure in this study I have drawn extensively on the extremely

lucid account of this model provided by Eggins (2004) and readers are referred to that estimable work for detailed explanations of the terms used in the following analysis. For the critical discourse analysis of ideology in the text my principal source of concepts and approach has been Fairclough (2003).

Every CDA study must strike a balance between the amount of textual material analysed and the depth of the analysis undertaken. As previously mentioned, in this study I have chosen to undertake a very detailed analysis of a limited amount of text. This has had two main consequences in terms of the limitations of the study. Firstly, since not all of the grammatical elements discussed in the CDA literature in connection with ideology were present in the text it has not been possible to demonstrate their operation. Secondly, given the small size of this text the potential for generalizations to be made on the basis of the analysis of this text to radio news broadcasts as a whole is severely curtailed and so the conclusions drawn must remain tentative and provisional.

The Text

The text selected for analysis here consists of 22 sentences which comprise 47 clauses and 428 words. To facilitate the analyses which follow the text has been annotated with Arabic numerals to indicate sentences and Roman numerals to indicate clauses.

Edward Stourton (programme co-presenter)

1 An eleven-year-old has been shot dead in Liverpool. 2i
Police are appealing for information 2ii saying 2iii this is no
time for silence.

[*Stourton reads other news headlines about GCSE results etc.*]¹

Alice Arnold (newsreader)

3i An eleven-year-old boy has died 3ii after being shot in
Liverpool. 4i Rhys Jones was playing football with two friends
in a pub car park in Croxteth 4ii when he was attacked. 5i
Detectives say 5ii a boy rode past on a BMX bike 5iii and fired

three shots 5iv one of which hit Rhys Jones in the neck. 6 The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has sent her condolences to his family. 7 Our correspondent Caroline Cheetham is at the scene. **Caroline Cheetham** [*On location. This is a repeat of part of her earlier report.*]

8i The three boys were playing football in the car park of the Fir Tree pub at about seven o'clock last night 8ii when a teenage boy wearing a hooded top rode up on a BMX bike 8iii and opened fire. 9i He fired three shots, 9ii one of which hit one of the boys in the head or neck. 10 He later died at Alder Hey Children's Hospital. 11i He hasn't yet been named, 11ii but police say 11iii he was a local boy from the private housing estate in Croxteth Park. 12i The pub and the nearby parade of shops have been cordoned off, 12ii as police continue searching the area. 13 Last night, police appealed for people to examine their consciences, and come forward with information.

Alice Arnold

14i Detectives have said 14ii that they are bewildered 14iii as to why the boy was targeted. 15 Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne of Merseyside police spoke of his disgust at the attack.

Simon Byrne [*On location. This is a repeat of part of his earlier comment.*]

16 It is quite awful and quite senseless that 17i It's just not right that an eleven-year-old boy should lose his life in these circumstances 17ii and again my appeal really is that anyone that knows who this killer is, this is not a time for silence, do the right thing and turn them in. 18 I particularly appeal to the criminal fraternity. 19i If you know who this killer is, 19ii work with us 19iii to catch them quickly 19iv and take them off our streets.

Alice Arnold

20i A local councillor, Rose Bailey, – 20ii who's lived in Croxteth for twenty-six years – told us 20iii that the area had been experiencing problems with some of it's young people.

Rose Bailey [*Via telephone. This is an edited version of her earlier comments. Deletions from this section made by programme producers shown in square brackets.*]

21i We've got the largest private housing estate in Europe with

no youth service er input whatsoever, 21ii so you can imagine 21iii how many thousands of children there are [*deleted <they're all family homes with three four five bedrooms with no activities whatsoever in place to to cater for these young people>*] 21iv and the only area where they do congregate and and cause mayhem if you like is in in and around the shops [*deleted <erm>*] 22i I tried to get CCTV put in 22ii and ironically they just approved the programme.

Clause Analysis

In this section the text is analysed in two ways: firstly for Mood and then for Modality. Keys are given for each analysis. These include all the principal categories in each system regardless of whether or not a particular category is represented in the text. This has been done in order to highlight what particular choices from the various systems have and have not been made by the text's producers.

The text has been divided into clauses. The mood element of ranking (non-embedded) clauses is shown in **bold**. Embedded clauses are shown within [[double square brackets]]. Double slashes // indicate clause boundaries within embedded clauses. Inserted clauses are shown by << double angle brackets >>. Where clause constituents are interrupted by other constituents this is shown by > single angle brackets < in the constituent labels. Where excerpts from the text are quoted in the following discussion they are indicated by the initials of the speaker and the sentence number enclosed in [single square brackets].

Mood and Modality Analysis

The Mood structure of the clause is the means by which the fundamental distinctions within the register variable of Tenor are realized. Specifically, it is through choices of elements such as Subject and Finite that participants in an interaction encode their understanding (or at least their ostensible understanding) both of

their relationships to each other and to the social and situational context in which the interaction takes place. For example, distinctions between the roles of giving and demanding are (congruently) associated with the structural patterns of declarative and imperative clauses respectively. And distinctions between exchanges of information or goods and services are related to Mood differences between major and minor clause types. The Mood system can also be viewed semantically as realizing the ‘arguable nub’ of the clause: assertions about what is or is not the case or what must or must not be done. Between these polar opposites realized via the mood system, gradations of meaning are realized through choices of the various systems of Modality.

In this section, Mood and Modality of all ranking and embedded clauses are analysed. They are coded according to the following key.

Key

S = Subject;

F = Finite; Fn = negative; Fma = modalized; Fmu = modulated.

P = Predicator; Pma = modalized; Pmu = modulated.

F/P = Fused Finite and Predicator.

C = Complement; Ca = attributive.

A = Adjunct; Ac = circumstantial; Aj = conjunctive; Am = mood;

Ao = comment; Ap = polarity; At = continuity; Av = vocative.

WH = WH element; WH/Ac = fused WH element and

Circumstantial Adjunct; WH/S = fused WH element and Subject.

Edward Stourton (programme co-presenter)

1 **An eleven-year-old (S) has (F)** been shot (P) dead (Ac) in Liverpool (Ac). 2i **Police (S) are (F)** appealing (P) for information (C), 2ii saying (P) 2iii **this (S) is (F)** no time for silence (Ca).

[Stourton reads other news headlines about GCSE results

etc.]

Alice Arnold (newsreader)

3i **An eleven-year-old boy (S) has (F)** died (P) 3ii after being shot (P) in Liverpool (Ac). 4i **Rhys Jones (S) was (F)** playing (P) football (C) with two friends (Ac) in a pub car park (Ac) in Croxteth (Ac) 4ii when **he (S) was (F)** attacked (P). 5i **Detectives (S) say (F/P)** 5ii **a boy (S) rode (F/P)** past (Ac) on a BMX bike (Ac) 5iii and **fired (F/P)** three shots (C), 5iv **one of which (S) hit (F/P)** Rhys Jones (C) in the neck (Ac). 6 **The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith (S) has (F)** sent (P) her condolences (C) to his family (Ac). 7 **Our correspondent Caroline Cheetham (S) is (F)** at the scene (Ac).

Caroline Cheetham [*On location. This is a repeat of part of her earlier report.*]

8i **The three boys (S) were (F)** playing (P) football (C) in the car park of the Fir Tree pub (Ac) at about seven o'clock last night (Ac) 8ii when **a teenage boy (S)** [[wearing (P) a hooded top (C)]] **rode (F/P)** up (Ac) on a BMX bike (Ac) 8iii and **opened (F)** fire (P). 9i **He (S) fired (F/P)** three shots (C), 9ii **one of which (S) hit (F/P)** one of the boys (C) in the head or neck (Ac). 10 **He (S)** later (Ac) **died (F/P)** at Alder Hey Children's Hospital (Ac). 11i **He (S) hasn't (Fn) yet (Am)** been named (P), 11ii but **police (S) say (F/P)** 11iii **he (S) was (F)** a local boy (Ca) from the private housing estate in Croxteth Park (Ac). 12i **The pub and the nearby parade of shops (S) have (F)** been cordoned (P) off (Ac), 12ii as **police (S) continue (F)** searching (P) the area (C). 13 Last night (Ac), **police (S) appealed (F/P)** for [[people (S) to examine (P) their consciences (C) // and come (P) forward (Ac) with information (Ac)]](C).

Alice Arnold

14i **Detectives (S) have (F)** said (P) 14ii that **they (S) are (F)** bewildered (Ca) 14iii as to why (WH/Ac) **the boy (S) was (F)** targeted (P). 15 **Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne of Merseyside Police (S) spoke (F/P)** of his disgust at the attack (C).

Simon Byrne [*On location. This is a repeat of part of his earlier comment.*]

16 **It (S>) is (F)** quite awful and quite senseless (Ca) [[**that**]] (<S) 17i **It (S>) 's (F) just (Am)** not (Ap) right (Ca) [[that an

eleven-year-old boy (S) should (Fmu) lose (P) his life (C) in these circumstances (Ac)]] (<S) 17ii and again **my appeal (S) really (Am) is (F)** [[that – anyone [[that knows (F) [[who (WH/S) this killer (Ca) is (F)]]]] (Av) – this (S) is not (Fn) a time for silence (Ca), // do (P) the right thing (C) // and turn (P) them (C) in (Ac)]] (Ca). 18 **I (S) particularly (Am) appeal (F/P)** to the criminal fraternity (C). 19i If **you (S) know (F/P)** [[who (WH/S) this killer (Ca) is (F)]] (C), 19ii work (P) with us (Ac) 19iii to catch (P) them (C) quickly (Ac) 19iv and take (P) them (C) off (Ac) our streets (C).

Alice Arnold

20 **A local councillor, Rose Bailey (S)**, << 20ii **who (S) 's (F)** lived (P) in Croxteth (Ac) for twenty-six years (Ac) >>, **bold (F/P)** us (C) 20iii that **the area (S) had (F)** been experiencing (P) problems (C) with some of its young people (Ac).

Rose Bailey [*Via telephone. This is an edited version of her earlier comments. Deletions from this section made by programme producers shown in square brackets.*]

21i **We (S) 've (F)** got (P) the largest private housing estate in Europe (C) with no youth service er input whatsoever (Ac), 21ii so **you (S) can (Fma)** imagine (P) 21iii how many thousands of children (C) **there (S) are (F)** [*deleted: they're all family homes with three four five bedrooms with no activities whatsoever in place to to cater for these young people*] 21iv and **the only area** [[where they (S) do (F) congregate (P) // and and cause (P) mayhem (C), if you like (Am),]] **(S) is (F)** in in and around the shops (Ca) [*deleted: erm*]. 22i **I (S) tried (F)** to get (P) [[CCTV (C) put (P) in (Ac)]] (C) 22ii and ironically (Ao) **they (S) just (Am) approved (F/P)** the programme (C).

Mood

The results of the coding are summarized in Table 1. Column headings show the initials of the speakers' names, arranged in order of speaking turn from left to right:

ES = Edward Stourton; AA = Alice Arnold; CC = Caroline Cheetham; SB = Simon Byrne; RB = Rose Bailey.

As Table 1 shows, speakers consistently selected an extremely limited number of choices from the Mood system. By far the most frequently used clause type was the full declarative. Indeed, of the other seven clauses, the sole abandoned clause was also begun as a full declarative and the four non-finite clauses represent grammatically obligatory contractions of full declaratives consequent on speakers' choices concerning clause complexing. This reliance on full declaratives is typical of the non-dialogic nature of written (though in this case, of course, specifically written-to-be-read-aloud) media texts where the commodity being exchanged is information and the relationship between speakers and hearers is one in which there is no possibility for feedback from the audience, at least within the timescale of the text's duration. In combination with other aspects of the text such Mood selections contribute to the construal of a distant and authoritative position for the text producers on the one hand and an essentially passive role for the audience on the other.

Table 1. Mood analysis (ranking clauses only)

Mood class	ES	AA	CC	AA	SB	AA	RB	Total
Full declarative	3	9	12	4	4	3	6	41
Elliptical declarative								
Polar interrogative								
WH- interrogative								
Imperative					1			1
Exclamative								
Non-finite	1	1			2			4
Abandoned					1			1
Minor clause								
Total ranking clauses	4	10	12	4	8	3	6	47

Despite the lack of producer-audience dialogicality, the text itself is highly multivocalic in that its 22 sentences are shared between five speakers. This high degree of multivocality suggests that such ‘performed’ dialogicality serves as the kind of mediated ‘quasi-interaction’ identified by John Thompson which, he argues, creates a situation wherein:

Some individuals are engaged primarily in producing symbolic forms for others who are not physically present, while others are involved primarily in receiving symbolic forms produced by others to whom they cannot respond, but with whom they can form bonds of friendship, affection and loyalty.
(Thompson 1995: 84-5)

In such situations, the audience are not so much hearers as overhearers of a conversation conducted by spacio-temporally distant others.² In this case of course, the conversation itself is not an actual one, conducted at a particular conjunction of spacetime by co-present participants, but a carefully constructed bricolage of utterances created in various places and times and packaged by the producers for consumption by the media audience. Interestingly, the contribution of Bailey does indeed come from a real (albeit mediated by telephone) conversational exchange: an interview with her conducted by John Humphrys, Edward Stourton’s co-presenter for this edition of the programme, which was broadcast one hour earlier but which had been recorded at some unspecified time prior to that. However, in her comments rebroadcast here all six clauses are full declaratives and apart from choosing the pronoun *you* to designate her interlocutor as Subject for one clause, there are no other Mood elements to indicate that she is engaged in a dialogue.

Against this backdrop of declarative clauses, the one use of an imperative clause by Simon Byrne is noteworthy. The speech event from which his comments were taken was a press conference

held by Merseyside Police the previous evening.³ One of the main purposes of that event was to enable the police to appeal to the general public for information. The crux of this appeal, addressed *particularly* to the *criminal fraternity*, is realized here through the imperative clause *work with us* in Byrne's last sentence:

- (1) *If you know who this killer is, work with us to catch them quickly and take them off our streets.* [SB 19]

This forceful request, expressed in the form of an unmodalised command, carries a considerable threat to intersubjective solidarity: hearers can challenge the speaker's authority or simply reject or ignore the request. To mitigate the face-threatening nature of the command therefore, Byrne makes use of two strategies. Firstly, he expresses his command in terms of a request for cooperation in a shared task to be undertaken by both informants and police in pursuit of a common goal relating to *our streets*. Secondly, he frames the request even more individually as one originating from himself by referring to *my appeal* and saying *I particularly appeal*. The combined effect of these strategies is to reduce the interpersonal distance between speakers and hearers with the aim of increasing the appeal's effectiveness.

Finally, we may note that Byrne uses two other imperative clauses in this extract. These occur in an earlier sentence where they form part of a paratactically linked three-clause complex functioning as an attributive Complement in a ranking clause:

- (2) *this is not a time for silence, do the right thing and turn them in.* [SB 17ii]

Since this complex is downwardly rankshifted, or embedded, other things being equal the semantic role of the clauses within it should

be viewed as less salient than those of ranking clauses. In this case, however, for a number of reasons they retain much of the force of ranking clauses. Firstly, the very fact that they are imperative clauses endows them with considerable prominence. Secondly, because they are functioning as full clauses rather than, for example, as Postmodifier to a nominal group, they retain much of their independent arguability and semantic force. And finally, they contribute additional force to the effectiveness of the rhetorical triple clause structure through the parallelism which they exhibit.

Modality

Turning now to the modality features of the text, as the above analysis shows, very little modality is expressed through the Mood system itself. There are only two modal Finites and no modal Predicates. The modal Finites are:

(3) *that an eleven-year-old boy should lose his life in these circumstances* [SB 17i]

(4) *so you can imagine* [RB 21ii]

In (3) the role of *should* is ambiguous with respect to modality function. As discussed by Huddleston (2002) the semantics of *should* are complex. In the present case, it could be regarded as strongly deontic with the sense of ‘must have to’ or ‘was forced to’, in which case it would be a modulated Finite. But it might also be interpreted less forcefully as meaning ‘happened to’, which would constitute a modalised Finite. Such usage is an example of what Huddleston classifies as ‘low-degree modality’ in which *should* has ‘little discernible modal meaning of its own’ (2002: 188). I interpret (3) as corresponding to Huddleston’s subcategory of ‘emotive’, for which he gives the example, *It is*

surprising that he should have been so late. On the basis of this interpretation we may conclude that little significance in terms of the power/solidarity relationship between speaker and hearer is being encoded by this modality element in this clause beyond a mild signal of the speakers emotional reaction to the event.

Likewise, Bailey's use in (3) of the modal auxiliary *can* to express what Huddleston calls 'dynamic possibility'⁴ is another example of low-degree modality (186) used here in a set phrase serving as a conversational 'monitoring' move, in the terms of Eggins and Slade (1997: 195), whereby the speaker can check or seek assurance that the audience is following her argument. Nevertheless, it has a positive solidarity function in that it is an invitation to the addressee (the interviewer, John Humphrys) to share with her in imagination the situation that she is describing concerning the young people on the housing estate where the shooting incident took place.

In conclusion, that fact that the only cases of verbal modality in this text were uttered by voices unaffiliated to the BBC is noteworthy. That the news presenting and reporting personnel do not use verbal modalization here is an indication of the high degree of facticity associated with the news and, by extension, their authoritative role as producers and purveyors of it. On the other hand, since their texts are essentially concerned with the exchange (specifically, giving) of information rather than of goods and services, there is no necessity or even possibility of using modulation either. These facts illustrate how this BBC news text is constructed from a tightly limited range of Mood and Modality features and how this is related to the contextual genre and register variables in which it was produced. These findings are complemented by an analysis of the pattern of Adjunct usage in the text.

Adjuncts

Table 2 summarizes the use of Adjuncts in this text. We may begin by noting that the total number of Adjuncts is just less than the total number of ranking clauses and that the great majority of Adjuncts are Circumstantial. This is indicative of the fact that many of the meanings being made by this text are realized as non-arguable or non-core elements of clauses (that is, they are not part of the main Mood section, which includes the Subject + Finite, but are located in the Residue portion of the clause). This strategy, for which I use the term *circumstantialisation of meaning*, may be interpreted as a means by which speakers' authority is created and maintained (Eggins 2004: 334).

Table 2. Adjunct analysis

Adjunct class	ES	AA	CC	AA	SB	AA	RB	Total
Circumstantial	2	9	11	1	5	3	2	33
Mood			1		3		2	6
Polarity					1			1
Comment							1	1
Vocative					1			1
Conjunctive								
Continuity								
Total Adjuncts	2	9	12	1	10	3	5	42
Total ranking clauses	4	10	12	4	8	3	6	47

Thus in the very first sentence, Stourton states that:

- (5) *An eleven-year-old has been shot dead in Liverpool.* [ES
1]

If we employ Halliday's tag question probe for Subject to this clause (6), we find that it picks up as Subject and Finite

unproblematically ‘an eleven-year-old’ and ‘has been [shot dead]’ respectively:

- (6) *An eleven-year-old has been shot dead in Liverpool, hasn't s/he?*

Thus it is possible for interlocutors in a conversation to argue about whether the assertion relating to the nub of the clause is true or not. But to argue about the location of the shooting is rather more difficult because the information is placed in the Residue rather than the Mood component of the clause. To argue directly about this would require starting with a sentence in which Liverpool was the Subject, such as would then yield the tagged question (7).

- (7) *Liverpool is the place where an eleven-year-old has been shot, isn't it?*

Of course, it is possible to disagree with the assertion contained in (5) by saying something like (8):

- (8) *No s/he hasn't. S/he has been shot dead in Manchester.*

However, this is only a partial denial of the asserted claim since the assertion regarding the child being shot dead remains unchallenged. It is for this reason that the circumstantialization of meanings by packaging them into Circumstantial Adjuncts can be a strategy for rendering them less open to challenge. Whether this is the case in any particular clause is a matter for interpretation and in many cases it is likely that Circumstantial Adjuncts will be used congruently to convey information about the spacio-temporal location of the goings on encoded by the clause. This reflects the fact that Circumstantial Adjuncts primarily serve an ideational

function rather than an interpersonal one. In some cases, however, their use may have interpersonal implications of the sort we have been discussing. These may be conventionalised expressions such as (9):

- (9) *Our correspondent Caroline Cheetham is at the scene.*
[AA 7]

In this case, *at the scene* serves as a conventional cue indicating the location of the next voice we shall hear. Alternatively, the Circumstantial Adjunct may simply contain modality elements, such as seen in (10), where the modalizing adverb *about* serves to qualify the speaker's knowledge claim.

- (10) *The three boys were playing football ... at about seven
o'clock last night* [CC 8]

Such usages are a useful reminder that when analysing clauses in terms of metafunctions it is frequently necessary to attend to the particularity of each individual instance rather than simply relying on congruent notions of what functions are served by particular grammatical forms and hence of simply reading function off from form.⁵

From the point of view of the present study, the most salient interpersonal use of Circumstantial Adjunct occurs in the imperative clause *work with us*, mentioned above, which was uttered by Byrne as part of his appeal for information about the shooting. In addition to its ideational role in specifying something about the manner in which the work is to be done the Circumstantial *with us* has a clear interpersonal role which more common 'manner' Circumstantials – *work with care*, *work with machinery* and so on do not. It would have been possible for

Byrne to phrase his request more forcefully by saying something like, in descending order of formality, *I demand that you inform on / turn in / grass on the killer so that we can catch them quickly*. Clearly, such formulations are very much at odds with both the wider ideologies of consensual and community policing and Byrne's immediate interpersonal task of securing the cooperation of a community which prior police experience had shown to be reluctant to do so. Finally, this clause provides a clear illustration of the importance for CDA of conducting a thoroughly metafunctional analysis of texts since we see here how the Mood and Modality systems combine to realize a particular effect.

Turning now from a consideration of the numerous Circumstantial Adjuncts in the text to a consideration of the far smaller number of Interpersonal Adjuncts (namely those of Mood, Polarity, Comment and Vocative) we find further evidence for the claim that programme personnel are more limited in their choice of grammatical realizations (and thus of meanings) than are representatives of other organizations or the lifeworld. Specifically, of the six instances of Mood Adjuncts, only one is spoken by a news producer. This occurs in Cheetham's report when she says that the murdered boy,

(11) *hasn't yet been named*. [CC 11]

This albeit low-level expression of counter-expectancy flags the assertion of the clause as being somewhat surprising or at least exceptional, bearing the implication that other things being equal we might reasonably expect that his name would have already been released and that, this not being so, there must be a particular reason for the delay. Incidentally, we may note that acts of naming were a prominent feature of this case, a fact which I shall discuss in more detail in a later work. Here we may simply note that,

setting aside the obvious fact that the boy had of course already been named by his parents and therefore that in this situation naming refers to the action of the police (which consists in officially releasing this information to the media), Cheetham's assertion at this time is incorrect: in fact Alice Arnold had spoken his name only moments earlier in her summary of the story. This apparent contradiction derives from the re-broadcasting here of this excerpt from Cheetham's earlier report.

The other five expressions of interpersonal meanings through Mood Adjuncts are used by Simon Byrne and Rose Bailey. The three used by Byrne were:

(12) *It's just not right that an eleven-year-old boy should lose his life in these circumstances* [SB 17]

(13) *my appeal really is...* [SB 17]

(14) *I particularly appeal to the criminal fraternity* [SB 18]

These all function to modify the force of his utterances. In (12) for example, the boy's death is described by Byrne as not merely *not right* but *just not right*. The emphatic function of *just* here is reflected by the intonational prominence with which it is uttered. In (13) *really* functions both as emphasis and as a means of focusing the hearers' attention on the following clarification or restatement of his appeal, which constitutes the informationally New component of the clause's Rheme.

In Rose Bailey's comments the following two Mood Adjuncts occur:

(15) *and the only area where they do congregate and and cause*

mayhem if you like is in in and around the shops. [RB 21]

(16) *and ironically they just approved the programme.* [RB 22]

In (15) the phrase *if you like* represents an instance of interpersonal grammatical metaphor of the sort discussed by Halliday (1994: 354). Here, Bailey is not actually making her statement conditional on the preference of the interviewer – the congruent interpretation of the conditional clause – but softening the force of her rather vivid expression *cause mayhem*. The construction also conveys the nuance that this phrase is not one with which Bailey herself completely agrees; that it is, in other words, an expression more commonly used by others, notably those in the media, with respect to the behaviour of the young people. As such, she may be employing it contingently here as a way of seeking ideological solidarity with her interviewer while simultaneously distancing herself from the prevailing terminology.

As for the other types of Adjuncts used in this text, we find that they occur only in the utterances of Byrne and Bailey. Bailey uses the only Comment Adjunct, *ironically*, and Byrne uses the only Vocative, *anybody*. Both types of Adjunct function outside the Mood structure of the clause, although they may occur at a variety of constituent boundaries within the clause, and they have an impact on the clause as a whole. Thus while they are peripheral to the arguable nub of the clause, this fact by no means precludes their potential for encoding ideologically determined meanings, particularly of an interpersonal nature, which an analysis of texts narrowly focused on argumentation and ideational meanings might overlook. In keeping with the standard ideology of objective news reporting, inserting personal assessments of the overall purport of the clause as a whole in the way Bailey does here is generally not

an option for news presenters. This is most certainly the case for the scripted bulletins of newsreaders like Arnold, but programme presenters have more latitude in this regard. Regarding the use of Vocatives, as a fundamentally dialogic element serving to designate next speaker or addressee, these again do not occur in scripted hard news, although in a sense all media texts are premised on an ellipsed *everybody* as macro interpersonal theme. Byrne's use here is of course motivated by the fundamental purpose of his utterance: a 'direct appeal' (via the media) for information about the shooting.

Finally, mention should be made of the two categories of Adjuncts which were not selected by the speakers in this excerpt: Continuity and Conjunctive. Both of these realize the textual metafunction, serving to organize the message and create texture. The absence of Continuity Adjuncts (such as *well*, *yeah* and *oh* where these items serve to introduce a clause) is to be expected since they are characteristics of conversational interactions, particularly in casual talk. But the absence of Conjunctives (such as *however*, *moreover* and *nevertheless*) is more noteworthy because it indicates that the rhetorical organization of the text is not based on an explanatory logic but simply a logic of appearances (Fairclough 2003: 94). That is, the text is structured as a list of facts and events rather than of causal relations between them.

Of course it may be argued that it is not the function of news reports like this to offer explanations and that other more expository segments of the programme, or indeed other programmes, may do that. Thus, for example, on the same day that this text was broadcast on *Radio 4*, on *Radio 5 Live*, after being reported several times in bulletins during the *Breakfast* programme, this shooting incident was taken up as the main theme

for the immediately following *Victoria Derbyshire* phone-in programme in which the guest was Bernard Hogan-Howe, the Chief Constable of Merseyside Police. The whole thrust of the discussion between Derbyshire, Hogan-Howe and the various callers was on why and how this incident (and others like it) happened and how they might be prevented.

However, as has been frequently pointed out, this division of rhetorical labour between the genres of report and ‘analysis’ programmes – comparable to the division between hard news and opinion/comment sections in newspapers – is not a purely natural or inevitable one but one that has been developed and shaped by media producers in response to particular socioeconomic circumstances and for particular purposes. Neither is it universal. Even within the British press, for example, the separation of facts and values is more strictly observed in the broadsheets than the tabloid newspapers. And while this fact might suggest the desirability of preserving the distinction in the name of objective reporting we must remember that it is that very objectivity – so-called – of the ‘quality’ press and ‘responsible’ broadcasters such as the BBC that contributes to the perpetuation of social inequality. For by setting the limits to acceptable debate, the range of voices that may be heard, and even the generic forms in which such debate can be conducted, in ways which allow inquisitorial interviewers such as John Humphreys and investigative journalists like John Pilger to expose epiphenomenal injustice but which leave the foundations of capitalist social relations virtually unquestioned, the liberal media helps perpetuate that system.

It is not entirely the BBC’s fault of course. It operates within the overall logic of capitalist relations and, as Richardson (2005) points out, it is these relations themselves that prevent journalism from effectively carrying out its purpose of enabling citizens to

better understand their lives and the world around them. But the carefully-cultivated image of the BBC as informational ‘honest broker’ is apt. This term, itself a capitalist metaphor, was coined in the nineteenth century as an epithet for the Prussian statesman Bismarck with reference to the skill with which he maintained peace in Europe through alliances amongst the great powers. However, in one of the grand ironies of history, Bismarck’s greatest achievement, the German Empire, proved unsustainable and collapsed just twenty years after his death because he had sought to preserve the status quo of unequal social relations rather than to create a just and internally united society.

Likewise, while enjoying a high reputation for the quality of its journalism the BBC has functioned as a predominantly socially conservative force. It may have played a significant part in uniting the country, most obviously on occasions of national crisis such as wars and epochal events such as the death of Princess Diana but also more mundanely through its sheer steadfastness and reliability in reporting the commonplace and everyday happenings. But whatever degree of unity has been achieved has been based on an acceptance of capitalist social divisions. This acceptance is reflected in the division between news and analysis – the elimination from news of explanatory logic – and this in turn is reflected at the level of individual texts in such apparently inconsequential matters as the choice of Adjuncts.

Conclusion

Through the above analyses, partial and incomplete though they are relative to the language system as a whole (not least since they relate to just one of the three language metafunctions identified by Halliday’s model, namely the interpersonal, and only one of the three realizational strata, namely the lexicogrammatical) I have attempted to show how a careful linguistic study of the language

of radio news discourse can help bring into focus some of the ways in which language functions ideologically at the level of sentences and clauses to encode, in Foucault's terms, the 'microphysics of power'. It is one of the many paradoxes of postmodernism perhaps that Foucault himself, although rightly regarded as the pre-eminent theorist of 'discourse' in the twentieth century, paid little attention to the minutiae of texts and language in his work. However, without a more text-oriented discourse analysis (or TODA as it is sometimes called) of the sort practiced by Critical Discourse Analysts such as Norman Fairclough and employed, albeit rudimentarily, in this paper, it is unlikely that the links between language, society and power can ever be properly understood. As one small example of the utility of this approach, this paper has tried to show how an utterly unremarkable bulletin about youth crime, taken from a well-respected radio news programme and produced by an eminently 'liberal' public service broadcasting organization, nevertheless encodes a range of ideologies concerning social identities, truth and knowledge which have implications for the maintenance of existing socio-economic relations wherein may lie, unquestioned by the media, the very sources of the kinds of deviant behaviour and other social problems which constitute the ideational content of the news itself.

Notes

- 1 The sentences omitted here were as follows. "This year's GCSE results are out today the pass rate is likely to be around ninety-nine percent. MEPs have expressed support for a Europe-wide register of sex-offenders, and a new theory has emerged about the timetable of human evolution. Today's news reader is Alice Arnold."
- 2 Nevertheless for many listeners of the *Today* programme (and of other radio programmes) the 'bonds of friendship, affection and loyalty' which develop are indeed powerful, as was indicated in December 2008

by the displeasure shown by many listeners when the BBC unexpectedly announced that Edward Stourton was to be dropped from the presenting team contrary to his own wishes.

3 Earlier in the programme a slightly longer version of this excerpt was broadcast in which Byrne says, “We’ve also got extra officers out in a manhunt for the killers this evening”. We may note her in passing that as a speech event in itself, the press conference forms an essential link in the intertextual and intergeneric chain of which this radio news bulletin forms just one small part and that, within it, Byrnes’ linguistic choices during his speech undoubtedly reflect aspects of the press conference’s contexts of situation and culture. For example, the Mood and Modality features of his utterance must reflect and to a certain degree realize the complex set of audiences (reporters from local and national media, consumers of those media, fellow police personnel, various sections of the local community and of course ‘the criminal fraternity’) to whom his remarks are addressed.

4 Dynamic modality differs from the two major categories of epistemic and deontic modality in that it is principally concerned not with possibility or permission but ability, although the boundary between them is ‘somewhat fuzzy’ and ambiguous cases abound. (Huddleston 2002: 179).

5 This is of course a particularly crucial point for CDA, as has been frequently pointed out. It is also one which means that the use of corpus analytical approaches needs also to be carefully triangulated with close readings of particular texts since (a) frequency does not necessarily correlate with significance and (b) there is a difficulty in being sure that one is always counting ‘the same thing’ with respect to particular lexemes or patterns.

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