

PROFESSIONAL SPEECH: ACCENTUAL AND JUNCTURAL
STYLE IN RADIO ANNOUNCING

by

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For Jane.

For my children, Toby, Hans and Els.

For my parents, Gerrit and Pien.

For Joyce Belfrage.

SUMMARY

This thesis presents a comparative study of radio announcing intonation, contrasting intonation in the private speech of radio announcers with their professional, 'on air' intonation, and comparing the intonational styles of different genres of radio announcing - newsreading, information announcements, live commercials, fine music announcements and popular music announcements - as well as the styles prevailing in a number of Sydney radio stations, including both commercial stations (2SM, 2KY, 2CH and 2GB) and non-commercial stations (the ABC and 2JJ).

A method for the auditory analysis of intonation is developed and tested, and then applied to a corpus of radio announcing speech, recorded specially for this study, and comprising the varieties of speech outlined in the previous paragraph.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate two major aspects of intonational style, accentual and junctural style. A quantitative analysis first establishes stylistic differences in the amount of accents and junctures placed by radio announcers. A linguistic analysis then establishes to which degree the placement of accents and junctures is governed by grammatical rules and to which degree it can only be explained pragmatically. An acoustico-phonetic analysis finally reveals some aspects of the physical realization of the accents and junctures.

Throughout the study intonational style is interpreted functionally and related to the purposes of the varieties of radio speech included, to the assumptions radio stations make about their audiences, and to the ideological values which underlie the practice of radio in its different manifestations.

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PREFACE

This study is situated between two fields, that of linguistics and that of mass media studies. Ever since I began working on it, now five years ago, I have hoped that, once completed, it would be able to make a contribution to both these fields: to linguistics, not only because it offers a description of the intonation of radio announcing, a speech variety which has, as yet, received little attention from linguists, but also because it touches on the problem of the borderline between the grammatical and the pragmatic, between what can be explained without and what needs reference to the socio-cultural context of speech, and this is a problem of increasing relevance in linguistics; a contribution, also, to mass media studies, not just because it relates to a number of topics well established in that field (the functions of mass communication, professionalism, 'news values', etc.), but especially because it does so by studying the signifier rather than the signified, the language used in mass media messages, rather than their content, an approach which until now, in studies of the broadcasting media at any rate, has only rarely been used, although it has often been thought desirable that studies of this kind should be undertaken.

In the course of the years during which I worked on this project I often despaired of achieving the kind of balance between the linguistic and the sociological component which I originally had in mind. The complexities of intonation analysis overwhelmed me, the months and months

I listened, over and over again, to the same recordings, painstakingly reducing them to a transcription on paper, the patient work of deciphering the Mingograph records of the speech, and taking measurements of pitch, intensity and duration from them, it all increasingly caused the interdisciplinary concept with which I started out to recede into the background. At times it was almost forgotten and I became infatuated with the technicalities of my research. The reality of radio was far away at such times, however much I had been immersed in it during the early stages, while collecting my recordings and talking to announcers.

Yet, in the final stages, pondering, as I wrote, the meaning of the intonation patterns I had found, I retrieved something of my original inspiration - to which degree I have succeeded in communicating it to students of linguistics as well as of the mass media must be judged by the reader.

My gratitude to Macquarie University is great in many respects. When I began working there, as a tutor in mass media studies, I was new to this country, and, despite my professional background in film and television, barely equal to the task of teaching the media. Joyce Belfrage was my guide during these years, and it is her confidence in me which made me carry on and stimulated me to start studying again, not film and television this time, but linguistics and communication theory. Without her this thesis would never have been. She retired before it was completed, but our friendship continues.

The considerable experience in intonation analysis of my supervisor, Professor Arthur Delbridge, was but one of the many benefits of our close contact over the years. His capacity to bring me down to earth when what he calls my 'convictions' carried me away has helped temper the excesses of my style, and his trained teacher's eye never failed to miss what imperfections still remain in my English.

Associate Professor John Bernard opened up the world of phonetics for me. His course I will always remember as one of the best I ever took. In one thing only I do not agree with him: he once wrote that phonetics does not lead to 'large issues'. Combining phonetics and mass media studies has persuaded me otherwise.

Dr. John Clark provided invaluable help by allowing me to test my method of intonation analysis with his phonology students, and by suggesting several improvements.

John Telec, senior technical officer of Macquarie's Speech and Language Laboratory provided technical assistance and toured Sydney's radio stations with me to record the announcers.

Many thanks must go also to my friend and colleague Dr. Phillip Bell, for stimulating conversations, valuable statistical advice, and for taking over, during the final months of writing, many of the chores which otherwise might have stood in the way of completing the thesis in time.

Without help from announcers, station managers, programme directors and other members of the radio industry

this study would never have come off the ground. For giving me access to studios, so that I could watch announcers at work, for discussing their work with me, for providing information, advice, contacts, and, above all, for allowing me to make my recordings, I thank Jeff Rushton, Garvin Rutherford, Ray Hood, Ron Hurst, John Sullivan, Arch McKirdie, Roland Redshaw, Ros Cheny, Kevin Kahler, Bruce Menzies, Graham Conolly, Geoff Howard, Mervin Eady, Paul Maclay, Martin Royal, Peter Young, Max Ambrose, Jeff Soper, John Hall, Peter Egan, Margaret Throsby, Mary Nicolson, Russell Stendel, Stuart Cranny, John Hood, Ted Robinson, Tony Barrel, Gail Austin, Kerry Phillips, Barry Friedman, Gary Kelly, Colin Humphries, George Gibson, Roger Dunn, Richard Gravell, John Burls, Ian Macrae, Mal Hedstrom, Gordon O'Byrne, Peter Grace, Barry Spicer, Len London, Bob Moore, Mike Roach and Ian Holland.

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