

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

... It might seem logical to imagine that the announcer, the man who now speaks to his vast public through the new media, is the direct descendant of, say, the town crier. Yet (...) let us look at the matter more closely. Does the professional public speaker, with his oratorical bag of gimmicks, his vocal projection, his exaggerated speech pattern and his larger than life 'surface personality', really qualify to speak to millions through the power of television? The shortest answer to that question is - no. (...) The television announcer's style is essentially intimate, restrained and personal. Yet (...) he can embrace an audience in one evening greater than that which could be accommodated in the largest theatre, packed to capacity and playing night after night for years. (...) Although many millions may be watching and listening to him, (he) behaves and speaks as though he is in the company of only one or two...
(Lewis, 1966, pp. 16-17)

The idea which Lewis expresses here, in a book on the 'technique' of announcing, written for aspiring members of the profession, recurs time and time again: in textbooks of radio and television announcing, in interviews with announcers, in the showbusiness columns of the popular newspapers, and in the comments of the public. Professional speech, in the electronic media, is 'conversational', different from everyday speech only in that announcers 'articulate more clearly' and 'emphasize more correctly' than

do ordinary folk, speak 'better' according to some neutral standard of 'good speech' which could apply, without modification, to all speakers of the language.^{(1)*}

And there is, of course, some truth in this: electro-acoustic technology has indeed gone hand in hand with changes in public speaking, just as it has made changes in singing possible. It has enabled public speech to dispense with some of the stylistic characteristics which, formerly, most saliently marked its public nature - an effect which Chao (1964, p. 40), along with many others, has described as 'a return to nature in linguistic life'.

Yet, is Lewis right? Is announcing speech really as much like 'conversational speech' as he seems to think? Doesn't it have its own kind of 'gimmicks' and 'vocal projection', its own typical and instantly recognizable, 'professional' style of speech? Isn't the apparent naturalness an illusion? A way of disguising the public, institutionalized nature of this speech? Of obscuring its unprecedented division between speaker and hearer, made possible by a technology which enables the voices of social control to penetrate the intimacy of our livingrooms?

It is my aim to show that this is indeed the case, that announcers systematically modify their speech when speaking in their role of professional mass communicators. It is my aim also to describe these modifications in detail. But I hope to be able to go beyond description, and illuminate also the paradoxical status of this mode of

* Notes can be found at the end of the chapter (p. 32).

speech - at once formal and intimate, public and private, impossible without advanced technology and 'natural' - and to fuse, in this way, linguistic analysis and social criticism, the study of codes and the study of their instrumentality in society.

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A first restriction on the scope of this enterprise was my decision to deal only with the intonation of announcing speech.

Why intonation? In part because of a fascination with intonation itself, with the challenging duality of its role in speech: while undoubtedly an integral part of the systematic side of language, an indispensable element in the syntactico-semantic organization of utterances, intonation is, at the same time, only partially predictable by linguistic rule, a 'halftamed servant of language', a means by which speakers can 'turn each logical message into an act of will', as Bolinger has said (1964, p. 29).

This duality, this partial resistance against the power of convention, makes me inclined to believe that intonation might be an apt choice for my purpose. For if it is true that announcing, as an institution, imposes on its speakers an intonation more predictable than that found in 'non institutional' speech, then it might be said also that intonation, in the electronic media, is not half, but fully tamed, that it is regimented, not only in its utterance-structuring aspects, but also in its expressive aspects.

That it, therefore, can serve to study the values disseminated by the institution which has fostered this mode of speech. (2)

My desire to demonstrate the relative predictability of announcing speech, however, does not mean that I would like to 'tame' intonation in general, to prove that what hitherto appeared (in part) unsystematic is, in fact, fully governed by rules. Intonation, because of its two-sided nature, is, I believe, a field of study which inevitably exposes the anthropological assumptions of the investigator, whether implicitly or explicitly. Either he accepts the challenge that intonation may, to some extent, and in some varieties of speech, resist formalization, testifying, in this way, to a residue of individual freedom - that private domain which social science and social discourse in general are so determinedly attempting to codify. Or he contributes, knowingly or not, to that 'mixture of psychology and inquisition' which Orwell foresaw when, in his Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949, p. 156), he made the detailed study of 'facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice' such a predominant part of the 'humanities' of the future. The nuclear physicist is not the only one who must contemplate the uses to which his work might be put.

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A second restriction on the extent to which I will be able to cover the subject of announcing speech is my choice to deal only with the medium of radio.

Here too, the reason is, at least in part, a matter of suitability for my project. Deprived of facial expression and gesture, the radio announcer has only his voice to express the institutional attitude towards the content of what he broadcasts, the intentions behind broadcasting it, the medium's projection of who might (should) listen, and how, and why. Although syntax and lexis undoubtedly play a part here, it can be expected that more of this expressive task will fall to intonation than is the case in television. Intonation is, so to speak, more neatly isolated here than in television announcing.

Yet, in this case too, my choice is in part governed by my fascination with the subject.

There is something peculiarly lonely about radio today. About making it as well as listening to it.

Somewhere high up in impersonal city buildings the announcers speak - to nobody. In bare, windowless rooms, decorated only by a stern, prominent clock. In small, claustrophobically cluttered cubicles. In stark and functional modern studios, with only the clouds for company, behind the insulation of a vast expanse of smoked glass. As I sat with announcers during their shifts, there was often a tangible sense of solitude, particularly in the early mornings, or late at night. And more than one of them confessed that it was always a relief to leave this confinement behind, to walk on firm ground again, amidst the people. Ellis Blain, an ex-ABC announcer, has described this feeling very well, in his part-autobiographical book about the ABC:

...I remember, in Hobart, coming up to the fifth floor in the bronze-sprayed lift cage one morning early and being overcome by a feeling of loneliness such as I have seldom experienced in my whole life. During the six-hour solo stint, talking to a microphone or an equally moribund technician through the glass, I felt totally cut off from all human contact...

(Blain, 1977, p. 115)

And there is a sense of loneliness also about listening to radio - we are so accustomed to it now that we find it almost disconcerting to listen to radio in a group, in a classroom, for example. These disembodied voices aim to penetrate the hours in which we are alone with ourselves. They speak to people who are isolated, to the members of the lonely crowd, emanate from the dashboards of their cars, from their transistor radios, on beaches and in boarding-houses, in kitchens, workshops, factories, janitors' lodges, bed-sitting rooms.

As a teenager I wrote a short poem entitled 'My Transistor Radio', which, translated from the Dutch, goes something like this:

...My transistor radio/ is of no small
comfort/ at night/ on the road/ or in
an unknown city.

My transistor radio/ commutes my
solitude/ into a soothing/ and not
unpleasant/ sadness.

He has been with me for quite some
time now/ my transistor radio/ I know
him well/ I know him very well...

I have since learnt that this 'companionship' of the medium is, today, a factor entering the calculations of station managers and the statistics of audience surveys. I have learnt to write about it in a different vein:

...In recent studies of audience use of the media, especially radio, the 'companionship' of the medium, its function of 'helping lonely people' has come to be recognized as an important category of media 'use'. Surveys include, among the permissible answers to the question why people listen to radio, phrases like 'It is a friendly voice to keep my company'. But, comforting as that voice may be for the lonely listener, it remains a surrogate, the companionship remains illusory...

(van Leeuwen, 1981a, p. 25)

I can now recognize my affective relation to that transistor radio as resulting from the channeling of my affects by a social institution - an institution which, if it could not establish this psychological mechanism in the listener, would not be able to survive. I have stopped listening to radio in this way, listening to this kind of radio. The spell is broken.

But I retain in memory one of George Segal's impressive sculptures: a woman (or rather, the rough exterior of the plastercast of a woman, giving only the attitude, the posture), sitting, head resting in her hands, at a bare kitchen table, in front of a window behind which only inky black night can be seen - and with a (real) transistor radio in front of her, on the table, playing. As is the case with so much modern American art, it at once celebrates mass society and forms an indictment of it. It at once mourns the loss of a cherished illusion and speaks of a new awareness - an awareness of the alienation which radio announcing, this strange and paradoxical mode of speech, helps to make bearable, and therefore helps to sustain.

Restricted in this way, my subject is relatively uncharted territory. There exists, of course, a professional literature on the subject.⁽³⁾ Textbooks for aspiring announcers, written by seasoned professionals. Do's and don't's about 'voice production', 'delivery', 'inflection', interesting as much, if not more, for the way they reveal the mass communicator's attitudes towards his speech as for the rules they prescribe (Labov, among others, has warned linguists not to take at face value what speakers believe their own speech to be like (1972, p. 132)).

To the same category belong also the occasional articles in periodicals such as The Listener, often decrying the innovations of newcomers to the field as threatening to the standards of the profession.⁽⁴⁾

Early work by linguists also tended to be prescriptive at times, urging radio speakers to adopt that 'naturalness' which, at the time, did not yet come naturally.⁽⁵⁾ After the Second World War, the time that linguists hailed radio as making an "...outstanding contribution (...) to the world (by) directing attention to the spoken as opposed to the written word..." (Ward, 1939, p. 12) was apparently over. References to radio announcing speech were now, as often as not, complaints - about announcers 'applying the wrong intonational and stress patterns' (Person, 1958, p. 295), or of their minds 'not (being) full of what they are saying' (Hultzen, 1964, p. 91).⁽⁶⁾ At other times some of the more pronounced intonational habits of announcers were commented on in a more neutral way.⁽⁷⁾

To my knowledge only two studies form an exception

to this pattern. One is Crystal and Davy's detailed analysis of two 'unscripted commentaries' - both BBC OB radio broadcasts, in fact, one of a cricket match, the other of a state funeral (Crystal and Davy, 1969, pp. 125-46). Their essay, however, does not theorize the status of this kind of speech very satisfactorily, and interprets, when it does so at all, in a naively pragmatic vein ("...(broadcasting) demands a high level of clarity and intelligibility..." (p. 135); "...thickly clustered prosodic features (are) the commentator's personal response to exciting activity..." (p. 135). The other is a study of news-reading speech by the German phonetician Geissner (1975), and this study, unlike Crystal and Davy's, goes beyond formal description, and analyzes intonational features as, in part, an expression of institutional values:

...News-reading, then, descriptively understood here as a bundle of stylistic factors, has a profoundly emotive effect. The news-reader's supposedly neutral speech style does not lend credibility to the speaker himself, or to the news he reads, but to the station and its programmes. In this way not only news itself, as a commodity, but also the mercantilism of the medium is obscured behind a veil of credibility. (...) What we have seen here is, in the final resort, not just the rhetoricity of the text variety 'news-reading' and its presentation, but also the rhetoricity of the medium itself...

(Geissner, 1975, p. 149, my tr.)

It is along these lines that I would like to approach my subject, attempting to show, not only that radio announcing is, as Delbridge has said (1967, p. 354), 'a rarefied and untypical form of the language', but also that it is what Stuart Hall has called a 'professional code':

a set of routines, learnt informally, almost by osmosis, during the professional's apprenticeship, and from then on habitually used. Routines which, in time, become almost second nature, an 'instinct' for what makes 'good delivery' (or 'good copy' or a 'good picture'). Routines which, if at all, are rationalized in terms of 'informal theories' about 'good speech' (or 'good writing', or 'good film editing') in some general, neutral, 'objective' sense; or about the necessities imposed by the (again neutral) nature of the medium; or about the needs of the audience as they are constructed by (or on behalf of) the station (or the newspaper, or the production company). Routines which, nevertheless, effectively express the 'ideological commitments' of the institutions which have fostered these 'professional codes':

...in one event after another (...) the same informal theories - supported by the same ideological commitments and functioning as and 'objective' set of technical-professional routines - produce the same mysterious product with systematic regularity...

(Hall, 1970, p. 1058)

Radio announcing as a professional code - if I succeed in amplifying this notion, in giving equal weight to its linguistic and its sociological side, I will have achieved what I set out to do.

* * *

But further restrictions on the scope of my project need to be made - for practical reasons, this time,

rather than on the basis of my interests and fascinations: intonation analysis is, by all accounts, a laborious and time-consuming task, and radio announcing is far from a homogeneous speech variety. Announcements may be 'live' or pre-recorded, read from a script or adlibbed - or something in between. Intonation may also vary according to type of programme or programme-segment: a fully scripted 'live' commercial differs intonationally from a newsbulletin, the unscripted announcement of a Mozart symphony from the disc-jockey's adlibbed introduction to a Beatles' song. Programme content may also influence announcing style - an ABC announcer told me:

...If it's a documentary about, say, children being decimated, you've got to put a little bit of sympathy in it, whereas if it's straight news or financial dry stuff, it's sort of deadpan. If it's funny, you've got to give it the funny touch...

And the same applies to commercials, according to an American textbook of announcing:

...Some commercials call for a slow, relaxed delivery, others for a hard-sell approach...
(Hyde, 1971, p. 166)

There is also the distinction between commercial and non-commercial broadcasting, and, within the commercial sphere, between the styles of the different commercial stations - differences to which experienced commercial announcers can easily adapt themselves:

...Give me a job on 2CH and I'll certainly sound very different from a call on 2SM...

My study, then, will restrict itself to brief

(appr. 2-minute), 'live' announcements, made in the studio. There would be much interest, also, in discussing documentary narration, on-location reporting speech, interview speech, talk-back speech, the intonation in pre-recorded commercials - but a systematic analysis of announcing varieties such as these I will not be able to give here.

A second restriction: the announcements on which my analysis will be based, my 'corpus', as the linguists say, are made by announcers who, at the time of recording (March-June 1978), were employed full-time by one of Sydney's 9 AM radio stations. At first sight this might seem to make my work of rather limited and local interest. Yet, I don't believe that this is necessarily the case. The descriptions of Sydney's radio stations which I will give below, show how closely they follow American and British models, not only in their programming, but also in their style of announcing. I believe, in fact, that announcing intonation might be as much an international style as, for example, newspaper writing, and, although I will not be able to prove this, I will be able to show, from time to time, that my observations of radio announcing in Sydney correspond closely to those made by British and American linguists about the intonation of radio announcers in their countries - even with the observations of non English speaking sources.

Quite a large proportion of the linguistic literature on intonation is based on utterances recorded for the purpose of some specific investigation, often even written by the investigator, to highlight a particular

intonational contrast, for example, and then read by selected speakers in the studio of a departmental laboratory. In mass communication research, on the other hand, the material is usually recorded 'off air'.

My own study will form a kind of compromise between these two methods: although I conducted special recording sessions with announcers, I did so in an environment familiar to them, their own station's studio. The recordings were made immediately before or after one of their shifts of duty, and scripts (or, for example, music playlists) were supplied by the station's programme manager, and hence followed a format familiar to the announcers. (8)

I decided to do this for three reasons. First of all because it would allow me to compare how several announcers from each station would read the same script, or adlib from the same notes. Secondly, because it would enable me to record, for comparison, some of their non-announcing speech - casual comments, or answers to questions I put to them, made before, between, or after the recording of the announcements. A third reason was more technical. Not yet knowing, at the time of recording, how much use I would want to make of instrumental speech analysis, I did not want to deny myself the possibility of measuring the intensity levels and fluctuations in their speech. To do so reliably, it is necessary to record a calibration tone, prior to recording the speech, and to keep, thereafter, the recording level constant. (9)

By asking the programme managers or studio supervisors which announcers would normally read the news, or

deliver the commercials, or announce music, I was able to record, within each of these and other categories, only those announcers to whose normal duties announcing of that category would belong. This means, incidentally, that many announcers recorded several different types of announcements - which affords the possibility of yet another comparison, that between the performance of the same announcer in different types of announcement.

I will now describe the collection of radio announcements resulting from these recordings, placing them, as much as possible, within the broader context of radio in Sydney.

NEWS

(i) ABC

The ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) is Australia's national broadcasting network. It operates 93 stations across Australia, is publicly financed, and modelled, to quite some extent, on the BBC, although it has never enjoyed a broadcasting monopoly (or an influence on national life) comparable to that of the BBC. When it was formed, in 1932, commercial broadcasting was already firmly established, and the call signs of the ABC's main AM stations in Sydney still betray its commercial ancestry: 2FC, now the ABC's 'highbrow' station, with programming dominated by 'fine music' and serious talks, originally stood for Farmer and Company, a department store, while

2BL, the ABC's 'middle-of-the-road station, which pays more attention to sport (especially cricket) and broadcasts 'breakfast' and 'drivetime' programmes presented by a 'personality' and modelled on commercial radio programming formats, stood for Broadcastings Limited, a group owned by newspapers. (10)

The ABC has a reputation for its news, even among those (the majority) who listen predominantly to commercial radio. A survey conducted for the commercial broadcasting industry by the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters acknowledged the 'aura of excellence surrounding the major ABC newscasts' and noted:

...many respondents who described themselves as people who 'never listen to the ABC' qualified this immediately by saying 'except of course for the news'...

(FARB, 1979, p. 44)

In the early days of the ABC voice quality meant 'as like the BBC as possible', and, especially for its older announcers (of which there are quite a few), this kind of 'voice quality' appears to remain the standard: ABC announcers are still criticized for sounding 'awfully anglicised and equally un-Australian'. (11)

Though its longer news-bulletins now contain taped inserts and brief interviews (a fairly recent innovation), the 2-minute 'News in Brief' programmes, broadcast hourly on 2BL and at 10.00 and 12.00 in the morning on 2FC, are restricted to five or six news summaries - read from 'scripts' torn from the teleprinter, and used without rewriting ('rip 'n reads', as this is called in the profession). More often than not the announcers must read them sight unseen.

Although ABC news-readers are no longer anonymous, and state their name, even at the opening of 'News in Brief' bulletins, they are by no means 'personalities' in the sense in which their television counterparts, in commercial as well as in national television, become highly publicised celebrities whose smiles one is confronted with on huge billboards all over Sydney. They are, for the most part, the 'continuity announcers', whose work, if we are to go by Ellis Blain's account of it, is far from glamorous:

...Along with frustration goes boredom as an ever present hazard to the ABC announcer's emotional equilibrium. Six hours a day, six days a week topping and tailing, with the odd news bulletin or weather report to relieve the monotony...
(Blain, 1977, p. 108)

The 'News in Brief' bulletin recorded for this study by five ABC announcers contains items about as Israeli raid into Southern Lebanon, the Moluccan uprising in Holland, an anti-uranium demonstration in Brisbane, the war between Ethiopia and Somalia, proposals for maternity leave put forward at a trade union conference in Melbourne, and a salary rise for the vice-chancellors of Australia's universities. Part of the script is reproduced in Appendix 1.

(ii) 2CH

2CH is one of the 6 commercial AM stations which Sydney counted when these recordings were made, in 1978. In 1972 it adopted a programming format pioneered, some 13 years earlier, by KABL, San Francisco, and variously called 'good music', 'sweet music', 'conservative music', and

'beautiful music'. In practice the 'beautiful music' ranges from sweet pops (orchestral versions of Beatles' tunes, for example) to light classics, and is programmed in 'brackets' of 4 items, each bracket lasting approximately 12 minutes. At 2CH the programming is done by means of a computer, according to 6 categories of music: 'fast orchestral', 'slow orchestral', 'fast vocal', 'slow vocal', 'soft top 40 items' and 'Australian'. A reduced number of commercials is broadcast between brackets - preceded by a 'spotbreaker', (a musical preamble, in the case of 2CH) and often alternating with community announcements. A 2- to 3-minute news bulletin is broadcast every hour. (12)

According to a brochure put out by the station for its prospective advertisers, it does not employ 'star announcers', but 'warm, friendly adults'. To stress the point, the brochure quotes from listeners' letters:

...I appreciate the relaxed manner of your announcers too, they have a sane approach to broadcasting, whether it be news items or advertising. Thank heaven you don't have announcers that behave like frustrated, third-rate comedians, like most other stations...

The news at 2CH, 'gentle' and 'laid back' in its presentation, is also 'rip 'n read': AAP wire copy, used without rewriting - although I was told by the station manager that the station does employ a journalist and adds its own local stories from time to time. The journalist, however, is not involved in reading the news - this is done by the same announcers who also announce the 'brackets' of music and read the 'live' commercials.

As is the case in so many commercial radio stations, in Australia as well as in the U.S., the bulletins contain almost exclusively local news and sport. I recorded one with items about two fishermen rescued from their skiff by a freighter, the murder of a 16-year old girl, a fall in the value of the Australian dollar, and a hockey match between Australia and West Germany - the 'script' is reproduced in Appendix 1. Four of the station's six full-time announcers participated in the recording.

(iii) 2GB

2GB forms part of the Macquarie Network, a group of 17 Australian commercial radio stations.⁽¹³⁾ In 1978 the station advertised its programming format as 'mellow rock' - a kind of compromise, perhaps, between the 'good music' and the 'contemporary/top 40' approach, aimed at attracting a wider audience.

In contrast to 2CH, 2GB employs news specialists - broadcast journalists who research and write, as well as read the news. Although it defines itself in terms of its music programming, the station is, in fact, considered somewhat of a news specialist among Sydney's commercial radio stations: it broadcasts half-hour news programmes as well as short bulletins, and style of writing and reading form the subject of explicit station policy. As the station manager explained it, 2GB news attempts to be more 'conversational' than ABC news, without, however, going to the other extreme of a 'high pressure approach' and a 'jerky style of

delivery'. In terms of writing this meant, for example, the use of direct address, otherwise a feature more commonly found in commercials. Thus 2GB newsmen were encouraged to write 'You'll pay 2 cents more for your milk from tomorrow', rather than 'The price of milk will rise by a further 2 cents from tomorrow'.

The short bulletin I recorded contained only local stories and sport. There were items about a near-fatal accident in a swimming-pool, a cricket match between Australia and Trinidad, the arrest of a cannabis smuggler at Sydney airport, the funeral of a policeman who died as a result of the notorious Hilton bomb incident, and a rumour that stable-hands doped race-horses with marijuana. All three of the station's newsreader-journalists recorded the bulletin, see Appendix 1 for the script format used.

MUSIC ANNOUNCING

(i) ABC

The 'fine music' programmes broadcast by the ABC's 2FC are in part compiled and presented by announcers who have been allowed to specialize in this area,⁽¹⁴⁾ and are mentioned by name in the ABC's weekly Radio Guide, in part by the Record Librarian or one of his assistants. The announcers assigned to present these programmes usually work from scripts written by staff writers.

One such programme is New Records from Overseas, broadcast from 3.00 to 5.00 pm on Saturday afternoons. Four ABC announcers read the script, which contained information

about the new records as well as impressionistic descriptions of the music, biographical detail about the composers and historical notes about the genesis of the works. They made only very minor modifications to the written text (see Appendix 1).

A small number of ABC announcers present the 2BL 'breakfast' and 'drivetime' programmes modelled, to some extent, on modern commercial radio. Their programmes are identified, in the Radio Guide, by the simple mention of the presenter's name. Although civil servants within a rather bureaucratic organization, they are presented to the outside world as disc-jockey 'personalities'. Only two of them, however, had achieved a popularity anywhere near that of their most wellknown commercial counterparts - perhaps because they do not participate in the horse-trading which follows the 'rating periods', and which forms radio's major attraction for the showbusiness pages of the popular newspapers: star-announcers lured away from their stations by large sums of money, to be hired by others in an attempt to improve on sagging ratings (or fired, for the same reason) - a game of musical chairs which apparently never loses its fascination for the public and certainly reinforces the myth that the most successful people are also the most mobile.

Four announcers of this category recorded adlibbed announcements of popular music, using, by way of playlist, either an 'Easy Listening Top 50' or a 'Top 40' chart, depending on what they considered to be their specialization. In their announcements they supplied, from their background

knowledge of popular music, information about the career of the artist, or about the success of the song. Transcriptions of two announcements are included in Appendix 1.

In 1974 the ABC started a third AM station, 2JJ. Organizationally somewhat separate from the ABC's main operations, it was modelled, at least in part, on commercial radio formats. But it broadcast music which could not be heard elsewhere: avant-garde rock, reggae, new wave, etc., and it also pioneered the use of women announcers, broadcast satires of commercial radio advertisements and other items of comedy, and provided community information of a kind which caused it, at times, to be the centre of controversy: a prisoners' programme, information about forthcoming demonstrations, etc.

The station, in the words of its first coordinator, gave its announcers:

...freedom to work (...) to throw their heads back and really laugh on air without having to worry about the modulation or the advertisers... (15)

And the announcers, many of whom had experience in commercial radio, were grateful for this. Holger Brockmann, in a newspaper interview:

...2JJ gave me confidence to be more myself on the air, to be me in public. (...) I can say to myself 'this is the way I am, folks. If you like me, great. If not, that's tough'... (16)

The commercial radio industry, however, deplored the 'anything goes' lack of discipline of the station, and accused the announcers of indulging in 'far too much point-

less, dull, self-indulgent talk. (17)

Five 2JJ announcers recorded popular music announcements. Unlike their 2BL counterparts, they preferred short, unadorned announcements, serving only to identify the music. As a result 2JJ music announcing is, quantitatively, a little under-represented in my corpus.

(ii) 2CH

2CH's 'beautiful music' announcements are also simple and to the point. At most the announcers insert, occasionally, a 'marvellous' or 'beautiful', to praise the station's music selections.

The same four announcers who recorded the 2CH news-bulletin, also recorded the announcements of 2 'bracket' of four items of music, using the computer printout as their playlist. The wording of some of the announcements is given in Appendix 1.

(iii) 2KY

In Sydney as in the U.S., many commercial stations were founded, in the 20's and early 30's, by individuals or groups with a message to spread, rather than (only) with a profit motive. Thus 2GB (named after Giordino Bruno) was founded by the Theosophical Society, 2KY by the Labour Party, 2SM by the Catholic Church, 2CH by the (Protestant) Council of Churches. But even when they are still owned by a religious or political body (as are, for example, 2KY, 2SM, and 2CH), the programming of these stations gives little

indication of the interests of their founders.

2KY, though operated by trade union bodies, is a straightforward commercial radio station, attempting to cater for Sydney's largely working class western suburbs: programming is dominated by sport, betting results, and a mixture of top 40 and 'country and western' type music.

The announcing style was characterized by one 2KY announcer as 'sporty' and 'racy'. He liked to build up the music to a climax:

...You do a slow number, then slightly faster, then slightly faster again, building to a climax, and you mix the end of one into the beginning of the other while putting the announcement on top of that...

Unfortunately not more than two of the station's nine full-time announcers found time or inclination to record some music announcements for my project. Those who did improvised introductions to the music based on their background knowledge of popular music (and on 'The Golden Book of Discs'), using the station's typed playlist, which, together with some examples of the announcements, can be found in Appendix 1.

(iv) 2SM

Unlike 2KY, which keeps a rather low profile, 2SM is in the centre of public interest, and considered Sydney's most successful commercial station. Its breakfast announcer is one of Sydney's three most wellknown radio celebrities, and several of the other announcers, too, regularly make the gossip columns of the popular press.

Programming is dominated by a tight playlight of current top-40 hits, with the top 5 played every few hours, the others at somewhat greater intervals. Only in the evenings, when, as one announcer put it, "...your wrinklies are watching television anyway...", is the range of music extended a little:

...The key to the formula, which was an American innovation, was familiarity. A small number of records was played repeatedly, so that they became familiar and comfortable. The playlist changed gradually at the rate of a few records a week... (18)

A keyword for the station's announcing style is 'bright' - one is reminded of Hoggart's reflection on this word, when he spoke of the 'corrupt brightness' in programmes

...accompanied with a stream of pally patter, whose whole composition assumed that whatever the greatest number like most is best, and the rest are the aberrations of 'eggheads'...

(Hoggart, 1957, p. 277)

One 2SM announcer was quite candid about the station's announcing style:

...You've got to sound 'up', but there's a thin line between that and sounding a bit mindless, spewing out those words, you know, spilling them out and screaming (...) Your sound's got to ge a 'hey, let's get it happening' sort of approach, like 'we're here having a good time' ...

The station's critics however, call it 'epileptic and juvenile',⁽¹⁹⁾ 'cheeky chat', abounding in 'ockerisms' like 'great oideas' and 'noin past ele'ns; and 'mites' for mates.⁽²⁰⁾

Four of the station's six full-time announcers recorded popular music introductions, using the station's

playlist, and all endeavouring to liven up the announcements with jokes - whether they are, as the 2CH listener quoted earlier thought, 'third-rate comedians' the reader may judge from the examples included in Appendix 1.

COMMERCIALS

(i) 2CH

Like other 'beautiful music' stations, 2CH broadcasts somewhat less advertisements than do other commercial stations, and precedes them with a short musical preamble. In addition, because of the station's affiliation with the Council of Churches, no advertisements are broadcast on Sundays, and the station boasts, in its brochure, a selective and 'dignified' approach to advertising - which excludes, for example, advertising considered 'sexually oriented'.⁽²¹⁾ Like its other programming, 2CH's advertisements must be 'muted' and 'gentle'.

The same four 2CH announcers who recorded music announcements and news-bulletins, read three commercials, selected by the programme manager as typical: a 30-second commercial for a seafood restaurant in Rose Bay, a 60-second advertisement for the weekend edition of the Sydney Morning Herald, and a 30-second commercial announcing a special sale at Sydney's Costless Warehouse. They made only very minor modifications to the scripts (one of which is included in Appendix 1).

(ii) 2KY

2KY's commercials, by contrast, are fast-paced and 'hard-sell'. Scripts are punctuated by exclamation marks and abound in strong-worded injunctions to 'buy now' or 'nip out this weekend'.

Two announcers recorded 30-second commercials for a second-hand car dealer, a sportsfishing supplies shop, another second-hand car dealer, and a portrait photography studio, following the scripts very closely (see Appendix 1).

INFORMATION

(i) ABC

Between programmes, the ABC's 2FC broadcasts, from time to time, announcements promoting its own programmes, as well as other ABC activities (concerts, printed material, etc.). Such announcements, like short news-bulletins and weather reports, belong to the duties of the continuity announcer.

Five announcers thus recorded a 2-minute 'line up' of one evening's 2FC programmes, for the most part adlibbing, with the Radio Guide as their source of reference, but using a script, written by a staff writer, for a more detailed overview of the topics included in a current affairs programme, and, in general, adhering closely to the written text for this segment of the announcement. The first appendix contains this script.

(ii) 2JJ

The 'alternative' community information provided by 2JJ, includes comprehensive lists of the gigs played by Sydney's rock- and jazz-bands in pubs, clubs and concert-halls.

The announcers adlib from a list of gigs, but announcing the 'What's On' is very much a routine affair, and a limited repertoire of stock-phrases is repeated continuously. 'What's On' announcements were recorded from the same five announcers who also provided the music announcements. Examples of their wording are attached, in Appendix 1.

(iii) 2SM

An integral part of commercial 'breakfast' and 'drivetime' programmes is formed by miscellaneous information considered useful to the listeners at the time of day the programme is broadcast. 2SM's breakfast programme contains, apart from the music: news, weather reports, traffic information, information about the departure times and delays of the trains and ferries, surfing information, and more. The whole creates, as one announcer put it "...one big stew to make a very wide appeal programme...".

Traffic information reaches the announcer in the form of a note, handwritten by the employee of the station who mans the telephone. The four announcers who recorded a segment of traffic information for my project embellished it by throwing in some adlibbed, lighthearted comment. See the example in Appendix 1.

NON ANNOUNCING SPEECH

I have included in the corpus two minutes of non-announcing speech from 7 of the announcers - the 3 2GB newsreader-journalists and the 4 2SM disc-jockeys. They are segments of impromptu interviews, recorded immediately after the announcements. As such they can not be said to be representative of these speakers' 'normal speech' - they were, in a sense, still speaking as announcers, explaining aspects of their work to an outsider. Yet, their speech in these segments differs rather dramatically from their announcing speech, and will therefore be useful, not only to demonstrate that announcers do modify their speech when they take place behind the microphone, but also to pinpoint of what these modifications consist.

This, then, is the composition of my corpus: 24 speakers recorded 94 minutes of speech, 83 minutes of which is announcing speech, and 11 minutes non-announcing speech. Divided by station: 6 speakers from 2BL and 2FC recorded 39 minutes of announcing, 5 speakers from 2JJ 7 minutes, 3 speakers from 2GB 7 minutes, 2 speakers from 2KY 6 minutes, 4 speakers from 2SM 5 minutes, and 4 speakers from 2CH 19 minutes. Divided by the type of announcement: 12 speakers recorded 27 minutes of news, 21 speakers 22 minutes of music announcing, 6 speakers 12 minutes of ads, 14 speakers 22 minutes of information.

It remains now to sketch the way in which this study will be structured. The first chapter will deal with the analysis of intonation. When I began to work on radio announcing intonation, I intended to adopt the system of intonation analysis described in Crystal and Quirk (1964) and Crystal (1969) - a system which allows for the systematic transcription of a wider variety of prosodic phenomena than any other study I know of, and which has, in fact, already been used for a small scale study of radio announcing speech (Crystal and Davy, 1969). But as I tried to use it for the transcription of my announcing recordings, I became increasingly frustrated - in part because it required me to make auditory distinctions which I felt I could not make with any reliability, but also because I began to doubt whether the resulting transcriptions would allow me to make the kind of interpretations I had in mind.

Descriptions of intonation (and this, perhaps, applies to all linguistic description) seem, to quite some extent, tailored to the wider interests of the investigator - the problems of teaching the pronunciation of English to foreigners, for example, or the desire to make a description of intonation fit an already existing framework of phonological or syntactic description, or the construction of a theory to account for the human faculty of producing grammatically correct sentences. In the case of Crystal's system of intonation analysis, this wider interest would appear to be the - purely formal - description of intonation in a wide range of varieties of English. Stylistic studies of speech and writing in the mass media, however, ultimately

fail to be of much interest to that area of media study which conceives of itself as a branch of the sociology of culture, unless they go beyond formal description, unless they can say, not only that certain linguistic features are typical for certain varieties of English, but also why this should be the case, how this might express the sociological conditions and the underlying episteme of the speech variety in question.

From this point of view, Crystal and Davy's analysis of radio announcing and newspaper writing (1969) and Leech's book on the language of advertising (1966), however excellent descriptively are less interesting than, for example, Kress and Trewe's study of newspaper writing (1978), or Kevelson's study of the 'language of newspaper headlines' (1977).

Kress and Trewe, because they use a systemic functional method of grammatical description, are able, not only to link the lexico-grammatical characteristics of newspaper writing (denominalization, for example) to functional-semantic categories (the identification of agents of processes, in the case of denominalization), but also to conclude that the importance of a figure like denominalization in journalistic rewrites of 'officialese' sources manifests an ideological commitment underlying the journalist's practice of 'writing for clarity', of writing 'good, plain English', namely the 'personalization' of news. And in this way it becomes possible to discuss the writing practices which the journalists themselves view as neutral in their wider socio-cultural and historical context.

Kevelson, in her The Inverted Pyramid (1977),

similarly relates the 'overt content of the news' to the

...underlying value judgments of editors
who choose certain marked structures of
word order to convey their editorial
policies which reflect, largely, the myth
of the great venturing hero...

(Kevelson, 1977, p. vii)

In my first chapter, then, I will attempt to develop, gradually, a method of analyzing intonation which can undertake, with regard to radio announcing intonation, a project akin to that of Kress and Trewe, and Kevelson: relate form to function, function to 'ideological commitment' or episteme.

Three fairly broad functional categories will be developed - 'accent', 'juncture' and 'ranking' - and the manifestation of two of these aspects of intonation in radio announcing speech - accentual and junctural style - will form the subject of chapters 3 and 4. It was, of course, my intention to write a chapter on 'ranking style' as well. Unfortunately this proved impossible within the time limits set for the completion of this thesis, and an account of 'ranking style' will have to wait for another occasion.

The final chapter will interpret the results of my analysis along the lines suggested above: construct radio announcing as a professional code, a means of expressing the ideological commitments of the mass communicator, and it will also attempt to relate the code to 'informal theories' of radio announcing such as have been documented in the sociology of mass communication⁽²⁾, and can be found in the professional literature, or gleaned from interviews with members of the profession.

NOTES

- (1) The terms in inverted commas derive from interviews I conducted, during the first half of 1978, with announcers, programme managers, studio supervisors, station managers, etc., (who will remain anonymous throughout this study).
- (2) That it is part of the training of media professionals to adopt these values is a fact well documented in the sociology of mass communication. Cf. Burns (1969), Warner (1969), Kumar (1977). Elliott (1977) gives an overview of the literature in this area, and Halmos (1969) is a collection of important papers in the field.
- (3) E.g. Barnhart (1953), Lewis (1966), Hyde (1971), Hilliard (1975), Herbert (1976), Evans (1977).
- (4) E.g. Alvin Lidell's article in The Listener of 5/4/79. Also Martin (1960), and Saunders in Listening Post (Nov. 1980).
- (5) E.g. Lloyd James (1935) Ward (1939).
- (6) E.g. Person (1958), Hultzen (1964), Turner (1973).
- (7) E.g. remarks in Bolinger (1965), Crystal (1969), Bernard and Delbridge (1979), Fonagy (1978), Schubiger (1958).
- (8) The recordings were made by Mr. J. Telec, Senior Technical Officer at the Speech and Language Research Centre, Macquarie University.
- (9) To this purpose a Dawe type 1418A Accoustic Calibrator was used. It puts out a reference tone with a level of 94 dB (accuracy ± 0.4 dB). Another requirement is, in fact, that the distance between speaker and microphone be kept constant. To achieve this by means of a brace which keeps the speaker's head in a fixed position, as one more experimentally-minded colleague suggested, appears not only unnecessary to me, but even positively damaging to the naturalness of the recording situation. Announcers are trained to keep a constant distance from the microphone at any rate, and during the recordings I was able to check visually that they indeed did so.

- (10) For a history of the ABC see Thomas (1980). There is also much useful information in Mackay (1957) and Walker (1973).
- (11) Sydney Morning Herald, 24/1/81.
- (12) For extensive background information on commercial radio programming formats, see Taylor (1967), a collection of papers from a U.S. conference of key figures in the commercial radio industry, well organized around the different programming formats. Also Hesbacher et. al. (1976).
- (13) The history of commercial broadcasting networks in Australia is discussed at some length in Mackay (1957).
- (14) The duties of ABC announcers depend on their grades. There are 5 of these, and an 'Announcer Review and Assessment Committee' assesses the announcers' work from time to time, assigning them points in 5 categories: 'voice quality', 'use of voice', 'broadcasting skill', 'programme value', 'background knowledge'. Their score (maximally 5 points can be obtained in each category) decides whether they will be promoted to a higher grade or not. Quotation from a document prepared by this committee:
- ...an announcer who presents a personality programme effectively and professionally, and commands a competitive share of the audience, would have a high programme value...
(ARAC Paper, No. 2, p. 5)
- (15) Sydney Morning Herald, 24/1/81.
- (16) Sydney Mirror, 22/8/76.
- (17) Rod Muir in The Bulletin, 21/8/76.
- (18) The National Times, 20/1/79.
- (19) The Bulletin, 21/8/76.
- (20) The National Times, 20/1/79.
- (21) Sydney Morning Herald, 28/11/79.