Aspects of Cohesive Reference in the Discourse Semantics of a News Text

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper constitutes a contribution to the study of the ways in which various forms of reference between sentences within news texts contribute to the perception of cohesion which such texts engender in their audiences. In simple terms, it concerns cohesive patterns such as "The boy shot the gun. Then he rode away." where the *he* in the second sentence creates a cohesive link to the first sentence by reference to *the boy* and *Then* similarly creates a temporal link between the two events. Since this kind of patterning is an aspect of textual organization above the level of the clause it is regarded as being realized within the discourse semantic rather than the lexicogrammatical stratum of texts. As will be apparent in the discussion which follows, the analysis of one particular news text presented in this paper will lead to a more general consideration of the ideological nature of such patterning and to some observations on the definition of '(a) text' in the context of radio news.

2. THEORY, METHOD AND DATA[1]

The core methodological framework for this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Two key aspects of this approach to the study of discourse are, firstly, its focus on the relationship between power and language and, secondly, its commitment to critiquing the role of language and language use in the creation and maintenance of unjust or otherwise undesirable social relations. There are several versions of CDA (see Wodak & Meyer (2009) for a helpful overview), but the version of CDA that my research draws on is that of the so-called 'Lancaster School'. This is the version that has been developed since the 1980s by Norman Fairclough and his colleagues at Lancaster University in England (Fairclough 2001). With its origins in Critical Linguistics (CL) (see Fowler *et al*. 1979), this version is characterized by its emphasis on close textual analysis as being the essential methodological foundation for ideological critique. In order to conduct such analysis CDA has drawn on a variety of different linguistic theories but the one which has been most extensively used is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

– sometimes also referred to as 'Hallidayan' linguistics after the leading proponent of this theory, Michael Halliday.[2]

SFL regards languages as constituting 'social semiotic' systems or 'meaning potentials' that have evolved to enable human beings to exchange three fundamental types of meaning, also referred to as *metafunctions*: the ideational metafunction (the representation and identification of people, things and events), which is further subdivided into the experiential (intra-clausal) and logical (inter-clausal) metafunctions; the interpersonal metafunction (the expression of social roles and attitudes); and the textual metafunction (the coordination of texts both internally and with respect to their contexts of production and reception). As should be clear even from this very rudimentary description, for a complete analysis of ideology in texts all three types of meaning need to be carefully considered, and this is what I set out to accomplish in my original, much larger study (Haig 2009).

SFL theory views language as being divided into three hierarchically interrelated strata. Firstly, there is the expression stratum, which is the material surface of language, either as speech or writing. This is the physical 'realisation' of the second stratum, that of the lexicogrammar, which corresponds to the conceptual level of the simple sentence or clause. The lexicogrammatical stratum itself is the realisation of the third stratum, that of the discourse semantics, which corresponds to the patterning of larger-scale textual structures above the level of the clause. These three strata in turn are related to three hierarchically arranged strata of context: the context of situation (the immediate situation in which a particular text is produced or consumed); the context of culture (the wider institutional and societal context of the text); and ideology. Although in my original study I analysed the text in terms of all three metafunctions and all six strata, in this paper only the findings relating to the textual meanings realised in the discourse semantic stratum via the system of REFERENCE[3] will be presented.

The text selected for analysis here is an excerpt from a radio news bulletin broadcast by the BBC on its most authoritative national radio station, Radio 4, on Thursday, 23rd August 2007 (see Appendix). The bulletin itself was broadcast at 8 am on *Today*, the station's 'flagship' news programme. The lead story in the bulletin concerned a particularly tragic youth crime incident in which an eleven-year-old boy was shot to death by a teenage gang member in Liverpool.[4] It should be noted here that during 2007 the problem of youth crime had been very high on

the political and media agendas in the UK, so much so in fact that the extensive and frequently sensationalistic media coverage given to youth crime showed all the hallmarks of a 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972). Accordingly, this research project was intended to look specifically at the influence of ideologies relating to youth and crime on the BBC's radio news broadcasts.

3. DISCOURSE SEMANTICS

The discourse semantic stratum of the language constitutes the various systems of text-forming resources that operate above the level of the clause. Discourse semantics and the analysis thereof is a crucial aspect of textual analysis when used as a component of discourse analysis because a clause-by-clause analysis of a text, even one which pays attention to patterns of clause complexing in the text, cannot fully account for the particular quality of 'texture' that the text displays. In other words, it cannot show how the text 'hangs together' (Hasan 1984: 181) and makes sense to its audience. This hanging together is a matter of its *cohesion* and here the difference between lexicogrammar and discourse semantics is clear. Within the clause, elements are related to each other grammatically (or 'structurally', as it is also termed in SFL). But grammatical relations do not extend beyond the clause. So whereas the unit of analysis for studying the lexicogrammar is the clause, when we study the discourse semantics the unit of analysis becomes the text as a whole (or sections thereof).

My analysis of lexicogrammar and clause complexes presented in earlier work was based on the overall approach to SFL outlined in the latest (2nd) edition of Eggins' *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (2004). However, for the analysis of discourse semantics I have chosen to follow the approach presented in the original (1994) edition of that work. This is because while both approaches are closely based on the seminal account of cohesion in English given by Halliday and Hasan (1976), in the original edition Eggins framed her account in terms of the 'ideological' version of SFL presented by Martin (1989; 1992) whereas in the second edition she returned to the more orthodox Hallidayan model.

4. REFERENCE

Whereas conjunctive cohesion (which I analysed in this text in a previous paper (Haig 2013, itself based on Haig 2009) is a resource for creating texture primarily in terms of logical connections, reference creates cohesion through the ways in

which the various textual participants are introduced and then subsequently kept track of. The term 'participant' here includes all the people, groups and things (be they real or imaginary, concrete or abstract) that are mentioned in the text.

When participants are first introduced into a text the reference is called a 'presenting' reference. When participants are subsequently referred to the reference is called 'presuming'. Because cohesion involves the creation of semantic ties between items in a text it is only the presuming type of reference which is counted as being cohesive. The most common presuming reference elements in English are the definite article (*the*), demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, those* etc.) and personal pronouns (*he, she, it* etc.). The identity of the item to which a presuming reference points may be located in three main kinds of context.

Firstly, it may occur as culturally-shared common knowledge in the culture and situation in which the text is produced or consumed. In the news bulletin text to be analysed here, the references to *the Home Secretary* and *Liverpool* come under this category. Reference to such items is called *homophoric*.

Secondly, the reference may be to something in the immediate context of situation. Such reference is called *exophoric* and, as this description implies, is a particular feature of face-to-face spoken interaction between co-present interlocutors who can indicate people and things to each other by use of deixis (*her or that*), often accompanied by some sort of gesture. There are no exophoric references in this news bulletin text. However, if the presenter, Edward Stourton, had introduced the newsreader, Alice Arnold, by saying *Today's newsreader is Alice Arnold and she is here with me now,* the *here* would have constituted an exophoric reference even though, of course, the audience could not actually have seen her.[5]

Thirdly, the identity of the referent may be retrieved from elsewhere in the text itself, typically because it has been mentioned (presented) earlier. This kind of reference is called *endophoric* and it is by far the most frequently used of the three types. This is also the kind of reference which is of most interest here because it is the only type which contributes directly to a text's cohesion. It does so by the semantic ties it creates between itself and the presenting item to which it refers. Incidentally, although I have not seen the point made elsewhere I think it is important to recognise that the other two categories of reference, homophoric and exophoric, *can* also contribute to cohesion. This can only occur when a reference to a particular cultural or situational person, place or entity is made more than once, allowing for an endophoric reference between the first and subsequent instances.

However, since this is a far from uncommon occurrence in all forms of text it seems important to take account of the contribution it makes to the creation of texture.

Cohesive reference is a large and complex component of the language system but its elucidation has been developed to a high degree of delicacy by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Martin (1992), though in rather different ways. However, for the purpose of this study I have found the simplified account of Martin's approach provided by Eggins (1994) to be adequate. Accordingly, the following brief introduction is largely based on that account although I have expanded the number of coding categories slightly to accommodate all the reference types actually used in the text.

Endophoric reference may be divided into three principal categories:

- *Anaphoric* reference. This is the most common type of reference, in which the item referred to has already appeared earlier in the text, usually within one or two sentences but occasionally further away.

- *Cataphoric* reference. This type of reference is one where the item referred to has yet to appear in the text. In such cases, the presuming reference appears before the presenting reference.

- *Esphoric* reference. In this type of reference the item referred to occurs within the same clause as the presuming reference. Since in this study I have followed Halliday in regarding cohesion as a non-structural text-forming resource it follows that esphoric reference can only be regarded here as making a minor or incidental contribution to inter-sentential cohesion.

In addition to these three principal types of reference, four other categories that are all used in the bulletin text need to be mentioned.

- *Comparative* reference. This is a type of endophoric reference which can occur anaphorically, cataphorically or esphorically. Here a tie is created between an item and something to which it is compared.

- *Bridging* reference. In this type of reference the presuming item refers to an item from which its existence or identity can be inferred. This is similar to homophoric or exophoric reference and also to implicit conjunctive cohesion in that it requires some cultural or situational knowledge in order to 'bridge' from the presuming item to the item referred to.

- *Possessive* reference. Here a reference is made to a participant through the use of a possessive pronoun or nominal group.

- *Whole text* reference. In this case the reference is not to a participant but to a

whole sequence of text, such as is made when summarising an argument with a phrase such as *This* demonstrates that … .

This simple categorisation of reference relations is by no means exhaustive but it is adequate for the purpose of this study. However, readers may wish to consult the studies mentioned above for further details.

4.1 Reference: coding

The reference relations in the text have been coded according to the key in Box 1. Various more or less elaborate schemes for displaying the analysis of referential cohesion have been proposed (e.g. IFG3, Eggins (2004), Martin (1992), Martin and Rose (2003)) but to simplify the presentation of the results here I have merely listed each reference chain in order of appearance of the head item (or first item in the case of chains beginning with cataphoric reference) and shown the codings in parentheses after each item. The results of coding the text are presented in Table 1.

Box 1 KEY for Reference analysis

Unless otherwise indicated by the following codes all ties are anaphoric.
A dash (–) indicates a cohesive tie between items in different sentences.
A tilde (~) separates items within a single sentence.
Head items (presuming reference) are shown in **bold**.
Numbers indicate sentence numbers (refer to Appendix).

B = Bridging; **C** = Cataphoric; **Cm** = Comparative; **E** = Esphoric;
H = Homophoric; **P** = Possessive; **W** = Whole text; **X** = Exophoric.

Table 1 Reference analysis

1 **the headlines** – 6 newsreader (B)
2 An eleven-year-old (C) – 7 An eleven-year-old boy (C*) – 8 **Rhys Jones** – 9 Rhys Jones – 10 his family (P) – 13 one of the boys (Cm) – 14 he – 15 he ~ he ~ a local boy – 18 the boy – 21 an eleven-year-old boy
2 **Liverpool** (H) – 7 Liverpool (H*) – 19 Merseyside (H) – 23 our streets (P)
[2, 7-9, 12-14] – 21 these circumstances (W)
3 **Police** – 9 Detectives (B) – 15 police – 16 police – 17 police – 18 detectives (B) ~ they (B) – 19 Merseyside Police – 23 us
3 **information** – 17 information
3 **silence** – 21 silence
4 **today** – 6 today's
8 **two friends** – 12 the three boys (B) – 13 the boys
8 **football** – 12 football
8 **a pub** – 12 the Fir Tree Pub – 16 the pub
8 **a pub car park** – 12 the car park of the Fir Tree Pub
8 **Croxteth** – 15 Croxteth Park – 24 Croxteth ~ the area ~ its young people (P) – 25 we
9 **boy** – 12 a teenage boy – 21 this killer (B) ~ them – 23 this killer (B) ~ them ~ them
9 **a BMX bike** – 12 a BMX bike
9 **three shots** – 12 three shots ~ one of which (Cm)
11 **the scene** – 16 the area – 24 the area
15 **private housing estate** – 26 the largest private housing estate in Europe
16 **the nearby parade of shops** – 25 the only area ~ the shops
19 **Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne** – 21 my appeal (P) – 22 I
22 **the criminal fraternity** – 23 you
24 **a local councillor** ~ Rose Bailey – 26 I
24 **us** { = the Today Programme } (H) – 25 you { = the interviewer } (B)
24 **young people** – 25 youth service (B) ~ thousands of children ~ they

* Items marked with an asterisk have been coded twice, first according to the coding shown in brackets and secondly as anaphoric.

4.2 Reference analysis

The most general findings of the reference analysis are summarised in Table 2 below. In this section, the following three topics will be discussed:

- Head items
- Major reference chains
- Reference types

Table 2 Summary of Reference

	ES	AA	CC	AA	SB	AA	RB	Total
Number of sentences	6	5	6	2	4	1	2	**26**
Number of head items	7	10	2	1	1	3	0	**24**
Major chains (4+ items)	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	**6**

* Column headings show the initials of the speaker (refer to Appendix)

4.2.1 Head items

As indicated by the total figure for the number of head items (that is, presenting references), this text contains almost as many reference chains as sentences. This immediately alerts us to the relatively greater contribution that reference is making to the overall cohesion of this text than was found in the case of conjunctive cohesion (see Haig 2013). Unsurprisingly, given the preponderance in this text, as in texts generally, of anaphoric reference (see Section 4.2.3 below), it is clear from the table that it is the earlier turns, specifically those of Edward Stourton (ES) and Alice Arnold (AA), that contain the most head items. This reflects their importance to the text's cohesion as the point of departure for the message of the text as a whole. Arnold's first turn provides the largest number of head items, including those of three of the text's six major chains. The fact that in reporter Caroline Cheetham's (CC) turn only two new chains are initiated reflects the fact that the main function of her turn is to elaborate on the information presented by the previous speakers rather than introduce new topics. Interestingly though, the two lifeword-related chains initiated in her on-the-spot reportage (those of *private housing estate* [15] and *the nearby parade of shops* [16]) are only referred to at the end of the text by local councillor Rose Bailey (RB). This creates a relatively long-distance element of cohesion in the text as a whole, bringing the text back to daily reality after the interruption of Merseyside Police officer Simon Byrne's (SB) voice of officialdom, and providing it with a sense of closure.

4.2.2 Major reference chains

All other things being equal, it is the longest chains in a text that contribute most to its cohesion. The six longest chains in this text are those shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Major reference chains

Chain	Links	Span	Intensity
Rhys Jones	12	19	0.63
police	9	20	0.45
boy [= the killer]	7	14	0.50
Croxteth	6	17	0.35
Liverpool	4	21	0.19
young people	4	1	1.00

In general the longest chains in a text are a good indicator of the identity and relative importance of those participants whom the text producers construe as being most central. In this case, reflecting the bulletin's concern with the victim of the crime, it is the name of Rhys Jones himself that forms the head of the longest and hence most important chain. It is also the only chain whose head item does not occur in initial position. This is because it is the only one in which the head item is preceded by cataphoric reference.

As a point of analysis it would have been possible to classify the Rhys Jones chain as one in which the head item was the mention of an *eleven-year-old* in [ES 2]. Such an interpretation would take the name of the victim as secondary to his age status and would view *Rhys Jones* as just one of the anaphoric references to *an eleven-year-old*. For the media and the general public, perhaps interested more in the social significance of the crime as a symbol of 'Anarchy in the UK' rather than the personal tragedy of one boy and his family, this would be a plausible interpretation, particularly at this very early stage of the story's evolution. However, my decision to regard the earlier reference as cataphoric derives from my understanding of Stourton's headline-stating turn as a whole as constituting what might be termed a 'macro-cataphoric' reference to all the items in the bulletin.

The term 'longest chain' can mean either the chain with the largest number of reference items, as it is being used here, or the chain which extends for the longest span through the text. Where two chains have the same number of items

but one spans twice the number of sentences as the other then the one with the wider span could be viewed as providing greater cohesion to the text overall. There will naturally be a trade-off between the strength of a chain's contribution to the cohesion made at a particular phase of a text and the overall strength of the cohesion made in the text as a whole. As shown by Table 3, although the *Rhys Jones* chain has the greatest number of items it does not have the greatest span. Rather it is the *Liverpool* chain, which only has four items, that extends the furthest through the text. A very rough idea of how length and span interact may be gained by dividing the number of references by the span to give what I have termed the 'intensity' of the chain.[6] As the table shows, by this measure it is the *young people* chain which stands out as having the greatest intensity. In this way, then, it seems that length, span and intensity are three fundamental dimensions to the contribution that reference chains can make to a text's cohesion. Different chains will tend to emphasise one or other of these dimensions.

To provide a clearer picture of the patterning of reference cohesion in the news bulletin text the six longest chains have been illustrated in Table 4 in relation to the structure of the text as a whole. They are arranged from left to right in the order in which the first item (normally the head item) occurs in the text.

The table provides a graphical representation of the interplay between length, span and intensity. One aspect of this is that, unsurprisingly, the longest chains do not flow evenly through the text but tend to cluster in certain regions. Thus the *Rhys Jones* chain shows a local intensity around Arnold's first turn and that of Cheetham, after which it is only referenced twice. In contrast, short but widely-spanning chains such as the *Liverpool* chain cannot form such agglomerations. They do, however, provide a more periodic, almost rhythmical background motif to the text as a whole.

Finally, we may note that the table shows how the reference chains tend to succeed one another as the text unfolds. Rhys Jones himself is clearly the first major topic in the text but this fades out after overlapping with the *police* chain. This in turn gives way to the shorter *Croxteth*, *boy* and *young people* chains. However, in this text this seems to be a particularity of this type of cohesion because, as I found when I analysed the parallel patterning of lexical cohesion in my original study (Haig 2009), the same type of succession is not apparent in that case.

Table 4 Structure of major reference chains

	Rhys Jones	Liverpool	police	Croxteth	boy	young people
ES 1						
ES 2	an eleven year old	Liverpool				
ES 3			police			
ES 4						
ES 5						
ES 6						
AA 7	an eleven year old boy	Liverpool				
AA 8	Rhys Jones			Croxteth		
AA 9	Rhys Jones		detectives		a boy	
AA 10	his family					
AA 11						
CC 12					a teenage boy	
CC 13	one of the boys					
CC 14	he					
CC 15	he / he / a local boy		police	Croxteth Park		
CC 16			police			
CC 17			police			
AA 18	the boy		detectives / they			
AA 19		Merseyside	Merseyside Police			
SB 20						
SB 21	an eleven year old boy				this killer / them	
SB 22						
SB 23		our streets	us		this killer / them / them	
AA 24				Croxteth / the area / its young people		young people
RB 25				we		youth service / thousands of children / they
RB 26						

4.2.3 Reference types

The patterns of reference type usage shown by this text are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Reference types

		ES	AA	CC	AA	SB	AA	RB	Total
Text-external	homophoric	1	1		1				**3**
	exophoric								**0**
Text-internal	anaphoric	1	2	18	2	8	3	7	**41**
	cataphoric	1	1						**2**
	esphoric								**0**
	comparative			2					**2**
	bridging	1	1	1	2	2		2	**9**
	possessive		1			2	1		**4**
	whole text					1			**1**
	Total reference	**4**	**6**	**21**	**5**	**13**	**4**	**9**	**62**

Clearly text-internal reference far exceeds the amount of text-external referencing (namely, the three references to the head item *Liverpool*). This reflects what might be considered a somewhat paradoxical degree of context-independence for a text which is ostensibly about reporting events in the real world.

Regarding the coding of references to *Croxteth*, I classified these as anaphoric rather than homophoric since I assumed that it would not be a place name familiar to most listeners. Of course, those for whom it was familiar would have derived a different interpretation of the text's coherence from the affordances it provides. Within that subset of the *Today* audience, different degrees and types of familiarity would influence the cohesive value that the area's name has for people. Arguing along these lines takes us down eventually to the level of individual listeners. This obliges analysts to recognise the difficulty in claiming to know what a text 'means', either in general or for particular readers or listeners, as the éminence grise of CDA criticism, Henry Widdowson, has repeatedly and cogently argued (Widdowson 1995; 2000; 2004).

Within the text-internal category, as noted above, the most commonly used form of reference in this text was anaphoric, in which subsequent items refer back to previously mentioned head items and other items in the chain. Anaphora is the most common type of reference in virtually all types of continuous prose

texts because of the cognitive ease with which such links can be both constructed by speakers and decoded by listeners, which is in turn facilitated by the many resources which the grammar of English has evolved to fulfil that function. In contrast, the opposite type of reference, cataphora, requires more pre-planning to produce and more cognitive effort to decode. As such, it is more typical of written modes. However, as Silvia Bruti observes in her study of cataphora in spoken English, 'the fact that it [cataphora] arouses the receiver's interest can make up for the cognitive gap it creates and the interpretative effort it requires.' (Bruti 2004: 39). This remark seems highly apposite to the two instances of cataphora in this news bulletin text since they both occur in the opening pre-planned turns of Stourton and Arnold as pre-head items of the *Rhys Jones* chain. Thus, in particular, Stourton's turn fulfils one of the essential functions of headlines by attracting listeners' attention to the stories. Of course, stating in [ES 2] that *Rhys Jones has been shot dead in Liverpool* would also have caught listeners' attention but for rather the wrong reason since, being addressee-new information, such a prominent topical theme would have puzzled the vast majority of them who would have had no idea who Rhys was.[7] Even the noun phrase *an eleven-year-old* actually used by Stourton struck me as possibly being a misreading of the news script since in almost all other situations during this and subsequent programmes the phrase used is *an eleven-year-old <u>boy</u>*. However, the News Script as published on the BBC News website within a few hours of the programme ending (see Haig 2009: 50) suggests that Stourton had read it correctly.

Apart from anaphora, the only other reference type used with any frequency was bridging reference. This type often requires cultural knowledge and inferencing in order to be understood, as in the mentions of *detectives* that form part of the *police* chain. In the case of the other major chain in which bridging was used, the *boy* chain, the inferencing is of a more purely conceptual nature as listeners must bridge between Byrne's two mentions of *the killer* and the head item *a boy*. In this respect I think bridging may be seen as a borderline case between text-internal and text-external reference.

Regarding this latter type, the complete absence of exophoric reference is hardly surprising given the impossibility of face-to-face interaction between speakers and audience and the consequent lack of a shared context of situation. In some parts of the bulletin it could have been used. For example, since she is described by Arnold as being 'at the scene', Cheetham might conceivably have

begun her report using an exophoric reference by saying, *The three boys were playing football <u>here</u> in the car park of this pub … .* Although neither of the other two correspondents who spoke during this whole bulletin used exophoric reference, it is occasionally used in the radio news bulletin genre. Indeed such a case occurred on the 1 pm news bulletin broadcast on this day at the start of *The World at One* news programme on Radio 4. Here again the Rhys Jones shooting was the first news item. The newsreader was one of Arnold's colleagues, Charlotte Green, and the on-the-spot reporter in Liverpool was not Caroline Cheetham but Jane Peel.[8] Green ends her introductory remarks about the story with the sentence, *From Croxteth, Jane Peel reports.* We then hear Peel speaking from an external location (indicated by the sound quality and traffic noise in the background) as follows:

> *The pub car park where little Rhys Jones was shot dead is now a sealed crime scene. A small white and yellow tent marks the spot where he fell. Tarpaulins cover two cars which it's thought were hit by bullets. There is real shock, that an innocent eleven-year-old boy could have been murdered <u>here</u> on <u>this relatively quiet and modern private housing estate</u>. It's less than half a mile from the house where Rhys lived with his parents and teenage brother. Some neighbours say the area has been suffering from anti-social behaviour, and they're worried about teenage gangs, coming into the Croxteth Park estate from nearby areas. Two people, aged eighteen and fourteen are being questioned by police, as part of what the Merseyside Chief Constable, Bernard Hogan-Howe said, would be a protracted, and complicated investigation.* [end of turn]

Such use of exophoric reference to indicate the Context of Situation, together with the ambient aural indications of on-the-spotness noted above, help give such correspondent reports a greater sense of immediacy and reality. In Hallidayan terms, the contribution which they make is to the text's registerial *coherence* rather than its referential cohesion (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 23). But cohesion and coherence are fundamentally related. As Halliday remarks, for a text to be coherent 'it must deploy the resources of cohesion in ways that are *motivated* by the register of which it is an instance,' (IFG2: 339, emphasis added). Likewise, the homophoric references to *Liverpool* and *Merseyside*, infrequent though they are, make a small contribution to the text's coherence by cueing listeners in to the relevant Context of Culture.

5. BUT WHERE DOES IT ALL END?

Having looked now at the patterns of occurrence displayed by one particular system of cohesive resources, namely the reference system, it may be useful to pause briefly to consider the meaning of the words 'text' and 'texture' as they apply both to the particular news bulletin extract under consideration here and to the materials studied by discourse analysts in general. The premise for all the analyses presented in this paper, and indeed in the original study from which it is drawn, is that in scrutinising this extract we are dealing with 'a text' and that it is characterised by having the quality of texture, created principally at the discourse semantic stratum through the three kinds of cohesive resources: conjunctive cohesion, lexical cohesion and reference. But to what extent is that assumption correct? To adapt a phrase from the literary theorist Stanley Fish, we might ask, 'is there a text in this bulletin?'

The start of the bulletin is marked rather formally if unostentatiously by the preceding Greenwich time signal 'pips' and the opening statement of Stourton. Of course, at a higher level of abstraction, the bulletin has been somewhat arbitrarily excised from the 'flow' (Williams 1974) of the programme as a whole (and indeed from the daily, weekly, annual and even perhaps decennial cycles of Radio 4 output) for the purpose of analysis. Even the words identified as head items here had all been previously mentioned several times on the programme. In contrast to the start, however, the ending of the bulletin is less clearly demarcated.

One indication that a radio news bulletin is a free-standing text is that, at least at the time of broadcast of the bulletin studied here, the BBC posted the scripts of the bulletins on the BBC News website.[9] Another way in which we can know that the bulletin is a discrete text is that, apart from the opening reading of the headlines by Stourton, it is a segment of the programme during which overall responsibility is passed over from the co-presenters to the newsreader. Regular Radio 4 listeners are aware of the conventions governing the role of newsreaders (and Arnold is explicitly identified as the newsreader here): namely, that they introduce these hourly bulletins (following the presenter's brief headline-giving introduction) but do not otherwise participate in the programme. This is not always the case on BBC radio. The lack of interaction between presenters and newsreaders might have come as quite a disappointment to aficionados of Radio 2, for example, (assuming they were tuning-in to Radio 4 for the first time) who can often hear (presumably with pleasure) the Radio 2 newsreaders and the morning

programme presenters engaging in cheerful banter at the beginning and end of the bulletins. It would probably have come as an even bigger disappointment to listeners to the *Chris Moyles Show* on Radio 1, since on that breakfast programme the newsreader is an integral member of the programme's anarchic 'zoo'[10] for whom reading the news is just a small part of their otherwise primarily entertainment-oriented role.

As for this particular extract, following the end of Bailey's turn the bulletin continues directly with Arnold introducing the next item (on the GCSE results). This turn is shown below. The underlined items within this section are those which form cohesive reference links with the preceding text.

The proportion of <u>GCSE</u> entries awarded the top grades is expected to rise again when this year's <u>results</u> are published. Around <u>six hundred thousand students</u> in England and Wales get <u>their</u> <u>results</u> <u>today</u>. But as <u>the pass rate</u> continues to rise, re-igniting the argument about dumbing down, there's concern that around forty percent of <u>teenagers</u> are leaving <u>school</u> without five good passes. Here's <u>our</u> <u>education</u> <u>correspondent</u>, Kim Catcheside.

Obviously, most of the reference items in this extract form chains with Stourton's mention of the GCSE results in [ES 4]. However, some of them (*six hundred thousand students, teenagers, school, education*) can also be seen as cohesively linking to parts of the major chains identified above. For example, since most GCSE examinees are sixteen-year-old school pupils, all of these terms could be seen as bridging references to the *young people* chain.[11]

The way in which the cohesive chains extend beyond the end of the bulletin extract points to the fact that texture is not a categorical, all-or-nothing aspect of text but one which shows prosodic waves which ebb and flow into, through and around the text. Indeed, although written or spoken texts unfold linearly, since mass mediated texts like this bulletin resonate through society in multiple directions along radiating chains of intertextuality, a more appropriate metaphor might be that of ripples spreading over the surface of a pond.

Although the above excerpt has demonstrated that cohesive reference chains continue beyond Bailey's final sentence, this is only to be expected given the content of the headlines at the beginning of the bulletin. In fact the bulletin as a whole continues for a further seven and a half minutes, covering ten other topics

according to the same general format of newsreader introduction (optionally) followed by a correspondent report.[12] The final item in the bulletin, which is also spoken by Arnold, is as follows, again with reference items underlined:

> *Two more animals are due to be slaughtered <u>today</u> at the Hindu temple in west <u>Wales</u> where Shambo the bullock was found to have bovine TB. He was put down after the failure of legal attempts to save him. Now, another bullock and a water buffalo have tested positive.*

The first underlined item is a very general reference linking to the short *today* chain that was begun in [ES 4]. The second is a homophoric reference but also a coincidental link to the mention of Wales by Arnold in the item on GCSEs. At a much more general level, we might also regard this final bulletin's reference to violent killing, via the word *slaughtered*, as constituting a semantic tie with the Rhys Jones story.

This final item seems rhetorically weak in terms of the demarcation of the end of the bulletin. In particular there is no formal, closing phrase such as *And that is the end of the news* or *And now back to Today*. As far as I can tell from repeated listening, there is not even any greater note of finality in Arnold's intonation as she utters the last sentence than there is at the end of any of the other items in the bulletin. Instead, the above item is immediately followed by Stourton's more senior co-presenter, John Humphrys, who begins as follows, again with reference links underlined:

> *The time is ten past <u>eight</u> [and <u>we</u>'ve just had a report it's been confirmed by <u>Merseyside Police</u> that an eighteen-year-old and a fourteen-year-old have been <u>arrested</u> on suspicion of <u>murdering</u> <u>eleven-year-old</u> <u>Rhys Jones</u> <u>last night</u>. More on that story of course later in the programme.] Now, here we go again, another set of <u>GCSE</u> <u>results</u> out today another row therefore about why every <u>child</u> seems to get an A <u>grade</u> these days, except of course that <u>they</u> don't. An awful lot of <u>them</u>, most of <u>them</u>, will not, <u>they</u> will fail indeed to get the five decent <u>grades</u> A to C in subjects including English and maths that are regarded as the minimum for a good start in life.*

Setting aside the section in square brackets for a moment, in this short sequence

31

we find a large number of cohesive references to chains established during the opening section of the preceding bulletin, suggesting that the texturing work of reference chains helps create cohesion both within and between programme sections. In fact, in the above extract, Humphrys is introducing the programme's so-called '8:10 Slot'. This item, which follows on directly from the 8 am news bulletin each day, is regarded by the producers as the highlight of the programme.[13] As such, on other radio stations, such as Radio 5 Live, one might expect it to be introduced by some attention-grabbing jingle or fanfare, but that would not be in keeping with the sober, authoritative ethos of Radio 4's news presentation style. Instead, the presentation is far more low-key. Below are four examples from the same week of how the slot usually begins.

Monday, 20th August
Topic: Interview with Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, about 'yob culture', tax and the National Health Service.
Presenter: Jim Naughtie

Nick Bryant reporting ten minutes past eight. Now as David Cameron's policy groups begin to send him their proposals, and the moment, comes closer when he starts to shape his first manifesto as Conservative leader, we return to some of the biggest issues and, I suppose, the fault lines of politics, like tax. … I want to start with what everyone calls these days, it seems, 'the yob culture'.

Tuesday, 21st August
Topic: Interview with Frances Lawrence, widow of head teacher Philip Lawrence who was murdered by a teenage gang member, Learco Chindamo, in 1995.
Presenter: Jim Naughtie

It's ten minutes past eight. In all the talk of street violence and yob culture, there are, a few particular crimes that still leap out. One of them, is, of course, the murder twelve years ago of the head teacher Philip Lawrence, stabbed, at his school gates.

Wednesday, 22nd August

Topic: 'Girls gangs'

Presenter: Jim Naughtie.

Ten past eight. In the argument about crime in the streets the growth of a gang culture is often identified, as one of the most worrying signs. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair has said that he thinks, there are more than a hundred and seventy of them, in London alone. It's a huge problem in many other cities as well.

Friday, 24th August

Topic: Rhys Jones case and youth crime

Presenter: John Humphrys

The time is ten past eight. When David Cameron described what's happening on the streets of our towns and cities this week he used the word anarchy, that was before the shooting of Rhys Jones in Liverpool. The coverage of Rhys' murder might suggest that we're going through a period of unprecedented violence, with gangs roaming the streets threatening the very fabric of our society. But is that a fair picture?

In each of these introductions, the main indications that the news bulletin has ended and the 8:10 Slot has begun are the change of speaker from newsreader to presenter and the announcement of the time. Normally, as shown here, the presenter moves directly from stating the time to introducing the slot.[14] This introduction usually begins with a formulaic, writerly sentence. Naughtie's introductions for Tuesday and Wednesday shown here use a very similar pattern and three of the four introductions use a hypotactic expansion clause complex with a preposed beta clause that is typical of carefully crafted prose.[15] However, on the day under consideration here Humphrys interrupted his introduction to give the breaking news about the two arrests in the Rhys Jones case. This he does with the words shown in square brackets in the above quotation. He then makes use of the discourse marker *now* (clearly distinguishable from the adverbial use of *now* by the rhythm and strongly marked intonation with which he pronounces it) to return to his main theme.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, what I would most like to emphasise here is that the information about the arrests inserted into Humphrys' introduction to the 8:10 Slot serves to extend the chains of cohesive reference beyond the end of the bulletin and into the discussion of the GCSE results. Although this may be exceptional it is but one particularly clear example of the general point that when critical discourse analysts select a media text for the analysis of any features, but especially trans-sentential features such as reference or cohesion, they ought to be aware that the text's boundaries may not be as absolute as they appear. Thus in the case of the major chains identified in this news bulletin text and illustrated in Table 5 above, although, for example, the *young people* chain seems very short and has a correspondingly high intensity score, it does not end with the conclusion of Bailey's turn. I shall report on my analysis of the nature and ideological significance of this kind of textual indeterminacy in a subsequent paper.

NOTES

1 Note that Sections 2 and 3 of this paper are slightly revised versions of the equivalent sections in Haig (2013), which in turn is largely based on the author's original study (Haig 2009).

2 The model of language proposed by SFL is rich, complex and continually developing. As such, it is not possible in this paper to provide more than the briefest of outlines. For an authoritative account of the latest version of the model as it has been developed for English see Halliday & Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 3rd ed. (2004). Note that this is referred to in the text as IFG3. Likewise, the second edition of the same work is referred to as IFG2. For a thorough yet accessible introduction see Eggins (2004); and for a collection of studies exploring the synergy between CDA and SFL see Young & Harrison (2004).

3 In this paper I follow the Hallidayan convention of showing the names of grammatical systems such as REFERENCE in small capitals.

4 An explanation of my reasons for selecting this particular text and a discussion of the social, political and media contexts in which it was produced is provided in Haig (2009).

5 In fact, for any listeners accessing the *Today* programme's studio webcam this might have been possible.

6 Halliday and Hasan (1976: 339) propose a much more elaborate system for measuring this. Compare also Hasan's scheme for analysing 'cohesive harmony' in texts (Hasan 1984). This is measured either as the percentage of words that participate in grammatical/reference chains or lexical strings versus those that do not or as the percentage of words in chains/strings that interact with other chains/stings versus those that do not.

7 Indeed on hearing such a headline the audience might have assumed that the victim was someone they *ought* to be familiar with. On the day that this bulletin was broadcast I used Google to search the Internet for the name 'Rhys Jones'. A large proportion of the high ranking hits I obtained were either for the Welsh comedian Griff Rhys Jones (the name I personally associated with this story) or the Welsh rugby league player, Adam Rhys Jones. There were also a smaller number of hits for a teenage mountaineer of that name and a few also to Sophie Rhys Jones, the Countess of Wessex. In contrast, on repeating the search in March 2009, 45 of the first 100 hits related to the murdered schoolboy.

8 Peel is a considerably more senior journalist than Cheetham. Variously described by the BBC as their 'Legal Affairs' or 'Home Affairs' correspondent, she had previously covered a number of high-profile stories including the trial of the Lockerbie bombers and the release from prison of two boys who in 1993, when they were ten-years-old, had murdered the two-year-old boy James Bulger near Liverpool. It seems that the BBC dispatched Peel to Liverpool at this time, presumably because of the extreme newsworthiness of the story, as a suitable reporter to take over from Cheetham.

9 The existence of the news scripts on the website was not clearly indicated and I doubt whether many ordinary listeners were aware of them. It was only by chance that I happened to come across them during my extensive surfing of the BBC website during the early stages of the fieldwork for this study. The BBC stopped posting them online altogether at the end of February 2008.

10 For discussion of the 'zoo media' format in relation to Goffman's concept of front and back stages (Goffman 1971) from a discourse analytic perspective see Talbot (2007: 142-44).

11 Strictly speaking, since these items are not specifically referring to the young people mentioned by Bailey in [24] the cohesive link made here is more one of the lexical cohesion type.

12 An item introduced by the newsreader only is referred to as a 'straight read', 'copy read' or 'reader'. An item where a reporter is introduced is called an 'intro plus voice' or a 'voice story'. See Dunn (2005: 205).

13 Almost always it is the more senior of the two presenters who presents this high-profile item. This means that when one of the presenters is female it is usually presented by the male presenter. At the time of this broadcast the *Today* presenting team consisted of three men and two women. Both of the women were considerably younger than any of the men but age is not the only factor. On retiring from the programme at the age of 60 after 18 years as a presenter, Sue McGregor published an autobiography in which she criticised the programme's treatment of female staff in general (McGregor 2002).

14 Naughtie's reference on Monday to the final report of the bulletin (*Nick Bryant reporting*) is an exception. It may have been due to the unusual nature of the item, which was about an Australian woman who was crushed to death by her pet camel when it tried to mate with her. However, such 'colour' items are frequently included at the end of a bulletin and, as such, may be viewed as another generic marker of the transition from bulletin to 8:10 Slot.

15 The fact that all four slots deal in one way or another with the problems of youth crime and gangs is symptomatic of the intense coverage given by the British media – not least the BBC – to these problems during 2007. Humphrys' question at the end of his Friday introduction hints, I think, at the BBC's (or at least his personal) relatively liberal stance on youth crime.

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APPENDIX

Text of excerpt from the 8 am news bulletin of the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme broadcast on 23 August 2007.

Edward Stourton (programme co-presenter)

1i It's eight o'clock on Thursday the twenty-third of August, 1ii the headlines. 2 An eleven-year-old has been shot dead in Liverpool. 3i Police are appealing for information 3ii saying 3iii this is no time for silence. 4i This year's GCSE results are out today, 4ii the pass rate is likely to be around ninety-nine percent. 5i MEPs have expressed support for a Europe-wide register of sex-offenders, 5ii and a new theory has emerged about the timetable of human evolution. 6 Today's newsreader is Alice Arnold.

Alice Arnold (newsreader)

7i An eleven-year-old boy has died 7ii after being shot in Liverpool. 8i Rhys Jones was playing football with two friends in a pub car park in Croxteth 8ii when he was attacked. 9i Detectives say 9ii a boy rode past on a BMX bike 9iii and fired three shots 9iv one of which hit Rhys Jones in the neck. 10 The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has sent her condolences to his family. 11 Our correspondent Caroline Cheetham is at the scene.

Caroline Cheetham (correspondent) [*On location. An unmodified repeat of the report by her that was broadcast during the programme's 7 am bulletin.*]

12i The three boys were playing football in the car park of the Fir Tree pub at about seven o'clock last night 12ii when a teenage boy wearing a hooded top rode up on a BMX bike 12iii and opened fire. 13i He fired three shots, 13ii one of which hit one of the boys in the head or neck. 14 He later died at Alder Hey Children's Hospital. 15i He hasn't yet been named, 15ii but police say 15iii he was a local boy from the private housing estate in Croxteth Park. 16i The pub and the nearby parade of shops have been cordoned off, 16ii as police continue searching the area. 17 Last night, police appealed for people to examine their consciences, and come forward with information.

Alice Arnold

18i Detectives have said 18ii that they are bewildered 18iii as to why the boy was targeted. 19 Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne of Merseyside police spoke of his disgust at the attack.

Simon Byrne [*On location. An unmodified repeat of comments by him that were broadcast on the programme's 6 am bulletin and again at 7:09.*]

20 It is quite awful and quite senseless that 21i It's just not right that an eleven-year-old boy should lose his life in these circumstances 21ii 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. 22 I particularly appeal to the criminal fraternity. 23i If you know who this killer is, 23ii work with us 23iii to catch them quickly 23iv and take them off our streets.

Alice Arnold

24i A local councillor, Rose Bailey, – 24ii who's lived in Croxteth for twenty-six years – told us 24iii that the area had been experiencing problems with some of its young people.

Rose Bailey [*Via telephone. An edited version of remarks made by her during an interview that was broadcast on the programme at 7:10. Deletions from this section made by programme producers are shown in square brackets.*]

25i We've got the largest private housing estate in Europe with no youth service er input whatsoever, 25ii so you can imagine 25iii 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>*] 25iv and the only area where they do congregate and and cause mayhem if you like is in in and around the shops [*deleted <erm>*] 26i I tried to get CCTV put in 26ii and ironically they just approved the programme.

An audio recording of this bulletin is available on the Today *programme's website at the following address:*

http:www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/listenagain/listenagain_20070823.shtml (accessed 6/10/2013)