WORDS, IMAGES AND MEANING :

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF THE PASSIVE VOICE IN A SIMULATED T.V. NEWS BULLETIN

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SUMMARY

This thesis employs empirical and theoretical methodologies to investigate the manner in which the language used in a television news story commentary affects viewer understanding of the story. To start, the nature of what is commonly referred to as "reality" is examined. This is done in order to show that reality is a social construct and that language and the media are two of the most potent factors in the construction of reality. This information acts as the groundwork upon which is based a discussion of the particular influence of the passive voice. The passive voice is looked at from grammatical and, perhaps more importantly, pragmatic perspectives.

With the theoretical justification for undertaking such work thus established, two original experiments are presented. Both experiments use videotaped newscast material with commentaries linguistically varied between conditions, and students as subjects in order to test a hypothesis that the grammatical presentation of characters within commentaries is correlated with viewer perceptions of those characters and the actions with which they are involved.

The final chapter acknowledges the potential for variables which comprise viewer backgrounds to interact with and thereby emphasise or mitigate the textual effects discussed in the experiments and the earlier theory-based chapters. A major portion of this chapter is devoted to the theory of Relevance, while another, equally important section is concerned with ideas developed through D. Morley's field research on a television programme called NATIONWIDE. These two major strands of the last chapter, the theory of cognition and the ethnography of viewer responses are representative of the combination of reasoning and empiricism which characterises this work in its totality.

PREFACE

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT

This study attempts to fill a gap in the critical linguistic study of news reports by showing that a passive sentence, or even a passive clause within a sentence, carries with it a potential for directing attention through a differential distribution of emphasis. Thus, it is hoped, this thesis will elucidate the manner in which the linguistic composition of television news commentaries plays a central role in constructing the meanings of news stories for viewers.

Meaning is produced in diverse ways in television news. While a complete study of television news must also involve the important matters of the medium's visual rhetoric (e.g. techniques of using particular camera angles and shot lengths) and the institutional structures under which the broadcast takes place, I have chosen to concentrate on the specific role of the verbal language of television reporting. There has been discussion on a larger scale of reality construction in the news *, but little work has been done concerning the production of meaning which arises as a consequence of the operation of particular linguistic strategies in news reports. I am, therefore, not replacing, but rather, augmenting more broadly based work by targeting a specific linguistic practice

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* = (Schlesinger [1978/87], for example, talks about intervention by the British government, particularly in regard to what information is broadcast about the Northern Irish situation. Since the newsclip used for the experiments concerns Northern Ireland, such a discussion is helpful in providing a broader perspective.

through which such reality construction takes place. To this end I will introduce the concept of reality construction through language and the media. I will examine the operation of language and the operation of news media individually but most importantly, consider the operation of language as verbal rhetoric in the news. A special emphasis is placed on television, as opposed to radio or print news because of the way in which the commentary interacts with and, indeed, qualifies the visual elements in news reports.

2.0 CHOICE OF SUBJECT MATTER AND APPROACH

The focus upon news broadcasting reflects a concern with the influence this form has on social processes through the shaping of public opinion. Television, as a widely dispersed medium, is able to gain far more exposure than is possible for written texts.

The interpretative factor for a pluralistic audience is one which cannot be overlooked. My concern is one which is shared by many disciplines : media studies, cultural studies, sociology, psychology and linguistics. I originally intended to look at viewer memory of news material to see which aspects (e.g. people, places, figures, dates) of reports make the greatest impression and therefore what type of information comes across most strongly over the course of a newscast. Several studies (See for example Katz, Adoni and Parness [1977], Neumann [1976] and Robinson [1972]) show that memory for factual data is poor yet the news is widely watched and indeed subsequently discussed among friends, business

colleagues, etc. Furthermore, particularly in light of the results of my first experiment, it was evident that memory was a matter of much greater complexity than was recall. The greater recall observed for certain aspects of the story only served to confirm a recency effect similar to that previously demonstrated in many other experimental studies. What was intriguing, however, was seeing the possibility elsewhere in the results that different interpretations might be linked to different linguistic presentations. As a result, my interest in what was remembered developed into a desire to try and clarify what linguistic aspects of the medium might be instrumental in channeling the reception of information. Whether or not the information is consciously remembered, I suggest that it is all registered and that the form in which it is presented colours first the perceptions and then the lasting impressions left by that information.

With my goals thus reformulated, I set about investigating the understanding of news stories in relation to the constraints imposed by certain linguistic routines characteristic of the genre. While other linguistic configurations are considered, the passive voice structure of clauses and sentences is the primary target of this inquiry. This is an appropriate object of study inasmuch as it reverses the syntactic position of participants within a sentence and thereby has the potential to subtly affect impressions of cause and effect. Moreover, studies of rhetorical strategy often look at carefully chosen vocabulary and the total effect of texts in terms of semantic force while paying scant attention to the crucial interim level of the structure of the individual utterance. While

recognising that the importance thus accorded to vocabulary and discourse is well-deserved, it is the intention of this work to remedy a somewhat imbalanced situation by pinpointing syntax as an important factor in the presentation of information.

3.0 COMPONENT PARTS OF THE THESIS

The composition of this thesis is a mixture of the theoretical and the empirical. These two realms are far too frequently insulated from each other, except for passing references which function either to support a general argument (if empirically determined figures and correlations find their way into theoretical work) or to ground otherwise isolated manipulations and callibrations (if a theoretical preface leads one into a mass of experimental or observational data). It is hoped that this thesis pays token attention to neither but, instead, integrates the two realms in order to build a sound, well-documented argument regarding the wide-ranging implications of such an established, frequently encountered source of information as the television news report.

In order to provide justification for taking on such a remit, Chapter One tackles the issue of the social construction of reality, with a progression from broader theories of reality construction, as described by Berger and Luckmann (1972), to experimental examples of persuasion's effect on a person's conceptions of the nature of things. The argument is developed by addressing the operation of two major "construction mechanisms", language and the media. The section on language examines two major strains of linguistic thought,

Universalism and Relativism (i.e. whether the nature of language is globally similar at some fundamental level or differs along with aspects of the culture in which it exists), in both their historical and modern guises. The stances of the major proponents of both schools of thought are presented, although the emphasis is on Relativism as a context for the later sections dealing with more specific shaping powers of language. The section on media engages with the subject of news reporting from a number of angles: agenda setting, definitional criteria of newsworthiness and communication / discourse theory, to name the most prominent subdivisions.

Having set the stage for explaining the significance of media language, I use Chapter Two to concentrate on one specific syntactic structure, the passive voice. News commentary is characterised by the routine occurrence of particular types of linguistic structure, which are not exclusive to such reports but are often also found in bureaucratic or official spheres of information transmission. The passive voice is not necessarily the single most frequent or outstanding manifestation of such language (another common form, for example, is the nominalisation of actions into nouns). Moreover, the passive voice is more commonly found in printed news than in broadcast news. As a result, broadcast news commentary has not previously been addressed in terms of the passive voice.

Chapters Three and Four relate the various facets of two experimental studies. These experiments test the effect of variation in commentary form (not content) on viewer understanding of a news report. This report was presented in video form to student subjects

from Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities. Although I believe wider ramifications exist, the homogeneity of my subject sample means that the results must, in the strictest sense, be limited to the population of British first year undergraduates. Similarly, although I believe the principles of what I am discussing to have wider application, the visuals of the report used in the experiments are supplied by ITN, and therefore it must be acknowledged that the findings are most relevant to British news. For both experiments guidance with the statistical analysis was supplied by the statistics department at Glasgow University. Points of incompatibility between purity of experimental design and applicability to external situations have generally been resolved in favour of the latter. The reason for this is that the corpus of experimental work to date has been skewed in the direction of carefully controlled experiments with simplistic, easily manipulable material such as colours, nonsense syllables etc. Such designs are difficult to relate to more complex matters, as the inferences drawn are necessarily oblivious to mitigating factors in the world at large (or at least larger than the room in which the experiment is set). My two experiments lay emphasis on producing an atmosphere of verisimilitude within a controlled setting.

Chapter Five, which follows this experimental work, serves a balancing function. While the main thrust of this thesis is to show the potency of textual, namely linguistic, factors in relation to the understanding of news, it needs to be recognised that these textual factors operate not in isolation but in conjunction with the reception of information by the audience. That is, the contexts

supplied by the backgrounds of viewerships serve to qualify the basic effects resulting from the structural composition of the broadcast material. This context is both cognitive, as is discussed in a section on Sperber and Wilson's theory of Relevance, and sociological, as is discussed in a section on Morley's conceptualisation of modes of reception. These two models are used rather than the standard Uses and Gratifications framework into which much audience research falls. This decision was taken because the Sperber and Wilson paradigm, together with the Morley work, makes it possible to see the audience member as making personal mental connections based on experience, while also being part of a larger community. Traditional Uses and Gratifications work often tends to ignore this crucial combination of cognition and culture in favour of an emphasis on individual psychology. Although individual emotions and motivation are useful, that line of inquiry has had the benefit of much exploration and attention which, I suggest, should now be applied to developing an understanding of the social mind at work in interpretations. In essence, this chapter acknowledges the ability of social forces (such as demographic and cultural situations) and their filtering through cognitive processes (such as determining Relevance) to potentially modify the understandings of messages which are conveyed through syntactic means.

My approach in this thesis, therefore, is to use critical linguistic analyses to examine the influence of grammatical form upon the reception of broadcast material by the viewing public. Both theories and experiments explore the difference which syntax makes to the way in which viewers make sense of news stories. The theories

provide the raw material for hypotheses which the experiments empirically evaluate. Such an approach compliments more traditional analyses which operate on more apparent textual and contextual levels. My goal is to suggest that the organisation of syntax within television news stories contributes to a viewer's perception of agency within a report and to suggest also that this perception of agency is instrumental in forming viewer appraisals of character responsibility.

CHAPTER ONE

CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

A. REALITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

"Reality" is the world as we know it. From the point of view of common sense, reality is unquestionable and invariable : it is "there" in the same way for all of us. The underlying position of this thesis, however, is that what is known as "reality" is a matter of conventional agreement. To better understand something of the formation of conventional agreement, there will be a review of experimental work concerning the role of persuasion in the overall construction of reality, especially as related to the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance. Calling reality a social construct is to view it in very broad terms. In the course of this discussion, the context will narrow first to reality as a media construct and finally to reality as a linguistic construct, on the grounds that one way society generates meanings is through the media, and one way the media generate meanings is through language.

2.0 THE "OBJECTIFICATION" OF REALITY

Berger and Luckmann (1972) hypothesise that society exerts a crucial influence in the production and communication of meaning through a process known as "objectification". This influence is one which involves a continual structuring and moulding of sensations received from the environment into representations with manageable cognitive shapes. The patterns these representations take interact with each other according to societal needs. These needs are

culturally selective in that they are characterised by the dynamics of the specific social order and practice in which they are produced. Through complex processes of reinforcement, socio-historical factors predispose members of the society to accept constructed roles, relationships and categories as "objective", stable, natural manifestations. Ashby (1956) notes that without these constructions the world of perceptual data would no longer cohere , while Connerton (1976:20), in contrast, sees reality thus constructed as "deformity which masquerades as reality." Conventionalised common-sense constructions form a residue. These residual forms are inherited and to some extent modified by each new generation of societal members. In this fashion a system of collective perceptions and consequent conceptions of how to recognise and partition phenomena is unconsciously perpetuated. This habituation process is the way in which an artificial construct is taken for a fact of nature.

Although this process pervades the whole of society, providing a public repertoire of knowledge and thought, it is important to note that this does not mean that all persons are automatically and inevitably affected in an identical fashion or that resistance to conformity is an impossibility. Through observance of the varying relationships which people from different cultures or subcultures have to a common experience or object, the process becomes less opaque and one can notice how effective and pervasive constructions can be. Moreover, any possibility of unquestioning acceptance of constructs and uniform determinism of consciousness is effectively countered by varied experiences and individual personality states

and traits which interact with the external stimulus. (Interaction in relation to textual determinants will be addressed in the final chapter.)

3.0 CONCEPTUAL CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSES TO THOSE CONSTRAINTS

The fundamental premise for this section and indeed the underlying thread of the whole of this thesis, is that one's knowledge of the world is necessarily defined by the nature of how that knowledge has been acquired. Biology plays its part from the outset. We may note that the band of wavelengths which humans can see is only a narrow portion of the electromagnetic spectrum and that the range of vibratory frequencies which humans can hear is likewise limited (See Grace 1987). If the distribution of raw data which is accessible from these two major physical senses of vision and audition is thus incomplete, epistemic conceptions of the world woven together on a continuum of life experiences must necessarily be greatly confined from the outset. Over and above this biological confinement, Graber (1976:53) also acknowledges confinement provided by the social formation, with terms such as "reality sleeve" and "conceptual straitjacket". However, alterations are continually being made to this jacket and its sleeves in the course of a society's development.

Furthermore, the process of communicating our conceptions radically affects them. The existing informational system contextualises phenomena, organises impressions and facilitates

knowledge in a manner which confirms, develops and extends the pre-existing cultural conditions. Language supplies categories which often operate unconsciously. Some categories are of a lower order, (e.g. detailed structures for tense and time expression.) Others are of a more crudely delineated, higher order. These larger-scale structures produce and organise background assumptions (e.g. The Russians are our enemies; therefore we must be ready to fight them.) Even though these background ideas may be more malleable than the linguistic categories, one must always bear in mind that language is the primary medium for depositing such ideas. The section on reality and language below will further develop this line of reasoning which is so crucial to efforts to characterise understanding.

3.1 Nature of Responses to Constraints

It seems reasonable that a process which operates without notice in daily life should be investigated. However, trying to thoroughly examine such operations is a difficult (though not impossible) task. Although heightened awareness may allow reasonably effective critiques to be formulated, no one can operate outside the mechanisms to gain a "pure" knowledge. Moreover, "awareness of the construction by no means entails the rejection of what is constructed." (Morley 1980:140)

The aim, White (1987:141) observes,

> "is not to find unadulterated truth or unbridled manipulation 'beneath' or 'behind' a given text or system of representation, but to understand how a

particular system of representation offers *us* a way of knowing or experiencing the world."

What can reasonably be expected to result from this inquiry is perhaps less dramatic and comprehensive than total immunity to the effects of those representations. The objective is more modest and more realistic, yet still most necessary : to see that the representations which appear most simple and obvious do not assume that status by virtue of some innate property, but rather because they can be integrated with a currently accepted system of social reality. Because of the strong association between perspective and meaning, both connotative and denotative, once that system is identified as socially, culturally and historically constructed, it relinquishes its naturalness and inevitability, though by no means all of its influence, as a shaper of interpretations and attitudes. In other words, analysis can make less automatic a habitual pattern of syntactic construction, thereby undermining it as a natural or inevitable mode of representation. This partial self-distancing, legitimises the possibility of opposing the dominant patterns of engaging with phenomena.

4.0 PERSUASION AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE IN REALITY CONSTRUCTION

This section looks at the operation of two separate yet related phenomena, persuasion and cognitive dissonance and discusses their impact on perceptions of reality.

4.1 Introduction to Persuasion in Reality Construction

Just as trends in food and fashion begin with a small group of consumers and promoters before reaching a status of mass acceptance, so, too, ideas about the nature of the world (e.g. a round earth) often begin inauspiciously before being accepted as common sense. They in part, achieve this status through the process of persuasion. If more than one person can be likewise convinced, future attempts at persuasion are likely to be even more effective, as two or more instances of the same opinion may come to be regarded as mutually verifying. For example, if, upon examining the results of my experiment, I conclude that some sample-based result is indicative of something existing in the corresponding population, I will be proportionately more certain of my findings if one or more other investigators have reached similar conclusions about that population. In the same manner, one frequently invokes the work of other researchers throughout the course of a thesis, in order that the consensus reached may convince the reading audience of the likelihood of truth in the offered statement or opinions.

Experimental investigations, although mostly dealing with perceptions rather than judgments, offer support to such ideas. Some experimenters choose ambiguous stimuli in order that contextual constructions may be made more obvious, but as detailed below, ambiguity is not always necessary for perceptions of a stimulus to be susceptible to external influences.

4.2 Experimental Work on Persuasion and Perception

In an early experiment into the origination of such effects, Clark (1916) asked a lecture theatre full of students to indicate when they detected an odor coming from a liquid substance in a bottle. This liquid was just water, but within ten seconds several Ss in the first row claimed to smell something. Within fifteen seconds most of the second row did, and the trend continued until by the end of three minutes, thirty-three students claimed to have noticed the odor. Interestingly, all of these students were sitting in the first five rows of the theatre and twenty-three out of the thirty-three were sitting on the same side of the room. Some years later, Sherif (1935) employed the autokinetic effect (without a frame of reference in the dark, people perceive a stationary spot of light to be moving). In a series of trials, Ss were asked to judge the distance involved in what they perceived as the light's movement. When Ss were exposed to the light individually, there was great inter-subject variation in the range of answers given. When Ss were put into groups of three or four, however, Ss estimations of distance were largely in agreement. (Whittaker (1964) later showed that the original discrepancy between answers must be within certain limits for this agreement to take place.) One might say that such an effect could be attributed to the "peer pressure" phenomenon and that Ss were only agreeing in the presence of others without experiencing a real change in their perception of distance. If one wishes to apply the motivational label of "peer pressure" to what happened in this experiment, it must be done with the proviso that the change in behaviour was accompanied by an internalised change in

evaluation of perceptions, for Ss judgments of distance continued to fall in the range reached by group consensus even when Ss were once again tested individually. For the purposes of the present argument, this is the most important finding to keep in mind.

While the autokinetic effect results from an ambiguous stimulus, as detailed above, there was no such ambiguity when Asch (1955) discovered that in 37% of his trials Ss accepted as true the deliberately false information supplied by experimental confederates regarding which lines drawn on cards were of comparable length.

Similar results have been obtained regarding lexical labels. Moscovici, Lage and Naffrechoux (1969) found that if, in a group consisting of six "Ss" (2 experimental confederates and four actual Ss), the confederates always referred to a blue light as green, nearly one-third of the actual subjects would also refer to the blue light as green, both when tested within the group and when tested individually after the group sessions.

Although these studies show that not all Ss are open to such influence (the last chapter will discuss what factors may override such influences), the percentage of experimental Ss who are affected is substantial enough to warrant questioning of what factors combine, and how, in the formation of reality as one knows it. Even the most basic assessments are not reached *in vacuo*. If people can come to doubt their initial perceptions about something as straightforward as colour, or at least profess to view in this manner, it seems likely that abstract or ambiguous realms within

which one has no such immediate experience would be correspondingly more susceptible to this phenomenon, whether the influence is propagandistic or coincidental in nature. Such realms would include theoretical formulation of complex ideas and value judgments or opinions about unfamiliar, newly encountered phenomena. Moreover, it is important to note that persuasive effects in messages are sometimes "sleepers", as described by Aronson (1973). That is, a person's attitude does not appear to change immediately after a communication. Instead, the change only becomes apparent when galvanised into an active presentation by some cue. This may occur long after the actual communication has been forgotten.

4.3 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The concept of cognitive dissonance, (see, for example, Festinger (1962a and 1962b)) holds that people are motivated to try to make their behaviour consistent ("consonant") with cognitive elements such as their attitudes/beliefs and vice versa, to achieve a sense of balance within the self. This is to say, if one espouses a given view one's actions are likely to be compatible with that view in order to legitimise the claims one has made. If one finds that one has acted in a way which is contrary to professed attitudes or if one has no professed attitudes in that particular area, one is likely to adjust one's ideas, developing attitudes which coincide with what one has done. The presumption is that it is a need within humans to find consistency within various areas of their lives. Often, however, people will act in a fashion which serves to

decrease the chances of dissonant situations occurring in the first place. Ehrlich, Guttman, Schönbach and Mills (1957) found that recent buyers of cars read adverisements promoting their own brand of car far more often than they read advertisements promoting others. Thus the new car owners in the study's sample tended to look for information which supported their action and avoid information which might have called into question the wisdom of that action.

Given this tendency for people to avoid inner contradiction, it is not surprising to come across experimental findings such as those of Knox and Inkster (1968), who asked people at a racetrack to rate, on a 7-point scale, the likelihood that their favoured horses would be race winners. These researchers discovered that the median score of those who were asked before they placed their bets was 3.48, which fell into a range designated "fair chance of winning", while the median score of those who were asked after they placed their bets was 4.81, which fell into a range designated "good chance of winning" and that this difference was statistically significant at $p < .01$. As far as cognitive dissonance theory is concerned, once the bettors had made the commitment to put their money where their mouths were, so to speak, they needed to intensify their belief in the horses' chances to justify their actions. Similarly Brehm and Cohen (1959) found that when children were asked to use a scale to rate their liking of a number of toys before and after each child was allowed to choose one toy to keep, the childrens' ratings of the toys chosen were higher after the choices were made. Cardwell (1971) details other means of justification, offering the example of a good student who expects to pass an exam easily but instead fails.

In line with Festinger's theories about dealing with dissonance, the student may : a) be less confident about his/her own abilities (change one of the dissonant elements), b) blame the poor performance on testing conditions (add new elements to the cognitive structure) or c) regard the test as being of little consequence (redefine the dissonant element as unimportant).

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR TELEVISION NEWS

As a source of information which is seen as reliable and accurate, by virtue of its very form, television news is invested with a great deal of authority. Moreover, although the actual events taking place occur far away, television news is regularly beamed directly into homes, and television viewing is considered a natural, routine activity. (Counterbalancing factors will be discussed in the last chapter.) In describing the experimental work above, I do not wish to suggest that television or even persuasion in general is sinister, but rather that the discretionary power invested in any channel of persuasion often constitutes a greater degree of influence than is immediately recognisable. The discussion on cognitive dissonance concentrated on a thought-behaviour dichotomy within a person, but this phenomenon is not so narrowly confined. Edelman (1975) notes that people understand controversial issues which they see on the news in a fashion which aligns the new material with pre-existing beliefs. (See also the discussion on relevance theory in Chapter 5) If something appears novel or contradictory at first, an effort is made to find points of

consistency so that the different items reinforce each other. The locus of inquiry in the next section is the power the media hold in constructing reality through their translations of events which happen "out in the world" into reports which happen "on the screen".

B. REALITY AS A MEDIA CONSTRUCT

6.0 HOW MEDIA REPRESENTS SOCIETY

According to Graber (1976) there are four basic things which analysis of media output reveals about public opinion in a society : 1) What is public knowledge ; 2) What topics are labelled most important and what the scales of priorities are seen to be ; 3) What the structure of values is (as recorded in what is considered right and wrong) ; 4) What things are considered to be logically or thematically related, contingent on each other or clustered together. All of this information regarding structuring and evaluation of information is useful for my analysis because it details contributions to the state of perceptions within a society. This information, in turn, goes some way toward explaining how a collective perspective on reality may be shaped by a general practice of television viewing. Let us now consider Graber's four groupings :

6.1 The Question of Public Knowledge

The amount and kind of information available to citizens within a society reveals the openness of a society. This is not something which is easily observed from within a society because, although one may know when something is being held back, one lacks the necessary overview to be able to see the complete informational picture. An externally situated observer (e.g. from a different culture), however, may be better able to assess the availability of knowledge within one society and contrast it with that which exists within different societies.

6.2 The Question of Topic Priority

This is a comparative rating. The relations which form a hierarchy of importance within a society also determine the amount of air time and position within a newscast that a story is given. The more prominently information is situated within a news format, the greater the momentum that story has for becoming a focal point of other forms of communication in society, (e.g. word of mouth), if indeed it is not already prominent. Information which becomes common currency in a society feeds back into the news system such that an initial programming decision to give high priority to a given piece of information is perpetuated at an interpersonal social level, to eventually become a follow-up piece on a topic in which many people are interested.

6.3 The Question of Value Determinations

The topics that a newscast describes in a positive or negative fashion will generally be synonymous with a population's common consensus of opinion. This parallel appraisal will not necessarily hold across subcultures, however, since many subcultural ideas of right and wrong clash with the normative values established in a society. Again, as in section 6.2, there exists a circular routing system, with societal norms mirroring media established norms and vice versa.

6.4 The Question of Logical Relationships

To make a rather rough analogy, one can use the topics which are grouped together in a segment of the newscast (e.g. without indications from either the anchorperson or a break in the flow of the programme that a topical transition is about to take place) as the responses to a psychoanalytic word-association test applied to the given society. Thematic links which might seem illogical to one society might seem entirely appropriate to another culture as a result of differing background assumptions brought along to the viewing. (See below, Chapter 5, for how shifts in these background assumptions operate to facilitate different understandings.)

7.0 THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF NEUTRAL MEDIA

The mass media in the West are democratic inasmuch as they allow the voicing of dissenting viewpoints, with few formal restrictions or declarations of a single, "correct" line. However, a relatively small number of sources monopolises the total output of news. This monopoly operates to determine the choice of topic (see sections 6.1 and 6.2 above) and, less directly, the configuration of those elements chosen to be included in reports (See section 6.4 above) This latter area can be thought of in terms of interpretive angles (see section 6.3 above) and characters focused upon (e.g. the upcoming experiment shows how commentary may highlight either of two opposing characters / groups of characters to create different impresssions).

This state of affairs considerably reduces the potential for contradictions to emerge and, hence, conflicting views of a situation to be formulated. Thus, as Dahlgren (1980) recognises, television news viewers become uncritical and ever more dependent on their information source.

Media interests go to great lengths to present and maintain the appearance of an ideal which Altheide (1976:6) calls "disinterested objectivity". This ideal, which is essentially one of impartiality and balance, is aspired to not only in order to boost credibility (Weinstein 1966) and thus become established as a stable point in a confusing society, but also to protect media interests from criticism and lawsuits (Tuchman 1972). Kumar (1977:248) refers to

the BBC as "trying to hold 'the middle ground' on a terrain that is treacherous and unstable...But it is a precarious balancing act." Since this strategy of appearing to have no political objectives or even set views is a staple constituent of news presentation, it is important to see it in a clear light. Hackett (1985:268) observes,

> "No longer can we simply assume the possibility of unbiased communication, of objective and detached reporting on an allegedly external social and political world. No longer can objectivity be taken as the opposite of ideology in the media, if indeed the forms of rhetoric of objectivity help to produce dominant political frameworks."

It is important to recognise, however, that broadcast material may be non-neutral without being driven by any actively intended bias. Unconscious bias exists in the selection of linguistic structures because language itself is not neutral. This point is further developed in the section immediately below, as well as in REALITY AS A LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCT.

8.0 THE FALLACY OF THE "FACT"

Several sources characterise the "fact" as rather different in nature from the stable truth it is commonly thought to be. Snow (1983) correctly contends that the media's insistence that they report self-explanatory facts and the public's belief that a particular set of facts leads to a particular conclusion are both mistaken. Baggaley and Duck (1975) propose that the view that news presents facts (but other television programmes and advertisements etc. do not) is dangerously naïve. Facts are only fragments of

knowledge which need to be contextually clarified. Altheide (1976) suggests that this issue be approached by understanding that almost any event (fact) could be reported in a variety of ways and that the choice of one perspective as an easily-gripped "angle" works to exempt unstated beliefs from justifications which would normally be required.

Perhaps the most significant challenge, however, to the claim of straightforward broadcasting of facts in the news has come from the Glasgow University Media Group, in their Bad News series of books. (1976,1980,1982) The group claims that whenever an event is reported, a plurality of meanings exists, but the group then goes on to say that the presentational structure of the report prefers or privileges one meaning, that is, this structure suggests a given reading as the most appropriate one for the viewer to adopt when making sense of the presented information. As mentioned in the section immediately above, this structure--meaning link is not the result of deliberate or conscious machinations. Rather, there exists a belief on the part of news gatherers and news presenters "that their routines and codes merely serve to fashion the news into intelligible and meaningful bulletins." (1980:122)

Lippmann (1965:54) contends that "the facts we see depend on where we are placed and the habits of our eyes." It is equally important, however, to keep in mind that the facts we hear depend on the habits of our ears and on the linguistic structures in the speech of others. Facts are phenomena which take on identifiable meanings when framed and constrained by language.

> "The relationship or association between talk and the things it describes is never neutral. All descriptions close off or foreclose on sets of alternatives. (Glasgow University Media Group 1980:123)

8.1 An Example of Constraints on Factual Information

Cohen (1963), Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Graber (1976) all address a news production practice which carries with it important implications for the characterisation of facts : Until mass media decision makers discern events in other lands (often designated as "remote") to hold interest or have consequences for the industrialised world, those events receive little or no coverage. Similarly, once those events cease to have such relevance, preoccupation with a story wanes and coverage is drastically decreased or terminated.

This practice exemplifies Altheide's (1976:179) contention that the "news process contributes to decontextualising or removing an event from the context in which it occurs, in order to recontextualise it ", potentially changing the aetiology. Without an established linkage to Western (or Superpower) concerns, a story is not considered to be pertinent to the audience at large and therefore not accomodated in the newscast. Consequently, many stories are covered superficially and do not run the full course from formation through development to completion. With no access to the indigenous viewpoints and underlying causes, viewer attention is

averted from the event's formative influences and the resulting impression for the audience of the relatively short-term manifest stages is that events in such lands do not unfold gradually. Instead, these events are seen to be sporadic and fitful, with no logical basis or resolution and of only peripheral importance to more central issues. Hartley (1982:78) even suggests that according to "the famous head-count equation for disaster" the further the scene of a disaster is from Western news centres, the greater the death toll must be to ensure coverage.

9.0 DEFINING THE NEWS

This section is concerned with the questions of how particular events are selected for inclusion in a news story and how ambiguities within such stories become resolved in a manner which makes the story "meaningful" to the viewer.

9.1 Decreasing Options For Diversity and Criteria for Decisions

If one begins with the total pool of happenings at a given time, the limitations of the screening procedure can be conceptualised in this manner : Firstly, not all that happens is efficiently reported, as there are a limited number of reporters to cover a far greater number of events, and misunderstandings between the field journalist and either the source of information or the home base sometimes lead to inaccurate reports. Secondly, with time

and space constraints, not all the information which is reported is taken on by the wire services. Thirdly, not all the information made available by the wire services is utilised. Fourthly, not all the information which is used by mass media is disseminated or stressed by any one source. If people read the same paper or view the same news programme on a regular basis, they are receiving a selective, necessarily simplified balance of information which has come through a long series of systematic filters and which serves to naturalise given positions. Even if they read alternative newspapers and watch alternative newscasts, it is only the limitations at the end of the filtering system which they might be able to modify. As Adoni, Cohen and Mane (1985:191) assert,

> "Any symbolic representation of reality is based on selection and editing of material derived from reality, and thus depicts only a certain part of reality and portrays it from a specific point of view."

The effects of the first two screening stages mentioned above operate throughout the range of mass media output, severely restricting what can be given consideration.---Although the role of media in reality construction may at times be evident even after such limited exposure as a single viewing of a particular report, it is more likely that it is not the impression left by an isolated transmission but the cumulative effect of long-term viewing which produces what Berelson (1948:182) calls "pervasive, subtle and durable effects" on public consciousness. These residual effects have the ability to shape frames of reference and, hence, perceptions of the environment. (Whether or not this available

portion of news *is* in fact attended to will be discussed in the final chapter. The point here, however, is that, in terms of inscribed positionality, there are several constraints operating on what a person has the option to attend to.)

With so many filtering points in the operation, decisions must constantly be made about what is important and hence, deserving of exposure. These decisions engage journalists "as constructors of nation and society and as managers of the symbolic arena." (Gans 1980:312) Although each reporter/editor will use discretion, incorporating past experience and individual/organisational values into the decision making process, Davison, Boylan and Yu (1976:97) list five abstractions from many formal and informal criteria which journalists adhere to in deciding what small portion of information, abstracted from the raw material of the day's events will qualify as "news". The criteria which thus delimit definitions of news are: 1)-High Impact (upon the audience which is presumed to be watching / reading, so this may differ from source to source); 2)-Conflict (Discord); 3)-Known Principal; 4)-Proximity; and 5)-Timeliness.

These attributes generally apply to information which is, according to consensual norms, considered to be out of the ordinary and/or likely to cause controversy. Veracity or accuracy of information is not always given high consideration as a defining news value, despite the widespread impact of mass communication systems. Davison et al. give the example of U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy's allegations of Communist infiltration into 1950s America as a story which was evaluated as fulfilling all five criteria of

newsworthiness; for example, 1) the impact was high since the topic was "bad news" and rhetoric used was emotionally stirring ; 2) there was a clear, easy to grasp conflict dichotomy : "us vs. them", and a great deal of dramatic hostility and vehemence in McCarthy's denunciations of an encroaching alien culture; 3) as a Senator McCarthy was a public figure ; 4) according to McCarthy, the Communists were everywhere, endangering the American citizen's way of life ; 5) the scare stories were relevant since they took place in an atmosphere of Cold War tension. Consequently, the story was given wide, long-running coverage by the media despite the lack of evidence to support McCarthy's charges.

Simply by reporting something in such depth the media confer status upon it (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1960). A large part of the audience had no prior knowledge of or interest in such concerns, but because of the privileged status accorded to mass media--trusted as competent and credible because they appear to be knowledgable disinterested and, hence, highly authoritative sources of information (Brown 1958)--many thought it likely that there was truth in the accusations. A resulting anti-Communist mood pervaded the society of the time. Thus, the news coverage influence generated both a particular cognitive behaviour (people considering the presentation of such material as indicative of an underlying factual basis for the allegations) and a particular affective behaviour (the consequent widespread suspicion and mistrust).

9.2 Ambiguity

In addition to criteria of content, a major presentational rubric used by journalists is the two-edged dictum that the report should be clear and unambiguous. Hartley (1982:24) explains,

> "News discourse is hostile to ambiguities and seeks to validate its suppression of the alternative possibilities...by reference either to 'the facts of the story' or to 'normal usage'...One of news discourse's most consistent (self-imposed) tasks is to *prefer* particular meanings for events over other possible meanings."

Boorstin (1973) shows how this idea of clearly defining news reports has been taken to an absurd conclusion (however logical it may be according to the operational criteria). He holds the media responsible for a preponderance of "pseudo-events" to which, he says, reality tends to conform. The pseudo-event is a creation and development of the media or interests powerful enough to have ready access to the media. Such an event does not occur spontaneously or naturally but has importance ascribed to it. Its primary characteristics are that it is a pre-scheduled public activity "planned, planted or incited" for the purpose of "being reported and reproduced." Moreover, its newsworthiness, according to journalistic criteria, is more important than its accuracy, as it is "intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy." An example of such a manufactured event might be a press conference or a function filled with celebrities whose primary reason for being present is the publicity which it is known will be generated. Thus we see the ultimate antidote to ambiguity: if the press media create the event in the

first place, they can easily stage the fit of its components such that the presentation reflects a preferred meaning.

9.3 Setting the Agenda

The ability of the media to guide the audience to focus its attention on particular issues in a particular context is generally referred to by the term "agenda setting". The other side of this practice, of course, is that information not incorporated into this agenda is often ignored. Graber's (1976:152) point that "The borderline between accurate description of present realities and self-fulfilling prophecy may be narrow." is well-taken, particularly in light of her further concern that the dominance of "official", "credible" sources of information, (e.g. governments and major institutions), serves to legitimate and perpetuate existing philosophies and powers. Looking at the different ideas involved in programming choices made by television networks around the world gives one some indication of how this process implicitly carries with it attributes of the social formation in which the medium is located (in interaction with concerns relevant to the organisation which is disseminating the information.) Behind the ideas presented through channels of mass communication lies the weight of the social and cultural environment responsible for originating and/or valuing such ideas because "part of the meaning of the news and part of the ability of the news to mean at all is derived from the social structure in which it is 'uttered'" (Hartley 1982:36).

Ideas thus emphasised become the ones which are presumed important and further attended to, because of the continuous reinforcement their availability administers. As the Glasgow University Media Group notes (1976:15),

> "The event achieves perceptual reality by being reported, while in addition, consequences flow from the report which actually shape the original reality in accordance with the meanings given it by the news."

Moreover, the audience cannot form misgivings or protest that it is not being shown stories about certain issues when such stories might provide the only opportunity for the audience to find out about such issues. One cannot show interest in the fully unknown. Therefore the menu of available stories acts to establish the bounds within which diverse views can be formulated. Hartley (1982:5) observes the importance of both whether and how something is presented on the news :

> "Individually, we perceive and interpret the world in terms partly derived from classifications familiar in the news; collectively, we make up 'reality' as we go along, perceiving it as meaningful to the extent that it can be made to resemble the expectations we bring to it from the ordered language system of the news."

All that is being said here obviously applies less to local news topics, (or topics for which one has a great deal of interest and independently acquired background knowledge), for which an audience may be able to detect and independently confirm or clarify questionable or ambiguous information, than it does to spatially removed national and, especially, as acknowledged above, international news. (See, for example, Hartmann and Husband (1972))

One's distance from the scene of the action and the amount of bias in one's perceptions and judgments are positively correlated, according to Welch (1972).

However, access to alternative accounts or even the possession of first-hand knowledge is not always a safeguard against influence by a report's particular version of reality, or what Desaulniers (1985:121) calls "a specific and novel manner of cutting up time and space." A study by Lang and Lang (1953), concerning participants in a public gathering, shows that the interpretation a news story puts on an event may take precedence over one's own interpretation, even though one has been present as a witness to / participant in an event, i.e. watching a report about something after experiencing that thing as an eyewitness can stimulate a restructuring of one's memory of what occurred. This phenomenon exists because no one individual has access to an event in its totality. Media versions become more real than individual experience because multiple television cameras and a cohesive narrative enable the news to show a different picture than any one person could witness and thereby construct inchoate experience as an event.

An example in which such deference to the broadcast reality may have taken place is found in the video clip used for the upcoming experiments. Many people lined the route which the main character took while walking through town, but each person would see that character only for the duration of time it took for the character to walk past. A start-to-finish version of the walkabout is accessible primarily from film taken by the cameraman and

narrated by the reporter who accompanied the main character the length of the walk. This version, which is dependent on the location of the camera and the gloss put onto the events by the narration, is, of course, not the only one which could detail the walk in its entirety. One can easily imagine that an account offered by one of the principals in the story (e.g. the woman) would be somewhat different in emphasis from one based in the camera-eye viewpoint.

10.0 THE ROLE OF COMMON SENSE IN THE MEDIA

The media endeavour to maintain and increase audience numbers by researching what the audience wants and then giving it to them. For example, a discussion by Morley (1980) details *NATIONWIDE*'s* - appeal to the average citizen, through stories on consumer issues with which the viewer can identify and an easily recognisable populist or "common sense" discourse which seeks to articulate the prevailing perspectives of the viewers. Yet, at the same time, another aspect of this populist discourse serves different interests.

In a functionalist account, common sense is the mechanism through which power interests are associated with mass viewer interests to the extent that a difference is no longer perceived by

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* = NATIONWIDE was a magazine format television programme which began in 1966 and ran through the 1970s. It was shown on BBC 1 in the early evening and reported things happening in the various regions of the United Kingdom.

the viewer to exist between the two. Controlling interests in a society must be seen to compromise in many areas in order that their control is somewhat discreet, and their potency not too readily apparent. In detailing this hegemonic process, Hartley notes (1982:58)

> "the dominant economic and political forces do not 'rule' in their own persons and cannot rule by themselves. Power is translated into authority and authority is exercised in the 'general' interest by 'neutral' agencies...The exercise of power in the interests of those who 'rule' and who benefit from it is achieved not by direct coercion (a last resort), but by routinely seeking to win the consent of subordinate... groups."

We must be careful, however, not to over-simplify the process by which the media and other complex institutions work, ascribing to them more intentionality than is actually warranted. We are all participants in the production of common sense. As Hartley further explains (1982:59):

> Hegemony "is achieved when people ascribe their powerlessness not to its source in economic and social relations, but to external forces of nature. For most practical purposes, such an explanation is not only plausible, but actually helpful in coming to terms with the very limited gains to be had within the practical horizons of 'realistic' demands".

Thus, the news does not produce new, particular or extraordinary meanings about "the way things are". Instead, it reproduces old, general and "ordinary" preferred meanings which fit into a consensus scheme. One most often does not even notice or identify these as being the representation of a particular position because these meanings are familiar, simple and expected, and

because these meanings are familiar, simple and expected, and therefore, do not even need to be explicitly asserted.

> "As long as the (unasserted) frame is shared between the encoder and decoder, then the passage of the problematic embodied in that frame is transparent." (Morley 1980:146)

What one does not notice as being in any way out of the usual, one cannot contest. Therein lies the true strength of common sense as the taken for granted background of the news.

11.0 THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Speaking about television news research which has taken place over the years, Dahlgren (1988:286-88) makes a distinction between "discrete informational facts" of a message and the information provided by a "structured discourse', noting that "the phenomenon of TV news is conceptualised within a framework which emphasises the transmissions as the transfer of manifest factual content to the audience" to the exclusion of two key points of interpretive analysis :

> "factual information could be *systematically* selective and slanted" and "the entire *structure of the audiovisual discourse* can (and normally does) have hegemonic import on the audience... in the production and maintenance (and even subversion) of meaning."

With this in mind, Dahlgren (1985) explicates a tri-functional model of communication based on the work of Jakobson.

1) The *referential* function, which is the basis of information about an external object (for the news story: the topic, what actually occurred) is very much subordinated to the other two, more closely related, functions. It is "the communication of accurate and verifiable messages about something, using symbols and grammar to signify external objects." (p.243)

2) The *poetic* function, which is concerned with the relationship between the message and itself. Through codes and conventions the communication circulates its own stylised, formatted, representations which, to an extent, replace the original event that is to be mediated to the audience.

3) The *phatic* function (after Malinowski's "phatic communion" of communication in social relationships) which attends to the act of communication, (e.g. how receiver attention is captured and how the contact between sender and receiver is maintained, rather than the content or the shape of the message.) For television news, this refers to attention-grabbing characteristics and the ability to draw individual viewers into the experience and make them feel that they are part of a larger community of viewers. Dahlgren (1985:244) notes that the operation of this strategic function in the immediacy of live, on-the-spot, coverage of events is linked to "rhetorical and dramaturgical elements in the TV news discourse."

Because all the functions are actually inextricably linked to each other, however, it may seem something of a forced distinction to break them down in this fashion. This thesis is concerned with

Dahlgren's referential function. It looks at the on-screen linguistic representation of what happened in the off-screen world. But it is also concerned with the shape of the commentary (poetic function) and viewer response to information represented and shaped in such a fashion (poetic function).

While the images used to convey information are important, it is imagery's anchoring in commentary which clearly defines the discourse and the communicative content. Brunsdon and Morley (1978) note that the voice-over commentary is privileged, providing dominant interpretations of the meaning and significance of the visual images with which they are synchronised. These verbal interpretations essentially "ground" images and resolve ambiguities. (See also Jamieson (1985) and Geertsma and Reivich (1969). The clinical work of the latter source suggests that while isolated visual cues are often stronger than audio ones, ambiguous visual cues are often interpreted through audio ones.)

This role of the verbal (audio) cue is particularly important to recognise because, as Graber (1976) points out, while connotations of expressions are retained, specific terms and phrasings are soon forgotten; that is, we only remember what was said (the content), not the way it was said (the form). Through subtle manouevres, the presentational style of the spoken commentary can impinge upon audience perceptions. The commentary, which is only part of the whole report, can syntactically and semantically influence impressions of other aspects of the report, (e.g. imagery and action). It thus effectively colours the report as a

whole without the audience being aware of the operation. Reactions, then, tend to be holistic, concerned with the general picture of the content rather than with the component parts of the presentation. It is thus that the status of a neutral conduit of information is erroneously attributed to the news, when in fact media perspectives frame a great deal of what is encountered in one's life. Jamieson (1985) draws attention to the fact that all messages are endowed with a rhetorical quality by being given form in the communication process, and stresses the fact that this rhetorical aspect is an essential characteristic which, if absent, would leave only unintelligible randomness. Yet, although he recognises this to be so, Jamieson's conception of a message fails to acknowledge the unity of form and content when he says (1985:105) "At the moment of apprehension the content may be more compelling than the rhetoric or form." This distinction between content and form cannot be made, at least not from any rationalist position, because one cannot apprehend anything apart from its form. One can only recognise content as it is presented. It does not exist in any state of purity untainted by rhetorical structuring.

Jamieson also warns of the prevalence of covert, masquerading motivations which are "manipulative" in that they use underlying cues to orient the viewer's interpretation on a sub-conscious level towards a "pre-planned destination." :

> "it is the intention behind the form of the rhetoric which we need to question...concealment of the techniques employed in media production can present an illusion of a denoted system which may, in fact, be heavily connoted." (p.59)

and

> "the television viewer is also subject to expectancies which guide him towards specific interpretations, and these expectancies find their support in tacit signs, and being tacit, they are below conscious awareness." (p.112)

It is quite easy for the significance of such a crucial point to be lost when examining televisual impact, because without knowledge of the specific production techniques used, one cannot isolate and contemplate aspects thus disguised. Nonetheless, as Schudson (1982:4) characterises television news discourse,

> "the way the world is incorporated into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration, and then transfigured, (is) no longer a subject for discussion but a premise for any conversation at all."

In other words, news discourse sets the terms within which any reported issue can be considered. And that discourse exists in a situation of reciprocal influence with the society in which that discourse is based. Thus, one finds that "cultural bias is inevitable; its scope and direction are not." (Glasgow University Media Group 1976:17)

An example which illustrates this point and undermines notions of "natural" media presentation is a study by Hallin and Mancini (1985). The basic difference identified between Italian and American television news formats is that Italian news is open, fragmented and lacking in unifying features while American news, though still essentially fragmented, exhibits unifying narrative and interpretive links which conceal this fragmentation and promote a sense of continuity.

Hallin and Mancini contend that by presenting a range of alternative presentations, Italian news constructs the audience in the role of a participant who pieces the diversity together, while the simplistic narration of American news constructs the audience in the role of a passive observer. These researchers suggest both approaches address a lack of consensus within their societies. The hypothesis is that the Italian approach freely shows this diversity of perspectives while the American one imposes an external order because each of these styles reflects the political and cultural make-up of its country (e.g. roles of political parties, leaders, national and international affairs) and the institutional make-up of its television system.

> "The media of the two countries, moreover, not only mirror the forms of political life of their respective societies, but *embody* them. Because they are embedded in such different political contexts, the media themselves play very different roles...Political structure thus comes to be embodied in certain ways of speaking about politics, conventions of communication that in their turn profoundly affect the possibilities for political discourse in the society." (p.207)

If these researchers are correct, that which is considered an objective portrayal of events in one country may not be recognised as such in others. It is unlikely that the United States / Italy opposition, nor even the fragmentation / unification dichotomy, are isolated examples of this phenomenon. I suggest that this symbiotic television-culture relationship is as widespread as television itself is, and that this relationship can be identified in a number of practices, from the relatively obvious, (e.g. straightforward editorialising or amount of time devoted to coverage) to the more

subtle (e.g. linguistic features of the commentary, as will be explored in the experiments to follow). There is clearly a need for analysis in this area. I contend that the widw reception of the media as transmitters of values and information makes them extremely potent conveyors of linguistic influence. The data which follow in chapters 3 and 4 are intended to clarify empirically the interdependent nature of culture, language and media forms.

C. REALITY AS A LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCT

12.0 INTRODUCTION

Two broad positions are held on the relationship of language to reality. Briefly speaking, one view claims that thought precedes language and that common features constitute the basis for all languages, while the other claims that language, thought and the context in which they occur synthesise and influence each other in patterns which vary across individual languages, i.e. language is one of the terms society makes available for apprehending reality. The former positions are major traditions in linguistic theory and are described in detail below, referred to by the terms "Universalist" and "Relativist".

The bases for these criticisms are found in the following section on the Relativist position, the position from which I am

arguing. My primary concern, however, is not to debate a controversy between the two positions as such. Rather, it is to detail the Relativist position, particularly the attributes which link language with society, thereby recommending it as the position on which to base this work.

13.0 CHOMSKYAN UNIVERSALITY

Noam Chomsky is perhaps the most respected and influential of the contemporary theorists to represent the Universalists in contesting the type of linguistic diversification proposed by a Relativistic theory of language. In fact, as Lyons (1981) remarks, the influence of Chomsky's theories has been so extensive that even arguments against those theories must take place using Chomsky's terms. The Chomskyan position is, however, not totally immune from some well-targeted criticism.

Chomsky, who invokes Rationalists such as Descartes and the Port Royal Grammarians as historical antecedents, may be seen as a proponent of Universalism inasmuch as he proposes a formal generative grammar which essentially holds that people possess both basic concepts and linguistic categories prior to learning their first language and that these are crucial to deductive reasoning during the process of language acquisition. Moore and Carling (1987:15) describe his position in the following way : during the process of language development,

> "...what each of us cognises is a particular grammar of a specific language. But this particular grammar is derived from, Chomsky would say explained by, its relation to a more abstract object, a universal grammar."

Rather, Chomsky sees abstract Universal grammar as biologically determined arbitrary characteristics which do not relate to the externally experienced world as such. "Ultimately the study of language is part of human biology" (Chomsky 1980:226) In other words, the same basic linguistic categories, principles and concepts exist across all human languages as part of the nature of the species, i.e. "an element of the human genotype." They are mechanisms which tacitly fashion general features of the deep structure. The deep structure is the "abstract underlying form which determines the meaning of a sentence". The linguistic environment in which the language is learned is merely incidental in this scheme of things, contributing to the parameters of the language only after the universal grammar is in operation. Even then, it is only in a sentence's surface structure, the arrangement or "actual organisation of the physical signal", that the unification of representations breaks down and differences occur. (Both quotes are from Chomsky in Allen and Van Buren 1977:2) Chomsky admits that wide variation takes place in the surface structure configurations but also states that such diversity has little bearing on his primary characterisation of the universality of deep structure. In fact, Chomsky suggests that the innately conceptualised deep structure common to all languages possesses a subject-verb-object order even though the grammatical rules of particular languages may designate the surface structure to take a

subject-object-verb (e.g. Japanese) or verb-subject-object (e.g. Arabic) order (Hasan 1988).

13.1 Challenges to Chomskyan Universality

Chomsky's claims have also generated a great deal of skepticism. Moore and Carling (1987) are representative of this skepticism, pointing out that Chomsky's model is deeply questionable in three basic areas:

a) how the theories are tested and confirmed : This issue addresses the potential for validation of Chomsky's theories. Moore and Carling note that Chomsky draws parallels between his own theories and theories in physics, but they suggest that this is a mistaken comparison. They point to the inadequacy of testing procedures for linguistic theories dealing with internal structures , as contrasted with well-developed, rigorous and objective testing procedures used on observable physical phenomena in the sciences.

b) what they are tested against : This issue questions the relationship of Chomsky's formally generated grammar to everyday utterances. The contention made against Chomsky is that this relationship is a rather tenuous one. (Chomsky might take their point yet still not see it as a problem, as he is aware of the gulf between idealised speech and actual manifestations, putting the differences down to insignificant variations on a strongly defined theme.)

c) precisely what the theories consist of : This issue is concerned with pinpointing the nature of the innate element which gives rise to the acquisition, production and understanding of language. Moore and Carling ask "In what sense can the formal grammar, articulated, modified and refined by the linguist, generating necessarily a formal language, be usefully said to shed explanatory light on an 'unknown'?" (Although they do not elaborate on this unknown, it is likely that Moore and Carling are referring to the structure of the human mind.) For many, Chomsky has not been able to supply a satisfactory answer.

14.0 PREFATORY REMARKS REGARDING CONTEMPORARY RELATIVISM

Relativism starts from somewhat different premises. First of all, it emphasises the differences between languages, rather than their similarities. It then declares that such differences may produce cognitive processes of qualitatively different kinds. It finally concludes that users of different languages may, in consequence, apprehend the world in rather different ways.

The operation of this Relativist strain of thought in 20th century theory is greatly evident in the work of a number of linguists, the most influential of whom is Benjamin Lee Whorf. I shall here detail the ideas of Whorf (including supporting points made by like-minded scholars), followed by a brief historical acknowledgement of two theorists, de Saussure and von Humboldt, from whom crucial Relativist ideas may be recovered.

15.0 THE BASICS OF WHORF AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR MY WORK

Firstly, Whorf, who sees language as shaping as well as expressing ideas, straightforwardly refutes Chomsky's position that common Universal structures predate and exist independently of linguistic communication. Whorf sees linguistic patterns as influencing a person's perception and thought. The diversity of linguistic patterns throughout the world signals a corresponding diversity of perception, thought and consequently viewpoints.

> "Users of markedly different grammars are pointed toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world." (Whorf 1956:221)

(Note: The word "must" in Whorf's statement appears to describe a more Deterministic view than his work otherwise suggests. This thesis subscribes to the above stance but would replace the word "must" by the more Relativistic "may".)

According to Whorf, one's conception of the world co-varies with filtering devices which are the structural characteristics of one's language. In acting as a mechanism for forming and a medium for articulating our conceptions, language is not just an itemised symbolic inventory of what immediately exists. Language may reinforce, undercut, or in some other way modify our perceptions of objects, crafting this malleable thing called *reality* in such a way that certain things are noticed, felt, spoken of, ignored, combined, separated etc. in greater frequencies than others.

The workings of the linguistic system in this differentiation of experience are extremely complex and pervasive. The finished product of a clause or sentence can be compared to an elaborate linguistic quilt which combines several interactive levels : phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic etc.

It is crucial, however, to recognise that no matter what the articulation *appears* to reveal about the speaker's epistemological assumptions, conceptions and reasoning, the meaning of the utterance should be located in terms of *effect* on the receiver, which is more accessible than *intentionality* of the producer. Therefore it is observable Ss *response* as a measure of the impact of experimental stimuli which is the focus of the empirical section to be found later in this work.

16.0 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CONCEPT FORMATION

Weisgerber (in Miller 1968:50-51) speaks of language-induced "categorical behaviour", wherein one sees everything from material things to abstract conceptions as "representatives of conceptually coherent complexes", rather than as individually experienced phenomena or naturally occurring groupings :

> "the concept 'red' is acquired not so much through the person's recognizing something common in the differently shaded colour experiences as it is through the fact that the common linguistic symbol, under the pressure of the speech community, welds the separate 'red' impressions into a single, closed union of endeavor."

He goes on to assert :

> "Language furnishes us not only with names and concepts...but also with the forms in which we arrange these in the flux of thought. Even though the separate contents of thought are individual, there are only relatively few syntactical schemata in which they can unfold...these sentence-schemata are not simply forms which serve man in the expression of his thoughts...these forms are at the same time the means which make possible and shape the unfolding of thought.

17.0 THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF IDEAL TRANSLATION

One concept which Whorf and other Relativists deal with at length is the (im)possibility of perfect translation. When the immediate force or impact on the listener of the single term/name originally used is significantly greater than that of the string of words/description used to express the desired meaning in another language, the meaning is often idiomatically termed "lost in the translation." (e.g. Lindesmith and Strauss (1968) report that the nearest translation for "compromise" in some languages is the potentially misleading "surrender".) With languages which share few or no foundations, one may find that certain idiosyncratic concepts are simply incommeasurable or, in Whorf's terminology, cannot be "calibrated" with those found in Indo-European languages. In other words, even if one adopts a policy of loan translation*, for troublesome concepts, these concepts cannot be "said". They cannot

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* = Loan translation is defined as "adoption by one language of a phrase or compound word whose components are literal translations of the components in a corresponding phrase or compound in a foreign language."

be "said", no matter how many words one has at one's disposal, because they cannot be fully "meant."

Whorf (1956), who derives much of his data from studies of Amerindian tribes, observes such non-translatable concepts (with English) in the Hopi language. As do all of the Amerindian languages Whorf studied, Hopi operates with a different set of epistemological assumptions in the semantic organisation of experience than English does, (e.g. the concepts of discrete chronological time and tenses which are found in English are not found in Hopi and therefore cannot be translated with any great degree of accuracy. If one conceives of time as a dynamic flow, as the Hopi Indians do, then the static point of '2 p.m.' is a distinctly alien and possibly incomprehensible reference.)

Kluckhohn and Leighton (1974) reach similar conclusions in a study of the Navaho language. These researchers say that while most things can be translated between English and Navaho, this can often be done only by a long, paraphrased translation which is strained and artificial in character. With such circumlocutory effort involved in the translation, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the two versions are not synonymous. Instead, the translation is really a loose approximation of the original semantic encoding of the nature of events. This approximation uses available resources to take in the key points but is unable to capture the atmosphere of the original because the very different linguistic characteristics preclude a comprehensive translation. In these Indian languages one word can encompass a range of meanings which would require several

English words and sometimes sentences, and vice-versa. In many Amerindian languages the specificity of the verbs used (involving, for example, spatial relationship to the speaker) requires that extra information be provided if an English description is translated.

Kluckhohn and Leighton (1974) state that in order to be able to clearly express oneself in a Navaho fashion, one needs to learn to think like a Navaho. Such thought, which under typical circumstances is quite unlike thinking in English, has far more sharply defined categories than English does. When considering such categorisation, it is helpful to bear in mind Montgomery's (1986:229) observation of how syntactical forms of language influence speakers / listeners :

> "the really fundamental differences between languages operate at more than the level of vocabulary: they operate within the structural patterns of the language itself."

The minute distinctions made in the detailed grammar of the Navaho cause nearly everything to be described with exactitude and in concrete terms, in contrast to the frequent use of abstractions and idioms in English. I would argue that when such an instance of vastly different phrasings of apperceptions occurs, it is neither an anomaly nor an indication of superior advancement in either language, but rather a significant indication of different culturally established priorities. These priorities are based on different societal needs, to which language and thought have responded. Although these researchers talk about how a given language as a whole organises perceptions and experiences, their

findings help to ground the work which will follow in this thesis, concerning the influence of particular syntactical structures.

18.0 VON HUMBOLDT

Such Relativist thoughts as those discussed above may not seem particularly radical today, but it is interesting to learn something of how they have developed into their present form. One thinker who can readily be seen as a forerunner of Whorf is Humboldt. During a time of outstandingly influential artistic accomplishments in Germany, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) was perhaps the best known and esteemed advocate of the Relativist position. Humboldt published ideas regarding the interaction of *Sprache* (language) and *Geist* (spirit) which have made him a forerunner of much thought in the field (particularly for descriptive linguistics and the Saussurean structuralist tradition.) Steiner (1975:81) notes that Humboldt saw language as the "centre of man" and the "framework of *a priori* cognition", with his work as an attempt to show "an analytic correlation of language and human experience" in terms of history and culture. Steiner (1975:81) also points out a double meaning of Humboldt's statement, *"Die Sprache ist das bildende Organ des Gedankens."* (The adjective bildend(e) could refer to either *Bild*/image or *Bildung*/culture.) to voice the Humboldtian perspective on the potential of language(s).,"It is this median quality, this material and spiritual simultaneity, that makes language the defining pivot of man and the determinant of his place in reality." It is important to note, however, that in addition to Steiner's two

interpretations of *bildend*, there is a third possibility : the verb *bilden* can be translated as to create, form or shape. This interpretation correlates well with the Humboldtian ideas that it is often language which is in control of man rather than the reverse and that the "inner forms" of different languages promote different intensities of life experience in their speakers.

> "Every single language has thus its own peculiar framework of established distinctions, its shapes and forms of thought, into which, for the human being who learns that language as his 'mother tongue,' is cast the content and product of his mind, his store of impressions, however acquired, his experience and knowledge of the world." (Humboldt as quoted in Miller 1968:36)

Many of these views concerned with the fitting of thought to expression seem to indicate an assertion of linguistic Determinism rather than Relativism, but I suggest that an interpretation along the lines of the more moderate Relativism is the most helpful one to adopt, as the evidence provided by systematically gathered data more frequently establishes correlations than causal relations in such contentious realms.

18.1 The Sentence as the Key Location of Linguistic Influence

One notion of Humboldt's which is particularly important for this study of the influence of syntactic structures is that the site at which the essence of the language - thought relationship is best revealed is not in vocabulary but rather, in the grammatical form or structure of the sentence. Much literature in the field of

linguistic relativism concentrates on vocabulary rather than grammar, but I suggest that this practice neglects precisely what is most important. As Humboldt declares,

> "It (synthesis : the discovery and 'articulation' of concepts through linguistic components) is most clearly recognised in sentence formation, then in words formed by inflection and affixes, and finally in every nexus of concept and sound." (as quoted in Miller 1968:31)

19.0 DE SAUSSURE

The other significant figure in the Relativist linguistic tradition upon which Whorf has made such a great impression is Ferdinand de Saussure. His ideas concerning the dependence of thought on language provide an appropriate foil to Chomskyan ideas regarding the pre-eminence of thought as discussed in the above section on Universalism. Saussure believes that unless it is expressed in words, thought cannot take shape; ideas remain nebulous and indistinct.

> "The characteristic role of language with respect to thought is not to create a material phonic means for expressing ideas but to serve as a link between thought and sound, under conditions that of necessity bring about the reciprocal delimitation of units. Thought, chaotic by nature, has to become ordered in the process of its decomposition. Neither are thoughts given material form nor are sounds transformed into mental entities; the somewhat mysterious fact is rather that 'thought-sound' implies division, and that language works out its units while taking shape between two shapeless masses." (de Saussure 1959:112)

Thus, Saussure details the interdependence which exists between language and thought, treading a path which ~~does~~ allows for neither

universal grammar nor linguistic determinism. Instead, language becomes a code or sign. This will be an important point to keep in mind when we later discuss the influence of linguistic descriptions on occurrences which are reported in news stories

20.0 RELATIVISM AND REALITY

The basic line of argument is this :

(1) Our experience of reality depends upon the concepts and categories that language makes available to us.

(2) The form and shape of a language (its patterns of linguistic organisation) depend upon the social process (Language is shaped and re-shaped by the language community.)

(3) Therefore, our experience of reality is socially constructed.

To elaborate, language has a symbiotic and a dialectical relationship with the phenomena to which it refers, but the cultural relevance is not confined to so small a segment of language as the word. As Apel (1966:72) states, "...der Satz erst in zusammenhang einer größeren Einheit von Sprache und Lebenspraxis...seinen Sinn erhält." (A sentence initially derives its meaning in the context of a wider meaning which is composed of language and of the practice of living.--my translation) This is the level at which my investigation is aimed. One could also apply those sentiments at the level of discourse. One never formulates an utterance or piece of text in autonomy.

Thus, on one level, language is a convention with semiotic properties which prove servicable for functions determined by the society which uses the language. Yet at the same time language itself, while expressing content under whatever circumstances apply, actively constitutes and produces all important associative relations, contexts and meanings of the utterance and discourse.

Hence, language not only influences appraisals of elements of reality (the realm of ideology) but also establishes and defines those elements initially (the realm of meaning), thereby instituting conceptual worlds which facilitate some possible explanations and preclude others. Language is necessary for organising experience. Lippmann's (1965) observation that 'we define before we see' succinctly takes note of the fact that content is not pre-established but, rather, created through the directing (not determining) linguistic forces of the statement. These forces, which Whorf (1952:4) compares to a law of nature, lie "outside the critical consciousness and control of the speaker."

21.0 THE PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE OF THE PASSIVE VOICE FOR NEWS

From linguistic relativity we draw the notion of language as crucially implicated in the construction of reality. Understanding the various ways in which linguistic effects originate and are manifested within a society establishes a grounding for understanding linguistic effects on a larger scale. My decision to examine the television news story commentary is prompted by Fowler's

(1977) description of the language of narratives as processing events while reporting them. Such an examination is a necessary step toward making the processing which takes place in television news commentaries more readily apparent, for,

> "Just as language is embedded in the 'forms of life' in which we use it, constituted by and helping to constitute those forms, the media are an integral part of political and social life." (Hallin and Mancini 1985:205)

The following chapter will be primarily concerned with the passive voice. The passive voice is an interesting discursive device to study in the context of news reports because of its potential to emphasise, and direct viewer attention to, particular aspects of what is being said. It is this allocation of emphasis which makes it possible for the grammatical voice used to influence viewer understanding. While the importance of this potential will be discussed at greater length and in a more general fashion in the next chapter, one news story example, offered by Trew (1978), elucidates this interweaving of syntactic and semantic properties, to show why the issue requires examination.

The medium from which Trew draws his material is the newspaper rather than the television newscast. However, the points which he wishes to draw attention to are well-demonstrated and by no means confined to the printed page since, as Adoni, Cohen and Mane (1985:192) point out

> "television news presents events as being 'caused' by the immediately preceeding acts of groups of individuals, thereby creating the impression that dissent is confined to small and marginal groups in society."

Consider the following examples drawn from *The Guardian* (a) and *The Times* (b) and (c) newspapers.

a) **POLICE SHOOT 11 DEAD IN SALISBURY RIOT**

Riot police shot and killed 11 African demonstrators and wounded 15 others...

b) **RIOTING BLACKS SHOT DEAD BY POLICE AS ANC LEADERS MEET**

Eleven Africans were shot dead and 15 wounded...

c) **SPLIT THREATENS ANC AFTER SALISBURY'S RIOTS**

After Sunday's riots in which 13 Africans were killed and 28 injured...

Note : (a) and (b) appeared on the same day--2/6/75. (c) is a next-day follow-up report.

Example (a) makes "police"/"riot police" the object of conceptual focus by positioning those words as grammatical subject. Example (b) does likewise for "rioting blacks"/"eleven Africans", Example (c), in using a prepositional phrase to detail what had happened the previous day, entirely omits the role of the police, eliminating reference to human agency, before going on to discuss the ANC in the main clause. (b) provides all the information supplied by (a), with only a shift in emphasis which implies a more central, vital role in the action for the black Africans and a more distanced one for the police, but (c) does something which goes well

beyond the notion of shifting emphasis and which cannot be attributed to the mere fact that the story in question is a follow-up. If a reader had not been introduced to the story when it first broke, it would appear that he/she would be unable to recover the deleted agent from example (c). That is, it is not evident "who" did "what" and "how" the action was initiated/carried out, although the question "to whom?" is answered by the 13 and 28 Africans who were killed and injured, respectively. Thus, this example displaces the causal mechanism in what is very much a cause (police action of shooting) and effect (dead and injured Africans) situation. The wording of (c) raises the possibility that the riot itself, as the only other noun visible, could be interpreted as a cause of death. This would clearly be misleading. To believe that the dead or injured are to blame for their own wounds is to exonerate those who actually did inflict the damage and deny that the tension existed between two opposing factions. The information that the police were the actual agents of death is, in fact, recoverable, but the onus is on the consumer of the information to make the necessary connections, initially by observing the absence of essential information and then by logically reasoning that someone/something specific within the riot must have been responsible for the killings and by reading the details of the story to see if the agent is mentioned in a less prominent story position somewhere down the page.

The experiments to follow in chapters 3 and 4 adopt similar concerns regarding emphasis. However, whereas Trew's news story examples provide no ongoing visual counterpart to the headlines and

body of the text, the upcoming experiments provide confusing visuals as a counterpart to the verbal narration. Thus, in both studies, the reader/viewer needs to become closely involved with information conveyed through language in order to be able to form a clear understanding of the material.

My examination of Trew's study is not designed to make distinctions between the particular newspapers mentioned or any other individual organisations because the structures detailed are an integral part of the established, institutional system of news reporting in the mass media. For instance, Blakar (1979:151) makes similar points by comparing the differing causal relationships in the sentences :

(1) *The police took in the demonstrators.* and
(2) *The demonstrators were taken in by the police.*
and suggesting that the gist of each could be abstracted to :
(1) *Police took action.*
implying that the police, the topic of the sentence, behaved in an autonomously active fashion and
(2) *The police had to take action.*
implying that the police had no choice but to act in response to demonstrators.

These sentences are attributed to no particular sources and may well have originated with Blakar, but one can easily draw parallels which would suggest that they are representative of a broad range of sources. In situations such as these, the facts are not distorted or

misrepresented in terms of objective truth value, but the listener perspective is shifted to such an extent that the actual agent of the action may be misrecognised. (See the discussion in the next chapter on whether or not active and passive voices are synonymous.) That misrecognition is sustained with subsequent reporting, as Trew's example (c) sustains the impressions established in (b).

Turner (1962:186) states that in science, from the early 19th century onwards, the passive voice is used especially frequently in processes wherein the machine or apparatus used is prominent "either because it is large or partly automatic." I suggest that in news reports which focus on conflict between participants (e.g. Trew's and Blakar's demonstrators and police), when the actions of one participant represent an institution or dominant established order (in this case, the legal system), those actions are frequently described in the passive voice for similar reasons. This is to say that the actions of the participant who acts on behalf of a large, established body are carried out in partly automatic fashion insofar as the behaviour is the result of institutional training. Another parallel is Turner's description of scientists as feeling themselves to be units in a team, consisting of themselves and their instruments. This team focuses its concern upon its appointed specialised tasks in a realm where social responsibility does not intrude. So too, the team of institutional representatives knows and concentrates upon its job of preserving the prevailing order which instigated the situational relationships to begin with. In this framework, individual agency is consequently de-emphasised, as

anyone else in the role (e.g. of policeman) would be expected to perform the same function.

Thus we can see that the issue of grammatical voice is of more than mere academic concern. The next chapter will provide a background of theories concerning the passive voice, which help to put the contentions of work such as Trew's into better perspective.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PASSIVE VOICE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Within the general domain of the linguistic construction of reality there are particular mechanisms which fairly readily reveal the position of the speaker/writer, (e.g. certain lexical choices which inspire strong associations with other things or strong emotions in the receiver.) However, these more obvious elements will be left aside in order to concentrate on an area which operates less obviously but not, I contend, with less effect.

Operating under the assumption that "some syntactic facts require semantic and pragmatic explanations" (Fillmore 1981:144), this chapter addresses the issues of voice and thematisation, with particular reference to the effects of the passive construction. Although some accounts claim that the passive voice is a purely formal operation, without semantic significance, the passive voice is here used to discuss one possible kind of link between syntax and meaning.

As Svartvik (1966) notes, there exists no uniform definition of the passive. In the absence of such a definition, and for the purpose of this study, I propose to define the passive voice as follows: 1) the logical object or affected entity is placed in the subject position, while 2) the logical subject or agentive entity is placed in the object position, as a prepositionally linked noun occurring later in the sentence, i.e. after the verb. The verb is a combination of an auxilliary and a past participle. When the object

position noun is deleted, the sentence is referred to as a truncated passive.

Active : The bee stung the gardener.

Passive: The gardener was stung by the bee.

Truncated passive: The gardener was stung.

2.0 SURVEY OF POSITIONS REGARDING SYNONYMY IN ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE STRUCTURES

This section aims to review and summarise the existing positions on whether the active and passive voices are synonymous; that is, whether they mean the same thing. It also aims to suggest that discussion in this area needs to take into account more subtle distinctions between the voices than have always been appreciated in the past. To this end, I will now spotlight two criteria used to evaluate synonymy between contrasting structures.

2.1 Two Criteria for Evaluating Synonymy

There has been a marked tendency for the work of researchers concerned with the active and passive voices to be seen as operating either in alignment with or in opposition to the statement: There is no difference between the meaning of an active expression and its related passive expression. Such a straightforward dichotomy is used by Johnson-Laird (1968:69), "Does the passive mean the same as

maintaining that the passive is meaningless apart from the fact that "The object of the active verb is the subject of the passive while the subject of the active is the agent of the passive," and further qualifying this stance by stating, "There is no true difference in the truth conditions--that if the active is true, so is the passive."

2.2.2 *Sense* :

The views of these researchers appear to have little in common with those of Poutsma (1926:102) who, in disputing the identicality of the active and passive voices, refers to "a distinct difference in the prominence assigned by the speaker to the two participants in the action and the degree of passiveness in which the object of the activity is represented.", Allen (1952), who deems it harmful to teach the passive voice as a mere alternative expression of the active, and Turner (1962), who sees the difference in emphasis characterising the two voices as being as significant as the difference in emphasis due to varied intonation. Some researchers are even more outspoken. Davison (1980:42) for instance, calls sentences which differ according to criterion 2 "a major embarassment to the position that active and passive sentences are synonymous." She claims that passive sentences convey meanings which are different from those produced by their active counterparts because they "have different conditions for use in discourse or are associated with extra assumptions on the part of the speaker."

If, however, Quirk and the others of that persuasion are basing their assertions on criteria 1 (purely logical relations) and Poutsma and those who share his views are utilizing criteria 2 (which element of the sentence is topicalised), then Palmer's "no true difference" and Poutsma's "a distinct difference" do not contradict each other, but rather, illuminate different facets of the change of voice. It is basically a matter of the two voices sharing the same reference but having different senses. The complexity of this area of research becomes yet more evident when one compares the Johnson-Laird statement quoted above in section 2.1 to an antithetical claim advanced by Azevedo (1973:29)."other authors...take a stand for the semantic equivalence of actives and passives (Katz, Postal, Edwin, Chomsky)."

To dispel the notion of synonymy between active and passive sentences, Ziff (1966:227) offers the examples:

(1) **Everyone is frightened by his house.** and

(2) **His house frightens everyone.**

He states that whereas the first sentence has ambiguous implications (either one particular house frightens all people or each person is frightened by his own house), the second sentence is not, (all people are frightened by a house belonging to a particular person referred to as "him"). Thus paraphrases may have a particular pragmatic basis.

3.0 OTHER PERSPECTIVES : BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY

A compelling argument which contains threads of both the Quirk et al. and Poutsma et al. stances yet embraces neither in its entirety has been developed by McKerrow (1922:164), whose contentions chronologically preceded those of the other theorists. His claim is that although the passive is an unnecessary grammatical form, the reason is not that it is synonymous with the active construction, but that it is concerned more with the end (resultive) state of a proposition in an attributive clause than the process which actively operated to produce that state.

> "If in ordinary conversation we use the phrase 'the boy was kicked by a horse' we are not thinking, as a rule, of the action of kicking, but of the hurt done to the boy. In fact, consideration will show that the use of the 'passive' construction in ordinary speech is almost restricted to occasions when what really concerns us is the condition of something or other due to something else, and not the action itself. It seems, therefore, that this something which is the grammatical subject is the logical subject also, and the construction therefore is logically an active one. If we agree with this, such a sentence as "The boy was kicked by a horse." can be regarded as a phrase of the general type as "The boy was ill" and the need for a passive voice vanishes."

Perhaps the most fully encompassing approach is the tripartite formulation offered by Hagege (1979) to examine the organization of syntax as a mechanism to produce specifically desired interpretations. This involves three frequently but not invariably parallel viewpoints which he calls:

A) Morphosyntactic: how relationships between terms in an utterance are represented (e.g. subject)

B) Semantico-referential: how the outside world is expressed within the linguistic message (e.g. agent)

C) Information-hierarchical: how characteristics of an utterance express the strategy of a speaker for directing the attention of a listener (e.g. topic or theme)

Such a careful division is helpful because not only is there a grammatical-psychological subject distinction between A) and B)/C), but there is also a further subdivsion of that psychological subject into the spheres of B) and C).

To exemplify an instance in which the three viewpoints did not represent parallel versions of a single understanding, Hagege used the sentences:

1) ***Peter ate the meat.*** and

2) ***The meat was eaten by Peter.***

He used the active-passive distinction to show that while "Peter" and "the meat" may not refer to the same thing semantically, they are in fact, morphologically equivalent as subjects.

It is, however, Hagege's third point, regarding speaker strategy for directing listener attention which is most germane to the current argument.

> "It is not irrelevant whether the speaker chooses to say 'Peter ate the meat.' or 'The meat was eaten by Peter.' because in this kind of structure the first noun phrase is a topic, i.e. that about which the utterance says something...This is one of the many

> reasons why in the history of a formerly fashionable current of linguistic thought the famous notion of the 'passive transformation' has itself undergone many a transformation...people became aware that important semantic problems were involved in this seemingly innocent operation." (p.71)

4.0 EVALUATION OF POSITIONS

Therefore to encapsulate the position of the present argument, the active and passive voices share the same objective value if one logically analyzes relations of participants within a sentence. The perspective or conception of relations engendered by the speaker (communicative intent) and transmitted to the listener within an utterance, however, is what makes the passive construction something other than a simple stylistic subcategory of the active.

The active and passive representations of a proposition do not *mean* the same thing. If the passive voice approximates any other grammatical form, it is more likely an adjectival state of being, as McKerrow suggests. I consequently disregard criterion 1 as an independently sufficient standard by which to assess semantic equivalence and am in complete agreement with Chafe's (1970:87-8) assertion that "The only valid criterion for sameness of meaning must be whether one surface structure conveys exactly the same message, thoughts, concepts or ideas as another." Both the active voice and its passive counterpart may refer to the same "reality" and thus have the same truth value, but their senses may be somewhat different. It is the evaluating standard of the sense delivered by

the grammatical voice, a meeting point of syntactic and semantic functions, which suggests that the passive is something more than a mere derivation of the active voice, meant to be understood by neatly diagrammed changes, or what Turner (1962:181) dubs "grammatical calculus." This standard, which takes into consideration the reception of the information, makes the question of voice and its comprehension within a discourse such as news commentary an issue which requires further attention.

5.0 USES OF THE PASSIVE

Given that there are strong grounds for believing there to be some difference in sense between the active and the passive, I will now explore in more detail some particular uses of the passive.

5.1 Jespersen's Model : Outline

Drawing upon Jespersen (1933), it is possible to define the uses of the passive in the following ways. It may be used :

a) to connect two sentences together;

e.g. ***John woke up and was called to breakfast by his mother.***

b) where the logical subject is not known or is not easily stated

e.g. ***He was killed while on holiday.***

c) where the logical subject is self-evident;

e.g. ***She was elected president of the club.***

d) where the logical subject is not mentioned in deference to tact or delicacy;

e.g. ***The secret was revealed.***

e) where the logical object attracts greater attention than the logical subject:

e.g. ***The killer was sentenced by the court.***

Let us examine each of these options in turn :

5.2 Jespersen's Model : Examination

a) ***John woke up and was called to breakfast by his mother.*** is a model which uses the passive, either full (as stated) or truncated (without "by his mother") as a stylistic mechanism in order to facilitate a link with the first half to make the text flow. (cp. ***The woman was charged with illegal immigration and fraud in connection with channeling funds to the IRA but was released from custody by an Irish court ...*** --Experiment One, Commentary One) The connecting function is similar to the straightforward compound sentence. This may be what Sledd (1959) means when he speaks, in rather general terms, of choosing the passive voice for the purpose of "effective prose". The interesting point this model shares with many other passives is the option to truncate without losing grammatical sense.

b) ***He was killed while on holiday.*** is a truncated passive often used when sentential events are spatially or temporally distant and specific agency is consequently difficult to identify. Palmer (1965:65) uses similar examples to illustrate "the only one obvious and clear reason to use the passive."

c) *She was elected president of the club.* is also a truncated passive. This model takes as its particular attribute an assumption that the sentence sufficiently contextualizes the situation for the deletion of the agent not to result in a loss of semantically essential information. (cp. ***Requests for a further detention order were turned down...*** --Experiment Two, Commentaries Two and Three) In speaking of this type of implicit meaning, Berry (1975 :160) states, "there is no need to be explicit because it is obvious from the situation or from the surrounding text what we are talking about." For this type of passive to operate effectively the speaker must accurately assess the degree of meaningfulness the listener can derive from the utterance *sans* agent. A possibility offered by Poutsma (1926) and Evans and Evans (1957) is that it does not matter whether the agent is clearly identified because that agent is thought to be peripheral or unimportant. This in turn raises the question of how self-evidence or importance is to be assumed. Examples of these first three categories can be found throughout this thesis and most other academic work.

d) *The secret was revealed.* is again a truncated passive. The particular attribute of this type of vagueness is that its motivation need not be limited by Jespersenian notions of "tact" and "delicacy", but rather has the potential to be used for obfuscating agency for a variety of reasons. Like Zandvoort (1969:53) who says the passive is used especially in sentences when it is "undesirable to mention the agent", Evans and Evans (1957) note that the passive often occurs to conceal the name of the agent, and Poutsma (1926:101) mentions the passive as a way to avoid "the possibility

of compromising" someone. (The Trew news story discussion in the previous chapter provides specific examples.) All of these purposes are plausible if one accepts Comrie's (1977) suggestion that the passive voice "demotes" the standing of the logical subject to show that the predicate is concerned with the newly positioned grammatical subject.

e) ***The killer was sentenced by the court.*** is a passive which, like a), may be used either in a complete or truncated passive. Like d) this use suggests a conscious, volitional process. The use of this type may mean 1) that the speaker finds the logical object more interesting than the logical subject, 2) that the speaker wishes the listener to focus on the logical object or 3) both. (cp. ***After the car had been abandoned...*** --Experiment Two, Commentaries Two and Three) As Ohmann (1968:194) states, the passive "throws emphasis on the direct object and reduces emphasis on the subject" of the related active. Davison (1980) reinforces this view by arguing that, in many cases, meaning is derived primarily from what is designated as the topic by being placed in subject position.

Yet another function of the passive voice is to provide technical clarification regarding the types of agency found in scientific operations. Turner (1962:191) states that action takes place either as a result of human causality (active voice), or in accordance with a law of nature (passive voice). "The passive provides an alternative construction without the implication of animism or arbitrary causality."

An important word to remember regarding any of the uses described above is "why". As Stanley (1975:31) notes :

> "we're entitled to ask why the agent is unknown, why the agent cannot be stated or why the agent is irrelevant...for those of us who must live with the consequences of someone else's exercise of power, knowing the deleted agents can be important in assigning responsibility for actions."

6.0 ASSIGNMENT OF EMPHASIS :

SYNTACTIC POSITION AND SEMANTIC PROMINENCE

The view which holds that the noun occurring first is the first to catch attention, and therefore emphasized (e.g. Jespersen (1933), Sweet (1950), Enkvist (1964)), faces a competing view, however. This opposing view has been advanced by theorists (e.g. Mihailovic' (1963) and Poutsma (1926)), who contend that a passive construction with the logical subject placed expressly at the end of the sentence actually stresses the logical subject rather than the logical object. Although justifications are not always provided on either side of the debate, this alternative stance appears to be predicated on an issue known as the given-new distinction, (See, for example. Clark and Clark (1977) for a fuller discussion), which theorizes that the first information in a sentence is taken as given or known information which does not require verification or much attention, while later information is regarded as new and requiring assesment through a more careful evaluation of the proposition. Still another vantage point is that of Hill (1963) and Berry (1975) who say that

both first and last position can provide the emphasis to make a noun prominent. (See Hill 1963:72-73 for examples involving stress and noun phrase clefting.) In this case one must take into consideration the possibility that contextual factors may be applicable as guidelines and that the emphasis-position relationship is specific to individual utterances.

7.0 INCIDENCE OF THE PASSIVE VOICE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Svartvik (1966:152) reveals that, overall, active constructions occur seven times as often as passive constructions in English *. When the passive construction does occur, Evans and Evans (1957) say that it is generally used by those who are educated rather than uneducated. Although, according to these researchers, the passive occurs much less frequently than the active and is usually produced within a specific section of the community, Poutsma (1926) notes that the passive construction is used more often in English than in any of the cognate languages. Why this should be so, however, has not yet been determined.

The most frequent manifestation of the passive voice is the truncated form, which omits the agent. Jespersen (1933) estimates

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* = Svartvik interestingly also observes that passives average, per thousand words, 8 for fiction, 9 for everyday speech, 13 for the humanities and 23 for science . The high average for science relates to its need to have tightly specified conditions and operate independently of subjective observers. The role of the experimenter is obscured by the passive. (See also Turner's discussion of the passive in science, at the end of Chapter 1)

that over 70% of passives in written English are in this shortened form, while Quirk (1972) and Svartvik (1966) put the figure for all English passives without agents at 80%. Other estimates are within the same region or slightly higher. The exact percentage is less important than the fact that several commentators point to this type of passive as comprising the overwhelming majority of instances of the passive voice in the English language. This information helps to contextualise the debate surrounding emphasis accorded by sentence position. In providing a reason for the end focus phenomenon which others have asserted without supplying a causal mechanism, Fillmore (1968) states that the preposition "by" marks its object as the focal point. If less than 30% of all passives include the agentive phrase, it follows that the strategy of emphasizing the agent by positioning it at the end of a sentence is a relatively rarely used device. Moreover, if the end position of a sentence is the point of greatest emphasis, an agentless passive construction would emphasise the process or verb, as Berry (1975) suggests. This has not been proposed by those who say prominence lies with the "new" information at the end of the sentence, but is a logical conclusion of their argument.

8.0 THE GRAMMATICAL LINK TO THE SOCIAL : THE 'SECRET AGENT AFFAIR

Fowler (1972:17) states that syntactical structure has the ability "to guide the reader into a particular cognitive orientation toward sentence content." In regard to truncated passives, he says

(1980:11) that "agent deletion permits a discreet silence about the performer of the action," (1980:11) and that "The impression would be given of a central participant 'to whom things happened'--as opposed to 'who had things done to him'." (1972:17) One would expect this type of impression to be particularly prominent in situations in which the information was presented rapidly and the receiver had little or no opportunity to contemplate the complexity of the information offered. Such a situation is frequently the case in television newscasts which do not provide the viewer with the time to "read" the information analytically, as one might do with information presented in a newspaper. Following Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew (1979:2), this section seeks to go some way toward "the unveiling of linguistic practices which are instruments of social inequality and the concealment of truth."

Ohmann (1959:405) argues that a syntactic form which is frequently employed should be utilised as a starting point for an investigation into the habit of meaning which lies behind an utterance. Although the active voice structure still occurs more frequently than the passive voice structure in broadcast news, the passive voice has become a routine syntactic form in newscasts. This structure appears to be used for certain functions more than others. In conducting a sampling of BBC, ITV and Channel Four news programmes, from January and October 1988, I came to the conclusion that the primary use of the passive voice was to avoid the difficulty of collective agents. For example, it would be typical of news phraseology to say "A conservative government was elected." rather

than "The British people elected a conservative government." (This example fits Jespersen's "C" category, above.) One notable characteristic of such phraseology is that it deletes the agent rather than simply displacing it from the beginning to the end of the sentence. Indeed, my informal sample count shows that for every passive sentence in which the agent is identified, there are eight such sentences which are truncated, i.e. ending immediately after the verb. To strongly link syntactic structures with meaning is not to suggest that there is a one-to-one form to meaning correlation. Rather, the relationship operates such that a given syntactic form helps to define the range of possible meanings for content which is expressed through that particular form. Coetzee (1980:200) too suggests that habitually used syntactic patterns can act as "clues to the logical or epistemological matrices" which purposefully motivate the discourse in question. Since the passive voice is one feature which is regularly used in reporting the news, it would follow from Coetzee's postulate that stories which contain a large number of passives are, to some extent, interpretable in the light of how those passives operate in the story, i.e. that preference for the habitual usage of such a specific structure within a text sets up a certain manner of understanding and experiencing events. (See Trew examples in Chapter One.)

Although the format of messages may have a substantial bearing on their nature and consequences (Paisley 1969), communication studies often overlook intention when examining data (Williams 1980). This section takes into account the roles of speaker motivation and language format in activating impressions. This is because an

essential premise of this thesis is that an examination of sentence organization within a discourse can expose the workings of that discourse, just as the examination of discourses can expose the workings of specific contexts and the society in which they are produced.

8.1 Personal Motivations Behind the Use of the Passive

As stated earlier, although aspects of the passive voice are analysed here, this thesis, nonetheless, uses the passive voice itself convey the points made. One immediate means, then, of addressing the issue of motivation behind the usage of the passive, in both full and truncated form, is to state my own reasons for making the passive such a prominent structure.

The first is tradition. The language use taught in research skills classes generally seeks to conform to a time-honoured standard of using impersonal, passive constructions for writing up research work, such as theses and dissertations. This traditional influence is, of course, not confined to academia, but rather, may be found in many spheres, including the focus area of television news. Ohmann (1968) captures the logic behind this use of the passive by saying that it "answers well to a preference for objectivity and distance."

Another motivation for my frequent use of passives is expediency. Certain sentences lend themselves well to passive constructions for the reasons outlined by Jespersen (see sections 5.0

and 5.1). And finally, yet another reason which is probably admitted far less often by me or anyone else who uses it, is the passive's function as a "technique for avoiding personal responsibility for one's statements," (Gibson 1966:123), "an act of self-protection from immediate responsibility" (Stanley 1975:30) This can often be disguised by professing a desire for the goals of objectivity and distance which are listed above and which are frequently invoked by journalists to explain their style.

8.2 A "Novel" Use of the Passive

These, I believe, are the more widespread and obvious motivations which make up a large percentage of the total occurrences of the passive voice in English, both with and without the agentive "by"-phrase. However, some theorists have suggested motivations which are neither quite so straightforward nor, one would surmise, so common. Ohmann's (1968) analysis of Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire suggests that at one level Gibbon's use of the passive voice imbues the historical account with an air of "knowing, imperturbable rationality." At another level, however, this passivization so de-emphasizes the role of Christians as a causal mechanism in connection with implausible, some would say miraculous, events that the reader's suspicion becomes aroused. Thus, Ohmann contends that rather than openly cast doubt upon the assertions made by the Christians, Gibbon uses a syntactic mechanism to query their credibility. (See Coetzee's (1980) discussion of this.)

This argument rather contradicts most of the work which has been done on the use of the passive voice as an instrument of semantic persuasion (such as Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew 1979). The more obvious line which critical linguistics might take on the Gibbon material would be that the use of the passive voice supports the claims of the Christians, as the missing agent in a sentence reporting the occurrence of a "miracle" could, presumably, be recovered as God.

If, however, the Ohmann argument is correct, the passive voice, in this instance, can be considered a form of literary irony. As such, it need not necessarily be at odds with the work which has been done regarding news reporting, as a) literary techniques used in books--especially one as long and comprehensive as Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire--are rare in news reporting which has an operational code with a mandate to be concise and b) the reader of such a book is likely to be prepared for such techniques as an integral part of the medium. The reader is likely to be alert to subtle techniques, and read and savour the material, both content and form, far more carefully than the consumer of news, whose primary concern is to ascertain the main points of the story quickly and to note the content with as much accuracy as possible. Little attention is paid to the grammatical form of news reports.

8.3 Passives and the News

If the deleted agent structures are used and commonly accepted without question in everyday language situations where there is

little doubt about the relationships between participants, such linguistic forms may pass unobtrusively into other, more crucial realms, potentially obfuscating nuances and connections to which the reader/viewer should be alert and suggesting other perspectives which the actual phenomena may not warrant. For example, the topic in mass media news stories can often be understood on multiple levels and therefore what is said may have multiple connotations, minor and profound. In a contentious situation, positions are often subtle, vague enough to be ambiguous, and hence require maximal clarity in the language used to express them.

The news story is a medium wherein the ordering of concepts is often important, i.e. what leads on to what, sparking off the newsworthy event may greatly affect viewer responses to that event. Snow (1983:15) asserts, "Examine most any news story and the implicit impression is that something else is going on and we should wonder what it is." It is precisely because the viewer pays little attention to the grammatical form of news reports that it is crucial for scholars of the media and language to do so. The more often such discursive form is accepted without awareness of its functional existence, the more necessary it is to detail through what means and to what effect that form functions in relation to the core propositions. Perception of the passive voice is likewise commented upon by Stanley (1975:25),

> "Apparently, our unquestioning acceptance of the syntactic nature of the passive and the importance of this assumption for modern grammars have effectively hindered us from describing passivization, its uses or its consequences."

She goes on to suggest (1975:30)

> "The speaker, having taken into account, as nearly as possible, the psychological bent of the audience, then determines how much information can be deleted without anyone noticing. Our willingness to accept statements with deleted agents is dependent on our judgment of the integrity of the speaker."

This contention seems to suggest that the structure is used to implicitly argue for what the vocabulary cannot or will not be used to say explicitly. As television news is the prime source of information concerning national and international events for many people and the journalism profession aspires to *balanced* reporting, people judge the news to have the necessary integrity to command their acceptance of the information as an impartial representation. Balanced reporting can, however, be misleading (Nelkin 1987, Hackett 1985), as it only assures that time is given to *available* views, whether or not these are empirically verifiable. The implicit assumptions derived from the belief systems of the transmitters are, together with the target information, passed on to a receptive audience.

8.4 The Need for Investigation

The crux of the matter for Stanley (1975:30) is that

> "The passive voice provides us with a syntactic construction for deceiving our readers into believing that we're giving them information when we're not. It is a construction that allows us to lie without overtly lying, and only the careful analytic reader will notice that information is missing."

While she states that most uses of the passive are subconscious rather than strategic, Stanley nonetheless raises the possibility

that such deception could occur and acknowledges that there is no simple test to detect such a usage. As discussed above, an analytical reading (in the sense of decoding messages) is rarely given to newscast stories. This contention of concealment is a serious one to make about the passive voice and therefore one which should be taken lightly neither by those who seek to support it nor those who seek to refute it. It is also a contention which has only been voiced in relatively recent times. Whether Jespersen and his contemporaries were unaware of this possibility, thought it fallacious or simply did not publish it due to the conventions of the times is not likely to be known. Nonetheless, given that this weighty contention does exist today, the next chapter will adopt an experimental format in an effort to empirically verify some of the theoretical concerns raised. Before going on to the experimental work, however, it is necessary to raise one last issue, transitivity, because of the close relationship between transitivity and grammatical voice.

8.5 TRANSITIVITY AND ITS RELATION TO VOICE AND THEME

Following Berry (1975), this section uses a model of language incorporating both traditional and systemic (Hallidayan) notions. Examined here are the semantic operation of syntactic features of a clause, such as the use of the passive voice and the expression of theme and transitivity (although both material and mental processes could be considered in light of the characteristics here discussed, transitivity, for this work, essentially refers to "who does what to whom and how" (Montgomery 1986), just as Lasswell (1948) suggests that communication should be approached by asking, "Who says what, in

which channel (how), to whom, and with what effect ?"). In studies of transitivity, the verb or action is generally referred to as the PROCESS, and noun phrases realising the roles of agent and patient are referred to as PARTICIPANTS and must both be explicit, that is, present in the surface structure of a transitive clause. The one exception to having explicit noun phrases is when a reflexive verb implies that the agent and patient are one and the same. Other optional sentence items, such as prepositional phrases and adverbs, are referred to as CIRCUMSTANCES (Simpson 1987). For example:

INTRANSITIVE : The dog ate in the shade.
participant, agent process circumstance.

TRANSITIVE : The dog ate bones.
participant, agent process participant, patient

TRANSITIVE : The dog scratched. *(itself)*
(REFLEXIVE) participant, agent process (implied patient)

Voice and transitivity are considered together because the passive voice acts as vehicle for actualising the transitivity of a clause, while theme is also considered because it is concerned with the PROCESS, PARTICIPANTS and CIRCUMSTANCES of a clause, just as transitivity is. Moreover, theme, "what is being talked about, the point of departure for the clause as a message" (Halliday 1967:212) has the same marked/unmarked distinction as voice, i.e. a clause with unmarked theme will generally have the same syntactic structure (S/V/O) as one with unmarked (active) voice. However, as Berry

(1975:163,164) observes in comparing the marked theme to the passive voice,

> "The marked theme option achieves its effect by shifting a whole element of structure and placing it in an unusual position in the clause. The passive option merely detaches a function from the element of structure associated with that function and assigns it to another element of structure. For the passive option the elements of structure remain in what is more or less usual order."

The voice, theme and transitivity patterns of a clause imply semantic choices made by the originator of the information and these choices may be passed on to the receiver of that information. Although the operation of these syntactic/semantic choices does not provide *sufficient* data for the full explication of meaning, it does provide *essential* data, for these choices may disclose agendas which the actual content of the clause does not readily manifest. Repetition of these choices within a discourse likewise characterizes the discourse as a whole.

Simpson (1987:3) explains how transitivity functions in a discursive setting :

> "Transitivity concerns the representation of meaning in the clause and features the different types of process that are recognised in the language...it shows how speakers encode in language their mental picture of reality and how they account for their experience of the world around them."

An instance of this is found in Berry's (1975:160) suggestion that in the sentence "The rose beds have been weeded.", "It does not matter who did the weeding as long as they have been weeded and are no

longer in need of attention." The absence of a weeder in the surface structure indicates that it is the end result (as per McKerrow 1922, above, in section 3.0) which is the speaker's concern.

The experiments in the following two chapters provide empirical evidence to clarify the operation of transitivity, as here discussed, and to indicate that the sense of a message is as important as its reference, if not more so, when viewer understanding is at issue.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPERIMENT ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO EXPERIMENT ONE

The news clip used for experimental purposes dealt with somewhat politically sensitive subject matter, concerning Northern Ireland and the IRA. The storyline will be discussed further below, in the section on Stimulus Materials. To speak in broader terms for the moment, however, the coverage of events in Ireland is a rather controversial matter. This is an area wherein the cause of protecting national security can easily be invoked to restrict broadcasting. The most recent, and perhaps most blatant instance of governmental intrusion into broadcasting is the ban put on interviews with spokespersons or sympathisers of terrorist organisations. Whereas it was previously left to a broadcasting organisation's code of professional ethics to decide whether or not it would be appropriate to show a representative of, for example, the IRA or Sinn Fein speaking on camera, the Government has now (November 1988) directly intervened to forbid these speakers any such direct access to the viewing audience. This rule holds even if the speaker in question is a legally elected representative of a political party, as is the case with Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams. Under the new rules, statements made by such persons concerning the Northern Irish situation may be broadcast only if delivered by a news reporter or news reader. Such restrictions belie a well-worn myth of journalistic independence and a straightforward mirroring of reality by the media. What broadcasting can and does do is reinforce certain aspects of society through style and availability of coverage. Once the mirror myth is shattered, it becomes possible to

see the importance of such investigative efforts as are undertaken in this thesis, concerning linguistic elements in newscasts.

The television viewer frequently has no personal knowledge of circumstances surrounding news stories. As such, he has no first-hand sources of information which might contradict or corroborate the televised information or that received by some other form of mass media, (e.g. radio or press). This is an important point to retain in relation to the following experiment because alongside the basic information and thematic elements, I submit, the viewer receives a specific, non-neutral viewpoint, delivered through the report's format or, as Sperber and Wilson (1986:73) note, "Some basic attitudes are conveyed by syntactic means." This mediation of the message through linguistic aspects can influence the viewer's initial concept formation and thereby reaffirm and perpetuate the structuring view.

In order to empirically test the capacity of language to influence impressions of news stories, the following factors were varied between two factually identical commentaries, to enhance the prominence of a character : Grammatical Voice (active vs. passive), Character Naming (Jane Murphy vs. the woman) and Clause Sequencing (main + subordinate vs. subordinate + main). In order to assess the influence of short, pre-story information such as headlines or synopses, the presence of such information was also manipulated. Thus, in this experiment, two different commentaries and the presence or absence of three still shots with captions were combined to provide four different presentations of a television news story.

Each of these four presentations was shown to a different group of subjects in a between-subjects design. The hypothesis which this experiment set out to test is a tripartite one : a) The more prominent a character is made within the context of an situation, the more that character will be perceived as being an integral part of that situation and playing a central role in the action at hand. b) If the situation in question is a negative one, the highlighted character will acquire equally negative characteristics in the estimation of those who view the report because that character will be perceived as being responsible for what occurs. c) A situation wherein the action of the filmed footage is ambiguous is structured into a more coherent sequence of events by relevant pictures / phrases presented prior to the actual filmed footage.

2.0 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section deals with the design of the experiment and the methodology used in carrying out that design. In particular, it is concerned with the sample of subjects, the procedure to which these subjects were exposed and the nature of the stimulus materials

2.1 Sample

The sample was comprised of 80 students from five first year classes at the University of Glasgow. These classes were English, Film and Television, Philosophy, Psychology and Theatre. Although these were the classes from which the actual recruitment of

volunteer Ss was conducted, the experiment was run outside of class time and Ss were given a token incentive of £1 to participate. There were four conditions, with 20 Ss assigned to each and females overrepresented in all but one condition. The modal age for each group was 18 years except for one group in which there was a double mode, with equal numbers of 17 and 18 year olds. The age range of the sample, which included a few mature students in all groups, was 16-47 years. Ss were told that they were helping with an experiment which was concerned with television and which would be used as part of ongoing post-graduate study. Ss were also told that the experiment consisted of watching a short video and answering a questionnaire afterwards, activities which were not to be discussed either during or after the experiment.

2.2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted by incorporating several viewing sessions over a month long period during an academic term. Curtains were drawn and lights were turned off in the room to focus Ss attention onto the screen of a Sony Trinitron colour television set which was placed in an easily visible location. Two of the four groups watched a video clip which began with three consecutive still shots accompanied by short written phrases, describing various points in the narrative. These shots and descriptions were presented without commentary and could be seen as titles, forming a synopsis of the story to follow. This preamble was immediately followed by the moving footage. There were two commentaries (See Appendix), each

one presented to a group which had seen the still shot sequence and a group which had not.

After the presentation of the video clip, questionnaires were distributed (See Appendix). While there was no time limit assigned for the completion of the questionnaires, the average completion time ran 35 to 40 minutes.

2.3 Stimulus Materials

The video clip was constructed using the visuals of an ITN news story which had been broadcast in March 1986. The central figure in the clip was Evelyn Glenholmes, a woman from Northern Ireland, who was charged with murder and bombing through her involvement with the IRA. Because of technical faults in the warrant to extradite her back to Britain from the Republic of Ireland, during the course of the clip she was released from custody, re-arrested and re-released. Between her first release and the re-arrest which followed, she was kept under surveillance by officers of the law, so that they would be able to locate her if a second arrest was called for. This surveillance period was accompanied by a great deal of visually confusing activity amongst crowds of people in the area. An inconsequential portion of the footage was excised to fit commentary time constraints. The superimposed ITN logo and the name of the original reporter, Vernon Mann, were retained, as these were presented over integral segments of the action. One important deletion was the superimposed name of Evelyn Glenholmes. In this

experiment, it was decided to obscure the real identity of the central character, calling her "Jane Murphy", in order to reduce value loaded evaluations. It was reasoned that since many television and newspaper stories do not carry filmed footage / stills and photographs, respectively, and the presentation of radio newscasts is obviously wholly auditory, the name of Evelyn Glenholmes was likely to be far better known than her face (especially as the majority of the Ss would have been relatively young when this particular news story was prominent.) Thus, it was hoped that by neutralizing the emotive importance of the details of the story, (i.e. there could be no strong reactions to a pseudonym), extremes in the responses would be filtered out. This line of reasoning is discarded in the next experiment for reasons which are outlined in the description of that experiment. In addition to the narrative voice-over, the companion of the woman was heard to speak the words "Here's the little schoolgirl they want to send to England." This occurred in all conditions.

The actual location of the action, Dublin, Ireland, was retained. The story charted the events surrounding "Jane Murphy" and her experiences with the legal system. The presence in the clip of a number of well-known Sinn Fein members, (e.g. Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and Danny Morrison) made it impossible to obscure that link. However, in line with the policy of obscuring the real, politically sensitive, particulars of the case (as detailed above), the charges brought against the woman were altered in the commentaries from murder and bombing to illegal immigration and fraud in connection with the IRA. The remainder of information

presented in the clip, i.e. facts, events and images, was true to the original broadcast.

The first images seen by two of the groups were three consecutive still shots taken from the moving footage and framed by a white line, as though a photograph, presented against a blue background. The first of these shots pictured the woman with two people behind her. Above the shot was the word FREED; below it were the words *Yard warrants 'defective'.* The second of the shots pictured the woman held by two men in dark suits. Above the shot was the word RE-ARRESTED; below it were the words *Awaiting new warrants.* The third of the shots showed the woman and a uniformed man standing next to each other. Above the shot were the words FREED AGAIN; below it were the words *Police custody rejected.*

The moving footage began with the woman's release from the courthouse. Several people ran toward the courthouse gates as she made her way toward them to get into a car and away from the courthouse. This scene, filled with people operating in a very dynamic fashion, was to set the pace for the rest of the clip. The next scene pictured the woman walking down the street with a host of others, including the Republic of Ireland Special Branch officers who were keeping her under surveillance. Unhappy with this situation, she eventually broke free from the legal escort. After a great deal of turmoil, both on the street and inside a department store, "Murphy" was recaptured and taken back to court. In the final scene, she was released for the second time and driven away in a car without surveillance.

The visuals included many crowd scenes of an ambiguous nature. These scenes suggested tension and conflict through chaotic movements and struggles, but precisely because of the lack of definition inherent in such mass motion, the motivations behind such motion were not clearly perceptible. Hence, the scenes were highly open to individual interpretation drawing upon verbal information for possible explanations. The viewer's consequent dependence on verbal input for clarification, not only through overtly explanatory material but also by means of other additional information which might help to contextualise the action, made this story particularly amenable to a language based investigation.

3.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Dubbed onto the visuals were two different commentaries (See Appendix), both narrated by a lecturer from the University of Glasgow. These, along with the presence or absence of the still shot sequence served as independent variables for the four groups :

GROUP A : Commentary One with still shot sequence

GROUP B : Commentary One without still shot sequence

GROUP C : Commentary Two with still shot sequence

GROUP D : Commentary Two without still shot sequence

The commentaries in this experiment were constructed to fit the visuals such that each of the two voice-overs related a narrative pertinent to the filmed footage. The commentaries differed only in form, not content, yet it is hypothesised that this form variation would act to produce responses more sympathetic to the woman suspect in those groups which were exposed to Commentary One. Let us now examine the individual variables in operation throughout the commentaries.

3.1 Still Shot Sequence

The composition of the still shot sequence was detailed in the previous section. Many studies have confirmed the processing of sentences to be context dependent. The presence of headlines prior to the presentation of prose passages has been shown to influence comprehension of the theme (Schallert 1976, Dooling and Millet 1973) and to produce greater free recall than in passages without titles / headlines (Dooling and Lachman 1971) but not greater than still pictures in a situation wherein either one or the other is presented (Bransford and Johnson 1972). The headlines / titles produce such effects by promoting "top-down" processing. That is, the key information provided by such phrases, prior to the presentation of the main portion of the report, acts as pre-existing knowledge which helps to guide attention to salient features and hence influence interpretation and recall by giving the report a more readily comprehensible structure. (See Brown and Yule 1983, ch. 7, for a survey of positions regarding the representation of

background knowledge used for interpretation, e.g. schemata, frames, scripts, scenarios, mental models) This strategy of understanding is also known as "conceptually driven processing." (Woodall, Davis and Sahin, 1983:3) The alternative, "bottom-up processing", occurs when the viewer does not have such a previous point of reference and instead uses the input of individual features of the report to build up an overall structure of the information. This strategy of understanding is also known as "data-driven processing." (Woodall, Davis and Sahin 1983:3) Thus, the stimulus used in this experiment, combining written captions with still pictures, could reasonably be expected to produce greater recall and a more coherent conception of the sequence of events in the groups (A and C) which were exposed to such a preamble than in the groups (B and D) which were not. This result was hypothesized to occur under both commentary conditions, because it would be measured by a questionnaire item requiring subjects to perform a chronological image ordering exercise which would not necessitate contextualization.

3.2 Character Naming

The use of a particular name as opposed to a generic noun, for example, "Fido" rather than "the dog" focuses attention on the character to whom it is applied. The importance of assigning a name to someone or something in texts was observed early in this century by Bartlett (1932) in his experiments measuring short and long term memory. Kripke (1980:48) characterizes a proper name as a "rigid designator" which fixes meaning and denotes the same

individual/thing in every possible world. The contrast to this would be a "description" which is not necessarily linked to a single referent but rather, might also apply to other objects or persons posessing the same quality or properties inherent in the description. An exception, however, would be the use of a specific determiner (definite article) , especially with post-modification, which also suggests a unique referent, or "rigid designation", e.g. the man *with the long grey hair* is also quite specific..

In Commentary One, the woman did not receive a proper name and her identity was referred to as remaining "undisclosed". The district justice who was ruling on the case and therefore representing the legal system, was named as John Bryant. The opposite held for Commentary Two, in which the woman was referred to as Jane Murphy, and the district justice was left unnamed, referred to only by title.

In Commentary Two, the pronoun "she" was sometimes substituted for the proper name, Jane Murphy. This change should not have altered the effect of this particular variable, however, as the use of a pronoun to refer back to a foregrounded antecedent is also an acknowledged method of sustaining the foregrounding effect. (Chafe 1972, Perfetti and Goldman 1974)

It was therefore hypothesized that the groups (A and B) which were exposed to Commentary One, in which the woman was not named would perceive her as being less prominent than the other two groups (C and D) would. Moreover, according to the overall hypothesis, this

fact would lead groups A and B to consider the woman to be less responsible for the complications which occurred throughout the clip and therefore less likely to attribute negative characteristics, such as aggression to her.

3.3 Voice

The use of active and passive voices can affect viewer perceptions and can heighten or obscure roles of actors in a sentence. As is the case for all the variables, the effect is increased when several instances of a particular construction occur within the space of a discourse. Coetzee (1980) notes that repetitive use of a syntactic operation is indicative of a particular logical relation or linkage of items suggested by the author. (See chapter 2, section 8.0) What this relation might be is suggested by Fowler and Kress (1979) who contend that the use of the passive voice works to neutralize the process or action in a sentence, for passives enhance the prominence of the affected (on whom the action is performed and whose situation is resultingly altered) while minimizing that of the agent (the performer of the action who initiates change). They further suggest that this effect spreads vagueness and uncertainty about who is doing what. The extreme version of this effect occurs in the truncated passive in which the "by..." phrase containing the agent is deleted, e.g. It was done (by X).

When possible the two commentaries differed insofar as the main clauses tended to be active in Commentary One and passive in Commentary Two, e.g. *1= The officers maintained surveillance / in spite of charges of illegality and harassment levied aginst them by the woman and her companion. 2= In spite of charges of illegality and harassment which she and her companion levied against the police / surveillance was maintained.* It was reasoned that whenever a character was the subject of an active main clause, the role of that character in the upheaval would be the role most emphasized.

3.4 Clause Sequencing

The sequencing of clauses within a sentence is important because earlier clauses have a different status than later ones. While an initial clause is considered to provide "given" information, a later clause is considered to provide new information or a comment on the basic point which was stated earlier in the sentence, (Broadbent 1973, Haviland and Clark 1974). Moreover, Clark and Clark (1977) contend that while listeners assume given information to be true, they try to verify the new and Hornby (1972,1974) suggests that because earlier information is accepted as known or given, it is more resistant to change. Although this is true whether a main or subordinate clause occupies the initial position and stress in vocal delivery is also a factor (Halliday 1967), a Clark and Clark (1968) recall study reports that subjects felt that the main clause of a sentence should come before the subordinate. Whenever possible, Commentary One located a main clause

before a subordinate clause and Commentary Two reversed this order, e.g. *1= Police fired warning shots into the air / when the suspect attempted to break away from their ranks. 2= When Jane Murphy attempted to break away / police fired warning shots into the air.*

Note: It was difficult to manipulate both voice and clause sequence variables consistently. The reason for this was that a good visual-verbal fit between the filmed footage and the commentary, took precedence in order to ensure an applicable and cohesive narration. When it was feasible, however, sentences were constructed according to the desired specifications.

4.0 QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

The questionnaire for this experiment was a relatively lengthy one. Since this experiment later underwent necessary modification and acted as a forerunner for another, more focused, experiment, a discussion of items which provided inconclusive results will not be incorporated here. A complete version of the questionnaire is, however, located in the Appendix and questions omitted here can be examined there.

4.1 Free Recall

The first questionnaire item to consider is a request for a free recall description of the news clip. Ss were asked to describe

the news clip as completely as they could and were provided with a full page on which to do this. To measure responses, a schedule of events was constructed and divided into three parts, each containing five points. The first part contained : 1) the charges against the woman, i.e. illegal immigration and fraud, 2) her release from custody, 3) the crowds at the courthouse, 4) her departure from the courthouse, 5) the Special Branch officers which tailed her. The second part contained : 1) the woman's walk through town, 2) her complaints aginst the surveillance, 3) the onlooking shoppers, 4) Sinn Fein headquarters. 5) her escape from surveillance. The third part contained : 1) the police catching up with the woman again in BHS, 2) the woman's re-arrest, 3) her lawyer's complaints about the situation, 4) her re-release by the court, 5) her final departure by car. The free recall descriptions were measured against the schedule, that is, it was noted how many items from the schedule were also mentioned in the free recall, with the result that events in PART 3 were markedly better recalled. The number and nature of events correctly mentioned did not differ to a significant extent between groups but rather between parts. The mean number of events correct per part were :

PART 1 = 2.01 PART 2 = 1.82 PART 3 = 3.39

Thus, there existed a strong recency effect (for extended pieces of text or series of discrete items, the last information presented is better recalled than the first or middle information) across the groups. This effect is characteristic of studies of recall

generally, as is the comparatively low number of recalled events in the middle section.

While there appears to be a slight primacy effect as well, this is not borne out by statistical analysis. Since this section involved three measures per subject, i.e. one per part, a paired t-test for related samples was employed, with the result that the differences for scores in PART 3 compared to those in both PARTS 1 and 2 were found to be significant at $p<.001$.

4.2 Chronological Sequencing

The second item required Ss to place a list of five scrambled images into the chronological sequence in which they were presented. Since the images in question were seen in the same order by all groups and indeed, all the visuals were the same for all the groups, one would expect this item to yield results which would not differ across commentaries. However, two of the conditions included the still shot sequence which provided a synopsis of sorts at the beginning of the clip. It was hypothesized that the presence of these shots with their captions could aid in the sequencing task, since the stills provided an element of structure to which Ss could mentally refer back while watching confusing scenes. If that structure could help Ss make sense of images to any degree, it was reasoned that this effect would be shown in the number of Ss who could correctly order the five images. Indeed, the percentages, by group, of successful orderings of the five images were as follows :

GROUP A: 45 % GROUP B : 30% GROUP C : 55% GROUP D : 10%

The two groups which had the still shot sequence, A and C, attained the highest number of correct sequences. Using a Generalized Likelihood Ratio Test, it was discovered that although the difference between A and B, the two groups with Commentary One (e.g. Police fired warning shots into the air when the suspect attempted to break away from their ranks.), was not significant, the difference between C and D, the two groups which shared Commentary Two (e.g. When Jane Murphy attempted to break away, police fired warning shots into the air.), was significant at $p<.05$. Such results suggest that an interactive effect may operate between selected commentary elements and the still shot sequence.

4.3 Outstanding Image

The question, "What single image stands out most strongly in your mind ?" did not provide any statistically significant information, but interestingly, Group D, which fared so poorly in the sequencing exercise, was the only group not to list a character (usually, but not always, the woman) most frequently in response to this question. Instead, by a small margin, this group gave general feeling / atmosphere responses most often. Whether there is a correlation between these two results for Group D is a matter which is open for question. One possible explanation might be that it is necessary for subjects to focus on a character as a means of navigating through events. When the primary image focused upon is

that of a chaotic, disordered atmosphere, it may be more difficult to incorporate what is seen into any type of cohesive order. This is because there is no constant to link onto and follow as a guide through minimally structured scenes. This explanation is, of course, conjecture but it would go some way toward accounting for the comparatively weak performance of Group D in the sequencing task.

4.4 Yes / No Questions

One particular portion of the questionnaire provided most of the valuable information derived. This portion was comprised of a series of questions which indicated the level of aggression and responsibility which Ss attributed to characters. These items followed a yes / no format, e.g. " In the street scenes was anyone acting aggressively ? " a) crowds ? b) suspect ? c) police ? , with the respondents having the option of writing yes or no next to the three choices in any combination. Again, using the Generalized Likelihood Ratio Test, a significant ($p<.05$) difference was found in the amount of aggression attributed to the woman suspect. This difference was not confined to one particular scene but rather was a major characteristic of the way Ss viewed the woman. The two groups which were exposed to Commentary Two (e.g. When Jane Murphy attempted to break away, police fired warning shots into the air.), saw the woman as more aggressive than the two groups which were exposed to Commentary One (e.g. Police fired warning shots into the air when the suspect attempted to break away.). An indication of

commentary influence is present in the percentages, by group, of those who said the woman was acting aggressively :

COURTHOUSE GATES SCENE	STREET SCENES
GROUP A : 10%	GROUP A : 15%
GROUP B : 5%	GROUP B : 10%
GROUP C : 30%	GROUP C : 35%
GROUP D : 40%	GROUP D : 50%

The figures show that groups C and D were two to eight times, in percentage terms, more likely than the other two groups to say that the woman was acting aggressively. To better understand what might have generated those divergent reactions, it is useful to examine the characteristics which form pertinent textual differences in the two commentaries. Groups C and D were exposed to Commentary Two, which foregrounded the woman by describing her with a first and last name, Jane Murphy, which Ss could mentally grasp onto and attach to the image of the red-haired woman. Moreover, Commentary Two further foregrounded the woman by making her, whenever possible, the performer of the action described, the logical as well as grammatical subject of clauses. In contrast, groups A and B could make no such individual name--image associations, because Commentary One simply employed the phrase "the woman" and furthermore, whenever possible, foregrounded the police as actors and clause subjects. Thus, group attributions of the woman's aggression were markedly correlated with deliberate attempts to foreground the woman. These

attempts were effected through the use of linguistic devices, with no visual discrepancies (e.g. framing, sequencing of images) between the copies of the clip shown to the various groups.

5.0 DISCUSSION

This section concentrates on how the experiment raised issues which had not been readily apparent before, and how, as a result of these new insights, the experimental design can be improved for the next empirical study.

5.1 Excluded Items

Portions of the questionnaire were not incorporated into the results section. The items which were excluded were 1) a series of questions which asked Ss to both surmise, e.g. "Why did the people run from the courthouse building to its gates ?" and also give factual answers, e.g. "Why did the first court appearance occur ?", 2) questions which could be answered either yes or no, regarding clarity of action in scenes and regarding whether a series of characters, main and subsidiary, inspired empathy, 3) questions which probed subjective impressions more forthrightly, e.g. "Was there a turning point ? If so, what was it ?" and "Was the news clip interesting ? Why or why not ?" and 4) statements which were quotes from the commentary. These statements included personal pronouns whose referents Ss were asked to identify. Overall, these items

lengthened the questionnaire without revealing information coherently related to the hypothetical issues.

More specifically, the answers to general opinion and fact related questions were evidently not appropriate for the task of discriminating between groups in such a way as to highlight inter-group differences in the perception of the main characters. The item which required referent identification suggested that regardless of how unclear the visuals were, the commentary was not at all ambiguous, with most subjects in all groups correctly identifying the referent. As for the ratings of empathy, had the influence of the commentaries been very strong, there might have occurred discernible differences in Ss feelings toward the characters, but the pattern of ratings was consistent across groups, suggesting that the composition of the narrative did not carry enough influence to inspire differing patterns of empathy. This item, of course, draws upon an area which relates more directly to the emotional strain within subject perception than do many of the other, more cognitvely oriented items. Thus, one possible explanation for the similarity of results across groups would be that cognitive areas of perception are more sensitive to the influence of syntactical structure than emotional areas are.

5.2 Modifications for Follow-Up Experiment

While the above discussion points to deficiencies in certain areas of the questionnaire, even some of the more fruitful

questionnaire items leave scope for modification and development. This experiment was extremely useful in providing guidelines regarding which types of questions are most applicable and sensitive to the particular concerns ennunciated in the hypothesis. In some areas simply analyzing the composition of the material rather than any particular results provided insights. The process of conducting an experiment was also useful for observing commentary characteristics "in action", by listening to the syntactic manipulations as they accompanied the footage. For instance, my repeated exposures to the stimulus material were useful in coming to the conclusion that perhaps the Jane Murphy--John Bryant naming distinction was not useful insofar as the police (not the judge) were the woman's opposing counterparts in the action, and also the conclusion that the central character should be referred to either as "the woman" or by her name, as the term "suspect" potentially carries with it connotations which the other two options do not.

The information supplied by this experiment made it possible to plan another, containing measuring techniques more responsive to the nuances of the material and consequently better able to capture the likely effects of contrasting textual devices.

5.3 Points to Develop

One questionnaire item which was considered to be a useful indication of how subjects perceived the clip was the request for a free recall description of the story. Although the recency effect is

an interesting result, it is a well-researched and documented psychological phenomenon, not directly related to the research at hand. (This inadvertent establishment of recency effects echoes that of Bernard and Coldevin (1985) who similarly did not manipulate serial position, but also found a prominent recency effect and a smaller primacy effect over all groups who were tested for recall of television news.) The more important point with which to be concerned is that because a comprehensive description was requested for this item, Ss attempted to fill the page with as much detail as possible, even to the extent of makes and models of cars. The sheer volume of material may have proved counterproductive by obscuring key elements and hence, detracting from the central issues. Thus, in response to this concern, it was decided to improve the question for a future experiment by requesting a synopsis limited to 50 words on a half page of the questionnaire rather than the comprehensive description of the clip for which an entire page was supplied in this experiment.

Another portion of the questionnaire found to be a valuable measure but in need of a format change was the series of questions which recorded Ss' attributions of qualities, e.g. aggression to characters. The yes / no distinction indicated that the commentary structure was exerting influence on Ss perception of agency. To be able to discriminate the nature of that influence more finely, it was decided that the same content of the questions could be more precisely handled using Likert Scales. The reasoning behind this decision was that a calibrated measuring device of this nature would

determine not only whether or not a characteristic was attributed, but also to what degree that attribution was made.

It was also decided to retain both the content and the format of the items requesting subjects to list the single most outstanding image and to order images into the chronological sequence in which they were presented. The premise on which these items were based was sound and the mode in which they were presented appeared to be effective for the designated purposes.

Moreover, it would appear that although visual interpretation is, to some degree affected by the commentaries which accompany images, whether it was one variable in particular, or a combination thereof, which was responsible for the differences shown in the results is difficult to establish because of the number of variables simultaneously in operation. The viewer may also be so involved in watching the intricacies of a melee' that little attention is left for processing words, as per the filter model of the single channel theory, which holds that people are only able to attend fully to one source of information at a time (See Broadbent 1958, 1973 for a fuller discussion of this theory). However, this theory is not currently popular. Instead, it seems likely that the visual confusion engendered may act as a catalyst, drawing the viewer into a more attentive, compensatory relationship with words and their explicative function. As Treisman (1964:14) notes,

> "It may be that the channel filter attenuates irrelevant messages rather than blocks them completely. If so, words which were highly important or relevant to the subject could be picked out when the threshold for

identifying them was temporarily or permanently lowered."

Although the simultaneous manipulation of several variables is not without precedent (see, for example, Housel's (1984) experiment on linguistic complexity in television news stories), the problem is that it is not possible to construct a hierarchy of determination or even isolate and evaluate the effect of each variable individually. In the face of this difficulty, it was decided to run a second experiment, such that both experiments, in order, would represent a cumulative enterprise.

6.0 Conclusion

Overall, this experiment looked at many areas simultaneously and provided fertile ground for appraising the possiblities and limitations of a controlled assessment of syntactical influence operating in the sphere of a news commentary. The combination of these possibilities and limitations reveal not only the most promising areas available for a further study but also the most, and least, efficient ways of examining those areas. It lays down the groundwork for a more developed investigation, with a more precise focus, to build upon. The effectiveness of this foundation is revealed in the following chapter, which details the next experiment.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPERIMENT TWO

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO EXPERIMENT TWO

For this key experiment, the hypothesis remained as stated for the previous experiment. That is, in a typical news report wherein conflict arises between two characters or sets of characters which represent opposing factions pursuing incompatible goals, the one which is made the object of conceptual focus by virtue of sentence position will be viewed less favourably. A character delineated as as the grammatical subject (presented as a foregrounded referent, as per Chafe 1972 ; Perfetti and Goldman 1974) is made prominent and thereby strongly linked with the ongoing action.* Galtung and Ruge (1965:68) theorise that

> "news has a tendency to present events as sentences where there is a subject, a named person or collectivity consisting of a few persons and the event is then seen as a consequence of the actions of this person or these persons."

In this experiment, Evelyn Glenholmes was placed into the position of

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*= In studies of industrial action reports on British newscasts, Glasgow University Media Group --hereafter referred to as G,U,M,G,--(1976) has shown that television news coverage uses interview settings in a fashion which parallels the linguistic structuring I am discussing. These settings associate one side in a conflict with intense activity and action and the other with responsible behaviour and reason. Not surprisingly, it is the strikers who are shown picketing and calling for change, often outdoors, while management representatives speak of peaceful resolution from the warm, calm atmosphere of an office. Although G,U,M,G, did not provide empirical evidence of decodings, Canter, West and Wools (1974) show that the room in which someone is placed provides contextual cues regarding status to the observer and Baggaley and Duck (1975) argue that association with something may be stronger than either logic or the actual person/ object presented. It is therefore sensibly suggested by G,U,M,G, that the windswept and noisy strikers are viewed as acting outside the bounds of rationality. They are therefore seen as more responsible for the reported discord and disruption than is the authoritative figure in the comfortable chair.

sentence subject and agent of the action in one commentary; the police were placed in the same position in another; and Glenholmes was made sentence subject but also a patient of the action in a third. The expectation was that, overall, the commentary which offered Glenholmes as both sentence subject and agent (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) would yield responses with the most negative assessment of her. The commentary with the police as both sentence subject and agent (e.g. The police freed the woman.) would represent the other end of the continuum of opinion and the third commentary (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) would produce results which would be located between the two extremes. If these expectations were fulfilled, the results would provide empirical support for accounts linking ideology and syntax, through the anchoring of the intense visual images in the verbal discourse. (See previous section).

Thus, to summarise, the predictions are as follows :

A. When she is made the grammatical and logical subject of the commentary, Evelyn Glenholmes will be most strongly associated with the series of events which form the substance of this report. This association will be manifested through responses which mention her frequently, and, since the series of events reported in this clip is chaotic and violent, through responses which characterise her in a negative fashion.

B. When she is made the grammatical subject but logical patient of the commentary, Evelyn Glenholmes will still be strongly associated

with the events portrayed in this report, but to a slightly lesser extent. The responses should be similar, although perhaps not as extreme as for subjects exposed to the previously detailed condition.

C. When the police are made the grammatical and logical subject of the commentary, the same types of subject response should take place, only with the police, rather than Evelyn Glenholmes, engendering these responses. In other words, in this condition, the role of the police will loom larger and the consequent associations and attributions will likewise be manifested in Ss responses.

2.0 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section addresses issues of experimental design, specifically: the subjects, the viewing procedure, the stimulus materials and nature of the independent variables and, finally, the questionnaire used to measure subject reactions.

2.1 Sample

The sample of 184 Ss was comprised of three first year classes, English, History and Psychology, at the University of Strathclyde. The group sizes were unequal, with 34, 66 and 84 students; however, statistical analysis took account of this divergence in order to establish a base for valid comparisons. All groups were drawn from

one faculty in order to increase the likelihood that the sample would be homogeneous and not include fundamentally different ways of viewing and thinking, such as might be found, broadly speaking, in the study of a formulaic subject, (e.g. mathematics), and an interpretive subject, (e.g. literature). The modal age for each group was 18, a representative age for first year students. Since each group had a small number of mature students, the age range of the sample was 17-49 years. Females were overrepresented in each group. The experiment was conducted in the usual lecture period of each of the three groups, in the lecture theatre in which the classes of all the groups were held. This method of obtaining subjects was adopted as a direct response to unsatisfactory time and money costs involved in the recruitment of volunteer subjects in the previous experiment. (This in-class method of conducting the experiment not only provides a large pool of subjects but is also simple and economical to run.) Ss were told they were helping in a project which was a component of a postgraduate degree and asked to watch a brief video and answer a questionnaire afterwards. They were also asked not to discuss the experiment during or after its administration, in order to avoid distorting the results of their own group or those of a subsequently exposed group.

2.2 Procedure

The lecture theatre which acted as the setting of the experiment was equipped with two identical colour video monitors which were suspended from the ceiling. these were arranged such that

all seats offered a clear view of the video clip which was being transmitted. The lights were dimmed to focus attention on whichever screen offered a subject the most comfortable viewing position.

The video clip each group was required to watch began with three still shots accompanied by a short written phrase, descriptive of the points in the narrative to which the still shots referred. These stills, along with their accompanying descriptions essentially formed a synopsis of the story to follow. There was no sound during their presentation.

Immediately thereafter, the filmed footage, including a different spoken narrative for each group, appeared. (Entire narratives are found in appendices.) The duration of the entire clip was just over two minutes. After the presentation of the video clip, questionnaires were distributed and Ss were instructed to complete the questionnaires in the order in which the pages were chronologically presented, in order to ensure uniform exposure to the questions. There was no time limit assigned for the completion of the questionnaires, but most Ss accomplished the task within 15 minutes, inclusive of viewing time. and all subjects accomplished the task within 20 minutes, inclusive of viewing time. Ss were told that an explanation of the purpose of the experiment and their role in it would be forthcoming and, two weeks after the experiment, a brief synopsis of the purpose and the results of the experiment was delivered to each of the respective lecturers of the three groups.

2.3 Stimulus Materials

As this experiment builds upon the first experiment, using information therein acquired, the video clip used for the previous experiment is also used here. To recapitulate the details, the video clip was constructed using the visuals of an ITN news story which was broadcast in March 1986. An inconsequential portion of the original footage was excised but the superimposed ITN logo and the name of the original reporter, Vernon Mann, were retained, since deleting them would have required the removal of integral segments of the action. Also retained were the superimposed information of the location, Dublin, and the name of the suspect around whom the action revolved, Evelyn Glenholmes.

The story which was filmed in several locations throughout the city of Dublin, Ireland, charted the events which surrounded a woman named Evelyn Glenholmes. She had been arrested on charges of murder and bombing in connection with the IRA, but was released because extradition warrants which had been prepared by Scotland Yard were declared technically defective by the Irish judge before whom she appeared.

The first images seen by Ss were three consecutive still shots taken from the moving footage and framed by a white line, as though a photograph, presented against a blue background. The first of these shots pictured Evelyn Glenholmes with two people behind her. Above the shot was the word FREED; below it were the words *Yard warrants 'defective'*. The second of the shots pictured Evelyn

Glenholmes held by two men in dark suits. Above the shot was the word RE-ARRESTED; below it were the words *Awaiting new warrants.* The third of the shots showed Evelyn Glenholmes and a uniformed man standing next to each other. Above the shot were the words FREED AGAIN; below it were the words *Police custody rejected.*

The moving footage began with Glenholmes' release from the courthouse. Several people ran toward the courthouse gates as she made her way toward them to get into a car and away from the courthouse. This scene, filled with people operating in a very dynamic fashion, was to set the pace for the rest of the clip. The next scene pictured Glenholmes walking down the street with a host of others, including the Special Branch officers who were keeping her under surveillance. Displeased with the situation, she eventually broke free from the legal escort. Amidst numerous participants and bystanders in the plentiful scuffles which ensued - and indeed were liberally dispersed throughout the clip - were people recognizable from other Sinn Fein publicity. After a great deal of turmoil both on the street and inside a department store, Glenholmes was recaptured and taken back to court. In the final scene she was released for the second time and driven away in a car, without surveillance.

Again, the visuals included many crowd scenes of an ambiguous nature. These scenes suggested tension and conflict through chaotic movements and struggles, but precisely because of the lack of definition inherent in such mass motion, individual actions were not clearly perceptible. Hence, as in the previous experiment, the

scenes were highly open to individual interpretation dependent upon the assistance of verbal information. The verbal information was also crucial to understanding a shot such as that of a lone man walking in a dark suit. This man appeared in only one brief shot and was not seen in the company of any other character, but the commentary revealed him to be the suspect's lawyer. Therefore the spoken text accompanying the fast moving images was a prime source of information to be used in understanding the clip.

2.4 Independent Variables

Dubbed onto the visuals were three different commentaries which served as independent variables for the three groups. These were narrated by a lecturer from the University of Strathclyde. The three commentaries all contained the same facts and sequence of events. They differed, however, in their syntactical arrangements. More specifically, the use of active and passive voices linked to the inscribing of grammatical / logical subjects was manipulated. For example,

COMMENTARY 1 : Whenever possible, the police or Special Branch were constructed as both the logical and grammatical subjects of active sentences, making them the performers of the action which occurred.

e.g.

The police	*followed*	*the woman*	*(through town)*
subject	*verb*	*object*	
agent	*process*	*patient*	

COMMENTARY 2 : Whenever possible, the woman, Evelyn Glenholmes, was constructed as both the logical and grammatical subjects of active sentences, making her the performer of the action which occurred.

e.g.

The woman	*led*	*police*	*(through town)*
subject	verb	object	
agent	process	patient	

COMMENTARY 3 : Whenever possible, the woman, Evelyn Glenholmes, was constructed as the subject of passive sentences, which made her the grammatical but not the logical subject, In other words, this commentary put Glenholmes into subject position syntactically but made her the recipient rather than the performer of the action which occurred.

e.g.

The woman	*was followed*	*by police*	*(through town)*
subject	verb	object	
patient	process	agent	

It was necessary to employ a three group design in order to assess the influences of both the traditional subject position (first noun) in clauses, and that of the actor/agent or force behind the action performed in a clause. The actor/agent can occur at the beginning of the clause (active voice) or at the end (passive voice, except for truncated passives, which delete the final noun.)

Finally, it must be stated that in the interests of coherence and replicating the news story genre which attempts to match each description to an image, the first experiment was not able to thoroughly systematise the distribution of variables. In this experiment, occasionally there were necessary pauses in the commentary, in order to keep the presentation of variables as orderly as possible. This was a preferable arrangement as not only were the variables presented systematically, but also the pauses did not affect the experimental commentaries inasmuch as they occurred at similar intervals in all three commentaries. Such pauses are normal practice in television commentaries but may seem more striking in this clip because of the lack of ambient sound which a standard broadcast clip would have in the background.

2.5 Note Concerning the Content of the Stimulus Material

Although the subject matter of the presented material involved such strongly emotive entities as Evelyn Glenholmes and the IRA, these were coincidental characteristics of the clip. The footage was chosen primarily for the visual confusion which made the spoken commentary more crucial to the comprehension of this clip than the commentary is for most clips. It was decided, however, in a major departure from the commentaries of the first experiment, not to try to obscure the true facts and personalities in this case as real-world situations are often comprehended in terms of previous knowledge. Moreover, IRA / Sinn Fein related material is so frequently broadcast on British television that viewer habituation

may well diminish much of the sensational nature of the content (though not necessarily the gravity of the situation.) Thus verisimilitude was given priority over a clinically experimental agenda which would require as few external givens as possible. It was felt that results obtained in the chosen fashion would consequently be more representative of the typical viewing situation.

After the decision was made to present the material in this fashion, and the technical implementation of the decision was completed, a number of salient unforseen events occurred in terms of the socio-historical setting of the experiment. Shortly before the time when the experiment was conducted (April 1988), the IRA presence in the media was particularly visible, as the following incidents had been reported :

a) three IRA members were shot dead by an SAS force in Gibraltar
b) a Protestant sniper attacked an IRA funeral
c) two British soldiers were caught up in an IRA funeral procession and killed by members of that procession.

The latter two incidents took place in Northern Ireland.

While this type of unanticipated media exposure must be considered as a potentially confounding variable, it was decided that that this variable would not unduly affect the results of my experiment as no one of the three groups could reasonably be expected to have been more exposed to this background information than the other two groups were. Furthermore, the evaluation of the

results involves comparative rather than absolute figures. That is to say, if a question asked for sympathy toward a given character to be recorded on a numbered scale, the differences between the responses of each group would be the issue of contention. If the responses of all the groups were situated at the top of the scale, it would be of no more consequence to the analysis than if they were situated at the middle or the bottom of the scale. It is purely the effects of the independent variable which are under investigation and that is only shown in a group's scores relative to the other two groups' scores.

2.6 Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix) was constructed such that the first item was a request for a free recall synopsis of what occurred in the video clip which had just been viewed. This item was placed at the beginning of the questionnaire to elicit a memory of the clip which was neither prompted nor constrained by the influence of subsequent questions. It was hoped that such responses would suggest which elements of the video clip made the greatest impression, inclusive of elements which may not have been addressed in individual questions elsewhere in the questionnaire.

The second item required Ss to order a jumbled list of five images into the sequence in which those images occurred on the video clip. These were purely visual items and consequently identical for all three groups.

After these two items were a series of fifteen questions to be responded to by marking a point somewhere along a 5-point Likert scale, with zero denoting middle ground or neutrality regarding the given issue. These scales recorded respondent assessment of several aspects of the two main forces acting in the story (the woman suspect and the police), regarding their actions as portrayed in the video and also of the police and the IRA independent of the experimental material. This latter assessment was, however, not totally independent of the video, as the video had already been seen at the time the respondents were presented with these particular questions. Rather, such an assessment was seen as an indication of how the respondent perceives his own position.

Finally, Ss were asked to offer ideas on how similar situations could be avoided. Again, this question, like the free recall elicited at the beginning of the questionnaire, provided scope for respondents to express their opinions independently of numerical or chronological categories. After the questions pertaining to the stimulus material there was a space for subjects to provide brief demographic data such as age and gender.

Ss were presented with both open-ended questions and questions requiring scale ratings because these two types of questions approach an issue with different conceptual frameworks. According to Kraus and Davis (1976), an open ended question "locates the dependent variable in the *individual issue salience* category", i.e. not directly in relation to other issues, while a rating question "places the measurement of the dependent variable in the category of

perceived issue salience, i.e. in relation to other issues. Although Kraus and Davis' ratings ranked the importance of issues against each other within a single question, while in this experiment ratings were done on identical individual scales for each question. I suggest that this formulation was still worth taking into consideration. When responding to any given question, Ss would be aware of their other responses on identical scales. This is not to suggest modification of responses due to task familiarity, but rather to suggest that Ss may take into consideration issues raised earlier in the questioning process.

3.0 GENERAL TRENDS OF RESULTS

The results of the three groups which received the three forms of stimulus materials were found to differ in a number of areas. The conventionally accepted significance level of $p<.05$ was adopted in all the statistical evaluations. While the results were not uniform across all questions, in terms of significance levels, the expected trends were frequently evident. Or, to put it another way, the direction of the results was frequently predicted, at least for two of the groups, but the margin by which the groups differed was not invariably enough to statistically verify the hypothesis in all cases.

For the items which concerned free recall, the outstanding image and suggestions for future action, the evaluation of phrases was necessarily more subjective than the evaluation of the strictly numerical responses of the equal interval scales and the sequencing

item. An independent evaluator was therefore called in for comparative assessments to exclude the possibility of experimental bias in the evaluations. Chi square tests for these items did not reveal significance at the level tested for but the tables (see appendix) reveal some noteworthy differences.

There were no significant differences in the sequencing, a result consistent with the hypothesis since this section required Ss only to remember images in relation to each other rather than to explain them in terms of an overall meaning, a requirement of subsequent items.

The most interesting results were derived from the section in which 5-point scales were used by Ss to reveal value judgments they had reached.

3.1 The Likert Scale Questions

The results of the scales were amassed using a two sample t-test , comparing groups 1, 2 and 3 in a series of two-way comparisons, i.e. GROUP 1 compared with GROUP 2, GROUP 2 compared with GROUP 3 and GROUP 1 compared with GROUP 3. To ascertain results at $p<.05$, the t-values for the groups were (according to size) : GROUP 1 = 1.981, GROUP 2 = 1.985 and GROUP 3 = 1.976. These were all rounded to 1.98. Table 1 (see appendix) shows the means of the groups before the t-test was applied and thereby reveals both significant and non-significant trends.

The question which asked Ss to rate the likelihood of the woman's guilt produced responses which were significantly different between all three groups. As expected, Ss exposed to Commentary One, which foregrounded the police (e.g. The police freed the woman.), rated the woman least likely to be guilty. The unexpected occurrence is that the commentary using her as the subject of the passive voice (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) rated her even more likely to be guilty than that using her as the subject of the active voice (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) Although this passive commentary, Commentary Three, does usually fit in between Commentaries One and Two, as far as numerical results are concerned, it does fluctuate to a greater extent than either of the others. Why this should be is not certain and therefore a matter for conjecture. I would suggest, however, that the volatile nature of the responses this commentary engenders might be due to the fact that this commentary melds characteristics of each of the other two commentaries. At certain points in the course of the report, the effects of one set of characteristics may be triggered to exert a stronger influence than the characteristics of the other commentary. What the trigger consists of is not something which I or others have yet been able to pinpoint, but it seems likely that it would be a matter involving an interaction of visual and verbal aspects and the phatic response to that interaction.

In the first scene of the clip, the "Courthouse Gates" scene, the hypothesized trend was evident, although not statistically significant, for Ss ratings of the woman's aggression. The ratings

of police aggression in the same scene also appeared in the order hypothesized, with GROUP 1 (those who heard "The police freed the woman, etc.) attributing significantly more aggression to the police than the other two groups did.

Likewise for the "Street Scenes", the ratings of aggression were as hypothesized, with GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) attributing significantly more aggression to the police than the other two groups did and GROUP 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) attributing significantly more aggression to the woman than the other two groups did. In the "British Home Stores" scene, the hypothesized trend was again paralleled by the results, with GROUP 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) attributing to the woman the most aggression, GROUP 3 (The woman was freed by police.) attributing a middling amount, and GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) attributing significantly less aggression to the woman than did GROUP 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.). The differences for the attribution of police aggression in this scene were not statistically significant but GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) did, as expected, rate the police more aggressive than the other two groups did.

Again, while the difference was not significant, GROUP 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) found the account's portrayal of the woman to be less sympathetic than the other two groups did. GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) perceived the portrayal of the police to be significantly less sympathetic than the other two

groups did and indeed, GROUP 2 was the only group to rate the portrayal of the police in the positive zone of the scale.

It similarly came as no surprise that GROUP 1 's (e.g. The police freed the woman.) rating of identification with the police was the lowest of the three groups and GROUP 2 's (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) rating of identification with the woman was the lowest of the three groups, though neither of these differences was significant. The most unusual aspect of the results to this question was a surprisingly strong, and indeed significant, show of identification with the police from GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.). GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) predictably found the woman least responsible and the police most responsible, the latter significantly so, for the tempestuous action which characterized the clip. As stated earlier, the last two questions in this section cannot be credibly evaluated because they ask for an assessment independent of exposure which has already occurred.

Overall, these results suggest that Ss perceive the agent of an action as being strongly identified not only with the effects of the individual action itself, but also with the circumstances and character of the general action. The hypothesis was confirmed on several items and was frequently supported even when the extent of that support did not include statistical significance. The area which is most difficult to characterize is that of the passive subject commentary (three). Ss exposed to this commentary identified with the police more than either of the other groups did, according

to one item, and found the woman most likely to be guilty in another. These results although consistent with each other are consistent neither with the hypothesis nor the general trend of the results. Moreover, in the first two scenes, although formally occupying middle ground, this group's ratings of the woman's aggression closely approximated those of the group which was exposed to the 'police as active agent' commentary. This suggests a possible struggle for hegemony between the two major characteristics of Commmentary Three (e.g. The woman was freed by police.), i.e. between the woman as the first occurring noun and grammatical subject vs. the woman as passive recipient of the action which unfolded around her. This point will be developed in section 4.3.

More straightforwardly, it is interesting to note that when a group's results differed significantly from those of the other groups that difference manifested itself most frequently on questions specifically concerned with the grammatical subject/agent of that group's commentary. For instance, this was particularly true for GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) which differed significantly from the other groups on questions of police aggression in the first two scenes and questions of police responsibility and the sympathy of their portrayal in the account.

3.2 Free Recall

The free recall item revealed that many Ss felt given characters / organizations were important enough to be included in

the synopsis and thereby how strongly that entity impressed the Ss in their brief viewing of the clip. The three categories representing these entities were :

a) whether a subject named Evelyn Glenholmes or included a permutation of that proper name, e.g. Evelyn, Glenholmes, Miss Glenholmes. This category was chosen because proper names are thought to be "rigid designators" (Kripke 1980, see section 3.2 in the previous experiment) which attach reference to an individual in every possible world, thereby providing a degree of emphasis.

b) whether a subject mentioned either or both the IRA/terrorism and Sinn Fein, an indication of the wider political significance of this individual case.

c) whether a subject mentioned the police, either by that noun or as Special Branch officers, an escort etc. indicating subject assessment of the extent of the law enforcement role in the episode. Since the images emphasized the woman suspect, this measure helps to reveal the comparative strengths of imagery and commentary. This is particularly relevant for Commentary One (e.g. The police freed the woman.), wherein the police are grammatical and logical subjects and the commentary is consequently not fully consonant (insofar as emphasis only--all commentaries are factually correct) with the images.

True to the hypothesized outcome, and representative of the strength of the commentary's influence, GROUP 1 (e.g. The police

freed the woman.) mentioned the police far more frequently than did either of the other two groups and GROUP 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) named Evelyn Glenholmes marginally more frequently than did GROUPS 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) and 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.)

3.3 Outstanding Imagery

The images which stood out most strongly appeared to fall into three main categories. These were :

a) the general confusion and crowds

b) the conflict and violence present

c) Evelyn Glenholmes -- her physical characteristics and anything/anyone closely associated with her.

It can be seen (table 3) that GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) was least likely to respond with an image centering on Evelyn Glenholmes and most likely to concentrate on the crowds / confusion and violence / conflict aspects of the situation. Such a result is consistent with the hypothesis. The curious result is the exceptionally strong tendency for GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) to list an image aligned with Evelyn Glenholmes.

3.4 Avoidance Action

The final item, which asked Ss to note what sort of action they thought could be taken in future to avoid the types of scenes which

were depicted in the clip. The responses to this question again fell into three general modes of thought. One strain of thought concentrated on promoting a lower profile for such potentially volatile court cases, one on improving the efficiency and accuracy of the procedures which attend such an incident and a third on politically and emotionally rather than bureaucratically oriented solutions. Whereas the first two types of responses could be applied to court cases of various natures, this third solution was more specific to the Glenholmes case and the Anglo-Irish content of the situation depicted in the clip. A few Ss also said there was no solution or that they did not know one. GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) revealed themselves to be considerably less likely to propose a solution specific to the woman's situation than did the two groups for which she was the subject of commentary. This was the strongest result within the confines of this question although minor variances can be discerned elsewhere. The most intriguing cross question result, however, is the fact that GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.), which was the group to most frequently mention the IRA in the free recall item was also the group most likely to propose avoidance action of the third (political/emotional) kind. These responses represented equal numbers of pro-British/United Kingdom and pro-Ireland/United Ireland views. These results were obtained although this group ranked second, between the two other groups, in their self-declared amount of identification with the woman suspect.

4.0 DISCUSSION

This section attempts to evaluate the findings of this experiment from three angles. Firstly, there is an examination of the nature of the news story as a medium for the communication of information. Secondly, there is an examination of this experiment as a balance between empirical and theoretical traditions. Finally, the implications of the results are detailed.

4.1 Nature of the Medium

Before discussing the results specific to this experiment, it is worth while to make a distinction between the type of story presentation involved in a news report and that involved in a more traditional narrative situation. The main character of a narrative of longer duration is often characterized through the use of background information and detailed descriptions which help to construct that character as a protagonist. In the case of the news report, which, as previously mentioned, most often describes tension between two or more elements, the emphasis is laid on a person or group with whom viewers have no prior identification. Therefore, the viewer cannot appreciate the position of the main character in a news report in the same manner as a character in a more detailed narration which operates without the time constraints of news. This difference acts to reveal Bloomfield's (1933:139) definition of "the meaning of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer." and

Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) definition of the "meaning of an utterance" as the "predictive assessment of what follows." The news report is a unique mode of conveying information, which, although sharing characteristics of newspapers and general visual media, cannot be wholly equated with such other forms of communication.

4.2 Nature of the Experiment

This experiment and the previous one operated largely according to established principles of controlled experiments. However, these experiments also attempted to construct a means of addressing, in a manner which might not be within the scope of fully controlled experiments, the world which exists beyond the isolated aspects of the immediate experimental setting. (I am hesitant to designate this world by its common label "real" because that term is associated with a variety of definitions, of which only some apply at present.) Thus, in this second experiment the names and charges were included exactly as they occurred in the original broadcast and, in both experiments, the coordination of the visual footage and the verbal commentary took precedence over systematic manipulation of the independent variable, when these two aspects of the clip did not coincide. The task was to contrive a situation which lay between the worldly relevance of field experiments and the precision of laboratory ones. To accomplish this task it was decided to utilise those standard controls for inter-group experimentation which would operate without detracting from the verisimilitude of the report. Nonetheless, for both experiments, the results obtained are

necessarily limited to the population of first year Arts and Social Science students, from which the samples were drawn. While such results might apply to the population at large, this cannot be ascertained from the present study.

The fact that GROUP 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) produced the most significant differences would seem to be linked not only to the fact that the police acted as the grammatical subject of this commentary while the woman acted as the grammatical subject of the other two commentaries, but also to the fact that the visuals emphasized the woman, thereby producing a discrepancy between the visuals and Commentary One (e.g. The police freed the woman.) which did not exist between the visuals and Commentaries Two (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) and Three (e.g. The woman was freed by police.).

4:3 What the Results Suggest

The results of this experiment present a scenario in which the linguistic emphasis of an actor is seen to provide a point of departure for Ss to establish their appraisals of a report fraught with more ambiguity than explanation. Just as Perfetti and Goldman's (1974) experimental work shows that a referent which is thematised as a syntactic subject prompts better recall, so there is evidence here that the commentary structures, thematising either the woman or the police, provided a way to negotiate the report's ambiguity. At least for GROUPS 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) and 2 (e.g.

least for GROUPS 1 (e.g. The police freed the woman.) and 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.), the pattern of responses was consistent with the hypothesis insofar as the order of the results emerged, albeit with intensity which varied along with the nature of the questions. The apparent inconsistency of GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) provides scope to broaden the nature of the hypothesis. The items for which GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) produced scores suggesting a particular need for this were their strong belief in the woman's guilt and resposibility along with their strong rating of her and attributes directly associated with her, e.g. her clothing as the strongest image of the clip. The aforementioned correlation between GROUP 3's (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) free recall and avoidance action results follow suit. The fact that GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) scores in these areas were of greater magnitude than GROUP 2 (e.g. The woman gained her freedom.) scores suggests that the subject of a passive construction, a staple syntactic form of news and scientific writing, can, in some instances, receive even more emphasis than the subject of an active construction.

On the whole, the results of GROUP 3 (e.g. The woman was freed by police.) suggest that the grammatical subject position overrides the passive structure in terms of Ss perception of a character. In other words, Ss seem to ignore the fact that in Commentary Three (e.g. The woman was freed by police.), the woman is the entity affected by the action and instead, in several instances, react as though she were the agent or logical subject of the deep structure as well as being the subject of the surface structure. Thus

perceptions of both the roles of characters and the causes of events were affected. (See the discussion of Trew's work at the end of chapter 1, which suggests that agency suppressed in truncated passive sentences may be attributed to the patient, the grammatical subject.)

5.0 CONCLUSION

Finally, to summarise the nature and purpose of the experiments which have just been presented, both retained the traditional methodology of controlled experimentation in terms of sample acquisition, exposure to the stimulus, stimulus manipulation etc. They departed from the norm, however, in the construction of the stimulus material by expanding traditional psycholinguistic experimentation beyond its usual subject matter of very well controlled, yet mostly restricted and non-contextualised sentences or other portions of discourse. Instead, these experiments used a news clip as the extralinguistic setting, with commentaries constructed for the testing purposes, to approximate a situation of authentic, i.e. naturalistic, language use. (See Carswell and Rommetveit 1971 for a justification of such expanded experimental focus.) The results suggest that specific codings used within the separate sentences of the report help to skew Ss responses to questionnaire items. In this fashion, these experiments have shown how linguistic structures can help to facilitate different readings of a series of images and, more broadly, how language and the medium

which uses that language to convey information may be factors contributing to the construction of a given perspective of reality.

As discussed in Chapter One, language and/or television news do not present information in fashion *X*, which necessarily, that is, inevitably, leads to viewer interpretation *Y*. Rather the range of possible meanings is narrowed such that a given preferred meaning is the one most likely to be understood as the accurate one by viewers. In the experiment, the Ss neither reached unanimously concurring intra-group conclusions nor unanimously contrasting inter-group conclusions. Instead, differences in the verbal texts were responded to in such a way that most Ss within a group produced responses of a similar nature, indicating similar interpretations. As these differed from group to group, just as the verbal commentaries did, we can see a quite evident correlation between syntactic characteristics of the text and viewer responses. This is the key finding of this research. To attempt to account for within-group differences, however, takes us into a slightly different area, that of viewer background. The discussion in the next chapter then, while not intending to detract from the clear evidence of textual influence, seeks to offer a picture of what modifying factors a viewer brings to bear on his interpreation of a report.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND VIEWER BACKGROUND

1.0 INTERPRETING THE NEWS : TEXT AND CONTEXT

The experimental work just presented shows how, given a fairly homogeneous audience, textual determinants (the commentary's syntactical structures) can be instrumental in producing different readings across a viewership. The results related in the last two chapters indicate that even with visual text held constant, Ss exposed to linguistically manipulated voice-overs produced differing responses to a number of questionnaire items. To recap, those who witnessed the woman/police as having a more active role in terms of grammatical voice and thematisation (e.g. the most active role would be held by the grammatical subject of an active sentence) also considered her/them to play a more actively responsible role in producing the sequence of events which occurred. Seen from the reception angle, such findings corroborate Van Dijk's (1977) suggestion regarding sentence production--that the most perceptually salient entity will be mentioned first, but also suggest that the converse may be true: that which is mentioned first becomes the most perceptually salient entity. The referents which were mentioned first had more salience and hence more responsibility attributed to them by subjects. These results suggest a measure of interpretive guidance to be found within the structures of the text itself. At the same time, however, it should be recognised that with a more heterogeneous audience, or a more strongly biased audience (e.g. drawn from a marginal group such as staunch Unionists or staunch Republicans) a variety of background factors, including perhaps

frequent exposure to other texts, might interact with the textual determinants.

Such interactions between the background and the text have the potential to produce varying readings and varying intensities of the same reading, even among viewers who are exposed to structurally identical texts, for "Perception of any stimulus is a complex constructive activity involving motivational and cognitive factors as well as those pertaining to the stimulus itself." (Baggaley and Duck 1975:73)

What this chapter aims to show is that research in the field need not be consigned to either pure textual study or pure audience study. Attempts to bring together textual semiotics and empirical sociology's descriptions of audienceshave been rare and not always successful. The previous theoretically-oriented chapters have concentrated on contributions made by textual mechanisms in mass media and language towards the presentation of televisual news text, examining how these mechanisms foster particular versions of reality. This chapter approaches the subject from a somewhat different angle: developing a dynamic framework of news text interpretation by showing the active interplay between the text (how the information is "packaged") and the viewer (the pool of extra-textual factors the viewer brings to the viewing experience) . This will be done through an examination of two paradigms, those of *relevance* and *social patterning*. Such an approach is indebted to Merton's (1946) idea that while content analysis provides clues, response analysis provides verification of such clues.

2.0 RELEVANCE THEORY : INTRODUCTION TO THE SPERBER AND WILSON MODEL

One way of approaching the relationship of text to interpreter is to look at the nature of communication in general. This is the starting point adopted by Sperber and Wilson (1986). It is primarily, but not exclusively, their sophisticated conceptual model which will be drawn upon in this section's description of the process of communication, in an endeavour to establish how a viewer engages with the information presented in a news report.

Briefly, Sperber and Wilson claim that of the two major models of communication currently in vogue, the code model (information is conveyed by the semiological encoding and decoding of messages) and the inferential model (information is conveyed by the production and interpretation of evidence), neither can sufficiently both explain and describe the communicative process. Each contains necessary attributes which the other lacks, but even together they are inadequate to the task of providing a comprehensive account of the issue. Instead, Sperber and Wilson claim that a new factor, i.e. one that is not mentioned in either of the two established models, is the key to understanding how meaning is conveyed. That factor is the Gricean maxim of "relevance" (defined below) and the reasoning behind their formulation and propogation of such a view is this:

Common to all the theoretical formulations in question is the belief that some sort of expressive mediation is required for information which is possessed by one person to be conveyed to and

understood by another person. For human communication, this mediation is most commonly speech. But the message which is communicated from one person to another involves more than what is precisely linguistically encoded. Rather, one must bring into consideration the structuring elements of the extra-linguistic factors operating at the time of the communication (e.g. temporal setting of utterance, relationship between speaker and listener, attitudes of each, etc.) I refer to these elements as "structuring" because they provide background information which guides the receiver's attention such that certain aspects of the utterance are focused upon and interpreted differently from others. However, targeting the focus of attention is still not sufficient to explicate the interpretive process -- in particular, for example, the assignment of reference. Sperber and Wilson (1986:9) explain why the code model of communication can only be considered a sub-section of a more comprehensive model:

> "there is a gap between the semantic representation of sentences and the thoughts actually communicated by utterances. This gap is filled not by more coding but by inference."

Thus the semiotic system is the basic system in effect but the purely linguistic properties of its signs are limited and at a certain point (i.e. beyond the atomistic, literal meanings of lexical items) this system becomes inadequate to the task of fully conveying / recovering the message to be communicated. Decoding alone is too closely bound to analytical reasoning which uses the given signifiers. This is the point at which the mode of inferring from the available premises takes over because

> "In general, conclusions are not associated to their premises by a code and signals do not warrant the messages they convey." (Sperber and Wilson 1986:13)

2.1 The Sentence--Utterance Distinction

It is important to note a distinction which Sperber and Wilson make in the (1986:9) statement quoted above. They speak of "the semantic representation of a *sentence*" vs. "the thoughts actually communicated by *utterances*" The code system, with its grammar of phonetic and semantic representations works quite well when confined to the semantic sphere of the *sentence*, a purely linguistic sphere which Sperber and Wilson refer to as a "common core of meaning". This common core, however, by definition falls short of the total communicative meaning. Communicative meaning belongs to the pragmatic sphere of the *utterance*, which contains everything that the sentential sphere does plus the extralinguistic nuances brought to the message by the context in which the communication takes place. These latter elements, introduced over and above the grammatical / linguistic format of the actual wording, influence comprehension and interpretation of the words. They integrate contextual and semantic properties, thereby helping the listener to infer certain particulars which bear upon the meaning of the core of the message. Although different utterances of the same sentence may generate different readings and assumptions (structured sets of assumptions) of communicative intent, because of the different, implicit, propositional attitudes involved (e.g. the same sentence could be uttered with a tone of sincerity or one of irony), external

elements do not take the place of the words themselves. Rather, these external elements clear up ambiguities. They function as mechanisms which help to construct a position with particular cognitive coordinates within an utterance. They provide an angle from which to view the words, recover intent and accordingly make adjustments, necessary for assimilation, starting from a point of socially conventional or normative meanings.

2.2 The Role of the Cognitive Environment

Furthermore, it is not merely the immediate context which is brought into this decoding and inferring process. Another important factor is a person's "total cognitive environment." This is a combination of both the observable environment in which the communication takes place and, perhaps even more importantly, the vast amount of conceptual information derived from the psychological and cognitive abilities which a person brings to bear on the matter. These abilities include potential understandings, determined by available beliefs, assumptions, expectations etc. and they efficiently operate in complex reasoning processes which are extremely difficult to delineate within traditional frameworks of explanation. Thus, the cognitive environment is a matter of both what *is* and what *can be* known by the person, as the acquisition and development of further knowledge requires using the already existing stock of knowledge as premises to be modified, confirmed etc. The more confident the individual is in the definitional strength of

these premises, the more certain that individual can be of the new information derived therefrom.

> "It is generally accepted that people have not only the knowledge that they actually entertain, but also the knowledge that they are capable of deducing from the knowledge they entertain." (Sperber and Wilson 1986:40)

The individual's accumulation of knowledge is, in part, an ongoing inferential process. One may gain this new picture of the world through the use of the conscious deduction of a demonstrative inference, as in problem solving, or through other more automatic (i.e. spontaneous, effortless and often subconscious) means, as in ordinary thought and verbal comprehension. Because this metamorphic operation is potentially limitless, the key selection principle which is adopted to guide one through masses of information is efficiency, or "optimal allocation of central processing resources"

> "Resources have to be allocated to the processing of information which is likely to bring about the greatest contribution to the mind's general cognitive goals at the smallest processing cost." (Sperber and Wilson 1986:48)

2.3 The Concept of Relevance

It is at this point that the quintessentially pragmatic concept of *relevance* emerges, because deriving new information (either changing pre-existing knowledge or integrating additional concepts) from old via inferences is a flexible context-dependent modification process which continually builds upon itself. A wider range of new representational knowledge, providing new and elaborate contextual

implications can be acquired with a continually increasing and, therefore, frequently reconstructed base store of old knowledge. The idea of relevance also helps to explain how people bridge the gap between the overt, literal meaning of a sentence and the full range of its implicit propositions and connotations. Thus interpretation is not fixed but emerges from organised processes of inference. (See arithmetical examples below in section 3.0. The wider range of knowledge just mentioned may be conceptualised as a greater integer.) At successive points during the progress of a discourse, the listener will be processing a different, increasing group of assumptions and trying to perceive and define an overall logical structure. These assumptions, as additions to consciousness, provide the contextual background of mental readiness and accumulated reference points against which later elements of the discourse are anticipated and interpreted. Sperber and Wilson (1986:48,49) assert

> "When the processing of new information gives rise to such a multiplication effect, we call it relevant. The greater the multiplication effect, the greater the relevance...an individual's particular cognitive goal at a given moment is always an instance of a more general goal: maximising the relevance of the information processed."

2.4 Ostension

Sperber and Wilson (1986:49) label human intentional behaviour as a case of ostension, defining this term as "behaviour which makes manifest an intention to make something manifest," and offering "showing someone something" as an example of such behaviour. The intention is to reveal and promote information through signification

which the listener will find relevant and therefore worth registering and keeping in mind. This act of communicating through calling attention to something reveals the inferential nature of communication, i.e. that providing explicit details is not always a necessary precondition for conveying a message. The speaker takes into account listener orientations to the situation and invokes ostension in order to deliberately : 1) indicate, through structural, contextual and / or directly stated means, that the information to be conveyed is indeed worthwhile and assumed to be relevant to the listener's distinct cognitive environment, and 2) focus or accentuate listener attention on these particularly relevant aspects of multi-referential information. From the listener's perspective, understanding such ostension precipitates the following inferential processing tasks: 1) construction and confirmation of hypotheses regarding the communicator's intentions, and 2) confirming existing assumptions / completing partially formed assumptions which are stored knowledge in the cognitive environment.

> "Interpreting an utterance involves more than merely identifying the assumption explicitly addressed; it crucially involves working out the consequences of adding this assumption to a set of assumptions that have already been processed."
> (Sperber and Wilson 1986:118)

Thus, although extremely important, the text alone is not a sufficient representation of meaning. Meaning is continually constructed by each receiver in accordance with the variables and procedures mentioned in this section; it is not found unproblematically, self-evidently or identically by all.

2.5 The Operation of Relevance Theory in Television News Comprehension

There exists a rather important link between the constructs of relevance theory and empirical work specifically concerned with viewer reception of television news stories; that is, such an account of relevance and the interpretive process acts as a theoretical framework which accommodates the findings of studies more particularly concerned with news story comprehension. For instance, Woodall, Davis and Sahin (1983) claim that comprehending a television news story involves two modes of information processing : both "bottom up" (joining together pieces of incoming information to make a composite "whole") and "top down" (using knowledge stored in memory as a framework to accomodate information input). (See also the discussion on the still shot sequence in the first experiment) In other words, the report includes attention-grabbing perceptual features which, once focused upon, are then slotted into the appropriate frame of reference provided by the viewer's encyclopaedic store of general world knowledge. How these particular perceptual features are presented in the report (encoded) may well determine not only what knowledge is understood but also what knowledge is stored, to be used in future understanding. (Tulving and Thompson 1973). According to the relevance theory outlined above, that information which is understood and stored would have been perceived by the listener as relevant to the things with which he was concerned. (See also corresponding work by Mackay (1969) who, as an information theorist, speaks of the conditional readiness of

the cognitive state as providing the orientating resources available for the reception of new information.)

To apply the theory to a specific instance, when the Ss watched the video clip in the experiment, it is likely that background frameworks of assumptions about Northern Ireland and the vivid and dynamic (albeit confusing) quality of the visuals combined with the independent variable of linguistic foregrounding to push either the woman or the police (depending on the commentary condition) into the forefront of attention for Ss. Once there, moreover, by virtue of that salience, whoever was so syntactically highlighted became intimately associated with the chaos portrayed, in an interplay of form and meaning. Moreover, the processing of subsequent events was influenced by the assumptions that association engendered. The actual causal sequence was thus linguistically obscured.

3.0 SOCIAL PATTERNING AS A COUNTERPART TO RELEVANCE THEORY

This discussion of links between the theoretical and empirical work being done is not, however, a full explanation of news text processing by viewers. Relevance theory has not yet declared any interest in the social location and distribution of background assumptions and how these assumptions activate varied interpretations. Indeed, relevance theory focuses upon the operation of these assumptions as a universal process, rather than one systematically affected by social groupings. This is an unfortunate deficiency in an otherwise illuminating theory.

In addressing those interpretive procedures which are commonly shared across the audience, linguistic/philosophical theories describe the structure upon which yet another layer of influence, the environment, operates. An example of research which begins to take account of diversity within the audience (without lapsing too heavily into the uses and gratifications trap of conceiving of people as an atomistic collection of needs and idiosyncracies) is that of Mackay (1969). Although not addressing himself to the social realm as such, Mackay notes that people with different goals or experiences may evolve cognitive constructions which are incomprehensible to other people and which produce different reactions to the same stimulus. One way the diversity of goals and experiences to which Mackay refers can be understood is in terms of social groupings and cultures. The basic decoding/interpretive process of determining relevance is a constant, but the psychological and cognitive constructs involved are partially products of the social atmosphere in which they occur. This is why specific, individual interpretations are generated. To make a mathematical analogy, the relevance theory described earlier is like an equation and the cognitive / psychological aspects are like individual integers. The mathematical operation carried out remains the same in each instance the equation is invoked (e.g. x+y+1=n), but the final answer may differ across such instances because the integers may vary (e.g. 3+2+1=6 and 4+5+1=10; 6≠10 although the same operation was performed in each case).

3.1 The Production of Meaning and Diversity of Meanings

The meaning or sense of the televised communication is an actively negotiated social interaction which "resides in the force-field between the givenness of programmes and the sense-making of the viewers." (Dahlgren 1988:289). Within this "force-field" which exists between texts and readers, many mediating and transforming influences (e.g. social experiences, mental capacity) operate to interpret functional characteristics, thereby creating a range (sometimes broad, sometimes narrow) of alternatives for the meaning of a message.

Diverse readings should not be dissociated from the contexts in which they occur because such readings depend upon and are fairly commensurate with a spread in the complex personal and social circumstances and predispositions of the viewing audience. These differences contribute to what Westergaard (1977:108) refers to as the

> "ambiguous reality of popular outlooks on the world--a contradictory mixture of dissent, disgruntlement, resentment and suspicion with conformity and acquiescent 'common sense'--the safe 'common denominators' of orientation that square with the practical order of things as they are."

Put simply, there is no access to a common, objective, unified "real" world; nor is there an unambiguous natural structure of things -- only problematics which set the stage for certain perceptions and interpretations to occur. The various experiences of reality are not, however, discretely sequential. What people

experience as reality is indicative of their positions within an extended matrix of factors in constant flux. These experiences are instrumental in guiding interpretations, both in terms of immediate reactions to particular points and an overall opinion of the total offering. Moreover, Loftus (1979) and Neisser (1982) show that people not only differ in their interpretations of why and how things happen but also on what happened, even when the event witnessed is a physical one, which is basically visual or auditory in nature (although who-what-where details are remembered far better than causes and consequences are. See Robinson, Davis, Sahin and O'Toole (1980).)

3.2 Parkin and Morley Formulations

This section concerns itself primarily with formulations developed by David Morley in his various works researching the viewership of the ***NATIONWIDE*** television programme. The introduction to Morley's work, however, is an examination of a model by which he was greatly influenced. This is the decoding model developed by Parkin.

3.2.1 *The Parkin Model*

Parkin (1972) addresses the differential decoding issue by a model which suggests that audiences understand texts according to one of three general meaning systems. The Parkin model holds that

the audience reacts to a text : a) as the encoder intended, according to the subject position constructed in the text (the dominant code); b) mostly as the encoder intended but with a few differences which resist certain aspects of the encoding and reflect the viewer's socially-structured situation (the negotiated code); c) in opposition to what the encoder intended, dissolving and redefining or reconstituting the problematic and questioning the credibility of the material (the oppositional code). Within the frame of this model, Morley (1980) suggests a fourth possible perspective: As a result of life experiences and values which differ vastly from those of the dominant culture in which the report has been constructed, the viewer finds the encoding utterly alien. Because there is no point of departure, that viewer is cognitively non-plussed and can do nothing from where he is culturally situated to connect the material with which he is confronted with personal experience; that is, because of cultural distance, the viewer cannot even grasp terms by which to become involved with the communication (especially connotations), let alone realise its drawbacks and form reasonably articulate opposition to it.

Although Parkin and Morley refer to these meaning systems in terms of "codes", I suggest that this is somewhat misleading terminology. In light of recent theoretical developments, particularly those made by Sperber and Wilson (detailed above), a more accurately descriptive term is *interpretations*. Briefly, to use Sperber and Wilson's terminology, groups which produce different *interpretations* of a text are bringing different background assumptions to the interpretation of that text. So, for instance, a

dominant reading is derived from accepting and using as background assumptions, the dominant viewpoints circulating in society.

3.2.2 *The Morley Criticisms of the Parkin Model*

Morley (1980:21) critically assesses the Parkin model, on which his own work is predicated, as sacrificing wider sociological issues to logical abstractions and leaving room for improvement through the formulation of potential alternatives to flesh out those abstractions. In particular, Morley contends that the three meaning systems proferred by Parkin over simplify the plurality of possible approaches:

> "any adequate schema will need to address itself to the multiplicity of discourses at play within the social formation, to provide systematic differentiations within the categories provided by Parkin, locating different 'versions' or inflections of each major discourse."

Furthermore, Morley (1980:21) is concerned about the fact that Parkin ascribes the three meaning systems to three different points of origin, which exist at different levels in the social formation (dominant = originating in the media ; negotiated = arising from the "local working class community" ; oppositional = produced by a "mass political party based on the working class"). Morley correctly sees these attempts at providing a class-based model as limiting understanding of a far more complex issue :

> "Moreover we must attend, as Parkin fails to do, to the multiplicity of ideologies produced by the range of political parties and organisations within civil society. This is precisely to focus on the relation

> of social and economic structure to ideology, and on the forms of articulation of the one through the other. These questions of social structure are fundamentally linked with the question of the differential interpretation or decoding of texts."

3.2.3 *The Morley Model*

Morley (1980:146-147) also suggests theoretical developments to supercede Parkin's model. He identifies four general decoding positions (Position 1 roughly corresponds to a dominant code/*reading* in the sense of Parkin's model, Positions 2 and 3 to a negotiated code/*reading* and Position 4 to an oppositional code/*reading*):

1) "Where the problematic is unasserted and shared, and passes transparently (e.g. a report's premise that 'race' is a problem--which premise is 'unconsciously' shared by the decoder). To put the idea into a Northern Irish context, one might replace the word "race" by the word "religion".

2) "Where a particular position within a problematic is asserted and accepted; here the encoded position is accepted by the decoder but it is consciously registered as a position (not a 'natural fact') against other positions. To the extent that this is then a recognition of the necessary partiality of any position it is a weaker structure than 1. (e.g. the explicitly made and accepted statement that blacks cause unemployment)." To put this statement into a Northern Irish context, one might replace the words "blacks"

and "unemployment" by "the IRA" and "the troubles", respectively. This structure is less secure because it is clearly expressed, rather than assumed. It is therefore not assimilated into one's collection of assumptions without thought but is accepted as an opinion with which the viewer agrees.

3) "Where a particular position within a problematic is asserted but rejected, while the problematic itself is not brought into question (e.g. the explicitly made statement that blacks cause unemployment is rejected as simply another of the politicians' endless excuses for their failures and the racist problematic is not necessarily challenged)." The same idea holds for the statement that the IRA cause the troubles. This statement is seen as an excuse from the politicians for not taking effective action by addressing the problems with rational policies.

4) "Where the underlying problematic is consciously registered and rejected (e.g. a particular report with racist premises is deconstructed to reveal those premises and another problematic is inserted in its place)." In the Northern Irish context one might label the premises of the rejected problematic as religious rather than "racist".

Morley's formulations are clearly interesting and indeed useful to employ in attempting to develop a foundation for understanding viewer interpretation of news reports. Whether or not these formulations apply to all types of reports as well as they do to Morley's examples and to my own would need to be empirically

established over a variety of news stories. Such stories would need to deal not only with conflict situations but also with lighter "good news" reports, more abstract reports (e.g. economic reports) etc.

One last qualification which must be noted concerning this otherwise helpful model is that it has intrinsic limitations and therefore must be employed with care. If it is indiscriminately applied, there is a risk that one may conflate encoding with decoding. The following example may assist in clarifying my reservations on this point. Let us examine the statement *"The intransigence of the IRA has deep roots in the religious unrest in Northern Ireland."* While Morley's model provides a framework for conceptualising how the information is received, that is, the acceptance or rejection of statements and underlying problematics, it does not address the issue of how the actual language used promotes such acceptances and rejections. In the example statement, there exists a clear example of linguistic condensation, known as *nominalisation*. In nominalisation, which frequently involves deleting an underlying participant, one finds "sentences or parts of sentences, descriptions of actions and the participants involved in them, turned into nouns, or nominals." (Kress and Hodge 1979:20) The deletion and reconstruction process obscures the complexity of the relationship between participants and actions, particularly when the identity of the deleted participant is irrecoverable. What this, in effect, precipitates is a shift in textual focus from those who are causally involved in a process to the process itself, because this process has been nominalised. For instance, by linking the two

words together as a adjective-noun unit, the phrase "religious unrest" suggests that the unrest is based on religion, although the actual causal process is obscured. Therefore the phraseology promotes an unjustified assumption of religion as the causal mechanism, in itself. However, the person who hears such a phrase in the midst of a barrage of other information will not have the time to isolate this rather suspect linkage and discern its function. All the implications of such a phrase are simply incorporated into a general understanding and assessment of the statement. Thus, my point is that while Morley's model assists us in seeing general patterns of response to information, it is insufficient to inform us of the specific triggering mechanisms (such as the linguistic structure through which the information is conveyed) which make those responses likely.

4.0 TELEVISION AS A "DISCURSIVE MECHANISM"

Given that such a spread of orientations to broadcast material exists, it is helpful to conceptualise the issue according to Tolson's (1988:120) suggestion

> "to think of television not simply as a 'text' or even as an 'institution' in the sociological sense, but rather as a discursive mechanism which may be mobilised within a variety of social practices."

Such mobilisation of the televisual discourse can, I submit, be initiated by both producers and receivers of information in order to span the communicative divide and produce meaning. The viewer is encouraged but not obliged to accept the determining terms inscribed

in the discourse. While one can, as a rule, neither apply a *tabula rasa* label to the viewing public, nor suggest that a text promotes full closure of meaning, the textual articulation of the information, as a "complex whole of representations" (Ang 1985:252), is the springboard off of which these sense-making patterns react. Whether or not the viewer is familiar enough with the content to bring many directly applicable background assumptions to bear on it, the structure employed in presenting that topic will be a vital, shaping, sometimes restricting influence on the reading. Edelman (1975:14) suggests that patterns of "linguistic cues evoke pre-structured beliefs", with events, language and self-conceptions as mutually defining parts of an ordered whole. I contend that the interactive nature of reading a text makes it difficult to say whether the encoded text (cues to an inscribed subject position/preferred reading) or the decoding brought to bear upon that text (pre-structured beliefs) by the viewer is "more" important. They are both crucially relevant; the production of positionality and thereby of meaning cannot be reduced solely to the effects of either.

The essence of the complex and subtle contextual relationship which exists between the text and the range of reception/social implications it engenders is encapsulated by Corner and Hawthorn (1980):

> "The reality of determination is the setting of limits and the exertion of pressures, within which variable social practices are profoundly affected but never necessarily controlled."
>
> and endorsed by Morley (1980):

> "all meanings do not exist equally in the message; it has been structured in dominance, although its meaning can never be totally fixed or closed."

Thus, the over-determining form of the text delimits possible meanings rather than prescribes just one.

5.0 TELEVISION NEWS AND ITS VIEWERSHIP

At this point let us review the relationship of the viewer to the news and television as a whole : 1) The television news report is trusted by most of the audience, as a result of painstaking efforts made by the journalism profession to produce a discursive system which appears neutral. 2) Television is a routine part of life. It reaches people in their own homes, where they feel relaxed and less inclined to critically question the information presented than they might be in a more formal setting. 3) Television is not only a medium for delivering news but also for providing entertainment, and thus has friendly, benevolent connotations. On commercial stations the news may even have commercial breaks which advertise upcoming programmes, as well as products to be sold. 4) Television serves a "phatic" function, making the viewer feel part of a larger community of other viewers. This function addresses an especially important issue for homebound people who live alone, without much interpersonal contact in their lives, and feel isolated. For them, television is a link to the outside world. Thus, the viewing of a television news story is framed by a particular

mode of reception which would not apply to other forms of commumnication because

> "the contextual is already structurally implied in the textual...the production of texts and the organisation of a general context of consumption are closely linked." (Ang 1985:253)

6.0 THE PERVASIVE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL FORCES

It would be limiting the immense influence of motivation derived from these and other sources, however, to presume to label such motivation as either a conscious or an unconscious, a rational or an emotional force. One's vast array of environmental influences, individual and social, are multidimensional, spanning all such manifestations. Take, for instance my earlier reference to possible divergent readings of the experimental film clip if it were to be shown to staunch Unionists and Republicans. This hypothesis is not included to suggest that the political involvements of these groups would cause them to invariably consciously ignore what was being said on the clip because they would have their beliefs set and their minds made up. Rather, my conjecture about possibly different responses from differently composed samples of Ss is mindful of the fact that the activation of assumptions and production of readings, no matter how extremely they deviate from the norm, is not always under the viewer's volitional control. This is because the influence of perpetually present social processes and of textual production is often more pervasive than is immediately obvious. Jamieson (1985:64) claims that,

> "on the one hand we are dealing with semiotic man, man as sign and code user, and on the other hand we are dealing with pragmatic man, man related to events and objects in the world. Of course the two cannot be neatly separated in the life of the person; practical events influence thought and signs and codes likewise influence thought."

Social forces do not act as firmly defined, singular "causes" which orchestrate given meanings and fix them into place but as complex differentiated reinforcers of human activity which, like textual aspects themselves, suggest a field or range of meaning. I argue that there is no such thing as a prototypical viewer. What is produced on the screen may not always be successful in describing phenomena in a way which accurately and relevantly intersects with viewers' life experiences. However, the more closely descriptions do match up, the more likely the viewer will be to accept and envision the messages in the spirit in which they were meant and sent. In other words, the viewer's assessment of what is offered up on the television screen will in large part be influenced by how well that screen life approximates the world encountered in daily life. For instance, if a programme purports to portray a community of which the viewer is a member, that viewer will form an impression of whether the show faithfully represents the community by noticing inconsistencies, congruencies, etc. Although actually referring to memory for written texts, Bartlett (1932:227) discusses this type of phenomenon in which the receiver takes in the message while simultaneously retaining awareness of dimensions of self. He describes it as "the attempt to connect something that is given with something other than itself." In the production of a textual reading, the "given" aspect is the text. The "other" is what the

viewer/reader understands of self and "the assumed normality of the world." (Van Dijk 1977:99) If little or no distance exists between the "given" and the "other", to challenge pre-existing beliefs, either because of accurate reporting or reliance on the report as the sole source of information, there should theoretically be equally little or no cognitive resistance mounted against that "given" information as it is consumed.

7.0 THE INDIVIDUAL VIEWER AS SOCIAL BEING

The viewer may think himself able to isolate and judge the "facts" of the position advanced on the inherent merits of those facts. Such a narrow reliance on interpretive skills is self-delusory and impractical insofar as facts do not occur in a vacuum, as discussed in Chapter 1. They are products of the logic and circumstances of their presentation. Furthermore, the viewer's competence in the area of communication reception is also influenced by the source. Haiman (1949), investigating the effects of a speaker's social position on the reception of a speech, found that the same speech on the need for mandatory health insurance was more convincing to experimental subjects when they were told that the speaker was the Surgeon General of the United States than when they were told that the speaker was a Communist or a second-year university student. Similarly Hovland and Weiss (1952) found that articles attributed to high credibility sources created a far greater amount (sometimes triple) of attitude change than articles

attributed to low credibility sources did, and Pêcheux (1978) discovered that the paraphrasings which homogeneous groups of Ss employed in summarising a piece of text varied according to whether those subjects were told that the text originated from a left or right-wing political source. Such findings highlight the potency of context as a mediator and the need to understand more about contextual factors in relation to such a respected institution of everyday life as the television newscast.

The viewer may also think himself a monad, quite autonomous and independently minded, but all viewers are inherently embedded in formations of the socio-historical structure at a particular juncture. These formations allocate resources for the individual to use in constructing his views. Piepe (1978), notes that reactions to televised material are mostly uniform within subcultures, groups which Dahlgren (1988) pinpoints as a prime location of cultural orientation. Hence, the viewer forms a subjective symbolic world with premises and judgments which cannot avoid being relative to the totality of the culture in which he is presently positioned and to the culture which he has been exposed to in the past. These socio-cultural orientations are fundamental parts of who that viewer is, standing between the report (the cultural identity of which was established in Chapter One) and the viewer's understanding of it, through the possible competencies they put at the viewer's disposal. In fact, Ang (1985:251) calls television viewing "an area of cultural struggle." Therefore, although individual idiosyncracies do exist and play an important role in effecting an interpretive reading, in the scope of an investigation into influences on such

readings one must not neglect the social origins which condition individual experiences.

Moreover, although understanding a brief news report may appear to be a fairly simple and immediate process, Schank (1982:15) has identified eight steps which occur in establishing the understanding of a simple story : 1) Make simple inferences; 2) Establish causal connections; 3) Recognise stereotyped situations (scripts); 4) Predict and generate plans; 5) Track people's goals; 6) Recognise thematic relationships between individuals and society; 7) Employ beliefs about the world in understanding; 8) Access and utilise raw facts. When the understanding process is thus broken down into its individual components of thought, it is easy to see the involvement of social influence more readily. Not one of the eight points is exempt from a societal overlay. Plans and goals, accessing and utilising are all prominent in most interactive domains of our everyday lives. As Graber (1976:290) remarks on the subject of individual understandings of common stimuli,

> "it is easy to overstress personal differences in meaning. Individual images, like handwriting styles, vary in detail, but the general configuration of images, as of letters, is similar for persons reared within the same culture or subculture."

Thus, it is likely that subcultural constraints engender a social patterning of responses in conjunction with the cognitive patterns engendered by the textual structures. Were this work to continue on a larger scale, an obvious next step would be to introduce the audience as a variable, for example, conduct experiments with groups of Loyalist and Republican Ss, which, for

the present purposes, can be seen as subcultural populations, or with groups from Northern Ireland and South East England, places where British culture is manifested in quite differing ways.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to briefly recapitulate some earlier assertions and demonstrations. I see this thesis as beginning from the premise that language structures the experience of reality. I have argued that all representations, regardless of how apparently remote or isolated they seem, are relative to the social circumstances in which they take place. Both the language used in a society generally and in the media which broadcast in that society are simultaneously products of, and contributors to, the social order in which they exist. The reality portrayed by the news, then, is dependent upon specific patterns of linguistic selection.

The function of this thesis, then, has been to detail mechanisms which operate to produce this phenomenon of shading the nature of things, or perhaps it would be more precise to say shading *understandings* of the nature of things. To that end, I have both discussed syntactical structures in a theoretical fashion and have employed those same structures as independent variables for controlled experiments.

As mentioned in the body of this text, the news clip used in those experiments was fairly arbitrarily chosen in that the Northern Irish content was purely incidental to the desired visual confusion. It was that visual confusion which was necessary to highlight viewer reliance on the spoken word. As such, once the criterion of confusing images had been fulfilled, the clip could just as easily have pertained to a tumultuous picket-line situation

for example. The conflict of two forces amidst a bewildering array of action shots would have been very similar.

While an examination of the Northern Irish situation was, therefore, not initially intentional or in any way part of my overall design for this work, it cannot, however, simply be dismissed. The contribution of that subject matter needs to be recognised in so far as any news story is viewed within a complex framework of historical and current events. These include both personal and vicarious experiences; and news reports, of course, are part of this latter category. Previously viewed news stories contribute to the corpus of varied material available for the viewer to draw upon (as per Relevance Theory, discussed in the last chapter). Content is obviously important in these realms, and, in recognition of that, I have briefly addressed issues concerning Northern Ireland in the theoretical chapters as well. (For an in-depth discussion of Northern Ireland in relation to news policy and reality, see Schlesinger [1987].)

Nonetheless, the overall stress has been on form and its ability to selectively emphasise aspects of content. It is most instructive to note that in spite of background assumptions and inferences (as discussed in the final chapter) which the Ss would surely have brought to the viewing of the experimental news clip, the textual manipulation was apparently able to influence Ss in their understanding of what was occurring and their attributions of responsibility, in terms of Evelyn Glenholmes and the police officers, for the actions and events in the story. A more

homogeneous group than the students used in these experiments would be likely to share more background assumptions and would thus, presumably, produce responses showing even more strongly the effect of the linguistic structuring. I would suggest that the strength of the effects of the language used in television newscasts is underestimated because the diversity in the background of the viewership interacts with these effects and thereby tends to obscure any indications of the influences at work. Although a longer-term plan to study such effects might involve isolated communities which are somewhat removed from a large number of outside influences, what has been written here is intended to offer an explanation of how the linguistic routines which are taken for granted in television news contribute toward given, to some degree predictable, versions of reality held by the public.

APPENDICES

SHOT LIST-----FROM BEGINNING OF MOVING FOOTAGE

1) people running, left to right
2) close-up of gates opening
3) people running directly toward camera, scuffling, camera jostled
4) close-up of "Murphy"/Glenholmes in crowd
5) "Murphy"/Glenholmes getting into red car
6) car driving away, right to left
7) car driving into street
8) people walking, from behind
9) "Murphy"/Glenholmes walking with bare feet
10) blue Garda car
11) "Murphy"/Glenholmes and companion, from front
12) Special Branch officers, from front
13) officers and "Murphy"/Glenholmes from right
14) shoppers lined up on the pavement
15) officers and "Murphy"/Glenholmes running, from back
16) front of Sinn Fein headquarters
17) Danny Morrison, Martin McGuinness
18) scuffle, from left
19) scuffle, from right
20) running, from back
21) scuffle inside and around bhs door
22) in-store scuffle with person on ground
23) scuffle, from back
24) man with glasses on floor
25) "Murphy"/Glenholmes in store, being led away
26) dress dummy on floor
27) crowds outside store / beige car
28) "Murphy"/Glenholmes getting in car
29) lawyer in dark blue suit
30) courthouse wall
31) "Murphy"/Glenholmes, Gerry Adams and others walking, from front
32) "Murphy"/Glenholmes and others, from left
33) blue car driving away

COMMENTARY ONE---EXPERIMENT ONE

Passers-by in Dublin were witnesses to scenes of chaos this morning. A crowd of people rushed toward the main courthouse gates after Dublin district judge John Bryant released from custody a Belfastwoman whose identity remains undisclosed.

The woman was charged with illegal immigration and fraud in connection with channeling funds to the IRA but was released from custody by an Irish court, due to a technically defective arrest warrant.

Special Branch officers insured that the suspect was successfully able to leave the court premises but tailed the vehicle, ready to act if there were new legal developments.

Later we caught up with some plainclothesmen accompanying the suspect and a male friend, both of whom objected vigorously to the policemen.

ON TAPE--Companion : Look at the little schoolgirl they want to send to England. *(repeated)*

The officers maintained surveillance in spite of charges of illegality and harassment levied aginst them by the woman and her companion. The route took them through crowded shopping thoroughfares of Dublin, startling street vendors and shoppers.

Shoppers watched this walkabout develop into a sprint near Sinn Fein headquarters, where party members from the north had gathered. Police fired warning shots into the air when the suspect tried to break away from their ranks.

In the ladies' clothing department of British Home Stores, just off Dublin's main street, a scene developed which was even more chaotic than those earlier in the day. There was a heated exchange of views around the area where police recaptured the suspect. Dummies and dress rails flew as police brought the woman out of the crowded store and led her into a police car, under arrest for the second time in one day.

Later, back in the district court, her lawyer described the arrest as "piracy". District justice Bryant turned down the state's request for a further detention order, forcing the police to let the suspect walk free for a second time, again in the midst of a crowd of people.

As the car sped off to an undisclosed location, this time there were no obvious signs of pursuit. Tonight there is a growing suspicion that police will be lucky to find her again.

COMMENTARY TWO---EXPERIMENT ONE

Passers-by in Dublin were witnesses to scenes of chaos this morning. freed due to a technically defective arrest warrant, Jane Murphy rushed toward the main courthouse gates surrounded by a crowd of people.

Charged with illegal immigration and fraud in connection with the IRA, Murphy was released from custody by an Irish court. She was successfully able to leave the court premises with the assistance of Special branch officers, but her vehicle was tailed in case of new legal developments.

Later we caught up with Murphy and a male friend, both of whom objected vigorously to the plainclothes policemen.

ON TAPE---Companion : Look at the little schoolgirl they want to send to England. *(repeat)*

In spite of charges of illegality and harassment which she and her companion levied against police, surveillance was maintained. The route took them through crowded shopping thoroughfares of Dublin, startling street vendors and shoppers.

Shoppers watched Murphy's walkabout develop into a sprint near Sinn Fein headquarters, where party members from the north had gathered. When Jane Murphy attempted to break away, police fired warning shots into the air.

In the ladies' clothing department of British Home Stores, just off Dublin's main street, a scene developed which was even more chaotic than those earlier in the day. There was a heated exchange of views around the area where Murphy was recaptured. Dummies and dress rails flew as Jane Murphy was brought out of the crowded store and led into a police car, under arrest for the second time in one day.

Later, back in the district court, her lawyer described the arrest as "piracy". The district justice turned down the state's request for a further detention order, making it possible for Murphy to walk free for a second time, again in the midst of a crowd of people.

As her car sped off to an undisclosed location, this time there were no obvious signs of pursuit. Tonight there is a growing suspicion that police will be lucky to find Jane Murphy again.

COMMENTARY ONE---EXPERIMENT TWO

Police released Belfastwoman Evelyn Glenholmes today amidst scenes of chaos, after an Irish court freed the woman due to a technically defective arrest warrant for murder and bombing, in connection with the IRA. A car was ready and waiting to take Glenholmes away from the court premises, and Special Branch officers did not impede its departure. They did, however, continue to keep her under surveillance.

After the car had been abandoned, Special Branch officers walked through the crowded streets of Dublin, keeping Glenholmes under observation in spite of her objections.

Police broke into a run in order to maintain contact with Glenholmes near Sinn Fein headquarters where Party members from the North had gathered. When they lost sight of Glenholmes in the crowd, the tenuous calm broke down.

Subsequently in the ladies' clothing department of British Home Stores, just off Dublin's main street, a scene developed which was even more chaotic than those earlier in the day. Police rearrested Glenholmes while tempers continued to flare. Dummies and dress rails flew as officers brought her out of the crowded store and led her into a police car, under arrest for the second time in one day.

Later back in the district court, her lawyer described the arrest as 'piracy'. Police applied for a further detention order but when the request was turned down, they let Glenholmes walk free for the second time. As the car sped off to an undisclosed location, this time there were no obvious signs of pursuit. Tonight there is a growing suspicion that police will have a hard time finding Evelyn Glenholmes again.

COMMENTARY TWO---EXPERIMENT TWO

Belfastwoman Evelyn Glenholmes gained her freedom today amidst scenes of chaos after she was released from custody by an Irish court due to a technically defective arrest warrant for murder and bombing in connection with the IRA. Immediately after her release, Glenholmes sped away in a car which was waiting to take her away from the court premises. She did, however, remain under surveillance.

After she abandoned the car, Glenholmes walked through the crowded streets of Dublin while strongly objecting to being kept under observation.

Glenholmes broke into a run near Sinn Fein headquarters where Party members from the North had gathered. When she broke away from the Special Branch escort and got lost in the crowd, the tenuous calm broke down.

Subsequently, in the ladies' clothing department of British Home Stores, just off Dublin's main street, a scene developed which was even more chaotic than those earlier in the day. Glenholmes was unable to resist arrest, while tempers continued to flare. Dummies and dress rails flew as she emerged from the crowded store and entered a police car under arrest for the second time in one day.

Later, back in the district court, her lawyer described the arrest as 'piracy'. Requests for a further detention order were turned down, making it possible for Glenholmes to walk free for the second time. As her car sped off to an undisclosed location, this time there were no obvious signs of pursuit. Tonight there is a growing suspicion that Evelyn Glenholmes will now go into hiding.

COMMENTARY THREE---EXPERIMENT TWO

Belfastwoman Evelyn Glenholmes was freed today amidst scenes of chaos after she was released from custody by an Irish court due to a technically defective arrest warrant for murder and bombing in connection with the IRA. Immediately after her release, Glenholmes was taken away in a car that had been waiting for her. She was, however, kept under surveillance.

After the car had been abandoned, she was found walking through the crowded streets of Dublin, still being kept under observation, in spite of her objections.

Glenholmes was caught up in a melee' near Sinn Fein headquarters, where Party members from the north had gathered. When she was separated from the Special Branch escort and lost in the crowd, the tenuous calm broke down.

Subsequently, in the ladies' clothing department of British Home Stores, just off Dublin's main street, a scene developed which was even more chaotic than those earlier in the day. Glenholmes was rearrested while tempers continued to flare. Dummies and dress rails flew as she was brought out of the crowded store and led away to a waiting police car, under arrest for the second time in one day.

Later , back in the district court, her lawyer described the arrest as 'piracy'. Requests for a further detention order were turned down and Glenholmes was allowed to walk free for the second time.

As her car sped off to an undisclosed location, this time there were no obvious signs of pursuit. Tonight there is a growing suspicion that Evelyn Glenholmes will be hard to find again.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXPERIMENT ONE

1. Please describe, as completely as you can, the newsclip you have just seen. (Ss were given a full A4 page to follow these instructions.)

2. What single image stands out most strongly in your mind ?
(Ss were given approximately ¼ page to answer this question.)

3. Please list the following images in the chronological sequence in which they were presented. Place the number "1" by the first and so on.

-- crowds of shoppers standing along road
-- bare feet
-- courthouse gates opening
-- blue car driving away from courthouse
-- dress dummies on shop floor

4. YES OR NO QUESTIONS

Was it clear what was happening in the crowd scenes :

a) outside the courthouse ?
b) on the street ?
c) inside the store ?
d) at the story's conclusion ?

In the "courthouse gates" scene was anyone acting aggressively :

a) suspect ?
b) crowds ?
c) police ?

In the street scenes was anyone acting aggressively :

a) crowds ?
b) suspect ?
c) police ?

Who was responsible for causing the chaotic situation in the British Home Stores scene :

a) police ?
b) crowds ?
c) suspect ?

Which of the following did you empathise with :

a) judge ?
b) lawyer ?
c) suspect ?
d) suspect's companion ?
e) police ?
f) crowds of people actively involved ?
g) bystanders ?

5. THE COMMENTARY STATED :

"The route took them through crowded shopping thoroughfares of Dublin." To whom does them refer ?

"Bemused shoppers watched the walkabout develop into a sprint." Who sprinted ?

When "dummies and dress rails flew", who set these inanimate objects in motion ?

6. PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN ONE SENTENCE EACH

a) Why did people run from the courthouse building to its gates ?
b) During the walkabout scene, who levied charges against whom ?
c) Who opened the gates ?
d) Why did the first court appearance occur ?
e) Why did the second court appearance occur ?
f) What happened between the courthouse scene and the walk through Dublin ?
g) Why did the walk through the streets of Dublin occur ?
h) What were the circumstances surrounding the shots fired into the air ?
i) Who was the only male character to speak ?
j) What do you think was the central issue of the story ?
k) Was the action resolved by the end of the clip ?
l) Was there a turning point in the action ? If so, what was it ?
m) Did you feel this newsclip was interesting ? Please give reasons why / why not.

Please list :

--- Your age
--- Your year and subject of study
--- Number of times per week you watch a) television of any sort b) newscasts c) documentaries
--- Your sex
--- Your opinions of televiison (½ page provided to answer this final question)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXPERIMENT TWO

1. Please describe the newsclip you've just seen--50 words or less

2. What single image stands out most strongly in your mind ?

3. Please list the following images in the chonological sequence in which they were presented. Place the number "1" by the first and so on

-- crowds of shoppers standing along road
-- bare feet
-- courthouse gates opening
-- blue car driving away from courthouse
-- dress dummies on shop floor

On a scale of -2 to 2, where -2 = "Not at all" and 2 = "Very"...

What is the likelihood that the woman was guilty ?

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all likely				Very likely

In the "courthouse gates" scene, the woman was behaving...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all aggressively				Very aggressively

In the "courthouse gates" scene, the police were behaving...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all aggressively				Very aggressively

In the "street scenes" the police were behaving...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all aggressively				Very aggressively

In the "street scenes" the woman was behaving...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all aggressively				Very aggressively

In the British Home Stores scene, the woman was behaving...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all aggressively				Very aggressively

In the British Home Stores scene, the police were behaving...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all aggressively				Very aggressively

This news account's portrayal of the woman was...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all sympathetic				Very sympathetic

This account's portrayal of the police was...

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all sympathetic				Very sympathetic

To what extent do you identify with the police ?

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all				Very much

To what extent do you identify with the woman ?

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all				Very much

How responsible do you consider the woman to be for the overall chaotic state of affairs ?

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all responsible				Very much responsible

How responsible do you consider the police to be for the overall chaotic state of affairs ?

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all responsible				Very much responsible

Rate your sympathy for the police independently of this broadcast.

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all sympathetic				Very much sympathetic

Rate your sympathy for the IRA independently of this broadcast.

-2	-1	0	1	2
Not at all sympathetic				Very much sympathetic

What sort of action do you think could be taken to avoid scenes like this happening again ?

Please list your :
--- age
--- sex
--- subjects taken

TABLE 1--LIKERT SCALE RESULTS
(mean scores on a scale of -2/not very...to 2/very...)

WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE WOMAN WAS GUILTY ?

GROUP 1 : 0.59 GROUP 2 : 1.05 GROUP 3 : 1.38

IN THE "COURTHOUSE GATES" SCENE THE WOMAN WAS BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY...

GROUP 1 :-0.09 GROUP 2 : 0.25 GROUP 3 :-0.08

IN THE "COURTHOUSE GATES" SCENE THE POLICE WERE BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY...

GROUP 1 : 0.91 GROUP 2 : 0.38 GROUP 3 : 0.53

IN THE "STREET SCENES" THE POLICE WERE BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY...

GROUP 1 : 1.21 GROUP 2 : 0.69 GROUP 3 : 0.82

IN THE "STREET SCENES" THE WOMAN WAS BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY...

GROUP 1 : 0.29 GROUP 2 : 0.96 GROUP 3 : 0.30

IN THE BRITISH HOME STORES SCENE THE WOMAN WAS BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY...

GROUP 1 : 0.18 GROUP 2 : 0.76 GROUP 3 : 0.52

IN THE BRITISH HOME STORES SCENE THE POLICE WERE BEHAVING AGGRESSIVELY...

GROUP 1 : 1.53 GROUP 2 : 1.37 GROUP 3 : 1.24

THIS NEWS ACCOUNT'S PORTRAYAL OF THE WOMAN WAS SYMPATHETIC...

GROUP 1 :-0.09 GROUP 2 :-0.46 GROUP 3 :-0.24

THIS NEWS ACCOUNT'S PORTRAYAL OF THE POLICE WAS SYMPATHETIC...

GROUP 1 :-0.47 GROUP 2 : 0.15 GROUP 3 :-0.02

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH THE POLICE ?

GROUP 1 :-0.56 GROUP 2 :-0.25 GROUP 3 : 0.14

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH THE WOMAN ?

GROUP 1 :-0.38 GROUP 2 :-0.71 GROUP 3 :-0.67

HOW RESPONSIBLE DO YOU CONSIDER THE WOMAN TO BE FOR THE OVERALL CHAOTIC STATE OF AFFAIRS ?

GROUP 1 :-0.35 GROUP 2 : 0.07 GROUP 3 : 0.20

HOW RESPONSIBLE DO YOU CONSIDER THE POLICE TO BE FOR THE OVERALL CHAOTIC STATE OF AFFAIRS ?

GROUP 1 : 0.94 GROUP 2 : 0.26 GROUP 3 : 0.48

RATE YOUR SYMPATHY FOR THE POLICE INDEPENDENTLY OF THIS BROADCAST

GROUP 1 :-0.21 GROUP 2 : 0.32 GROUP 3 : 0.44

RATE YOUR SYMPATHY FOR THE IRA INDEPENDENTLY OF THIS BROADCAST

GROUP 1 :-1.00 GROUP 2 :-1.20 GROUP 3 :-1.42

TABLE 2--FREE RECALL RESULTS
(percentage of total answers for group)

	EVELYN GLENHOLMES	IRA/SINN FEIN	POLICE
GROUP 1	38	26	36
GROUP 2	44	30	26
GROUP 3	42	57	32

TABLE 3--OUTSTANDING IMAGE RESULTS
(percentage of total answers for group)

	CROWDS/CONFUSION	VIOLENCE/CONFLICT	GLENHOLMES
GROUP 1	35	41	24
GROUP 2	30	37	33
GROUP 3	30	26	44

TABLE 4--AVOIDANCE ACTION RESULTS
(percentage of total answers for group)

	LOWER PROFILE	MORE EFFICIENCY	POLITICAL CHANGES
GROUP 1	47	35	9
GROUP 2	40	30	24
GROUP 3	29	39	30

+ no answer=

GROUP 1 = 9
GROUP 2 = 6
GROUP 3 = 2

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