"She's just this sort of bigoted woman": The Mediatisation of a Political Gaffe in British Broadsheet Newspapers

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Abstract

This case study investigates the coverage, in British broadsheet newspapers, of a political gaffe that occurred during the British General Election campaign of 2010. The analysis focuses on three aspects of this coverage that show how "post-democratic politics" – i.e., the decline of citizens' trust and active participation in mainstream, electoral politics, and scepticism towards the idea that its elite, institutional practices are still pursuing the highest common good – are subject to the constraints and logics of a mass-mediatised public sphere. The first aspect concerns the use of linguistic markers of sensory perception to allow readers to "witness" what happened. Although audiences thus acquired intimate knowledge about a political leader, they were also positioned as voyeurs who watched politics at a distance. The second aspect concerns the use of speech-representation devices to recontextualise the *event* of this gaffe into an underlying political *issue* of immigration. Here, the words of an ordinary voter were ventriloquised as being the voice of "the nation". The third aspect concerns how journalists communicated the sources or bases of their knowledge, and how this provided evidence for the "truth" of their assessments. The overall analysis shows how political power in mediatised post-democracies is discoursal, and why it can be fragile and volatile.

1. Introduction

A political gaffe is a public utterance or action that backfires. Its real, perlocutionary outcomes are different from, or even the reverse of, the ones that the actor(s) intended and anticipated. In the mediatised[1] public spheres of contemporary post-democratic

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[1] The term "mediatisation" refers to the historical processes whereby the influence of mass-media and social-media is now a central part of "the public sphere", i.e., the space in which opinions about matters of public interest or concern are formed and discussed. The extent to which post-democratic politics is "guided" or "governed"

politics, which include the rise of populist antipathy towards elite, mainstream politics (Crouch 2004: 69ff; Mair 2006; Tormey 2015), the journalistic exposure of political gaffes, scandals and other infelicitous performances has increased (Stanyer 2013). Conversely, the zone of privacy and deference that once surrounded politicians in liberal democracies has receded (Thompson 2000: 39-41ff). It is now more likely that a politician's transgressions or "misperformances" will be publicly revealed in ways that are difficult to predict and deflect. These types of exposure include intimate details about a politician's appearance, mannerisms, personality and private life (Stayner 2013: 1-31ff); the fusion of selected, amplified information with assertive evaluation (Stanyer 2007: 112-13; Bednarek and Caple 2013: 136-59); and types of negativity, especially distrust and scepticism of politics and government, that have "shifted from a mere 'news value' to an overarching 'news ideology'" (Lengauer *et al.* 2011: 181).

In the light of the above, this case study investigates a corpus of online, British broadsheet newspaper coverage of a gaffe that was made by Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister of Britain and the leader of the Labour Party, during the politically sensitive period of a national election campaign in 2010. A live microphone had provided undeniable, durable and easily accessible evidence that immediately after speaking in public to a supporter of his political party about immigration into Britain from Eastern Europe, the Prime Minister had privately dismissed her as "just this sort of bigoted woman". Although, in all fields of news media, there was an initial focus on Brown's alleged duplicity and negative character traits, the main agenda became that of immigration into Britain and the voter he had dismissed as "bigoted". Portrayed by news-media as a voter who was the "physical embodiment" of Labour's traditional core vote – working class, northern, white and female (Kavanagh and Cowley 2010: 174), she was also represented as having courageously spoken up against a "politically-correct" rule of silence. This, in her words to Brown, was the rule that "You can't say anything about the immigrants". The mediatisation of Brown's "bigot" remark thus

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by mediatisation is nevertheless an open and empirical question. In contrast, the more neutral term "mediation" refers to the act of transmitting messages and the use of different channels of communication to do so (Esser and Strömbäck 2014: 241; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999: 250; Moffitt 2016: 97).

triggered a potent, but hitherto more latent, issue of immigration. This was fed by populist disenchantment with elite, mainstream politicians, especially in the wake of the 2009 MPs' expenses scandal. As well as demonstrating the agenda-setting effects of news (Van Aelst *et al.* 2014), this debacle can be seen as an early tremor of more recent political divides concerning immigration into Britain. Cutting across traditional left / right political positions and involving opposed values of social identity and social diversity (Goodhart 2017: 1-47), this schism was arguably reflected in the polarised result of the 2016 "Brexit" referendum (Kaufmann 2016; Evans and Tilley 2017).

Against this background, this study will investigate three questions that concern how this gaffe was mediatised in broadsheet newspapers:

1) How, in the initial stages of broadsheet coverage, was the journalistic exposure of Brown's gaffe founded on an aesthetic dimension of witnessing the spectacle of his appearance, behaviour and thoughts? Although intersemiotic relationships between text and images are important here (Bednarek and Caple 2013: 111-36), the analysis will focus on the use, across the corpus, of linguistic markers of sensory perception. These merged the imputed intensity of Brown's mental states with empirical proof of having "seen" them.

2) How did these broadsheets position themselves as a proxy for receiving and transmitting claims that an ordinary voter had articulated a consensus of opinion about immigration – a consensus that was supposedly held by a white, British ethnic majority? It is necessary here to investigate a strong tendency, generalisable across the corpus, to use speech-representation devices to ultimately compress distinct voices into a single, overarching news narrative about what "the people" had been thinking, and were now saying.

3) How did journalists maintain their readers' basic trust that assessments in broadsheet newspapers are true? Important here were the ways in which journalists referred to different types of knowledge and evidence. It will be shown how the marking of knowledge as based on witnessing strategies, hearsay, fact, hypotheses or inferences helped to reinforce the credibility of journalists' assessments.

Although these three types of mediatisation are treated separately here, they each involved person-centred news stories and the use of caustic language to reflect an anti-establishment mood. Before proceeding to the analysis, it is necessary to outline the data and methodology, and clarify the contextual and theoretical backgrounds.

2. Data and method

Analysis was conducted on a 100,000-word corpus that was assembled from online, broadsheet[2] news and commentary during the period from 28 April (the day of Brown's gaffe) to 20 May 2010. In line with Stanyer's (2007: 112) argument that "[t]he distinction between news and comment, once a cornerstone of the broadsheet press, is fading", the corpus shows that news information was interwoven with commentary, interpretation and types of negative evaluative language. Coverage was intense from 28 April to 10 May 2010 (i.e., four days after the day of the general election). This incident then rapidly ceased to be a news item. Although, in 2010, printed broadsheets were already undergoing a decrease in sales (source: Audit Bureau of Circulation for 2010), consumption of online broadsheets was significant (Conboy 2010: 145-48). Providing readers with hyperlinks and opportunities for cross-referencing, they also allowed for longer opinion pieces. These online newspapers could thereby function as an important voice of interpretation that could help to "set an agenda and the parameters within which a topic is conceived" (Burroughs 2015: 166).

The corpus was divided into sub-corpora that consisted of 15,942 words for *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* (officially pro-Conservative in their overall editorial policy and providing opinions in articles that also dealt with other aspects of the election campaign); 22,768 words for *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday* (adopting an overall pro-Liberal Democrat editorial policy in personal columns and other opinion pieces dedicated to

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[2] Following Bednarek (2006a: 18 fn 2), the term "broadsheet" is used here because it is preferable to the synonymous term "quality newspaper". The latter implies a value judgement and a problematic contrast with "popular newspapers" (Jucker 1992: 47).

this incident); 26,380 words for *The Guardian* and *The Observer* (which took an implicitly pro-Liberal Democrat stance in opinion pieces that focused mainly on how Brown's gaffe would influence the election result); and 34,910 words for *The Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph* (which spoke with a diverse range of explicitly pro-Conservative voices in their political columns). Although readers' posts on blogs were a minor part of this online commentary, they were excluded from the present analysis on the grounds that their feedback loops, "echo chambers" and "contagious memes" were not subject to the professional norms of institutional, mainstream journalism (Facchinetti 2012: 153-61).

Despite their different political affiliations, these online newspapers were adhering to "the key legitimating professional ethics of liberal journalism" (Skovsgaard *et al.* 2013: 23). Journalists' professional self-images of implementing fairness, balance and objectivity were as important, if not more important, than rigid partisan advocacy of the mainstream views of a political party. That said, columnists and editorial-writers, "who are licensed to operate to some degree outside reporting norms" (Cotter 2010: 34), did not function as purely neutral, descriptive conduits. Their editorial position or personal slant was imbued with an authoritative expertise and a detached, ironic tone of knowing that Brown's gaffe, along with the public face of politics more generally, involved a disjunction between appearances and reality.

The methodology has involved the use of corpus analysis software and the procedures of discourse analysis. For each newspaper, news reports, editorials and opinion pieces that focused on this incident were first downloaded as text files. Using the software *Wordsmith Tools Version 5.0* (Scott 2010), these files were examined and tagged manually. This was in order to identify and categorise how witnessing strategies, speech-representation devices and knowledge stances were used in ways that are generalisable across the corpus. However, the remaining analysis was more qualitative. It took into account Widdowson's view of discourse as a pragmatic process of "relating the text to something outside itself, that is to say to the *con*text" (2004: 7ff, his emphasis). Single concordance lines, which were expanded up to the entire text if necessary, were scrutinised for instances of contextual meaning that had to be inferred from texts since they were not contained *in* their words. These meanings

could not have been easily identified through collocation, key word and frequency analysis alone.

The contexts of this gaffe, as well as the forms of their mediatisation, now need to be mentioned before turning to how texts indexed contexts, i.e., pointed away from themselves towards contexts, and thus activated discourse.

3. Contextual background and mediatisation

Towards the end of the British General Election campaign of 2010, the incumbent Prime Minister and leader of the New Labour Party, Gordon Brown, undertook a "meet-the-people" walkabout in the English, northern city of Rochdale. His brief conversation with Gillian Duffy, a sixty-six year old pensioner and an avowed lifetime Labour supporter, eventually touched upon the topic of welfare benefits. Duffy complained to Brown that "vulnerable" people could not receive these payments because people who "aren't vulnerable" were claiming this money. She added: "You can't say anything about the immigrants because you're saying you're – but all these Eastern Europeans coming in, where are they flocking from?". Brown immediately pointed out that the million people immigrating to Britain from Europe were counteracted by the same number of British citizens emigrating to other European countries. After an exchange of amicable farewells, the Prime Minister left the scene in his chauffeur–driven car. Unaware, or having forgotten, that a live microphone was still attached to the lapel of his jacket to allow the media to hear his public conversations, he had the following exchange with his director of strategic communications, who was in the same vehicle (Kavanagh and Cowley 2010: 174):

Brown: That was a disaster. Should never have put me with that woman. Whose idea was that?
D.S.C: I don't know, I didn't see.
Brown: Sue's, I think. Just ridiculous.
D.S.C: Not sure if they'll go with that one.
Brown: Oh they will.
D.S.C: What did she say?
Brown: Everything. She's just this sort of bigoted woman who said she used to be a Labour voter. Ridiculous.

It was promptly decided, by the private news-media company that had lent Brown the microphone he was wearing, that this recorded conversation should be placed in the public domain. The recording and its transcript were disseminated rapidly and widely on broadcast, printed and online news outlets, as well as on social media networks. Brown's dismissal of Duffy as "just this sort of bigoted woman" – with the intensifying particle "just" signalling "exactly" or "no less than", and the hedge "sort of" soliciting common ground between speaker and hearer (Aijmer 2002: 155-57, 203) – became the object of furious news-media scrutiny. A clear disjunction had been exposed here between the Prime Minister's apparently authentic, spontaneous interaction with an ordinary person in the street (literally), and his frank, impromptu remarks to a colleague in the seclusion of a limousine reserved for the supreme echelons of democratically elected government. This incongruity was seen as being highly inappropriate for a politician who was not only the acting head of government, but also the leader of the political party for which this citizen had claimed she had always voted. Subsequent events on the same day included the tracking down of Duffy, and the broadcasting of her dismay as she listened to Brown's remark. The Prime Minister's shock and regret at what had happened was also captured when, during a live, televised radio interview a few hours after his gaffe, he buried his head in his hand as he listened to the playback of his private conversation (see photograph below). Although he apologised to Duffy both in this interview and during a personal visit to her home on the same day, this corrective face-work was criticised by all sections of news media as being insincere.

In online broadsheets, this overall incident underwent the five processes of "mediatisation" described by Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999: 250-52). First, using criteria for determining "news values" (Bell 1991: 155-60; Bednarek and Caple 2014), only certain aspects of this incident – Brown's alleged negative character traits, Duffy's question about immigration and politicians' alleged indifference to voters – were selected and amplified as "newsworthy". Second, information about Brown's appearance, voice, mannerisms and personality were instances of the mediatisation process of 'spectacularisation' (see also Mazzoleni 2015: 379). They gave audiences the impression that they could immediately and directly "observe" Brown's innermost

thoughts and feelings, even though these processes of communication were controlled from the omniscient perspectives of journalists. Third, the way in which this *event* focused public attention on an underlying political *issue* of immigration was an instance of the agenda-building and agenda-setting processes of mediatisation (Van Aelst *et al.* 2014). By comparing the number of news items referring to immigration, asylum or race in UK written and broadcast news outlets before and after Brown's gaffe, Deacon and Wring (2011: 297) show that this event had "a triggering effect across all media sectors [that] is stark", even though it was more evident in British mid-market tabloids than in broadsheets[3]. Fourth, Brown's apologies to Duffy can be seen as an example of how politicians have to adapt to the effects of news-media coverage. Brown was arguably trying to forestall or mitigate further unfavourable news coverage. Lastly, the mediatised exposure of Brown's private remarks could be justified in terms of revealing the reality behind the public face of politics. News-media were performing the critical "watchdog" role from which political-news derives a crucial part of its professional legitimacy and democratic function (Skovsgaard *et al.* 2013: 23-9).

This study will focus on the second and third processes described above. It will also show how Brown's gaffe was mediatised through journalistic assessments that were based on types of knowledge, and that appeared difficult to challenge.

4. Recontextualisation, and political-historical and social-cultural contexts

Meanings in broadsheet commentary were context dependent in the aforementioned sense of Widdowson (2004: 7ff). Instead of involving only semantic meanings and their routine, conventional social functions, there were also intended meanings that had to be inferred from contexts that involved shared beliefs, values and assumptions (Widdowson 2004: 7-57). Such contexts can also be

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[3] The lack of detail about immigration policy in the Conservative, Labour and Liberal-Democrat 2010 election manifestoes, which are "the principal form of policy documents released by parties" (Quinn, Bara, Bartle 2012: 176), is further evidence that immigration was not a salient issue in this election campaign until Brown's gaffe.

recontextualised, i.e., rearranged so that previously backgrounded or tangential beliefs, values and assumptions become salient (Fairclough 2003: 139-43; Blackledge 2005: 12-3). An example of this, which is evident across the corpus, is the way Duffy's question to Brown about immigration was construed as representing the hitherto mainly silent thoughts of "the people". From a political perspective, this needs to be understood in terms of how Duffy was portrayed in the corpus as a mixture of ordinariness and extraordinariness. This mixture was, in essence, the same as that which is more readily associated with far more charismatic and salvationist populist figures such as Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales and Jörg Haider. On the one hand, Duffy was seen as the embodiment of ordinary common sense that was valorised against the wisdom of aloof, insouciant, self-interested, technocratic expertise and authority dispensed from Westminster. On the other hand, she was represented as transcending ordinary people insofar as she alone had "spoken up" in front of Brown. If, as Laclau (2005) argues, such populism is quintessentially political since it is based on a fundamental antagonism between two social groups ("us"/"them", "voters"/"government" and so forth), then it also needs to be understood in terms of how the single redemptive figure who is the people's voice is, today, nearly always a mediatised construction in one way or another (Moffitt 2016: 98). Going further, it has been argued that "[w]hile all contemporary politics are mediatised to some extent", it is ultimately contemporary populism that shows the purest forms of mediatised politics (Moffitt 2016: 94).

The mediatisation of any aspect of contemporary politics is, however, "a matter of degree and an empirical question" (Esser and Strömbäck 2014: 241). In the case of how Brown's gaffe was recontextualised, it is necessary to consider the political-historical and socio-cultural contexts. The British "nation", which had once been four separate nations, had become "a rather homogeneous country at the heart of a multiracial empire" before becoming "a multiracial country, now without an empire" (Goodhart 2014: xli). Unease in 2010 about a perceived lack of a homogeneous social identity was linked, arguably, to resentment of the Labour government's failure to predict the many East Europeans who were "one of the most publicly visible groups to arrive [in Britain] after 2004" (Goodhart 2014: 211). During the period of Labour

government from 1997 to 2010, net immigration into Britain had risen from approximately 55,000 per year to nearly 250,000 per year (Kaufmann and Harris 2014: 19ff). Consequently, while contemporary arguments about immigration into Britain focus explicitly on its pace, scale and consequences rather than on race or ethnicity, it is not difficult to understand why, in 2010, race and ethnicity were still underlying emotional questions for the collective consciousness of a white British ethnic majority. They arguably surfaced again in debates about immigration that were at the centre of the 2016 "Brexit" referendum (Kaufmann 2016; Evans and Tilley 2017; Goodhart 2017: 1-47).

It is reasonable to assume that broadsheet journalists in 2010 expected their readers to have some basic, intuitive knowledge of these complex historical-political and social-cultural contexts. Yet alongside other forms of news media, broadsheets helped to produce *new* points of articulation between these contexts. Coverage of the discrepancy between the Prime Minister's public and private utterances fuelled what Crouch (2004: 69) had called "a popular desire for a politics which seems to address people's concerns from outside the framework of established political and social elites". And coverage of an ordinary voter's words helped to sharpen public awareness that immigration needed to be firmly placed on the election agenda.

5.   The use of witnessing strategies to create spectacularisation

Before turning to the issue of immigration, it is necessary to examine how the initial stages of online broadsheet newspaper coverage, from 28 April to 3 May 2010, also focused on Brown's appearance, behaviour and thoughts. This type of mediatisation thus involved the exposure of personalised information (Stanyer 2013: 1-31ff). Activating and interacting with audiences' prior knowledge and dispositions, this exposure used textual and visual modalities of an overall aesthetic form of "spectacularisation" (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999: 251; Mazzoleni 2015: 379). Important here was the visual image of Brown burrowing his head in his hand as he listened, for the first time, to the playback of his "bigot" remark during the aforementioned televised radio interview:

FIGURE 1
Still from Brown's televised radio interview, © copyright 2010 BBC

As well as providing broadsheet readers with a modally different aspect of the same news-story (Bednarek and Caple 2013: 115-17), this iconic image functioned as objective evidence of Brown's downfall. Equally important though was the use of linguistic markers of sensory perception. These allowed written texts to be organised from the perspective of a witness. A co-construction of meaning took place whereby journalists positioned readers as counterfactual witnesses who could "access the event as if they [were] at the scene in person" (Hsieh 2008: 221). Readers could thereby make the same inferences as actual witnesses and include themselves in the construal of the situation (Mushin 2001: 63-6). These witnessing strategies were functional for convincing readers that they could directly "observe" the innermost thoughts and feelings of Brown, and could thus "check for themselves" and verify the information they were reading. Although, strictly speaking, this was a fallacy, it is, as Bednarek (2006a: 132) notes, "[b]y pretending that these events are in fact observable phenomena, i.e. by mentioning sensory evidence for the existence of the respective mental state in the Senser's mind, [that] the newspapers justify their report of them".

A key variable in the use of such witnessing strategies was that they could be grounded in a text world where the viewer was either present or absent from the clause. On the one hand, readers could be incorporated into a mass audience of deliberate, volitional perceivers. The most frequent example of this concerns the transitive use of the visual perception verb "watch*". In each case, the naming of an anonymous mass audience served to defocus the volition of any single spectator, and to thereby reinforce the shared, inter-subjective nature of witnessing:

TABLE 1
Concordances of "watch*" that refer to audiences

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or that." The world had been    watching. CNN International b
her Rochdale home, telling the  watching world that he was a
Not all of the 10m people who   watched the BBC News special
y of his mistake became clear.  Watching at Labour HQ in Lond
Laura Kuenssberg reports. 1315  Watch Brown's open mic gaffe
r hours"  and said Britain had  watched with "shock, amazeme
e had heard the exchange. And,  watched live by hundreds of t
so much participating in it as  watching it all play out on t
t of Mrs Duffy. Hardly anybody  watching the encounter on tel
n Duffy. As for GB, a chum who  watched it in the boozer repo
ster and the whole country has  watched it. I think the Labou
campaign stopped yesterday to   watch Mr Brown's walk of sham
rase. If you were one of those  watching who hated Gordon Bro
d, held his head in his hands.  Watching in London, Lord Mand
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On the other hand, references to viewers could be entirely absent from the clause. The object of perception, i.e., Brown rather than any perceiving agent, was the salient focus of attention. Prevalent here were intransitive uses of the verb "look*" that were followed, or sometimes preceded, by adjectival constructions with expressive lexis:

TABLE 2
Concordances of "look*" that refer to Brown

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d, and a haggard and humiliated-looking Prime Minister can be
  ng in front of the television "looking like death", one witn
f being kind to lumpy, uneasy- looking Scots. If we compiled
the audience want somebody who  looks like yesterday's man an
ssage because he's starting to  look really haggard. Will the
so often a glowering and tired-looking presence during the c
s like yesterday's man and who  looks exhausted?" The former
about Gordon Brown though.  He  looked terrible. Grey, badly
s message across with Mr Brown  looking so shaky on TV and on
that one more glimpse of Brown  looking broken might break us
ign coverage. He has a Homeric  look about the eyes - Homeric
if he was being tortured.  The  look was accurate. Acutely aw
lleagues. According to one, he  looked "sheepish". The deal w
don Brown, who worked hard but  looked traumatised, came clos
ologises, but this, of course,  looks "fake". The requirement
Nottinghamshire coalfield, he   looked - and sometimes sounde
io show listening to the tape,  looking as if he was being to
the previous day's BigotGate,   looks pale and unwell - shade
at the best of times, but now   looking utterly marooned. On
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These two types of witnessing strategies helped to turn the raw and vivid immediacy of perceptual experience into shared, objective phenomena that stood beyond the personal, idiosyncratic or prejudiced views of journalists and readers. Moreover, a non-reciprocal intimacy (Stanyer 2013: 9-10ff) was taking place whereby audiences, cast in the role of counterfactual witnesses, could voyeuristically observe while they remained physically distant from, and invisible to, the object of their intense interest.

Also important was the extension of the prototypical meanings of "see" and "hear", as well as their nominalised equivalents (e.g., "sight" and "sound"), into their polysemous and metaphorical meanings of "knowing" or "internal understanding" (Viberg 1983; Sweetser 1990: 1-13; Whitt 2010: 253). In real terms, the mental states that were being attributed to Brown consisted of loose forms of inferencing from sensory perception, i.e., prior knowledge, beliefs and suppositions were used to derive disputable conclusions from this sensory information. But the extended meanings of linguistic markers of sensory perception appeared to be an independent, trustworthy basis for presuming that these imputed mental states were objectively true. Take the following examples that refer to the shame and humiliation that is "seen" in the above photograph:

(1) "You actually *see* the moment" said Stewart, "when a man's political career leaves his body." (*The Guardian*, 3 May 2010)

(2) He [Brown] held his head when he was *made to listen* to the tape because he could *hear* the sound of Labour voters turning theirs away in shame. (*The Telegraph*, 28 April 2010)

In (1) the meaning of "see" is extended into a relationship of synonymy with "recognise" and "detect" that is reinforced by the intensifying adverbial meaning, as opposed to a discourse-particle meaning, of "actually" (Aijmer 2002: 251-56). Furthermore, generalised "You" positions individual readers within an anonymous mass audience, and the surgical, visceral metaphor of "leaves his body" conveys a gut feeling of having had one's professional vocation removed forever. In (2) an externally enforced act of auditory perception, encoded by "made to listen", invites audiences to "observe" the introspective mental state of Brown. Stylistic devices of anaphora

("held his head" as the antecedent referent of "turning theirs") and lexical synonymy ("listen" and "hear") focus the audience's attention on the metaphorical, discoursal meaning that Brown could "hear" – in the sense of this word's extended meaning of "apprehend" – the imminent defeat of his political party in a general election.

Witnessing strategies were also used to assess Brown's corrective face-work after his gaffe. In broadsheet commentary on the moment when Brown stepped outside Duffy's house after apologising, he was subjected to the rule that "When public figures use apologies for their own benefit, the felicity conditions for apologies are seriously undermined and the sincerity is called into question" (Duguid 2015: 166). There was a prevalent use here of witnessing strategies that made no mention of the perceiver. Brown was the salient focus of attention in similes and adverbial information that selectively "depicted" (Clark and Gerrig 1990) the Prime Minister's facial expression as being unconvincing and even grotesque:

(3) [...] *his grin appeared as a false veneer.* (*The Independent*, 29 April 2010)

(4) *Wearing an awkward grin*, he emerged to say sorry. (*The Guardian*, 29 April 2010)

(5) "I am a penitent sinner," he said, *fixed grin on his face.* (*The Telegraph*, 28 April 2010)

(6) He emerged from her house *smiling fixedly.* (*The Times*, 29 April 2010)

The above findings support various arguments, usually conducted without references to analytical frameworks, that values of British tabloid journalism can now be found in British broadsheets, albeit in subtle and mitigated forms (Rusbridger 2005; Bednarek 2006a: 203-04; Conboy 2010: 130-33). The focus of this literature has been mainly on a convergence of presentational techniques (e.g., headlines that express attitude) or editorial policies (e.g., concerning the relative importance of news and views). Yet the tabloid dimension of broadsheet coverage of Brown's gaffe is found, above all, in the privileging of spectacularisation. By merging personalised, intimate accounts of the intensity of Brown's imputed emotions with empirical proofs of what was seen, readers had easy access to an intimate, non-reciprocal and voyeuristic

schadenfreude enjoyment of an elite politician's misfortune. This was consistent with a tabloid genre of political reality that is "demotic, articulate, capricious, maudlin" (Thompson 2016: 64). Such voyeuristic ridicule also touches upon Pels' (2003) argument that there is a gap in modern democracies between the public's active participation in politics, and the passive watching of politics at a distance.

6. How Duffy's voice was recontextualised into the voice of the nation

Inspection of the corpus shows that the focus on Duffy and immigration began almost immediately after Brown's gaffe occurred. It lasted until this incident ceased to be a news item. Functional here were two strategies of argumentation. The first was the tendency of broadsheets to "adopt a White outlook in their reporting, imagining and positioning their readers as White readers" (Richardson 2004: 229). The second was that broadsheets claimed to know, on the basis of hearsay knowledge, what the white British ethnic majority was really thinking. By means of using linguistic devices of speech representation, these newspapers became a proxy for reporting a set of allegedly homogeneous opinions about immigration that were attributed to this majority. As well as providing "a guarantee of credibility and legitimacy together with a sense of immediacy and liveliness" (Piazza 2009: 170), modalities of speech representation are a form of deixis since they index information to an implied or explicit point of origin (Mushin 2001: 33-5). The basic "choice" is between "averral" (i.e., the voice of the writer/speaker) and "attribution" of the voice to someone else (Sinclair 1988). These two alternatives can be understood within the framework of Appraisal theory, especially its system of engagement which treats all textual voices as dialogically opening up or closing down alternative voices and positions (Martin and White 2005: 92-160). The present analysis, however, starts from how direct quotation in news discourse can amplify, mimic or decontextualise the speech of others, whilst types of indirect quotation can echo, paraphrase or "depict" this speech (Clark and Gerrig 1990). It will be shown how it is thereby possible to conflate and blend the reporting and reported

voices in ways that allow the former to be "disguised" as the latter (Bednarek 2006b: 651). The result can be "a multi-voiced narrative called the news 'story'" (Harry 2014: 1042) in which the reported speech does not necessarily stand outside the reporting, or representing speech (Blackledge 2005: 15-6). The following analysis focuses in turn on three types of quotation that Harry (2014) defines as "direct", "free-indirect" and "standard indirect".

Direct quotations, which comprised 21% of all representations of Duffy's speech across the corpus, represented the speaker as speaking in her own voice. By bringing the reader "face to face" with Duffy's actual words, journalists represented a dramatic, one-sided rhetoric that sought confrontation through interrogative or negative constructions:

(7) "He's an educated person. Why has he come out with words like that?" (*The Times*, 28 April 2010)

(8) "I thought the Prime Minister was understanding, but he clearly wasn't", she says. (*The Telegraph*, 3 May 2010)

Free-indirect quotations, which comprised 35% of all representations of Duffy's speech across the corpus, consisted of a "paraphrasing and summary of an original quote by means of synonyms, re-phrasings and re-wordings" (Harry 2014: 1043-44). Duffy's words were syntactically and discoursally incorporated into an overall reporting voice of the journalist that seemed, however, to be "a relatively accurate re-assertion" of what the source originally said and meant (Harry 2014: 1050-51). Circumstantial adverbial information, where the journalist was speaking, introduced or qualified main clauses where inverted commas marked "incorporated quotations" (Clark and Gerrig 1990: 790). These had been plucked from the reported voice:

(9) After being played the Prime Minister's comments, Mrs Duffy, looking surprised and upset, said she was "*very disappointed*", adding it was "*very upsetting*". (*The Independent*, 28 April 2010)

(10) Gillian Duffy says she felt "*shot down*" by Gordon Brown's "bigot" remarks. (*The Sunday Times*, 2 May 2010)

Such an interweaving of reported and reporting voices could produce a type of linguistic ventriloquism (Thompson 1996: 514;

Wortham and Locher 1996). Duffy's single voice was spoken through the voice of a majority – one that was white, British, supposedly homogeneous and that could be elided with "the nation":

(11) Mrs Duffy's views, right or wrong, may be shared by *millions of older voters*. (*The Guardian*, 29 April 2010)

(12) But Mrs Duffy cut through this patronising twaddle, revealing that the chief concerns of British women are – who'd have thunk [sic] it? – the same as *the whole nation*: the budget deficit, university fees, immigration. (*The Times*, 1 May 2010)

In (12) this ventriloquism takes place through assimilating Duffy's voice into the voice of "British women", which is in turn extended into the voice of "the whole nation". Moreover, the coining of "thunk" here produces an echoic voice. It is "intended to be recognized as marked in the language of the current speaker or writer and thus attributable to another voice" (Thompson 1996: 514). "Thunk" thereby becomes a form of deixis. It indexes a regional northern and working class "folk" dialect that is projected onto Duffy's voice. This single individual is thereby depicted as representing the sentiments of a white, British ethnic majority.

The construal of Duffy's voice as a spokesperson for other people also occurred through standard indirect quotations. These comprised 44% of all representations of Duffy's speech across the corpus. Here, the above ventriloquism gives way to a "writer-centred, discursively flattened out and objectified re-assertion more fully in the reporter's control, only distantly echoing whatever was originally uttered" (Harry 2014: 1052):

(13) The real fracture in our support was lit up with spotlights in Gordon Brown's brief encounter in Rochdale. Not for what he said to Mrs Duffy. *But for what Mrs Duffy said about Britain*. (*The Guardian*, 14 May 2010)

(14) *Gillian Duffy spoke for the nation* when she challenged Mr Brown on her way to buy a loaf of bread. (*The Times*, 7 May 2010)

(15) There is intense anger among large parts of the electorate about what is happening to this country, *and in Mrs Duffy that discontent found its voice*. (*The Telegraph*, 28 April 2010)

(16) The real danger for Labour is not what Gordon Brown said to Gillian Duffy, but what she said to him. Fairly or not, *Gillian Duffy speaks for many voters*. (*The Independent*, 29 April 2010)

(17) If she's a bigot, then so am I. *Because she was only saying what I've been hearing on the doorsteps*. (*The Telegraph*, 30 April 2010)

It would be impossible to prove that such discourse about Duffy's words was a direct *cause* of the emergence of immigration as a salient, political issue. Yet it helped to *reinforce* a news narrative, in the wake of Brown's gaffe, that New Labour's "open door" policy on immigration had been deeply problematic. Balanced engagement with alternative voices and positions was, in principle, a default procedure and professional ethic for broadsheet newspapers (Richardson 2004: 44-7; Skovsgaard 2013). But the above modes of speech representation also realised a function that Conboy (2010: 6), drawing upon Bakhtin (1996), sees as central to newspapers: "to close down a potentially infinite heteroglossia into a unified editorial voice but one which still may *appear* to draw on the energies of a multiplicity of voices and attitudes" (emphasis added). In terms of Appraisal theory this tendency was "dialogically contractive" (Martin and White 2005: 92-160). These broadsheets synthesised a plethora of voices into a single, insistent line of populist sentiment, and they located it in Duffy's voice. They then had to walk a discursive tight rope between on the one hand, their lack of rigorous justification or critical unpicking of Duffy's views; and, on the other hand, their refraining, in accordance with a rhetoric of tolerance in elite journalism (Richardson 2004: 52-3; Blackledge 2005: 134), from negative evaluations of any type of immigrant or ethnic category.

7. Types of knowledge

Broadsheet journalists needed to establish that their assessments were true in the sense of being credible, reliable and as standing beyond *mere* belief. Crucial here was the linguistic marking of various types of knowledge that provided evidence for journalists' assessments. For example, the above-mentioned witnessing strategies involved sourcing knowledge to sensory experience, and the representation of Duffy as speaking on behalf of generalised others required journalists to show that their knowledge was based on hearsay evidence. Whilst these and other types of knowledge are reflected in most accounts of "evidentiality" (e.g., Diewald and Smirnova 2010), there has been controversy as to

whether this trans-linguistic category should refer only to a semantic-functional domain (e.g., Aikhenvald 2004), or also to dialogic and rhetorical functions (e.g., Mushin 2001). The latter position will be adopted here. Functions of persuasion, confrontation and acceptance in news discourse are partly realised by the linguistic marking of various types of knowledge that provide evidence that appears difficult to challenge (Bednarek 2006b; Hsieh 2008; Hart 2011; Marín-Arrese 2011). The analysis here focuses on three more types of knowledge on which assessments were based: factual, hypothetical and inferential.

7.1. Knowledge as factual

Since facts consist of assertions that are already assumed to be true (Mushin 2001: 74-6) and that are, in principle, open to objective verification, the denial of their truth "is not an option for the reader" (Hunston 1999: 187). However, even an assessment, which is in principle open to further discussion, "may be expressed as if it were a fact" (Hunston 1999: 188). An example of this in the corpus is the use of the passive verbal form "caught" to encapsulate the situation in which Brown found himself after his gaffe:

TABLE 3
Concordances of "caught*" that refer to Brown

```
the voter, and not the leader   caught by a microphone and th
the former prime minister was   caught off guard in Rochdale
not the first politician to be  caught out by an "open mic".
st about okay. And then he was  caught saying this: "You shou
orced to apologise after being  caught on microphone describi
s now reporting Brown has been  caught on tape calling Mrs Du
g anything, to now where he is  caught calling a Labour voter
he incident which saw Mr Brown  caught on a radio microphone
ian Duffy, made in private but  caught by a live broadcast fe
 says - but mortified at being  caught out, not for uttering
ross the UK. 29 April Brown is  caught right in the thick of
non-public figure unwittingly   caught up in one of the bigge
feel sympathy for a politician  caught unawares, then humilia
r, Gillian Duffy, after he was  caught on a TV microphone dis
ologise for unguarded comments  caught on a radio microphone
k to the stage After insult is  caught on microphone, PM is f
e cameras and microphones that  caught him out in the first p
Mr Brown's private thoughts -   caught on the microphone atta
st week the Prime Minister was  caught on microphone describi
rown had been catastrophically  caught on microphone describi
ith Gillian Duffy, when he was  caught describing her as a "b
aught by a microphone and then  caught again being filmed on
ectly to Brown's gaffe. He was  caught out saying what he rea
```

Each of these tokens of "caught* + particle" or "caught* + adverb, adjective or participle" were used to talk about a discovery that Brown had done something that should be assessed as wrong. Although this wrongfulness was an opinion or moral judgement rather than a fact, it was merged into a factual meaning of "caught" that is encoded in the above concordances. This meaning was that of a frozen action – an ontological state – from which it was impossible for Brown to escape. A static, permanent and undeniable relationship is set up between who or what has been caught and the circumstances in which this happened. The reader is left with the feeling that the moral judgement that Brown's behaviour was unacceptable is also a fact rather than an assessment.

The factual status of assessments was also communicated by factive verbs (Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1971) and factive nominals (Lees 1960). Factive verbs such as "understand", "believe" and "realise" introduced embedded 'that' clauses. These carried presuppositions that could survive negation of the previous clause. Specifically, these clauses triggered presuppositions that involved assessments that were taken as given, i.e., as not available for questioning:

(18) He understood *that Mr Brown had undermined his own character with his behaviour towards Mrs Duffy the day before.* (*The Telegraph*, 30 April 2010)

(19) [...] the gathered journalists could scarcely believe *they had been presented with such a ready-made metaphor for Gordon Brown's last week on the campaign trail.* (*The Independent*, 1 May 2010)

(20) If he doesn't realise *that people in Rochdale worry about immigration for reasons other than racism and bigotry,* he needs to talk to more people whose postcodes don't begin with N. (*The Times*, 29 April 2010)

(21) This may explain his failure to understand fully *that what is happening now is a vague resentment, not a racist rejection of needy people.* (*The Guardian*, 30 April 2010)

A similar kind of frame was set up by "factive nominals" (Lees 1960), i.e., the explicit naming of facts as such. These introduced nominal phrases that encoded assessments that were taken to be uncontroversial and already accepted:

(22) But there is no disguising *the fact that the issue of immigration is at the top of the political agenda here.* (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 2 May 2010)

(23) He claimed that he had spoken in frustration, upset by *the fact he had not been able to give her a clear answer on her question about immigration.* (*The Times*, 28 April 2010)

(24) The disaster for Brown lay in *the fact that he was virtually alone in his negative assessment of Mrs Duffy.* (*The Guardian*, 29 April 2010)

(25) She's oblivious to *the fact she's become the best moment of the election so far.* (*The Telegraph*, 3 May 2010)

These different ways of anchoring assessments to facts were cognitively linked to readers' expectations that assessments would in some way be underpinned by evidence that was difficult to challenge.

7.2. Knowledge as hypothetical

The linguistic marking of hypothetical knowledge referred to different points on a reality-irreality spectrum. English conditional constructions (Sweetser 1990: 113-44; Dancygier and Sweetser 2005) could mark *irrealis* (e.g., past counterfactual scenarios or future hypothetical ones) that were used as a basis for reasoning back to scenarios in the *real* world that were believed to be self-evident. Relevant here is Brown's use of two concessive conditional if-clauses to perform corrective face-work on the televised radio interview shortly after his gaffe:

(26) I apologise *if I said anything like that.* What I think she was raising with me was an issue about immigration and saying that there were too many people from Eastern Europe in the country and I do apologise *if I have said anything which has been hurtful* and I will apologise to her personally.

Concessive if-conditionals "explicitly set up an abnormal, surprising relationship" between the two propositions they link (Dancygier and Sweetser 2005: 157). The above two tokens of concessive "if" create two implied meanings that arise only in a specific context of utterance, and that are therefore "particularised conversational

implicatures" (Grice 1981). These are firstly, that it would have been normal and expected for Brown *not* to have "said anything like that"; and secondly, the fact that he did was surprising and atypical of his behaviour. What are set up here are pragmatic scales of likelihood and categorisation. Brown invites his audience, to the point of implicitly challenging them, to decide for themselves the extent to which his "bigot" remark was prototypical of his behaviour. Online broadsheets interrogated these concessive conditionals as being disingenuous:

(27) What does he mean "if I said"? We'd just heard him say it on the recording. (*The Telegraph*, 28 April 2010)

(28) This was a masterful use of the political-conditional tense, the "if" suggesting that he might not have said something hurtful, and she might not be offended, even though he already knew he had and she was. (*The Times*, 4 May 2010)

These journalistic-cum-linguistic criticisms of Brown's attempt to reduce his gaffe to a minor glitch are based on an appeal to a norm; namely, that what ultimately counts is what has already unquestionably happened in the real world. This world is contrasted with, and then privileged over, what might have happened in a possible but hypothetical and less certain world.

7.3. Knowledge as inferential

The status of knowledge as having been inferred, i.e., as having the status of "new, implicit information" that has been "extracted from given, explicit information" (Cummings 2005: 75), was prevalent in predictions of the election result in the light of Brown's gaffe. Drawing upon Aijmer (2009), linguistic markings of this type of knowledge can be analysed as communicating the shared, inter-subjective nature of these predictions, and different degrees of certainty that they were true. The two most frequent exponents of inferential knowledge in the corpus were clauses introduced by the lemmas "seem* + to-infinitive" and "see*". The former coded inferences that were derived from what unspecified or generalised sources (e.g., "Everyone", "canvassers", "some ministers" and "such polls") had said. They indicated the shared nature of predictions:

(29) Everyone *seems* to be hoping that if they just wish hard enough, the Prime Minister's gaffe will not be the defining moment of the campaign. (*The Times*, 1 May 2010)

(30) And there was Mrs Duffy. Before she arrived, canvassers were reporting that the Labour vote *seemed* to be in steep decline. Then it imploded. (*The Guardian*, 5 May 2010)

(31) Labour will have to confront the disaster of its campaign much more thoroughly and radically than some ministers *seem* to think. Brown, they say, will be out within days. (*The Observer*, 2 May 2010)

(32) Such polls *seem* to mirror the attitudes viewers had before the debate actually began. (*The Independent*, 1 May 2010)

In contrast, although, as in (33) and (34) below, tokens of "see*" could also indicate shared beliefs, they communicated a wider range of degrees of certainty that a particular situation would occur. In (33) and (34) the certainty of the belief is high, in (35) it is moderate or neutral, and in (36) it is low:

(33) With the Mrs Duffy affair the tide is *seen* to have turned from Brown, and the natural predisposition of individuals to want to back a winner has come into play. (*The Independent*, 30 April 2010)

(34) Type Labour into Google and the first thing you *see* is "Labour have failed". (*The Guardian*, 30 April 2010)

(35) Labour will anxiously be waiting for this weekend's polls *to see* if the episode in Rochdale has further weakened the party's standing. Many polls already have Labour in third place. (*The Telegraph*, 30 April 2010)

(36) But it doesn't feel like that this time. Whatever the result on Thursday, it's hard *to see* there being a clear resolution to the country's predicament. If there is a hung Parliament, the parties will enter into days of negotiations. (*The Times*, 4 May 2010)

As is the case for the other types of knowledge that have been examined here, the linguistic marking of inferential knowledge was primarily a pragmatic and rhetorical construct. By basing their assessments on a type of knowledge, journalists could ensure that their readers were more favourably disposed towards accepting these evaluations. They appeared to be based on evidence or reasoning that was difficult to challenge.

8. Conclusion

This study has examined three ways in which a political gaffe was mediatised in broadsheet newspapers. First, linguistic correlates of sensory perception were used as witnessing strategies to construct a spectacle. Although this allowed readers, i.e., voting citizens, to have a non-reciprocal intimacy with a political leader, it also positioned them as voyeurs who watched politics at a distance.

Second, speech representation devices were used to recontextualise Duffy's words into an alleged consensus of opinion held by a white British ethnic majority. It was suggested that journalists ultimately found themselves in limbo between accepting the apparently self-evident reasonableness of this opinion, and offering a detailed analysis of the extent to which it was true. Third, it was shown how journalists' references to types of knowledge bestowed truth upon their assessments.

These three instances of mediatisation were functional for disseminating knowledge of a disjunction between the Prime Minister's public and private utterances, and for construing the ramifications of his expressed contempt for the immigrant fears of an ordinary voter. The overall fallout from this gaffe showed how an anti-establishment populism could use language to identify with a rapidly invented spokesperson (i.e., Duffy), and it pointed to some of the difficulties that are now eroding the "representative" nature of mainstream, electoral politics (Tormey 2015).

The overall analysis here supports Ankersmit's (2002) view of such political representation. Classical and Habermasian ideals of creating and representing a public sphere of informed citizens, i.e., of voters who deliberate and make rational decisions about the common good, no longer approximate to how most citizens *actually* interact with the highly complex, technocratic nature of polity, policy, and political strategies and tactics today. Since voters' access to this complexity is usually mediatised, their understandings occur through frames (e.g., in the present case, Brown's negative personality traits, the anti-establishment mood, and the immigration issue). These frames are built up from contexts, they can be reinforced or modified through mediatisation, and they interact with readers' prior knowledge and dispositions (de Vreese 2014). Brown and his political party had

to work through, i.e., they could not completely circumvent, the mediatisation and massification of public opinion through such frames. This shows how political power in contemporary "post-democracies" depends on a real or apparent consensus of voting citizens, which is in turn partly dependent on the reinforcement or swaying of public opinion through mediatisation. Such power is therefore discoursal rather than coercive. Yet it is also fragile and volatile. It is subject to groundswells of public opinion and emotion that are difficult to predict and deflect.

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