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Exploring the axiological workings of 'reporter voice' news stories—Attribution and attitudinal positioning

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to contribute to the scholarship which is interested in the rhetorical, axiological workings of what are sometimes termed 'hard news' or 'objective' news stories—a style of news journalism typically associated with the 'quality' or 'broadsheet' news media and involving a regime of 'strategic 'impersonalisation'. It is interested in the communicative mechanisms by which such texts are often able to advance or favour particular value positions while employing a relatively impersonal style in which attitudinal evaluations and other potentially contentious meanings are largely confined to material attributed to quoted sources. It reviews previous research on the evaluative qualities of these texts, with special reference to the literature on attribution and so-called 'evidentiality' in news discourse. It is proposed that understandings of the axiological workings of these text can be enhanced by referencing some of the key insights emerging from what is termed the 'Appraisal 'framework', an approach to the analysis of evaluative language developed within the Systemic Functional Linguistic paradigm of Michael Halliday and his associates. In particular it is proposed that understandings of the workings of these texts can be enhanced by referencing proposals in the Appraisal literature with respect to implicit or 'invoked' attitude and by reference to an account of attribution and so-called 'evidentiality' which is grounded in Bakhtinian notions of dialogism, rather than in notions of truth functionality and certainty-of-knowledge claims.

1. Introduction

An obvious, widely-noted and much-discussed feature of Western, English-language news journalism is its frequent use of what is often termed 'attribution' whereby the journalistic author, through directly-quoted or indirectly-reported speech, presents the viewpoints and versions of event on offer in an article as derived from some external source. Via this practice, it is not the journalist author who passes judgement, calls for action or speculates about motives and consequences but rather the quoted source, whose observations, interpretations, beliefs and opinions are apparently being passed on to the media audience. This practice has, of course, been seen as one of the pillars of what has been termed 'objectivity' in news reporting, a descriptor held to apply to those news reporting texts which, accordingly to Mindich's influential formulation, present as 'detached', 'nonpartisan', 'factive' and 'balanced' (Mindich, 1998: 2). Thus, for example, Stensaas, in a study of the historical development of the 'objectivity ethic' in US newspapers, proposed that 'objective news reporting' is that in which it is quoted external sources, and not the journalistic author, who make any 'claims to significance,

statements of prediction, value, advocacy, or inductive general-izations' (Stensaas 1986: 53).

Considerable research over recent years has demonstrated that there is a significant body of news reporting, especially in what is termed the 'quality' or 'broadsheet' media, where attribution is used in the way described by Stensaas—i.e., evaluative and interpretative meanings of the type listed by Stensaas are largely confined to material attributed to external sources. Thus, for example, Stensaas did find instances of reports which matched his criterion, and more specifically found that the frequency of such reports increased progressively over the period of his study – from 1865 to 1934 – to the point where 'objective reporting', as so defined, was 'normative' by the 1920s. Similarly, subsequent work on British and Australian news reporting in the 1990s and 2000s by Iedema et al. (1994), White (1998), Martin and White (2005) and White and Thomson (2008) has found, in a similar vein, that there is a sub-set of English-language broadsheet news reports which operate under a comparable stylistic regime—i.e., the journalistic author does not include explicit references to his/her own emotional responses, does not issue directives and does not explicitly pass judgement on the behaviour of human participants, confining all such interpersonally charged material to external sources. While these authors' findings did parallel those of Sensaass, they did not, however, invoke notions of 'objectivity', preferring to see these texts as involving a regime

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of strategic impersonalisation by which the journalist's evaluative role is backgrounded and that of the quoted source foregrounded (see, for example Iedema et al., 1994 and White, 1998). This particular stylistic regime has been given the label 'reporter voice' (See Martin and White, 2005: Section 4).

The following short extract, from the British *Guardian* newspaper is offered by way of exemplification of this 'strategically impersonal', 'reporter voice' type of text. Such extracts, by way of illustration of key points of the discussion, will be introduced at appropriate points as the following sections unfold.

Extract 1. *Countryside campaigners say government should reconsider 200 miles of overhead pylons in wake of report*

By John Vidal.

Countryside campaigners fighting hundreds of miles of 50-m tall electricity pylons said on Tuesday that they have been vindicated by an independent report, which says burying cables is far cheaper than has been claimed by the National Grid.

The report by engineering consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff into the comparative costs of routing transmission lines was commissioned by government planning body the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). It found that underground cabling was 4.5–5.7 times more expensive than traditional overhead pylons. This compares with the claim of being 10–20 times more expensive, which is often made by the National Grid company in planning applications. The National Grid has been the monopoly supplier of UK pylons for 60 years….. [*The Guardian*, February 1, 2012]

This extract is entirely unexceptional. It is prototypical of this type of 'reporter voice' news report in that, while all explicitly attitudinal material and contested versions of events are attributed to quoted sources, the extract can, nevertheless, be interpreted as favouring a particular value position—one which is positively disposed towards the countryside campaigners and their environmental objectives and negatively disposed towards their opponents, the National Grid company. The attitudinal mechanisms at work here will be identified and analysed as the discussion continues.

This paper is concerned with the conduct of analyses of such texts, but not out of any specific interest as to whether or not it is useful to characterise them as 'objective'. The debates and discussions around this notion are not directly relevant to this paper. The interest, rather, is on account of the fact that through their extensive and careful use of attribution, along with some other interpersonally significant resources, these texts may be read as 'detached', 'impartial' or 'balanced' while at the same time they may advance a particular axiological position. This, of course, is a property of some news reporting which has been very widely considered in the literature. Thus, by way of just one example, Greatbatch (1998) proposed the term 'neutralism' to describe a style of language used in news interviews where attitudinal and ideological work is clearly going on but where it is difficult to identify the specific words and phrases which are responsible.

This paper seeks to contribute to the scholarship directed at describing and explaining the communicative workings of such 'strategically impersonalised' or 'reporter voice' texts. As indicated, its particular interest is with the potential of at least some of these texts to advance or favour particular attitudinal positions, even while, for the most part, confining explicitly evaluative meanings to the words of quoted sources. One concern of the paper is with meanings by which evaluative meanings may be implied or activated by association, rather than being explicitly announced, since numerous studies have shown that these typically play a significant role in these 'reporter voice' texts. (See, for example, Gruber, 1993; White, 2005, 2006, 2009; Coffin and O'Halloran, 2006

and Clark, 2007). An example of such a meaning is provided by the final observation in Extract 1 above—'The National Grid has been the monopoly supplier of UK pylons for 60 years.' While of itself 'factual', the observation clearly has an attitudinal potential when presented in this co-textual setting—the potential to give rise to inferences that the company is motivated by self-interest and therefore is likely to be an unreliable witness.

The primary focus, however, will be on the communicative arrangements by which the journalistic author engages dialogistically with the diversity of voices and viewpoints and which provide what the Bakhtinian tradition (Bakhtin, 1981) would term a 'heteroglossic' backdrop to news reports. An important variable in these types of news report turns on which of the options the writer takes up for engaging with prior speakers and potential respondents. The paper explores some of the potential consequences for axiological positioning (i.e., advancing a particular value position) which can follow particular arrangements in a text of these options for dialogistic engagement.

(It should perhaps be noted that analyses of the transitivity relations in news reporting texts have been highly effective in revealing their underlying ideological orientations. See, for example, Trew (1979). While this aspect of the rhetorical workings of these texts is not dealt with here, it is proposed that any analyses of the axiological workings of such texts may need to also attend to these transitivity arrangements, in order to be comprehensive.)

In exploring approaches to analysing the axiological, rhetorical workings of these 'reporter voice' texts, the paper necessarily references a long line of prior work on intertextuality, attribution and what is more broadly termed evidentiality or epistemological positioning. I refer here, by way of exemplification, to the work by Fairclough (1992), Bergler (1993, 2006), on reported speech in news reporting as an 'evidential' device, Thompson and Ye (1991) on evaluation in reporting verbs Calsamiglia and López Ferrero's work on the role and positioning of quoted sources in media discourse (2003), Bednarek (2006) on 'epistemological positioning' in news discourse, and Hsieh (2008) on evidentiality in Chinese news reporting.

While there are obviously some significant differences between the above accounts, in general terms they can be seen to share the following concerns. They all take note of the diversity of reporting verbs by which material from an external source can be included in a text, and all typically are concerned to provide some account of the parameters along which the meanings of these verbs can vary. Thus, for example, Bergler (1991: 133)) classifies reporting verbs according to what they indicate as to (1) the 'physical characteristics of the original utterance' (e.g., voice quality, volume, etc.), (2) the 'original utterance situation' (e.g., what speech act was being performed'), (3) the 'attitude of the source towards the complement clause' (i.e., whether they are positively, negatively or neutrally disposed to the material they are reported to have enunciated), and (4) 'the strength of the complement', which Bergler explains as referring to 'the reliability, certainty, or credibility of the complement [the attributed proposition] as encoded in the reporting verb by the reporter.' One purpose of this paper is to outline an alternative taxonomy for reporting verbs which attends to their functionality in positioning the speaker/writer dialogistically vis-à-vis prior utterances on the same subject and anticipated responses.

Similarly, the cited scholars usually attend to ways in which the nature of the cited source may have an evaluative effect—for example, acting to construe the attributed material as more or less credible, certain or reliable. Bergler, for example, suggests that certain types of sources have the potential to produce evaluations of high certainty or reliability on the basis of attributes of authoritativeness or expertise (for example, material attributed to 'officials' or 'analysts'). Calsamiglia and López Ferrero (2003) offer an elaborate taxonomy of source types, based on Van Leeuwen's

(1996) scheme for classifying social actors, and accordingly attend to such issues as whether the source is 'specified' (e.g., a named individual) or 'genericized' (i.e., the material is presented as sourced from a generalised class such as 'scientists' or 'economists'.)

These scholars also typically note that the evaluative meanings of both reporting verbs and these source type designations are highly susceptible to conditioning by the textual context in which they occur—i.e., often variable to a significant degree. Thus Bergler (1991: 147) notes: 'The influence of the complex source noun phrase [the source designator] on the trustworthiness of the attributed utterance is very subtle and cannot be derived solely from the lexical semantics of the words involved.'

This paper is novel in bringing to bear on these issues some key insights derived from the Appraisal framework (see, for example, Iedema et al., 1994; White, 1998, 2002 Martin, 2000 and Martin and White, 2005). Appraisal is an approach to the analysis of evaluative language which has been developed by a group of linguists working within the Systemic Functional Linguistics paradigm of Michael Halliday (1994), and provides systematic taxonomies of what are seen as the key types of evaluative meanings. Specifically these are meanings for explicitly or implicitly conveying positive and negative assessments (termed inscribed and invoked 'Attitude' in the Appraisal literature), meanings by which the speaker/writer engages dialogistically with prior speakers on the same subject and anticipates potential responses (termed 'Engagement'), and meanings by which the intensity of utterances can be raised or lowered, or the boundaries of semantic categories can be blurred or sharpened (termed 'Graduation').

The following sections outline insights into the rhetorical functionality of these 'reporter voice' texts which become available under the Appraisal framework. Specifically the sections outline insights arising from the account the Appraisal framework provides of 'implied' attitude and from the account of dialogic positioning available via the Engagement taxonomy. With respect to the attitudinal workings of these texts, the insights from Appraisal are largely in line with the prior literature, only enabling what are arguably more nuanced and delicate analyses. With respect to the dialogistic workings of these texts, and specifically with respect to the functionality of attribution and so-called 'evidentials', the insights are rather more at odds with the prior literature, at least to the extent that they offer an alternative to the truth-functional or knowledge-status perspectives which have previously been favoured. I turn firstly to issues of attitude before then addressing issues of dialogic positioning and attribution/evidentiality.

2. Understanding the attitudinal workings of 'reporter voice' texts—Invoked attitude

As discussed above, news texts of this 'reporter voice' type typically confine any explicit assessments and statements as to value position to material attributed to quoted sources. Extract 1 above was a case in point. Against this, of course, is the fact that this type of news report frequently includes material which is implicitly evaluative and thereby functions to advance a value position, even while doing this with language which is less overtly attitudinal and which may rely on the reader to supply particular inferences. To provide a principled account of these different mechanisms for advancing attitudinal meanings, the Appraisal literature distinguishes firstly between what it terms 'inscribed' Attitude (where there is explicitly attitudinal lexis such as *corruptly, competently, compellingly, honestly, skilfully, reliable, accurate*) and what it terms 'invoked' attitude where the attitudinal value is activated indirectly via implication, association or optional entailments. This category of 'invoked' attitude is further divided into subcategories according to the mechanisms by which the attitudinal value is invoked. In what

is termed 'provoked' attitude (see White, 1998), an evaluative (though not explicitly attitudinal) meaning will be involved—for example the counter-expectational 'only' and the intensifying 'extremely' in the following: 'He only visits his extremely frail mother once a year'. Such 'provoking' invocations are contrasted with what is termed 'evoked' attitude where the meanings appear to be entirely 'factual', that is to say there are no explicit evaluations of any type in the utterance—for example: 'Mr Bush was elected president with 500,000 fewer votes than his opponent.' Instances of evoked attitude will, of course, be highly contingent, depending on attitudinal influences coming from elsewhere in the text and on the world view and value positions brought to the text by the reader. They rely on the reader responding with a particular inference.

Consider the following example by way of exemplification of the workings of invoked attitude in these 'reporter voice' texts.

Extract 2.

(1) The families of British detainees at Guantanamo Bay are to take their fight for the men's release to the US with the help of the foremost American civil liberties group, they announced yesterday.

(2) Politicians, campaigners and lawyers joined relatives of the prisoners to launch the Guantanamo Human Rights Commission at the House of Commons.

(3) Nine Britons and three British residents are among the 660 men who have been held at the American naval base in Cuba for more than two years without charge or access to lawyers. Another 11 Europeans, several from France, Sweden and Germany, are also detained at Camp Delta.

(4) 'We have to speak not only to the courts of law but to the court of public opinion,' Nadine Strossen, the president of the ACLU, said. She said there was growing concern over the Bush administration's actions in the 'war on terror'. < … >

(5) 'It is plain and clear that the treatment of these 660 being held without charge, without access to a lawyer, without access to a court, violates the most fundamental of human rights,' said Philippe Sands QC, professor of law at University College, London. [*The Guardian*, January 21, 2004]

The opening three sentences of this extract are free of explicitly attitudinal terminology (except, perhaps, for the term 'foremost' in 'foremost American civil liberties group'). Nevertheless this section does include a number of attitudinal invocations by which a value position critical of the government and sympathetic to campaigners is favoured. Thus for example, the families of the detainees are said to be 'taking their fight' to the US. While to describe someone as 'fighting' is not of itself to advance an attitudinal assessment (it can be either good or bad depending on who is fighting, with whom, in what circumstances), the collocation 'take one's fight to' does have an association with positivity, specifically determination and possibly courage. This is supported by a search of the Collins Wordbanks 500 million-word corpus. A search for 'take their fight' returned 12 hits. Eleven of these involved metaphorical 'fights' (e.g., 'The five sisters of murdered Belfast man Robert McCartney were thrust into the spotlight when they decided to take their fight for justice to the US.'). In all of these eleven instances, the 'fight' was a just one, with those doing the metaphorical fighting determinedly battling against the odds, against bureaucracy, and so on. There was just the one instance where those involved in the 'fighting' were arguably not positively appraised: 'Whoever wins, the more disturbing development is that some Iraqi jihadis, hoping to take their fight beyond Iraq 's borders, are threatening to launch a terrorist campaign in the U. S.' Tellingly, in the case, this was a literal

rather than a metaphorical fight. While 12 collocations do not provide sufficient evidence for definitive conclusions, they are none-theless suggestive that 'take their fight', when metaphor is involved, has a positive association. As a formulation which involves intensifying metaphor (i.e., a form of evaluation), this can be classified as an instance of 'provoked' attitude. This is significant in that, as a 'provocation', such evaluative material is potentially more 'visible' to the reader—i.e., less impersonalising than an 'evocation'.

As well, of course, there is the observation that the detainees have been held for 'more than two years without charge or access to lawyers', a 'factual' assertion, and hence an instance of an attitudinal 'evocation', which would nevertheless clearly have the potential to invoke a negative view of the authorities in readers bringing to the text a particular set of beliefs about detention without charge.

In the sentences which follow after (sentences 4–5), explicitly attitudinal material advancing a negative view of the authorities is introduced through propositions attributed to external sources (for example, that the detainees' treatment 'violates the most fundamental of human rights'.) Significantly, however, the attitudinal scene has already been set via the earlier attitudinal implications.

3. Quoted source descriptors as attitudinal invocations

I turn now to a related issue: the potential of quoted source descriptors (the naming and designation of the source) to invoke an attitudinal assessment of the material being attributed to that source, specifically to invoke either a favouring or a disfavouring of that material. Some of the relevant literature was briefly discussed above. While Calsamiglia and López Ferrero (2003) have developed an elaborate taxonomy of source descriptor types based on van Leeuwen's social actor types, as yet there has not been an attempt to develop a comprehensive account of descriptor types by reference to their potential to act as attitudinal invocations. By way of a brief sketch of how an analysis towards this end might be conducted the following outline is provided.

3.1. Source descriptors 'evoking' attitudinal assessments

As discussed above, evoking attitudinal invocations are those where there is nothing which is explicitly evaluative present—i.e., no intensification, no counter-expectation, no metaphor, no attitu-dinal values which might indirectly evoke a positive or negative attitude. Descriptors which simply name a source without any accompanying modification fall into this category. For example source descriptors which name high status international figures (Nelson Mandela, for example) and perhaps some religious leaders (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope, the Dalai Lama for instance). Source descriptors which reference high profile organisations may also function in this way—for example, attributions to the Red Cross or Médecins Sans Frontière. In cases where the named source is not widely known, then additional descriptors as to the source's profes-sion, institutional membership, position in a hierarchy and so on may become attitudinally charged. A case in point would be the designa-tion of the quoted source in the previous extract as 'Phillipe Sands QC, professor of law at University College, London'. Of course, as instances of 'evoked' attitude, the attitudinal potential of such formulations is entirely contingent, dependent on co-textual conditioning and the beliefs and attitudes the reader brings to the text.

3.2. Source descriptors 'provoking' attitudinal assessments of attributed material

Another option taken up in these 'reporter voice' texts is to 'provoke' a favouring of an attributed proposition through an

explicit evaluation of the source. Here we are dealing with terms such as *leading, prominent* and *respected*. For example:

<u>Leading</u> agricultural scientists hold that recent farm produc-tion trends increasingly indicate US has been living off past tech breakthroughs. (*New York Times* Abstracts, 31 May 1976).

Such formulations are instances of 'provoked' invocation of attitude towards the proposition in that, while there is an evaluative element present, it does not target the propositions itself.

As others have noted (for example, Hood, 2004, Calsamiglia and López Ferrero 2003) evaluative effects also follow from source descriptors which reference quantified groupings, by which the attributed material is presented as associated with a significantly large or diverse grouping. For example,

…**many scientists hold that**′ the Hubble telescope has pro-vided some of most valuable space images to date. (*New York Times* Abstracts, 24 August, 2004)

A reverse effect of disfavouring the attributed proposition may operate when the grouping associated with a proposition is presented as being limited in its scope. For example:

only a few scientists believe the Earth will self-stabilize. (*USA Today* 18 April 1990)

There is not, of course, a simple one-to-one correspondence between number and degree of evidential standing. Some group-ings, no matter how large, are unlikely to have high evidential standing on account of having a low social status (for example, football hooligans, or neo Nazis). As well, context will always be important and it will always be available to the author to cancel out any potential attitudinal effects. This is often done by simply setting up one grouping against another. For example:

Many scientists hold that climate change is unstoppable; **others say** it is possible to minimize the impact. (*El Pais* English edition, 2 February 2011).

Again such descriptors would be classified as instances of 'provoked' invocation of an attitude towards the attributed proposition—with the 'provocation' being done by the quantification.

As in the earlier discussion of invoked attitude, the contrast between 'provoking' and 'evoking' may turn out to be of some significance analytically, given that the attitudinal work being done by a provocation (e.g., 'leading scientists believe…', 'only a few scientists believe') may be more visible to the reader and hence to some degree reveal the subjective involvement of the journalistic author.

4. Dialogic positioning, attribution and 'evidentiality'

I turn now to what I signalled above as being the most substantive difference between the Appraisal-based approach I am exploring here and the approach to analysis typically found in the relevant literature. This difference turns on notions of what is at stake communicatively in the context of what is traditionally termed 'epistemic modality', 'evidentiality' and 'attribution'. (For the sake of this discussion I will treat evidentiality and attribution as separate categories, even while attribution is often treated as a sub category of evidentiality.) The cited literature is largely located in a scholarly tradition (e.g., Lyons, 1977; Palmer, 1986; Coates, 1983; Chafe and Nichols, 1986) where these mean-ings are understood in truth functional or knowledge status terms—as the means by which the speaker/writer provides some indication of the reliability of the 'knowledge' being presented or an indication of their degree of certainty with respect to the truth

value of the current proposition. Thus, for example, Bergler (1991: 7) states with respect to attributive formulations that 'the function of the reported speech here is clearly to indicate that the reporter cannot or will not evaluate the truth of the complement' and that 'by attributing the complement clause [the attributed proposition] to the source of the information, the reporter introduces an evaluative environment in which the reader can assess the reliability of the information.' In a similar vein, Hsieh characterises reportatives such as he *said* and *reportedly*, and so-called 'evidentials' such as *it seems* and *apparently* as those 'means of coding distinctions in the source and mode of evidence for the factual status of a given utterance' and states that, 'One way journalists convey their strength of certainty towards what is to be reported is to indicate or allude to the source of evidence for their claim.' (Hsieh, 2008: 205, 206). Similarly, Bednarek (2006) deals with attributives, evidentials and epistemic modals (along with some other related meanings) under the heading of 'epistemological positioning' and contends that these are all resources for, 'expressing assessments concerning knowledge' (p. 635). She adopts Anderson's account (1986: 273, cited in Bednarek, 2006: 636) of 'evidentials' as functioning to 'express the kinds of evidence a person has for making factual claims'.

Under the Appraisal approach, these attributives and evidentials are dealt with as categories within a substantially wider ranging taxonomy of resources by which the speaker/writer engages dialogically with prior utterances on the same topic and potential responses. This 'Engagement' taxonomy includes, in addition to attribution and evidentials, modals of probability, negation, certain types of meta discourse, concession, counter-expectationals, consequentiality and factives. The rationale for such a taxonomy comes from Bakhtin/Voloshinov's now widely influential notions of dialogism and heteroglossia under which all verbal communication, whether written or spoken, is 'dialogic' in that to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners. (See, for example, Bakhtin, 1981 and Voloshinov, 1995.) Thus the Engagement taxonomy brings together and sub classifies all those locutions which provide some means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence to 'engage' with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context.

This results in a significantly different understanding of the functionality of attributives and evidentials. When viewed dialogistically, these locutions are seen to actively construe a heteroglossic backdrop for the text by overtly grounding the proposition in either the contingent, individual subjectivity of the speaker/writer (in the case of evidentials and epistemic modals) or in the contingent subjectivity of the quoted source (in the case of attribution), and thereby recognising that the proposition is but one among a number of propositions available in the current communicative context.

To illustrate more fully what is at stake in the contrast between a dialogistic perspective on these meanings and a truth-functional/knowledge-status perspective, a discussion of an extract from Bednarek (2006: 645) is provided in the following sections.

The extract includes an instance of attribution, the modal adjunct 'perhaps' and the evidential 'appeared'.

As Pelé, perhaps the greatest-ever footballer, said when he flew into Newcastle yesterday, many of the country's young stars appeared to be losing touch with the qualities that once made them role models. (*The Times*)

Bednarek, in line with traditional treatments of modality and evidentials, interprets the 'perhaps' (in 'perhaps the greatest-ever footballer') and the 'appeared' (in 'many of the young stars appeared to be losing touch…') as indicating 'low certainty of knowledge', first on the part of the author ('perhaps the greatest-ever') and secondly on the part of Pelé, the quoted source ('appeared to be losing touch'). But the dialogistic perspective shifts the focus so that such a concern with 'certainty of knowledge' is seen to be not always and not necessarily the primary, determining communicative motive. In this regard it is noteworthy that in both cases the proposition at issue can hardly be characterised as involving 'knowledge', and they certainly do not involve 'factual claims'. Informational 'reliability' is not at issue. Rather these are both instances of highly evaluative assessment, opinions which are not susceptible to tests of 'truthfulness' or 'accuracy'. Obviously, in the first instance, the author's objective is to advance an opinion-based, highly positive assessment of Pelé—that he is one of the greatest footballers of all time, if not the greatest footballer of all time. The writer employs 'probably', and hence stops short of categoricality in the assertion, in order to mark the proposition as potentially contentious and to signal recognition that there may well be some who will not exactly share the writer's views on this matter. Tellingly, the utterance is organised in such a way that the alternative positions which are being allowed for, or entertained, are not those which would reject the overall positivity of the writer's viewpoint, but rather those which might quibble about whether or not there might not be one or two other players who are even greater than Pelé. Thus the writer makes a space in the text's heteroglossic backdrop for those who share his positive view of Pelé, but who hold that there are even greater players. Thus the authorial voice presents itself as invested in this proposition while at the same time acknowledging that the value position being advanced is contingent and but one of a number of potential dialogistic alternatives. In this, then, we see that the primary functionality of the meanings of this type. They act to acknowledge a heteroglossic backdrop for the proposition by presenting it as potentially at odds with some dialogistic alternative.

A similar analysis would apply to the use of 'appeared' which follows after, although of course this time it is a quoted source, rather than the writer, who is represented as advancing an opinion in such a way as to acknowledge that it will potentially be in tension with dialogic alternatives. Again there is no sense here that the purported originator of the utterance (Pelé) has a 'low degree of certainty' with regards any 'knowledge', or that he is being presented as uncertain in this opinion. The primary effect of this being represented as an opinion which has been contingently derived from some observation or deduction is, again, to present it as but one of a number of possible alternatives and accordingly to acknowledge the heteroglossic backdrop against which it operates.

Additionally, this extract contains an instance of attribution—'As Pelé said…' To understand what is at stake here in terms of dialogistic engagement, we should firstly consider a case involving the more common 'X said' and where the complication of the evidential 'appeared' has been removed—e.g., 'Pelé said many of the country's young stars were losing touch with the qualities that once made them role models.' As foreshadowed above, in dialogistic terms such formulations ground the proposition in an individual, contingent subjectivity—that of the quoted source. As such, this highly evaluative, opinion-based proposition is just one of a range of possible propositions and accordingly dialogic space is opened up to these potential alternatives. This functionality of being 'dialogically expansive' is thus a property which such attributions share with the modal and evidential meanings discussed above. In this sense, attribution and evidentiality/epistemic modals are dialogistic twins, sharing the property of opening up dialogic space to alternative propositions, and varying only in the nature of the subjectivity in which the proposition is ground.

This, then, is a rather different perspective on the functionality of attributions of the *X-said* type which are frequently seen as absolving the writer of responsibility for the attributed material. Thus, for example, Bednarek states, 'Ultimately, it is the writer who is responsible for this act of attribution, but it is the source that is said to be responsible for the attributed proposition.' (2006: 642). This notion off 'absolution from responsibility' has, as Calsamiglia and López Ferrero observe, become something of a commonplace, especially in the journalism training literature (2003: 149). Obviously it serves journalistic self interest in providing a basis to any claim that journalists are impartial, disinterested conveyors of 'facts', but ignores what, upon closer analysis, is surely the obvious point that the journalist author is entirely responsible for introducing the attributed material into the text and accordingly for putting this particular proposition into play. As Calsamiglia and López Ferrero observe, attribution 'means managing the words of others to convey and serve the purpose of the writer, giving a slant to what is said' (p. 149). Tellingly this is exactly the view of attributed material which is enshrined in media law where the journalistic author is held to be just as liable for defamatory meanings contained in attributed material as the quoted source.

From the dialogistic perspective then, the communicative functionality of this type of attribution is not a matter of epistemic 'responsibility' nor of authorial certainty or lack of certainty vis-à-vis the material being advanced. Rather it functions to present the author as putting the current proposition into play in a way which allows for the possibility of dialogic alternatives.

It is also often observed that attributions involving *to say* and related verbs construe the authorial voice as 'neutral' with respect to the quoted material. This view is compatible with the dialogic perspective as long as 'neutrality' is understood, not in terms of assessments of reliability, certainty or truthfulness, but in terms of dialogic association between author and quoted source. As will be discussed below, other reporting verbs – e.g., *to demonstrate* and *to claim* – function to present the authorial voice as standing with (*demonstrate*) or stepping back from (*claim*) the quoted source with respect to the current quoted proposition. In contrast *say* and related verbs are, of themselves, unmarked with respect to this parameter, entailing neither dialogic association nor disassociation.

We should note as well that the source descriptor here (the celebrated and widely respected footballer, Pelé) involves attitudinal invocation as discussed above, with the potential to activate a positive disposition in the reader towards the opinion being attributed to this source. The text, in this sense, can be seen, at least at the point where the utterance occurred, as 'favouring' this proposition. If the reference had simply been to 'Pelé', then this would be analysed as an instance of an 'evoking' invocation which simply affords the reader the opportunity to supply a positive inference. However, in actuality, the reference to Pelé is accompanied by 'perhaps the greatest-ever footballer'. While this doesn't explicitly evaluate Pelé as an expert or authority on the behaviour of younger players today, it nevertheless has the potential to 'provoke' a positive disposition in the reader towards this opinion.

Under the dialogic perspective, then, the analysis to be advanced is that the journalistic author has put into play a highly evaluative proposition via communicative mechanisms which:

(1) allow for or 'entertain' heteroglossic alternatives,
(2) attribute the proposition to an external source with which the authorial voice neither associates or disassociates and,
(3) employs attitudinal invocations which have the potential to position the reader to regard the proposition favourably.

One further point needs to be made with respect to this extract. As noted, the attributing formulation was actually 'as X said' rather than the much more common 'X said'. This has the effect of presenting the journalistic author as jointly articulating the proposition with the quoted source, and not as simply attributing the proposition. The effect is quite significant in terms of dialogistic arrangements. The authorial voice asserts itself as a primary source of the proposition, potentially cancelling out the dialogistically expansive effects associated with the more usual *X-said* formulations. If the proposition had not been of itself dialogically expansive (through the presence of 'appeared to be') the effect would be to produce a categorical assertion which doesn't allow for dialogic alternatives: 'As Pelé said, many of the country's young stars are losing touch with the qualities that once made them role models.'

Accordingly, even while *as-X-said* formulations do introduce another voice into the text, they nevertheless involve the authorial voice in a categorical assertion, therefore not engaging with any dialogic alternatives. In terms of the account of Engagement developed by White (1998, 2002, 2003) and Martin and White (2005), this would be classified as an instance of 'monogloss'—an assertion by which there is no recognition of the heteroglossic backdrop in which the text operates. Of course, in such cases there are two voices – the author's and the quoted source's – but the formulation construes them as a single voice in terms of the advancing of this particular value position. Tellingly, these *as-X-said* formulations (as opposed to *X-said* formulations) are incompatible with the 'strategic impersonalisation' of typical 'reporter voice' texts, since they typically involve the authorial voice joining with a quoted source to monoglossically declare some attitudinal or otherwise contentious meaning.

5. Reporting verbs—Semantic dimensions and entailments

The insights of the Appraisal literature, and particularly its account of Engagement resources, favour a perspective in which issues of 'truth value', 'informational certainty' and 'knowledge status' are not given the primacy they are afforded in much of the evidentiality literature. Preference is given to the dialogic functionality of these formulations. In this, of course, the Appraisal literature lines up with those scholars who have identified what is often termed the 'pragmatic' aspect of these locutions. Myers, for example, has observed that one purpose of such locutions, at least as they operate in academic discourse, is not to mark knowledge claims as uncertain, but rather to mark the claim as 'unacknowledged by the discourse community' (Myers, 1989: 12). This is not, of course, to suggest that these meanings may not in some cases convey authorial uncertainty. It is just that this 'uncertainty' is understood in dialogistic terms—a gesture by which space is made available for alternative voices and viewpoints.

The discussion to this point, therefore, has attended to the meanings of attributives and evidentials in broad terms—their functionality with regards knowledge status versus dialogistic positioning. I turn now to a narrower consideration of attribution, and specifically to a consideration of the communicative functionality of reporting verbs—those verbs which frame or project the attributed material which is being introduced into the text. It was noted above that analysts have paid considerable attention to the semantics of the quite extensive set of verbs in English, typically offering an account of parameters by which the meanings or functionality of these verbs may vary. Under the influence of the Appraisal literature's account of Engagement, this section offers a taxonomy which attends to what is at stake in terms of dialogistic positioning in the choice of one or other of these verbs. The discussion is in two parts. The first part attends to how certain key reporting verbs position the primary voice of the journalistic author vis-à-vis prior utterances and potential

responses. In the second part, the discussion attends to how a sub set of the reporting verbs acts to the position what will be termed the 'secondary voice', the voice of the quoted source, vis-à-vis prior utterances and potential responses. Thus the two sections provide a dialogistic take on the widely noted phenomenon by which reporting verbs may have a double functionality of indicating both the 'stance' of the primary authorial voice vis-à-vis the attributed material and the 'stance' of the secondary, quoted source towards this material.

5.1. Attributives and the dialogic stance of the primary authorial voice

With respect to dialogic positioning and the primary authorial voice there are three broad options made available by reporting verbs in English. As already discussed above, verbs of the *to say* type are unmarked or neutral with respect to dialogic association—indicating neither association nor disassociation. Other similar verbs include *to state*, *to assert*, and *to report*. Adverbials such as *reportedly* and adjuncts such as *according to* have a similar functionality. Such formulations are unmarked for dialogic association in that that there is no entailment here by which the speaker/writer is understood to 'stand with' or 'stand away from' the quoted source and the attributed material. In the Engagement taxonomy, such verbs (and related formulations) are given the label 'Acknowledge', as a sub-type of the broader category of 'Attribute'.

In taxonomic contrast with this class are those verbs which are marked for dialogic association. There are two sub types: those by which the primary authorial voice is presented as standing (associating) with the quoted source and those by which the primary authorial voice is presented as standing away from (disassociating) the quoted source and the attributed material. The first 'associating' sub group includes verbs such as *to prove*, *to demonstrate*, *to show* and *to reveal*. These verbs have been discussed in the literature under the heading of 'factivity' (see for example Kiparsky and Kiparsky, 1970). Through an entailment of this 'factivity', the semantics of these verbs is such that the 'validity' or 'truth' of the framed proposition is presupposed or taken for granted. Thus for a proposition to be 'demonstrated', 'revealed', or 'proven', that proposition must be 'actual'—i.e., it is taken to be 'valid' or 'true'. Accordingly, by use of such a reporting verb, the primary author indicates support for the current proposition, indicating that it stands with or 'associates' dialogically with that proposition. In the Engagement taxonomy, such meanings are given the label, 'Endorsement'. The following extracts demonstrate such verbs in action.

A study in 1997 **showed** that most adolescent American girls … assess their own self-worth entirely in terms of how good they look. (Collins Wordbanks, brnews sub-corpus).

Mr Duelfer 's report **demonstrated** that Saddam was doing his best to get around the sanctions. (Collins Wordbanks, oznews sub-corpus).

The verb *to claim* is the primary mechanism by which, in English, the primary authorial voice can stand away or disassociate from the quoted source and the attributed material. This verb and its semantic entailments have been much discussed in the literature, with the verb typically understood as allowing greater room for doubt and as indicating a lower level of reliability, certainty and credibility vis-à-vis the quoted proposition, when compared with one of the *to-say* verbs. Thus, for example, Bergler states: '*To claim*, for example, has much less strength [re evaluations of reliability, certainty or credibility] than *to state*, which is still lower in strength than *to announce*.' (1991: 144). This, of course, is a knowledge-status oriented gloss rather than a dialogism-oriented account where the verb is said to simply 'disassociate' the primary voice from the attributed proposition and thereby to actively indicate that alternative propositions are possible. (See Caldas-Coulthard,

1994: 295 for a somewhat similar observation.) The knowledge-status notion that *to claim* necessarily entails a sense of unreliability or lack of credibility can be shown to misrepresent the semantics of this verb in that it is not the verb itself which conveys a negative attitude towards the attributed material.

This is not to deny that there is a strong tendency for *claim* to be used when attitudinal work elsewhere in the sentence or in nearby sentences is acting to cast the proposition in an unfavourable light. It is certainly frequently the case that *to claim* is used as a framing verb when the proposition in question is elsewhere characterised as doubtful, lacking credibility or wrong. The following are typical examples of this.

Do not forget that 8 mb of RAM in your PC is a practical minimum—2 mb is recommended and the 4 mb Microsoft **claims** is usable is just ridiculous. (Bank of English, New Scientist sub-corpus).

The malicious *Daily Mail* also **claims** Beatrice, 14 … and sister Eugenie, 12, were upset at another row between her mum and 'hapless' Andrew. (*The Mirror* September 6, 2002).

However, by way of support for my proposal that it is not the verb itself which carries this negativity is the possibility that any potential negativity towards the attributed proposition can be cancelled out by the addition of explicitly positive qualifiers such as 'rightly' or 'correctly'. For example:

In his foreign policy speeches, George Bush often mentions the importance of human rights. He **correctly claims** that Operation Desert Storm ended Iraq's abuse of Kuwaiti human rights. (Bank of English—US public radio sub-corpus).

Even more significant is the use of this verb (without any qualifiers) in contexts where it is implausible that the verb is acting to cast doubt on the proposition or construing it as unreliable. This can be demonstrated in the following extract from a report in the British *Daily Mail*.

Apartheid city: Former CRE boss condemns both sides of the divide

The damning verdict on a community torn apart by segregation—and warnings that were spurned

ALL sides of the racial divide must take the blame for turning Bradford into a terrifying hotbed of fear and ignorance, an inquiry has found.

Days after rioting left 200 police officers injured and caused £25million damage, a team led by race equality campaigner Lord Herman Ouseley delivered a verdict that damned almost every section of its society.

The rot runs deep, with Asians, whites, schools, the police and the local authority all told to take responsibility for the crisis.

The report depicted Bradford as a city in which 'weak' political leaders 'kowtow' to community leaders to keep the peace in a 'doing deals' culture.

Schools are places of 'virtual apartheid' where racial conflict, harassment and 'Islamaphobia' thrive.

Racism is fuelled by inadequate education about different cultures and 'parental prejudices'.

Communities have little, if anything, to do with people outside their own race or religion, **it is claimed**. [*Daily Mail*, September 1, 2001]

What is significant is that the article is obviously positively disposed towards the findings of the inquiry being reported. Thus, for example, the inquiry is said to have provided a 'damning verdict'. Similarly those involved in the inquiry are said to have 'found' that 'both sides are to blame' rather than to have 'asserted' or 'said' this. Other propositions associated with the inquiry are barely asserted, without any attributive framing, suggestive of a close association between the journalistic author's voice and the voice of the inquiry. When, in the final sentence of the extract, 'it is claimed' is used to frame the attributed material, there is
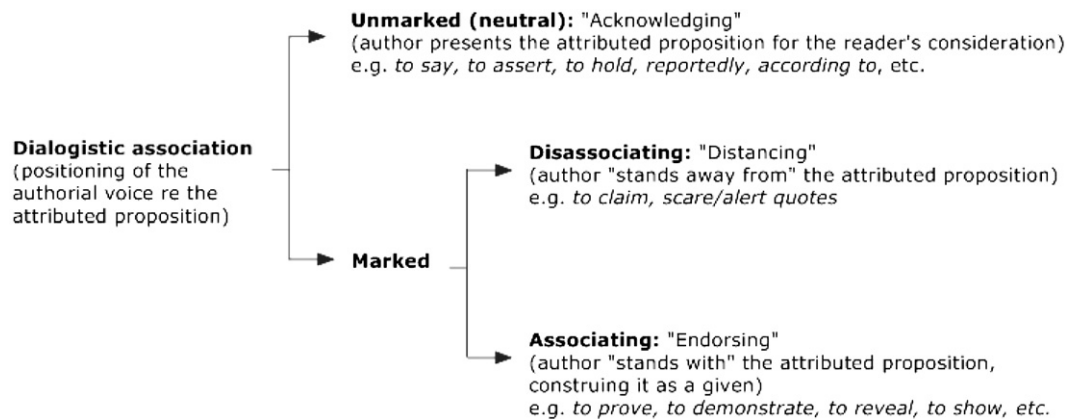
Unmarked (neutral): "Acknowledging"
(author presents the attributed proposition for the reader's consideration)
e.g. *to say, to assert, to hold, reportedly, according to*, etc.

Dialogistic association
(positioning of the
authorial voice re the
attributed proposition)

Marked

Disassociating: "Distancing"
(author "stands away from" the attributed proposition)
e.g. *to claim, scare/alert quotes*

Associating: "Endorsing"
(author "stands with" the attributed proposition,
construing it as a given)
e.g. *to prove, to demonstrate, to reveal, to show*, etc.

Fig. 1. Dialogistic association.

nothing to suggest that this reflects a shift in authorial stance, that suddenly the author has gone from being supportive of the inquiry to questioning its findings or suggesting they are doubtful or lacking in credibility. More plausible is the possibility that this use of *to claim* simply encodes authorial 'standing away' as, for a moment, he communicatively enacts the journalistic role of distanced, disinterested observer who should, accordingly to journalistic mythology, always be disassociated from any evaluative or otherwise contentious material.

Accordingly, as proposed above, *to claim* 'disassociates' the authorial voice from the attributed proposition but does not of itself cast the attributed proposition in a negative light, even while providing a supportive communicative setting for other meanings which might operate in this way. In the Engagement taxonomy, locutions which operate in this way are termed 'Distancing'.

The system of options by which the primary authorial voice is positioning dialogically vis-à-vis prior utterances is presented above in Fig. 1.

Patterns of use of these resources are often highly revealing with respect to the communicative workings by which 'reporter voice' texts favour particular value positions. Use of associating 'Endorsement' locutions will typically indicate a value position is being favoured by the text, while the use of diassociating 'Distancing' formulations will indicate the opposite. A highly suggestive pattern along these lines can be observed in Extract 1 cited at the opening of this paper. There it was suggested that despite its 'strategically impersonal' style the text favoured the environmentally-protective value position of the countryside campaigners. It is noticeable in this regard that propositions of the countryside campaigners and their allies are acknowledged as 'sayings' ('Countryside campaigners fighting hundreds of miles of 50-m tall electricity pylons **said** on Tuesday that they have been vindicated by an independent report…') while the propositions of those who support their position are endorsed as 'findings' ('[The report by engineering consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff] **found** that underground cabling was 4.5–5.7 times more expensive than traditional overhead pylons.'). In contrast the propositions of their opponents, the National Grid company, are distanced as 'claims' ('the **claim** of being 10–20 times more expensive, which is often made by the National Grid').

Analyses which attend to these dialogistic arrangements can thus be highly productive in revealing the underlying axiological orientation of such texts.

5.2. Attributives and the dialogic stance of the secondary voice (the quoted source)

The literature cited above has frequently attended to the stance indicated of the quoted source vis-à-vis the material being attributed to it. Thus Calsamiglia and López Ferrero propose that the quoted source, via the choice of reporting verb, can be presented as positively disposed towards the attributed material, neutral, tentative or negatively disposed (2003: 158). Thompson and Ye (1991) offer a similar analysis. This section offers a slightly different take on these reporting verbs—a perspective which is more systematically dialogistic in offering a taxonomy which attends to how the quoted source (as opposed to the primary authorial voice) is presented as having positioned itself dialogistically vis-à-vis prior utterances on the current topic and vis-à-vis potential responses. In order to demonstrate this taxonomy it is necessary to briefly offer a more extended account of the Engagement taxonomy as developed in the Appraisal literature.

As indicated above, the Engagement taxonomy extends beyond attributives, modals of probability and evidentials to include such meanings as negation, adversatives, concession, certain types of intensifying meta-discourse and consequentials. This is on the basis that all these formulations present the speaker as engaging with other voices and other viewpoints. These resources are divided into two sub-groups. On the one hand there are attributives and the evidentials/modals discussed above which, by grounding the proposition in the contingent subjectivity of either a primary or a secondary voice, actively allow for alternative positions, thereby opening up dialogic space to these alternatives. These resources, accordingly, are sub classified a 'dialogically expansive'. Taxonomically contrasted with these 'expansive' resources are those which, while still engaging with dialogic alternativeness, nevertheless reject, challenge or suppress these alternatives. These are sub classified as instances of 'dialogic contraction'. Included in this sub category are:

- negation (since it presents the speaker as rejecting the opposing positive assertion), adversatives such as *however*, and *yet* (since they present the speaker as countervailing some assumed expectation),
- concurring expressions such as *of course*, *obviously*, *admittedly* (since they present the speaker agreeing with and sharing the same views as the addressee),
- certain intensifications such as *the facts of the matter are…*, *I contend that* (since they present the speaker as challenging and heading off some prior alternative), and
- justifications, via such connective such as *therefore* and related locutions (since they present the speaker motivating the current propositions so as to win over those who might be dubious or resistant).

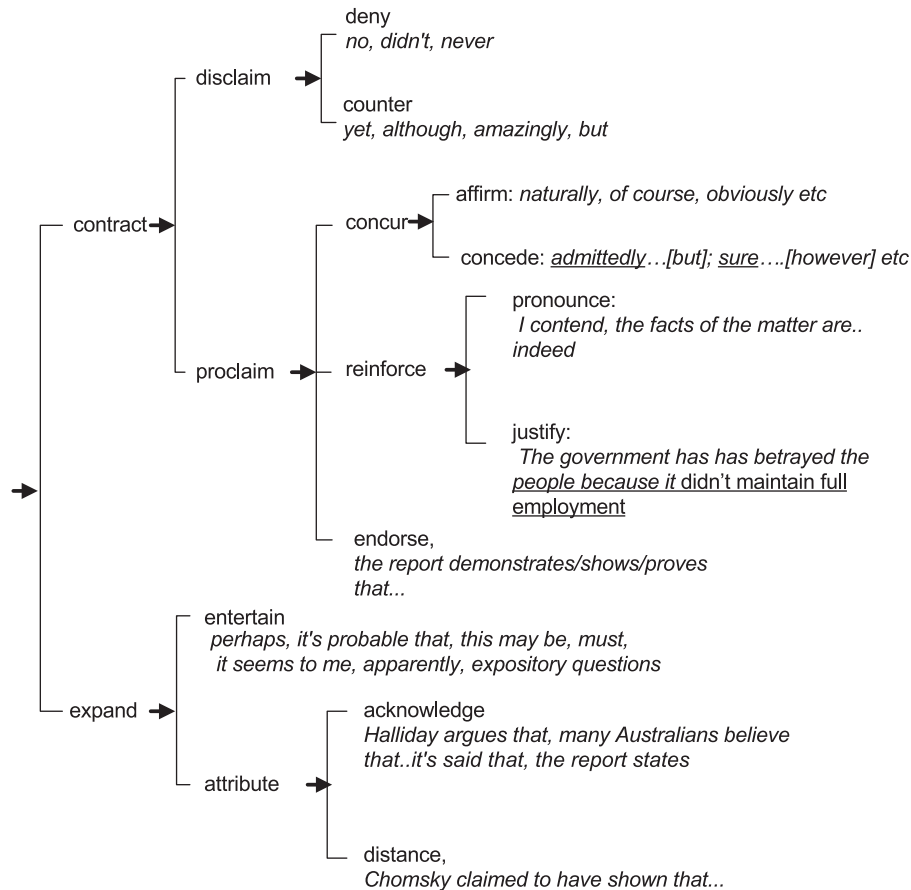This system as it applies to the primary speaker is set out diagramatically below.

Fig. 2. Dialogistic options for the primary voice.

Fig. 2 As indicated, certain reporting verbs enable some of these primary-voice dialogistic relations to be indicated of the secondary voice (the quoted source). Thus, for example, the reporting verb *to deny*, presents the quoted source as having negated a proposition, while the reporting verbs *to insist* and *to contend* present the quoted source as having made a pronouncement contrary to some alternative position. Similarly, *to agree that* and *acknowledge that* present the secondary voice as concurring, while *to conclude that* may construe the quoted source as having reinforced a proposition against possible alternatives via the use of some evidence or supporting argumentation. Additionally, reporting verbs such as *to wonder whether, to suspect that,* and *to postulate that* present the quoted source as actively allowing for alternative viewpoints and hence as being dialogically expansive—they are presented, via the reporting verb, as having 'entertained' alternatives to their proposition. It turns out then, that secondary (quoted) voice options available under 'attribute' repeat some of the options for dialogic positioning available to the primary voice (the speaker/writer). This secondary-voice sub system (with the primary voice 'attribute' as its entry point) is presented in the following Fig. 3.

Obviously then, any dialogistic positionings being projected onto quoted source are likely to be of interest for any analysis of how the text as a whole might act to advance or favour a particular value position. While it is not possible to make definitive statements about the ultimate rhetorical functionality of such positionings out of their context in a particular text, it is nevertheless possible to note that, for example, presenting a quoted source as having 'concluded' is likely to be associated with textual favouring of the current proposition. This is on account of the second order dialogic positioning which is indicated—namely that the quoted source has

reinforced the proposition against possible alternatives with some form of supporting argumentation. That is, unless there are counter indicators elsewhere in the text. Such functionality is demonstrated in the following extract from the Australian *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Coroner slams detention failures before suicides

A New South Wales coroner has recommended fundamental changes to the way the Immigration Department monitors the mental health of detainees after finding systemic failures in the care of three men who committed suicide in three months at the Villawood detention centre. Coroner Mary Jerram said immigration detainees were at much greater risk of suicide because of their loss of freedom, and "when a government chooses to maintain a detention system it carries a heavy responsibility".

Yet in the cases of Fijian Josefa Rauluni, who leapt to his death, and Iraqi asylum seeker Ahmed al-akabi and Briton David Saunders, who both hanged themselves in the shower in 2010, neither the Immigration Department or its private contractor, Serco, fulfilled that obligation, she said.

'In all three deaths, some of the actions of some staff were careless, ignorant or both, and communications were sadly lacking,' the coroner concluded.

She pointed to "startling examples of mismanagement" by the department, Serco, and health provider International Health and Medical Services, and protocols that were ignored.

Serco staff 'were completely unprepared and untrained in dealing with him', she found…. [*Sydney Morning Herald*, December 20, 2011]

The text here is obviously highly supportive of the value position attributed to the coroner, a strongly negative view of the Australian Immigration Department in its treatment of detainees. What is significant here are the choices as to reporting verb which have the
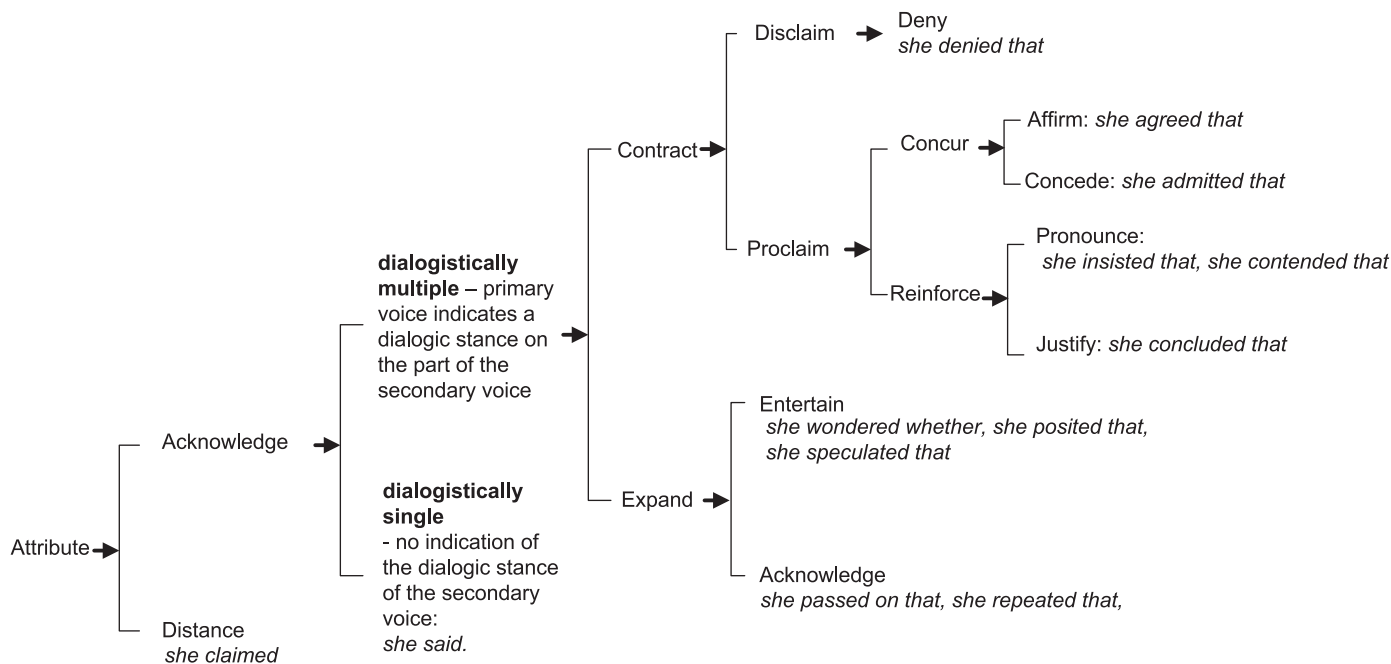
Fig. 3. Options for secondary-voice dialogistic positioning.

effect of enhancing the sense of the text's favouring of this particular perspective. Instead of exclusively employing dialogically neutral *to-say* type verbs, the journalistic author employs 'endorsing' options to construe propositions as givens. Thus the coroner has presented, not as asserting, but as having 'found' various propositions—for example that there were 'systematic failures of the three men' and that staff 'were completely unprepared and untrained'. Noteworthy here is the formulation 'She pointed to "startling examples of mismanagement" by the department', another mechanism which presents the journalistic author as 'standing with' the quoted source on this, i.e., as 'endorsing' the proposition.

Of particular interest for the current discussion, is the use the author makes of *to conclude*—a reporting verb which, as discussed above, may convey the sense that the quoted source (the coroner) has provided justification for one of her propositions.

'In all three deaths, some of the actions of some staff were careless, ignorant or both, and communications were sadly lacking,' the coroner concluded.

Obviously it is not possible here to provide much more by way of discussion of these 'secondary order' reporting verbs. By way of some further illustration of the sorts of issues which do arise I offer a brief discussion of the communicative functionality of verbs such as *to insist* and *to contend*. As indicated above, under the dialogistic approach being developed here, such verbs are construed has having a double dialogistic function—as firstly presenting the primary authorial voice as grounding a proposition in the contingent subjectivity of a secondary voice (a quoted source), and as secondly presenting that secondary source as having 'pronounced' that proposition by way of challenge or refutation of some prior utterance. Predictably, the ultimate contribution of propositions framed in this way to the axiological workings of the text will be highly contingent, dependent on just who is doing the 'insisting' and against whom. Thus we find *to insist* being used both in contexts where the co-text might be interpreted as disfavouring the 'insisted' proposition and in contexts where the opposite effect is in play.

['insisted' proposition at odds with the co-text, and hence potentially disfavoured] All the charities' spokespeople **insist** that the celebrities who support them do not need the publicity; they 're famous enough already and only help out of the goodness of their hearts. But then again, as John Rendall of HELLO! magazine points out, they would say that, wouldn't they. 'It certainly keeps the celebrities in the public eye, ' he says. [Collins Wordbanks, brnews sub-corpus]

[no co-textual disfavouring of the 'insisted' proposition] As well as the bumptious know-alls and the liars, there are the people who regularly turn up for the money—a practice the industry is keen to stamp out. However, the ad industry **insists** that if the consumers selected are genuine, focus groups can be helpful. 'They are immensely useful to help you get into the heads of the target audience. If you are looking for how they really feel about a brand then it is invaluable,' says Janet Grimes, a senior planner at Ogilvy & Mather. [Collins Wordbanks corpus—brnews]

Interestingly, Bergler (1991) contends something rather different with respect to *insist*. She states: 'By choosing *insist*… the reporter points out that the statement is not only open to challenge but has in fact been challenged. This necessarily lowers the certainty of the reported statement for the reader.' (p. 115). I would suggest that this 'knowledge-status' oriented gloss misunderstands the dialogistic effect associated with this verb. In fact, *insist* doesn't present the quoted source as having 'been challenged' but as itself doing the 'challenging'. There is an agency error here. While it is certainly the case that propositions which challenge prior utterances in this way may be disfavoured by the text (and certainly Bergler's evidence does seem to suggest that this is very often the case), this is not necessarily so (as demonstrated above) and thus 'uncertainty' or 'textual disfavouring' should not be seen as entailed by the verb. Its meaning is a purely dialogistic one (the quoted source is presented as stressing its own view point by way of a challenge to a prior contrary utterance or viewpoint) and not an attitudinal one. Any "lowering of certainty" or disfavouring of the associated proposition follows from an inter-action between this particular dialogistic positioning and other evaluative elements in the text.

6. Conclusion

By way of conclusion it perhaps needs to be stressed that I am not necessarily being critical of news journalism in

proposing that these 'strategically impersonal' texts (sometimes termed 'objective' reporting) often function axiologically to advance particular value positions. Grounds for criticism most obviously emerge only when claims of journalistic neutrality and disinterestedness are too naively made, or when the axiological position being advanced is prejudicial, exploitative or without a plausible basis. These texts do remain intriguing on account of their strategic impersonalisation, a quality which, as journalism historians such as Stensaas and Mindich have shown, is an invention of the early to mid 20th century. Are these texts typically read as 'factual' and 'neutral' by media audiences, with a resulting potential for their value positions to be naturalised, or do readers typically see past the impersonalised façade, easily enough uncovering their underlying axiological interests? Whatever the answer to this question, it remains important to continue to develop analytical tools for getting at the rhetorical functionality of these texts, even if it is only to understand the processes by which sceptical readers discover any hidden axiological agendas. This paper has been an attempt both to add to the available analytical toolkit and also to suggest some modifications to it, particularly with respect to prior perspectives where notions of truth functionality and knowledge status may have prevented adequate consideration being given to what is going on dialogically in these texts.

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