

## PART III

### Diskurs und Grammatik

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#### **Voicing and Ventriloquizing - the Constructive Role of Discourse Representation in Political Interviews<sup>1,2</sup>**

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##### **1 The constructive role of the media**

The constructive role of the media in political reporting has long been noted, as has the media's changing function within democracies from mediator or watchdog to almost a political institution itself. Regarding election campaigns, Blumler and Gurevitch have noted that television editing often yields a severely boiled-down version of the campaign. One of the journalistic "packaging devices" employed is the juxtaposition of statements made by the parties:

[...] in continually counterposing one party's stand on an issue with that of its rivals the journalists appear to be promoting inter-party communication. It is as if the news personnel are trying to create a dialogue between the parties, where it otherwise might not have existed, and to trigger the politicians into comments and actions that might not have been forthcoming otherwise. Television journalists thus help to orchestrate the campaign, even if they did not write the original score. (Blumler & Gurevitch 1995: 134)

What happens after the election, when the campaign has been fought, the polls have closed and the major television stations start their election night specials? A multitude of voices is orchestrated by one or more presenters in the studio, who communicate with experts, news personnel and interviewees both in the studio and on outside locations. For several hours, while the results of the election are taking shape, the live election night broadcast weaves a complex web of intertextual relations, made up of various media, formats and texts, in various semiotic modes. Processes that might be observed over the course of days and weeks during an election campaign may be condensed into the space of a few hours during election night.

In this paper I will focus on the analysis of political interviews on election nights and on a particular interviewer practice, that of attributing utterances to other speakers. The practice is central to the "packaging device" of juxtaposing positions mentioned by Blumler and Gurevitch. It is prominent in election night interviews, where it serves different functions from those observed by Blumler and Gurevitch during election campaigns.

##### **2 Voicing and ventriloquizing**

On a linguistic level, what is involved in the practice of voicing is use of reported speech in its variants of direct, indirect and free indirect speech. Representing the discourse of others is a device whereby speakers can distance themselves from what is being expressed, positioning

themselves in a Bakhtinian dialogic universe of voices other than their own (White 2000). In Goffman's (1974, 1981) terms, a figure other than the speaker is being animated without the speaker being understood to be either the author of the words or to be responsible for them. If this is done by putting one's own words into the mouths of others, e.g. speaking for pets or prelinguistic children, Goffman speaks of "say-foring" or "ventriloquizing":

Although baby talk is sometimes used between consenting adults as part of affectionate styling (now perhaps mostly found on TV) and very often used to children as a means of dispelling the fear they might have in dealing with adults, another function is at issue here: its use as a mock-up in which a speaking adult acts out a response that a nonspeaking child might make if he could (or would) talk. A similar form of ventriloquism is used to animate pussy cats, teddy bears, and other lovable objects. (1974: 536)

The practice, however, is not restricted to "lovable objects" and those who are unable to speak for themselves. It is a particularly vivid way of enacting another's discourse, and one that is not traditionally considered in linguistic analyses of reported speech.

Now obviously, to be able to do this sort of thing greatly increases the strategic potential of communicators, and numerous functions have been described for this device in the literature (mitigating or accounting for face-threatening acts, warranting arguments, characterizing individuals, maintaining social relations of dominance, etc., e.g. Leech & Short 1981; Short 1988; Fairclough 1992; Caldas-Coulthard 1994). The functions of the practice depend to a large extent on the type of activity or genre engaged in and on the addressees - i.e. for news reporting it may be done differently in the broadsheets or in the rainbow press (cf. Fairclough 1988). For news interviews, Clayman (1988) has shown how interviewers routinely employ the practice. It allows them to incorporate a point of view or opinion into their questions, inviting the interviewee to react to it, without endorsing the opinion themselves. Thus they can, at least superficially, maintain the neutral and impartial stance required by their professional code.

### **3 Analysis**

The data to be analyzed are from the British General Elections of 1997, transcribed from the video-recordings of six to eight hours election night television broadcasts by the BBC and ITV. The political interviews in these data are conducted with leading politicians of the two major British parties, the Conservative Party (or Tories) and the Labour Party. This is the election in which the Labour Party in the shape of Tony Blair's "New Labour" won its first landslide victory (the second was in 2001), ousting the Conservatives after eighteen years of Tory rule.

Who gets quoted in these interviews? This differs for Conservative and Labour interviewees. The voices quoted to Conservative interviewees are those of members of their own party, who have spoken out on topics that are controversial within the party. These critical voices may also be left vague or anonymous, or they may even be those of the interviewees themselves. The aim is to trigger reactions that the interviewees would not otherwise show in public and that can in turn be fed back into the night's discourse. For Labour the situation is different: against a background of strong party discipline and an overwhelming victory taking shape, no controversial voices are to be heard from within the party. It is interesting to see how the interviewers nevertheless manage to construct contrasting positions, without in fact invoking criticism levelled by Labour and Tories at each other. This is not for lack of such criticism. The Conservatives are not so preoccupied with their defeat and internal struggles that they refrain altogether from making critical remarks

regarding a future Labour government. However, none of that gets fed back into the quote-recycling machine of the night.

What are the controversial *topics* negotiated via the practice of representing discourse? Controversial topics can be formally identified in interviews because they are marked by the interplay of interviewee evasion and interviewer insistence, which leads to complex sequential structures on the one hand, and complex question and response structures on the other (Clayman 1988; Heritage & Roth 1995; Jucker 1986; Lauerbach, to appear a,b). According to these criteria, the sensitive topics in my data for the Conservatives are to acknowledge defeat, to analyse the causes for the defeat - e.g. the campaign, divisions in the party (particularly over joining the European Common Currency), policy, leadership - and the future leadership of the party. Sensitive topics for Labour are the acknowledgment of the scale of the victory and any danger which such a substantial majority may pose to government (like unruly back-benchers), the discussion of future positions in the Cabinet, the re-modelling of "Old Labour" into "New Labour", the promises of the manifesto, and the degree of radicality to be expected from a Labour Government. These topics are recycled throughout the night in two- to four-minute interviews.

In the following presentation and analysis of interview excerpts, interviews with Conservative politicians will precede those with Labour politicians. For reasons that will become clear in the course of the analysis, a third category of participants will be required: women, losers and the socially deprived.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 The Conservatives

Excerpt (1) shows that the appropriate quote to be recycled must first be elicited from an interviewee, preferably from someone who is known to be outspoken and controversial in the party and who can be expected to provide a provocative soundbite. The example is analytically interesting because it represents a rare instance where an interviewer can be shown to orient to the type of quote that is suitable for being presented to other interviewees: In the arrowed utterance, he explicitly earmarks a negative and rhetorically strong comment regarding the interviewee's own party for later recycling:

(1) **ITV97.I/0.58 Jonathan Dimbleby interviews Conservative candidate Edwina Currie**

DD Does, given your experience, does this exit poll that we've got make sense (3 lines omitted), that kind of majority is not a surprise to you?

EC I think it will be over a **hundred**, it depends on how it pans out in the different uh constituencies (3 lines omitted) but there is no **doubt** that the uh/that the/the vote was decided a **long** time ago, I'm not so sure that the campaign made a scrap of difference, except in this sense (.) that it's **clear** that going Euro-**sceptic** did **not** help the Conservatives **one jot**, it did **not** bring in extra votes and in fact I think it drove some **more** voters away

JD → Interesting thought, we'll pursue that in/in more detail with others later ...

The controversial topics here are the possible causes for the defeat of the Conservatives and the party's stand on joining the European Common Currency, which had caused a deep split in the party.

Excerpt (2) exhibits the classical form of voicing: There is first a *frame* in which the quote is ascribed to a source, here in a neutral manner, using the reporting verb 'say', then comes the *quote* itself, and then a *questioning element*: Do you agree with that? The position of frame and question element may be reversed, and one or both of them may be omitted. The controversial comment here is ascribed to Secretary of Defence Michael Portillo and concerns

the topic of disunity in the party as a cause for the election defeat. The dispreference markers at the beginning of the response (*well, I think, unfilled pause*) are a formal signal that this is a dispreferred topic for the interviewee and that a disagreeing response is coming up.

(2) **BBC97I/1.22 David Dimbleby interviews Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine at Conservative Headquarter**

DD → Michael Portillo says that it's disunity that was the problem for the Tory Party. Would you agree with that?

MH Well I think it's important to have a (.) **mature** period of reflection, to look at **all** the questions, **all** the answers. And, what is **critical** is that the Party finds a **way to** (.) **regroup, unite**, and begin to fight back. We are a **hugely** successful political party, and what I do think is a great danger is (.) now that we sort of get into a sort of [unenthusing] process uh in the uh **heat** of (.) election **results** uh which/uh **frankly** uh/ the analysis is better **done** within the private discussions that must go on within the Conservative Party.

In excerpt (3), Conservative candidate Edwina Currie's critical remark on Europe, which was earmarked for recycling in (1), is quoted to a member of the (outgoing) Cabinet. It meets with vehement disagreement, on the grounds that the results are not yet known – the Tories' standard response until well into the night:

(3) **BBC97.I/1.18 Jeremy Paxman interviews Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell**

JP → Do you agree with Edwina Currie that it was the divisions in your party and particularly the behaviour of the Eurosceptics that did for you?

SD I don't accept by any means that the result of the election has yet been decided or at least that it is yet known. Er (.) I do agree with what I heard Michael Portillo saying earlier on in your programme, namely that a party that presents a united face to the electorate (.) is a party that strengthens its claim to their support.

The interview in excerpt (4) is with Kenneth Clarke, whose move against Europe was widely thought to have caused the split in the Party. He is confronted by the interviewer with criticism voiced by backbenchers (who remain anonymous), and by Nicolas Winterton, who in terms of being outspoken seems to be comparable to Edwina Currie. Unlike in the previous cases, these quotes are not a general criticism of the division but a direct attack on the person who is held responsible for them - and who is the addressee. Again, the beginning of the response marks formally the dispreferredness of the topic:

(4) **ITV97.I/2.32 Jonathan Dimbleby interviews Kenneth Clarke (Conservative) in Rushcliffe**

JD → What do you have to/do/we've **already** had some (.) back benchers **speaking** out in very **contrary** ways about the **cause** of it and Nicolas Winterton (.) who never keeps his light under a bushel, as it were, h/has/has has blamed it all on you

KC Well I think there're plenty of people who work for the party up and down the country who hope uh that **those** back benchers in the next parliament (.) uh on the Conservative side behave a little more sensibly than the back benchers on the (.)5 Conservative side did at times in the last Parliament, and I/ my own advice I'd give to Nicolas is to (.) stop bursting out into recriminations within two hours of the polls' closing/closing is not the right preparation for opposition, uh my **own view** is I would have liked to see mo:re about the economy (.) in this election, I'd have seen/liked to've seen/heard **more** about the economy over the next five years,

I would have liked to've **heard** a lot less about Europe, and obviously I'd have liked to've heard a lot less about sleaze, but (.) no party can completely control the **agenda**, the modern media, the modern election has a life of its own, now you/you/you can't just suddenly leap instantly to decisions about why the electorate (.) have decided as they have.

Edwina Currie can be relied on to speak out on other sensitive topics as well - she also provided a suitable soundbite on the topic of the campaign, with which another high-ranking Conservative politician is confronted:

(5) **BBC97.I/1.04 Jon Sopel interviews Deputy Chairman Michael Dobbs at Conservative Headquarter**

JS → Mr. Dobbs, Edwina Currie this evening has said that the Tory campaign was a campaign (.) run by **kids**, it's been a **shambles**, she said.

MD Well, perhaps I can thank Edwina for all the helpful advice that she was giving to us during the campaign a/a/and perhaps get on to more (.) serious subjects. Erm, I mean, if these exit poll s are/are accurate e:r and we are going to lose tonight uh I can still stand here and say I take **tremendous pride** in having helped fight elections for eighteen years. You know, when we (.) fought for the nineteen seventy-nine election we took over a country which was (.) **crucified** by discontent, split apart, and **if** we are handing the country over (.) to another government tonight it's a country which has a **strong** economy, which is/ there are not riots in the street=

JS But if you have done so well, why have you done so badly? ....

In excerpt (6) both the voice of Nicolas Winterton blaming Kenneth Clarke for the split in the party, and that of Lord Tebbit blaming Brian Mawhinney, the Tory campaign manager, for his management of the election campaign, are being played back to the interviewee:

(6) **ITV97.I/1.31 Jonathan Dimbleby interviews Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind in Edinburgh Pentlands**

JD → Uhm on/ just uh one or two of your senior people are already speaking out, Nicolas Winterton blaming it on Ken Clarke, N/Norman Tebbit, L/Lord Tebbit saying I don't know who was leading the campaign, I don't think Brian Ma/Mawhinney did **either**, what do you make out of all **that**?

MR Well I know Ken Clarke very well, he's a man of **great** integrity, of **great** honesty, he speaks his mind and I think that's something which uh ought to be **admired** not criticized or **reviled**.

Excerpt (7) is an example of the interviewee being confronted with a controversial comment he himself made earlier that night. The interviewer quotes back to him something he had said on the radio, turning it into an accusatory question. The question elicits a counter attack on the media's practice of orchestrating a fictive debate by quoting interviewees to each other. The interviewer challenges this response, but only on the grounds that the question has not been answered, while the interviewee's critical comment on journalistic practice is ignored:

(7) **BBC97.I/1.22 David Dimbleby interviews Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine (C)**

- DD → And **why** should *the electorate have sleepwalked*, in your words, *to disaster*?
- MH Well those are the sort of questions we'll have to ask ourselves and, as I said, I don't myself go for this sort of [...] **technique** uh within **hours** of the polls closing. I think these will require **mature** reflection [among] very senior colleagues who want to play their part in it. And there's absolutely **nothing** to be gained from the debates when one person says one thing, one says another, one asks one question, one gives a different answer, **that** is a way which is **very** fascinating to the **media** but it is **not** the best interest of the Conservative Party.
- DD But of course it **did** sound as if you weren't blaming your **colleagues** but blaming the **electorate** when you said they were sleepwalking to disaster if they voted Labour.
- MH Well ...

But of course Heseltine is absolutely right in his analysis - the media are indeed orchestrating a debate, and they are doing it by playing different voices against each other; not *between* the parties, as Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) have noted for election campaigns, but *within* the Conservative Party. The mechanism is quite simple: A source which is known to be outspoken is interviewed on sensitive topics early in the night, and his or her provocative comments are then fed to other interviewees to elicit from them more provocative comments to be recycled again, and so on (see also Clayman & Heritage 2002: 227 who call this interviewer practice 'split-hunting').

### 3.2 Labour

Turning now to interviews with Labour politicians, their situation was different from that of the Conservatives in that they were winning a landslide victory while the Tories were facing a crashing defeat. While Labour's victory may have been partly due to a general fatigue with the Tories and a desire for change after eighteen years of Conservative rule, it was generally agreed that the root for Labour's success lay significantly in Tony Blair's refashioning what came to be known as *Old Labour* into what was called in the campaign *New Labour* or *the Third Way*. This shifted the Labour Party from the left of the political spectrum firmly into its middle. However, the move was not uncontroversial within the party. It had required firm party discipline to push it through, and campaign strategies such as sending left-wing strongman John Prescott off on a bus to tour the North of England, where he could do little harm. During election night however, Labour's sweeping success silenced all dissenting voices.

Where then to look for the means of creating a debate, where to find the controversial topics and the perfect soundbites to quote? One way is to go back in history and dig up something that was said in a comparable situation, as in (8).

(8) **BBC97.I/1.41 David Dimbleby interviews Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown**  
(topic: landslide victory, large majority)

- DD → But uh i/i/th/there's not an element in that "*we're going to be more radical than people thought*", that "*we are the masters now*", the famous **phrase** that was uttered the last time Labour had a landslide like this.
- GB No no no not at all, not at all. We will **honour** our manifesto, we'll **fulfill** it. I think the **feature** of this election is that uh people thought the Conservatives, and widely so, had betrayed the trust that they had **got** from the British people in nineteen ninety-two, it was a record of broken promises, we are **determined** that there is a **bond** of trust between the **new** government and the British people, ...

Another way is to make quotes up. The legitimate means of doing this are provided by the practice of ventriloquizing mentioned above, of putting words into somebody else's mouth. Ventriloquizing does not recycle or sum up what was actually said but what *might* have been said, thought, feared, or intended, but is not explicitly admitted, or is deliberately *not* talked about. Obviously the adequate response to this is strong and unambiguous rejection. Looking again at (8), it remains unclear who exactly said what is quoted. The words don't really sound as if they could have been said by Labour, so (8) may be a case of recycling a previous ventriloquizing already, a second-degree ventriloquism, as it were.

In (9) possible self-doubt and anxiety in the face of having to govern after eighteen years in opposition are voiced as something John Prescott might think. As in (8), the response is again strongly unequivocal, yet somewhat paradoxically in agreement, due to the fact that the interviewee has subtly refocused the question:

**(9) ITV97.I/1.05 Jonathan Dimpleby interviews John Prescott (L)**

- JD I uh sa/ uh I've never s/ well actually I've seen you smile quite a lot uh but I (.) /try and keep a serious face for a second while I ask you isn't it in **fact**/ you've **been** in opposition, you've loved opposition, you've gone around **s:tomping** in opposition, **suddenly** isn't it quite  
 → **daunting** to think (.) "*we've actually got to run the show now for the first time (.) for a very long time?*"
- JP Of course it is, I mean people at this scale have given us **such trust** and **such** (.) **support**, and uhm we've given our promises they've been **carefully** thought out and we shall **deliver** them, make no mistake about that.

The next two examples focus on the shift from Old Labour to New Labour, which was not uncontroversial in the party itself. (10) again ventriloquizes the Old Labour supporter Prescott with a critical comment he might well be expected to make but emphatically has not made - again this elicits a strong response, this time disagreeing:

**(10) ITV97.I/1.05 Jonathan Dimpleby interviews John Prescott (L)**

- JD You don't sometimes think to yourself (.) or begin to think to yourself when you look  
 → at this likely result, I stress it's still an exit poll of course basically uhm "*did we need the quite so new Labour as we **are** in order to **get** it, couldn't we've been a little/a touch more **old Labour** and **still** got here?*"
- JP No I think this is remarkable, results coming in around the country and uh Tony Blair is going to be **right** (.) to uh have uh brought about those changes as he did.

In (11) it is the constituents of the interviewee that are being ventriloquized with possible criticism regarding New Labour's taxation plans and the consequences for poor urban areas. The response is strong contradiction and endorsement of party modernization and leadership:

**(11) ITV97.I/2.24 Jonathan Dimpleby interviews Labour MP Harriet Harman**

- JD Did he turn the party on its head basically?
- HH Well, he's modernized the party, I mean people here in Camberwell and Peckham never gave up (.) on that we could end the/ the divisions in society and that we could have uh (.) opportunity for all, but (.) the party wasn't trusted-
- JD But your/your people (.) Ha/ Harriet Harman in/ in your area which is a very (.) uhm deprived area of London, one **might** expect that they would be **frustrated** by New Labour and might

→ say “*Why can’t we have (.) more taxes in order to fund better services, why can’t the rich be socked (.) so that we can have more resources here*” and you’re not/ you don’t get that at **all**?

HH We want/ people here say they want Labour in government, and our pledge is on unemployment, on hospitals and on schools and to cut VAT are exactly the agenda for people here, but it was the **modernization** of the **party** that was necessary to/to bring (.) those pledges into action tha/ that was what was necessary and that’s what (.) the leadership we’ve had (.) has provided (.) I hope.

### 3.3 Women, losers and the socially deprived

Was it only politicians of the Labour Party that were subjected to this practice of ventriloquizing during election night 1997? Well, no. There were three Conservatives as well - two female, one male. One of the women was again the (in)famous Edwina Currie, and the other was the equally (in)famous Lady Thatcher:

(12) **ITV97.I/0.58 Jonathan Dimpleby interviews Conservative candidate Edwina Currie**

JD Now uh uh uh what made you(.5)/you caused **tremendous** rage in the party hierarchy,  
 → what made you write that article (.) and say publicly “*we’re done for*”?

EC I’d like to put the records straight, I didn’t write an article at all ...

(13) **ITV97.I/ 2.39 Jonathan Dimpleby and political expert Michael Brunson discuss the interview with Kenneth Clarke**

JD Uhm I was very interested, I expect you were, in what Ken Clarke had to say, Mike.  
 MB Well, he was (.) /you/he was **characteristically forthright**, wasn’t he, our Ken, never minces his words, he was talking there about “a period of constructive opposition”, but I also detected there is something else. Did you notice the way he said that basically he wished that they’d stuck on the economy. Now for example **I** am hearing that Lady  
 → **Thatcher** (.) was **frantically** sending in messages during this campaign saying: “*For goodness sake go on the economy*”, and I’ve **also** heard from Labour Headquarters that that was their **worst fear** that **if** the Tories had **hammered** them **every day** on the state of the economy, then they **really** would have had (.) a hell of a fight on their hands, but of course because of the state of the Conservative Party it split off in all these other issues.

The ventriloquized male was Prime Minister John Major, who - as the media kept stressing - had led his party to the worst defeat since the Duke of Wellington in 1832. If the Conservative grandees interviewed before were on the losing side in this election, Major was the loser *par excellence*, and he resigned as leader of the party the following day. The topic of (14) is whether Major should resign soon or not:

(14) **ITV97.I/2.35 Jonathan Dimpleby interviews Defence Secretary Michael Portillo**

D But do you think he ought to stay/I mean from the Party’s point of view would it be a good  
 → thing if John Major stays/stays **on** as leader or if he (.) swiftly says *okay over to everyone else*?

The practice of ventriloquizing is a very personal and intimate device: It claims to be able to get inside the character so treated, to speak for them and to publicise their innermost intentions, plans, fears or critical stance, and all of this in a linguistically colloquial, personal register. As my data show, the verbal mimicry involved also extends to features of social and gender dialect (e.g. *sock them* for the poor constituents in (11), *for goodness sake* for Lady



Thatcher in (13), *we're done for* for Edwina Currie in (12), *we've got to run the show now* for John Prescott in (9)). By the form of the words chosen, it also paints the character in a certain light - *as seen by the speaker*.

One can assume, based on Goffman's analysis of ventriloquizing as directed to pets and prelinguistic children, that the practice works downwards on the social scale, rather like joking and complimenting. But this would only, if uncomfortably, apply to one set of those who are ventriloquized in my data - women, losers, and the socially deprived: Lady Thatcher and Edwina Currie (who are both women and belong to the political losers of the night), the soon to be **ex**-Prime Minister John Major, and the socially deprived in Harriet Harman's constituency.

What does this tell us about the high-ranking Labour politicians that are also dealt with in this manner? They are in the process of winning a landslide victory and will soon be members of the government. Yet the identity that is being constructed for them is totally at odds with this. Perhaps the question should be asked differently: What does this tell us about how the ITV sees Labour? For it is indeed a practice that is restricted to the interviews done by ITV - there is no ventriloquizing done at all by the BBC in our data. In order to answer this question, further empirical evidence from election night 1997 will need to be looked at. It will also be enlightening to analyse the political interviews done during election night 2001, when Labour was reconfirmed with another landslide after four years of Government, and see if discourse practices have changed with the redistribution of power. Another interesting question to be pursued is to find out if there are intercultural differences in discourse representation with respect to how the media deal with power. How do German television stations portray the winners and losers in a comparable situation, when in the German parliamentary elections of 1998 the Social Democrats ousted the Conservatives after sixteen years of Chancellor Kohl?

#### **4 Concluding remarks**

The discourse representation practices of the interviewers in my data do not construct a dialogue or debate *between* the parties, as found by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) for election campaigns. What they do create is dialogue *within* the parties by emphasizing the already highly visible rifts within the Conservative Party and creating possible controversies within Labour. These two strands of dialogue run side by side through the night's discourse. No attempt is made to engage the two major parties in debate with each other. The debates are constructed between real voices within the Conservative Party, and between fictive ones within Labour. The effects of this practice are to personalize and dramatize political discourse in various respects:

For the Conservatives, in formally direct, indirect and free indirect speech, party members are quoted or voiced with controversial statements. This has the general effect of tying policy to person in various ways:

- It dramatizes the discourse by selecting quotes that are highly critical of specific individuals and that are expressed in emotional and colloquial language, and
- it plays proponents of different points of view against each other personally.

Beyond these general effects, there are also context-specific ones tied to the controversial topics of election night 1997: What caused the defeat, who was responsible, and who is willing to name the culprits. There are also two effects of the practice which can be observed in the *responses* of the interviewees and which can only be noted in passing here:

- The practice results in interviewees disagreeing with or supporting the person whose view is voiced, rather than engaging with the position expressed, and
- it results in interviewees producing direct or complex indirect/implicit responses in which they negotiate their position in relation to specific individuals that represent conflicting party factions.

For Labour things are different: In the absence of critical voices from within the Labour Party itself, ventriloquizing is employed by interviewers to construct a controversial dialogue with a hidden inner voice, in an attempt to break up Labour's united front. The effects of this practice are also to personalize and dramatize, but in a different manner. As with voicing, there are general and particular effects of the practice of ventriloquizing. The general effects are the ones discussed above:

- The practice constructs the ventriloquees as rather low on the social scale, and
- it does this from a perspective that the television interviewers assume will be shared by the majority of the audience.

The particular effects specific to this election night work as follows:

- They regulate who is included in the group that is constructed as being low on the social scale, i.e. women, losers, the urban poor, and Labour.
- Through the semantics of what is ventriloquized, Labour is portrayed as:
  - inexperienced in government,
  - ridden by self-doubt and anxiety on the one hand, but also as being raring-to-go radicals,
  - betraying the values of Old Labour, and
  - being insensitive to the plight of the poor.

Predictably, the interviewees respond with unequivocal disagreement.

Thus besides dramatizing and personalizing political discourse, discourse representation also constructs identities of the individuals and groups concerned. The cumulative results of this practice in the data studied here are: the picture of a hopelessly split and infighting Tory Party on the one hand, and of an insecure and not-to-be trusted Labour Party on the other.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised version of papers given at the Georgetown Round Table for Languages and Linguistics 2001 and at the International Conference on Language, the Media and International Communication, Oxford 2001.

<sup>2</sup> This paper is part of the project "Television Discourse", supported by the German Science Council, and directed by the author. The goal of the project is a comparative discourse analysis of television election night coverage in the USA, Great Britain and Germany.

<sup>3</sup> Reminiscent of, but not to be confused with, 'women, fire and dangerous things', cf. Lakoff (1987).

Lauerbach, Gerda. (2003). Voicing and Ventriloquizing - The Constructive Role of Discourse Representation in Political Interviews. Baumgarten, Nicole/Böttger, Claudia/Motz, Markus/Probst, Julia (eds.), Übersetzen, Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Spracherwerb und Sprachvermittlung - das Leben mit mehreren Sprachen. Festschrift für Juliane House zum 60. Geburtstag. *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht* [Online], 8(2/3), 176-186.

Verfügbar: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~german/ejournal/Lauerbach.pdf>.