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The verbal construction of non-verbal behaviour: British press reports of President Clinton's grand jury testimony video



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ABSTRACT. On Monday 21 September 1998, the videotapes of president Clinton's 17 August testimony to the grand jury in the Clinton–Lewinsky affair were released to the public. In this article we analyse reports of the event in eight British national newspapers with a special interest in how Clinton's non-verbal behaviour (NVB) in the grand jury testimony is presented, evaluated and used to evaluate his overall 'performance' and political persona. Overall, we find somewhat predictable differences with the broadsheet and left-leaning newspapers being more positive in their evaluation of Clinton's NVB than the tabloids and right-leaning newspapers. However, we also observe instances of the genre and ideological cross-over when this pattern is not always clearly upheld. We also discuss the susceptibility of NVB to metapragmatic commentary and manipulation.

KEY WORDS: *Clinton, Lewinsky, metapragmatics, non-verbal communication, political scandal, press reports*

Introduction

On Monday 21 September 1998, the videotapes of President Clinton's testimony to the grand jury in the Clinton–Lewinsky affair were released to the public. The testimony was given on 17 August in the White House and was videotaped despite Clinton's and his lawyers' opposition, as they feared that once the tapes were made they would inevitably find their way into the public domain. The tapes were made, as the prosecuting lawyer Solomon Weisenberg maintained, for the benefit of one of the 23 jurors who had not been able to attend the testimony.

In this article we analyse the press reports of Clinton's testimony, in particular the papers' choices of the descriptors and interpretations of Clinton's non-verbal behaviour in the video. We are particularly interested in how the newspapers, combining written text and still pictures from the video, differ in their reports of

the way Clinton 'looked' and 'behaved' during the testimony, in terms of the amount of space devoted to the Clinton video story, the selection of issues, and the discursive strategies in reporting them. As we argue in a later section, these differing representations are used to give voice to the papers' ideological orientations.

Although metapragmatic manipulation of written and spoken communication is a well-recognized strategy in media communication (see later), we argue that the relative indeterminacy and immediacy of non-verbal behaviour (e.g. facial expressions and gestures) account for the great ease with which the media, as well as the social actors in non-institutional, face-to-face contexts can and do use metapragmatic manipulation of non-verbal behaviour.

The stage of the Clinton–Lewinsky scandal that our analysis touches upon is that after the initial denial by President Clinton that he had had any improper relationship with the White House intern, which in turn had been contested. In terms of Thompson's (2000) model of the political scandal, the press coverage we are dealing with has not so much to do with the first-order transgression (the affair itself), but with the second-order transgression (alleged false denial of the affair).

This study is based on a qualitative analysis of written and photographic texts in eight British newspapers published on Tuesday 22 September: *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Independent*, *Mirror*, *Sun* and *Western Mail*.

The article is roughly divided into two parts. In the theoretical part, we state our position with regard to the issues of representation, metapragmatics (especially in the media) and ideology, and we overview the literature on non-verbal communication¹ focusing on those of its aspects which make it especially prone to metapragmatic commentary. In the analytic part of the article, we examine our data in three sections: captions, articles and expert opinion on Clinton's non-verbal behaviour. We conclude with an overview of the similarities and differences found across the newspapers and discuss the significance of our findings.

Metapragmatic representation and ideology

In his model of communication, Jakobson (1960) proposed that one of the functions language performs is based on the code itself. Language can refer to itself (both in its verbal and non-verbal modalities), and thus perform the metalinguistic function. It is accepted, however, that metalinguistic expressions do not *merely* refer to language. They can, and do, introduce the speaker's point of view both on the expression itself and, at the same time, on all sorts of other aspects of extralinguistic reality, such as the speaker, the relationships the speaker enters with her/his interlocutors and others (see e.g. Caldas-Coulthard, 1994; Short, 1989).

The reporting of someone's words is not just a 'neutral' account of what has been said. The act of retelling something involves the speaker's control both of

what is being retold and also how the retelling is structured and organized, depending on the speaker's view of the world (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994: 295). Furthermore, the reporting voice (Cook, 1992: 184) may dominate or intentionally distort the reported voice. Indeed, in his account of voices in media discourse, Fairclough (1995: 81) argues that

one feature of indirect speech is that although it is expected to be accurate about the propositional content of what was said, it is ambivalent about the actual words that were used – it may simply reproduce them, or it may transform and translate them into discourses which fit more easily with the reporter's voice. An interesting example is: *Libyan officials at the UN, faced by the threat of more sanctions, said they wanted more time to sort out the details of the handover. Is the handover the Libyan formulation, or a translation of what the Libyans actually said into another discourse?*

The question Fairclough asks is not one of the metalinguistic function of the sentence, but, rather, of the ideational or representational function which is concealed in the metalinguistic expression. Likewise, Caldas-Coulthard (1994: 305–6) argues that such *verba dicendi* as *urge*, *declare* or *complain* are not only metalinguistic, but also metapositional in that they label and categorize the speaker's contribution and as such are highly interpretative.

Recently, some researchers (e.g. Cameron, forthcoming; Van Leeuwen forthcoming; Verschueren, forthcoming) have questioned the validity of the distinction between language and metalanguage, or the communicative and metalinguistic function of language. For example, in his re-analysis of three discourse studies of political language, van Leeuwen questions the distinction between metalanguage as a discrete, scientific register used to describe the 'object language', and metalanguage in Jakobsonian terms, i.e. as fulfilling one function of language (here: metalingual) alongside many others (see also Lucy, 1993).

In his (re-)analysis, van Leeuwen demonstrates how discourse analysts represent the object of their study (here: discourse of political interviews), and how this representation recontextualizes language and ultimately the social practices originally enacted by this language. The author deals with the analysts' (meta)linguistic, or (meta)semiotic manipulation of such categories as the representations of social actors in the interviews and their verbal acts. Thus, van Leeuwen argues for the adoption of a non-discrete view of metalanguage as a unique register (see also Verschueren, forthcoming) as the analytic practices of different analysts yield different representations of the 'same' types of data. In this sense, linguists' metalanguage is not an objective, scientifically 'pure' tool of description and interpretation. Meta-language (or meta-communication) cannot be separated from language (or communication). Therefore, linguists and lay people alike ideologize language by the unavoidable 'meta' subtext of all their communication.

In a similar vein, Cameron (forthcoming) finds it counterproductive to discuss metalanguage in a traditional fashion, focusing on the identification of its various forms and specific functions. She argues that at a theoretical level, making a distinction between language and metalanguage cannot be sustained. Instead,

metalanguage remains arguably a useful analytic category, which may be deployed for the discussion of various sociolinguistic phenomena, such as ideological construction, social control and (strategic) stylization (see various contributions to Jaworski et al., forthcoming). It is in this sense, proposed by Cameron, that this article treats the notion of metalanguage, or, more specifically, metapragmatic comments about Clinton's non-verbal behaviour, as a means of ideological construction through explicit interpretation and evaluation of one's communicative behaviour.

We view such metapragmatic comments as instances of representation of social reality and as constructing preferred versions of this reality, which in the context of this article pertains to Clinton's political persona and the acceptability of his conduct. Representation is a process subject to regimes of production and reception, which, in turn, are reflective of the ideological complexes present in the society. Practices of representation, resting on more or less (un-)contested sets of classification of individuals, groups, states, events, social relations, and so on, are always part of a communicative situation, which is marked by and indicative of the power differentials between communicators as well as those who are the object of representation (see, e.g. Coupland, 1999; Hodge and Kress, 1998; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). Therefore, we treat the written and photographic texts we examine in this article as sites of social and political struggle representing competing ideologies with the reports of Clinton's non-verbal behaviour being strategically construed in different and often contradictory terms.

Following the work of Billig (e.g. 1990) in rhetoric and van Dijk (e.g. 1998) in discourse analysis, we contend that ideology, not unlike other social categories, is constructed discursively in situated practices of day-to-day interaction. In fact, van Dijk argues that it is through discourse, and other semiotic practices, that ideologies are formulated, reproduced and reinforced. Accomplishing ideology is an important end in political (both with capital and small 'p') discourse because its acceptance by the audience (especially mass media audiences) ensures the establishment of group rapport, or, as Fowler (1985: 66) puts it, because of the emergence of a 'community of ideology a shared system of beliefs about reality' creates group identity.

We understand ideology as social (general and abstract) representations shared by members of a group and used by them to accomplish everyday social practices: acting and communicating (e.g. Billig et al., 1988; Fowler, 1985; van Dijk, 1998). These representations, which are capable of 'ironing out' the contradictions, dilemmas and antagonisms of practices in ways that accord with the interests and projects of power (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), are organized into systems which are deployed by social classes and other groups 'in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works' (Hall, 1996: 26).

This study draws from two other, specific studies: Barthes (1977) and Hall (1981), which link the use of photographs in the press with myth, and ideology making, respectively. The connotative, associative meanings of photographs,

which form part of what Barthes (1977) refers to as the society's mythology, are further modified, reinforced or 'inflected' by their headlines and captions (Hall, 1981; see also van Leeuwen, 2001). Hall comments on the interpretive work of photo captions, which he illustrates with the newspaper photographs of the Tory politician Mr Maudling on the day of his resignation over the Poulson affair. The newspapers showed the same or very similar photographs and variously chose to interpret Mr Maudling's expression as 'angry', his resignation as a 'tragedy', and so on. Thus, the photo 'is linked with a particular interpretation which exploits its connotative value' (Hall, 1981: 238), and the text bridges the theme of the message and the dominant ideology reinforced by an imposed reading of an image.

Verbal and non-verbal communication

One of the major assumptions in the study of non-verbal communication is that in face-to-face interaction communicators find non-verbal (visual and paralinguistic) messages to be more *believable* than talk (e.g. Argyle et al., 1970; Knapp, 1972; Lyons, 1977; Richmond and McCroskey, 2000). In other words, in a communicative situation interactants attend more readily to each others' visual and paralinguistic signals as framing devices (Goffman, 1974), or contextualization cues in Gumperz's (1982) terms, than to the verbal ones. This is especially clear in cases of conflicting or contradictory messages sent out by the verbal and non-verbal means. Hecht et al. (1999: 5) give the following example: '[I]magine asking a friend if something is wrong. Your friend says "no" in a muted voice and turns away with arms across the chest'.

Likewise, Henley (1997) offers the following anecdotal example of the significance of non-verbal cues in interpreting spoken discourse, which interestingly parallels the theme of this article.

When Richard Nixon sent transcripts, rather than tapes, of presidential conversations to the House Judiciary Committee investigating the question of his possible impeachment (April, 1974), members complained that transcripts could not convey the full or correct meaning of an utterance, having no voice inflection, stress, or other such nuances, and demanded the tapes. This exchange is a landmark in recognizing the legitimacy of paralinguistic communication, those characteristics that affect its interpretation but are not part of the usually recognized language.

(Henley, 1977: 7)

The belief in the primacy of non-verbal communication over verbal communication, as demonstrated in the above examples, is especially relevant while discussing the press reports of Clinton's testimony as, not unlike in the Nixon case, most of these reports are concerned with the president's alleged deceptive and evasive behaviour. Thus, if a speaker claims to be saying the truth but his/her non-verbal cues are those typically associated with deception, other things being equal, he/she will be understood to have lied. Most of the press reports discussed in this article make similar claims about Clinton's mendacity (as well as his

emotions) quoting, and reproducing, the *evidence* from the video in the form of Clinton's non-verbal signals and devices.

One major problem with such thinking is that the 'typical' non-verbal signals of deception (e.g. gaze aversion, fidgeting, self-touching, decreased forward body lean, increased distance, and so on) cannot be said to be straightforwardly related to lying or deception (e.g. Miller and Stiff, 1993; Robinson, 1996) and are relatively easy to control and manage by the presumed liar. Other cues associated with lying are often self-contradictory (e.g. long pauses and immediate answers) and/or highly ambiguous (e.g. sweating may be a sign of lying or being hot). Thus, despite what Ekman and Friesen (1969, 1974) call *leakage* (i.e. involuntary signalling of the truth behind the lie usually associated with difficulties of voice control and lower body control), determining whether someone is in fact lying or not based solely on their non-verbal behaviour is extremely difficult, especially when the speaker is an experienced liar and good actor, a lie has been 'rehearsed' rather than produced spontaneously, the liar is trained (e.g. negotiators, professional gamblers, etc.), the liar is trustworthy, and so on (for overviews, see, e.g. Robinson, 1996; Vrij, 1998). Some authors go as far as to argue that '[a] liar's attempts to look and sound truthful can in themselves provide clues to deception' (Remland, 2000: 273). Although this claim seems extremely difficult to be defended empirically, it is quite likely that it is actually put to work in everyday social communication, with a greater or lesser level of communicators' awareness. In other words, interlocutors may be making all kinds of guesses whether someone is lying or not in view of any 'evidence' they like (i.e. the non-verbal signals for lying present or not).

Here lies the paradox. On the one hand, communicators treat non-verbal behaviour as primary to speech but because of its indeterminacy and ambiguity it is not sufficiently reliable for interpretation of communicative behaviour. This is where we need to acknowledge the importance of verbal communication again, as it is often the verbal accounts of non-verbal behaviour, that we rely on in disambiguating and/or imposing preferred interpretations on the non-verbal medium.

An excellent example of the power of words in the strategic interpretation of non-verbal behaviour is Goodwin and Goodwin's (1977) analysis of expert witness testimony for defence in the 1992 trial of four police officers involved in the beating of the motorist Rodney King, who was stopped for a traffic violation in Los Angeles in 1991. The beating was captured on video by an amateur and the film was the principal piece of evidence against the policemen. However, the seemingly obvious interpretation of the non-verbal aspects of the video was contested by the defence lawyers who, through the testimony of an expert witness, another police officer, restructured the scenes from the television screen in such a way that the jury focused on the actions of King, rather than those of the four policemen. Through a number of discursive means the defence managed a re-interpretation of King's behaviour as an active co-participant in the encounter with the policemen. They claimed, for example, that King's minute body movements could be seen as potentially aggressive and threatening to the policemen, whose

brutality then gained the legitimacy of 'self-defence'. Thus, Goodwin and Goodwin demonstrate the importance of non-verbal cues for the interpretation of communication, and also how it can be manipulated metapragmatically to 'build and contest *professional vision*, socially organized ways of seeing and understanding events that are answerable to the distinctive interests of a particular social group' (1997: 293; emphasis in original).

The Goodwins' notion of professional vision gains special importance in relation to the analysis of political discourse and, especially, its non-verbal element. In fact, the attempt at 'accuracy' in describing and interpreting politicians' non-verbal behaviour often falls outside the scope of political discourse analysis precisely because it is so indeterminate. In his recent study of the British Prime Minister's rhetorical style, Fairclough (2000) states the importance of studying Tony Blair's (or any other politician's) non-verbal behaviour and the difficulty in achieving this goal:

Blair's rhetorical style is not purely a matter of language. It is a matter of his total bodily performance, of which what he says is just a part. It is a matter of how he sounds, how he looks, the shifting expressions on his face, the way he moves his head and other parts of his body. While it is highly important to try to capture this total bodily performance, it is very elusive, difficult to describe, and particularly difficult to describe in print. Ideally, we (author and readers) should be watching and discussing a video together, if not Blair in person.

(Fairclough, 2000: 97)

Interestingly, what Fairclough finds difficult if not impossible to achieve in print with regard to Tony Blair's 'total bodily performance', the newspapers analysed in this article seem to find quite natural with regard to Bill Clinton's. However, as we hope to demonstrate, the result is that the newspapers create different 'professional visions' of the same event, depending on which social group they think they represent. In other words, they employ strategic meta-pragmatics in the service of ideology.

Press reports of Clinton's non-verbal behaviour

In this article, we follow Goodwin and Goodwin's claim that 'the ability to see relevant entities is not lodged in the individual mind, but instead within a community of competent practitioners' (1997: 309). In our case, it is the newspaper editors, journalists and invited experts who organize the field of professional vision for their readers in newspaper reports through their captions, headlines and articles. It is these texts which mediate the interpretation of photographic images, just as language mediates the interpretation of any other photographic image (see Kozloff, 1987, and Burgin, 1982, quoted in Scott, 1999).

The accounts of Clinton's non-verbal behaviour (henceforth NVB) in the video-taped testimony differ across the newspapers examined here very significantly. Also the actual space devoted to the event (release of the tapes, their contents and impact) varies from a few columns to several pages.

The most striking feature of the 22 September newspapers is that the Clinton affair dominates their front pages and that they all carry photographs of the president. Interestingly, in six of the eight newspapers, the front page photographs are stills from the video. The exceptions are the *Daily Telegraph*, which has a photo of a seated, smiling Clinton at the UN meeting in New York with the caption: 'President Clinton at the UN yesterday while the video was being broadcast', and the *Sun*, which has a half-page photo of Clinton on crutches in March 1997 on the left, and a small photo of Lewinsky in the right-bottom corner; the main headline reads: 'We had sex on crutches'.

The newspapers feature images from the video inside their issues, too. In most cases these are series of stills arranged horizontally, evoking the sequences of moving images captured on video. This reinforces the newsworthiness of the footage from the video preceded by the speculation of Clinton's unruly and undignified behaviour and lying during the testimony.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

As has already been said, all the newspapers carry multiple stills from the video (between four and 12), all showing Clinton's face at different times of giving the testimony. Thus, the visual aspect of the story is emphasized, and given that the stationary camera which filmed Clinton (and no-one else) was aimed at his face, the president's facial expressions together with his upper body posture and hand gesturing become the focus of attention for many commentators. With the exception of two photographs, one in the *Daily Telegraph* and one in the *Sun*, showing a monitor in Times Square during the broadcast of the testimony videotapes (see below), all the other photos are those of Clinton as if seen directly on the television screen. The predominance of framing the photos as stills from the video, rather than as a public broadcasting event (as seen in the *Daily Telegraph* and in one photograph in the *Sun*), puts more emphasis on reporting Clinton's behaviour in the testimony rather than the release of the tapes and the social, political and legal significance of this fact. In the photos taken as stills from the video, Clinton's face and upper body part are framed in such a way that any external context is ruled out (cf. Lister and Wells, 2001 on framing 'Portrait of Clifton' by Robert Mapplethorpe).

The captions appearing with the stills from the video are as follows:

Independent, 12 photos, p. 1: [no caption]

Guardian, eight photos, p. 1: [no caption]

Daily Telegraph, photo of a TV monitor on Times Square in New York, p. 2:

A huge screen in New York's Times Square displays the President's interrogation. One barman said, 'I thought it was all pretty tame'.²

Financial Times, four photos, p. 1:

Facing the music: President Bill Clinton shows his emotions during intense questioning in the videotaped testimony broadcast throughout the world yesterday.

Western Mail, six photos, p. 1:

Portrait of a man under pressure as he awaits world's verdict.

Sun, six photos, pp. 6–7:

DODGY Clinton squirms during tough video grilling; DUCKING He struggles to answer another accusation; DIVING Pressure shows on the sweating President; DEVIOUS He searches for a way to dodge allegations; DENIAL Anger mounts as he loses cool on camera; DECEIT Specs can't hide his mounting desperation.

Photo of a man watching the Clinton video on a TV monitor on Times Square in New York, p. 9:

TIMES SQUARE Spellbound Americans watch Clinton squirming yesterday.

Mirror, one photo, p. 1:

TV TORMENT: How the world saw Clinton yesterday on the video of his grand jury testimony.

Four photos, p. 3:

RATTLED: Clinton angrily points a finger at his accusers; SQUIRMING: President on the defensive; EVASIVE: But under fierce grilling he hasn't a prayer; HUMILIATED: He told of his deep embarrassment; PLEDGE: Promising to tell nothing but truth; STATEMENT: He opens prepared speech; NERVOUS: Clinton looks edgy during quiz; TRUST ME: Trying to convince Grand Jury; WEARY: Strain begins to show on his face; HANDS ON: President stresses his point.

Daily Mail, one photo, p. 1:

Humiliating trial by television: President Clinton during his four-hour interrogation by the Grand Jury.

Four photos, pp. 4–6:

ANGRY, ANGUISHED, EVASIVE, DEFIANT: HOW THE PRESIDENT FACED UP TO THE STARR LAWYERS' TRIAL BY TELEVISION.

As can be seen from the above quotes, the newspapers differ in their choice of captions to describe the stills showing Clinton's face. Four patterns emerge:

- (a) no caption (*Guardian, Independent*);
- (b) generic comment [*Western Mail, Financial Times, Mirror* (p. 1), *Daily Mail* (p. 1)];
- (c) list of adjectives describing individual photographs (with or without a further gloss) (*Sun, Mirror, Daily Mail*);
- (d) explanation and extension of the image (*Daily Telegraph, Sun*, p. 9).

Of the above four types, (b) and (c) correspond most closely to the text–image relationship, which Barthes (1977) referred to as *anchoring*, i.e. the use of written text to fix the relatively indeterminate and polysemous meaning of visual images. The captions anchor the 'floating chain of signifieds' (p. 39) of the visual images. Anchoring works in two different, but related, ways: on the one hand, the caption has the power to identify what is in the visual message in order to help the viewer 'choose the correct level of perception' (p. 39; emphasis in original); on the other hand, anchoring, compared by Barthes with a vice, prevents the viewer from arriving at multiple connotative meanings. Barthes argues that the primary

function of anchorage is ideological and states that

the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle *dispatching*, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance. In all of these cases of anchorage, language clearly has a function of elucidation, but this elucidation is selective, a meta-language applied not to the totality of iconic message but only to certain of its signs. The text is indeed the creator's (and hence society's) right of inspection over the image; anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility – in the face of the projective power of pictures – for the use of the message. With respect to the liberty of the signifieds of the image, the text has thus a *repressive* value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested.

(Barthes, 1977: 40; emphasis in original)

The polysemous nature of visual images mentioned by Barthes is further augmented in our data by the fact that these press photos are, as already emphasized, stills from the continuous footage of the video. Therefore, most images vary slightly with respect to Clinton's facial expressions and/or gestures. Among the 20 photographs in the three tabloids, only four (in two pairs of two) can be said to be the 'same'. Interestingly, all the captions are different, including those for the seemingly identical photographs. One of the photos appearing in more than one newspaper shows Clinton looking up from above his reading glasses. The caption in the *Sun* says: 'Deceit: Specs can't hide his mounting desperation', whereas the *Daily Mail* says simply: 'Anguished'. The picture of Clinton showing him taking an oath at the beginning of the testimony with his right arm raised is described in the *Mirror*: 'Pledge: Promising to tell nothing but the truth', and in the *Daily Mail*: 'Angry'.

The two patterns of caption use discussed so far, (b) and (c), show varying levels of intensity with which the Clinton images are anchored in different types of newspapers. The broadsheets which do not provide any captions [type (a)], give the reader most freedom in interpreting the visuals, although of course the headlines and the text in the articles do anchor the photographs to some extent. The broadsheets with the single caption/headline for the whole set of Clinton photographs anchor the images at a relatively general level 'elucidating' (to use Barthes' term again) the contextual aspect of the story, pointing to Clinton's stressful experience. This corresponds to our category of 'generic' captions. The broadsheets leave the interpretation of the photographs largely to the reader. Clinton is said to show 'his emotions' (*Financial Times*) but we are not told what they are. 'Portrait of a man under pressure as he awaits world's verdict.' (*Western Mail*) could be used as a caption for the photograph of almost any of the world leaders in almost any major political story.

The tabloids, however, provide the tightest grip in the vice of anchoring Clinton's images and unequivocally disambiguate the images either in the kinds of emotions Clinton is showing (e.g. 'anger', 'embarrassment', 'strain'), or the kind of communicative actions he is involved with (e.g. 'dodging', 'evading', 'defying'). They use the photographs to document Clinton's emotions, although,

as research shows (e.g. Fridlund, 1994; Wierzbicka, 1999), facial displays are not expressions of discrete emotional states. Even such apparently clear statements by the *Daily Mail*, which interpret Clinton's behaviour as *angry* or *anguished*, cannot be seen as more than the newspaper's wish to interpret reality in an ideologically preferred way.

Thus these captions are evaluatively and ideologically charged to a greater extent than the captions in the broadsheets. They create a ridiculing and belittling image of Clinton. Moreover, looking at the captions in the *Sun*, we get a sense not so much of an attempt to describe the photos accurately or 'merely' report the news, but to engage the reader in an entertaining word play made manifest by the hardly incidental, alliterative character of the captions (DODGY; DUCKING; DIVING; DEVIIOUS; DENIAL; DECEIT).

In our taxonomy of captions above, categories (b) 'generic comment', (c) 'list of adjectives describing individual photographs (with or without a further gloss)', and arguably (a) 'no caption', show more or less definitive examples of anchoring of the photos. Category (d) 'explanation and extension of the image' shows another type of the text-image relationship which Barthes (1977) calls *relay*. This type of text-image relationship obtains predominantly in the two photographs of television monitors in New York in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Sun*. Apart from explaining the location of the monitor in each photograph (it is Times Square in New York, not any other square), which acts as an anchor, the text of the captions extends, or *relays* the meaning of the photographs further by adding an element of another story to it: the reception of the video by the US public.

In the *Daily Telegraph* the relay is represented by the voice of a token citizen: a 'barman', who comments on the relative 'tame'ness' of the video material. The extension of the story goes beyond Clinton's behaviour to the representation of the voice of an 'average' person, the 'man in the street', who sums up the story for the reader.

The relay of the *Sun*'s caption for a similar photograph appears to be more sensationalist, not unlike the rest of the tabloid's coverage of the event. The caption makes another direct, interpretive comment on Clinton's behaviour ('squirming'), and in contrast to the *Daily Telegraph*'s report of the event as a 'non-event' ('tame'), creates the impression that the release of the tapes is an event gripping the American nation ('spellbound').

ARTICLES

As with the photo captions, the newspapers show considerable variation in the reporting of the testimony in their lead articles and editorials, and Clinton's NVB features rather prominently in the accounts of the contents of the video lasting over four hours. The papers demonstrate two dominant patterns of interpretation of Clinton's NVB: praise and admiration, and ridicule and condemnation. In support of their stance on interpreting Clinton's NVB, some of the newspapers offer their readers expert opinion, which we examine in some detail in the next section.

For the most part, the broadsheets adopt a positive view of Clinton's performance

and evaluate his NVB as understandably showing signs of anger or impatience, while, for the most part, praising him for remaining calm and dignified, e.g.:

The president *keeps his cool* remarkably well under obscene and prurient questioning. He *sounds human, warm* and a great deal better than his prosecutors.

(*Guardian*, p. 1)³

The tape revealed a president *under pressure* who *occasionally snapped* at his interlocutors but *did not lose his temper*. 'I am not going to answer your trick questions.' He said at one point.

(*Financial Times*, p. 1)

Early response to the Clinton testimony suggested that the damage might not be as great as the White House feared. While often evasive and at times clearly angry, Mr Clinton was *mostly judged not to have been intemperate, and he never, despite advance rumours to the contrary, lost control*.

(*Independent*, p. 1)

Mr Clinton appeared by turns nervous, tense and angry.

(*Western Mail*, p. 4)

Most of these reports comment on Clinton's (positive) conduct throughout the testimony (see, especially, the *Guardian*). The *Financial Times* and *Independent* hedge their positive commentaries ('occasionally snapped', 'often evasive', 'at times clearly angry'), but in the end both papers dismiss earlier speculation of Clinton's outrageous behaviour. This is especially clear in an interesting case of multiple negation in the latter paper ('mostly judged not to have been intemperate, never. . . . lost control'). Even a negative evaluation of Clinton's NVB, such as in the *Western Mail*, shows a degree of caution by choosing the verb 'appear', which emphasizes the subjectivity of the reporter's commentary.

The positive evaluation of Clinton's NVB is positive not merely because the newspapers happen to say so. The evaluation of the president's NVB is positive also because of the negatively construed behaviour of his questioners (*Guardian*, *Financial Times*), or because others, unnamed commentators, have evaluated it so (*Independent*). Thus, the potential threat to the accusation of over-interpretation is diffused by hedging, contrasting 'evidence' with earlier speculation, giving the negative context for Clinton's NVB, as well as quoting the voices of others.

The articles in the tabloids make more direct references to the 'evidence' from the video and the reproduced stills from it. For example, the *Daily Mail* refers to the 'strain' on his face, as supposedly evidenced by the photographs:

These were perhaps the most important – and the toughest – hours of the President's life, a fact reflected in the *strain shown in these pictures*.

(*Daily Mail*, p. 4)

The remaining two tabloids engage in ridicule and condemnation of Clinton on a large scale. The *Sun* has the greatest amount of direct references to Clinton's NVB commenting not only what Clinton's NVB was like but also what it was *not* like:

Gone was the sunny, smiling statesman. In his place was a sullen, hunted defendant in the dock.

The body language was not that of a proud holder of America's supreme office.
(*Sun*, p. 9)

The *Sun* goes as far as to link the examples of Clinton's NVB with claims of criminal guilt, as in the following example, in which throat clearing and shifting in the seat were clear and unambiguous signs of deception and guilt:

There were flashes of anger and remorse. But as he constantly cleared a dry throat and shifted in his seat, the world could see a guilty man with something to hide.
(*Sun*, p. 9)

The *Sun* leaves its readers in no doubt that Clinton deserves nothing but full condemnation. The article is full of observations of Clinton's NVB, all meant as evidence of his deviousness. Consider the following examples:

As the pressure on him piled up the President turned pale, began sweating and wriggled and shifted uncomfortably.
(*Sun*, p. 5)

In the end he looked shocked and angry as he struggled to give some credence to his antics in the biggest humiliation Americans have known.
(*Sun*, p. 5)

Finally, Clinton's negative NVB is not toned down by the suggestion that his interrogators may have been aggressive or impolite (as some broadsheets do). On the contrary, it is stated or implied that it is Clinton who directed his anger and aggression towards the others:

He clenched his teeth and stayed silent for several seconds trying to regain his composure before telling Mr Weisenberg: 'Let me say something about all of this'.
(*Sun*, p. 6)

The president then rounded angrily on Mr Bittman when he tried to interrupt and, pointing his finger, insisted: 'Let me finish . . . you brought this up'.
(*Mirror*, p. 2)

Returning to the broadsheet coverage of the story, an interesting case is observed in the *Daily Telegraph*. As has been already discussed, in its photo caption, the paper seems to present the release of the video as a benign non-event in political terms ('It's all pretty tame'). The same is true of its news and reports articles, which do not engage in any explicit discussion of Clinton's NVB. However, the paper's editorial section presents an aggressively formulated, negative view of the president. Titled 'Clinton is a certified liar . . .', the lead editorial argues the many ways in which Clinton concealed the truth while giving testimony to the grand jury, as well as on other occasions. His NVB is quoted several times as potential evidence of deceit, e.g.:

Not even Bill Clinton, brilliant actor though he is, was able to prevent the hint of grin enveloping his face as he served up this ridiculous contortion.
(*Daily Telegraph*, p. 20)

He clenched his hands together, perspired and swore to the jury that he had never engaged in any conduct intended to arouse Miss Lewinsky in any way.

(*Daily Telegraph*, p. 20)

Not unlike in the articles in the *Sun*, the *Daily Telegraph*'s close juxtaposition of Clinton's 'clenching his hands', 'perspiring' and 'grinning' suggests a close relationship between the cited NVB and Clinton's withholding of information. In other words, the *Daily Telegraph* stops just short of the full statement of 'leakage'.

EXPERT OPINION

Four papers (*Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Western Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*) run separate, relatively short articles written by or quoting various 'experts' on non-verbal communication. The experts are identified as such by their academic title, university affiliation and the like (for a more detailed discussion on constructing the media expert identity, see Fairclough, 1995), and are presented in the coverage of the story as 'accessed voices', thus external to the newspaper, as opposed to those 'from within', or 'institutional' voices discussed above (Hartley, 1988). However, the evaluation of Clinton's NVB in these articles is consistent with the overall tone of the reporting in each newspaper. Of course, as the opinion of the newspapers about Clinton's conduct differs, this leads to the inevitable inconsistencies and contradictions across the expert voices. Consider the following extracts from three different papers:

Dr Friedman, asked by the *Sun* to analyse Clinton's body language, said:

'There are two presidents on trial.

There is the President who thinks he's being threatened and abused, who is nervous and afraid that he's going to blow his top. Then there's the President who recognises this is a political issue which he is willing to debate, and he does it very well.

He tries to remain calm and not to reveal too many of his feelings. But his hands are clasped in front of his body, to protect himself.

There are also times when he puts his hand to the side of his face, showing how hard he's trying to control his nerves and anger. He is continually swallowing, showing anxiety. He's swallowing back anger which under any other circumstances, he would be expressing.'

(*Sun*, p. 6)

And Dr Friedman is quoted again:

At this point he's really angry – especially with Monica, as telling anyone about it was only ever going to discredit Clinton.

Even if he did it, he wants his sense of outrage to show how disgusting the question is and he doesn't want to admit it.

This question makes him look so sordid and sick, to many people it may make him totally unsuitable to be President.

(*Sun*, p. 6)

In the *Daily Mail*, the consultant psychologist, Dr Raj Persaud unanimously declares that Clinton lied throughout all of his testimony, with his NVB providing the clearest evidence for this claim:

The key body language signs of lying are symptoms of anxiety peaks which suggest fear of being uncovered, or guilt. Clinton's behaviour bristles with these – frequent gulps of water, smacking and moistening of lips, glistening brow and flushed face. He waves his hands in a defensive gesture often used by people desperate to convince an unbelieving audience.

(*Daily Mail*, p. 5)

In contrast, the *Western Mail* quotes Dr Aldert Vrij who states:

He didn't fidget or look away, which is associated with lying – he looked straight into the eyes of his questioners.

In *The Daily Telegraph* the role of the expert is entrusted in Charles Spencer, the newspaper's theatre critic, and the title of the article sets it as a more humorous (tabloid-like?) piece: 'Starr stages a costly flop as chutzpah carries the day'. Unlike the *Daily Telegraph*'s editorial, this is a rather light-hearted and Clinton-friendly piece. The author asserts that

[w]e'd been told in advance that Clinton seemed sweaty, furtive, bad-tempered and guilty. In fact he was remarkably calm and reassuringly presidential.

(*Daily Telegraph*, p. 3)

It appears that the four experts' views quoted above, with all the hallmarks of their 'expertness' (e.g. generic statements, statements of principles, relative lack of hedging, etc.) are used by the newspapers (with the possible exception of the *Daily Telegraph*) as a means of supporting their preferred stances. The *Sun* is clearly supported by Dr Freidman in the paper's description of Clinton as predominantly 'angry' and 'deceptive'. Dr Persaud in the *Daily Mail* finds Clinton's NVB as showing 'symptoms of anxiety', but like the editors of the newspaper does not appear to pursue a similar attack on Clinton as the *Sun* and Dr Friedman do.

Dr Vrij in the *Western Mail* is as laconic and relatively non-judgemental, as the newspaper which commissioned his opinion. The main contrast between his statement and that of the other experts is that Vrij finds no evidence of Clinton's lying.

The voice of the *Daily Telegraph*'s expert is construed slightly differently: being an insider (the newspaper's own theatre critic) it appears in the 'Reports and Analysis' section of the paper (pp. 2–4), and is consistent with the overall positive/non-aggressive style of reporting of the story. However, it stands in opposition to the negative and highly critical presentation of Clinton as a liar in the editorial section of the paper (see above).

It is quite clear that even though predominantly constructed as an accessed voice, the 'expert view' is an inherent part of the coverage and the world-view, or 'lived ideology' proposed by the newspaper. Put differently, the newspapers use expert voices in constructing their professional visions in the sense proposed by the Goodwins' discussed above.

Conclusion

In this article we have concerned ourselves with the press coverage of President Clinton's NVB during his testimony on his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. We have argued that the metapragmatic nature of these reports is not so much aimed at the 'accurate' reporting of the facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and certain physiological reactions (e.g. perspiration) of Bill Clinton, but, rather, they are aimed at constructing a particular version of reality, a version which is ideologically compatible with the dominant ideologies subscribed to by the newspapers.

Our argument was built on the assumption that the prevailing discursive constructions of, and practices involving, non-verbal communication are characterized by a fundamental contradiction: non-verbal (together with other forms of visual) communication is at once considered more ambiguous and more true than verbal communication. Consequently, we have demonstrated how this contradiction is exploited by the press as it focuses on the non-verbal performance of politicians in order to assess their integrity and, by these means, take sides in political conflicts, scandals, election battles, etc. Our argument centres on a political scandal but we believe that a similar point could have been argued by analysing the visual coverage of an electoral contest.

Overall, the comparison of the eight newspapers' accounts of Clinton's NVB demonstrates a rather clear split between broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. The former tend to be positive (*Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Independent*) to neutral (*Western Mail*). Of the broadsheets, only the *Daily Telegraph* in its editorial is strongly critical of Clinton, which is not surprising given the newspaper's conservative reputation. The tabloids, however, tend to be mildly critical (*Daily Mail*) to sensationally negative and disparaging (*Sun*, *Mirror*). It is interesting that despite the opposing political leanings of the latter two tabloids (*Sun* to the right, and *Mirror* to the left), they both seem to adopt a unanimous stance with regard to the coverage of the Clinton story. By overriding their political differences, they display archetypal features of an overarching ethos of tabloid publishing: 'sensationalist, human interest driven forms of news coverage' (Allan, 1999: 198).

What we find of particular interest is the comparison between the *Daily Telegraph* and the tabloids, especially the *Sun* and *Mirror*. The *Daily Telegraph's* (the best selling British broadsheet newspaper) coverage, as we have just observed, is quite different from the rest of its broadsheet market and, quite surprisingly, tends to be similar to that of the two best selling British tabloids. This affinity between the *Daily Telegraph* with the tabloids, and that between the *Sun* and *Mirror*, undermines the clarity of their political differences. What our analysis suggests then is a breach of the two dimensions along which British newspapers are traditionally classified – 'quality' and political affiliation. Let us offer some commentary on how we view these 'transgressions'.

To view the 'excursion' of a broadsheet newspaper into the realm of the tabloids merely in terms of putting the right-wing conservative agenda over that

of the genre is only part of the picture. The other part, it seems to us, is a possibility of homogenization of journalistic practices along the press spectrum. In other words, the extraordinary nature of the event gave rise to what is often referred to as the 'tabloidization' of news reporting (see Allan, 1999). Thus, the coverage of Clinton's NVB, with its 'human' interest aspects (the sex scandal; the alleged rudeness of the president) seemingly overriding its political implications, and the colossal leeway offered by the indeterminacy of, say, facial expressions, provides an ideal opportunity for the conservative agenda to be pushed beyond the constraints of the broadsheet genre. In such a way, the *Daily Telegraph* becomes closer in its coverage to the *Sun* rather than to the left-leaning *Guardian*.

However, the *Mirror's* more progressive and left-wing agenda could not have been sustained in view of the moral implications of the covered event. What we argue is that the tabloid responds to the Clinton testimony not so much with a 'news report' but, alongside its conservative arch-rival the *Sun*, it offers its readers a tale of how *not* to behave while in the top public office. The two tabloids could be seen then as the guardians of the world 'as we know it'.

In sum, there are two aspects of the analysed newspapers' metapragmatics in the reporting of Clinton's NVB. On the one hand, and expectedly, the newspapers use their accounts to construct a reality that suits their overall political/ideological stances. But it could be argued that this not only has the (local) function of constructing a particular event from a particular point of view, but also that of setting up and/or reinforcing a particular media agenda. In particular, the blurring of press and political borderlines in the case of the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sun* and *Mirror*, suggests that metapragmatics is used to further the 'cause' of journalism that does not only report, but at the same time is capable of passing the moral judgement. At the risk of some exaggeration, the Clinton tapes offer particularly the British popular press a chance to justify their frequent excursions into the private lives of celebrities and politicians.

There is another agenda that could be pointed to here, which in fact even further blurs the distinctions between the different publications analysed above. In his analysis of the political scandal, Thompson (2000) notes that today's political scandals are fostered by the changing role of the media which have given the political actors an unprecedented visibility and have significantly changed the relationship between the private and the public. Political scandals, continues Thompson, are no longer merely reported in the media, but in fact are constituted by mediated forms of communication.

What we observe in the case analysed here is precisely the agenda to continue with the coverage of the scandal, to help its continuation, feed the audiences which will then turn for more information to the press. In such a way, the press secures further sales.

Note that, as we signalled at the beginning, the coverage analysed here is that concerning the second-order transgressions; those which are to do with the alleged false initial denials. By casting the testimonies in terms of truth or falsity, the press potentially constructs further transgressions which will in due course be

further covered. The issue whether the coverage is unequivocally accusatory or more 'neutral' is almost of secondary importance, as the coverage continues and creates further expectations as to the news on the explicitly referred to or implied transgressions. The press coverage completes yet another circle from public disapprobation through further denials/transgressions to further disapprobation (Thompson, 2000), or at least expectation of further news.

Finally, note that the use of photography in the press reports analysed above is itself significant, especially that, as we indicated earlier, they are in fact stills from video footage, which the editors were at liberty to choose to suit their purposes.⁴ Photography is usually invested with the power of indexicality (Messaris, 1997), objectivity and factuality (Lister and Wells, 2001), or naturalizing (van Leeuwen, 2001). Put another way, photography is perceived as a medium with high modality (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996), that is to say it is perceived to be more representative, or accurate than other forms of visual communication, such as drawings or paintings. This is precisely why advertisers attempt to pass paintings as photographs (see Key, 1989). This is also why, despite the unlimited possibilities of digital manipulations of photography, photographs are used as evidence in courtrooms (Mitchell, 1992).

By showing the photographs, and by anchoring them in a particular way, the press not only gives credence to the captions themselves – after all, the readers can make up their own minds by looking at them – they also legitimize their stories. The photographs of non-verbal behaviour, the ultimate evidence, legitimates the stories that the press breaks.⁵

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NOTES

1. For the purpose of this article, we use the terms 'non-verbal behaviour' and 'non-verbal communication' interchangeably.
2. In addition to its reports in the main body of the newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph's* special, containing six pages of transcripts of the testimony, 18 photographs from the video are lined right at the top (three per page). There are no captions underneath the photos but three quotes from the transcript run underneath across all the six pages: 'Mr President, do you believe we're entitled to the truth?' (pp. ii–iii); 'Are you telling our grand jurors this case was a political set-up?' (pp. iv–v); 'I want to ask some questions, but I know you won't answer them' (pp. vi–vii).
3. All emphasis in the remaining quotes from the newspapers is ours.
4. This point was suggested to us by Theo van Leeuwen.
5. Numerous cartoons related to the story of the Clinton testimony appear in the papers, but they serve mainly as the often exaggerated and humorous commentary on Clinton's ordeal rather than as part of the 'objective' reporting of the story.

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