Audience engagement in the discourse of TV news kernels: The case of *BBC News at Ten*

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Abstract

Existing studies have extensively explored audience engagement in TV news, but not enough attention has been paid to the discursive (re)presentation of this phenomenon in the discourse of TV news kernels. Based on a pool of news items collected from *BBC News at Ten*, this article aims to investigate how the discourse of news kernels is constructed and presented to engage the audience. The analysis shows that news values and (simulated) journalist–audience interaction are two main ways employed by the journalists to achieve audience engagement in presenting TV news kernels. On one hand, a news kernel tends to cover the most newsworthy information of the news story, and the news text; on the other hand, it is often styled as newsworthy, too. In the meanwhile, the presentation of the news kernel tends to create a sense of (simulated) interaction between the journalist and the audience by practices such as pre-opening remarks, introducing the reporter and alerting the audience, among others. The findings reflect quite different journalistic practice of TV news kernels from that of print news leads.

Introduction

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of audience engagement in the discourse of opening a TV news item, namely, a 'news kernel' in the terminology of Montgomery (2007). In Montgomery's view, a standard TV news item comprises two main elements: news kernel and news subsidiary. The former, similar to the lead of print news (Bell, 1991;

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Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1988; White and Barnas, 2010), is an essential part of a TV news item acting to introduce the news story; the latter is a supplementary part of the news acting to support the former with details of the event (Montgomery, 2007: 39). The concept of leads has long been used in the description of print journalism, although it was not until the 1980s that the study of leads became the subject of much research. Cappon (1982) suggested that a standard lead includes the six elements, that is, who, what, when, where, why and how. Van Dijk (1988) explored the structure of news stories based on Labov's model of narrative. A story, according to Labov, consists of the elements of abstract, orientation, complication, resolution and coda (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). Van Dijk (1988) thus saw news text as the combination of Summary and Story, where Summary is the headline and lead of the news text (p. 53). Likewise, Bell (1991: 164–174) regarded lead as the abstract of a news story, which comprises both events and evaluations.

Montgomery's (2007) study of broadcast news programmes coined the concept of 'news kernel' as the counterpart of 'lead'. According to him, a TV news programme involves a relatively fixed structure: opening visuals + news headlines + news items + closing visuals (Montgomery, 2007: 39). The opening visuals are the introductory sequence of the programme, and the news headline is the highest summary of a prospective news item, which in turn is the essential part of the programme usually consisting of a news kernel and a news subsidiary. The closing visuals are the ending part of the programme 'acting to sign off and wind up the entire news program' (Feng, 2016: 4240). The news kernel is the upshot of a news item, realised primarily with studio-based news presentation. It comprises a main event, additional components, reporter introduction and the closing. The event concerns the topic of the item, and it is the essential part of the kernel. Additional components may be reactions to, background information and/ or outcomes of the event. The reporter introduction concerns the identification of a speaker (correspondent or editor) who is to report the news. The closing is where the presenter winds up the kernel and hands over the speakership to the reporter, or sometimes alerts audiences of some sensitive information to be reported. A news kernel plays multi-functional roles such as summarising news stories, accentuating newsworthiness of the event, identifying correspondents and shifting between different discourse spaces. This article intends to inquire how the audience engagement is expressed through the above-mentioned discourse forms and practices. Before proceeding, a literature review and a data description are in order.

Audience engagement in TV news kernels

Existing studies discussed the notion of engagement primarily from the aspect of audience effect. Blumler and Katz (1974), for instance, studied the readers/audiences' gratifications with news access. Hall proposed the concepts of encoding/decoding when examining the degrees of 'understanding/misunderstanding' news depending on the positions of the producers and receivers (Hall, 1980; Morley, 1980). Later on, audience effects were studied through ethnographic description of the audience everyday activity of watching TV (Ang, 1985; Fiske and Hartley, 2003). These studies provided solid evidences for the strength of audience engagement in viewing media news, but they failed to address how the news is constructed and presented in order for it to engage an

audience. Audience engagement in this study refers to the ways and strategies exploited by media products such as TV news to attract the audience. These ways and strategies may include writing a newsworthy story (Bednarek and Caple, 2014, 2017; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), making the text well-formed (Bell, 1991; Boyd, 2000; Cappon, 1982), interacting with the audience (Goffman, 1981; Montgomery, 2007; Scannell, 2000), making the utterance informal and conversational (Fairclough, 1995; Scannell, 1996) and so on. This study focuses on two strategies primarily employed in the discourse of TV news kernels, namely, the representation of news values and the construction of (simulated) journalist–audience interaction.

News values

News values are factors (or criteria) journalists depend on in selecting and presenting news stories. Such factors serve to attract the audience and maintain their attention to the news. Galtung and Ruge (1965) pioneered 12 such factors that may determine the choice of news stories, including frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, elite nations, elite people, personification and negativity. Van Dijk (1988) introduced additional factors that may constrain the selection and formulation of the news, in particular cognitive constraints such as presupposition, deviance and proximity. Bell (1991: 159) suggested that the selection of a news story may also be influenced by factors such as competition, co-option, predictability and prefabrication. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) argued that news values may cater to everyday situations, hence factors such as 'celebrity', 'entertainment' and 'good news' may take effect in manifesting news values. Other factors are also important such as 'scale/scope', 'intensity', 'conflict' and 'power' (Montgomery, 2007: 6–7).

As the gist of a news item, news kernel is bound to highlight newsworthiness of the reported event. In terms of scale/scope, the kernel may be designed as verbally or visually superlative, intensive and/or unexpected (Bednarek and Caple, 2017; Montgomery, 2007). In terms of time and place, the event may be constructed as if happening 'here' and 'now' so as to create a sense of facticity, recency and proximity (Montgomery, 2007). In terms of elite effect, powerful nations, famous organisations, public figures or celebrities are likely to be stressed. Or the kernel may be formulated as presenting different voices so as to foreground a degree of conflict (Feng, 2016). In addition, news values may be achieved through the practice of styling the news (Bell, 1984, 1991; Frobenius, 2014). Journalists may design their talk as appealing as possible by resorting to linguistic devices such as 'choice of personal pronouns or address terms', 'politeness strategies', 'use of pragmatic particles' and 'quantitative style shift' (Bell, 1991: 105).

Simulated journalist–audience interaction

Although news values may serve to engage the audience, we cannot say that audience engagement results solely from newsworthiness. Journalists' performances, in particular their interaction with the audience, are also important in achieving this purpose. Scholars have long identified the phenomenon of parasocial interaction (PSI) between audiences and characters in mass media (Horton and Wohl, 1956). PSI means a type of illusory

communication with media figures that an audience experiences in consuming media messages. As Horton and Wohl (1956) state, 'One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media . . . is that they give the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with the performer . . . as if he were conversing personally and privately' (p. 212). PSI has been extensively studied in the field of media and communication and used particularly as a theoretical tool to measure the strength of audience attitudes towards media personas (Rubin and Step, 2000; Savage and Spence, 2014). It also offered a lens for the study of communicative relationships between news producers and the audience. Mancini (1988), for example, proposed a model of 'simulated interaction' based on PSI, as he postulates,

> In televised information, one may be able to point to an interactional level, which establishes a situation of presumed communication between speaker and televiewer. This situation may be described as 'simulated'. We can observe the interactional behavior of only one of the two actors of the communication, who simulates a personal relationship with the interlocutor, simulates direct contact with the audience, behaves as if speaking directly to the viewer whose reactions and behavior can be anticipated, and of whom a clear image can be formed. (p. 156)

According to Mancini (1988), simulated interaction is different from daily conversation because it involves no direct communication between interlocutors. There is only TV presenter's one-way presentation targeted at the imagined audience. The presenter, therefore, has to adopt a simulated face-to-face interaction to 'guide the televiewer in the directions desired by him/her' (Mancini, 1988: 158). This can be achieved through two types of indicators, namely, 'meta-discursive brackets' and 'deictics'. Mancini coined 'Meta-discursive brackets' following Schiffrin's (1980: 206) 'discourse brackets', meaning 'meta-linguistic clauses indicating the boundaries of a discourse'. Meta-discursive brackets include (1) product indicators that 'journalists use to begin or end a report, repeating the name of the network to which they belong' (Mancini, 1988: 161), (2) indicators in the news presentation that suggests the 'organizational instruments of TV news' (Mancini, 1988: 161), (3) indicators of relevance 'with which the journalist . . . confirms the importance of the events to be reported' (Mancini, 1988: 163) and (4) didactic and interpretive indicators serving to 'introduce passages of explanatory or interpretive discourse' (Mancini, 1988: 163). The second type, that is, deictics, is 'linguistic elements whose function is that of "locating" the utterance: personal pronouns of the first and second person, adverbs (here, there), etc' (Mancini, 1988: 165).

Mancini's model is useful for examining audience engagement, but it needs improvement. First, his meta-discursive brackets need to be expanded. Hyland and Tse's (2004) description of meta-discourse markers may be more comprehensive and appropriate. In their view, meta-discourse markers include *interactive resources* such as transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential markers and code glosses; and *interactional resources* such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers and self-mentions. Although these are generally regarded as the characteristics of academic writing, they may function as indicators of simulated interaction in TV news discourse. Some markers may, for example, overlap with Mancini's meta-discursive brackets such as transitions, endophoric markers, frame markers and code glosses. Others such as evidential markers and hedges may serve to reassure the audience the truth of news; engagement markers and

self-mention may function to involve the audience. What is also absent in Mancini's model is the application of visual elements that are often important factors in achieving simulated interaction. As Montgomery (2007) suggests, presenters may establish 'a direct relationship with their audience' through the practice of direct visual address (p. 74). In addition, discourse devices such as address forms (Clayman, 2013; Jefferson, 1973), footing-shift (Goffman, 1981) and speech acts (Searle, 1976) are also important indicators for the establishment of (simulated) interaction and journalist–audience co-presence.

To sum up, news values and (simulated) interaction are two major devices of achieving audience engagement. Not only can the news values be regarded as criteria for the choice and manufacturing of a news story, but they are also important factors in attracting news viewers. (Simulated) interaction is a type of journalist–audience communication whereby the journalist intends to achieve a co-presence or interactive relationship with audiences in order to draw their attention to the news. The following section centres on how the two devices are exploited and expressed in the discourse of TV news kernels.

Data

The data are a pool of news items collected from *BBC News at Ten*, a flagship TV news programme in the United Kingdom. Besides some additional news items, most data came from the following two periods: 9–13 January 2012 (first period) and 7–11 January 2013 (second period). The episodes in the first period include 51 news items, with 13 as brief news,[1] and those in the second period include 54 items, with 11 as brief news. All the items involve a news kernel that consists of a main event and other components such as background information, outcomes, reactions, pre-opening remarks, reporter introduction and audience alerting. The following section gives a detailed examination of these components, with particular attention paid to the newsworthiness and the interactional elements expressed in them.

Newsworthiness in news kernels

Researchers generally suggest that a news kernel is to summarise 'the key facts of a news item' (Montgomery, 2007: 84). Or as Bell (1991: 150) claims, a news lead is the first-order summary of the news story (headline is the second). However, a news kernel acts not merely to summarise the news story but also engage the audience. As our data show, nearly all the components in the kernels are carefully selected and designed so that they may become newsworthy and appeal to the audience.

Screening the main event

As mentioned above, a news kernel encapsulates a main event, but may include additional components such as contextual background, accompaniment, outcomes and reactions. The main event is the macro-proposition of the news story (Van Dijk, 1988: 34). As the core part of a news item, the event must be newsworthy enough to attract the audience. In Ext. 1, the main event is 'A 23-year-old university student faces extradition to America on charges of copyright infringement'. It is supplemented by background

information (or causes): this student 'allegedly earned thousands of pounds through his website, which helped people watch American films and TV shows for free'; consequence: 'he could face up to 10 years in jail if convicted in the U.S'.; and reaction: 'he says he will appeal against today's decision'.

Ext. 1 (*BBC News at Ten*, 13 January 2012)

1	Presenter:	A 23-year-old university student faces extradition to America (.) on charges
2		of copyright infringement (.) Richard O'Dwyer from Bolsover in Derbyshire
3		(.) allegedly earned thousands of pounds through his website, which helped
4		people watch American films and TV shows for free (.) he could face up
5		to 10 years in jail if convicted in the US (.) he says he will appeal against
6		today's decision (.) this report from our home affairs correspondent
7		Matt Prodger contains flash photography (.)

The main event embodies at least two news values that may serve as a 'hook' to attract the audience. First, it connotes a negative outcome, which is reflected from the use of 'extradition', 'charges', 'copyright infringement', 'in jail' and 'convicted'. Second, the event connotes a sense of 'unexpectedness'. According to Membership Categorisation Analysis (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2009; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008; Sacks, 1992), college students as a category is bound to the activities of 'studying', 'clubbing', 'protesting' and so on rather than 'law-breaking', let alone to a degree subject to extradition. The accusation that this student would face extradition is quite unexpected to the audience. What is more, additional components such as the causes and potential consequences added even more strength to the value of negativity and unexpectedness, thus further accentuating the newsworthiness of this event.

It is usually the case that the main event and its outcome are most newsworthy messages, but the effectivity of the newsworthiness is often reinforced by other additional components, as we have seen in the above-discussed extract. Let us see one more example.

Ext. 2 (*BBC News at Ten*, 8 January 2013)

1	Presenter:	A British soldier has been shot dead in Afghanistan and six others have
2		been injured (.) in yesterday's attack at a military base in Helmand
3		carried out by a man in Afghan army uniform (.) the British soldier
4		who died was serving with the 28th Engineer Regiment (.) and his
5		family has been told (.) our correspondent Kunty Samorrow
6		reports now from Kabul (.)

This item reports an unexpected breaking event. The kernel covers the main event ('a [shooting] attack'), direct outcome ('a British soldier has been shot dead and six others have been injured'), participants (the attacked: British soldiers; the attacker: a man in Afghan army uniform), time ('yesterday'), place ('at a military base in Helmand'), background ('the British soldier who dies was serving with 28th Engineer Regiment') and aftermath ('his family has been told'). All were arranged in a descending order in terms of newsworthiness. It is obvious that the main event and its outcome denote the most newsworthy message. Yet, the newsworthiness of the event is largely supported by the

additional information. For example, time reference 'yesterday' suggests that the event happened recently. The place reference 'at a military base in Helmand' suggests that the attack was serious – the shooting, and hence hatred, occurred between the helper and the helped since the attacked soldiers were considered to help the army the attacker belonged to. The identity of the attacker even further supports the seriousness of the shooting – a soldier attacker is quite likely to bring about destructive casualties. As the outcome suggests, one British soldier was dead, six injured.

Accentuating the outcome of the event

In terms of news value, a news kernel tends to highlight the outcome of the main event rather than the event itself. Bell (1991) takes it as 'a common principle of news writing', as he says,

> it is not the action or the process which takes priority but the outcome. Indeed, it is this principle that enables news stories to be updated day after day or hour by hour. (p. 153)

In Ext. 3, the main event is 'five men have appeared charged with the rape and murder of a young woman on a bus in the city last month', but the event itself is not emphasised because it is not placed at the very beginning of the kernel. The most prominent information is the occurrence of the 'chaotic scenes' (line 1). The 'chaotic scenes' was one of the reactions to the previous main events – that is, the initial rape and murder of a girl and the arraignment of the accused – showing that the people present in the court were quite excited, most likely outraged at the criminals. This can be seen as a classic example of 'inverted pyramid' structure in which the most recent, updated, and hence the most newsworthy event (namely, 'chaotic scenes') is placed first (Tuchman, 1972).

Ext. 3 (*BBC News at Ten*, 7 January 2013)

1	Presenter:	There have been some chaotic scenes inside a court in Delhi (.) where
2		five men have appeared charged with the rape and murder of a young
3		woman (.) on a bus in the city last month (.) the case has caused outrage
4		across India (.) two of defenders have agreed to testify against the other
5		suspects in the hope that they will be able to avoid the death penalty
6		(.) from Delhi (.) our correspondent Andrew North sends this report (.)

Let us see one more example. In Ext. 4, the main event is, 'Tunisians are using the same drastic form of protest' (lines 5–6), while the additional components include the history and background of the event (i.e. 'forced their president to resign', 'the first uprising of the Arab Spring began when a young market trader set fire to himself to draw the world's attention to his country's problem', lines 1–4). These messages were dramatic events of the past and are still notable at the present. Placing them at the very beginning of the kernel highlights the following messages: little change has taken place over a long period of time, and people still choose to protest by self-immolation.

Ext. 4 (*BBC News at Ten*, 12 January 2012)

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1     Presenter:   Erm 12 months ago the people of Tunisia forced their president to resign
2                  (.) as they demanded democratic rights and freedom of speech (.) the
3                  first uprising of the Arab Spring began when a young market trader set
4                  fire to himself to draw the world's attention to his country's problems (.)
5                  well (.) a year later (.) despite democratic elections hundreds of Tunisians
6                  are using the same drastic form of protest (.) our correspondent
7                  Wyre Davies has travelled to Tunis (.) and his report does
8                  contain some distressing images (.)
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Both the current and previous examples can be seen as the reports about continuity stories; that is, they are follow-up stories of the main events that are now background information. Continuity stories entail an important news value, that is, co-option. As Bell (1991: 159) suggests, continuity stories are updated information of once-prominent topics or events and are thence potentially newsworthy enough to be selected as news.

Styling the news

Newsworthiness may be achieved through the practice of styling the news, that is, reformulating the discourse of news to make it appeal to the audience (Bednarek and Caple, 2017; Bell, 1984, 1991). To begin with, newsworthiness may be constructed through word choice. In Ext. 5, the expression 'within the last few minutes' (line 1) shows that the event (the downgrading of France's AAA credit rating) happened just now and it was urgent; the expression 'the second biggest economy in the Eurozone' (lines 1–2) suggests that the event was of a high profile and in a large scale (Bell, 1991; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Montgomery, 2007; Van Dijk, 1988). The placement 'cherished' before 'AAA credit rating' indicates that a three-A credit rating is very important to French, and even European, economy. As a result, the action of downgrading was emphasised as a devastating blow to the Eurozone economy, especially when Greece's debt crisis was under way at that time.

Ext. 5 (*BBC News at Ten*, 13 January 2012)

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1    Presenter:   Good evening (.) within the last few minutes, the second biggest economy
2                 in the Eurozone (.) France has had its cherished AAA credit rating down-
3                 graded (.) the decision made by one ratings agency (.) Standard and Poor's (.)
4                 could have an impact on the country's borrowing rates and crucially (.)
5                 the viability of the Eurozone's bailout fund (.) eight other countries had
6                 their ratings downgraded as well (.) and there are new fears that talks to
7                 resolve Greece's debt problem may be in crisis(.) our Euro editor Gavin
8                 Hewitt is in Paris and reports on a turbulent Friday the 13th for the euro (.)
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The wording of the accompaniment, reactions and consequences even reinforces the news value of 'scale/scope'. As for the accompaniment, that is, 'eight other countries had their ratings downgraded as well' (lines 5–6), the number of 'eight' suggests that the action of downgrading is of great impact on the Eurozone economy. For the consequence

(lines 4–5), the expression 'crucially, the viability of the eurozone's bailout fund' empha-
sises the 'negativity' and 'scale' of the impact. The word 'crucially' can be seen as a
booster of the effect. And for the reaction (lines 6–7), the word 'new' indicates that the
action has added more fears to the already existing 'fears', as if rubbing salt in the
wounds.

Second, newsworthiness may become salient through the exploitation of present
tenses. Nearly all the news kernels use the present tense, although past tenses may be
embedded. In Ext. 6, most clauses are constructed in present tenses, such as 'are driving',
'has been classed', 'are likely to be', 'say' and 'is' (in bold). The present progressive
tense 'are driving' seems to say that the event is happening 'now'. The present perfect
tense 'has been classed' indicates that the past action (i.e. 'classing the fire as cata-
strophic') has impacts on the present, and the simple present tense (i.e. 'say', 'is') sug-
gests the present state of the event. In a word, present tenses help construct the news as
if the event were happening 'now', hence creating a sense of recency and proximity.

Ext. 6 (*BBC News at Ten*, 8 January 2013)

1	Presenter:	High winds and record temperatures **are driving** more than 130
2		fires in south-eastern Australia (.) in four areas of New South
3		Wales (.) the danger **has been classed** as catastrophic (.) experts
4		say that fires breaking out in that region **are likely to be**
5		uncontrollable (.) our correspondent Nick Bryant **is**
6		in New South Wales and he sent this report (.)

The third way is to foster conflicts. This is achieved primarily through juxtaposition
of different reactions. Ext. 7 tells about a British Government's half-term review.

Ext. 7 (*BBC News at Ten*, 7 January 2013)

1	Presenter:	Good evening (.) David Cameron and Nick Clegg say they will keep
2		the coalition together until the next election in 2015 (.) at a joint news
3		conference in Downing Street (.) they unveiled the government's mid-
4		term review and outlined policy areas (.) including care of the elderly (.)
5		where new action is being planned (.) Labour said that the review
6		lacked any detail or substance (.) our political editor Nick
7		Robinson has this report (.)

Rather than foregrounding the event itself, the presenter emphasised two reactions to
it. One came from the government leaders (David Cameron and Nick Clegg), who
claimed that 'they will keep the coalition together until the next election' (lines 1–2); the
other came from the opposition party (Labour), saying that 'the review lacked any detail
or substance' (lines 6–7). The reactions obviously formed a conflict between the govern-
ment and the opposition party.

Reactions may come from more than two parties. Ext. 8 involves the UK's intention to
have a national referendum over its exit from the EU. The Americans refuted this possible
proposal, saying that a referendum would weaken the UK's relationship with the EU.

Ext. 8 (*BBC News at Ten*, 9 January 2013)

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1    Presenter:    Good evening (.) the Obama administration has expressed concern about
2                  the UK weakening its relationship with the European Union (.) David
3                  Cameron is due to deliver a major speech on Europe later this month (.)
4                  and he has already suggested that a referendum might be needed (.) if
5                  radical changes are proposed (.) but the Americans alert that referendums
6                  have often turned countries inwards (.) Nick Robinson's report does
7                  contain flash photography (.)
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This kernel includes three reactions from three different parties, the UK, the US, and the EU. These reactions form three different conflicts: the UK's interest versus the US's interest, the UK's interest versus the EU's interest, and the UK's staying in or out of the EU. Each is newsworthy enough to attract the audience because all are 'conflicts' among elite powers of the world (Galtung and Ruge, 1965).

(Simulated) interaction in news kernels

We have seen how the news kernel is constructed as newsworthy as to engage the audience. Journalists may also achieve this purpose by interacting with the audience or simulating an interaction with them. Such interaction may be realised through journalist–audience co-presence or presenter's simulated communication with the audience. When delivering the news, the presenter may adopt a mode of direct visual address, that is, a form of news reading 'where the *presenter* speaks [directly to the camera] with the direction of gaze apparently towards the audience' (Montgomery, 2007: 47, italics in the original) as if she or he were communicating face-to-face with the audience (see also Montgomery and Shen, 2017). In this way, a type of PSI between the presenter and the audience is created, during which the audience becomes consciously or subconsciously engaged (Horton and Wohl, 1956). In BBC news kernels, such interaction is achieved primarily through three practices, that is, pre-opening remarks, reporter introduction and audience alerting.

Pre-opening remarks

Pre-opening remarks in this study refers to the presenter utterances before the beginning of the news kernel, and it acts as a *preparational* stage for the opening of the kernel. There are usually three types of pre-opening remarks including greeting (e.g. 'good evening'), prefatory markers (e.g. 'now', 'well') and presenter's transitional remarks (e.g. 'Brian (.) thanks very much (.) Brian Taylor there for us in the Scottish Parliament').[2] These remarks play important roles in establishing a journalist–audience interaction, although not all kernels involve such remarks.[3] Greetings only occur at the end of the last headline and the beginning of the first news item. By using a greeting, the presenter ushers in the section of news items while simultaneously establishing a friendliness with the audience. Prefatory markers mainly include 'now' and 'well', as shown in (a) and (b) (underlined). These markers act as a certain type of inviters for the audience to join in the news event. They

signal the opening of the kernel and bring the audience from a then-and-there report of the prior news to a now-and-here presentation of the current item, thus forming a coherent trajectory from the space of news field to the space of news studio:

(a) [Reporter, direct visual address:] [. . .] Nicholas Witchell (.) BBC News (.) at the Leveson Inquiry (.)

[Presenter, direct visual address:] Now (.) the way we watch and use television is set to be transformed in the years ahead thanks to massive investment in new technology er by big manufacturers [. . .] (*BBC News at Ten*, 10 January 2012)

(b) [Reporter, voiceover:] [. . .] Lorna Gordon (.) BBC News (.) Edinburgh (.)

[Presenter, direct visual address:] Well let's say exploring imprecations (.) a little more that's goodnight at the Scottish Parliament [. . .] (*BBC News at Ten*, 9 January 2012)

Sometimes, when the prior news item ends with a live two-way, that is, a live interview between the presenter and the correspondent/editor (Montgomery, 2006), the current news kernel will be prefaced with a footing-shift remark suggesting the closing of the prior news item and the usher-in of the present. By footing-shift, we mean that the presenter shifts his footing alignments between different participants (Goffman, 1981). As Goffman (1981) says,

> A change in footing implies a change in the alignment we adopt, both to ourselves and to the others present, as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. A change in our footing is another way of talking about a change in our frame for events. (p. 128)

Take Ext. 9, for example. The presenter closes the prior news item with an acknowledgement token ('O.K.'), an address term ('David') and a thank-you remark ('thanks very much, once again') (line 1). The informal address term ('David') signals a live interaction and an intimate relationship between the presenter and the correspondent. It seems that the presenter is doing news through a real-time, face-to-face conversation with his colleague. This is in reality impossible because it is a two-way interview between the presenter and the correspondent (Montgomery, 2006). By articulating the word 'O.K.', the presenter seems to reassure the correspondent that he has received what he just said, and he is going to close the talk. The utterance of 'O.K.' thus acts as a possible pre-closing (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) to signal that the presenter is going to end the exchange with the prior news reporter. Right after this remark, the presenter turns immediately to the overhearing audience and articulates the name, 'David Shukman' (lines 1–2). This is a formal mode of address form expressed from a third-person point of view, meaning that he is talking to the audience rather than to 'David Shukman' the correspondent, that he has shifted his footing to align with the audience *now*, and that he is going to open another news item *thereafter*. During this process, he switches from a relatively informal exchange with the correspondent to a formal interaction with the audience.

1	Presenter:	O.K. (.) David thanks very much, once again (.) David Shukman (.) now
2		(.) one of the world's biggest technology shows has opened in Las Vegas
3		this evening (.) around 20,000 new products have been launched (.) and
4		one of the biggest trends this year involves TV sets which do (.) rather
5		more than show just TV programmes (.) as Rory Cellan Jones reports (.)

Ext. 9 (*BBC News at Ten*, 8 January 2013)

The presenter's footing-shift between the correspondent and the audience is actually achieved through the transition from his address to the correspondent to his address to the audience. During this shift, the presenter manages to establish a real-time communication with this correspondent on one hand, and with the overhearing audience on the other. As a result, the presentation appears more like a dialogue rather than simply the presenter's monologue.

Introducing the reporter

Introducing the reporter is the practice of identifying the correspondent or editor (or 'reporter' in general) of the subsequent news report for the audience. It is an expositional utterance of credential messages attributed to the reporter, usually including his or her name, affiliation, professional position and access to the to-be-reported event, as illustrated in examples (c) to (e) (underlined):

(c) Our political editor Nick Robinson has this report. (*BBC News at Ten*, 7 January 2013)

(d) This report from our home affairs correspondent Matt Prodger contains flash photography. (*BBC News at Ten*, 11 January 2012)

(e) This report by our technology correspondent Rory Cellan Jones does contain some flashing images. (*BBC News at Ten*, 10 January 2012)

Reporter introduction creates a direct, simulated and interactional relationship between the presenter and the audience, through which the presenter reassures the audience the authenticity of the news, on one hand, and leads them to the subsequent news report, on the other. Let us take (c) for an instance. The affiliation in this example is represented by the first-person plural pronoun 'our', the professional position is 'political editor', the reporter's name is 'Nick Robinson' and the access to the event is 'has this report'. By *affiliation*, we know the reporter's institutional identity – 'our' refers to the BBC. It is a self-mention (Hyland and Tse, 2004) which suggests the institutional identity of the presenter and the correspondent, showing that 'we' as journalists are author, producer and communicator of the news (Goffman, 1981). Mancini (1988) takes this as a discourse indicator functioning 'to remind the viewer of the name of the product' (p. 161). The use of 'our', along with the reporter's name, accentuates the journalistic authority and authenticity over the news.

By *professional position*, we know that the reporter in (c) is a political editor. This suggests that he should be responsible and qualified for reporting this type of news, that is, political issues. As a matter of fact, this extract covers David Cameron Administration's mid-term review and outlined policy areas. Attributing the reporter to a political editor suggests that he is qualified for reporting this event because a political editor as a *category* is bound to have the knowledge and capacity on political reporting, which in turn consolidates the credibility of the news.

The *access to the event* indicates that the reporter has the exclusive information about the story. This entitles him or her the right to report the upcoming event, which in turn reinforces the journalistic truth claim to the news. In addition, the expression '. . . has this report' may serve as an endophoric marker (Hyland and Tse, 2004: 168). The deictic 'this' here not only indicates a sense of immediacy but also acts as a referring item to lead the audience to the news report. As we can see from the above, a reporter introduction usually occurs at the end of the news kernel. It is the closing of the kernel and the opening of the subsequent news report/interview. The audience can therefore follow the referring meaning of 'this' to move from the space of the studio to the space of the news field (see also Montgomery, 2007).

Alerting the audience

Alerting the audience here means the journalistic action/process of reminding or warning the audience of the information considered harmful to (some of) them. It is often achieved through utterances such as 'Nick Robinson's report does contain flash photography'. According to our data, approximately 8% of the news kernels contain such alerting. Some of them concern distressful pictures, such as the report about Tunisians' protest against the government (*BBC News at Ten*, 12 January 2012), in which the audience was warned of the news footage containing Tunisians' self-immolation. However, most of the alerts concern the use of flashing photography/images, as shown in (d) and (e), repeated here in (f) and (g) (underlined).

   (f) This report from our home affairs correspondent Matt Prodger <u>contains flash photography</u>. (*BBC News at Ten*, 11 January 2012)

   (g) This report by our technology correspondent by Rory Cellan Jones <u>does contain some flashing images</u>. (*BBC News at Ten*, 10 January 2012)

Audience alerting conveys the journalistic consideration for the needs and concerns of the audience. According to the Office of Communications' (or Ofcom, 2012) *Guidance Notes*, the broadcasters are strongly encouraged to give an alert before presenting flash photography, for 'flash images and/or patterns can cause seizures in people with photosensitive epilepsy' (p. 6). Essentially, the information of the alert may be irrelevant to the understanding of the news. It is designed not for this purpose but to remind the audience of the potential harm. In so doing, journalists are fulfilling their statutory duty, as well as exercising their duty of care. They are telling viewers about the potential harmful messages so that they can ensure the audience of not only the authenticity of the news but also the safety and health of the information. Upon receiving the alerts, the audience

could choose not to watch that news in order to avoid potential harm. Moreover, if we see this practice from a legal perspective, the use of the alerts could help journalists and the news institution avoid possible lawsuits that might be caused by the presentation of potentially harmful messages.

Conclusion

Based on the material from *BBC News at Ten*, this article examined how the forms and practices of news kernels function to engage the audience. The analysis showed that news values and (simulated) interaction are two major strategies contributing to the audience engagement in the production and presentation of the news kernels. On one hand, journalists tend to construct a news kernel by inserting newsworthy information into the news coverage so that they can serve to attract the audience. Moreover, they may choose to style the news in ways appropriate to the audience with devices such as wording, tenses, reference and contrast. On the other hand, they tend to create a (simulated) interaction with the audience through discursive practices including pre-opening remarks, introducing the reporter and alerting the audience. During the pre-opening, presenters may insert prefatory markers and/or transitional remarks before opening the kernel. Such actions may serve to create an interaction between the journalist and the audience. Reporter introduction, as the name implies, is to identify the speaker for the subsequent news report. It functions not only to personalise the institutional basis of the news but also to project a journalistic authority over the news. The audience alerts, although not occurring in each of the news items, act to warn the audience of sensitive information to be presented in the news. The use of these alerts can be seen as a considerate, responsible practice that the journalist undertakes in doing the news.

These features suggest some significant differences between the print news lead and the TV news kernel in terms of audience engagement. A print news lead covers some or all of the six elements, that is, what, who, when, where, why and how (Bell, 1991; Cappon, 1982; Van Dijk, 1988), while a TV news kernel concerns not only these elements but also pre-opening remarks, reporter introduction and sometimes audience alerts. Furthermore, the presentation of TV news kernels occurs within a flow of information (Williams, 1983 [1976]). It is a dynamic discourse that requires the presenter and news team (and by implication the broadcast audience) to pay attention to and mark the transition between different discourse domains and the interaction among different participants. Because the print news lead is a static text, it is unnecessary for the journalist to consider the transition between two adjacent news pieces (although the print news can incidentally establish connections and relevance between items through the aspects of layout and frame; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1998). In addition, the print news lead can only present the event that has already happened. This means that the lead mainly, if not solely, plays the role of summarising the past event, whereas the TV news kernel can present what is happening here and now (usually a live report), or it can be *designed* to show what is happening here and now, thus creating a sense of co-presence between journalists and the audience (Scannell, 2014). Finally, TV news kernels usually contain two types of discourse; one is narrative, that is, the presentation of the main event and the reactions to it, and the other is live interaction, that is, the presenter's real-time communication with the reporters and/or the audience. For print news leads, there is usually one

single discourse, the discourse of telling the news story (Bell, 1991; Van Dijk, 1988). Live interaction in print news is impossible because it is unlikely that news gathering, writing and consuming take place synchronously.

This study contributes to the writing, editing and presentation of TV news kernels. Practitioners may refer to the structural organisation of the news kernel when writing a TV news report. For the presentation of news kernels, this study may provide advice on the management of the shift between different discourse domains and the interaction with different participants. It may also be helpful for the presentation of different voices. For instance, presenters could be advised to do the news on behalf of the news organisation and maintain a neutral(istic) and objective position by presenting different voices.

Notes

1. Brief news here refers to a very short news item (about 20 seconds in length) compared with a normal one (2 minutes on average); it consists of the news kernel only.
2. Although they belong to the closing sequence of the prior news item, these remarks serve as a transition from the closing of the prior news to the opening of the current. In particular, the last part of the remarks, for example, 'Brian Taylor there for us in the Scottish Parliament', is a formal mentioning of the correspondent, which, plus the presenter's appearance on the screen, suggests that a new item is to occur.
3. Our data show that if no speakership change occurs at the boundary of two adjacent news items, the current item will often start with no transitional remarks. The occasions include the following:
    (1) The prior item is a piece of brief news;
    (2) The current item is a piece of brief news;
    (3) The current item proceeds with a coming-up news headline announcement;
    (4) There occurs a reporter's sign-off at the end of the prior item, such as 'Christian Fraser, BBC News (.) Paris'.

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