

[Special Contribution]

Taking Bakhtin Seriously: Dialogic Effects in Written, Mass Communicative Discourse

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This paper outlines a methodology for operationalizing Bakhtin's widely influential notion that all texts, whether spoken or written, are ultimately dialogic. More specifically it outlines an analytical methodology for accounting for the dialogic workings of written, mass-communicative texts which advance a viewpoint or argue a case. It is proposed that such analyses will attend to the nature of the "intended reader" or the "putative addressee" which the writer constructs for the text, the relationship which the writer constructs with this putative addressee, and the manner in which the text deals with positions which diverge from those advanced by the text. It is proposed that the discourse semantic taxonomies provided by the appraisal framework of Martin and White (Martin & White 2005) can provide the necessary linguistic framework for such an analysis.

Keywords: Bakhtin, dialogism, attitude, appraisal, axiology, addressivity, communality, journalism, commentary

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate one way by which text linguists and discourse analysts may operationalize Bakhtin's now widely influential notion that all language, whether written or spoken, is "dialogic" — or, as Voloshinov puts it:

The actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psychological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances.

Thus, verbal interaction is the basic reality of language.

Dialogue...can also be understood in a broader sense, meaning not only direct, face-to-face, vocalised verbal communication between persons, but also verbal communication of any type whatsoever. A book, i.e. a verbal performance in print, is also an element of verbal communication. ...[it] inevitably orients itself with respect to previous performances in the same sphere... Thus the printed verbal performance engages, as it were, in ideological colloquy of a large scale: it responds to something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on. (Voloshinov 1995: 139)

More, specifically, this paper is concerned with a methodology for identifying and analyzing the “dialogic” functionality, in this Bakhtinian sense, of mass communicative texts which act to advance viewpoints or argue a case — for example, journalistic commentary articles and political speeches or pamphlets.

With this purpose in mind, this paper outlines a framework which attends to the following issues:

1. The nature of the “intended reader” or the “putative addressee” which the writer constructs for the text - what will be termed the “addressivity” of the text.
2. The relationship which the writer constructs with this putative addressee — to be dealt with under the heading of “axiological alignment”.
3. The manner in which the text deals with positions which diverge from those advanced by the text — what will be termed the “communality” of the text.

In formulating these as aspects of the dialogic functioning of texts, I rely on the discourse semantic analytical taxonomies formulated in the appraisal framework of Martin, White, Iedema, Feez, Rothery and their colleagues (see for example Iedema et al. 1994 and Martin & White 2005). The appraisal framework offers analytical taxonomies which distinguish different types of attitude, and which characterize utterances according to how they position the speaker/writer vis-à-vis prior speakers on the same subject or vis-à-vis potential respondents. It is this second analytical taxonomy, termed “Engagement” in the appraisal framework, which will be the primary focus of the discussion in this paper.

The paper firstly outlines the basis on which these notions of addressivity, axiological alignment and communality are proposed, and then demonstrates how they may be applied to explicating the dialogic functionality of written, mass communicative texts, a key aspect of the communicative workings and the rhetorical potential of such texts. For this purpose, the discussion will focus on one short extract from a journalistic commentary article, with some reference made to an extract from a second text for the purposes of comparison.

2. Addressivity

It has long been recognised that writers of such mass communicative texts construct for their texts a particular “intended reader” or “putative addressee”. From the Bakhtinian perspective, this is clearly “dialogic”, in that this putative addressee can be seen as a partner, or at least as a virtual partner, in a “conversation” with the author. Authors construct this virtual, conversational participant by signaling certain assumptions as to the experiences, beliefs, expectations or attitudes this putative addressee will bring, or could potentially bring, to their reading of the text. Occasionally these “addressee-construing” assumptions are signalled via explicit statement, as demonstrated in the following extract from a commentary article in the British *Daily Mail* newspaper.

My neighbour recently asked me, on behalf of her friend Julie Christie, to sign a petition against a war on Iraq... Indeed many of you decent, caring and humanitarian *Mail* readers will have signed similar petitions — and some of you may even be marching today with my neighbour's friends against 'Bush's and Blair's War'. [Ann Lesley, *The Daily Mail*, February 15, 2003]

More typically this construing of the addressee is via more indirect linguistic mechanisms, via formulations which only imply or entail that the addressee holds, or could hold, a particular belief or viewpoint, or is likely to respond to what is being asserted in a particular way. The formulation “of course” is a good case in point — for example: “The government, of course, was never going to keep its election promises.”¹ Here “of course” signals an assumption on the part of the writer that his/her negative view of the government will also be held by the addressee — this view of the government is projected onto the reader. I will employ the term “addressivity” to reference this aspect of a text's dialogic functionality — its construing for itself of a particular addressee.

3. Axiological alignment

The dialogism of such mass communicative texts is not, however, limited to this construing for the text of a particular intended reader. Authors also write so as to indicate a particular stance or relationship vis-à-vis this putative addressee. Thus, for example, they may write so as to construe the addressee as largely in alignment with the writer axiologically (i.e. sharing the author's understandings, beliefs and/or values), as at odds with the writer axiologically (i.e. not sharing the writer's beliefs or attitudes), or as falling somewhere between these two poles and as not yet having formed a view on the matters under consideration. I follow Don (2007) in employing the term “axiological alignment” to reference this aspect of a text's dialogic functionality.

The term “axiology” encompasses both beliefs about the experiential world and attitudes vis-à-vis happenings and entities in this experiential world. Thus, on the one hand, it encompasses beliefs about which events have transpired, beliefs about causes and effects, beliefs about how the world is constituted as types and sub types, and so on. On the other hand, it encompasses emotional reactions to, and attitudinal assessments of, these happenings and arrangements. Thus axiological alignment can turn either on beliefs about experiential phenomena or on attitudes towards these phenomena.

¹ Examples are invented unless otherwise indicated.

4. Communalities

The final dialogic aspect of mass communicative texts to be explored in this paper is a matter of how the text deals with positions which are divergent from those which the text itself advances. Positions are, of course, frequently attached explicitly to “speakers” or communities of “speakers” who are external to the text — for example: “My brother contends that a Tasmanian Tiger broke into his chicken coop.” or “Many vegetarians believe that eating meat is morally wrong.” Alternatively, writers will reference a position at odds with the viewpoint they are advancing, but will not associate it with any particular, identified source — for example: “It is wrong to suggest that, with different policies, the government could have prevented the global financial crisis.” Here, of course, an alternative position, that “the government could have prevented the global financial crisis”, is “in play”, as a position which will have been advanced by one or more “speakers”, or is likely to have been advanced. Accordingly, the way in which a text deals with positions which are divergent from those being advanced by the text can be seen as matter of how it deals with those who actually or potentially “speak” these positions. In this sense, this aspect of the text — i.e. its dealing with alternative positions — can be seen as dialogic.

I use the term “communalities” to reference this aspect of a text’s functionality. Communalities can be narrow or broad. When communalities is narrowly construed, the text admits or recognizes only those who share the author’s understandings, beliefs and attitudes — i.e. those who are closely aligned with the author axiologically. Thus divergent positions are simply not recognized in the dialog being constructed by the text. When communalities is broadly construed, the text does admit alternative viewpoints and does engage dialogically with those who hold divergent positions.

5. Identifying and explicating the dialogic dimension in mass communicative discourse

I begin this part of the paper with an illustrative analysis of an extract from a journalistic commentary article from the British *Daily Mail* newspaper. In this article, from 2003, the author, Simon Heffer, is commenting on events which had transpired the day before, specifically a protest against the visit to the United Kingdom by the then President of the United States, George W. Bush. The protest occurred soon after the US, the UK and their allies had invaded Iraq.

JUST hours after our Consul-General and two dozen other people were murdered in Istanbul on Thursday, an idiotic, self-indulgent rabble of wreckers went to demonstrate in London’s Trafalgar Square. As part of their ‘fun’, they imitated the fall of the genocidal maniac Saddam Hussein by toppling a Saddam-style effigy of President Bush.

Every American should be told that this insult to an honoured guest and strong

ally of this country was not carried out in the names of most of the British people. It was committed by a group of morons who have no idea how dangerous this world is, and how essential it is that every step is taken to make it safer. (continues...) [Simon Heffer, *The Daily Mail*, November 22, 2003]

The analysis which follows will show how an account of the dialogic workings of the language in this extract can be provided under which specific communicative effects are related to the specific linguistic mechanisms by which these effects are activated. The discussion will show that the language choices taken up in this extract act to construct a compliant addressee who is closely aligned with the writer axiologically. Simultaneously, the text construes a narrow communality in which alternate viewpoints and their speakers are excluded from the “dialog”.

5.1. Axiological alignment

5.1.1. Attitudinal alignment — inscriptions

Given that this is a commentary or opinion piece, it is not surprising that axiological alignment turns primarily on matters of subjective assessment — on attitude. Obviously, the writer bids to align the reader into a strongly negative view of the protestors through his use of explicitly attitudinal terms such as “idiotic”, “self-indulgent”, “rabble”, “wreckers” and “morons”, into a strongly negative view of Saddam Hussein through the explicitly attitudinal term “genocidal maniac”, and into a negative view of the world through the term “dangerous” and the formulation, “how essential it is that every step is taken to make it safer”. Equally obviously, a strongly positive view of President Bush is advanced through the use of the explicitly attitudinal terms “strong ally” and “an honoured guest”.

Under the appraisal framework, such terms would be classified as instances of “inscribed” attitude in that they involve, as just indicated, the use of explicitly negative or positive words and phrases which would be largely stable in the attitudinal meanings they convey across different texts and different contexts. In choosing to explicitly inscribe attitude in this way, writers manifestly commit to value positions and unambiguously indicate conditions for axiological alignment between writer and reader.

5.1.2. Experiential alignment

Axiological alignment with respect to this text could, of course, also turn on experiential issues, since it contains a number of propositions about actual events and circumstance. It seems unlikely, however, that many readers would have doubted the proposition that, for example, the reported protest took place, that the protestors toppled an effigy, or that President Bush was visiting the UK at the time, given that these events had been widely reported in the British media, and given the credence generally afforded the media in reporting such basic “facts”. There is however at least one assertion about experiential phenomena in the text which may have been more likely to put axio-

logical alignment at risk — namely the proposition that the protestors enjoyed themselves conducting their protest, that they regarded such activities as “fun”: “As part of their ‘fun’, they imitated the fall of the genocidal maniac...”. That the protestors experienced positive emotions of this sort, or that they had this view of their activities, seems much less securely based on evidence which would have been easily and generally available. At least some readers might question whether this would, in fact, have been the emotion experienced by the protestors, or the view they would have taken of their protesting. Accordingly, this would appear to be one point in the text where axiological alignment could be at risk on epistemic grounds.

5.1.3. Attitudinal alignment — invocation

The proposition that the protestors regarded protesting in this way as “fun” is, of course, also attitudinally oriented in that it has the potential to trigger a negative view of the protestors in any readers who would hold such an emotion to be inappropriate, i.e. callous or unfeeling, in these particular circumstances. This is an instance of what would be termed “invoked” attitude in the appraisal framework since the assessment of “inappropriateness” and “callousness” is not explicitly stated by the writer but, instead, is activated via the norms of social acceptability which the reader is positioned by the text to apply. The way in which such indirect, invoked attitude establishes conditions under which axiological alignment is put at risk is arguably more complicated than the way in which inscribed attitude performs this function. On the one hand, the writer presents certain “facts” — that the protestors “had fun” or regarded this “as fun” — and hence might be seen as not making any attitudinal demands at all with this particular assertion, since it is apparently left to readers to interpret these “facts” in their own evaluative terms. Accordingly we can say that, in such cases, axiological alignment does not turn on whether or not the reader accepts an attitudinal assertion on the part of the writer, since, strictly speaking, no attitudinal assertion has been made. On the other hand, it seems likely that many (or even most) readers would see the inclusion of such a “fact” at this point in the text as attitudinally loaded, as part of an obvious strategy on the part of the writer to position readers to share his negative view of the protestors. Accordingly axiological alignment will still be at issue, but rather than being a matter of simple attitudinal agreement, it will turn on whether or not readers supply the attitudinal interpretation the text positions them to provide. In this case, this means accepting these particular “facts” as evidence of the protestors’ ethical failings. Readers who reject the implication that it was necessarily “wrong” of the protestors to regard this “as fun” will be at odds with the depiction of the protestors being set up by the text. They will therefore disalign with writer over the attitudinal response this “fact” is supposed to entail.

5.2. Addressivity

I turn now to the issue of addressivity. As indicated above, the appraisal frame-

work offers the analytical taxonomy termed Engagement by which systematic accounts of addressivity effects can be developed. The Engagement taxonomy was broadly formulated to provide a systematic account of those linguistic mechanisms by which the writer/speaker engages with prior writers/speakers on the same subject or with anticipated responses to the current utterance. In this section I demonstrate an addressivity analysis of the text extract which makes use of this Engagement taxonomy — i.e. an analysis of how the extract constructs for itself a particular intended reader or putative addressee.

Broadly speaking, addressivity effects are of two types. Firstly there are effects by which particular viewpoints (i.e. beliefs, understandings, attitudes or expectations) are actively projected on to the putative addressee. The writer signals an assumption that the addressee holds a particular viewpoint. Secondly there are effects by which the addressee is construed as potentially finding the current viewpoint problematic in some way - as novel, uncertain, contentious, unproven, implausible, incredible, unwarranted or untrue. Thus, in this case, the addressee is construed as more or as less susceptible to a position divergent from that currently being advanced or referenced by the text.

The Engagement framework identifies several mechanisms by which writers can construe this putative addressee as being possessed of particular knowledge, beliefs, attitudes or expectations, or as likely to respond in a particular way to the propositions currently being advanced in the text. One such mechanism has already been briefly discussed, the use of “of course” to signal that the writer assumes the addressee is already familiar with the material being presented (e.g. “Easter, of course, began as a pagan festival.”) or that the addressee will already hold the view being advanced and will regard it as entirely unproblematic (e.g. “These protestors, of course, have no regard for other people’s concerns and sensitivities.”). The Engagement taxonomy employs the label “Concur” for mechanism which work in this way. There are, however no instances of Concur in this extract.

5.2.1. Counter expectation

Formulations which present a proposition as counter expected supply another mechanism for projecting values, beliefs or expectations onto the addressee. Such formulations have been widely discussed in the linguistics literature and given such labels as “concessive” or “adversative”. They are given the label “Counter” in the Engagement taxonomy. Such formulations present a particular proposition as going against what would be generally expected in the circumstances — for example: “They are divorced and yet they remain the best of friends.” Counter expectation is conveyed via conjunctions such as *yet* and *although*, by some uses of *but*, by connectives such as *however*, and by particles such as *still*, *only* and *just*.

There is one instance of counter expectation in the text extract. Via the particle “just”, the proposition that the protestors “went to demonstrate in London’s Trafalgar Square” is construed as counter indicated by the proposition that some hours earlier “our

Consul-General and two dozen other people were murdered in Istanbul”.

Just hours after our Consul-General and two dozen other people were murdered in Istanbul on Thursday, an idiotic, self-indulgent rabble of wreckers went to demonstrate in London’s Trafalgar Square.

Being referenced here, and “countered”, is the expectation that the news that people have been killed in a terrorist attack in Turkey would preclude anyone from protesting against the war in Iraq on the same day. This expectation arises, of course, out of a particular value position which, being assumed rather than articulated, proves difficult to describe precisely. It presumably involves some belief that grief or respect for those killed would somehow prevent any “right minded” person from wanting to go ahead with any protest. The protestors’ decision to go ahead with their protest is thus construed as aberrant with respect to what are presented as commonly held values. In writing in this way, the writer signals an assumption that this is a viewpoint which he shares with the putative addressee and which he can take for granted of the putative addressee. Here, of course, is a communicative effect which involves both addressivity and axiological alignment — writer and reader are construed as in absolute solidarity with respect to this attitude towards anti-war protesting.

5.2.2. Denial

Negation is another mechanism by which beliefs, attitudes or expectations can be projected onto the addressee. It is given the label “Deny” in the Engagement taxonomy. As a number of scholars have observed (for example, Tottie 1982, Leech 1983: 101, Pagano 1994 and Fairclough 1992: 101), instances of Deny (negation) act to invoke or put in play their affirmative opposites. Thus if I assert “I didn’t eat the cake.”, I thereby imply that someone, somewhere has either asserted that I did eat the cake, or at least has suspected this. Thus we can say that the negative invokes the positive. In terms of dialogic effects, Deny is arguably more complex than Concur or Counter, in that, as others have noted (Tottie 1982, Pagano 1994), the dialogic directionality of negation is variable or ambiguous. In some cases, the denial and hence the “dialog”, is clearly directed towards some identified external 3rd-party source — for example: “Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe, the government did not commit to a cut in income taxes.” In other cases, it is possible to interpret the denial as directed towards the putative addressee, as contradicting or correcting a belief or attitude which the writer assumes the addressee will hold, or is likely to hold. The following extract illustrates such a case.

The gas we use today, natural gas, contains more than 90 per cent methane, and was known long before the discovery of coal gas. Natural gas burns with twice the heat of coal gas, is **not** poisonous and has **no** odour. [Bank of English corpus — US academic sub-corpus]

Here the addressee is construed as holding the view, or likely to hold the view, that natural gas is poisonous and will have an odour. Tottie (1987) and Pagano (1994) employ the term “implicit negation” in connection with denials of this type and Pagano makes the point that they act to project “existential paradigms” onto this intended audience (1994: 254).

There are also cases of Denial where it is ambiguous or underspecified as to who might hold the view which is being denied. There is one such case in the extract.

Every American should be told that this insult to an honoured guest and strong ally of this country was **not** carried out in the names of most of the British people.

The proposition which is invoked here, via being denied, is that the protest (here designated an “insult”) was carried out in the names of most of the British people — i.e. that there would be general support in the community for such protests. There is nothing in the text to indicate that the writer assumes this is a view which the reader holds, quite the contrary given the immediately prior assumption that the reader will regard the protest as aberrant and untoward. Similarly there is no identified 3rd-party to whom this viewpoint is attached. Rather, it seems that this is to be understood as a proposition which some unspecified grouping in society has advanced, or would be likely to advance — perhaps the protestors, perhaps those people who generally oppose the war in Iraq — and which is therefore “in play” in the current communal conversation around the war. As a consequence, this particular denial constructs the putative addressee only to the extent that the addressee is construed as being potentially exposed to this proposition, as being a member of a conversational community in which this proposition is in circulation.

5.2.3. Bare assertion — “monogloss”

Influenced by Bakhtin’s notion that all language is “dialogic”, the appraisal framework holds that bare or categorical assertions are themselves “dialogic” (see Martin & White 2005: 98). Thus, under the appraisal framework, utterances like the following would be seen as “dialogic”.

People who protest in this way are moronic.

The protestors regard toppling an effigy of George Bush as fun.

Saddam Hussein is a genocidal maniac.

The world is a very unsafe place.

Now, on the face of it, there might appear to be nothing “dialogic” about statements like this — the speaker/writer simply asserts, without any apparent reference to any prior speakers or possible responses from those addressed. But the actual interpersonal functionality of such statements becomes clear once we recognise that they are but one option among many options by which speakers/writers position themselves dialogically.

Thus, a formulation such as

People who protest in this way are moronic.

must be seen as in alternation with formulations such as,

Of course people who protest in this way are moronic.

The facts of the matter are that people who protest in this way are moronic.

People who protest in this way are undoubtedly moronic.

In my view, people who protest in this way are moronic.

To protest in this way you would have to be moronic.

Such a protest could be seen as moronic.

To protest in this ways is arguably moronic.

A number of commentators have described the protestors as moronic.

She claims that people who protest in this way are moronic.

When viewed from this perspective, such bare or categorical assertions do not present as “neutral” but, rather, as interpersonally charged in that, by their very categoricity they indicate the speaker/writer holds the view that the proposition may be declared absolutely, that there are no dialogic alternatives which need to be acknowledged or otherwise engaged with. An assertion formulated in this way, of itself, constitutes a stance, an adopted position. Such bare assertions construe the proposition as sufficiently self evident, reasonable, agreed upon, known or otherwise unproblematic in the current communicative context that no alternatives need be engaged with.

Within the Engagement taxonomy, such formulations are characterized and classified as “monoglossic” (“single voiced”), in recognition of the fact that they involve only the single voice of the writer and ignore the multiplicity of alternative views and voices likely to be in play in the current communicative context. Formulations such as “The facts of the matter are that people who protest in this way are moronic.”, “Such a protest could be seen as moronic” and “She claims that people who protest in this way are moronic.” are classified as “heteroglossic” (“multi voiced”) in recognition of the fact that they acknowledge that the proposition is just one position within a diversity of possible alternative positions.

Thus the Engagement system divides proposals into two broad categories, those which are formulated through bare assertion (monogloss) and those which are conveyed via formulations which in some way recognise actual or potential alternatives (heterogloss).

Bare assertion, as a manner of formulating propositions, is best thought of as only weakly addressive. The bare assertion does not construe the putative addressee as necessarily operating with a particular belief, attitude or expectation. Nevertheless, unless the proposition is elsewhere in the text justified, defended or qualified, it does present the writer as assuming the reader will find the proposition sufficiently unproblematic that no possible alternative or contrary positions need to be recognised. Of course, if it

is elsewhere justified or defended, then the proposition ends up being construed as to some degree problematic and the putative addressee as potentially in need of convincing as to the truth or reasonableness of the proposition.

The Engagement taxonomy identifies a second option among those formulations which are monoglossic. It distinguishes between those formulations which represent the proposition as at issue, or argumentatively in play, and those which represent it as a “given” and hence as unarguable. The distinction is illustrated by the following contrastive pair.

1. The protestors toppled an effigy of George Bush and this is moronic.
2. These morons toppled an effigy of George Bush

In the first instance the proposition that the protestors are moronic is still in play argumentatively. The proposition is directly available for discussion or debate. For example:

- A: The protestors’ behaviour was moronic.
 B: No it wasn’t.
 A: Yes it was.

In the second instance, the proposition is no longer accessible to immediate argument, being construed, through nominalization, as a given. Here we are dealing with a phenomenon which has been widely discussed in the literature under the label of presupposition. (See, for example, Kempson 1975.) In the Engagement taxonomy bare assertions, as exemplified by the first member of the above pair, are labelled “assertion” and presuppositions, as exemplified by the second member of the pair, are labelled “presumption”.

There are a number of mechanisms by which propositions can be presumed, including nominalization, as already demonstrated, and via clausal subordination.

As it turns out, in this extract bare assertion is only employed in providing what is essentially experiential observation — i.e. accounts of observable actions and circumstances. The propositions which are barely asserted in the extract are as follows.

- [the protestors] went to demonstrate in London’s Trafalgar Square.
 [the protestors] imitated the fall of the Saddam Hussein
 [the protestors] toppled a Saddam- style effigy of President Bush.

The large proportion of propositions, both experiential and attitudinal, in this text are presumed. Of most interest here, in terms of addressivity, are the propositions which convey attitudinal assessments. These include the following:

- that the protesters are idiotic, self-indulgent, a rabble and wreckers
 that for them the protest was fun
 that the protest was an insult

that Saddam Hussein was a genocidal maniac
 that George Bush is an honoured guest in Britain
 that George Bush is a strong ally of Britain
 that the protestors were a group of morons
 that the world is an extremely dangerous place

An analysis of how these propositions are actually formulated in the text reveals that they are all presumed. Thus for example, the text states that “...an idiotic, self-indulgent rabble of wreckers went to demonstrate in London’s Trafalgar Square.” The test for presupposition is that the proposition “survives” negation — that is to say, the proposition is still advanced, even when the sentence as a whole is negated (see, for example, Saeed 2003: 103). Thus the propositions that, for example, the protestors are idiotic and self-indulgent is still advanced by “an idiotic, self-indulgent rabble of wreckers **didn’t** go to demonstrate in London’s Trafalgar Square.” The same situation applies for the propositions that President Bush was an honoured friend and a strong ally, as expressed in “Every American should be told that this insult to an honoured guest and strong ally of this country was not carried out in the names of most of the British people.” Here, for example, the proposition that President Bush is an honoured guest of the British people is formulated as a post modifier in a noun phrase with “this insult” as its head — “this insult to an honoured guest”. Thus, again, the proposition in question is presented as “given” and “agreed upon”, as a position about which there is no argument. The same applies for all the attitudinal propositions listed above.

Since such presuming formulations present the proposition as “given”, “to be taken for granted” or as universally agreed upon within the current communicative context, there are obvious consequences for both addressivity and axiological alignment. Writer and putative addressee are thereby construed as necessarily in alignment with respect to the presumed proposition and the presumed viewpoint is projected onto the addressee — i.e. the addressee is construed as not only holding this view but as regarding it as entirely unproblematic, as a position which can be taken for granted.

By this analysis we reveal that the writer of the extract under consideration constructs a putative addressee who will be entirely in agreement with, and will regard as uncontroversial, the negative assessments listed above of the protestors (e.g. “idiotic”, “self-indulgent” etc), and the world (e.g. “dangerous”), and the positive assessments of President Bush (e.g. “an honoured friend”, “a strong ally”).

5.3. Communalities

I turn now to the question of the communality which is constructed for the text. Is it narrowly construed as admitting only those who share the writer’s viewpoint or is it more broadly construed as admitting a diversity of voices and viewpoints?

Communalities turn on the degree to which and the manner in which the text recognises and engages with viewpoints which might be divergent from that advanced by

the text. As already discussed, the viewpoint advanced by this extract is one, in broad terms, of support for the then current US and British military action in Iraq. Its component parts are the strongly negative view of the anti-war protestors, the strongly positive view of US President Bush (as the political leader principally associated with the action) and the view that the world at that time was an extremely dangerous place (presumably as a result of the terrorist activities which were presumably seen as necessitating this military action). The discussion to this point has shown that the propositions by which this value position is advanced are very largely formulated, not just in monoglossic terms (i.e. with no recognition of alternative viewpoints), but in terms by which the propositions are treated as given or unarguable. By this use of presumption, then, the text constructs for itself a very narrow communality, one in which there is no space for any who might hold alternative views, who might, for example, have a different view of President Bush, or who might regard this assessment of the protestors as contentious or otherwise problematic in some way. There is no recognition that such views might be in play as the writer constructs a dialogic “in group” from which such alternative viewpoints are entirely excluded.

There was the one brief moment in the text where the writer does acknowledge the possibility of an alternative viewpoint. This was supplied via the denial statement discussed in an earlier section: “Every American should be told that this insult to an honoured guest and strong ally of this country was **not** carried out in the names of most of the British people.” Here, as discussed above, there is recognition that someone might hold that the protest was, in fact, carried out in the name of most of the British people — i.e. that it would have had widespread support. Interestingly, this can be interpreted as indicating the writer assesses such a position as so imminent in the current communicative context that it must be overtly refuted. He can be seen as having been forced, in a sense, by the text’s actual heteroglossic backdrop into a moment of dialogistic engagement, a moment of recognition of an alternative viewpoint. Such a recognition might be seen as somewhat broadening the communality of the text. At least for one moment, the writer engages dialogically with those who do not share his views. Any such broadening, however, must be seen as only minimal, given that the alternative viewpoint is categorically rejected. The alternative viewpoint, even though momentarily acknowledged, is nonetheless repudiated.

6. Comparisons with another text

In this extract, then, we observe dialogic mechanisms at work which construe a putative addressee who is closely aligned with the writer axiologically and which establish a narrow communality — i.e. one which affords virtually no place in the dialog for those who might question, challenge or reject the position being advanced.

This, of course, is but one possible dialogic arrangement. In order to give a broader sense of the dialogic workings of mass communicative texts, I turn now to considera-

tion of an extract from a contrastive text, one where dialogic effects operate to construe the putative addressee as actually or potentially at odds with the writer axiologically.

My neighbour recently asked me, on behalf of her friend Julie Christie, to sign a petition against a war on Iraq. Many of those approached — the Great and the Good and assorted thespians (many of whom are friends of mine), all decent, caring and humanitarian people — did sign.

And their illustrious names were duly printed in full-page ads.

Indeed many of you decent, caring and humanitarian Mail readers will have signed similar petitions - and some of you may even be marching today with my neighbour's friends against 'Bush's and Blair's War'.

But I could not sign. And I cannot join this march...

<...>

I cannot pretend that the war against the Saddam regime will be 'bloodless'; war never is. Nor can I pretend that the blood which will be shed will not only involve innocent, Saddam-hating Iraqi civilians but also, alas, probably some of 'our boys'....

But I reluctantly believe (whatever Hans Blix or the U.N. Security Council say) that war is probably the only answer.

We in the West take it as axiomatic that violence can be used only as a last resort: we simply do not understand the mindset of men such as Saddam, whose entire career proves that, for him, violence is the first resort.

And although most peace campaigners' views are passionately and sincerely held, I believe that those marching today are tragically, and perhaps fatally, mistaken.

Is it 'humanitarian' to allow a regime such as this to continue unabated?

Is it 'humanitarian' or merely selfish to allow our own justifiable fears about our own immediate safety to give a green light to a man such as Saddam to continue to do whatever he likes?

And, in the end, is it wise to let his regime prosper long enough for him to become, as he promises, 'indestructible'?

In my view, no. Which is why I couldn't sign my neighbour's petition, and why I couldn't agree to join her and her friends on the march today.

[Ann Lesley, *The Daily Mail*, Feb, 15, 2003]

Tellingly, the writer begins by offering several sentences in which she acknowledges and engages which a value position at odds with her own: the view by which protesting against the war is positively assessed. She explicitly presents this as a viewpoint which the putative addressee is likely to hold and presumes several propositions by which those who plan to protest are positively assessed — specifically that they are "decent",

“caring” and “humanitarian”.² From its very beginning, then, the text is dialogically expansive, presenting the writer as engaging in a dialog with an alternative viewpoint which is construed as understandable, widely held and hence legitimate.

Equally telling is the way in which she indicates that she does not share this view — i.e. that she is axiologically at odds with this putative addressee. Specifically, she doesn’t initially construe protesting against the war in explicitly negative terms. She doesn’t announce her position of opposition to the protest by explicitly characterising protesting as wrong or misguided. Rather she casts this as a matter of her own ability or volition. Thus she declares: “But I could not sign [a petition against the war]. And I cannot join this march.” Her position of opposition to the protest and support for the war is construed as personal and as just one possible view among a range of alternative views.

When the writer does, later in the text, explicitly apply negative labels to the anti-war, pro-protest position, she employs “I believe” and “perhaps” to overtly signal this is her own personal perspective, and hence but one of a number of possible positions on the subject.

And although most peace campaigners’ views are passionately and sincerely held, **I believe** that those marching today are tragically, and **perhaps** fatally, mistaken.

Elsewhere in the texts, key attitudinal propositions are couched in similar terms — i.e. explicitly signalled as grounded in the writers own subjectivity and hence but one view among a range of possible alternatives. Thus for example:

But **I reluctantly believe** (whatever Hans Blix or the U.N. Security Council say) that war is **probably** the only answer.

and

And, in the end, is it wise to let his regime prosper long enough for him to become, as he promises, ‘indestructible’? **In my view**, no.

Under the appraisal framework, formulations of this types (for example, modals of probability, evidentials, comment adjuncts such as “in my view” and certain types of rhetorical question) are given the label “Entertain”. Such formulations are characterised as “dialogically expansive” in that, in recognising the possibility of divergent viewpoints, they open up the current “dialog” to these alternatives. They act to signal an estimation on the part of the writer that the current proposition is either uncertain or

² I acknowledge that it may be possible to discover a hint of irony or even sarcasm in the writer’s use of the terms “Great and Good”, and “thespians”. This would complicate the axiological workings of the text somewhat.

contentious in some way — i.e. potentially at odds with alternative propositions. In this, values of Entertain have addressivity effects, acting to present the author as writing for a reader for whom the position currently being advanced may be problematic in some way and who, therefore, may be disaligned axiologically from the writer.

Also significant is the fact that the writer devotes a large proportion of the remainder of the text to presenting justification of her position vis-à-vis the war. This justification takes the form of an argument as to why the attack on Iraq is necessary and should be supported. Specifically, she justifies the war as necessitated by a perceived need to remove the oppressive, violent government of Saddam Hussein.

Is it ‘humanitarian’ to allow a regime such as this to continue unabated?

Is it ‘humanitarian’ or merely selfish to allow our own justifiable fears about our own immediate safety to give a green light to a man such as Saddam to continue to do whatever he likes?

And, in the end, is it wise to let his regime prosper long enough for him to become, as he promises, ‘indestructible’?

To argue in support of a proposition is, of course, to construe the proposition itself as contentious and the addressee as someone who needs to be persuaded as to the truth or well-foundedness of the proposition. One only acts to persuade when there is someone who needs persuading. Argumentative justification clearly serves, then, an addressivity function, construing an addressee who is sufficiently disaligned axiologically with the author to need winning over to the writer’s position.

It follows from the above, that this extract operates with a broad addressivity. The writer presents as very much aware of, and open to, those who hold a contrary position. Even while the writer ultimately rejects this position, she nevertheless construes it as understandable, widely-held and hence legitimate. This follows directly from her overall purpose of seeking to change her readers’ viewpoint, to win them over to the view that it is wrong to oppose the war.

7. Conclusions

This discussion, then, has demonstrated an analysis which is directed towards identifying and interpreting the dialogic workings of mass-communicative written texts. It has demonstrated an analysis by which it is possible to discover the specific linguistic choices by which authors construe for their texts a specific putative addressee and construct the “dialogic environment” in which the text operates as one which is either open or closed to those who hold divergent views.

The analysis was demonstrated by reference to extracts from two rhetorically rather different journalistic commentary articles. The first text was of a type which is sometimes described as “preaching to the converted” or as a “flag waving exercise”, a text which rehearses a particular viewpoint, not for the purpose of argument or persuasion,

but simply to affirm a particular value position. We can imagine several possible rationales for such a text. One would seem to be to provide a rallying point for those who share the viewpoint being advanced, to provide them with the reassuring sense of belonging to a well-established, widely-based community of shared values and beliefs. Another might be to act as a form of intentional aggravation or baiting of those who do actually hold to different positions — given that it completely ignores their viewpoint — and thereby working to provoke these aggrieved parties to respond to and to discuss the article. The second extract was from a text which served the rather different purpose of arguing a case, of seeking to win over a reader who is assumed to have come to the text with a viewpoint at odds with that which the writer proposes to advocate.

The analysis demonstrated how these different purposes were served by the different choices as to dialogic positioning. In the first text, the “flag waving exercise” was effected by the writer engaging in a virtual dialog with an addressee who is construed as already aligned with the writer in a narrowly defined, exclusionary communality of shared value and belief. In the second text, the act of persuasion was effected by the writer engaging in a virtual dialog with an addressee who is construed as initially at odds with the writer but who is susceptible to being won over by the offered argumentation.

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