The Microanalysis of Political Communication

Claptrap and ambiguity

Peter Bull

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How do politicians cope with questions and interruptions? How do they invite applause and audience appreciation? How often do they avoid replying to questions, how and why do they do this and what are the consequences of their evasions?

Such questions are posed and answered by this series of original studies of political speeches and televised political interviews conducted by the author and his colleagues. They were based on the Annual Party Political Conferences (1996–2000) and the last five General Elections (1983–2001) in the UK. Both verbal and non-verbal features of communication are examined, including hand gestures, applause, interruptions, questions, replies and non-replies to questions.

As a result of applying the techniques of microanalysis, we have a greater awareness of how applause can occur both invited and uninvited in political speeches. We can evaluate more effectively the interview skills of both politicians and political interviewers. We have a better understanding of how and why politicians equivocate, handle interruptions and seek to present themselves in the best possible light. It is often the case that political speeches are dismissed as mere 'claptrap', while politicians are castigated for their evasiveness in interviews. But the detailed microanalytic research presented here brings fresh insights into the role played by this apparent 'claptrap and ambiguity' in the underlying political process.

This unique and highly contemporary study provides a rare interdisciplinary view of politics, communication and microanalysis. It will be valuable reading for advanced students and academics within the fields of social psychology, linguistics, political science, communication studies and sociology.

Peter Bull is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of York. He is the author of fifty academic publications, principally concerned with the microanalysis of interpersonal communication. These include several books, the most recent of which is *Communication under the Microscope: The Theory and Practice of Microanalysis* (Psychology Press, 2002).

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Preface

In *Communication under the Microscope: The Theory and Practice of Microanalysis* (Bull, 2002), the author set out to trace the development of microanalysis, a distinctive and novel approach to the analysis of interpersonal communication. Its key feature is a belief in the value of studying social interaction through the detailed analysis of film, audiotape and videotape recordings. In this book, the focus is on the microanalysis of political communication. A series of original empirical studies by the author and his colleagues are presented, based on the detailed analysis of speeches and interviews.

Often political speeches are regarded as no more than 'claptrap', while politicians in interviews are typically castigated for their evasiveness in replying to questions. But microanalytic research shows that there is much more to political discourse than this apparent 'claptrap and ambiguity'. In this book, detailed attention is given to how politicians seek to present themselves in the best possible light, to how and why they equivocate, to how the analysis of equivocation and interruptions can give valuable insights into a politician's communicative style. Consideration is also given to how best to evaluate the interview skills of both interviewers and politicians. In addition, a series of studies are presented on how and why applause occurs in political speeches.

The research programme was based principally on speeches and interviews by the leaders of the three principal British political parties over the past few decades. These leaders are listed below:

Paddy Ashdown	(Leader of the Liberal Democrats, 1988–1999)
Tony Blair	(Leader of the Labour Opposition, 1994–1997; Labour Prime Minister from 1997)
William Hague	(Leader of the Conservative Opposition, 1997–2001)
Charles Kennedy	(Leader of the Liberal Democrats, from 1999)
Neil Kinnock	(Leader of the Labour Opposition, 1983–1992)
John Major	(Conservative Prime Minister, 1990–1997)
Margaret Thatcher	(Conservative Prime Minister, 1979–1990)

The speeches were video-recorded principally from the annual autumn Party Political Conferences (1996–2000), the interviews from General Elections (1987–2001). All these speeches and interviews were recorded off-air on a VHS videocassette recorder with slow-motion replay facilities. To avoid repetition, this detail is not mentioned in the Apparatus sections in Chapters 3–10.

The one study not based on party political leaders is that of hand gesture in political speeches, reported in Chapter 2. This was based on a Labour Party rally in St George's Hall, Bradford, West Yorkshire, and recorded on a portable video camera. Full details of the three speakers are given in that chapter.

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1 The microanalysis of political communication

Introduction

During the twentieth century, research on communication underwent a revolution. Central to this new approach was the belief in the value of studying social interaction through the analysis of film, audiotape and videotape recordings of behaviour. Because such research is based on the detailed ('micro') analysis of both speech and nonverbal behaviour, the author has referred to it elsewhere as the microanalytic approach (Bull, 2002). In *Communication under the Microscope* (Bull, 2002), the author set out to trace the development of microanalysis. In this book, the author presents a series of original empirical studies conducted by himself and his colleagues on the microanalysis of political communication.

Microanalysis represents not only a distinctive methodology but also a distinctive way of thinking about communication (Bull, 2002). Undoubtedly, the analysis of film, audiotape and videotape recordings has facilitated discoveries which otherwise simply would not be possible. Indeed, the effect of the videotape recorder has been likened to that of the microscope in the biological sciences. Without recorded data which can repeatedly be examined, it is simply not possible to perform highly detailed analyses of both speech and nonverbal communication. But microanalysis did not develop simply as a consequence of innovations in technology. Film technology had been available since the beginning of the twentieth century; two of the earliest pioneers of cinematography, Muybridge and Marey, had a particular interest in analysing and recording movement patterns in animals and humans (Muybridge, 1899, 1901; Marey, 1895). The extensive use of this technology in the study of human social interaction has only really developed in the past few decades; its use reflects fundamental changes in the way in which we think about human communication (Kendon, 1982).

The introductory chapter to *Communication under the Microscope* (Bull, 2002, pp. 1–23) traces the intellectual influences that contributed to the development of microanalysis as a distinctive mode of thought. It also seeks to specify the key features of the microanalytic approach. The introductory chapter to this book is divided into three parts, the first two of which are

based to a substantial extent on *Communication under the Microscope*. Part I outlines different approaches to the analysis of communication, which have contributed to microanalysis. Part II specifies the key features of microanalysis, and then seeks to show their relevance to research on political communication. Part III summarises the programme of empirical studies to be presented in this book.

I. Approaches to the analysis of communication

The structural approach

Two early pioneers of communication research were Ray Birdwhistell (a linguist) and Albert Scheflen (a psychiatrist). Their collaboration was based on a number of shared assumptions, which made their approach highly distinctive. Thus, Birdwhistell and Scheflen regarded communication as a tightly organised and self-contained social system like language, which operates according to a definite set of rules. They saw the task of the investigator as to identify and articulate those rules. As such, their research has been referred to as the 'structural approach' (Duncan, 1969).

For example, Scheflen (e.g. 1964, 1973) studied psychotherapy sessions in great detail using a technique which he called Context Analysis. The method he recommended was a natural history one: through repeated viewing of videotape, the researcher can identify which of the nonverbal cues are ordered in sequential arrangements (Scheflen, 1966). One of his most important insights concerned the significance of what was termed 'postural congruence' – the way in which people imitate each other's postures. He observed that when people share similar views or social roles in a group, they often tend to express this by adopting similar postures (Scheflen, 1964). Conversely, dissimilar postures can indicate a marked divergence in attitude or status. Posture mirroring may also be used as a means of establishing rapport; a person may imitate another's postures to indicate friendliness and togetherness. Thus, posture mirroring may be indicative of the relationship between people.

Birdwhistell's principal concern was also with the study of nonverbal communication. He coined the term 'kinesics' to refer to the study of body movement, arguing that it could be analysed in a way that paralleled structural linguistics. In particular, he proposed that body motion is a learned form of communication, that it is patterned within a culture, and that it is structured according to rules comparable to those of spoken language. Those elements of body movement which are significant in communication he termed 'kinemes'. Of course, kinemes do not occur in isolation, they occur in patterns or combinations, referred to as 'kinemorphs' (by analogy with the linguistic term 'morpheme'). By the same token, kinemorphs can be organised into more complex patterns, referred to as 'kinemorphic constructions'.

Birdwhistell also devised a highly detailed system for categorising body movement (Birdwhistell, 1971), although it has never been clear how successfully this system could be applied in practice. In a very real sense, his work was programmatic: he was putting forward a plan for research, rather than actually carrying it out. Nevertheless, Birdwhistell was a highly influential figure. In particular, he focussed attention on the culturally shared meaning of certain forms of body movement. This meant that the significance of body movement could not be understood purely in terms of a narrow psychological approach concerned exclusively with its role as a means of individual expression (Kendon, 1982).

The significance of the structural approach can be usefully appreciated when set against the so-called 'external variable' approach (Duncan, 1969). This referred to an alternative strategy of attempting to relate communication to features external to the social context. Thus, a researcher might seek to investigate whether particular nonverbal behaviours are associated with particular personality traits: for example, by correlating scores on a questionnaire measure of extraversion with duration or frequency of gaze. This approach at one time typified much psychological research on communication, and was rightly criticised for its failure to take account of the structural organisation of social interaction (Duncan, 1969). Almost all contemporary communication researchers would now regard an awareness of the importance of structure and context as axiomatic.

Sociological approaches

Closely related to the structural approach is that taken within sociology. In fact, there are two distinctive sociological strands of research of particular importance: conversation analysis and the work of Erving Goffman.

Goffman

Goffman's principal concern was the study of social interaction. Of course, in this he was not alone, but there are a number of features which make his particular approach distinctive. One important innovation was that he regarded everyday social interaction as something worthy of study in its own right, rather as a means of studying more traditional sociological concerns, such as a primitive or sophisticated mentality, or the structure of kinship or power relationships (Burns, 1992). Another was his ability to take what might be regarded as commonplace observations, and to recast them in terms of a novel conceptual framework. Although he has had a profound influence, in no sense was his work based on the detailed analysis of either video or audio recordings. Rather, he worked from his own participant observations of social interaction, and from material such as etiquette books and advertisements. His significance was much more as a theorist, as someone who put forward a conceptual framework within which social interaction could be studied.

Thus, Goffman developed a theory to explain the ways in which people present themselves in daily life, support or challenge the claims of others and deal with challenges to their own identity (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1971). A particularly good example of Goffman's influence can be seen in the impact of his first published article, 'On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction' (1955). In this paper, he formulated a number of ideas concerning the importance of what he called 'face-work': strategies both for avoiding threats to face and repairing damage to face when it has occurred. Goffman's ideas have proved remarkably enduring. According to one review, the intellectual roots of virtually all contemporary research on face can be traced to this 'seminal' essay (Tracy, 1990).

Most significant of these is the contribution of two linguists, Penelope Brown and Steve Levinson (1978; 1987), who were the proponents of what has come to be known as 'politeness theory'. Following Goffman, they defined 'face' as the public image which every person wishes to claim. Face claims, they proposed, can be positive or negative. Positive face concerns the desire to be appreciated by others, negative face the desire for freedom of action. Brown and Levinson also attempted to show how strategies in conversation can be seen to reflect these two principal aspects of face. This concept of face has had an important influence on the studies of political interviews reported in this book (see especially Chapters 8–10).

Conversation analysis

The other major sociological contribution is what has become known as 'conversation analysis'. This emerged out of a sociological approach known as 'ethnomethodology'. Ethnomethodologists were highly critical of the way in which quantitative sociologists imposed what they perceived as arbitrary categories in their classification of sociological phenomena. Instead, ethnomethodologists believed in the importance of the participants' own formulations of their everyday interactions, and advocated that these should be a principal focus of study. It was to these formulations that the prefix 'ethno' referred.

Many of the basic assumptions of conversation analysis stem from a series of lectures given by Harvey Sacks in 1964 and 1965 (Sacks, 1992). The innovative and striking feature of these lectures was the recognition that talk can be studied as an activity in its own right, rather than as a means of studying other processes. Other important features were the proposals that ordinary talk is systematically, sequentially and socially organised, and that no detail of interaction (however trivial it may seem) can be dismissed as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant (Heritage, 1989).

The idea that ordinary talk is orderly contrasted sharply with prevailing models of language at that time (Lalljee and Widdicombe, 1989). In seeking to analyse people's capacity for language, Chomsky had argued for an important distinction between competence and performance. Compe-

tence represented an idealised model of people's linguistic ability, whereas performance (what people actually do in their talk) was assumed to be a degenerate version of competence (Lalljee and Widdicombe, 1989). In contrast, Sacks argued that ordinary talk could be formally described in terms of socially organised, culturally available rules and procedures. It should be studied not as a deviant version of people's competence, but as orderly in its own right.

Although Sacks' lectures were delivered in the mid-1960s, conversation analysis only began to have a wider impact in 1974, following the publication of a paper on how people take turns in conversation (see Kendon, 1988). This paper (Sacks *et al.*, 1974) identified a number of distinctive features considered to characterise turn-taking, and proposed a system of rules to account for the way in which it is organised.

In the paper by Sacks *et al.*, details were also given concerning a novel procedure for transcribing conversation. The aim was to reproduce as far as possible both the sound and structure of conversation. In order to do this, standard spelling was frequently ignored. For example, 'back in a minute' becomes 'back inna minnit', while 'lighting a fire in Perry's cellar' becomes 'lightin' a fiyuh in Perry's celluh'. A number of conventions were also devised to indicate the sequential structure of utterances in conversation. A double oblique sign (//) indicates the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by the talk of another, while an equals sign (=) refers to what was called 'latching', where there is no interval between the end of one person's utterance and the start of another. Subsequently, one researcher has even been concerned to devise highly detailed ways of representing different kinds of laughter (Jefferson, 1984). In one excerpt, a laugh is transcribed as 'ihh hh heh heh huh', while in another a different form of laughter is transcribed as 'hhhh HA HA HA HA'. Thus, in conversation analysis, the transcription becomes an important part of the research. Through such faithful attention to detail, it was claimed that other analysts are given the opportunity to identify systematic regularities which might have eluded the initial investigators.

This method of transcription is highly distinctive, and constitutes one of the most characteristic features of the conversation analytic approach. It is also the point at which Schegloff's work diverged most clearly from Goffman's. Although Sacks was a student of Goffman and clearly learned a great deal from him (Schegloff, 1989), their approaches were fundamentally different. Whereas Sacks analysed social interaction in the finest of detail, Goffman painted with a broad brush. Whereas Goffman's influence was essentially that of a theorist, Sacks pioneered a methodology whereby it was possible to test empirically his own theoretical presuppositions concerning the structure and organisation of conversation.

Both Goffman and Sacks have had an enormous influence on communication research. If Goffman is open to criticism, it is because he failed to back up his observations through the analysis of either video or audio

recordings. His contribution was to supply the theoretical scaffolding; the nitty gritty of detailed microanalysis he left to others. With Sacks, it is entirely the reverse. Sacks *et al.* (1974) wrote that the aim of a conversation analysis transcript was 'to get as much of the actual sound as possible into our transcripts, while still making them accessible to linguistically unsophisticated readers'. The success of this procedure is seriously open to question. There are plenty of features of speech which such transcriptions omit, for example, tempo, pitch, loudness, vowel quality and voice quality. At the same time, there is also a problem that the attempt to reproduce the sound of speech can make the text quite impenetrable. So, for example, one of Sacks *et al.*'s (1974) extracts reads, 'I'd a' cracked up 'f duh friggin (gla-i(h)f y'kno(h)w it) sm(h)a(h) heh heh.' How accessible this is to a linguistically sophisticated reader is seriously open to question – let alone to an unsophisticated one.

In this author's view, a transcript is best used not as a substitute for the recording, rather as a form of assistance. If researchers work from the transcript alone, they may miss important points of detail which were not annotated on the original transcript. Indeed, Sacks *et al.*'s analysis of turn-taking has been criticised for precisely this point (e.g. Power and dal Martello, 1986; Cowley, 1998). The best technique is to view or listen to the tape in conjunction with a transcript, ideally in the form of a video-recording, so that researchers can not only hear what is said and how it is said, but can also see any associated nonverbal behaviour for themselves. This is the approach taken in all the empirical studies reported in this monograph.

Speech Act Theory

A parallel development in linguistic philosophy was the development of Speech Act Theory. Initially, these ideas were elaborated by John Austin in 1955 in the William James lectures at Harvard University, subsequently to be published posthumously in 1962 under the title, *How to do Things with Words.* In order to acquire a fuller understanding of Austin's ideas, they need to be set in the context of academic philosophy at that time (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In particular, Austin was attacking the view of logical positivism, that if a sentence cannot be verified as either true or false, it should simply be regarded as meaningless. More broadly, Austin was attacking a whole spectrum of views which regarded the central function of language as describing a state of affairs, or stating some facts. In contrast, the main proposition of Speech Act Theory was that language can be regarded as a form of action.

So, for example, to say 'I'm sorry' is not to convey information about an apology, nor to describe an apology; it does in itself constitute the act of apologising. But Speech Act Theory is not based on a distinction between some sentences which do things and other sentences which describe things.

Instead, Speech Act Theory presents this distinction in a different way. Its fundamental tenet is that all utterances both state things and do things, that is to say, they have both a meaning and a force. Indeed, there is also a third dimension: utterances can have an effect, consequent upon meaning and force.

Speech Act Theory represented a radical departure from views which were then current in the philosophy of language. Previous work had been concerned with the formal, abstract properties of language, to be dealt with in the same way as logic and mathematics. In contrast, Speech Act Theory focussed on language as a tool, as a means of doing things. In spite of this, Speech Act Theory is still essentially a branch of philosophy. It was developed primarily in the context of debates within philosophy, and little consideration was paid to the practical problems of applying the theory to everyday talk occurring in natural situations. Its enduring influence has come from other intellectual traditions such as conversation analysis and discourse analysis, which have sought to investigate empirically how social actions (such as ordering and requesting, persuading and accusing) are accomplished in language.

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is an approach which has a number of features in common with conversation analysis and Speech Act Theory. The term 'discourse' is used in a broad sense to cover all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, as well as written texts of all kinds. So discourse analysis can refer to any of these forms of communication (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

There are many forms of discourse analysis, associated with several different academic disciplines; indeed, discourse *analyses* might be a more appropriate term. Discourse analysis originated in branches of philosophy, sociology, linguistics and literary theory. It is currently being developed in a variety of other disciplines as well, including anthropology, communication, education and psychology (Wood and Kroger, 2000).

At least three main approaches can be distinguished (van Dijk, 1997). There are those that focus on discourse 'itself'; that is, on structures of text or talk. Such analyses are concerned with abstract properties such as the narrative structure of a story, the use of rhetorical devices in speeches, or the placing of headlines in news reports. Second, discourse may be analysed in terms of the social actions accomplished by language users. One of the themes strongly stressed in both Speech Act Theory and conversation analysis is that people use language to do things. This focus on language function or action is a major component of discourse analysis. Finally, analyses of discourse presuppose that language users have knowledge. To understand a sentence or to interpret the topic of a text presupposes that language users share a vast repertoire of sociocultural beliefs on which their interpretations

are based. Hence, the analysis of cognition has been a third substantive area of research.

One well-known example of discourse analysis is the work of Jonathan Potter, Margaret Wetherell and Derek Edwards. Their principal concern has been with language as a form of action, a means of accomplishing a variety of social functions. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), a person's use of language will vary according to its function; that is to say, it will vary according to the purpose of the talk. For example, in describing a person to a close friend on one occasion and to a parent on another, a narrator may emphasise very different personal characteristics. Neither of these accounts is seen as the 'true' or 'correct' one, they simply serve different functions.

In cases such as these, it is proposed that people are using language to construct versions of the social world. 'The principal tenet of discourse analysis is that function involves construction of versions, and is demonstrated by language variation' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 33). The proposal is not that some forms of talk are merely descriptive, while others are deliberately constructed: all language, even language which passes as simple description, is regarded as constructive. However, the term 'construction' is not meant to imply that the process is necessarily deliberate or intentional. The person who produces the account does not necessarily do this in a calculating or conscious way. Nevertheless, a version emerges as people try to make sense of something that has happened to them, or engage in such activities as justifying their own actions or blaming others.

Two further features are stressed in what has been called the Discursive Action Model (Edwards and Potter, 1993). One of these is the problem of 'stake' or 'interest'. An interested or motivated account runs the risk of being discounted on precisely that basis (for example, with the remark, 'Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?'). Thus, speakers endeavour to construct their account in such a way that it will be understood as factual, and not dismissed as partisan or simply biased. Discourse analysis seeks to understand how such an account is constructed to achieve that particular effect.

The other feature is 'accountability' (Edwards and Potter, 1993). In reporting events, speakers routinely deal with the accountability of the people they are describing for their actions. At the same time, speakers are also accountable for their own actions, including the accuracy and interactional consequences of the narratives which they produce. Thus, speakers may seek either to claim credit or to distance themselves from the events which they report, depending upon the function of the talk. The ways in which both these aspects of accountability are constructed in narratives is the focus of an approach from the perspective of discursive psychology.

However, it should be noted that the discursive psychology of Potter, Wetherell and Edwards is only one formulation of discourse analysis; there are many others. Furthermore, there are also significant differences of

opinion between different analysts. For example, van Dijk (1997) regards the analysis of cognition as one of three substantive areas of research in discourse analysis. Conversely, discursive psychology is presented as a radical alternative to cognitive social psychology, a means whereby cognitive concepts such as memory, attitudes and attributions can be re-conceptualised in terms of discursive actions (Edwards and Potter, 1992). Thus, Potter and Wetherell (1987) regard language not as a means of representing inner thoughts, ideas or attitudes, rather as a means of accomplishing a variety of social functions.

Another controversial feature of discursive psychology is that it seems to embody a position of philosophical relativism. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), a person's use of language varies according to its function: it is not possible to say whether an account is a 'true' or 'false' one, accounts simply serve different functions. But if this is the case, it would appear as if all accounts are as good as one another, and there would appear to be no way to choose between them. Again, if neither thoughts, nor ideas nor attitudes can be inferred from discourse, then it might appear that there is nothing beyond discourse, and discourse analysis can only be used to make inferences about discourse. Taken to this extreme, discursive psychology seems to lead to a dead-end. However, relativism is not intrinsic to all discourse analysis; indeed, discursive psychology has been criticised by other discourse analysts precisely because of its relativist stance (e.g. Parker, 1992).

Ethology

A characteristic feature of both conversation analysis and discourse analysis is that they are based on the analysis of naturally occurring situations. This is also true of another approach which stems from an entirely different intellectual tradition. Ethology developed initially as a branch of zoology, concerned with the study of animal behaviour in its natural habitat, but its techniques have subsequently been extended to the analysis of human behaviour. In ethology, special emphasis is laid on observing behaviour in its natural environment. The typical research methods are naturalistic observation and field experiment. Where films or tapes are made, ethologists have developed a number of techniques for concealed filming in order to not upset the natural flow of behaviour. Thus, a movie camera with an angle lens was used by the ethologist Iraneus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972) to make his recordings. This enabled him to make recordings in a different direction from where the camera was pointed, and was intended to minimise self-consciousness in the people he observed.

Ethologists work on the assumption that behaviour is, to a considerable extent, inherited and they seek to interpret behaviour in terms of its evolutionary functions. One of the forerunners of ethology was Charles Darwin. He realised that if his theory of natural selection was to explain the

evolution of animal species, then it also had to be able to account for behaviour. In fact, Darwin's work contains much material that would now be described as ethological, although it would be anachronistic to describe Darwin either as an ethologist or as the founder of ethology. The first person to use the term 'ethology' in its modern sense was Oscar Heinroth, in a paper published in 1911 (Thorpe, 1979). The title of 'The father of modern ethology' was also applied to Konrad Lorenz (Huxley, 1963), who became most famous for his writings on aggression. However, Lorenz acknowledged Heinroth as the source of his inspiration, and in one place defined ethology as 'the subject which Heinroth invented' (Thorpe, 1979).

Heinroth studied ducks and geese. He found that greylag geese would vocalise in one way when they were about to walk or fly as a family, in another way just before merely walking rapidly. These distinctive vocalisations he called 'intention movements', because they typically occurred just prior to performing the actual behaviour. Julian Huxley (1914) studied the diving bird known as the great crested grebe. He used the term 'display' to describe the complex postures and water 'dances' which he observed. Subsequently, Tinbergen proposed that behaviour itself could evolve specifically for its signalling value, and that it did so by exhibiting the twin qualities of conspicuousness and simplicity (Tinbergen, 1953).

Lorenz and Tinbergen referred to these signalling behaviours as 'fixed action patterns', pre-programmed innate responses which would occur in response to appropriate 'releasers' in the environment. However, modern ethologists regard this analysis as mechanistic and outdated (Fridlund, 1994). They now regard culture as formative in its own right, and view both non-humans and humans as more than reflexive automata. Thus, non-human postures, squawks and grunts have been observed to be dependent upon context in both their perception and production (e.g. Smith, 1969, 1977). Furthermore, if signalling evolves through natural selection, it may also evolve through learning: there appear, for example, to be regional dialects in birdsong (Smith, 1977).

A good example of ethological research comes from the study of social hierarchy in both humans and animals. Ethologists have observed that conflicts between members of the same species often take place within specific rules; this has the advantage of reducing the risk of serious injury or death. Such conflicts may take the form of what are called 'threat displays', which signal one individual's likelihood of attacking another. The conflict may be resolved when one contestant performs 'appeasement gestures' as a sign of submission (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1973).

In ethological terms, threat displays and appeasement gestures are seen as ways of resolving conflict; they can also lead to the establishment of social hierarchies through which future conflict may be regulated. An important clue to the nature of a social hierarchy is who looks at whom, known as the 'structure of attention' (Chance, 1967). According to this view, the most important animal or the most important person in the group is the focus of

the subordinates' attention. In fact, not only does the pattern of gaze provide clues to the social structure of the group, it also constitutes a means whereby influence is exerted: as the recipient of gaze, the dominant individual is more easily able to exert influence over others.

Ethological concepts have been highly influential on the microanalytic approach. Indeed, the parallels between ethology and other microanalytic approaches have been noted by a number of investigators. For example, Goffman, when he came to write *Relations in Public* (1971), adopted the title of 'human ethologist'.

Communication as skill: a social psychological approach

One of the most significant influences on microanalysis has been the proposal that communication can be regarded as a form of skill. In 1967, an important paper appeared entitled 'The experimental analysis of social performance'. In this article, Michael Argyle and Adam Kendon argued that social behaviour involves processes comparable to those involved in motor skills, such as driving a car or playing a game of tennis. Given that we already know a great deal about motor skill processes, they proposed that this knowledge could be applied to advance our understanding of social interaction.

The social skills model – as it has become known – was subsequently elaborated in Argyle's books on social interaction (for example, Argyle, 1969, 1978). In the original social skills model, six processes were considered to be common to motor skills and social performance: distinctive goals, selective perception of cues, central translation processes, motor responses, feedback and corrective action, and the timing of responses. Each of these processes is discussed in turn below.

1 *Distinctive goals* can be seen, for example, in the process of driving a car. The superordinate goal of reaching one's destination may also involve subordinate goals, such as overtaking a slow-moving vehicle, crossing a difficult junction, or joining a main road in heavy traffic. So too social performance can be seen as having distinctive goals. In a job interview, the superordinate goal of the interviewer – to select the right person for the job – necessitates a number of subordinate goals, such as obtaining information from the interviewee, and establishing satisfactory rapport in order to achieve those ends.
2 *The selective perception of cues* is a key process in the performance of any skill. Not all information is of equal value: that is to say, the skilled performer may pay particular attention to certain types of information relevant to achieving their objective, while ignoring irrelevant information. Indeed, one mark of skilled performance may be to learn what input can be ignored. A skilled public speaker learns to sense the interest and attention of the audience, and to adjust the performance appropriately, whereas the conversational bore completely fails to read the response of his or her listeners.

3 *Central translation processes* prescribe what to do about any particular piece of information. The term 'translation' refers to the rule by which a particular signal is interpreted as regarding a particular action. An important feature of skills acquisition consists in the development of such translations which, once learned, can be readily and immediately acted upon. It is in the development of new translations that a great deal of hesitancy and halting can often be observed.
4 *Motor responses* refer to behaviours which are performed as a consequence of central translation processes. The learner driver may initially find it extremely difficult to change gear, but with practice the movements become quite automatic. So, too, with social behaviour. Initial learning may be quite awkward, but with extensive practice large chunks of behaviour can become fluent and habitual. Indeed, social behaviour can become too automatic. The monotone of museum guides who have repeated their guided tour too often is one well-known example of automatised behaviour. Similarly, there was the unfortunate case of a lecturer who reported that 'he had reached a stage where he could arise before his audience, turn his mouth loose, and go to sleep' (Lashley, 1951; cited in Argyle, 1969).
5 *Feedback and corrective action* refer to the ways in which individuals may modify their behaviour in the light of feedback from others. Just as in a central heating system, where the information from a thermostat regulates the heating output, so too feedback is important in the context of social interaction. For example, a teacher who sees that pupils have not understood a point may repeat it slowly in another way; again, a salesman who realises that he is failing to make an impact may change his style of behaviour. Argyle proposed that feedback is obtained principally from nonverbal cues. So in conversation a speaker will typically scan the other's face intermittently to check whether the listener understands, agrees or disagrees, and whether he or she is willing for the speaker to continue talking.
6 *Good timing and rhythm* are also important features of social skills. Without correct anticipation as to when a response will be required, interaction can be jerky and ineffective. Taking turns is the characteristic way in which conversation is structured. In larger groups, turn-taking can sometimes be problematic, because opportunities to speak can be quite restricted. Choosing the right moment to make a point in a group discussion is a useful example of the social skill of good timing.

The concept of social skill has not been without its critics. Although there are significant similarities between motor and social skills, there are also important differences (Hargie and Marshall, 1986). For example, since social interaction by definition involves other people, it is necessary to consider the goals not only of one individual but of all those involved, as well as their actions and reactions towards one another. In this sense, social behaviour is often much more complex than motor performance.

The role of feelings and emotions is another feature neglected by the ori-

ginal social skills model. The importance of mood and emotional state in communication is widely recognised (e.g. Parkinson, 1995), and can have an important bearing on responses, goals and perceptions in social interaction. Furthermore, whereas we often take into account the feelings of other people with whom we interact, this is clearly not the case in learning to perform a motor skill.

The perception of persons differs in a number of ways from the perception of objects. We perceive the responses of the other person with whom we communicate. We may also perceive our own responses, in that we hear what we say, and can be aware of our own nonverbal behaviour. Furthermore, we can be aware of the process of perception itself, referred to as 'metaperception'. We make judgements about how other people are perceiving us, and we may also attempt to ascertain how they think we are perceiving them. Such judgements may influence our own behaviour during social interaction (Hargie and Marshall, 1986).

The social situation in which interaction occurs is important for an understanding of social skills. Significant features which may affect social interaction are the roles which people play, the rules governing the situation, the nature of the task and the physical environment. In addition, personal factors, such as age, gender and physical appearance, will be important in the way in which people behave towards one another (Hargie and Marshall, 1986).

In the light of these criticisms, a revised version of the social skills model was proposed (Hargie and Marshall, 1986). The original model was extended to take account of two people interacting with one another: thus, feedback comes from our own as well as from other people's responses. The term 'central translation processes' was replaced with the term 'mediating factors' to allow for the influence of emotions as well as cognitions on behaviour. The original model was also further revised to take account of what was termed the 'person–situation context' (Hargie, 1997). Person factors can include personality, gender, age and appearance, while situation factors refer to features such as social roles, social rules and the cultural context within which interaction takes place.

Despite these criticisms, the social skills model continues to be highly influential. One of the most important proposals of the original model was that, if communication can be regarded as a skill, then it should be possible for people to learn to communicate more effectively, just as it is possible to improve performance on any other skill (Argyle and Kendon, 1967). This proposal was formalised in what was termed 'social skills training'. More recently, it has become known as 'communication skills training', and has been used extensively in a wide variety of social contexts (see Bull, 2002, pp. 130–144).

II. Key features of the microanalytic approach

Despite important differences of opinion and emphasis between these communications scholars, they do share a number of common assumptions. These can be seen to embody a distinctive way of thinking about communication, which the author has referred to as 'microanalysis' (Bull, 2002). Its principal themes are presented below, together with a consideration of their implications for the research reported in this book.

Communication is studied as it actually occurs

A key feature is a concern with the analysis of communication as it actually occurs through the detailed analysis of film, videotape or audiotape. This marked a radical shift from the traditional concern with the study of communication in terms of what it should be – in terms of, for example, its efficiency, clarity or persuasiveness. The focus on communication as it actually occurs can be seen to characterise all the different approaches to communication analysis described above (pp. 2–12), and can be regarded as one principal underlying theme of microanalytic research. In the studies presented here, communication as it actually occurs is studied through the detailed analysis of video-recordings of political speeches and political interviews.

Communication can be studied as an activity in its own right

Another important theme is the proposal that communication can be studied as an activity in its own right. Just as Goffman made social interaction itself the focus of his investigations, so too an important and innovative feature of conversation analysis was the recognition that talk can be studied as talk, rather than as a means of studying other social processes. Similarly, the focus of discourse analysis is exclusively on discourse itself: how it is constructed, its functions and on the consequences which arise from different ways in which discourse is organised. In the research reported here, it is political interviews and political speeches themselves which are the focus of investigation.

All features of interaction are potentially significant

A further distinguishing feature of the microanalytic approach has been the expansion of what behaviour can be regarded as communicative. In recent decades, the remarkable development of interest in nonverbal communication can be regarded as one such manifestation. So, too, is the extraordinary detail in which conversation analysts seek in their transcripts to represent as exactly as possible the way in which conversation sounds. The underlying assumption is that all features of interaction are potentially significant, and therefore should not be dismissed out of hand as unworthy of investigation.

In the research to be presented here, considerable attention is given to fine details of communication, which anyone not familiar with the micro-analytic approach might regard as trivial or unimportant. The initial study reports an analysis of the use of hand gestures in political speeches. Later studies of political speeches focus on the synchronisation of applause, and on the subtle differences between invited and uninvited applause. The studies of political interviews also focus on a number of fine details of interaction: on interruptions, on different ways in which politicians may equivocate and on different ways in which questions may threaten the face of a politician.

Communication has a structure

A related proposal is that communication has a structure. Although interaction may seem at first sight to be disorderly or even random, it cannot be assumed to be so, and one of the tasks of the investigator is to analyse whether an underlying structure can be discerned. Structure can take a variety of forms. Interaction may be sequentially organised, that is to say, certain behaviours or features of conversation may occur in a regular order. It may be hierarchically organised, that is to say, behaviour or conversation may be organised into higher-order units. It may also be organised in terms of social rules.

The research reported here is guided by the underlying assumption that communication has a structure. Thus, applause in political speeches does not occur in response to just anything a politician says. It has been shown that applause can be invited by the speaker through a range of rhetorical devices embedded in the structure of speech specifically for this purpose (Atkinson, 1983, 1984a, 1984b). It will also be shown that applause can occur uninvited, either directly in response to the content of speech (Chapter 3) or through a misreading of rhetorical devices (Chapter 5).

Similarly, the discourse of political interviews has its own particular structures. For example, although politicians are notorious for not replying to questions, equivocation does not occur all the time. It will be shown that politicians are much more likely to equivocate in response to certain questions which create what is termed an *avoidance–avoidance conflict* (Bavelas *et al.*, 1990), where all the principal responses to a question may make the politician look bad, but equivocation seems to be the least face-damaging alternative (see Chapter 8).

Conversation can be regarded as a form of action

According to Speech Act Theory, language does not simply describe some state of affairs or state some facts: it is in itself a form of action. This proposal has been profoundly influential and underlies a great deal of research

on the analysis of conversation. A principal concern has been the study of function. To a substantial extent, this represents the influence of Speech Act Theory: once it is accepted that speech is not only concerned with the transmission of information, but constitutes a form of activity in its own right, it is logical to conduct analyses on the nature of that activity.

Nowhere can this be more true than in the sphere of political communication. Political discourse is in itself a form of political action. Often dismissed as 'just' rhetoric, political discourse plays a vital role in the self-presentation of politicians and political parties, in the presentation of policies, in currying the widest popular support from the electorate. One important aspect of political discourse is self-presentation and face management, to which considerable attention is given in Chapters 8–10.

Communication is best studied in naturally occurring contexts

Common to almost all the approaches discussed so far is the proposal that communication is best studied in naturally occurring contexts. The one exception to this has been experimental social psychology; its proponents have traditionally made extensive use of laboratory-based experimentation as a means of studying communication. However, the trend in social psychology in recent years has also been towards naturalistic analysis.

In this context, the term 'naturalistic' is used very broadly to refer to almost any situation which has not been specifically set up as an experiment for the specific purpose of observing communication. Thus, televised broadcasts of political speeches and interviews might be seen as 'naturalistic', because these events have not been set up for the purposes of political communication research, they are simply part of the ongoing political process.

Communication can be regarded as a form of skill

The proposal that communication can be regarded as a form of skill represents one of the main contributions of the social psychological approach to communication. Indeed, it has been so influential that the term 'communication skills' has passed into the wider culture. In the studies to be reported here, considerable attention is given to the communication skills of both politicians and political interviewers. Thus, the analyses of political speeches reported in Part I have a number of implications for what can be regarded as skill in oratory. Similarly, in Part II the analyses of political interviews might be used to evaluate the communicative skills of both interviewers and politicians. It will be argued that, in political interviews, skill in face management and self-presentation is of central importance for the politician, especially given that tough interviewers will ask a high proportion of 'no-win' questions to which the politician cannot respond without incurring some damage to face.

Communication can be taught like any other skill

A related proposal is that communication can be taught like any other skill. This again has been highly influential in the wider culture; social or communication skills training has been widely used in a variety of personal and occupational contexts (see Bull, 2002, pp. 130–144). No studies of communication skills training were conducted in this research, although the results of the studies to be presented here could easily be used to improve the communication skills of both politicians and political interviewers, or indeed to improve the political perceptiveness of the electorate.

Macro issues can be studied through microanalysis

Also of particular importance for the wider culture is the assumption that major 'macro' social issues such as racism, politics or feminism can be analysed through microanalysis. In a sense, all the research studies to be reported here are concerned with the macro issue of political communication, which they seek to show can be illuminated through detailed microanalytic research.

Methodological issues

Although communication scholars arguably share a number of common assumptions, they do (unsurprisingly!) also have significant disagreements. Some of the most important arguments have been concerned with methodology: on how to actually conduct research. Such disagreements need to be considered, before outlining the programme of research to be presented in this book.

Traditionally, one of the main planks of academic psychology has been a belief in the value of the experimental method, and for many years this approach typified social psychological research on interpersonal communication. Intrinsic to the experimental method is a belief in the importance of quantification and the use of inferential statistics. A significant consequence of a quantitative approach is the need for categorisation. The advantage of this procedure is that it allows the researcher to reduce observed behaviour to frequencies or rates of occurrence, rather than attempting a detailed description of each event. These data can then be subjected to some sort of analysis using inferential statistics. Hence, a salient feature of communication research in experimental social psychology has been a preoccupation with the development of coding systems (Bull and Roger, 1989).

This approach has been subject to intensive criticism by those who favour naturalistic observation and a qualitative approach. One target of criticism has been the artificiality of the data obtained in laboratories, where the participants either knew or suspected that they were being recorded for the purpose of an experiment. Although these problems are not

insurmountable, the use of naturalistic observation has increasingly become the preferred method of making observations in communication research.

The use of coding systems has also been criticised, on the grounds that such procedures are typically arbitrary, reductionist and distort the data to fit it into preconceived categories (Psathas, 1995). Furthermore, it is claimed that context and meaning are only dealt with in so far as they are specified in the category system (Psathas, 1995). Researchers in both conversation analysis and discourse analysis have also become increasingly concerned not to 'impose' preconceived categories on the data, but to make use of the ways in which people categorise themselves, as manifested in their own discourse (van Dijk, 1997).

However, there are a number of features which this critique of categorisation ignores. While it is certainly interesting to examine the ways in which people categorise themselves, this is not the only way of analysing interpersonal communication. Coding systems devised by outside observers can be highly informative. Coding systems can also change over time. That is to say, they can be improved to make a better representation of the phenomena. A good coding system can act as a valuable aid to perception, not necessarily as a hindrance. It may enable the researcher to identify phenomena which might not be immediately obvious to the untrained observer.

Research on nonverbal communication can be used to illustrate the value of coding systems. Because of the anatomical complexity of bodily movement, it can be very difficult to give precise descriptions of its physical appearance. Nowhere is this more true than in the facial musculature, which is capable of producing an extensive array of different expressions. These are highly varied, often subtle and intricate and hence can be very difficult to describe. The Facial Action Coding System (FACS) is a procedure for categorising facial movements, developed by Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen (1978). By concentrating on the anatomical basis of facial movement, FACS can provide a detailed description of all the movements possible with the facial musculature. Thus, the system is not only comprehensive, it can also serve as an invaluable guide to perception, by helping the observer to identify complex facial movements and providing a language with which to describe them. Indeed, FACS has become widely accepted as the main technique available for analysing facial expressions, and there is now an extensive body of research using this procedure (see Ekman and Rosenberg, 1997).

The research studies to be presented in this book make extensive use of coding systems. The Body Movement Scoring System (Bull, 1987) was used to analyse hand gestures in political speeches in the study reported in Chapter 2. The studies of political interviews also make extensive use of coding systems. The Interruption Coding System (ICS) was devised by Roger *et al.* (1988) to provide a fine-grained analysis of interruptions; this system is described in Chapter 6. Another procedure was developed for identifying questions, replies and non-replies to questions in political inter-

views (Bull, 1994). This system is described in Chapter 7, where it was used in a series of studies on equivocation. It was also used in all the subsequent studies of political interviews (Chapters 8–10). A further coding system was devised for the analysis of face-threats in questions in political interviews (Bull *et al.*, 1996); this is reported in Chapter 8, and forms the basis for the studies of face reported in Chapters 8–10.

However, the research to be presented here was not based exclusively on coding systems. Qualitative as well as quantitative techniques were used wherever it was considered appropriate, and illustrative examples of political discourse are discussed throughout the book as a whole. Furthermore, in Chapter 3, an extensive qualitative analysis is presented of the kind of content which receives applause in political speeches. Thus, the methodological approach taken here is essentially pragmatic rather than ideological. In this author's view, neither quantitative and qualitative techniques – nor categorical and non-categorical approaches – need be regarded as mutually exclusive; they can be employed together to bring different insights on particular problems. This is the approach taken in this book.

III. Outline of research

The focus of the book is on two particular aspects of political communication – namely, interviews and speeches.

Political speeches

Collective applause is a phenomenon of considerable potential interest to the social psychologist. In the context of political speeches, applause can be seen as a highly manifest expression of group identity, a means whereby audiences not only praise the ingroup (their own party), but also derogate outgroups (their political opponents). As a group activity, applause also requires group co-ordination; hence, it raises interesting interactional questions as to how audiences are able effectively to synchronise their behaviour to applaud in concert rather than in isolation. Furthermore, applause is closely associated with rhetoric, a topic of direct interest to analysts of discourse.

The author's research on political speeches arose out of a long-standing interest in nonverbal communication, and a dissatisfaction with the rather contrived and constricted laboratory settings in which many such studies at that time were conducted. A particular concern was to look at the use of hand gestures in a natural setting where it occurred with a high degree of visibility, and for this purpose political oratory seemed ideal. The results of this study are reported in Chapter 2.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the functions of gesture in political speeches. Two speeches were used to analyse the relationship of hand gestures to vocal stress, a third speech to investigate the role of hand

gestures in inviting and controlling audience applause. This latter analysis was conducted in the context of a theory of rhetoric developed by the sociologist, Max Atkinson (1983, 1984a, 1984b). This theory is concerned with the way in which rhetorical devices are used to invite applause, and is described in some detail in Chapter 2. It proved invaluable in understanding how hand gestures are used both to articulate the structure of applause invitations, as well as to refuse applause when it occurs at inappropriate points during a speech.

Atkinson's theory has, in fact, proved remarkably influential and provides some compelling insights into the stage management of political speeches. As such, it has become widely accepted, although it has always been open to criticism on a number of counts. Nevertheless, since the time when the original research was conducted in the 1980s, the theory has never been subjected to any systematic re-evaluation. In the remaining chapters of Part I, a series of studies are presented which were intended to do precisely this – to test the validity of Atkinson's theory of rhetoric.

According to Atkinson, collective applause is highly synchronised with speech, invited through rhetorical devices employed by the speaker for this purpose. The problem is that the theory as it stands does not account for negative instances which might be inconsistent with it; for example, collective applause which does *not* occur in response to rhetorical devices, and incidences of applause which are *not* synchronised with speech. Two studies which focussed on these concerns are presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

On the basis of these analyses, a revised version of Atkinson's theory of rhetoric was proposed. This was based on the proposition that not all applause in political speeches is invited through rhetorical devices; it can also occur uninvited in the absence of such devices. Furthermore, it does not have to be synchronous with speech, it can also be asynchronous. A study to test this model is reported in Chapter 5, intended to investigate the relationship between these different dimensions of applause: invited/uninvited, synchronous/asynchronous, rhetorically formatted/non-rhetorically formatted.

Political interviews

The other major strand of the author's research on political communication has been concerned with the analysis of televised interviews. This arose initially out of an interest in the role of interruptions in conversation. To analyse interruptions, the Interruption Coding System (Roger *et al.*, 1988) was devised, based on two experiments conducted in a social psychology laboratory. However, the author wanted to test out this system in a non-experimental setting where interruptions occur with a high degree of frequency; for this purpose, the televised political interview seemed ideal. Thus, a study was conducted of interruptions in interviews with Margaret

Thatcher and Neil Kinnock broadcast during the 1987 General Election. This is reported in Chapter 6, together with a description of the Interruption Coding System.

Chapter 7 reports several analyses of political equivocation. In the first instance, criteria were established for identifying what constitute questions, replies and non-replies. These criteria were then used to conduct an assessment of the extent to which politicians fail to reply to questions, based on a set of 33 interviews. The next stage was to investigate the different ways in which politicians equivocate. A typology of equivocation was developed, which was then used to analyse the communicative style of three party political leaders: Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock and John Major.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the reasons why politicians equivocate so extensively in political interviews. It was argued that a principal source of *avoidance–avoidance conflicts* identified by Bavelas *et al.* (1990) as responsible for equivocation are what are termed 'threats to face'. That is to say, politicians will tend to avoid certain kind of responses which may make them look bad. When all the principal ways of responding to a question may make them look bad, they tend to favour equivocation as the least face-threatening option.

To test hypotheses derived from this overall theoretical framework, an analysis was conducted of 18 interviews from the 1992 General Election. A typology was devised which distinguishes between 19 different ways in which questions in political interviews may pose threats to face. An important distinction was made between *avoidance–avoidance conflict* questions, and those where it was considered possible to produce a response which was not threatening to face (*no necessary threat* questions). In the case of the former, equivocation was predicted as the least face-threatening and therefore the most likely response. In the case of the latter, a *no necessary threat* response was predicted as the most likely response.

In Chapter 8, a study is also reported of six interviews from the 2001 General Election. This election was the first in which both the BBC and ITV arranged for the leaders of the three main political parties to be questioned in the same television programme by professional interviewers alongside members of the general public. This offered an excellent opportunity to test the hypothesis that equivocation by politicians is at least in part a function of the questions which they are asked in political interviews. Thus, because of the complex structure of *avoidance–avoidance conflict* questions, it was hypothesised that they are more likely to be posed by professional interviewers than by members of the public. Accordingly, politicians are more likely to equivocate when questioned by professional interviewers because of the nature of the questions which they are asked.

The analysis of the face-threatening structure of questions has important implications for evaluating the interview performance of both interviewers and politicians. In Chapter 9, a study is presented of six interviewers during the 1992 General Election, based on the distinction between

avoidance–avoidance conflict and *no necessary threat* questions. *Avoidance–avoidance* questions are arguably tougher than those which allow a *no necessary threat* response, because they create pressures on the politician to equivocate. The relative proportion of such questions (referred to as *level of threat*) can be used as a measure of interviewer toughness: the higher the proportion of *avoidance–avoidance* questions, the tougher the interview. *Level of threat* can also used as a means of assessing interviewer neutrality. If it can be shown that an interviewer consistently asks a higher proportion of *avoidance–avoidance* questions to members of one political party rather than another, then it can be argued that this is indicative of interviewer bias.

The analysis of face management also has important implications for evaluating the interview performance of politicians, and this forms the basis of Chapter 10. This chapter was concerned with how politicians handle both *no necessary threat* questions, and questions which create an *avoidance–avoidance conflict.* To the extent that a politician produces a face-damaging response where a *no necessary threat* response was possible, interview performance may be regarded as unskilled – given an adversarial political system in which a politician must seek to present the best possible face. On this basis, an evaluation was conducted of *avoidable face-damaging responses* in interviews broadcast during the 1992 British General Election. An analysis was also conducted of five televised interviews with Tony Blair in the 1997 General Election in which it is argued he showed highly skilled face management in handling questions which create *avoidance–avoidance conflicts*. Both analyses are reported in this chapter.

In the final chapter (Chapter 11), a summary of the main findings is presented. The theoretical significance of the research is also considered, with regard to both Atkinson's (1983, 1984a, 1984b) theory of rhetoric and Bavelas *et al.*'s (1990) theory of equivocation. Finally, the practical significance of the research is considered from a threefold perspective: that of the electorate, the politicians and the professional political interviewers.

Part I

Political speeches

2 The use of hand gestures

Introduction

The study reported in this chapter was concerned with the way in which politicians make use of hand gestures in public speeches (Bull, 1986). It was based on a video-recording of a political rally in St George's Hall, Bradford, West Yorkshire, during the 1983 General Election campaign. One main influence on this study was the extensive research literature on body movement and speech. The second main influence was Atkinson's theory of rhetoric (e.g. Atkinson, 1983, 1984a, 1984b). Each of these approaches is discussed below.

Body movement and speech

According to Condon and Ogston (1966), the body of the speaker moves closely in time with his speech; they called this 'self-synchrony'. Self-synchrony is not simply confined to hand gestures; movements of all parts of the body have been found to be closely co-ordinated with speech. However, this is not to say that *every* bodily movement is related to discourse. For example, in a study of psychotherapy sessions, it was primarily non-contact hand movements (movements that do not involve touching the body or touching an object) which were judged as related to speech (Freedman and Hoffman, 1967).

An important form of self-synchrony is that between body movement and vocal stress. Spoken English is produced in groups of words, typically averaging about five in length, where there is one primary vocal stress, sometimes referred to as the 'tonic' (Halliday, 1970). This primary vocal stress is conveyed principally through changes in pitch, but also through changes in loudness or rhythm. The group of words is referred to as a 'phonemic clause' or 'tone group', and is terminated by a juncture, in which the changes in pitch, rhythm and loudness level off before the beginning of the next phonemic clause (Trager and Smith, 1951). Speakers of English typically accompany their primary stresses with slight jerks of the head or hand (Pittenger *et al.*, 1960). Furthermore, it is not just

movements of the head and hands which are related to vocal stress, but movements of all parts of the body (Bull and Connelly, 1985). In fact, most of the tonic stresses (over 90 per cent) in the study by Bull and Connelly were accompanied by some kind of body motion. Typically, these took the form of continuous movements, such as nodding the head or flexing and extending the forearm, where the apex of the movement was timed to occur at the same time as the tonic. So, for example, the downward movement of a head nod might begin before the tonic, the apex of the head nod coinciding with the tonic, the upward movement of the head occurring after the tonic.

Other ways in which body movement is related to speech are through syntax (Lindenfeld, 1971) and meaning (e.g. Scheflen, 1964). From an analysis of the speech of a patient in a psychotherapy session, movements were found to occur principally within the duration of a syntactic clause rather than across clause boundaries (Lindenfeld, 1971). Larger chunks of speech can also be marked out through shifts in posture (Scheflen, 1964, 1973). Changes in what is referred to as the 'position' – corresponding roughly to taking a certain point of view in an interaction – tend to be accompanied by a postural shift involving at least half the body (Scheflen, 1964). Changes of topic are also sometimes accompanied by shifts in posture: in a study of television newsreaders, it was found that the introduction of a different news item was frequently accompanied by a change in hand position (Bull, 1987).

Head movements are also closely related to the meaning of speech. This is not just through signalling 'yes' or 'no', but can occur in a variety of other ways (McClave, 2000). For example, vigorous head shakes may accompany emphatic words such as 'a lot', 'great' or 'really'. A wide sweep of the head may be used to indicate inclusiveness, accompanying such words as 'everyone' or 'everything'. When a person starts to quote directly from someone else's speech, a shift in head orientation may slightly precede or directly accompany the quotation (McClave, 2000).

Body movement is thus clearly co-ordinated with speech, in terms of vocal stress, syntax and meaning. But often it has been studied alone, as if it were a separate and distinct form of communication. Critics of this 'body language' approach have repeatedly stressed the interconnectedness of speech and body movement, and argued that the distinction between them is highly artificial (e.g. Bavelas and Chovil, 2000). Hand and facial gestures in particular may be seen as visible acts of meaning and, hence, should arguably be treated as part of natural language. Bavelas and Chovil (2000) have referred to this as 'face-to-face dialogue', and advocate what they term an integrated message model in which audible and visible communicative acts are treated as a unified whole.

The focus of the study to be reported in this chapter is on hand gestures. According to Kendon (1985), gesture is arguably as fundamental as speech for the representation of meaning; they are joined together only because

gesture is used simultaneously for the same purpose. In the organisation of an utterance, speech and gesture are planned at the outset; the encoding of the utterance may occur simultaneously through both speech and gesture. There is considerable evidence consistent with this view (McNeill, 1985). Not only do gestures occur primarily during speech, they are also synchronised with linguistic units; indeed, they have semantic and pragmatic functions that parallel those of speech. In addition, gesture develops simultaneously with speech in children, and dissolves together with speech in aphasia (any disorder of speech resulting from brain damage). Speech and gesture interact with one another in creating meaning. Not only does gesture clarify the meaning of the speech, speech can also clarify the meaning of the gesture (Kelly *et al.*, 1999). In short, gesture may be seen not just as an alternative to speech, but as an additional resource, as part of a multichannel system of communication, which allows the skilled speaker further options through which to convey meaning.

The particular role of gesture can be seen to arise from a number of distinctive features which make it highly suitable for certain kinds of tasks (Kendon, 1985). It is, of course, first and foremost a visual means of communication. As such, it is often easier or quicker, for example, to point to an object than to describe it in words. Again, some gestures are like representative pictures in that they attempt to represent the visual appearance of an object, spatial relationship or bodily action (sometimes referred to as 'physiographic'). In one experiment (Graham and Argyle, 1975), English and Italian students were asked to communicate information about two-dimensional shapes to other students from their own culture, both with and without the use of hand gestures. The decoders drew what they thought the shapes were, the drawings were rated by English and Italian judges for their similarity to the original shapes. When gesture was permitted, the drawings were judged as significantly more accurate, while the Italians also did significantly better than the English under these circumstances. Gesture is, of course, widely believed to be of particular importance in Italian culture.

Because gesture is visual, it is also a silent means of communication. It may be employed when it is difficult or impossible to use speech. The speech channel may be momentarily blocked by noise, but it may also be blocked because it is already in use. Thus, in multiparty conversations, gesture may be employed by people who are not actually talking as a means of commenting on an interaction, without interrupting the flow of speech. This may be done cooperatively or critically, so that the commentator does not have to take a speaking turn (Kendon, 1985).

An additional advantage of gesture is that it can be used without having to enter into the kind of mutual obligation or ritual conduct which seems to be required by conversation. Consequently, it may sometimes be quicker to make a passing comment through gesture rather than through words. It may also be used in situations where the speaker seeks to be less fully bound

or committed to what he or she has to say. It may sometimes be adopted as a substitute for speech, where actually to formulate a thought in words might be regarded as too explicit or indelicate (Kendon, 1985).

Gesture is, to some extent, optional. Whereas features like vocalisation, speech rate and amplitude are intrinsic to speech, that is to say, it is impossible to converse without them, it is perfectly possible to converse without the use of gesture. Consequently, the presence or absence of gesture may in itself be seen as a form of communication. Thus, gesture may be used when a person is interested in the topic he or she is talking about, or to accompany certain parts of speech which a person regards as more important. Similarly, it has been found that people attempting to be persuasive used significantly more gesture than when asked to present a message in a neutral fashion (Mehrabian and Williams, 1969). Conversely, an absence of gesture may indicate a lack of desire to communicate. People suffering from depression were found to use significantly fewer illustrative gestures on admission to hospital than on discharge (Kiritz, 1971; cited in Ekman and Friesen, 1974).

Gesture by its very nature is a form of bodily action and this gives it certain advantages in communication. The appearance of an action can never be as adequately described in words as it can be represented through movement. Thus, gesture may be of particular importance in mimicry or in demonstrating how particular skills should be performed. Because gestures can be reminiscent of other physical actions, they may acquire additional forcefulness as a consequence: a clenched fist may convey anger more effectively than a torrent of words. This may give gesture especial importance in the communication of emotions and interpersonal attitudes.

Not only is gesture a visual form of communication, it is *highly* visible, especially in comparison to, say, facial expression or eye contact. In a study of a birthday party, it was observed how people used gesture as an initial salutation to capture one another's attention before entering into conversation (Kendon and Ferber, 1973). In a study of medical consultations, patients were found to use flamboyant gestures to attract the doctor's attention when it was focussed on his or her notes (Heath, 1986). In this context, gesture has the additional advantage of indirectness as well as visibility, since a direct request for attention from a higher-status figure like a doctor might be seen as some sort of challenge to the doctor's authority. There are also differences in visibility between different forms of gesture. More important aspects of speech can be indicated by larger movements (articulated from the shoulder, or indeed involving both arms), and/or by movements involving more than one part of the body.

This is particularly true of a situation like public speaking. For the orator, gesture has distinct advantages over other forms of nonverbal communication such as facial expression or gaze, which may be less discernible to a distant audience. Politicians at public meetings are well known for the flamboyant use of gesture, hence this seemed a particularly good setting in

which to examine the relationship of hand gestures to speech. Whereas the author's previous research had been based on conversations between students in a social psychology laboratory (e.g. Bull and Connelly, 1985), the aim of this study was to analyse a naturalistic situation where hand gestures might be expected to occur with a high degree of frequency.

Atkinson's theory of rhetoric

The other major influence on the study reported in this chapter was Atkinson's analysis of the rhetorical devices used by politicians to invite audience applause (e.g. Atkinson, 1983, 1984a, 1984b).

Atkinson pointed out that applause is not random; it occurs in response to a relatively narrow range of actions on the part of the speaker, such as advocating the speaker's own political position or attacking the opposition. The timing of applause is also characterised by a high degree of precision: typically it occurs either just before or immediately after a possible completion point by the speaker. Similarly, speakers usually wait until the applause has finished before starting or continuing to speak. In fact, just as conversationalists take it in turns to speak, so do speaker and audience, although audience 'turns' are essentially limited to gross displays of approval or disapproval (such as cheering or heckling). Indeed, as Atkinson points out, if the audience was not restricted in this way, it is hard to imagine how public meetings could ever take place in the ensuing verbal chaos!

The close synchronisation between speech and applause suggests that audience members are not only paying close attention to the speaker but, in addition, must be able to predict possible completion points in advance of their occurrence. If this were not the case, one would expect to find frequent delays between speech and applause, more instances of applause starting in places other than possible completion points and more incidences of isolated or sporadic applause. The fact that audiences seem for the most part to applaud 'on cue' suggests that there must be some system of signals which enables them to recognise where and when applause is appropriate.

Atkinson's critical insight was to propose that it is features in the construction of talk itself which indicate to the audience when to applaud. He argued that audiences are more likely to respond to statements that are constructed in such a way as to both emphasise and highlight the content, and which project a clear completion point for the message in question. Emphasis naturally calls attention to passages to which the speaker attaches particular significance, but Atkinson argues that emphasis alone is rarely sufficient to ensure a response. Projectability is also important, because audience members must decide not only if they will applaud but when to applaud; if the speech is constructed in such a way as to indicate appropriate applause points, this assists the audience in co-ordinating their behaviour. According to Atkinson (1984a, p. 18), the use of rhetorical devices is in the

interest of the audience, because it helps them applaud together rather than risk exposure to public ridicule and humiliation by applauding in isolation.

One of the cues he identified is when a conversation includes a list of three items. In conversation, the completion of a list can signal the completion of an utterance – a point at which another person can or should start talking. Such lists also typically consist of three items, so that once the listener recognises that a list is under way, it is possible to anticipate the completion point and hence the end of the speaker's utterance (Jefferson, 1990). In political speeches, Atkinson proposed that the three-part list may serve a comparable function, but in this case signalling to the audience appropriate places to applaud. For example, Tony Blair (at that time Leader of the Labour Opposition) was duly applauded in his speech to his party's annual conference (1 October, 1996) when he said that 'there is no future for Britain as a low wage, low skills, low technology economy'. He was also applauded for a more famous three-part list in the same speech: 'Ask me my three main priorities for Government, and I tell you: education, education and education.'

Another comparable rhetorical device is the contrast. John Major was duly applauded when he told the Conservative Party conference (11 October, 1996) that 'we are in Europe to help shape it and *not* to be shaped by it'. Contrasts can be used to do a number of things, including boasting about one's own side, attacking the opposition, or doing both things at the same time. To be effective, the second part of the contrast should closely resemble the first in the details of its construction and duration, so that the audience can more easily anticipate the point of completion. If the contrast is too brief, people may have insufficient time to recognise that a completion point is about to be reached, let alone to produce an appropriate response. According to Atkinson, the contrast is by far the most frequently used device for obtaining applause. He also proposed that the skilled use of both contrasts and three-part lists is characteristic of 'charismatic' speakers (Atkinson, 1984a, pp. 86–123), and that such devices are often to be found in those passages of political speeches which are selected for presentation in the news media (Atkinson, 1984a, pp. 124–163).

Given that Atkinson's research was based on the analysis of selected extracts, one possible criticism is that he might have focussed on examples which support his argument but are not necessarily representative of political speech-making as a whole. The only effective answer to this criticism is comprehensive sampling. This was the intention of John Heritage and David Greatbatch (1986), who analysed all the 476 speeches which were televised from the British Conservative, Labour and Liberal Party conferences in 1981 – a truly heroic study! They found that contrasts were associated with no less than 33.2 per cent of the incidences of collective applause during speeches, and lists with 12.6 per cent; hence, almost half the applause occurring during these 476 speeches was associated with the two rhetorical devices originally identified by Atkinson.

Five other rhetorical devices for obtaining applause were identified, referred to as puzzle–solution, headline–punchline, combination, position taking and pursuits (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). In the puzzle–solution device, the speaker begins by establishing some kind of puzzle or problem and then, shortly afterwards, offers the solution; this is the important and applaudable part of the message. The puzzle invites the audience to anticipate or guess at its solution, while at the same time listening carefully to the speaker's own solution when it is delivered. Since the delivery of the solution naturally coincides with the completion of the political message, the audience is normally able to anticipate the point at which applause should properly begin. For example, Paddy Ashdown was applauded for the solution to the puzzle posed in this speech to the annual Liberal Democrat Party Conference (24 September, 1996): 'And here's another Conservative solution to the problems of the Health Service. The Private Finance Initiative – PFI. But what the NHS really needs is a different kind of PFI [PUZZLE]. *Patients First Instead*' [SOLUTION].

The headline–punchline device is structurally similar to the puzzle–solution format, although somewhat simpler. Here, the speaker proposes to make a declaration, pledge or announcement and then proceeds to make it. The applaudable part of the message is emphasised by the speaker's calling attention in advance to what he or she is about to say. Thus, the speaker might use headline phrases such as 'I'll tell you what makes it worthwhile...', 'And I'll say why...', 'And I repeat the promise that I made at the election that...', 'And our number one priority is...' or 'And I can announce to you that...' In the following extract from a speech by Tony Blair to the Labour Party Conference (30 September, 1997), he states '*And I tell you that* [HEADLINE] I will never countenance an NHS that departs from its fundamental principle of health care based on need not wealth' [PUNCHLINE]. The punchline 'need not wealth' also contains a contrast, and is duly applauded.

In position taking, the speaker first describes a state of affairs towards which he or she could be expected to take a strongly evaluative stance. The description itself contains little or no evaluation. However, at the end of the description, the speaker overtly and unequivocally either praises or condemns the state of affairs described. Thus, John Major, in his speech to the Conservative Party Conference (11 October, 1996), is applauded for condemning the following state of affairs: 'I still hear too many stories of politically correct absurdities that prevent children being adopted by loving couples who would give them a good home [STATE OF AFFAIRS]. If that is happening we should stop it' [EVALUATIVE STANCE].

All these devices may be combined with one another, with the result that the completion point of the message is further emphasised. The most common form of combination identified by Heritage and Greatbatch links a contrast with a three-part list. The following extract comes from Tony Blair's speech to the Labour Party Conference (1 October, 1996) in which

both a contrast (A2, B2) and a three-part list (1, 2, 3) are 'nested' in another contrast (A1, B1):

> (A1) It is sometimes said you know that the Tories are (A2) cruel but they're (B2) efficient.
> (B1) in fact they're the most (1) feckless, (2) irresponsible, (3) incompetent managers of the British economy in this country's history.

If an audience fails to respond to a particular message, speakers may actively pursue applause. A common method of doing so is to recomplete the previous point, as in the following speech by John Major to the Conservative Party Conference (11 October, 1996): 'New Labour, no new services in Glossop or elsewhere. In the most important part of a health service the family doctor's surgery *that's what New Labour would mean.*' John Major failed to receive applause after the contrast 'New Labour no new services in Glossop or elsewhere', consequently he reiterated the point in a slightly different way.

In the 476 speeches analysed by Heritage and Greatbatch (1986), more than two-thirds of the collective applause was associated with these seven rhetorical devices. Most effective were contrasts and lists, the two devices originally identified by Atkinson as significant in inviting applause. Thus, the results of this comprehensive survey of political speeches provided impressive support for Atkinson's original observations. It demonstrated what is, in effect, a strong positive correlation between rhetorical devices and collective applause.

An obvious objection to this whole analysis is that audiences do not simply applaud rhetoric, they also respond to the content of a political speech. This point is readily acknowledged by Atkinson, Heritage and Greatbatch, but they also propose that audiences are much *more* likely to applaud if content is expressed through an appropriate rhetorical device. For example, in an analysis of two debates at the Conservative and Labour Party conferences, Heritage and Greatbatch looked at one particular class of statements the audience might be expected to applaud, referred to as 'external attacks'. These are statements critical of outgroups such as other political parties, which should evoke unambiguous agreement amongst party conference participants. Whereas 71 per cent of external attacks expressed through one of the seven rhetorical devices were applauded, only 29 per cent of external attacks received applause in the absence of rhetorical devices.

In another such analysis, Heritage and Greatbatch looked at political debates characterised by strongly defined majority and minority positions. Two debates were singled out for this investigation: the economic policy debate at the Conservative Party Conference and the defence debate at the Labour Party Conference. In the former, there was a clear consensus in favour of right-wing, Thatcherite policies; in the latter, there was an over-

whelming sentiment in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. It was found that most of the applauded statements were couched in one or more of the seven rhetorical devices identified by Heritage and Greatbatch (76.3 per cent of the pro-majority statements and 90 per cent of the pro-minority statements). Overall, the pro-majority position was applauded nine times as often as the minority one. While Heritage and Greatbatch acknowledge that applause is clearly related to certain types of speech content, they argue that the chance of that content being applauded is greatly increased if it is expressed in an appropriate rhetorical device.

Applause can also be affected by the speaker's intonation, timing and gesture. The manner in which a message is delivered may strongly complement and reinforce its rhetorical structure, providing further information to the audience that this is a point where applause would be appropriate (Atkinson, 1984a). A sample of speeches formulated in one of the seven basic rhetorical devices was coded in terms of the degree of 'stress' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). Stress was evaluated in terms of whether the speaker was gazing at the audience at or near the completion point of the message, whether the message was delivered more loudly than surrounding speech passages, or with greater pitch or stress variation, or with some kind of rhythmic shift or accompanied by the use of gestures. In the absence of any of these features, the message was coded 'no stress'. One of these features was treated as sufficient for a coding of 'intermediate stress', while the presence of two or more features was categorised as 'full stress'. Over one half of the 'fully stressed' messages were applauded, only one quarter of the 'intermediate' messages attracted a similar response and this figure fell to less than 5 per cent in the case of the 'unstressed' messages. Thus, the manner in which a message is delivered would seem to play a substantial role in influencing audience applause.

From a comprehensive sampling of political speeches, Heritage and Greatbatch provided impressive support in favour of the role of rhetorical devices in inviting applause. Their analysis of the effects of vocal and nonverbal stress also show that delivery is important. But the demands of sampling a large number of speeches means that it is not possible to provide a detailed examination of the way in which vocal and nonverbal features of stress are organised in relation to speech. The alternative is to adopt a case-study approach. This forms the basis of the study to be reported in this chapter, in which three speeches were examined in considerable detail.

Hypotheses of the study

In the analysis of these three speeches, a number of hypotheses were tested concerning the role of hand gestures. These hypotheses were based both on the author's previous research on body movement and speech (Bull and Connelly, 1985) and on Atkinson's theory of rhetoric:

1 a prime function of hand gestures will be to pick out important elements of the politician's speech. This was tested by investigating what proportion of a speaker's hand gestures were synchronised with vocal stress.
2 hand gestures may also serve to pick out phonemic clauses (often referred to as 'tone groups'). This was assessed by investigating to what extent hand gestures coincide with the duration of tone groups.
3 hand gestures will also be related to rhetorical devices used to invite applause.

Method

Speeches

A video-recording was made by the author of a Labour Party rally which took place in St George's Hall, Bradford, West Yorkshire, on 28 May during the General Election campaign of 1983. Three speeches were selected for analysis; the speakers and the duration of their speeches are listed below:

Martin Leathley (Labour Party Parliamentary candidate, Shipley, West Yorkshire)	5 minutes 8 seconds
Arthur Scargill (President, National Union of Mineworkers)	22 minutes 48 seconds
Pat Wall (Labour Party Parliamentary candidate, Bradford North, West Yorkshire)	4 minutes 37 seconds

At the time of the General Election, Martin Leathley was a schoolteacher and a local councillor, contesting a safe Conservative seat with a substantial majority. Pat Wall had something of a national reputation both as a public speaker and as a consequence of his association with Militant Tendency, a left-wing group in the Labour Party. Neither of these candidates were returned to Parliament in the 1983 General Election. The third speech selected for analysis was by Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers. Scargill first came to national prominence as a result of his involvement in the miners' strikes of 1973 and 1974; he also has a reputation as a highly effective public speaker.

Thus, the three speeches could be seen as representing a continuum: one speaker (Scargill) a national figure with a good reputation for oratory; the second speaker (Wall) less well known, but with something of a national reputation; the third speaker (Leathley) a local councillor unknown in the national political context. All the speakers delivered their

speeches from the rostrum, and all could be seen to be speaking from notes.

Apparatus

A portable colour video camera mounted on a tripod was used to record the political rally.

Procedure

The political rally was video-recorded with the full consent of the meeting organisers. Care was taken to provide a continuous head and shoulders picture of each speaker so that his hand gestures were always in view of the camera.

Intonation (in terms of both vocal stress and tone group boundaries) was transcribed by a trained phonetician. A reliability check carried out independently by another phonetician on the speech by Pat Wall showed 85 per cent agreement on both vocal stress and tone group boundaries.

Hand gesture was transcribed by the author using the Body Movement Scoring System (Bull, 1987). This system is intended to enable the investigator to describe in detail the visual appearance of body movements. It takes as its basic unit of analysis the single movement act; hence, the system describes gestures as a series of movements rather than as a series of positions. A basic distinction is made between those movements which involve contact with an object or part of the body and those which do not involve any such contact. Body-contact and object-contact acts are described in terms of the way the contact is made (e.g. touching, grasping, scratching), the part of the body which makes the contact and the object or part of the body with which the contact is made. Non-contact acts are described in terms of the various movements which are possible from each of the major joints of the body – in the case of hand/arm movements, from the shoulder, elbow, wrist and finger joints. For example, the forearm can flex, extend, rotate inwards and rotate outwards; these movements can also be performed in combination with one another. Reliability for scoring hand/arm movements was satisfactorily demonstrated in a previous study (Bull and Connelly, 1985) with a k coefficient of 0.81 (Cohen, 1960) between two independent scorers.

A content analysis was carried out on the speech by Arthur Scargill to identify the seven rhetorical devices described by Heritage and Greatbatch as effective in inviting applause. In addition, the speech was classified into different speech acts, following principles for content analysis devised by Thomas *et al.* (1982) in a system called Conversation Exchange Analysis (CEA). In this system, speech is segmented into separate acts, each of which can be seen to represent a single thought or idea. Acts can be further classified along three dimensions: activity, type and focus. The *type* dimension

was used in this study to categorise the type of information conveyed in the speech by Arthur Scargill; the categories employed were based on CEA and on the work of Atkinson, Heritage and Greatbatch. A high degree of reliability for CEA has been demonstrated in a previous study: the division into speech acts was achieved with just 3.93 per cent inter-observer disagreement, while a *k* coefficient (Cohen, 1960) of 0.957 was obtained for the type dimension (Thomas *et al.*, 1982).

The type categories are listed individually below; since a speech act may serve more than one communicative function, these categories were sometimes used in combination with one another:

External attack:	criticisms of other political parties and other external groups.
Internal attack:	criticisms of individuals or factions within the speaker's own party.
Implicit attack:	a statement which can be construed as an attack on another individual or group, although the attack is not explicit.
Positive advocacy:	advocates particular political policies.
Commendation:	commends particular individuals or groups.
Naming:	names particular individuals or groups without commendation.
Address:	addresses the chairman or the audience.
Metastatement:	statements which comment on the nature of the speech.
Personal experience:	refers to past and present experiences of the speaker.
Reply to heckling:	speaker responds to heckling from the audience.

Results and discussion

Hand gesture and intonation

The speeches by Martin Leathley and Pat Wall were transcribed to investigate the relationship between hand gestures and intonation. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 2.1.

In this table, a hand gesture is defined as a single act; this might involve movement from more than one point of articulation, e.g. from the shoulder and the elbow. Where a movement is repeated on a number of occasions, e.g. flexes and extends forearm (five times), this would be scored as five movements. Bilateral gestures are scored as two separate movements; hence, it is possible for two gestures to be related to a single incidence of vocal stress.

The results for both speakers showed that a substantial proportion of their hand gestures were directly related to intonation, in the sense that the movement was timed to occur at the same time as the vocal stress. But not

Table 2.1 Relationship between hand gesture and vocal stress

	Pat Wall (incidences (%))	*Martin Leathley (incidences (%))*
Vocal stresses accompanied by gesture	74 ($N = 293$)	36 ($N = 354$)
Gestures directly related to stress	65.5 ($N = 362$)	49 ($N = 266$)
Gestures indirectly related to stress:		
(a) Preparatory gestures	3	2
(b) Terminating gestures	9	1
(c) Misplaced gestures in a repeated sequence	10	7
Gestures unrelated to stress	10.5	40
Unscoreable because speech is lost in applause	2	1

all the remaining hand gestures can be dismissed as unrelated to vocal stress. Some can be regarded as preparatory movements, in which, for example, the speaker flexes his forearm before bringing it down to coincide with the stressed word. Other movements can be seen to terminate a clause, where the speaker extends his forearm after a sequence of stress-related movements. A third category consists of movements in a repeated sequence of gestures, where the apex of the movement does not always coincide with the vocal stress; for example, in a sequence of five repeated forearm movements, two may not actually coincide directly with the vocal stress. If gestures indirectly related to vocal stress are included in the total of stress-related movements, the proportion rises to 87.5 per cent for Pat Wall and 59 per cent for Martin Leathley.

In fact, only 10.5 per cent of Pat Wall's hand gestures could be said to be totally unrelated to vocal stress; these comprised mainly contact hand gestures in which Pat Wall shifted his hand on the rostrum (10 per cent of all hand movements). He used only two non-contact gestures (out of 283) which appeared to have no relation to vocal stress: in one of these movements, Pat Wall raised his hands to quell the applause from his audience; the other movement appeared to be a mistake, in which he pointed without saying something, but as if he was going to speak. In the case of Martin Leathley, 40 per cent of his hand gestures appeared to be totally unrelated to vocal stress. Again, these were mainly contact gestures, in which Martin Leathley shifted his hand on the rostrum (30 per cent of all hand movements); but there were also a number of non-contact movements ($N = 25$, 9 per cent of all hand movements), as well as a couple of movements in which Leathley turned over his notes. However, the majority of his non-contact gestures were related directly or indirectly to vocal stress (83 per cent of all non-contact hand gestures; $N = 145$).

In both speeches, hand gestures were most commonly related to vocal stress through what were termed 'multiple apex peaks' (Bull and Connelly,

1985). These take the form of a repeated movement, such as flexing and extending the forearm, which can be repeated continuously for two or more occasions, often coinciding with the vocally stressed words. In Pat Wall's speech, 56 of these multiple apex peaks were observed, *none* of which crossed tone group boundaries, i.e. the total length of the gestural sequence occurred within the duration of the tone group. Similarly, in Martin Leathley's speech, there were 15 multiple apex peaks, again none of which violated tone group boundaries. Hence, these multiple apex peaks seemed to serve a dual function: they both picked out stressed words, and demarcated the extent of the tone group. Overall, the majority of hand movements of both speakers were related directly or indirectly to vocal stress; hand movements not related to stress typically took the form of contact movements, where the speaker adjusted the position of his hand on the rostrum.

Hand gestures and the control of applause

From the content analysis of the speech by Arthur Scargill, 25 rhetorical devices were identified. Applause was categorised into collective and isolated applause: collective applause referred to clapping from a substantial proportion of the audience, whereas isolated applause referred to claps from just one or two people. The importance of this distinction is that if rhetorical devices are effective applause invitations, then they should be associated with collective rather than isolated applause. The results showed two-thirds of the instances of collective applause were associated with rhetorical devices (22/33), whereas only two instances of isolated applause (out of a total of 18) occurred in response to rhetorical devices. Thus, rhetorical devices were much more likely to be associated with collective than isolated applause.

Nevertheless, it could still be argued that audience applause occurs in response to the content rather than the form of political speeches. Thus, a further content analysis was carried out of the types of statement used by Arthur Scargill in his speech. The results for collective applause are shown in Table 2.2, for isolated applause in Table 2.3.

These results clearly showed the value of rhetorical devices in inviting applause. A large proportion of Arthur Scargill's speech was made up of external attacks (58 per cent of the total number of speech acts): 86 per cent of rhetorically formatted external attacks received collective applause, in contrast to only 13 per cent of non-rhetorically formatted external attacks. All of the other types of speech act which received collective applause were applauded more when presented in rhetorical devices, with the exception only of replies to heckling (of which there were only three examples in the whole speech). In contrast, isolated applause occurred more frequently in response to speech acts which did not use rhetorical devices, again with the exception only of replies to heckling.

An analysis was then conducted of Arthur Scargill's use of hand gestures

Table 2.2 Collective applause in Arthur Scargill's speech in relation to speech content

Content category	*Rhetorical devices**	
	Present	*Absent*
External attacks	86 (7)	13 (91)
Positive advocacy	100 (2)	0 (4)
Positive advocacy/external attack	100 (6)	33 (3)
Implicit attack	67 (3)	0 (6)
Commendation	100 (2)	50 (2)
Internal attack/commendation	100 (1)	(0)
Reply to heckling	0 (1)	100 (2)
Naming	(0)	0 (2)
Address	(0)	0 (2)
Metastatement	(0)	0 (1)
Personal experience	(0)	0 (34)

Note
*The figures given are the percentages of speech acts in each category which received collective applause. Figures in brackets represent the total number of observations in each speech category.

Table 2.3 Isolated applause in Arthur Scargill's speech in relation to speech content

Content category	*Rhetorical devices**	
	Present	*Absent*
External attacks	14 (7)	15 (91)
Positive advocacy	0 (2)	25 (4)
Positive advocacy/external attack	0 (6)	0 (3)
Implicit attack	0 (3)	0 (6)
Commendation	0 (2)	50 (2)
Internal attack/commendation	0 (1)	(0)
Reply to heckling	100 (1)	0 (2)
Naming	(0)	100 (2)
Address	(0)	0 (2)
Metastatement	(0)	0 (1)
Personal experience	(0)	0 (34)

Note
*The figures given are the percentages of speech acts in each category which received isolated applause. Figures in brackets represent the total number of observations in each speech category.

in relation to rhetorical devices. The three most commonly occurring devices in the speech were contrasts, three-part lists and headline–punchlines. (NB It should be noted that rhetorical devices are sometimes used in combination with one another; for example, the second part of a contrast might take the form of a three-part list. In the preceding analysis of rhetorical devices in relation to applause, such a combination would be regarded as part of one rhetorical device; but in the ensuing analysis of gesture, this would be treated as an example of both a contrast and a three-

part list. Hence, the number of examples in the gesture analysis comes to more than the 25 rhetorical devices discussed above, p. 38).

Of the ten contrasts which occurred during the course of the speech, eight were followed by collective applause, one by isolated applause. In the case of contrasts, Arthur Scargill made use of a particularly interesting device, that of ambidextrous gesturing. In eight out of the ten contrasts, he illustrated one part of the contrast with one hand, the other part of the contrast with the other hand. However, this should not be seen as a device which is simply confined to illustrating contrasts. Switching from one hand to the other is a characteristic feature of Arthur Scargill's speaking style; in fact, in this speech it occurred on no less than 80 occasions. Contrasts typically involve a transition from one syntactic clause to another (eight out of the ten contrasts in this speech), and an examination of the speech as a whole showed that 62.5 per cent of the hand switches occurred at clause boundaries. The other incidences of hand switching also occurred at syntactic boundaries: at the end of a prepositional phrase (12.5%), at a subject/verb boundary (5%), at a verb/object boundary (5%) and to separate items in a list (14%). Thus, it seems that the use of ambidextrous gesturing to illustrate contrasts is merely a special example of the way in which Arthur Scargill seemed to use this device to mark out syntax.

During the course of the speech, there were also nine three-part lists, six of which were followed by collective applause, one by isolated applause. The three items in a list were also marked out by carefully synchronised gestures. Where a three-part list comprised three words, each was stressed vocally and accompanied by a single hand gesture. Where a three-part list included a phrase or a clause with more than one vocal stress, then a repeated hand movement was typically employed, picking out two or more vocal stresses and terminating at the end of the list item; a new gesture would then start on the next item. Scargill typically used non-contact gestures in the form of single or multiple apex peaks to pick out words, phrases or clauses, but on one occasion he actually smacked one hand on the other on each of the stressed words in the three phrases which made up the list.

The headline–punchline device was used on seven occasions, and each time it was greeted with collective applause. On three occasions, the final part of the punchline was delivered with a gesture using both hands. Although bilateral gestures occurred frequently throughout the speech, they are only used on one other occasion in conjunction with a rhetorical device. In association with a punchline, they seemed to have the effect of bringing the message to a climax, highlighting that here was an appropriate point for the audience to applaud.

If Scargill's hand gesture were closely intertwined with rhetorical devices which invite applause, they also played a significant role in the way in which he attempted to control applause. Where incidences of isolated applause occurred ($N = 18$), he consistently talked through them; on four of these occasions, he also held up his hand to suppress the applause, either with a

hand or a finger outstretched. Collective applause was often interruptive, the audience starting to applaud before Scargill had finished his sentence (21/33 instances of collective applause). Nevertheless, he still continued to speak into the applause, even though on a number of occasions he became completely inaudible (9/21 interruptions). In every instance of collective applause, he started speaking before the applause ended (except of course in the final ovation!). Typically, he would resume speaking as the applause tailed off (18/33 instances), but sometimes he attempted to interrupt after a brief pause (11/33), and on three occasions he simply continued talking. On eight occasions, he gestured to stop the applause, typically with hand/hands outstretched.

Further analysis was carried out of the points in the speech where these 12 applause-suppressing gestures occurred. On four occasions, they occurred at the end of a long burst of collective applause, presumably because Arthur Scargill simply wished to continue with his speech. However, on the other eight occasions, these gestures occurred just before a point in the speech where applause might be considered more appropriate, typically when Arthur Scargill was about to invite applause through one of the rhetorical devices discussed above (p. 40).

Thus, Arthur Scargill created the impression of overwhelming popularity, continually struggling to make his message audible, both by speaking into the applause and by using gestures to restrain it. At the same time, he whipped up applause by using rhetorical devices, the structure of which was articulated by the carefully synchronised use of hand gestures. These gestures singled out pairs of statements in a contrast, picked out the items in three-part lists and highlighted climaxes. In fact, Arthur Scargill actually seemed to conduct his audience: his gestures not only accompanied rhetorical devices which invited applause, but also curtailed the applause once it had been invited – even to the extent of indicating points at which applause was or was not appropriate.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the functions of gesture in political speeches. The results showed that gesture was related both to intonation (in terms of vocal stress and tone group boundaries). It was also shown how hand gesture was used both to articulate the structure of rhetorical devices and to control applause. As such, this study added to the research literature demonstrating a close relationship between body movement and speech.

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