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THE ROLE OF EXPLICIT STANCE ATTRIBUTION IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis Communication

Crisis Communication (CC) is a discipline that is a rapidly growing independent offshoot of Public Relations which deals with the complex phenomenon of *crisis* and the intricacies of *crisis response*.

There were two events, both in the 1980s, which set the stage for the development of the field. First, the Johnson & Johnson Tylenol case whose "image rescue project was quickly judged by most commentators as an unqualified success" (Heath 2010: 4) and the other, an extreme end on a scale of success, the Exxon Valdez oil spills case which "had become, in the minds of experts, a paradigm for how not to handle a corporate crisis" (Berg & Robb 1992: 97). Up to and including these landmark cases, organizations and companies handled their crises as best they could, without crisis management or crisis communication plans (Fearn-Banks 2011: 90).

First and foremost, CC should be seen in a wider context of Crisis Management where it has taken its direct roots. The roots of Crisis Management, in turn, reside in Emergency and Disaster Management (Coombs 2010). Thus understood, CC originated from a broad field of Public Relations. It was as early as 1923 that Edward Bernays who is widely regarded as the "father" of modern public relations, asserted in his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* that corporations could no longer ignore the existence or effects of public opinion (Barton 1993). Seventy years later, in the introductory chapter of *The Handbook of Public Relations and Communications*, Philip Lesly called public relations "a phenomenon and a necessity of our times" (1991: 4), which due to high incidence of various crises, can nowadays be said about Crisis Communication.

Crisis Communication has been subdivided into: *pre-crisis*, *crisis* and *post-crisis*, which reflects the fact that any crisis occurs in stages. One of the first to make the observation about a stage-character of crisis, was Steven Fink who in 1986 published his seminal work in crisis management entitled *Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable.* As his model did not earn much recognition, over years new models emerged, among which the aforementioned three-stage model first propounded by Coombs (2007), has now been enjoying most popularity.

In the *crisis (response) phase,* which is the focus of attention in this analysis, all efforts are concentrated on how and what the organization communicates during a crisis. Until recently, research into crisis response focused on how to protect an organization or reduce the damage that is caused by a crisis episode (Fediuk et al. 2010). Recently, with a growing recognition of crisis response as persuasive communication, new approaches seek to help researchers shift from a sender-based understanding of crisis to an impact-oriented one, which provides understanding of the effects that crisis messages have on perceptions and behaviours of stakeholders, i.e. any group of people who can affect or be affected by the behavior of an organization (Agle et al. 1999; Bryson 2004).

Evaluative language

The study of evaluation may appear a daunting task due to two reasons, the complexity of the phenomenon as such, and a variety of independent approaches and thus a multitude of terminologies used in the area of evaluation. This stems from the fact that the analysis of the evaluative language can be done along several different parameters (Thompson & Hunston 2000).

The number of different terms notwithstanding, two major distinctions can be made. The first and the most fundamental one, concerns the perspective from which language of opinion is approached. Within this perspective the analysis may focus either on language items (Lyons 1977), or on the language users (Ochs 1989; Besnier 1993; Halliday 1994).

The other, is the distinction which can be made within the approaches favouring language user perspective and it concerns two types of opinion the speakers express. Roughly speaking, it boils down to good/bad (attitudinal meaning) vs certain/uncertain (modality). As Thompson and Hunston (2000) observe, the linguists tend to either emphasize the differences, i.e. give each type a separate label and analyse them in the main as separate phenomena ('separating' approach) or conversely, emphasize the similarities, include both attitudinal meaning and modality under a single label and analyse them at least partly, if not chiefly, as aspects of the same phenomenon ('combining' approach). Among such 'combining' approaches to evaluative language is that of Biber and Finegan (1989), Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan (1999), and Conrad and Biber (2000). They examine the language of evaluation/ opinion through the perspective of *stance.*

Grammatical marking of stance

Although Biber et al. (1999) appreciate the fact that people express stance meanings in a variety of ways including *grammatical*, *lexical*, and *paralinguistic,* their approach seeks to explore the *grammatical stance marking* as a three-dimensional phenomenon, i.e. 1) structural, 2) semantic and, 3) that of attribution of stance.

Therefore, the first dimension focuses on various types of structures that are used to express stance. Those structures (grammatical stance marking devices) have been grouped into five sets: 1) Stance adverbials, 2) Stance complement *that*- and *to*- clauses, 3) Modals and semi-modals, 4) Stance noun+ prepositional phrase, and finally 5) Premodifying stance adverb (stance adverb+ adjective/ another adverb/ numeral.

The other dimension in stance is concerned with the three major semantic distinctions between the *epistemic*, *attitudinal* and *style of speaking* stance. This level of analysis is likely to reveal a wide range of personal meanings, expressed by the speakers, spanning both the speakers' comments on the status of the information in a proposition, i.e. certainty (doubt), actuality, precision, or limitations, and strictly attitudinal meanings, as well as some information concerning style of speaking (Biber et al. 1999).

Finally, the approach provides structural patterns of looking into the attribution of stance and singles out three types of it: *explicit*, *implicit*, and *ambiguous* attribution of stance. Therefore, it may benefit the analysis in terms of speaker-audience/ *self-other(s)* relations (Terkourafi 2005). Communicating *stance* and in particular, attribution of stance invariably involves presenting/ revealing *self* and its relation to the audience- *other(s)*. It is so since as Fahnestock (2011: 279) argues, attitudes and bids for alignment are encoded in every language choice, and the speaker's presence and his/her relation with the audience(s) are the indelible ground of all discourse. Probing that ground can best be done in English through examining the use of first, second and third person pronouns. Roughly speaking, there are three possible interactive dimensions between the speaker and audience(s): from above, across, or below. In other words, the speaker can talk to the audience from the position of superiority, equality or inferiority.

Explicit stance attribution

To ascertain the force of any stance marking device, one needs to take into consideration the issue of whose stance is represented by a given stance marker. This brings us to the issue of stance attribution and the systematic relations between the grammatical form chosen for stance markers and the extent to which stance is attributed to the text producer (Biber et al. 1999: 976). Apart from *implicit* and *ambiguous* stance attribution, which are beyond the scope of this article, the speakers may overtly attribute stance to themselves, or to a third party.

The grammatical forms that make the attribution of stance explicit include the following:

a comment clauses, e.g. *I got lots of them*, [*I think*].*[1]

b *I*+ verb+ complement clause, e.g. [*I*] [*know*] [*that the whole House will agree with me that* (...)]

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[1] All examples are taken from corpus unless marked with (*). In this article, square brackets [ ] have been used for highlighting.

c *I+ be+* adjective+ complement clause, e.g. [*I*] [*am*] [*convinced*] [*they are the right thing to do*].

d It+ verb/ adjective+ *me+* extraposed complement clause, e.g. [*It*] [*amazes*] [*me*] [*that they can just stand on the street*].*

e My+ noun+ complement clause, e.g. *Earlier on this afternoon I informed the Home Secretary,* (...) [*my*] [*intention*] [*to resign as Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service*] (Biber et al. 1999: 976).

All the above structures can be used with a first person plural pronoun, third person pronouns, or full noun phrases, to show that stance is attributed explicitly to a third party, rather than to the speaker.

Analysis: The role of explicit attribution of stance in crisis response

The systematic relations between the grammatical form chosen for a stance marker and the extent to which stance is attributed to the speaker has been discussed in the above section. The following section is going to examine the linguistic variants of explicit stance attribution (to the speaker, or to a third party), and issues related to how it influences the discourse of crisis response.

Therefore, first the analysis will show how the use of the first person singular pronoun *I* intertwines with the first person plural *we* or occasionally, *you* for that matter, and how it influences stance attribution process. Then, the analysis will focus on noun phrases called *institutional metaphors* (Lerman 1985), e.g. *But* [*the News of the World and News International*] *failed to get to the bottom of repeated wrongdoing that occurred without conscience or legitimate purpose*, and other noun phrases which are used to explicitly attribute stance to the party other than the speaker, and what effect it has on the crisis response discourse. Finally, some attention is going to be given to the use of third person singular and plural pronouns and how they are used for stance attribution.

First and foremost, stance is most overtly attributed to the speaker by means of all structures with first person singular pronoun *I* and its possessive and objective variants *my*, and *me,* which leaves no doubt as to whose stance is being expressed, e.g. (...) *I have with great sadness informed both of* [*my*] [*intention*] [*to resign*]*. Moreover, according to Biber et al. (1999) all the structures with first person plural pronoun *we* (with its possessive and objective variants) are on a par with first person singular *I* in that he claims that they show that the expression of stance is in both cases attributed to the speaker. I would like to argue that in case of crisis communication where the speakers quite frequently tend to avoid responsibility and apportion blame among other parties, *we* cannot be treated as automatically marking the speaker's stance, although it certainly does to a point. In many cases, which the analysis will show, first person plural pronoun *we* is an escape route which allows the speaker to downplay his/her own presence among the pronoun *we* referents. Therefore, although the *we*- constructions are classified as explicitly attributing stance, they are going to be given particular attention in the analysis.

Explicit stance attribution: personal pronoun *we*

The aforementioned claim seems tenable when the referents of *we* are unambiguously present to the audience's perception (e.g. by means of anaphoric/ cataphoric reference), as in the passage from [s7] [*My son and I*] *have come here with great respect for all of you, for Parliament and for the people of Britain whom you represent. This is the most humble day of my career. After all that has happened,* [*I know*] [*we need to*] *be here today,* or another one from [s8] *There will be a certain amount of uncertainty in the coming days, but* [*we*] [*should*] *all be clear that,* [*as Dow Jones journalists*], [*we owe*] *Les an enormous and irredeemable debt.* In both examples there is no doubt as to who else, apart from the speaker, should be attributed stance marked in the above sentences. Similarly, the speaker in the passage from [s13] makes the referents of the pronoun *we* unambiguous when he is saying the following: *Last night* [*the Deputy Prime Minister*] *and* [*I*] *met with* [*the Leader of the Opposition*]. *And* [*I*] *also met with* [*the Chairs of the Culture Media and Sport, Home Affairs, and Justice Select Committees*] *to discuss the best way forward. Following these consultations,* [*I*] *want to set out today how* [*we intend*] [*to proceed*]. Stance expressed by the verb *intend* which controls the *to-* complement clause that follows, can infallibly be attributed to the people who have been listed in the sentences preceding the last one, and referred to as *we*.

The above passage is immediately preceded by the following one: [s2] *Mr Speaker,* [*we*] *all* [*want*] *the same thing: press, police and politicians that serve the public.* Here, it is ambiguous whose stance is being conveyed by means of the stance verb *want* in *we all want.* The determiner *all* (in post position) is only apparently helpful as its scope is broad enough to include: people in the world, people in Europe, people in the UK, the Members of Parliament, the British government, the audience, to name just a few. Even if the speaker narrows down the group of people denoted by the pronoun *we* as in the example to follow, it still remains ambiguous, especially in *sensitive* discourses such as that of crisis response where the circumstances require precise apportioning of blame for the events in order to commence the repair process. Therefore, when the speaker is saying: [s9] [*We*] [*the Met*] *cannot afford this – not this year*, he is trying to justify his decision to step down as Metropolitan Police Commissioner with the well-being of the institution he leads rather than his own, which reflects itself in the pronoun used. Similarly, in the following example stance is apparently explicitly attributed to the group of people inclusive of the speaker but only vaguely defined, as in [s15] *Operation Elveden and Lord Justice Leveson's inquiry are charged with doing just that, but* [*I*] *believe that* [*we*] *can and must do more.* There are numerous cases of *apparently* explicit attribution of stance caused by the ambiguous reference of the pronoun *we.* This fact reflects what Lerman (1985) calls the problem of dual identity which is present in the speech of all public figures, whose *I* is fused with a public role and addressed to a mass audience, or, in other words, it reflects "the discourse of the *Institutional Voice*, the discourse of one who speaks in a dual role, as an individual, who also represents (as the journalists do) or personifies (as the President may) an institution" (Lerman 1985: 185). She further claims that the inherent paradoxes of

what she dubs *Institutional identity* (1983) "are most apparent in non-trivial and public discourse, in which serious propositions are asserted for which the speaker is not responsible, or whose propositional structure creates a level of ambiguity which defies logical analysis" (Lerman 1985: 185). Actually, all the speakers in both sub-corpora represent *institutional identity*, which is however, more pronounced in C2 due to the nature of the statements (section 5). In C1, as it includes resignation statements, *an individual* is apparently more enhanced than *an institutional identity.* With this in mind, it would be quite a challenge to maintain the claim concerning the explicitness of stance attribution in cases like these above.

Most intriguing however, and fairly numerous across the statements are cases where stance is unambiguously attributed to the speaker but the subject(s) of the proposition(s) framed by that stance and expressed by means of the first person plural *we*, has/ have got ambiguous reference, e.g. [s9] *However, as Commissioner* [*I*] *carry ultimate responsibility for the position* [*we*] *find ourselves in. With hindsight,* [*I wish*] [*we*] [*had judged some matters involved in this affair differently*]. [*I*] *didn't and that's it,* or another one from [s12] *So, just as* [*I acknowledge*] [*we have made mistakes*], [*I hope*] *you and everyone inside and outside the Company will acknowledge that* [*we are doing our utmost to fix them, atone for them, and make sure they never happen again*], and yet another passage from [s14] [*I wish*] [*we had managed to see and fully solve these problems earlier*]. In each case above the speaker explicitly attributes stance to himself (*I wish*, *I acknowledge*, *I hope*, *I wish*) but dilutes his own participation in the activity expressed by the verb in the proposition framed by stance, by means of the pronoun *we* (*we had judged*, *we have made mistakes*, *we had managed to see*). The plural pronoun seems to shelter the speaker and not expose himself, esp. that in most cases the proposition concerns the crisis events. Furthermore, in many cases, the speakers introduce a different set of referents each time they make use of the first person plural *we*. Additionally, the examples above reveal the speakers' consistent tendency to alternate their use of the first person singular and plural pronouns for self-reference. The reason for that is that the speaker wishes to achieve certain communicative goals by conveying different persuasive messages to different people at the same time but "[p]roducing coherent statements in such situations is only possible by using various forms of indirectness or vagueness because different groups of the audience may have dissimilar (and even contradictory) wants" (Grubner 1993: 3).

Another issue that arises in connection with the use of the first person plural *we* is *clusivity* and how it is handled by the speakers in building their relationship with the audiences. In its regular use, the pronoun should be interpreted as "I in addition to one or more other persons" Lyons (1968); and the other persons may or may not include the hearer. If the set of *other persons* does include the reference to the hearer, it is customary to talk about an *inclusive* use of the pronoun *we*, if it does not, then the term *exclusive* is employed. Hence, *we* is not "the plural of *I*': rather, it includes a reference to *I* and is plural" (Lyons 1968: 277).

The speakers tend to juggle with inclusive and exclusive *we* at will, depending on which serves their communicative purposes better, which becomes evident when one studies longer passages from the statements of particular speakers.

A good example might be [s3] who uses self-reference first person singular pronoun *I* to commence his statement [s12], which might suggest that he wants to signal to his audience(s) that he represents himself as an individual and presents his own subjective position. Moreover, it may be indicative of his wish to be separated from Other(s) whom he later brings to the discourse. Nonetheless, right in the same sentence he fights shy of *I* and breaks into a run of *we*. In terms of pronoun use, this is the tendency that prevails throughout his statement. When the speaker is saying (...) *and the steps* [*we*] *are taking to address* (...), he uses exclusive *we* (Lyons 1968), which has the effect of distancing himself from his audience but more importantly, enables him to melt into the group and dissolve his responsibility for the crisis. Torode (1976) refers to such use of *we* as a *transcendental voice* and suggests that the implication is that the decisions will be taken elsewhere and at another time. In case of [s12] quoted above, the implication might be that the steps are being taken somewhere else and in a broadly understood presence. When the speaker is saying *the steps* [*we*] *are taking,* he conjures up the idea of a group of people currently not on the scene whose deliberations will decide the matter, and for which the speaker is not fully responsible (Harré 1985: 138). Following Torode (1976), Harré (1985: 138) sharply contrasts the use of *we* as a *transcendental voice* with the *royal we*, in which the speaker is appearing as the embodiment of the collective will. It is the user of the *royal we* who makes the decision there and then, and as such can be addressed. The difference is that the decision once made is announced with the majesty of the one who is the sovereign, the embodiment of people, and not with the feeble authority of the human individual. Apparently, there is no clear clue as to who else, apart from the speaker, *we* in [s12] encompasses. Most probably, they are the powerful at the News International. The exclusive use of the first person plural in [s12] becomes even more intriguing inasmuch as it seems to contradict the speaker's intentions expressed in the beginning of his statement, when he is addressing his audience with the following words: [*you as colleagues*] *at the News of the World.* If the speaker were consistent in the way he uses first person plural *we*, this kind of address, would only strengthen inclusiveness of the previous *we.* On the other hand, if *we* were inclusive, the speaker would not need to inform the audience about *the steps being taken*, they would be well-informed as part of the team but they are not. Moreover, the next *we*, as in [*We*] *now have voluntarily given evidence to the police that I believe will prove that this was untrue and those who acted wrongly will have to face the consequences* is most probably exclusive.

The same tendency to form close alignments with the audience(s) by means of inclusive *we*, can be traced in the statements of other speakers as well. The only difference being their treatment of the plural pronoun *we*. Unlike other speakers, [S4] does not constantly alternate her use of the first person singular and plural pronouns. Instead, she uses the inclusive *we* to create a strong sense of community with her audience in the beginning of her statement when she is saying [*we*] *pride ourselves on*, *the reputation of the company* [*we*] *love so much*, *the press freedoms* [*we*] *value,* and later on consequently sticks to the first person singular pronoun *I*. Nonetheless, it is not only the spirit of community that the speaker wants to feed with the inclusive *we*, but in the same breath she is saying [*I*] *feel a deep sense of*

responsibility for the people [*we*] *have hurt and I want to reiterate how sorry I am for what* [*we*] *now know to have taken place*, thus apportioning blame among other referents of the pronoun *we*. The first person plural pronoun *we* functions as an escape route which allows the speaker to downplay her own presence among the pronoun *we* referents.

Explicit stance attribution: personal pronoun *you*

So far, attention has been given to the switch from the first person singular *I* to the first person plural *we*, and its impact on crisis response. Below some attention is going to be given to how the speakers avoid the first person singular *I* for self-reference, by means of second person pronoun *you,* a colloquial alternative to the more formal and mainly upper-class *one* (Fairclough 2003).

Hence, in a passage from [s15] dealing with the speaker's alleged misjudged decision to employ Andy Coulson, the speaker first explicitly marks his stance twice when he is saying *With 20:20 hindsight and all that has followed,* [*I*] [*would not have offered*] *him the job, and* [*I*] [*expect*] [*that he would not have taken it*]. This way he responds to the criticism of his decision implying that the critics are unfairly judging the wisdom of the decision in light of information that was not available when the decision had been made. The speaker firmly and somewhat regrettably admits that he would not have made the same decision if he had had the knowledge he does now. When it comes to the second coordinate clause ([*I*] [*expect*] [*that he would not have taken it*]), he is less firm and expresses his stance with the attitude verb *expect* and this way he signals his lack of commitment to the truth of the information in the proposition in the *that-* clause. In the passage that follows the speaker further elaborates on his decision and its consequences referring to himself with the pronoun *you*, as in *But* [*you*] *do not make decisions in hindsight;* [*You*] *make them in the present.* [*You*] *live and* [*you*] *learn and, believe you me,* [*I*] *have learned*. The distinction should be made between the *you* which can refer to any or all people in an unspecific way and to the *you* speakers use to refer to themselves, in an impersonal way. "In this kind of usage, the apparent switch of person merely disguises a continuity of referent. It is an attempt to objectify what is a subjective argument since such usage present a personal opinion as if it was a general one, shared by all people (Hope & Wright 1996: 30). When the speaker uses *you*, he may either avoid being self-centred, which does not appear to be the case here, or attempt to deceive, to pass something contentious off as inevitable, or generally agreed upon (Wright & Hope 1996). In his attempt to justify the reasons for his misjudgement of the situation the speaker seeks to offer the arguments that would both appeal to the general public and be difficult to refute at the same time. Hence, the use of the pronoun *you* in the above passage might refer to any or all people in an unspecific way. The proposition (*you do not make decisions in hindsight*) is self-evident, and everyone has to admit that people take decisions in the present and not in the past. The personal confession he makes saying *believe you me,* [*I*] *have learned*, in which he does not hesitate to use the self-reference pronoun *I*, implies such a reading of *you* which refers to the speaker himself but in an impersonal, disguised form. The vicinity of the first person singular pronouns in the sentences

explicitly marking the speaker's stance only strengthen this interpretation of the pronoun *you*. His argument is additionally reinforced by means of the phrase *believe you me*.

Explicit stance attribution: *institutional metaphor*

Similarly, noun phrases which denote an institution/ organization, or any other group of people, inclusive of the speaker may have the same function of sheltering the speaker and downplaying his/her role in the activities or states expressed in the proposition.

The speakers tend to act according to what Lerman (1985) calls a *general prohibition*, i.e. avoid the use of *I* or personal pronouns with P-topics[2] (problematic topics). Here, the problematic topic is the phone hacking scandal (the crisis under analysis), therefore, understandably, the speakers may wish to avoid any personal link with it. Actually, the speakers hardly ever use the word *crisis* meaning 'phone hacking scandal'. Altogether, there are two occurrences of the word with this meaning, first in [s3] *I have believed that the right and responsible action has been to lead us through the heat of* [*the crisis*], and the other in [s15] *We believe that* [*this crisis*] *calls for us to stand back and take another, broader look at the whole culture of policing in this country, including the way it is led*. The speakers are fairly consistent in avoiding *I/we* pronouns with the *problematic topic*. Instead, they resort to the simplest device that the language provides for avoiding clear, unequivocal meaning, i.e. the substitution of metaphor for literal, explicit reference (Lerman 1995: 1999).

The cases below are representative of what is called an *institutional metaphor* (Lerman 1985), e.g., *the News of the World, News International, the paper, the Company, No.10, the Conservative Party, the last Government, the official Opposition, the Met, the Commissioner's office*, etc. whose literal referents usually include the speakers themselves. However, the human Actors are in the shadow, they are impersonalized (Fairclough 2003), or conversely, the institution is personified and it becomes the Actor and the subject of the verbs describing the activities, as in *The good things* [*the News of the World*] [*does*] (...); *the News of the World is in the business*; *The paper made statements to Parliament* (...)*, The Company paid out-of-court settlements* (...), or as in a longer passage from [s15] *They were missed by* [*the last Government*] *but, yes, missed by* [*the official Opposition*]*, too.* Quite often, stance is explicitly attributed to such 'personified institutions', e.g. [s12] *But* [*the News of the World and News International*] [*failed*] [*to get to the bottom of repeated wrongdoing*] *that occurred without conscience or legitimate purpose*, or *As a result,* [*the News of the World and News International*] *wrongly* [*maintained*] [*that these issues were confined to one reporter*], and yet another one [*The Commissioner's office*] [*informed*] *me this morning* [*that the team have so far made eight arrests and undertaken numerous interviews*]. Metaphorization enables the speaker to shift the

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[2] Labov and Fanshel (1978) use the term „D-events" (disputed events), which refers to the central events in a given discourse. Lerman's (1985) "P-events" is a more general category of difficult, problematic topics related to the subject matter of her research. Therefore, I follow Lerman's terminology.

blame without threatening somebody else's face. The metaphor compresses a set of presumably well known referents, yet nothing literal has been said, which frees the speaker from personal responsibility for his/ her words (Lerman 1985).

The noun phrases, other than *institutional metaphors*, which are explicitly attributed stance are also present in the statements but are less numerous. Among them are the following: *the public*, *people*, *Ed Llewellyn's reply*, *current circumstances*, *this crisis*, etc. Therefore, when [S10] is saying *He has led the Met through difficult times, and, although* [*current circumstances*] [*show*] *(that)* [*there are still serious issues to be addressed*] (...), she avoids any overtly expressed personal connection with the proposition in *that-* clause, which would threaten the face of the subject of the verb *has led* (referred to as *He*). Similarly, [S2] in [s15], explicitly attributes stance to the first noun/ noun phrase in each example below, as in [*People*] *desperately* [*want*] *us* [*to put a stop to the illegal practices*], [*to ensure the independence and effectiveness of the police*], *and* [*to establish a more healthy relationship between politicians and media owners*]. Apparently, it's *people* who *desperately want*, but in fact, what follows allows one to believe that the speaker expresses his own stance. The sentences to follow strengthen the urgency of the desire expressed with the stance verb *want* whose force is enhanced with an adverb *desperately* (above) and adverbial phrase *above all*, as in *Above all,* [*they*] [*want*] *us* [*to act on behalf of the victims*] (...), and also in [*The public*] [*want*] *us* [*to work together to sort this problem out*], *because until we do so it will not be possible to get back to the issues they care about even more: getting our economy moving, creating jobs, helping with the cost of living, protecting us from terrorism, and restoring fairness to our welfare and immigration systems*. Therefore, saying very little directly, the speaker manages to indirectly minimize the magnitude of the crisis when he is saying *because until we do so it will not be possible to get back to the issues* [*they*] [*care about even more*]. Lerman (1985: 204–205) observes that citation of others validates an opinion and if the others are generalized, as in, e.g. *Many people ...*, the concern or opinion is further legitimated, distanced from personal expression. She further maintains that the "[a]void speaking of your own opinions with regard to P-topics" rule, discussed above, creates and typifies the credibility problem common to impersonal discourse and that despite the manner of introduction of those topics, the audience knows, at some level, that the speaker is actually selecting facts and, however, covertly, expressing opinions.

Explicit stance attribution: *third person singular and plural pronouns*

Finally, there are occurrences of people referred to by name, third person singular pronouns (with their accompanying possessive and objective variants), and plural pronouns other than *we* which overtly indicate that stance is attributed to somebody else other than the speaker, e.g. *I am very sorry that* [*Andy Coulson*] [*has decided*] [*to resign as my director of communications*] (...), *Mr Speaker, when I spoke to Sir Paul Stephenson yesterday,* [*he*] [*made clear*] [*that he is as determined as I am that all aspects of the police relationship with the media should be beyond reproach*], [*He*] [*assured*] *me* [*that the investigation is fully resourced*], *Above all,* [*they*] [*want*] *us* [*to act on behalf of the victims*] (...). They are less numerous than the other cases

discussed above, and seem to have the function of distancing the speaker from the information in the propositions. Thus, the speakers indicate that they do not claim their personal role in the actions described in the propositions (*Andy Coulson has decided, they want us*), or commitment to the truth of the propositions (*He assured me*). On the other hand however, they want the information contained in the propositions to be heard publicly, and they want the audience(s) to know who imparted it. Lerman's (1985) rule: *Avoid speaking of your own opinions with regard to P-topics,* seems operative here.

Phone Hacking Scandal

The public first heard of the phone and e-mail hacking scandal in 2005 when two people: the newspaper's royal editor, Clive Goodman, and a private investigator, Glenn Mulcaire, were arrested and then, having been found guilty, imprisoned for gaining illegal access into Prince William's voicemail. The list of people whose privacy has been, to a greater or lesser degree, brutally invaded, reportedly covers a few thousand victims including high rank politicians, celebrities, sports people and, more appallingly, victims of crime, the relatives of the British soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and the 7/7 London terrorist attack victims. "Industrial scale" (Leigh, Wintour & Davies 2010) hacking, heinous as it is, turned out to be only a peak of an iceberg of illegal or criminal activity, with cases of out-of-court gagging settlements, bribery and corruption of police officers, exerting undue and illicit pressure on various people in a position of power and authority in the UK and, apparently, abroad. Several mutually independent investigations by some newspapers, the police, Parliament and other bodies were launched thus resulting in a number of prominent resignations and arrests of many people in top positions in the media, politics and police, to date. The magnitude and extent of the crisis inspired comparisons with Watergate scandal and earned it such nicknames as *Hackgate*, *Ruppertgate* or *Murdochgate*, in the press.

The texts

The texts in the corpus amount to approximately 11 000 words. The corpus naturally divides into two sub-corpora, where the first one (C1) consists of 11 statements (resignations and replies to resignations) and amounts to 5309 words and the other, (C2) consists of 4 statements and amounts to 5650 words. The table presents the overall composition of the corpus with relevant data.

The corpus has been necessarily limited in terms of content, time-span and consequently, size. The two variables of content and time-span render the corpus homogenous, which is of significance to the results of the present research. First, the study deals with one multi-layered complex crisis but focuses on its second phase i.e. *crisis (response) phase* (section 1), which is when the speakers actually started crisis communication with their audience(s). Second, it was only actually the year 2011 that marked the onset of the second phase. The communication that had taken place before 2011 can be boiled down to one single strategy, i.e.

"Nothing happened". As late as on 6 July 2011, one day before James Murdoch publicly announced the closing of the *News of the World*, Rupert Murdoch issued a statement in which he wrote that "the allegations of phone hacking and making payments to police with respect to the *News of the World* are *deplorable* and *unacceptable*" (emphasis mine). Therefore, including the messages released before 2011 into the corpus, would affect the results and most probably distort them. Consequently, the corpus consists of all the available statements released by the people in top positions in the media, politics and the police in the UK, directly implicated in the events. They were all issued between 21.01.11 and 20.07.11, with Coulson's resignation statement triggering the series. In fact, all the statements, except for Coulson/ Cameron exchange, were made in July that year.

Table 1. Overall composition of the corpus

[Speaker's ref. no] [statement's ref. no]	SPEAKER	TYPE OF STATEMENT	NO. of WORDS	DATE
		Corpus 1		
1 [S1] [s1]	Andy Coulson	resignation statement	158	21.01.11
2 [S2] [s2]	David Cameron	response to Coulson's resignation statement	136	21.01.11
3 [S4] [s3]	Rebekah Brooks	resignation statement	368	15.07.11
4 [S3] [s6]	James Murdoch	response to Brooks' resignation statement	473	15.07.11
5 [S5] [s4]	Les Hinton	resignation statement (to R Murdoch)	258	15.07.11
6 [S5] [s5]	Les Hinton	resignation statement (to Dow Jones staff)	181	15.07.11
7 [S6] [s7]	Rupert Murdoch	response to Hinton's resignation statement	415	15.07.11
8 [S7] [s8]	Robert Thomson	response to Hinton's resignation statement	166	15.07.11
9 [S8] [s9]	Sir Paul Stephenson	resignation statement	1679	17.07.11
10[S9] [s10]	John Yates	resignation statement	376	18.07.11
11[S10] [s11]	Theresa May	response to police officers' statements	1096	18.07.11
		sub-total	**5309**	
		Corpus 2		
12 [S3] [s12]	James Murdoch	statement on closure of NOW	945	7.07.11
13 [S2] [s13]	David Cameron	statement to the HC on hacking scandal	1801	13.07.11
14 [S6] [s14]	Rupert Murdoch	statement to the CMS Committee	643	19.07.11
15 [S2] [s15]	David Cameron	statement to the HC on hacking scandal	2257	20.07.11
		Sub-total	**5650**	
		total	10959	

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Rola jednoznacznego przypisania postawy w komunikacji kryzysowej

Streszczenie

Pomimo tego, że jako dziedzina naukowa Komunikacja Kryzysowa (KK) istnieje już od połowy lat 80 ubiegłego wieku, jak dotąd nie cieszy się ona zbyt dużym zainteresowaniem naukowym w kręgach językoznawców. W szerokim pojęciu, komunikacja kryzysowa to zbieranie,

przetwarzanie i rozpowszechnianie informacji potrzebnych do tego, aby stawić czoła sytuacji kryzysowej (Coombs 2010). Jedną z podstawowych faz w komunikacji kryzysowej jest faza reakcji (*crisis response phase*). Do niedawna badania naukowe dotyczące tej fazy komunikacji kryzysowej koncentrowały się wokół tego, jak osłonić organizację w kryzysie, bądź jak zredukować szkody jakie już się dokonały za sprawą tegoż kryzysu (Fediuk et al. 2010). Ostatnio, wraz z rosnącym uznaniem komunikacji kryzysowej jako rodzaju komunikacji perswazyjnej, pojawiło się nowe podejście, które ma na celu nakłonić naukowców do zmiany postrzegania kryzysu. Kryzys jest tu widziany nie przez pryzmat organizacji bezpośrednio zaangażowanej, ale pod kątem wpływu jaki wywiera na inne strony w jakikolwiek sposób nim poszkodowane. Taka zmiana w postrzeganiu sytuacji kryzysowej umożliwia zrozumienie oddziaływania komunikatów kryzysowych na ich odbiór przez strony dotknięte kryzysem i zachowania tychże stron. Wydaje się, że badania w ramach szeroko pojętego języka wartościującego (Thompson & Hunston 2000) mogą umożliwić wgląd w to jak mówcy manipulują zasobami języka w celach perswazji. Dlatego też, poniższy artykuł ma na celu zbadanie tego jak jednoznaczne przypisywanie postawy (w wybranych gramatycznych znacznikach postawy) (Biber et al. 1999) używane jest przez mówców wygłaszających komunikaty kryzysowe w celu zmiany postrzegania kryzysu przez strony pokrzywdzone. Analiza dotyczy oświadczeń wydanych w 2011 roku, w związku ze skandalem podsłuchowym w *the News of the World*, przez kluczowe osoby ze świata mediów, polityki i policji.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja kryzysowa, faza reakcji w sytuacji kryzysu, postawa, przypisywanie postawy, skandal podsłuchowy