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**Exploring Indices of National Identity in a Corpus of Radio Phone-in Data from Irish
Radio.**

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1.0 Introduction

Radio phone-in has a reflexive function in bringing the voices of a community to a community. For those who telephone the programme, it provides interpersonal communication even if they do not 'go on air'. For those who listen in, a radio phone-in programme offers a vicarious form of interpersonal interaction. Listeners can feel close to the familiarity of the presenter and they are brought into other ordinary people's problems and come into contact with other people's opinions. Armstrong and Rubin (1989: 89) comment that talk radio is one of the few media that allows spontaneous interaction, and their quantitative research shows that it functions as an alternative to interpersonal interaction. According to Moss and Higgins (1979: 285), radio phone-in dialogues are easier than face-to-face interaction for members of the audience because they come in recognisable formats and because the presenter has a finite range of speech strategies.

Over the years, research into talk radio has largely centred on the democratising capability of this type of programme (see Turow 1974; Avery and McCain 1979, among others). Hutchby (1996: 4) comments that many of these studies fail to

focus on the talk that actually takes place. Hutchby, whose analytical standpoint is firmly within the Conversation Analysis (CA) tradition, points out that talk radio is a form of institutionalised interaction, where talk takes place within an organisation, the broadcasting company, which has its own structure and stability (Hutchby 1996: 7). Within the CA model, this structure and stability, as discussed by analysts such as Boden (1994) and Drew and Heritage (1992), propagates itself through talk and interaction. Hutchby's work has contributed greatly to the existing body of research into the organisation of talk on talk radio. His work focuses on *The Brian Hayes Show*, a daily show on London's LBC station (see Hutchby 1991; 1995 and 1996).

Hutchby (1991: 135) points out that: talk radio involves the essential input of lay members of society 'whose substantive moral, political, intellectual convictions ... are treated as the basis for discussions, in the presence of *overhearers*, of "issues" defined as significant by callers themselves' (my italics). Notwithstanding the validity of Hutchby's point here, his terminology creates a conundrum that has largely gone unaddressed in research into this type of talk, that is, the use of the term *overhearers* to refer to the status of the audience that actually constitute the show. This paper will make a case for the inclusion of 'audience' in the analysis of radio phone-in talk since the audience creates, sustains and locates the show socio-culturally. It will be argued that the talk of 'ordinary people' who phone a show encodes socio-political meaning and that this can be accessed systematically through using a corpus-based approach to analysing the data. This paper will focus on a sample of data from an Irish radio

phone-in show called *Liveline*, broadcast on national radio in the Republic of Ireland (see below for further details).

2.0 The audience conundrum

Most analysts of radio phone-in data do not give much consideration to the triangular participation structure between the *presenter*, the *caller* and the *audience* which characterises this type of interaction. Normally, the dyadic model of participation is imposed on the interaction, where *presenter* and *caller* interchange between *speaker* and *hearer*, and, as mentioned, the audience is cast as ‘overhearers’ or ‘eavesdroppers’. For example, Montgomery (1986: 428) says that it is common for the audience to be the ‘overhearing recipient of a discourse’ (see also Heritage 1985). Moss and Higgins (1979: 291) acknowledge that there are clear signals of a wider audience that seem almost to be ‘eavesdroppers on a cozy chat’. Other researchers into broadcast genres such as news interviews (Heritage and Roth 1995) and television talk shows (Illie 1999) also use the term ‘overhearer’ to refer to the listening status of the audience.

While at a schematic level, this dyadic model abstracts the core process of communication, many researchers of face-to-face spoken interaction have commented on its inadequacies and the need for its refinement so as to accommodate the actual conditions of spoken encounters (Goffman 1981; Clark and Carlson 1982; Duranti 1986; Schiffrin 1987; Harness Goodwin 1997; Antaki, Díaz and Collins 1996; Matoesian 1999 among others). Duranti (1986: 243), referring to talk in general, makes the following point, which parallels the thinking of Goffman (1981) and which is very relevant to the present discussion:

‘...speakers and audience are equals not simply because their roles are interchangeable – in fact they may not be in some situations – but rather because every act of speaking is directed to and must be ratified by an audience’

Fundamental to our analysis of *Liveline* is a descriptive model that accounts for all of the participants and how they relate to each other. In any interaction, participants guide, orient and modify their talk within their *participation framework* (after Goffman 1981: 137). Goffman’s notion of *participation framework* refers to the instantaneous view of any social gathering, relative to the act of speaking at any one moment in time. Crucially, Goffman (1981) offers a distinction between *hearer* and *addressee*, which, when applied to the participation dynamic of *Liveline*, provides for the inclusion of the audience within the participation framework of the interaction. At times the *Liveline* audience has the status of *hearer* and at other times it has the status of *addressee* as we can see in *extract 1*. At first the audience is the *addressee* (bold text) and once the caller is addressed, the audience switches to the status of the *hearer*¹ (plain text), all within the participation framework of the programme:

Extract 1

Presenter:	Now to a couple that had very very difficult Christmas this year however all's well that ends well ah Austin good afternoon to you.
Caller:	Good afternoon Marian.
Presenter:	Your little boy went back to playschool yesterday?

The *participation framework* therefore describes the network of participation constituted at any point in the interaction by the *presenter*, the *caller* and the

¹ This ‘movement’ from one addressee to another is a normal part of any non-dyadic interaction and is accounted for by Goffman (1981: 124-159) as part of the phenomenon of ‘footing’.

audience. Of salience in this paper is the substantiation this model gives to the inclusion of 'audience' in the collaborative construction of meaning in a specific social context.

3.0 The participation framework and its territory

At a broader level, we can say that the *participation framework* created by the *presenter, caller* and *audience* has a stable territory or location. For *Liveline*, this range is mostly within Irish society. Within the participation framework, there is a shared understanding of this territory or range. This is clearly evidenced in the level of shared knowledge that the speakers can assume when they speak. *Extract 2*, for example, carries an implicit understanding of who *we, people* and *in this country* refer to even though the caller and presenter are not physically co-present. For the participants, these references are tacitly understood and have absolute 'values' within the boundaries of a stable participation framework range:

Extract 2

- Caller: ...**people** are not going to be exposed to rugby and that's a tragedy because **we** need it **we** need more **people** playing rugby **we** me= **we** need more people watching it and becoming enthusiastic about it especially little kids like twelve year olds and thirteen year olds.
- Presenter: That's right who who'll take a pride in an Irish team yeah.
- Caller: Absolutely. They play **we** all know this they play what they see on television and they wear what they see on television. Now if they're not seeing rugby then they won't know the rules and they won't know what they wear <slight laugh> they will know nothing about it. And so the game will be done a great disservice if not it won't die but it'll be it'll be seriously seriously affected **in this country**.
-

Since the interaction in radio phone-in takes place within a stable range, which in this case more or less corresponds to Irish society, we can find encoded in the talk indices of both social and geo-political identity. This paper sets out to explore some of the lexico-grammatical items that provide indices as to how Irish society (as far as can be represented by callers to *Liveline*) refers to itself and positions itself in relation to what it is not. Specifically, it will look at how the participants refer to themselves as a group and how they position themselves (through pronoun choice) in relation to others.

4.0 The Data

We will examine a corpus of radio phone-in data comprising approximately 55,000 words from an Irish radio phone-in programme called *Liveline*, broadcast every week day on Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) between 1.30pm and 2.45pm. *Liveline* is one of the most popular radio programmes in Ireland, with a listenership of 311,000², almost ten per cent of the population of the Republic of Ireland. The data sample was taken from the year 1998, and comprises 44 phone calls to the show spread throughout that year. Topics for discussion meander from call to call and include the following miscellany: female facial hair problems; tattoos; the peace process in Northern Ireland; how ears were pierced in the old days; the referendum on the Good Friday Agreement and changes to the Irish constitution; experiences of working aboard; cursory tales about sunbathing without sun block; calls reminiscing about boarding schools; calls

² Statistics released by Joint Listenership Research in August 2000, compiled by the Market Research Bureau of Ireland (Donnelan 2000: 5).

about the contemporary decline of fidelity and moral decay in general; things that can go wrong when working in Saudi Arabia and the growing trend of litigation in Irish society among others. Unlike many talk radio shows, the presenter in *Liveline* does not normally provide counselling and she generally avoids engaging in strong debate. Her role appears to be more that of conduit between the caller and the audience. The following extract (*extract 3*) typifies the type of interaction found in *Liveline*. Here we find a caller, Emmet, responding to an earlier caller, Breda, whose son has just got a tattoo. Breda phoned the show seeking advice on how to erase it. Subsequently, various callers telephoned with opinions and advice on tattoos (the presenter's name is Marian Finucane):

Extract 3

- Presenter: ...Now Emmet good afternoon to you.
- Caller: How are you Marian?
- Presenter: You don't share Breda's view on tattoos?
- Caller: Well I wou= I can understand her her worries to be honest wh= d= did she say what a= I didn't catch what age the lad is.
- Presenter: Eighteen.
- Caller: Eighteen Yeah am yeah I I got one well sort of recently about six months ago
- Presenter: Yeah.
- Caller: But I I'm I'm twenty-seven and I'd spent sort of the age from I was always sort of curious to get a small one and I+
- Presenter: Why? What's the attraction?
- Caller: Well I don't know am the the little tattoo that I got is just a small little Celtic pattern which judging by what that lady said may be somewhat similar to what he got am I don't know what it is really am.
- Presenter: Where did you get it done? In Ireland?
- Caller: Oh Yeah yeah in Galway.
- Presenter: And am where is it?

Caller: It's high up on my shoulder.
Presenter: Near your neck?
Caller: No no no no no no no no no I mean you wouldn't see it if I was wearing a T-shirt.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 Lexico-grammatical choice as an index of identity

As a starting point in this investigation, let us look at a single lexical item. Sinclair (1996: 75) places the word as the starting point of the description of meaning – ‘the word is the unit that aligns grammar and vocabulary’ (ibid) and very few words have ‘terminological tendencies’, that is a ‘fixed meaning in reference to the world’ Sinclair (1996: 82). Carter (1987: 71) tells us that research in this area concurs that ‘lexical items in discourse require to be constantly interpreted and re-interpreted by the language user’ and that, when analysts go beyond constructed examples to consider real texts, ‘the “values” of lexis become of significance’. Within this relatively stable and collaboratively achieved sense of range in the participation framework of *Liveline*, it is predicted that unmarked stable patterns of meaning or ‘values’ will emerge and that these ‘values’ may be specific to this participation framework and so will be revealing in terms of the socio-cultural identity of the audience cohort.

Let us take what one would expect to be a straightforward lexical item: the word *island* – one dictionary definition is ‘a mass of land that is surrounded by water and is smaller than a continent’ (Collins Concise Dictionary, 1989). A concordance search for the word *island* in the *Liveline* corpus yields the following results:

Table 1 - Occurrences of *island* in *Liveline* data

<i>Total Number of words in Liveline corpus</i>	55,000
<i>Total number of occurrences of 'island'</i>	48
<i>Total number of occurrences per million words</i>	873

In these data, the core value of *island* is in reference to the island of Ireland and the second most frequent usage is to refer to one of the Aran Islands, a group of small islands off the west coast of Ireland. Let us compare this result in the context of spoken data collected on other islands, namely, Britain and New Zealand. We find the following results for the lexical item *island* as shown in *table 2* from the London-Lund Corpus (Britain), the Lancaster/IBM Spoken English Corpus (Britain) and the Wellington Spoken Corpus (New Zealand) (data from ICAME CD - Hofland, Lindebjerg and Thunestvedt 1999³). Only occurrences of *island* (or *islands* in the case of New Zealand) that referred to the respective countries or island composites were counted and all results presented in *table 2* have been normalised to occurrences per million words:

Table 2 – Occurrences of *island* across spoken data from other island countries compared with occurrences in *Liveline*

³ For further information on the ICAME CD see <http://www.hit.uib.no/icame/cd>

Corpus	Data	Occurrences of <i>island</i> per million words
London-Lund	500,000 words of British English	0.8
Lancaster/IBM Spoken English Corpus	55,000 words of British English, mostly BBC recordings	18
Wellington Spoken Corpus	1,000,000 words of New Zealand English	70 ⁴
<i>Liveline</i>	55,000 words of Irish English, all spoken radio phone-in data	873

We see from these results that the word *island* occurs with a strikingly high frequency in the *Liveline* data and indeed it is very interesting to note how low the occurrence is in the British data. The high result in the Irish data is partly accounted for by frequent discussions that took place during the 1998 sample period about the question of Irish identity in the lead up to the Good Friday Referendum in May of that year.

The use of the word *island* to refer to Ireland is politically fraught. The Republic of Ireland is in fact only part of the island of Ireland while the six counties of Northern Ireland are part of the United Kingdom and so to use *island* to refer to Ireland as a country is tantamount to a political aspiration. This is borne out by the research of Coperías Aguilar and Besó (1999) who assembled two corpora of written data from Northern Ireland: a 15,440 word corpus of Sinn Féin data and a 9,800 word corpus of Ulster Unionist Party data. Their result for the word *island* in the Sinn Féin corpus is compared with the result from *Liveline* in *table 3* – again the results have been presented in occurrences per million words:

⁴ This figure includes all instances of North Island and South Island.

Table 3 – Occurrences of *island* across SF written data 1997-98 (Coperías Aguilar and Besó 1999) compared with occurrences in *Liveline* – results per million words

Sinn Féin corpus	<i>Liveline</i> corpus
2,072	873

Sinclair (1996: 76) makes the observation that ‘words enter meaningful relations with other words around them and yet all our current descriptions marginalise this massive contribution to meaning’. Putting this in the context of the participation framework of *Liveline*, we can predict ‘meaningful relations’ that should have repeated and relatively stable values within the range of this participation framework. If this is so, the political or aspirational nuance carried by the majority metaphoric use of *island* should be sustained in the form of meaningful relations by its colligational patterning⁵. The most frequent patterns that co-occur with *island* in the *Liveline* corpus are *of the island*, *in the island* and *on the island* in that order of frequency. Interestingly the literal or geographic pattern *on the island* is not the most frequent. *Table 4* gives a frequency breakdown of these patterns.

Table 4 - Frequency distribution of colligation patterns for *of the island*, *in the island* and *on the island* in *Liveline* corpus. All results are per million words.

<i>Of the island</i>	109
<i>In the island</i>	72
<i>On the island</i>	36

From these data, we see that the preferred colligational pattern when referring to the island of Ireland is either *in the island* or *of the island*. This points to a

⁵ *Colligation* is the co-occurrence of grammatical choices (Firth 1957), see Sinclair (1996).

preference for metaphoric over literal (or geographic) usage. If the lesser used phrase *on the island* locates Irish speakers geographically, the majority colligational patterns: *in the island* and *of the island* locate participants metaphorically. This lexico-grammatical choice profiles the identity of a group of people who very much see themselves metaphorically as living *in* an island country or being part *of* a whole island (something that is not found in the British or New Zealand corpora referred to above). In further support of this assertion, we can substitute the word *island* in the *of* and *in* patterns with words such as *country* or *society* (in the/of the *country* or *society*). Interestingly, the literal *on the island* pattern is frequently used in the *Liveline* data when the reference to *island* is not to the mainland Republic. When callers talk about one of the islands off the west coast of Ireland, the literal *on the island* form is unproblematic as the results in *table 5* show.

Table 5 – Summary of colligation patterns of *island* in *Liveline* data.

MEANING	LITERAL	LITERAL	METAPHORIC	METAPHORIC
REFERENCE	Aran Island Geographic reference to Aran Mór – an island off the mainland	Island of Ireland Geographic reference to Ireland	Island of Ireland Metaphoric reference to Irish Society	Island of Ireland Metaphoric reference to Irish Society
FORM	on the island	on the island	in the island	of the island
TOTAL	273	36	72	109

From *table 5* we see that *Liveline* callers use the pattern *on the island* more than 7.5 times more frequently to refer to the Aran Islands than to the mainland of Ireland.

So far the results for the word *island* provide an example of the kind of insights that can be gained into how identity is indexed lexico-grammatically in the *Liveline* corpus. Further investigations into other societal reference terms such as *society, country, nation, Ireland* and so on, would lead to more markers of how different identities are expressed through lexico-grammatical choice.

5.2 Pronouns as indices of audience identity

Pronouns offer another source of socio-cultural information in the data. Many researchers agree on the non-canonical nature of pronoun use (see McCarthy, 1994; Pennycook, 1994; Wales, 1996 and Wortham, 1996); however, the main focus for grammarians has been on sentence level pronoun form. As Wales (1996: 50) says of pronouns: '...despite their diversity of ever-changing roles and functions, their flexibility in the minds and mouths of the users of English are often ignored by grammarians.' She continues that the prototypically human referents of pronouns have a wide variety of social roles and stances and, therefore, interpersonal pronouns are rarely "neutral" in their reference. In the present analysis, the members of the *Liveline* audience, as a ratified group within a participation framework, make systematic choices about how they refer to themselves, their world and others in it relative to what it is not. By examining pronoun use in the corpus, it is hoped to show that speakers' lexico-grammatical choices at this level offer another viable index of identity.

5.2.1 Deictic mapping: centring and othering

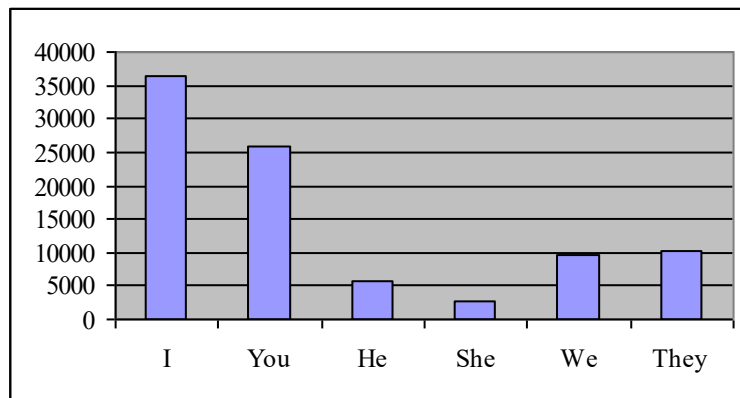
Wortham (1996) uses the term *deictic mapping*, whereby he analyses ‘participant deictics’ in the context of a classroom interaction by looking at personal pronouns. According to Wortham (1996: 331) ‘deictics systematically index aspects of the context, and these forms often sketch the framework of the interactional event’. When we apply this notion to the situation of an Irish radio phone-in, we can make assertions about deictic markers as indices of the context at a societal level, especially in respect to how ‘mainstream’ Irish people, as represented by the *Liveline* audience, position themselves in relation to ‘others’. In this context of nationwide media discourse, participants locate themselves politically, socially and interactionally in the participation framework of *Liveline*, and this central or mainstream position is collaboratively negotiated.

5.2.1.1 Centring

Let us begin with interactional markers. In his examination of DJ monologue, Montgomery (1986) notes that unlike other forms of broadcast talk, DJ radio monologue operates more frequently along the axis between the first and second person (*I* and *you*), in other words, it is interpersonal and socio-relational rather than representational (ibid: 423-5). A survey of the pronouns used in *Liveline* yields the following results as shown in *table 6*⁶:

Table 6 – Pronoun Distribution in *Liveline* (occurrences per million words)

⁶ For practical purposes, the result for *you* is inclusive of generic *you*, *you* as first person singular and *you* as second person plural.



As discussed in Farr and O’Keeffe (forthcoming), this distribution for pronouns *I, you, he, she, we and they* is very similar to the pronoun distribution for casual conversation found in Biber et al (1999: 334). The more or less equal result for *we* and *they* in the data presented above supports Pennycook’s point about the inherent dichotomies of *we*, which he says is ‘always simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, a pronoun of solidarity and of rejection, of inclusion and exclusion.’ (Pennycook 1994:175). *We* claims both authority and communality (Pennycook 1994: 176) and it also constructs a *we/you* and *we/they* dichotomy, ‘the two pronouns must always be understood with reference to other assumptions about who is being defined as the “we” from which the “you” and the “they” differ’ (ibid). In the case of *Liveline*, *we* can be used by the presenter or the caller to appropriate speaking authority on behalf of the audience. This uncontested appropriation further substantiates a tacit participation framework range. *Extract 4* provides an example of a typical call opening where the presenter uses *we* generically to refer to *all of us who are in the Liveline participation framework*:

Extract 4

Presenter: Hello there and a very good afternoon to you <theme music> well **we** were talking yesterday about ear piercing and nose piercing and

piercing any other bits of you ah that may cross the mind ah Breda
your son got a nice little Christmas present pleased you no end
anyway?

Caller: Oh yes he did hello Marian <\$O2> aam. </\$O2>

Extract 5 again exemplifies stable usage of generic *we* on the part of the presenter, here also its referential value is undisputed and in the next turn it is endorsed through replication of use by the caller. The presenter and the caller are part of the set which comprises this *we*:

Extract 5

Presenter: Right. You think **we** have lost our sense of conviction?

Caller: We= Well I think it's I think **we've** lost the ability to talk about it or or to to ah since **we've** tried to build a society that that aam that without talking about talking about what our convictions are and I think there's a danger in that. I mean there's obviously a danger in convictions too that they can create divisions and conflicts and all that sort of thing.

Extract 6 shows a caller's use of *we* that sets *people in situations of hardship* as 'other' (cf. 'other attribution' Halliday and Hasan 1976). This set of people are not part of the tacitly understood generic centred *we*.

Extract 6:

Caller: ...**we** don't really know one another in the way that **we** perhaps did in a simpler and easier aam ah situation in the past+

Presenter: Ahmm.

Caller: +which was now more full of hardship but at least but **people** knew one another an= and didn't see one another simply as another group over there but they were actually acquaintances whose families they knew and whose backgrounds they knew and so on.

Presenter: Yes.

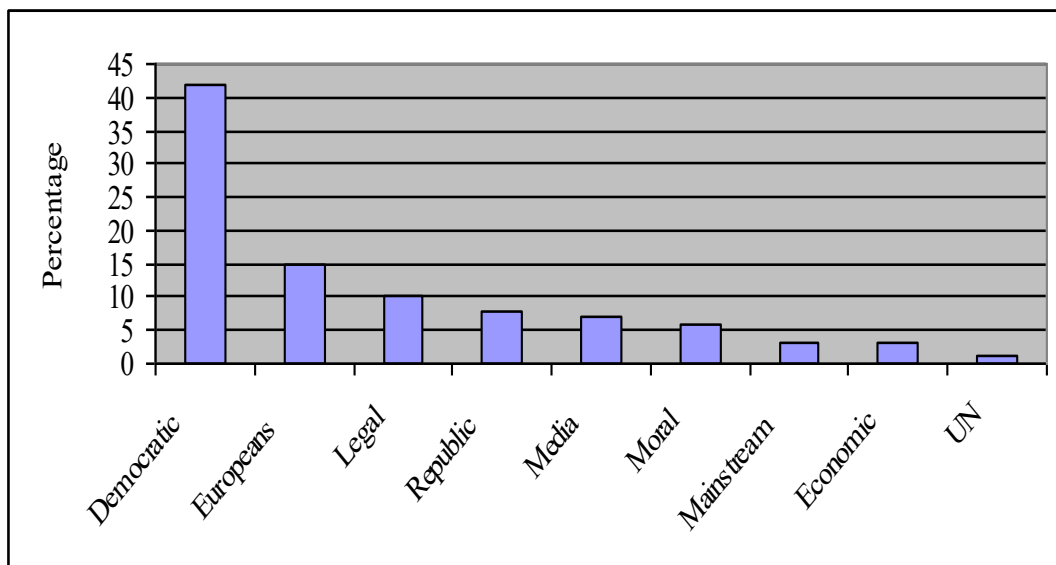
→ Caller: And I think I think there's a certain anonymity about it which enables **us** to say that. I think if **we** understood the real difficulties that **people** have in breaking out of this ah **situations of hardship** and so on I think **we** wouldn't say that so easily.

For a more quantitative analysis of this undisputed generic use of the pronoun *we* within the *Liveline* participation framework, all occurrences were isolated and in each case the context in which it was used (that is, its 'value' in that context) was logged. *Table 7* presents a breakdown of the findings, plus examples.

Table 7 – Profile of generic *we* values across *Liveline* data

<i>We</i> value	Example	Percentage of total generic <i>we</i>
<i>We</i> with a democratic right to vote for our political future	<i>...get on and address what we are voting on...</i>	42%
<i>We</i> Europeans	<i>We are within Europe...</i>	15%
<i>We</i> with a legal right	<i>...we are a bit inclined to ah see opportunities to compensate people...</i>	10%
<i>We</i> part of the majority Catholic Republic of Ireland	<i>...Don't tell me you think we should change our respect for Good Friday</i>	8%
<i>We</i> media consumers	<i>...by subscribing to Sky that we can we can watch these things...</i>	7%
<i>We</i> with moral obligations within society	<i>...we do need to stop and ask ourselves what's important to us...</i>	6%
<i>We</i> the ordinary mainstream people	<i>...what we call marriage...</i>	5%
<i>We</i> a sporting nation	<i>...much as we did against France...</i>	3%
<i>We</i> economically successful	<i>...what we want to do with all this wealth</i>	3%
<i>We</i> part of the United Nations	<i>...we operate within the United Nations we are Ireland</i>	1%

The data from *table 7* are represented graphically below:

Table 8 – Profile of referential values of generic *We* in *Liveline* corpus

These *we* values are not surprising across the data taken from 1998, when some of the Republic of Ireland's main concerns were how to vote in two major referenda: the European Referendum (The Treaty of Amsterdam) and the Good Friday Referendum on Northern Ireland. In addition, people spoke out about the issue of thousands of Irish army deafness compensation cases being taken against the State and there was growing awareness of economic success and its consequences. These generic *we* values could be said to hold residual socio-historic information and it would be interesting to check the same type of data in the future to index extent of the referential shift.

5.2.1.2 Othering

Othering is a by-product of positioning and centring. The notion of positioning is normally associated with research into power semantics in dyadic interactions, where concepts such as footing, alignment and framing can be linked (see Goffman 1974 Goffman 1981; Davies and Harre 1990; Tannen 1993; Tannen

and Wallat 1993; Gavrusseva 1995; Antaki, Díaz and Collins 1996.). Here we will look at how 'otherness' is constructed through pronoun choice. The use of *that* in *Extract 7* below offers an interesting example from the data (the context is *tattoos*):

Extract 7

Caller: ...sailors had them done... I think there's um a lot of undesirables criminals and people like **that**...

On the surface, *like that* appears to be a straightforward vagueness marker, which could be substituted by *and so on*. On closer examination, this usage of *that* is far from neutral and the speaker's choice to use it intentionally positions her in a separate set within society in relation to sailors, undesirables and criminals who collectively form the *other* set. This example adds support to Pennycook's assertion that to view pronouns as neutral assumes that there is 'some unproblematic, uncontested world out there that is referenced by language' (Pennycook, 1994: 174). In 1998, the president of the United States provided a classic example of this positioning function of *that* in his statement to the American people: 'I'm going to say this again. I did not have sexual relations with **that** woman Miss Lewinsky'. Here again *that* functions as a distancing device in relation to *that* woman, just as the caller in *extract 7* distances herself from sailors, undesirables and criminals (see Lakoff 1974; Halliday and Hasan 1976; McCarthy 1994).

There are many interesting encodings of enmity and *otherness* to be found in the present data. *Extract 8*, exemplifies the use of *they*, *them* and *those* as *othering*

devices used by callers from the Republic of Ireland to refer to the Unionist population in Northern Ireland.

Extract 8

- Presenter: But the problem is I mean this was an agreement where **we** were trying to ah all bring sides on board. The Unionists would not sign up to the concept that **they** were Irish. **They** don't want to be Irish.
- Caller: Course **they** don't. The Unionists don't want to be anything but Unionists.
- Presenter: **They** want to be British.
- Caller: Oh come on **they** don't want to be British.
- Presenter: Well **they** tell you **they** want to be British.
- Caller: Marian the Unionists want to be Unionists **they** want to be a separate little empire all to **themselves** getting attention from Dublin and attention from England and answerable to nobody.
- Presenter: Well now I ga= I've gather from your tone that you're not a great admirer of Unionists but the simple fact of the matter is that **they** talk to **us** here on the radio and elsewhere and **they** say **we** are British and **we** want to remain British.
- Caller: **They** say all of **those** things ah yo= I'll go back to that lady in a second. **They** say all of **those** things ah what **they** want is for the British to pay for **their** welfare **their** social welfare system and all of the rest but not to interfere with **them** or anybody else to interfere with **them**. **They** have a nice little empire running have it running for many many years and **they** want to keep it going+
- Presenter: Are you+
- Caller: +of course they do.

Immediately in the next turn (see *extract 9*), we find a very interesting contrast between the presenter's use of *this* and the caller's use of *that* to refer to the same issue⁷:

Extract 9

⁷ Note: '*this change*' refers to the referendum in the Republic of Ireland on the Good Friday Agreement, which also included constitutional amendments relinquishing territorial claims to the six counties of Northern Ireland

- Presenter: Are you going to vote for **this** change?
- Caller: I haven't fully considered **that** yet. I'll wait until I see the agreement.
- Presenter: Right.
- Caller: I haven't I haven't am as I said I haven't paid much attention to what was going on. I have no faith in in in ah Unionists am in what **they** say nothing whatsoever. It as I said earlier **they** talk only to God and **they** talk down to him.
- Presenter: Right.

The shift here from the presenter's *this change* to the caller's use of *that* indexes a position of adversity on the part of the caller in relation to the proposed constitutional change. This variation between *this* and *that* is in line with research by McCarthy (1994) who looks at *it*, *this* and *that* in written texts (see also McCarthy 1998). He tells us that *this* regularly functions to signal that the topic focus is shifting or has shifted, while *that* also functions in this way, it can also refer to entities or foci that are non-current, non-central, or other-attributed (after Halliday and Hasan 1976) and so it can marginalise, or reject validity or importance. Looked at in terms of speaker positioning, we can say that *this*, by its focusing function can show affiliation while *that*, through its distancing function can indicate enmity or have an *othering* effect.

Deictics used to locate speakers geographically offer more indices of identity in the *Liveline* data. In *extracts 10 to 12*, we find Northern Ireland referred to as *that place up there*, containing *the Unionists up there*, and it is referred to as a place with *people on both sides up there*:

Extract 10

- Presenter: But it wasn't that always going to be a problem for **both sides** in fairness in that you have the kind of backwoodsmen and women and

mentality on both sides and if you want to bring them with you and if you want them to vote for this the sales pitch on one side is the antithesis of the sales pitch on the other side.

Caller: Well am that that is presuming that they're all backwoodsmen surely if if if that's the attitude two= towards it am and maybe you're right but the bottom line as far as I concerned is that is that **that place up there** is ah has been shown to be an ungovernable entity in any shape or size ah it was formed by a head count of the six counties that are there or otherwise it would have been nine...

Extract 11

Caller: Am a lot of the things he said and a lot of the things that are e= people **the unionist people up there** continually say and that are left go unchallenged I I just would like to draw attention to a few.

Presenter: Right surely yeah am.

Extract 12

Presenter: Okay. Anyway you got your material.

Caller: We got our material and we got our interview with am Ian Junior and we had our opinions from **people on both sides of the divide up there** as to the am outcome of the referendum...

Symbiotically the *up there* has its corresponding *down here*, which is the unproblematic 'centre' for the participation framework:

Extract 13

Caller: ...allowing the government in Dub= government in Dublin to have a say in the affairs of the North of Ireland is one thing. Allowing people in the North of Ireland to demand of the Dublin government that they take their part is a separate thing all together. Furthermore having people in the south of Ireland ah with a right to be Irish deciding that if they have a right to be Irish it also implies they that they have a right not to be is a separate thing also.

Presenter: You mean that somebody **down here** living in county Wicklow says "oiks hold on I'm not Irish I'm British"?

Caller: Correct and right.

What is interesting about looking at the systematic use of pronouns throughout the data is that they are stable and fixed at 'the centre' even if their values may

be anomalous. The audience has a common awareness of who it is and who it is not, even on the same island where radio waves have no territory.

Conclusion

O’Sullivan (1997: 167) in her study of the Irish radio talk show *The Gerry Ryan Show* quotes the Irish journalist Frank Nally on the growth in popularity of radio phone-ins in Ireland in the early 1990s: ‘it used to be the parish pump, but in the Ireland of the 1990s, national radio seems to have taken over as the place where the nation meets’. When the nation *meets*, the discourse that results is flavoured by its participants, encoding not just their values and beliefs at that time, but markers of their socio-historic selves within that society. This identity is, as we have seen, sustained even at lexico-grammatical level.

This paper set out to explore indices of self-representation and identity in a corpus of Irish radio phone-in data, however, it has found that residual in the talk of the nation are stable yet conflicting identities. We find a group of people who articulate a strong (metaphoric) island identity. Yet this island, at the same time, sees itself as part of Europe. Historic reality on this metaphoric island divides it into *that place up there* which is distinct from *down here*. *Up there* are ‘others’ and *they* are not solely the Northern Unionist population. Socially, *we* are economically successful modern Europeans and *we* sometimes spare a thought for *those, down here*, who are not so fortunate. And so the anomalies go.

It is perhaps best to consider these indices of modern Ireland as encoding more than any one generic identity, but as a convergence of contemporary identities, which are continuums of ongoing socio-historic identities. To apply the ideas of Kelly Hall (1995: 207), in our 'interactive practices', talk is differently enacted and valued by individuals who come together to create, articulate and manage their collective histories via the use of socio-historically defined resources and identities. The indices of identity and self-representation revealed in this exploration are relative to those who took part at a point in time in everyday Ireland. In less than a decade from now, the ongoing and inevitable process of social change may alter these indices. As new social conditions interact with old prejudices and identities, the referential value of *we* may broaden just as new *others* may emerge from somewhere *out there*.

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