Thinking out loud: A discourse analysis of 'thinking' during talk radio interactions

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Abstract: Early work in discursive psychology highlighted the rhetorical strength of devices that serve to establish matters as objective facts. More recently, there has been increasing interest within this discipline concerning mental state invocations (e.g. imagining; knowing; intending), which typically convey speaker subjectivity. Elsewhere, linguists have examined the social business enabled by speakers' deployment of cognitive verbs, a prime example of which deals with overt references to *thinking*. The current article sets out to extend the work on *thinking* by synthesizing research from discursive psychology, linguistics, and conversation analysis in order to undertake an integrated analysis of thinking. In our examination of a UK talk radio corpus, comprising data from 11 talk radio shows, we demonstrate three discursive functions of deploying a *thinking* device: setting an intersubjective agenda; doing opinion; and managing 'facts'. An integrated approach allows us to examine the rhetorical strength of these subjectivizing maneuvers, and contribute to the existing body of work concerning the discursive deployment of thinking and mental state terms.

Keywords: discourse, subjectivity, thinking, rhetoric, talk radio, cognitive verbs

1 Introduction

The aim of the current study is to extend existing work on *thinking* by examining how people make use of thinking as a rhetorical device in the practical accomplishment of subjectivity. Our analysis favors a Discursive Psychology (DP) perspective, but seeks to synthesize prior DP/Conversation Analytic (CA) work alongside linguistic research in the area. Our hope is that this integrated approach offers further insight regarding the variable use of *thinking* as a speaker resource, which will be of cross-disciplinary interest.

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We have chosen to focus our analysis of the *thinking* device within the interactional context of talk radio. TR is argued to 'potentially represent the closest thing to an authentically democratic public sphere that the mass media have been able to produce' (Hutchby 2001: 481), within which radio phone-in programmes function at the juncture of media and public talk (Fitzgerald and Housley 2002). Nuyts (2001) argues that *I think* is especially common in antagonistic contexts. According to Hutchby (1996), TR operates as a site for engaging in oppositional debate and, in this context, callers participate with an awareness that their contribution is more likely to be met with positive or negative evaluation than to be met with neutrality. For this reason, we anticipate that TR will provide a fruitful site for examining the rhetorical engagement of *I think* and the *thinking* device in general.

The analysis undertakes an inductive exploration of speakers' deployment of the *thinking* device in TR. Taking as our start point the fundamental CA research question: 'why that now' (Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 299), our primary research questions ask (i) what interactional business might be being accomplished and (ii) what rhetorical consequences might follow from speaker utilization of the *thinking* device within the TR context.

This article is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews previous work on the *thinking* device from the fields of DP, CA and linguistics, highlighting its functioning as a marker of commitment. This leads to an examination of some of the relevant ways that objectivity and subjectivity are managed in talk. Section 3 provides details about the data corpus of this research, while Section 4 comprises the analysis of the data, focusing on three prevalent functions. In Section 5, conclusions are drawn regarding the analysis and its contribution to work in DP, CA and linguistics.

2 Literature review

2.1 Cognitive verbs and linguistic commitment

Linguists have long explored the invocation of cognitions via cognitive verbs (e.g. believe, assume, think). Inspired by Austin (1946/1970), Urmson (1952) sought to challenge the common philosophical obsession, as he saw it, with the descriptive function of verbs, by highlighting a class of 'parenthetical verbs' (p. 480), which are not concerned with description. According to Urmson (1952), these verbs have been confusing to philosophers because, although they appear to reference something psychological, they do not. He likens the function of such verbs to

stage-directions, which serve to 'help the understanding and assessment of what is said rather than being a part of what is said' (p. 496). Urmson's (1952) observation has developed into the key linguistic principle of commitment, in which the speaker makes a public display of an attitude towards their utterance (De Brabanter and Dendale 2008) and which is commonly taken to be gradable (e.g. Palmer 1986; Toulmin 1958; Vanderveken 1990).

2.2 I think as a variable marker of commitment

Research from the fields of both Linguistics and CA has traditionally associated *I think* with a downgrading function in talk. Within CA, *I think* is understood to operate as a marker a dispreference, which is intrinsically tentative or reluctant (e.g. Atkinson and Drew 1979; Levinson 1983; Nofsinger 1991). For example, in an early elucidation of the features of dispreferred actions, Atkinson and Drew (1979: 58) highlight the way that the rejection of an offer is 'somewhat 'soft-ened' by the inclusion of '*I don't think*,'' whilst for Levinson (1983), *I think* is heralded as one of the ways that a second pair part is characteristically mitigated.

Similarly, within linguistics, research has demonstrated the downgrading function of *think*, assuming only a minus-commitment application (e.g. Hooper 1975; Jucker 1986). Turnbull and Saxton (1997) explore the facework that epistemic modals achieve during lay speakers' refusals to comply with requests. The authors contend that, in contrast to epistemic modals asserting absolute necessity (e.g. I know), *I think* expresses 'probability by indicating that the laws of rationality dispose but do not compel the speaker to believe the truth of the state of affairs' (p. 149). Thus, with respect to preserving face during refusals to comply, *I (don't) think* presents a display of tentativeness and reluctance to refuse.

Subsequently, however, the *thinking* device has been shown to potentially both strengthen and weaken speaker commitment. Simon-Vandenbergen (2000) examines the cognitive verb *I think* in a comparative analysis of political interviews and everyday conversations. She finds a dual-role for the particle as a marker of commitment, which is differentially distributed between the two contexts. In the conversational discourse, *I think* tends to indicate a probability-based opinion toward potentially verifiable propositions. Conversely, in her political data, *I think* usually precedes opinions and subjective evaluations, typically accompanied by 'expressions of epistemic certainty, maximizing devices and emphasisers' (p. 54), which display strong commitment in potentially controversial matters that lack objective certitude. Notwithstanding this empirical distinction, Simon-Vandenbergen notes a common feature of *I think* across

the two contexts – that it invariably communicates a speaker's personal perspective. Nuyts (2001: 390) agrees with such a conclusion, asserting more broadly that 'mental state predicates systematically express subjectivity.'

Fetzer (2008, 2011) also applies the concept of commitment to the use of the cognitive verb *think* in political discourse. In line with Simon-Vandenbergen (2000), Fetzer (2011: 265) argues that, when it co-occurs with 'markers of epistemic modality expressing probability and possibility, *I think* has an attenuating function, and with markers expressing certainty and necessity, it has a boosting function.' These findings highlight a contextual dimension to the use of *I think*. In particular, Simon-Vandenbergen (2000) argues that casual conversation's typical emphasis on agreement contrasts with the adversarial manner by which interviewers conventionally task interviewees to respond to opposing views. This perspective aligns with Nuyts (2001), who finds that mental state predicates predominate in contexts characterised by personal opinions and overtly individual experiences and/or in argumentative or antagonistic contexts.

2.3 Subjectivizing maneuvers and objective evaluations

In the field of DP, cognitions are examined as they are produced and engaged with in talk-in-interaction (Edwards and Potter 2005), whilst remaining agnostic regarding inner cognitive activity (see Antaki 2006). This work concerns itself with the practical social business accomplished when people make use of mental state terms (Antaki 2006). Examples include, invocations of (not) remembering (Muntigl and Tim Choi 2010); imagining (e.g. Guise et al. 2007); (not) wanting, (not) knowing, and intending (Edwards 2006). In each of these examples, emphasis is placed on speaker deployment of subjectivity, whereby human agency becomes the overt focus of the talk. In this article, we refer to such activity as subjectivizing maneuvers as, in line with a DP approach, we are concerned solely with the practical accomplishments that stem from *doing* subjectivity in talk, while making no claims regarding what may or may not be the 'inner' subjective experience of the speaker.

DP work on fact construction evidences the rhetorical strength of devices that establish matters as objective facts (e.g. Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter 1996; Xenitidou and Morasso 2014). To frame something as a fact is to make it 'appear solid, neutral, independent of the speaker, and to be merely mirroring some aspect of the world' (Potter 1996: 1). This representation dissociates the described matter from human error and the speaker's own stake or interest (Edwards and Potter 1992). In analysis of food evaluations in family mealtime conversations, Wiggins and Potter (2003) focus on the contrast between subjectivizing versus

objectivizing activity. These authors distinguish subjective evaluations as occasions where the subject is grammatically foregrounded, such that their food (dis)preferences are the focus of the utterance. Meanwhile, in objective evaluations, the object is grammatically foregrounded, such that the utterance focuses on the qualities of the food itself. Wiggins and Potter's comparative analysis highlights a number of rhetorical advantages of each evaluation type, in particular, the way that these evaluations differentially manage their implications for others. For example, by focusing on the author, subjective evaluations avoid implicating others as sharing the evaluation. This can be useful for protecting hearers' negative face (see Brown and Levinson 1987). Conversely, in the case of complimenting an object's (food item's) creator, an objective evaluation praises that object's qualities, implying that anyone evaluating the object would likely (also) do so positively. Such contrasts highlight the unique affordances offered by subjectivizing maneuvers, which is the focus of the present article.

3 Data and methodology

Our data comprise a corpus of 11 TR shows broadcast live by BBC Radio 5 between January and April 2013. These shows featured within the regular *Your Call* weekday morning slot, which traditionally involved live debate of a preselected, often contentious, current affairs topic. Members of the public called in and contributed their views alongside input from pre-invited elite callers, judged to have some relevant knowledge or expertise. The 11 shows were selected from a larger corpus, collected daily over a four month period. The selection was based solely upon the show titles to ensure the inclusion of wide ranging topics that were considered likely to generate input from diverse callers. In total, the dataset of 11 shows comprise 10,228 lines of transcript (see the Appendix for transcription conventions). Across the dataset, *think* is stated on a total of 708 occasions. The minimum instances of *think* in any given episode is 33 and the maximum is 105, (Mean = 64).

4 Analysis

In keeping with the findings of Fetzer (2008), *think* was by far the most frequent cognitive verb in our data. Across the dataset we identified frequencies of the following cognitive verbs (also referred to as weak assertives [Hooper 1975] or parantheticals [Urmson 1952]): *think* = 708; *believe/ief* = 79; *expect* = 22; *suppose* = 26; *imagine* = 10; *guess* = 4. The *thinking* device, which includes *think(ing)/thought,*

featured across the contributions made by both the host and callers within all of the programmes analyzed. The analysis below distinguishes three functions of the *thinking* device that were found to predominate in our data*:* setting an intersubjective agenda; doing opinion; and managing facts.

4.1 Setting an intersubjective agenda

One of the most common ways in which formulations of *thinking* appeared in the data involved its invocation by the show's host, as part of their recurrent, omni-relevant institutional activity (Kilby and Horowitz 2013). The first example of this occurs within the standard host activity of sending out to the audience an initial call or routine reminder of the show's topic. These featured the *thinking* device in eight of the 11 shows, for example:

(1)   *[Show F: host-think].*

1 NC   >we want< your thoughts oh five hun̲dred >nine oh nine<

2   ↓si̲x nine thre::e

(2)   *[Show E: host-think].*

1 NC   what do you̲ think should tax̲ payers stump up so

2   parents can̲ (.) stay at home̲

In addition to such topic initiation work, a regular host's deployment of *thinking* featured within a second omni-relevant host activity: introducing or reintroducing callers to the air (Thornborrow 2001). At least one example of this use of *thinking* appeared in each of the 11 shows and tended to take the open-ended format of *what do you think*.

(3)   *[Show C: host-think].*

1 NC   Well let's hear from ↑A̲::ngela in ox er

2   An̲gela in Ox̲fordshire Angela what d'you ↓think̲ (.)

Less frequently, the *thinking* device featured when hosts posed questions to callers currently on air. These tended to take the fixed-response format of *do you think (that) x*.

(4)　　*[Show K: host-think].*

1 RB　<u>do</u> you think it is a uniquely (0.2) <u>Engli</u>sh trait

2　　　this ↑<u>arro</u>gance?

The majority of these shows explicitly target evaluative concerns linked to contemporary social issues in the UK. For example, one show debated *Should the army be recruiting 16 year olds?* at a time when international campaign groups were petitioning the British Army to end the recruitment of people under the age of eighteen; and *Should the NHS give IVF to women in their 40's?* was debated in the wake of a change in NHS guidelines on this issue. The hosts' variable and repeated usage of the *thinking* device during call openings serves to focus the business of these shows on the subjectivity of *what people think*. This creates a space in which perspectives on, and evaluations of, the issue at hand can, should and do differ. Competing thoughts invoke an intersubjective atmosphere in which multiplicities of evaluations provide for the entertainment of listeners.

    In our analysis, the *thinking* device provides a mechanism for setting an intersubjective agenda for these shows, such that intersubjective, and often competing, views and opinions become the focus. As Fetzer (2008: 386) argues, as soon as a speaker communicates a subjective world stance it 'is no longer part of the subjective world but assigned an intersubjective status.' We use the term 'intersubjective' here to incorporate both what Billig (1989) distinguishes by this term – the assumption that viewpoints toward a referent should be coherent with/substitutable for each other – and the alternative assumption, which he calls *multisubjectivity* – that numerous, potentially contradictory, viewpoints toward a referent can coexist. Billig argues that even holders of strong views may take a multisubjective stance at some points (e.g. when distinguishing their views from counterviews). In the sequential run of TR, where the host oversees progression of the debate from caller to caller, the intersubjective agenda provided by the host's use of the *thinking* device allows for callers to adopt either an intersubjective or a multisubjective stance as appropriate to their rhetorical purposes.

4.2 Doing opinion

We turn now to caller invocations of the *thinking* device, to illustrate a series of ways in which it is deployed so as to construct opinion, stance or perspective. In the first instance, we examine caller invocations of *I think* in the accomplishment

of evaluations. As previously noted, CA demonstrates the work that *I think* accomplishes as a marker of dispreference (e.g. Atkinson and Drew 1979; Levinson 1983; Nofsinger 1991). In the current data, there were many examples of *I think* appearing, on first glance, as just such a dispreference marker within second pair parts.

(5)   *[Show K: caller-think].*

1 RB e:rm so Mark ↑<u>are</u> the English ↓<u>arrogant</u>

2 Ma2 (0.4) well (0.4) ↑<u>I</u> think some some that-

3   clearly <u>some</u> English people <u>are</u> arrogant

4   but but a- w- a- for the ↑most ↓part y'know ↑I ↓<u>think</u> that

5   ↑<u>other</u> nations have .hh um >y'know<

6   a a quite a justified inferi↑<u>ori</u>↓ty complex

7   and they're ↑<u>all</u> ↓ready ↑<u>all</u> too ↓ready to take off<u>en</u>se

8   and ↑<u>call</u> ↓English people arrogant

Extract 5 is typical of such occurrences, whereby *I think* occurs within a question-answer sequence, in combination with various other dispreference markers, including delays, repair initiations (*some some that- clearly <u>some</u>* [lines 2–3]), prefaces (*well* [line 2]) and token agreements (*<u>some</u> English people <u>are</u> arrogant but* [lines 3–4]). In such cases, in keeping with the findings of Turnbull and Saxton (1997), the *thinking* device works to maintain face. In Extract 5, *I think* confines the evaluation – *some some that- clearly <u>some</u> English people <u>are</u> arrogant* (lines 2–3) – to only what the speaker *thinks*, thus foregrounding the speaker's subjectivity.

    In her analysis of political interview data, Simon-Vandenbergen (1997) reports similar hedges, whereby *I think* is combined with analogous items. Such utterances are also typical of what Fetzer (2008) characterises as a minus-commitment usage of *I think*. Far more prevalent, however, in the current data, was the contrasting deployment of *I think* identified by both Simon-Vandenbergen (1997, 2000) and Fetzer (2008, 2011): the plus-commitment usage. Simon-Vandenbergen (1997) notes the way that *I think* tends to be repeatedly combined with high value choices by political speakers, displaying

a very strong commitment to their own thesis. CA's extensive attention to high value choices follows their characterisation by Pomerantz (1986) as extreme case formulations (ECFs). In our data, *I think* was recurrently combined with ECFs, which serves to upgrade commitment in the way Simon-Vandenbergen (1997, 2000) observes. Here are two examples:

(6)   *[Show C: caller-think].*

1 Ma   .hh erm well I I ↑tuned in act↓ually

2   as I was driving a<u>long</u> Nicky

3   [and I was just °real-°

4 NC   [↑<u>thank</u> ↓you (.) [((laughs))]

5 Ma   [it's o↑<u>ka::y</u> I was ↑<u>ab::</u>solutely app↓<u>a::lled</u> .hh

6   at the way Holly <u>Dust</u>in was <u>spok</u>en to:

7   and I think .hh <u>she</u> is just a <u>perf</u>ect illust<u>ra</u>tion .hh

8   of how when women ↑<u>start</u> to speak ↓out

9   about what's ↑<u>happening</u> to them .hh

10 NC   [yeah]

11 Ma   [they get ↑<u>si</u>↓lenced hh and what they're saying

12   is actually often minimised and so

13   from a discussion about groping we suddenly

14   found ourselves having a discussion about wolf whistling

15 NC   [Yes]

16 Ma   [and the who::le discussion got taken away

17   and I think it's just hh a typical wa::y hh that

18   when women and girls try and speak about

19   out about these things hh that we're silenced hh

20   so we we don't try again

(7)   *[Show D: caller-think].*

1 Su hall↑o: how are ↓you

2 NC very well <u>thank</u> you it's all <u>you::rs</u>

3 Su Right erm I hhmm personally

4   I think it's an abomination hh as far as I'::m aware

5   and I'm not a biologist o::r anybody like that erm hh

6   we have sex (.) partly because its enjoyable hh

7   but also because we it::s for procreation

8 NC [Oh right]

9 Su [to continue the species hh

10   er::m (.) and as I see that er::m the human (.) race

11   at the moment is not exactly going to

12   become extinct overnight hh I don't see that there's

13   a need to try and save every single embryo hh

14   an::d sort of produce a child from it erm

15   I also think that not every woman is designed or or

16   intended in the great scheme of things to have a child

In these extracts, the initial *think-ECF* pairings toward the start of each turn, *I think .hh she is just a perfect illustration* (Extract 6, line 7); *I think it's an abomination* (Extract 7, line 4), convey a speaker's extreme subjective evaluation. Building on Pomerantz's (1986) work, subsequent research has demonstrated the potential for ECFs to function as displays of speaker investment (Edwards 2000; Norrick 2004). Moreover, Edwards (2000) notes that an important feature of ECFs is that they are regularly treated as 'hearably nonliteral … that is, offered and received as something other than accountably accurate proposals about the world' (p. 369). In discussing the potential ambiguity of private verbs, Simon Vandenbergen outlines the position of Stubbs (1986), who proposes that a modal meaning will be inferred when *I think* is followed by a verifiable proposition, whilst, when it is followed by an unverifiable proposition, a psychological meaning will be inferred. However, based upon her analysis, Simon-Vandenbergen (2000: 52) reports that, although there are instances where *I think* is followed by either a verifiable or non-verifiable proposition, there are also 'many cases where the distinction between verifiable and non-verifiable is not clear-cut because the proposition refers partly to a probable fact and partly to personal opinion.' Moreover, in her political interview data, the propositions related to *I think* are typically ''pure opinion' and 'subjective evaluation'' (p. 52). She suggests that such use serves the speaker's desire to appear committed and self-assured when talking about controversial issues that are far from certain.

In our analysis of TR data, we similarly found both verifiable and non-verifiable propositions linked to the *thinking* device. However, by far the most common use of the *thinking* device was related to non-verifiable propositions, whereby lay and elite speakers display plus-commitment to an intersubjective psychological position in a similar way to that of the elite speakers in Simon-Vandenbergen's (2000) political interview corpus. In his detailed work on rhetoric, Billig (1996) states that building advocacy for one's position is a central rhetorical activity, which draws upon a range of strategies designed to develop and uphold a given stance, and that the issue of consistency is key. In Extracts 6 and 7 the *think-ECF* pairing occurs toward the start of the speaker's turn, thereby providing an unambiguous moral starting point upon which additional advocacy work can rest. In both of these Extracts we see such advocacy swiftly develop, with a second use of the *thinking device* closely following the initial *think-ECF* pairing. In Extract 6 this second use might be routinely treated as non-verifiable *(and I think its just hh a typical wa::y hh that when women and girls try and speak about out about these things hh that we're silenced* [lines 17–19]*)*. However, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that factual evidence may be gathered to support the claim. Meanwhile, the subsequent pairing in Extract 7 *(I also think that not every woman is designed or or intended in the great scheme of*

things to have a child [lines 15–16]) is, again, arguably verifiable. However, both propositions we suggest best align with Simon-Vandenbergen's (2000) prior point, namely, that the verifiable qualities of some propositions are, in practice, not clear cut. From a rhetorical standpoint, such ambiguity regarding the verifiable/non-verifiable basis of the proposition is well suited to advancing the ambitions of the speaker, enabling the speaker to promote an unambiguous moral position, whilst limiting the possibility of challenge regarding the objective basis of the supportive claims. In other words, whilst the use of ambiguous, or indeed, non-verifiable propositions may potentially leave room for doubt regarding the objective facts which underpin the speaker's stance; they afford advocacy through consistency, thereby leaving no room for ambiguity regarding the speaker's moral stance in relation to the issue.

Having demonstrated these two examples of an upgrading function to *I think*, we now return to further consider Extract 5:

(5)   *[Show K: caller-think]*.

1 RB   erm so Mark ↑<u>are</u> the English ↓<u>arro</u>gant

2 Ma2 (0.4) well (0.4) ↑<u>I</u> think some some that-

3   clearly <u>some</u> English people <u>are</u> arrogant

4   but but a- w- a- for the ↑most ↓part y'know ↑I ↓<u>think</u> that

5   ↑<u>oth</u>er nations have .hh um >y'know<

6   a a quite a justified inferi↑<u>ori</u>↓ty complex

7   and they're ↑<u>all</u> ↓ready ↑<u>all</u> too ↓ready to take off<u>en</u>se

8   and ↑<u>call</u> ↓English people arrogant

We have already noted the caller's inclusion of dispreference markers in Extract 5, but we can also see here ECFs: *clearly* (line 3) and ↑<u>all</u> ↓*ready* ↑<u>all</u> *too* ↓*ready* (line 7). We suggest that here is where a bidirectional potential of *I think,* in relation to commitment, supports the rhetorical work of the speaker. Billig (1996) highlights that speakers often experience situations in which they must strive to identify with an audience while simultaneously offering a contradictory viewpoint, and 'when this occurs, the contrary forces of accommodation and

contradictions must be brought into play, and the speaker will have the tricky job of navigating the waters whose currents swirl about dangerously in several directions' (p. 268). In Extract 5, the mix of ECF upgrades and dispreference downgrades, combined with the two uses of the *thinking* device, enables the speaker to firstly concede that English arrogance is possible, via a modal probability use of *think*. English arrogance is then set aside as the speaker presents a more central concern, namely the *inferi↑ori↓ty complex* (line 6) attributed to other nations. This second use of *think* is not open to modal interpretation, instead it provides a psychological display of speaker subjectivity, presenting a morally grounded plus-commitment to the proposition.

Simon-Vandenbergen reports that, whilst variable displays of plus and minus commitment are evident across her political interviews and casual conversation data, displays of doubt are more evident in the casual conversation data. Meanwhile, displays of certainty are a much stronger feature of political interviews. Interestingly, our analysis reveals similar use of the *thinking* device by everyday lay speakers who are calling in to TR, to the elite political speakers in the data analysed by Simon-Vandenbergen (2000). The above examples reflect how *I think* serves to boost these lay speakers' subjective position, whilst striving to maintain a relationship with the audience and avoiding impeding the actions of others if they were to disagree with that position. Moreover, as Simon-Vandenbergen (2000) notes, *I think* is always available to be oriented to as a marker of probability. Thus, the *think*-ECF pairing can potentially inoculate ECFs against challenge to their 'factually brittle' status (Edwards 2000: 352).

The above observations about the upgrading and downgrading functions of *I think* also apply to examples of *I don't think* in the data. In the following two Extracts, *I don't think* functions quite straightforwardly in a minus-commitment, dispreference-marking role.

(8) *[Show K: host-think].*

1 RB I d- I ↑<u>don't</u> think that's <u>abso</u>lutely en↑<u>tirely</u> ↓true

2   >but it< ↑might (.) >be< ↓<u>bro:ad</u>ly speaking

(9) *[Show J: caller-think].*

1 Ni >I mean< I've .hh I've got Mediter<u>ra</u>nean blood in me

2   the the Mediterranean's do it ↑<u>eff</u>ortlessly

3   I <u>don</u>'t know the <u>why</u>s and the <u>where</u>fores

4   I ↓<u>don</u>'t think we've got time to a- analyze <u>why</u> it <u>i:s</u>

5   .hhh e::r maybe there's a stronger ↑<u>fami</u>ly unit

6   ↓I don't I- I don't know the full <u>reasons</u>

Here, *I don't think* combines, as Fetzer (2011) observes, with (other) markers of probability: [not] *absolutely en ↑ tirely ↓ true* (Extract 8, line 1); ↑ *might (.) >be<* (Extract 8, line 2); *maybe* (Extract 9, line 5); and *I don't know* (Extract 9, lines 3 and 6). It also combines with (other) dispreference markers, such as self-repair (*I d- I* [Extract 8, line 1], *I've .hh I've* [Extract 9, line 1] and *the the* [Extract 9, line 2]); delay (*e::r* [Extract 9, line 5]); and token agreements (*it< ↑might (.) >be< ↓bro:adly speaking* [Extract 8, line 2]). Commensurate with the facework Turnbull and Saxton (1997) report being accomplished in the extensive use of *I don't think* in speaker's refusals to comply, in Extract 8, line 1, *I don't think* softens the host's challenge to the veracity of a prior caller's objectivity claims. Similarly, in Extract 9 line 4, *I don't think* softens speaker commitment to an assertion of a time-constraint impediment to the provision of further information.

    However, in our data, we also repeatedly witness *I don't think* operating in a plus-commitment capacity. The presentation of this involves speakers developing a contrast between what they *don't think* and *do think* in a single turn. In these cases, what speakers *don't think* does not counter what another caller has argued in favor of; rather speakers present what they *don't think* juxtaposed against what they *do think*. Below are some examples: Extract 10 is drawn from a debate concerned with 'tax payers and stay-at-home parents;' Extract 11 appears in a programme addressing concerns around domestic terrorism; and Extract 12 is from a show focusing on an MP and his wife being imprisoned.

(10)   *[Show E: caller-think].*

1 Ia oh isn't it ↓<u>won</u>derful that we've got a er

2   a <u>school</u> in <u>Peter</u>borough with ↑<u>three</u> hundred children

3   and <u>none</u> of them has got <u>Eng</u>lish as a first <u>lang</u>uage

4   hh there's el<u>even</u> language ((inaudible)) ↑<u>yep</u> (.) cool.

5   ↑I don't think that's ↓goo:d (.)I think that's a failure

6   by ↑government

(11)   *[Show F: caller-think].*

1 WZ I- I think we've got e- e- g- I- I- I we've got

2   ↓scho::ols in ↓Birmingham which are

3   ninety percent >one particular< faith I don't think that

4   (.) particularly preaches integration wel well

5   I ↓don't think that supports community cohesion well

6   I think >we need to look at< how we can address that hh

7   I don't think that hh

8   that creates (.) er er ↑terrorism er ↑terrorists

9   er (.) I ↑think that hh that ha- .hh

10   ↑helps (.) ma::rginalise individuals

11   I think >that's what we need to< look at

(12)   *[Show I: caller-think].*

1 NC Steve what was it like for you

2 St   it was horrendous (.) it really was it was-

3   worst time of my life .hh and I feel really sorry

4   for the ↑pair of them to be honest with ya

5   I don't think >people like that<

6   should really be sent to ↑prison (.)

7   I think it's a comp<u>le</u>te waste of <u>th::e</u> erm (.)

8   ((inaudible)) <u>cost</u> (.)

Whilst Extract 10 represents a clear-cut example of *I don't think* and *I think* performing upgrading of the evaluations made, Extracts 11 and 12 contain downgrades (e.g. *parti<u>cu</u>larly (.) <u>pre</u>aches* [Extract 11, line 4]*; should really be* [Extract 12, line 6]) and upgrades (e.g. *we need to look* [Extract 11, line 6]; *comp<u>le</u>te waste* [Extract 12, line 7]). In these cases, the combined use of upgrades and downgrades again serves the rhetorical effectiveness of the *thinking* device by presenting a balanced and reasoned assessment, which in turn promotes the speaker's subjectivity. In the case of *I do-don't think* contrasts, the speaker's subjective stance is communicated via the considered and rational articulation of assertions they are committed to and against.

Having elucidated a number of the ways in which opinions are constructed in conjunction with a first-person deployment of the *thinking* device, we now turn to its third-person usage. The first notable matter is that proposals of what *others think* are far less common in our data than uses of *I think*. Secondly, a wide range of others are represented as *thinking* by callers, including *you*, *somebody*, *they*, *people,* and various identity designations.

(13)   *[Show J: caller-think].*

1 Ar I <u>must</u> say that I <u>pho</u>ned up

2   because I was ↑<u>in</u>censed b::y .hh

3   the <u>la</u>dy who spoke just be<u>fore</u> the break

4   who seemed to think that she could do

5   .hh >anything< she ↑<u>wi:sh</u>ed irrespective of other ↑<u>peo</u>ple

(14)   *[Show C: caller-think].*

1 An   ↑<u>wolf</u> whistling which it which

2   it actually ↓<u>is</u> a <u>com</u>pliment

3 NC yeah we-

4 An   it's a ↑compliment if somebody (0.4)

5   ↑thinks ↓you're attr<u>act</u>ive

In these Extracts, callers are using the *thinking* device to focus their challenge of another's perspective by emphasizing the subjectivity of said other. A common feature of such challenges is the explicit or implicit contrast of the others' subjectivity with extant reality.

(15)   *[Show K: caller-think].*

1 TE   it <u>suits</u> (0.6) sm<u>all</u>er countries (0.4)

2   say like S<u>cot</u>land (0.4) >d'you know<

3   to↑<u>think</u> that ↓<u>England</u> are <u>arrogant</u> they're <u>not</u> arrogant
        Extract 16 [Show G: caller-think].

1 KL   ↑<u>all</u> I would ↓<u>say</u> .hh is .hh for >anyone< who <u>thinks</u>

2   that ↑<u>violence</u> will be the thing that turns it round

3   it <u>isn't</u> it im↑<u>mediately</u> ↓moves the debate

4   a<u>wa:y</u> away from the ↑<u>issue</u> hh <u>onto</u> one of ↑<u>violence</u>

When Jefferson (2004a) outlines her 'notes on 'At first I thought'' (p. 139), she builds upon the earlier observations by Sacks (1992, Vol I: 787), in which 'the contrast class true-false ... turn[s] out to be relevant... for participants' and often involves the use of verbs, including *think*. Expanding these analyses, Jefferson (2004a) identifies a recurrent conversational sequence, whereby a first speaker states *X is the case*, a second speaker tenders an *I thought Y* counter-statement, following which, the first speaker makes a *denial of Y*. The sequences in the Extracts above are somewhat similar. However, in these cases a single speaker produces all the parts and the sequence order is: *other thinks Y, denial of Y, X is the case*. Outlining how her identified exchanges map onto the *At first I thought X, then I realised Y* format, Jefferson (2004a: 145) explicates how "thought' is used when it turns out to be wrong *but is being pursued as in-principle correct*, reasonable, right' (original emphasis). However, the *other thinks*-reality contrast within the current data is a more straightforward discounting of the subjectivity of others.

4.3 Managing facts

A contrasting use of the *thinking* device in our data relates to situations where *I think* is attached to objectively verifiable propositions. We will focus on two Extracts, one of which discusses concerns about immigration into the UK, and the other explores attitudes towards providing IVF treatment to women in their forties. Extract 17 involves the speaker's use of *I think* in expressions of uncertainty.

(17)   *[Show B: caller-think].*

1 Al and ↑then you put >somebody< who's in↑competent

2   and as parliament put it .hh er Keith Vaz I ↓think

3   the chairman of the home affairs sel↑ect com↓mittee

(18)   *[Show D: caller-think].*

1 Ro she's only got a ↑yea:r ↓t::o

2   >to potentially have< a ↑ba↓by erm

3   now that >puts a lot< of ↑press↓ure on it and I think

4   er (.) with my ↑limi↓ted understanding of it

5   that actually can (.) contribute to er

6   a negative (.) possi↑bility

In these Extracts, the speaker makes a factual declaration, but attenuates their pronouncement using *I think*. This use of *I think* fits with its common linguistic treatment, following Halliday (1994: 342), as an 'epistemic modality of probability.' Here, we demonstrate qualified support in our data for such a function of *I think*: qualified in that this represents just one of a range of ways that *I think* is deployed. It should also be noted that such a use of *I think* is regular (occurring in all 11 shows) but not very common in the data. Related to our earlier observations, we suggest that the TR context falls somewhere between the extremes of lay and political discourses identified by Simon-Vandenbergen (1998, 2000). Simon-Vandenbergen

finds such ''low value' of probability' expressions (2000: 53) to be recurrent in her conversational data but very infrequent in both her political interview (2000) and parliamentary debate corpora (1998).

Edwards and Potter's (1992) work on fact construction suggests that devices which establish descriptions as being pure reflections of objective reality are a key solution to stake dilemmas, such that speaker interests are removed. What we witness in the above usage of *I think* is that it is possible for subjectivity to be foregrounded in a way that manages the dilemma of stake. This usage of *I think*, rather than indexing an opinion or stance on a proposition, highlights the tentativeness of the proposition. Thus, far from introducing an interestedness, it acts as a qualifier that protects against corruption by inaccuracy. Moreover, buffering a statement of fact in this way projects, for the speaker, an identity of someone whose central concern is the veracity of their assertions.

One final point of analysis concerns the usage of *I think* for the handling of facts during what can be glossed as concluding. The most common way in which this was accomplished was in the format *so I think*.

(19)　*[Show E: caller-think].*

1 Be　there are no allowances for the married ↑mother hh

2　　　but ↑single mothers (0.4) ↑do get

3　　　allowances for their children (0.4) .hh

4　　　so ↑I think that it would be a good idea

5　　　to pay something to ↑married ↓mothers

Drawing on Schiffrin's (1987: 201–202) proposal that 'so conveys a meaning of 'result,'' Tien Do and Phuc (2012: 298) demonstrate that ''so' serves to show the introduction of something as the upshot of speakers' prior talk ... as resulting from their shared knowledge and/or a result of the activity they are engaged in.' In the current data, a concluding activity is accomplished via a statement of fact, followed by *so I think,* and then an evaluation that is conveyed as the consequence of that fact. A parallel function appears in our data via the format *and I think*. According to Schiffrin (1985), *and* can perform a similar coordinating function to *so* when advancing a proposition and this seems to be the case in examples such as the following:

(20)   *[Show I: caller-think].*

1 LB   they (0.4) play jokes on you hh get- (.)

2   <u>clo</u>thes that don't <u>fit</u> you prison clothes

3   I remember them bit sort of <u>star</u>chy and <u>scra</u>tchy .hh

4   but it ↑<u>actual</u>↓ly (.) er for ↑<u>me</u>: >it was

5   ↓no< different from <u>school</u> .hh bit like- (.)

6   >you know< how one was treated at <u>school</u>

7   .hh but that's the in↑<u>itial</u> shock and I ↑<u>think</u> <u>fo</u>::r (.)

8   <u>e:r</u> (.) ↑<u>Vic</u>↓ky ↑<u>that</u> sort of treatment will be:

9   ↑<u>really</u> quite difficult to <u>deal</u> with

Sometimes, however, no coordinating conjunction is present, yet the structure and function of the utterance appear otherwise comparable to the uses already discussed. In these cases, a speaker's evaluation is presented as the outcome of the facts they have just pronounced.

(21)   *[Show H: caller-think].*

1 De   my <u>fa</u>ther said (0.2) .hh

2   when I <u>left</u> (0.2) <u>e:rm</u> the ↑train station

3   I'll see you in a couple a weeks (.)

4   I <u>think</u> that gave me- .hh e:r

5   basically the (0.4) will hh to stay <u>in</u> really

In each of these cases, *I think* appears to subjectivize a proposition that is presented as an upshot from some pre-stated description of the world. This observation again expands on previous analyses of fact construction. We witness

constructions of objective fact adjoined to subjectivized evaluations, such that speaker subjectivity can be foregrounded while conveying a strict adherence to the veracity of matters of fact. Again, the dilemma of stake (Edwards and Potter 1992) is managed, not by the complete avoidance of subjectivization but, in this case, by co-opting fact constructions to bolster subjective evaluations.

5 Discussion and conclusion

In our analysis, the *thinking* device has been demonstrated to act as a resource that can perform a range of functions. In the context of TR where speaker intersubjectivity is of central concern, we find the *thinking* device to be repeatedly involved in the business of opinion-making, and also tied up with the construction of facts. In our data, the creation of a space for opinions to be aired is promoted via invocations of *thinking* by show hosts, while, in producing opinions, callers draw on the *thinking* device to build advocacy for their standpoint. In doing so we witness the flexibility of the *thinking* device, with the capacity to both upgrade and downgrade speaker utterances, and operating on factual assertions in both additive and contrastive ways.

Following previous work that has examined *I think* in the realms of political discourse (Fetzer 2008, Fetzer 2011; Simon-Vandenbergen 1997, Simon-Vandenbergen 2000) and lay talk (Simon-Vandenbergen 2000; Turnbull and Saxton 1997), our analysis explores TR discourse, a site where multiplicity of views and the voicing of strong opinion is normative. Simon-Vandenbergen (2000) argues that, in her data, the tone of speaker turns typically demonstrates uncertainty in casual conversation, and certainty in political interviews. She concludes that this is because only the political interviewees are undertaking to 'show they are in possession of the necessary authority to deserve the trust and confidence of their listeners or at least part of their listeners' (p. 58). In the current analysis, upgrading uses of *I think* are very common and uncertainty deployments are less common but regular. One explanation is that these TR callers are less engaged in projecting an authoritative identity on these shows than the political figures in Simon-Vandenbergen's (1997, 1998, 2000) data. Alternatively, projecting an authoritative identity may have been one of these callers' central projects but, compared to Simon-Vandenbergen's political speakers, these callers may have been freer to do uncertainty for the purposes of conveying a rational, veracity-focused identity, whenever the occasion warranted such a move.

In terms of the analytic scope of the current work, our analysis adds to existing DP work, highlighting that, in addition to the objectivizing work associated with

fact construction (e.g. Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter 1996; Xenitidou and Morasso 2014), subjectivizing manouevres are also useful rhetorical tools in the furnishing of both opinion and fact. Furthermore, related directly to the work by Wiggins and Potter (2003: 516) on grammatically embedded subjective evaluations – as 'I (x) the cheese', versus objective evaluations 'The cheese is (x)' – our analysis reveals an alternative, conjoined subjective-objective evaluation, 'I think the cheese is (x).' This format offers a range of affordances that differ from either of those previously identified by Wiggins and Potter.

In relation to classic CA work, our analysis has shown numerous upgrading usages of *I think*, as well as deployments of *I think* in conjunction with combined upgrading and downgrading particles. We have thus argued that the dual-capacity of *I think* represents a valuable rhetorical resource for speakers, which differs from its use as a second pair part marker of dispreference. On a rather different note, we would also add the contrast of *I do-don't think* and of *other thinks*-reality to *At first I thought X, then I realised Y* (Jefferson 2004a), as examples in which the *thinking* device is commonly deployed within a contrast structure in talk-in-interaction.

Whilst adopting a predominantly DP approach, we have sought to synthesize our analysis with the existing body of linguistic research. Linguistic research has taken a keen interest in the study of *thinking* as a cognitive verb, and this body of linguistic work has scaffolded our knowledge and our approach to examining *thinking* as a rhetorical device. Our findings lend support to the work of Simon-Vandenbergen (1997, 2000) and Fetzer (2008, 2011) in arguing against the assumption of a purely probabilistic quality to *I think*. We did find an important function for probabilistic deployments of *I think*, in its uncertainty usage, and these appear useful for the delicate handling of facts. However, the current analysis makes clear that the probabilistic deployment of *I think* is just one of many functions of the device. We hope that our attempt to synthesize linguistic and DP approaches to examine *thinking* in this manner provides useful insights for researchers in both fields, and that our work might stimulate additional integrated attempts to study cognitive verbs.

In conclusion, we recognize that the current analysis does not represent an exhaustive list of potential uses for the *thinking* device and we suggest that it merits a great deal more scrutiny. Further work appears warranted across a range of contexts in order to establish when and how the *thinking* device gains its rhetorical power. Moreover, similar investigations of the ways in which speakers invoke subjectivity-talk such as *feeling*, *believing*, *guessing*, and *knowing* might also be highly illuminating. We hope, through this analysis, to have stimulated interest in synthesizing approaches to the study of subjectivizing maneuvers and

cast some light on what can be accomplished by foregrounding subjectivity with the *thinking* device, in the case of broadcast discourse.

Appendix: Transcript conventions

Based on the Jefferson (2004b) transcription system.

(0.6)	Numbers in brackets indicate elapsed time in seconds
(.)	A dot in brackets indicates a hearable pause of under 0.2 seconds
<u>can</u>	Underlining indicates stressed intonation
[	Opening square bracket indicates the onset of overlapping talk
]	Closing square bracket indicates the end of overlapping talk, where discernable
°real°	Degree signs indicate speech volume that is markedly quiet
I- I-	Dash indicates abrupt cut-off of sound or word
↑I ↓do	Up and down arrows indicate high or low pitch
:	Colons indicate extensions of the sound immediately before
.	A full-stop indicates a completing inflection, irrespective of sentence completion
.hh	Dot-prefixed h pairs indicate an audible in-breath
hh	h pairs indicate an audible out-breath
>be<	Greater and lesser than symbols encompass talk at a discernibly faster speech rate
((words))	Transcriber description is provided in double brackets

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