

TELLING STORIES FROM THE NEWSROOM: A LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF DRAMATIZATION IN BROADCAST NEWS

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Abstract

Drawing on Linguistic Ethnography and Narrative Studies, the paper hones in on the on-going production of a news item about an airplane crash in Indonesia broadcasted by the Swiss French-speaking public TV in 2007. It shows how telling a story in the news is a team performance: from the structuring of the narrative to the dramatization of the reported events. The analysis focuses on a preliminary narrative sequence occurring at the beginning of the news item. It details step by step how and on the basis of what criteria media practitioners negotiate their narrative choices and what leads them to adopt a particular narrative configuration over another.

Keywords: Narrative practices, Storytelling, News, Dramatization, Linguistic Ethnography.

1. Narrative practices in the broadcast news

The article¹ aims to give a linguistic ethnographic account of narrative practices in the newsroom through a single case analysis. To this end, we approach both the media product, the news item, and the on-going media production, the news-making process. The paper deals with a set of data collected in 2007 at the French-speaking public TV broadcasting corporation in Switzerland and, in particular, data relating to a news item about an airplane crash in Indonesia. We focus on the on-going production of the news item and show how telling a story for a broadcast is a *team performance* (Goffman 1959). More precisely, the paper focuses on the collaborative structuring and dramatization of a preliminary narrative sequence occurring at the beginning of the news item.

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Our approach to storytelling in broadcast news falls into the context of a twofold shift: on the one hand, from *news products* to *news production* in media linguistics (Perrin 2006, 2013; Cotter 2010; Jacobs, Van Hout & Van Praet 2011; Burger & Perrin 2014); on the other hand, from *texts* to *practices* in sociolinguistic and discourse perspectives on narrative (Georgakopoulou 2007; De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2008, 2012). Thinking in terms of *narrative practices* in the *news production process* helps to solve a paradox raised by Montgomery (2005, 2007) showing that textual structure of television news (because it combines text and picture) appears to differ significantly from a common narrative form: “[T]elevision news presents actions which are often incomplete and where no identifiable character or protagonist is offered to help structure the subjective identification of the viewer [...] television news in its textual particulars quite simply fails to exhibit story-telling characteristics. On the contrary, the core principle of intelligibility in television news reports might be summed up as the convincing deployment of pictures – and, in this respect, narrative is only an occasional discursive resource [...]” (Montgomery 2005: 240). According to him, television news relies more on pictures than on stories with the result that the text is more a commentary of the images than a narrative in itself (Montgomery 2005: 251-252). Consequently, television news would not be narrative, and journalists would not be the “professional story-tellers of our age” (Bell 1994: 100).

This does not seem so from a news production perspective: “in their manipulation of temporal elements, reporters are not stenographers or transcribers; they are storytellers and interpreters” (Cotter 2015: 805). Naturally, the ways of telling a news story vary depending on several factors such as story complexity, journalistic style, available semiotic resources or allocated space/time (Perrin 2011). Likewise, as stated by the small stories research, “it does not make sense to talk about narrative as an undifferentiated whole or one homogeneous genre but as many genres closely associated with routine ways of telling stories in different contexts” (Georgakopoulou 2016: 257-258). Thus, if news texts do not always show a full-fledged narrative structure, it seems nevertheless relevant to study the news *as* or *related to* narrative practices².

² Moreover, we must take into account the ability of the audience to build stories from scattered information (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2013a) or through serialized events (e.g. Revaz & Baroni 2007). See also Perrin & Zampa (2018).

2. Data and methodology

We briefly present the data and the methodology we use to describe and analyse the complex phenomenon that telling a story from a newsroom is.

2.1. Data

Our paper exploits data collected at the International News of the French-speaking public TV broadcasting in Switzerland by the SSR-SRG Project (Perrin *et al.* 2008; Perrin 2013). The data documents the news production and products related to a single event, an airplane crash in 2007 in Indonesia (Burger 2011; Perrin 2013; Zampa 2017; Merminod 2018; Merminod & Burger *forthcoming*). Our data consists of computer loggings and audio-video recordings, as follows: 1 news item (from the noon edition); 3 editorial conferences (in the morning); 1 sequence of working sessions involving CA, the journalist in charge (in the morning); 1 computer logging (in the morning); 2 interviews with CA (a biographical and a retrospective one). Because of its focus on storytelling as a *team performance*, this paper emphasizes interactional data and only occasionally uses the other sets of data. The news items were broadcast in the TV news Bulletin of the French speaking public channel for the noon and the evening editions.

Excerpt 1: the news item (news Bulletin 07.03.2007, 12:46-12:47 pm)³

	<p>Anc1⁴ We begin with news from another aviation catastrophe this morning in Indonesia.</p>
	<p>Anc2 It is a Boeing 737 of the national company Garuda that crashed upon landing on the island of Java killing about twenty people. Most of the passengers were Indonesians but a delegation of Australian diplomats and journalists was also on board. Warning: some footage might be shocking. They are commentated on by CA.</p>
	

³ The data is originally in French. Additionally, it should be noted that the anchors' preface is written by the journalist around noon (11:56 am - 12:00 pm), *i.e.* after the writing of the news item (mainly written between 11:07 am and 11:55 am).

⁴ Anc1: Newsreader 1; Anc2: Newsreader 2; Over: Voice Over; Witt: Witness.

	<p>Over A few moments after the crash, the desperate escape, far from the Boeing, for one of the survivors. This passenger is not yet safe but his camera is on. No fewer than one hundred and twelve passengers, among the one hundred and thirty-three transported by the Indonesian company Garuda, survived, and six out of seven members of the crew. But many are injured. The statement of a security officer at the airport in Yogyakarta.</p>
	<p>Witt I heard two explosions and I pulled four people out of the airplane, safe and sound. About thirty passengers were already outside, and they too were all alive.</p>
	<p>Over Twenty-one people, however, did not manage to get out of the airplane and died, incinerated, trapped by the flames in the front part of the airplane. At the moment of the landing, the passengers had been warned that the Boeing was going to encounter strong turbulence. It hit the runway at excessive speed. The airplane rebounded on the tarmac twice before crashing violently into a rice field three hundred meters away and burning up completely.</p>
	
	

2.2. A linguistic ethnographic approach to newsroom activities

Even though it seems to be one of the best means to apprehend the complexity of the news, “until fairly recently, very few researchers with training in linguistics would have considered venturing into a newsroom to observe journalists going about their daily business of making news” (NT&T 2011: 1843-1844). Virtually, the linguistics of news production combined with newsroom ethnography allows us to consider news stories as embedded in a twofold process. Following Jacobs & Slembrouck (2010), we heuristically mobilise Goffman (1959) and his dramaturgical metaphor distinguishing the *front stage* from the *backstage*. The *front stage* is what is accessible to the audience, the media representation. The *backstage* is not public and only reachable by media practitioners: it is where useful material for the representation (*i.e.* the broadcast item) is collected, assembled and gathered round. It is the site where the actors of the representation can have another discourse – partly a reflexive discourse – about the representation.

Seen front stage, a news story can be approached as a product and a process: a structure representing events by verbal and iconic means that is embedded in a media performance introduced to an audience by an anchorman. *Seen backstage*, a news story is a product in process – *i.e.* an on-going production caught up in a complex network of practices – which is achieved by a team of practitioners from

several fields who ultimately speak as one actor, the broadcast. Because practitioners represent, confront and evaluate their own narrative choices backstage⁵, they provide the analysts with interesting representations of what is at stake when it comes to telling a story on the broadcast news. For the practitioners, these negotiations are sites of reflexivity in which they can more or less overtly exhibit the way they understand what they do and recount their understanding of what the others do. At the same time informing the ‘social meaning’ of a specific practice for a given community, these sites of reflexivity inform the analysts about it (Jaworski, Coupland & Galasinski 2004).

Drawing on Linguistic Ethnography (Rampton *et al.* 2004; Blommaert 2007; Maybin & Tusting 2011; Rampton 2014), we use “analytic tools from linguistics and discourse analysis embedded in an ethnographic epistemology [...]. This means that the apparatus of linguistics and discourse analysis are treated as a set of ‘sensitising’ concepts, [...] the point is that paradigms do not have to be a swallowed whole” (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts 2015: 33-36). Such a perspective is grounded in diverse sets of data “in order to understand the complexity of social events” (Snell, Shaw & Copland 2015: 10). For the purpose of this article, we employ tools from interactional and narrative studies. On the one hand, we use Conversation Analysis applied to institutional talk (Drew & Heritage 1992; Heritage & Clayman 2010) and Goffman’s descriptive apparatus (Goffman 1959, 1981) to follow step by step the interactional moves leading to one particular narrative structure. On the other hand, we exploit analytic tools developed in Narratology (Fludernik 1996; Baroni 2007; Herman 2009) to understand the issues of choosing one particular narrative configuration from several possibilities.

3. Narrative practices in the newsroom

Narrative practices are relating to *ways of telling* (Hymes 1996; Georgakopoulou 2007, 2013b)⁶ that have family resemblances: they are *semiotic methods* for expressing and organizing human experience through time. How

⁵ Generally emerging from a negotiation with or a confrontation to the others (Burger & Delaloye 2016), explicit representations can also emerge from a negotiation with oneself (Zampa & Perrin 2016).

⁶ “Ways of telling refer to the communicative how: the socioculturally shaped and more or less conventionalized semiotic and in particular verbal choices of a discourse activity” (Georgakopoulou 2013b: 202).

people tell stories, the *tasks* they accomplish to do so, is always context-sensitive (Georgakopoulou 2007). It “is a process that raises different types of action and tasks for different interlocutors and is ultimately shaped online. [Narratives] emerge as a joint venture and as the outcome of negotiation by interlocutors” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012: 44). Because of the prefabricated nature of the news item and because of the delayed interaction between the mediators (the tellers) and the audience (the recipients)⁷, most of the negotiations that shape the telling are hidden backstage. In the present paper, we analyse how the structuring of the telling and the dramatizing of the events are a joint venture involving different actors in the newsroom. To this end, we work on a sequence placed at the beginning of the news item. It depicts the escape of one passenger after the crash.

Excerpt 2: the escape (news Bulletin 07.03.2007, 12:47 pm)

Time	Footage	Voice Over
12 sec.	 <p><i>Soundtrack: heavy breathing, voice saying 'oh my god', aircraft noises, explosions.</i></p>	<p>(5 sec.)</p> <p>A few moments after the crash, <i>Quelques instants après le crash,</i> the desperate escape, far from the Boeing, <i>la fuite éperdue, loin du Boeing,</i> for one of the survivors. <i>de l'un des survivants.</i> this passenger is not yet safe, <i>Ce passager n'est pas encore à l'abri,</i></p>
10 sec.	 <p><i>Soundtrack: explosions, voices, aircraft noises.</i></p>	<p>but his camera is on. <i>mais sa caméra est enclenchée .</i></p> <p>[...]</p>

⁷ In most cases, the audience cannot directly and immediately intervene in the media, particularly in the case of news items that are written and recorded before the newscast.

The narrative sequence stages the experience of a person escaping from the crashed aircraft. It shows how he reacts to the catastrophe. The news item begins in the heat of the moment: the escape is introduced before its cause, the crash. What leads to structuring the news with a beginning *in medias res*? And what motivates a narrative configuration that is mainly grounded in the particular experience of one person rather than several? To answer these questions, we first analyse how media practitioners (a journalist and a cutter) negotiate the structure of this narrative sequence (3.1.) and then how they dramatize it (3.2.).

Prior to that, it is worth mentioning that the journalist responsible for the story (CA) sees newswriting for the television as a collaborative achievement. As Perrin observed, “he prefers collaborating with cutters for two reasons: first, ‘video editing is a profession in itself’, and second, ‘I like the feedback, you know it’s an exchange which is creative and profitable’. Although some cutters would expect the journalist to come to the cutting room with a completed text, the ‘good cutter would not appreciate this’. Instead, they prefer working ‘in connection’ with the journalist” (Perrin 2013: 72). For CA, television is thereby different to the written press in which the journalist is somewhat more independent, as he explains in the biographical interview: “The television is a much heavier machine. When you work in the written press, you are more alone, you are much more independent. In some sense, you depend less on a cutter [...] on a heavier structure. [...] There are also certainly fundamental differences when it comes to journalistic work on television and in the written press because you write texts. On television, you work with sound, with images. This is quite different.” (Biographical interview, March 5th 2007; our translation). As we will see, CA does not only perceive his work as collaborative but also carries it out as such. On March 7th 2007, after the topic was assigned to him during one of the morning editorial meetings, CA retrieved information at his desk, and then met the cutter (DS) in the cutting room to produce the news item. It is in the cutting room that most of the work on the story was done in collaboration with the cutter. CA and DS worked together from approximately 10:55 am to 12:35 pm. The parts we analyse occur from 10:57 am to 11:20 am.

3.1. Structuring the telling with sounds and images

In this part, we analyse how the journalist and the cutter successively suggest different schematic versions of the news item. As they watch together the video footages provided by news agencies, they consider several ways of structuring the telling. Their work is mostly guided by the footage they are watching.

3.1.1. Choosing a beginning

At 10:57 am, as they are trying to identify the source of the amateur footage displayed on the cutting room's screens, the cutter provides a first suggestion for a beginning ("You could have started your subject by saying that these are images taken, you see, by the tourists."). But this suggestion does not seem to fit with the stylistic expectations of the journalist ("Yeah well, pff, amateur images."). A few minutes later (10:59 am), as they decide to start the cutting, the cutter suggests again an option of beginning. He points at the amateur footage on the screens with a deictic marker ("that that's for us [...] that's the beginning", l. 6, 7 and 9, below): the footage shows a person who is both filming and running on the footage. After that, a heavy breathing comes from the technical desk, during 2 seconds (l.11, below). The journalist underlines the strength of the *breathing* sound by the means of gestures (l.12, below) and the cutter acknowledges it as a relevant concurrent solution to the *running* sequence he previously suggested (l.13, below).

Excerpt 3: choosing a beginning I (Cutting room, 10:59-11:00 am)⁸

- 1 J [right well it does]
[bon ben ça fai:t]
- 2 C [after we'll have to slowly start] cutting
[après il faudra qu'on commence] à monter gentiment quoi
- 3 but I think it's going to be easy (.)
mais j'pense ça va être facile quoi (.)
- 4 but you'll have (.) to
mais il faudra (.) qu'toi tu
- 5 (2)
- 6 C <((looking at the screen)) ça>
<((looking at the screen)) ça>

⁸Transcription conventions are based on ICOR (<http://icar.univ-lyon2.fr/projets/corinte>).

/\	rising/ falling\ intonational shift	[]	overlapping
(.)	micro-pause (max. 0.3)	(..)	pause (min. 0.3 - max. 0.6)
(n)	pause in seconds	x	inaudible segment
:	phonic lengthening	=	immediate linking
#n	long multimodal description	(())	shorter multimodal description
<>	delimitation of described phenomena	(word)	transcriber's hesitation
h	salient breathing	&	turn extension after an overlap
-	truncation	ita	French original

The speaker's name is indicated on the left (C: Cutter; J: Journalist). The numbers on the left refer to the transcribed lines.

Excerpt 5: the breathing option

Sec. 1	Sec. 5	Sec. 10	Sec. 15
			
<i>st: heavy breathing, voice saying 'oh my god', voices, aircraft noises.</i>	<i>st: heavy breathing, voices, aircraft noises.</i>	<i>st: heavy breathing, voices, aircraft noises.</i>	<i>st: heavy breathing, voices, aircraft noises.</i>

At this point of the production process, the cutter and the journalist's opinions converge. Nevertheless, their opinion quickly differs: as the cutter reconsiders the *running* option (1.16, below), the journalist emphasizes the strength of the breathing sound by the means of multimodal resources (1.17-25, below). To this end, the journalist imitates the breathing sound not only 'phonically' (by breathing himself loudly) but also 'corporally' (by placing an open hand on his chest). By doing so for 10 seconds, he embodies a behaviour existing in the video footage and, in this way, emphasizes its significance.

Excerpt 6: choosing a beginning II (Cutting room, 11:00 am)

- 15 ((C replays the breathing sound sequence))
 16 C x the other one who's running that's not bad either no/=
 x l'autre qui court c'est quand même pas mal non plus
 hein/=
- 17 J =that's str- <#2 th- th- th- the sound
 =c'est f- <#2 c- l- l- le son



ima #2 J puts his right hand on the chest and keeps it until 25

- 18 (.) yeah but the .h wait the the sound of the h::f::
 (.) ouais mais le .h attends le le bruit du h::f::
- 19 the breathing sound it's strong no/
 la respiration elle est forte hein/
- 20 (..)
- 21 C yeah yeah I can [put] it under if you want=
 ouais ouais j'peux t'l[e met]tre dessous si tu veux=
- 22 J [xx] =xx=
 [xx] =xx=
- 23 C =it's not cheating

- =c'est pas tricher
 24 (3)
 25 J yeah>
 ou:ai:s>
 26 (2.5)
 27 C that that's real experience isn't it/
 ça c'est du vécu hein/
 28 (...)
 29 J that that is expressed strongly huh you can let talk (...)
 ça ça s'exprime fort hein tu peux laisser parler (...)

After the journalist's insistence on the breathing sound, the cutter suggests mixing the two options (1.21 and 23), which is acknowledged by the journalist (1.25). Watching the footage, the cutter underlines the authenticity that emerges from the breathing sound (1.27). In a convergent way, the journalist accounts for the strength of the material they are working on (1.29 and, below, 1.30) and suggests a way to use it ("you can let talk", 1.29)¹⁰. The cutter refuses it for a technical reason (1.34-36, below).

Excerpt 7: choosing a beginning III (Cutting room, 11:00 am)

- 30 J and then here there are people leaving that's strong that
 et pis là y a des gens qui s'tirent c'est fort ça
 31 (...)
 32 C yeah but it's [s::]
 ouais mais c'est [s::]
 33 J [maybe] better than the shaking [image no/]
 [peut-être] mieux qu'l'image [tremblée: hein/]
 34 C [it's always in]
 [c'est toujours en]
 35 it's always in wide shot er
 c'est toujours en plan large euh
 36 it's going to be difficult to cut if you want
 ça va être difficile à r'couper si tu veux
 37 J in wide shot/
 en plan large/
 38 (...)
 39 C well <you see> [just a] bit difficult to cut&
 enfin <tu vois> [juste un] peu difficile à monter&
 40 J [xx]
 [xx]
 41 C &and all that
 &et tout quoi
 42 (...)
 43 J oh yeah it it's shaking a lot isn't it
 ah ouais ça ça tremble vachement hein/
 44 (...)

¹⁰ Incidentally, during the retrospective interview, the journalist comes back on the significance of the breathing. While he is commenting the computer log where his writing moves are recorded, he says: "I use these slashes. It means pauses. To let speak the image, it's what that means. [...] Here it's mostly a heavy breathing [...] At one point, we heard the guy who runs doing ((the journalist mimics a heavy breathing))" (Retrospective interview, 19:38, March 7th 2007; our translation).

- 45 J **no**
 non
- 46 C **no that's not it it's always in wide shot you know and**
 non c'est pas ça il est toujours en large tu sais et
- 47 **(.) I cannot**
 (.) j'peux pas
- 48 **(..)**
- 49 J **I think there was a x=**
 j'crois qu'y avait un x=
- 50 **=(a heavy breathing sound comes from the technical**
 desk))
- 51 J **<here we hear <#3 the H:: H:: H::>**



- ima* **#3 J imitates the fact of breathing heavily**
52 **(2)**
- 53 C **we'll find a way (...) okay**
 on va s'arranger (...) okay

After the journalist's suggestion (l.29-30), the cutter formats his turn in a counter-argumentative way ("yeah but it's", l.32). Nevertheless, his turn is syntactically and semantically incomplete when the journalist completes it with a comparative construction ("maybe better than the shaking images", l.33), which supports the suggestion he previously made (l.29-30). At the same time, he points out a technical problem with the *running* option's footage. In the following turn, the cutter uses the same syntactical format as in his previous turn to highlight a problem in the *breathing sound* option's footage ("it's always in wide shot [...] it's going to be difficult to cut", l.35-36; also l.39 and 41). They both maintain their stance and repeat them (l.43-47) until the journalist comments on a heavy breathing sound coming from the technical desk (l.50). Then, the journalist embodies once again the breathing sound (l.51). The cutter moves towards a kind of consensus ("we'll find a way (...) okay", l.53). We can summarize the negotiation between the two practitioners as follows.

Excerpt 8: Overview of the negotiation (Cutting room, 10:59-11:00 am)

Time	Cutter	Journalist
10:59	C signals <i>the person who is running</i> as an option of beginning (6, 7, 9)	
10:59		J points out <i>the breathing sound</i> (12)
10:59	C underlines the interest of the <i>breathing sound</i> (13-14)	

10:59	C underlines the interest of <i>the person who is running</i> (16)	
11:00		J insists on the strength of <i>the breathing sound</i> and embodies it (17-19)
11:00	C suggests to mix <i>the breathing sound</i> with the images of <i>the person who is running</i> (21, 23)	
11:00	C observes the authenticity of <i>the breathing sound</i> (27)	
11:00		J insists on the strength of <i>the breathing sound option</i> (29-30)
11:00		J points out the poor quality of the images of <i>the person who is running</i> (33)
11:00	C explains the technical difficulties related to <i>the breathing sound option</i> (34-36, 39, 41)	
11:00		J points out the poor quality of the images of <i>the person who is running</i> (43)
11:00	C explains the technical difficulties related to the images of <i>the breathing sound option</i> (46-47)	
11:00		J insists on the strength of <i>the breathing sound</i> and embodies it (51)
11:00	C moves towards a consensus (53)	

The negotiation between the two practitioners shows two sets of arguments which lead to the selection of the footage and, thus, to the structuring of the news. On the one hand, there are arguments related to the technical use of the footage (their quality and their usability). On the other hand, there are arguments related to the footage's expressive strength (their intensity and their authenticity).

More precisely, the second set of arguments concerns the strength with which the footage expresses the experience. As “[n]arrative roots itself in the lived, felt experience of human or human-like agents interacting in an ongoing way with their cohorts and surrounding environment” (Herman 2009: 21), these arguments echo a narrative dimension of the footage. When the journalist embodies the breathing sound, he underlines this dimension. And, because what it is represented is the experience of another (a vicarious experience), “the empathetic identification of the observer with the agent or experiencer who is focused on, directly correlates with the given *perceptual* focalization and with the cognization of what therefore constitutes itself as an incidence” (Fludernik 1996: 75). Actually, the negotiation between the two practitioners is about the best means to

project oneself into the experience of the agent: a visual means (the camera moves) or an audio means (the breathing sound), both signalling the action's intensity.

The mediation of documents impacts the telling: here, the competition between sound and images plays an important part in the way the journalist and the cutter configure the beginning of the news. So, what is at stake is to know if it is better to emphasize a visual that allows us to see what a person is seeing when escaping a crash or to choose a sound that insists on the intensity of the running and the state of the runner. In narratological terms, the negotiation is about how to stage an *intern occularization* and *auricularization* (Jost 1989)¹¹, that is to say how to manage the way recipient(s) see(s) and hear(s) what the character sees and hears. Thus, for the practitioners, the question is the following: is it better to favour an experience as *an agent in the events* (the one who is escaping) or as *an audience of the event* (the one who is watching the plane burning)? The practitioners could prefer to stage the *agent in the events* because of its ability to signal the intensity of the experience. However, this choice is made more complex because, in the footage where the character has an audience positioning, the heavy breathing indicates the intensity of the experience and provides a form of authenticity.

3.1.2. (Dis)agreeing about a structure

As we have seen above, the cutter expresses a kind of consensus regarding the significance of the breathing sound. Then immediately, the journalist suggests a complete structure of the news item (11:00-11:01 am). We can sum up the journalist's suggestion as follows: a wide angle shot where the catastrophe took place, images of the crashed plane, images of people running away, the audio recording of the airport security guard and finally the recapitulation of the events. Such a structure does not show a linear ordering of the events: the result (the crash) is introduced before the cause (the events that led to the crash). The non-linear order is explained by the fact there are available images of the result¹² but not of the cause. So, in the journalist's suggestion, the news item already begins in the heat of the moment as in the final product (excerpts 1 and 2). Nevertheless,

¹¹ Following Jost (1989), we define an *intern occularization* as a focus on the visual perceptions situated in a character and an *auricularization* as a focus on the hearing perceptions.

¹² Moreover, this footage makes the story particularly tellable, as stated by the whole editorial board.

in comparison with the final product, the beginning in the journalist's suggestion offers a 'contextual' perspective rather than an individual one. The journalist's suggestion sets the scene rather than draws the trajectory of a specific character. The cutter refuses this part of the journalist's suggestion, insisting on his preference for a beginning focused on a specific character. At that moment of the production, the practitioners have not yet reached an explicit agreement about the news item structure.

A few moments later (11:02 am), the cutter states there are not so many images to use ("We do not have ten thousand things"), which is acknowledged by the journalist. This leads the cutter to the conclusion they have to start with the footage of the man who is running ("We must start with that, yes"). A few moments later (11:03 am), the journalist asks the cutter whether the breathing sound will be present or not in the final assemblage ("We'll hear the breathing or not at all? This 'H'"). Once again, the journalist imitates the breathing sound 'phonically' (by breathing himself loudly) and 'corporally' (by stretching out his neck quickly). The cutter interprets his intervention as a request and offers to integrate the sound with the images of the *running* option ("I can put it on if you want"). Then, they decide to properly begin the cutting. This time, they reach an agreement on a schematic version of the general structure (11:04-11:06 am).

At first, the cutter signals he knows the shots he wants to use to open and to close the news item ("I want to put the first shot pretty long [...] I pretty much have a first and a last shot and in-between filled with fire and blood you know", 11:04 am). The journalist acknowledges only a part of the cutter's suggestion ("Yes the fire. There are the first images we had [...] that were very strong", 11:04-11:05 am), and then he lists the shots he thinks significant: "There are shots where we see the airport track" and "We should not forget to use the people watching" (11:05 am). Amongst the shots he lists, he does not explicitly name the *running person* one. Afterwards, the cutter begins his turn with a counter-argumentative marker and makes explicit his willingness to begin with the running person shot: "Yes but I really want to begin [...] with the guy who's running" (11:05 am). Then, he offers once again to integrate the breathing sound to the images of the person who is running. He explains why he wishes to begin with such a shot: because of the point of view perspective, the images of the person who is running give a strong impression of a passenger who is escaping immediately after the crash. The journalist partly acknowledges the explanation

of the cutter. Nevertheless, he stresses the importance of using images that show a collective experience rather than an individual one in the rest of the news item: “Yes but after you’ll still put the people getting out [...] We need to see them” (11:05 am). The cutter concurs with this comment. As a result, the journalist agrees to begin with the *running* option, even if he does not show a complete acceptance of such a choice: “Yeah so let’s try like this, okay [...] We’re at noon. We’re doing a little experimenting. We’ll see about the risks” (11:05-11:06 am).

A few moments later, because of the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the journalist, the cutter clarifies his motivations for using this specific shot. In his opinion, these images are no longer those of a specific story of a particular individual but those of the generic story of any passenger escaping from a crash: “It’s news [...] It’s the passenger who escapes [...] In the background, you’ve got the plane burning” (11:06 am). By categorizing these images as “news”, the cutter frames the individual experience as an emblematic one. He defuses the tension between the individual and the collective perspectives raised by the journalist as he displays that the *running* option functions as an account of a type of experience: *escaping*. Despite this explanation, such a beginning does not convince the journalist, especially because it does not fit with his stylistic credo of what the news has to be. However, he accepts it and, while the cutter starts the editing, he begins to round up elements for the writing. In the writing process, as we will see, the journalist exploits the ‘script’ suggested by the *running* option (*i.e.* the escape of a passenger) to dramatize the reported events.

In short, what are the key elements we can extract from the analysis of these first minutes of production? The footage leads the structuring of the news item, and especially the beginning. The criteria for choosing a beginning are technical (usability and quality of the images) but relate also to style (contextual appropriateness) and content (in terms of experience: intensity and authenticity of the account, individual *versus* collective experience, and specific *versus* generic experience; in terms of action: an on-going process *versus* a result).

3.2. Dramatizing the events through the writing

The joint structuring of the video shots contributes to the organisation and the motivation of the telling: on the one hand, by beginning the news item with an individual rather than a group, and, on the other hand, by choosing images that

show an on-going action rather than an action's result. This twofold choice impacts not only on what is verbally represented but also on the ways it is represented. It orients the teller(s) towards a specific narrative configuration, *i.e.* a particular selection and ordering of the narrated events. Here, the configuration consists of a non-linear representation of the course of events.

3.2.1. Dramatization in the news product

The narrative begins in the heat of the moment, with a scene that sets an agent between danger and safety (as he runs) and in which there is a high degree of uncertainty (as we do not know – at this precise moment – if he will reach a safe place or not). Moreover, beyond the dramatizing choice of the order of events, the way the character's actions are described can be in itself relatively dramatic, as a close analysis of the textual features shows.

From a grammatical perspective, the *escape sequence* consists of two sentences. The first one is composed by an adverbial phrase of time (“A few moments after the crash”) followed by a noun phrase (“the desperate escape of one of the survivors”) that is interrupted by an adverbial phrase of place (“far from the Boeing”). The first sentence clarifies the spatiotemporal parameters that are not indicated by the images. It gives the circumstances that help to contextualize the action represented. Because of the absence of a conjugated verb, the noun phrase contributes to an effect of immediacy. It functions as a comment on the images and gives them a narrative frame: it provides to the person who is running a motive (to escape from the danger), an intention (to be safe) and, in qualifying the action, an emotional state (the distress). Hence, the person who is running becomes an agent in a frame and with a purpose. The second sentence with two coordinated clauses gives a high agency to the agent facing the events. The structure “X but Y” dramatizes his action almost as an intrepid act: in using “but”, the clause “his camera is on” is presented as involving an opposite conclusion to the one implied by “this passenger is not yet safe”. By opposing the two clauses, the text shows an agent who acts in a different way to how he could best solve the problem he is faced with (*i.e. escaping as quickly as possible*).

Such a verbal description injects a dose of uncertainty into the course of the depicted events: this is no longer a person who is filming and running, this is not only a person who is escaping, this is also a person who is acting in such a way as

to put his life at the risk. The events, or more accurately the actions, are then dramatized.

3.2.2. *Dramatization in the news-writing production*

As we said before, the narrative configuration and the dramatization of actions are grounded in the interpretation of the images. The way actions are described is a *crucial* and *complex* matter in the case where a vicarious experience is mostly mediated by the footage. This is *crucial* because “since other states of mind remain inaccessible from the viewpoint of an external observer, agency in and by itself seems to become the prime motor controlling others’ activities and actions” (Fludernik 1996: 75). This is also *complex* because there is no previous narrative that already configures the vicarious experience. As an external observer, the teller must construct by himself a relevant narrative framework, *i.e.* the who, what, where, when, how and why. Thus, telling this vicarious experience requires assumptions about the character’s reasons for action. To do so, the journalist and the cutter interpret raw material and configure it into a narrative that allows an understanding of what has happened. Even if the journalist is the actual writer, the narrative configuration in its verbal aspect is nonetheless the result of a joint interpretation of both practitioners.

The escape sequence was written by the journalist between 11:09 am and 11:17 am. Before the writing itself, the joint interaction already provides descriptions that will then appear in the escape sequence. The descriptions can be proposed either by the journalist or the cutter. For instance, at 11:06 am, while they try to identify the person who is running, the journalist describes the scene as “*the desperate escape of a survivor*”. Even if the cutter does not go along with this description, the journalist will use it as a keystone of the text. The cutter also participates actively in the formulation of the descriptions: at 11:07 am, the journalist asks how to describe the immediacy of the images (“how do we say it so that people can understand”), the cutter offers then several formulations (“well you can say taken immediately a few seconds a few moments after the crash”) and one of them, the last one, will appear in the final product. Likewise, the event categorizations¹³ used to identify the character (“survivor” and “passenger”) are

¹³ An *event categorization* is a categorization that only mobilizes the narrative framework to describe an agent and does not use another social labels to provide identities. *Event categorisations* are built on the logic of represented actions, often conveying prototypical storylines.

the product of a joint construction during the first minutes of the news-making (Merminod & Burger *forthcoming*).

Between 11:09 am and 11:17 am, while the cutter works on the footage, the journalist writes the *escape sequence*. We can summarize the main writing moves, as follows:

- From 11:09-11:10, a noun phrase (“the desperate escape”), then an adverbial phrase of place (“far from the Boeing”), then a complement of the noun phrase (“of one of the survivors”).

Result: “The desperate escape far from the Boeing of one of the survivors”

- From 11:11-11:13: a clause (“his camera is on”), then an adverbial phrase of time (“a few moments after the crash”).

Result: “A few moment after the crash, the desperate escape far from the Boeing of one of the survivors. His camera is on.”

- From 11:15 to 11:17, a second clause (“this passenger is not yet safe”), then a conjunction (“but”).

Result: “A few moment after the crash, the desperate escape far from the Boeing of one of the survivors. This passenger is not yet safe but his camera is on.”

Besides the separation of the writing into three moments, the summary draws attention to an interesting phenomenon: the order of appearance of the elements during the writing is not the same as the order of appearance in the written text. For instance, the adverbial phrase of time (“a few moments after the crash”) that opens the text emerges only during the second moment of writing. Maybe of greater importance for our point is the integration, only in the third moment, of the second clause (“this passenger is not yet safe”) with a coordinating conjunction that shows contrast (“but”). The character’s positioning as highly agentive appears only in the third moment. As we will see, such a positioning emerges step-by-step during the writing because the journalist hesitates over different ways of telling that imply different configurations of the story. The table below documents in detail the writing moves made by the journalist between 11:15 am and 11:17 am

Excerpt 9: not yet safe I (Computer logging 11:15-11:17 am)¹⁴

Time	Op.	Text	Context
11:15	W	'une quest'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... une quest sa caméra est enclenchée
11:15	E	'une quest'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... sa caméra est enclenchée
11:16	W	'alors même que l'a'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... alors même que l'a sa caméra est enclenchée
11:16	R	'que l'a' by 'qu'il est loin'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... alors même qu'il est loin sa caméra est enclenchée
11:16	R	'est loin' by 'n'est pas encore h'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... alors même qu'il n'est pas encore h sa caméra est enclenchée
11:17	R	'alors même qu'il n'est pas encore' by 'il'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... il sa caméra est enclenchée
11:17	W	'n'est pas encore à l'abri'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... il n'est pas encore à l'abri sa caméra est enclenchée
11:17	R	'il' by 'ce passager'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... ce passager n'est pas encore à l'abri sa caméra est enclenchée
11:17	W	'mais'	... Quelques instants après le crash, la fuite éperdue loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants... ce passager n'est pas encore à l'abri mais sa caméra est enclenchée

From 11:15 am to 11:17 am, we observe nine writing moves before reaching the final narrative configuration. At 11:15 am, the journalist writes “une quest” (*i.e.* the incomplete form of “a question”). Even though it is difficult to analyse such a small fragment, we can assume it underlines to some degree the uncertainty of

¹⁴ Writing moves: W = writing; R = replacement; C = correction; E = erasure.

what is at stake. At 11:16 am, “une quest” is replaced by an incomplete concessive clause “alors même que l’a” (“even though the a”). Because of the context, we can guess the incomplete word is “l’appareil” or “l’avion” (“the aircraft” or “the airplane”). As a concessive clause, “alors même que l’a” is subordinated to the clause “sa caméra est enclenchée” (“his camera is on”). Such a construction introduces a *narrative tension* (Baroni 2007) in the text as it puts together two clauses that have a relation of simultaneity and a relation of opposition. Then, “que l’a” (“the a”) is replaced by “qu’il est loin” (“he is far away”). If the structure is still a concessive one, the subject of the clause changes: the focus is on a human agent rather than the circumstances (the aircraft). Then, “est loin” (“is away”) is replaced by “n’est pas encore” (“is not yet”). In “est loin” (“is far away”) as well as in “n’est pas encore” (“is not yet”), there is the same idea of an action that has not yet reached its goal. The main difference between the two is that one of those (“is far away”) makes an evaluation of the distance from a goal while the other one (“is not yet”) only states the incomplete achievement of the action. At 11:17 am, the journalist replaces the concessive clause by a declarative one “il n’est pas encore à l’abri” (“he is not yet safe”) and specifies the goal to reach (safety). Then, he explicitly identifies the agent by replacing “il” (“he”) by “ce passager” (“this passenger”). It should be noted that the demonstrative determiner functions as an element of the anaphoric chain (taken between “one of the survivors” and “his camera”) and as a deictic marker (by pointing at the images). Finally, the journalist brings the adversative logic back by adding the conjunction “mais” (“but”) between the two clauses (“ce passager n’est pas encore à l’abri” and “sa caméra est enclenchée”).

The audio and video recording of the working session show that some of the successive formulations written by the journalist are the product of an ‘internalized’ and ‘self-centred’ reflection, as the long silence of 15 seconds (l.2, below) between the writing of “une quest” and its replacement by “alors même que l’a” indicates. Likewise, the passage from “he is far away” to “he is not yet” seems mainly related to the journalist’s reflection (l.17-22, below). Nevertheless, formulations are also negotiated with the cutter. From the line 24 (below), the practitioners discuss the appropriateness of the following formulation: “at the risk of his life he turned on his camera”.

Excerpt 10: not yet safe II (Cutting room, 11:15-11:18 am)

- 1 J a question
une question (1.2) x (0.4) x (3) x
txt¹⁵ une quest
- 2 (15)
- 3 J even (1.2.) though (12) though
alors (1.2) même (12) que
txt alors même que l'a
- 4 (7)
- 5 C it's incredible I'm keeping it like this okay/ (1)
c'est incroyable .h j'te garde ça comme ça hein/ (1)
- 6 I'll be very long no I have put I have put two shots
j'mets très long hein j'ai mis j'ai euh mis deux plans
- 7 [and then we]'ll be (far) but er (0.7) that's&
[et pis on] s'ra (loin) mais euh (0.7) c'est:&
- 8 J [yeah=yeah]
[ouais=ouais]
- 9 C &that's the best ((laughs))
&c'est les meilleurs ((rires))
- 10 J even thoug (1.7) even though
alors même que (1.7) alors même
- 11 (5.8)
- 12 C okay (.) mh: (0.6) tsk. (0.7) pff: (.)
okay (.) mh: (0.6) tsk. (0.7) pff: (.)
- 13 yeah and then we'll see
ouais et après on verra
- 14 (1.5)
- 15 C ITV maybe/ (1.5) yeah
ITV peut-être/ (1.5) ouais
- 16 (2.7)
- 17 J he (4.6) is (0.7) far=
qu'il (4.6) est (0.7) loin=
txt qu'il est loin
- 18 C =<((whispering)) we have time>=
=<((whispering)) on a le temps>=
- 19 J he (0.4) he is far (0.4) he (2.7)
qu'il (0.4) qu'il est loin (0.4) qu'il (2.7)
- 20 he (3) he is out of danger/
qu'il (3) qu'i:l est hors de danger/
- 21 (16)
- 22 J even though he is not yet
alors même qu'il n'est pas encore
txt n'est pas encore
- 23 (7)
- 24 J at the risk of his life he turned on his camera/
au péril de sa vie il a enclenché la caméra/
- 25 C roh:=
roh:=
- 26 J =no/
=non/
- 27 C do not exaggerate

¹⁵ Txt refers to the journalist's actual writing.

- faut pas exagérer*
- 28 (0.5)
- 29 J **no/=**
non/=
- 30 C **=er when he turned on**
=euh quand il a enclenché
- 31 **the risk for his life was over** [((laughs))
c'est fini le péril de sa vie [((laughs))
- 32 J **[you think/ (but you'll see)**
[tu crois/ (mais tu vois)
- 33 **it may still expl-**
il peut encore saut-
- 34 **and=and=and there are still some=some=some**
et=et=et il y a encore des=des=des
- 35 **it may still explode here the plane**
il peut exploser là l'avion
- 36 (0.8)
- 37 C **well [he is the one&**
bah [c'est qu'il est qui&
- 38 J **[no/**
[hein/
- 39 C **&he sold these i[mages for three thousand dollars&**
&c'est qu'il a vendu ces i[mages pour trois mille dollars&
- 40 J **[yeah**
[ouais
- 41 C **&to:: to: the Indonesian TV that's all [isn't/**
&à:: à: la télé indonésienne c'est tout [hein/
- 42 J **[ouais**
[ouais
- 43 (4)
- 44 J **he is not yet safe here/ (.) no/**
il est pas encore à l'abri là/ (.) hein/
- 45 C **((C wags his head from left to right and purses his lips))**
- 46 (7)
- 47 C **I'm making [(.) a war film here**
je monte [(.) un film de guerre là
- 48 J **[he is not yet safe (.) comma**
[il n'est pas encore à l'abri (.) virgule
- txt il n'est pas encore à l'abri**
- 49 (4.3)
- 50 J **this passenger (1.5) is not yet safe (0.8)**
ce passager (1.5) n'est pas encore à l'abri (0.8)
- txt ce passager**
- 51 **comma (1) but (0.5) his camera is on (0.5)**
virgule (1) mais (0.5) sa caméra est enclenchée (0.5)
- txt , mais**
- 52 **clac (1) does it seem tiny to you what I say that**
clac (1) est-ce que ça semble rikiki c'qu'je: je dis ça
- 53 **a few moments after the crash the desperate escape**
quelques instants après le crash la fuite éperdue
- 54 **far from the boeing for one of the survivors**
loin du Boeing de l'un des survivants
- 55 **this passenger is not yet safe**
ce passager n'est pas encore à l'abri

56 **.h but his camera (.) is on**
 .h mais sa caméra (.) est enclenchée
 57 **(0.8)**
 58 J **that's it=**
 c'est ça=
 59 C **=x=**
 =x=
 60 J **=no/=**
 =hein/=
 61 C **=yeah> you can read it once again if you want to no/**
 =ouais> tu peux me lire une fois si tu veux hein/

At line 22, the journalist writes the end of a concessive clause (“even though he is not yet”). Nevertheless, after 7 seconds of silence, he suggests an alternative formulation (“at the risk of his life he turned on his camera”, 1.24). It should be noted that this formulation differs from the concessive clause in its structure: the tension is brought by an adverbial phrase of manner (“at the risk of his life” // “au péril de sa vie”); the main clause is not anymore a passive one (“his camera is (turned) on” // “sa caméra est enclenchée”) but an active one (“he turned on his camera” // “il a enclenché sa caméra”). Such a formulation more precisely situates and motivates the action in a network of events. However, the cutter evaluates the formulation in a negative way due to its excessiveness (1.25, 25, 30 and 31). He considers such a description does not fit with what happened: “when he turned on, the risk for his life was over”, 1.30-31). The journalist suggests an assumption (1.32-35) that supports his own interpretation of what happened: “it may still explode here the plane” (1.35). The cutter does not ratify that assumption and keep on with his line of arguments. The cutter refuses to position the agent as a heroic character. He presents the individual who is filming as intent on his financial profit in this concern: “he sold his images for three thousand dollars to the Indonesian television that’s all” (1.39 and 41). Next, the journalist suggests another formulation and seeks the cutter’s agreement: “he is not yet safe no/”, (1.44). The cutter in turn shows his lack of agreement by shaking his head from left to right and by pursing his lips, but he does not verbally express a refusal (1.45). The cutter moves on to his cutting activity (1.47). The journalist shows then, by speaking while typing, his choice to keep the formulation “he is not yet safe” (1.48-51). Then, as he finishes the writing of the escape sequence, he reads his text and asks the cutter’s opinion (1.52-60). The cutter suggests the journalist reads the text on the footage he has cut (1.61).

Despite a disagreement on the interpretation of what happened and how to describe it, the practitioners keep going in order to fulfill their assignment and

provide a news item about the airplane crash for the noon edition. Nevertheless, we see a clash between two ways of interpreting the images, the journalist's dramatizing way and the cutter's non-dramatizing way. These two ways are not grounded in the same schema of incidence and do not position the main character in the same manner.

A few seconds later, the cutter suggests once again the journalist reads his text on the footage (11:18 am). After a quick discussion about the way to do it, the latter reads his text ("a few moments after the crash the desperate escape far from the Boeing of one of the survivors this passenger is not yet safe but his camera is on", 11:18 am). At the end of his reading, the cutter immediately takes his turn and explicitly refuses the formulation "he is not yet safe". From 11:18 am to 11:20 am, the journalist and the cutter discuss the appropriateness of the journalist's description and they develop two lines of argument. This time, their positions are not really based on the interpretation of what happened but rather on the interpretation of the images they assembled. They evaluate whether or not the verbal description is consistent with the structuring of the visual material. On the one hand, the cutter claims that the character is safe. His main argument line is the following: the footage shows the character taking refuge. By doing so, the cutter positions the character as a rather passive agent. On the other hand, the journalist claims that the passenger is not yet safe. His arguments are more diverse. They relate to the intensity of the breathing, to inferences regarding the circumstances (*a dangerous context*) and the agent's motivations (*he runs because he is not yet safe*), to the running action depicted by the images, and to the sequential positioning of the action description regarding the images (*before the images of the character taking refuge, there are images of him not yet being safe*).

We see here the upholding – even the strengthening – of the two schemata of incidence. This leads to two different narrative configurations. While the cutter is against a verbal dramatization of the action, the journalist exploits the dramatization potential of the running shot. In order to keep going, both the practitioners display the schemata as two individual perceptions¹⁶. Such a display

¹⁶ This is signalled by specific expressions as "it's how you feel it" or "but you do not feel it like this" (11:19 am).

allows them to compare their interpretations¹⁷. Nevertheless, they do not reach an agreement and the cutter finally gives up upon the journalist's insistence.

Thus, if the cutter had the last word during the selection and ordering of the images, it is here the journalist's call. As stated by Burger (2011), there are two different areas of expertise, the audio-visual, which is one mainly the domain to the cutter, and the verbal, principally related to the journalist. Nevertheless, these areas of expertise are far from being impermeable, as we have seen throughout the analysis. It is particularly in this aspect that telling a news story is a *team performance*¹⁸.

4. Conclusion: what happened in the newsroom?

By honing in on the dramatization of a narrative sequence at the beginning of a news item, the analysis has demonstrated that *telling a story in* or rather *from a newsroom* is a *team performance*: from the ordering of the images to the writing of the text, from the structuring of the narrative to the dramatization of the reported events.

Therefore, regarding the *production format* (Goffman 1981; Bell 1991; Scollon 1997) involved in media communication, the distribution of *authorship* and *principalship* is far more complex than what is stated in the anchors' preface ("[The images] are commentated on by CA") or what is written on the news ticker at the end of the news item ("CA DS"). The preface neither draws attention to the constitutive entanglement between text and images in the production of the news item (the images seem to be a given, which is then commented on by the journalist), nor the fact the text stemmed from within a negotiation between two practitioners (CA and DS). Besides, putting aside the overall responsibility of the news institution (the French-speaking public TV broadcasting), the journalist is the one who is explicitly considered as responsible for what is said. Additionally, if the news ticker at the end of the news item mentions DS (the cutter) as much as CA (the journalist), it neither specifies their role in the news-making process, nor their responsibilities. Coming back to the dramaturgical metaphor, we can ask

¹⁷ The journalist even offers a formulation grounded in the cutter's interpretation ("he's looking for shelter under a tree his camera is already on", 11:19 am) but he doesn't affiliate with this.

¹⁸ The *team performance* dimension of news stories is also related to other processes in the newsroom, such as the decisions taken by the editorial board in editorial meetings (Merminod & Burger forthcoming).

ourselves whether this squashing of *authorship* and *principalship* tends to favour the solitary existence of the journalist's figure in the *front stage* at the cost of a relative silencing of the other news practitioners.

Our analysis revealed what led to a narrative configuration that presents a non-linear ordering of the events that is focused on the experience of an individual staged as a highly agentive character in an uncertain world. "Opening linguistics up" (Rampton *et al.* 2004: 4), ethnography enabled us to "document local theories of what constitutes a narrative and what the role of narrative is in [a] specific communit[y]" (Georgakopoulou 2007: 21). Rather than only considering news stories as narrative texts, we have considered how and why narrative practices are part of the interpretation and production processes involved in the making of the news. By accessing not only the final *performance* (the one seen on *stage*) but also the several *performances* that created it *backstage*, we have thus seen that telling a news story is not only founded on interwoven activities but also shaped on (a chain of) diverse (re)configurations of the reported events.

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