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The life of a political speech(writer): Metadiscursive text trajectories in high-end language work

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Abstract

Following Thurlow's (2020b) understanding of "wordsmiths," in this paper I document an underexplored and markedly high-end area of language work: political speechwriting. Drawing on Macgilchrist and Van Hout's (2011) text trajectory approach to ethnographic discourse analysis I engage with two primary areas of scholarship: metadiscourse and entextualization (see Silverstein and Urban 1996), both of which facilitate a deeper understanding of the role of "elite" linguistic labor in contemporary markets. Ultimately, I demonstrate the ways in which political speechwriters come to claim skill and value – not only based on the unique "production format" (Goffman 1981) of the profession, but also related to the wider sociopolitical context of their work.

KEYWORDS

entextualization, ethnographic discourse analysis, language work, metadiscourse, wordsmiths

INTRODUCTION

A good friend told me she once saw a talk given by John F. Kennedy's speechwriter, Ted Sorensen. During the Q&A afterwards an audience member asked whether he had penned Kennedy's famous line, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." Mr. Sorensen hesitated, and then responded, "Ask not." This anecdote nicely encapsulates the mystique surrounding political speechwriting as a profession, as well as the code which these markedly high-end language workers must carefully follow – they are the *authors* but not the *animators* nor *principals* of their craft (Goffman 1981). At the same time,

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and as others have noted (e.g., Hanks 1996), the complexity of these roles should not be understated. Indeed, Mr. Sorensen's response is all pretense, and serves as a coy admission of his authorship; speechwriters' work may take place behind-the-scenes, but they still routinely claim ownership and expertise, demonstrating the inevitable commodification of their linguistic skill in the marketplace (Holborrow 2018). As such, the current study serves to programmatically document this underexplored area of political/linguistic labor and to metadiscursively investigate the professional and rhetorical implications of its unique "production format."

Following those who have engaged with linguistic labor as a phenomenon of our contemporary knowledge-based, neoliberal economy (e.g., Duchêne and Heller 2012), I am largely interested in how certain types of language workers are explicitly valued in the market (see Jakobs and Spinuzzi 2014). [Correction added on June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "Heller and Duchêne 2012" was changed to "Duchêne and Heller 2012."] Thus, I follow Thurlow's (2020b) recent thinking concerning "wordsmiths": the community in which I am interested is not an example of those who are without sociopolitical or economic capital. Rather, speechwriters – whose livelihoods are based on the crafting and designing of words for powerful, public figureheads – are well-remunerated, and relatively prestigious. However, and as is the case for many wordsmiths, the product of speechwriters' language work is almost always attributed to someone else. Despite this, sociolinguists and discourse analysts have predominantly focused on politicians' speeches/statements without addressing the backstage laborers and actual producers of this discourse (see Wodak 2009 for an important exception). This is all to say that speechwriting as language work and wordsmithery is an especially ripe site for ethnographic fieldwork, and, as I argue here, is well-suited to an approach that focuses specifically on metadiscursive, entextualized text trajectories.

My aim, then, is two-fold. First, I wish to add to scholarship documenting the research context of political speechwriting (e.g. Kjeldsen et al. 2019); as an understudied domain of institutional discourse, I demonstrate what language scholars can learn from this necessarily invisibilized yet highly respected profession. This paper is thus largely programmatic, as it is geared towards mapping out *what* exactly speechwriters do, and *how* they talk about it. Second, this study exemplifies the merits of Felicitas Macgilchrist and Tom Van Hout's (e.g. Macgilchrist and Van Hout 2010, 2011; Van Hout and Macgiilchrist 2010) ethnographic discourse analysis as a means of highlighting the dynamic interconnectedness of discourse (e.g. Maybin 2017), and the valuable insights which can be gleaned from examining various genres of textual data (e.g. Lillis 2008). Ultimately, my ethnographic text trajectory analysis enables an engagement with two primary areas of scholarship: metadiscourse and entextualization (see Silverstein and Urban 1996; Lillis and Maybin 2017), both of which facilitate a deeper understanding of the role of linguistic labor in contemporary markets.

In what follows I first outline the theoretical underpinnings of my data collection and analysis: language work, metadiscourse, and entextualization. I then move on to documenting the background of my project as well as my unfolding data collection processes. Relying on a holistic methodological approach to text trajectory analysis, I demonstrate how speechwriters' language work is ultimately rooted in the prestige that comes with creative skill and (marketable) expertise/knowledge. I conclude by offering an overview of my preliminary insights into speechwriters' professional practices and performances of linguistic aptitude, arguing that it is specifically their entextualization practices which facilitate these discursive claims to value.

LANGUAGE WORK, METADISCOURSE, AND ENTEXTUALIZATION

Cameron's (2000) study featuring call center workers in the UK highlights the linguistic impacts of globalization on the provision of services in competitive markets. Her observation that

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employees' language use is both strategically styled and highly-monitored demonstrates the ways in which these linguistic laborers have been ultimately exploited – their skills commoditized and anonymized as cogs in the neoliberal apparatus of wealth accumulation (cf. Harvey 2005). While others have explored similar processes unfolding in various multilingual contexts (e.g., Heller 2003) few scholars have attended to the sorts of language work which are more explicitly valued, or “elite” (see Mapes 2021 for an explanation of this term). As such, Crispin Thurlow's (2020a) edited volume *The Business of Words* turns language scholars' analytical attention towards these more high-end wordsmiths; chapters cover professions such as dialect coaches, court judges, word artists, and school principals, to name just a few. In mapping the complex linguistic issues which arise in each of these domains, it becomes clear that prestigious, institutionalized language work in the so-called new economy is not only rife with social misunderstanding and inconsistency but is also frequently used to support claims to expertise, status, and value. However, and as Duchêne (2020) notes in his contribution to the volume, our understanding (and labeling) of these language work hierarchies must not be approached uncritically. In essence, any study of wordsmiths and linguistic labor demands *metadiscursive* reflection.

In lieu of documenting the breadth and scope of metalinguistic theory (others have done this very successfully, e.g. Jaworski, Coupland, and Galasinski 2004), I will instead simply underscore that eliciting metadiscourse is a methodological strategy which is not only aimed at particular kinds of data collection, but also necessary for the researcher's positioning vis-à-vis their participants. On the one hand, scholars have demonstrated how obtaining self-reflexive commentary on various types of language-in-use is a fruitful exercise in determining the social implications of discursive practices (e.g., Busch 2012). On the other, it is likewise necessary to account for our scholarly evaluations and determinations of what sorts of language (and what sorts of speakers) are worthy of study. To return to Duchêne's (2020) point, we must thus consider how our labeling and classifying schemes belie the metadiscursive entanglements of researcher-researched, or, for example, “elite-nonelite” language worker (cf. Woydack 2019) – and furthermore, whether participants themselves find these categories to be relevant or interesting. As Lillis (2008) observes, this level of (auto)ethnographic engagement allows the researcher to stay firmly located in their informants' sociohistorical contexts. It is thus that we can effectively document the real chains of metadiscursive activity which (re)produce the social world (see also Coupland 2016). An effective entry point in this regard is *entextualization*.

In their seminal work on poetics and performance, Bauman and Briggs (1990) advised scholars to not only consider the importance of contextualization (i.e. the “anchoring” of discourse to its context), but also the de- and re-contextualization of language. This they call entextualization, “the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a *text* – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting” (73, emphasis in original). This process is inherently metadiscursive, as it reveals a speaker's reflexivity in their language use (see also Silverstein and Urban 1996). For Bauman and Briggs it is also an act of control; as Leppännen et al. (2014) observe, entextualization requires access and social power. This is reflected in speakers' “legitimacy of their claims to re-use the texts, in their competence in such re-use, and in the differential values attached to various types of texts” (116). As such, processes of entextualization are imbricated in the social order of language, including claims to linguistic expertise and know-how. This is not to say, however, that speechwriters are straightforwardly “powerful” in their entextualizing practices. While the ability to write is historically a status symbol (Jakobs and Spinuzzi 2014), writers are also often at the mercy of editors (see Van Hout and Macgilchrist 2010 on journalists); reviewers (see Lillis 2008 on academic writing); and the market (see Haviland 1996 on the sociopolitical implications of writing in Tzotzil). In other words, and as with other types of professional writing, speechwriters operate within particular “domain constraints” (Jakobs and Spinuzzi, 2014). To borrow from Irvine (1996), we might thus consider speechwriters' entextualization practices to be “intricate laminations of participant roles” (157) – a way of

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(materially) producing the texts required of them, certainly, but also an explicitly creative means of the sense-making, ownership, and skill required for claiming social-cum-economic capital in global markets. Before explaining how these processes take shape in the data, I turn now to the specifics of my methodological approach.

DATA AND METHOD

My project on speechwriting is part of a larger research program called *Elite Creativities* which is aimed at examining an array of relatively understudied, high-end language workers or wordsmiths (e.g., dialect coaches, UX writers, and advertising copywriters).[1] In addition to collecting secondary sources related to each profession (e.g., memoirs), as well as "language biography" interviews following Preston's (2004) focus on folk linguistic accounts, the *Elite Creativities* research group has attempted to ethnographically track wordsmiths' actual production of deliverables (e.g., speeches). In this regard, my data collection began in September 2019; I participated in a 3-day professional speechwriting course in Washington, DC where I took detailed fieldnotes and archived all materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides). I also conducted an interview with the instructor of the course, a former political-turned-freelance speechwriter, as well as one of the students – both of whom put me in contact with various others. By the end of 2021 I had collected and transcribed 19 recorded interviews; read several memoirs/educational resources written by political speechwriters (e.g., Peggy Noonan's 1990 *What I Saw at the Revolution*); and had watched/transcribed Jon Favreau's (President Obama's former speechwriter) Oxford Student Union Address, which I found available on YouTube. Although I originally intended on supplementing these data with participant-observation, this proved to be largely impossible: speechwriters work under extraordinary time pressure and are often subject to non-disclosure agreements. Furthermore, at the time of my data collection (during the Covid-19 pandemic) they were predominantly working remotely. Fortunately, however, ethnographic text trajectory analysis is a well-documented alternative and supplement to traditional ethnography, and is aptly suited for examining writers in particular (e.g., Van Hout and Macgilchrist 2010).

Various scholars have advocated for "text trajectory" as an approach to discourse analysis (e.g., Blommaert 2005); as I have already mentioned, Van Hout and Macgilchrist's (2010) documentation of the production of a news story from assignment to final delivery served as the primary inspiration for my own text trajectory data collection practices. Similarly, and in terms of entextualization in performative genres specifically, Bauman (1996) documents the evolution of a Mexican *coloquio* folk drama from its original script to final performance, illuminating nicely how each stage of production has a formative effect on what follows. Although many text trajectory-based studies rely on lengthy bouts of immersive fieldwork (e.g., Woydack and Rampton 2016), Maybin (2017) contends that what is most important is that researchers adopt "ethnographic methodologies which are sensitive to the dynamics of texts and their sociocultural and historical contextualization" (431). In other words, it is a markedly holistic – and even *chronotopic* (see Bakhtin [1975] 1981) – perspective to discourse data which is paramount (see also Lillis 2008). Likewise, following Rampton et al. (2004), Macgilchrist and Van Hout (2011) suggest that text trajectory analysis both ties ethnography down and opens linguistics up (4). The researcher's focus is thus simultaneously *situated* but *reflexive*, allowing nicely for a micro to macro perspective. As such, my own data collection procedures focus on text trajectories as cyclical processes which are not neatly bounded but are rather representative of how discourse travels "through and around institutional processes" (Rock et al. 2013: 4). This sort of ethnographic approach allows me to trace the ongoing entextualization of discourse across various genres of data.

In terms of methodological application, I routinely asked participants whether they might be willing to share drafts of their work so I could track the "life" of a speech. Although many

expressed an interest in this sort of data collection verbally, only three speechwriters (all of them working in the realm of government/politics) ended up providing these sorts of materials, which include outlines or notes from speech planning meetings, first/second drafts (some with handwritten notes or tracked changes), and then final versions. For a few of these speeches I was also able to find footage of their delivery, which I archived accordingly in an effort to document the "frontstage" performance of speechwriters' "backstage" language work (see Goffman 1959).

Following previous ethnographically informed work (Mapes 2021) I relied on a three-step analytical process in which I first conducted loose content analysis before moving on to interpretive (qualitative) discourse analysis and finally critique (cf. Thurlow and Aiello 2007). Thus, my insights here are based on several close readings of multiple genres of interconnected data, across which I detected various prominent themes. In no particular order, these include questions of ownership; voice and authenticity; creativity; and impact/virtue. After examining these themes in detail, I determined the central presence of entextualization as a discursive mechanism through which speechwriters claim expertise and professional value. In what follows, I first attempt to "define the job" of political speechwriting, identifying the multi-talented and collaborative nature of their complicatedly invisibilized language work. Second, I more specifically attend to processes of entextualization using text trajectory data drawn from two political speechwriters (namely, those whose speech revision materials were most complete in that they documented multiple stages of production). Across these analytical sections I demonstrate the ways in which speechwriters' unique "bundle of skills" (Holborrow 2018) is not only metadiscursively articulated, but also linguistically (re)produced and enacted in the written products of their distinctly neoliberal labor.

MAPPING THE PROFESSION: WHAT DO POLITICAL SPEECHWRITERS ACTUALLY DO?

Peggy Noonan (1990), David Litt (2017), and Barton Swaim (2015) have all written memoirs about their time working for either presidents in the White House (Noonan and Litt) or in Swaim's case, the former governor of South Carolina (Swaim). [Correction added on June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "(1990)", "(2017)", "(2015)", and "(Swaim)" were added.] In addition to larger issues related to the administrations these speechwriters served, each of these books document their daily professional practices. Unsurprisingly, and as my informants reiterated in their interviews, most political speechwriters' work is devoted to producing written content for the "principal" (the professional term used to describe the elected official, and semantically akin to Goffman's 1981 usage). The most menial of these tasks is letter-writing, which includes drafting individualized responses to letters from constituents, thank you notes, and so on. Multiple speechwriters I interviewed began their careers in politicians' letter rooms. This work is often lowest in the hierarchy of writing tasks and is therefore reserved for those just starting out; it is a genre through which they can begin to understand and adopt the principal's voice. For some speechwriters, like Barton Swaim, this is particularly *un*enjoyable. While letter-writing helped him master the governor's particular style, he describes it as "ungainly": "It was like listening to twelve-tone music: you had to force yourself to do it, but after awhile you could discern some charmless patterns, and even like them in a perverse kind of way" (Swaim 2015: 40). Swaim's account alludes to the range of micro-linguistic choices which characterize speechwriters' work. They identify as writers (and therefore as highly skilled "creatives," see Thurlow 2020b) yet their daily linguistic labor often involves implementing a set of stock vocabulary, and indeed, even writing "badly" in order to capture the authentic voice of the principal (see Swaim 2015, 26). [Correction added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "Swain ibid., 26" was changed to "Swain 2015, 26".] Thus, as speechwriters must learn to write in a very specific, often counterintuitive way, their language work is reminiscent of the heightened specialization required of all contemporary "professionals" (Kong 2014).

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This general ethos applies to their other tasks as well. Political speechwriters regularly produce op-eds for major newspapers/publications; statements for the media (potential "soundbites" or these days, "retweets"); notes for debate prep; short addresses for press conferences, or for state/federal legislative bodies; and of course, speeches themselves, which vary in relative importance and length. For example, speechwriters working on political campaigns are responsible for crafting the "stump speech," a 5–10 minute address delivered at campaign rallies which transmits the candidate's general platform to voters (cf. Lempert and Silverstein 2012 on "message"). This is tweaked – sometimes multiple times per day – according to current events and the audience being addressed. As such, speechwriters working for elected officials during political campaigns are often expected to work 80-hour weeks; for instance, one of my informants described taking more than 500 trips in one year while writing for a congressperson. Not only was she editing small speeches daily, but she was also simultaneously working on any number of longer speeches which were upcoming on the schedule. These might include invitations to address (funding) organizations concerning various topics, as well as more legislative content for federal/state government. All this is to say that a typical political speechwriter is expected to accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently, according to the demanding schedule of the principal. Essentially, as with other neoliberal language workers (e.g., Woydack and Rampton 2016), the physical/intellectual demands placed upon speechwriters are high.

In this regard, some speeches require extensive planning and preparation. Lengthy university commencement addresses and the famed "State of the Union," which is delivered annually by the President of the United States, might take months to prepare. When asked about his work on the State of the Union for President Obama, Jon Favreau expressed his overall dislike of the task, describing it as "the hardest speech to write." This is due in part to the sheer number of people who must approve it – a State of the Union is sent off to various federal agencies and pertinent staff during the revision process, so that wording related to any particular organization or legislation can be fact-checked and so on (cf. Jakobs and Spinuzzi 2014 on "document cycling"). This sort of collaboration can be quite taxing for the speechwriter, who is responsible for accommodating a wide range of perspectives while still attempting to "tell a story" as Favreau puts it, and to capture the principal's individual style. In other words, and as one of my informants stated emphatically, a speech about policy must still "make your audience feel something." Thus, while writing political speeches is certainly prestigious, it is also difficult, and requires not only good writing but also a highly communicative and collaborative skillset. Again, what comes to the fore is that speechwriters are multi-talented in their linguistic labor – they may specialize in writing, but their day-to-day language work is much more all-encompassing (and potentially under-valued, see Thurlow 2020b).

Perhaps the most notable aspect of speechwriters' collaboration lies in their relationship with the principal. This does, of course, vary. A number of Pete Souza's presidential photographs capture this process. In one, President Obama is pictured standing next to Jon Favreau, who looks over his shoulder at a speech-in-progress; another features a typed speech marked up with extensive handwritten notes in ink (the President's).[2] These images nicely illustrate the defining element of the profession: to repeat, speechwriters are author, but never animator of their words (see again Goffman 1981). And importantly, this distinction means they are not *owner* of their written work, either. However, as a quick example of this complexity, consider Extract 1, which is Favreau's response to a question about the Obama administration's achievements during the presidency:

Extract 1

1 No I think that we've been very lucky in that um.. most things we've wanted to say about
2 the country and the world, most things that Barack Obama has wanted to say he has said.

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What stands out here is Favreau's repair of his use of the plural first-person pronoun to singular third; he begins by referring to himself together with President Obama as "we" two times in line 1 before self-correcting in line 2. This is signaled initially by his repetition of "most things"; as Tannen ([1989] 2007, 59) notes, this repetitive "linking" utterance functions to effectively transition (both the speaker and audience) to the revised content. [Correction added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "Tannen (2007 [1985]: 59)" was changed to "Tannen ([1989] 2007, 59)".] Ultimately Favreau's repair accomplishes two things: it acknowledges that he is indeed the author of the messaging "about the country and the world," and simultaneously that he is not the owner of these words. It is the animator who receives credit, and so he shifts to "Barack Obama" and "he," but only after (perhaps subconsciously) alluding to his own role in the production format (remember also Mr. Sorensen's "ask not" quip from the introduction to this paper). Similar instances of personal pronoun repair occurred at various points in my interviews with speechwriters, conveying the subtle ways in which they seem to both avow and disavow their backstage role. All this is to say that in order to do their job well, speechwriters must at least perform invisibility (see Zweig 2014). In other words, they must *appear* to refute ownership of their work – both in the writing they produce and in metadiscursive accounts of their professional practice.

In terms of "mapping the profession" of political speechwriting, then, three primary characteristics stand out: 1) speechwriters' language work refers to a range of tasks, both written and more generally communicative; 2) collaboration is key and is often a taxing/difficult element of the job; and 3) speechwriters appear to be acutely aware of the author/animator distinction in their writing, and seem to simultaneously avow and disavow their lack of ownership metadiscursively. While these defining characteristics are surely programmatically interesting for scholars of professional discourse, they are also nicely entextualized in the circulation of various other speechwriting texts. Thus, I turn now to ethnographic discourse analysis, documenting how the actual production of speeches relates to the larger social order of language work.

METADISCURSIVE TEXT TRAJECTORIES: THE LIFE OF A SPEECH

In the following analysis I specifically consider the chronotopic (Bakhtin [1975] 1981) life of a speech from assignment to final delivery, focusing on the relationship between two speechwriters' metadiscursive reflections in their interviews and the products of their labor. [Correction added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "(Bakhtin 1981[1975])" was changed to "(Bakhtin [1975] 1981)".] I should note, however, that I do not view these speechwriters' "language biographies" (Preston 2004) as transparent records. Rather, and as Lillis (2008) points out, these case studies are vehicles for contextualizing the interplay of texts involved in speech production. Thus, I begin by addressing the general trajectories involved in speechwriting (see Woydack and Rampton 2016), highlighting how this relates to one practitioner's professed learning process, as well as the politics of audience design (Bell 1984) as her speech "travels" (see again Rock et al. 2013). Then, I turn to a case study in which I more specifically demonstrate the entextualization of another speechwriter's reflexive understanding of her work in the micro-linguistic revisions to one speech draft. Throughout my treatment of these texts I adopt what Macgilchrist and Van Hout (2011) describe as "an aesthetic of smallness and slowness" (5), attempting to not only track chains of discourse, but also to reflexively document the sociopolitical significance of these processes in terms of my informants' performed professional value.

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Case Study I: Evie

I interviewed Evie, a (former) political speechwriter, in September 2021 using Zoom; our recorded conversation lasted about 35 minutes, and included reflections on her current and past positions, as well as the (creative) differences in writing for one principal vs. multiple.[3] At my request, after the interview Evie sent several documents pertaining to a speech she had written in her previous position as speechwriter for a US Governor. Although Evie now works as a speechwriter for an organization in Washington, DC, her career began as an intern on the election campaign for said governor; she was eventually hired as part of the communications team, and more or less fell into the role of speechwriter out of necessity due to another staff member going on vacation. The accidental nature of Evie's professional trajectory is a common refrain in speechwriters' accounts and speaks to the ways in which the profession continues to be a job which is not necessarily based on one's credentials or formal training but rather on something a bit more intangible – personal ambition, networking, and being in the so-called right place at the right time.[4] In this sense, the role of speechwriter is a bit of a "unicorn" in the broader realm of political work. It carries immense prestige and is a title eagerly claimed, but it is not an occupation that one will often see advertised on hiring websites, for example. As such, a speechwriter's skillset is most frequently learned on the job. In Extract 2 Evie elaborates on this process:

Extract 2

1 And then I kind of just like learned as I went, on the campaign and [details omitted for
2 anonymity] just kind of like tried to retain as best as possible, what sounds good in
3 writing, and what sounds good out loud. And a lot of that was going to events with the
4 governor and listening to [them] speak, and transcribing it and just figuring out the style
5 that [they] liked to speak in, um and what types of things, what language [they] used.

What is primarily highlighted in Evie's learning process is her attention to the principal's voice: their "style" (line 4) and "what language they used" (line 5). In "going to events with the governor" (lines 3–4) and listening to the delivery of speeches, Evie also seems to draw on a different version of Rock's (2017) "frontstage entextualization" – although her learning process does not involve "writing aloud" as in Rock's data, her observation of the written word being spoken in a frontstage context allows Evie to effectively repeat and (re)contextualize the governor's style in her backstage work.

Relatedly, the process of learning how to write speeches involves two new orientations for the speechwriter: the first, which is not mentioned in Extract 2 but which I have already discussed at length, is the release of ownership. Most of us are taught to claim and craft an individual voice in our writing (see Brock and Raphael 2003), but speechwriters must learn to let go of this explicitly personalized positioning in favor of the principal. Second, and as Evie mentions in lines 2–3, she learned "what sounds good in writing, and what sounds good out loud." Many speechwriters distinguished between the sort of writing they learned to do at university and the writing they do in their jobs. Capturing the spoken word in writing is an entirely different task than writing an op-ed, and one that necessitates another sort of letting go – of lofty, complicated prose, and of formal or difficult vocabulary (see Collins 1996 on the ideology of textualism). For example, one speechwriter I interviewed relayed that William Safire (President Nixon's speechwriter) was fired from one of his jobs because of his use of "indefatigable" in a speech; another talked about her principal's fondness for the word "ameliorate," and her insistence that they say "help" instead. Thus, while speechwriters are generally self-professed logophiles, above all, their writing must be easily understood. Learning to be a good speechwriter therefore involves a re-orienting to the ingrained semiotic ideologies (see Keane 2018) of the

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task at hand. They are not writing to demonstrate intellectual and poetic prowess, but rather to allow the principal to reach the largest audience possible. Evie's reflexive understanding of her learning process thereby displays the institutionalized professional standards of speechwriting, as well as her familiarity with the importance of audience design (see again Bell 1984).

All speechwriters I interviewed talked at length about audience and the ways in which they must strategically produce content which appeals to a range of people – this particular skill was often discussed in terms of taking complicated, technical content and making it accessible to lay audiences (or "real people," as David Litt describes them in his 2017 memoir). However, audience design for speechwriters also entails things as banal as name-dropping, or even simply thanking all appropriate persons in the correct order; for example, in my speechwriting course we were advised to insert humorous anecdotes or inside jokes which would immediately convey the principal's (performed) familiarity with the setting and its occupants. Indeed, this sort of attention to detail is expected of the speechwriter. And in Evie's case, the extent to which she designs a speech for specific people relates to how she measures its eventual success. In Extract 3, for instance, she responds to a question I asked about how she determines whether a speech goes well:

Extract 3

1 The point of [the speech] was to make sure that we made a lot of different groups happy?
2 (laughs) [lines omitted] It matters, how well it's received by our friends. Cause y'know
3 [the opposing party] were never going to like the speech I doubt that a lot of [them] even
4 watched it. um so I don't really care what people on the opposite side of the aisle think
5 because they had their statements about it written before [the governor] even took the
6 podium. [lines omitted] A big part [of speechwriting] is garnering support in the future,
7 whether it's monetary support, or just building a coalition, and you want to make sure
8 your friends are happy. (laughs)

While Evie begins her utterance by referring to making "a lot of different groups happy" (line 1), she quickly shifts to specify that the primary group she's concerned with is "our friends" (note her use of the plural first-person pronoun; line 2), or in other words, the people who might continue to support the governor in the future – monetarily or otherwise (line 7). Importantly, although the speech in question was televised and therefore accessible by all members of the state's government (and its residents), Evie does not necessarily consider them to be her intended audience. Rather, she doubts "that a lot of [opposing party members] even watched it" (lines 3–4) and remarks that their responses to the speech were likely drafted beforehand (line 5). Of course, Evie's perspective here reflects the notoriously partisan nature of the US political system; "the opposite side of the aisle" (line 4) is framed as lazy, at best, and at worst, ingenuine or deceitful. More interestingly, however, is how her reflexive discourse sheds light on the complex ways in which a speech might *seem* designed to address a particular audience (the speech to which Evie refers contains multiple references to "bipartisanship" and "reaching across the aisle," for example), when in reality it is constructed for (multiple) others (see Goffman 1981 on "reception roles"). To be clear, this observed professional practice – the fashioning of a political figure's message to duplicitously appeal to certain people – is a rather routine aspect of political rhetoric (Lempert and Silverstein 2012). So, too, is the markedly chronotopic, de- and re-contextualized nature of a speech's imagined recipients.

In this vein, Evie's (and the governor's) intended audience is spatially and temporally diverse, both literally and figuratively. Throughout its life the speech's audience evolves from one who is designed to aid in its production (i.e., staff members) into the intended recipients of the final message – Goffman's (1981) "addressees." And in the latter case,

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various complexities exist: a speech is often delivered to a physical audience while being simultaneously transmitted on TV or online to various others. Later it might be spliced and disseminated in pieces across social media (in a variety of modes) and (re)contextualized by political analysts and amateurs alike. Words or phrases from a speech may be even further entextualized in memes, and therefore reach laypeople who have no prior relationship to or understanding of the original source. Thus, the life of a speech is complicatedly located on a seemingly endless space–time continuum; it is "charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot and history" to use Bakhtin's ([1975] 1981: 85) oft-cited conceptualization of "the artistic chronotope," and as it travels it necessarily changes shape and focus (see Mapes 2021). [Correction added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "(Bakhtin's (1981[1975])" was changed to "(Bakhtin's [1975] 1981".]). The speechwriter, of course, is tasked with anticipating these various audiences and trajectories. This becomes more apparent in tracking the life of one of Evie's speeches for the governor.

In their own study of text trajectories, Woydack and Rampton (2016) observe how call center scripts are adapted at different stages in the production process, resulting in a complex chain of textual travel. For speechwriters, these stages can be broadly categorized as Outline, Draft, Final, and Delivery – in Evie's case, she sent me files containing her outline (with comments from another member of the governor's staff), her first draft, and then the final speech which was disseminated publicly before its delivery. In addition, I was able to watch the governor perform the speech online, and I took note of any departures from the final, written version accordingly. I briefly attend to each of these four stages in speech production below, focusing on how the politics of audience design come to be entextualized in the chronotopic life of the speech in question.

Speechwriters' initial outlines are often referred to as "skeletons," revealing the relative bareness of these documents in comparison to fully drafted speeches. Outlines might contain eloquent sentences which do eventually end up in the final version, but they are generally seen as the "brainstorm" stage of writing, and are formatted using bullet points, question marks, "XXXX" in substitution of names or statistics, and other general placeholder discourse. That said, there are clear links between the outline and subsequent drafts. Even if most of its language does not appear verbatim in future versions, the outline provides the organizational scaffolding for the final speech. This seems to be partially accomplished by making use of the visual affordances of written texts (see Figure 1, a mock-up of Evie's outline).[5] The outline document is characterized by frequent use of color (for blocked section headings), bold font (for highlighting key themes), and underlining/capital letters (to distinguish between specific topics within sections). Thus, the life of a speech is strikingly multimodal from the outset, perhaps conveying what Jones (2009) calls a "technology" of entextualization; these visual details facilitate the transportation of the text. And in this sense, Evie's discursive choices in preparing the outline are made with its initial recipients in mind – namely, the governor's communications team, and perhaps the Chief of Staff (COS). Her use of visual cues helps alert this markedly temporary audience to the overarching narrative of the speech, and the "value statements" (Evie's words) pertaining to each topic. In other words, the outline transmits the core messaging of the speech in a drastically simplified way, allowing for quick commentary and movement to the next writing stage: the first draft.

The time which elapses between outline and draft is variable. For some speeches the turnover might be quite rapid – a matter of hours, or just a day or two. As Evie was working on the speech in question for several months she was primarily concerned with the governor's more pressing (daily) public appearances and would return to working on this lengthier project whenever she found time. As such, it is possible she did not deliver her first draft of the speech until a couple months after receiving feedback from the communications team on the outline (which consisted of just two suggestions for anecdotal content).[6] In this case

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TITLE OF SPEECH – OUTLINE

PRIMARY POINTS
• Reference to sociohistorical context, description of governor's **action**, **results** of that action. • Reference to certain community **adjective** describing community members, description of their actions, description of Governor's support, during particular sociohistorical context. • Reference to sociohistorical context, summary of governor's action. **Adjective**, **adjective**, **adjective** describing accomplishments.

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION TO CONTEXT • Sociohistorical context is different from previous years. • Explanation of action, description of attendees and setting. • Justification of action, hopeful outlook. • Acknowledgement of community members. SPECIFICS • Description of sociohistorical context. • Specific number [XXXX] related to context. • Another specific number [XXXX] related to context. • Summarizing statement. • Unifying statement. • Reference to community members. • Reference to other community members. • Unifying statement. • Summarizing statement.

FIGURE 1 First page of speech outline.

the draft follows the outline quite closely; organizationally it is practically identical, except that material deemed as "looking forward" in the outline (i.e., ideas for future progress) has been concentrated towards the end of the document instead of interspersed throughout, topic by topic. However, the most notable difference between the two documents is a visual one, in that all bullet points and color blocked section headings have been removed (see Figure 2, a mock-up of Evie's draft). Rather, the draft's appearance is really that of a standard speech; sentences are mostly complete, although they still in some cases contain bracketed place-holding language (e.g., [THANK SPONSORS]) and question marks (e.g., [MONTHS?]). Furthermore, although sentences are not quite constructed according to intonation units (Chafe 1987), they are divided by commas, dashes, and line spaces, and are clearly formatted to facilitate reading aloud; some phrases are even underlined, presumably to advise the Governor's use of stress during delivery. Section/topic headings have been

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Governor XXX

Title of Speech

INTRODUCTION

Greeting.

Sociohistorical context is different from previous years.

Ramifications of context and impact on speech.

Elaboration, description of attendees and setting.

Justification of action, unifying statement and summary.

Reference to sociohistorical context.

Description of impact.

Acknowledgement of community members.

Elaboration.

Emotional elaboration.

Description of statistical status.

Elaboration on statistics.

Summary and unifying statement.

Description of event and specific accomplishments.

Reference to community members.

Reference to other community members and time [MONTHS?].

Summary of Governor's action and important ideological stance.

Unifying statement.

Unifying statement.

Specific reference to event.

Specific reference to event. [THANK SPONSORS]

Description of bipartisan action.

Description of bipartisan action.

FIGURE 2 First page of speech draft.

pared down and seem to serve simply as organizational guides for Evie herself – they allow her to keep track of the narrative of the lengthy speech, and perhaps aid its various readers. In this regard, she also makes use of the highlighter function to call-out specific questions or

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other bracketed information that needs revising. Again, the outline's evolution into the draft is guided by the intended audience, which now comprises the COS, the governor, and a larger network of policy experts and fact-checkers. However, the speech – as an almost continual "work in progress" (cf. Woydack and Rampton 2016) – is anchored to its chronotopic context, which necessarily evolves throughout the final round(s) of revision and writing.

The final version of the speech is not based on just one set of feedback but potentially on a series of back-and-forth exchanges between various parties. Again, this collaborative aspect to speechwriting is seen as both creatively helpful and frustrating (or even stifling). However, Evie did not seem to take issue with the extent to which she was asked to revise her first draft. This is due in part, I assume, to the quickly evolving Covid-19 crisis at the time. Simply put, as the state of the world rapidly changed, the speech needed to change with it (cf. Pogner's 2003 "qualitative revision analysis"). For the governor's message to be powerful and relevant, Evie's initial outline was no longer entirely appropriate or factual, and the speech was thus amended accordingly (organizationally and otherwise). In terms of its visual appearance, all section and subject headings were removed from the final copy, and all acknowledgments, statistics, and specific details were updated. Although the document I was provided is the same as what was distributed to the media and other sources before the governor's delivery, there were still several more changes between this written version and what was performed and streamed for live audiences. I suspect this is due simply to its multimodal evolution. While Evie's final production of the speech is written text, its delivery is spoken, and indeed is not simply produced aurally but also visually by the governor. It is therefore complemented by their use of gesture, and other paralinguistic resources such as pausing and stress – all of which vary according to the principal's delivery style and particular voice.

While some speakers are known for making last-minute revisions on the way to an event (what Noonan refers to as "the final battle," [1990: 78]) others simply go off-script and make changes during delivery. Evie's governor is apparently in the latter group. While they do not often depart entirely from a tele-prompted speech, they will occasionally ignore the written grammatical structure in favor of pausing to emphasize certain lexical items and will likewise play with sentence structure – reversing word order and generally colloquializing the discourse. These small changes to the speech demonstrate what Bauman and Briggs (1990) call an agent-centered view of performance, conveying the real power of the animator; ultimately, the governor "reflexively examine[s] the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself" (69). Their ownership is thus solidified by the delivery, as this is when the speech becomes irrevocably finalized. It certainly continues to travel beyond this moment (again, multimodally), but the speechwriter officially loses control of the trajectory once the speech is performed by the principal. In this way, Evie's reflexive account of learning to write for the governor's particular voice, and for the governor's chronotopically-situated "friends" (see again Extract 3), can be traced through the evolution of the speech into its final, animated version.

What becomes clear is how Evie has found ways of articulating the nature of her professional labor – and therefore its value (cf. Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013) – despite her relative powerlessness vis-à-vis the principal. [Correction added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence, "Uriciuoli" was changed to "Urciuoli".] However, it is the complexity of this hierarchy which speaks to Duchêne's (2020) skepticism concerning a supposedly *elite* label like "wordsmith." Evie's high-end linguistic expertise and the perceived success of her work is intrinsically dependent on the governor's performance; like any other number of lower-status language workers, she is thus beholden to whatever the sociopolitical and (economic) market demands. As a result, Evie's entextualization practices help solidify not only her professional value but also her membership in the larger "discourse community" of political speechwriters (see Pogner 2003). I will now explore how this same sort of metadiscursive positioning emerges in a second case study.

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Case Study II: Anna

Anna has held various positions in political communications and currently works as a communications director and speechwriter for a US Congressional committee. While her responsibilities entail the management of two others working in her office, her primary role is to produce all content delivered by the Chairperson of the committee, including speeches, talking points, and press releases. During our interview, which was conducted via Zoom in October 2021, Anna discussed her standard professional practices, a typical workday, her conceptualization of creativity, and the speech revision process. Our recorded conversation was approximately 35 minutes long, and afterwards (at my request) she immediately sent several documents pertaining to two different speeches she had written, both of which had been delivered by the Chairperson to the House of Representatives. Ultimately, my ethnographic text trajectory approach allows me to track the entextualized relationship between the metadiscursive reflections in Anna's interview and the actual product of her labor: a 45-minute speech.

As I already mentioned, across many of my interviews I heard from speechwriters that the relative ease of the revision process corresponds with the number of people involved; as one informant put it, “the fewer the better.” All of this reinforces the ways in which the author/animator role distinction can be practically and cognitively trying for speechwriters. In fact, sometimes it is other members of the principal's staff who take on the author role, and are more actively involved in revision. Anna's Chairperson, for example, does not read drafts of speeches until the very end of the process and trusts the Chief of Staff to review content beforehand. [Correction added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In the previous sentence and in the following sentence, “COS” was changed to “Chief of Staff”.] Earlier in our interview Anna mentions that she relies on this person's “expertise,” because the Chief of Staff “knows the [Chairperson's] voice, knows [them] well” – however, in Extract 4 Anna describes this exercise as something she has had to learn, and ultimately let go:

Extract 4

1 And so it's frustrating, because sometimes [they will] basically rewrite the speech. And
2 other times, [they're] like, this is great, no edits and, and so it kind of like just depends on
3 where we are in the process, how much time [they have], maybe, um, but so the editing
4 process can be a little emotional for me. But at the end of the day, I've kind of learned to
5 just let it go by now. And trust that, you know, it's still going to be good, it doesn't have
6 to be perfect or exactly as I would want it. So I do think that that it's something that's
7 been difficult to learn.

In addition to revealing the scale of variation in the revision process (“rewrite the speech” vs. “no edits,” lines 1–2), Anna ultimately contends that speech revision is an affective practice for her: it is not only “frustrating” (line 1) and “emotional” (line 4) but also involves “trust” that her words will still be “good” (line 5) after editing – even if they are not exactly as she wants them. This sort of evaluative language concerning authorship demonstrates the internal struggle with which all speechwriters seem to grapple; that is, that the speech is ultimately not theirs (see again Extract 1). Indeed, this notion – “it's not my speech” – was reiterated often in my discussions with speechwriters, and typically with a tone of resignation. One senses this same attitude in Anna's learning to “just let it go” (line 5), and final admission that it has “been difficult to learn” (line 7). It is important to note, however, that this tension over ownership does not seem to be about public recognition but rather about a desire for mastery of craft (see also Zweig 2014). In other words, Anna seems to want to produce a good speech according to what she deems as “perfect” (line 6) but must ultimately prioritize the animator's voice and delivery style (via the COS) over her linguistic idealism and expertise.

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In this regard, the metadiscursive practice of writing in the Chairperson's voice instead of her own is one in which Anna engages constantly; in Extract 5, for example, she reflects on her Chairperson's delivery style, and how she writes to accommodate it:

Extract 5

1 When my boss delivers speeches, [they] read them off the paper. It's not a lot of
2 inflection. And you have to write with that in mind. Like you're not going to write this
3 long winded, flowery language for somebody that's not comfortable delivering it, where
4 it doesn't seem honest, or transparent. My boss is a lot more, you know, folksy and down
5 to earth and straightforward, and that‘s why those staccato sentences work.

Anna captures the sociopolitical discourse of authenticity in this extract (e.g. Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013) – of course, part of what allows a politician to come across as "honest, or transparent" (line 4) is the speechwriter's attention to their particular voice. As such, Anna avoids "long winded, flowery language" (line 3) and instead privileges "staccato sentences," which allow the Chairperson to appear "straightforward" (line 5). It is interesting to note here that Anna's task is not just a lexical one; whereas elsewhere in the interview she talks about inserting colloquial phrases such as "let me cut to the chase," her attention to "staccato sentences" reveals that she is also cognizant of how she might structurally produce the speaker's lack of "inflection" (line 1). And in fact, Anna remarked that she always reads speeches out loud during her writing process to make sure she is capturing the Chairperson accurately (see again Rock 2017). In other words, her expertise comprises a range of rhetorical knowledge and skill, which also connects to the specific sort of *creativity* required of her profession.

Because it is a primary theoretical interest for the *Elite Creativities* research program, in interviews I always asked speechwriters about how they viewed their work as specifically creative. Usually this came up organically as they discussed their professional practices and relationship to language. In Anna's case, I prompted her to elaborate on whether she was able to be creative while working within the confines of the Chairperson's delivery style. Her answer, in Extract 6, alludes to what Wilf (2014) describes as "true creativity"; she must come up with unique and innovative ways of accomplishing a task, rather than focusing simply on verbal artistry:

Extract 6

1 It's like, okay, well, how do you make this not sound like a book report? How do you
2 infuse [the Chairperson's] personality into it? And, you know, when we were, I was
3 writing, I think my magnum opus. So far, it was like a 45 minute long speech that [they]
4 gave on the House floor, [lines omitted] and that was like, very in the weeds, technical
5 kind of stuff, but that's not what's gonna play for this odd like, whatever audience is
6 watching or is going to be useful to us moving forward. [lines omitted] And so there was
7 a lot of those kind of transition lines to help break it up. And I think that that's a different
8 creative muscle than, you know, thinking about what's going to galvanize the masses, or
9 really inspire people to like, get to their feet.

Anna makes a distinction here between the sort of speeches which "galvanize the masses" or "inspire people" (line 9) and the kind of messaging which she must craft: "in the weeds, technical kind of stuff" (lines 4–5) for a very particular audience (i.e., US Congress). The disparities between these two kinds of political writing came up often in my interviews, as speechwriters must be equipped to both simplify difficult material – what they often describe as *distilling* – and convince people to take action, to "get to their feet" as Anna puts it in line 9. The latter is seen as more explicitly creative because it typically involves narrative and emotion, what we

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might deem poetic or linguistic creativity (cf. Jakobson 1960). However, Anna's work falls more within the realm of Jones's (2010) discursive creativity: she is not only strategic in the ways she structures the material, using "transition lines to help break it up" in order to attend to the audience and keep them interested (lines 5–7), but she also specifically orients to the future, writing in a way that will be useful for the committee "moving forward" (remember also Evie's focus on garnering future support in Extract 3). Thus, Anna understands her language work to be socially meaningful. Her aim to "infuse" the speech with the Chairperson's personality is not just about capturing their voice, but more strategically concerned with rhetorical persuasion and institutional goals – this is the "creative muscle" (line 8) she has learned to exercise. And ultimately, it is the combined work of catering to the Chairperson's style while still producing impactful language which is specifically entextualized in Anna's writing.

The speech to which Anna refers as her "magnum opus" in Extract 6 is one of the two she sent me after our conversation. The file included her initial outline, two versions of her first draft (one with tracked changes), and two versions of the final speech (one version formatted for the Chairperson's delivery, in larger font). I compared each of these documents extensively for my analysis but focused much of my attention on the first draft with tracked changes, as I am specifically interested in the micro-linguistic changes which are implemented throughout speeches' textual travel. Overall, I identified a general strategy of *simplification* and *intensification* in Anna's speech revision process; in what follows I will show just a few examples of what I mean. In order to preserve the speechwriter's anonymity I have completely de-contextualized these extracts – in all cases they are displayed with the draft wording on top, and the revised wording below:

Extracts 7–10

7. Draft: It illuminates
   Final: When you dig deeper

8. Draft: sent over
   Final: submitted

9. Draft: what's to stop any President from twisting the law to his own ends?
   Final: it will not stop. We all know that.

10. Draft: indifference to the law
    Final: lawbreaking

On the one hand, simplification often encompasses a reduction of words and a consequent streamlining/formalizing of the message, but on the other is also related to an overall colloquializing of the language. So for instance, "it illuminates" becomes "when you dig deeper" in Extract 7. The speechwriter's use of rhetorical "you" here and the expression "dig deeper" is noticeably more casual than the previous wording, allowing Anna to capture the "folksy and down to earth" nature of the Chairperson (see Extract 5) while simultaneously increasing audience involvement (cf. Fairclough 1989 on "synthetic personalization"). Conversely, the change from "sent over" to "submitted" (Extract 8) represents a different iteration of simplification – in formalizing the linguistic register (i.e., revising a typically spoken phrase into a typically written one; cf. Rock 2017), Anna both reduces words and marks the depicted procedure as more official and streamlined (a general strategy which is arguably typical of neoliberal workplaces; see Iedema and Scheeres 2003). Thus, simplification appears to be a careful balancing act for the speechwriter, occurring across two axes: formalization-colloquialization on the one hand, and high-low word count on the other. Importantly, these also overlap with an axis of intensification in which the overall stance of the utterance is visibly strengthened.

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The combined work of simplification and intensification is perhaps best represented by Extract 9: the lengthy rhetorical question "what's to stop any President from twisting the law to his own ends" becomes "it will not stop. We all know that." Importantly, here a rather evaluative, affective (e.g., "twisting" and "to his own ends") depiction of a hypothetical actor (e.g., "any President") is reduced to something structurally condensed (e.g., two short statements), personalized (e.g., "we"), and based in presupposed fact/reality (e.g., "it will not stop"). This revision thus encapsulates the speaker's voice (remember the "staccato sentences" from Extract 5) while also heightening the force of the message (cf. Wang and Feng 2017; Martin and White 2005). In other words, by *simplifying* the phrase Anna reduces the (overly) dramatic, emotional nature of the utterance, and instead formulates the critique as matter of fact and rooted in logic or shared knowledge. This consequently *intensifies* the Chairperson's stance while also appealing to the audience's own expertise and evaluative judgments. Rather similarly, in Extract 10 "indifference to the law" becomes "lawbreaking" – this revision serves to escalate the described action, implying real, legally-condemned behavior instead of just questionable morals. The combined axes of simplification and intensification thus allow Anna to simultaneously attend to (1) style/voice and (2) impact/persuasion, demonstrating the nuanced or even "messy" creativity (Jones 2018) required of her profession.

What is especially striking about this ethnographic text trajectory data is that the speechwriter's metadiscursive reflections on her writing practices and professional aims seem to be incredibly accurate – a testament to the merits of eliciting this sort of data, of course, but also demonstrative of Anna's real understanding of her craft, and of her professional (marketable) value (see Holborrow 2018). And in fact, following Sarangi's (2005) call to "consultative" research, I provided Anna with a draft of this paper for her approval before submission; she was also struck by the clear relationship between her interview discourse and writing practices. Indeed, what she seems to do in her interview is repeat and re-contextualize (and therefore entextualize) the micro-linguistic processes in which she engages each day, nicely illuminating how document revisions can demonstrate a writer's adherence to the standards of their professional discourse community (see again Pogner 2003). Anna's characterization of the Chairperson's voice and the ways in which she is able to capture it linguistically align quite clearly with her changes to the speech draft; likewise, her professed aim to highlight and prioritize the institutional goals of the committee (see again Extract 6) are also reflected in the revisions. Thus, and perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a deeply cyclical, co-constituting quality to this text trajectory data; the speechwriter's wordsmithery is ideologically entangled not only with how she seems to view her specific role but also with the sociopolitical ramifications of her work. As Urciuoli and LaDousa (2013) observe, this is the real crux of creative linguistic labor in a neoliberal context: Anna has learned how to best articulate (and entextualize) her skill, and therefore how to claim individualized value in the market of political language work.

CONCLUSION

In her discussion of participant roles in the performance of Wolof insult poems, Irvine (1996) describes discourse as an interweaving chain: "Unmoored from the present, it is more easily transported into the future. Understood as having already occurred in other dialogues, and destined to occur in still more, it is intrinsically tied to none" (156). This poetic description of the process of entextualization – complicated by laminated participant roles – is a fitting characterization of the various text trajectories which make up my speechwriter data. They represent the ways in which common rhetorics and practices of speechwriting become de- and re-contextualized in new discourse – in the form of direct reference to specific texts, but also in the more subtle reiterations of learned professional behavior. Relatedly, the entextualized text trajectories present in these different genres of data speak to the powerful ways in

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which these wordsmiths must operate within the confines of their profession. As Silverstein and Urban (1996) argue, this is the real merit of focusing on metadiscourse, and entextualization specifically: it allows researchers to more deeply understand "the existence of a shared culture" (13). Thus, by holistically documenting the travel of speechwriters' spoken and written discourse I have been able to comment on the sub-culture of political speechwriting, and on the co-constituting practices which solidify one's membership in this professional community.

Ultimately, in this paper I have demonstrated the following. In the first section of analysis I mapped the profession, identifying speechwriters' range of skill and responsibility; the collaborative nature of their work; as well as the all-important distinction between author and animator, and the ways this lack of ownership is metadiscursively avowed and disavowed. I addressed these primary characteristics in my text trajectory analysis as well. In the first case study, I showed how the life of a speech is chronotopically filtered and continually reimagined in order to facilitate its travel, exchanging hands – physically and virtually – until and even beyond its final delivery (cf. Bauman 1996). My analysis illuminates how this trajectory is guided by complex layers of audience design; as the speech moves through the revision process, its format and shape are necessarily dependent on its various recipients. Likewise, this process is captured in the speechwriter's metadiscursive reflections on her writing, demonstrating nicely how language workers' reflexive accounts might speak to the material processes of their labor, as well as the hierarchies within which they must operate. Similarly, in the second case study I tracked another speechwriter's reflexive theorizing of her language work in the micro-linguistic practices she employed during the speech revision process. Her changes to the draft exhibit an overall strategy of simplification and intensification, revealing how this wordsmith's metadiscursive attention to speaker style, voice, and institutional goals/impact take shape in the product of her distinctly creative labor (Jones 2010). As such, this ethnographic text trajectory evidence of entextualization is another indication of the ways in which language workers come to embody and discursively enact the "the new worker-self" in late or advanced capitalist regimes (Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013: 211).

However, what I have identified here is not necessarily the exploitation of wordsmiths within the larger economy of language work, but rather the ways in which entextualization practices ultimately teach them to understand and articulate their expertise and value in very specific ways. This, I would argue, appears to be inherent to speechwriters' professional socialization. As a concluding case in point: during my speechwriting course the students engaged in a lengthy discussion with the instructor concerning what to do when a speaker doesn't want to incorporate words or phrasing which the speechwriter especially likes or believes in. First, the instructor advised us to try and explain to the speaker why it was "in their best interest" to include the particular material in the speech. He said that if they still refuse, however, we could just "sneak it in" to some other speech later on. The implication here is that it is the speechwriter who is ultimately in control, and who best understands what the speaker needs. And indeed, multiple other speechwriters I interviewed professed to using this tactic in their practice. All this is to say that the speechwriter's backstage role – their relative powerlessness vis-à-vis the principal – is certainly not a straightforward one, and it is precisely this complexity which comes to the fore in their entextualization practices. In the end, however, and no matter if they are generally perceived as prestigious, highly skilled professionals, speechwriters are workers who "have no choice but to sell their labour" (Holborrow 2018: 59). According to Thurlow (2020b) this is the precarious position of all language workers; it is the inevitable result of a (linguistic) marketplace entrenched in ideological and socioeconomic struggle.

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earlier versions of this work, and to Deborah Tannen for additional insight. Lastly, I would like to thank Sonia Das and two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable suggestions for revision. Open access funding provided by Universitat Bern.

[Corrections added June 1, 2023 after first online publication: In Endnote 2, the URL was corrected; In the reference list, “Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981[1975]” was changed to “Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1975) 1981”; the reference ‘Cant, Sarah, and Ursula Sharma. 1998’ was removed from the reference list; “Tannen, Deborah. 2007[1989]” was changed to “Tannen, Deborah. (1989) 2007”; the reference list was put in alphabetical order.]

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ENDNOTES

[1] Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation Elite Creativities project.

[2] For example: https://www.petesouza.com/gallery.html?gallery=President%20Obama&sortNumber=14&skipno=0#14

[3] All names and personal pronouns have been changed for anonymity. Additionally, some identifying details have been omitted from extracts.

[4] This was not necessarily the experience of speechwriters of color – and in fact, was brought up as a distinct problem in one of my interviews. David Litt also addresses this in his memoir *Thanks, Obama* (2017).

[5] Figures 1 and 2 do not capture the full length and word count of these documents; I have summarized the content with descriptive phrases and tried to give an impression of the layout.

[6] I reached out to Evie by email to confirm the precise timeline but received no response.

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