# Resounding News:
# The Acoustic Conventions of Israeli Newscasts

HADAR LEVY
AMIT PINCHEVSKI[1]
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

This article takes sound as its analytical point of departure in asking the following question: What does sound do in television news? Exploring the conventions of sound used by producers of Israeli television news, from the signature tune to the various news items, this study reveals the role of sound as part of journalistic framing practices but also as an insidious element challenging the visual as well as the construction of framing. We suggest that inquiring into the acoustic features of television news may offer new insights into the news genre and its practices. We propose the term *soundscape* as a complementary conceptual metaphor to framing with the aim of counteracting the visual bias dominating the academic discourse of political communication and journalism studies.

*Keywords: sound, television, news, framing, soundscape, sound studies*

Television news is a heavily researched genre, which has been studied by a diverse company of scholars from various perspectives. These include narrative studies (Bell, 1999; Montgomery, 2005), conversation analysis (Ekström, 2001; Hutchby, 2005), and, especially from the perspective of political communication, dealing with questions of institutional practices (Altheide, 1976; Epstein, 1973), thematic content (Frosh & Wolfsfeld, 2007; Peter & De Vreese, 2004; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), and media effects (Iyengar, 1994; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). Notwithstanding their divergence, what is common to all these studies is the focus on the visual and verbal aspects of televised news. Indeed, the visual figures prominently within the theoretical discourse of political communication, not only as an object of study but also as a source of one of its fundamental tropes: framing (Frosh, 2011). To frame is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Journalistic framing bears political

significance, as biased, one-sided framing might "encourage recipients to give attention and weight to the evaluative attributes that privilege the favored side's interpretation" (Entman, 2010, p. 392).

According to Coleman (2010), the common dichotomy of visual and verbal within the framing discourse altogether ignores the role of sound. This article sets out to explore the previously understudied acoustic features of television news as part of the framing process but also as a potentially insidious, often unintended component, which sometimes threatens to undo the framing process. Examining what sound does in television news may thus open new ways of approaching television news; moreover, and more radically, it may also present a challenge to longstanding assumptions informing the discourse of political communication and journalism studies.

Sound is primarily defined as a physical phenomenon: "The sensation produced in the organs of hearing when the surrounding air is set in vibration in such a way as to affect these" (from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*). In this article, we interpret "sound" in a different way than is traditionally understood in news framing research, namely, not as the semantic choices made by television reporters or as voice intonation and inflection, so fundamental to conversation analysis. Nor do we use it to designate what is commonly known as a "sound bite"—a catchy, short extract that serves to highlight items in the newscast. Rather, for our purposes, sound refers to all that which lies beyond the verbal: the acoustic rather than the semantic qualities of the hearable. In film studies, where it has been employed mainly from a psychoanalytical perspective (Doane, 1980; Silverman, 1988), sound—more than image—is said to have "the ability to saturate and short circuit our perception" (Chion, 1990/1994, p. 33). Yet in other quarters of media studies, sound has largely been ignored (Bull, 2004).

Recent years have seen a growing scholarly interest in sound as an object of inquiry, with a new, multidisciplinary field known as sound studies (Pinch & Bijsterveld, 2004). A key concept in sound studies is *soundscape*: a term coined by Canadian composer Murray Schafer (1993) to designate the sonic counterpart of landscape, a sonic environment consisting of "events *heard* not objects *seen*" (p. 8, emphasis in original). In surveying the conventions of sound used in production in Israeli television news, from the signature tune to the various news items, we build on Thompson's (2004) development of the notion of soundscape as a simultaneously physical and cultural environment, encompassing sounds but also material objects creating these sounds. Soundscape thus gives rise to symbolic meanings, aesthetic values, and social circumstances that dictate who gets to hear what. We suggest that introducing the soundscape as a complementary conceptual metaphor to framing may offer new insights into the news genre and its practices, and work to counteract the visual bias dominating the academic discourse of political communication and journalism studies.

## Method

Our corpus consists of a sample of 59 Israeli newscasts that were broadcast in 2013, including weekday ($n$ = 32) and weekend ($n$ = 27) editions, taken from three different but simultaneously broadcast television channels (22 news broadcasts each from Channel 2 and Channel 10, and 15 news broadcasts from Channel 1). In line with the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we conducted a close listening to single out reoccurring acoustic themes within the newscasts. A comparative

approach is applied in analyzing the acoustic arrangement of the same events on different news broadcasts to identify sound-related patterns with respect to the medium, the genre, and the broadcasting channels. We provide hyperlinks to some of the sound clips analyzed as well as additional quantitative data in footnotes.

It is important to note at the outset that for almost 25 years, Channel 1 was the only Israeli television outlet to air a newscast as part of the public broadcasting service. Channel 2 was established in 1993 as the first commercial television channel in Israel, and before long, its daily newscasts became the most popular in the country. Channel 10's newscast is relatively young, joining the scene in 2002. As the second commercial broadcaster, Channel 10 has experienced financial troubles almost from the beginning. The different institutional settings of the three will prove important in understanding some of the production decisions insofar as the sounds in television news are concerned. Although restricted to the Israeli context, we expect some of the conclusions to have general relevance, and at the very least to call for further research in different broadcasting contexts.

## News and Tunes

The first acoustic element the audience encounters when watching the news is the signature tune, usually accompanying the anchorwoman's voice-over presenting the main headlines of the day. The musical notes evoke vigilance and suspense, functioning as an "acoustic logo," circumscribing the "news" time slot. The signature tune serves to frame the newscast using sound, as it ceremonially signals the deviation from regular broadcasting in favor of the news broadcast. The signature tune is a "soundmark" in Schafer's (1993) terms: a specific sound possessing "qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in the community" (p. 10). As such, it has a performative role in the ritual of television news, functioning as a subtle liminal (Turner, 1967) device that marks that transition from "entertainment" to "news." The signature tune also plays a key rhetorical role in establishing the broadcast's ethos of authority: Engineered down to the last note, it is designed to tell the audience something about the newscast in the language of music.

Comparing the three signature tunes of the Israeli news broadcasts on Channels 1, 2, and 10 reveals their musical similarities as well as disparities relating to tonality, rhythm, and melody.[2] The different musical choices constituting the signature tunes echo the cultural and institutional backgrounds of the different news broadcasts as well as proclaiming their professional identity. All three signature tunes are entirely synthesized and share a Western major key tonality; a quadruple meter; a vibrant, ascending melody typical of national anthems; and prominent wind instruments and kick drums, used for ritual or communicative purposes in different cultures throughout history (Campbell, Greated, & Myers, 2004). These underlying musical features, common to all signature tunes, are in keeping with all three Israeli news broadcasts' appeal to a national audience.

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[2] Music for Channel 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2_5ewNRCng;
Channel 2, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_XjoEmBxqY; and
Channel 10, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvLX_cP2YUk

Nevertheless, the signature tunes of Channels 1 and 2 present greater resemblance considering their homophonic melodies, their steady 60 beats-per-minute tempo, and the similar orchestration (particularly the steady kick-drum backbeat). The homophonic, trumpet-like ascending melodies convey majesty and formality, implying the authoritative, well-established, national status of both broadcasts. Time is a critical factor in reporting the news (Tuchman, 1973), in this case, literally: The signature tunes of Channels 1 and 2 obey the solid industrial clock's rhythm of 60 beats per minute. This effect is further achieved by series of on-the-second high-pitched tones (syncopated on Channel 1), referencing the famous BBC beacon. There are also important differences between the two channels. Unlike the two other signature tunes, Channel 1's ending is unresolved and holds harmonic tension. Channel 2's signature tune is inlaid with various sound effects, simulating electronic signal transmission, swishes, and beeps. These sound effects, keyed to graphics such as a circular loading icon, establish Channel 2's newscast as digitally up to date.

Channel 10's signature tune is polyphonic, encompassing features identified with popular and electronic music, such as a mild acceleration in tempo (from 62 to 64 beats per minute), rhythmic variations, bass dynamics, and percussion dominance and variety (Snoman, 2009). These features provide Channel 10 with a more vibrant, contemporary-sounding signature tune compared with Channels 1 and 2. Channel 10's musical opening is unconventional considering its polyphonic "call-and-response" structure, producing a dialogue between wind and string instruments, in contrast to the homophonic character of the other channels' signature tunes. These rhythmic and orchestral variations may suggest a greater topic variety in Channel 10's newscasting (Van Leeuwen, 1989). Channel 10's signature tune does not incorporate high-pitched tones, although a sound resembling the toll of a heavy bell occurs twice, as if summoning the Israeli audience to gather.

**The Acoustic Architecture of the Studio**

The studio is the home base of the news broadcast from which viewers depart to the chaotic reality, and to which they return safely afterward. As the last notes of the signature tune fade out, we enter the acoustic architecture of the studio. According to Nyre (2008), the production style of television news is "inaudible studio acoustics" (p. 22), which means that the studio functions as a sterilized buffer against the noisy outside. Several microphones are placed in the studio to pick up the various speakers, and the studio's short reverberation is mixed to create the feeling of a slightly larger room than appears through the frame. On both Channels 2 and 10, microphones are attached to the speakers' clothes, allowing them to speak in a low-pitched voice while also amplifying the sound of their breathing. Previous studies have proposed that breathing serves the anchorwoman in punctuating the transition from one item to the next by taking a deep breath (Dori-Hacohen, 2012), as well as suggesting intimacy within this mode of address (Van Leeuwen, 1999). On Channel 1's news, the microphones are not attached to the speakers' clothes, but instead are positioned on the table facing the speakers, requiring them to speak up. This technical detail has noisy consequences, as we demonstrate below.

What we do not hear is of equal importance. As a rule, studio items are introduced visually without diegetic sounds of reality: We see silent video footage supplemented either by the anchorwoman's voice-over or on a split screen alongside the current speaker in the studio. It is as though the speakers in the studio have the power to mute reality to make themselves heard. There are two exceptions to this

convention, constituting two audiovisual conventions of their own. The first, in studio items incorporating edited footage of musical performances, sports events, and mutatis mutandis violent clashes (especially with respect to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict), the diegetic sound is not completely muted, but considerably lowered. Such an acoustic production choice emphasizes the newsworthiness of these events via sound: What is common to these admittedly divergent types of reports is the liveness and drama being instilled to their reporting acoustically.

The second exception is live transmissions. During these reports, reality sounds are allowed to invade the studio with less control on the production's part. The visual convention of split screen in such reports brings the studio and the outside world closer together through a dialogue between the anchorwoman and the reporter onsite. Occasionally, however, a time gap occurs between the anchorwoman's questions and the reporter's answers due to transmission delay, intensifying the spatial distance between them. Sometimes, it is even possible to hear the anchorwoman's question repeated through the reporter's earphone while both of them wait in awkward silence. These technological constraints seem to impose a longer silence than is customary in typical face-to-face interaction as turn taking proceeds between the studio and the outside. Unlike the first exception of authorized intrusions of outside sounds, the delay, palpably felt by the lack of synchronicity between audio and video feeds, foregrounds the untamed nature of sound, especially in live reports. In live transmissions, there is always a danger of unplanned incidents. For example, during live reports on Channels 2 and 10,[3] following a dramatic press conference on the economy (October 15, 2013), both newscasts introduced split screens between the anchor in the studio and the reporter on the scene. However, because of the spherical, leaking nature of sound (Stanyek & Piekut, 2010), in addition to the voice of the reporter on-screen, audiences of both channels could simultaneously hear the voice of the other channel's reporter, potentially distracting their attention and introducing mutual leakage that might undo the framing of the event produced by each channel.[4]

### Sound "Bites"

Other than the anchorwoman and the correspondents' voices, the news studio is filled with silence, thus making it a highly exposed acoustic space wherein the smallest, unplanned noise may easily be heard. The directional microphones in the studio are aimed to amplify specific sources of sound; nonetheless, various noises interrupt the acoustic architecture of the news studio and violate the sonic regimen, such as paper rustling, mobile phone ringing/vibrating, coughs, whispers, and all sorts of squeaks, crackles, and bumps.[5] The microphone is a relatively unselective device: It "does not hear as do

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[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goOUysflmcQ&feature=youtu.be

[4] Forty-six cases of lowered diegetic sounds on studio items: Channel 2: 12 (8.5% of all studio items), five separate demonstrations, three sports events, two musical performances, one election campaign, and one foreign affairs. Channel 10: 24 (17% of all studio items), five musical performances, five demonstrations or violent clashes, four sports events, four crime scenes, four political events, and two foreign affairs. Channel 1 did not exhibit any thematic consistency regarding this issue: 10 (11% of all studio items). Forty-five cases of audio transmission delay: Channel 1: 12; Channel 2: 19; Channel 10: 14.

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtdPcc0d8QE&feature=youtu.be

ears that have been trained immediately to filter voices, words and sounds out of noise; it registers acoustic events as such" (Kittler, 1986/1999, p. 23). The more studio time there is during a newscast, the greater the risk of breaking the acoustic rules.

Noise is often considered "unwanted sound" (Schafer, 1993, p. 273), but some of the unplanned noises mentioned, coming from objects handheld by the participants or in their immediate vicinity, may be incorporated as part of the professional line of the newscast. Rustling paper provides concrete support to the anchorwoman's role in announcing the news. A mobile phone's vibration or the tone of incoming text message may suggest a real-time update, reinforcing the reporter's credibility; in contrast, the interrupting text message may not be relevant, raising the question of when the mobile phone—this hazardous object situated between the private and public sphere and allowing constant availability (García-Montes, Caballero-Munoz, & Perez-Alvarez, 2006)—is permitted into the news studio, seeing that it presents a constant contaminating potential to the silence of the studio. Whatever the reason, the sound of the incoming text message seems likely to undermine the news, making the viewer wonder about the acoustic mishap.

Bumping into the microphone accidentally, dropping a pen to the floor, shoes squeaking, or chairs scraping may all have a similar distracting effect, but nevertheless are considered as acceptable mishaps during newscasts. This in contrast to participants whispering or finger-snapping to get attention, believing themselves to be undetectable to the television audience because they are outside the visual frame, as was the case in a studio item discussing recent escalation of violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on Channel 10 (September 27, 2013), or during a recap of the Boston Marathon bombing on Channel 1 (April 19, 2013). Even more surprising are noises coming from the studio backstage: the production staff talking, laughing, or coughing. At times, it is even possible to detect the producer's voice through the anchorwoman's earphone, guiding him or her through the broadcast. The "dynamic screen" behind the anchor, coming across as innovative and high-techy, makes an industrial squeaking noise as it moves on the rail, creating something of an audiovisual irony.[6]

Goffman (1956) defines the "back region" of live broadcast as "all places where the camera is not focused at the moment or all places out of range of 'live' microphones" (p. 69). The abovementioned incidents prove that—despite the efforts of producers—these regions do not necessarily coincide and demonstrate how misleading the incongruity between the audible and the visible might be. The acoustic range is far greater than the visual: Microphones pick up every little noise—in and out of the visual frame—and amplify it. The conventional way of responding to these unplanned or unwanted acoustic

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[6] Fifty-four cases of paper rustling: Channel 1: 24; Channel 2: 16; and Channel 10: 14. Ten cases of mobile-phone-related sounds: Channel 1: 5; Channel 2: 3; and Channel 10: 2. Ten cases of bumping into the microphone; all on Channel 1. Two cases of pens dropping to the floor; both on Channel 10. Seven cases of whispering: Channel 1: 3; Channel 2: 2; and Channel 10: 2. Thirty-nine cases of noises from the backstage of the studio: Channel 1: 37; Channel 10: 2. Nine cases of audible voices coming through earphones: Channel 1: 3; Channel 2: 2; and Channel 10: 4. Five cases of squeaks from the "dynamic screen," all on Channel 10.

occurrences during a newscast is to ignore them completely, to preserve the authoritative façade, which at times achieves the opposite result.

### *Hear and Here*

Different noises accompany the news broadcast and possess a distinctive presence effect (Gumbrecht, 2004): sounds addressing the senses rather than the mind, allowing the audience to touch the studio at a distance. Heavy breathing, high heels clacking on the studio floor, bracelets jangling softly, or the metallic knock of cufflinks on the panel's table tell the audience about the participants' embodied presence and about the material reality involved in the communication process, making them closer and more tangible. Some of these sounds are suggestive of gender. This might invite examination of the ways sound is linked to gender, and how what is heard is connected to gender categories in the studio. But before designating fixed meanings, these noises indicate the participants' embodiment, which continues to signal both within and outside the frame. As Pinchevski and Liebes (2010) describe it,

> the logic of broadcasting has made the separation of body and voice a commonplace, normative phenomenon . . . the body is inevitability inscribed onto its media traces, broadcast or recorded. It is the body's singular mark on the voice that brings out the expressive over the intelligible, the materiality of the body. (p. 273)

Thus, every snuffle, cough, or clearing of the throat outside the visual frame are ways in which the body—assisted by the microphone—continues to haunt the news broadcast acoustically, as though resisting its omission from the visually oriented ritual of television news.

Examining the microphone's status in the studio during news panels involving a number of participants reveals a gap between the dialogic façade and the actual institutional discourse structured by production. Conversation analysis studies has identified a move toward a "conversationalization" of the news: a turn from a monologic, formal presentation of the news to a more dialogic interaction structure, which is not fully scripted in advance (Montgomery, 2006; Tolson, 2006). In some cases, however, what seems like conversations are actually "monologues in disguise" (Hamo, 2009, p. 334), having the appearance of a dialogue on the overt and proclaimed level, while fundamentally preserving the monologic character of delivering the news. By turning the microphones on and off, the production seeks to control turn-taking in the interaction and limit the leaking of sounds from their assigned channels into those of others (Stanyek & Piekut, 2010). These attempts are not always successful: after participants do their designated part in discussing their topic of expertise, and the production turns off their microphones, they might start speaking again out of turn about a different topic. Oftentimes during discussions, they are initially heard through other participants' microphones, which may compel producers to turn their microphones back on to maintain the appearance of conversation.[7]

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[7] Fifteen cases of high heels clacking on the studio floor (all during the weather forecast): Channel 1: 6; and Channel 2: 9. Eight cases of snuffles: Channel 1: 1; Channel 2: 5; and Channel 10: 2. Sixteen cases of throat clearing: Channel 1: 5; Channel 2: 4; and Channel 10: 7. Twelve cases of coughing: Channel 1: 4;

Sustaining the routine audiovisual conventions described is a sign of journalistic professionalism. Control over sound is sought to maintain the authority asserted by the ability to separate between the studio and the outside world. As demonstrated, sound sometimes acts as a subversive element, undermining the producers' effort at maintaining on-air cleanliness, but noises may also carry some benefits. Sound is often considered immaterial and ephemeral (Chow & Steintrager, 2011; Ong, 1982), leading to the definition of hearing as a temporal sense (Sterne, 2003). Therefore, we might say that unplanned sounds disrupting the acoustic sterility of the studio serve as indexical cues, referring to the live broadcast and establishing liveness, a central element in the ethos of television (Hamo, 2015). These noises may soften the formality and sometimes undermine the belabored seamlessness of the newscast.

### Out of the Studio, Into Reality: The News Items

As opposed to the studio's single-layered sound, all news items in our research corpus ($N = 434$) have sound depth, being composed of several sound layers. In describing the general acoustic structure of news items, based on the idea of perspective (Schafer, 1993; Van Leeuwen, 1999), we can say that the reporter's voice-over, as the immediate, most prominent sound, is in the foreground, while the less prominent, lowered sounds of reality are in the background. This structure applies both to hard-news items (dealing with politics, economics, and crime) and soft-news items (also known as human-interest stories), whereas soft-news items ($n = 133$) usually contain an additional layer of musical sound in the background. In the following subsections, we lend our ears to the acoustic layers at the back of news items: the diegetic sounds of reality and the musical soundtrack.

Listening to hard news soundscapes reveals that items dealing with similar topics share similar acoustic frames. For example, items dealing with politics usually consist of a thick tumult of numerous speakers at government meetings, international conferences, or social events, placed under the reporter's voice-over.[8] These lo-fi walls of sound have a muffling effect: It is impossible to make out what is being said other than the fact that there is much talk going on. Nonetheless, the cacophony as a whole is significant. First, the noisy soundwall furnishes the news item with an illustrative sound texture of an essential practice in politics: talking. As such, it serves a phatic function: "messages primarily serving to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works" (Jakobson, 1960, p. 355). In this case, the noisy soundwall affirms the existence of an open channel between the reality and the audience. Although it has no narrative value (as mentioned before, these items all sound the same), the thick tumult has a presence effect in Gumbrecht's (2004) terms, as well as a reality effect in Barthes's (1984/1986) terms: It makes the reality more tangible to the audience by its noises, and more authentic and credible by its redundancy. In items covering multiple political occurrences, several soundwalls are stitched together by editing, roughly attaching one reality patch to another, each carrying its unique acoustic density and volume. The incongruity between the raw "realities," arising through the uneven editing sutures, enhances their reality effect (Barthes, 1984/1986) and uncovers the urgent, unpolished editing practices of hard news.

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Channel 2: 6; and Channel 10: 2. Twenty-three cases of reactive volume control: Channel 1: 7; Channel 2: 12; and Channel 10: 4.

[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPSTX_CsLL0&feature=youtu.be

The soundscape of items covering legal issues is abrupt and incoherent under the reporter's voice-over, comprising echoing footsteps, doors slamming, chairs screeching, chains rattling, and fragments of sentences. These items (as well as items dealing with politics and foreign affairs) are often dotted with the mechanical clicking sounds of the camera shutters of predatory reporters accompanying suspects in their walk of shame through the court corridors. According to Sontag (1977), "the omnipresence of cameras persuasively suggests that time consists of interesting events, events worth photographing" (p. 11); here, it is the clicking sound of the shutter, more than the mere presence of the cameras, that indicates the realization of such potential. Such sounds assist in framing occurrences as important by indicating newsworthiness acoustically: Noisy, excited bundles of clicks will accompany first-order events, whereas less dramatic happenings will earn only scarce clicks. Camera-shutter sounds carry a unique presence effect (Gumbrecht, 2004) as they register the presence of still cameras within video footage. This double register—the video registering the sounds of the still camera as it registers the reality silently—enhances the reality effect and affirms the importance of the event, as the visual medium resounds through the audiovisual one.

News items dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict contain routine ingredients.[9] In depicting Palestinians, news items often incorporate volleys of gunfire, echoing explosions, and collective yelling. In covering clashes between Palestinians and Jewish settlers in the West Bank, the swearing and shouting of Palestinians, settlers, and soldiers get mixed together, which makes it hard to tell them apart. News items reporting on rocket attacks against Israel include piercing sounds of howling sirens. Occasionally, these items introduce crying and praying in Hebrew as well as in Arabic, mostly at funerals of the conflict's victims. The Israeli authorities figure in such items through various machinery sounds such as ambulances, jeeps, rescue vehicles, tanks, airplanes, and helicopters; as honking vehicles drive through the frame, engines are roaring and doors slamming. As the reporter's voice-over makes room for selected acoustic highlights, the most alarming sounds are brought to the fore—for instance, fierce quarreling or booming blasts.

According to Wolfsfeld (2004), journalists prefer the simple way to tell about the conflict, using episodic, incendiary images and sound bites, which can be integrated into the evening news without meddling into the bigger, more complex picture. Nevertheless, in listening to items dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, one learns that their sounds reoccur and are indicative of an ongoing situation rather than of a specific event. Israeli authorities, regularly manifested through metonymic machinery sounds, rattling and clattering through the various scenes of the conflict—sounds that assert military control over the situation. As in the case of studio items, these repeated acoustic production choices accentuate the drama, along with the newsworthy visual scenes of violent confrontations of the conflict (Wolfsfeld, 1997). This ready-made acoustic formula, defining the audible essentials for items dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, surely simplifies the practice of news editors; nonetheless, this off-the-rack recipe runs the risk of normalizing the conflict as timeless, and sounding out the Palestinians in a superficial, stereotyped manner.

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[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOxcTnB1KgA&feature=youtu.be

Floating over these hard-news arenas is the reporter's informative voice-over. In hard-news items, the reporter takes a direct-address style, an authoritative "voice of God" through the off-screen narration (Nichols, 1983). The reporter's voice is acousmatic (Chion, 1990/1994; Dolar, 2006): The reporter is heard, but not seen, his voice in the foreground as it informs the audience from a distant and omniscient point of view of a frame of reality whose diegetic sound plays at a low volume. As mentioned, according to the logic of broadcasting, the separation of body and voice has become a normative phenomenon (Pinchevski & Liebes, 2010), and, in this case, the absence of the reporter's body stresses his distance from the reality, establishing his objectivity and authority (Kohn & Eitan, 2007). This basic acoustic apparatus yields a regulated and buffered channel between the already restricted sounds of hard news reality and the audience.[10]

### Forensic Sounds

The dominant mindset of television sound design aims at reducing reverb and noise in favor of intelligibility (Høier, 2012). However, several noisy technical constraints have increasingly become common, even imperative, conventions in television news. The acoustic perception of investigative stories involving hidden cameras or sound recordings is the polar opposite of hard news, where the most important sounds are in the foreground, while secondary noises are relegated to the background, producing a reversed sound orientation.[11] Microphones used in these recordings are often highly sensitive yet poorly placed (to keep them hidden), thus amplifying the closest sounds, which are usually the recorder's voice, but also proximate sounds, such as papers rustling, phones ringing, and chairs squeaking, rendering the acoustic focal point—the voice of the subject being secretly recorded—faint and distant. The acoustic redundancy of covert recordings, which results in hampering the scene's intelligibility, is often supplemented by poor visual information, capturing an arbitrary corner in the room (usually from a low angle) or digitally blurred faces obscuring the suspect's identity.

Put together, these technical audiovisual constraints give rise to a genre-specific sound symbolism (Bijsterveld, 2006): namely, specific cultural meanings associated with specific sounds experienced in a specific context of listening. The reversed sound orientation of audio recording, in combination with deficient visual information, produces an audiovisual convention of "incrimination" (Kohn & Eitan, 2007, p. 206), signaling transgression and immorality—the acoustic framing is used to frame someone. Furthermore, the reversed sound orientation imposes a point of audition on the listeners, situating them on the recorder's side (Lastra, 2000; Nyre, 2008). The noise symbolism, as well as the

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[10] Eighteen of 23 news items dealing with politics (78%) include thick sound walls of numerous speakers. Seventy-seven cases of camera shutter clicks: in 10 of 23 news items dealing with politics (43%), in 37 of 69 news items covering foreign affairs (53%), and in 30 of 69 news items covering legal issues (43%). Twenty-one of 34 news items dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (61%) include howling sirens, and/or volleys of gunfire, and/or echoing explosions, and/or crying, and/or yelling and swearing in Hebrew and Arabic. Five of 34 news items dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (14%) include praying in Hebrew and Arabic. Eighteen of 34 news items dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (52%) include machinery noises of various vehicles.

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQQWjhh4wvk&feature=youtu.be

imposed point of audition, serves the news producers in constructing the news. For instance, during an investigative story on Channel 10 (January 3, 2013), questioning the credibility of salt therapy, noisy segments of hidden camera recordings containing a reversed sound orientation were interwoven with clean, intelligible footage through cross-cutting. The hidden camera recordings featured the faint and distant voices of several salt therapists, muffled by classical music played in the spa, computer sounds, coughs, and excessive static noise, whereas the counterfootage introduced an expert criticizing the salt therapy method with no interference. In addition to the acoustic disparities, the anonymous therapists appear with their faces digitally blurred, while the expert sits in his office, respectfully titled by his name and credentials. This case demonstrates how the juxtaposition of noisy stripes containing a reversed sound orientation and clean stripes as part of a news item, with the assistance of the manipulative, invisible practices of editing (Liebes, 2000), serves to acoustically present incriminating evidence together with the passing of judgment.

Reporters routinely assemble fragments of information to produce a coherent item, revealing newsrooms as "forensic laboratories of reality" (Ellis, 2009, p. 81). Phone recordings are often used in reporting transgressions, as in the case of Israel Railways workers suspected of embezzlement (January 2, 2013, Channel 2), or hazardous situations, such as rocket attacks (February 26, 2013, Channel 2). In addition to adding liveness, weaving such recordings within items may assist establishing its credibility by adding an evidence effect. As with hidden recordings, by imposing a point of audition on the listeners, such as listening in to a recorded telephone conversation, the audience identifies with the caller's side of the conversation, in this case, the reporter or member of the production staff. The caller's voice sounds normal, whereas the disembodied voice of the person on the other end sounds distorted and distant as per the logic of a telephonic call, which favors intelligibility at the expense of specificity (Lastra, 2000). The phatic (Jakobson, 1960) static noises accompanying the conversation render the telephonic medium itself with a presence effect (Gumbrecht, 2004), since "there are channels, and thus there must be noise. No channel without noise" (Serres, 1982, p. 79).

Technical distortion of sources' voices serves to ensure their anonymity, usually by altering the pitch (together with masking their appearance).[12] The distorted voice "has a touch of the uncanny" (Dolar, 2006, p. 22): It sounds funny and unnatural, too low or too high, like a cartoon character. Sometimes the voice is doubled and sounds like two voices, one very high and the other very low, speaking simultaneously, as two extreme points on a vast spectrum of voices and identities. Voice distortion subtracts from the voice the traits that act as an acoustic fingerprint, making it unrecognizable as well as hybrid: both human and machine. Paradoxically, a technical convention designed to obscure the connection between a specific body and a specific voice, came to be associated with a genre described by Hill (2007) as "the most well established and recognizable factual genre" (p. 4).[13]

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[12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7aIBRVR4l8&feature=youtu.be

[13] Eighteen cases of reversed sound orientation; 37 news items include phone recordings; seven cases of digital distortion of sources' voices.

***Soft News Versus Hard News***

Music is used in soft-news items for various purposes, such as creating a mood, organizing the narrative, entertaining, expressing criticism, or creating irony. Soft news carries no urgency and interest in that it does not necessarily expire over time (Tuchman, 1973), which allows for prolonged, often more stylized, slots borrowing aesthetically from cinematic sound-editing practices. However, these acoustic luxuries work to mark the content of soft-news items as lighter, thus signaling their deferred position on the program lineup, on average as the 11th of the approximately 13 items per broadcast. This musical cue plays an important role in the composition of the news broadcast, announcing the transition from "important matters" to merely "interesting matters" (Tuchman, 1973, p. 114), authorizing the audience to assume a more relaxed mode of attention.

According to Corner (2002), music is considered "an importer of unwelcome emotion and feeling" (p. 358) within journalistic genres, contrasting with values of objectivity and professional balance. Hard-news items almost never include such soundmarks, drawing instead on indexical acoustic samples in creating a realistic soundtrack to accompany the report. Nonetheless, as demonstrated, television news sound editing weaves the diegetic sounds according to specific scales, meter, and tempo, following more or less set conventions. These circumstantial noises partake in the framing process and introduce bias as they are harnessed as part of a hard-news item to raise empathy or to favor one side in a conflict.

This generic sound-based distinction has some important implications in informing the framing of Israeli political parties. During the 2013 election campaign, coverage of smaller niche parties was positioned toward the end of the newscast and included humorous and ethnic music; by contrast, items covering mainstream parties appeared in the opening headlines and contained no music at all. Thus, for instance, classical music was assigned to the coverage of Hayerukim (The Green Party), stressing environmental protection in their election campaign, while oriental drumming accompanied an interview with Asma Agbarieh-Zahalka, leader of the Arab-Jewish Da'am Workers Party. Attributing specific musical genres to small parties affirms and further determines their peripheral status within local politics, suggesting that only elites vote for Hayerukim and only Arabs vote for Da'am. The fact that relatively small parties got musical framing, as opposed to the utter lack of musical framing of mainstream parties, supports the political status quo, suppressing alternative ways of rethinking the political arena.

Despite their differences, hard news and soft news share some acoustic features. Sound redundancy, for instance, is common to most sound bites, as random circumstantial sounds accompany the short statements of relevant figures on camera. These sounds might not be insignificant, but their registering within the sound bite recording nonetheless holds a subversive potential in relation to the general framing of the news item. Cheerful birds chirping during a solemn sound bite concerning car accidents or domestic violence, or an ominous raven's call accompanying casual kindergarten footage, afford an added layer of reality—and reality effect (Barthes, 1984/1986). As Coleman (2010) suggests, the chirping of birds "may very likely carry frames of its own" (p. 237), but they are not necessarily the frames engineered by production. Listening closely, these incidental sounds might not carry frames at all.

Using sound to mark news item's boundaries is another prevalent yet planned convention, common to both hard and soft news. All sound-related conventions described—thick sound walls in items dealing with politics, camera shutter sounds, alarming sounds of conflicts, noisy reversed sound orientation recordings in investigative stories, distorted voices in anonymous accounts, and music—are often sounded with increased volume at the beginning and/or end of news items. Such sound editing choices are equivalent to visual close-ups or zoom-ins used to punctuate specific elements within a perceived reality. This metaconvention serves to frame news items technically, as well as culturally, further dramatizing the transition between the sterilized news studio and the piercing reality.

All sound conventions listed, both in hard- and soft-news items, were found to be broadly shared and exercised by all three Israeli news broadcasts. Two exceptions were detected, both in Channel 1's news broadcast. Despite appearing at the beginning of the newscast and dealing with issues typically categorized as hard news, the two news items surprisingly contained music: elevator music curiously accompanied a critical-tone item dealing with the government's economic policy (October 15, 2013), and extraneous jazzy notes concluded an item covering the safe return of an Israeli citizen from captivity in Egypt. The deviation from the generic hard-news-sans-music norm is dramatically disharmonious, a mismatch that is further accentuated by the fact that the two other Israeli newscasts did not integrate any music while covering the same captive story on that very evening (March 27, 2013, Channels 1, 2, & 10). These exceptions prove the acoustic rules and stress the communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) required in news production, namely, the knowledge about how and when to use the acoustic conventions appropriately.

## Conclusion

This article outlines the various conventions of sound in Israeli television news, revealing the key role of sound as part of production and journalistic framing practices. The ceremonious signature tunes act as performative soundmarks, indicating the newscast's generic boundaries, while the buffering acoustic architecture of the studio functions as the sonic subframe of the newscast, interspersing the noisy news items. Raw and disordered noises—such as muffled, off-the-record conversations, camera shutters, and sirens—are conventionally organized according to the item's theme in the service of journalistic framing. However, this study also reveals the insidious character of sound, threatening to break into the visual frame, as well as challenging the cultural frame designed by journalists and news producers. Due to its spherical, elusive nature, sound acts as a subversive element within the news broadcast as unselective microphones inside the studio and out in the field amplify—among other things—random noises, acoustic mishaps, and competing voices from outside the visual frame. These incidents briefly crack the authoritative façade of the news broadcast and disclose its back region's practices (Goffman, 1956).

Despite some differences among the Israeli newscasts, all three are consistent in their use of the conventions of sound. These findings raise the following question: Why do all three Israeli news productions march to the same tune? A possible answer may be found in the field of organizational sociology. As in any organization, the organizational behavior in news media is based on routines. According to Levitt and March (1988), the term "routines" includes "the forms, rules, procedures, conventions, strategies, and technologies around which organizations are constructed and through which they operate" (p. 320). Organizational routines are persistent, history dependent, and transmitted in

various means—socialization, education, professionalization, personal movement, mergers, and acquisitions—but also through imitation. Professional organizations, pressured to demonstrate that they are acting in collectively valued ways, copy ideas and practices from each other, which leads to diffusion of experience and routines within a community of organizations. To borrow from Frosh's (2011) account of political communication discourse, we may say that the conventions of sound used in the representation of reality in television news are both descriptive and prescriptive, as the different newscasts share a tendency toward similar sound conventions. Whether it serves as a marker of collective professionalism or simply as a method to facilitate the daily, hectic practice of news editors, the conventional usage of sound in television news results in a problematic uniformity with regard to the ever-narrowing ways we hear the world, not to mention silencing alternative ways to know it. Our findings suggest that journalistic practices leading to uniformity call for deeper attention in future research.

Just as with other professionals, scholars hold routines and conventions, which may encompass problems of their own. According to Frosh (2011), the centrality of visual tropes—such as framing—in the discourse of political communication predetermines scholarly discourse and limits its epistemological breadth. As mentioned before, to frame is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). This definition has theoretical (and consequently methodological) implications, providing the student of television newscasts with a limited set of tools, which may result in "dichotomous thought structures that mask their own conceptual procedures" (Frosh, 2011, p. 108). Relying on the visual metaphor of frame as a methodological concept risks missing all that is screened out: News framing analysis requires its own framing, a decisive choice of what is significant, what stays in or is left out.

Hence, tackling the question of what sound does in television news while using visual metaphors as conceptual guidelines would inevitably fail to capture the diverse acoustic shades which do not fall within the frame. Framing dictates a content hierarchy and strict categorization, whereas listening is a method that "values ambiguity" (Carter, 2004, p. 44). As this article demonstrates, exploring the soundscapes of television news may benefit the study of television news in uncovering the intended sounds and supporting the journalistic framing but also the unintended sounds, which might undermine such framing. Employing soundscape as a complementary conceptual metaphor to framing gives access to the acoustic background underlying the framing process, providing a deep context to the visual, verbal, and textual elements of television news.

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