`since the number of pages has to be a multiple of 4`…[1]

« Vous êtes… »

While listening to French radio, I have been struck recently by the way French interviewers address their studio guests

> — Monsieur Machin, vous êtes chargé de recherche à la faculté de …, spécialiste des modes du discours, et directeur d'une revue…

(invented example)

This sounds to my ears slightly ridiculous: Machin and Machine know who and what they are, and why they are there, by definition. On similar occasions British announcers usually go for something like

We have with us in the studio today…

The function and aim of both these types of text is of course to let the listeners know who is going to be interviewed. But the suppositions underlying the speech situations are quite different. The English-speakers use a potentially inclusive *we*: the listeners out there are not necessarily included (they are patently not in the studio), but they are not being shut out either.

The French broadcasters on the other hand seem reluctant to turn their metaphorical backs on the distinguished guest even for this brief moment. Their stock formula ensures at least a pretence of addressing the studio guest while informing the listeners of the guest's credentials. It thus maintains the contact with the interlocutor present, but only at the price of apparently estranging the audience, turning them as it were into eavesdroppers, overhearers, excluded from participation (even passive participation) in the discourse situation. But that is (in a sense) a denial of the very reason for the broadcast and the presence in the studio of guest and interviewer. And this from a station (Europe 1) that calls itself « la radio active » and bases much of its daytime programming on phone-ins. Perhaps the particularity is confined to Europe 1, and I would be interested to hear if other radio stations do the same.

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[1] Note: sometimes I write these fillers as needed, but I also bash them out as the ideas strike me and save them till needed. I worry continually that I might one day insert one I have already used. If I do, please tell me…

Filler