Reportable Facts and a Personal Touch: The Functions of Direct Quotes in Online News[1]

Daniela Landert

Abstract

Reporting statements from news sources is an essential part of news reports. Such statements are often transformed into narrative reports and indirect quotes, but they can also take the form of direct speech quotes. Direct quotes have always been used in news writing with a variety of different functions, such as providing colour to a news report and distancing the journalist from what is said. However, in recent data from online news sites these functions show some differences compared to earlier data from print newspapers. The aim of this study is to investigate these shifts and to explore the extent to which they depend on the new technological setting online.

Looking at data from the *Times Online* from 2010 and comparing it to data from the printed *Times* from 1985 and 2010, I identify two main shifts in the function of quotes. On the one hand, the integration of source material from which the quotes are taken reinforces one of the functions, namely presenting reportable facts. On the other hand, the function of expressing personal experiences and emotions is much more prominent than in the print data from 1985. I argue that the first of these shifts is directly related to the different settings of print and online news, whereas the second shift has to be seen in the context of a more general trend towards more personalised news reporting.

Keywords

1   Introduction

Online news sites have introduced various innovations compared to print newspapers. They integrate text with video reports and image galleries, they update breaking news stories continuously without depending on regular print cycles, and they let readers comment on news articles and interact with each other. In many respects, though, they can be said to follow the model of print newspapers; in particular, they have adopted the linguistic conventions of news writing. Reporting statements from news actors and official sources is an essential part of any news report and, consequently, speech reporting has been a characteristic of news writing since the beginning of newspapers.[2] Therefore, one might assume that the use of speech representation more generally and direct quotes in particular does not show any interesting developments in online news. However, if we compare a typical instance of a direct quote from the printed *Times* from 1985 (Example 1) with a quote from the *Times Online* (Examples 2) we can see that they do not necessarily fulfil the same functions.[3]

(1) Mrs Thatcher said that she wanted a settlement, but the board had to manage and had to close uneconomic pits. "It has to make the decision: that must be clear from the outset." (tp-uk-850125)

(2) With Africa's football championship set to open as planned on Sunday, other teams spoke of their fear that they, too, might become the target of attacks. "We have goose bumps … who knows what is going to happen to us," said Amade Chababe, Mozambique assistant coach. (to-wn-100110, ellipsis in original)

The main function of the quote in Example 1 is to present Thatcher's statement as a reportable fact. This is very typical of quotes in the printed *Times* from 1985. The sources of most quotes in these data come from official actors, such as politicians and

---

[2] The term "news actor" is used in this paper to refer to individuals who appear in news reports, for instance as sources of quotes. Bell (1991: 191) uses the term to refer to individuals "whose […] utterances have news value". See also Gans (1979: 8), Jucker (1996).

[3] The examples quoted in this paper identify the article from which they come in the format SOURCE-SECTION-DATE. Source is either "tp" for a printed issue of the *Times* or "to" for an online article. The section is "wn" for world news articles and "uk" for UK news. And the date of the issue from which the article is collected is given in the format YYMMDD. For more information, see section 4.

spokespersons of interest groups, who present positions and interpretations of current affairs (see also Landert 2014: 194). Statements that represent personal experiences and emotions are hardly ever found in the *Times* of 1985. However, this is an important function of quotes in the *Times Online*, as illustrated in Example 2. The quote appears in a report on a terror attack on the Togolese football team at the 2010 Africa Cup of Nations. In this case, the quote is not newsworthy for announcing a political decision or an official stance, but rather for presenting the personal perspective of someone who is affected by a news event. The quote in Example 2 also differs from quotes in the *Times* from 1985 in another respect, namely that further evidence for its factual status can easily be found online. Not only does the same quote appear in various online newspapers, but there are also videos in which one can watch Chababe being interviewed.[4]

There are various factors that play a role in the differences between the functions of quotes in the printed *Times* from 1985 and the *Times Online* from 2010. On the one hand, technological innovations of the online setting can facilitate changes. On the other hand, news media are affected by more general diachronic changes, such as tendencies towards popularisation and increased immediacy in news reporting. Disentangling these two aspects is not trivial, since innovations in online news that originated with technological factors can influence print news (see, for instance, Bucher/Schumacher 2008, Cooke 2005). In order to understand the shifts in the functions of direct quotes, it is important to combine a comparison of different types of data (diachronic and print versus online) with a detailed investigation of how these functions come into effect.

The aim of this study is to investigate recent shifts in the functions of direct quotes that can be observed on the *Times Online*. I will compare the data from the *Times Online* from 2010 to data from the printed *Times* from the same year, as well as to data from the printed Times from 1985. The first shift I identify consists of a new way in which quotes can function as reportable facts, which relies on additional evidence for the statement that is made available online. The second shift concerns an increase of quotes that present personal experience and emotions. I will argue that this second development is not directly related to technological factors, unlike the first

---

[4] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6w99EFF8a0 (last accessed 29 October 2014).

development. Instead, it should be seen in the context of personalisation tendencies that affect news media more generally.

Before starting my analysis, I will provide a brief overview of previous accounts of the functions of quotes in print newspapers in section 2. Following this, I will show that there are systematic relations between these functions and other aspects of quotes. More specifically, I will argue that certain characteristics of the context, content and language of quotes serve as triggers for specific functional interpretations. The model introduced in section 3 will not only facilitate the analysis of functions of quotes, it will also help identify factors that lead to changes in the function of quotes over time, and differentiate between technological factors and more general tendencies of news media. After introducing my data in section 4, I will proceed with the analysis in two steps. In section 5, I will investigate how the online setting can strengthen one of the functions of direct quotes by emphasising the role of quotes as reportable facts. In section 6 I will then explore the increase of quotes that present personal experience and emotions.

2   Functions of Quotes in Print Newspapers

In the past couple of decades, various approaches to the functions of quoting have been made. On the one hand, general theoretical accounts discussed, for instance, the functional differences of various forms of quotation, such as direct, indirect and mixed quotation. Examples are Clark/Gerrig (1990), Cappelen/Lepore (1997), and various contributions in the recent volume edited by Brendel/Meibauer/Steinbach (2011). On the other hand, the functions of quoting have been investigated in relation to specific contexts, such as informal conversations (e.g. Mayes 1990, Tannen 1986), courtroom settings of the past (e.g. Collins 2001, Włodarczyk 2007) and computer-mediated communication (Bublitz/Hoffmann 2011). These latter approaches show that the communicative context in which quoting takes place can have an influence on its functions. For instance, several of the functions Bublitz/Hoffmann (2011: 441-446) identify in their data from (interactive) computer-mediated communication are closely related to the setting, e.g. when semi-automatised quoting is used for "bridging disrupted adjacency" between a post and its reply.

In this section, I will focus in particular on approaches that deal with quoting in the context of news reporting (where quotations are usually called "quotes") and I will introduce the functions that have been suggested for this type of data. Sections 5 and 6 will later investigate two of these functions in more detail, identifying the shifts they undergo in the online setting.

A general account of the functions of quotes in news media is provided by Bell (1991: 207–209). While this is not the most recent account, it provides an excellent characterisation of quotes in up-market print newspapers before the widespread use of the Internet. Bell names three main functions. The first of these concerns their ability to present "incontrovertible fact[s]" (1991: 207). Journalists are required to report reliable information and, if necessary, they need to be able to provide proof for their statements. By quoting, the responsibility for the content of the statement is shifted to the source of the quote. Journalists do not need to verify the information in statements; they only need to verify that the statement was made. Given that many of the statements quoted in news media come from press conferences or interviews, where usually there is a possibility to record such statements, this is relatively easily done. Thus, quotes are "particularly incontrovertible fact[s]" for journalists, since it is hard to contest that the quoted statement was made if the journalist is in possession of its recording (1991: 207–208). Example (3) illustrates one such use of a quote as an incontrovertible fact. It is taken from an article in the printed *Times* from 1985, in which Mr Shultz, the US Secretary of State, is quoted as using the term "equitable agreements".

> (3) Mr Shultz by contrast made no reference to space, and talked only in vague terms of "equitable agreements", raising the thorny problem of verification. (tp-wn-850108)

It is characteristic for such usage that the quoted source is a public figure with authority. The same statement made by an unknown individual without some official function would have had a low likelihood of being quoted. In contrast, statements made by influential individuals like the Secretary of State are quite likely to become newsworthy facts.

The second function mentioned by Bell (1991: 208) is to "distance and disown". It is comparable to the function Clark/Gerrig call "dissociation of responsibility" (1990: 792). Journalists are required to report in an unbiased and objective manner. Opinions and evaluations are therefore often attributed to sources and the more extreme a statement, the more likely it is that it is represented as a direct quote.

(4) But there are also powerful American figures in Geneva who, although not present at the negotiating table, exert influence behind the scenes. They include Mr Richard Perle, Assistant Defence Secretary, who has profound mistrust of the Russians, describing them as a "nation of liars". (tp-wn-850108)

In Example (4), the offensive expression "nation of liars" is presented as a direct quote in order to distance the newspaper from the content of the statement. The direct quote signals a neutral stance on the part of the newspaper, while still reporting the statement.

The third of Bell's functions consists in enriching the news article with colourful expressions (1991: 208–209). Such expressions would be inappropriate outside of quotes due to their style. In the same way as newspapers are expected to report content objectively, they are normally expected to use formal language. Usually, therefore, colloquial and non-standard language, colourful metaphors and verbal puns are restricted to quotes. In the following example, Arthur Scargill, the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, is metaphorically described as the *Godfather*.

(5) But the appeals fell on deaf ears and Mr John Gummer, the chairman of the Conservative Party, returned to the offensive, urging striking pitmen to "refuse to be intimidated by Scargill the Godfather". (tp-uk-850109)

In this case, colouring the report with an expression relating to a popular film (Francis Ford Coppola's epic crime movie *The Godfather* from 1972) is the most salient function of the quote, but other functions are also present. Using a direct quote distances the newspaper from the content of the quote, which associates Scargill with

a fictional mafia boss. Moreover, the quoted statement was made by a central actor in the reported news event and, therefore, the quote constitutes a reportable fact. Thus, all three of Bell's functions are present to a certain extent.

There is one function of quotes in news reports which is not discussed by Bell (1991), but which has received attention from other scholars: reporting emotions. Example 6 illustrates this function. The quote appears in a report about the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and it presents the emotions of the sister of a British citizen who was killed. The quote does not add any newsworthy facts to the report – instead, it repeats information that was already provided before, but formulated in a more personal way.

(6) At least one British citizen is among the missing. Ann Barnes, 59, a United Nations worker originally from Leighon-Sea, Essex, has been unaccounted for since Tuesday. Ms Barnes's sister, Irene Marquet, said she felt sure her sister was among the casualties. "There's been absolutely no trace. One wants to remain hopeful but it gets more and more difficult as time goes on," said Mrs Marquet, a pensioner living in southern France. (tp-wn-100116)

Burger (2005: 97, 101) lists integrating the emotions of the source into a news report as one of the central functions of direct quotes. Stenvall (2008: 1572) points out that direct quotes play a particularly important role for expressing emotions in hard news reports. She explains that the objective style of these texts requires the absence of the text producers' emotions and concludes that "[s]trictly speaking, the only way to report *other* people's individual feelings 'objectively' is to resort to direct quotes, that is, to let the person in question describe how s/he feels." (Stenvall 2008: 1572, emphasis in the original). Several researchers furthermore make a link between direct quotes reporting emotions and personal experiences, on the one hand, and the emotional involvement of readers, on the other (Bös 2010a: 239–240; Luginbühl 2012: 258–259; Santulli 2012: 278; Schäfer 2005: 226; Tuomarla 2000: 70–72). Quotes that represent the personal experience and emotions of those directly affected

by the news offer readers a more immediate experience of news events.[5] They provide a personal touch to otherwise distanced reporting and can be used to dramatise news reports.

Such dramatisation of news reports with quotes containing emotions or personal experiences has been described for French (Schäfer 2005: 226; Tuomarla 2000: 70–72), Italian (Santulli 2012: 278), German (Schäfer 2005: 226) and American (Luginbühl 2012: 258–259) newspapers. Bös (2010b: 77) analysed the occurrence of personal quotes in British newspapers historically and found an increase between 1700 and 2000. She further finds that down-market newspapers took the lead in this development and that it is only towards the end of the 20th century that personal quotes occur in up-market newspapers like the *Times* (2010b: 84-85; see also Schneider 2002: 157). This might also explain why Bell (1991) does not include the reporting of emotions and personal experiences in his discussion of the functions of direct quotes in news reports.

3   The Function of Quotes in Relation to Their Context, Content and Language

In order to analyse shifts in the functions of quotes it is important that the functions can be identified clearly. As illustrated above, several functions of quotes are often present simultaneously, which is one of the reasons why it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint the exact function of a specific quote. Another reason is the fact that functions generally are more difficult to identify than formal characteristics. They depend on interpretations of textual effects, which are to some extent subjective. This poses a problem for empirical studies that aim to compare the function of quotes in different sets of data. One way to approach this problem is to analyse factors that facilitate or even trigger a specific functional reading. As I am going to argue in this section, such factors can be identified for all functions and they can be assigned to

---

[5] Creating immediacy is not restricted to quotes reporting emotions. Bublitz/Hoffmann (2011: 441-442), for instance, point out that the use of direct speech, indirect speech and free indirect speech allow authors to shift between different levels of narrative immediacy. In the case of quotes containing personal experiences and emotions, this effect is particularly strong, however, since the content of the quote invites readers to become emotionally involved.

three different levels: the context of the quote, its content and its language (see Table 1).

	Context	**Content**	**Language**
Reportable facts	authoritative source; evidence available / traceable		
Distance and disown		not objective, opinionated, potentially offensive	
Personal touch		personal experiences and emotions	(first person reference)
Colour			violating stylistic requirements of journalistic reporting: non-standard, colloquial, colourful metaphors

Table 1: Factors inviting specific functional interpretations of quotes

The context of a quote is related to the function of quotes as reportable facts. As
mentioned above, in order for a quote to be a newsworthy reportable fact, its source
needs to have a certain authority. Generally speaking, the more authoritative a source,
the more likely it is that a quote will be perceived as a reportable fact. The status of
the source is thus an important indicator for the first of Bell's three functions of
quotes. There are other aspects of the context which can relate to this function. For
example, in order for a quote to be perceived as a fact, it needs to be highly credible
that the quote is faithful. Generally, direct quotes evoke faithfulness claims that
include the speech act value of the quote, its propositional content, and its wording
(see Jucker 2006: 109). However, Short/Semino/Wynne (2002) point out that

10

contextual factors can weaken or even cancel these faithfulness claims.[6] For instance, if the anterior discourse in which the quote originally occurred is not accessible, there is less expectation on behalf of the addressee that the quote is faithful. This is the case in spoken conversation and storytelling, for which it has been shown that quotation is often not accurate (see Mayes 1990, Tannen 1986).

In contrast, quotes that function as reportable facts need to evoke strong faithfulness claims. Readers must find it credible that the journalist had access to the anterior discourse and in most cases journalists are expected to be in possession of a record documenting the anterior discourse, either in the form of notes or, even better, as sound or video recordings. As I will further argue in section 5, the presentation of such records together with the article in which a quote appears is one of the factors that emphasise the factual function of quotes. In other words, whenever evidence of the anterior discourse is made available, the factual function is reinforced.

The content of the quote plays an important role for the distancing function of quotes. Whenever news articles include content that obviously violates the journalistic norms of objectivity, there is a high likelihood that it is not only explicitly attributed to a source, but that it is also presented as a direct quote. In general terms, quotes which contain such openly non-objective statements invite a reading that disassociates the newspaper from the reported position. Quotes that are likely to be read in this way include, for instance, quotes which express strong opinions and quotes which are potentially offensive. Quotes providing a personal touch by expressing emotions and personal experiences can also be included here. Like opinions and offensive statements, emotions and personal experiences violate the journalistic norms of objectivity by privileging the view of an individual over general and abstract processes and by providing an affective rather than a factual account. In this respect, quotes that report emotions and personal experiences can be seen as a special case of the more general distancing function. One difference between these quotes and other distancing ones concerns their linguistic realisation. Given that emotions and personal experiences are generally expressed in the first person, linguistic features like first person pronouns can help identify such quotes.

---

[6] See also Clark/Gerrig (1990: 795-800), who provide a detailed discussion of the various problems of the "verbatim assumption", i.e. the view that direct speech reproduces previous statements verbatim.

This does not mean that first person pronouns are necessarily reliable indicators for quotes expressing emotions and personal experiences. They can also occur in contexts in which the source states an opinion, takes over responsibility, expresses commitment or gives advice. Moreover, first person plural pronouns have a variety of different possible referents, including vague and generic uses that do not refer to the speaker in particular (see Kitagawa/Lehrer 1990, Wales 1996: 58–68). I will discuss the various functions of quotes containing first person singular pronouns in more detail in section 6.

Finally, the language of quotes is clearly responsible for their function of enriching news reports with colourful expressions. As discussed in section 2.1 above, this includes all expressions that would violate the stylistic requirements of formal news reporting if they appeared outside of quotes.

The fact that different functions of quotes are triggered by different factors not only helps identify functions; it can also explain why some functional shifts are more closely related to technological innovations than others. As I will further argue in section 5, presenting quotes as reportable facts has taken on new facets in the online setting. Given that this function is triggered by contextual factors, it is not surprising that is affected more directly by the technological setting than other functions.

4   Data

Most of the data on which this analysis is based were collected for a larger research project on personalisation in online news (Landert 2014). In the present study, I only focus on a subset of these, published on the online site of the *Times*, which is most suitable for a diachronic comparison with earlier data from the printed *Times,* available via the *Times Digital Archive.*

The online data were collected in January 2010 from the news site *Times Online* (www.timesonline.co.uk).[7] They consist of 28 news articles selected on the 14 even days between 4 January and 30 January. On each collection day, the top-listed articles from the sections "world news" and "UK news" were selected, resulting in a corpus

---

[7] In the meantime, the online site of the *Times* has been redesigned. It was re-launched in the summer of 2010 and the old domain www.timesonline.co.uk was replaced by two separate domains, www.thetimes.co.uk and www.thesundaytimes.co.uk.

of articles that can be described as typical front page news, i.e. news reports on current events with a very high news value.

The data from the printed *Times* from 1985 were selected to match the online data as closely as possible. They are taken from the 18 issues of the *Times* published between 7 and 26 January 1985 and include for each day the most prominently placed front page article on a world news topic and the most prominently placed article on a UK news topic. A higher number of articles was collected to compensate for the shorter average length of these earlier articles, compared to the online data.

In order to be able to distinguish between purely diachronic changes of print newspapers, on the one hand, and changes related to the difference between print and online setting, on the other, the two sets of data were complemented with data from the printed version of the *Times* from January 2010. The articles for this data set come from the issues published on the days on which the online data were collected and, again, include two articles from each issue. Due to the fact that the print version from 2010 does not always contain a UK news topic and a world news topic on its front page, some of the articles come from subsequent pages. In one case, no suitable article with an international focus was found in the first section of the newspaper, so that the world news article was taken from page 29. Table 2 gives an overview of the number of articles and number of words in each part of the corpus.

	Articles	**Words**
Times 1985	36	23,188
Times 2010	28	19,004
Times Online 2010	28	22,443
Total	92	64,635

Table 2: Overview of collected data in number of articles and number of words

All articles were copied or typed into an XML file and annotated for quotes and first person singular pronouns.

5   Quotes as Reportable Facts in Online News

As mentioned before, the first shift that I investigate concerns the function of quotes as reportable facts, which is closely related to technological innovations on online news sites. In contrast to print newspapers, online news sites can not only quote source material, but they can also embed it into their articles. Videos and transcripts of press statements can be added to news articles as additional material and hyperlinks can be used to direct readers to external websites where source material is officially released. In this section, I will show with the help of some examples how the availability of such material affects the function of quotes as reportable facts.

One of the most common topic areas for which source material is provided is politics. Important press conferences and interviews are often recorded and integrated as videos, and central documents are sometimes provided in addition. In January 2010, for example, the *Times Online* reported on US president Obama's first State of the Union address. The textual report was accompanied by a video, integrated between the headline and the by-line. The video consisted of a brief extract of his speech, cut together from various segments. The video extract covered two of the quotes occurring in the textual report, reproduced in Examples (7) and (8). In the second case, only the end of the quote, the emphasised part, was included in the video.

(7) No detailed strategy was expected for saving the healthcare Bill that dominated Mr Obama's first year in office, and none was offered. Mr Obama restricted himself to a plea "to come together and finish the job for the American people". (to-wn-100128)

(8) "We have finished a difficult year," he said. "We have come through a difficult decade. But a new year has come. A new decade stretches before us. *We don't quit. I don't quit. Let's seize this moment to start anew.*" (to-wn-100128, my emphasis)

14

The video showing Obama making these statements provides evidence that the quotes in the textual report are accurate and it reinforces their status as facts. Readers can see for themselves that Obama gave a speech and that he made the quoted statements. In the case of this article, additional material is provided through a link named "Full text: Obama's State of the Union Address". This leads to a separate page on the *Times Online* website which contains the transcript of the entire speech. The subtitle of the page indicates that this transcript was issued by the White House and a quick web search leads to the White House website, which not only provides the full transcript but also a video of the entire speech that can be downloaded or viewed online.[8]

The online setting thus allows journalists to make their source material available to readers, and it allows readers to trace statements back to their original context and check their accuracy. Irrespective of whether or not readers actually do this, the possibility for doing so already influences the effect of quotes. While all direct quotes claim to accurately represent a statement from an anterior discourse, the availability or reproduction of their anterior discourse reinforces this claim (see also Short/Semino/Wynne 2002: 349-350). In other words, the mere possibility to verify quotes emphasises their factual function. The emphasis is particularly strong in the case of material located on official external websites and for videos, which provide the information through visual and auditory channels and so allow readers to see and hear for themselves.

Videos and transcripts of public speeches are not the only way in which source material is presented with news reports. Of particular interest are cases in which documents are centrally involved in causing news events, so that reports of the events are likely to quote these documents. A news story which illustrates this point concerns a conflict within Britain's Labour Party in January 2010. Two MPs, Geoff Hoon and Patricia Hewitt, wrote to all Labour MPs asking for a secret ballot about the degree of support for Prime Minister Gordon Brown as a candidate for the general election. Like most British online news sites, the *Times Online* reported prominently on the message and its consequences. The report quoted several paragraphs from the letter and the beginning of this quote is reproduced in Example (9).

---

[8]   http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2010-state-union-address, last accessed 8 October 2012.

(9) In their letter, Mr Hoon and Mrs Hewitt said the party was "deeply divided" over the leadership. "The continued speculation and uncertainty is allowing our opponents to portray us as dispirited and disunited," they said. (to-uk-100106)

The quote can be compared to the text of the entire letter, which is made available as a PDF file via a link in the left-hand sidebar. Unlike the White House press release discussed above, this letter cannot be traced back to an official release by an independent website. Moreover, the PDF file looks like a screenshot from an e-mail, without an official letterhead. In this respect, the letter is rather weak evidence for the factual status of the quotes in the article. It provides additional context, but otherwise the document is no more credible than the quote itself. However, there is one factor that still contributes to the perception of the letter as a credible record, namely the (implied) knowledge that other reproductions of the letter are available online. Indeed, news articles about the story on the online sites of the *Guardian, BBC News* and the *Sun* all reproduce the full letter, either in a sidebar, on a separate page or integrated into the news report. With the help of search engines, the respective articles are quickly identified. Knowing that the content of this crucial document can easily be compared across different platforms increases the credibility of the reproduction of the letter and, by extension, of its quotes in the news reports.

The importance of cross-platform references can also be observed in other quotes from the same news article. Several of the statements attributed to the two main news actors Hoon and Hewitt are said to come from interviews with the *BBC*, rather than with the *Times'* own journalists. This is particularly noteworthy since the article is accompanied by a *SkyNews* video in which very similar statements are made. Example (10) reproduces the quote from the news report and Example (11) provides a transcript for a section of the video embedded in the article.

(10) Mr Hoon told the BBC he had not discussed the move with anyone other than Mrs Hewitt. "We both came back from the Christmas vacation, having

> independently had these kinds of conversations, both independently deciding that it was time that we issued this letter. […]" (to-uk-100106)

(11) Patricia Hewitt and I quite separately over the Christmas vacation came to the view that it was necessary to address this matter. (transcript from the video embedded in to-uk-100106)

There are several possibilities why the article may quote Hoon from an interview with the *BBC*, rather than from the interview with a reporter of an associated news channel.[9] A likely explanation is that at the time of writing the article, only the interview with the *BBC* was available to the journalist. However, given the ease of accessing online content, it is not difficult for a reader to locate the video in which Hoon makes the statement quoted in example 10. It is embedded in an article on the same news story published on *BBC News*.[10]

These examples show that the Internet affects the context and function of quotes by facilitating access to the anterior text. It has become quite common for news articles to embed and link to source material that provides further evidence for quoted statements and thereby emphasises their status as reportable facts. To some extent, this is not only true for online news but also for print newspapers. Print newspapers cannot contain embedded videos and linking does not provide access to external material as directly as on online sites. Still, readers of print newspapers are frequently directed to online sites on which additional material can be found. The article about Obama's State of the Union address in the printed version of the *Times* ends with such an online reference, reproduced in Example (12).

(12) The State of the Union speech in full. Video, pictures and analysis at www.timesonline.co.uk (*The Times,* 28 January 2010, p. 39)

Even though the access to the speech is less direct in this case, pointing readers towards the full transcript of the speech affects the status of quotes in this article in a

---

[9] The *Times* and *SkyNews* are both part of Rupert Murdoch's *News Corporation* (see www.newscorp.com, last accessed on 8 October 2012). *SkyNews* videos are often used to illustrate news articles on *Times Online.*
[10] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/8443769.stm, last accessed 16 January 2013.

very similar way as the link to the transcript affected the quotes of the online article. While clearly tied to technological developments and media changes from print to online, the effects of this change in the function of quotes are thus not restricted to online publications.

6   Quotes Presenting Personal Experiences and Emotions

Another shift in the function of quotes can be observed in recent online news data, namely an increase in the presentation of personal experiences and emotions. As explained in section 3, this is a special case of the distancing function of quotes, whereby newspapers dissociate themselves from the views expressed in the quote. For the purpose of this study, I investigated quotes with first person reference in the data from the *Times Online* from 2010 and compared the results to the data from the printed *Times* from 1985. In addition, the comparison with data from the printed *Times* from 2010 will show whether the observed change is restricted to the online setting or whether it also occurs in the print version.

Before presenting the results for quotes containing first person reference, it is interesting to look at some more general results for the frequency of quotes in these three data sets. As can be seen from Tables 3 and 4, quotes occur more frequently and take up a considerably larger proportion of the texts overall in the more recent data compared to the data from 1985.[11] Moreover, quotes are slightly longer in the data from 2010 (see Table 5), even though this difference is not statistically significant. The voices of sources thus generally have a higher presence in the news articles from 2010 than in those from 1985, and this is true for both the print and the online version of the *Times*. Previous research has shown that quotes increased in the *Times* between 1833 and 1988 (Jucker/Berger 2014), and in British (and American) newspapers more generally between the 1960s and the 1990s (Mair/Hundt 1997: 75–76). The data in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that this trend might still be ongoing.

---

[11] For both Tables 3 and 4, the difference between the printed *Times* from 1985 and the *Times Online* from 2010 is statistically significant at p < 0.001. The difference between the printed issues from 1985 and 2010 is statistically significant at p < 0.001. The difference between the printed version and the online version from 2010 is not statistically significant.

	Times 1985	*Times* 2010	*Times Online* 2010
Words total	23,188	19,004	22,443
Words in quotes	3,220	4,466	5,179
In %	13.9%	23.5%	23.1%

Table 3: Number of words in quotes in percent of total number of words

	Times 1985	*Times* 2010	*Times Online* 2010
Words total	23,188	19,004	22,443
Number of quotes	213	255	305
Frequency per 1,000 words	9.2	13.4	13.6

Table 4: Frequency of quotes

	Times 1985	*Times* 2010	*Times Online* 2010
Words in quotes	3,220	4,466	5,179
Number of quotes	213	255	305
Average length	15.1	17.5	17.0

Table 5: Average length of quotes

In order to investigate the presence of personal viewpoints, all forms of the first person singular pronoun were tagged, including the possessive determiner *my*. Table 6 shows the percentage of quotes containing any first person singular pronoun in each of the three datasets. Only 7% of all quotes have first person singular pronouns in the data from the printed *Times* from 1985. In contrast, 15% of all quotes contain first person singular pronouns in the *Times Online* from 2010. This higher frequency is not due to the online setting, as a comparison with the printed *Times* from 2010 shows. There, the percentage of quotes with first person singular pronouns is even higher.[12] It

---

[12] The difference between the printed *Times* from 1985 and the printed *Times* from 2010 is significant at p < 0.001. The differences between the other pairs of publications are not statistically significant.

is possible that this difference between the printed and the online version of the *Times* from 2010 is related to the slightly shorter length of quotes in the online version (see Table 5), which in turn could be a consequence of different typographic conventions of marking quotes in print and online. If longer quotes are split up into two quotes, which often happens when they span more than one paragraph, this could lead to a lower percentage of quotes containing first person singular pronouns.

	Times 1985	*Times* 2010	*Times Online* 2010
Number of quotes	213	255	305
Containing 1st pers. sg. pronouns	15	51	46
in %	7.0%	20.0%	15.1%

Table 6: Percentage of quotes containing any first person singular pronouns

Quotes with first person singular pronouns often contain more than one pronoun. In addition, such quotes tend to occur in clusters, especially in the more recent data. 11 of the 28 articles in the online data do not contain any quotes with first person singular pronouns. In contrast, the article on the Labour Party conflict discussed above contains four quotes with a total of six first person singular pronouns. These are all quotes in which politicians specify their role in and attitude towards the call for a secret ballot (see Example 13). One article in the printed version of the *Times* from 2010 even contains 11 quotes with a total of 17 first person pronouns. This is an article on an earthquake in Haiti and several victims and witnesses report their own experiences (see Example 14).

(13) "I have received the letter and I support their call." (to-uk-100106)

(14) "It's tearing at my leg. I can't wait long." (tp-wn-100120)

This suggests that the likelihood of articles containing quotes with first person singular pronouns varies depending on topic and that differences in the use of first

person singular pronouns in quotes need to be interpreted with care, especially when the analysis is based on a relatively small number of complete articles. Nevertheless, the earlier data show a lower proportion of articles containing quotes with first person singular pronouns than the more recent data. Only 10 of the 36 articles from the *Times* from 1985 contain quotes with first person singular pronouns, compared to more than 60% for the data from 2010 (see Table 7).[13]

	Times 1985	*Times* 2010	*Times Online* 2010
Number of articles	36	28	28
Articles with 1st pers. sg. quotes	10	19	17
in %	27.8%	67.9%	60.7%

Table 7: Percentage of articles containing quotes with first person singular pronouns

Frequency is not the only difference between the earlier and the more recent data. A detailed analysis of the function of all quotes with first person singular pronouns shows that some uses of quotes are restricted to the data from 2010. I will now discuss the functions of first person quotes, starting with those also found in the earlier data and then proceeding to those that appear to be innovations.

The most common function for all sets of data consists in expressing the opinion of the source of the quote. Often this is realised with verbs expressing mental processes like *think* and *believe* or with verbs of communication like *say.*

(15) Mr Peter Rogers, head of Manufacturers' Hanover Trust's foreign exchange department in New York said: "The British Government has got a breathing space rather than a permanent turnaround for the pound. I can't believe, the Government would allow it, but the market here believes parity can happen." (tp-uk-850116)

---

[13] This difference is not statistically significant, though.

(16) "I don't think American elections should be bankrolled by America's most powerful interests, and worse, by foreign entities," he [= US president Obama] said. (to-wn-100128)

(17) "I've always said that because of all the uncertainty around we should be very cautious," the Chancellor said. (to-un-100126)

In addition, quotes sometimes report past, ongoing or future actions carried out by the source in an official capacity. Again, such quotes can be found both in the printed *Times* from 1985 (Example 18) and in the *Times Online* from 2010 (Example 19).

(18) Yesterday Dr Mesfin Dmise, the national co-ordinator [of the World Health Organization], said: "I asked the Ministry of Health to let me know the results of their inspection of the camps last week." They promised to let him have them today, he said, and "if the tests are positive I will inform the WHO in Geneva. If the result is negative I might well carry out independent laboratory tests". (tp-wn-850124)

(19) "I have sought an urgent meeting with the First Minister to discuss the implications for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister." (to-uk-100108)

First person quotes expressing emotions occur in two main ways. On the one hand, emotions are used as a rhetorical resource in argumentation. Politicians and other official actors are often quoted in this way and this use can again be found in all data sets, for instance in Example (20) from the printed *Times* from 1985. In this case, the emotion does not express an emotional state of the source, but rather an attitude towards the quoted statement. Even though the quote contains a verb expressing an emotion (*hate*), this is very close to expressing opinions.

(20) "I hate to disagree with Mr Gromyko before the talks start, but that clearly was not our position," Mr Weinberger said. (tp-wn-850114)

On the other hand, emotions in quotes can serve to actually represent the emotional state of news actors. Often this co-occurs with the description of personal experiences by those directly affected by a news event, for instance in the role of victims or witnesses.

    (21)   Outside court Mr Hussain's son, Awais, 22, said he was "extremely grateful" to the court for releasing his father. He added: "I just hope other families have people like my dad." Awais said of the attack on his family: "It was quite terrifying. I don't think our family will get over it." (to-uk-100120)

    (22)   "It has been the hardest thing I have ever experienced and will ever experience in my whole life, no matter what happens to me. There will be nothing that will compare to the pain and heartbreak of watching my beautiful daughter leave this world." (tp-uk-100126)

This use was observed in the online and the print data from 2010, but not in the earlier print data from 1985. In contrast to quotes that report actions carried out in an official capacity (Examples 18 and 19 above), these quotes provide a much more personal perspective on news. They describe the experiences of private individuals who became victims or witnesses of events, and if they quote people who are represented in their official role, like the priest in Example (23), then the experiences clearly surpass the normal duties of this person.

    (23)   "I've been up and down this country and every door is closed," the priest said. "We are running out of food; our children are throwing up water." "They keep saying that the government is having a meeting and that soon someone will come. But no one comes and I no longer know what I should do." (to-wn-100124)

These uses of quotes tend to occur in articles reporting on crimes and catastrophes. Therefore, one might perhaps think that their absence from the print data from 1985 could be a consequence of a stronger focus on political topics in the front page articles

of this earlier data set. However, there are strong indications that the differences in topic do not provide a sufficient explanation. For instance, the earlier data contain two articles about a Cholera outbreak in an Ethiopian refugee camp, which would have provided the opportunity to integrate quotes expressing personal experiences and emotions. Example (24) reproduces a brief extract (without any quotes) from one of the articles.

(24) Yesterday I visited Harbo, a new camp in a part of Wollo region which has only recently been affected by the more severe effects of a famine that is slowly spreading south. […]. In Harbo, where an average of 50 people still arrive daily, they show all the signs of comparatively recent arrivals. There is a resignation in the faces, a despair in the eyes and a listless quality to their movements. They sit and peer aimlessly out of tents or stand and watch the world without curiosity, a people who have given up. (tp-wn-850123)

From the article, it becomes clear that the journalist was present at the scene and that he interacted with individuals who could have made statements similar to those in Example (23). Indeed, towards the end of the article, relief and charity workers are quoted. In contrast to the priest in Example (23), however, they do not describe their personal experiences in the crisis, but present an analysis of the political situation.

(25) "Colonel Mengistu came to power because of the failure of the last government to manage a famine. Now here he is with one which is five times as severe." (tp-wn-850123)

This example suggests that the absence of quotes expressing emotions and personal experiences in the printed *Times* from 1985 cannot be attributed to differences in topic and access to sources alone. The article about the cholera outbreak in an Ethiopian refugee camp would have provided opportunities for integrating a more personal perspective on the events by quoting relief workers or individuals who were directly affected. Instead, the parts that allow readers the most direct and emotional access to the events occur outside of quotes, in the voice of the journalist (see Example 24).

A more likely explanation for the absence of this function in the earlier data lies in a recent trend towards more emotional, sensational and personalised reporting in up-market newspapers. It has often been shown that up-market newspapers are taking over features that are typically associated with down-market newspapers (Bös 2010b: 84–85, Conboy 2010: 130–135, Schneider 2002). This tendency, sometimes referred to as "tabloidisation" (see, for instance, Conboy 2006, Holly 2008, Sparks/Tulloch 2000), has affected the layout, the language and the content of up-market newspapers like the *Times*. Compared to the issues from 1985, the *Times* in 2010 contains more images, more "soft news" (e.g. human interest stories), and a stronger focus on private actors in the news (see Landert 2014 for results based on the *Times Online*). The fact that news articles – in both print and online versions – also contain more quotes in general, more quotes with first person singular pronouns, and more quotes expressing emotions and personal experiences fits very well into this overall trend.

7   Conclusion

Over the last few decades, newspapers have undergone quite far-reaching changes, not least due to the development of new media. It is taken for granted today that high-profile newspapers offer content online, either as a freely accessible service financed through advertisement or as a service restricted to their paying subscribers. While such news sites clearly continue many of the conventions of their printed counterparts, it is also reasonable to assume that the new setting invites and facilitates changes – not only in how news is produced and consumed, but also in the form and structure of texts and the functions of textual elements. One of the challenges of studying such changes lies in the difficulty of differentiating between general diachronic developments of news media, on the one hand, and the consequences of new technologies, on the other. In light of the many interdependencies of media changes and technological changes a strict separation between these two aspects is not possible. Nevertheless, there are changes for which it can be shown that they are more closely related to technological factors than others.

In this study, I have investigated changes in the functions of quotes in articles from one online news site, compared to their usage in articles in the newspaper's

printed counterpart 25 years earlier. I have determined two main shifts. On the one hand, quotes expressing personal experiences and emotions are characteristic of the more recent data. This function is closely related to the content of quotes, i.e. the kind of statements with which sources are quoted. The fact that there is no obvious relation between the content of quotes and technological factors is one indication that this change is not directly related to the online setting. Further evidence is provided by the finding that quotes with such personal content can also be found in more recent articles of the print version. Moreover, this development fits into the more general tendency of up-market newspapers to adopt features typical of down-market ones. All this suggests that the online setting is of secondary importance for the increase of quotes expressing personal experiences and emotions.

On the other hand, I have argued that the online setting plays an important role for the function of quotes to present reportable facts. By integrating the source material from which quotes are taken and by allowing readers to compare such source material across different platforms, the factual status of quotes is reinforced. This reinforcement is directly related to the technological setting of online news sites, which allows the integration of videos and which facilitates hyperlinking. While references to online resources can also be found in print newspapers, the linking in this case is less immediate and, moreover, it still depends on the online setting. The potential for a seamless integration of written articles with videos, sound files and material on external websites is therefore one of the fundamental differences between print and online news.

References

Bell, Allan. 1991. *The Language of News Media*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bös, Birte. 2010a. "Dialogic quotation patterns in historical news reports"*,* in: Nicholas Brownlees, Gabriella Del Lungo and John Denton (eds). *The Language of Public and Private Communication in a Historical Perspective*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 228–244.

Bös, Birte. 2010b. "*People's Voices.* Eine diachrone Betrachtung persönlicher Zitate in der britischen Presse", in: Martin Luginbühl and Stefan Hauser (eds). *MedienTextKultur. Linguistische Beiträge zur kontrastiven Medienanalyse.*

Beiträge zur Fremdsprachenvermittlung, Sonderheft 16. Landau: Verlag Empirische Pädagogik, 67–93.

Brendel, Elke, Jörg Meibauer and Markus Steinbach (eds). 2011. *Understanding Quotation.* Berlin: de Gruyter.

Bublitz, Wolfram and Christian Hoffmann. 2011. "'*Three Men Using our Toilet all Day Without Flushing* – This May Be One of the Worst Sentences I've Ever Read': Quoting in CMC", in: Joachim Frenk and Lena Steveker (eds). *Anglistentag Saarbrücken 2010. Proceedings*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 433-447.

Bucher, Hans-Jürgen and Peter Schumacher. 2008. "Konstante Innovationen: on Online-Journalismus zum konvergenten Journalismus. Wie neue Medien und alte Paradoxien die Kommunikation verändern", in: Bernhard Pörksen, Wiebke Loosen, Armin Scholl (eds). *Paradoxien des Journalismus. Theorie – Empirie – Praxis.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 477–501.

Burger, Harald. 2005. *Mediensprache. Eine Einführung in Sprache und Kommunikationsformen der Massenmedien.* Vol. 3. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Cappelen, Herman and Ernie Lepore. 1997. "Varieties of quotation". *Mind* 106, 429–450.

Clark, Herbert H. and Richard J. Gerrig. 1990. "Quotations as demonstrations". *Language* 66/4, 764–805.

Collins, Daniel E. 2001. *Reanimated Voices. Speech Reporting in a Historical-Pragmatic Perspective.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Conboy, Martin. 2006. *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a Community Through Language.* London: Routledge.

Conboy, Martin. 2010. *The Language of Newspapers. Socio-Historical Perspectives.* London: Continuum.

Cooke, Lynne. 2005. "A visual convergence of print, television, and the Internet: charting 40 years of design change in news presentation". *New Media & Society* 7/1, 22–46.

Gans, Herbert J. 1979. *Deciding What's News. A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time.* New York: Pantheon Books.

27

Grösslinger, Christian, Gudrun Held and Hartmut Stöckl (eds). *Pressetextsorten jenseits der 'News'.* Sprache im Kontext 38. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang

Holly, Werner. 2008. "Tabloidisation of political communication in the public sphere", in: Ruth Wodak and Veronika Koller (eds). *Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere.* New York: de Gruyter, 317–344.

Jucker, Andreas H. 1996. "News actor labelling in British newspapers". *Text – Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 16/3, 373–390.

Jucker, Andreas H. 2006. "'but 'tis believed that ...': speech and thought presentation in Early English newspapers", in: Nicholas Brownlees (ed.). *News Discourse in Early Modern Britain. Selected Papers of CHINED 2004.* Bern: Peter Lang, 105–125.

Jucker, Andreas H., and Manuel Berger. 2014. The Development of Discourse Presentation in *The Times*, 1833-1988". *Media History* 20/1, 67–87.

Kitagawa, Chisato and Adrienne Lehrer. 1990. "Impersonal uses of personal pronouns". *Journal of Pragmatics* 14/5, 739–759.

Landert, Daniela. 2014. *Personalisation in Mass Media Communication: British Online News between Public and Private*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Luginbühl, Martin. 2012. "'I felt the glass windows of my parents' apartment shaking'. Ein intermedialer und interkultureller Vergleich zur Inszenierung von Nähe in Zeitungsberichten und Fernseh-Korrespondentenberichten", in: Grösslinger/Held/Stöckl (eds), 249–264.

Mair, Christian and Marianne Hundt. 1997. "The corpus-based approach to language change in progress", in: Hans Sauer and Uwe Böker (eds). *Anglistentag 1996. Proceedings.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 71–82.

Mayes, Patricia. 1990. "Quotation in spoken English", *Studies in Language* 14/2, 325–363.

Santulli, Francesca. 2012. "Zitierte Rede. Authentizitätsbeweis oder einfach Infotainment?", in: Grösslinger/Held/Stöckl (eds.), 265–279.

Schäfer, Patrick. 2005. "Porträts in der Regionalpresse. Ein deutsch-französischer Vergleich", in: Hartmut E. H. Lenk and Andrew Chesterman (eds). *Pressetextsorten im Vergleich – Contrasting Text Types in the Press.*

Germanistische Linguistik Monographien 17. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 223–242.

Schneider, Kristina. 2002. *The Development of Popular Journalism in England from 1700 to the Present. Corpus Compilation and Selective Stylistic Analysis*. Doctoral dissertation. Universität Rostock.

Short, Mick, Elena Semino and Martin Wynne. 2002. *Revisiting the Notion of Faithfulness in Discourse Presentation Using a Corpus Approach*. *Language and Literature* 11/4, 325–355.

Sparks, Colin, and John Tulloch (eds). 2000. *Tabloid Tales. Global Debates over Media Standards.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Stenvall, Maija. 2008. "On emotions and the journalistic ideals of factuality and objectivity – tools for analysis". *Journal of Pragmatics* 40/9, 1569–1586.

Tannen, Deborah. 1986. "Introducing constructed dialogue in Greek and American conversational and literary narrative"*,* in: Florian Coulmas (ed.). *Direct and Indirect Speech*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 311–332.

Tuomarla, Ulla. 2000. *La citation mode d'emploi: Sur le fonctionnement discursif du discours rapporte direct.* Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Wales, Katie. 1996. *Personal Pronouns in Present-day English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Włodarczyk, Matylda. 2007. *Pragmatic Aspects of Reported Speech. The Case of Early Modern English Courtroom Discourse.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.