Book Review

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The book under review contains contributions to the Fourth International
Conference on English Historical News Discourse (CHINED IV), held in
Helsinki in 2014. The collection aims at demonstrating "how news writing
develops over three centuries" (p. 4). After a chapter by the editors that dis-
cusses news discourse in relation to socio-cultural developments, addresses
relevant issues pertaining to data and methodology, introduces the contribu-
tions to the volume, and presents the rationale for grouping the contributions
into three parts, the thirteen remaining chapters are grouped into three sections.

Part I, "Changing or maintaining conventions?", which contains papers on
"the early days of newspaper production" (p. 8), begins with a chapter by Birte
Bös on newsmakers' inaugural metadiscursive comments in first editions of
newspapers between 1694 and 1737. After an introduction where important
information on the historical background and on the author's choice of metho-
dology is succinctly provided, Bös discusses major themes in her corpus and
provides a keyword analysis which constitutes the main quantitative section of
the study and which identifies clear linguistic differences between inaugural
comments and news reportage, e.g. the high frequency of first-person pronouns
and the low frequency of past-tense verbs in texts belonging to the former
category. Bös also addresses how newsmakers outlined the design of their
papers and linguistically constructed themselves, their competitors, and their
readership.

Chapter 3, by Elisabetta Cecconi, focuses on religious lexis in two English
Civil War newsbooks, the royalist *Mercurius Aulicus* and the parliamentarian
Mercurius Britanicus, in 1643–1644. Cecconi analyses (i) religious keywords in
each newsbook (perhaps unexpectedly, given that "at the time, religion was
deeply interwoven with politics and grandees" [p. 40], no such keywords in fact
occur in *Mercurius Aulicus*) and (ii) religious words which are used in both
newsbooks but which are invested with different ideological meanings in the
two publications. Cecconi's analyses show, among other things, that religious

terminology was used in the *Mercurius Britanicus* to implicate Charles I in collusion with the Catholic church. Her conclusions are convincing, though I miss a more careful discussion of corpus size and the extent to which this factor may have influenced the results.

Nicholas Brownlees's contribution concerns advertising in the period 1700–1760. Eighteenth-century comments on advertising are compared with advertisements in the *Newcastle Courant* from 1711, 1740, and 1759. The aspects under scrutiny are two of Leech's (1966) essential components of successful advertising, viz. Attention Value and Selling Power. Brownlees finds that most advertisements in the *Newcastle Courant* contain features that set them apart from regular text and thus give them Attention Value (something which does not tally with some suggestions in previous research). As regards Selling Power, the advertisements analysed partly deviate from what contemporary voices considered typical; for instance, Latinate lexis is quite rare. Brownlees's examination of data from a provincial paper, for which advertising would have been an even more important source of revenue than it was for a metropolitan paper owing to lower sales figures in the countryside (pp. 64–65), is a very valuable addition to existing research.

In Chapter 5, Howard Sklar and Irma Taavitsainen analyse an anonymous mid-eighteenth-century mock advertisement on suicide in *The Gentleman's Magazine* from the perspective of historical pragmatics. The authors classify the advertisement as an instance of ironic satire and compare it with Swift's famous "modest proposal". The socio-cultural context surrounding the concept of suicide and the profile of *The Gentleman's Magazine* are also discussed.

The last chapter in Part I fittingly identifies stability as well as change. Ying Wang's careful analysis of four-word lexical bundles in articles from *The Times* between 1784 and 1983 demonstrates that, while the frequency of such bundles undergoes change (an increase until the early 1900s, followed by a decrease), the distribution of structural types and functions has remained stable over time. Wang also provides hypotheses on links between these patterns and socio-historical developments concerning the newspaper as a product.

The first chapter in Part II, "Widening audiences", is Martin Conboy's "British popular newspaper traditions: From the nineteenth century to the first tabloid". Conboy traces the development of the Sunday press, the spread of features of Sunday papers to the daily press after the repeal of the stamp duties, and the emergence of the first genuine tabloid, the *Daily Mirror*. Conboy convincingly demonstrates that, after its re-launch in the 1930s, the *Daily Mirror* stood out from other papers in "allow[ing] itself to be guided in its commercial endeavours by the input of its readers" (p. 134), especially in the form of letters.

In Chapter 8, Claudia Claridge analyses the linguistic construction of social groups in editorials from the important unstamped paper *The Poor Man's Guardian*. Claridge considers, among other things, (i) pronouns used to refer to the paper, its readers, and its opponents and (ii) the use of rhetorical features such as (real and fictional) direct speech, metaphor, and punctuation. Among the findings that emerge from Claridge's convincing analysis is that the editors of *The Poor Man's Guardian* tend to use *we* exclusively, i.e. not including the readers of the paper in the reference of the pronoun; this sets up a framework where the reader is regarded as needing the guidance of the paper.

Chapter 9, by Jorge Pedro Sousa, Elsa Simões Lucas Freitas, and Sandra Gonçalves Tuna, compares two illustrated magazines during the period 1837–1844 with regard to their approaches to political issues: *The Penny Magazine* and the Portuguese publication that endeavoured to imitate it, *O Panorama*. While the two magazines are similar in many respects, the authors also note subtle differences in the way in which text and illustrations were combined in the two publications to "make the news more readable" (p. 160), such as the more didactic tone in *O Panorama*. These results are fruitfully linked to differences in the composition of the British and Portuguese reading public and in editorial choices.

In Chapter 10, Jan Chovanek looks at how announcements of upcoming sports events were communicated to readers by external voices in *The Times* in the form of letters to the editor (football) and advertisements (cricket). Among other things, Chovanek identifies genre-related differences between the two types of announcement. For instance, the letters to the editor analysed contain negative politeness features, e.g. *I shall be much obliged if you will allow me to give notice in your columns that ...* (p. 182), which pay attention to the editors' face by explicitly signalling that the decision to publish the letter rests with the newspaper; such features are absent from announcements about cricket, as these are classified advertisements. Chovanek's analyses have clear merit; however, as he states that the advertisements for cricket matches are often "formally indistinguishable" (p. 192) from similar announcements published by the paper itself, I would have liked to see the latter treated here rather than being "subject to analysis in a separate study" (p. 180).

The last chapter in Part II is Minna Nevala's qualitative analysis of descriptions of Jack the Ripper in contemporary British newspapers. Nevala attempts to ascertain whether references to Jack the Ripper and to the murders undergo any changes in terms of intensity, objectivity, and solidarity over time. The data evince a decrease in solidarity and objectivity (e.g. referring to the Ripper as "the monster") that correlates with an increase in intensity (e.g. adjectives like *ghastly*).

The first chapter in Part III, "New practices", is Maija Stenvall's contribution on style in news agencies' reports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; a large part of her analysis is devoted to accounts by AP and Reuters of the 1906 pogrom in Siedlce in present-day Poland. Stenvall shows how the AP text is more narrative, while the more objective Reuters telegrams place responsibility less clearly on the Russian soldiers who carried out the pogrom. While Stenvall's analysis is very interesting, her empirical analysis is somewhat brief, as she attempts to cover a great deal of ground—e.g. a new Affect taxonomy, the nature of journalistic objectivity, nineteenth-century news narratives of violence, and a brief case study of an additional AP story—in addition to the comparison.

In Chapter 13, John M. Ryan considers the emergence of Italian–American identity between 1903 and 1949 in *La Gazzetta del Massachusetts*, a newspaper intended for the Italian–American community in New England. Ryan examines format/design/layout, content, and language in five samples covering one decade each. The results indicate, among other things, that a gradual transition took place towards increased assimilation to American culture and the development of a more integrated Italian–American identity.

The fourteenth and last chapter in the volume, by Isabel Ermida, examines six *The Yellow Kid* comic strips. After discussing the origin of comics and their treatment in popular culture studies, Ermida presents a model for the analysis of comics and applies this model to her data. The strips are analysed from the perspectives of structure (modes—verbal and visual language), sociology (functions), and semantics (mechanisms, i.e. the construction of humour). Ermida's application of the model sheds light on how the humorous effect of the comic strips is achieved. However, as the model is ultimately intended for more general application than the six strips that make up Ermida's corpus, I would have liked to see clearer discussion of how these strips were selected; for instance, were they chosen because they lent themselves well to analysis within the framework of the model?

Diachronic developments in English news discourse is a valuable addition to existing research on a genre that occupies a central position in written nineteenth- and twentieth-century English. The volume provides a wealth of information on English news language over time, and several of the contributions are also of very high quality. Another advantage of the book is the inclusion of theoretical perspectives in several contributions. This feature helps the reader to relate the findings presented to a wider scholarly context. (At the same time, however, it limits the space available for presenting and discussing results in some studies.)

Historical news language is a burgeoning field of study, and one potential advantage of the volume is that it draws on a wide variety of frameworks. While

a few studies present quantitative, corpus-based results, others offer qualitative insights into newspaper discourse, discussing individual articles, letters to the editor, etc. One problem with such methodological heterogeneity in a single volume, though, is that connections between contributions – shared concerns, insights, etc. – may not appear clearly. The editors do show that the papers in each section are linked together (pp. 5–6) and aptly summarize the contents of each contribution (pp. 8–10), but sections based on common methodological concerns with brief introductions by the editors would arguably have been preferable. Some contributions are also based on primary material that is quite limited in size and/or scope. While this is of course not a disadvantage in itself, I occasionally miss a clearer attempt to justify the scope of individual contributions and to discuss how generalizable the results may be.

Finally, while the book is well-edited in many respects, there are some language mistakes, missing italics, etc., e.g. "news … constitute discursive entities" (p. 159; should be *constitutes*), "politeness became a leading concern in the educated society" (p. 4; should be *in educated society*), and "from the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Manchester Guardian" (p. 221; the newspaper titles should be italicized). Though such slips are of minor importance overall, some of the chapters in the book would have benefitted from an additional round of proof-reading.

These quibbles notwithstanding, *Diachronic developments in English news discourse* clearly fills important gaps in research on English news language. This volume should be of interest not only to scholars specializing in the language of news texts, but also to researchers in fields such as Late Modern English studies and genre studies.

Reference

Leech, Geoffrey. 1966. *English in advertising: A linguistic study of advertising in Great Britain*. London: Longmans.