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Acting out on Twitter: Affordances for animating reported speech in written computer-mediated communication

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Abstract: Quotative BE *like* is a construction associated with informal spoken contexts and, especially, with various forms of embodied enactments. This study examines instances of quotative BE *like* in a corpus of Twitter data (1,000,000 tweets; 1,113 quotative instances). Special attention is paid to how users of Twitter employ the platform's affordances to *animate* their speech reports – i.e. to represent voices, enact body language, or otherwise 'dramatize' the speech reports. The aim is to investigate how a linguistic format which is richly embodied in face-to-face interaction gets 're-embodied' on Twitter. The study finds that animation of reported speech on Twitter is visually, and predominantly typographically, afforded. In the material, oral practices are more frequently reconfigured and *remediated* rather than directly reproduced. That is to say, even when users are not reproducing spoken utterances, they often employ graphical strategies that are mainly understandable by analogy to spoken and embodied face-to-face interaction. However, users also draw on emergent online repertoires with no face-to-face analogues, such as 'pure' typographical play and the recruitment of established online memes. Thus, the findings suggest that orality lingers as a trace, but is not a necessary component, in bringing reported speech to life in a text-based computer-mediated setting.

Keywords: reported speech, enactment, animation, affordance, Twitter, social media, computer- mediated communication (CMC)

1 Introduction

The quotative construction BE *like* is commonly associated with reported speech and embodied enactment in informal talk. The aim of the present study is to investigate how this richly embodied quotative format tied to face-to-face interaction gets re-embodied in a text-based, computer-mediated setting, focusing on

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the case of the microblog Twitter. Specifically, the study investigates how users of Twitter *animate* written reports framed with BE *like*.

Broadly, *animation* refers to strategies used to 'dramatize' a report (Tannen 2007; Wikström 2014a), through expressive voice modulation or some other form of mimetic performance (Buchstaller 2003). Quotative BE *like* has specifically been associated with such animation, which is what motivates the focus on this quotative in the present study. Further, the study focuses on how Twitter *affords* animation. In a communication context, *affordances* may be broadly defined as structural enablings and constraints on actions, behaviors, and strategies in communicative interaction (Gibson 1986; Hutchby 2001). Notably, affordances are not only the technological provisions of the platform, but rather the possibilities for action that emerge in the interface of those provisions and the embodiment and psychology of the agent using the platform (Arminen et al. 2016).

In what follows, Section 2 present a review of relevant literature on animation of reported speech and on the informal quotative in computer-mediated communication, leading to an operational definition of quotative BE *like* and of animation. Section 3 describes the corpus and several methodological considerations. Section 4 presents the findings. A quantitative overview identifies a general range of affordances of Twitter employed for animation of reported speech framed by quotative BE *like* in a corpus representative of general Twitter discourse in English. Subsequently, this range of affordances is exemplified and discussed with a microanalytic focus (Giles et al. 2015). Finally, Section 5 discusses and contextualizes the findings, and draws out the conclusions.

2 Animation of reported speech and computer-mediated communication

Reported speech is a common feature of spoken interaction which has also received some attention in written computer-mediated communication (CMC; Rickford et al. 2007; Tagliamonte and Denis 2008; Jones and Schieffelin 2009). Since quotative BE *like* is a form typically associated with spoken discourse (Lampert 2013; Puschmann 2015: 29), this study contributes to a tradition of CMC research addressing the 'spokenness' of writing in new digital media. Animated instances of reported speech in writing highlight the complex interaction in CMC between features of discourse traditionally associated with both speech and writing, in addition to the emergence of features more-or-less unique

to CMC (Herring 2004; Crystal 2006; Jonsson 2013). Some scholars have criticized this tradition, arguing that the speech–writing distinction is too simplistic and often analytically irrelevant (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2013; Darics 2013; Vandergriff 2013; Herring and Androutsopoulos 2015; Arminen et al. 2016). The present study does not presume that reported speech on Twitter simply reproduces face-to-face practices in text (cf. Arminen et al. 2016: 12), but does address the question of CMC's spokenness by targeting a practice that clearly is in some sense adapted from spoken interaction to written CMC.

It has been frequently noted that the conventional term *reported speech* is a misnomer (see e.g. Tannen 1986, 2007; Clark and Gerrig 1990; Holt and Clift 2002; Good 2015). It is often irrelevant whether a report factually documents an actual occurrence. Further, what is reported is often not only – or at all – speech, but rather other embodied conduct. While *demonstration, constructed dialogue*, and *enactment* are arguably more accurate labels (Clark and Gerrig 1990; Sandlund 2014; Good 2015), the term 'report' is retained here because it is more broadly recognized.

Tannen (2007) notes how reported speech often is *animated* in its delivery (cf. Goffman 1981: 144). *Animation* may be seen as the quoter (the person doing the reporting) enacting a performance of some nonverbal aspect of the quotee's (the supposed origin of the utterance being reported) delivery. Interestingly, animation of reported speech happens not only in face-to-face interaction, but also in written online communication. For instance, Jones and Schieffelin (2009) demonstrate the use of quotative BE *like* for "voice representation" in instant messaging, and Wikström (2014a) shows how various forms of animation contribute to the multimodal complexity of speech reports in conversational microblogging. Further, Wikström (2014a) found that BE *like* reports are significantly more likely to be animated than reports framed with SAY. This may partly owe to the informality of BE *like* reports, but is presumably mainly due to the semantic and pragmatic flexibility of the discourse marker *like* (see further Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004; Fox Tree and Tomlinson 2007; Buchstaller and D'Arcy 2009; for a survey of quotation practices on Twitter, see Puschmann 2015).

The present study operationally defines quotative BE *like* as any instance of the string BE *like* immediately followed by a stretch of discourse which is plausibly understood as a report of a verbal or nonverbal utterance. Further, as operationalized in the present study, animation is any feature of the report that performatively dramatizes some aspect of the quotee's supposed original utterance beyond verbal content (e.g. attitude, facial expressions, vocal qualities, etc.). Thus, animation might be something very specific, such as a particular gesture, or a less specific air or attitude. Animation is a feature of the

report rather than a description produced separately from the report, and thus 'shows' rather than 'tells', as illustrated by the invented examples (a)–(b):
(a) He was like "SHUT UP, goddammit! >:(".
(b) He shouted "shut up, godammit!" angrily.

In (a), the quoter animates loudness and affect by means of capitalized typography and an angry emoticon. In (b), the quoter describes loudness and affect through the reporting verb *shouted* and the adverb *angrily*.

3 Methods

The material used in this study is a corpus of one million tweets from 2012, compiled by IllocutionInc. These tweets were collected at regular intervals (every minute of every day) throughout 2012, and filtered to represent English-language tweeting (IllocutionInc.com 2013; C. Darwin, personal communication, May 30, 2013).[1] All examples below are directly reproduced from the corpus, excepting the anonymization of usernames, the replacement of URLs with descriptions of what is being linked, and the reproduction of some graphics which were not visible in the corpus database itself. Emoji are reproduced using EmojiOne version 2.2.5.[2]

From the corpus, all instances of quotative BE *like* (for the verb forms *am, are, is, was, were, be, being*, and *been*, and the contracted *'m, 're*, and *'s*), were retrieved. The main limitation of the search frame BE *like* is that *like* can sometimes serve as a quotative without being immediately preceded by BE, such as when another verb is used or when an adverbial is inserted between BE and *like*. Therefore, this retrieval method was evaluated through testing on a subsample of 100,000 tweets. The aim was to estimate the recall and precision of BE *like* as compared to 'bare' *like*. Recall and precision refers to whether the search frame identifies *all* and *only* relevant retrievals. These figures were arrived at by going over all instances of *like* in the pilot subsample and identifying the quotatives. The testing showed that, as compared to retrieving all instances of *like*, the search frame BE *like* sacrifices some recall (75.7% as compared to 100%) for a major improvement in precision (33.3% as compared to 2.5%). A second methodological concern was the possibility of non-standard spellings. Therefore, the

1 The documentation describes the filter as relatively liberal, erring on the side of including tweets which are only partly in English. The corpus does not systematically represent any particular variety.
2 See http://emojione.com.

subsample was also searched for variant spellings of *like* (*lyke*, *lik*, *lahk*, etc.), and of BE before *like*. These searches suggested no loss of recall from spelling variation. The retrieval method was therefore considered adequate in terms of precision and recall.

After retrieval of all BE *like* instances, the material was further coded into quotative and non-quotative instances, and the quotative instances were coded into animated, non-animated, and undetermined instances (cf. operational definition in Section 2 and findings in Section 4). To assess the reliability of the animation coding, all instances were separately coded by a second coder. An additional subset of 25% of instances were checked by a third coder. The coders received a definition of animation similar to the operationalization described in Section 2, several 'prototype' examples, and a description of features to be especially attentive to (see Section 4, Table 3). They were also instructed to take note of any other formal or stylistic features that would in their estimation fit the definition of animation. Indeterminacy resulted mostly from unclear report boundaries, e.g. when an emoticon at the end of a tweet could be seen either as belonging to the report or as the quoter's evaluation of or reaction to the report. The level of agreement was 84% between coder 1 and coder 2, 83% between coder 1 and coder 3, and 80% between coder 2 and coder 3, which was considered satisfactory given the limitations of the data and the inherently fuzzy concept of animation.

4 Findings

This section begins with an account of the quantitative findings, detailing the distribution of quotative instances, animated quotative instances, and the identification of four general categories of how animation was found the be afforded. These four general categories break down into more particular sets of strategies and formal features, which are the primary focus in Sections 4.1–4.4. In these sections, examples were selected for discussion, firstly, to illustrate each of the features belonging to the respective affordance categories; secondly, to highlight the broad variety of uses that these features are put to; and thirdly, to highlight cases of functional overlap, ambiguity, and other complexities that problematize the over-arching categorization.

The corpus of 1 million tweets yielded 4,312 total retrievals of BE *like*, of which 1,113 were quotatives (Table 1). These were distributed across 1,040 individual tweets – 974 tweets containing one relevant instance of BE *like*, 59 containing two instances, and 7 containing three instances. Further, all quotatives were coded as Animated, Non-animated, or Undetermined (Table 2).

Table 1: *Number of* BE like *retrievals, quotative and non-quotative.*

	N	%
Quotative	1,113	26%
Non-quotative	3,199	74%
TOTAL	4,312	100%

Table 2: Number of animated, non-animated, and undetermined instances.

	N	%
Animated	587	53%
Non-animated	474	43%
Undetermined	52	5%
TOTAL	1,113	100%

Notably, all identified instances of animation were in the visual channel. While Twitter technically supports the posting of audio and audio/video content, this technical provision was never found to be used for the purposes of animation in the corpus. Further, while many particular strategies were employed, all revolved around either lexical choice, spelling, or the use of nonverbal graphical elements (typographic or pictographic). Based on this observation, all animated quotatives were categorized into the over-arching groups Lexical, Orthographic, Typographic, and Graphic (Table 3). That is, the particular affordances for animating quotatives all fall into one of these more general categories, which may be seen as basic affordances of written communication.

Notably, most of the features identified in Table 3 are well-known for their emotive uses and their role as nonverbal cues in previous CMC research (e.g. Walther 2005; Crystal 2006; Herring 2012; Vandergriff 2013). What are here called 'stage directions' may be compared to 'emotes', and canonically take the form of 'performative predications' (Herring 2012; Virtanen 2013). Relatively recent features in CMC such as emoji, hashtags, and embedded GIFs have also been studied in terms of their expressive potential (Wikström 2014b; Tolins and Samermit 2016; Danesi 2017; Zappavigna and Martin 2018).

The central quantitative finding of this study is that animation of reported speech on Twitter is most frequently expressed typographically (Table 4). Lexical and orthographic animations were roughly equally frequent, and graphic animation was comparatively rare. On the null-hypothesis of an equal distribution, the observed frequency difference is statistically significant (univariate χ^2 196.9, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3: The over-arching affordance categories.

Affordance category	Instantiating features
Lexical	Emotive acronyms (e.g. *lol*)
	'Stage directions'; i.e. glosses of actions or events along the lines of **smiles* or >drops glasses<*
	Onomatopoetic items (e.g. *boom*)
	Discourse markers (e.g. *huh* or *um*)
	Word repetition (e.g. *cake cake cake cake cake*)
	'Nonsense' items (e.g. *wejkljwlek*)
Orthographic	Letter repetition and respellings that evoke spoken pronunciation (e.g. *keviiiiin* or *wunda* 'wonder')
Typographic	Case-shifting (e.g. *oh come ON*)
	Typographic/ASCII emoticons (e.g. the vertical ;-) or the horizontal cheering figure \(^¤^)/)
	Excessive/marked use of punctuation (e.g. ……???)
	Excessive/missing spacing (e.g. *ohmygodohmygodogmygod*)
	Marked uses of asterisks, hashtags or other typographical markings
Graphic	Emoji (e.g. 😎 or 🚀)
	Images (embedded or hyperlinked)
	GIFs (an image format that cycles repeatedly through several frames)

Table 4: Frequency of the affordance categories.

	N	%
Lexical	212	26%
Orthographic	169	21%
Typographic	353	44%
Graphic	76	9%
TOTAL	810	100%

Note that one instance of reported speech can be animated in several ways, and thus the total in Table 4 exceeds the total number of animated tweets (Table 2). For example, an instance containing both expressive case alternation and an emoji features both typographic and graphic animation. Similarly, an instance containing both case alternation and excessive punctuation counts for two instances of typographic animation. Further, the 'stage directions' instantiate two categories simultaneously. They are lexical in that they consist of at least one word, but were also, in all instances, typographically marked.

The remainder of Section 4 presents individual instances representing each of the affordance categories, Lexical (Section 4.1), Orthographic (Section 4.2), Typographic (Section 4.3), and Graphic (Section 4.4).

4.1 Lexical animation

The Lexical category was instantiated most frequently by emotive uses of lexical or semi-lexical items such as abbreviations, onomatopoeia, and discourse markers. Examples (1)–(2) illustrate these features.

(1) RT @user: That moment when you have to sneeze, but your body is like "lol jk" -__-

(2) same RT @user: when people are like ugh havent kissed someone in a week and im just like……

In (1), an attitude is animated on behalf of a person's body. *Lol* is an abbreviation of *laughing out loud*, and tends to indicate laughter or a playful stance, and *jk* is an abbreviation of *just kidding*. The use of these items together, *lol jk*, has been conventionalized as an expression of playful or mean-spirited teasing.[3] The author of (1) thus dramatizes the situation of thinking that one is about to sneeze but then not sneezing, animating the 'body' itself as a character with attitude in this microdrama. In (2), the animating feature is the marker *ugh*, animating a disgruntled emotional state (cf. Fraser 1996).

Expressive acronyms such as *wtf*, *lol*, or *omg*, while abbreviating full phrases, have arguably become sufficiently common in online parlance that they are lexically itemized in their own right. In the present material, such items tended to index an attitude rather than represent a quotee actually uttering the abbreviated phrase, as with *lol* in (1). The item *wtf* was also mostly used in this way, as in (3), though it did occasionally actually serve to represent the utterance of the full phrase, as in (4):

(3) Ever look at your tweet count and been like wtf?! Then realized most of em are retweets aha!

(4) @user ahah i noe i wulda been like wtf yhu doing by my house agn ahah xD & hmm tru, & ahah i noe me too lmao😂😭

3 Cf. http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=LOL+jk.

In (3), the acronym *wtf* may be regarded as having a function that is indexical or performative rather than representational. That is, in (3), as with most instances of similar abbreviations in the material is, the salient function of the item *wtf* is to index or express an attitude, and it is not necessarily the case that the item is supposed to represent anyone actually uttering the phrase *what the fuck*. This use of the item *wtf* may in this sense be compared to how, e.g. a winking emoticon within a report most saliently functions to animate a flirtatious or playful attitude, not necessarily to represent that someone physically winked. In (4), on the other hand, the abbreviation necessarily does represent the full phrase, since the phrase is a syntactically necessary part of the reported utterance ('[what the fuck] are you doing by my house again?').

In addition to the lexicalized expressive items exemplified above, there were also a few instances of non-lexical 'nonsense' items. While being nonsensical, these items still have an expressive function. Examples (5)–(6) illustrate this.

(5) RT @WeLoveGomez: When a fake Selena account follows you and you're like "ASDFGHJKLZXCVBNM. oh..."

(6) @user ikr? i was like wejkljwlek

These items seem to construe some kind of attitude of bafflement, excitement, frustration, or other relatively strong emotional state. In (5), the uppercase string *ASDFGHJKLZXCVBNM* seems to express the excitement of believing that celebrity icon Selena Gomez is following you back on Twitter. This excitement contrasts with the lowercase, 'trailing off', *oh* ..., expressing the disappointment of realizing that it is merely a fake account. Notably, this letter string is not randomly produced, but rather reflects the affordance of a standard QWERTY-keyboard: The string reproduces the second and third row of letters on such a keyboard, from left to right. In (6), the author is apparently responding to another user, agreeing with some idea that this other user has expressed by saying *ikr* ('I know, right?'). The reported nonsense string in this instance is also not random, but rather seems to be produced by the author putting their hands on the keyboard and repeatedly mashing: Note how the letters *w* and *e* and the letters *j*, *k*, and *l* respectively form a left-hand and right-hand cluster on a QWERTY-keyboard. Thus, the string appears to performatively simulate 'uncontrolled' keyboard mashing, using the material affordances of a typewritten format to index agitation.

The Lexical category also comprised some instances of expressive repetition of lexical items, as in (7)–(8).

(7) White people be like “SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS”

(8) My brain has been like, cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake cake, all morning.

The repetition here is evocative of rhythmic chanting, animating an attitude of obsessive excitement or insistence. In relation to (7), it is unlikely that the author of the tweet intended to convey that ‘white people’ collectively uttered the word *shots* exactly fifteen times at a given point in historical time. Rather, this report animates a kind of generic behavior. This animating quality is further enhanced by the uppercase typography, which is discussed further in Section 4.3. In (8), the adverbial ‘all morning’, following the report, makes it clear that the repetition is also meant to suggest extension over time. The non-literal interpretation of these instances is further invited by the redundancy (at face value) of repeating a lexical item many times, especially given Twitter’s well-known message length constraint, which was 140 characters at the time the data were collected. These tweets are 115 and 120 characters long respectively, and thus come close to utilizing the full space available. To that extent, the salient affordance here is not just character iterability, but more specifically, *limited* character iterability.

A variant of the asterisk-marked ‘stage directions’ is presented in (9):

(9) Bitches Be Like Wake up *pic* Get dressed*pic* School Flow *pic* Bored *pic* With Bae*pic* No Filter *pic* Goodnight *pic*

Here, a Twitter user is making fun of photo-based microblogging (the platform Instagram is specifically evoked by the phrase ‘No Filter’). The text between the repetitions of **pic** can be understood as hypothetical quotations of picture captions. The **pic** itself is a stage direction for the action of taking a picture (that is, it is presumably intended to be understood as a performative predication along the lines of **takes pic** or **posts pic**; Herring 2012). Thus, this user enacts a microdramatization of a day in the life of an obsessive selfie-taker (a behavior that the user ascribes to ‘Bitches’ in general).

4.2 Orthographic animation

The second affordance category concerns spelling practices. It has been noted in previous research that many nonstandard spellings in CMC are not just failures of orthography, but rather functional and socially meaningful respellings

(Shortis 2007; Tagg 2011; see also Wikström 2016 on how Twitter users reflexively negotiate spelling choices). In the present material, respelling occurred primarily in the form of letter repetition, as exemplified in (10)–(12).

(10) RT @user: That moment when you hear someone call your bestfriend their bestfriend and you're like... "Ummmmm, no bitch."

(11) They be like "UHHHHH KEVIIIIN GEEEEE" !

(12) I had to pass some year 7's and they were like "Heeeey ;)" so I ignored them and they called me a faggot. RESPECT YOUR ELDERS MATE.

The reports in (10) and (11) both feature utterance initial hesitation markers that have been orthographically lengthened.[4] In both cases, these markers suggest an attitude of disbelief, and the intensity of this attitude is animated by the lengthening. In (11), the vowels in the name *Kevin* and the interjection *gee* are similarly lengthened, and the animated attitude is further heightened with uppercase typography. It is not automatically to be assumed that the function of letter repetition is to represent spoken manner of production (cf. Darics 2013). However, in both of these cases, it is plausible that the orthographic lengthening is in some way intended to represent lengthening in pronunciation. In this regard, (12) is especially notable. It features a narrative of the author having to 'pass some year 7's', which establishes that the reported event transpired in a physical, face-to-face, setting (presumably at school). Thus, this tweet readily invites the understanding that the character repetition in the report (*heeeey*) represents a manner of pronunciation. Notably, there is also a winking emoticon, clearly construed as part of the reported utterance since it too is positioned within the bounds of the quotation marks. At face value, however, it is unlikely that the group of year 7 quotees said *hey* and winked chorally, so the report presumably rather animates a general flirtatious or playful attitude.

There were also a few instances in the material of other forms of clearly purposeful respelling beyond letter repetition, as illustrated in (13).

(13) When you get a friend request on Facebook and you're like OMG WUNDA WHO IT IZ. Then soon realise it's Sharita Pagnat from Siberia. No. :-/

4 In speech, the items *um* and *uh* are often called 'pause fillers' (Clark and Fox Tree 2002). Here, I opt to call them hesitation markers, since in writing, of course, there is no pause to fill.

Here, the respellings ‘wunda’ and ‘iz’ work together with the uppercase typography and the expressive abbreviation *omg* to stylize an attitude of excitement. Since the author of (13) appears to use a British variety (note the spelling *realise*), one might speculate that the respelling ‘wunda’ is intended to represent a markedly broad British pronunciation of *wonder* (e.g. /ˈwʊndə/). The author of this tweet, similarly to that of (5) above, uses stylistic contrast to animate a rapid shift from excitement to disappointment in the context of getting fake friends/followers on social media.

Example (14), finally, is superficially similar to the examples of letter repetition above, but is especially noteworthy in relation to the problematic assumption that letter repetition is primarily a voice-imitating feature (cf. Darics 2013).

(14) in my dreams i be home but it dont be my real house i be like wtfffff O.o

It is possible that the repeated *f* in *wtfffff* was intended to represent a lengthened fricative sound, for instance, as the sound might be extended to emphasize the (implied) item *fuck*. However, the character repetition is perhaps better understood as purely visually emphatic, not representative of a manner of pronunciation. This may be compared to how a reduplicated emoticon mouth such as :-))) is visually emphatic, and presumably rarely used to depict a multi-mouthed or triple-chinned smile. As such, (14) can be seen as a case that highlights the intrinsic ambiguity of distinctions between spelling as representation of speech and spelling as purely visual expression in the context of CMC.

4.3 Typographic animation

Beyond respellings, Twitter affords some additional ways of using typography to animate speech reports. Text formatting is notably constrained on Twitter as compared with many other online and web-based text environments (e.g. HTML-formatted email). However, Twitter users evidently do make expressive use of the options that are available, given that typography was the most frequently employed affordance for animation of reported speech in this study. The single most salient feature is case alternation, as in (15)–(16).

(15) @user...Oh yess I’ve had couple PPL apologize to me bc I be like WHAT You SAY

(16) RT @user: Everybody is tweeting “OMG I CANT BELIEVE ITS DECEMBER”, I’m like tf’ you you think came after November? November Jr.?

Example (15) illustrates case alternation which seems to represent variation in loudness or intensity. The author of the tweet is animating rage, or possibly shock, on their own behalf, with the exclamation 'WHAT You SAY' apparently eliciting apologies from people ('PPL'; *bc* is a shortened form of *because*). Example (16) illustrates the importance of co-text: The BE *like* report in (16) does not itself feature expressive case alternation, but in this instance it is reasonable to understand 'normality' of the report as animated. Specifically, this normality contrasts with the immediately preceding 'shouted' report of what '[e]verybody is tweeting'. Thus, this instance features an enactment of level-headedness by means of typographic contrast. Conversely, some users consistently write in uppercase, so that their use of uppercase in a speech report has no apparent expressive function (cf. Wikström 2014a). Thus, it is the stylistic contrast achieved through case *alternation* rather than the use of uppercase itself that affords the kind of expressivity that Twitter users can employ to animate voices.

Further, the material featured instances of Twitter users employing punctuation, especially periods, for animation, as in (17):

(17) I hate waking up before something important happens in a dream. It's like "wait, what's the cure for cancer?!? NOOooo..."

Example (17) is one of a few instances in the material featuring the impersonal *it's like* frame, though despite the impersonality of the construction, the preceding sentence in the tweet suggests that the quotee is the author himself/herself (cf. Fox and Robles 2010 for an in-depth discussion of this construction). The author of (17) uses a combination of question marks and an exclamation mark to animate the urgency of a question. Further, the combination of case alternation and an ellipsis is evocative of a dramatically lengthened 'No!', trailing off or fading away, in spoken production.

A second kind of typographical animation that occurred frequently in the material is the use of emoticons. Examples (18)–(19) show two common variants of 'vertical' emoticons, namely a frowning face animating a dispirited attitude in (18), and an emphatically repeated string of smiling faces in (19). The narrative related in (19) suggests that the emoticons animate a kind of self-satisfied false innocence, as the quotee is keeping a funny secret. The horizontal emoticon O_o in (20) conventionally expresses some degree of surprise or dumbfoundedness.[5]

5 Cf. http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=o_O.

(18) Watching all the cute couples and being like “Oh, I want that.):’”

(19) @user HAHAHAHAHHA I was laughin to myself and you were like ‘what’ and I was like ‘nothing:):):):)’ hahah they’re vile

(20) my mom is so rude..I can’t hug a boy without her being like ... O_o y’all dating?...

While the most common emoticons, such as these, are constructed from the basic characters that are easily available on a QWERTY keyboard, Twitter also supports an extensive set of Unicode symbols beyond the ‘standard’ alphanumeric characters. Only a small handful of tweets in the present material used such ‘special characters’, presumably because they are more difficult to produce. Example (21) shows one of these few instances of special character use in the material.

(21) When you’re at a party and you hear your favorite song and you’re like ヽ(≧▽≦*)ノ THIS IS MY JAM!!!!!!

This emoticon animates the spirit of rocking out to one’s favorite jam, in the style of so-called ‘kaomoji’.[6] The parentheses represent rounded cheeks, demarcating a face. The mathematical symbols suggest squinting eyes. The inverted triangle serves as the figure’s grinning mouth, and the asterisk could be seen as the figure blushing or perspiring, or as a twinkle in the eye. Outside of the parentheses, two katakana iteration marks represent upraised arms. The use of non-Western alphabetic characters likely owes to the East Asian origin of kaomoji, and reflects the expanded typographical possibilities afforded by the international Unicode standard that Twitter supports.

The expressive use of typography can also take more subtle forms. While Twitter users are inconsistent when it comes to using quotation marks to delimit what is being reported, Example (22) shows a singular instance from the material where the author not only uses quotation marks, but does so in a markedly expressive way:

(22) i poured my fucking heart to you and you reply “oh” “lol”, bitch I hope you get hit by a bus so I can be like “oh” “lol”

6 Cf. the “table flipping” emoticon, which is one of the more popular kaomoji in the West: http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/flipping-tables.

In (22), the narrative conveyed invites understanding the quotation marks as both emphatic and distancing: The author of the tweet clearly disapproves of the addressee's original, cold-hearted utterance. In this narrative frame, the marked departure from typographical convention – separating *"oh lol"* into *"oh" "lol"* – comes across as a deliberate expressive strategy.

One of Twitter's most notorious affordances is the hashtag. Throughout the 1,113 quotative tweets, there were 136 hash symbols (#), almost all of which were part of hashtags. However, these hashtags were most often not used within speech reports, but rather positioned as comments on speech reports (cf. the notion of hashtags as metacomments in Wikström 2014b). Example (23) shows an instance where the hashtag clearly does belong to the report, but it was not considered to serve an animating function. Rather, it seems that the author of the tweet is merely reporting on what s/he would be writing on Twitter if s/he had a boyfriend.[7] Examples (25)–(26) illustrate instances where tagging may be understood as adding or supporting the animation of reports.

(23) I wish I had a boyfriend so I could be like#TeamTaken and write our date everywhere 😊😌😔😕

(24) Why is "Your Gonna Smell Meeeeeeee" trending? I was like #WTF ?!

(25) When a guy says they fallin for you and you already kno he's a *heart-breaker* ii be like #ontothenextone

In (24), the tagging of *wtf* may be understood as working together with the uppercase and the emphatic punctuation (*?!*) to animate the intensity of the author's reaction to the 'trending' phrase 'Your Gonna Smell Meeeeeeee'. Finally, in (25), the tag seems to have a function roughly equivalent to the 'stage directions' in Section 4.1. Specifically, the tag glosses how s/he anticipates behaving in response to advances from a known 'heartbreaker', using the quotative format to enact rather than describe that reaction (cf. the expressive and performative hashtag uses, explained as instances of pragmatic maxim flouting, in Wikström 2014b).

7 This tag is a play on how fans of the *Twilight* franchise at one point used "#TeamEdward" or "#TeamJacob" to express preference for either of the male protagonists. #TeamTaken would indicate that one has no preference, being already "taken".

4.4 Graphic animation

Animation by means of embedded or hyperlinked graphics was the least frequent category. The corpus represents the year 2012, at which time emoji were less prominent than they have become in subsequent years. However, they were nevertheless the most frequent form of graphic animation in the material. The functions of emoji overlap substantially with emoticons. For instance, in (26), the winking emoji animates a playfully flirtatious demeanor on behalf of "Mr Wright" in roughly the same way that;-) would. However, emoji do also afford an expansion of expressive possibilities as compared to emoticons, as is illustrated in (27).

(26) Back in the day, my daddy would go up to girls and be like, "Hey, I'm Mr. Wright. I heard you were looking for me? 😉"

(27) When I drink milk I'm like 😍😋🍼 then I when I realize it came from a cows hairy nips I'm like 😷😩

In terms of material affordances, a practical difference is that emoji are more readily producible on a smartphone. More interestingly, some emoji faces are more detailed and expressively specific than typographical emoticons can generally be, such as the emoji with hearts for eyes. Further, the relatively expansive emoji set that was becoming standard at the time also includes stylized representations of many types of objects, places, and activities, such as the baby's milk bottle in (27). Both quotatives in (27) also illustrate an emergent practice of symbol combination. The first set combines a face with hearts for eyes with a standard smiley face and a baby's milk bottle, animating pleasure and contentment, supposedly like that of a baby with a bottle. The second set combines the medical mask face with a dismayed face, animating sickness and disgust at the cow's hairy nips.

The second form of Graphic animation found in the material was embedded, Twitter-hosted, images. Example (28) illustrates a recurring type of use in the material, where the image is framed as representing some kind of generic attitude associated with a recognizable social situation. In all such instances, the structure of the report is BE *like* + [image], with no additional text or content in the report itself.

(28) RT @user: seeing a cute couple and being like.. [image; Figure 1]

In (28), the image is a single frame from *Shrek*, depicting the cartoonishly sad face of the character Donkey. This image is used to animate the forlorn feeling of

'seeing a cute couple', supposedly from the perspective of a lonely person. Thus, the use of the image combines a generic stylization of an emotional state with the denotational specificity of referencing a widely familiar cultural artifact. Further, the author is not merely referencing *Shrek*, but is also playing intertextually with a meme genre (cf. Wiggins and Bret Bowers 2014; Tolins and Samermit 2016): This frame of Donkey has been reproduced across many online contexts beyond this tweet.[8] Most images in the material were similarly recognizable memes (sometimes so-called 'image macros' featuring superimposed text). Other images were less recognizable, sometimes apparently of a private origin.

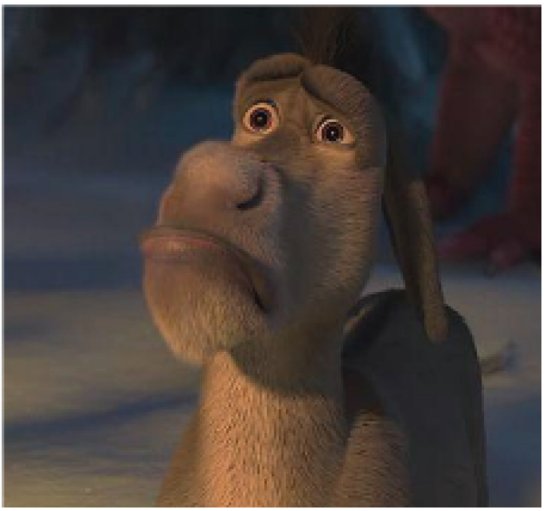

Figure 1: Sad Donkey.

Examples (29)–(30) demonstrate animation with GIF images, which consist of multiple frames – often sourced from film or television – giving the appearance of a short, looping video (for an account of GIFs as enactments in text messaging exchanges, see Tolins and Samermit 2016).

(29) @user1 RT @user2: Then Obama ran into @EricCantor and was like... [link; Figure 2]

Example (29) features an image of former US President Barack Obama, smirking confidently. Throughout the frames of the GIF, pixelated sunglasses glide down

8 See e.g. https://memegenerator.net/Shrek-Donkey-Sad.

Figure 2: Irreverent Obama.

and land on Obama's face and the text 'DEAL WITH IT' appears, as in Figure 2. The tweet is apparently a comment on a recent victory for Obama in a political struggle over healthcare (the so-called 'Obamacare' debate) which was ongoing at the time. Notably, in (29) an image of Obama is used to animate an irreverent, triumphant attitude on behalf of Obama himself (as he would hypothetically appear to House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, mentioned in the tweet). This was the only instance in the material in which the form of animation was an actual depiction, albeit modified, of the quotee. The 'irreverent' effect is heightened by the combination of elements – the somewhat awkward photograph of Obama, the clumsy way in which the glasses slide into place, and the mismatch between the photograph and the cartoonish sunglasses and text. This playful mishmash of elements arguably exemplifies what Douglas (2014) terms 'the Internet ugly aesthetic', a playful, digital punk sensibility.

Finally, (30) shows a Twitter user animating his/her own hypothetical reaction to being contacted by celebrity idol Selena Gomez by linking to four GIFs.

(30) If Selena tweeted me I'd be like: [four links; Figures 3–6]

In sequence, the GIFs depict a zoom-in on the stunned face of the character Ginny from a *Harry Potter* film; Bill Hader spitting water into the face of Kristin Wiig in a *Saturday Night Live* comedy sketch; Sonny from the TV-show *Miami Vice* removing his sunglasses, modified so that the glasses are doubled, and a man spitting water at his computer screen. The close-ups of stunned reactions and so-called 'spit-takes' animate a playfully excessive attitude of surprise and

Figure 3: Stunned Ginny.

Figure 4: SNL spit-take.

shock on behalf of the quotee. This strategy of combining GIFs emphasizes how the particular events depicted are removed from their respective narrative contexts and genericized as expressions of affect.[9] Notably, it is unlikely that the quoter created these GIFs *de novo* for the purpose of composing this tweet. Rather, the items are more likely repurposed from some other context or retrieved from a repository (note the '4GIFs.com' watermark in Figure 5).

9 As an anonymous reviewer notes, similar strategies are very common on the platform Tumblr.

Figure 5: Stunned sunglasses removal.

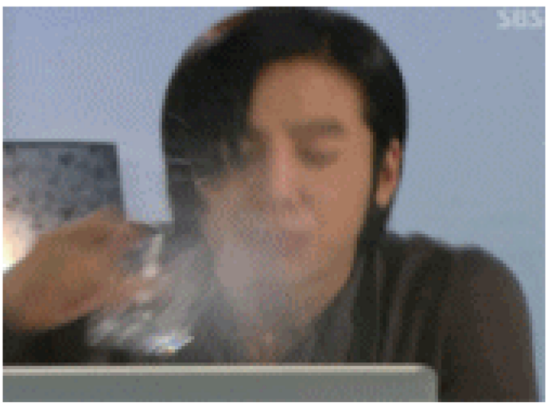

Figure 6: Computer screen spit-take.

5 Discussion and conclusion

This study found that animation of reported speech on Twitter is most frequently expressed typographically, and is least frequently expressed graphically. This is possibly because Twitter began as a purely typographic medium (in 2006), and has only gradually expanded support for graphics, increasingly emphasizing non-textual visual elements by, *inter alia*, providing image

hosting and embedded displaying of both still and moving images. Several modalities (e.g. kinesics or proxemics) are of course absent from the present material, since they cannot appear in tweets. Audio and audiovisual content (e.g. hyperlinked YouTube videos) could technically have occurred in the material, but did not. Thus, all animation identified in this study's material is in the visual channel.

More specifically, 91% of the devices or features employed to function as animation – Lexical, Orthographic, and Typographic – saliently belong to the domain of typeset text, the domain of what the keyboard affords. Only around one tenth of the animating features of the tweets show the user moving beyond what they can produce by tapping on a (physical or touchscreen) keyboard. This may mainly be an effect of how Twitter invites relatively rapid communication: Hitting the Shift-key to produce case shifting, adding punctuation forming emoticons, or repeatedly hitting letter keys, etc., are quick ways of producing expressive tokens construing emotional states, imitating vocalizations, and so forth. Retrieving an image from a meme archive or some other online source, or finding and embedding/hyperlinking other resources, presumably requires more effort and deliberation. In other words, this over-arching pattern could be explained in terms of ease of production.

Further, the finding may be compared to the results of Herring and Dainas (2017), who argue that a preference for emoticons and emoji over elements such as video in Facebook comments may be explained in terms of a complexity hierarchy, favoring small over large, still over dynamic, and short (or no) duration over long. When it comes to animation of quotatives on Twitter, these two factors arguably go hand-in-hand: 'Lighter' visual expression, such as forms of typographic modulation, can be used dynamically in various message-compositional arrangements. 'Heavier' elements such as GIFs not only require more effort to reproduce in a message, but also impose more constraints on the composition.

The question remains the extent to which the animation practices outlined above *represent* speech (or face-to-face interaction more generally). When the report is part of a narrative about a face-to-face situation, the Twitter user is clearly making relevant the notion that written text represents a prior spoken discourse. In most other cases, however, such an interpretation is not necessarily warranted. As previous research (Dresner and Herring 2010; Virtanen 2013: 279) has noted, there in fact tends to be a discrepancy between, e.g. the physical facial expressions of online interactants and the emoticons they use to express themselves. Typically, the poster who writes *lol* is not 'actually' laughing out loud. This discrepancy emphasizes the performative rather than representational

dimension of such features. Nevertheless, the present study suggests that the affordances that are exploited by users of Twitter to animate reports rely on oral expressivity at least in a more general sense. *Remediation* (Bolter and Grusin 1999) may provide a useful framework for thinking about this, in its emphasis on how new media owe their legibility and comprehensibility to how they integrate prior forms of mediation: While an instance of letter repetition may not be directly representing an actual instance of vocal delivery, its emotive performativity relies at least partly on a conventionalized method for remediating oral expressivity in writing. Similarly, a winking emoticon owes its potential for animating flirtatiousness to the fact that such emoticons remediate facial expressivity.

Graphic animation is especially interesting in this regard. It was clear in this study that Twitter users prefer images and emoji that depict faces and bodies. This lends some support to the idea that graphics substitute for embodied behavior in spoken reports (cf. Tolins and Samermit 2016). However, as unique emoji combinations and the recruitment of pop culture references and memes suggest, these practices draw not only on face-to-face repertoires, but also on emerging repertoires of online intertextuality and remix culture (Lessig 2004; Wiggins and Bret Bowers 2014). Further, the perhaps most notable exception to the relevance of orality comes in the form of the 'keyboard mashing' nonsense strings. If such an instance appropriates the mechanics of typing to index an emotional state, it remediates the QWERTY-keyboard, not a face-to-face practice. Thus, the remediation of orality in CMC is only one component in a broader remediation complex.

In sum, the present study shows that animation of reported speech on Twitter is visually, and predominantly typographically, afforded. The observed quotative practices frequently remediate – but rarely seem to directly represent – oral practices, but in some cases rather draw on emergent repertoires of online practices with no direct equivalents in face-to-face interaction. It was beyond the scope of the present study to provide more in-depth analyses of the precise interactional functions of animation. However, future research could focus on contextualizing individual instances and investigating, e.g. how animation strategies function in conversational reply-chains, how recipients respond to animated reports, etc. At present, the following conclusion can be drawn: The fact that BE *like* quotatives are so often animated and that this animation is predominately typography-based suggests that typography modulation can meaningfully be understood as the Twitter equivalent of voice and body modulation in spoken interaction. In the re-embodiment of an oral practice to a non-oral setting, typography is the affordance most readily available to exploit for expressive potential.

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