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TWEETING THE NEWS: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN NEWSPAPER TWEETS

Twitter belongs to one of the most popular news-disseminating microblogging platforms, used by mainstream-journalism media outlets, broadcast media and newspapers in particular. The following analysis focuses on linguistic properties of newspaper tweets. It is the purpose of the study to identify the structural, discursive and rhetorical goals of newspaper tweets. The analysis comprises Twitter profiles of selected English and German daily newspapers. The study has shown that a variety of discursive strategies are employed in the composition of tweets. Among the most conspicuous properties of newspaper tweets emphasis on newsworthiness, interactivity and conversationalization has been identified. The study has also shown a highly promotional and presentational role of newspaper tweets.

INTRODUCTION

Twitter has become one of the most popular news-disseminating platforms, used by citizen- and mainstream-journalism outlets, broadcast media and newspapers in particular. The following analysis focuses on the usage patterns of this platform by newspapers, on linguistic properties of tweets specifically. It was observed in previous research that it is a frequent practice for newspapers to upload headlines or leads to the platform (Armstrong and Gao 2010). Yet, more and more frequently news is not uploaded automatically, but created specifically for the platform. It is the purpose of the study to identify the structural, discursive and rhetorical goals of newspaper tweets. The analysis comprises tweets published over two months (February, March 2013) by selected English and German daily newspapers, three newspapers from each country (*the Guardian*, *the Telegraph*, *the Times*; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *die Welt*). The working hypothesis is that, considering the primary uses of the platform, tweets will fulfil informative and interpersonal functions in particular, i.e. provide news and trigger interaction with the readers, and that these functions will be revealed in the discourse strategies applied in the tweets.

TWITTER AS A MICROBLOGGING PLATFORM

Twitter, launched in 2006, has now become one of the most popular microblogging platforms, with nearly 140 million active users, posting on average 340 million tweets per day. The platform enjoys the greatest popularity in the USA (with 27.4% of all the users of Twitter, with more than 140 million accounts registered), with Brazil and Japan following (above 40 million and 30 million accounts, respectively). As far as Europe is concerned, Twitter is the most popular in the United Kingdom, with 32.2 million user profiles registered. The use and popularity of Twitter in Germany is definitely smaller, with approximately 8 million active users in this country (Twitter blog).

The studies devoted to the motivations for using Twitter and gratifications associated with it proved that the platform is used to engage in communicating and in social activities (Greer and Ferguson 2011). It was shown that the main uses to which Twitter is put comprise daily chatter, conversation, reporting and sharing information (Java *et al.* 2007). Similar observations were presented by Jansen *et al.* (2009: 2186) who observed an increasing use of microblogging platforms for “trusted sources of information, insights, and opinions”. The studies conducted so far proved that Twitter is treated as a supplement not replacement for other media (Greer and Ferguson 2011). However, quite significantly, in Greer and Ferguson’s (2011) study nearly half of the respondents expressed their preference of Twitter over radio and newspapers (42% and 54% of users, respectively), which may be considered as a sign of a considerable importance of this medium as a source of news.

TWITTER AND JOURNALISM

Twitter has become a significant tool for news media and individual journalists to disseminate information and engage with the audience. News media have noticed the advantages this platform offers in the dissemination of news due to its speed and brevity (Armstrong and Gao 2010, Kwak *et al.* 2010, Murthy 2013). Twitter is considered a useful tool for news media, supplementing and innovating traditional practices of collecting, investigating and disseminating news (Ahmad 2010). More significantly, Twitter has become a significant promotional and marketing tool, allowing the news media to reach a wider audience (Armstrong and Gao 2010).

Hermida (2009: 4) maintained that microblogs “are creating new forms of journalism”. It has been claimed that Twitter has given rise to “ambient journalism”, omnipresent and fragmented journalism, comprising a stream of information from mainstream and citizen-journalism news outlets (Bruns 2010,

Hermida 2010). Especially prominent is the role of Twitter in changing the traditional journalistic practices, enhancing the potential of citizen journalism and transforming the relation between journalists and the audience. Hermida (2009) argued that Twitter has triggered a change in the relationship between journalists and readers, as online journalism has largely become a collaborative practice. Moreover, Twitter has contributed to a change in users' approach to news and news consumption patterns, enhancing user-participation in disseminating and processing of news (Greer and Ferguson 2011, Murthy 2013).

Twitter's role in influencing journalistic norms and practices was emphasized as well. Studies proved that journalists on social networking platforms provide insight into how stories are crafted, offer personal takes on news events, and provide context for the development of news coverage (Lasorsa *et al.* 2012). Twitter has also become a significant reporting tool used to report on a breaking news situation. Studies have shown that reporters use the platform successfully in reporting eye-witnesses' accounts of events from the scene, providing users with valuable and trustworthy information (Vis 2013). For newspapers, Twitter offers a tool for enhancing connectivity and creating or strengthening relationships and bonds with the readers (Armstrong and Gao 2010, Greer and Ferguson 2011).

TWITTER AND NEWSPAPERS

All the analyzed newspapers have a Twitter profile. The popularity of respective profiles, measured in the number of followers, and the activity of the newspaper, measured in the number of tweets and profiles followed, are noticeably different. The table below shows details concerning these aspects of the profiles (as of 18th March 2013):

Table 1. Newspapers on Twitter

	Telegraph	Times	Guardian	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	Süd- deutsche Zeitung	Die Welt
Number of tweets in general	159 625	70 609	26 635	106 320	6845	49 715
Number of followers	195 652	64 548	875 529	6784	83 865	93 259
Number of profiles followed	185	371	1064	21	213	76

The highest activity on Twitter can be seen in *the Telegraph* and *the Times*, as well as the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, with a lower degree among other German dailies. These differences, however, are closely associated with circulation of the respective newspapers as well as the period of functioning on Twitter – with the platform only recently gaining on popularity in Germany, as mentioned above. Worth noting is a considerable activity of *the Guardian* on Twitter – with the highest number of followers and profiles followed, contrasted with a relatively low number of tweets in general. A high number of followers and profiles followed reflects the activity of the newspaper online and the popularity of its web-products, with the newspaper homepage awarded the Website of the Year award in 2012.

STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE OF TWEETS

As stated above, the aim of the study is to analyze the most prominent discourse properties of the tweets and to measure the degree to which the tweets compare with news headlines and leads. The form of news on Twitter best exemplifies how structural requirements of story design influence the shape of news and discourse structure (cf. Cotter 2010: 147). The limit of 140 signs imposes restrictions, but at the same time creates a basis for creativity in shaping messages.

STRUCTURE

As far as the structure of tweets is concerned, a number of patterns may be observed. The most common approaches in the construction of tweets comprise the publication of abstract-based (headline- and/or intro-based) tweets or original tweets created specifically for the platform. The first approach is typical of newspapers using Twitter as a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed channel. In such cases, the tweets assume the form of headlines and/or intros of news stories published on the newspaper website. In the analyzed corpus this approach has proved the most frequent on the profile of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The second trend observed is to create messages different from headlines and leads, prepared specifically for the medium. It is on these tweets in particular that the following analysis will focus, due to their innovative nature.

With respect to structure, a conventional tweet comprises a textual message (e.g. a news report on the event), hyperlink to the full story, and optionally a

byline with attribution – the name of the author or website being the source of the news story. These components can be arranged in various configurations. For example:

Common pesticides 'can kill frogs within an hour' – @dpcarrington reports on @GuardianEco <http://gu.com/p/3dag4/tw>
 Härter, schneller, weißer: Warum künstliche #Fingernägel nicht nur ästhetisch bedenklich sind: Die @sz-Stilkolumne <http://sz.de/1.1621787>

The central component informs on the event, content of the story, comprises a quote or commentary, while further elements may be seen to play the role of identification of the source/author, or subject area. With respect to the structure of the textual component (a news piece) two major forms have been identified, comprising simplex (one-partite) and complex (multi-partite) tweets.

One partite tweets include verbless clauses, nominalizations or simple and compound sentences as the main components:

Germany to follow eurozone into recession <http://thetim.es/W9ILZk>
 North Korea rages at new UN sanctions <http://gu.com/p/3eafd/tf>
 Die Söhne Helmut #Kohls und ihre Geschichten von der bösen Schwiegermutter <http://on.welt.de/ZUuPbP>
 #CSU-Chef Horst #Seehofer sagt „Nein“ zur Gleichstellung der Homo-Ehe: <http://www.sz.de/1.1614042>

The use of verbless clauses, nominal constructions, as well as sentential structures is typical of headlines style (Bell 1991, Reah 1998). Used in headlines, the structures guarantee an adequate level of informative content with a high degree of density and compactness. Those two properties are extremely important on Twitter, with its constraints on the amount of content.

The second structural convention involves the use of multi-partite tweets which consist of two or more elements. For instance:

Henry Winter: even rich owners like Nicola Cortese and Roman Abramovich need the fans <http://tgr.ph/13QOgBP>
 "Strong ministers still get their way." Battle lines drawn in Whitehall's phoney war <http://soc.li/6vreAhg>
 Neue Vorwürfe gegen #Amazon: Ehemalige Amazon-Mitarbeiter berichten der @SZ von unumenschlichen Arbeitsbedingungen <http://www.sz.de/1.1614066>
 Ist #Ungarn auf dem Weg zur Diktatur? Was die Verfassungsänderung bedeutet, erklärt Verfassungsrechtler Ulrich Hufeld <http://www.sz.de/1.1622980>

This structure is typical of headlines in online newspapers, as it allows a quick identification of the scope of a news story, which is particularly important for readers scanning pages for news of interest to them (Kolodzy 2006, Ward 2002, Tereszkiwicz 2012). The examples above present the most frequent shape of initial components in multi-partite tweets – a phrase, clause, a pull-quote from the news story, a question and/or question-answer format.

ORIGINAL TWEETS – MODIFIED ABSTRACTS AND NON-ABSTRACT-BASED TWEETS

Though the majority of the tweets have repeated headlines and leads, examples of original tweets, messages created specifically for the medium have also been identified. Worth noting frequency of such tweets has been observed in *the Guardian* (12.14%), *the Telegraph* (9.62%), *the Times* (7.75%), as well as in *die Welt* (7.6%) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (6.41%), with no such tweets found in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Original tweets entail modifications of headlines or leads of news stories, as well as autonomous tweets published independently of stories on the main website. Original tweets exhibit interesting properties on the discursive, syntactic and lexical layer of the posts. Three main discursive goals and rhetorical purposes have been identified behind the modifications of abstracts (headlines/leads) and the composition of original posts: increase in informative value and newsworthiness, conversationalization and interactivity, as well as promotion.

TWEETS IN THE FORM OF MODIFIED ABSTRACTS

The analysis of tweets based on abstracts involved a comparison of tweets with headlines and leads of the stories to which the tweets link. The study has shown that the most frequent modifications involve expansion of headlines or leads to include additional components concerning the content of the story behind the link. The components added comprise a range of elements which can be seen to play different rhetorical functions. In the examples provided below, tweets are contrasted with abstracts published on the homepage of the newspapers.

– use of evaluative strategies

The most frequent strategy in composing tweets involves expanding or modifying newspaper headlines and leads by supplying further details or underlining other components of a news story by means of evaluative strategies:

1 in 3 professionals 'is suffering from burnout'. The problem is worst in London & most likely to affect accountants <http://thetim.es/W6ER8W>
One in three professionals 'is suffering from burnout'

Talented professionals are struggling to cope with stress at work, with burgeoning workloads causing them to become demotivated or even leave their jobs altogether, a study has found. One in three professionals in Britain is suffering from "burnout", according to a report by a recruitment specialist.

Das Spiel zwischen dem #FCB und #Fortuna Düsseldorf wurde zu einem völlig unverhofften Spektakel. #Bundesliga <http://www.sz.de/1.1620255>
 FC Bayern mit 20 Punkten Vorsprung Jupp Heynckes zahlt – und ist sauer
 Der FC Bayern ist glücklich, weil er gegen Fortuna Düsseldorf mal wieder einen Rückstand dreht und weil Jérôme Boateng sein erstes Bundesliga-Tor erzielt. Nur ein seltsamer Disput zwischen Boss Karl-Heinz Rummenigge und Trainer Heynckes trübt die Stimmung.

The addition of story details in this form increases the informative potential of the tweet, their persuasive role, but above all the newsworthiness of the event (cf. Bednarek and Caple 2012). The composition of tweets involves the use of the linguistic strategies of intensification, evaluation, and comparison. Among the news values underlined in this way, the value of negativity (*problem, affect*), superlativeness (*most likely, worst*), impact (*Spektakel*) are particularly foregrounded. By using loaded vocabulary with strong connotations, both positive and negative, the tweets emphasize the meaningfulness of the events and thus attract readers to become acquainted with the stories.

– use of numbers

The tweets are also expanded to include numerical information associated with the events in question – not given in the headline or lead of the story. For instance:

Apple and Samsung patent row set for new jury trial as judge knocks \$450m off the \$1.05bn award <http://gu.com/p/3e7c9/tw> via @GuardianTech
 Apple and Samsung smartphone patent row set for new jury trial
 Judge Lucy Koh rules jury must decide how much Samsung must pay for infringements by 14 devices from original trial. By Charles Arthur

Prognose zur Wahl in #Italien: Mitte-Links-Bündnis 37%, #Berlusconi ca. 30% <http://sz.de/1.1609371>
 Wahl in Italien Bersani führt – Berlusconi und Grillo stark
 Italien wählt Mitte-Links: Hochrechnungen sehen das Bündnis von Spitzenkandidat Bersani in Führung. Der hat sich mittlerweile zum Sieger im Abgeordnetenhaus erklärt.

The introduction of numbers in news stories is said to enhance facticity, as well as objectivity and reliability of coverage (Bell 1991). More significantly, inclusion of such details increases the newsworthiness of the event, the news value of superlativeness in particular (Bednarek and Caple 2012: 91). The presence of figures was identified as one of the discursive features of online headlines (Tereszkiewicz 2012). A recurrent use of this strategy in tweets proves that it is considered important in enhancing the persuasive potential of tweets.

– use of quotations

The composition of original tweets involves the use of quotations as well. Two basic tendencies with respect to the structure of tweets have been identi-

fied – expansion of the original headline or lead of a story with a quotation or a replacement of the headline with a citation from the story. In the case of the latter, it is the quotation that forms the basis of the tweet. The selection of the quotes is conditioned by the appeal of the quote, its evocativeness and strength. The quotes include strong, controversial, humorous or witty statements, which is to enhance the rhetorical potential of the tweet. For example:

“I hope to get stronger so that the monster inside my head grows quieter” – @EJWoolf’s Apple a Day <http://thetim.es/ZkrNcd>

An Apple a Day: is disordered eating really a life sentence?

From the very fat to the very thin, we seem to be going from bad to worse. New statistics suggest that 65 per cent of men and 58 per cent of women are overweight or obese — and fewer than two in five...

“#Papst Benedikt XVI. ist gescheitert. Er ist getrieben vom Hass auf die Moderne“, schreibt Alan Posener: <http://on.welt.de/ZL681k>

Getrieben vom Hass auf die Moderne

Der große Gegner Papst Benedikts XVI. war der Rationalismus des Westens. Beim Versuch, diesen zu überwinden, kam es zu erheblichen Absurditäten.

Though the use of quotes, analogically to figures, is common in news discourse (headlines, news stories) in general (Bell 1991, Bednarek and Caple 2012, Tereszkievicz 2012), the selection of these forms and making quotes conspicuous, suggests an increased weight attached in tweets to enhancing their impressive potential. Providing quotes of the actors of the news or witnesses of events contributes to an increase in newsworthiness, news value of personalization and negativity in particular. The insertion of the quote may be seen to play a persuasive and impressive function – attracting readers to become acquainted with the story, as well as influencing readers’ opinions.

– use of rhetorical questions

Headlines and leads used on newspaper websites are often replaced with tweets in a question, or question-and-answer format. In this case, the wish to increase the level of attractiveness, appeal of the story can clearly be seen:

Want David Cameron to turn on your Christmas lights? That’ll be £45,000 please <http://thetim.es/Y1y6iw>

Cameron ‘too expensive’ to switch on town’s Christmas lights

In the absence of ageing soap stars, or superannuated authors no one reads, there is one thing a town should be able to rely on: that the local MP can switch on the Christmas lights.

Weniger Menschen heißt mehr Wohlstand für jeden? So war Chinas Ein-Kind-Politik gedacht. Das Gegenteil ist passiert. <http://sz.de/1.1614782>

Wirtschaft in China: Ein-Kind-Politik bremst den Konsum

Eigentlich sollte die Ein-Kind-Politik den Wohlstand in China mehren: Wenn es weniger Bürger gibt, bleibt für jeden mehr übrig, das war die Idee. Doch tatsächlich wirkt sich die Familienplanung negativ auf den Konsum aus, meinen Wissenschaftler.

The choice of headlines in a question and question-answer format over other discursive forms on Twitter marks a preference of a more interactive, dialogical form. This may be seen as an attempt at increasing readers' curiosity and winning their attention.

– use of questions and directives

One of the most frequently applied persuasive devices in the tweets is the use of directives and questions addressed at readers. In these cases, the headlines were modified to include an imperative directed at the readers. Directives used in the tweets have the form of commands which are to encourage readers to become acquainted with a news story, column or interactive game. For instance:

Want to buy mum a book this Mother's Day? Check out Caroline Mortimer's top 10 recommendations <http://soa.li/gAcdrXH>

Mother's Day: Top 10 book presents – Telegraph

Mother's Day: Ten perfect books to give your mother this Sunday

#Shakespeare oder #Eminem – wer hat's gedichtet? Können Sie unterscheiden zwischen Weltliteratur und #Rap? Ein Quiz. <http://quiz.sueddeutsche.de/quiz/208>

Shakespeare trifft auf Rap: William in da house

William Shakespeare hat Dutzende Stücke verfasst, die noch heute weltweit aufgeführt werden. Können Sie die Verse von Eminem, Sir Mix-A-Lot und Shakespeare unterscheiden? In unserem Quiz finden Sie es heraus.

The tweets' goal is to directly persuade readers to click on the link and follow the story. The directives are additionally enhanced by questions addressed at readers, which are supposed to attract users' attention, as mentioned above.

– use of exclamations and paralanguage

Headlines transferred to Twitter are also expanded to include spoken-mode elements evoking a face-to-face conversation. Those interactive elements involve directives intended humorously as well as paralinguistic elements and exclamations:

Careful, you could have someone's eye out! Battle of Hastings re-enactment cancelled (in case someone gets hurt) <http://thetim.es/VOp2mV>

Battle of Hastings cancelled (in case someone gets hurt)

The Battle of Hastings has had to be postponed amid fears that someone could be injured.

Health and safety concerns that would have baffled William the Conqueror and his 11th-century Anglo-Saxon foes have led to this year's re-enactment of the most famous engagement in English history being cancelled.

Oh, wie schön ist #Panama: Finden nach @SZ-Informationen auch #Porsche, #Piëch, #Quandt und #Burda. <http://sz.de/1.1628885> #steueroase

Deutsche Milliardäre in Steueroase Porsche, Piëch und Quandt in Panama

Verschwiegene Steueroase: Vertreter einiger der reichsten deutschen Familien sollen nach SZ-Informationen Firmen in Panama halten.

Such devices may be seen to suggest humorous spoken interaction. They “set a joking tone, a shift from writing to mock conversation” (Myers 2010:112). The elements create an impression of an informal, more direct and entertaining interaction between the author and the readers.

– use of ‘Warum...’ and ‘Wie...’ clauses

A particularly frequent modification identified in German tweets, not found in the English posts, involves the use of ‘Warum...’ (Eng. ‘why’) and ‘Wie...’ (Eng. ‘how’) clauses. For instance:

Graham Hughes reiste vier Jahre um die Welt – ohne einen einzigen Flug. Warum es trotzdem kein @GWRnews-Rekord ist. <http://sz.de/1.1621088>

Russland, ausgerechnet Russland: Weltreisender verliert Guinness-Rekord

„Es ist mein Fehler, ganz allein mein Fehler“, klagt Graham Hughes in seinem Blog. Der Brite hat allen Grund, sich zu grämen: Er reiste in vier Jahren um die Welt und besuchte dabei alle 201 Staaten.

Launige Anekdoten vom #Alkohol: Wie bei #Maischberger über #Alkoholismus im Alter gescherzt werden durfte. <http://www.sz.de/1.1622583>

V-Kritik: Menschen bei Maischberger Launige Anekdoten vom Alkohol

Sänger Werner Böhm preist die Vorzüge von Hochprozentigem als „Entspannungselixier“, Schauspieler Jaecki Schwarz gibt alkoholgeschwängerte Anekdoten aus seinem Berufsleben zum Besten.

Both these structures create certain expectations concerning the content of the stories, promising an answer to the problem presented in the tweet. Consequently, the use of these forms aims at increasing the appeal of the news stories behind the tweet and raising readers’ interest in the stories in question.

– use of editorial ‘we’

Original tweets comprise as well tweets presenting and advertising content published on other channels of the newspaper. Such tweets perform an explicitly promotional function, highlighting the new additions to the newspaper website, the variety of content and the abundance of the offer which the reader may explore. A frequent discursive strategy aiming at persuasion and promotion of content is the use of the authorial voice of the editorial board in the tweets (i.e. ‘we’) presenting the offer of the newspaper:

We have many more fascinating #PompeiiExhibition features today, including Robert Harris on the eruption of Vesuvius <http://soc.li/AwaDsSk>

All the latest reaction to #Armstrong in our live blog: <http://soc.li/KZkArfJ> And here’s @gallagherbren’s analysis: <http://soc.li/eN1XwdT>

Ein Kulturschock für Einzelkinder: Unsere #Erziehungskolumne berichtet aus der Krabbelgruppe. <http://sz.de/1.1619306>

Wie haben @DasErste, @ZDF, @RTLde usw. den TV-Abend gemeistert (#Papst, #ChampionsLeague)? Wir haben ferngesehen. <http://sz.de/1.1623884>

The use of personal references, of the ‘we’ pronoun, makes the interaction with readers more personal, direct and familiar. This way of announcing signals involved, conversational discourse and a rejection of an impersonal and institutional voice. The use of ‘we’ instead of a more impersonal form underlines the original, authorial nature of the content and emphasizes the uniqueness of the materials offered by the newspaper. The presentational and promotional value of the tweets is additionally highlighted by evaluative adjectives describing the materials (*fascinating, latest*) which underline the appeal and novelty of the news. These tweets highlight new content offered by the newspaper and are designed to attract readers and direct them to the website or other platforms of communication.

– attribution

Attribution and identification of the author play a significant role and constitute an important component of tweets, which is in line with traditional journalistic conventions (Cotter 2010). In tweets, attribution may enhance the value of the content behind the tweet, the name of the journalist may attract readers familiar with specific newspaper columns. Consequently, highlighting the name of the journalist writing the news story may represent a means of persuasion and encouragement to follow a tweet:

Tobias Jones on how this election shows why #Italy remains Europe’s most dangerous basket case <http://soc.li/kSeMTYB>

This election shows why Italy remains Europe’s most dangerous basket case

Italy’s latest bizarre election result is part of a long tradition, born of frustration with corruption and appeal to the common man.

Letzte Chance statt letztem Geleit – @nifberlin zieht ein Fazit zum #FDP-Parteitag: <http://www.sz.de/1.1620826>

Fazit zum FDP-Parteitag Letzte Chance statt letztem Geleit

Die Notgemeinschaft Rösler und Brüderle ist das wichtigste Produkt des Parteitags. Ein Kommentar von Nico Fried, Berlin

The introduction of the author’s name, usually in the initial position, projects forward to the article, provides clues on the content and line of reasoning, and lends the message a more personal, individual character.

ORIGINAL INDEPENDENT TWEETS

Original tweets, published independently of the stories on the newspaper websites involve breaking news tweets, as well as interaction- and collaboration-triggering tweets. Each of these types of tweets fulfil the rhetorical purpose by means different discursive strategies.

– breaking news tweets

In the category of original tweets, tweets devoted to breaking news, which inform on events happening in real time, are particularly worth-mentioning. They prove the potential of the platform to inform on news underway (Hermita 2009, 2010, Murthy 2013). Breaking news tweets can be found on the profiles of the British newspapers, and do not occur as a rule on the profiles of the German newspapers. In the case of the German dailies, tweets informing on news underway have been identified only on the profile of *die Welt*.

Breaking news tweets have a multipartite structure – are introduced by the label “breaking news”, “live”, or “latest”. In the case of German tweets, they are introduced by means of verbal or visual cues, which are to signify important events underway and attract attention to such news. Further components of such tweets provide news on the key event in progress:

Latest: #NHS commissioning board says Sir David Nicholson should stay as chief executive despite calls for his resignation. More details...

Breaking: The Queen has been admitted to hospital in London after experiencing symptoms of gastroenteritis – PA. Story coming shortly.

Achtung, der @pontifex Papst Benedikt verschickt seinen letzten Tweet heute um 17.00 Uhr

++ Venezuelas Präsident Hugo Chavez ist tot

In breaking news tweets the focus is placed on the immediacy of the coverage and the news value of timeliness and novelty. This is achieved by the above-mentioned labels identifying the ‘breaking’ character of the news, as well as by a range of references to time and the choice of tense forms. These components emphasize the immediacy, freshness of coverage, and importance of news happening at the time. In breaking news tweets the focus is placed on the news values of negativity and superlativeness as well. The emphasis on these values is expressed by such linguistic means as negative vocabulary as well as comparisons and intensification. The ‘liveness’ of the coverage and the freshness of an event is stressed by the announcement that more details are forthcoming. In this way, the tweets serve as trailers projecting forward to the news to come and create an expectation of a further development of the event in question.

– threads of updates – tweets on the same event

A further worth noting aspect associated with tweets is the presence of various levels of announcing the same content. The same story can be announced on Twitter in different ways, applying different discursive strategies to enhance its appeal. Different levels of announcing may be seen in the following examples:

Details released by the government show that the taxpayer paid £1.17m for Olympic tickets to MPs #olympicsfreebie <http://soc.li/YelzxOg>
 Have a look at the list of free Olympic tickets given to MPs last year. Have we missed anyone? <http://soc.li/YelzxOg> #olympicsfreebie
 In case you missed it: Government accused of 'burying' bad news about MP's Olympic tickets #olympicsfreebie <http://soc.li/YelzxOg>

The tweets visibly differ in terms of function and discursive shape. The first tweet, the earliest to be published, represents a news-oriented post which provides factual information concerning the event in question. Emphasis on the newsworthiness of the event can also be seen, reflected in the underlined news value of negativity, superlativeness and proximity. The appeal of the tweet also relies on its application of the rhetoric of contrast – emphasizing the dichotomy between the government and taxpayers (Montgomery 2007). With these properties the tweet can be seen to exhibit properties of conventional news abstracts. The tweet to follow, representing the second level of announcing, employs conversational strategies, which strengthens an interactive over an informative purpose of the post. The tweet employs a directive speech act and a question addressed at the readers, which performs a strongly persuasive function. The last of the tweets concerning the event in question can be seen to combine an interactive and an informative aim, merging a direct reference to readers with a post informing on the latest event. This tweet, analogically to the first one, underlines the news value of negativity and prominence by resorting to negative vocabulary (*accuse, bury, bad news*), and highlighting prominent actors of the news (*government, MPs*).

In the German tweets, threads of updates have also been identified with analogical tendencies in their structuring. For instance:

Die neue deutsche #Amnesty-Chefin spricht über #Polizeigewalt in München und was sich bei Waffenexporten ändern muss: <http://www.sz.de/1.1611464>
 Harte Kritik an der #Bundesregierung: Selmin #Caliskan – ab März die neue Chefin von @amnesty_de – im Interview. <http://sz.de/1.1611464>

While the first update focuses on the key aspect of the news content – the actor of the news, the type of news content and the thematic scope of the material, introducing the reader to the content – the next tweet highlights a controversial aspect of the story. The change in the value of the tweet is accompanied by a change in the evaluative force of the tweet and its focus on newsworthiness and negativity of the content.

The tweets exemplify different layers of announcing the same content. Each tweet includes and underlines a different component of the news event highlighting different aspects of the story. Consequently, a change in the informative value, in the persuasive and interactive potential of the tweet may be seen. By introducing conversational elements, direct references to the readers, the tweets perform a persuasive role and increase the dialogical and personalized character of the messages.

– collaboration-triggering tweets

Collaboration- and interaction-triggering strategies involve the use of direct questions and physical directives addressed at readers (cf. Hyland 2001). These speech acts used in tweets function as invitations to comment, share opinions, to enter into an online conversation, to cooperate in the dissemination of news and opinions. Examples of such tweets have been identified only in the profiles of the British newspapers:

If you were affected by last night's RBS glitch, please get in touch.

Were you at the calamitous Justin Bieber concert last night? If so, can you get in touch please? cif.editors@guardian.co.uk – thanks!

Have you recently dropped out of uni? We're keen to talk to students about the reasons behind their decision Email- students@guardian.co.uk

The tweets constitute an invitation to participate in the information process, to share news from various regions and to share personal experiences of current events with others. The appeal and attractiveness of collaboration is enhanced by offering the readers an opportunity to have their materials (pictures, comments) published online in the newspaper. The use of such tweets confirms that the platform may be treated as a useful tool to strengthen contact and relationship with readers and to create a community. The platform may help gain valuable information from witnesses of events, obtain an insider perspective on events beyond the reporters' reach (cf. Murthy 2013). The frequency of such posts proves that the newspapers try to keep up with the latest trends in the media associated with the development of citizen journalism, increased activity of average citizens in disseminating information. In a positive way, the attempts may increase readers' political and social activism, awareness of current affairs. However, though directly addressing the readers and encouraging them to express their comments, the tweets may constitute successful means of indirect persuasion, of attracting readers to follow the profile of a particular newspaper.

CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of tweets of different newspapers has proved a large diversification with respect to discourse. The newspapers publish both headlines and/or leads, as well as original tweets. Discourse practices range from an addition of elements to a headline or lead of a story, to more substantial and meaningful rephrasing of the news abstracts or creation of original tweets designed specifically for the new platform. The discourse of tweets may be seen as a novel form of discourse. However, it has certain features in common with other news discourse forms as well.

What the tweets share with the headlines and leads is their function, encompassing information, interaction and promotion. Analogically to both these news components, tweets are reader-oriented, short, and focus on the most important piece of information.

What is particularly important with respect to tweets is the emphasis placed on the level of newsworthiness. The tweets can be seen to employ a range of discursive strategies emphasizing various news values. The strategies involve different lexical and syntactic means, such as intensification, quantification, comparison, the use of loaded words or modality markers, which underline the news values of novelty, negativity, and superlativeness. By promoting the newsworthy aspects of the stories, in line with news values, the tweets fulfill informative and rhetorical goals associated with conventional news texts, i.e. provide information and attract readers to follow the story. In tweets, the conventional strategies found in headlines, such as intensification, evaluation, use of numbers and quotes have proved particularly frequent, chosen over neutral expressions found in corresponding headlines. These choices prove that in the tweets the emphasis put on impression and persuasion, on influencing readers is strengthened and is of primary significance in comparison with other news discourse forms.

The analysis has confirmed the observations that Twitter emphasizes mutual relationship between journalists and readers. Such relationship, though present across a range of other news media as well (cf. Montgomery 2007, Cotter 2010), seems to have acquired a different quality and appears to have gained on force and significance on Twitter (Hermida 2009, 2010). In newspaper tweets, the purpose to win readers' attention and draw them in the story influences the content and discourse properties of the tweets. The frequency of different forms of direct address to readers highlights the journalistic goals of responsiveness and interaction (Cotter 2010: 110). The use of questions, directives, expressive speech acts, and conversation enacting strategies belong to the strategies increasing the degree of conversationalization. In these cases persuasive goals of tweets are foregrounded – the focus is placed on attracting readers, persuading them to follow links, at raising their curiosity and interest. Interaction-based nature of the tweets is expressed through the presence of phatic elements including the use of informal language and invitation to interaction (cf. Cotter 2010: 130). The presence of tweets employing conversational strategies proves the use of Twitter for its basic purpose – communication and conversation. It is in this area of use that Twitter can be distinguished from other news media.

Worth emphasizing is the promotional role of newspaper tweets as well. One of the main goals of tweets involves promotion of content, presentation of the offer of the newspaper website. The tweets function as advertisements, are to excite readers' interest, attract readers to follow links and explore the content of news stories and of the newspaper website.

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