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Year: 2014

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## **The development of discourse presentation in *The Times*, 1833–1988**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2013.879793>

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-93258>

Journal Article

Accepted Version

Originally published at:

Jucker, Andreas H; Berger, Manuel (2014). The development of discourse presentation in *The Times*, 1833–1988. *Media History*, 20(1):67-87.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2013.879793>

## “We are happy to be able to state that ...”

The development of discourse presentation in *The Times*, 1833 – 1988<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Introduction

- (1) The Minister of Commerce said that he agreed with M. Sans that, on every consideration of economy and utility, it would be preferable to improve and facilitate the navigation of Garonne than to form a canal parallel to it.<sup>2</sup>
- (2) Mrs. Gladstone then accepted the lace and briefly thanked the deputation, expressing the hope that the party would spend a pleasant day in the park.<sup>3</sup>
- (3) “The man who looks after QPR’s pitch will have to be as much a technician as a horticulturist”, Mr Taylor said.<sup>4</sup>

Extracts (1) to (3) are taken from *The Times* in 1833, 1895 and 1988. In all three cases the newspaper reports on what somebody said, the Minister of Commerce in 1833, the wife of the then ex-Prime Minister, and a groundsman at the stadium of the Queens Park Rangers in London. Discourse presentation<sup>5</sup> has always been an important part of news reporting.<sup>6</sup> Newspapers report not only facts and events but also the utterances – and sometimes even the thoughts or written statements – of a large range of people. There are various different means which can be used to report speech, thought and writing. In (1), *The Times* uses indirect speech with an introductory verb *said* and a subordinate clause in which the original first person personal pronoun has been changed to third person. In (2), there is a combination of a narrative report of a speech act and indirect speech. We are told that Mrs. Gladstone thanked the deputation but we do not know what words she used for the purpose. But we are told about the hopes that she expressed in indirect speech. In (3), the words of the groundsman are given in direct speech in the typical format of postposing the main clause to the end of the reported speech. *The Times* claims to be reporting the precise words of what he said on that occasion.

Newspaper preferences for particular formats differ and they change in the course of time.<sup>7</sup> In this paper we want to focus on these developments in the formative years of the modern Anglo-American newspapers, from 1833 to 1988, from the first developments of the Penny Press, which made mass production possible, to the peak in the circulation of the British-based tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*.<sup>8</sup> We want to focus on just one newspaper, *The Times*. The concentration on the development of discourse presentation in one newspaper makes it possible to focus primarily on the diachrony and to reduce the interference of other differences, such as social class or place of production.

Jucker compared discourse presentation from early modern newspapers (samples from 1671 to 1791) with a sample from recent online newspapers (sample from 2004).<sup>9</sup> He found that the focus of reporting shifted from “the reporting of events through reliable sources” in the early newspapers to the reporting of “people and their opinions” in

today's newspaper.<sup>10</sup> In this contribution we want to build on this finding. We focus on the different kinds of discourse presentation and see how their use changed over time. We will have both, a quantitative and a qualitative look at the development in order to see, how frequencies changed and how this change manifests itself in particular contexts.

## 2. Early newspapers

Early newspapers like the *London Gazette*, *The English Post* or the *Evening Mail* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used discourse presentation for two basic purposes. On the one hand they used it to quote what were claimed to be reliable sources and on the other they reported significant speech acts of the newsmakers of the day, for instance a declaration made by the king.<sup>11</sup> Thus they regularly referred to the sources of their information with formulations such as, "Letters from Milan say ...", "Three ships arrived at Ragusa from Constantinopel affirm ..." or "They write from Cadiz that ...".<sup>12</sup> They even used formats, such as "and 'tis said" to authenticate news items. These introductory phrases can be seen as rhetorical devices to stress that the news items are based on information received by the newspaper rather than being made up by the newspaper editor. Extracts (4) to (6) are relevant examples.

- (4) Letters from the Levant tell us, that the Captain Baffa had left Candia, and visited several of the Islands in the Archipelago, where he had Levied great sums of Money as arrears of Contributions charged on them during the late war, and taken up some considerable numbers of Children, Male and Female, for the service of the Seraglio, and was since arrived at Smirna, intending in little time to return again to Candia, with some numbers of Labourers to be employed in the fortifications and other buildings of the City, which were designed by the Visier, who intended not only to return thither in person, but to invite thither the Grand Segnior to take a view of his late conquest.<sup>13</sup>
- (5) Our Advices from Warsaw say, that the Czar has promised the King of Poland, not only to maintain the Saxon and other Forces he shall take into his Service in order to prosecute the War against Sweden, but also to send to his assistance a good body of Horse.<sup>14</sup>
- (6) The German Regiment of 700 Horse which was quartered at Toledo is marched from thence towards Catalonia. And 'tis said, a Detachment of the Spanish Forces in that Province will be sent to Milan.<sup>15</sup>

In all these cases the main news item is given in indirect speech. The format suggested that the news came directly from correspondents or eyewitnesses and assured the readers that they were getting first-hand news and thus increased the authenticity and reliability of the reported facts. It is noteworthy that these early newspapers do not, or only very rarely, use counterfactual verbs, such as "claim" to introduce reported speech, that is to say the author does not distance himself from the accuracy of the events related in the reporting clause. He takes a neutral stance towards them and reports them as facts.<sup>16</sup>

The second use of discourse presentation, mentioned above, concerned the reporting of speech events that were newsworthy in themselves, such as a declaration made by the King of France, orders issued by the government or compliments of condolence paid by ambassadors at the Spanish court, as in the examples (7) to (9).

- (7) The King has declared that he will assist Holland and Denmark against any whomsoever that shall make War against them.<sup>17</sup>
- (8) He has Orders to wait upon the King of Spain, and to receive his Commands, whether he shall attend him in his Journey hither, or proceed to the Court of France, to Compliment the Most Christian King on his part.<sup>18</sup>
- (9) The 3d Instant the Queen of Spain began to receive the Compliments of Condolence for the Death of the late King.<sup>19</sup>

In these cases the original speech event itself was sufficiently newsworthy to be reported.

Jucker found that in present day newspapers, discourse presentation has become much more pervasive and functionally more diverse.<sup>20</sup> It is still used as an authenticating device for reporting facts, but more often it relates not facts but opinions about facts, and it is not just the opinions of more or less important newsmakers, but the opinions of the average man or woman in the street. While in earlier newspapers, speech events were elaborately reported, speech was reported much more selectively towards the later years. “While early newspapers told their readers what happened, modern newspapers tell their readers people’s opinions about what happened”.<sup>21</sup>

Against this background it is interesting to investigate the development of discourse presentation in the formative period of the modern newspaper, i.e. the years from 1833 to 1988. At what point can we see evidence of the diversification of the functions of discourse presentation? Which formats are preferred and how did the use of different formats change?

### 3. Corpus Compilation

We gathered our data from only one newspaper, *The Times*. The data was extracted from *The Times Digital Archive* in six samples of roughly 5,000 words. The samples were taken at intervals of 31 years (1833, 1864, 1895, 1926, 1957 and 1988) adding up to a corpus of around 35,000 words in total. For each year, we chose random samples as will be outlined below. However, due to the limited size of our corpus, we introduced a number of criteria for choosing the articles. In order to allow for variation within the samples, each sample consists of material from at least eight different articles. Furthermore, as there is considerable variation in terms of article length, only articles with a word count of 250 words or more are included. This is in line with Jucker, who considers “generally longer articles” from the modern online newspapers and excludes shorter, standardized texts.<sup>22</sup> Finally, to avoid a skewing influence of longer texts, articles with more than 1000 words were cropped to the sentence containing the 1000<sup>th</sup> word.

An important decision was to focus on articles from the “home news” section. Section headings in *The Times* were established at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and became an important influence on how newspaper articles were written and perceived. It made sense to consider one section in detail so as to avoid an unbalanced distribution on different sections. For the 1926, 1957 and 1988 sample, articles under the heading “home news” were chosen. For the earlier sample years, in which section headings were not yet established, articles were selected according to the classification principals of the ZEN corpus. For that corpus, “reports from the British Isles are regarded as home news”.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, formats such as letters or reviews are not considered as part of “home news” but as separate text classes.<sup>24</sup> In order to transfer this classification to our corpus, we

made two modifications: first, in *The Times Digital Archive*, every article is assigned a text category, e.g. “law” or “news”. For this corpus, only articles tagged as “news” were included whereas, for instance, articles on court cases (tagged as “law”) were excluded. This is in line with what Fries says about corpus classification: “the basic guideline is to stay as close as possible to text classes established by the editors and publishers of the newspapers themselves”.<sup>25</sup> Second, deviating from the classification in the ZEN corpus, articles on accidents and crimes were included. They are tagged as “news” in *The Times Digital Archive* and they are longer after the year 1800 than earlier when they were “typically short news items”.<sup>26</sup>

The data that was extracted for each of the six sample years, can, of course, not be considered as a truly random sample in the technical sense. However, in a non-technical sense we believe it is representative of its period. The section of “home news” has been an integral part of newspapers since it was established. Still today it is one of the central sections in daily newspapers, also in *The Times*. Thus, developments within this section provide important implications on newspaper reporting as a whole. Within the category of “home news” we took a random sample. We applied the following procedure: for each sample, we picked the issue of *The Times* from Tuesday of calendar week 23. Within that issue eight articles were chosen in the order in which they occurred after the heading “home news”. If there was no such heading, articles considered as “home news” were included in the order in which they occurred from the beginning of the newspaper. The issues of the following day(s) were considered for additional data if necessary. If the word count of the first eight articles exceeded 5000 words, the sample was complete. Otherwise, subsequent articles were added until the total word count passed 5000. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of articles and the word count per sample as well as the details on the total corpus size.

| Year  | Number of Articles | Number of Words |
|-------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1833  | 9                  | 5414            |
| 1864  | 8                  | 6817            |
| 1895  | 8                  | 6526            |
| 1926  | 9                  | 5149            |
| 1957  | 11                 | 5346            |
| 1988  | 12                 | 5215            |
| Total | 57                 | 34467           |

**Table 1.** Overview of the Corpus of *Times* Articles

#### 4. Data classification

##### 4.1 *The Leech and Short model*

Our basic classification system of discourse presentation in this paper is the Leech and Short model. It was proposed by Leech and Short and further discussed by Semino and Short.<sup>27</sup> Leech and Short developed their system on the basis of a corpus of fictional texts. They distinguished not only between direct and indirect speech but added the

categories free indirect speech, free direct speech and narrative report of speech acts (see example (2) above).

NRSA: narrative report of speech acts  
IS: indirect speech  
FIS: free indirect speech  
DS: direct speech  
FDS: free direct speech

The Leech and Short model also includes a parallel classification for acts of thinking: NRTA (narrative report of thought acts), IT (indirect thought), FIT (free indirect thought), DT (direct thought) and FDT (free direct thought).

In the context of newspaper language the reporting of thoughts may seem somewhat strange. In contrast to fiction authors who create their characters together with the characters' private emotions and thoughts, journalists normally only have access to what the various news actors actually say but not to what they may feel or think behind the explicit words. If a journalist reports a news actor's thoughts, it is typically understood as a reference to what the news actors explicitly stated as his or her thoughts. Extract (10) gives a relevant example.

(10) It is thought that this plan, if feasible, would offer great mutual advantages.<sup>28</sup>

This sentence does not refer to the secret thoughts of an individual but to expectations that were explicitly uttered by some unnamed spokesperson or were perhaps just speculated to be the expectations of a group of people.

This classification of discourse presentation has been further refined and expanded. In particular acts of writing have been added.<sup>29</sup> In more recent work Short introduced further terminological distinctions on the basis of the precise relationship between the posterior discourse, as he calls it, i.e. the presenting discourse, and the anterior discourse, i.e. the discourse being quoted.<sup>30</sup> Thus, he distinguishes between speech and writing presentations that give an account of an anterior proposition and those that give an account of a series of anterior propositions. The former he calls a proposition-domain summary, and the latter a discourse-domain summary.<sup>31</sup> For thought presentations this distinction is not relevant because they refer to "someone's inner world", and which is, therefore, not available for inspection.<sup>32</sup> The analyst cannot compare the posterior discourse with the anterior discourse.

There are several problems with these refinements of the terminological distinctions. The proliferation of categories has led to increased difficulties in delimiting them. Short himself speaks of seemingly "arbitrary decisions" and the "increasingly finicky and unrealistic tagging conventions".<sup>33</sup> Even more seriously, however, it seems to be extremely difficult to categorise the precise relation of the posterior discourse to the anterior discourse. Several researchers have discussed the issue of the faithfulness of the reported speech to the original formulation which it purports to represent.<sup>34</sup> However, in our historical data we have no way of verifying the accuracy of the words reported by the newspapers, and, in fact, we believe that the question of accuracy is mainly relevant for exploring discourse presentation on a theoretical level, namely to assess claims of faithfulness of the writer and expectations of faithfulness of the reader. The various forms

of discourse presentation are used as rhetorical devices that create the impression of faithful word-by-word accounts in the case of direct speech or at least faithful accounts of the propositional content in the case of indirect speech, irrespective of the actual accuracy.

Our purpose in this paper is not to add to the discussion of special cases and the fine-grained differences of individual manifestations of speech, thought and writing presentations, but to characterize a particular type of newspaper language in its historical development and to do so with the help of sufficiently typical manifestations of discourse presentation. Moreover, our very small sample corpus does not contain enough material to analyse less frequent constructions. It can only be used to demonstrate the developments of sufficiently common cases. Most of Semino and Short's or McIntyre and Walker's additional categories turned out to be very rare in our corpus. Therefore, and in line with Jucker, the classification of speech is based on Leech and Short and Short et al.<sup>35</sup> Categories are understood and tagged as outlined by Short et al.<sup>36</sup>

## 4.2 Application of the Leech and Short model

Similar to Semino and Short, we manually isolated and tagged instances of discourse presentation in our corpus.<sup>37</sup> However, we did not use a text annotation system but exported the individual instances into a separate database (FileMaker) file where we tagged and annotated every instance. Overall, we had to tackle three questions in our application of the Leech and Short model to our data. First, there are a number of instances that cannot unequivocally be considered as cases of discourse presentation. Which of these cases do we consider for our study? Second, as Short et al. mention, the "categories available to writers are not always sharply distinguished from one another, but arranged along a pair of related *clines*, or *continua*".<sup>38</sup> How can we achieve a consistent classification of cases that fall between the categories? Third, there are different ways of dividing larger strings of discourse presentation into individual records. What do we consider as one instance of reported speech or thought in such cases? These questions are addressed in the following three subsections.

### 4.2.1 Delimitation of discourse presentation

For most cases, it was straightforward whether to include them for or exclude them from analysis. They fell into the categories of the Leech and Short model or did not have to do with speech or thought at all. Apart from these "neat" instances, two recurring cases needed further consideration. One such case concerned the category of narrative report of a speech act (NRSA). This category is located at the boundary between what counts as speech presentation and what Leech and Short describe as "narrative report of action", i.e. a report of an action rather than of speech.<sup>39</sup> By definition, NRSA reports "that a speech act (or a number of speech acts) has occurred".<sup>40</sup> Many reported events had to do with speech in one way or another and could thus be considered as cases of NRSA. Examples (11) and (12) are two such cases:

- (11) The **discussion** that followed showed how deeply divided the booksellers are.<sup>41</sup>
- (12) Publishers and booksellers met at the Booksellers' Association **conference** here to-day to make another attempt to escape from the dilemma the trade found itself

in when the book wholesale firm Simpkin Marshall, Limited, failed two years ago.<sup>42</sup>

Both examples report that a speech act (a discussion) or a number of speech acts (a conference) has occurred. In this study, we are interested in instances that are exclusively concerned with speech or thought. This includes example (11). By contrast, a conference is a larger construct that, apart from speech acts, implies a number of other actions such as that people assemble in one place or that they take breaks once in a while. Speech is only part of a larger event here. For this reason, example (12) and similar cases were excluded from analysis.

As a further case, we encountered instances of discourse presentation within other instances of discourse presentation. Semino and Shor refer to these cases as “embedded speech, writing and thought presentation”.<sup>43</sup> (13) provides an example:

(13) Mr. PERRY **said** that he **considered** the Reformed Parliament a disgrace (...)<sup>44</sup>

In this example there are two cases of discourse presentation: one instance of indirect speech (“Mr. PERRY said that ...”) and one instance of indirect thought (“he considered the ...”). The instance of indirect thought is located within the instance of indirect speech. Similar to framed narratives, this is a case of discourse presentation framed by discourse presentation. In Semino and Short’s data, more than twelve percent of instances were cases of embedded discourse presentation.<sup>45</sup> Cases of such frames can be interesting for analysis as they show how reporters put an additional level between their reporting and the actual message. However, for the present study we decided not to categorise these cases as individual instances. This decision allows for a clear focus on “what the reporter writes that somebody said/thought/wrote”, which is included, while “what other people said/thought that somebody said/thought/wrote” is backgrounded.

#### 4.2.2 Delimitation of individual categories

Distinctions between categories are not always watertight. While a number of cases have to be considered individually, there are two kinds of recurring cases for which we further specified the classification guidelines of the Leech and Short model. First, there are a number of cases which fall between the categories of narrative reports of speech acts and indirect speech. The following example shows two such instances:

(14) Mr. R. H. Code Holland, ..., **explained** the effects of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act on booksellers and **described** the new net book agreement to prevent price-cutting which has flowed from the Act.<sup>46</sup>

In such cases, a consistent differentiation between indirect speech and narrative report of speech acts is based on the faithfulness claims as introduced by Jucker: an instance of indirect speech provides both, speech act value (a report that a speech act took place) and propositional content (a report of the content of that speech act).<sup>47</sup> Cases of a narrative report of speech acts, by contrast, only provide a speech act value and lack propositional content. Applied to example (14), this means that the first instance (“Mr. R. H. Code Holland, ..., explained ...”) is classified as narrative report of a speech act. It is stated that a specific subject matter was explained (speech act value). However, it is not stated on which arguments the explanation was based (no propositional content). The second instance (“... and described the new book agreement ...”) is classified as indirect speech.

Additional to the information that a speech act (a description) occurred, the speaker's reasoning is provided ("the new book agreement prevents price-cutting"). This is propositional content.

Second, there are different ways in which the dividing line between direct and free direct speech can be drawn. Here we proceeded according to Semino and Short's basic guideline.<sup>48</sup> They mention that, whenever possible, they relied on formal criteria for differentiating categories "because they are the most reliable criteria to apply consistently." In our study we classified free direct speech strictly following Leech and Short:

In essence, these are examples of DS or DT with one or more of the indications of the presence of the narrator removed. Hence the reporting clause, or the inverted commas, or both, might be removed.<sup>49</sup>

Instances of direct speech that lack inverted commas or a reporting clause are consistently classified as free direct speech. Example (16) is such an instance.

- (15) Lord ALTHORP. – It is certainly a subject of regret that we have not been enabled to do so, but we have been surrounded with difficulties; and it is, at all events, too late this session to effect the proposed object.<sup>50</sup>

In this case, the speaker is mentioned as well as the wording of what he said. However, the inverted commas as well as the reporting verb are missing. Thus "indications of the presence of the narrator" are removed and (15) is classified as an instance of free direct speech.

#### **4.2.3 Quantification**

While it is clear for most cases, where an instance of discourse presentation begins and ends, some cases need further consideration. We considered three cases in detail. First, our data contains longer bodies of free indirect speech that consist of more than one sentence. In such a case, we consider each sentence as a new instance of free indirect speech. Similarly, some articles contain longer bodies of free direct speech. If they are not framed by inverted commas, every sentence is counted as an individual instance analogous to how free indirect speech is classified. If free direct speech occurs within inverted commas, all sentences that are enclosed by the inverted commas are classified as one instance of speech presentation. Finally, there are cases in which both indirect and direct speech or free indirect and free direct speech occur in the same sentence, as in (16) and (17) respectively.

- (16) But, apart from his comment that to end restriction would be against public interest because "it would be the end of the stockholding bookseller,"<sup>51</sup>
- (17) New moves to recruit additional staff and to install new equipment will take at least five years to come to fruition by which time the problem will have become "quite terrible", Mr Domogala said.<sup>52</sup>

Such cases are treated in two ways: If the parts of indirect and direct or free indirect and free direct speech are of about equal length as for instance in example (16), the instances are classified as two records. If only a few words of direct or free direct speech are inserted into indirect or free indirect speech as for instance in example (17), the whole

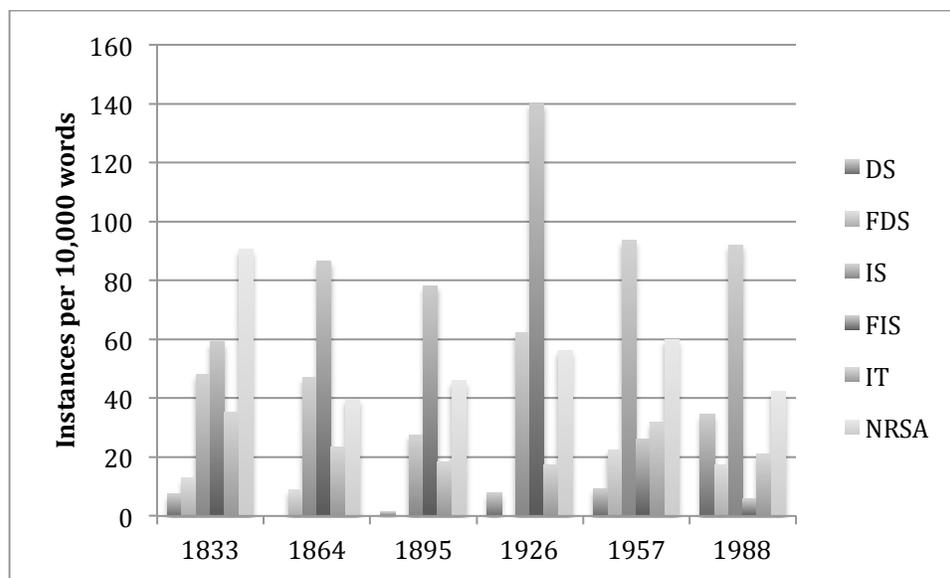
sentence is classified as indirect or free indirect speech respectively. In any case, such instances were marked with the additional tag ‘mix’ so as to allow an isolated analysis.

The delimitation problems outlined in the previous two subsections and the quantification problems outlined above should be taken as an indication that a categorisation and quantification of reported discourse depends on a large number of decisions that have to be taken by the researchers. Quantitative results based on these data, therefore, should be considered with a healthy amount of caution. Even if these decisions are applied as consistently as possible across the different time samples, apparent frequency differences between one period and the next can only be taken as suggestive, in particular if they are based on a limited amount of data as in the present case.

## 5. Quantitative results

As mentioned above, we decided to focus on kinds of discourse presentation that are sufficiently common in our corpus, and, therefore, we included only categories that were attested at least ten times in our data. In section 4 above, we introduced Leech and Short’s<sup>53</sup> five categories of speech presentation (NRSA, IS, FIS, DS, FDS). All these categories were common in our corpus. We also indicated that parallel categories can be distinguished for acts of thinking and writing. However, in our data indirect thought (IT) was the only category outside of speech presentation that was attested across the subsamples in sufficient numbers to justify inclusion in the overall results. Thus, the categories we focus on in our analysis are narrative report of speech acts (NRSA), indirect speech (IS), free indirect speech (FIS), direct speech (DS), free direct speech (FDS) and indirect thought (IT).

Figure 1 and table 2 give an overview of the frequency development of the relevant forms of discourse presentation in the six subsamples from 1833 to 1988.



**Figure 1:** Normalized frequencies of the relevant forms of discourse presentation in six subsamples of *The Times*

|       | 1833   | 1864   | 1895   | 1926   | 1957   | 1988   | Total  |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| DS    | 7.39   | 0.00   | 1.53   | 7.77   | 9.35   | 34.52  | 9.28   |
| FDS   | 12.93  | 8.80   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 22.45  | 17.26  | 9.86   |
| IS    | 48.02  | 46.94  | 27.58  | 62.15  | 93.53  | 92.04  | 59.77  |
| FIS   | 59.11  | 86.55  | 78.15  | 139.83 | 26.19  | 5.75   | 67.02  |
| IT    | 35.09  | 23.47  | 18.39  | 17.48  | 31.80  | 21.09  | 24.37  |
| NRSA  | 90.51  | 39.61  | 45.97  | 56.32  | 59.86  | 42.19  | 54.84  |
| Total | 253.05 | 205.37 | 171.62 | 283.55 | 243.17 | 212.85 | 225.14 |

**Table 2:** Normalized frequencies (instancies per 10,000 words) of the relevant forms of discourse presentation in six subsamples of *The Times*

Our data shows no clearcut and linear development, but some trends are nevertheless visible. The overall frequency of discourse presentation fluctuates across the time samples. The frequency declines in the three nineteenth-century samples from about 250 instances of discourse presentation per 10,000 words to about 170. In the twentieth century it starts on a much higher level again (about 280) and then declines to 215. The individual categories, too, fluctuate to a certain extent, and the developments for the individual centuries appear to be somewhat more linear than the developments across both centuries. The categories of direct speech and free direct speech are always clearly outnumbered by the categories of indirect and free indirect speech. The category of free indirect speech stands out because it has a very high value in the 1926 sample, comprising roughly 50 per cent of all discourse presentations in this sample. In subsequent samples its value is very much lower and almost disappears in the 1988 sample.

It has to be remembered, though, that we decided to count consecutive paragraphs of free indirect speech as individual instances. If longer stretches of free indirect speech are counted as one single instance, the figures change considerably (see table 2a).

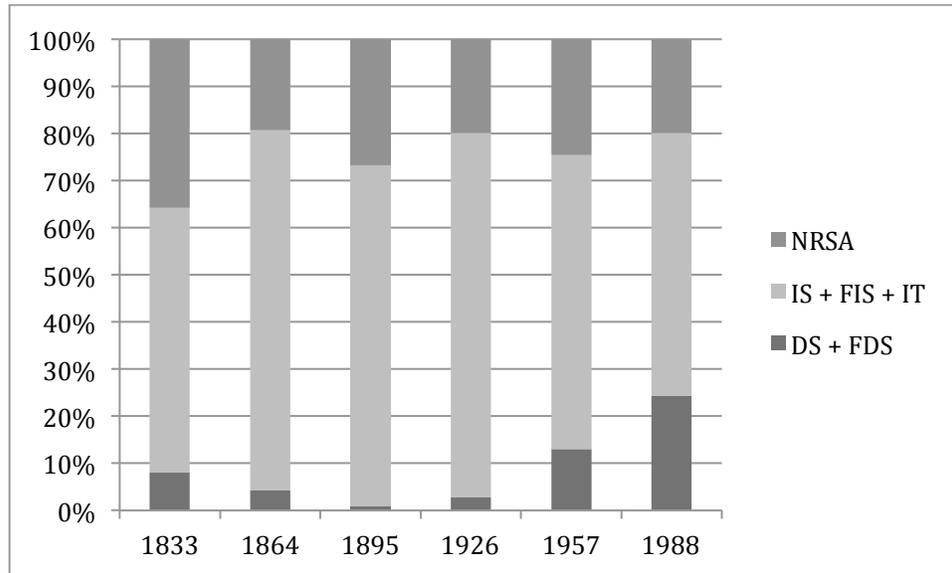
|       | 1833  | 1864   | 1895   | 1926   | 1957   | 1988   | Total  |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| FIS   | 25.86 | 17.60  | 7.66   | 42.73  | 22.45  | 5.75   | 67.02  |
| Total | 219.8 | 136.42 | 101.13 | 186.45 | 239.43 | 212.85 | 182.68 |

**Table 2a:** Modified values for free indirect speech (consecutive instances counted as one), normalized frequencies (instancies per 10,000 words)

There is still a peak in 1926, but a comparison of the figures in table 2 and table 2a reveals that longer stretches of free indirect speech were particularly common in the early periods of our sample. In the 1957 subsample there were only very few such sequences and in 1988 there were none. A closer look at the data shows that the long sequences of free indirect speech in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were mostly connected to reports of meetings with detailed accounts of the statements that were made at these meetings. We discuss this kind of articles in detail in section 6.1.

Direct speech and free direct speech had some significance in the 1833 sample but almost disappear in the course of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, however, there is a steady increase to almost a quarter of all discourse presentations in the 1988 sample. Figure 2 highlights this development by focusing on the larger trends. It

merges the two categories of direct speech (DS and FDS), and the three categories of indirect speech and thought (IS, FIS, IT).



**Figure 2:** Relative frequencies of different forms of discourse presentation in six subsample of *The Times*

The relative frequency of the narrative reports of speech acts diminishes somewhat over the two centuries while the relative frequency of direct and free direct speech show a marked increase starting in the twentieth century.

Finally, as mentioned above, there are also some mixed formats, i.e. instances of (free) indirect speech with a short extract of (free) direct speech inserted. Extract (18) gives a relevant example.

- (18) Dr Smith told the BMA’s annual conference of medical academic representatives that the policy was unacceptable and could lead to a devaluation of any DHSS-sponsored research “when merely the fact that it had been published might tarnish the results with suspicion”.<sup>54</sup>

Such instances are not frequent in our data, but they show a considerable increase towards the end of the period under analysis. There are no instances in the first two subsamples, two in 1895 and one in 1926. It is only in the last two subsamples, 1957 and 1988, that they become more frequent with seven and eight instances, respectively.

## 6. Discussion

Our quantitative results showed three main developments over the years: there is an increase of direct forms of presenting speech in relation to indirect forms. There is a decrease of the use of longer blocks of indirect and free indirect speech. Starting in the 1895 sample, mixes of direct and indirect or free direct and free indirect speech become more frequent. These findings point towards two developments. First, indirect forms of discourse presentation lose prominence throughout the years in favour of direct forms. This is in line with what Jucker found about modern online newspapers in which he

found “a pervasive use of direct speech”.<sup>55</sup> Second, larger blocks of speech presentation seem to be more and more fragmented towards the later years. It seems that the reporting moves away from a comprehensive account of what was said towards a selection and summary of the most important and poignant statements and pieces of content. Such a development also shows in the increased use of mixed speech presentation when indirect and direct speech occur together. Newsworthy soundbites of direct speech are embedded in indirect speech.

In the following two subsections we want to further discuss our findings with some longer excerpts from our corpus. In particular, we want to focus on two broader topics that were reported in articles from different sample years in our corpus: meetings and accidents. A focus on specific topics allows us to narrow down even more the variables that influence different stylistic choices of kinds of discourse presentation (although we are aware of the fact that variables such as the change of author cannot be controlled here).

### *6.1 Articles on meetings*

With “articles on meetings”, we refer to reports on conferences, annual assemblies or other kinds of scheduled events during which people meet for discussion and decision. Concrete examples are a meeting of the Society of Arts for the distribution of prizes<sup>56</sup> or a conference of the Booksellers’ Association discussing the problems of single-copy book orders<sup>57</sup>. In what follows we discuss longer excerpts from articles on meetings. We start with an example in the earliest period of our corpus.

- (19) CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES—Sitting of June 4. M. Dupin took the chair at half-past 1. The proces-verbal was as usual read and adopted in the presence of less than 20 deputies, after which the sitting was suspended until ten minutes to 2, when the discussion of the bill relative to the completion of the public works in progress was resumed.
- M. Jousselin proposed an additional paragraph to article 3, adopted in the last sitting, for the purpose of declaring that no part of the 44,000,000f. granted by that article for works of canalization should ...
- M. Legrand (...) and the Minister of Commerce entered into some explanations to prove that such a resolution would, according to the terms of the contract, be an act of injustice towards the company, and the additional paragraph was rejected by a large majority.<sup>58</sup>

The extract reproduced in (19) is the beginning of an article published in *The Times* of June 6, 1833 on the proceedings of the French Chamber of Deputies (which was from 1814 to 1848, during the Bourbon Restoration, the Lower chamber of the French Parliament). The newsworthy event in this case is the meeting itself and the speech acts that were carried out as part of the proceedings. The proceedings concern legislation and expenditures in connection with shipping canals to be constructed by private companies in the department of the Aine. The extract given in (19), which comprises about a third of the entire article, contains – according to our classification system – seven independent references to reported speech acts, six of which appear in the form of a narrative reports (NRSA). The first speech act concerns the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, which is a complex speech act involving – presumably the speech of the

chairperson and the voting of the deputies. It was presumably also the chair person who suspended the meeting with an appropriate speech act, but again we are not told the precise wording or even the propositional content of this speech act. The third reference is to a discussion in which presumably several of the deputies took part. In the following speech act a named individual, M. Joussein makes a proposition (another NRSA) concerning a paragraph that was adopted in the previous sitting of the Chamber of Deputies. This adoption, of course, also constitutes a speech act in our definition. In the final instance, the article provides some more detailed insights into the discussion at the meeting in indirect speech.

The following extract concerns the report of another meeting. This opening passage is characterised by narrative reports of speech acts.

(20) The Co-operative Congress of Great Britain and Ireland, which began at Huddersfield on Saturday, was attended by a large number of delegates from all parts of the kingdom, who were received by the Mayor (Alderman J. J. Brook) in the town-hall in the morning, his Worship cordially welcoming them to the borough.

(...)

Before the congress proceedings commenced the chairman and Mr. George Thomson, the president of the congress, paid warm tributes to the memory of Mr. J. W. Mitchell, who had died.

The President (Mr. George Thomson) delivered his address. He said that the old problem was still before them – how should they so arrange the work and wealth of the world as to enable man to live at his highest, noblest best? The problem as to material had been solved, but the moral problem remained, (...) <sup>59</sup>

The delegates were received and welcomed by the Mayor, the chairman paid tribute to the deceased and the president delivered his address. The article then proceeds with a detailed report in the form of indirect and then free indirect speech with only minimal journalistic intervention. The focus is clearly on the details of the speech, which in itself is a newsworthy event. This is similar to extract (19) from 1833 and contrasts with more recent newspapers. The journalist sees himself as a faithful reporter of the proceedings with very little selecting and focusing.

In extract (21) from an article published in 1926 we can already see a very different opening: the decision and consequences of the meeting are in the foreground, not how the individual steps of the meeting took place. Here we can see a shift from reporting the event as a whole to reporting the outcome of the meeting.

(21) London retail meat traders, at a meeting held yesterday at Smithfield, decided to ask the Prime Minister to receive a deputation which would discuss with him the Order of the Minister of Agriculture prohibiting the importation of carcasses from the Continent. The traders consider that the imposition of a general embargo on imported meat is unnecessarily drastic for its purpose of protecting British herds from infection with foot-and-mouth disease, and they contend that the cutting off of supplies of Dutch pork and veal will result in an all-round increase in the cost of meat to the consumer. <sup>60</sup>

This passage occurs at the beginning of the article. It is here noteworthy that the final outcome of the meeting (“decided to ask the Prime Minister”) occurs already at the beginning of the article. A faithful account of the chronological course of the meeting, as we saw in articles from earlier years, is not provided. Later on in the same article, even more evidence of a selection process can be perceived.

- (22) Mr. Knight, the president of the Union of London Retail Meat Traders, stated at the close of the meeting yesterday that they had come to the conclusion that in the public interest it was their duty to put certain points before the Prime Minister. The result of the Order would be a big increase in the price of meat, including beef and mutton, if not immediately, at any rate in the near future. Ten per cent. of meat supply normally (...) <sup>61</sup>

Interestingly, Mr. Knight is the only participant of the meeting to be quoted in the article. This is again in contrast to earlier articles, where meetings were recounted in a dialogic manner. <sup>62</sup> Here, not the proceeding of the meeting itself but the eventual outcome is focused on. Discourse presentation is employed to embed this information.

Extract (23) taken from the issue of *The Times* published on June 8, 1926, concerns a dinner held in honour of Lord and Lady Reading with Lord Lee of Fareham presiding the meeting. The extract is again concerned with speech acts carried out at this event. Thus, what was said at this dinner constitutes the actual piece of news which is passed on to the readers of *The Times*.

- (23) Lord Lee, proposing the health of Lord and Lady Reading, announced that the Union was on the point of a successful conclusion of a campaign for the establishment of new head-quarters at Dartmouth House, Charles-street, Berkeley-square. Lord Reading, before he went to India gave powerful aid to the Union. In America he and Lady Reading had been unwearied in their efforts towards bringing about a better understanding and sympathy between the English-speaking peoples. That was among the most conspicuous of their many successes, and one for which the English Speaking Union wished to accord them a special vote of thanks. <sup>63</sup>

The extract reports a speech delivered by Lord Lee in honour of Lord and Lady Reading. In this case the extract starts with the narrative reporting of a speech act (NRSA), i.e. the toast offered by Lord Lee, and it continues with the indirect speech introduced by “announced that ...”. The following sentences must all be understood as also to belong to Lord Lee’s toast. They are, therefore, in indirect speech, or more precisely – because they lack the introductory phrase – they are in free indirect speech. This presentation of speech resembles examples (19) and (20) in how detailed a speech event is recounted. However, the fact that the corresponding article is concerned with an event of the high society, a dinner party, could have an influence here. It seems that while the reporting of individual speech events has been de-emphasised in general news, the practice of fully reporting a speech event is still present in news on high society.

By the middle of the twentieth century, reports on meetings have changed considerably. *The Times* now summarizes what was said at a meeting. Reports on meetings more regularly select what they consider to be important information and they background or ignore less important aspects.

- (24) The shipbuilding employers and trade unions failed once again yesterday to reach a settlement of the union claim for increased wages. After nearly four hours of negotiation, it was announced the meeting had been adjourned until Tuesday next week.<sup>64</sup>
- (25) Mr. Walter Harrap, who the publishers have particularly charged with the search for a solution, described to the booksellers his views. To summarize his argument: both publisher and bookseller at present deal with single copy transactions at a loss. (...) <sup>65</sup>

In (24) the whole negotiation process is summarized in a mere instance of narrative reporting of speech (“nearly four hours of negotiation”), while the outcome of the negotiation is foregrounded through an instance of indirect speech (“it was announced the meeting ...”). In (25), the journalist openly states that s/he is summarizing speech of a newsmaker. Both examples are in stark contrast to accounts from earlier samples, in which long blocks of free indirect speech seemed to give a precise account of what was said.

In our last subsample of 1988 this process of journalistic selection and emphasis has continued. In the article from which extract (26) is taken it only becomes clear that criticism of Government policies was voiced at a conference. The conference itself is not the newsworthy event. It is the outcome which is foregrounded and emphasised.

- (26) Medical academics yesterday accused the Government of political censorship by giving itself powers to suppress medical research findings.<sup>66</sup>

Extract (26) is the first sentence of the article. Here, the reporter forgoes any introductory notice of the relevant speech event which could have been done through narrative reporting of speech. S/He dips right into the newsworthy piece of information by providing the key content in an instance of indirect speech. Only towards the end of the article is it stated that a conference, which was most likely the final trigger for the accusations, took place. Thus, the content presented is relatively detached from the speech event, from which it originated. On the whole, while the reported speech events are more and more backgrounded through the years, the outcome or generally the piece of most noteworthy news is more and more foregrounded. These findings further illustrate our claim that reporting shifted from the presentation of larger blocks to a more selective use of discourse presentation.

## 6.2 Articles on accidents

The following extract is taken from an issue of *The Times* published in 1864. It concerns a railway accident that occurred on the line from Ascot to London. The issue of the previous day had already carried an article on this accident. The present article provides further information on the nature of the injuries sustained by passengers and further investigations into the causes of the accident.

- (27) We are happy to be able to state that up to last evening the wounded of this unfortunate calamity were all doing well, and there are only two cases for the results of which fears are now entertained. (...) The names of the two most severely wounded, and whose lives, as we have said, are still in jeopardy, are Mr. E. Trigg, publican, of 34, Market-street, Brighton, and Lous Ray, the person who

was mentioned as belonging to the household at Marlboroughhouse, and who, it seems, is apprenticed to one of the cooks in that establishment. (...)

The company have already received notice of minor injuries to eight persons who were enabled to proceed to their homes, in some cases merely notifying the injury and demanding small sums for compensation, which were at once granted; in others only stating that such cuts or bruises had been suffered by them (...), but, of course, it is known that a very much larger number have been hurt, though in every case the injuries are believed to be comparatively trifling.<sup>67</sup>

In this extract the newsworthy event is clearly not a speech event itself. Thus, instances of discourse presentation concern statements about the newsworthy event, even a day after the first report of the accident. In this case, the newspaper itself is the source of the reported speech, “We are happy to report that ...”, and again “as we have said”, both of which introduce cases of indirect speech. In the continuation of the report, the railway company is reported to have received “notice” of further injuries. Because of the clear indication of the propositional content of what was communicated, this was analysed as indirect speech, even though it could justifiably have been analysed as indirect writing. The report leaves it open whether “notice” was given in spoken or written form. The final instance of discourse presentation in this extract is introduced by “it is known that...” and was, therefore, analysed as indirect thought.

In a contrasting extract that is not taken from our corpus we would like to give an indication of more recent ways of using discourse presentation. The extract is taken from an article on an accident in which a coach after swerving to avoid a boy ran into a group of children near a school hurting 22 of them.

(28) Distraught school head Joseph Hughes said: Our thoughts are with the students in hospital and their families. We we will be praying through the night for the best outcome.

He said the road had been an accident blackspot for years. Police quizzed the shocked bus driver.

Pupil Peter Murphy, 14, said: One boy ran out and the bus went off the road, hitting a load of kids. Some were trapped under the wheels. People were screaming and running away. There was blood everywhere.<sup>68</sup>

In this case, speech presentation is used to provide soundbites of the headmaster of the school where the accident happened and a schoolboy and eyewitness. In particular the statement by the pupil, Peter Murphy, does not add any essential facts that were not already described earlier on in the fairly short article, but these facts are here repeated in the words of a schoolboy, and the details of children trapped under the wheels and the “blood everywhere” add graphic detail to the more sober description in the article itself. This kind of reporting can be seen in contrast to example (27) above. In (27), the reporter was concerned to distinguish new information (“The company have already received notice that ...”) from what they have already said (“as we have said”) thus securing that what is new is clearly distinguishable. This is different in (28) where the different sources of speech allow the reader to have a number of different perspectives on what happened. This has the effect that, as in more recent accounts of meetings, one noteworthy scene is foregrounded, while the actual proceedings themselves are de-emphasized.

For present-day newspapers, Short, Wynne and Semino report that broadsheet newspapers like *The Independent* and *The Times* use a higher proportion of indirect speech and narrative reports of speech acts in contrast to tabloid newspapers, such as *The Sun* or *The Daily Mirror*, which rely more on direct and free direct speech.<sup>69</sup> We have shown in the previous section, that in *The Times* the use of direct and free indirect speech has increased, especially from 1895 to 1988. This section has provided some examples that suggest a development from the reporting of speech events as coherent wholes towards a focus on one or a few noteworthy and newsworthy statements that characterise an event, put a clear focus and at times present that focus from different perspectives. We have further exemplified this tendency through a passage from *The Sun*. The general developments we found thus imply that *The Times* as a broadsheet is likely to further increase its use of direct and free direct speech and to follow the lead of the tabloids as described by Short, Wynne and Semino.<sup>70</sup>

## 7. Conclusions

What people say, think and write is an integral part of news reporting. It has been part of the earliest newspapers and is still an important feature today.<sup>71</sup> However, as this paper has shown, the way discourse is presented in the news underwent a fundamental shift in the last two centuries. The clearest differences could be observed on a functional level. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century discourse presentation was regularly used to give a faithful account of events in which the spoken word was an integral part, such as conferences and official meetings. The journalist used discourse presentation, very often in the form of indirect or free indirect speech, to give a faithful account of the statements and speeches made at these meetings. In the last two subsamples of our data, a clear shift is discernable in this respect. The journalists more often summarize speeches, pick out individual statements as particularly noteworthy and in general take a more active role in selecting and focusing of individual statements, and for this purpose they used a broader mix of linguistic resources, including mixed formats, such as direct speech inserted in longer stretches of indirect speech. While speech events were presented as coherent wholes in earlier newspapers, the focus has shifted towards a more selective use of individual statements that summarise an event or characterise it from different angles.

Furthermore, this contribution has suggested in which direction discourse presentation particularly in broadsheet newspapers might develop in the future. We found a shift towards a more direct mode of speech presentation that is in line with what Short, Wynne and Semino and Jucker found.<sup>72</sup> The use of direct speech in tabloids is especially pervasive.<sup>73</sup> Thus, it seems, that in terms of discourse presentation broadsheets slowly develop into the direction spearheaded by tabloids. For future studies, it would be interesting to further explore this finding with reference to our functional argument: how does the tendency towards selecting and summarising discourse manifest itself diachronically in tabloids and how might tabloids have led the way for broadsheet newspapers in this respect?

In this contribution we have focused on one single newspaper, i.e. *The Times*, and the development from 1833 to 1988. This focus has allowed us to consistently trace the diachrony with little interference of other variables, such as social class or place of production. Discussing articles dealing with similar content has allowed us to limit

different variables even more. For this paper, we are however aware of the fact that there are other stylistic variables such as variations due to the author that we did not control. In order to overcome such a skewing influence, a larger corpus would be needed. Collecting a corpus of articles dealing with a specific topic, e.g. accidents or meetings, might be another interesting direction for further studies on discourse presentation in news discourse. Exploring one kind of article in depth might expand our insights of how discourse presentation changed over the years.

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## Notes

1. "The Ascot Railway Accident." 1864. *The Times*, 9 June.
2. "Chamber of Deputies – Sitting of June 4." 1833. *The Times*, 6 June.
3. "Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone." 1895. *The Times*, 4 June.
4. "High-tech grass for footballers" 1988. *The Times*, 7 June.

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5. In terms of terminology, we followed Semino and Short (2004), who use “speech presentation”, “thought presentation” and “writing presentation” individually and “discourse presentation” as a cover term to include speech, thought and writing presentation.
  6. see Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  7. Short et al., “Using a Corpus for Stylistics Research”; Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  8. The period from 1833 to 1988 provided the focus for a workshop on Popular News Discourse held in Zurich, Switzerland on 18 January 2012 as part of the research network “Exploring the language of the popular in American and British newspapers 1833-1988”. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the workshop.
  9. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  10. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 124.
  11. See Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  12. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 112-113.
  13. Retrieved from the ZEN corpus, 1671lgz00518; The references of the extracts from the early newspapers follow the file names of the ZEN corpus. The first four digits indicate the year of publication. The following three characters abbreviate the title of the newspaper. The remaining digits refer to the individual file. Sources are abbreviated as follows: cui = Current Intelligence / dpt = The Daily Post / ept = The English Post / evm = Evening Mail / lgz = London Gazette / pul = The Public Ledger.
  14. Retrieved from the ZEN corpus, 1701ept00072.
  15. Retrieved from the ZEN corpus, 1701lgz03668.
  16. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 117.
  17. Retrieved from the ZEN corpus, 1671cui00003.
  18. Retrieved from the ZEN corpus, 1701lgz03668.
  19. Retrieved from the ZEN corpus, 1701lgz03668.
  20. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  21. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 124.
  22. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 111.
  23. Fries and Schneider, “ZEN: Preparing the Zurich English Newspaper Corpus”, 10.
  24. Fries and Schneider, “ZEN: Preparing the Zurich English Newspaper Corpus”.
  25. Fries, “Text Classes in Early English Newspapers”, 180.
  26. Fries and Schneider, “ZEN: Preparing the Zurich English Newspaper Corpus”, 11.
  27. Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*; Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*.
  28. “The Future of Charing-Cross Hospital.” 1895. *The Times*, 4 June.
  29. See, for instance, Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*; Short, “Thought Presentation Twenty-Five Years on”; McIntyre and Walker, “Discourse Presentation in Early Modern English Writing”; see also McIntyre et al., “Investigating the Presentation of Speech, Writing and Thought in Spoken British English”; Włodarczyk, “Pragmatic Aspects of Reported Speech”.
  30. Short, “Discourse Presentation and Speech (and Writing, but not Thought) Summary”.
  31. Short, “Discourse Presentation and Speech (and Writing, but not Thought) Summary”, 23.
  32. Short, “Discourse Presentation and Speech (and Writing, but not Thought) Summary”, 22.
  33. Short, “Thought Presentation Twenty-Five Years on”, 228-9.
  34. See, for instance, Short, Semino and Wynne, “Revisiting the Notion of Faithfulness in Discourse Presentation Using a Corpus Approach”; Hall, “Who Said That? Who Wrote That?”; Short, “Discourse Presentation and Speech (and Writing, but not Thought) Summary”.

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35. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”; Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*; Short, Semino and Culpeper, “Using a Corpus for Stylistics Research”.
  36. Short, Semino and Culpeper, “Using a Corpus for Stylistics Research”, 115.
  37. Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*.
  38. Short, Semino and Culpeper, “Using a Corpus for Stylistics Research”, 115.
  39. Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*, 324.
  40. Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*.
  41. “Central Supply Proposed for Single-Copy Book Orders.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June (emphasis added).
  42. “Central Supply Proposed for Single-Copy Book Orders.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June (emphasis added).
  43. Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*.
  44. “Surrey County Meeting.” 1833. *The Times*, 4 June (emphasis added).
  45. Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*.
  46. “Central Supply Proposed for Single-Copy Book Orders.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June (emphasis added).
  47. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 109.
  48. Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*, 11.
  49. Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*, 118.
  50. “Interview with Lord Althorp, Surcharges, House Tax, and Police Rate.” 1833. *The Times*, 4 June.
  51. “Central Supply Proposed for Single-Copy Book Orders.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June.
  52. “Compromise Likely as Baker Rejects Big A Level Shake-up” 1988, *The Times*, 7 June.
  53. Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*.
  54. “‘Political’ Veto Condemned: Doctors Accuse the Government of Bid to Censor Research.” 1988. *The Times*, 7 June.
  55. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”, 119.
  56. “Distribution of the Prizes Adjudged by the Society of Arts.” 1833. *The Times*, 4 June.
  57. “Central Supply Proposed for Single-Copy Book Orders.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June.
  58. “Chamber of Deputies – Sitting of June 4.” 1833. *The Times*, 6 June.
  59. “The Co-Operative Congress.” 1895. *The Times*, 4 June.
  60. “The Importation of Carcasses. Retail Traders and Embargo. Effect on Meat Prices.” 1926. *The Times*, 8 June.
  61. “The Importation of Carcasses. Retail Traders and Embargo. Effect on Meat Prices.” 1926. *The Times*, 8 June.
  62. See Bös, “People’s Voices”.
  63. “Britain and America. Lord Reading on Harmony.” 1926. *The Times*, 8 June.
  64. “Talks on Shipyard Wages Adjourned. Difficulty again over Conditions.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June.
  65. “Central Supply Proposed for Single-Copy Book Orders.” 1957. *The Times*, 4 June.
  66. “‘Political’ Veto Condemned: Doctors Accuse the Government of Bid to Censor Research.” 1988. *The Times*, 7 June.
  67. “The Ascot Railway Accident.” 1864. *The Times*, 9 June.
  68. “22 Kids Hurt in Coach Accident”, 2007 *The Sun*, 26 July.
  69. Short, Wynne and Semino, “Reading Reports”, 55.
  70. Short, Wynne and Semino, “Reading Reports”.
  71. See Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  72. Short, Wynne and Semino, “Reading Reports”; Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.
  73. See e.g. Jucker, “but ‘tis believed that...”.