



UNIVERSITY
OF BRESCIA

Language and discourse in online journalism

Roxanne Barbara Doerr

April 8th, 2019 Università degli Studi di Firenze

Changes in journalism

Ways in which journalism and journalists have been influenced by social media:

- **New sources** of information
- **Rapid cycle** of news reporting and verification
- **Contribution of users**
- Use of new media instruments by **independent journalists** and **traditional news providers**
- Journalists as **facilitators** of news rather than gatekeepers

Changes in journalism

Traditional journalism had to adapt in order to:

- **avoid marginalization** by users and user media
- target a **different and younger audience**
- access and use **UGC (User Generated Content)**
- retain **control over journalists** who would have created their own blogs and online platforms

Changes in journalism

Four characteristics of digital communication contributed to such change:

- **Union** of image, text, sound and video
- **Unlimited amount** of information and content in a textual space
- Different **patterns of interaction**
- Different **connotations and expressions** used by the media

Changes in journalism

Current journalism is composed of:

- **Core** (traditional) sets of news practices
- Other journalistic practices positioned at the margins

Online journalism is seen as a place where unsatisfactory news and news reporting traditions may be **revised and renewed**

Journalism and users

It is possible to speak of:

- **networked journalism:** the journalist retains his or her essential functions while the users consume and (sometimes) comment
- **citizen journalism:** the user actively produces and collaborates with the journalist

Journalism and users

Newspaper websites have also integrated UGC into their platforms in many ways and to many degrees:

- Polls
- Podcasts
- Q&A (questions and answers) with or without extra comments
- Message boards and forums
- Comments on stories
- Blogs/j-blogs
- Reader blogs
- Photo galleries
- Spaces for story submissions

Journalism and users

Nevertheless:

- The more participatory forms and radical departures from traditional media are the least used by users
- Newspapers tended to shift towards **moderation**

Language in online journalism

Online journalism also:

- creates a link between piecemeal **sound bites** and the entire and potentially limitless full content
- creates clusters of **dynamic, related and hierarchically structured texts**
- changes **format and language** based on the target and users' needs and preferences

Language in online journalism

BBC Online journalism tips:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/article/art20130702112133470>

Main points:

- Importance of “catchy” **headlines**
- “**Inverted pyramid structure**”
- Updated and expanded articles
- Extra content and page layout
- **Hypertextuality** makes articles both a possible starting point and source for further information

Language in online journalism

Online articles must contain:

- Single sentence **summary** that expands on the headline
- Accurate, significant **pictures and videos** with clear **captions**
- **Essential story** in first four paragraphs (about 70 words)
- Clear, balanced, self-standing **paragraphs** with spaces and context
- Clear **topic changes** (noun phrases, rhetorical questions or quotes)
- **Simple language** and **short sentences**
- **Explanations** of information and technical terms

International online journalism

- The online versions of traditional media (ex. *New York Times*, *CBS news*) seek **mass audiences** and therefore claim to be “objective”
- Other Internet sources target **smaller niche** segments of the audience who tend to be more loyal and therefore present a **partisan perspective**

Strategies of **objectivity**:

- Presenting “**both sides** of the story”
- Presenting “**costly**” stories rather than “cheap” stories

International online journalism

Observe the following homepages:

- <http://www.bbc.com/>
- <http://edition.cnn.com/>
- <http://www.aljazeera.com/>

Analyse the **cultural differences and priorities** found in:

- Graphic presentation (holistic)
- Use of media and social networks (holistic)
- Functional text (hol-atomistic)
- Presentation of news (atomistic)
- Language (atomistic)

J-(web)logs

One of the main uses of new media in the field of journalism consists in journalistic weblogs that are:

- interested in knowledge-as-process rather than knowledge-as-product
- quick moving
- multilinked and interactive
- focused on specific fields and matters
- informal, personal and opinionated in language and content

<https://www.onemanandhisblog.com/>

<https://davidhiggerson.wordpress.com/>

J-(web)logs

Advantages for **bloggers**:

- Space for **individual journalistic thinking**
- **Challenge** to corporate journalism
- Democratic, **interactive** space

Advantages for **users**:

- be informed by an expert
- access **further sources** through hyperlinks
- (sometimes) **comment and contribute**





UNIVERSITY
OF BRESCIA

Thank you! 😊

roxanne.doerr@unibs.it

Roxanne Barbara Doerr

April 8th, 2019 Università degli Studi di Firenze