

Diachronic changes in forms and functions of reported discourse in news narratives

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Abstract

This study examines historical developments in the forms and functions of reported discourse in news narratives. In this genre, reported discourse can serve at least two main pragmatic functions: (1) a dramatizing function by reconstructing what news sources were saying or thinking *during* the newsworthy events (narrative-internal discourse) or (2) an additional legitimizing function by revealing that the narrative reconstruction is based on statements made by these sources *after* the events took place (narrative-external discourse). We applied a cognitive linguistic model to a corpus of 300 Dutch news narratives published between 1860 and 2009. Results showed an increase in direct reported discourse at the expense of indirect reported discourse. Furthermore, a steep increase in the percentage of narratives with narrative-external discourse was found, whereas the percentage of narratives with narrative-internal discourse remained stable over time. Moreover, the results revealed a striking shift in the functional use of reported discourse: until halfway of the twentieth century, reported discourse was predominantly used as a strategy to dramatize news narratives by reconstructing news sources' speech and thought, but then it developed an additional legitimizing function by anchoring the information exchange between journalist and news source in a Narrative-External Space.

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1. Introduction

The representation of people's speech and thought in written discourse has attracted the attention of scholars in the fields of linguistics and narratology for many decades (e.g., Banfield, 1973, 1982; Clark and Gerrig, 1990; Semino and Short, 2004; Vandelanotte, 2004a). These scholars share an interest in the interplay between the form and function of such reported discourse. This interplay varies across genres (Vaughn, 1995). The present study focuses on the form and function of reported discourse in news narratives, a journalistic subgenre which combines literary storytelling techniques with journalistic conventions. This genre sets a unique frame in the sense that news narratives, unlike traditional news articles and reports, serve a dual function of both informing and engaging readers (Shim, 2014). To fulfill these two functions, journalists nowadays make strategic use of grammatical and referential devices to describe news events from the perspective of news sources without crossing the boundary of nonfiction (Van Krieken et al., 2015b).

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Table 1
Viewpoint categories.

	Viewpoint category	Example
	Narration	A man was hiding in the bushes.
Reported discourse News source's viewpoint	Direct speech/thought	"I saw a man hiding in the bushes," Mary said.
	Indirect speech/thought	Mary said that she saw a man hiding in the bushes.
	Distancing indirect speech/thought	She saw a man hiding in the bushes, Mary said.
	Free indirect speech/thought	Well yes, she now definitely saw a man hiding in the bushes!
	Implicit viewpoint	Mary saw a man hiding in the bushes.

The present study examines the use of reported discourse as an alternative linguistic resource to both engage and inform readers. Specifically, reported discourse can contribute to the engaging function of news narratives by reconstructing the news events from the viewpoints of people involved in the events and to the informative function by demonstrating the factual status of the narrative reconstruction of reality (Van Krieken et al., *in press*). The aim of this study is to systematically examine historical developments in the various forms and functions of reported discourse in news narratives. This aim is informed by previous research indicating that reported discourse plays an important role in understanding pragmatic developments in journalistic discourse. In a diachronic corpus study of Dutch news articles, Vis et al. (2012) found an increase in linguistic expressions of subjectivity. At the same time, this subjectivity shifted from the journalist's text to direct quotations attributed to news sources, which also increased over time. This means that the language of newspapers became more subjective, but it mainly became so through changes in reported discourse.

It thus appears that historical changes in the use and form of reported discourse can be responsible for changes in the overall pragmatics of journalistic discourse. This raises the question as to whether and how the pragmatic function of discourse reports in itself has developed over time, in particular in the subgenre of news narratives where these reports may serve various functions. The present study therefore sets out to examine diachronic changes in the forms and functions of reported discourse in news narratives. To that end, a corpus of 300 murder narratives is analyzed, all of which were published in Dutch newspapers between 1860 and 2009. The next section discusses the forms and functions of reported discourse in news narratives in more detail.

1.1. Forms and functions of reported discourse in news narratives

Two aspects are central to the pragmatic function of discourse reports in news narratives. The first aspect is the mode of the report, and the second is the spatiotemporal anchoring of the report. Both aspects are discussed below.

1.1.1. Modes of reported discourse

The default representation mode in news articles is simple narration, in which information is presented from the "neutral" viewpoint of the journalist. Information can also be presented from the embedded, subjective viewpoint of a news source by means of a speech or thought report in the direct (Semino and Short, 2004), indirect (Semino and Short, 2004), distancing indirect (Vandelanotte, 2004a,b), or free indirect (Semino and Short, 2004; Banfield, 1982) mode. Finally, information can be presented from the embedded perspective of a news source by means of an implicit viewpoint, in which case reference is made to a person's consciousness (perception, cognition, emotion, opinion) without quoting any speech or thought (Sanders and Redeker, 1996). Table 1 provides examples of the different viewpoint categories.

The different viewpoint categories differ in their dramatizing potential. Direct speech and thought is generally considered to be more lively and dramatizing than reported discourse in the indirect mode (e.g., Sternberg, 1982;

Vandelanotte, 2004a), since direct discourse *demonstrates* what was said or thought, whereas indirect discourse *describes* or *paraphrases* what was said or thought (Clark and Gerrig, 1990). Thus, in direct discourse, the journalist yields the floor to the news source and their voices are completely separated. In indirect discourse, the journalist offers two voices, that of the journalist and that of the news source, but the journalist “does not take responsibility for the latter’s embedded voice” (Capone, 2010:378). Distancing indirect reports offer two voices as well, but the embedded voice of the news source is rendered in an “echoic” way (Vandelanotte, 2004b:573). Finally, reported discourse in the free indirect mode signals a blending of voices such that the voices of journalist and news source are hardly discernible (Sanders, 2010).

All different reporting modes may be used in news narratives. Consider, for example, the following excerpt, which is part of a nineteenth-century Dutch newspaper narrative about the murder of an adulterous woman by her jealous husband. The narrative reaches its climax when the wife returns home late at night from a meeting with her paramour (see the Appendix for the original excerpts in Dutch).

Excerpt 1

(1) Last Sunday Mrs. Parasol told her husband that she wanted to see the Boeuf Gras, and that one of her friends, Mrs. C., had made her window available to her. Mr. P. approved this visit of his wife; but Mrs. P. was still not home by dinner time. Her husband immediately phoned Mrs. C., but she did not know anything about it.

(2) Eleven o’clock in the evening, in came madam.

(3) “Where have you been?” mister P. asked.

(4) “That is none of your business” madam replied with a sneer.

Mr. Parasol immediately pulled out a revolver and fired two shots. Mrs. P. was hit in the right lung by the first bullet, and in the head by the second. Fatally wounded, she collapsed.

(Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 23 February 1896)

Excerpt 1 opens with a speech report of the wife in the indirect mode (1) which paraphrases a request to her husband.² The viewpoint then shifts to the husband, who is waiting for his wife to come home and is trying to locate her. In (2), his viewpoint blends with the journalist’s viewpoint in a case of free indirect thought (“in came madam”); the inner voice of the husband is intertwined with the journalist’s voice of narration. This is followed by a dialog between husband and wife in the direct mode (3–4). The liveliness of the direct speech adds to the tension of the scene and functions as a means to engage the reader (Craig, 2006). Note, for instance, how the use of the present tense within quotation (4) causes the time of the utterance to be “fictively current” (Davidse and Vandelanotte, 2011:248), as if all is happening in front of the reader’s eyes.

The discourse reports in excerpt 1 are all reconstructions of what the news actors were saying and thinking *during* the news events. Such reconstructions provide a compelling account of what happened. At the same time, they are problematic for the news genre precisely because they are reconstructions rather than verifiable facts (Frank, 1999). In this example, it remains unclear on what basis the narrative reconstruction was made. As will be explained below, the strategic anchoring of discourse reports in time and place can function as a means to legitimize such reconstructions.

1.1.2. Spatiotemporal anchoring of discourse reports

Crucially, the pragmatic function of a discourse report is in news narratives also determined by the spatiotemporal anchoring of the report. Discourse reports refer either to what was said during the main news event or to what was said afterwards (Van Krieken et al., in press). Consider the following excerpt, which is part of a contemporary Dutch newspaper narrative published at the time of the trial of a couple who had murdered the woman’s father.

Excerpt 2

When Lieke was in the bedroom with dad, he [*her partner*] appeared with a hood he had torn off a rain coat and stood behind father Jan. He interpreted the look Lieke gave him as permission: (1) “Do it!” And she also yelled: (2) “I’ll stay with you forever!”

He put the hood over Jan’s face and pulled it backward. (3) “Hold it tightly,” Lieke said. Yesterday she confirmed: (4) “Then dad was gone pretty fast.”

(De Telegraaf, 24 July 2008)

² Paraphrases in indirect discourse can become more indirect by replacing NPs with NPs which cannot be easily recognized by readers. For instance, in this fragment, the Boeuf Gras is a short name for a traditional costume ceremony at Carnival time taking place at the Promenade du Boeuf Gras in Paris. This feast may have been represented in other terms by Madame Parasol in her actual utterance. One may wonder whether the indication “Boeuf Gras” is enough for Dutch readers at the time to interpret this paraphrase. Note that replacement of NPs could also transmit (deliberate) misinformation. The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

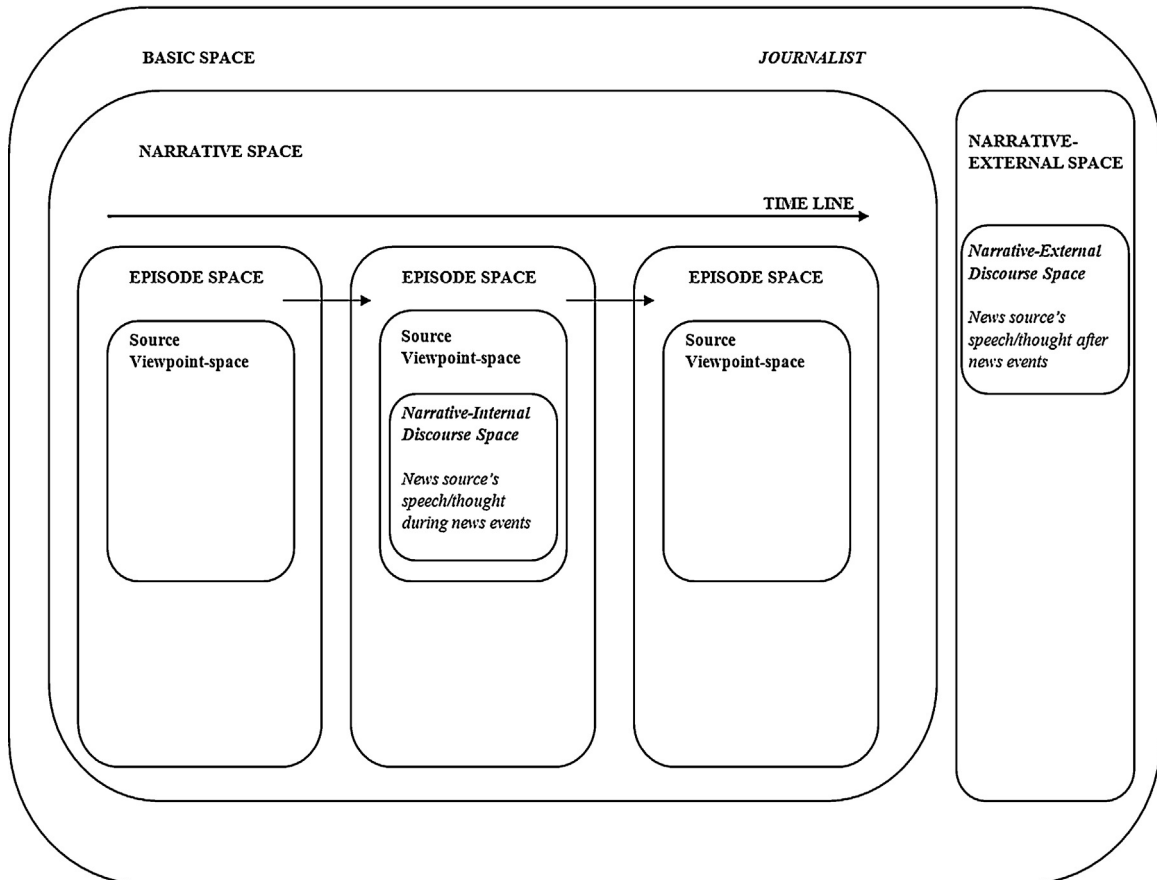


Fig. 1. Cognitive linguistic model of narrative news discourse.

In excerpt 2, the first three quotations demonstrate what the woman said at the time of the news event. Like the discourse reports in excerpt 1, these quotations serve to dramatize the narrative and thus to engage the reader.

By contrast, the last quotation (4) does not demonstrate what the woman said during the events, but how she evaluates the events afterwards, during the trial at which the journalist presumably was present and heard her speak. This quotation is, in other words, anchored in a setting external to the narrative setting. This is indicated, first, by the temporal adverb “yesterday” which should be interpreted with respect to the date of the newspaper’s publication rather than the date of the murder, and, second, by the use of past tense speech. Although this quotation does add to the drama of the narrative – characterizing the speaker by quoting her informal language use – it also serves a different, additional function: it establishes the crucial link between reality and the narrative reconstruction of that reality. As such, this quotation informs the reader about the factuality of the narrative.

The spatiotemporal anchoring of discourse reports can be clarified by conceptualizing discourse reports as *embedded mental spaces* (Sanders and Redeker, 1996). In cognitive linguistics, the notion of mental spaces refers to the conceptual domains that are set up and linked by linguistic elements with the effect “to create a network of spaces through which we move as discourse unfolds” (Sweetser and Fauconnier, 1996:11). In the case of narrative discourse, each mental space has its unique (if fictional) coordinates in terms of time and space (Dancygier, 2012). Fig. 1 represents the network of spaces in news narratives (Van Krieken et al., in press).³

As in any other discourse, a Basic Space can be assumed in news narratives that functions as the starting point of narration. The Basic Space equals the viewpoint of the journalist. From the Basic Space, a Narrative Space is construed that represents all narrative events, usually structured in multiple episodes which capture the consecutive units of time, place, and action. Within these episodes, embedded mental spaces can (but do not necessarily have to) be opened up

³ The basic elements of the model were adapted from Dancygier (2012) by Van Krieken et al. (in press).

that represent the viewpoints of news sources; they are accessed by linguistic elements, such as cognitive verbs or modal expressions (Sanders, 2010).

Discourse reports also provide access to the mental spaces of news sources. These reports are anchored in a space that is located either inside the seminal Narrative Space (i.e., in a Narrative-Internal Space) or in an external space located outside this narrative (i.e., in a Narrative-External Space). Narrative-internal discourse reports dramatize the narrative by revealing what the people involved were saying or thinking while the newsworthy events took place. Note that in Narrative-External Spaces, the settings are represented in which news sources afterwards explain what happened. As such, they function as the *ground*, i.e., a communicative setting in which both speaker (here: news source) and hearer (here: journalist) are present (Langacker, 1987a:126).

In news reconstructions, a Narrative-External Space must always be assumed in order to account for the factual status of these reconstructions (Van Krieken et al., in press). The degree to which this space is profiled⁴ may vary across narratives. The Narrative-External Space may remain implicit, as in excerpt 1, or it may be explicitly profiled by the use of narrative-external discourse reports, as in excerpt 2. In the latter case, a news source's voice sounds from the Narrative-External Space; in such cases, the journalist forces the reader to mentally represent that space. Narrative-external discourse reports thus serve a legitimizing function as they demonstrate to the reader that the narrative reconstruction is based on information provided to the journalist by the news actors.

The Narrative-External Space can be profiled by discourse reports in various reporting modes, but this profiling is strongest in the case of direct discourse reports since the direct mode confirms, by demonstration, the presence of both journalist and source in the communicative setting (Vis et al., 2015; Clark and Gerrig, 1990). Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3

In the night of 19 to 20 May, 1991, J. visited a nightclub in Sevenum. There he became irritated by the behavior of K. from Lottum. J. decided to cool off for a bit in his car at the industrial park and somewhat later went to his sister's house where he took a piece of hand rail from the garden. He intended to teach the (subsequent) victim a proper lesson. [. . .] (1) "I regret it," J. said yesterday, (2) emphasizing that he had merely visited K. to resolve the issue.

(Limburgsch Dagblad, 17 April 1992)

In excerpt 3, the direct discourse report (1) marks a transfer from the Narrative Space to a Narrative-External Space, a court hearing, which becomes explicitly profiled through the demonstrative direct mode. The indirect discourse report (2) is anchored in the Narrative-External Space as well but merely paraphrases the suspect's subsequent statement. Although the direct discourse report profiles the Narrative-External Space more explicitly than the indirect discourse report, both reports add to the legitimization of the narrative reconstruction because both are anchored in this external space.

Narrative-external discourse reports are, in the direct mode, typically signaled by the use of past tense speech (e.g., utterance (4) in excerpt 2). The past tense serves as an indication that the speaker is explaining or reflecting on the news events from a later point in time. Other linguistic signals of such discourse reports include temporal and locative expressions in the reporting clause which refer to the ground instead of the narrative setting (e.g., "Yesterday" in excerpts 2 and 3), in particular when combined with verbs of attribution like "recall", "confirm" or "admit" (Van Krieken et al., in press).

To summarize, the spatiotemporal anchoring of discourse reports in news narratives is a crucial factor in the pragmatic function of these reports. Whereas narrative-internal discourse reports serve to dramatize and enliven the narrative, narrative-external discourse reports serve an additional function of legitimization. Discourse reports of the latter kind are, according to Frank (1999), more often than not omitted because they supposedly interrupt the flow of the news narrative. Empirical research testing this contention appears to be lacking, however. The present study therefore sets out to provide a deeper insight in the actual use and pragmatic functions of discourse reports in news narratives.

We are specifically interested in how the use and functions of reported discourse have developed over time. The news narrative published in 1896 (excerpt 1), for instance, solely shows narrative-internal discourse reports, whereas the more recent news narratives published in 2008 (excerpt 2) and 1992 (excerpt 3) show both narrative-internal and narrative-external discourse reports. This not only implies that narratives can differ from one another in the specific types of discourse reports used, but might also be an indication of diachronic changes in the functional use of reported discourse. Such changes can be assumed on the basis of a previous study which revealed an increase in direct discourse reports in

⁴ In cognitive linguistics, the term "profile" generally refers to how and which aspects of a process, relation or entity are designated and emphasized differently by alternative linguistic expressions (Langacker, 1987a,b). In the present article we use the term exclusively to denote the process that occurs when a discourse report unveils (or further highlights) the otherwise latent Narrative-External Space.

Dutch news articles as well as an increase in linguistic markers of subjectivity (Vis et al., 2012). These developments appeared to be interrelated such that subjectivity became increasingly expressed in news sources' reported discourse rather than in the journalist's text. This finding shows that overall changes in journalistic discourse can be explained by changes in the use of discourse reports and, as such, might point toward historical developments in the pragmatic functions fulfilled by these reports. The present study aims to examine these developments in a large corpus and by differentiating between narrative-internal and narrative-external discourse reports. Specific expectations are formulated in the next section.

1.2. Historical development of reported discourse

Although much research is devoted to describing historical changes in journalistic discourse (e.g., Chalaby, 1996; Wijffes, 2007; Williams, 2007), quantitative research investigating these changes remains scarce. Previous studies have nevertheless provided some clues as to what the historical development of reported discourse might look like. First of all, in the early twentieth century, objectivity became a central norm in American journalism (Schudson, 2001; Stensaas, 1986). The practices and conventions associated with this norm were later taken over by European journalists (Broersma, 2007). Since objectivity is closely intertwined with factuality (e.g., Stenvall, 2008), the increasing importance of objective reporting might be reflected in an increase in the use of narrative-external discourse reports in news narratives as a way to confirm their factual status. Hence our first hypothesis:

H1. The percentage of news narratives with narrative-external discourse reports increases over time

Second, claims have been made about the “narrativization” of journalism over the past decades (Kramer, 2000; Hartsock, 2007; Shim, 2014). Since the New Journalism movement in the 1960s and 1970s, storytelling formats have been firmly anchored in American journalism (Frus, 1994). In The Netherlands, too, an increasing interest in narrative journalism has been noted which has manifested itself in various initiatives to promote the use of storytelling techniques among journalists (Groot Kormelink and Costera Meijer, 2015). The increasing focus on narrative reporting might be reflected in an overall increase in the use of narrative-internal discourse reports as a strategy to dramatize news narratives. Our second hypothesis is therefore formulated as follows:

H2. The percentage of news narratives with narrative-internal discourse reports increases over time

The above hypotheses predict that the use of both narrative-external and narrative-internal discourse reports increases over time. However, a specific stretch of reported discourse is always anchored either in a Narrative-External Space or in a Narrative-Internal Space. News narratives can therefore not only vary in the types of discourse reports used, but also in the ratio between narrative-external and narrative-internal discourse reports. This raises relevant questions about the interplay between the use and functions of reported discourse. Do news sources' discourse reports mainly refer to what they said during the events or, conversely, to what they said afterwards? And are there any diachronic changes in the dominance of narrative-external versus narrative-internal discourse reports? As the present study seeks answers to these questions, the following research question was formulated:

RQ1 How did the use of narrative-external and narrative-internal discourse reports in news narratives develop relative to one another?

To test the hypotheses and answer the research question, our cognitive linguistic model of narrative news discourse will be applied to a corpus of news narratives.

2. Method

2.1. Corpus construction

A corpus of Dutch journalistic crime narratives published between 1860 and 2009 was assembled. Criminal events constitute a stable news theme in journalism since they are by nature newsworthy for their negative impact on society (Katz, 1987). Such events are also among the most likely topics to take on a narrative form in newspaper coverage (Johnston and Graham, 2012), which makes them a well suited topic for the purposes of the present study. In order to achieve homogeneity across the content of the corpus articles, only narratives about murder cases were included.

The on-line databases *Delpher* (www.delpher.nl; for the period 1860–1989) and *LexisNexis* (academic.lexisnexis.nl; for the period 1990–2009) were searched using the terms *moord* (“murder”) and *vermoord* (“murdered”). This search was done for each decade independently. A fixed set of newspapers was included in the search to establish as much continuity

across the decades as possible.⁵ However, none of the newspapers appeared during and/or was digitalized for the entire period. This means that for some of the decades, different newspapers had to be added to the search. Care was taken to ensure that for each pair of consecutive decades, at least two of the newspapers included were the same.

As it was highly unlikely that all newspaper articles that were retrieved this way would be narratives, a purposive sampling technique (Neuendorf, 2002:88) was applied to ensure that only articles relevant to the purposes of this study would be included in the corpus. This means that for each consecutive article that was retrieved, a decision was made whether it was a murder narrative or not. An article was classified as a murder narrative if it (1) described either a case of murder (attempt) or the discovery of a corpse and (2) provided chronological details about the course of events which the journalist could not have witnessed in person, implying some sort of narrative reconstruction of the murder and/or the corpse discovery. By including articles that meet both criteria, we were able to reveal whether and how journalists use discourse reports to dramatize news events and/or to legitimize their narrative reconstructions of reality. For each decade, the first 20 articles meeting the selection criteria were added to the corpus. Any duplicate narratives were excluded.

2.2. Corpus descriptives

The corpus consisted of 300 narratives published in 17 different Dutch newspapers; including local as well as national newspapers, broadsheet as well as tabloid newspapers, and newspapers with a “right-wing or conservative” political orientation as well as newspapers with a “left-wing or progressive” political orientation. Each decade contained narratives from four to seven different newspapers. The majority of the narratives covered murder cases that had occurred in The Netherlands (74.33%), the remaining (25.67%) had occurred in foreign countries. The length of the corpus narratives varied between 94 and 2733 words, with a mean length of 488 words.

2.3. Analysis

The narratives were divided into sentences, after which each sentence ($n = 9699$) was analyzed on a number of variables. The analytical procedure is visualized in Fig. 2.

First, it was determined whether the sentence was part of a headline, subheading, or other editorial information. If this was the case, the sentence was coded as “Editorial” and the analysis was terminated. If this was not the case, the analysis was continued.

Then, the type of viewpoint (embedding) was determined. The categories of viewpoint type were based on the categories described by Semino and Short (2004), Banfield (1982), Sanders and Redeker (1993, 1996), Sanders (2010), and Vandelanotte (2004a, 2004b). The six main categories were (cf. Table 1)⁶: (1) narration (no viewpoint embedded); reported discourse in the (2) direct, (3) indirect, (4) distancing indirect, or (5) free indirect mode; and (6) implicit viewpoint.

A sentence was coded as (1) narration if it represented information from the viewpoint of the journalist and did not embed the viewpoint of a news source (Sanders, 2010; Semino and Short, 2004). A sentence was coded as reported discourse in the (2) direct mode if it embedded the viewpoint of a news source by means of a speech or thought report in its original form (Semino and Short, 2004). If a sentence embedded the viewpoint of a news source by means of a speech or thought report in a subordinated conjunction, it was coded as reported discourse in the (3) indirect mode (Semino and Short, 2004). If a sentence embedded the viewpoint of a news source by means of a speech or thought report in a non-literal way but with the word order of an independent clause, typically with the reporting clause appearing in mid-sentence or sentence-final position, it was coded as reported discourse in the (4) distancing indirect mode (Vandelanotte, 2004a,b). A sentence was coded as reported discourse in the (5) free indirect mode if it embedded the viewpoint of a news source by

⁵ (1) De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad: 1860–1899, 1910–1919, 1930–1959; (2) Leeuwarder Courant: 1860–1889, 1900–1949, 1990–2009; (3) Algemeen Handelsblad: 1860–1919, 1930–1949; (4) Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant: 1860–1869; (5) Het nieuws van den dag: Kleine courant: 1870–1909; (6) De Grondwet: 1870–1879; (7) Nieuwsblad van het Noorden: 1880–1929, 1950–1999; (8) De Telegraaf: 1890–2009; (9) Nieuwsblad van Friesland: 1900–1929, 1940–1949; (10) Limburgsch Dagblad: 1920–1929, 1940–1999; (11) Het vrije volk: Democratisch-socialistisch dagblad: 1940–1959, 1970–1989; (12) Friese Koerier: 1950–1969; (13) Gereformeerd gezinsblad: 1960–1969; (14) De Tijd: Dagblad voor Nederland: 1970–1979; (15) Nederlands Dagblad: 1970–1989; (16) NRC Handelsblad: 1990–2009; (17) De Volkskrant: 1990–2009.

⁶ Following Semino and Short (2004), several subcategories were distinguished to account for the wide variety of reported discourse modes. These subcategories were included in the calculation of the intercoder reliabilities. The main analyses were performed over the higher-order main categories. For instance, “Narration with a Narrative Report of a Speech Act” was distinguished as a subcategory of “Narration” to account for sentences in which reference is made to a speech act without further elaboration of what was said (e.g., *He spoke for hours*). For such sentences, the code “Narration with a Narrative Report of a Speech Act” was used to calculate the intercoder reliability. This was done to avoid the risk of inflated reliability scores. The main analyses included only the higher-order categories (“Narration” in the case of the example).

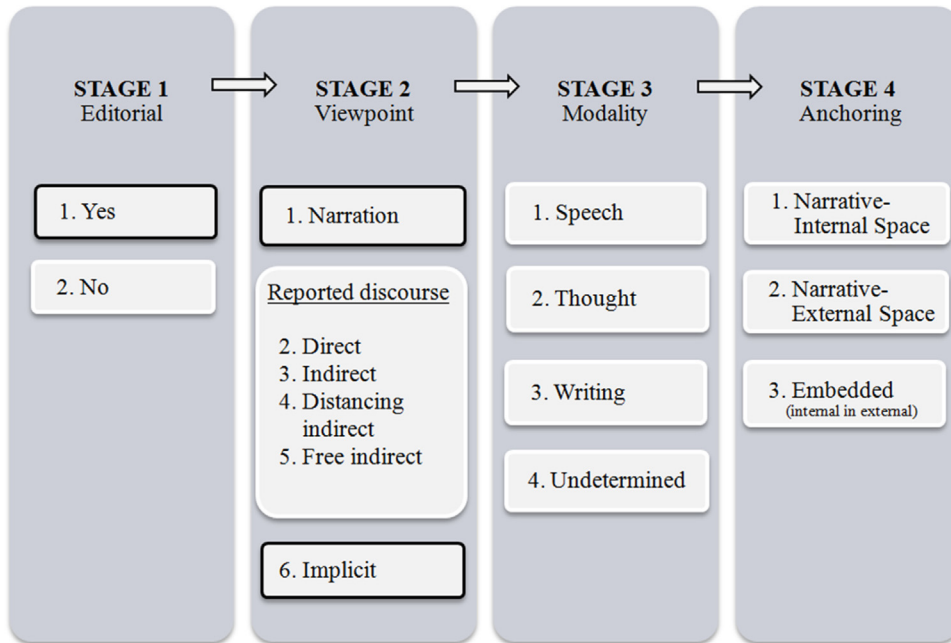


Fig. 2. Analytical procedure (black lines indicate termination of the analysis at that stage).

means of a speech or thought report in which direct discourse was combined with narratorial commentary, typically with person and tense anchored to the viewpoint of the journalist and temporal and spatial adverbs anchored to the viewpoint of the news source (Semino and Short, 2004; Banfield, 1982). A sentence was coded as (6) an implicit viewpoint if it referred to a news source's consciousness without quoting any speech or thought, typically by means of a verb of cognition, perception, or epistemic modality, an opinion indicator, or a (metaphoric) phrase expressing an emotional or cognitive state (Sanders and Redeker, 1993, 1996; Sanders, 2010). Finally, if a sentence represented multiple viewpoints, it was coded as such.

If a sentence was categorized as reporting a news source's speech or thought, the modality of the reported discourse was determined. The four categories were: (1) speech, (2) thought, (3) writing, and (4) undetermined. If a sentence reported discourse in multiple modalities, it was coded as such.

Finally, the anchoring of the discourse report was determined. A sentence was coded as anchored in (1) a Narrative-Internal Space if it reported an utterance which took place during the news events, typically signaled by the use of present tense within the speech or thought report. A sentence was coded as anchored in (2) a Narrative-External Space if it reported an utterance which took place after the news events, typically signaled by the use of past tense speech and temporal or locative expressions in the contextual reporting clause which refer to the ground (e.g., trial, interview, press conference). A third category, (3) narrative-internal discourse embedded in a Narrative-External Space, was distinguished to account for sentences reporting what was said or thought during the events (narrative-internal discourse) which are embedded in a discourse report anchored in a Narrative-External Space, e.g.: "(1) *In the car he said:* (2) *'I have to post a letter.* (3) *Ride with me, then we can chat for a bit,*" (4) *John told yesterday.* Here, sentences (2) and (3) report what was said during the events (internal discourse), but these are embedded in an utterance (1) which took place after the events (external discourse), as clearly indicated by the temporal adverb in (4).

2.4. Procedure and intercoder reliability

Two coders received extensive training in the analysis of viewpoint representation in news narratives. After each training session, the coders discussed their encodings, after which any necessary changes and additions to the code book were made. This procedure was repeated until the categories proved exhaustive and mutually exclusive and no further changes or additions had to be made.

The first coder coded the entire corpus. The second coder coded thirty narratives (10% of the corpus), which were randomly selected using Microsoft Excel's random number generator function. Intercoder reliabilities were calculated over these thirty narratives ($N = 831$ sentences). The reliability scores ranged from good (Cohen's $\kappa = .74$ for the variable

Type of Viewpoint; Cohen's $\kappa = .70$ for the variable Discourse Anchoring) to excellent (Cohen's $\kappa = .95$ for the variable Editorial; Cohen's $\kappa = .90$ for the variable Modality) (qualifications by Fleiss, 1981; as cited in Bakeman and Gottman, 1986:82).

3. Results

Sentences coded as editorial information ($N = 914$, less than 10%) were excluded from the analyses. The analyses were performed over the remaining sentences ($N = 8785$). We first present an overview of general findings with respect to (developments in) the use and forms of reported discourse. We then move on to the historical developments in the pragmatic functions of reported discourse in news narratives.

3.1. General findings

The vast majority of the narratives (80.7%) showed reported discourse. The minority (18.7%) of these narratives exclusively showed narrative-external reported discourse. Over a third of the narratives (38.3%) exclusively showed narrative-internal reported discourse.⁷ The remaining narratives (43.0%) showed both narrative-external and narrative-internal discourse.

Overall, 38.1% of the sentences embedded the viewpoint of one or more persons involved in the news event by means of reported discourse or an implicit viewpoint. Reported discourse (51.6%) was more frequent than implicit viewpoint (46.5%). In a small number of sentences (1.9%), multiple viewpoint embedding strategies were used. Table 2 provides an overview of type and modality of the represented discourse sentences.⁸ This table shows that in most instances, the modality of the reported discourse was speech. Thought reports occurred much less frequently and written discourse reports were rare.

Table 2 furthermore shows that direct and indirect discourse reports were more frequent strategies to embed news sources' viewpoints than free indirect and distancing indirect discourse reports. Over time, the percentage of sentences with reported discourse in the direct mode increased significantly ($r = .61$, $p = .016$), whereas the percentage of sentences with reported discourse in the indirect mode decreased significantly over time ($r = -.62$, $p = .014$). The percentages of sentences with free indirect and distancing indirect discourse remained stable over time ($r = .25$, $p = .368$ and $r = .38$, $p = .167$, respectively).

It thus appears that the amount of reported discourse in the direct mode increased at the expense of reported discourse in the indirect mode. To examine this development in more detail, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed to analyze changes in the ratio between direct discourse and indirect discourse ($\chi^2(1) = 115.44$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .07$ (Cox and Snell)). Fig. 3 displays the percentage of sentences with reported discourse in the direct mode versus sentences with reported discourse in the indirect mode per decade.

Time was a significant predictor of type of reported discourse ($B = .13$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 110.08$, $p < .001$; Exp. $B = 1.13$). This means that the use of reported discourse in the direct mode (versus the indirect mode) increased significantly over time. Specifically, the odds for a given discourse report to be in the direct rather than the indirect mode increased with a factor of 1.13 per decade.

3.2. Diachronic developments in the functions of reported discourse

Fig. 4 shows per decade the percentage of narratives that showed one or more narrative-internal discourse reports and the percentage of narratives that showed one or more narrative-external discourse reports.⁹

In support of Hypothesis 1, a highly significant increase in narratives with narrative-external discourse reports was found ($r = .87$, $p < .001$). Between 1860 and 1869, only 10% of the narratives showed discourse reports that were anchored in the Narrative-External Space. This percentage had increased up to 95% between 1990 and 2009. In contrast with Hypothesis 2, no significant development in the percentage of narratives with narrative-internal discourse reports was found ($r = -.21$, $p = .459$).

⁷ A very small percentage (3.8%) of the sentences showed narrative-internal discourse which was anchored in a Narrative-External Space. Since these sentences in effect report narrative-internal discourse, they were in the analyses taken together with sentences coded as reporting discourse anchored in a Narrative-Internal Space. This did not affect the results.

⁸ A small percentage of the sentences reported discourse in multiple modalities, and in an equally small number of instances the modality was undetermined (both 0.3%). These sentences are not included in the percentages as reported in Table 2.

⁹ The percentages do not add up to 100% since not all narratives showed reported discourse and the categories are not mutually exclusive: a narrative with narrative-internal discourse may also show narrative-external discourse and vice versa.

Table 2
Type and modality of reported discourse (*n* = 1724 sentences).

	Speech	Thought	Writing	Total
Direct mode	96.8%	0.9%	2.4%	100% (61.2%)
Indirect mode	84.1%	14.2%	1.8%	100% (32.4%)
Free indirect mode	79.6%	20.4%	0.0%	100% (3.1%)
Distancing indirect mode	87.7%	10.5%	1.8%	100% (3.3%)
Total	91.8%	6.1%	2.1%	100%

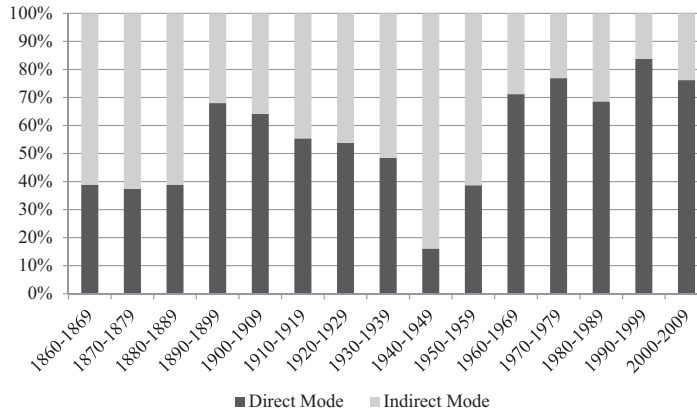


Fig. 3. Percentage of reported discourse sentences in the direct versus the indirect mode (total *N* = 1619).

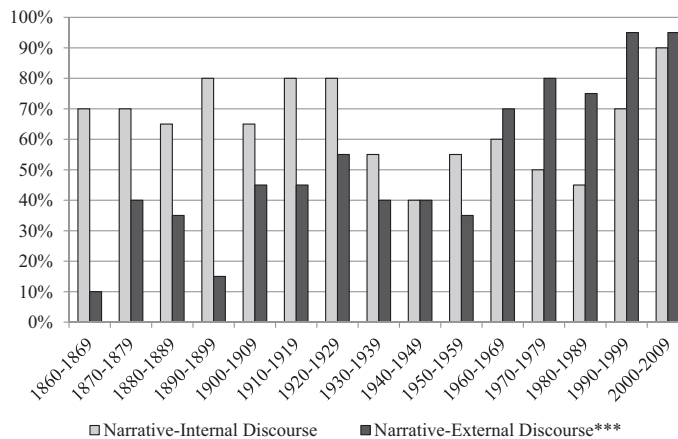


Fig. 4. Percentage of narratives with narrative-internal and narrative-external discourse reports per decade (total *N* = 300; ****p* < .001).

Our research question was concerned with the functions of reported discourse throughout the years. Fig. 4 above shows that narrative-internal as well as narrative-external discourse reports have been used in all periods. However, a given discourse report is always anchored either in a Narrative-Internal Space or in a Narrative-External Space. Examining the ratio between narrative-external and narrative-internal discourse can reveal possible shifts in their relative dominance. Fig. 5 shows per decade the percentage of narrative-internal discourse sentences versus the percentage of narrative-external discourse sentences.

A binary logistic regression analysis was performed to examine whether time predicted in which type of discourse space a certain discourse report was anchored ($\chi^2(1) = 348.13, p < .001; R^2 = .18$ (Cox and Snell)). Time was a significant predictor of discourse anchoring ($B = .22, \text{Wald } \chi^2(1) = 293.56, p < .001; \text{Exp. } B = 1.24$). This means that the

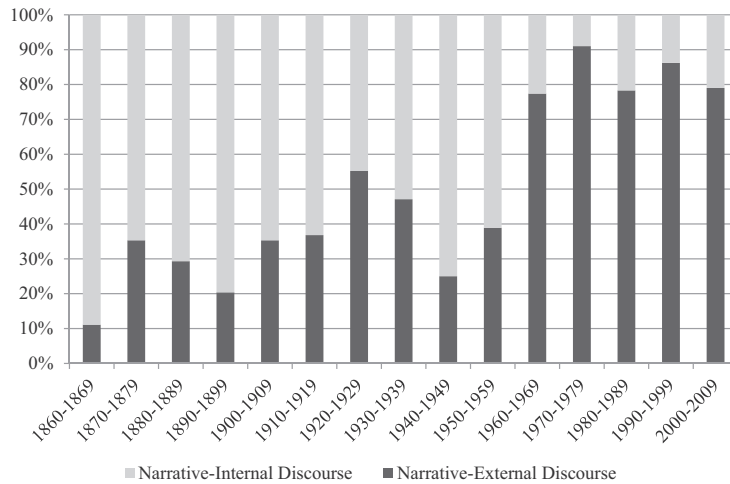


Fig. 5. Percentage of narrative-internal versus narrative-external discourse sentences per decade (total $N = 1729$).

use of narrative-external (versus narrative-internal) discourse increased significantly over time.¹⁰ Specifically, the odds that a given discourse report was anchored in a Narrative-External Space (instead of a Narrative-Internal Space) increased with a factor of 1.24 per decade. As can be seen in Fig. 5, this increase has resulted in a shift in the functional use of reported discourse. Until halfway of the twentieth century, reported discourse was predominantly anchored in Narrative-Internal Spaces. From the 1960s onwards, by contrast, reported discourse was predominantly anchored in Narrative-External Spaces.

4. Conclusion and discussion

The results of the present study can be summarized in two main conclusions. The first conclusion is that the journalistic demand of legitimization has become more important in the genre of news narratives over the past 150 years. This is reflected in a vast increase in narratives with discourse reports that are anchored in a Narrative-External Space, which establishes a crucial connection between the news events as they took place in reality and the narrative reconstruction of those events as they appear in newspapers (Van Krieken et al., *in press*). In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the minority of the news narratives showed narrative-external discourse reports, which means that the Narrative-External Space most often remained implicit. From the 1960s onward, the Narrative-External Space became more profiled in news narratives. Journalists increasingly reported news sources' discourse as a means to demonstrate the truthfulness of their narratives. This finding seems to contradict Frank's (1999) assertion that journalists avoid quotations of this kind out of fear to interrupt the flow of the narrative. It appears that journalists have come to value the ethics of news narratives as much as the esthetics, and that they have developed sophisticated means to intertwine narrative and reconstructive information.

The conclusion that legitimization has become increasingly important is substantiated by the second main conclusion, namely that the dominant function of reported discourse in news narratives has shifted over time. Over the last 150 years, reported discourse has always contributed to both the engaging and the informative function of news narratives. Yet, until halfway of the twentieth century, the dominant function of reported discourse was to dramatize these narratives. In this period, reported discourse most often referred to what news sources were saying and thinking while the newsworthy events took place. This is considered a powerful resource to capture the interest of readers and draw them close to the news events and the people involved (Craig, 2006). In the second half of the twentieth century, however, much of news

¹⁰ Additional analyses revealed that the increase in narrative-external (versus narrative-internal) discourse reports applied to discourse in the direct mode ($\chi^2(1) = 237.88, p < .001; R^2 = .20$ (Cox and Snell)) as well as discourse in the indirect mode ($\chi^2(1) = 52.34, p < .001; R^2 = .09$ (Cox and Snell)). The odds that a given discourse report in the direct mode was anchored in a Narrative-External Space (instead of a Narrative-Internal Space) increased with a factor of 1.29 per decade ($B = .77, \text{Wald } \chi^2(1) = 198.03, p < .001; \text{Exp. } B = 1.29$). The odds that a given discourse report in the indirect mode was anchored in a Narrative-External Space (instead of a Narrative-Internal Space) increased with a factor of 1.15 per decade ($B = .14, \text{Wald } \chi^2(1) = 48.12, p < .001; \text{Exp. } B = 1.15$). Analyses of the ratio between external and internal discourse in the distancing indirect and free indirect mode could not be performed due to low frequencies.

sources' reported discourse transferred from Narrative-Internal Spaces to Narrative-External Spaces, indicating that reported discourse developed a legitimizing function which complemented and ultimately came to dominate over the merely dramatizing function. In this period, reported discourse most often referred to what news sources have said after the newsworthy events took place. As these speech reports are often recollections of what happened or reflections thereon, they can convince readers of the veracity of the narrative and remind them that the narrative informs them about events which have occurred in the real world and in which real people were involved. Notably, in doing so, they still contribute to the news narratives' liveliness by dramatizing recounts of public hearings, court trials, and news interviews, but they do so in a more legitimate, less "fictionalizing" manner, by quoting news sources directly on their grounded experiences.

The present study does not provide support for the claim that journalistic discourse has "narrativized" over the past decades (Kramer, 2000; Hartsock, 2007; Shim, 2014), at least not within the genre of crime news narratives. The results showed no increase in the percentage of narratives with narrative-internal speech and thought reports. In combination with the finding that the relative amount of these dramatizing discourse reports decreased over time, this seems to indicate, in fact, a decreasing degree of narrativity. It is noteworthy, however, that the dramatizing potential of reported discourse has always been exploited by journalists. In all periods, forty percent or more of the narratives showed reconstructions of what the news actors were saying and thinking during the news events, indicating that this reconstructive technique is an important genre characteristic.

It is nevertheless possible that other journalistic genres have in fact increased in narrativity over the years, and speech and thought reconstructions are of course not the only narrative techniques available to journalists. Future studies could provide alternative tests of the narrativization hypothesis by examining historical developments in a wide range of alternative techniques, such as the reconstruction of time and place or the use of anecdotal leads, and in various genres.

The historical developments in the use and functions of reported discourse show how the genre of news narratives has evolved notably through time. In broader terms, they demonstrate that the function of reported discourse not only varies across genres (Waugh, 1995), but may also develop over time within a given genre. This has consequences for future research on historical, genre-specific developments in the use of discourse reports. For instance, Vis et al. (2012) found that the use of direct quotations in Dutch newspaper articles increased significantly in the second half of the twentieth century. The present study not only replicates this finding for the specific genre of newspaper narratives, but also adds to a better understanding of this development.

It is typical for direct quotations to serve a double function of dramatization and demonstration (Clark and Gerrig, 1990). Thus, although the use of direct quotations in itself adds a subjective component to a journalistic article (Vis et al., 2012), it may simultaneously function as a means to increase its overall objectivity (see also Sigal, 1986). Specifically, news narratives have become more subjective in terms of an increase in the relative amount of news sources' direct speech, but these speech reports simultaneously have enlarged their objectivity as they increasingly served an additional function, i. e., to demonstrate the factual status of the news narratives. Such refined qualifications are only possible when the use and forms of discourse reports are examined in relation to the various functions they may fulfill.

In addition, the results showed that the increase in direct discourse came at the expense of a decrease in indirect discourse. This indicates a growing preference for replicating rather than paraphrasing news sources' discourse. Interestingly, from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this development can be viewed as a trend toward a highly neutral reporting style in which the journalist's reluctance to paraphrase is interpreted as an overall avoidance of commitment or taking any stance (see Waugh et al., 2015 for current trends in Critical Discourse Analysis). Noteworthy, however, is a steep decline in this trend seen in the 1940s of our data. The use of direct quotations even reached its nadir in this period while the use of indirect discourse hit its peak. This rupture might find an explanation in a change toward a more sober writing style during the (post) Second World War years or the many reforms of the Dutch journalistic landscape during the German invasion (see Wijffes, 2004). Due to scarce amounts of time and resources, newspaper reporting was forced to become an ultra-economic affair. Journalists were possibly not in the position to interview sources and gather quotations for verbatim replication but had to rely on indirect information instead. This explanation is supported by a sudden decline in narrative-external discourse reports in the period before, during and after the war, which might signal a lack of personal contact between journalists and news sources. An additional explanation could be found in a relative greater commitment of journalists toward their news sources in a time of (post) war unification of spirits in the Dutch society.

The present study furthermore replicates and extends Sanders's (2010) finding that in the genre of news narratives, the embedded viewpoints of news sources can also blend with the viewpoint of the journalist. Such blends are established by the use of implicit viewpoints and speech and thought reports in the free indirect mode (Sanders and Redeker, 1996). Both of these strategies were found in our corpus, although their relative occurrences differed considerably. Implicit viewpoints were used very frequently, while instances of free indirect speech or thought were only rarely found. Since reported discourse in the free indirect mode results in stronger perspectivization than the use of implicit viewpoints (Sanders and Redeker, 1996), this finding might be an indication of journalists' hesitance to dramatize their narratives to a degree where

they no longer feel able to legitimize their reconstructions (see also [Craig, 2006](#)). An additional finding seems to point in that direction: thought reports were only rarely encountered in our corpus, indicating that reconstructing the thoughts of news sources, which are by definition unverifiable, is considered “a bridge too far” by most journalists.

On a methodological level, this study shows that detailed modeling of reported discourse can be operationalized in global and broadly applicable rules for the analysis of a large corpus of texts which differ widely in age, length and complexity. Our cognitive linguistic model explains for the different pragmatic functions of discourse reports by visualizing the various situational spaces – each with their own topology in terms of time and place – that are set up by news narratives and through which readers move while processing news narratives. Application of our model to the corpus texts yielded reliable results which point toward clear, objective, and generalizable conclusions about the linguistic forms and contextual functions of space building in narrative news discourse. These results can be translated into specific expectations about the effects of the various space building types on readers’ processing and evaluation of news narratives. Whereas narrative-external discourse reports can be expected to increase the perceived truthfulness of news narratives, narrative-internal discourse reports can be expected to increase readers’ engagement with these narratives to a degree where they virtually experience the reported news events from up close, as *mediated witnesses* ([Van Krieken et al., 2015a](#)).

The focus of the present study was limited to a specific journalistic subgenre (narratives) and a specific topic (murder). These narratives can be exemplary for the coverage of unplanned and unsettling news events, such as terrorist attacks and nature disasters, where journalists are typically not present in person and thus intrinsically need to reconstruct what has happened. Obviously, the results of this study may not be generalizable to the news coverage of “planned” news events, such as political debates and election campaigns, where journalists can await the events to cover them. In the news coverage of such events, discourse reports typically fulfill alternative functions, for instance as strategies to portray a politician in a positive or a negative frame ([Gidengil and Everitt, 2003](#)). Examining historical developments in reported discourse in political news could further advance our understanding of how the pragmatics of speech and thought reports in journalism has changed over time.

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Appendix. Original Dutch excerpts

All excerpts are taken from narratives included in the corpus.

Excerpt 1

Zondag j.l. vertelde mevrouw Parasol aan haren man, dat zij de Boeuf Gras wilde zien en dat een harer vriendinnen, mevrouw C, haar venster voor haar beschikbaar had gesteld. De heer Parasol keurde dit bezoek zijner vrouw goed; op etenstijd was mevr. P. echter nog niet thuis. Haar echtgenoot telefoneerde onmiddellijk naar mevr. C, doch deze wist van niets.

‘s Avonds om elf uur, daar kwam mevrouw aan.

“Waar ben je geweest?” vroeg de heer P.

“Dat gaat je niet aan” antwoordde mevrouw met een hoonlach.

Onmiddellijk haalde de heer Parasol een revolver voor den dag en schoot twee malen. Mevrouw P. werd in de rechter long getroffen door den eersten kogel, en door den tweeden in het hoofd. Doodelijk gewond stortte zij neder.

Excerpt 2

Toen Lieke bij vader in de slaapkamer was, verscheen hij met een capuchon die hij van een regenpak had afgescheurd en stelde zich achter vader Jan op. De blik die Lieke hem toewierp vatte hij op als toestemming: “Doe’t dan!” En ze riep ook: “Ik blijf voor altijd bij je!”

Hij sloeg de capuchon over Jans gezicht en trok hem achterover. “Hou hem goed vast”, zei Lieke. Gisteren bevestigde ze: “Ons pap was toen vrij snel weg.”

Excerpt 3

In de nacht van 19 op 20 mei 1991 bezocht J. een discotheek in Sevenum. Daar raakte hij geïrriteerd door het gedrag van K. uit Lottum. J. besloot even af te koelen in zijn auto op het industrieterrein en ging even later naar het huis van zijn zus waar hij een stuk trapleuning uit de tuin haalde. Hij was van plan het latere slachtoffer een behoorlijk lesje te leren. [. . .] “Ik heb er spijt van,” zei J. gisteren, benadrukkend dat hij K. alleen maar had opgezocht om de kwestie op te lossen.

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Further reading

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