

# Changing Genre Conventions in Historical English News Discourse

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Over the last three decades, historical sociolinguistics has developed into a mature and challenging field of study that focuses on language users and language use in the past. The social motivation of linguistic variation and change continues at the forefront of the historical sociolinguistic enquiry, but current research does not stop there. It extends from social and regional variation in language use to its various communicative contexts, registers and genres, and includes issues in language attitudes, policies and ideologies. One of the main stimuli for the field comes from new digitized resources and large text corpora, which enable the study of a much wider social coverage than before. Historical sociolinguists use variationist and dialectological research tools and techniques, perform pragmatic and social network analyses, and adopt innovative approaches from other disciplines. The series publishes monographs and thematic volumes, in English, on different languages and topics that contribute to our understanding of the relations between the individual, language and society in the past.

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## **Volume 5**

Changing Genre Conventions in Historical English News Discourse  
Edited by Birte Bös and Lucia Kornexl

# Changing Genre Conventions in Historical English News Discourse

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## Preface

This volume comprises a selection of the papers presented at the Third International Conference on Historical News Discourse (CHINED III) held in Rostock (Germany), 17–19 May 2012. Like its two predecessors, the meeting brought together international scholars in the field of historical news discourse. The first conference in this series, CHINED I, was initiated by Nicholas Brownlees and took place in Florence, 2–3 September 2004. Its proceedings were published in *News discourse in Early Modern Britain* (ed. Nicholas Brownlees, Bern: Lang, 2004). The contributions to the follow-up meeting, held in Ittingen (Switzerland), 31 August – 1 September 2007 and hosted by Andreas Jucker, appeared in a volume entitled *Early Modern English news discourse: Newspapers, pamphlets and scientific news discourse* (ed. Andreas H. Jucker, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2009).

With CHINED IV, held in Helsinki, 5–7 June 2014, and CHINED V to take place in Porto, 11–13 June 2015, we can safely say that this conference series has developed into an established tradition, continuing to provide a forum for expert discussion and exchange among researchers who investigate the multi-faceted nature of historical news discourse. Up-to-date information relating to past, present and future work in the field can be found on the CHINED News website (<http://www.chinednews.com/>).

We would like to thank the contributors of this volume for their co-operation, and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions. We are also very grateful for the continued support by the series editors, Terttu Nevalainen and Marijke van der Wal, and for the assistance we received from Anke de Looper at John Benjamins. Further thanks go to our colleagues Nuria Hernández, Alexander Haselow, and Theresa Wannisch for commenting on previous versions of the manuscript. Last but not least, with their careful attention and devotion to detail Johann Schedlinski and Michael Wentker have been of immense help in preparing the volume for publication.

Essen/Rostock, December 2014  
The Editors



# Introduction

Birte Bös and Lucia Kornexl

University of Duisburg-Essen / University of Rostock

News discourse comes in many different shapes, both diachronically and synchronically. CHINED (the conference series on historical news discourse and the research network resulting from it) has therefore made it its policy to adopt a broad perspective on news discourse, which allows for the integration of a variety of genres and expressional modes associated with the domain of news (cf. [www.chinednews.com](http://www.chinednews.com)). This openness for the diversity and complexity of news in form, structure and content is reflected in the proceedings of the first two CHINED conferences (ed. Brownlees 2004 and Jucker 2009) and has also guided the selection of papers for this volume. The types of texts covered range from prototypical kinds of news discourse such as hard news and crime reports to more specialised news categories such as medical news, death notices, advertisements and fictional texts. Focussing on *Changing Genre Conventions in Historical English News Discourse*, all the contributions share a common interest in the nature and the dynamics of such conventions.

It is well known that the term ‘genre’ has diverse conceptualisations across and even within disciplines.<sup>1</sup> However, the different linguistic approaches do have a common core which we rely on here. As pointed out by Diller (2001:31), they all conceptualise ‘genre’ as a “fuzzy, prototypically structured category membership of which is a matter of more-or-less rather than either-or”. There is also a common assumption that “genres as forms of semiotic practice are socially based” (Solin 2011: 119).

Various attempts have been made to differentiate ‘genre’ from other concepts such as ‘text-type’ (for example in the early work by Biber 1988), or ‘register’ and ‘style’ (Biber & Conrad 2009). Such distinctions, which are based on the differentiation between language-internal, micro- and macrostructural features and external features, might be useful for analytic purposes (cf. Taavitsainen 2001: 141). Yet, in actual language use we can hardly separate internal features

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1. See, for example, Ljung (2000), Diller (2001), Moessner (2001), and Solin (2011) for insightful summaries of different linguistic approaches to genre.

related to linguistic form and external features related to communicative functions and social contexts (cf. Diller 2001: 15). It is thus their interaction that is specifically explored in many of the contributions to this volume.

Given the special focus of this collection, the dynamic nature of genres, their intertextual and pragmatic connections,<sup>2</sup> and their potential for change are major objects of investigation. Looking at genres as “the locus of linguistic change” (Diller 2001: 31), the papers aim to capture traces of hybridity and indications of categorial shift, which have been acknowledged as defining qualities of genres in recent research (Solin 2011: 131). Searching for built-in dynamic components and outward moving factors, the authors investigate triggers, mechanisms and agents of change that have affected genre conventions in historical English news discourse from the 17th century to the present day.

The contributions share a data-driven approach; all of them rely on material from the ever-growing electronic archives of historical news discourse and established corpora such as the *Florence Early English Newspaper Corpus*, the *Lancaster Newsbooks Corpus*, the *Zurich English Newspapers Corpus*, the *Rostock Newspaper Corpus*, the *Corpus of Early English Medical Texts* and the *Corpus of English Death Notices*. The studies benefit from a combination of quantitative and qualitative research perspectives, which allows for fine-grained insights into the material under investigation.

The dynamics of genre conventions are viewed from different angles that are reflected in the structure of this volume. **Part I, “The formation of public news discourse and metadiscursive terminology”**, sets the scene by exploring fluctuating shapes of news presentation as reflected in the use of domain-specific key terms. Both contributions in this part methodologically draw on the approach of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). They relate observations from previous linguistic and socio-historical studies with corpus-based data, thus refining research design and results.

**Nicholas Brownlees’** contribution provides a close-up on the early stages of periodical news writing, when genre conventions were still to evolve and news writers looked for models to be used and adapted. Brownlees investigates editorial metadiscourse from 1620, when the first coranto appeared, to 1695, when the lapse of the Licensing Act reformed the English news landscape. He focusses on nominal forms used in expressions like *in our former booke, a continuation of more news*, and *this intelligence*. This kind of metadiscourse, chosen by newsmakers to relate to their own publications and to the news they presented, is assigned to three major semantic fields: publication types, modes of presenting news, and

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2. Cf. Bakhtin’s notion of ‘genre’ (1953/1986), which stresses the interaction between different types of texts and their authors and audiences.

concepts of ‘news’. Linking the use of editorial metadiscourse to the socio-historical conditions of the time, the paper reveals newsmakers’ ideas, ambitions and strategies regarding news presentation in the formative years.

Covering a wider diachronic scope, Birte Bös’ investigation of British news stories sheds light on changing journalistic practices during the past three centuries. She examines the metadiscursive use of key terms such as *news*, *advice*, and *report* and their specific modifications, which illustrate contemporary conceptualisations of news and news values. The usage of terms like *letter*, *express*, *journal*, and *telegram/telegraph* reflects changes in the news gathering and production procedures and gives evidence of the impact of technological innovations. Agents of news processing are made visible by key terms such as *correspondent* and *editor*. Bös shows that the sets of concepts investigated underwent systematic change at the end of the 19th century, which correlates with the beginnings of modern journalism.

Different fashions of news presentation and diversifications in referencing practices and readership appeal are discussed in Part II, “**Changing modes of reference and shifts in audience orientation**”. As the four papers in this section show, early and late Modern English news writers and advertisers draw on a variety of linguistic strategies to anchor their texts in time and space, to give them a specific personal appeal, and to adjust them to certain target groups.

Claudia Claridge examines diachronic trends in the realisation of temporal and spatial references in British newspapers from the 17th to the 20th century. Her data from five time samples illustrate the impact of genres such as letters, chronicle texts and official proclamations, whose referencing conventions were important role models especially for early newspapers. Looking at deictic and non-deictic time and place indicators, Claridge finds a more volatile development than one might have expected. After a preference for deictic forms in the early stages, a trend towards more precise, non-deictic reference could be observed in the 18th-century samples, which reversed again in the later periods investigated. Claridge’s discussion of these developments links up with earlier research results (such as Biber’s 2001 observations) and clarifies the relation of her findings to shifts in news publication processes and rhythms.

Minna Palander-Collin’s study explores the forms and functions of person-mention, i.e. indications of the advertiser, the audience or other persons, in advertisements from two London newspapers. She observes a clear decrease of person-mention in the period under investigation (1785–1880). Whereas in the late 18th and early 19th centuries advertisers were visibly creating a deferential relation to their potential customers, often following letter-like conventions, person-mention proved to be almost non-existent in the data from the end of the 19th century. Palander-Collin’s contribution illustrates once more that such

linguistic developments can only be understood in relation to broader societal developments, cultural, political and commercial changes and, intertwined with that, changing genre expectations and models.

The third paper in this part discusses transformations of death notices during the 19th and 20th centuries. For her analysis, **Sarah Borde** compiled a corpus of 400 death notices published between 1801 and 2012. She uses a prototype approach to portray the macro- and micro-structure of these announcements. Her diachronic study shows that whereas some structural elements were used quite consistently throughout the period investigated, others changed their status as obligatory or optional components of such texts. The actual linguistic realisation of the structural elements reveals opposing trends: towards increasing precision, e.g. in the case of date references, and towards increasing vagueness, e.g. regarding the circumstances of death. Clearly, the genre conventions of death notices are not only influenced by the institutional frame of the specific newspaper; they are also highly sensitive to changing cultural and social norms.

**Irma Taavitsainen** compares the presentation of medical news in three periodicals from the late 17th and early 18th centuries catering for different readerships: *The Philosophical Transactions for the Royal Society*, *The Edinburgh Medical Journal*, and *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Based on a series of keyword analyses, Taavitsainen points out important differences between professional medical discourse, with determined attempts to establish scientific standards, and lay medical discourse, with pronounced traces of personalisation and privateness. Yet, her study also shows that both professional and lay practices did not stand in opposition, but overlapped and interacted, and were, in fact, closely related in the period under investigation.

In **Part III**, “**Transgressing boundaries and shifting styles**”, phenomena of intertextuality, medial shift and genre transfer are investigated. The papers in this part exemplify and discuss publication-specific realisations and interconnections of news reporting, gradual changes in modern news discourse towards more speech-like structures and strategic exploitations of genre conventions through satirising them.

**Elisabetta Cecconi** explores the construction of murder reports in four co-existing publication types in the 17th century: broadside ballads, occasional pamphlets, newsbooks, and an early newspaper (*The London Gazette*). She discusses layout features, discourse structure and lexis of the proto-lead, and authorial comments, metadiscursive elements and aspects of factuality in the body copy, in order to demonstrate the formal and functional diversity of crime news as well as their similarities in the different publications. Generally, Cecconi observes an increasing degree of factuality and precision towards the end of the 17th century, and with that a substantial change in news values and ideology.

**Alexander Haselow's** comparison of hard news from 1900 and 2013 in a quality and a popular paper focusses on the use of syntactic patterns typically associated with conceptual orality: conjunctions as extra-clausal linking devices, disintegrated clausal units, and syntactic fragments loosely attached to a completed syntagma. Haselow's data indicate an increasing preference for speech-like syntactic patterns in hard news reports, which lends further evidence to the much-discussed trends towards colloquialisation and informalisation. The author points out important cognitive implications of the increasing use of speech-like syntax in public news discourse and emphasises the stimulating effect of new electronic media in this process.

Finally, the paper by **Isabel Ermida** explores the playful subversion of genre conventions in Mark Twain's famous spoof news. Applying her Model of News Satire, Ermida anatomises Twain's skilful parody of structural and stylistic conventions of news presented with a sensational touch. In addition to this inter-textual component, Twain's stories are shown to exhibit the critical and comic components vital for the construction of news satire. It is the interaction of these elements that make Twain's stories successful and, indeed, the archetype of the genre of news satire.

All the papers assembled in the present volume are united by an overall concern to provide state-of-the-art analyses of their subject that contribute to a theoretically and empirically grounded understanding of generic changes in English news discourse during the early and later modern period. Though they focus on different forms and aspects of historical news discourse, their results combine to form a strong plea for an integrated approach that tries to capture the ways in which linguistic, pragmatic and social factors interact in shaping genre styles. By its very nature, news is a societal phenomenon couched in linguistic form. It is the aim of this collection to enhance our understanding of the complex relations of language, society, and changing genre conventions.

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PART I

**The formation of public news discourse  
and metadiscursive terminology**



# “We have in some former bookes told you”

## The significance of metatext in 17th-century English news

Nicholas Brownlees

University of Florence

This contribution examines metatextual comment in 17th-century periodical news publications. Periodical news publication was a new genre and those involved in its production had to determine the language they should use in the writing up of such news. In the article I analyze the terminology 17th-century news writers themselves adopt in relation to their own publications and the news they are presenting. The analysis focuses both on the frequency and content of editorial metadiscourse between 1620 (the start of periodical news) and 1695 (the lapse of the Licensing Act). The diachronic analysis of frame and endophoric metatextual markers provides insight into editorial aspirations, anxieties, commercial concerns and general attitudes to news discourse.

**Keywords:** 17th-century English news, editorial metadiscourse, endophoric markers, frame markers, book, coranto, *London Gazette*, newsbook, pamphlet

### 1. Introduction

The year 1620 marks a defining moment in the history of the English press. It was then that London stationers started selling one-sheet corantos containing the latest news from the continent.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the occasional news pamphlets that had been published up until 1620, corantos did not provide one-off accounts of a particular event but news updates from many different parts of Europe. Although corantos did not come out on a fixed day of the week, their publication was frequent enough

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1. Apart from the name ‘coranto’, which is how they are usually referred to nowadays, these publications were also variously referred to by contemporaries as ‘courant’, ‘curranto’, ‘corante’ or ‘corant’. In the first decades of the 17th century the term ‘stationer’ was often used to include printers, publishers and booksellers.

for news historians to regard them as the first exemplars of the English periodical press (Boys 2011, Brownlees 2011). Whilst for the first two years these news publications were essentially literal translations of previously published German and Dutch corantos, in the summer of 1622 we see the first signs of English news publishers and writers attempting more ambitious strategies in the writing up of periodical news. Periodical news publication was a new genre<sup>2</sup> and those involved in its production were facing up to a long-term fundamental question: what language should they use in the writing up of such news? There is no doubt that this question exercised news publishers and writers of the day as they attempted to work out a news discourse that best suited this new genre. They needed to find a way of presenting news that contemporary readers would find appropriate, and which would encourage them not just to buy that particular number but also successive issues. This was no easy task, and during the course of the century news writers and publishers experimented with various discourse styles and publication formats in their quest for success.

My aim in this article is to examine these ways of news presentation, from the first extant coranto of December 1620 up until 1695, the year that saw the lapse of the Licensing Act, and with its demise the beginning of a new age in English newspapers. The span of 75 years is divided into three periods. The first incorporates 1620–1641, the second 1642–October 1665, and the third November 1665–1695. As will be elaborated in Section 4, each of these periods represents a distinct phase in the history of the 17th-century English periodical press.

Specifically, I shall analyse the terminology 17th-century news writers themselves adopt in relation to their own publications and the news they are presenting. By identifying the terms they use to describe what they are writing, and seeing what insights these words can give us regarding the news texts themselves, I believe we can have a more precise idea regarding not just how periodical news discourse evolved in the 17th century but why. In particular, I shall focus on what is written in editorial metadiscourse.

## 2. Definitions

In the literature the term ‘metadiscourse’ has been given various definitions. Some scholars, such as Mauranten (1993), have defined it narrowly, using the word to refer to just those elements referring to the text itself. This understanding of metadiscourse, which is sometimes called ‘text reflexivity’, can be contrasted

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2. I follow Taavitsainen (2001: 139–140) in my definition of ‘genre’: “Genres are inherently dynamic cultural schemata used to organise knowledge and experience through language”.

with the much wider view of the term adopted by linguists such as Vande Kopple (1985), Crismore *et al.* (1993), Taavitsainen (2000) and Hyland (2005). Hyland (2005:37), for example, defines metadiscourse as “expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community”. This definition accommodates not just the self-reflective role of language use but also its more explicit interpersonal function, thereby incorporating within the definition of metadiscourse such language features as evaluation, stance and engagement. Engagement markers, for example, include forms of reader participation as expressed by reader pronouns (*you, your, inclusive we*). In the context of 17th-century news, aspects of evaluation and pronominal usage – hence metadiscourse, if we follow the above definition – have been examined by Brownlees (2006; 2011; 2012), Claridge (2000), Fries (2012), Prentice & Hardie (2009).<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of the present study I intend to follow the model of analysis proposed by Hyland (2005), itself based on Thompson & Thetela (1995), though rather than looking at interactional features of metadiscourse I shall examine two aspects of self-reflective metadiscourse. These two features are called frame and endophoric markers. Hyland defines frame markers as features that order arguments in the immediate text (e.g. *in this chapter, to summarize, in conclusion*) whilst endophoric markers are elements that refer to other parts of the text. Since news publications were organized serially, I shall use the term ‘endophoric’ not just in reference to different parts of the same issue but also to different numbers of the same news series or publication (e.g. *in last week’s number*).<sup>4</sup> I shall follow these definitions, though in my own analysis I shall limit my examination to nominal forms of such metadiscourse terms. Thus, my focus will be on nominal forms in such expressions as *this pamphlet, in our former booke, a continuation of more newes, this intelligence, the discourse, this translation*.

This terminology will be examined in ‘editorial’ metadiscourse, that is, passages written ostensibly by the news editor or publisher as distinct from embedded reports written by various correspondents and reporters printed within the news publications.

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3. See also Bös (2012) for pronominal usage in newspapers from the 18th–20th century and Bednarek (2006) for features of evaluation in the modern-day press. For analysis of the role of metadiscourse in 16th- and 17th-century religious and scientific texts, see Boggel (2009), Pahta & Taavitsainen (2010: 556) and Taavitsainen (2000).

4. The serialized nature of periodical news publications is illustrated not just by the continuous numbering of separate issues but by the booksellers’ practice of binding an entire year’s publication of individual titles and selling them as single items.

### 3. Data and method

#### 3.1 Electronic corpora and archives

In my study of frame and endophoric markers in 17th-century periodical news I have made use of both electronic news corpora and online news archives. The three electronic corpora are the *Florence Early English Newspapers Corpus* (*FEEN*), the *Lancaster Newsbooks Corpus* (*LNC*), and the *Zurich English Newspaper Corpus* (*ZEN*). The *FEEN* corpus covers the period from the beginning of periodical news in 1620 until 1649. Consisting of 256,000 words, the *FEEN* corpus is divided into six subcorpora designed to represent particular aspects of periodical news publication between 1620–1649.<sup>5</sup>

The *LNC* is very different in size and focus from the *FEEN* corpus. Rather than including selected texts over an extended period of time, it includes a vast array of news and spoof news texts over a short time span. The period in question is December 1653 until the end of May 1654, and the part of the corpus containing the mainstream news publications amounts to 870,000 words (Prentice & Hardie 2009: 31).<sup>6</sup> The third corpus that has been consulted, the *ZEN* corpus, contains a selection of periodical English newspapers from 1671 until the end of the 18th century.<sup>7</sup> For my research, I examined numbers in the corpus from 1671, 1681 and 1691, amounting in all to 180,000 words.

However, apart from these machine-readable corpora, I also examined electronic archives. They were *Early English Books Online* (*EEBO*), the 17th-century section of the *Burney Collection of Newspapers*, which for my purposes was especially useful for the 1620s and 1630s, and the archive of *The London Gazette*, Britain's principal newspaper from November 1665 to the end of the century.<sup>8</sup>

I needed to search the archives because the metadiscourse features I was looking for do not appear uniformly in print news publications. Although the three electronic corpora I had access to were large, they were not capable of providing

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5. See Brownlees (2012) for a description of the *FEEN* corpus. In its extended form, the *FEEN* corpus covers the period 1620–1653, but the version found on the website (<http://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk>), and which is used for the present analysis, includes the years 1620–1649.

6. The website version of the *Lancaster Newsbooks Corpus* (<http://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk>) covers the period from January–May 1654.

7. See Fries (2012) for a description of the *ZEN* corpus.

8. *EEBO* not only contains many news publications between 1620–1641 but also the Thomason Tracts (the British Library collection containing a very wide range of periodical news pamphlets between 1641–1660).

enough data for meaningful conclusions. In my examination of scanned versions of news publications, I particularly concentrated on the first numbers of periodical news series, since it was often in these initial numbers that one finds not just meta-journalistic comment relating to general editorial objectives but more particularly to the way in which editors intended to present the news.

### 3.2 Methodology

In my analysis of metadiscourse in both the electronic corpora and the electronic archives I followed the broad principles of what is often referred to as corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). The essential tenets of this model of analysis have been described, among others, by Stubbs (1996; 2001) and Partington (2004; 2009). Haarman & Lombardo (2009:8) state the characterizing feature of this methodology as “a constant movement back and forth between data in the form of concordances, collocations and clusters on the one hand and, on the other, the contextual information (i.e. the actual texts) retrievable by the software”.

However, the contextual information that is required for an informed understanding of not only *what* metatextual features are found but *why* they are found requires not just an analysis of the textual context but wider contextual matters including the history of news (Sommerville 1996, Raymond 2003, Peacey 2004, Randall 2008, Boys 2011), early modern reading practices (Cressy 1980, Fox 2000, Sharpe 2000, Pettegree 2010), and history and politics in 17th-century England (Coward 1994, Wormald 2008). In this respect I am adopting the definition of ‘context’ in Pahta & Taavitsainen (2010: 551), where ‘context’ is described as a rich concept involving “textual contexts as well as sociohistorical conditions of text production with its societal, situational, historical, ideological and material sides”. Given this sociohistorical approach, I follow Claridge (2010: 587) in situating my research in historical news in the field of historical pragmatics.<sup>9</sup>

Due to my prior knowledge of 17th-century news publications, I already knew some of the words I wished to analyse through concordance lines. Other words I later decided to analyse during the research were the result of data that emerged in the concordance results. My methodological approach was essentially inductive, though in such a research there is also the potential for more deductive reasoning as the first findings suggest hypotheses which can then be tested “against the data, using the Popperian deductive ‘theory-then-research’ method” (Partington 2009: 289–290).

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9. See Taavitsainen & Fitzmaurice (2007) and Taavitsainen & Jucker (2010) for general considerations relating to the ambit of historical pragmatics.

## 4. Analysis

What first strikes our attention is the variation in frequency of frame and endophoric discourse markers in editorial addresses and comment during the 17th century. This is shown in Table 1, where we find in the first column the time span and frequency of publication, in the second column the publication format<sup>10</sup> and contents, and in the third column the presence or otherwise of frame and endophoric markers during those specific years. The table reveals that in the 17th century there is no steady pattern towards either more or less metadiscourse. The frequency varies considerably over the years, going backwards and forwards, influenced by various internal and external factors including format of publication, editorial objectives, commercial considerations, the extent of government control of the press, and the manner in which this control is expressed. In my opinion, this irregular pattern needs to be stressed in that it is indicative of how historical news discourse is prone to vary in accordance with not just specific editorial aims and commercial concerns but also the degree of external political control.

**Table 1.** Editorial frame and endophoric markers in 17th-century periodical news

Time span and frequency of publication	Publication format and contents	Amount of metadiscourse
1620–1621 (frequent but not weekly)	Folio half-sheet, with news on both sides of the single leaf, in two columns, with caption title. Generally called ‘corantos’, they were translated more or less literally from Dutch/German news sheets.	Nothing apart from generic title terms such as <i>courant</i> , <i>corante</i> .
1622–1632 (often weekly)	Generally 16–24 quarto pages (2–3 sheets). Foreign news corantos with much editorial input. Full title page. Text begins on recto of second leaf.	Found particularly between 1622–1624; for example, in October–November 1622. Also short, occasional metatextual referencing between 1625–1632.

10. By ‘format’ I am referring to the size, number of pages and general physical appearance of the publication including features such as title page, number of columns, margin space, typeface, binding and quality of paper.

Table 1. (*continued*)

Time span and frequency of publication	Publication format and contents	Amount of metadiscourse
October 1632–December 1638 (periodical news publications banned by government decree)		
December 1638–April 1640 (frequent but not weekly, and often more than one number on same day of publication)	½-sheet on two leaves (four pages). Based on translations of foreign news corantos. Caption title.	Almost nothing apart from generic title terms such as <i>courant</i> , <i>Newes of this present weeke</i> .
April 1640–1641 (frequent but not weekly)	16 quarto pages (2 sheets). Based on translations of foreign news corantos. Caption title.	Almost nothing apart from generic title terms such as <i>courant</i> , <i>Newes of this present weeke</i> .
1642–1665 (weekly)	8–16 quarto pages (1–2 sheets). Sometimes called ‘newsbooks’ by historians. Caption title is generally used. British and foreign news, often highly politicized and partisan.	Found throughout Civil War years (1642–1649). Also afterwards, especially in first numbers of publications where editors refer to format and other matters relating to metadiscourse.
November 1665–1695 (twice weekly)	Folio half-sheet with news on both sides of the leaf, in two columns, with caption title. Similar to 1620–1621 coranto format. The <i>London Gazette</i> has virtual monopoly of British press until 1688. British and foreign news based on dispatches. In 1695 Licensing Act lapses and more newspapers appear.	Almost nothing apart from generic title terms like <i>gazette</i> and occasional reference to <i>paper</i> .

My analysis of frame and endophoric discourse markers on title pages and in editorial addresses and comment in 17th-century periodical news centres around three main semantic fields. They are respectively terms used for publication types, for modes of presenting news, and for concepts of ‘news’. Table 2 shows the nouns used in relation to these three broad categories.<sup>11</sup>

11. The analysis included both the plural form and spelling variants of the term. For example, the word *coranto* was also found as *corante*, *curranto*, *cvrranto*, *corantos*, *corantoes*.

**Table 2.** Terms used for publication types, modes of news presentation, and concepts of ‘news’

Publication types	Modes of news presentation	Concepts of ‘news’
<i>booke</i>	<i>account</i>	<i>advice</i>
<i>coranto</i>	<i>continuation</i>	<i>avisoes</i>
<i>gazette</i>	<i>discourse</i>	<i>intelligence</i>
<i>mercury</i>	<i>historie</i>	<i>news</i>
<i>pamphlet</i>	<i>journal</i> <sup>12</sup>	<i>occurrence</i>
<i>paper</i>	<i>narration</i>	<i>passages</i>
<i>sheet</i>	<i>relation</i>	<i>tydings</i>
	<i>report</i>	
	<i>translation</i>	

4.1 Beginnings of periodical news (1620–1641)

I now wish to examine the use of some of the terms in Table 2 and see what they can tell us about 17th-century periodical news. The terms that will be considered are those which in my opinion offer the most insight into discourse styles and the presentation of news in the period under review. Let us begin with the terms given by news writers *cum* editors (for they were often the same person) to their own publications. Starting with the first years of the periodical press, we see that while at the beginning there is no metadiscourse within the body of the publication, in 1622, and for two years after that, we find extensive metatextual reference. In 1622 the editor is presenting a periodical news publication that is different in format and frequency from those publications that had ushered in the periodical news in 1620. This new type of publication is frequently referred to in metadiscourse comment, and the one word which is emphasised in relation to the publication is the noun *booke*. Most of the metatextual instances of *booke* are endophoric (Examples (1–3)), though we also find the occasional example of the term as a frame marker (Example (4)).<sup>13</sup>

12. The usage of *journal* in relation to the mode of publication is aptly illustrated by the following example: “to the continuation of which Story we now come, following the method of a **Journall**, and telling things in the same order of time, as wee hear that they were done” (*A Continuation of the Newes*, 16 November 1622).

13. In all examples, relevant keywords are indicated by bold type.

- (1) You heard by the last **Booke** printed May 2 (7 May 1623)<sup>14</sup>
- (2) as you may remember to haue reade in our last **booke**, printed May 2  
(7 May 1623)
- (3) You see in our former **booke**, how far the Count de Colato is now come down  
that way (2 October 1623)
- (4) We will for this time conclude our **booke** with the execution of the foure tray-  
tors (17 May 1623)

In all between 1622–1624 *booke* is found 33 times, a figure which gains additional significance when we see that its metatextual usage in successive 17th-century periodical news publications is almost non-existent.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, we need to ask two questions: why is *booke* adopted at the outset of periodical news as opposed to other possible names such as *coranto*, *pamphlet*, or *gazette*, and following the demise of the term *booke* how exactly did writers refer to what they were writing?

The most obvious reason why *booke* is used is because from several points of view the news publication was indeed in the form of a book. Unlike the earlier 1620–1621 English news publications, which were more or less literal translations of German and Dutch corantos, it was not a single-sheet text. English publishers framed their periodical news in a quarto format, with a title page that rendered it in form similar to bound books.

However, not only was the format of these early English periodical publications different from continental news publications but also dissimilar was the mode of telling the news. The principal English editor of the time, Thomas Gainsford, refers to foreign printed corantos and gazettes in his metatextual comment but almost always in order to distinguish the mode of narration found in these publications from what is provided in his own. For example, in referring to the news he provides on 15 January 1624, the editor of the English publication writes that because his news is

- (5) more solid then ordinary Marchants vse to receiue [it] rather may be named **discourses**, then *Gazets* or *Corantoës*

Therefore, what the English news writer is providing is a *discourse*, a significant word in that it contrasts with the very factual style in the Dutch and German corantos and Italian gazettes. These latter foreign publications were sought by

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14. See “Corpus of analysis” at the end of the present paper for the complete titles of cited news publications between 1620–1642. For a bibliography of 1620–1642 corantos, see Dahl (1952).

15. One of the few occasions in which *booke* is found in metadiscourse after 1624 is on the title page of the coranto of 6 March 1632.

English news publishers as important news sources, but the news in them was not packaged in the form of *discourses* but in a much more essential, fact-based manner. Indeed, in the same number as he refers to the term *discourses* – 15 January 1624 – the English news writer explains that he has not included a news item from a coranto because:

- (6) the *Coranto*, was but a poore abstract of the businesse

Therefore, on the one hand, there is the term *discourse*, and on the other hand, the word *abstract*. In my opinion, these terms are important since they represent contrasting points on a news recount cline, ranging from the bare hard news, the *abstract*, to the more in-depth narration of news where the editor seeks to explain not just what has happened but why. Between 1622–1624 the English news writer publishes his news in a *booke*, where very often the news story is in the mode of a *continuation* and a *discourse*.

- (7) Wee write a **continuation**, that you may see by the proceedings, that there is good dependancy between the relations, wherein we purpose to keepe nere to the Lawes of Historie (13 June 1622)
- (8) and by way of **discourse** afford you reasons why *Bethlem Gabor* consented to a parley concerning a cessation of armes (15 January 1624)

Through *discourse* the reader is able to understand the “reasons” (Example (8)) for an event, whereas a *continuation*, by providing the context for a correct understanding of events, is likened to the “Lawes of Historie” (Example (7)), a very pertinent simile since for contemporaries history was much more highly considered than simple news telling.

In relation to genre, we can justifiably believe that one further reason why the news editor in these years so insistently refers to his publication as a *booke* is because through association with this respected cultural genre, the news writer aimed to give greater credibility and importance to the news that he wrote. All Early Modern news writers were very aware of how the news market of the time worked within a fundamental paradox: whilst there was a great demand for news, there was an equally strong scepticism regarding the reliability of that very same news.

The insistent editorial emphasis on the news publication being a *booke*, therefore, underlines the importance of the credibility paradigm in early periodical news. In these early decades of the 17th century what most concerned news editors was the need to render their print news credible, and, in relation to this the word used to name the news publication was hence very significant. Thus, whilst *booke* was used in these first years, other names were avoided. For example, the word *pamphlet*, which in 15th-century English had the meaning of ‘small book’,

had acquired a negative connotation by the end of the 16th century. By then a pamphlet's contents were often associated with scurrility, scandal, ephemera and deceit (Raymond 2003:8–10). It is not surprising that between 1620–1642 the term *pamphlet* was generally avoided by news editors in reference to their own publications.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, although the term *coranto* was frequently used by contemporaries in reference to the periodical publications between 1620–1641, it was infrequently found in editorial metadiscourse, and when it was used it did not often have a positive connotation, as seen in Examples (5) and (6) above.<sup>17</sup>

Partly because of its initial association in the early 1620s with the often ridiculed world of occasional news pamphlets and broadside ballads, and partly because of the ever frequent accusations of inaccuracy if not blatant mendacity that accompanied corantos throughout their twenty-year existence (Brownlees 2011:73–77), news editors usually preferred to avoid the word *coranto* when speaking about what they were writing.

Editorial recognition of the public's low opinion of corantos is clearly shown in the preface to *The Swedish Intelligencer* (1634), a news series that was published at very irregular intervals in the 1630s. In introducing the volume of news, which like other volumes in the series ran to over 200 pages, the editor justifies his use of corantos as credible news sources in the following terms:

- (9) Very good use have we also made of the *Weekly Currantoes*: which if a man of judgement reads, he shall for the most part finde (especially those of latter times) very true, and very punctuall. Whosoever will be cunning in the Places and Persons of *Germany*, and would understand these warres, let him not despise *Currantoes*.

However, although the need to emphasise the reliability of their news remained a constant editorial preoccupation, this does not mean that editors did not change strategies in their aim to achieve this. In fact, from 1625 until 1632 – the year in which corantos were banned for six years – we find a significant drop in both the presence of metadiscourse generally and more specifically reference to the generic

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16. I found just two occurrences of its use. They are 19 March 1624 and 20 April 1624: “Cvstome is so predominant in euery thing, that both the Reader and the Printer of these *Pamphlets*, agree in their expectation of weekly Newes”; “you shall by Gods grace in this pamphlet receiue a true model of the state of Europe, as it standeth at this houre”.

17. One contemporary who made use of the term *coranto* was the Rev. Joseph Mead, who provided regular newsletters to his friend Sir Martin Stuteville. For references to these letters and Mead's use of material found in corantos, see Dahl (1952).