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The Cases of the Reception of Political Speeches and Discourses in the Online Journals *New York Times Online* and *Spiegel Online*

Abstract

Challenging the assumption that communication patterns are not created each time new and *ad hoc*, but are defined by a certain framework, we will show that communication patterns depend on the way they are represented in a medium. For this examination we will use the example of political speeches and their representation in the news of the online news journals *New York Times* and *Spiegel Online*. One of the most significant current discussions in mass media and communication studies circulates around the question of the representation of news and their presentation within the framework of specific media. This is also the cutting edge for communication studies asking the question of the conditions of discourses in the mass media. Both perspectives are in this study considered as tools for the access to the discursive communicative patterns in mass media. We will examine in examples the text structures of political speeches in the framework of their media and describe the influence and persuasive communicative perspective of the news journals in specific cases.

Keywords: Communication, Mass Media, Contemporary Speech, Rhetoric

1 Introduction

Intertextuality assumes that any text depends on prior conventions, codes, and other texts. The term is sometimes used to refer to the unavoidable multiplicity of references in any text (Underwood). Also intermediality is a term expressing the reliance of media on other media. Hayles wrote in *Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality*:

Literary criticism is filled with assumptions specific to print. As print materials are increasingly translated into electronic documents, these unrecognized assumptions tend to be overlaid onto electronic materials without thinking through how textuality must change when texts are electronic. Arguing that an electronic text should properly be considered a process rather than an object, this essay revisits definitions of work, text, and document. Two central premises need to be rethought: that work and text are disembodied, and that “work” is a convergent ideal construct. The essay proposes instead that both work and text be considered embodied and media-specific, and that “work” be thought of as an Assemblage rather than a convergent ideal (Hayles 2003: 265).

Balkin wrote in *How Mass Media Simulate Political Transparency*:

Today political transparency is virtually impossible without some form of mass media coverage. However, mass media can frustrate the values of political transparency even while appearing to serve those values. When politicians and political operatives attempt to simulate transparency and appropriate the rhetoric of openness and accountability, the mass media does not always counteract the simulation. Indeed, it may actually tend to proliferate it (Balkin 1998: online).

Both *New York Times Online* and *Spiegel Online* are exclusive online news media. Hybrid media like online news journals present a multi-layered text. We will examine these layers in selected articles of *New York Times Online* and *Spiegel Online*. The questions used in journalism to describe the event are: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? This set of questions can be traced back to the doctrine of stasis and the topoi used to find arguments in the ancient rhetorical system. The Lasswell Formula used the questions: Who? What? How (in which Channel)? To Whom? This set of questions can be traced back to the doctrine of stasis in the ancient rhetorical system. Also the Laswell Formula derived from it. A hybrid appearance of the text is given by the circumstance that the products of journalism are produced by more than one author and their text types vary. Based upon digital media and the compound structure of different media broadcasting techniques products in journalism, which originally relied on the printed text, can be presented in different media employing visuality and acoustic signs especially via the digital media. Journalism has many features similar to rhetoric. In the job skills of the journalist we find similarities to the officia of the rhetor: Researching and documenting (inventio, invention), organizing and planning (dispositio, disposition), formulating and editing (elocutio, elocution), presenting (actio, performance).

Print Journalism
Journalism Agencies
Radio Journalism
Television
Online Journalism

Journalism according to its Media

We can say that the idea to write or report something new is a relatively uncommon characteristic feature of monographic writings and books. Here we find the use of the word new in the context of official announcement of the state.

2 On Journalism and Rhetoricity

Quintilian in the *Institutio Oratoria* (5, 3) mentions about public report or opinion that with regard to rumors and common report one party will call them the verdict of public opinion and the testimony of the world at large; the other will describe them as vague talk based on no sure authority, to which malignity has given birth and credulity increase, an ill to which even the most innocent of men may be exposed by the deliberate dissemination of falsehood on the part of their enemies. It will be easy for both parties to produce precedents to support their arguments. Journalism and rhetoric have an ambivalent relationship. Most of the criteria and sets of values of professional journalism like authenticity, neutrality, and objectivity referring

to the hard news would not allow rhetorical elements in journalistic writing except the writing styles of soft news, opinion writing, and special forms of journalism. The tradition of classical rhetoric has not developed a specific rhetoric of journalism for professional purposes. Technical reproducibility of printed information was actually given prior to the invention of Gutenberg. After the use of papyri and handwritten printing on woodblocks allowed to produce multiple copies of one object containing carved written or visual information Printing made it possible to reduplicate sets of information such as books and to store them. Printing actually opens the opportunity to reproduce speech and written words or visual information and to store them, but on the other hand is not a tool to deliver the information. Among the technical developments that actually are relatively close to the spoken words is the newspaper. Newspaper's major function to report news is actually a function that was previously related to the oral transmission of news. With the establishment of newspapers, new forms of writings that are more or less codified were used. Rhetorical functions partly were implemented into the new styles or writing, but actually the approaches of writers of newspapers regarding rhetorical categories derived from the *ethos* of the speaker. Rhetoric became under the empirical approach of newspapers successively a negative or contradictory form of writing or speaking. In the 21st century newspapers refer to rhetoric as a political way to speak or a negatively connotated attribute, while the classical understanding of rhetoric passed away. Eloquence has become a topic in the journals of the U.S. Kirsch wrote in *In Praise Of Fine Language* on January 16, 2008 for the *New York Sun*:

Should we trust eloquence? As we enter another presidential election year, with its quadrennial reminder that eloquence has all but disappeared from American politics, this may sound like a purely academic question. It is customary to blame television, with its demand for artificial naturalness, for the decline of public speaking. Howard Dean in 2004 was the most recent politician to learn that what sounds like passion on the stump comes across as mere screaming on the news.

But in fact, the American hostility to eloquence goes back much further than the television age. Not since William Jennings Bryan has a politician risen to fame as a great orator; not since Webster and Clay has the U.S. Congress been a nursery of eloquence. It is as though American democracy itself harbors some suspicion of lofty speech, in keeping with its eternal bias toward the pragmatic and the accessible (Kirsch 2008: online).

News management is a term used to describe the way that individuals or organizations attempt to control the flow of news to the media and to 'set the agenda' for the media. This might involve issuing a press release which is embargoed, holding press conferences times to make the lunch-time and early-evening news, or staging an event which is big enough or unusual enough to grab the media's attention. (Underwood 2008: no pagination) Daniel discussed the relation between rhetoric and journalism. (Daniel 2002: 507-524). Cline in *Toward a Field Theory of Journalism wrote*:

To begin understanding the influence of journalism on culture I think it's important to consider the concept of noetic field. A noetic field (as defined by James A. Berlin in *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*) is a "closed system defining what can, and cannot, be known; the nature of the knower; the nature of the relationship between the knower, the known, and the audience; and the nature of language". Berlin concludes from this (and I agree) that rhetoric "is thus ultimately implicated in all a society attempts. It is at the center of a culture's activities". [...] To search for a "field" theory of journalism is to search for a theory that explains the entire practice in all of its complexity. In this sense I'm using "field" as a metaphor indicating the kind of search currently underway to discover a theory of "everything" in physics (Cline 2008: online).

Ward in The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond wrote:

The aim of ethical statements, and the norms they assert, is to establish or maintain the credibility of reports, journals and new forms of journalism. The rhetorical model sees journalism ethics as arising out of the relationship between journalist and audience. The assertion of a journalism norm is a normative response to criticism, competition, government censure and reader expectations. Alterations in that relationship are prompted by changes in journalism practice and changes in the ambient culture. Only by examining how this relationship responds to journalistic practice and society can we comprehend how norms arise, become dominant and decline. To gain such insights, an interdisciplinary approach employing philosophy, ethics, science and social history is necessary. A full understanding of journalism ethics requires that we plunge into the complex history of our culture (Ward 2004: online).

On the Media Lang Homepage in the Course Notes Peter R.R. White – 2002-03 was written:

Few would doubt that mass-media journalism has the potential to exert a powerful influence on contemporary society, shaping, as it does, the way we talk about our past, present and future, the way we debate ethical, political, economic and cultural issues and the way we view our relationship with the wider world. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that journalistic discourse is so often the target of criticism and the focus of vigorous, sometimes heated debate. The debate is complicated even further, I believe, because as a society, we seem to operate with diverse, sometimes contradictory understandings of what news journalism is and should be (Media Lang Homepage: Course Notes Peter R.R. White – 2002-03 2009: online).

Stephens in A Call for an International History of Journalism noticed that

[...] we have a lot of local journalism histories that underplay or ignore the countless notions that drifted across borders in what has always been a cosmopolitan business. As a result, countless potentially instructive parallels remain unexplored. As a result, many of the major stories in this history – stories that are inescapably multi-national – remain untold (Stephens 2008: online).

On the homepage Mass Media Rhetoric / Media Literacy of the Department of English of the University of Birmingham is written (Mass Media Rhetoric/Media Literacy (Unit 1 – 1)):

Few would doubt that mass-media journalism has the potential to exert a powerful influence on contemporary society, shaping, as it does, the way we talk about our past, present and future, the way we debate ethical, political, economic and cultural issues and the way we view our relationship with the wider world. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that journalistic discourse is so often the target of criticism and the focus of vigorous, sometimes heated debate. The debate is complicated even further, I believe, because as a society, we seem to operate with diverse, sometimes contradictory understandings of what news journalism is and should be. On the one hand, the news media are held up as one of the pillars of democratic society, the so-called "Fourth Estate" acting to inform, to educate, to provide a forum for debate and to expose corruption, injustice and incompetence in government and big business. On the other hand, the actual texts produced by the media are seen to be biased, inaccurate, commercially motivated, voyeuristic and sensationalist. While journalists declare that their texts are 'objective', that they offer reliable, impartial and neutral records of events suitable for 'first drafts of history', media theoreticians and academic analysts contend that no text can be 'objective' and that all news reporting necessarily interprets and evaluates the events it depicts according to particular socially and culturally determined points of view (Homepage Mass Media Rhetoric / Media Literacy 2009: online).

3 Case Studies of the Representation of Politics in Mass Media: *The New York Times Online* and *Spiegel Online*

We will now examine cases with a specific persuasive perspective of the mass media regarding the object they present. For this study we selected political speeches as presented in the journals *New York Times Online* and *Der Spiegel Online International Edition*. We will demonstrate that communication patterns are defined by a certain framework. Communication patterns depend on the way they are represented in a medium. The news outlets *New York Times* and *Spiegel Online* build connections between the original source cited, the political speech, and the meta-level of speech of the corporate author, the news journal. We will show our findings in the text parsing the information at several levels.

3.1. Case Study of Discourse in 'The New York Times Online'

In our case we can distinguish between the source text or primary text of the news, the original political speech, and secondary text parts that derived from this information

Secondary Discourse Level: Context of the News Journal:	News Journal Context
Secondary Discourse Level: On the political speeches:	On Political Speeches
Primary Discourse Level: Political Speech, direct quotation:	Political Speech

Discourse Levels of News Outlets in the Case of Political Speeches in Online Journals

Text types are used as means to differentiate between basic functions of texts. Genres are related to a specific medium' for example literary or visual genres exist. Text types can be differentiated as follows:

Text Type	Relation		Function
Expositional text types	(Procedure)	How?	Instruction
Descriptive text types	(Object)	Who?	Reporting
Narrative text types	(Event)	What?	Reporting
Argumentative text types	(Audience)	To Whom?	Persuasion

We will now examine the text Alessandra Stanley wrote in the *New York Times* according to the discourse levels above:

More Politics News

President Obama gave five back-to-back television interviews broadcast on Sunday that were as tightly choreographed – and eerily similar – as the multiple Magritte bowler-hatted men milling in the remake of “The Thomas Crown Affair”.

The president’s talk show grand slam, conversations with CNN, NBC, ABC, CBS and Univision, all taped on Friday in the Roosevelt Room, was a remarkable – and remarkably overt – display of media management. Mr. Obama even doled out equal doses of presidential charm, chuckling ruefully about “rambunctious” protesters to Bob Schieffer of CBS and speaking self-deprecatingly to George Stephanopoulos of ABC, conceding that he had not presented his health care proposals in a way that allowed people to put “their whole arms around it”. “And that’s been a case where I have been humbled, and I just keep on trying harder”, he said. “Because I – I really think it’s the right thing to do for the country.” [...] Viewers have grown accustomed to the drama of live politics. Sunday looked more like a string of TNT reruns, an Obama health care overhaul marathon. In each conversation, Mr. Obama proved

what most people already know: he is a deft and appealing speaker who can stay on message. But there was nothing in those stacy interviews that shed light on whether his message would take hold. When asked by ABC if a health insurance mandate was the same as a tax increase, the president replied: “What I’ve said is that if you can’t afford health insurance, you certainly shouldn’t be punished for that.” [...] Mr. Obama declined to discuss his proposals on the one outlet guaranteed to find fault (or change the topic to the Acorn scandal). And that made his star turn look less like a media blitz than Medici vengeance – Fox did not broadcast Mr. Obama’s health care speech to Congress on Sept. 9, so Mr. Obama did not speak to “Fox News Sunday”. [...]

But Mr. Obama chose to make a statement – and raise a distracting fuss on Fox News – by declining to speak. And Fox milked it. When he was not talking about Acorn, Mr. Wallace bemoaned the presidential slight, asking, “Whatever happened to reaching out to all Americans?” He told Bill O’Reilly that the White House aides were “a bunch of crybabies”.

Apparently, the feeling is mutual. “We figured Fox would rather show ‘So You Think You Can Dance’ than broadcast an honest discussion about health insurance reform”, a White House deputy press secretary told ABC News on Saturday. “Fox is an ideological outlet where the president has been interviewed before and will likely be interviewed again; not that the whining particularly strengthens their case for participation any time soon.”

Mr. Obama did not openly convey any animosity in his Sunday interviews. He was poised, thoughtful and, most of all, consistent, assuring each interviewer, in almost identical phrasing, that he had no immediate plans to send more troops to Afghanistan and that an economic recovery is at hand. [...] He said the same to David Gregory, the host of “Meet The Press” on NBC. “The media loves to have a conversation about race”, Mr. Obama said, adding, “This is catnip to, to the media because it is a running thread in American history that’s very powerful”. Mostly, however, Mr. Obama demonstrated that the news media are catnip to presidents (Stanley 2009: online).

3.2 Case Studies of ‘Spiegel Online’ International Edition

In the following article we will distinguish between text as reference to political activity (reference text to political activity) and reference to media activity (*reference to media activity* in cursive letters). In the article *Merkel’s Conservatives, SPD Get Boost From TV Debate* in *Spiegel Online* (September 16, 2009) was written:

ddp

Both Chancellor Angela Merkel and her challenger Frank-Walter Steinmeier got a boost from Sunday’s election debate. Sunday’s TV election debate may have been a snooze fest, but it has given a boost to the two main parties – Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives and the center-left Social Democrats of her challenger Frank-Walter Steinmeier – ahead of Germany’s Sept. 27 federal election.

Germany’s two main parties, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives and the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) of her challenger Frank-Walter Steinmeier, have seen support increase in the first opinion poll to be released since Sunday’s televised debate between the two candidates ahead of the Sept. 27 election.

The whole part from “The poll by the Forsa institute conducted on Monday, Sept. 14, showed the conservatives up two points to 37 percent from last week and the SPD up three points to 24 percent”. to “Asked who they would elect if the candidates were directly elected rather than their parties, 56 percent said they would vote for Merkel, up three points from last week. A total of 24 percent said they would vote for Steinmeier, up four points” (*Spiegel Online*. 2009: online).

Here the activities of the politicians in the first paragraphs are presented as political activities, but they are actually results from media statistics. The second part is exclusively dedicated to the interpretation of media statistics. The whole text is actually a reference to the media and the politicians are the agens in it. In the following text we will look at the implementation of mass media and related statistics into the text serving for an interpretation of the political

activities. In the article *German Politics. Strategizing Against the Social Democrats. Bavarians Grumble over Merkel's Valium Campaign in Spiegel Online* (September 16, 2009) was written:

Getty Images

The current election has been so tame in Germany, that some are comparing it to a campaign on valium. Angela Merkel's conservatives got a boost in the polls after Sunday's television debate, but so did Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his Social Democrats. Members of the Christian Social Union, the Christian Democrats' Bavarian sister party, fear the conservatives' plan to govern with the business-friendly Free Democrats may be in jeopardy. The Bavarian sister party to Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has come out with stinging criticism of the chancellor following a lackluster performance in Sunday's only television debate in the run-up to Germany's Sept. 27 election, with the media dismissing her "valium campaign". Discontent in the Christian Social Union (CSU), the CDU's Bavarian sister party, is growing over Merkel. They say Merkel needs to take a stronger stance with her economic policies – and they want to promote a 100-day program to spur economic growth and job creation. CSU officials are concerned that a bump created for the center-left Social Democratic Party (according to the latest poll, the SPD has risen by three points to 24 percent) could spell bad news for the conservatives and jeopardize Merkel's stated aim of forging a new government with the business-friendly Free Democratic Party. At the federal level, the CDU and the CSU govern together as the so-called "Union" conservative bloc, with the CSU traditionally holding a few cabinet seats in the government. Currently, the parties are in an artificial marriage in a grand coalition in Berlin with the center-left SPD – the Union's arch enemy in normal times. Merkel, the CDU and CSU have all said they would prefer to govern with the FDP after Germans go to the polls in less than two weeks. According to a poll released by German pollster Forsa on Wednesday, though, the FDP has lost two points and is hovering at 12 percent, leaving the CDU, CSU and FDP with 49 percent of total votes.

With a large number of undecided voters, that is cause for concern for officials in the CSU and the CDU. This week, a pair of state governors from the CDU who wield significant power at the national level – Roland Koch of Hesse and Christian Wulff of Lower Saxony – are internally calling for the party to focus the campaign on the dangers of a so-called red-red-green coalition. The pairing doesn't currently have enough votes in polls, but if swing voters shifted to the SPD, it could plausibly form a government with the Greens and the far-left Left Party. SPD chancellor candidate Frank-Walter Steinmeier, also Germany's foreign minister and deputy chancellor, has said his party wouldn't go into a coalition with the Left Party at the national level, but it already has or plans to in handful of states. The Left Party is controversial in Germany, because it was created with the merger in 2007 of western Germany's WASG and eastern Germany's Party of Democratic Socialism, the successor to East Germany's Communists. Conservatives are warning that the SPD, if desperate enough, could align with the party in a bid to remain in government.

More Duet than Duel

Sunday's debate between Merkel and Steinmeier – which many described as being more duet than duel, as debates are called here – didn't help any. One leading CSU official, who would not be quoted by name, told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper that he got the impression from Sunday's performance that Merkel would prefer to continue governing with the SPD and Steinmeier. Merkel pleaded with voters to choose a CDU-CSU-FDP government, but most analysts felt she did a pretty poor job of selling that political constellation. [...] According to a report in Cologne's *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* newspaper, SPD candidate Steinmeier is gaining points on Merkel in both competency and sympathy among voters. Pollster Omniquest found that the day after the TV debate, 51 percent said they felt Steinmeier was competent for dealing with economic issues – close to eight points higher than his showing the previous month. But 60.8 percent still said they trusted Merkel on the economy.

Paving the Way for a “Traffic Light” Coalition?

Meanwhile, senior SPD officials have been floating the idea of a so-called traffic light coalition together with the FDP and the Greens. “In areas like education, domestic and foreign policy, human rights and privacy protection we could make progress with the FDP”, SPD party chief Franz Müntefering told the *Augsburger Allgemeine* newspaper. “One or two percentage points here or there and the conservatives and FDP will have no majority. Then the door would be opened to the Chancellery for Frank-Walter Steinmeier.” Müntefering also spoke out against renewing the current left-right coalition with Merkel. Noting the ongoing disputes between the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, he said a coalition with the FDP and Greens could be just as stable as the current government. “That was a serious challenge, this lasting conflict between the CDU and CSU. A three-party coalition with the SPD, Greens and FDP couldn’t be any harder” (*Spiegel Online* 2009: online).

In the article *Closing the Gap? Poll Shows SPD Gaining Ground on Merkel’s CDU* in *Spiegel Online* (September 18th, 2009) was written:

ddp

A new poll shows Frank-Walter Steinmeier is whittling down Angela Merkel’s big lead. With just over a week to go before Germany’s national election, a new poll reveals a much-needed boost for the Social Democrats. But the survey also shows that Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives look like they will be able to form a center-right coalition with their preferred partner, the business-friendly Free Democratic Party.

Germany’s center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) does not have much to smile about these days after a plodding election campaign, but just over a week before Germans go to the polls, they have finally got a dose of good news. Following a lackluster few weeks, the SPD’s candidate Frank-Walter Steinmeier is gaining some support, shrinking Chancellor Angela Merkel’s sizable lead. A poll commissioned by the ARD television channel and released on Thursday evening showed Steinmeier bolstered by his better-than-expected performance in last Sunday’s television debate with Merkel. His SPD party gained 3 points compared to a week earlier to reach 26 percent, while Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, continued to prevail with their support unchanged at 35 percent. [...] Many voters remain undecided about how they will vote in just over a week’s time and the outcome is far from set in stone, despite Merkel’s buoyant support after four years of presiding over a “grand” coalition government with the Social Democrats. Merkel will almost certainly win a second term as chancellor but it remains to be seen whether the FDP will replace the SPD as her coalition partner – as the conservatives hope. According to the latest survey, 48 percent of the sample group would be pleased to have a coalition formed by the conservatives and the FDP. Meanwhile, 45 percent would welcome a continuation of Germany’s current grand coalition government. Jas (*Spiegel Online* 2009: online).

This article, *Closing the Gap? Poll Shows SPD Gaining Ground on Merkel’s CDU* in *Spiegel Online*, also mixes secondary discourse level of the context of the news journal with secondary discourse level referring to political speeches and primary discourse level with quotations of political speech and direct quotation of political speech. But the majority of the text is secondary discourse level.

4 Conclusion: Political Speech and the Rhetorics of Mass Media Journalism

We have demonstrated that communication patterns are defined by a certain framework of references. These references are homogeneous. Communication patterns depend on the way they are represented in a medium. In political speeches and their representation in the news journals *New York Times* and *Spiegel Online* such frameworks determinate the presentation of news in a specific and persuasive way. The news outlets built connections between the

original source cited, the statistics, the political speech, and the meta-level of speech of the corporate author, the news journal. The text structures of political speeches are here used in an interpretative and selective way and the journalistic framework can be described as a commentary of the primary source. Our findings suggest that in general a text is a construct with information at several levels. In our case we can distinguish between the source text or primary text of the news, the original political speech, and secondary text parts that derived from this information. In our examples we have shown that the reference to political speech as reported source of mass media journalism and the actual description of politics in the mass media are distinguished. The articles use the political speeches and quote them, but they also use the words from these authentic speeches in new contents and highly interpretative ways. Narration and description are classical parts of a rhetorical contribution according to classic theory of rhetoric. So the articles contain elements of a descriptive text type, which reports, a narrative text type for a narration, and an argumentative text type with the intention persuasion. The persuasive dimension of the narrative and descriptive parts of the articles derives from the self-centered perspective of the mass media in articles of the mass media: The authors of the articles refer to the position and function of the mass media and the speech on the politician and the political activities of the politician are reported from the perspective of the mass media and the representation of the politician in the mass media. We have shown this relation between the mass media and politics distinguishing between the different levels of discourse in articles.

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