



Call for papers

A True and Fair View: Communicative, Linguistic and Ethical Aspects of Expressing Point of View in Journalism

10-11 December 2020

Fourth biennial conference of the Brussels Institute for Journalism Studies (BIJU)
Department of Applied Linguistics
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium

Deadline for proposals: 30 June 2020

Plenary speakers

Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (Cardiff University, UK)
Peter R. R. White (University of Sydney, Australia)

After three successful small-scale, high-quality international conferences in 2014, 2016 and 2018, the Brussels Institute for Journalism Studies (BIJU) is now ready to launch its fourth call for papers. The topic for this year's conference will be the expression of standpoint and viewpoint in journalism. As always, our conference is multidisciplinary. So, we invite scholars from different backgrounds like communication and media studies, linguistics, ethics, epistemology and political and social sciences to think about the *modi operandi* and the desirability of journalists expressing their standpoints and sharing their views.

Many different aspects come to mind when thinking about views and standpoints in (journalistic) communication. Many different terms apply as well. In linguistics, *stance*,

vantage point and *footing* are differentiated and non-interchangeable terms for referring to the perspective from which one communicates. Applying these insights to journalistic communication offers exciting new way of approaching the expression of perspective in journalistic writing and reporting.

The linguistic study of reported speech and quoting can also contribute to the study of expressing perspective. Quoting several sources is a commonly used technique for keeping a neutral or 'neutralistic' position in journalism, at the risk of giving a too broad forum to non-relevant sources or leaving the news consumer puzzled.

The line between point of view and opinion is thin. When expressing opinions, assessments are made. In order to be able to judge whether a situation is desirable or non-desirable, a *norm* has to be defined and this raises new questions. How do journalists express or imply the norms or reference points they operate from? In this context, the application of linguistic Appraisal Theory can be illuminating.

Such linguistic approaches to point of view in journalism connect with longtime, yet, recently revitalized developments and debates, in both professional and scholarly fields, relating to what constitutes legitimate journalistic goals, role conceptions, and (associated) practices or genres. This ultimately pertains to the normative foundations of journalism which, at least from a Western perspective, have been primarily informed by the so-called 'core value' or 'strategic ritual' of objectivity and the implied tendency for journalists to identify with the disposition of a neutral, detached, 'passive' observer of events and transmitter of information, as opposed to adopting a more 'active' or 'interventionist' role. Indeed, the idea of the journalist 'providing views rather than news', and reflecting upon or variously interpreting the news, has been typically relegated to the background by the objectivity-led and ratio-centered ethos of the traditional news paradigm.

Challenges to established professional norms and standards have surely been evident throughout journalism's history. Yet, indications of a what has been identified as a 'paradigm reexamination' have arguably become ever more manifest in the contemporary cultural and sociopolitical moment, which is notably characterized by shifting knowledge and truth claims, a heightened sense of '(self-)reflexivity', and an increased centrality of subjectivity and 'emotionality' in public life. In combination with the affordances of digital, networked media, and the coping strategies developed by legacy media in response to market pressures, non-professional 'newcomers' in the journalistic field, and questions of public confidence and accountability, this context has provided an impetus for both novel and once 'marginalized' non-paradigmatic journalistic genres and practices to proliferate and (re)claim authoritative status. As part of what has been referred to as an 'interpretive turn', subjective, evaluative, (self-)reflective, experiential, and 'confessional' discourses have rendered the journalist's 'voice' more prominent, moving beyond a detached, matter-of-fact, 'he said, she said' style of reporting and making the boundaries between news, opinions, and personal narratives ever more porous. In the process, the association of truth or epistemic authority with objectivity has been variously defied, or replaced with considerations of transparency and epistemic hesitation.

We invite participants to engage in a critical discussion of point of view in journalism. Possible questions which can be addressed are: is it possible to define the 'proper' standpoint, is it possible to give a full account of a state of affairs, does the traditional journalistic method of including multiple sources guarantee balanced reporting, is interpretive or transparent journalism to be preferred over the traditional 'neutralistic' journalism, how can interpretive forms of journalism be meaningfully differentiated, measured and assessed, how does point of view relate to verification, assertion, and affirmation, how can stances and points of view be rendered linguistically and/or visually, is there a place for emotions in journalism, what are the ethical implications of expressing points of view in journalism?

Inspirational literature:

Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin (2019). *Emotions, Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

White, Peter R. R. (2020). The Putative Reader in Mass Media Persuasion: Stance, Argumentation and Ideology. *Discourse and Communication* (online soon).

We welcome submissions from all relevant disciplinary backgrounds approaching topics including but certainly not limited to:

- The objectivity norm / bias in news reporting
- Interpretive journalism
- Transparency in journalism
- All forms of advocacy journalism
- The position of point of view in non-Western models of journalism
- Ethical aspects of the expression of opinion
- Linguistic devices for neutralism
- Plurivocity in news reporting
- Appraisal and alignment
- Point of view or the expression of 'voice' in visual communication
- Fake news / Post-truth

We welcome both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and analyses at process, product/text, and/or audience level.

After the previous conferences, we have edited special issues of renowned journals and a book volume with a renowned publisher bundling the most innovative papers presented. We will endeavour to do the same after this conference.

Junior researchers are warmly invited to participate.

The venue for the conference will be the Africa Museum (<https://www.africamuseum.be/en>) Leuvensesteenweg 13, 3080 Tervuren. This is about 15 km from the Brussels city centre, but it can easily be reached with tram 44.

Conference fee (including reception, lunches, coffee):
€ 150 (regular participants), € 75 (PhD students).

Dinner will be organized on Friday 11 December and charged separately.

Please send a proposal of no more than 300 words (excluding selected references) together with your affiliation and a short biography (c. 100 words) to fairview@vub.be by **30 June 2020**. Decisions will be announced by 15 July.

Questions about any aspect of the conference should be addressed to fairview@vub.be. For updates on the practical organization, please check our website <http://www.vub.ac.be/en/events/2020/fairview>.

Websites of the previous conferences:

<https://www.vub.be/en/events/2014/hybridity-and-the-news-hybrid-forms-of-journalism-in-the-21st-century>

<https://www.vub.be/en/events/2016/constructed-constructive-journalism>

<https://www.vub.be/en/events/2018/whatnews>

Publications of the previous conferences:

Hybridity and the news: Blending genres and interaction patterns in new forms of journalism (*Journalism*)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1464884916657520>

Post-truth and the political: Constructions and distortions in representing political facts (*Discourse, Context & Media*)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2211695818303271>

Constructive journalism: Concepts, practices, and discourses (*Journalism*)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1464884918770885>

Special issue of *Journalism Studies* on News Values (in preparation)

Book volume on *News Values from an Audience Perspective* (Palgrave McMillan – in preparation)