

Quotations in American Newspapers: A Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores features of direct and indirect quotations in American newspapers. Eighty discourses in The New York Times, the Washington Post, Bloomberg, and The Hill have been selected for analysis. The results show that the use of quotation speech contributes to the distinctive features of the newspaper discourses. Moreover, the use of quotations with diverse and subtle nuances of meanings not only avoids boredom but also helps the writers express their stance authentically and objectively.

KEYWORDS: direct and indirect quotations, quotation speech, commentary, discourse, commentary discourse

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I. INTRODUCTION

Among the journalistic genres, commentary genre is always creative, intellectual and informative. Newspaper commentary discourse is one journalistic genre which has an argumentative style in which writers tend to persuade the readers and lead them to a certain point of view in their message. Newspaper commentary discourse generally conveys personal and subjective opinions on current events or relevant issues and such commentaries are written by individuals who are not affiliated with or working for the newspaper but are commonly experts, professionals or prominent figures in certain fields. These commentaries are intended to argue for or against a case and to persuade readers that the viewpoints therein are reasonable and credible (see more in Wang, 2008; Chen, 2011).

To understand the way the commentary discourses are constructed, the readers have to understand that the social background of the writers and the institution of each media, beliefs and values in one country also have an influence on the use of language. The writers with different social background, races, beliefs and values may view the same event in the different news angles. Richardson (2007) argued that society and value judgment are expressed by words, which has both connotation and denotation meanings. According to Eggins (1994), the language we use always conveys an attitude and makes a role. Thus, the different use of words also means the different meanings the senders want to encode in the texts. And Fowler (1991) maintains that language in news stories is not neutral but socially constructed.

Quotations - both direct and indirect - play an integral role of commentary discourses to make them livelier, more colorful, and more authentic. To successfully achieve their predominantly persuasive communicative purpose, newspaper commentaries need to effectively convince readers. For this purpose, it is necessary for the writers to quote a word, an event or a knowledge in a direct or indirect style to make an argument. An argument with a quotation is more convincing. In commentary discourses in American newspapers, there are two types of quotation: direct quotation and indirect quotation

II. DIRECT QUOTATIONS

The results of analysis show that direct quotations are used in the following situations:

Direct quotations are considered as the use of ideas of predecessors, with or without the same viewpoint, to express the contents journalists want to present. In term of semantics, the words or expressions chosen are part of the writer's message to the readers and can be considered as the expression of the writer's opinion and attitude.

For examples:

(1) In the statement issued by Ms. Huffman, she said she wanted to apologize to her family, friends and colleagues, and especially, she said, "*to the students who work hard every day to get into college, and to their parents who make tremendous sacrifices to support their children and do so honestly.*"

Ms. Huffman said that her daughter had been unaware of the cheating. And Ms. Huffman acknowledged that, in an attempt to assist her daughter, she had ultimately hurt and betrayed her. "*This transgression toward her and*

the public I will carry for the rest of my life,” she said. “My desire to help my daughter is no excuse to break the law or engage in dishonesty.” (The New York Times, April, 8, 2019)

(2) That this year’s gathering was happening virtually was a different reminder of the contingencies of history. Had it not been for the administration’s chaotic response to Covid-19, more than one participant speculated, Mr. Trump might well have handily triumphed in November — and this past-tense assessment wouldn’t be happening at all. “What if Trump had won?” Michael Kazin, a professor at Georgetown University, said, in response to a hypothetical thrown out by Zelizer. “I’d probably be trying to organize demonstrations rather than sitting around on Zoom.” (The New York Times, March 22, 2021)

The direct quotations in the examples (1) and (2) aim to show the writer’s attitude and opinion towards the information he/she gives and also adds facts that contain information and create the authenticity, thus creating the highlight and prominence of the information.

Writing about the same event, but each journalist chooses different kinds of quotation. In American newspapers, there are full and partial direct quotations.

2.1. Full direct quotation

we found that basically full direct quotation in American newspapers is used for the following cases:

(a) Quoting a statement in which the speaker can quote another person’s statement creates a multi-layered quotation. For example:

(3) It is that statement that Chinese citizens heard from Li last March. In response to a reporter’s question about what would happen when the 70-year LURs expired, Li said: “*There’s an old saying in China: Economic security brings peace of mind. . . . [T]he term can be renewed, there is no need to apply for renewal, there will be no pre-conditions, and there will be no effect on the ability to buy and sell. Of course, some people may say, “That’s what you say, but is there any legal guarantee?” Let me stress this here: The State Council has already tasked the relevant departments with urgently studying the laws relating to the protection of real estate and coming up with a proposal.*” (The New York Times, May 16, 2017)

In the excerpt, the quotation from the source Li contains other direct quotations and this combination makes the sentence structure complicated, the information is intertwined and can be difficult for the readers. However, this gives the readers the trust in the accuracy of the information. If rewritten as an indirect speech, the complexity and difficulty of the sentence will increase many times since regardless the changes in sentence structure and verb tense, just the use of personal pronouns in indirect sentences (replacing two pronouns ‘you’ and ‘me’ in direct sentences has also made difficulties for the writer and readers.

Li said there was an old saying in China that economic security brought peace of mind. . . . [T]he term could be renewed, there was no need to apply for renewal, there would be no pre-conditions, and there would be no effect on the ability to buy and sell. He said that of course, some people might say that was what I [Li] say, but if there was any legal guarantee. And he [Li] told them to let him [Li] stress that there that the State Council had already tasked the relevant departments with urgently studying the laws relating to the protection of real estate and coming up with a proposal.

(4) Twenty-two years after the late Sen. John McCain returned home from Vietnam — by his account, a better man than when he had arrived — he sat in the Oval Office urging an American president who had avoided service in the war to establish diplomatic and economic relations with our former enemy. “*It doesn’t matter to me anymore,*” McCain (R-Ariz.) told Bill Clinton, “*who was for the war and who was against it. I’m tired of looking back in anger, and I’m tired of America looking back in anger. It’s time to put the past behind us, Mr. President, and do what’s right for both countries.*” (The Hill, July 11, 2020)

The type of quotation in examples (3) and (4) above and example (5) below can also be called a mixed quotation in which the indirect quotation is combined with several direct quotations or direct quotation combined with several indirect quotations. For example:

(5) “*The Taliban wants to make a deal - we’ll see if they make a deal,*” Mr. Trump said. “*If they do, they do, and if they don’t, they don’t. That’s fine.*” He also said that the *Taliban was willing to agree to a cease-fire pending the more extensive accord, a matter of contention in the earlier talks but one that Mr. Ghani’s government has insisted on.* (The New York Times, November 28, 2019)

(b) Quoting a whole statement or a slogan. Examples:

(6) And China’s president, Xi Jinping, will have to recognize that China can no longer enjoy the trading privileges it has had over the last 40 years, so he’d be wise to curb his nationalistic “*no-one-tells-China-what-to-do*” bluster and look for the best win-win deal he can get. Because Beijing can’t afford America and others shifting their manufacturing to “ABC,” Anywhere-But-China, supply chains. (The New York Times, May 21, 2019)

(7) But that's not all that is new and problematic. We now live in the age of "dual use." In a dual-use world, "everything that makes us powerful and prosperous also makes us vulnerable," noted John Arquilla, one of the top strategists at the Naval Postgraduate School. (The New York Times, May 21, 2019)

(8) Before convening via Zoom for two days of discussion, the members had submitted chapters on topics including immigration, foreign policy, race, party politics, media, disinformation and impeachment. After revisions and editing, the work will be published next year by Princeton University Press in a volume called "The Presidency of Donald J. Trump: A First Historical Assessment." (The New York Times, March 22, 2021)

2.2. Partial direct quotation

In order to create information focal points briefly and purposefully, the writers opt the partial quotation in such cases as

(a) Specialized terms that can only be understood when they are used correctly in specific situations and are often fully quoted to give the readers an accurate and reliable concept whether they know the topic of the text well or not. The explanations for the quoted words, if any, are only complementary, not a substitute for the quotation. Examples:

(9) Between 2010 and 2014, e-commerce grew by an average of \$30 billion annually. Over the past three years, average annual growth has increased to \$40 billion. "That is the tipping point, right there," said Barbara Denham, a senior economist at Reis, a real estate data and analytics firm. "It's like *the Doppler effect*. The change is coming at you so fast, it feels like it is accelerating." (the New York Times, April 15, 2017)

(b) Proper names, slangs, dialects, vernaculars, names of characters that are unique in a certain locality, words of foreign languages without equivalence in the target language, etc. It is a way to save words and bring efficiency without any alternative descriptions. Examples:

(10) Let the West worry about so-called black swans, rare and unexpected events that can upset financial markets. China is more concerned about "gray rhinos" — large and visible problems in the economy that are ignored until they start moving fast. The "gray rhinos" are a herd of Chinese tycoons who have used a combination of political connections and raw ambition to create sprawling global conglomerates. (The New York Times, July 23, 2017)

(11) "Ik ben ik"—I am me—was the classroom theme when my son started preschool in the Netherlands two years ago. He painted a portrait of himself, with exaggerated teeth only on the bottom row and three strands of wiry hair on his head ("hair is hard," he later told me). (The Atlantic, July 05, 2017)

(c) Words or expressions commonly used by famous figures may be quoted to show the writer's attitude towards the character mentioned. Examples:

(12) China kept insisting it was still "a poor developing country" that needed extra protection long after it had become the world's largest manufacturer by far. (The New York Times, May 21, 2019)

(13) China launched an ambitious "Go West" campaign at the turn of the millennium, aiming to narrow the income gap between the booming eastern seaboard and the remote west, essentially by building modern infrastructure and exploiting the west's natural resources. (The Washington Post, May 30, 2016)

Partial quotation is a very effective method if the quoted words and phrases meet the following conditions:

- Sufficient brief that they can be recognized only as a sentence component.
- Match appropriately, logically with other components of the sentence that appear before and after them in all aspects: vocabulary, grammar and semantics.
- It must be carefully selected to satisfy the readers since the readers will only accept this solution if the quoted part cannot be replaced by another interpretation. In other words, the quotations should stand out and help make the sentence more impressive.
- When choosing a word or phrase in one context to be used in another context, partial quotations in the same sentence may come from various sources. Therefore, the words and phrases quoted must be simple, not too strange or too new, so that readers can infer through their background knowledge and experiences without much difficulty. This requires both the writer and the readers to have a relatively good background knowledge to understand the explicit and implicit information created by the writer. These implications are the factors that create a unique style for each writer and determine whether the sentence will make a good impression on the readers.

Examples:

(14) Gen. David Petraeus, a former commander of American forces in Afghanistan who is now retired, has warned that a premature withdrawal could lead to a Taliban conquest of the country, and Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina and a close adviser to Mr. Trump on foreign policy, has said removing troops could "pave the way for another 9/11." (The New York Times, November 28, 2019)

(15) As the virus spread in early January, the mayor of Wuhan, Zhou Xianwang, was touting futuristic health care plans for the city. It was China's "political season", when officials gather for annual meetings of

People's Congresses. It is not a time for bad news. When Mr. Zhou delivered his annual report to the city's People's Congress on Jan. 7 against a backdrop of bright red national flags, he promised the city top-class medical schools, a World Health Expo, and a futuristic industry park for medical companies. Not once did he or any other city or provincial leader publicly mention the viral outbreak. "*Stressing politics is always No. 1,*" the governor of Hubei, Wang Xiaodong, told officials on Jan. 17. (The New York Times, February 01, 2020)

(16) The scope and prospects of any renewed negotiations remained unclear, and White House officials gave few details beyond Mr. Trump's sudden revelation. On the flight to Afghanistan, Stephanie Grisham, the White House press secretary, had insisted that the secret trip was "*truly about Thanksgiving and supporting the troops*" and "*nothing about the peace process*" with the Taliban. (The New York Times, November 28, 2019) In brief, partial quotation, when used logically and artistically has an effect that will go beyond any description or narrative since it meets the characteristics of the commentary language. This is not only an argumentative feature of newspaper discourse but also relates to communication strategies. In addition to the above benefits, it is also found that the use of partial quotation also avoids cumbersome and long sentences but creates high accuracy for the discourse.

III. INDIRECT QUOTATION

It can be noticed that a relatively prominent feature in the newspaper discourse is the presence of the indirect quotation. Examples:

(17) President Trump paid an unannounced Thanksgiving visit to American troops in Afghanistan on Thursday and *declared that he had reopened peace negotiations with the Taliban less than three months after scuttling talks in hopes of ending 18 years of war.* (The New York Times, November 28, 2019)

(18) Consumer electronics makers are among the most vulnerable, because many game consoles, smartphones and tablets are made in China. On Saturday, *Apple announced that it had closed all of its corporate offices and retail stores in China - where it booked \$44 billion in sales last year - until Feb. 9 because of the virus.* (The Washington Post, February 03, 2020)

It can be recognized the indirect or "reported" nature through the verbs: declare, announce, etc. Indirect quotations have the distinct advantage of allowing writers to summarize long statements and use indirect quotations as a transition from one sequence of events to the next, or join two parts of indirect quotations. This is also a more reasonable method to convey opinions and thoughts.

IV. MEANS OF QUOTATION

Both direct and indirect quotations as well as facts in the discourse need indicating the source of origin, except for facts that are obvious, or have been mentioned. Origin is usually placed after the quotation or event, but in long quotation sequences there are three places for the word of origin: after the full quotation sentence, after the first fact or inserted the sentence. The group of announcement words can be called quotation phrases. This section will analyze the function of the quotation phrases in American newspaper.

Cao Xuan Hao (2017) states: "a phrase is defined not by its intrinsic properties but by its syntactic function and only by its syntactic function" (p.40).

Nguyen Van Pho (2018) argues that: "a sentence is not constructed by words but by phrases as functional units, and in turn, these phrases are constructed by phrases of lower and lower hierarchy. Simply, the component of a sentence is not words but phrases as a functional unit; Sentences are combinations of functional phrases, not words" (p.2)

Thus, phrases do not have their own syntactic characteristics, they always exist and function in a certain sentence; it is defined according to the syntactic function in the sentence. Therefore, when determining a phrase, it is always necessary to indicate its subject, predicate, complement, predicate or adverb status in the sentence. (Cao Xuan Hao, 2017, p.41).

It can be found through the data that the quotation phrase can be divided into: (a) the quotation phrase is a verb, (b) the quotation phrase is a phrase (verb or preposition phrase) and (c) the quotation phrase is a clause.

a. The quotation phrase is a verb

Based on the pragmatic meaning of the quotation verbs, it is possible to divide the quotation verbs in American newspapers into 3 groups: (1) verbs specific to the act of declaration (narration): say, tell, remark, realize, recognize, point out, report, declare, announce...; (2) group specific for the act of asking: ask, demand, inquire, query, wonder..., and (3) group specific for the act of suggestion: suggest, offer, call, order, request, tell, propose, persuade...

The group of quotation verbs used in the act of narration is the most diverse in which the verb 'say' is typical. For examples:

(19) In the statement issued by Ms. Huffman, she *said* she wanted to apologize to her family, friends and colleagues, and especially, she *said*, “to the students who work hard every day to get into college, and to their parents who make tremendous sacrifices to support their children and do so honestly”.

Ms. Huffman *said* that her daughter had been unaware of the cheating. And Ms. Huffman acknowledged that, in an attempt to assist her daughter, she had ultimately hurt and betrayed her. “This transgression toward her and the public I will carry for the rest of my life,” she *said*. “My desire to help my daughter is no excuse to break the law or engage in dishonesty.” (The New York Times, April 08, 2019)

In this example, verb “say” is used 4 times, and in the discourse: “Felicity Huffman and 13 others to plead guilty in college admissions scandal”, verb “say” is used 14 times.

The use of ‘say’ in all cases will be very monotonous, so it is often replaced by verbs with more diverse meanings such as comment, protest, warn, indicate, explain, add, hint, reveal, declare, admit, state, etc. Examples:

(20) President Xi Jinping recently *warned* that financial stability is crucial to national security, while the official newspaper of the Communist Party *pointed to* the dangers of a “gray rhinoceros”, without naming specific companies. (The New York Times, July 23, 2017)

(21) President Trump paid an unannounced Thanksgiving visit to American troops in Afghanistan on Thursday and *declared* that he had reopened peace negotiations with the Taliban less than three months after scuttling talks in hopes of ending 18 years of war. (The New York Times, November 28, 2019).

Verbs whose meaning is a combination of the verb ‘say’ with an element showing context include: reply, warn, protest, explain, suggest, continue, interrupt, threaten, vow, urge, promise, agree, argue, add, etc. Examples:

(22) India’s Supreme Court is hearing cases challenging the biometrics program. Some petitioners *argue* that Aadhaar impinges on basic constitutional rights. Others *say* it has led to needy people being excluded from welfare programs. One case *suggests* it could have resounding implications for people of lower castes who could face discrimination if biometrics are matched with surnames and addresses — often indicators of caste. (The Washington Post, March 25, 2018).

Verbs express thoughts: believe, find, observe ... as well as verbs: insist, complain, boast also appear in American newspaper discourse. Example:

(23) On the flight to Afghanistan, Stephanie Grisham, the White House press secretary, had *insisted* that the secret trip was “truly about Thanksgiving and supporting the troops” and “nothing about the peace process” with the Taliban. [...] During his short visit on the ground on Thursday, Mr. Trump *boasted* of American military successes against Al Qaeda and the Islamic State and *suggested* that the Taliban was eager to make a peace deal. (The New York Times, November 28, 2019)

b. Quotation phrase is a verb phrase

Verb phrases with the function of quotation phrase in American newspapers are a combination of reporting verbs and modal adverbs or verbs combining adjectives. Example:

(24) Some current and former military officials *are worried* that Mr. Trump’s appetite for a troop reduction he can boast about on the campaign trail as a fulfillment of his promise to scale back American foreign interventions could lead to serious national security risks. (The New York Times, November, 28, 2019)

The fixed phrase that has the function and position as the quotation phrases in American newspaper discourses is the preposition phrase of ‘according to’ (according to the latest numbers, according to the public, according to statistics, according to a recent survey, according to (Mr./Ms.), according to (+name of organization)). It is often used to source information from an unspecified individual or group of individuals. Examples:

(25) Electronics manufacturers rely on Chinese suppliers for up to 50 percent of their components, while automakers get 15 percent from China, *according to* Chris Rogers, a Panjiva supply-chain specialist. (The Washington Post, February 03, 2020)

(26) China’s \$14 trillion economy also is four times as large as it was 17 years ago and far more globalized. About 150 million Chinese business executives and tourists took an international flight in 2018, the most recent data available, more than seven times the 2003 figure, *according to* JPMorgan. Globally, the number of shipping containers moving among the world’s ports has almost tripled, *according to* the United Nations. (The Washington Post, February 03, 2020).

(27) In 2015 the company made the first sales of its invention, the Sewbot, to customers in the U.S. Revenue last year rose 1,000 percent, and it’s on track to do the same in 2017, *according to* CEO Palaniswamy “Raj” Rajan. (Bloomberg, June 21, 2017).

c. Quotation phrase is a clause

Examples:

(28) Both sides underscored that if the Taliban are sincere in their commitment to reaching a peace deal, they must accept a ceasefire,” *Mr. Ghani wrote on Twitter*. “We also emphasized that for any peace to last, terrorist safe havens outside Afghanistan must be dismantled.” (The New York Times, November 28, 2019)

(29) Twenty-two years after the late Sen. John McCain returned home from Vietnam - by his account, a better man than when he had arrived - he sat in the Oval Office urging an American president who had avoided service in the war to establish diplomatic and economic relations with our former enemy. “It doesn’t matter to me anymore,” *McCain told Bill Clinton*, “who was for the war and who was against it. I’m tired of looking back in anger, and I’m tired of America looking back in anger. It’s time to put the past behind us, Mr. President, and do what’s right for both countries.” (The Hill, July 11, 2020)

In examples (28) and (29), a clause is used as the quotation phrase for the preceding quotations and the following quotations.

(30) *What McCain wrote in 1995 has come true*: “It is ... absolutely in our national security interests to have an economically viable Vietnam strong enough to resist, in concert with its neighbors, the heavy-handed tactics of its great power neighbor. That reason, more than any other, urges the normalization of our relations and makes Vietnam’s membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], and the increasingly responsible role Hanoi is playing in regional affairs, a very welcome development.” (The Hill, July 11, 2020)

In this example, a clause is used as the quotation phrase for the following paragraph.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The content of the newspaper discourses is not merely reporting but also for many other purposes. Thus, the use of quotations, the quotation phrases in this discourse genre is within the scope of the communication strategy. In reality, direct and indirect quotations are used together to explain, complement each other or increase the accuracy in expression, and lead the readers to an idea that the writer wants to achieve.

The use of quotations contributes to the characteristic of the newspaper discourse. Moreover, the use of quotations with diverse and subtle nuances of meanings when quoting not only avoids boredom but also helps the writer to express his attitude honestly and objectively.

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