EMOTIONALITY IN THE TELEVISION COVERAGE OF AIRPLANE DISASTERS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how emotion is built into the television coverage of airplane disasters in the form of narratives, language and sound. It shows that the reporting embeds emotional content within a set of stylistic features. These features include the outsourcing of emotions, detailed descriptions, juxtapositions, contrasts, conditional perfect as well as technical features such as emotional language and sounds. Based on

the findings, we argue that there are layers of complexity in emotional storytelling, which build on a variety of narrative, linguistic and technical features that journalists can draw on. Although we link these to the coverage of airplane disasters, our findings have broader implications for the study of emotionality in journalism studies and disaster communication. As such, these features show the distinctive ways in which emotions may be used in other forms of media coverage, establishing a broad repertoire of emotional practices in journalism.

INTRODUCTION

The coverage of disasters departs from conventional reporting practices, opening up spaces for incorporating emotion. It pays attention to the emotions of those affected by the events while also serving as a space for narrating "the collective emotions of the larger community reacting to the misfortunes of others like them" (Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen 2007, p. 5). As a result, emotions are central to the journalistic narratives of disasters: They enable the understanding of a news story (Pantti 2010; Pantti et al. 2012). They also carry the potential to immerse audiences in the story (Gürsel 2010), encouraging reflection and enabling empathy.

Given the centrality of emotions, this article examines their use in the coverage of airplane disasters. Research in the area remains limited, even though airplane disasters are dramatic events which allow the media to "raise emotions in news production" (Pantti 2010, p. 175). The article argues that the television reporting of airplane disasters draws on emotionality by using emotional content which is embedded in and heightened by a set of stylistic features. The emotional content relates to the experiences of those affected by the disaster. The stylistic features add emotionality to the structure of journalistic storytelling as well as wider narratives around the disasters. Based on the findings, we argue that there are layers of

complexity in emotional storytelling, which build on a variety of narrative, linguistic and technical features that journalists can draw on. Although we analyse how these operate in the context of television coverage of airplane disasters, the findings have broader implications for journalism studies and disaster communication.

AIRPLANE DISASTERS, EMOTIONS AND THE MEDIA

Airplane disasters are rare phenomena (National Safety Council 2017). Yet, when incidents do occur, they tend to dominate the news agenda and capture audience attention (Cobb and Primo 2003; Hood 2012; Kim and Lee 2008). A small number of scholarly studies have investigated their prominence: Kim and Lee (2008, p. 85), for instance, state that airplane disaster coverage is "compelling and dramatic". Vincent et al. (1989, cited in Kim and Lee 2008, p. 85) explain that airplane disasters possess elements that "allow television news to do what it does best: tell a compelling story by capitalizing on dramatic visual and narrative". Previous studies examined the representation of airplane disasters in media coverage more broadly (Boelle 2020; Cobb and Primo 2003; Garner 1996a, 1996b; Hood 2012, 2013, 2014; Sonnevend 2018; Vincent et al. 1989). They also used incidents as exemplary cases to investigate more general issues in journalism, such as media bias and balance (Entman 1991; Peh and Melkote 1991), accuracy in reporting (Ramanathan 2016), ethical reporting and journalists' errors of judgment (Latif 2015), media relations and crisis management (Adebayo 2017; Henderson 2003; Howell 2015; Kirmse 2016; Zafra and Maydell 2018), freedom of speech online (Daud 2014), social media behaviours (Masip et al. 2019) and implications for the mental health profession (Jacobs et al. 1990).

However, research remains limited on how emotions are used in the reporting of airplane disasters. In that respect, the most relevant studies are situated in journalism studies more generally: A recent 'emotional turn' has alerted scholars in the field to the centrality of emotion across contexts of journalistic production, texts and audiences (Peters 2011; Beckett and Deuze 2016; Orgeret 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen 2019). Wahl-Jorgensen (2013), for example, built on Tuchman's idea of the strategic ritual of objectivity to suggest that there is a strategic ritual of emotionality which "is

just as embedded in, and central to, journalistic practice as is the strategic ritual of objectivity". Indeed, Schmidt (2021: 1185, 1182) argues that, between the 1960s and 1990s, print journalists in the United States "were transforming traditional journalistic roles of being detached observers" and "embraced the chance of becoming personally and emotionally involved". In recognising emotionality as a "necessary condition for objective reporting, understood as capturing the breadth and depth of living experiences through augmented objectivity", it is possible to argue that emotional journalistic practices are not at odds with objectivity, but rather reinforce the objectivity norm (Schmidt 2021: 1186).

The scholarship on emotionality relates more broadly to ideas on narrative journalism. This is a form of journalism which applies the compelling "style and techniques of fiction" (van Krieken and Sanders 2017: 1367) to the factual reporting and truth-telling of traditional journalism (Vanoost 2013: 77; van Krieken and Sanders 2017: 1365). While this form of journalism can be "challenged on the grounds of factual accuracy and stretching the truth" (Habers and Broersma 2014: 640), counterarguments are that narrative journalistic texts do not actually "abandon the principle of truth" or "their intention to inform and tell a true story", but simply "do so using literary tools such as structure, tone, dialogue or literary scenes, and do it in such a way that they build a narrative framework as attractive as any fictional text" (Naranjo 2017: 54).

These literary tools can equally serve as emotional cues that attract the audience's attention, prolong their engagement and elicit emotional responses (Beckett and Deuze 2016; Peters 2011; Pantti 2010). Pantti (2010), mentions three specific features of emotionality in news coverage. First, emotions can be seen through "the emotional states of sources" (Pantti 2010, p. 174). This involves expressions of grief and empathy (Pantti 2010). Second, emotions can be expressed through images which are perceived to have a greater impact than text (Pantti 2010). Third, emotional content is more suitable for particular topics and story types than others (Pantti 2010).

However, the literature needs to be widened to include a broader repertoire of emotional practices and cues in journalism to fully understand the media's use of

emotions. After all, emotions take on important roles and vital functions in reports, from facilitating intelligibility to shaping viewer engagement (Pantti 2010; Peters 2011). This is frequently essential to disaster coverage where emotion discourse – i.e. the "practices of naming emotions, reporting on their presence and force, accounting for their emergence, and narrating about emotion-laden events" (Katriel 2019, p. 57) – helps shape our understanding of the news, encourage reflection, enable empathy and tell the 'full story' (Pantti 2010; Pantti et al. 2012; Ward 2010). Given that research on emotion discourse remains limited, this article investigates how emotions are 'crafted' in the coverage of airplane disasters in the form of narratives, language and sound.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study focuses on airplane disasters because these incidents involve human tragedy, both in terms of the lives lost and those affected by the disasters. This, alongside the fact that commercial, passenger-carrying airplane disasters tend to attract a disproportionate share of media coverage (Hood 2012; Pantti 2010; Sonnevend 2018), opens up possibilities for the media to incorporate emotions in their reporting. We chose the following two disasters for analysis because both were among the most recent and prominent airplane disasters since the September 11 terrorist attacks (Boelle 2020). In addition, the different and politically isolated natures of the two case studies allow us to establish an initial framework of emotion discourse in airplane disaster news.[1]

- **Malaysia Airlines flight MH370:** On March 8th, 2014, the aircraft was on route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing when, less than an hour after take-off, it lost contact with air traffic control and went missing with 239 people on board (BBC 2017). Tracking data and further satellite analysis later suggested that

[1] We are aware that the MH17 Malaysia Airlines Flight, which crashed in Ukraine in 2014 after being hit by a Russian-made missile (BBC 2016), received similar levels of media interest. However, given the influences of the political conflict and crisis on the reporting at the time, we decided against investigating the coverage of this incident. We also decided against examining the more recent Boeing 737 Max plane incidents (Ethiopian Airlines 302 and Lion Air 610) because a Box of Broadcast search revealed these incidents received significantly less media coverage than Malaysia Airlines 370 and Germanwings 4U9525. For illustration, there were 145 broadcasts on Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, 140 on Germanwings 4U9525, 49 broadcasts on Ethiopian Airlines 302 and 32 on Lion Air 610.

the airplane had changed course considerably and might have crashed into the Indian Ocean, southwest of Australia. With the search covering nearly three million square miles and the bulk of the airplane still missing, the tragedy "is likely to remain the world's greatest aviation mystery" (BBC 2017).

- **Germanwings flight 4U9525:** On March 24th, 2015, the aircraft was on route from Barcelona to Düsseldorf when the co-pilot, who had previously been diagnosed with suicidal tendencies, prompted the aircraft to descend and crash into the French Alps (Behrend et al. 2015). With 150 people on board, including 16 adolescents from a school in Germany, the tragedy hit international news headlines and received a considerable media attention (Behrend et al. 2015).

Both case studies were subjected to content, thematic and discourse analyses. The content analysis focused on the frequency of "occurrence of specified [emotional] characteristics or dimensions of texts" (Hansen et al. 1998, p. 95). Specifically, this included the news medium as well as the mention of the passengers and the responses of their relatives, friends and colleagues. The thematic analysis identified and organised themes to show patterns in content, which allowed us to study emotional content in more depth (Alhojailan 2012; Braun and Clarke 2006; Guest et al. 2012). The discourse analysis served as a qualitative complement to the thematic analysis. It focused on the content and stylistic features used to produce emotionality in the reporting. This included a lexical analysis with an emphasis on common instances of word groups, labelling and grammatical features, the classification of actors and the use of modality (Deacon et al. 2007; Hansen and Machin 2013; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). Through this, we can gain an understanding of the key stylistic features that are used to incorporate and elicit emotions.

The sample consisted of news reports published by the main television channels in the UK – i.e. BBC, ITV, Sky, Channel 4 and Channel 5. This decision was based on Ofcom's "News Consumption in the UK" report (2020, p. 7). Even though media followers no longer subscribe to just one isolated type of media (Chadwick 2013), the

report suggests that the most-used platform for news in the UK remains television (75%), followed by the internet (65%), radio (42%) and print newspapers (35%).

The news reports were accessed through Box of Broadcasts, using the search terms 'Malaysia Airlines' or 'Malaysian Airlines' and 'Germanwings' and including sample periods of a year of coverage starting on the day before the incidents. These general search terms and broad sample periods guarantee that most, if not all, broadcasts related to the flights were included in the Box of Broadcasts search, especially bearing in mind that the search operation and investigation of Malaysia Airlines 370 had continued for several months (Brown 2014).[2]

The search resulted in a total of 285 broadcasts – 145 of these relate to the case study of Malaysia Airlines 370 and 140 to Germanwings 9525. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the broadcasts for each channel.

Table 1: Breakdown of the search results by news broadcaster and case study

Broadcaster	Malaysia Airlines 370	Germanwings 9525
BBC	74	69
ITV	21	31
Sky	35	25
Channel 4	12	10
Channel 5	3	5
Total number of broadcasts per case study	145	140
Total number of broadcasts	285	

The content analysis examined the total number of news reports. The above-mentioned variables were subjected to intercoder-reliability testing (McHugh 2012) based on a random sample of 30 out of 285 broadcasts (≈ 10% of the population). The coder agreement was 93.3% for the mention of the passengers and 90% for the mention of the relatives, friends and colleagues' responses to the disasters. The aim of the thematic and discourse analyses was to analyse at least 10% of the broadcasts

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[2] The fact that the cause of the Germanwings 9525 incident was resolved quickly is not relevant because it is reasonable to assume that the media ceased reporting once there had been no more news.

returned through the search. Based on this, a sample of 55 broadcasts was examined – 25 for Malaysia Airlines 370 and 30 for Germanwings 9525.

Visuality is a key feature in eliciting emotions and emotional storytelling; however, as the inclusion of this would go beyond the scope of the article, we specifically paid attention to narratives, language and sound. Subsequently, we argue that emotional storytelling in the reporting takes place through different forms of emotional content and various stylistic features, which invite empathy and compassion in audiences.

EMOTIONAL CONTENT

Emotional content primarily relates to the experiences of those affected by the disasters and shows what the people have gone or are going through at the time of the reporting. It represents a form of *personalised storytelling*, which paints the experience of particular individuals caught up in a story and thus opens up space for identification (Stenvall 2008). In the cases of Malaysia Airlines 370 and Germanwings 9525, emotional content usually focuses on two aspects of the disasters: first, the personal stories surrounding the incidents (the stories of the plans and the lost lives of passengers) and, second, the subsequent emotional impact the incidents have had on people's lives (the 'suffering' of the relatives, friends and colleagues). Figure 1 shows that, across the case studies, both topics are prominent in the coverage, as 84.2 % of broadcasts mention the former and 62.8 % the latter.

Figure 1: Frequency of personalised content
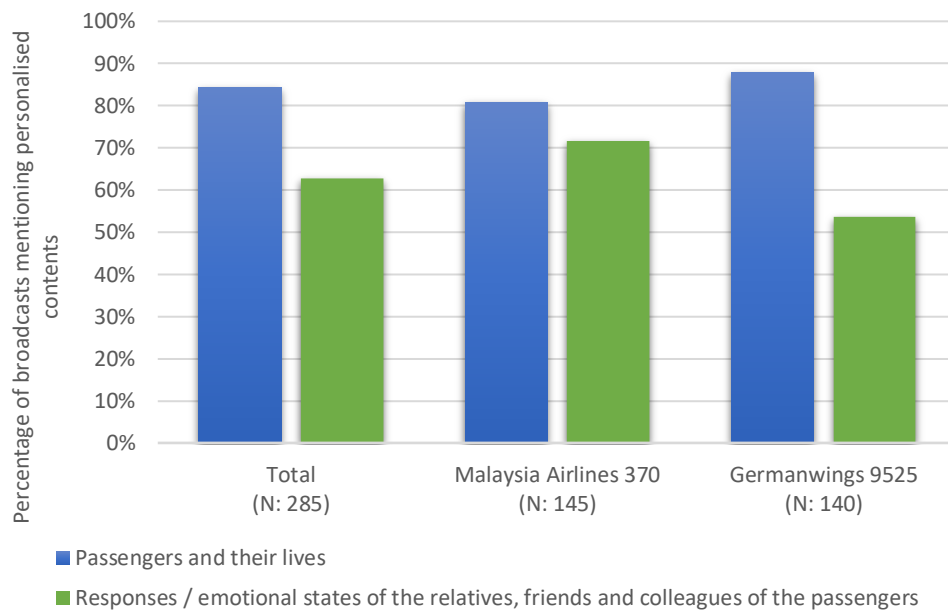
The personal stories of the incidents may refer to tales of people returning to their families, holidaymakers enjoying their lives or pupils returning home from a student exchange. These show the mundane reasons why people were on the fateful airplanes and emphasise the human destruction in the disaster as well as the tragedy of the situation: They have been hit by bad luck, "ironically struck down at an unfair moment" (Kitch 2000, pp. 185-186); they are "[t]he men, women and children who never made it to their destination" (Sky News Tonight 2015). In line with ideas on personalised storytelling, there is often a focus on identities, which means that the victims are represented as individuals with a name and background that personify them "by encapsulating the essence of that person" (Finch 2008, p. 713). This brings the story closer and invites empathy and compassion because the identities of the passengers, from the audience's perspective, transition from those of unknown strangers to Ju Kun from Beijing, Chao Yan and Adrian Waterloo from France as well as Mary and Rod Burrows from Australia. An example includes the following:

Malaysia Airlines 370:

[Voice-over:] Movie stuntman Ju Kun was flying home to Beijing to see his two young children. Teenagers, Chao Yan and Adrian Waterloo, from France, were

enrolling in University in China; while Mary and Rod Burrows from Australia were travelling the globe, enjoying their retirement. (5 News 2014)

Along similar lines, the reporting regularly singled out the stories of children aboard each aircraft, from infants to 16 school children in the case of Germanwings 9525. According to Höijer (2004, p. 517), this has the potential to appeal to audiences' emotions because children "are often seen as helpless in a violent situation" and thus 'worthier' of compassion. In that respect, one narrative stands out. This is the story of 16 school children aboard the Germanwings flight 9525, returning home from a language exchange in Spain. The example below describes the cruelty of the situation in which the school children were 'chosen', almost as if by destiny, to participate in the exchange and ended up taking the fateful flight (Sky News at Ten 2015):

> [Voice-over:] The story of how the school chose 16 students from a group of 40 is a tragedy in itself. [News correspondent:] The school exchange trip to Spain was always hugely popular and, because of that, pupils were invited to take part in a raffle, leading to inevitable disappointment for some. But those who lost out now live on. And those who seemed to have been favoured by chance initially have lost everything. They are mourning across the nation, but nowhere more so than in the school victims' lakeside hometown. (Sky News at Ten 2015)

This example calls to mind Kitch's study (2000) on how the deaths of celebrities are covered in the media. Such coverage frequently heightens the sense of tragedy through "the implication that the celebrity was ironically struck down at an unfair moment" (Kitch 2000, pp. 185-186). In the case of the school children, the ironic tragedy involves the fact that the school exchange, which was supposed to be a joyful experience, ended in the death of those "favoured by chance initially", while the classmates who were disappointed to miss the trip were, in fact, the lucky ones (Sky News at Ten 2015).

Reports on the actual 'suffering' of the passengers, whether emotional or physical, are exclusively found in the Germanwings 9525 reporting. An explanation for this relates

to the practicalities around the individual incidents. The Germanwings 9525 investigation reconstructed the events aboard the aircraft with the help of cockpit voice recorders and mobile phone footages and provided the information for the media to report. By contrast, similar endeavours for the Malaysia Airlines 370 incident proved impossible, given the missing airplane, evidence and information. In the few instances where the 'suffering' of the Germanwings 9525 passengers was described, the content of the reports invoked the horror of the situation, opening up spaces for envisioning and understanding the experiences of those on board. Such storytelling is essential for the cultivation of empathy. As Glasser (1991, pp. 235-236) notes, "[s]tories enable us to think creatively and imaginatively about our experiences and the experiences of others". In the following example, graphic details allow us to recount the final moments aboard Germanwings 9525 and envision the situation, inviting empathy and compassion for the passengers:

> [News correspondent:] Passengers can be heard screaming as the pilot shouts, 'for god's sake, open this door'. An alarm goes off. The passengers continued to scream. And then … there is the sound of the impact. (BBC News at Five 2015)

The second form of emotional content focuses on the aftermath of the disaster and describes the emotional responses of individuals to the events. It shows how particular relatives, friends and colleagues of the passengers are dealing with the loss of their loved ones. The emotional states detected in the reporting range from shock and denial to pain, hope, anger and frustration and love. Examples of each can be seen in table 2. Although the prominence of these emotional states varies depending on the incident, there are parallels between the case studies as they both show similar reactions of the relatives, friends and colleagues. This highlights that coverage of airplane disasters embeds a broad, yet distinctive range of emotions through the use of personalised storytelling. Such coverage, in turn, invites empathy through the reflection on the experiences of others (Glasser 1991). It also communicates beyond the tragedy of airplane disasters and appeals to more general human values because it links the incidents to stories that we can identify with on a day-to-day basis,

"whether they be the ones of pain, fear, happiness or love" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2019, p. 77).

[INSERT TABLE 2]

Discussing the emotional states further, the reports mention archetypical situations in which the relatives, friends and colleagues find themselves. In the case studies, this primarily refers to the archetype of the separation of families, the cause of which is explicitly attributed to the disasters. The following examples illustrate this, in describing children asking for their fathers and relatives not being able to say, 'I love you' or 'goodbye':

<u>Malaysia Airlines 370:</u>

[Ms. Wen, wife of missing passenger:] My husband was on that plane, my child is asking me for their dad, day after day. What can I do? But, now, there is no information at all. We really are helpless. (Sky News at Nine 2014)

[Mother of missing passenger, no name:] [Crying] There is something I really want to say to my son: I love you, all of us love you. (Sky News at Seven 2014)

Taken together, our findings suggest that emotional content – in the form of the stories of the passengers and those who survived them – serves a crucial role in bringing to life the human drama of the disaster. It does this through concrete and often graphic detail, which invites audience members to put themselves in the shoes of the individuals behind the numbers. Such content is shaped by the essential journalistic skill of storytelling (Franco 2008) and showcases a tendency toward narrative journalism where texts lean on literary tools, such as personalised storytelling, to contribute to and heighten the human drama of these news stories, inviting the audience for self-identification (Tulloch 2014; Naranjo 2017). For example, van Krieken and Sanders (2021: 1403) explained that "journalistic narratives have a stronger engaging effect on audience members than non-narratives, both in terms of feeling 'present' at the described scenes and in terms of identifying and empathizing with the story characters".

This is vital to the cultivation of compassion. Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) proposed a typology of three different forms of news of suffering, what she calls "adventure," "emergency" and "ecstatic" news. Adventure news is "news of suffering without pity", characterised by brief, factual reports represented by a "void of agency" because of the absence of any human actors from the story (Chouliaraki 2006, pp. 10-11). By contrast, emergency news is "news of suffering with pity", which represents victims as individuals who can be helped by the action of distant others (Chouliaraki 2006, pp. 10-11). Finally, what she refers to as "ecstatic news", exemplified by coverage after the September 11 attacks, brings the sufferers as close to the spectators as possible, opening up a space for identification (Chouliaraki 2006, pp. 10–11). Ecstatic news constructs "the sufferers as *sovereign agents* on their own suffering and in a relationship of *reflexive identification* between these sufferers and the spectators" (Chouliaraki 2006, p. 157) and enables a cosmopolitan disposition by "contextualizing the intensely personal in the realm of the public and the political" (Chouliaraki 2006, p. 215). The emotional content we highlighted represents such ecstatic news – typical of proximate suffering. Western media audiences largely encounter 'suffering' and disasters indirectly through inhabitants of global crisis areas. Through the ecstatic news of those affected by airplane disasters, audience members are invited to engage in close encounters with individuals who have their own projects and life histories bound up in the stories of large and otherwise abstract disasters – whether that be geographically proximate or distant.

STYLISTIC FEATURES

In addition to personalised storytelling, reports entangle (emotional) content inside a set of other stylistic features designed to complement and heighten emotionality. The features which are involved in these "meaning-making processes" (Nikunen 2019, pp. 10-11) of emotionality include the outsourcing of emotions, detailed descriptions, juxtapositions, contrasts, conditional perfect as well as technical features like emotional language and sounds.

The *outsourcing of emotions* suggests that journalists show the feelings of people, such as the relatives, friends and colleagues of the passengers. This feature closely relates to personalised storytelling because it describes people's emotional responses to the disasters. It primarily occurs in two ways, through direct 'emotional' speech or, more indirectly, through descriptions of other people's emotions. Along those lines, the subsequent example shows relatives and friends describing their own emotions but also journalists explaining their emotions. Through the use of Kamariah Sharif's soundbite and the voice-over, emotions are attributed to the relatives and thus 'outsourced'. However, one should note that, at least to a certain extent, the reporting journalist identifies with the relatives in explaining their emotions and thus indirectly assumes a (personal) role in the story. In that context, Schmidt (2021: 1182) notes, for telling literary-minded stories, such personal emotional engagement is necessary to "render ... insights into emotionally relatable accounts".

Malaysia Airlines 370:

[Voice-over:] But, of course, the families of the passengers and crew are still hoping, and they are praying. [Kamariah Sharif, mother of missing passenger:] Oh God, give me strength and guidance. I can't tell you how much I miss my son. This has gone on for so long now. I've been talking to a photo of him, asking, 'when will you come back to me?' I pray for you, son, to be home safe. (Sky News at Ten 2014)

Detailed descriptions refer to lengthier storytelling, which adds weight and context to the story. The technique is sometimes paired with *juxtapositions* or *contrasts*, which compare the 'before' and 'after' of events (Edwards 1999; Stenvall 2008). Coverage which illustrates this is prominently found in the case of Germanwings 9525. The example below describes the horror of the crash location and juxtaposes it against what was once 'beautiful' scenery:

[Voice-over:] The mountains so many visitors have adored; now the scene of grim recovery. [...] A passenger aircraft; some of the cabin windows still

visible. The flight data recorder has already been found, but no survivors. (BBC News at Ten 2015)

Conditional perfect is a grammatical tense which allows for describing a hypothetical, unreal or wishful situation that is based on the outcome of an event in the past (Education First, no date a, no date b). It imagines a situation which *could have* happened if the past had been different. The following example shows how the disasters transformed the lives and plans of those affected. Here, the horrors of the present are aligned with an imagined situation of what would have happened if the disasters had not taken place.

> Germanwings 9525:
>
> [Voice-over:] 17-year-old Mira Boos should have been celebrating this special day with her best friend [it was her birthday]. [Mira Boos:] She was really lovely. ... She was so [pause]. She knew what she wanted to do in her life. We said we'd travel together to the south of America. It's unbelievable. She [would have] had her birthday today. I don't know what I can say. (Sky News at Ten 2015)

The characteristics of the grammatical tense relate to those of *juxtapositions* and *contrasts* as these features also compare the dreadful reality with a hypothetical situation. Yet, the emotionality of conditional perfect derives from a wishful state of reality for the future rather than from the contrast alone. This calls to mind Neiger's discourse of the future, where "we meet journalists in their full might as creators of texts of 'reality' that has not yet occurred and may never come to be" (Neiger 2007, p. 311). In particular, he proposes the idea of an "averted future", asking the question, "'What would have happened if?'" (Neiger 2007, p. 316). However, while his argument focuses on "a conjectured, uncertain future in which worst-case scenarios could become reality" (Neiger 2007, p. 316), *conditional perfect* suggests the opposite, which means that there is a worst-case scenario in the past which could have resulted in a better present or future, had it been avoided in the first place.

Finally, the media can evoke emotions by drawing on technical features such as *emotional language* (Namkoong et al. 2012) and *sounds*. The first aspect primarily refers to emotion words, which express "inner feelings" (Edwards 1999, p. 281) and are, in themselves, associated to 'mean' or describe an emotion (Frijda et al. 1995). These words are often linked to the *outsourcing of emotions* as they are used to describe the emotions that the passengers and their relatives, friends and colleagues are going or may have gone through. Likewise, they may be used by relatives, friends and colleagues to express their own emotions; or by the voice-over and members of the news team to describe the emotions of those affected from an outsider's perspective. Coverage which illustrates this can be seen in the following example where language such as "torment" (BBC Breakfast 2014), "very tough" (BBC Breakfast 2014) and "we just don't feel complete" (BBC Breakfast 2014) is used:

Malaysia Airlines 370:

[Danika Weeks, wife of missing passenger:] We are sitting around waiting, and every day is torment for us. It is on our minds 24/7 … [tearing up] It is very tough. It is not getting any easier on us. You know, I miss him more and more every day. He was our world. And we just don't feel complete without him. And we have not been able to feel anything different because we have had nothing to go on. (BBC Breakfast 2014)

Emotional *sounds* are linked to the representation of 'suffering' in the sense that they provide emotional audio sequences. These heighten emotionality by providing a sense of 'realness' or authenticity to the reports, perhaps even "transcend the boundaries of time and space" (Namkoong et al. 2012, p. 32). As Kyriakidou (2015, pp. 216-217) notes, "[i]f the audio-visual mediation of suffering forms the basis for the emotional character of witnessing, its liveness, the fact that it takes place simultaneously to the act of viewing, is what renders media witnessing morally compelling". The findings on the use of sounds and tones demonstrate that the media pointedly make use of breaks or pauses in the narration, sometimes even explicitly identifying an intended use of silence. This has the effect that the audiences focus on or take in the words and natural sounds from the scene as if they were there 'feeling'

it. The following example shows this as the 'silence' in it focuses the attention of the audience towards the impact the loss of the school children had at the school:

Germanwings 9525:

[Voice-over:] Most striking outside the Josef König high school today was the silence. [Pause] 1,200 boisterous students normally laugh, jostle and shout their way around here. But, today, nothing is normal. 16 school friends, boys and girls, alive with future hopes and dreams, have gone. [Pause] The school shut down on hearing the news, but these youngsters linger on. The reality of their friends' plane crash barely sinking in. (BBC News at Ten 2015)

In the case of Germanwings 9525, some reports also broadcast music from a memorial service commemorating the passengers who lost their lives. For instance, it was reported:

[Voice-over:] [Pipe organ music] There are so many questions. So few answers. This woman, Sarah, lost a relative. 'Oh, Lord', she prays for all the families and friends who miss their loved ones painfully and don't know what is to come, 'I ask you, dry our tears'. [Sad, slow-paced music] Carved angels passed from hand to hand. A symbol of faith and a message too: In all this, the mourners were told you're not alone. (BBC News at Six 2015)

This is interesting as news reports generally avoid using music because of its links to emotionality (Juslin 2013; Juslin and Sloboda 2010). Moreover, it reinforces the idea that the audiences' involvement with the reporting can be 'crafted' through emotional and, in this case, musical storytelling (Peters 2011). For instance, Juslin and Sloboda point out that:

Music is often regarded as a 'language of the emotions' (Cooke, 1959). It expresses emotions that listeners perceive, recognize, or are 'moved' by. … Indeed, there is some indication that most people experience music (somehow, somewhere) every day of their lives, often with an accompanying affective reaction of some sort (Juslin and Sloboda 2010, p. 3).

Our analysis indicates that the media reporting of airplane disasters draws on emotional content which becomes embedded in a set of particular tools that add a dramatic or epic dimension to these 'emotional' narratives and are thus designed to elicit and heighten emotionality. To some extent, this compares to cinematographic ideas regarding the use and effect of music in films: While the activity happening in a film scene has its own appeal to audiences, the musical accompaniment provides a broader framework to embellish and emphasise the drama. Therefore, we suggest that, in an attempt to elicit the compassion or empathy of audiences, news reports use emotionality in a similar way. They draw on 'emotional' moments or content and a variety of stylistic features which highlight the emotionality of such content. Furthermore, our findings suggest that 'emotional' content may not be emotional – at least not in this magnitude – without the use of stylistic features, while the stylistic features may not elicit emotionality without the use of 'emotional' content. In other words, emotional content and the stylistic features are intrinsically linked, in that emotional content provides the suitability for a larger emotional narrative and becomes embedded within a set of stylistic features designed to elicit and heighten the emotionality behind it. This needs to be examined in more detail in future research by charting the responses of audiences. Further attention also needs to be paid to the journalistic production processes to understand the practices underpinning such 'crafted' reporting of emotional content.

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrated how narratives, language and sounds incorporate emotionality in the television coverage of airplane disasters, establishing a broad repertoire of emotional practices in journalism. It showed that reports embed emotional content within a set of stylistic features designed to elicit and heighten the emotional dimension in these narratives. The emotional content refers to the experiences of those affected by the disaster. It illustrates what the people have gone through or are going through at the time of the reporting. In that respect, it usually

describes two topics: the personal stories of the disasters (the stories of the plans and the lost lives of passengers) and the emotional impact the incidents have had on people's lives (the 'suffering' of the relatives, friends and colleagues of the passengers). This practice renders abstract stories tangible by outsourcing emotional labour to those affected by the disasters. In doing so, it resembles forms of 'ecstatic news' that might invite reflexive identification (Chouliaraki 2006). In a fashion similar to narrative journalism, the reports analysed here lean on literary tools or stylistic features, such as personalised storytelling, to complement and heighten the human drama of these news stories (Tulloch 2014; Naranjo 2017). We pointed to a range of additional emotional cues through which emotional content is embedded, including the outsourcing of emotions, detailed descriptions, juxtapositions, contrasts, conditional perfect as well as technical features such as emotional language and sounds. These features establish a new register of emotionality with potential relevance for journalism studies and disaster communication more broadly.

Further, our research indicates that coverage of airplane disasters – in line with broader trends in disaster reporting – provides a moment of rupture with conventional norms of objectivity, opening up new spaces for more emotional reporting (Pantti et al. 2012). In doing so, such coverage elicits the empathy of audiences. However, our analysis also illustrates the complexities of emotional storytelling in disaster reporting. This suggests that emotion discourse is, in fact, flexible "in providing the sense of events, of states of mind" (Edwards 1999, pp. 277-278) as journalists can choose from a broad repertoire of emotional features when reporting events.

Given that the article focused purely on the analysis of texts and sounds, we are unable to chart emotional reactions in audiences. This means that, while some content and stylistic features may be considered "influential in shaping public emotions in diverse and subtle ways" (Richards and Rees 2011, p. 854), further research needs to be conducted on audience responses to such coverage. Future research also needs to focus on the journalistic production processes behind such 'emotional' practice as well as on the role of visual elements in emotion discourse

because visuals have an inherently "affective or emotional power, that is the ability to 'move' us" (Domke et al. 2002, pp. 133-134). Last but not least, the scholarship in the field could be widened by examining how our established repertoire of emotional content and cues applies to other news – on disasters and more generally – to enhance knowledge about journalistic storytelling more broadly.

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