King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1016/j.linged.2019.05.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2019.05.003)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Georgakopoulou, A. (2019). Designing stories on social media: A corpus-assisted critical perspective on the mismatches of story-curation. *Linguistics and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2019.05.003>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Manuscript Details

Manuscript number	LINEDU_2018_390_R1
Title	Designing stories on social media: A corpus-assisted critical perspective on the mismatches of story-curation
Article type	Full Length Article

Abstract

At a time of increased monetization of social media, there is scope and need for critical-linguistic perspectives to go beyond the focus on users' linguistic and multi-modal resources. Drawing on the project 'Life-writing of the moment: The sharing and updating self on social media' (www.ego-media.org), in this article, I make a case for a corpus-assisted critical perspective which allows the scrutiny of media companies' design of stories as communication features in their apps. What definitions and views of stories underpin such story-features? What facilities are on offer for posting stories, how are they branded, and why? Who is positioned as an ideal story-creator and audience of those stories and why? I address these questions with reference to the recent story-designing spree on Snapchat and Instagram. The corpus analysis of how stories as an app feature are launched and discussed on online media, incl. keyword analysis and lexical and thematic associations of the term 'story', has brought to the fore three mismatches between the marketing rhetoric or branding of stories as a feature and the actual affordances offered for them. These involve tensions and trade-offs between: continuity of self and ephemerality; textuality and visuality; creativity and control for the user vs. pre-selection templates and customization. These mismatches are revealing of a re-designation of key-ingredients of stories, in particular time, memories and audience engagement, so as to suit the apps' agenda of metricization of users' lives and their ever closer links with advertising.

Keywords	Instagram & Snapchat Stories; sharing-life-in-the-moment; visuality; creativity; pre-selection templates
Taxonomy	Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences
Corresponding Author	Alexandra Georgakopoulou
Order of Authors	Alexandra Georgakopoulou

Submission Files Included in this PDF

File Name [File Type]

response to reviewers.docx [Response to Reviewers (without Author Details)]

highlights.docx [Highlights]

Title page for L&E updated.docx [Title Page (with Author Details)]

Designing stories on social media article revised.docx [Manuscript (without Author Details)]

To view all the submission files, including those not included in the PDF, click on the manuscript title on your EVISE Homepage, then click 'Download zip file'.

Research Data Related to this Submission

There are no linked research data sets for this submission. The following reason is given:
Our data is a custom-made corpus on Sketch Engine owned by the EgoMedia Project (and in an online repository attached to the project) which we can make available upon request.

Many thanks to the reviewers for their positive reaction to my article and their valid points for minor revisions. I have now done my best to address all of the points raised.

Specifically, I contextualized my study more fully in existing digital narrative studies on the one hand and science and technology studies and platform studies on the other hand, by adding references and pointing out gaps in the former body of work. Related to this, I provided a fuller rationale for the need of the present study and its place in digital narrative studies. (I could have provided more detail regarding the above, as the bodies of work involved here are both from multiple disciplines and multi-stranded, but the article was already long and with the additions made, it is now c. 400 words longer than before).

I went through all the tables and made information in the captions clearer (Table 3 had the wrong caption – corrected that), where applicable, as well as streamlining choices of emphasis (e.g. bold). I also explained the reference to the number of occurrences of the bi-gram ‘much creativity’ as requested. Finally, I corrected typos.

- * Current stories-designing spree on social media critically analysed with a focus on Instagram & Snapchat Stories.
- * Corpus-assisted analysis reveals three mismatches between the rhetoric of stories as a feature on apps and the affordances offered:

continuity of self vs. ephemerality;
textuality vs. visuality
creativity & control for the user vs. pre-selection templates & customization
- * Story-curation re-designates key-ingredients of stories: time, memories and audience engagement.
- * Re-designation of stories within story-curation suits the agenda of users' metricization & ever closer links with advertising

Designing stories on social media:

A corpus-assisted critical perspective on the mismatches of story-curation

Alex Georgakopoulou (*King's College London*)¹

Corresponding address:

Alex Georgakopoulou
Professor of Discourse Analysis & Sociolinguistics
School of Education, Communication & Society
King's College London
Waterloo Bridge Wing, Franklin-Wilkins Building, Waterloo Road
London, SE1 9NH, UK

Email: alexandra.georgakopoulou@kcl.ac.uk

Declarations of interest: None

¹ Acknowledgements: 1) I am very grateful to Anda Drasovean for compiling the corpus, carrying out keyword, concordance and collocation analysis and providing feedback on the discussion of the corpus results of this article. All remaining errors are mine.

2) This article has been made possible as a result of funding from the European Research Council (ERC) for the project 'Ego-Media: the impact of new media on forms and practices of self-presentation' [FP7/2007-2013; grant agreement No. 340331].

Abstract

At a time of increased monetization of social media, there is scope and need for critical-linguistic perspectives to go beyond the focus on users' linguistic and multi-modal resources. Drawing on the project 'Life-writing of the moment: The sharing and updating self on social media' (www.ego-media.org), in this article, I make a case for a corpus-assisted critical perspective which allows the scrutiny of media companies' design of stories as communication features in their apps. What definitions and views of stories underpin such story-features? What facilities are on offer for posting stories, how are they branded, and why? Who is positioned as an ideal story-creator and audience of those stories and why? I address these questions with reference to the recent story-designing spree on Snapchat and Instagram. The corpus analysis of how stories as an app feature are launched and discussed on online media, incl. keyword analysis and lexical and thematic associations of the term 'story', has brought to the fore three mismatches between the marketing rhetoric or branding of stories as a feature and the actual affordances offered for them. These involve tensions and trade-offs between: continuity of self and ephemerality; textuality and visuality; creativity and control for the user vs. pre-selection templates and customization. These mismatches are revealing of a re-designation of key-ingredients of stories, in particular time, memories and audience engagement, so as to suit the apps' agenda of metricization of users' lives and their ever closer links with advertising.

Keywords: Instagram & Snapchat Stories, sharing-life-in-the-moment, visuality, creativity, pre-selection templates.

1. Introduction

My starting point in this article is that, at a time of increased monetization of social media, there is much scope and need for critical perspectives on the social media constitution of selves. I draw on the project 'Life-writing of the moment: The sharing and updating self on social media' (www.ego-media.org), where I apply a critical *small stories* perspective to social media: this enables me to explore both users' practices and the media apps' designing of communication in the context of what stories are promoted and shared by whom, how and why. Stories have been amply documented as a prime communication mode for the constitution of tellers' subjectivities in a wide range of everyday life contexts (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012: ch 1). At the same time, there is, by now, a critical mass that has shed light on the forms, functions and contextual aspects of stories online in digitally orientated narrative studies, such as transmedial narratology (e.g. Thon 2016), digital narratology (e.g. Bell, Ensslin & Rustad 2014), sociolinguistics (e.g. articles in De Fina & Perrino 2017) and mediated narrative analysis (Page 2018). Some of this work especially within sociolinguistics has notably drawn on epistemological insights and methodological tools from small stories research, which I originally developed for the analysis of stories in interactional contexts and lately tested out and further systematized for the analysis of social media communication (see section 2 below). Nonetheless, research on stories as media-designed and 'curated' communication, integrated into the ecology of quantification and computation of users' activities, is lagging behind. Addressing this gap is a prerequisite for interrogating the kinds of political, ethical and emotive subjects media apps seek to engineer, since stories play a major role in how we (re)work and make sense of our

experience, emotions, and ourselves over time. A key-focus in this inquiry into the facilities and directives for storytelling online is the recent move of media companies toward producing stories as distinct, engineered features in their apps. This story-designing spree is a step up in story-curation which in my view warrants urgent scrutiny: the process of creating story-features, described by Instagram CEO Kevin Systrom, as drawing on “a format”, taking it “to a network” and putting “your own spin on it” (cited in Constine 2016)¹ needs to be unpicked. What definitions and views of ‘story’ is it underpinned by? What facilities are on offer for posting stories, how are they being branded², and why? Who is positioned as an ideal story-creator and audience of those stories and why?

In this article, I will address these questions with specific reference to the feature of Stories³ on Instagram and Snapchat. Quite simply, I will seek to shed light on what the design of stories tells us about what a story is on the architected space of Snapchat and Instagram. My corpus-assisted analysis of how *Stories* are launched by the apps and subsequently discussed and reviewed in online media (see section 2 below) has made apparent a notable convergence on how stories are conceptualized and what kinds of

¹ This was in response to the criticism that Instagram Stories had copied the successful feature of Snapchat Stories.

² As I will show, stories as a feature are promoted as a new product partly addressed at ordinary users and partly at businesses and so marketing language and strategies are integral parts of their launch.

³ All references to the app feature will be with capital S henceforth.

affordances⁴ are offered for them. In particular, the explicit designing of Stories as an accumulation of moments was found to come with certain paradoxes and mismatches between the rhetoric of the design and the affordances on offer. These paradoxes involve trade-offs and tensions between:

- a) A promised continuity of self that goes beyond the here-and-now and the apps' logic of ephemerality and sharing the moment.
- b) The use of conventional definitions of stories as primarily verbal and textual activities and their design as primarily visual activities supported by a meta-language of visuality.
- c) The rhetoric of personalization, creativity and control for the users, on the one hand, and the abundance of pre-selection templates and customization on the other.

These mismatches are revealing of a re-designation of key-ingredients of stories, in particular time, memories and audience engagement. This, in turn, suits the apps' agenda of metricization of users' lives and their ever closer links with advertising.

Links with advertising are attestable in the language of business and marketing that is incorporated in the design of story-features which render stories as commoditized, consumable and branded activities. Sharing-lives-in-the-moment, I will argue, is being

⁴ Drawing on Gibson's (1977) seminal work, affordances on social media are widely defined as perceived (by the users) possibilities and constraints for action (see Barton & Lee 2013).

designed, promoted and monetized with the millennials and generation Z⁵ as a primary target audience of early adopter users. This has implications for what kinds of lives and subjectivities Stories as a feature have the potential of making widely available.

2. Data and methods

The data for this article are part of a larger project entitled “Life-Writing of the Moment: The Sharing and Updating Self on Social Media”.⁶ This project follows on from my work on small stories for the analysis of social media communication (Author 2013a,b; 2014). Within this approach, stories are examined as contextualized social practices. To do so, I bring together micro-analytical, online conversation analysis methods (Giles et al 2014) with digital ethnography (Varis 2015) and a genealogical approach to media platforms that examines the ways in which they compute and (re)-configure users and social relations, especially through the prism of the algorithmic quantification of their activities (e.g. Gillespie 2016, Lupton 2016, van Dijck 2013). In line with the growing line of critical inquiry into media apps and their algorithms within platform studies as well as within science and technology studies, I view platforms as ideologically-laden spaces and socio-material actors with influence on communication, in that they prompt, encourage, and provide users with specific tools for specific ways of (inter)acting in

⁵ The millennials are variously called Generation Y and the ‘me generation’. There is lack of agreement on the endpoints of both the millennials and the Generation Z. Broadly speaking, the labels apply to those born between the early 80s and mid-90s and from thereafter to 2012 respectively.

⁶ The project is part of the ERC funded Advanced Grant ‘Ego-media: the impact of new media on forms and practices of self-presentation’. <http://www.ego-media.org/>. The project has been granted ethical approval by King’s College London Research Ethics Committee.

them (e.g. Beer 2009, Bucher 2018, Kitchin & Dodge 2011). I also draw on the emerging critical discourse-analytic work on the significance of the apps' Discourses, especially via their CEOs and product managers, for how users are discursively constructed and what roles are projected for them (e.g. Hoffman, Proferes & Zimmer 2016). Finally, as I will discuss below, I employ corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) principles and techniques so as to uncover hidden meanings and interconnections in the discourse of apps and their offerings for stories. In tune with a critical discourse analytic agenda, I view such opaque meanings as having the potential to promote certain stories and semiotic choices in them, making them more available than others and even normalizing them.

My starting point in the *Ego-Media* project has been the built-in logic of breaking news in many social networking sites (Author 2013a). This is linked with the algorithmically shaped preference for recency of posts: recency notably remains one of three weighing factors in Facebook's algorithm Edgerank (cf. Bucher 2012). I have demonstrated how this economy of breaking news serves as a directive to users for sharing their everyday life as *small stories*, that is, as brief, fragmented, share-as-you-go snapshots of daily, often mundane, life (Author 2017a). Not taking up this prompt for sharing life-in-the-moment comes with a cost to users' metricized popularity, as I have shown in relation to young women's selfies on Facebook (Author 2016a). With data from Facebook and YouTube, I have also shown the salience of two user practices of posting and distributing small stories: *Taking a narrative stance* on unfolding events and semiotically manipulating (*rescripting*) circulated stories through memes, mash ups, etc. (Author 2015, 2017b). These practices are shaped by media affordances and so they attest to the role of such affordances in making certain types of stories and, in turn,

modes of self-presentation more prominent (Author 2016b).

The role and place of corpus methods

To complement the micro-analysis of my data-sets, I draw on corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS, Partington 2004) for the analysis of published surveys, platform blogs, including any publicity about new features for stories, and reviews of such new features in online tech magazines. I view this material as a sort of paratext (Genette 1980), an important part of the complex mediation between algorithms, affordances, discourses of media companies and users' practices. A corpus-assisted analysis allows me to undertake a critical approach to social media affordances in connection with the micro-analysis of users' stories and the ethnographic tracking of changes in media affordances (cf. Jaworska 2016 on the value of combining methods in CADS). Specifically, the corpus methodology is instrumental in identifying discourses of how stories are being viewed and defined and how they connect with the breaking news logic. In CADS, the analysis tends to follow a recursive process (Scott & Tribble 2006) of shifting between quantitative handlings of large data and 'funnelling down' (Marchi 2010) from identified patterns to micro-analyses of stretches of data with consideration of context (Baker et al 2013).

The corpus-assisted analysis of the present study followed on from a qualitative analysis of key-articles on Stories as a feature on Instagram and Snapchat. Using previous findings on how users adapt media-facilities for sharing the moment to produce small stories, I sought to identify the extent to which Stories as a feature build on or, indeed,

depart from established practices (Author 2017b). In particular, I focused on how aspects of plot in the Stories were talked about and what facilities were offered for them. This included what connections were made between Stories and time, what was proposed as a tellable story and how, and what modes of audience engagement were promoted. I noted the significance of the lexis *moments* in how Stories were connected with time, a constant referencing to *telling stories* when in fact Stories were primarily defined as collections of snaps and photographs, and the abundance of metricization and tools in the creation of Stories. In parallel, my ethnographic tracking of a group of female teenagers whose selfies I had analysed (Author 2016a) suggested their move to Snapchat and then Instagram Stories as a more ‘authentic’ way of presenting themselves and their lives than selfies. This tallied with celebrities and influencers adopting Stories as a way of presenting non-filtered, non-narcissistic selves (e.g. Kim Kardashian, see Author 2018).

The EgoMedia corpus

In compiling a web-based corpus on how Stories as an app feature are launched and reviewed, my aim was to scale up and probe into the above observations with a view to documenting their resonance beyond individual texts and cases and to uncovering any lexical and thematic associations that revealed hidden meanings in the design and promotion of Stories. The results of the corpus analysis, in turn, guided further micro-analysis, which is currently informing the next stage of corpus analysis. This further analysis is beyond the scope of this article.

Using advanced google search facilities on stories, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook, and the search engines *Google*, *Bing* and *DuckDuckGo*,⁷ we pulled c. 1,213 articles (excluding duplicates) related to the introduction and review of Snapchat Stories (2014) and Instagram Stories (2016).⁸ The obtained corpus (henceforth the *EgoMedia* corpus) contains 156 files and approx. 1.000.000 words.

The main types of sources include:

- online newspapers (Mail Online, USA Today, NY Times, Independent, BBC, Metro)
- tech magazines and blogs: e.g. TechJunkie, The Verge, Macworld, The Next Web, TechCrunch, Wired
- business/online marketing magazines and blogs: Sprout Social, Marketing Land, Forbes, Business Insider, eearchenginejournal.com
- digital media magazines and blogs: BuzzFeed, Hootsuite
- Instagram/Snapchat blogs (<https://instagram-press.com/blog>, <https://www.snap.com/>)
- lifestyle blogs & online magazines: People Magazine, Romper

The articles were collected over a period of two weeks in January 2018 and the publication dates include the time interval 9/05/2012-30/1/2018. The graph below

⁷ We used more than one search engine to try and minimize the biases of Google search histories in the collection of data.

⁸ The corpus was compiled in February 2018 and it includes material published by January 2018.

shows the distribution of the articles over time. The spikes in the graph represent key-events in the evolution of Stories (e.g. 02/08/2016 – Instagram launches stories).

Our search results (URL) were retrieved using a browser add-on (*Linkclump*) and saved in a spreadsheet. The unique URLs resulting from the searches were fed into a custom-made Python script. Using the Python module ‘Newspapers’, this script downloads the html file for each URL, and then parses it to extract the page’s/article’s title, date of publication, author, text, any images and accompanying videos.⁹ Once all this information was downloaded and parsed, it was saved in a CSV file. The last step in the corpus- building process was that of encoding the text and metadata in an XML format so that they can be read and searched with the help of corpus analysis software (Sketch Engine). We subsequently generated two keyword lists, one containing single-word, the other multi-word units, using the reference corpus EnTenTen15 (or English Web 2015), a web corpus of approx. 15 billion words, collected in 2015. We also used the British National Corpus (BNC) and the TED_en Corpus (transcriptions of TED talks), both of

⁹ Although such elements were ‘cleaned up’ for the purposes of the corpus analysis, it was important for us to download and have access to them for any subsequent multimodal analysis. The articles employed few (recurrent) photos and videos, mostly taken by the apps’ launching blogs, which routinely serve as templates (for what a good story to post is) and guides for how to post stories.

which are available on Sketch Engine, to generate and compare word-sketches: these are lists of salient collocates grouped by grammatical category.

Following funnelling down principles of CADS, we identified keywords and key-semantic domains, collocates, so as to explore the textual behaviour of keywords, and concordances, so as to explore patterns of lexical associations. The manual analysis of the highest ranked 100 keywords and key-phrases (by comparison to our reference corpora) identified 'time' (esp. 'moments'), 'sharing', 'pronouns', 'business', 'creativity' and 'visuality' in the top 50 categories of words. These will be discussed below. A key-semantic domain analysis was also carried out, using the programme Wmatrix¹⁰ and a sample of 100 randomly picked articles.

3. Analysis: The mismatches of story-curation

My study has so far attested to an increasingly close link between social media product design, often described as 'curation', and stories-in-the-moment. This is particularly the case in the evolution of Facebook, of Instagram which was acquired by Facebook in 2012, and of Snapchat, the 3rd most popular social app, after Facebook and Instagram, amongst the millennials and the generation Z. I have identified 3 pivotal design-phases

¹⁰ The Wmatrix is an online tool (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix>) that automates the semantic categorization process and allows the exploration of semantic fields and collocations.

in relation to stories in the evolution of these ego-centred apps.¹¹ I have also documented the development of specific story-genres, storyteller-positions and audience uptake for each of them (Author 2017b). A discussion of these is beyond the scope of this article. Briefly though, the first design-phase (pivot) goes back to about a decade ago and it involves a gradual rolling out of affordances for *sharing the moment now*, based on an algorithmic pressure for immediacy. The 2nd major design-phase involved the move from telling the moment, with text-based representations, to showing the moment. This was enabled and encouraged with facilities for geo-location, shared check-ins and visual affordances, in particular selfies, which rose in popularity in 2013 (Author 2016a). In this article, I focus on the third and latest design-phase (covering mainly the period post-2015), which I describe as a story-designing spree, as it involves the rolling out of facilities, explicitly branded as memory and *story-facilities*.

Many apps currently converge on launching these facilities as a way of allowing users to create a more continuous sharing of their everyday moments, to share ‘not just one moment, but all moments of their day’. This includes WhatsApp Status (2016), Twitter Moments (2016), and Facebook Stories (2017). Here I am focusing on the hugely popular Snapchat Stories (2014) and Instagram Stories (2016). The feature of Stories¹²

¹¹ Ego networks are akin to ‘common-bond communities’ which owe their existence primarily to the fact that the members are interested in one another, as opposed to building on shared interests (Schwämmlein and Wodzicki 2012: 388).

¹² Stories as a feature acquire material, iconic and action-button dimensions: for instance, users click on their story button to share to their story day. They used to swipe left on the main camera screen to access their friends’ stories on Snapchat. (Now they swipe right). They tap on a user’s profile to see their story

has been described as ‘a game changer’ (Cooper 2016) for Snapchat and so it was no accident that it was largely replicated by Instagram Stories. As of 2017, the number of Stories posted on Instagram has surpassed that of Snapchat Stories: as an estimate, 300 million people use Instagram Stories every day (<https://www.statista.com>). Teenagers post on average 4 times more stories a day than any other age-group.

My analysis of this story-designing spree shows that it needs to be placed genealogically in the context of attempts by Facebook to go beyond the single feed and the present moment by allowing users to share memories. The Timeline is such an early attempt followed by the video “A Look Back,” which was launched for the 10th anniversary of the platform in 2014, and ‘On this day’ in 2015, which allows users to revisit posts and share them as memories. The curation of memories is thus an antecedent to the curation of stories: what brings them together is the apps’ move to providing facilities that enable users to go beyond the single feed and the present moment. This is presented as a key-feature in Snapchat and Instagram Stories. Stories are presented by apps as a novelty and an important step toward facilitating the so called ‘rich’ and ‘meaningful’ user-content. But as I will show below, they build upon and consolidate the two aforementioned design-phases of sharing the moment as breaking news and of showing the moment. In this way, they take on some of their limitations, which they purport to solve, in particular the pressure on users to share on a daily basis and to privilege the here-and-now of their postings. This reliance on and extension of facilities for

and a user’s profile picture on Instagram has a colourful ring around it to indicate that they have posted a story.

‘sharing/showing the moment now’ creates three key-mismatches between the marketing rhetoric of Stories as a feature and the affordances offered for them.

3.1 Continuity vs. ephemerality

Stories are launched as chronologically ordered collections of photos and videos with a beginning-middle-end and some continuity and permanence, which is from the outset defined as being relative to the single feed and the moment. For instance, in their inception, Snapchat Stories, were a way of going beyond the app’s pure ephemerality, by allowing users to post photos and/or videos that last for 24 hours, as opposed to being erased after viewed.¹³ In this way, Stories draw on conventional, accepted definitions that users can be expected to be familiar with. In the same vein as Stories on Snapchat and Instagram, the earlier discourses underpinning Timeline and Memories on Facebook are readily connectable with conventional conceptualizations of a story as a more permanent, temporalized and ordered activity. We note then an association of memories and stories with the ideas of chronicling and archiving both today and “your past life”. This is, however, done in close association with the unit of moment and with posts, either previous or current, within a given platform. Memories on Facebook, for instance, are retrospectively put together by Facebook to include previous moments within Facebook: *your posts and others’ posts you’re tagged in, major life events and when you became friends with someone on Facebook*. On the one hand, memories are designed as a retrievable archive of experiences, evoking a lay metaphor of memories with wide currency (Brockmeier 2015). On the other hand, they are still premised on

¹³ Even though stories are just 10 seconds long, relatively speaking, they are more sustained activities than individual snaps.

and created out of past single feeds posted by users as a response to the directive of sharing the moment.

It is notable that in the EgoMedia corpus the lexeme ‘moment(s)’ is one of the top 50 keywords and it mostly collocates with ‘share/sharing’ (see Table 1 below). This suggests the close association of Stories with sharing moments, which is a far cry from the conventional definition of stories as reports of past events, evaluated and reflected upon by the narrator. (The association of stories with the past and past events is also noted in the reference corpora).

Rank	Collocate	Freq.	logDice Score
1	share	271	11.415
2	day	121	10.619
3	Twitter	67	10.014
4	capture	46	9.9
5	all	104	9.83
6	sharing	53	9.787
7	life	50	9.749
8	lets	39	9.549
9	those	47	9.523
10	not	79	9.422
11	remember	31	9.374
12	in	224	9.339
13	their	100	9.238
14	from	90	9.149
15	everyday	25	9.145
16	throughout	26	9.131
17	capturing	24	9.113
18	of	316	9.11
19	the	575	9.075
20	that	172	8.956

Table 1 – Top 20 collocates for *moment* (ranked by logDice score)

The sense of continuity which the launching of Stories evokes is therefore at odds with the continuing, algorithmically-valued features of liveness of sharing, recency and ephemerality. Snapchat Stories, for instance, remain live for 24 hours and then disappear. They are also literally small stories, i.e. 10 seconds long. And even though Instagram Stories can now be archived beyond 24 hours or be added to users' profiles to appear as highlights, the algorithms still prioritize recency and new-ness in a number of ways. For instance, out of the people a user follows and Instagram thinks this user wants to see, the stories are ordered by time: whoever has posted most recently will be first in the feed. Putting together stories to go beyond the moment is therefore still done in ways that allow for aggregative compilations of moments in the present rather than for reflective, highly selective re-constructions of past events. This has implications for how features that promise more sustained story-activities can be taken up by users. Kaun & Stiernstedt (2014) show that prioritizing recent posts and inviting users to constantly upload new materials is not conducive to collective remembering on Facebook. Flow, immediacy and liveness are found to be major elements, not only in terms of how users are asked to participate in making memories, but also in how they experience time. In similar vein, the analysis of the key-semantic domains suggests that immediacy is a salient theme in the corpus (see Table 2 below).¹⁴ This can be observed

¹⁴ The table presents the 20 most salient semantic domains (ranked by log likelihood value and relative to BNC, our reference corpus) and the most frequent words assigned to these domains (with a freq. >10).

in the highlighted semantic fields ‘Time: Future’ (row 14) and ‘Time: Present; simultaneous’ (Row 20).

Rank	Freq. in sample corpus	Log-likelihood value (LL)	Semantic domain	Most frequent words
1	2150	2173.72	Speech: Communicative	stories, story, content, said, say, comments, says, told, talking, conversation, talk, point, comment, saying, spoke, note, mentioned,
2	701	996.04	Using	users, use, using, user, used, uses, function,
3	654	785.25	Arts and crafts	photos, photo, camera, icon, pictures, picture, design, draw, drawings, drawing,
4	3403	783.41	Unmatched	Instagram, snapchat, app, apps, whatsapp, slideshow, screenshot, Canva, Stacy, emoji, geofilter, iphone, Ingrid, username, millennials, Shopify, emojis, storytelling,
5	435	649.6	The Media: TV, Radio and Cinema	video, videos, viewers,
6	358	511.99	Information technology and computing	screen, upload, blog, website, web, digital, online, messaging, downloaded, computer, https,
7	286	506.55	Reciprocal	share, sharing, shared, shares,
8	8194	406.27	Pronouns	you, your, it, that, i, they, their, what, she, we, them, who, this, her, which, my, its, something, he, our, us, me, someone, his, one, everyone, everything, those, itself, these, anyone, anything, their_own, your_own, him, ones, whatever, yourself,
9	731	402.12	Paper documents and writing	post, posts, text, page, archive, posting, posted, list, delete, stickers, record, recording, edit, tag, deleted,
10	503	279.17	General appearance and physical properties	feature, image, twitter, images, features, format, ready,
11	183	177.73	The Media	media, publish, published
12	31	147.6	Business	rolling_out
13	292	141.42	Business: Generally	business, company, businesses, b2b, companies,
14	542	135.72	Time: Future	will, 'll, going_to, wo, soon, future,
15	349	130.08	Business: Selling	marketing, ads, customers, marketers, sales, buy, store, advertisement, advertising,
16	326	123.31	If	if

17	619	115.73	Wanted	want, choose, strategy, option, select, options, wanted, choice,
18	443	113.1	Sensory: Sight	see, watch, seen, watching, look_at, seeing, visual, watched, visible,
19	1171	102.93	Likely	can, would, could, may, might, ca, 'd, probably, likely, sure, make_sure, possible, clear, potential,
20	428	100.83	Time: Present; simultaneous	now, update, daily, yet, today, current, currently, updates, right_now,

Table 2 – Key semantic domains

The salience of immediacy in the corpus is mainly supported by the aforementioned importance of the lexeme ‘moment(s)’, which is in turn associated with *sharing and capturing instants of one’s day* and *doing things/living/being “in the moment”*. The most frequent modifiers for *moment* (see Table 3, column 1, below), often used in the plural, can be grouped semantically in three broad categories:

1. everyday, little, casual, daily
2. special, favourite, funny, beautiful, perfect, interesting, authentic
3. fleeting, brief

EgoMedia		BNC		English Web 2015		TED_en	
Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score
share	10.55	few	9.15	memorable	8.63	present	9.58
twitter	10.13	brief	8.89	very	8.35	brief	9.16
everyday	9.99	very	8.73	present	8.22	very	9.1
favorite	9.74	fleeting	8.1	brief	8.18	exact	8.93
special	9.19	precise	7.89	pivotal	7.97	few	7.34
funny	8.78	crucial	7.88	few	7.95	great	6.52
brief	8.7	right	7.75	proud	7.93		
life	8.64	last	7.58	teachable	7.9		
behind-the-scenes	8.58	critical	7.4	dull	7.51		

fleeting	8.52	present	7.36	crucial	7.37
particular	8.46	dipole	7.28	quiet	7.37
little	8.46	rare	7.23	watershed	7.31

Table 3 – Most salient modifier collocates for *moment* in the EgoMedia, BNC, English Web 2015, and TED_en corpora

Moments are thus associated with spontaneity and the mundane, reinforcing the deployment of stories for sharing the everyday as it happens and as ‘multiple’, ‘little’ moments. This is in contrast to the two most frequent meanings of *moment* in the BNC, namely moment as a very short time interval (e.g. a brief moment) and as an opportune and specific occasion (e.g. at the last/crucial/right moment). Such conventional associations for *moment* are absent from our corpus in favour of new associations, esp. with the mundane.

In similar vein, the analysis of the collocates of the lemma *story* (see Table 4 below) shows that the association between stories and memories, which is salient in the BNC, is absent from our corpus, providing further evidence for the close association of stories with the present moment and ephemerality.

EgoMedia		BNC		English Web 2015		TED_en	
Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score
view	11.45	tell	10.29	tell	11.34	tell	10.62
watch	10.87	hear	7.67	read	9.11	hear	8.15
tell	10.84	read	7.59	share	9.03	write	8.12
create	10.79	write	7.57	hear	8.19	share	8
see	10.26	recount	7.39	write	7.79	cut	7.99
post	10.06	believe	7.37	recount	7.06	remember	7.31
hide	9.86	invent	6.77	publish	6.97	know	6.52
save	9.55	cut	6.77	retell	6.95	start	6.2

share	9.38	relate	6.71	narrate	6.83	be	6.15
bring	9	finish	6.62	know	6.62	make	5.84
make	8.88	know	6.59	love	6.46	become	5.67
have	8.53	retell	6.45	relate	6.3		
open	8.17	publish	6.39	be	6.29		
delete	8.15	continue	6.08	move	6.28		
select	8.11	begin	6.02	cover	6.21		
be	7.98	illustrate	6.02	break	6.19		
add	7.97	remember	5.97	remember	6.05		
tap	7.81	print	5.95	feature	6.03		
download	7.8	narrate	5.91	run	5.97		
screenshotted	7.54	move	5.85	follow	5.94		

Table 4 – Most salient collocates for *story* as (sentence) object in the EgoMedia, BNC, English Web 2015, and TED_en corpora

3.2 Telling vs. showing

The second mismatch in the data involves the way in which the label stories is deployed.

On the one hand, it evokes conventional definitions of telling stories in other environments, particularly stories we tell our friends. The power of stories for connecting with others is also constantly referenced. On the other hand, the rest of the language that describes stories, the template-stories that are offered as pictures or videos, and the actual facilities, designate Stories as postings with photos and videos. In this case too, Memories on Facebook provide a useful antecedent to this re-designation. Memories are described as a visual history of one's life. Similarly, the term 'visual conversation' with friends is increasingly employed by Instagram to describe users' communication with Stories, in particular as one of the latest updates on offer allows viewers of a Story to respond to it with a photo or video. Language and text are

increasingly confined to brief evaluative captions, ideally to be accompanied by emojis. As visual posts count as algorithmically priority posts, it is fair to assume that this serves as incentive for users to comply with the promoted visuality of Stories. It also consolidates the metricization of stories, adding yet another metric of success to the longstanding one of liking, i.e. that of how many users have viewed ‘your story’.

This mismatch between the branding of stories and the affordances offered for them is also attestable in the parallel uses of the lexis *Stories* (with a capital S) and *stories* as two distinct and differentially defined activities. In the corpus, the former was found to refer to the engineered app feature that comes with specific affordances, while the latter, often prefaced by the pronouns ‘my’ and ‘your’, evoked conventional definitions of stories that users are expected to be familiar with from other environments. *Stories* in the plural was also capitalized by 200%, while *story* was 50% more frequent than *Story* (see Tables 5a and 5b below).

Table 5: Frequency of each word-form of the lemma STORY

Word form	Frequency
story	3,832
Story	2,456
STORY	16
stories	11
story's	6
Story's	6

Table 5.a – Word forms (with frequencies) for the lemma STORY (small s)

Word form	Frequency
Stories	8,500
stories	3,316
Stories'	78
STORIES	38

Table 5.b – Word forms (with frequencies) for the lemma STORIES (capital S)

The lemmas *story* and *stories* strongly collocate with visual language (e.g. *watch*, *view*, *see*, *hide*, *appear*, *disappear*, in bold in Tables 6a & 6b below). *Story* (singular) also collocates with *tell* (see Table 6a below) while the lemma *Stories* (plural) does not (see Table 6b below). This is linked with the fact that story also collocates with the theme of creativity, as I will discuss in 3.3. below. *Stories* (both capital S and small s) on the other hand strongly collocate with the verb ‘use’ and the noun ‘feature’ (in bold in Table 6b below). This difference in collocations between story (singular) and stories (plural) provides further evidence for the hybridity of the lemma *story/stories* as both a mode of creativity for the users and a curated feature.

Table 6: Partial word-sketch for the lemma ‘story/Stories’ in the EgoMedia corpus

Modifiers of ‘story’		Nouns and verbs modified by ‘story’		Verbs with ‘story’ as object		Verbs with ‘story’ as subject	
Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score
snapchat	10.96	Explorer	9.92	view	11.45	be	9.74
instagram	10.76	Settings	9.56	watch	10.87	play	9.51
own	10.17	Feature	9.55	tell	10.84	end	9.48
entire	9.96	Setting	9.42	create	10.79	include	9.28
my	9.39	Post	9.34	see	10.26	follow	9.08
new	8.83	Click	9.12	post	10.06	disappear	8.98
first	8.79	highlights	8.79	hide	9.86	use	8.65
snap	8.6	Content	8.63	save	9.55	have	8.51
ig	8.46	tomorrow	8.58	share	9.38	appear	8.49
current	8.4	Today	8.55	bring	9		
custom	8.35	Saver	8.54	make	8.88		
next	8.31	Takeover	8.49	have	8.53		

Table 6a – Partial word-sketch for *story* in the EgoMedia corpus

Modifiers of	Nouns and verbs modified by	Verbs with "Stories" as	Verbs with "Stories" as
--------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

"Stories"		"Stories"		object		subject	
Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score	Collocate	Score
instagram	13.11	Feature	11.12	use	11.69	be	10.97
snapchat	11.22	highlights	10.53	introduce	10.02	have	10.17
facebook	9.39	everywhere	10.31	view	9.91	allow	10.14
live	8.07	Archive	9.66	watch	9.67	do	9.28
custom	7.74	Format	9.31	launch	9.55	let	9.2
official	7.64	Ad	9.26	post	9.39	launch	8.79
our	7.59	Camera	9.04	share	9.37	become	8.76
search	7.52	Screen	9.01	create	9.31	make	8.75
stories	7.37	Ads	8.71	see	9.16	provide	8.74
view	7.26	snapchat	8.63	make	9.08	appear	8.73
feature	7.12	Work	8.56	call	9	give	8.68
insta	7.03	Section	8.55	save	8.85	offer	8.52

Table 6b – Partial word-sketch for *Stories* in the EgoMedia corpus

The re-designation of stories as visual rather than textual communication places a premium on specific narratorial positions, in particular, the narrator-experiencer as opposed to the narrator who can step back and reflect on the goings-on. The privileging of sensory roles for the narrator-recorder of their life (e.g. *I see, I hear, I am experiencing now*) becomes part of the key-semantic domain of visuality. Similarly, audiences are positioned as primarily viewers of stories: The experience and language of watching a TV series or film language are adapted in the offered facilities and so, for example, Stories can be viewed, hidden, watched, muted, rewound, etc. In the EgoMedia corpus, most of the sensory-visual verbs (*watch, see, view*) position users as consumers. This tallies with the marketing purposes of Stories, as I will discuss below, and it adds to the overall mismatch between Stories as a feature and the rhetoric that stories as a label evoke.

3.3. Creativity vs. pre-selection templates

The third mismatch involves the rhetoric of personalization for users, which highlights that they are in a position to control their stories and be content-creators, with the high level of standardization with which stories come, especially in terms of pre-selections. A key-linguistic element of personalization in the corpus involves the unusual¹⁵ frequency of 2nd person pronoun *you*, which is approx. five times more frequent than *I*. (*Your* is about ten times more frequent than *my*, see Table 7 below).

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	you	20607
2	your	16110
3	it	11150
4	I	4356
5	their	4072
6	they	3944
7	we	2655
8	them	2338
9	its	1740
10	my	1654

Table 7 - Top 10 most frequent pronouns in the EgoMedia Corpus

The salience of *you* and *your* can be partly explained by the fact that many of the articles are ‘how to’ guides, containing numerous indications and procedural sequences, and written in a style that directly addresses the users. At the same time, the analysis of *you* collocates suggests a strong association between *you*, if-conditionals and modals, e.g. *can* (see Figure 8 below, excerpt from concordance list). All three categories emerged from the keyword analysis as salient features of the corpus. The fact that they are also

¹⁵ In relation to the reference corpora.

closely connected as collocates suggests an emphasis on the choices and possibilities that Stories as a feature offer to users. At the same time, choices in the corpus seem to be restricted to pre-defined options or scenarios that allow specific courses of action in specific circumstances, as we can see in Figure 8 below:

1	just tap their faded profile photo to send a quick response. You <u>should</u> see the new disappearing photos and videos feature
2	IGN Is Now On SnapchatShare. Oh snap. Oh snap. Update: <u>If</u> you haven't checked out IGN's Snapchat edition, you are
3	has a feature that allows you to add music or sound effects. You <u>can</u> even use your own playlist, although it does add
4	into GIFs and post them on your Instagram Story, even <u>if</u> you re not using Instagram's standalone GIF-creating app
5	of friends or brands that would start group chats <u>if</u> you reply (Instagram) Surely Messenger Day will adopt these
6	the attention of the teenage and under-35 markets. <u>If</u> you re looking for a digital marketing agency that keeps their
7	clicking on the icon, you will be redirected to a page, where you <u>can</u> either enter or paste the URL that you want your
8	. TIPS: If you get bored with one of the snaps within a story, you <u>can</u> use your other hand to tap the screen and it will
9	Insta stories had the most impact. With #InstaStories you <u>can</u> create impactful #videos that resonate with your
10	if there is any way they can watch Live Stories anonymously. You <u>would</u> want to do this when you are 'stalking' or 'checking up

Figure 8 – Example concordance lines for *you* in the EgoMedia corpus

The theme of possibilities for users through Stories is also closely linked with another salient theme in the corpus, that of creativity and originality. Key-words and phrases such as *create*, *creative*, *much creativity*, *creating content*, *own story*, *exclusive content*, indicate emphasis on using the Stories feature creatively, and on being authentic and original. This is certainly how Stories were initially promoted by Instagram: the phrase *much creativity* is amongst the 50 most salient key-phrases (bi-grams) in the corpus (using the English Web 15 as reference corpus). It occurs 29 times in it, as part of the exact same sentence, cited by sources in the corpus, from Instagram's announcement of the Stories feature launch. Creativity collocates with the term *story* in association with possessive modifiers (*my*, *your*) while, as suggested above, *Stories* collocate with the words *feature* and *use*. This positions posters of Stories as both creators of content

(*storytellers*) and as users and consumers of a curated feature. This tension between productive, personalizing and curated roles is also evident in the uses of the keyword *creative*. The analysis of its most significant collocates suggest three main patterns of use:

- Collocates such as *Get, get, Be* indicate that *creative* is frequently used in imperative sentences/headlines (see Figure 9 below, lines 1-3)
- Collocates such as *tools, way, ways, filters, content* suggest that *creative* is frequently used to refer to the creative potential of Instagram/Snapchat tools (see Figure 9, lines 4-7)
- *Creative* is most frequently associated with adjectives such as *fun, funny* and *engaging* (see Figure 9, lines 8-10)

1	provide prizes to the first person to find the answer. <u>Get</u>	creative	, like Travel+Leisure did, and watch your audience
2	media habit if you want to take this medium seriously. <u>Get</u>	creative	. Repetitive content is what kills long-term engagement.
3	are the types of questions marketers have to ask. <u>Push Your</u>	Creative	<u>Side By</u> giving a reason to follow the content, more users
4	want to keep on your profile grid. Edit them with filters and	creative	<u>tools</u> and combine multiple clips into one video. - Share
5	unique. Via spingo: Snapchat geofilters In order to add	creative	<u>design</u> options to your event specific geofencing, follow
6	weekly themed content, and so on. Conclusion There are many	creative	<u>ways</u> to incorporate the new Highlights feature into your
7	in your videos, giving you so many possibilities for	creative	<u>content</u> . Use your imagination! We've got some pawtastic
8	these fun Snapchat ideas a try. Here are seven <u>unique</u> and	creative	uses of Snapchat for your business. 1. Coupons The
9	ideas out on Snapchat? Snapchat allows you to share <u>fun</u> ,	creative	, and personable content quickly and interact with your
10	help you make any photo or video <u>funny, interesting</u> or	creative	." GIF stickers in Instagram are already available today as

Figure 9 – Example concordance lines for creative in the EgoMedia corpus

The above examples show the co-existence of creativity that promises choice and control for the storyteller with designed pre-selection facilities which restrict control to choosing from a menu, adjusting privacy settings, turning notifications on or off, etc. In

similar vein, Stories come with an abundance of constantly evolving tools that are widely adopted by users. These include:

- Augmented reality filters such as koala ears and rainbow barfs
- Bespoke graphics and emojis
- Time and scene duration manipulations, for instance, flipograms and boomerang which allows forward and backward movement
- Template stories and style guidelines
- A menu of voices for users to choose for themselves as character in their story.

Stories thus function as a site for intensifying curation by pulling together complex resources and tools. According to Poulsen's (2018) study of the history of the design of Instagram, this is in tune with the gradual evolution of Instagram from a photo-sharing app to a social network app with social interaction at its centre: Stories have been an important step in this evolution.

Both the abundance of story-facilities and the mismatch between the rhetoric and the reality of creative control for the users are comparable with what has been noted about Mark Zuckerberg's 'user-empowering language' about sharing on Facebook (Freishtat & Sandlin 2010, Hoffman, Proferes & Zimmer 2016). Freishtat & Sandlin (2010) specifically argue that the illusion of control for users is achieved by simplifying and diversifying tools for managing content at the same time as rhetorically positioning them on the same plane as would-be content exploiters. As seen, both strategies apply to the data at hand. In particular, there is a strategic ambivalence in our corpus about who

is addressed: ordinary users, influencers and businesses alike are positioned as level-playing content-producers. At the same time, ordinary users are the ones targeted by the advertising through Stories (see below). The positioning of users as both story-creators and consumers ultimately enhances the mismatch between the rhetoric and reality of control.

Discussion: Stories between creativity and metricization

Why are these mismatches in play? And what do they tell us about the direction of travel in relation to designing stories on media apps at this point? What kinds of stories, lives, and subjectivities does this designing have the potential to make more visible, available and perhaps sought after? At the heart of these questions is our finding that the apps' curation of stories capitalizes on familiar, positive associations of stories with personal creativity and connection with others, through sharing experiences. This suggests that, from the outset, stories are viewed as an attractive communication format in the quest of apps for serving as hubs which keep the users hooked (Eyal 2014). What better way for it than providing facilities that encourage users to present themselves with some kind of continuity, as van Dijck (2013) observes about Facebook and LinkedIn? The mismatches reported above, however, show that using stories as a vehicle well-suited to the provision of facilities for meaningful content-creation is connected with the apps' dual and often competing goals of design and algorithmic maximization. In particular, with Stories, media companies appear to be taking a further step toward the algorithmic micro-targeting of users with advertisements. Stories both in terms of what they reveal

about the users and in terms of how they can be used by business are seen as a more personalized and compelling way of advertising (cf. Constone 2016).

This infrastructure in which social interactivity and affectivity are instantly turned into valuable consumer data has been argued to be intensified by Facebook through multiple actions that are afforded by convergence and cross-syndication of apps. Users' navigation between related apps ultimately feeds data back into Facebook (Gerlitz & Helmond 2013). Such dynamics of intensification shows that the collapse of the social with the quantifiable and traceable is designed on social media as an ongoing and potentially scalable process (idem). The abundance and customization of facilities for Stories, as discussed above, including the ever-evolving metrics, are a case in point. The mismatch between the rhetoric of control for the users and the reality of designed templates can be explained by the role of metricization both as traceable behaviour and as a way of capturing users' attention in the curation of stories.

Further evidence for how the social becomes intertwined with the quantifiable is provided by the analysis of collocates of the keywords *view* and *watch* (see Figure 10). Both keywords frequently co-occur with wh-words and quantifiers (e.g. *many*, *number*, *times*) to form recurring multi-word sequences (e.g. *see who has viewed your story*, *see how many people have viewed your story*). Engagement with a story and enjoyment out of it thus becomes a measurable, status-accruing activity.

1	well, anyone can choose to to follow you. To see <u>who</u> has been	viewing	the snaps on your story, go to the Stories screen as
2	rates. Yes, you are able to take a look at <u>how many</u> people	viewed	your story on Instagram, however, you can't see how
3	away views from stories. Generally, I receive about <u>100</u>	views	if the first two or three minutes after I post a story. Today
4	<u>how many times</u> an Instagram video or image in their feed was	viewed	more generally, according to the number of "likes" it
5	, this is probably a great way to up its numbers and get <u>more</u>	views	to more stories, but the costs (to people's time?) might be

6	you to see <u>how many times</u> your video was viewed and who	watched	it. Marketers can get a better idea of their interacting by
7	before they disappear completely. Also, <u>whenever</u> you	watch	a friend's story it notifies them that you've seen it.. Well
8	story has been seen. This is a good way to see if people are	watching	your story multiple <u>times</u> , which may mean that they are
9	there (read: 1762) is the <u>total number</u> of people <u>who</u> have	watched	your stories so far. While you're watching InstaSnap (I
10	Instagram feed, if you fancy. Can I see <u>how many</u> people have	watched	it? Again, yes. When watching your own story, at the

Figure 10 – Example concordance lines for *view* and *watch*

This metricization of stories is a factor in their huge success as a feature amongst celebrities and influencers who can use them so as to blur the boundaries between sharing snapshots of their mundane everyday with promoting their products (Author 2018). Similarly, established brands are now being promoted by advertisers through Stories. The constant rolling out of features which facilitate this is indicative of where stories as a communication feature are going to next. For instance, the new Paperclip icon on Snapchat lets everyone, from ordinary users to advertisers, attach an external web link to their Snaps for their Stories. It is fair to assume that connecting their presence on Snapchat to other locations on the web is mostly done for the benefit of corporate brands and that, increasingly, users will be encouraged to go to the websites of such brands to check out products. It is no accident that over 50% of businesses on Instagram have produced a Story on the platform and one in five Stories from businesses generate a direct message from a follower, potential client or customer.¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://support.socialreport.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005343286-Instagram-Stories-Vs-Snapchat-Stories-2017-Statistics>

Closely related to the above is the saliency of the business and marketing domains in the EgoMedia corpus, that include the production of 'how to' guides for the use of Stories, produced with business and marketing specialists in mind. This provides further evidence for the ever closer link between any social media curation, of which Stories have been a major example lately, and monetization through advertising.

Conclusion

In this article, I set out to address the question of what definitions and views of stories underpin the increasing offering of story-features on apps. Similarly, who is positioned as an (ideal) story-creator and audience of those stories and why? I focused on the feature of Stories on Instagram and Snapchat. My corpus-assisted critical analysis of how the apps' publicity and other online media present and review Stories, including a keyword analysis and identification of the lexical and thematic associations of the word *story/ies*, made apparent a notable convergence on how they are conceptualized in the two apps and what kinds of affordances are offered for them. In particular, the explicit design of stories as an accumulation of moments was found to come with certain paradoxes and mismatches between the rhetoric of the design and the affordances. Stories were found to be built on the basis of the algorithmic logic of instant, live-sharing despite setting out to go beyond the moment and to offer facilities for continuity of self. They also promoted visual representations and snapshots of sharing the moment as well as viewing audience engagement practices, despite evoking familiar tropes of textual and telling accounts of one's life. The promise of user control and creativity was found to clash with the abundance of pre-selections, prior categorizations of experience, templates and menus with specific editing features.

I argued that these mismatches show a collapse of the relational and creative power of stories with the quantification of users' activities. They thus attest to the increasing links of story-curation with the social media move toward monetized, advertising-linked design. The hybridity of Stories as content-creation features and consumables is also evidenced in the ambivalent positioning in the corpus of the target users of Stories as (ordinary) creators, advertisers and consumers.

Taking into account the media affordances of distribution and amplification, this curation of stories has the potential to create normative ways of storying oneself. Similarly, the convergence and replication of story-facilities across apps suggests that drawing on templates to post stories will become further consolidated as a widely available mode of sharing everyday life, particularly for the main targeted groups of teenagers and young adults. The marketing of Stories already makes specific assumptions about what is story-worthy. In particular, template stories offered by the apps and how-to-guides are about sharing moments of having fun with friends. The features that enhance the stories' plot involve adding weather, location, holidays, funny sunglasses, etc. Users are encouraged to create 'goofy selves' and to do 'imperfect sharing'. Story-design thus seems to have taken on board the backlash from posting on Facebook 'glossy, perfect lives' (Costino 2016) and the moral panic about posting edited selfies as a narcissistic activity (Author 2016a). It also seems to be picking up on a prevalent discourse in the aftermath of this moral panic about the need for online self-presentation to be authentic and 'real' (Marwick 2013). In this way, stories seem to be remedying an earlier emphasis on edited selves. The directive to 'keep it real' becomes, however, integrated into the well-established metricization and attention economy of

apps. Stories become part of a quantified self-presentation. It is true to say that facilities for audience selection are constantly being rolled out: e.g. users can include 10 friends by mention in their Instagram story and these become their ratified addressees. But the dilemmas of audience selection vs. audience reach persist, as stories vie for viewings from as many friends and followers as possible. The uptake of Stories is in turn intertwined with visible (to users) metrics, including not just numbers of views but also of viewing completion figures. Overall, any further curation to stories can be expected to continue to navigate the slippery ground between the provision of meaningful, personalised content-creation which aims at maximizing users' attention economy within an app and the monetization and metricization of lives which capitalizes on this attention.

The deployment of stories in processes of subject-making, especially in the production of entrepreneurial subjects who seek mobility, has lately been noted in relation to many contemporary institutional practices in Western contexts: from legislation and production and circulation of stories in legal hearings to electoral processes and voter canvassing (Fernandez 2017). The critique of this commoditization of stories which often involves scripted performances fashioned in the self-help industry points to a reduction of the vastness of narrative practices and the fullness and complexity of individual experience (idem). This complexity is skewed through the use of dominant narrative devices and plots that make certain stories legible and amenable to travelling beyond their original contexts into the mainstream (idem; also see Shuman 2005). Stories on apps, as discussed in this article, need to be placed in such contexts of neo-liberalization, where stories have been refashioned since the turn of the millennium within a business model, so as to bring capital to organisations. The close association of

stories with the social media economy of sharing, however, as shown, allows the commoditization of stories to take a decisive step further than the self-help industry of globally available training toolkits and protocols produced in the last 20 years. To be specific, the wide availability of ready-made, pre-selection templates, ideally brief and portable for easy distribution, can be expected to commoditize stories even further, rendering the above reported mismatches, especially between curation and creativity and uniqueness, more apparent and potentially more difficult for the users to reconcile.

This is not to suggest that users' practices based on story-features will not present contextual and individual variation in how different users may take them up. In fact, my own work so far has focused on users' story practices and it is clear that there is, sociolinguistically conditioned, potential in them for both strategizing and resisting media apps engineering (Author 2016a,b; 2017b). Individual users' creative practices notwithstanding though, the level of standardization reported here, merits further critical attention, if we are to understand fully the place of stories in the social media curation of lives. This study's findings provide evidence for a process of (re)-branding, a re-configuration of values attached to a prime communication mode and so they call for the use of discourse analysis tools to interrogate further the implications of this. This type of exploration can add to the emerging social semiotic and discourse-based line of inquiry into the role of media apps in promoting specific identities and reinforcing stereotypical biases (e.g. see articles in Adami & Jewitt 2016). The rich agenda of such an inquiry includes, amongst others: how algorithms' assumptions about users can shape users' self-perceptions (Bucher 2018); the ethical roles and responsibilities of researchers in relation to users' metricization of subjects and the weaponisation of their data (Harari 2016); the critical analysis of the discourses employed by media companies

vis-à-vis communication. In an ideal world, applied and sociolinguists would be consultants and major stakeholders in the media-design of stories as communication features. As things stand, and with a dystopian scenario of stories increasingly becoming part of weaponized content, promoted variously by influencers, advertising companies and even user-bots, the more realistic but still important scenario is the development of a critical media-discourse awareness inquiry, in dialogue with other disciplines (e.g. education) and social media-activism initiatives.

References

Adami, E. and Jewitt, C. (2016) Special Issue: Social media and visual communication. *Visual Communication 15*: 263-270.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C. and McEnery T. (2013). Sketching Muslims: A corpus-driven analysis of representations around the word “Muslim” in the British press 1998-2009. *Applied Linguistics 34*: 3255-78.

Beer, D. (2009) Power through the algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious. *New Media & Society 11*: 985–1002.

Bell, A., Ennslin, A. & Rustad, H.K. (2014) *Analyzing digital fiction*. Oxon/NY: Routledge.

Brockmeier, J. (2015) *Beyond the archive*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bucher, T. (2012) Want to be on the top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook. *New Media & Society* 14: 1164-1180.

Bucher, T. (2018) *If ... then. Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Constine, J. (2016) Instagram launches 'Stories', a Snapchatty feature for imperfect sharing. <https://techcrunch.com/2016/08/02> (accessed 28/9/2018)

Cooper, S. (2016) Snapchat versus Instagram: The war of the stories. www.thedrum.com/opinion/2016/08/25 (accessed 25/4/2018)

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2012). *Analyzing narrative: Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge: CUP. ☒

De Fina, A. & Perrino, S. (2017, eds.) *Storytelling in the Digital Age. New challenges*. Special Issue. *Narrative Inquiry* 27 (2).

Eyal, N. (2014) *Hooked*. New York: Penguin Portfolio.

Fernandes, S. (2017) *Curated stories. The uses and misuses of storytelling*. New York : Oxford University Press.

Freishtat, RL, Sandlin, JA (2010) Shaping youth discourse about technology: technological colonization, manifest destiny, and the frontier myth in Facebook's public pedagogy. *Educational Studies* 46: 503–523.

Genette, G. (1980). *Narrative Discourse*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Author (2013a). Storytelling on the go: Breaking news stories as a travelling narrative genre. In Hatavara, M., Hydén, L-C and Hyvärinen, Matti (eds) *The Travelling concepts of narrative*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins. 201–224.

Author (2013b) Small stories research as a framework for the study of social media practices: Narrative stancetaking and circulation in a Greek news story. *Sociolinguistica* 27: 19–36.

Author (2014) Small stories transposition & social media: A micro-perspective on the 'Greek crisis'. *Discourse & Society* 25: 519-539.

Author (2015) Sharing as rescripting. Place manipulations on YouTube between narrative and social media affordances. *Discourse, Context & Media* 9: 64-72.

Author (2016a). From writing the self to posting self(ies): A small stories approach to selfies. *Open Linguistics* 2:300–317.

Author (2016b) Friendly comments: Interactional displays of alignment on Facebook and YouTube. In Leppänen, S., Kytölä, S. & Westinen, E. (eds.) *Discourse and identification: diversity and heterogeneity in social media practices*. London: Routledge. 178-207

Author (2017a) Narrative/life of the moment. From telling a story to taking a narrative stance. In Schiff, B., McKim, E. & Patron, S. (eds.), *Life and narrative. The risks and responsibilities of storying experience*. OUP. 29-54.

Author (2017b) Sharing the moment as small stories: The interplay between practices & affordances in the social media-curation of lives. *Special Issue. Storytelling in the digital age. Narrative Inquiry* 27: 311-333.

Author (2018) *'Out with the celebrity self, in with the celebrity 'Stories': Kim Kardashian and the social media move to storifying visibility*. Paper presented to the Symposium *'Keeping up with the Kardashian decade'*, 22 February, King's College London. Podcast available: <http://www.ego-media.org/keeping-kardashian-decade/>

Gerlitz, C. & Helmond, A. (2013) The Like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web. *New Media & Society* 15: 1348-1364.

Giles, D., Stommel, W., Paulus, T., Lester, J. & Reed, D. (2014) Microanalysis of online data: The methodological development of "digital CA". *Discourse Context & Media* 7: 45-51.

Gillespie, T. (2016) Algorithm. In Peters, B. (ed.), *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Harari, Y.N. (2016) *Homo Deus. A brief history of tomorrow*. London: Penguin.

Hoffman, A. L., Proferes, N. & Zimmer, M. (2016) "Making the world more open and connected": Mark Zuckerberg and the discursive construction of Facebook and its users. *New Media & Society* 18. doi: 10.1177/1461444816660784.

Jaworska, S. (2016) Using a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach to investigate constructions of identities in media reporting surrounding mega sport events: the case of the London Olympics 2012. In Lamond, I. R. and Platt, L. (eds.) *Critical events studies: Approaches to research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 149-174.

Kaun, A. & Stiernstedt, F. (2014) Facebook time: Technological and institutional affordances for media memories. *New Media & Society* 16: 1154-1168.

Kitchin, R. and Dodge, M. (2011) *Code/Space: Software and Everyday Life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lupton, D. (2016) *The quantified self*. Cambridge: Polity.

Marchi, A. (2010) 'The moral in the story': a diachronic investigation of lexicalised morality in the UK press. *Corpora* 5: 161-190.

McGuire, J. (2016) 'How long can you view your Instagram stories'? it's all temporary.

<https://www.romper.com>. Last accessed 28/9/2018

Page, R. 2018. *Narratives online. Shared stories in social media*. Cambridge: CUP.

Partington, A. (2004). Corpora and discourse a most congruous beast. In Partington, A., Morley, J. & Haarman, L. (eds.), *Corpora and Discourse*. Bern, Oxford: Peter Lang. 11-20.

Poulsen, S.V. (2018) Becoming a semiotic technology – a historical study of Instagram's tools for making and sharing photos and videos. *Internet Histories 2 (1-2)*: 121-139.

DOI: 10.1080/24701475.2018.1459350.

Schwammlein, E. & Wodzicki, K. (2012) What to Tell About Me? Self-Presentation in Online Communities. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 17*: 387-407.

Shuman, A. (2005) *Other people's stories. Entitlement and the critique of empathy*. University of Illinois Press.

Thon, J-N (2016) Transmedial narratology and contemporary media culture: Nebraska: Nebraska University Press.

Varis, P. (2016) Digital ethnography. In Georgakopoulou, A. & Spilioti, T. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*. London: Routledge. 55-

68.

van Dijck, J. (2013) You have one identity: Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, Culture and Society* 35: 199-215.