"This is an age for news": A corpus-based analysis of the word *NEW(E)S* in the spoken discourse of Early Modern English society (1560-1760)

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Abstract

In my paper, I shall be examining how the voracity for news which characterises Tudor and—to a larger extent—Stuart England can be mapped on the spoken discourse of society in Early Modern England. To do so I shall analyse the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760* as representative of the spoken interaction of the past in the categories of authentic and constructed dialogues. By applying tools of corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington 2004, 2009), I shall provide a quantitative and qualitative investigation of the word *NEWS* in the attempt to grasp the impact of news on people's everyday life. While quantitative evidence will help us establish possible patterns of news vocabulary distribution from 1560 to 1760, the qualitative analysis of keywords in context will allow us to uncover collocational sets which can be interpreted in light of the evolving relationship between society and news in the historical period examined.

The paper will also aim to provide an example of how corpus-assisted research in historical sociolinguistics can help us trace relations between language practices and context.

Keywords: Early Modern English news, spoken discourse, society, modes of news transmission, collocations, concordances, popularization, mass news culture

1. *Introduction*

The sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries are considered both by contemporaries and historians as the centuries of news (Zaret 2000). Indeed, though the need to be informed is as old as human society itself, it is only from the sixteenth century that an unprecedented news culture takes shape in Early Modern Britain and it is in the course of the seventeenth century that it reaches its full realisation.

From the Medieval period people's appetite for news has been documented in letter writing, in the circulation of dispatches and in the presence of renowned public places in towns where people met to hear the latest news and report events either to their masters or their peers. This medieval heritage of news transmission acquired renewed vigour with the invention of printing and the subsequent experimentation with

forms of cheap print and periodical publications which, for the first time, opened up a print news market for the masses. In Early Modern England, the traditional oral and scribal mode of news delivery coexisted with the more prolific print format, eliciting divergent responses from society. While more and more people were ready to part with money to get the latest news in print, the literate elite expressed harsh criticism against the mass voracity for printed news.

In my paper, I shall examine the occurrences of the word *NEW(E)S* and its major collocates in the *Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* (henceforth *CED*) with special attention to its distribution across the decades and to the context of discourse. The choice of a non-news related corpus to assess the impact of news in Early Modern English society is due to my assumption that the resonance of a socio-cultural phenomenon on common people can be better understood in text-types other than those specifically related to the phenomenon itself. The corpus-based discourse analysis is meant to show how Early Modern English spoken discourse can help us keep track of people's attitude towards news and of their habits regarding news delivery and consumption. In particular I will attempt to establish what mode of news transmission was preferred and by whom and whether the corpus is capable of attesting any change in people's taste for news.

2. Methodology

In my analysis of *NEW(E)S* in the *CED* I shall apply the broad principles of Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) as described among others, by Stubbs (1996; 2001) and Partington (2004; 2009). The methodology combines the usual qualitative approach to the analysis of text with the quantitative analysis provided by Corpus Linguistics in the attempt to discover previously unnoticed regular patterns in familiar text-types and link them to specific societal discourse practices (Lombardo 2009). Given the historical dimension of my corpus, the concept of context will be enlarged to include not just the text in which the word is found but also contextual matters such as the history of news (Raymond 2003; Peacey 2004; Brownlees 2011, 2012; Pettegree 2014), Early Modern reading practices (Cressy 1980; Fox, 2000; Sharpe 2000; Dummork et al. 2014) and society and communication in seventeenth century England (Sommerville 1996; Zaret 2000). This contextual

information is, in fact, crucial to the understanding of the socio-cultural reasons which determined people's conceptualisation of *NEW(E)S* within certain discourse patterns. In this regard, I will adopt Pahta and Taavitsainen's multilayered notion of context (2010: 551) described as involving "textual contexts as well as sociohistorical conditions of text production with its societal, situational, historical, ideological and material sides". Insofar as my study attempts to map patterns of language use based on the socio-cultural conditions of seventeenth century England, my research can be inserted within the wider European tradition of historical pragmatics (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2010: 5).

3. Description of the corpus
The *CED 1560-1760* was compiled by Culpeper and Kytö at Uppsala and Lancaster Universities. It is a 1.2 million-word corpus of Early Modern English speech-related texts divided into two broad categories: constructed dialogues, including comedies, prose fiction, didactic works and authentic dialogues, including trials texts and witness depositions. The category of 'didactic works' covers dialogues written for teaching purposes and is subdivided into dialogues used for language teaching and other dialogues concerning the religious, political and social concerns of the day. Constructed dialogues are characterised by the use of fictional dialogue constructed by an author and aimed to be mimetic of spoken interaction. They are also called speech-purposed and speech-like texts. Authentic dialogue texts purport to be written records of real speech events taken down at the time of the speech event, in this sense they are called speech-based texts (i.e. based on actual, real life speech events). Interactive face to face interaction has been found to play an important role in mapping socio-cultural as well as linguistic changes. This is why this corpus has been selected to trace the evolution of a mass news culture in Early Modern English society.

The 200-year period (1560-1760) covered in the corpus is divided into five 40-year periods. Period 1 from1560-1599; period 2 from 1600-1639; period 3 from1640-1679; period 4 from 1680-1719; period 5 from1720-1760.

4. The world of news in sixteenth and seventeenth century England: an overview

Both in Tudor and Stuart England communicative practices developed and information distribution reached an unprecedented level. Indeed, the introduction of print reinvigorated rather than suppressing the traditional oral and written mode of news transmission, with the result that the three media (speech, script and print) infused and implemented each other in a fruitful process of change and continuity.

From the sixteenth century, the increasing level of literacy in society favored people's access to forms of news delivery other than word of mouth so that by the end of the seventeenth century there was practically no one who lived beyond the reach of the written and printed word (Fox 2000: 36-37; Femke 2014: 61). Indeed, even those who could not read could still have access to news by having it read aloud by their neighbor (Watt 1990: 12-13; Fox 2000: 39; Hunt 2014: 15). Although the scribal mode of news transmission in the form of expensive manuscripts remained a prerogative of the upper classes, circulation of news in private correspondence was very common among both (semi) literate and illiterate people—the latter through the practice of having it read aloud (Zaret 200: 118-119; Hunt 2014:15).[1]

The commercialisation of forms of cheap print such as broadside ballads, pamphlets and periodicals completed the process of news popularization, by allowing a heterogeneous cross-section of society to be informed about the latest news at a reasonable price.[2] As Raymond (2017) notices, both written and printed news often circulated in bundles or packets, thus revealing the complementarity of news genres in the Early Modern period. In the CED, there are several instances of the word "bundles" used as synonym for "news"/"intelligence". In the fiction Noted Highway-men (1714), the author represents a carrier transporting "boxes and bundles" in his waggon and in the Trial of Stephen Colledge (1681), the porter is said to have brought "three bundles to our house".

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[1] As Hunt (2014: 15) claims the practice of reading aloud – which was characteristic of the Early Modern English society – was a crucial means for the illiterate to gain access to the written and printed texts.

[2] The average price of a broadside ballad in the seventeenth century was between halfpenny and a penny, whereas the standard price of pamphlets was about 2*d* (Spufford 1981, Watt 1990). Presumably the same price applied for early newsbooks.

People's increasing appetite for news was well documented by the common greeting "What newes?" which from the early sixteenth century echoed in the speech of courtier and countryman, of master and servant, of shopkeeper and apprentice, as will be shown in the course of the analysis (see 6.1). In town streets newsmongers cried out the attention-catching title of news broadsides and pamphlets and many people—from the gentry collector to the labouring poor—could be potential buyers. The content of the news, then, could transit either by word of mouth, through public news reading or telling, or in the form of written correspondence through private letters. This suggests that no crude binary opposition between oral and written/printed forms of communication appears to have existed in Early Modern England (Fox: 2000). In addition, it is by no means easy to draw clear-cut class boundaries in news consumption. According to Watt, for example, "the audience presupposed within the cheap print itself appears to be inclusive rather than exclusive, addressed both as 'readers' and 'hearers'" (1991: 3). As literacy increased and the news market developed, a discrepancy between authorial/editorial intention and actual news reception was far from exceptional.

5. Quantitative analysis of NEW(E)S in the CED
I shall start with an illustration of the quantitative distribution of the word *NEW(E)S* and I shall continue with a quantitative and qualitative analysis of its major verb collocates and premodifying adjectives. The lexico-syntactic patterns which emerge from the investigation will allow us to identify the (changing) modes of news transmission, the different social and geographical provenance of the participants in the news network, the venues of distribution and contemporaries' contrasting feelings towards news.
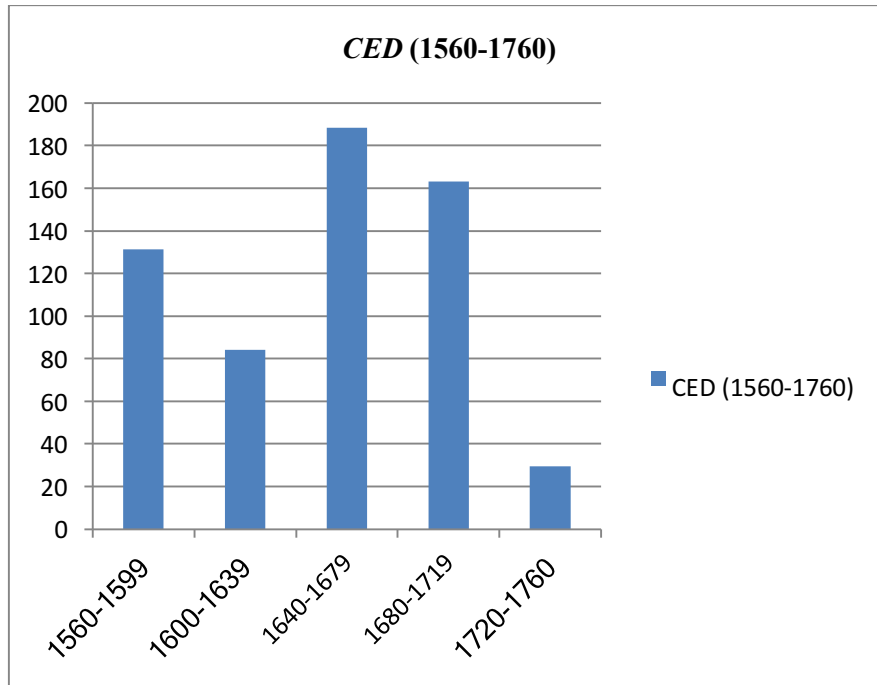
CED (1560-1760)

Table 1. Quantitative distribution of *New(e)s* in the *CED*

Table 1 testifies to an extensive use of *NEW(E)S* from 1560 to 1720.[3] In particular, two interesting points emerge from the analysis: 1) the peak in the use of the word in period 3 (1640-1679) and 2) its unexpected drop in

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[3] In order to understand the turning point in the social diffusion of *NEW(E)S* from the mid-sixteenth century, we should take a look at its frequency in the previous century. To this purpose, a word-search in the *Early English Books On-line (vol.3)* covering the period from 1470 to 1780 is helpful. The corpus consists of 1,202,214,511 words and contains books, pamphlets and broadsides printed in England and its colonies in the time span of about three centuries. The results show that in the decades from 1470-1500 there is just one single occurrence of *NEW(E)S.* The next decades (1500-1520) feature only a slight increase in its frequency with 6 occurrences in 3 different texts (1.96 instances of the word per million words). The years 1520-1529, on the other hand, mark a turning point as the word *NEW(E)S* begins to take off with 87 matches in 9 different texts (26.34 instances per million words). It is the beginning of a new era, the age of news.

period 5 (1720-1760). As to the first point, the increase in the frequency of *NEW(E)S* can be explained in relation to several contextual factors: the period of strong political unrest which characterised the English Civil War, the collapse of censorship in 1641 and the development of periodical publications on which political propaganda relied (Raymond: 1996; Brownlees 2011: 97-98). As Raymond notices, by the end of 1641 "there were many newsbooks produced by different publishers, competing with and counterfeiting each other, struggling to find a foothold in a potentially lucrative [news] market". The second point to consider is the sharp drop of the word from the beginning of the eighteenth century. A similar reduction was noticed by Brownlees in his diachronic analysis of the semantics of news in three news-related corpora: *The Florence Early English Newspaper Corpus; The Lancaster Newsbook Corpus* and *The Zurich Early English Newspaper Corpus* (Brownlees 2011: 194). Brownlees accounts for the phenomenon claiming that "by 1701 the print news genre had established itself, therefore as readers knew that what was being reported was based on news, it was not necessary to state it" (2011: 194). Following Brownlees's line of argument, we can hypothesise that even people and characters in the *CED* discussed facts without labelling them as news. Since by the early eighteenth century the news culture was implemented and commonly recognised, it may have no longer needed meta-linguistic reference.

6. New(e)s plus verbs in the CED

The nearby verb collocates of *NEW(E)S* are worth looking at as they reveal the Early English modes of news transmission and their distribution across the decades. In the *CED* the most frequent verb collocates of *NEW(E)S* are characteristic of oral communication. One semantic area refers to the teller-hearer mode of oral delivery and includes verbs of perception and saying: (*hear(ken)* 33, *tell* 20, *ask(t)* 20, *say* 20, *enquire* 8, *report* 3, *relate* 3, *talk* and *speak* 3, *spread*), the other one refers to the bringer-receiver mode and includes verbs of (oral) delivery and reception (*bring* 7, *receive* 2, *return to* 1, *have/come from* 4). The scribal mode is only attested (9.3% of the verb collocates), as is the case with the print mode, whose existence is recorded relatively late from the 1680s onwards, through the verbs *print* 3*, read* 2*, buy* 2*, see,*

sell, send down, purchase, which correspond to 8.5% of the overall verb collocates.
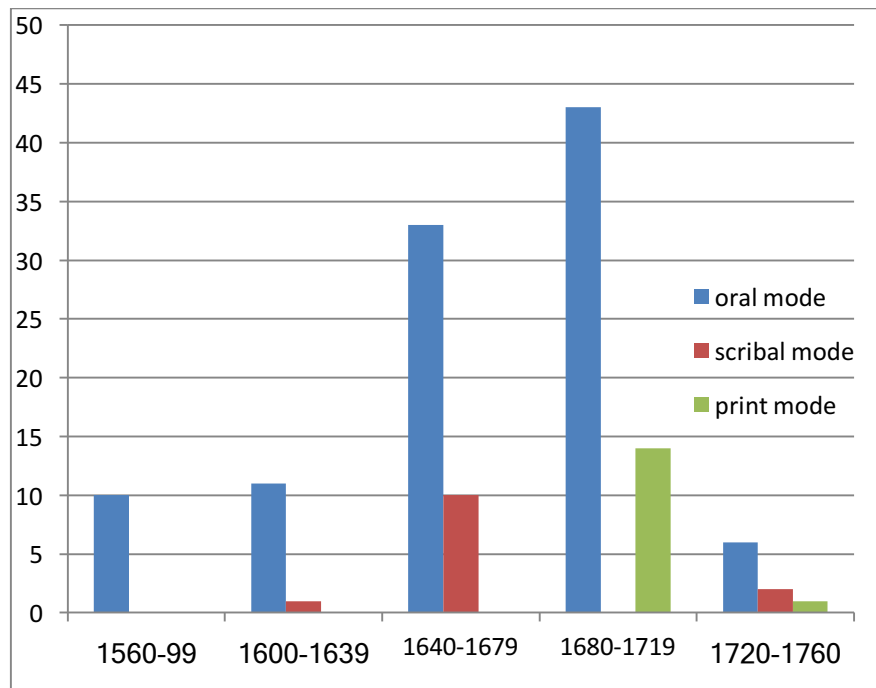

Table 2. *New(e)s* plus verb distribution in the *CED*

6.1 Oral mode

Table 2 shows that oral delivery is the dominant mode of news circulation over the two centuries with a peak in period 4 (1680-1719). If on the one hand the result could be biased by the spoken discourse recorded in the corpus, on the other hand it confirms Zaret's conclusion that despite the importance of the scribal and print forms of news delivery, oral communication remained the primary mode of news transmission in Early Modern England (2000: 103).

The teller-hearer pattern presupposes a direct contact between the two parties with one enquiring about news and the other answering. The bringer-receiver pattern is less direct as it requires the intermediary figure of a third party who brings the news to someone else. Both the

teller-hearer and the bringer-receiver semantics document feudal residues of the master-servant relationship, as we can see from the following quotations taken from comedies and fictions:

Teller-hearer semantics

(1) Dash [servant]....goe, runne, flye: and a farre off **enquire**, If that the Lady Somerfield be there, if there, **know what newes**, and meete me straite at the Myter doore in Fleete Street.

(*Ram-Alley*, 1611)

(2) –   What good **newes** hast thou **heard**? Hast thou done my Busines?
    –   L. Sir I did see Master M. But not Master P.

(*The Marrow of the French Tongue*, 1625)

Bringer-receiver semantics

(3) God giue you good morrowe Gentle-women : good morrowe Mistresse Clemence : Fleuri .
    And to you also Prudence , what **newes** ? doe you **bring vs anye newes** ? is my Mother vp?

(*The French Garden,* 1605)

(4) Jeremy backs as fast as he could Gallop , and was the first who **brought his Mistress News** of his Master , and withal deliver 'd the Errand he was sent about.

(*The Jealous Husband,* 1715)

(5) Ariana was so pleas 'd at the Adventure , (for now she began to admire young Courtall for his cunning Admission) **gave her Man a Crown piece for the News**

(*The Jealous Husband,* 1715)

Those who could not afford a servant went to town themselves and met their neighbours and fellow countrymen in taverns, market places, St Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Exchange. In particular, people living in the country were eager to hear news from the capital and acknowledged the privileged position of those living in London for the freshness of the news. Below is an exchange among members of the middling sort including a trader, who was considered a precious news-bringer thanks to his frequent trips to the City.

(6) Dunst
> − [...] I pray you to **report the newes of London**, for thence I understand your maistership is lately come
> −   With a glad will, but ere we enter into them, let me first **tell you what I latest heard**, which proouing true will equally glad us both.
> <div align="right">(*Country-Mans Care*, 1641)</div>

(7) I wonder you should so earnestly **enquire newes of mee** , that live in the Countrey , whenas we **receive all our newes from you** . I confesse , you did prevent mee , therefore I pray , what is the best newes in the City?
> <div align="right">(*Country-Mans Care*, 1641)</div>

A problematic aspect of news delivery was the truthfulness of news reporting. If in the traditional feudal system the master could trust his men and servants' accounts of private affairs in or outside the court, common people found it hard to trust news heard in the streets without knowing anything about the source of the information. How was it possible to establish the authenticity of the report on the basis of mere rumours? Again in most cases the credit of the news was closely linked to the reputation of the teller, so if the teller was considered reliable and s/he ensured that the news was true, that was guarantee enough for the hearer to believe it.

(8) This Porter **brings sad Newes** to you Will , you must trust him for a suit of Cloathes , as bad as 't is : come, h 's as honest Fellow, and loves the King

(9) Batson , **The News was brought** by a Fellow who was not believed , and by consent a Porter was sent out to inquire the Truth.

> <div align="right">(*The Tryal of Nathaniel Thompson*, 1681)</div>

(10) **They tell very strange newes** . There are so many lies abroad ; I give no Credit at all to any of these foolish stories .

> <div align="right">(*The True Advancement of the French,* 1653)</div>

Problems of news credibility and verification became even more serious with the commercialisation of printed news. Hawkers, hired by the publisher to fill in the printed paper, were ready to manufacture news in periods of shortage, in order to ensure the sale of the product and thus their income.

(11) My Register is not to be fill 'd like those of vulgar News-Writers with Trash for want of **News** , and therefore if I say little or nothing , you may thank those who have done little or nothing.

(*The Historical Register*, 1737)

6.2 Scribal mode

In the *CED* the scribal mode of news transmission is documented in periods 2, 3 and 5 with a higher frequency in period 3 (1640-1679). Although the corpus only attests the presence of written news, scribal communication, especially in the form of private letters, was a very common practice in Early Modern England (Zaret 2000; Fox 2000). It presupposed the literacy of both writer and reader, though the content of the correspondence had the potential to reach a wider audience through the custom of reading letters aloud. For this reason, caution was in order when the news reported was of political or religious character. Indeed, expressing incautious opinions in matters of state could land both writer and reader in big trouble. In the years before the outbreak of the Civil War a contemporary warned "Its not safe to write any opinion of these high distractions" (Zaret 2000: 125). Private news letters were often used to circulate secret information within a community of selected readers and to conspire against the state. When their content ended up in the wrong hands they became the major body of evidence in trial proceedings, as the quotations show:

(12) The out-side sheet of this Paper was a Letter of **news** which was called Mr. Coleman 's Letter ; and at the bottome of this Letter there was this Recommendation , Pray Recommend me to my Kinsman Playford .
In this Letter of news there were expressions of the King, calling him Tyrant , and that the Marriage between the Prince of Orange and the Lady Mary the Duke of York 's Eldest Daughter would prove the Traytour 's and Tyrant 's ruine .

(*The Tryal od Edward Coleman,* 1678)

Beside newsletters, also the circulation of expensive manuscripts reporting news and incautious opinions could get people into trouble with the law. This was the case of John Bastwicke an anti-episcopal doctor who wrote books attacking episcopacy, for which he was tried and condemned. The quotation below reveals how easily the word *news* was taken as synonym for secret information and conspiracy against the Establishment.

(13) L. Keeper Well , proceed to the busines of the day ; Read the Information .

Which was read , being very large ; and these five Bookes annexed thereunto (viz.) a Booke of Dr. Bastwicks written in Latin.

The second , a little Booke , intituled , Newes from Ipswich .
(*Censure of ….Dr Bastwicke*, 1637)

News reporting in epistles, however, generally had a more legitimate character. It was considered to be an aristocratic news service as it was written by gentlemen writers for gentlemen readers. It was therefore an exclusive form of news transmission which maintained the elite character of news as prerogative of those who had the competence to understand it. The news written by a gentleman for gentlemen was supposed to be authentic, objective and real and as such far from the scurrilous and freak stories told by anonymous hawkers in vulgar pamphlets for the ignorant masses. The quotation below reveals the author's intended social diversification of news discourse as opposed to its upcoming popularization.

(14) Car .

I have written no lesse then six large Epistles this morning , and sent 'em now by my Man **to be convey 'd into** the Country to Lords and Knights , with all the **news** spirituall , and temporall , forraine and domestick that could possibly fall into a private Gentlemans Collection .
(*A Mad Couple Well Macth'd*, 1653)

The English gentleman's desire to inform his peers reflects the role of news at the time. News was seen as a high value commodity and those who had important news were eager to communicate it to their preferred addressees (Brownlees 2011: 13). In his speech, the gentleman identifies the target audience of his private newsletters as belonging to the aristocracy. The quotation also gives some hints as to 1) how news was able to circulate at the time and 2) how it was classified by contemporaries. In comedies news distribution was entrusted both to the gentleman's servant, who had the task to send the packet of newsletters at a specific point in town, and to the carrier or the postal service which from the mid-seventeenth century offered a public, national service. Both operated weekly from London but while carriers travelled at quite a slow

speed (between 20 and 24 old English miles per day), the public postal service was cheaper and swifter thus resulting in a higher frequency of postal despatches even during the Civil War (Schobesberger et al. 2016:49-54 *passim*).

Regarding news classification, the gentleman singles out four news categories on the basis of content (either religious or political) and provenance (either domestic or foreign). It is worth pointing out that from the year 1641 onwards domestic news expands its focus to include politics. As a consequence, in the year 1653 (when the comedy was written) the character must have felt free to discuss the governmental issues of his Kingdom in much the same way as he must have been used to debating foreign politics in the previous decades. The news selected and written by a gentleman for gentlemen is considered to be the only type of news worth being collected by the educated gentry. Indeed although a few members of the upper class have passed down in history for collecting printed news, the practice was the exception rather than the rule (Molekamp 2014: 63). The prestigious news documentation to be handed down to posterity continued to circulate in the more authoritative scribal mode.

6.3. Print mode

Though the print mode of news transmission was on the market from the early sixteenth century, the *CED* records its presence no earlier than in period 4 (1680-1719). This time gap can be explained by assuming that a cultural phenomenon may take some time to be recognised and fully attested in the (fictional or real-life) spoken discourse of contemporaries.

As already anticipated, the introduction of periodical print publications in the years of the Civil War marked the beginning of another important change in Early Modern English news culture. For the first time, the range of domestic news enlarged to include the political affairs of the Kingdom. This aroused the curiosity of the majority of the population who was happy to part with money in return for "minted" news about their King and the Parliament. So, along with traditional forms of cheap print the decade featured the distribution of periodical newsbooks, known as "weekly books", which replace references to epistles and manuscripts in the *CED*. Indeed, it is precisely in period 4 (1680-1719) that references to the written mode of news delivery

disappear to make room for testimonies of increasing printed news reporting the daily affairs of the Kingdom. Bookstalls near St Paul's Cathedral, itinerant newsmongers at market places and fairs moved the wires of the informative network, becoming the protagonists of a new commercialization process. The examples below exemplify this turning point in social consumption and tastes.

(15) Rich .
VVhy , are you going to Market then , pray what de'y design to buy that you fear to come too late ?

Will .
Buy Neighbour , why **News** , new Minted News , what do you think I intend to buy , that 's the greatest Chaffer nowadays .

Rich .
But pray where is it to be sold ?

Will .
Why every where , there is few or no Markets but what yields little or much , but at this I am going to they **sell** it by Sackfull , setting it up by way of Auction, so that at the burning of an inch of Candle , and **Two-pence price** , a Man may purchase as much as his Head can bear .

(*Treason Made Manifest*,1681)

(16) Shopkeeper .
Really Sir , this honest Freeholder Speaks a great deal of truth , for I am sure I have lost more in my way of Trading by my Prentices running to the Coffee-houses to **read the News** , than by all the Taxes of the Late Reign , and yet there was no reason to Complain of the smallness of them neither ;
Farmer .
No , in my Conscience ; but Sir , these printed papers have made us all mad , I can never go to the Market , but I meet with some Rascallions or other , that assaults me with hard words about my Landlord.

(*A dialogue between a Member of Parliament, a Divine, a Lawyer, a Freeholder, a Shopkeeper and a Country Farmer,* 1703)

Example (15) best reflects people's appetite for printed news. More precisely, it documents four crucial aspects of the emerging mass news culture: 1) the venue of transmission i.e. the market place, 2) the price of print news, that is about two pence for pamphleteering, 3) the target, which is the common man and 4) the news trade itself, which is

described as "the greatest chaffer/bargain" of the time. As the quotation suggests the low cost of cheap print is what guarantees the wide diffusion of news, which also reaches the middling sort and the labouring classes.

While example (15) testifies to people's desire for news, example (16) gives voice to the harsh criticism of the literate gentry who interpret people's addiction to news as a sign of madness and social destabilisation: "these **printed papers** have made us all mad". In the didactic dialogue the characters, representing different layers of society (from a Politician to a country farmer), give voice to worries about the popularization of news consumption. In particular they show concern for a news-audience made up of illiterate or semi-literate people that only thanks to the cheap price of news could gain access to delicate matters of state. The stance of the political elite, which is strategically endorsed by the farmer in the didactic dialogue, also hints at the dangerous factionalism fostered by the political content of news discourse. The literary authorities feared that the social order of Tudor and Stuart England could be subverted by news dissemination among the lower orders. In the quotation the professional newsmongers are demeaned by the negative evaluative descriptor "Rascallions" and their job is stigmatised as fomenting hatred and division among social classes. In another didactic dialogue of the same period (17) an authoritative French Master, says:

> (17) For my part , I can not excuse the foolishness of some people , who talk of Government without being acquainted with it . [...] Let us speak of private news"
>
> (*The Complete French-Master*, 1694)

The quotation denounces the increasing approach of the common people to matters of state, along with their pretentions to understand its difficult meaning. By encouraging private news discussion, the character recognizes the social value of news while stigmatising public issues as unsuitable to uneducated common people. If from 1560 to 1680 most of the news talk in the *CED* concerns private affairs,[4] the latest from

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[4] Consider the following examples: "Compaspe, here is **newes**, Apel. is in loue with you" (from the comedy *Alexander,* 1584); "What will you say , if I find that ye are brethren and twins ? I would thinke it happie **newes**" (from the comedy *Menaecmi,* 1595).

London[5] and foreign politics,[6] from the 1680s dialogues document people's preference for home politics. By the end of the century the habit of debating matters of state was so rooted across all layers of society that—after the Restoration—Charles II did not attempt to quash the press but rather tried to wrest it to his favour with the creation of a state controlled press monopoly (Raymond: 2003: 324; Brownlees 2011: 163). The trope of foolishness used by the literate people to attack the evolving news culture (ex. 16,17) is also noticed by Raymond when he argues that "newspapers and pamphlets debates were frequently described as being invaded by madness [...] The figure of madness indicates lack of common ground. If pamphlet exchange created a new Babel, as was widely suggested, then debate inflamed divisions rather than resolved them" (Raymond 2002: 121).

   To sum up, a contrasting perception of the social value of news emerges from the analysis. If on the one hand the prescriptivism of a conservative minority revealed anxiety about the socially inclusive character of the print news culture, on the other hand, a process of news popularization came to the forefront challenging social boundaries in news consumption and setting the premises for the development of public opinion.

7. New(e)s + premodifying adjectives
The word *NEW(E)S* can be premodified by adjectives which reveal how contemporaries evaluated and described news. Studies on news discourse have already shown how adjectival premodification can be reflective of central news values such as positivity/negativity, credibility, novelty, continuity both in contemporary and historical news discourse (Bell 1991; Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Cecconi 2009; Bös 2015). In addition, my data reveals that the news values which are at the basis of 20th century news discourse were already attested in early English news text types,

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[5] "What **newes** Gentlemen at London?" (from the fiction *Knights,* 1579); "Then he knows all the little **news** o'the Town" (from the comedy *The Man of Mode,* 1676).
[6] "What **newes** in France?" (from the handbook, *Schoolemaister*, 1573); "We heare very bad **newes** from Spaine" (from the handbook, *True Advancement,* 1653).

from occasional broadsides and pamphlets to newsbooks and early newspapers. (Cecconi 2009; Bös 2015).
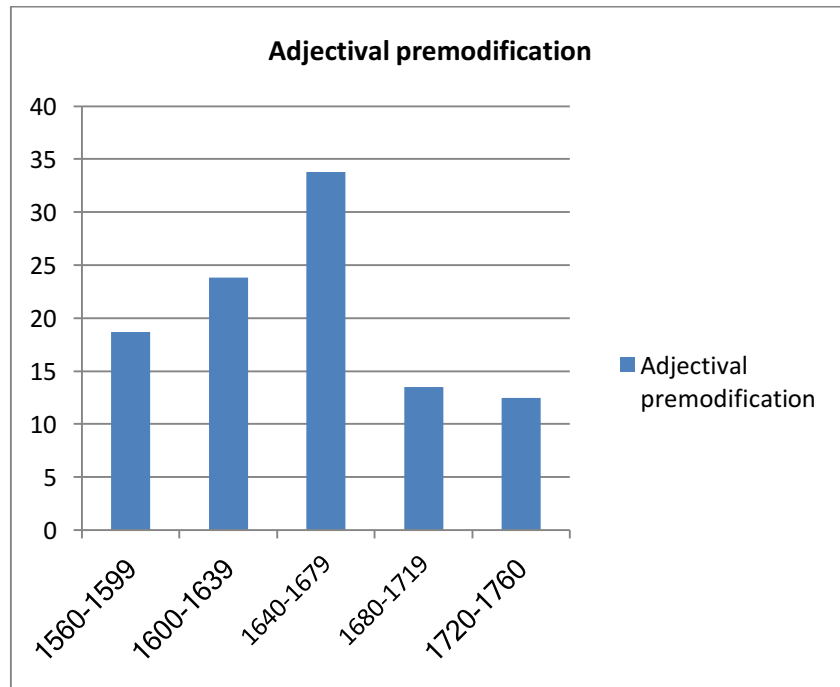

Table 3. Distribution of adjectival premodification of *New(e)s* in the *CED*

As we can see in table 3, there is a slight increase in the use of pre-modifying adjectives in the *CED* for period 3 (1640-1679) followed by a notable decrease in period 4 and 5 (1680-1719; 1720-1760). An analysis of concordances reveals a progressive diversification in the lexical choice of adjectives across the two centuries. In the sixteenth century, *NEW(E)S* is premodified by adjectives belonging to the good *vs* bad semantic dichotomy: *good* (2), *best* (2), *happie, dismall*. As we can see all the adjectives refer to the receiver's response to the information.

(18) I would think it happie newes

(*Menaecmi*, 1595)

(19) That indeed is good news quoth Goodcall for wearied men, is it not?

(*Discouerie of the Knights*, 1597)

(20) O dismall newes, what is my soueraigne blinde?
                                                    (*An Humerous Dayes Myrth,* 1599)

From the 1640s the exceptional proliferation of news publications determines a peak not only in people's usage of news premodification but also in its lexical variety*: strange* (4), *skipping, tripping, lipping, brave, rarest, minted, sad, ill* (3), *great, bad, cruel, private, next* (2). People were familiar with some of the premodifiers above from their reading/hearing of occasional and periodical news publications. For example the adjective *strange* is one of the most common left-collocates of *NEW(E)S* in sensational broadsides and pamphlets about natural disasters and prodigies (Cecconi 2009), whereas the adjective *sad* is very common in crime news text-types (Cecconi 2015). In addition to a higher lexical variety of adjectives referring to the good *vs* bad dichotomy (*cruel, ill great, sad*), the *CED* shows premodifiers referring to other important news values of the time, i.e. sensationalism (*rarest, strange*), freshness (*minted*) and continuity (*next*). In several cases the adjective refers to or anticipates the content of the news (*brave, skipping, lipping, private*). Below is an example:

(21) Abr . Sister Gillian , -- I have the rarest newes for you !
        Gil . For me t is wel ; -- And what news have you got for me Sir ?
            Abr . **Skipping** news , **lipping** news **, tripping** news .
            Gil .   How , Dancing brother Abr'am ? -- Dancing !
            Abr . Prancing , advancing , dancing ! Nay , 't is a Match ; -- a Match upon a Wager.
                                                    (*The Countrie Girle*, 1647)

Some adjectives are particularly interesting as they document aspects of the evolving news market. "Minted", for instance, refers to the freshness and novelty of the news to be purchased at the bookstall in the 1680s and reflects the commercialisation of information.

(22) Buy Neighbour , why News , new **Minted** News , what do you think I intend to buy ,
        that 's the greatest Chaffer nowadays.
                                                    (*Treason Made Manifest*, 1681)

The adjective "next" in the collocation "the next news I/we heard" found in period 4 (1680-1719), on the other hand, suggests the value ascribed to the continuity of news. When telling news people refer both to previous

and subsequent information about that particular event thus reconstructing its history and the evolution of the news itself. This method of narration is reflected in the serialization of news which characterises the seventeenth century news culture and which is traceable in the progressive numbering of issues from 1620 to the nineteenth century. Below are two examples from the corpus:

(23) one day the last Summer , when our Barge lay against York Stairs , there was a great Noise about the Head Bayliff of Westminster , breaking into an Embassenders House , to seize upon some Goods which belonged to a Man was condemned to be Hanged at Tyburn ; and upon Complaint of the Embassender to the King , the said Bailiff was taken and clapt into the Tower ; and every body said , he would be hanged at the least , for breaking the Common Law of all Nations : But the **next News** we heard , was , that he had got some sort of a Warrant , was made by the Long Parliament , that set him at Liberty within three Hours after he was committed .

(*Sam, The Ferriman*, 1681)

(24) Colledge.
No , but he told me this , that there was such a design , and , said he , I will get you , and some other honest men , and he desired me to be by when he had something more to tell which would do his business for him , but the **next news** I heard of him was , he was put into Newgate.

(*Tryal of Stephen Colledge*, 1681)

Finally, the drop in the use of adjectival premodification in people's speech from the 1680s onwards may reflect a corresponding tendency in printed news discourse to silence the explicit editorial (evaluative) voice of previous cheap print. Indeed, studies show that in the late seventeenth century, with the advent of the early newspaper (*The London Gazette*), news discourse favours a more fact-centered, apparently neutral, reportage of the event, which resembles the official court proceedings published in periodicals or even the very first corantos (Jucker 2005; Brownlees 2015).

8. Conclusions

My study can be placed within that research trend in historical news discourse which examines the distribution and collocation of news-related words in historical news corpora (Brownlees 2015; Bös 2015). However, it differs from previous studies as it considers the distribution of the word *NEW(E)S* in a non news-related corpus. Although the

quantitative evidence of *NEW(E)S* is limited in comparison with its occurrences in specialized news corpora, it is my assumption that its use in the *CED* can enhance our understanding of how early Modern English society—as represented in the dialogue—evaluated news and of how it responded to the development of a print news culture

The coexistence of the oral, scribal and print mode of news transmission shows that news is a value for all social classes in Early Modern England. A certain degree of social diversification, on the other hand, can be found in the mode of news transmission. Indeed, while oral news delivery proves to be a universally accepted practice of news dissemination, the print mode (as opposed to the traditional scribal mode) receives a socially diversified response in the *CED*. This results in a different quantitative distribution of the three modes with the oral delivery being dominant across the two centuries and the print format taking over and replacing the scribal mode from the 1680s.

The success of the print mode among the masses is due to many factors: the increasing level of literacy, the affordable price of the (weekly) pamphlet, its availability in several town spots, the freshness of periodical news and its continuity. As Molekamp claims, "the market for popular print brings together readers from a range of socio-economic classes, arguably challenging normative class boundaries in fostering the development of 'a reading class'[...]" (2014: 62). In the light of historians' increasing agreement on a socially unified print news culture (Spufford 1985; Watt 1991; Bayman 2011), the social diversification emerging in the corpus—i.e. print mode for the lower orders and scribal mode for the gentry—may be interpreted as part of the authors' willingness to exhibit normative class boundaries which were daily crossed in news consumption. In this sense, the socially inclusive character of printed news was purposefully portrayed as bearer of foolishness and the conservative view of public (political) news as a commodity to be shared among the educated elite represented a prescriptivism which rarely found correspondence in everyday life. If on the one hand the principle of mass exclusion was depicted as guarantee of the prestige of written news (either in expensive manuscripts or in confidential newsletters), on the other hand it contributed to its marginalisation as shown by the drastic reduction of references to the scribal mode from period 3 (1640-1679) to period 4 (1680-1719).

Period 5 in the corpus (1720-1760) is characterised by a curious drop in the use of *NEW(E)S* with the oral mode remaining dominant and with a very tiny advantage of the scribal mode over the print mode. This shortage of references to *NEW(E)S* in comparison with previous decades is perhaps due to the fact that by the early eighteenth century the news culture—which was a print culture—was commonly acknowledged in society and it may have no longer required metalinguistic reference when discussing facts.

Finally, the analysis of adjectival premodification of *NEW(E)S* shows some commonly recognized news values of the time: from the emphasis on the emotional response of the news receiver in the sixteenth century to the importance ascribed to the sensationalism, freshness and continuity of the news in the seventeenth century. The results confirm the extent to which Early Modern English news values anticipate features of contemporary journalism.

The picture of news and society which has emerged from the analysis of the *CED* could be rendered more precise by applying a similar method of investigation to the epistolary genre covering the same time span. Indeed, the development of news discourse in Early Modern England is deeply indebted to private correspondence as a form of non-specialised news dissemination.

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