'Not Sure What Is Going on Today': Verbal Evidential Strategies in Celebrity Gossip Blogs

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Abstract
Celebrity gossip blogs are rapidly becoming a widespread discursive practice to know the latest news about the rich and famous. Due to the numerous gossip blogs that exist in the blogosphere and their continuous flow of news, the bloggers feel the pressure of the immediacy that is linked to the readers' frequent access so as to keep their knowledge updated. As a result of this informative frantic pace, the bloggers make use of a whole array of sources that provide them with the newest gossip. They then use this gossip to comment and further assess it through their own opinions. This study follows a quantitative and qualitative approach to a selection of celebrity gossip blogs in order to determine the most recurring verbal evidential strategies used by bloggers. Evidentials can be defined as those markers that indicate the source and reliability of the information. In particular, they refer to whether the information is seen, heard, reported, inferred, etc. The results of the study point to three main verbal strategies that reflect the blog writer's acquisition of information: hearsay verbs attributed to external sources, mindsay and verbs of perception averred by the blogger. The use of these specific verbal markers suggests the writers' wish to attract the audience so that they participate actively with their own comments regardless of the veracity of the gossip.

Key words: gossip celebrity blogs, evidentials, sources and bases of proposition, averral, attribution

1. Introduction

Nowadays the blogosphere knows no limits since bloggers talk and appear in a lot of professional and non-specialised fields. But chatting about gossip seems to be a major topic. Gossip is essential to establishing reputations and becomes a way to expose people's infringement of norms. It shapes a crucial instrument for a community to guarantee that its norms are respected (Solove 2007: 63) The Internet is transforming the nature and effects of gossip in so far as it is becoming more permanent and widespread, but it is not so selective when it comes to having a definite audience (Solove 2007: 74).

In particular, celebrity gossip blogs usually follow the same general format. A picture is posted, and this picture is accompanied by a comment, story, or a link to a more detailed article. If the picture is the

central point of the post, the text influences the way in which the picture is received. Bloggers are altering the way that stars are *consumed* by the public by concentrating not only on the image itself, but also on its means of production (Petersen 2007). As a result, they modify our expectations and understanding of stars and their importance. With the advent of newspapers and magazines, the reader had to wait for a weekly update on the star's dynamic lifestyle. By means of the television, the audience was introduced to celebrity *news* like *Entertainment Tonight* and *E!* However, the Internet is now accessible nearly everywhere and at all times so that a consumer can check new entries several times a day. Petersen refers to Perez Hilton's blog as an example of both a detector of public disfavour and a catalyst for it. Hilton comes across pieces of gossip from diverse sources and spreads this *news* to an audience of millions. Although the famous blogger acknowledges that the gossip may be unlikely, his continued interest in the story cleverly influences the reader to believe that such behaviour may be attributed to the stars in question. As a result, the gossip blogger functions as a star manipulator, and contributes to emphasising the idea that Hollywood can manipulate any image to please the public.

Celebrity blogs are part of the commentary blog (Miller and Shepherd 2004), and can be defined in four ways: (1) the typical commercial entertainment blog like *Entertainment Weekly*, which offers a mix of gossip and undercover publicity that is considered to be an extension of the traditional television show. (2) The DIY gossip blog that is fan-based like the successful Perez Hilton who criticises or praises celebrities. (3) The paparazzi agency blog site that offers the agencies' own celebrity pictures together with some improvised gossip and news, like *X17 Online*. (4) The personal social networking pages of celebrities that use commercial sites such as *Myspace*, *Twitter* or *Flickr*, and celebrities' own websites (McNamara 2011: 524). In all cases, the audience are able to comment on the content presented. The bloggers become the voice of gossip but also wish that their words have an instant effect on the audience by means of provoking comments. However, there is no implication that the bloggers' expressions of certainty reflect that the truth has been said, or that the sources of information used to disclose that supposed truth are legit. In trying to elicit an answer from the readers, bloggers often introduce dubious informants whose authority is not always provided and who are, in many cases, unidentified. The aim

of this study is thus to analyse the celebrity gossip bloggers' use of evidentials that is related to "all marks signalling what testifies to the validity of the information stated by a speaker or writer" (Grossman and Wirth 2007: 202). In the news discourse, the writer usually mentions the source of information but there is no reference to the reliability of the utterance, defined as a specific use of a piece of language in a certain situation. The focus of the news is just on the attributed proposition that describes some state of affairs and that is part of the utterance (Bednarek 2006b: 125-126). Similarly, gossip bloggers do not usually care about the reliability of the information that they give and are just concerned about its impact and further response of an audience that is avid for gossip regardless of its authenticity.

1.1. Theoretical framework

Evidentials have been defined as devices used by speaker to mark the source and reliability of their knowledge (Chafe 1986: 262-264). They are also seen as markers that qualify the reliability of information conveyed in such ways as the source of evidence of statements, their degree of precision, their probability, and the expectations concerning their probability (Mithun 1986: 89). Anderson (1986: 277) extends this definition, and adds that evidentials specify factual claims and indicate the justification available to the person that makes the claim. This author states, moreover, that these markers are usually used in assertions, and when the claimed fact is directly observable by both speaker and hearer, evidentials are rarely used. In the case of the celebrity gossip blog, evidential occurrences are apparently used for a variety of rhetorical purposes that are aimed at attracting an audience that is capable of responding to the content given even if this is of uncertain provenance.

Willet's (1988: 405-406) conception of evidentiality is based on a triple system: information that can be attested, reported and inferred. The last two systems represent indirect ways of presenting information. Attested information is acquired through the senses; information is reported when obtained from hearsay or folklore and, with regards to inferential information, it can be marked as relating to observable evidence or mental constructs (logic, intuition, or dreams). As to the addressers' relation to the acquisition of information, attested and inferential information would be acquired or created by them, whereas

reported information would be attained in previous discourse or from other external sources.

Marín-Arrese (2007: 86-88, 2009) proposes a classification of semantic subdomains of evidentiality that distinguishes between: (1) perceptual domain, which contains markers that emphasise the perceptual aspect of the acquisition of information and indicate that the writer has direct access to the evidence, or that the evidence can be perceptually available to the writer and reader (Fitneva 2001). (2) Cognitive domain, which underlines the cognitive basis of the information offered by the writer. This domain comprises predicates of belief and/or general knowledge like *believe*, *bet*, *consider*, *doubt*, *know*, *think…* (3) Communicative domain, which includes performative uses of verbs of communication and involves changes of meaning from the domain of verbal communication to the domain of cognitive processes. Expressions like *that implies* or *that suggests* can be found.

Monika Bednarek (2006a: 637-638) chooses the term epistemological positioning, hereafter EP, rather than evidentiality to mark the basis of the writer's knowledge. This author suggests that EP contains the following elements:

- Basis of knowledge (evidentiality) that indicates whether the information was seen, inferred, heard, etc.
- Certainty of knowledge (modality) that regards the degree of certainty of the writer's knowledge.
- Deviations from knowledge (mirativity) that describe the writer's information as expected or unexpected in terms of his/her knowledge of the world.
- Extent of the knowledge that the writers possess: is it limited in some way?

Bednarek prefers to use the term evidentiality as a subcategory of EP that designates evidence. In her evaluation of the news discourse in a corpus of 100 news stories from ten national British broadsheets and tabloids, Bednarek (2006b: 53) distinguishes six dimensions of the evidentiality parameter:

- Hearsay: it is involved with reported information with no reference for the people who report it. This information is marked by the 'Sayer', different from the writer, as in the following example: *'The stars will arrive on time and will greet their fans as expected,' said one source*.

- Mindsay: it regards information that is thought, felt or experienced by a 'Senser' who is also different from the writer, as in *'... and what can I do now,' thought Beatrix, 'if I can't tell anyone'*.
- Perception: it reflects the identity of the person who perceives. The term 'Experiencer' is used to refer to this source and it usually corresponds to the writer, as in the following instance: *Mary, who looks likely to be accused of murder, has not confessed anything*.
- General knowledge: the content of the news is evaluated as part of the background that writer and reader may share, as in the expression *It is well known that regular exercise is good for your health.*
- Proof: the content of the news is based on some "hard proof", as in the example *Blood tests confirmed that he had taken drugs*.
- Unspecified: it comprises a range of evaluators that convey different meanings that cannot be grouped under one term, in examples like *It emerged that...*, *It means that...*

Her conclusions point out hearsay evidentials as the most important parameter in combination with style evidentials, which are concerned with the evaluation of the news offered by the writer. Within style, Bednarek (2006b: 57) classifies evidentials according to the following sub-values:

- Neutral: *say*, *tell*
- Illocutionary: *demand*, *promise*, *claim*, *report*
- Declarative: *acquit*, *plead guilty*
- Discourse signalling: *add*, *conclude*
- Paralinguistic: *whisper*, *scream*

As I will show in my analysis of the celebrity gossip discourse, the parameter of hearsay neutral evidentiality that is represented by the verbs *say* and *tell* is also followed in importance by hearsay illocutionary evidentiality that is represented by more subjective verbs like *claim* and *report*, which conveys a higher evaluative force (Bednarek 2006b: 126-127).

In this study I follow Bednarek's (2006a, 2006b) classification due to its usefulness in my study of new media discourse that is also worried with the transmission of knowledge, although other taxonomies of categories of evidentiality are also existent (cf. Aikhenvald 2004;

Carretero 2004; Chafe 1986; Fox 2001; Marín-Arrese 2007, 2009; Rooryck 2001; Willet 1988). I mainly consider evidential verb markers that reveal the basis of the writer's knowledge and that specify how he/she has acquired the information. In particular, I examine whether the blogger reports gossip that is based on what someone else has expressed or if it is the result of his/her own judgement. This particular finding involves an important difference with respect to the news discourse in verbal uses like mindsay. Whereas in the news discourse mindsay verbs reflect information that is experienced by someone different from the writer, in the blogging discourse it is the blogger who appears as the main 'Senser', granting a higher subjectivity to the whole message.

In relation to this conflict between who is responsible for the news, and whether the source of the information is the own writer or it is attributed to someone else, I take into account the relation between evidentiality and sourcing, a notion that is essential in news discourse even though in this paper the focus is on less serious news. The other elements pertaining to EP are not within the scope of this study.

1.2. Sources and bases of propositions

Source of propositions refers to the source to which knowledge is attributed, that is, who is responsible for the content of the news, whereas basis of proposition has to do with the basis (or evidence) for the source's knowledge in reference to how the writer has obtained that knowledge (Bednarek 2006a: 639). Whereas the source of the utterance usually corresponds to the writer (Self), the source of proposition can coincide with the writer (Self) or a third party (Other). In this paper, the source of proposition must not be confused from *the source* that bloggers sometimes include to transmit the news and that is usually anonymous, as in (1):

(1) *A source is claiming that at the Much Music Awards Katy was reportedly overheard backstage dissing the young singer about what she wore*.
Source of utterance = Self (the writer)
Source of proposition = Other (*a source*)
Basis of Self's knowledge of attributed proposition = hearsay (*claiming)*

In example (2), the source of proposition is an unknown third party and the basis of the writer's knowledge is hearsay evidence (*are told*). In the

case of the embedded discourse that is typical of discourse news, the main source of proposition corresponds to a frequently unidentified informant (Other) although the blogger is the ultimate provider of the data, both in the case of his/her own assessment and in the deliberate introduction of someone else's word:

> (2) *We're told by the time cops arrived Lindsay had left the club and was a passenger in a car that was leaving the area. Cops intercepted the car and made the arrest.*
> Source of the utterance = Self (the writer)
> Source of proposition = Other (unknown)
> Basis of Self's knowledge of attributed proposition = hearsay (*are told*)

Other's considerations usually become the excuse for the blogger's views but we do not have proof that the speaker is question is reliable, or that the bloggers' use of certainty expressions are authentic. In fact, the use of irony is frequent in their opinions although they count with the readership's approval. In (3), the blogger seems to make fun of Joe Jonas and Demi Lovato's fans. The writer gives his own opinion about the breakup of these celebrities before offering an account of several reports in his blog entry:

> (3) *We imagine there are still tween hearts out there who ache at the thought of Joe Jonas and Demi Lovato's recent split.*
> Source of utterance = Self (the writer)
> Source of proposition = Self (the writer)
> Basis of Self's knowledge = mindsay (*imagine*)

In the interplay between sourcing and evidentiality, an important distinction concerns the difference between averral and attribution. Hunston (2000: 178) explains that "[i]f a piece of language […] is attributed, it is presented as deriving from someone other than the writer. If a piece of language is averred, the writer him/herself speaks". This distinction is essential for the study of evaluation in gossip blogs because the readers will attach more or less credence to, in this case, the blog that they are enjoying. Averral and attribution may be present in the same utterance, so this distinction can be more complicated due to the fact that "every attribution is embedded within an averral" (Hunston 2000: 179).

In the piece of discourse that I am examining, the blogger avers the utterance wherein the attributed proposition is embedded in those cases

in which someone else reports news about celebs. In (4), the blogger is the source of the whole utterance:

> (4)   *"You could tell they were a couple," says our source who also noted that they both looked "very relaxed" talking and laughing closely.*

The blogger avers the whole utterance and within this averral he attributes the proposition to *our source* that is responsible for the news on the film stars Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart. The certainty of his knowledge is not explicitly marked in this quote. However, the certainty of Other's knowledge (*our source*) is high considering the verbs used: *noted* and *looked*.

> (4')   *"You could tell they were a couple," says our source who also noted that they both looked "very relaxed" talking and laughing closely.*
> Source of the utterance = Self (the writer)
> Source of proposition = Other (*our source*)
> Basis of Self's knowledge of proposition = hearsay (*says*)

> (4')   *You could tell they were a couple …very relaxed*
> Source of proposition = Other (*our source*)
> *Basis of Other's knowledge of proposition* = perception (*noted* and *looked*)

Here the blogger wants to create a rapport with his audience by distancing himself from the strict report of news and giving his personal opinion about the celebs under study. Thus, in the same entry the writer addresses his audience and asks: *Ever wonder why Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart are so good at playing hide and seek from the paparazzi? Big duh: They do it on purpose.*

2. Material and methods
The corpus selected for my analysis is comprised of sixty posts belonging to high-traffic celebrity gossip blogs during May 2010 and October 2012. The posts have been selected randomly, though trying not to repeat the same gossip about a particular celebrity so that the themes are more varied.

The sites are the following:
Allie is Wired (4,250 words)
Dlisted (5,420 words)

I'm not obsessed! Gossip… without the guilt (4,082 words)
Just Jared (2,952 words)
Lainey Gossip (3,300 words)
Perez Hilton (4,020 words)
Pink is the New Blog (6,765 words)
Radar online (3,426 words)
Ted Casablanca's The Awful Truth (5,452 words)
The Superficial (2,271 words)
TMZ (3,312 words)

Eight of these sites belong to DYU gossip blogs whose writers decide on the celebs with which they are going to deal. By contrast, *Radar online* and *TMZ* are agency blogs that present their own graphic material and printed gossip.

I manually analysed a corpus of 45,250 words looking for verbs that contained bases of proposition that indicated the evidence for the blogger's knowledge. These verbal markers are aimed at reflecting how the writers have obtained the gossip and how they decide to transmit and further comment upon that piece of information. This procedure involves a text-driven methodology based on the manual analysis of small-scale text corpora and one that does not obey theoretical assumptions about the classification of the data. I have sought expressions related, in this particular case, to verbal evidential strategies (Bednarek 2006a: 638-639). Gossip blogs provide a rich source for looking at expressions that reflect either Self's or Other's knowledge. After the manual analysis I used an electronic word processor search to indicate the exact number of occurrences according to my previous examination. I picked up those examples commented below as illustration for my analysis.

In the posts selected, I have identified three main bases of the source's (Self or Other) knowledge (evidentiality) according to which the bloggers report on the gossip that someone else has already said or they are the authors of the thoughts posted (Bednarek 2006a: 640):

- Hearsay (source = Other): the reported information is marked by a 'Sayer', who is different from the blogger.
- Mindsay (source = Self): it regards information that is thought, felt or experienced by a 'Senser', who usually corresponds to the blogger.
- Perception (source = Self): it includes information that is perceived by an 'Experiencer', who is also the blogger.

As I will illustrate below, the blogger (Self) does not usually comment on the certainty of his/her knowledge, nor is the basis of Other's knowledge always explicitly marked. As a result, the writer declares that his/her knowledge is based on what a third party, usually unknown, has stated. The blogger (Self) is responsible for the utterance and the act of attribution but, as in the examples above, it is *a source* (Other) the person responsible for the attributed proposition.

3. Analysis of results
3.1. Hearsay verbs
The main bases of the source's knowledge contain the following hearsay verbs: *tell*, which occurs 37 times, *say* which occurs 30 times, *report* which occurs 27 times and *claim* which also occurs 27 times.

When using hearsay evidentials, bloggers try to appear objective by reflecting the characterisation of news as embedded talk. At the same time, the balance between neutral (*say* and *tell*) and illocutionary (*report* and *claim*) occurrences prevents the report of speech from becoming too boring, allowing the bloggers the introduction of more entertaining language that enlivens the gossip. Furthermore, evidential verbs like *say* and *tell* are easy to understand and that is why they are selected by the popular press and gossip blogs alike (Bednarek 2006b: 141-142).

Within hearsay verbs, I distinguish among three different types of *sources* that bloggers use to report their gossip. None of them provides enough reliability insofar as they are either anonymous or come from other gossip sites similar to those offering the news. A first group of examples presents unidentified *sources* that bloggers apparently trust enough to present as valid to readers. In most cases, we ignore these insiders' bases of knowledge. However, the fact of not being explicitly marked does not prevent the writers from using them as the pretext for commenting upon what these unnamed people say and inviting readers to participate:

> (5) *Sources say that Jim and his posse of pussy arrived at the club at 3 a.m. and headed straight to the VIP area. Once inside, witnesses say that Jim gave all his attention to one pretty blonde girl that "looked a lot like Jenny" and a seksi brunette.*

The blogger relies on anonymous observers to remark that Jim Carrey is back *at the dating game*. In example (6), the same writer refers to more

nameless *sources* that possess very valuable information about the *Heroes* TV series and its impending end:

> (6) *Sources are suggesting that NBC is feeling so confident about its upcoming line-up of new shows that they are considering NOT bringing back the series Heroes for one final superpowered season.*

The post finishes with the tag *Are U sad to see Heroes go?* bidding the readers to participate. Expressions like *what do YOU think?* or *thoughts??* sometimes appear at the end of the post in order to initiate a lively debate between them. Martin and White (2005: 110) regard these questions as 'pseudo' questions, where the reader is positioned to supply a particular answer. This dialogical relationship that is present in blogs fosters the use of communion figures like rhetorical questions that seek to get the audience's participation in the blogger's commentary (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 177-178). By asking about his readers' feelings, the blogger initiates potential virtual comments with his own view, and gives his column a subjective nature that is otherwise absent from the strict report of news.

A second group of hearsay examples includes *sources* that other well-known gossip blogs and tabloids regard as valuable. Bloggers quote or report information from these people, and readers presumably trust the account offered with the same interest. In example (7), the writer presents the following account:

> (7) *A royal source tells "People" that Princess Stephanie and Caroline are currently tutoring Charlene in royal protocol. Where do I fill out an application for Princess Stephanie's School of Royal Protocol, because you know the cafeteria has an open bar and the gym is a giant disco. I mean, this is probably the school anthem.*

The inclusion of *a royal source* may refer to a real insider related to the Monaco family or may be an ironic label for this individual who gossips about royalty to the *People* site. In fact, the blogger uses this knowledge to mock at *Princess Stephanie's School of Royal Protocol* when he adds that *the cafeteria has an open bar and the gym is a giant disco*. Example (8), similarly, uses an unknown source who gossips about the actor Jeremy London and his addiction problems to the *Radar* site.

(8) *A source tells "Radar" that Jeremy will check into Celebrity Rehab early next week. Jeremy's last visit to rehab was back in September of '09 when he was treated for an addiction to prescription pills.*

The last group of hearsay examples alludes to gossip blogs and tabloids themselves as direct *sources* of the rumour. Bloggers rely on these informants to post new information, knowing that their own sites may become the next *source* at any moment:

(9) *"Page Six" reports that in Tim's newest book "Gunn's Golden Rules", he writes all about Anna Wintour and Andre Leon Talley's ridiculous ways.*

The blogger rejoices at the fact that this writer seems to deprecate the traits and behaviour of the powerful editor-in-chief of the American *Vogue* magazine, Anna Wintour, and the also famous former editor-at large of the same publication. He simply trusts the information given by the blog agency *Page Six*. Example (10), in contrast, deals with the actor Gary Coleman and his tribulations with his wife before his tragic death. The writer turns to the agency blog *Radar* to give further details of the news:

(10) *Three months before Gary Coleman's death, he went out and got a restraining order against his ex-wife Shannon Price because he knew that minion of Satan was up to some no good shit. Radar says that while Gary was in the hospital recovering from a seizure, Shannon was staying at his house without his permission.*

3.2. Mindsay verbs

My second group of examples contains utterances with mindsay verbs as main bases of knowledge. Unlike news stories, wherein a lot of propositions are attributed to Other by means of hearsay and mindsay verbs, it is Self (the blog writer) who avers most mindsay verbs in gossip blogs. It seems that bloggers are not interested in what other sources assume or think about celebs but just in the information that they can offer. Thus bloggers prefer to appraise Others' material by inserting their own observations. They either hold up or rebut a given view with their comments, and build up a post in such a compelling and appealing way that readers feel obliged to have a say.

Within perception evidentials the following two sub-categories are present: (1) Belief, which concerns the writers' lower reliability and, as a result, their opinion is more explicit. The most frequent verbs are *think* which occurs 29 times, *be sure* which occurs 29 times, and *guess* which occurs 12 times. (2) Volition, which is related to the expression of the writer's negative or positive wishes and intentions, is followed in importance. The most common verb is *know*, which occurs 44 times. Although *think* and *know* convey different meanings in utterances like *I think that Peter will be here soon* and *I know that Peter will be here soon*, both of them refer to states of cognition and are thus included within the intellectual state/thinking/cognition (Bednarek 2006b: 154). Marín-Arrese (2007: 87) refers to *know* as a cognitive marker that emphasises the cognitive basis of the information uttered by the speaker and that usually contains predicates of belief and/or general knowledge where the bloggers express their personal views about individual experiences or attitudes (Nuyts 2001: 122):

> (11) *So we just hope Mayer doesn't turn into too much of a "good boy." If we catch him helping an old lady cross the street or picnicking in the park, we'll know something really nefarious is at work. Because we all know that under that polo and those matching sweatbands, J.M. will always, ultimately remain a baddie at heart.*

The blogger openly accepts John Mayer's poor reputation and jokes about the possibility of his becoming a *good boy*. In the utterance, the blogger uses a collective *we* aimed at including the readers in his opinion and inviting them, at the same time, to enter the discussion. I can consider this figure of communion as an enallage of person from *I* to *we*, in which a change in the number of people follows that allows blogger and reader to form a joint *we* (Graff and Winn 2006: 57; 2011: 114). Furthermore, it helps the blogger to "create a new media text by drawing on existing content but reshaping them through his or her ideological perspective" (Meyers 2012: 1032).

Likewise, in (12) the blogger's reveals his negative opinion about Naomi Campbell. The author criticises the fact that the famous model is wearing furs after she promised not to wear them, and points at her hair loss as some sort of divine punishment:

> (12) *Ugh, I am so not a fan of the fur … I think it's so gross that Naomi would once pledge to never wear fur and then decide, meh, she likes fur after all. Karma*

has a funny way of working out. Isn't it interesting that she ends up losing her hair while she proudly wears the hair/fur of poor defenseless animals? HMMMM.

3.3. Perception verbs

The third group of evidential strategies includes perception verbs uttered by Self (the blog writer). Bednarek (2006a: 645) points out that in news discourse, both examples of Experiencer:Self and Experiencer:Other are common. The first often occurs when Experiencer:Self describes news actors' mental states. As to expressions of Experiencer:Other, they are also valuable means of providing evidence for statements and of testing the trustworthiness of attributed propositions. Both cases appear in celebrity gossip blogging. However, the most meaningful instances contain Experiencer:Self as the main evaluator of others' mental and physical states.

The category of perception covers three different types: 'mental perception' or inference, sensory perception, and 'showing' (Bednarek 2006a: 640). In my examples, the distinction between mental and sensory perception that includes verbs such as *look* and *look like* is sometimes difficult to discern, so I will restrict to showing the number of occurrences of the most numerous verbs without specifying the type of perception they belong to. They are the following: *look*, which occurs 55 times, *seem* which occurs 35 times, and *sound* which appears 22 times. Perception evidential verbs like *look* and *sound* that make reference to sensory and mental evidence are evaluated as highly credible especially when the whole utterance is averred by Experiencer:Self. In contrast, perceptions evidentials like *seem* evaluate the reliability of the utterance as median (Bednarek 2006b: 130-133).

In (13), the writer comments upon the fact that the singer Charice has had plastic surgery despite her youth. She ironically points out that *she looks fresh and clean* before appearing on the show:

(13) *Charice just turned 18 in May, but that didn't stop her from getting the work done to her face so she looks fresh and clean for her appearance on the hit musical show.*

Example (14) introduces the blogger's judgement on the wedding of two famous film stars, pointing out that the photo agency whose news she is

writing about reports on evident news. The sentence *It seems logical since they were married over the weekend* […] reinforces the author's assumption of the celebs' destination:

> (14) *Well, so says the photo agency. Newlyweds John Krasinski and Emily Blunt were spotted at LAX this afternoon. Reportedly, the couple is leaving on their honeymoon. It seems logical since they were married over the weekend, but I highly doubt they told the photographers where they were headed.*

Mindsay and perception verbs that are not attributed to Other become based or sourced averrals in so far as they are the consequence of the writer's interpretation of data and show the basis of the writer's knowledge. Whereas in attribution the basis of Other's knowledge is 'outside' Self, in based averrals the basis is 'inside' Self, that is, it is part of the blogger's own subjective experience. Bednarek (2006a: 648) affirms that "the more the speaker's presence is explicit, the more subjectified the utterance". As a result, the use of mindsay and perception evidentials suggests a more subjective reading than using hearsay evidentials that are attributed to Other. In the news discourse, in contrast, both hearsay and mindsay involve attribution, whereas perception involves based averrals (Bednarek 2006b: 62). Furthermore, the use of mindsay and perception bases of knowledge in gossip blogs implies some distancing from positions of authority and responsibility that might place the bloggers in a difficult position if they did not use any evidential markings in their entries (Fox 2001: 182):

> (15) *Last weekend we read a report that claims that Mischa Barton has given up drinking alcohol for good … and today we get to see the fruits of that decision. The newly sober Mischa was spotted out and about last night wearing an outfit that, IMHO, looks like only a drunken or blind woman would ever deign to wear in public … behold (…).*

(15) is an example of based averral. The source of the utterance is the blog writer (*we*) and the basis of his knowledge contains two perception verbs: *read* and *get to see*. Firstly, the blogger attributes the proposition that *claims that Mischa Barton has given up drinking alcohol for good* to *a report* that he read. Secondly, he gets to *see* the result of that report in the utterance *The newly sober Mischa was spotted out and about last night wearing an outfit that, IMHO, looks like only a drunken or blind woman would ever deign to wear in public … behold (…).* The verb

spotted out used in the passive indicates that an unknown source saw Mischa, whereas it is the blogger himself who thinks that the actress *looks like only a drunken or blind woman would ever deign to wear in public*. The use of the perception verb *looks like* to describe the actress's attire suggests some distance from the writer's authority as regards to a possible lack of confidence. Irony is used in the last sentence that indicates that he is not sure about the celeb's recovery. The ironic meaning is reflected by the phrase *the newly sober Mischa* and the use of the acronym *IMHO* standing for "in my honest opinion". The inclusion of acronyms is common in this blogging practice as a convention typical of spoken registers which, together with verbal techniques like the use of the personal pronoun *we* and the rhetorical question, bring to mind everyday language in an attempt to create communion with the readers (West-Brown 2008: 321).

The blogger's negative opinion about Mischa Barton's appearance is in agreement with the idea that that the gossip blogger can damage the perfectly constructed image that the entertainment industry tries to preserve carefully. What is more, when the writer uses sarcastic and vicious discourse, this blogging practice offers an opportunity to debate facets of a celebrity's behaviour, way of life and appearance (Fairclough 2008: 1-3). In this respect, bloggers are autonomous when they are compared with other entertainment-media outlets in that they are not interested in promoting the professional projects of a star, but in the rumour that surrounds his/her private life. Their unauthorised access to celebrities threatens the controlled construction of the star image while increasing his/her visibility to a growing audience (Meyers 2012: 1028-29).

4. Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to show the verbal evidential strategies favoured by celebrity gossip bloggers. In contrast to other "more serious" practices like tabloid journalism and gossip magazines, where the writers supposedly have the time and the opportunity to check their sources, the bloggers do feel the pressure of immediacy. Thus these writers do not always specify their bases of knowledge and trust on an army of questionable sources in an attempt to show the most notorious and newest news. The exercise of gossip blogging that is related to

commentary and not serious journalism prompts a type of evidential marker that does not necessarily reflect the bloggers' actual certainty.

My results reflect the inclusion of three main categories of verbal evidential occurrences that reflect how the bloggers receive the information: (1) hearsay verbs, which show three different types of sources attributed to Other: undetermined sources whose origin is never specified, sources that inform gossip printed or online publications, and internet sites and gossip blogs as providers of the news. I have also referred to (2) mindsay and (3) perception verbs that are averred by Self. These evidential expressions obey to the bloggers' wish to inform and further comment on the news so that the readers may be eager to answer back after reading a blog entry. Their continuous updates often make the readers check the blogs several times a day so the bloggers feel the obligation to satisfy their readership with the latest gossip. Thus the celebrity blogs occupy a very important place within celebrity culture to the detriment perhaps of other more traditional printed tabloids and magazines (Meyers 2012: 1032).

In addition, the verbal evidential strategies used in this new media discourse are used for the rhetorical purpose of engaging the audience with the gossip commentary and opinions about celebs rather than the simple and more objective report of news. For this reason, argumentative devices such as the figures of communion entail a fundamental aspect of this blogging practice. The bloggers introduce techniques like the rhetorical question, the enallage of a person and the acronyms in order to gain the adherence of the audience and increase its number (Sánchez-Cuervo 2013: 337-342).

Further research may consider the study of the other elements of EP with regard to celebrity gossip blogs, especially those elements concerning the certainty of knowledge that is connected to the realm of modality and its relationship to evidentiality (Alonso-Almeida forthcoming; Alonso-Almeida and Cruz-García 2011; Cornillie 2009; De Haan 1999; Marín-Arrese 2007, 2009; Nuyts 2001; Plungian 2001). Similarly, some investigations could be conducted as to the study of evaluation and the semantic domain of appraisal in this discursive practice (Martin & White 2005).

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http://allieiswired.com.
Dlisted.
http://www.dlisted.com.
I'm not obsessed! Gossip… without the guilt.
http://www.imnotobsessed.com.
Just Jared.
http://justjared.buzznet.com.
Lainey Gossip.
http://www.laineygossip.com.
Perez Hilton.
http://perezhilton.com.
Pink is the New Blog.
http://www.pinkisthenewblog.com.
Radaronline.com.
http://www.radaronline.com.
Ted Casablanca's The Awful Truth.
http://uk.eonline.com/uberblog/the_awful_truth/index.html.
The Superficial.
http://www.thesuperficial.com.
TMZ.
http://www.tmz.com/