<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

News and relations : Highlighted textual labels in the titles of early modern news pamphlets

Suhr, Carla Maria

John Benjamins

2018

Suhr, C M 2018 , News and relations : Highlighted textual labels in the titles of early modern news pamphlets . in P Petré , H Cuyckens & F D'hoedt (eds) , Sociocultural Dimensions of Lexis and Text in the History of English . Current Issues in Linguistic Theory , no. 343 , John Benjamins , Amsterdam , pp. 41-60 . <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.343.02suh>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/326557>

<https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.343.02suh>

unspecified

acceptedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

News and relations: Highlighted textual labels in the titles of early modern news pamphlets

Carla Suhr
University of Helsinki

Running head. Highlighted textual labels in the titles of early modern news pamphlets

Abstract. This paper is a pragma-philological examination of the textual labels and visual features in the titles and title pages of 53 early modern sensationalist news pamphlets. The analysis shows that certain textual labels are favored over others, that textual labels were not highlighted until the 1640s, and that before that time the overall visual layout of the title page was a more important genre marker than textual labels. These developments in the conventionalization of textual labels can be tied in with increasing literacy and access to printed texts of the unlearned masses that were the primary readership of these pamphlets.

Keywords: historical linguistics, pragmatics, pragma-philology, English, news pamphlets, genre, textual labels, titles, illustrations

1. Introduction

The book historian Eleanor Shevlin claims that “titles embody the potential to illuminate not just individual works, but reading processes, authorial composition, publishing practices, marketing trends, and generic

transformations as well” (1999: 43–44). In the past few years, linguists – especially in the field of pragmatics – have picked up on several of these aspects of titles. They have taken notice especially of the potential of textual labels given in titles to carry genre expectations (see Bach 1997; Suhr 2011; Ratia 2013). At the same time, linguists have also begun to recognize that visual features of a page can carry linguistic meanings or aid the reading comprehension of a text (Bach 1997; Suhr 2011; Carroll et al. 2013; McConchie 2013; Salmi 2013; see also the contributions in Meurman-Solin & Tyrkkö 2013). Other studies have acknowledged the competition between marketing trends and what Shevlin (1999: 43) calls the contractual nature of the title (see Tyrkkö et al. 2013).

The importance of the textual labels of early English news publications was hinted at already in 1996 by the historian Joad Raymond in his study of newsbooks, which were short, quarto format periodical news publications of the 1640s. He cursorily notes that the term ‘news’ had acquired a potentially pejorative connotation from its use in earlier occasional sensationalist news pamphlets focusing on anomalous phenomena such as monstrous births, witchcraft, trials and executions, or natural disasters (1996: 158–159; see Raymond 2003: 98–128 for a description of sensationalist news pamphlets). Because of this taint, Raymond argues, *news* was more likely to be used in titles for foreign news, whereas ‘proper’ domestic news – which began to be printed only in the 1640s – would appear under the label of *intelligence* or *information*, which implied sophistication and seriousness but also expertise

of the editor in sifting through meaningless news and interpreting it to inform the judgment of the readers (1996: 158–163). However, there has been no systematic study of the textual labels of sensationalist news pamphlets from before 1640 that could corroborate Raymond’s claim that *news* was such a common label for these texts that its use could not be considered for other types of domestic news reports.

My study of the visual and linguistic features of the title pages in a corpus of English witchcraft pamphlets (Suhr 2011: 125–142), one type of sensationalist news pamphlet, suggests that it was precisely around the 1640s when self-descriptive textual labels such as ‘*news* or *relation*’ started to carry content and genre expectations. Earlier pamphlets did not highlight textual labels on the title page because visual features such as illustrations and layout marked a text as popular, or as a text aimed at the growing semi-literate middle and lower classes that benefited from increasing basic literacy. The formative years from the late 16th century up to the 1640s, the study argues, were a period when the new genre became conventionalized and reading became a common enough skill that readers could use highlighted textual labels to guide their expectations of the content and structure of a text rather than visual features of the title page (Suhr 2011).

This study builds upon these earlier studies. On the one hand, it tests Raymond’s claim about the ‘contamination’ of the textual label *news* because of its prevalence in the titles of sensationalist news pamphlets before the 1640s. This is done by charting the repertoire of textual labels and by

identifying any diachronic patterns of over 50 sensationalist news pamphlets from the period 1580–1700 that deal with monsters, storms, and encounters with the devil. At the same time, this study tests whether the turn from visual to verbal primacy observed in witchcraft pamphlets and dated to around the 1640s can be seen in the other sensationalist news pamphlets; to that effect, it records the presence or absence of illustrations and visual highlighting of linguistic items. Both the conventionalization of textual labels and how they were marked in popular news pamphlets can be tied to the larger cultural issues of literacy, reading habits, and changing print culture. This pragmatic-philological approach thus not only sheds light on the early development of genre conventions in news writing but also demonstrates how the pragmatic study of texts can be advanced by taking account of visual aspects of the textual page in the analysis of linguistic features that help readers structure and process texts (for syntactically oriented approaches to genre analysis, see the contributions by Moessner, Gather, and Nakayasu in this volume).

This paper is organized as follows. The following section describes the main findings of previous studies regarding textual labels in Early Modern English pamphlets. Section 3 introduces the materials of the current study and outlines the method used to analyze textual labels and their relevance for readers, while Section 4 presents the results of the study. Whether the claims of Raymond (1996: 158–163) and Suhr (2011: 125–142) are supported by the results of the current study is discussed in Section 5. Section 6, then,

concludes with remarks about the broader implications of this study and suggestions for further research.

2. Previous linguistic observations on textual labels in Early Modern English pamphlets

There are three linguistic studies that consider textual labels in Early Modern English pamphlets.¹ Two of them (Bach 1997; Claridge 2000) focus on the period starting in 1640, so they cannot shed light on Raymond's claim about the earlier use of '*news*' as a textual label for sensationalist news pamphlets. In addition, the majority of the pamphlets these studies investigate are not sensationalist news pamphlets but polemical pamphlets that argued for particular political, religious, or scientific viewpoints rather than reporting on news. These two studies are therefore of limited use in terms of determining the variety of textual labels for specifically sensationalist news pamphlets from 1580 onwards, or in testing the 1640s watershed hypothesis. They do, however, provide interesting points of comparison for the present study, so I

¹ After the submission of this chapter, two articles appeared that include an analysis of the metadiscursive use of what I would call textual labels in historical English news discourse. Brownlees (2015: 5) describes the terms he analyzes as nominal forms of metadiscourse terms; his analysis focuses on such terms used in the title pages and in editorial addresses and comments of periodical news publications of the 17th century, which are closely related to sensationalist news pamphlets (called 'occasional news pamphlets' by Brownlees 2015: 13). Bös (2015) investigates the quantitative development and potential semantic and functional changes of 25 news-related key terms, not all of which are textual labels. Her material is comprised of news stories from the period 1700–2000.

summarize their main suggestions and findings regarding textual labels before describing the study of textual labels of witchcraft pamphlets (Suhr 2011: 125–142) that this study replicates.

Bach (1997) contains an in-depth analysis of the textual labels – he uses the term ‘text-type label’ – of almost 500 pamphlets included in the Thomason tracts, dating from the period 1640–1661.² The study analyzes the kinds of textual labels found in these texts and shows how the clustering of labels signals participation in chains of pamphlets and controversies dealing with specific people, groups of people, or institutions. Furthermore, Bach shows how textual labels in the titles, supported by typographical highlighting and sometimes illustrations, can be associated with certain schemas (LIST, SERMON, LIFE-AND-DEATH, and TRIAL) that helped readers (and listeners) to keep track and make sense of the actual pamphlet text; textual labels, then, activate or trigger in the reader certain expectations of the contents and structure of the text to follow. Bach also identifies certain textual labels (*inventory*, *funeral*, *fair*) that worked as *imagines et loci* mnemonic devices that could be used to help remember the pamphlet text. *News* is not a label that Bach discusses either as a schema or a mnemonic device. Bach’s findings about schemas or mnemonic devices are not directly applicable to sensational news pamphlets, because many of the textual labels in his material

² The Thomason tracts are a collection of pamphlets, books, and newspapers printed between 1640 and 1661. Originally, the texts were collected by the London bookseller George Thomason; they are now held in the British Library (see <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/news/thomasontracts/> (October 9, 2017)).

simply do not appear in sensational news pamphlets. In fact, Bach does not provide a complete inventory or statistics of the textual labels found in his material, so there are no direct points of comparison between his discussion of textual labels and the results of this study. However, the importance of textual labels, emphasized as it is by typographical highlighting, certainly seems to support Raymond's point about avoiding the term 'news' as inappropriate for the newsbook genre (1996: 158–159) and also my own (2011) claim about a shift in the 1640s towards verbal genre marking in witchcraft pamphlets.

Claridge (2000) mentions what I term 'textual labels' in her study of interactive features in pamphlets included in the *Lampeter corpus of Early Modern English tracts* (1999/2003), which covers the period 1640–1740. According to her, textual labels point to established genres or text-types or speech acts by describing "what kind of text the pamphlet is or what function it has" (2000: 28), but they also imply who the intended addressee or reader of the text is because they are expressions that require a target, be it a person or another pamphlet. Claridge links this characteristic with a wish to make a more personal connection with the reader, visible especially in the frequency of the textual label *letter* (which has the added benefit of increased authenticity and credibility when the addressee is an important person) and in texts written as dialogues (2000: 28–29). This is an intriguing hypothesis, and it is worth testing whether the textual labels in sensationalist news pamphlets show a similar concern for personal connection. A comprehensive inventory

of textual labels in her material was beyond the scope of Claridge's study, but in fact a list of these labels is available in the manual of the *Lampeter corpus*, and it is made use of in Section 4.

Claridge (2000) and Bach (1997) do not differentiate between what I call polemical pamphlets and sensationalist or popular news pamphlets. However, this is an important distinction to keep in mind, for the intended audiences of the two kinds of texts were very different: to produce and to follow the sophisticated argumentation full of learned references found in polemical pamphlets, which often evolved into controversies addressing previous texts on the same topic, required a level of literacy beyond the means of the majority of the population (e.g. Brayman Hackel 2005: 57–63 and Thomas 1986 on different kinds of literacies). Sensationalist news pamphlets had a much wider audience consisting of increasing numbers of newly semi-literate readers from all but the lowest levels of society (Clarke 1983: 22–23) – and the practice of reading popular texts out loud brought even the illiterate within the potential audience of popular news pamphlets (e.g. Fox 2000: 36–39; Suhr 2011: 15–26).

The differences in the level of education of the audiences of polemical pamphlets and sensationalist news pamphlets is very likely to be reflected in their repertoires of textual labels. Learned readers were familiar with a very wide range of genres and the textual labels attached to them through their classical education, whereas the barely literate readers of sensationalist news pamphlets had contact with a much more restricted range of genres that

possibly derived from the oral genres they were used to listening to. For such semi-literate readers, building up enough familiarity with reading texts to be able to assign certain kinds of content-related and structural expectations to different textual labels located in the title of a text takes time, especially when texts are still in the process of forming their own textual conventions, as was the case with sensationalist news pamphlets. Neither Claridge (2000) nor Bach (1997) can shed light on the repertoire of textual labels in pamphlets during these formative years, and in fact Suhr (2011: 128–130) only makes general observations about the kind of information included in titles rather than systematically charting textual labels in witchcraft pamphlets from before 1643. The art historian Ruth Samson Luborsky (1987) claims that woodcut illustrations were a generic convention of romances, a popular genre, and Suhr (2011: 123) suggests that this reliance on a visual feature of texts to mark genre also applies to 16th-century witchcraft pamphlets and could well apply to other popular genres. Existing studies of illustrations in all kinds of pamphlets (Davies 1986) and ballads, chapbooks, and penny chapbooks (Watt 1991) up to the year 1640 certainly lend credence to this supposition, as they make note of the continued importance of illustrations in these texts – though they have not analyzed the precise quantities of illustrations in them.

In fact, I argued earlier (Suhr 2011: 125–142) that the reliance on visual genre marking was retained on the title pages of witchcraft pamphlets until the 1640s, about half a decade longer than in the actual texts. Therefore it very likely did not matter what kind of descriptive textual labels witchcraft

pamphlets carried in their titles. The text on the title page was arranged in a visually pleasing manner using different typefaces and decreasing type size, for instance by organizing the text into shapes such as an inverted pyramid; illustrations were expected components of title pages even after they disappeared from the inner pages of pamphlets. No attention was paid to highlighting textual labels that could guide a reader's expectations about the content and style of the pamphlet, with the result that textual labels were harder to identify cognitively for prospective buyers looking at title pages. It seems that, rather than the title or the textual labels embedded in the title, it was the presence of woodcut illustrations and a visually pleasing layout on the title page that were the primary signal for prospective buyers that the text would appeal to a popular audience. According to the study, the 1640s appears to be a watershed: this was the decade when the earlier visual primacy of the title page gave way to the practice of typographically highlighting the words and expressions that label the genre and topic of witchcraft pamphlets. This shift signaled that textual labels now had meaning for both producers and readers of the texts, exemplified also by contemporary newsbook editors' distinctions between the labels *news*, *intelligence*, and *information* that Raymond notes (1996: 158–163).

My earlier study (2011) was limited to one genre of sensationalist news pamphlets only, and the material consisted of only 36 texts. The current study aims to test whether the watershed hypothesis applies also to 53 sensationalist news pamphlets spanning approximately the same time frame and focusing

on three other topics: monsters, storms, and encounters with the devil. At the same time, the current study charts the range of textual labels in these texts as well as identifying any emerging trends in labeling. The following section describes the materials and methods of this study in more detail.

3. Materials and methods

The primary material of this study consists of a small-scale corpus of 53 sensationalist news pamphlets reporting on monsters, including abnormal births (19 texts), storms (15 texts), and encounters with the devil (19 texts) (see Kay & Alexander in this volume for an analysis of the supernatural in English metaphors). They were located in the *Early English Books Online* database using the subject search keywords ‘monsters’, ‘storm’, and ‘devil’. These keywords were chosen because they were mentioned as especially frequent topics (alongside witchcraft) of sensationalist news pamphlets in historical overviews of the genre (Clarke 1983; Raymond 2003). Accordingly, the texts included in the corpus can be considered representative of the genre. Note that the initial search yielded far more than 53 texts; the final number was obtained after discarding multiple copies and texts belonging to other genres such as ballads, broadsides, and treatises. Some of the texts are translations of foreign news pamphlets, but the majority of texts deal with singular, ‘wonderful and true’ events that took place in England.

The selected texts reflect developments in contemporary printing practices. The earliest text is from 1580 and the latest from 1699, so the texts cover roughly the same period as the corpus of 36 witchcraft pamphlets used in my earlier work (2011: 58–60). As with the witchcraft pamphlets, the texts are not spread evenly over the period, reflecting the reality of contemporary publication. For example, Raymond's (2003: 109) observation that news of abnormal births were rare in the 1620s and 1630s but increased again in the 1640s and 1650s correlates with a gap from 1620 to 1640 in the monster pamphlets of the corpus. In general, the majority (40 texts) of the corpus texts are from after 1640: there are only 3 texts from the 16th century, and a further 10 texts from the first four decades of the 17th century. This skewing towards the end of the period is also present in the witchcraft pamphlet corpus, though not quite so clearly (13 of the 36 texts are from before 1640). This is a general feature of Early Modern English publishing, for the number of printed texts, especially short texts, increased dramatically in England from the 1640s onwards. The explosion of print has been connected to the relaxation of censorship with the outbreak of the English Civil War but also with increasing literacy and an increasing demand for news (Raymond 2003: 161–172).

There is one important difference between witchcraft pamphlets and the other sensationalist news pamphlets considered here: almost all the witchcraft pamphlets report on witchcraft trials. As a result, their textual labels are often inherited from parts of trial proceedings regardless of whether the source of information is actual trial documents or eyewitness reports from a trial. This

is not the case with the sensationalist news pamphlets dealing with monsters, storms, and devil sightings, which rely on word-of-mouth accounts, eyewitness statements, or sometimes letters as sources. It can therefore be expected that the other sensationalist news pamphlets will have a wider range of textual labels than witchcraft pamphlets, or at the very least that textual labels related to trial proceedings (e.g. *examination*, *confession*) will not be found in the other news pamphlets.

After an initial look at the title pages in the corpus, I divided the texts into two categories: texts that contain typographical highlighting and texts that do not make use of typographical highlighting. Typographical highlighting includes features such as typeface switches (usually from Roman to italics or vice versa, though black-letter is found as well), larger type size, or the use of all capital letters, all of which have the effect of making words or expressions stand out from the rest of the text. These highlighted items are what readers would see first, and they would therefore very likely play an important part in guiding the readers' expectations of the contents and perhaps also of the structure of the text itself. At least in the 17th century, printers were very aware of the importance of emphasis through typographical highlighting. This is evident in Moxon's guide for compositors, where he writes the following:

He [the compositor], as aforesaid, judiciously reads his *Title Page*, and considers what *Word* or *Words* have the greatest Emphasis in it. If many

Words precede the Emphasis, he considers whether it be best to make one or two *Lines*, or more of them, by electing a *Body* bigger or less to *Set* the precedent *Matter* in, and whether any of these *Lines* ought to be *Indented*, either at one end or both, viz. *Set* in the middle of the *Line*. And what Words of Emphasis come in that precedent *Matter*, that he may *Set* them either in *Capitals*, *Roman*, *Italick* or *English* [i.e. blackletter]; and at last bring the great Emphasis, which is generally the *Title* or *Name* of the *Book* in a *Line* by it self, and just fill it if he can; which he has some helps to do, by the great *Bodied Letters* of the *Lower Case*, or else by *Capitals*, *Roman*, *Italick* or *English*, of a proper *Body*, which best pleases his fancy, or is in present mode. (Moxon 1683: 221, italics in original)

What is evident from Moxon's instructions to compositors is that typographical highlighting as a way of emphasizing words that were considered most important was normal practice in his time. This was not always the case, as Suhr (2011: 125–142) has shown at least for witchcraft pamphlets; as mentioned in Section 1, one aim of this study is therefore to examine whether the practice of emphasizing important words in the titles of sensationalist news pamphlets became the norm in the 1640s.

In addition to highlighting, I took note of whether the title pages contained illustrations. Both of these visual features of title pages, typographical highlighting and illustrations, are important for determining if

other sensationalist news pamphlets show a turn from visual to verbal considerations.

Once the texts were divided into two categories depending on whether their title pages contained highlighted elements, I made an inventory of the various textual labels found in the texts. Using the functional definition of Claridge (2000: 28), I identified textual labels as terms that tell “what kind of text the pamphlet is or what function it has.” Claridge’s definition derives from the one for the term ‘text type and genre self-descriptor’ used in the annotations for texts in the *Lampeter corpus*. According to the compilers, these self-descriptors are terms “explicitly given on the title page or somewhere else in the text,” and they were only accepted if they were an established genre term (e.g. *sermon*) or a publication type (e.g. *pamphlet*), or if an expression on the title page could be interpreted as a speech act term in a wide sense (e.g. *answer*) (Claridge 1999/2003: Section 3.2.2). I was, however, more restrictive in my criteria and focused only on textual descriptors found on the title page.

The inventory of labels that I compiled makes a distinction between *primary* and *secondary* textual labels as well as *headlines* and *topical* labels, all of which can be seen in the title page of a 1678 pamphlet reporting on a man possessed by the devil (see Figure 1). It is important to note that all but primary textual labels can occur multiple times on a title page, and in fact combinations of labels are common. Primary textual labels are the first textual labels assigned to a text – in Figure 1 the primary textual label is *news* – and

I would argue that it is these textual labels that readers rely on most when determining their expectations of the content and structure of the text. Secondary textual labels are supplementary labels that follow one or more labeling elements – a primary textual label, a headline or another secondary textual label – and they are preceded by tag words such as *or*, *being*, *shewing*, or *with*. These secondary textual labels can be typographically highlighted, but this is rare. Instead, it is strikingly common to highlight the tag words that precede the secondary labels by centering the single word on a line and using all capital letters. Secondary textual labels, then, indicate that additional information is forthcoming; often secondary textual labels are followed by quite detailed descriptions of the contents of the pamphlet. This is also the case in Figure 1: the secondary textual label *relation* comes after the tag *being*, and the narrative of the pamphlet text is summarized after the label.

[Insert Figure 1 here or at the top or bottom of this page.]

Strange and Wonderful
N E W S
 FROM
GOSWELL-STREET:
 OR, A
VICTORY over the **DEVIL.**
 B E I N G

A true Relation how a Person, living at the House of *Francis Jordan* at the Sign of the Huntsman and Hounds, near *Mount-Mill* in *Goswell-street*, having for three years last past lain under an Evil-Tongue and lamentable Fits, generally judged to proceed from Witchcraft, and was in a lamentable condition, and her flesh was as if it were tore off her bones.

With the strange Noises heard at that time, and how the Spirit struck the man of the House a grievous blow on the head, which for some Hours occasion'd great pain to him, but now he is recovered.

The Truth of this Relation is and will be attested by *Francis Jordan* at the Sign of the Huntsman and Hounds, near *Mount mill* aforesaid.

Susan Shawe, } *Rachel Hopkins.*
Margaret Flamstead. } *Ralph Jordan.*
 And several other persons.

With Allowance.

L O N D O N : Printed for D. M. 1678.

Figure 1. Title page of a sensationalist news pamphlet from 1678. The original document is held in the Guildhall Library, City of London. The image is published with permission of Proquest. Further reproduction is prohibited.

Headlines are catchy phrases such as “VICTORY over the DEVIL” in Figure 1 or more informative expressions such as “The *KENTISH* MIRACLE” that fit into one or at most two lines. They are intended to catch a potential reader’s interest. They usually start the title, but they can also follow another headline or a primary textual label. Headlines are usually typographically highlighted, which makes them stand out from the text. Headlines often replace primary textual labels, though there are a few instances where a headline in small type is followed by a textual label in much larger type. In these cases, I count the textual label as a primary label rather than as a secondary textual label simply because the visually highlighted textual label catches the reader’s eye first rather than the headline in smaller type at the top of the page. Finally, title pages may have topical labels that tell something about the topic (e.g. *wonder, tempest*) of the pamphlet or where the described event took place (e.g. *Goswell-Street* in Figure 1). Topical labels always need to be typographically highlighted, i.e. they have to stand out from the surrounding text, in order to be included in the analysis. The difference between headlines and topical labels is that headlines are multi-word expressions whereas topical labels consist of just one word.

Once information about the different kinds of labels found in other sensationalist news pamphlets had been collected, the next step was to

compile an inventory of primary and secondary textual labels that could be compared to the textual labels found in witchcraft pamphlets (Suhr 2011) and the pamphlets included in the *Lampeter corpus* (Claridge 1999/2003: Appendix V). This inventory was used to identify potential long-term trends in textual labeling of sensationalist news pamphlets. The analysis of labels was then refined to focus on elements that are highlighted visually, so that it was possible to see whether the 1640s is a watershed in terms of switching from visual to verbal considerations in title page design, as is the case with witchcraft pamphlets.

4. Results and analysis

4.1 Textual labels

The first aim of this study is to compile an inventory of textual labels found in sensationalist news pamphlets. The 53 pamphlets considered in this study contain 15 unique textual labels and 21 different headlines. Only four of the texts contain neither textual labels nor headlines, but instead make use of highlighted topical labels. Altogether, textual labels are used 72 times as either primary or secondary textual labels. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the textual labels and the number of times (in parentheses) they are used in the corpus texts' title pages.

Table 1. Unique textual labels used in the title pages of sensationalist news pamphlets

<i>relation</i> (32), <i>news</i> (13), <i>account</i> (9), <i>discourse</i> (3), <i>history</i> (2), <i>narrative</i> (2), <i>report</i> (2), <i>letter</i> (2), <i>view</i> (1), <i>declaration</i> (1), <i>testimony</i> (1), <i>examination</i> (1), <i>description</i> (1), <i>enquiry</i> (1), <i>miscellanies</i> (1)
Total: 15 types, 72 tokens

Clearly, the most common textual labels are *relation*, *news*, and *account*, 75% of all occurrences; the remainder of the textual labels are only used once or twice each. It would seem, then, that though there was a fairly wide range of textual labels that could be used in sensationalist news pamphlets, these three textual labels are preferred over others. Most of the labels could be said to be interactive in the sense that they imply a target (e.g., you *relate* a story to someone; see Claridge 2000: 28–29).

Table 2. Primary and secondary textual labels used in the title pages of sensationalist news pamphlets

Primary textual labels	<i>relation</i> (12), <i>news</i> (12), <i>account</i> (3), <i>history</i> (2), <i>narrative</i> (2), <i>view</i> (1), <i>report</i> (1), <i>declaration</i> (1)
	Total: 8 types, 34 tokens
Secondary textual labels	<i>relation</i> (20), <i>account</i> (6), <i>discourse</i> (3), <i>letter</i> (2), <i>report</i> (1), <i>testimony</i> (1), <i>examination</i> (1), <i>description</i> (1), <i>enquiry</i> (1), <i>news</i> (1), <i>miscellanies</i> (1)
	Total: 11 types, 38 tokens

Looking at the distribution of these labels over the categories of primary and secondary textual labels (Table 2), *news* stands out, for it is strikingly rare as a secondary textual label. Conversely, *relation* and *account* were more often used as labels for supplementary information, though their distribution

is not as distinctive as that of the label *news*. *Relation* and *account* were perhaps considered more neutral or less informative than *news*, which is why they may have been relegated more easily to secondary textual label status. None of these terms fit the schemas Bach (1997) identifies for polemical pamphlets, but they do fit into van Dijk's narrative macrostructure (1980: 116), which can be found in all kinds of genres. I argue that *relation* and *account* were already established labels in other genres (e.g. in travel literature) when sensationalist news pamphlets began to be printed, whereas *news* was a new 'unattached' label. The prominence of *news* as specifically the primary and possibly most visible textual label may be why it becomes associated with sensationalist news pamphlets. Raymond (1996: 1) points out that *What news?* was a question asked so frequently in early modern England that it became the subject of satire; pamphlets labeled *news* answered the question on everyone's lips before it was asked. There is very tentative support for Raymond's (1996: 158–159) suggestion that the association between *news* and sensationalism was already in place by 1640, as of the 13 corpus texts from before that date contain *news* as a primary textual label. However, this is hardly conclusive evidence.

As mentioned before, the textual labels found in witchcraft pamphlets are predominantly associated with trial proceedings, because the texts often reported on trials. Only one such label, i.e. *examination* (*testimony* is not used in the legal sense here), is found in other sensationalist news pamphlets. Of the non-trial-related textual labels used in witchcraft pamphlets, three labels

stand out: *relation* is used 14 times, and *news* and *account* are each used 5 times. Just as in other sensationalist news pamphlets, *news* is only used as a primary textual label (with one exception), whereas *relation* and *account* are found both as primary and textual labels. Other textual labels used only once or twice include *treatise*, *rehearsal*, *discovery*, *description*, *life (and death)*, *answer*, and *history*. With a few exceptions, all of the non-trial-related labels are only used in texts printed in the latter half of the 17th century, when witchcraft pamphlets started to report on suspicions of witchcraft and on unexplained phenomena attributed to witchcraft when witchcraft trials began to become rare. When the frequencies of the textual labels in witchcraft pamphlets (excluding trial-related labels) and other sensationalist news pamphlets are combined, a clear trend emerges in favor of just three textual labels: *relation*, *news*, and *account*.

On the basis of the *Lampeter corpus*, a number of observations can also be made about textual labels used in polemical pamphlets printed after 1640, though no distinction can be made between primary and secondary textual labels. The manual of the *Lampeter corpus* provides a list of 50 different ‘genre self-descriptions’ used altogether 169 times in the 120 texts of the corpus (Claridge 1999/2003: Appendix V). Of the three most frequent labels found in sensationalist news pamphlets (*news*, *relation*, *account*), the label *account* is used 8 times – it is the seventh-most frequent one – in polemical pamphlets, *relation* is only used 3 times, and *news* is only used once. However, a closer look at the titles of the texts in which these labels occur

reveals that the texts are in fact sensationalist news pamphlets rather than polemical ones, and adjusting the figures leaves only instances of *account* and one instance of *relation*. Polemical pamphlets in the *Lampeter corpus*, then, seem to favor other textual labels. Many of the most frequently used textual labels of polemical pamphlets indicate a literate genre (*discourse*, *treatise*), though *answer*, *letter*, and *sermon* are not as restricted.

Some other tentative trends emerge in the textual labeling of sensationalist news pamphlets when a diachronic perspective is added. Of the most frequent textual labels, *news* is evenly spread over the 17th century, while *relation* picks up only from 1640 onwards, after which it is used consistently until the end of the century. Intriguingly, *account* appears to have an extremely restricted lifespan, found almost exclusively in texts from the 1680s, but this is most likely just coincidence. Headlines are not evenly spread in title pages, as they cluster into one longer period between 1643 and 1675 and a shorter spate in the 1690s. Finally, from about 1675 onwards, there is a notable increase in topical labels combined with a tendency of clustering in texts. Often topical labels are emphasized as prominently as the textual labels that accompany them, and in a few cases topical labels are emphasized at the expense of the primarily textual label. The increasing importance of topical labels alongside textual labels is so pervasive that it must be motivated by something. I suggest that the reason is competition for buyers: sensationalist news pamphlets (and also the first newspapers) were now so

ubiquitous that highlighting a textual label was not enough to garner readers' interest without topical labels to catch their attention.³

4.2 Visual highlighting

My second aim is to examine whether sensationalist news pamphlets about monsters, storms, and encounters with the devil exhibit a turn from visual to verbal title pages in the 1640s similar to the one noted for sensationalist witchcraft pamphlets (2011: 125–142.) The first step is to calculate how many texts out of a total of 53 highlight textual labels, headlines, and topical labels; how many texts do not make use of typographical means for emphasizing words; and how many texts have illustrations on their title pages. The results are presented in Table 3; recall that texts could have various combinations of these features on their title pages.

Table 3. Numbers of texts with highlighting of textual elements and illustrations

³ The top three textual labels used in sensationalist news pamphlets (*news*, *relation*, and *account*) were also found in periodical news publications (Brownlees 2015). However, as Brownlees does not provide information about the frequency or the diachronic development of these terms (or the other terms he analyzes), no comparison can be made between sensationalist news pamphlets and periodical news publications. In news stories in the period 1700–2000, *news* is used quite consistently and frequently throughout the period, whereas the usage of *account* drops drastically after 1830. *Relation* was not included in the set of key terms investigated. By far the most frequently used term in news stories was *advice(s)* (Bös 2015), but that term too drops in the mid-19th century. Though the two studies by Brownlees (2015) and Bös (2015) are not directly comparable to the present one, they do indicate that the textual labels *news*, *relation*, and *account* were within the repertoire of labels in historical news discourse in general, possibly all the way up to the mid-19th century.

Textual labels highlighted	25 texts
Headlines highlighted	13 texts
Topical labels highlighted	22 texts
No highlighting	11 texts
Illustrations	12 texts

Visually prominent title pages had illustrations on them, and they did not highlight textual labels, as a pleasing visual appearance of the title as a whole was more important than individual words. According to the watershed hypothesis, these kinds of title pages are expected to be dominant in sensationalist news pamphlets until the 1640s, when verbally prominent title pages appear and quickly replace the earlier type of title pages. The new type of title page no longer carries illustrations, and important verbal elements (textual labels, headlines, and topical labels) are highlighted typographically to stand out from the rest of the title. The 53 texts were therefore divided into three groups according to their publication dates: pre-1640 (this period actually ends in 1628, as there are no texts from the 1630s), 1640s, and post-1650. If the watershed theory is to hold, the texts in the pre-1640 group are expected to have illustrations but no highlighting, the 1640s group to mix verbal and visual title pages, and the post-1650 group to lack illustrations but at the same time to contain highlighted textual elements.

The pre-1640 group contains 13 texts. The 1640s group initially contained 8 texts, but the last three texts of the decade fit the expected

characteristics of the post-1650 group, so the time frames of these two groups were adjusted to 1640–1645 and post-1645. The middle group thus ended up with only 5 texts, while the post-1645 group contains 35 texts. Figure 2 shows how many texts in the pre-1640 and post-1645 group do *not* behave as expected.

Figure 2. Characteristics of title pages before 1640 and after 1645

The post-1645 group, consisting of two-thirds of all the texts, fits the mold of verbally prominent title pages very well, since all of the texts highlight textual elements, and only two texts (one from 1655 and the other from 1680) have illustrations. The pre-1640 group, which should emphasize overall visuality, fits the expected pattern less neatly. Two of the texts that do not have illustrations do have large ornamental devices instead, so only three texts lack an image of some sort. Furthermore, in three of the four texts with highlighted textual elements, the highlighting may have been unintended, as the textual

element appears on a line of its own perhaps simply because it did not fit into the preceding or the following line. The lines of text in visually prominent title pages decreased in size and alternated typeface, so single textual labels on the first line are particularly difficult to interpret. Only one text (from 1613) of the thirteen texts in this group wholly runs counter to expected characteristics, in that it lacks an illustration as well as highlighted textual elements. When we take into account these cases of equivocal categorization, the pre-1640 group fits the expectations rather well, and therefore the watershed hypothesis seems to hold for all sensationalist news pamphlets.

Of the five texts in the middle group, one text (from 1640) fits the pre-1640 group, two texts (from 1643 and 1645) fit the post-1646 group, and two texts (from 1642 and 1645) mix the features of the two groups. Of course, since there are no texts from the 1630s, the middle group could also be extended to start in 1630 (this is also the case with witchcraft pamphlets). However, a study of pamphlet illustrations up to 1640 (Davies 1986) makes no mention of a decrease in pamphlet illustrations in the 1630s, so it seems likely that the visually oriented title pages continued until the 1640s.

5. Discussion

This study tested two claims regarding textual labels in Early Modern English sensationalist news pamphlets. The first is that *news* was a term associated

with sensationalist news pamphlets (Raymond 1996: 158–159), and was therefore avoided in newsbooks. The analysis of textual labels found in 53 sensationalist news pamphlets showed that *news* is indeed the second-most frequently used textual label and that it was the only textual label that was predominantly used as the most prominent primary textual label. *News* was evenly spread through the period investigated here, 1580–1700, though its occurrence before 1640 in only 3 out of 13 texts is at best tentative support for Raymond’s claim. The repertoire of textual labels was actually quite small, especially considering the practice of using several labels in one title page: there are only 15 unique textual labels in the 53 pamphlets. Furthermore, three of the labels (*news*, *relation*, and *account*) are clearly preferred over the others.

However, as the sample size is still quite small, especially for the period before 1640, it would be beneficial to increase the number of sensationalist news pamphlets looked at when inventorying their textual labels, especially if one wants to identify any diachronic trends. This could be quite easily done by expanding the list of sensationalist topics to include murders, highway robberies, and other crimes as well as fires, earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters. Alternatively, using the descriptive adjectives that often occurred with the textual labels (such as *most true* or *wonderful*) as title keywords would further increase the range of texts.

The second claim that this study tested is whether the design of the title pages of sensationalist news pamphlets shifted in the 1640s from title pages

emphasizing the overall visual look of the page to those highlighting textual labels only (Suhr 2011: 125–142). This claim was also corroborated by the current study: it can indeed be said that the 1640s were a watershed in title page design. This shift suggests that a critical mass of readers and texts had been reached, such that readers were familiar enough with the generic conventions of sensationalist news pamphlets to recognize them on the basis of their textual labels rather than on the basis of the visual image of the title page. An important contributing factor to this was increased literacy, but also an increase in reading habits and a wider availability of texts, both of which may be attributed to the explosion of print and the desire for news in the turbulent 1640s. The intriguing rise in highlighting topical labels, which would be worth investigating further, may also be tied in with the dramatic increase in the availability of reading material, not only of sensationalist news pamphlets but also of the periodical publications in the late 17th century.

6. Conclusion

Historical linguists especially in the field of pragmatics have in recent years begun to take into account the many ways in which visual features of a text work together with its linguistic features, for example in structuring text and guiding readers' interpretations and comprehension. In my earlier work (2011: 142), I problematize the assumption that the presence of a textual label

in the titles of texts aimed at semi-literate audiences would be automatically recognized by contemporary readers as such and suggest that it is only when textual labels are highlighted typographically that they can be considered reliable indicators of the recognition of textual labels as genre or text-type descriptors. This study supports this view by showing that typographical highlighting of textual labels was a general development in sensationalist news pamphlets from the 1640s onwards. Furthermore, it shows that certain textual labels were favored over others and that clustering them together with topical words was used as a strategy for specifying the rather general textual labels.

It would be interesting to find out when typographical highlighting of textual labels began to occur systematically in more literate genres. Bach's study (1997) indicates that visual highlighting of textual labels was considered important in polemical pamphlets of the 1640s and 1650s, but what of earlier polemical pamphlets? If such highlighting is absent in polemical pamphlets before 1640, it is possible that the 1640s watershed in title page design observed in sensationalist news pamphlets merely reflects a larger contemporary shift rather than developments in the functionality of textual labels for semi-literate audiences. On the other hand, earlier textual highlighting in more literate and established genres – polemical pamphlets but also other genres – could show that the conventionalization of textual labels took place at different paces for different audiences. A pilot study of

plague texts in the Stuart era (Ratia 2013) points to this hypothesis, but much more work needs to be done with textual labels of historical genres.

References

- Bach, Ulrich. 1997. *Englische Flugtexte im 17. Jahrhundert: Historisch-pragmatische Untersuchungen zur frühen Massenkommunikation* (Anglistische Forschungen 254). Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.
- Bös, Birte. 2015. Conceptualisations, sources and agents of news: Key terms as signposts of changing journalistic practices. In Birte Bös & Lucia Kornexl (eds.), *Changing genre conventions in historical English news discourse*, 23–51. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/ahs.5.02bos
- Brayman Hackell, Heidi. 2005. *Reading material in early modern England: Print, gender and literacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brownlees, Nicholas. 2015. “We have in some former bookes told you”: The significance of metatext in 17th-century English news. In Birte Bös & Lucia Kornexl (eds.), *Changing genre conventions in historical English news discourse*, 23–51. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/ahs.5.01bro

- Carroll, Ruth, Matti Peikola, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liisa Varila, Matti Peikola & Risto Hiltunen. 2013. Pragmatics on the page: Visual text in late medieval English books. *European Journal of English Studies* 17(1). 54–71. DOI: 10.1080/13825577.2013.755006
- Claridge, Claudia. 1999/2003. “Life is ruled and governed by opinion”: The Lampeter corpus of Early Modern English tracts manual of information. <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/sections/linguist/real/independent/lampeter/manual/pages/contents.html> (26 February, 2015.)
- Claridge, Claudia. 2000. Pamphlets and early newspapers: Political interaction in news reporting. In Friedrich Ungerer (ed.), *English media texts past and present: Language and textual structure* (Pragmatics and Beyond, n.s., 80), 25–43. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Clarke, Sandra. 1983. *The Elizabethan pamphleteers: Popular moralistic pamphlets 1580–1640*. London: Athlone Press.
- Davies, Marie-Hélène. 1986. *Reflections of Renaissance England: Life, thought and religion mirrored in illustrated pamphlets 1535–1640* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 1). Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications.
- Fox, Adam. 2000. *Oral and literate culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford Studies in Social History). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lampeter corpus of Early Modern English tracts*. 1999. Compiled by Joseph Schmied, Claudia Claridge & Rainer Siemund. In Knut Hofland, Anne

- Lindebjerg & Jørn Thunestvedt (eds.), *ICAME collection of English language corpora*, 2nd edn., CD-ROM. Bergen: The HIT Centre, University of Bergen.
- Luborsky, Ruth Samson. 1987. Connections and disconnections between images and texts: The case of secular Tudor book illustrations. *Word & Image* 3(1). 74–85.
- McConchie, Roderick. 2013. Some reflections on early modern printed title-pages. In Anneli Meurman-Solin & Jukka Tyrkkö (eds.), *Principles and practices for the editing and annotation of diachronic data* (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change 14). Helsinki: VARIENG. <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/14/mcconchie/> (October 9, 2017.)
- Meurman-Solin, Anneli & Jukka Tyrkkö (eds.) 2013. *Principles and practices for the editing and annotation of diachronic data* (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change 14). Helsinki: VARIENG. <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/14/> (October 9, 2017.)
- Moxon, Joseph. 1683. *Mechanick exercises: Or, the doctrine of handy-works. Applied to the compositors trade*, vol. 2. London: Printed for Joseph Moxon.
- Ratia, Maura. 2013. Investigating genre through title-pages: Plague treatises of the Stuart period in focus. In Anneli Meurman-Solin & Jukka Tyrkkö (eds.), *Principles and practices for the editing and annotation of diachronic data* (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change 14).

Helsinki:

VARIENG.

<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/14/ratia/> (October 9, 2017.)

Raymond, Joad. 1996. *The invention of the newspaper: English newsbooks 1641–1649*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Raymond, Joad. 2003. *Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain* (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salmi, Hanna. 2013. Visual presentation of English body and soul debates. *Studia Neophilologica* 86(suppl. 1). 144–156. DOI: 10.1080/00393274.2013.834106

Shevlin, Eleanor F. 1999. “To reconcile book and title, and make ’em kin to one another”: The evolution of the title’s contractual functions. *Book History* 2(1). 42–77.

Suhr, Carla. 2011. *Publishing for the masses: Early modern English witchcraft pamphlets* (Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki 83). Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.

Thomas, Keith. 1986. The meaning of literacy in early modern England. In Gerd Baumann (ed.), *The written word: Literacy in transition. Wolfson College Lectures*, 97–131. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Tyrkkö, Jukka, Ville Marttila & Carla Suhr. 2013. The Culpeper Project: Digital editing of title-pages. In Anneli Meurman-Solin & Jukka Tyrkkö (eds.), *Principles and practices for the editing and annotation*

of diachronic data (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change 14).

Helsinki:

VARIENG.

<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/journal/volumes/14/>

tyrkko_marttila_suhr/ (October 9, 2017.)

Van Dijk, Teun A. 1980. *Macrostructure: An interdisciplinary study of global structures in discourse, interaction, and cognition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Watt, Tessa. 1991. *Cheap print and popular piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.