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QUOTATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA: HOW SHARING OTHER PEOPLE'S WORDS COULD INCREASE MISINFORMATION

According to the report "We Are Social" (2021), one of the most important reasons why Internet users take to social media platforms are: "stay up-to-date with news and current events", "seeing what's being talked about", and "sharing and discussing opinions with others". They are all focused on quoting. Our research helped us to confirm the dominance of posts with quotations in social media (the institutional broadcasters' profiles). Quotation can take various forms to produce different results. Direct quotations include direct speech, text islets, and pseudo-quotations; indirect quotations include indirect speech and narrated speech. Direct quotations in the form of various direct references accounted for 73% of quotations on Twitter and 61% on Facebook. This confirms the tremendous popularity of quotations in direct speech – senders avoid allegations of being partial; after all they show the facts that speak for themselves. It is strategies of the senders which increase misinformation.

Keywords: social media, objectivity, quotation, direct speech, indirect speech, quotation marks

INTRODUCTION

Quoting is in fashion. This is not only because we have just learned to exuberantly share quotes with the online "share" option. As early as in ancient times, the rhetoricians recommended using quotations, both actual and fictional, to enliven a speech: authority argument, *sermocinatio, sententia, epea pteroenta*, *communis opinio*, anticipation, etc. They were meant

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to enrich the message, make it more attractive, bolster the author's credibility and undermine the adversary's prestige. In fact, even up to today, the principle of interlarding somebody else's words has been applied when constructing any utterance. Let us look at science, for example: the quotation index is one of the most important criteria of scientific excellence; the multiplicity of indices and formulas used to identify the number of references to various scientific studies lend a lot of weight to such surveys and demonstrate the success of the researcher. Another example? The positive term "opinion-forming media" has in for several years Poland meant "media that are quoted by other media" (IMM, 2022). Every media broadcaster would like to be an opinion-forming medium, because it is a term that indicates a strong position in the market, even if it only refers to the number of references, quotes and mentions[1]. By applying the criterion of quoting, tabloids or gossip portals for which the integrity of the message is not important are the opinion-forming media.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

TYPES OF QUOTATIONS

Quotation itself can take various forms to produce different results (Authier, 1978, pp. 1–87; Banfield, 1973, pp. 1–39; Grzelka and Kula, 2012). The most basic division is between **direct quotations** and **indirect quotations** (Tab. 1), which follows from the status of the sender of the quoted words. In the first case, we identify the person quoted as the direct sender: The words are not distorted by or subordinated to intermediaries. The sender strengthens this independence by additional means, including quotation marks, colons, italics, dashes, or different typefaces. On the other hand, indirect quotations are included in the work of the author's narration, and they are subordinated to it at the linguistic (stylistic) and pragmatic levels (the attitude towards the quotation, the person quoted, or the circumstances is revealed).

Direct quotations include **direct speech** (*oratio recta*, *oratio directa*), or a literal quotation, directly derived from somebody else's utterance, without distortion and without interference, embracing the meaning – usually one or more sentences; a **text islet**, which is an original snippet, a fragment of a quoted speech (less than a sentence) which the narrator marks as somebody else's but which fits into their own context; and **seemingly direct speech** (pseudo-quotations) – in structurally independent statements (quotes, italics, etc.) the prototype is distorted in a manner that the receivers are unaware of (e.g. translation of the original utterance, which makes Joe Biden speak Polish, while in the German media he speaks German and in the Swedish media, Swedish). This type of "introducing somebody else's words" basically does not change the content, but only the form (e.g., Polish instead of English).

Direct quotations are visible in the text without reading. They take a different font, quotation marks, dashes, or a preceding colon. They are treated as a signal of literalness and originality, and the receiver does not expect to see abuse or distortion in such statements. The most common designation, quotation marks, refers to the original, prior statement. The

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[1] Although there is also a widespread qualitative rather than quantitative understanding of the term, the opinion-forming media are qualitative media, addressed to a demanding audience; these are elite media.

message is simple and clear: that was exactly what someone had said, it is an authentic text, we are not changing anything. Obviously, such interpretation is more probable in cases of media that the receivers trust, those which they consider close to their vision of the world and with which they share an ideology.

Indirect quotations are used by a narrator to introduce statements of others in a modified form. Most often they are made shorter, reformulated, simplified, summarised, further specified and/or explained. **Indirect speech** is primarily designed for that purpose, as it allows the narrator to use the statements of other people in the narrator's own text so that such statements could be functionalised and subordinated as much as possible – in terms of grammar, style, rhetoric, etc. (thus, the text becomes uniform since the narrator is writing about someone else's utterance using the narrator's own words). **Narrated speech** is incorporated entirely into the author's sending mode. The author points to the fact that a speaking situation took place – and so the narrator reduces, generalises, and says how, where and under what conditions someone said something, rather than focusing on the content itself. Cultural knowledge is inscribed in its use (e.g., "miners' protest", "deliver an address", "final speech")[2].

Table 1. Categorization of exemplary quotations

Direct quotations	Direct speech	"We had a six-year-old girl on a ventilator, who eventually returned home. Now we have an infant whose chances are unfortunately very slight", is what they say in the paediatric hospital in Niekłańska Street. "There are more and more children infected with coronavirus".
	Text islets	Minister for Education @CzarnekP announces "the beginning of end of the pandemic". Children return to schools one week earlier #wyborcza
	Seemingly indirect speech	The European Court of Human Rights: The Disciplinary Chamber is to cease action against Judge Wróbel #wyborcza
Indirect quotations	Indirect speech	One out of six Poles claims that #corononavirus is a myth. The same percentage of people are of the opinion that man did not land on the moon in 1969 #BIQdata #wyborcza
	Narrated speech	The European Commission sues Poland. #wyborcza

Source: Twitter https://mobile.twitter.com/ga_wyborcza, 8–9.02.2022

Indirect quotations explicitly inform the receiver that the sender changed the original statement, so they are inaccurate, imprecise, and do not reflect faithfully what they refer to. They are the author's restatement of somebody else's words. And as such, the accounts are

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[2] The third important type of indirect quotations is seemingly direct speech, which is the most difficult to identify, as it is not designated in any way. Somebody else's statement is grammatically aligned with the narrator's text, and the quotation signal comes out of the stylistic domain – the fragment of the text is proper for the specific person's way of speaking and it differs from the author's speaking style. This is a construct that requires effort from the receiver, so it is encountered in literature rather than in the media.

secondary, sieved through somebody else's awareness and sensitivity. They are simply less reliable, as the receiver cannot be sure what the original version looks like. It is difficult to determine what content comes from the narrator and what content comes from the person being cited, which is the reason behind various abuses, which can be minor and harmless, but also fundamental and far-reaching. Transformations within the quotation may include generalisations, distortion, generalising modifications or extensively detailed modifications, and finally manipulations. In short, they are conducive to disinformation.

QUOTATIONS AND OBJECTIVITY

"In an era of greater polarisation, silent majority strongly supports impartial and objective journalism", as the authors of "Digital News Report 2021" claim, and they indicate the results of qualitative studies. The receivers explicitly opt for neutrality and objectivity, and 74% of the respondents believe that "news outlets should reflect a range of different views and leave it up to people to decide" (Reuters Institute, 2021, p. 20). This clearly identified social need is even stronger in countries where we see a decline of confidence in public as well as local and regional media, such as Poland or Hungary. Once again, "classic" views of the communication theory on the standards of objectivity prove to be necessary (objectivity as a superior category is described not only in textbooks and studies for journalism enthusiasts – e.g. Allan, 2010; Harcup, 2021, in the codes of ethics for journalists, but also, as we have already pointed out, it is referred to by the receivers). It is understood and defined very widely, most often by the following characteristics: impartiality, truthfulness, evidence, precision, detail, and lack of expressiveness. In addition to the desired features of the messages, often abstract and difficult to apply in practice, recommendations are also made for the introduction of specific components into the message.

> The issue of what counts as impartiality in news seems relatively simple but can also be complex in practice, not least because there is little chance of achieving a value-free assessment of value freedom. Impartiality is appreciated mainly because many events involve conflict and are open to alternative interpretations and evaluations (this is most obviously true of political news, but much the same can be said of sports). Most generally, the normal standard of impartiality *calls for balance in the choice and use of sources, so as to reflect different points of view, and also the presentation of two (or more) sides where judgements or facts are contested* [italics added for emphasis] (McQuail, 2010, p. 356).

OTHER PEOPLE'S WORDS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

According to the report "We Are Social" (2022), one of the most important reasons why Internet users (aged 16 to 64) use social media platforms (right behind "keeping in touch with friends and family" 47.6% and "filling spare time" 36.3%) is **"reading news stories"** (31.6%). In the 2021 report, the response **"stay up-to-date with news and current events"** was provided by 36.5% of the social media users, and this was the most frequently indicated reason. Since the need to be informed is crucial, and social media are to satisfy this need at least partially, neither traditional media institutions nor media personalities/politicians can

ignore this fact. What is interesting and symptomatic (in the context of writing about other people's words) is that **"seeing what's being talked about"** (29.5%) and **"sharing and discussing opinions with others"** (24.5%) were highly ranked among the reasons for using social media. Sharing and discussing opinions with others and seeing what's being talked about (both in private and in public) are actually, in both cases, a focus on quoting: The key words here, such as "discussion", "opinion", "dialogue" and "conversation" indicate that we either quote, or we are being quoted. Most commonly, both are at play.

According to research by the Reuters Institute in 2021, social media are indicated as a source of information by 59% of the population in Poland (compared to 31% in Germany, 41% in the UK, 42% in the USA, and 63% in Hungary). What should also be taken into consideration are the motivations and habits of users (a large proportion of them are young people, under 25 years old, who represent the so-called Generation Z). Studies in the UK indicate that more than half of those who use Facebook for news and 25% of those who use Twitter for news declare incidental news consumption, answering: "I mostly see news while I'm there for other reasons" (Reuters Institute, 2021, p. 52). The above data suffice to let us assume that social media receivers will use a variety of sources: private, social, professional and public ones and that the multiplicity of shared, viewed and read words will not increase their reception vigilance in terms of the verification of the data at the source, informed prioritisation, and the ability to verify "fake news" (Boczkowski et al., 2018).

In addition,

> global concerns about false and misleading information have edged slightly higher this year, ranging from 82% in Brazil to just 37% in Germany. Those who use social media are more likely to say they have been exposed to misinformation about Coronavirus than non-users (Reuters Institute, 2021, p. 9).

A survey on a representative sample of Internet users in Poland (over 15 years of age) reveals that they consider the Internet to be the most useful channel of communication (with reference to national and international news), but, and this is interesting from the point of view of the nature of the medium, its credibility was assessed on an equal footing with private conversations. Only television was ranked lower in terms of credibility. In the same study, when asked about Internet circles where they encountered false information the most frequently, the Internet users indicated social media (58%) (IAB Polska, 2018, pp. 14–16).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE/QUESTIONS

Facing the crisis of accusations of spreading misinformation and the diminishing of trust, it is crucial to ask if and how quotation on social media has led to disinformation. To achieve this, we want to examine these four issues:

– ways of embedding quotations (direct speech, indirect speech, text islets, narrated speech);
– relations between these practices and degrees of misinformation;
– relations between the original text (source) and the quotation;
– who is speaking in quotes used in social media.

One of the key issues we would like to address is the correlation between the type of citation and the effects of its use in a text.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out a quantitative and qualitative analysis, two types of social media of a different nature and with differing recipient profiles were selected: Facebook and Twitter. We followed the media posts appearing from January 24 to February 9, 2022 of two newspapers, both significantly important among the Polish print media: *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Sieci*. *Gazeta Wyborcza* is the largest Polish daily newspaper; it has been published since 1989 and is now considered an opposition medium to the Polish ruling party Law and Justice. *Sieci* (since 2012) is a conservative, right-wing weekly which supports the ruling party.

To achieve our goals we combine textological, rhetorical and pragmalinguistic tools – thus treating genres, strategic text positions, broad and narrow context, sender and receiver categories, as well as aspects of stylistic diversity used by senders, with equal importance.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

When in 2012 we finished work on a project about quotations in traditional media coverage (daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television), quotes were a fundamental building component in journalistic material. The information texts were literally "moulded" from quotes that helped the media build complete and reliable coverage (e.g., by strengthening polyphony and impartiality), but they were also used to simulate ethical activities (through e.g., allegations, modified quotes). In social media, this trend is predominant, as shown in the statistical data in Table 2.

Table 2. Quotations in Twitter and Facebook posts for two broadcasters:
Gazeta Wyborcza (GW) and *Sieci* (the data relate to week 24–30.01.2022)

Social media platfom		Twitter		Facebook	
		GW	*Sieci*	GW	*Sieci*
Total number of posts		289	111	336	159
Number of posts including quotations		129	94	203	112
Direct quotations	Direct speech	93	74	118	31
	Seemingly direct speech	3	9	14	23
	Text islets	17	4	17	9
Indirect quotations	Indirect speech	8	16	20	38
	Narrated speech	35	16	42	43

In total, 400 Twitter posts and 495 Facebook posts were studied. Over 50% of the Twitter posts (223) contained quotations, while on Facebook the share of quotations reached over 60% (315). The quotations in direct speech are predominant (167 times on Twitter and 149 on Facebook). Among the examples of indirect citations, narrated speech appears most often (51 times on Twitter, 85 on Facebook).

When analysing the profiles (Facebook, Twitter) of several major news portals and media (we have only selected two for this paper: *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Sieci*), we saw a tremendous popularity of quotations in direct speech (see Tab. 2), which are most often combined with photos of people who made that statement.

Figure 1. Twitter, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9.02.2022

Figure 2. Twitter, *Sieci*, 2.02.2022

The layout is usually similar: a heading (with the name of the speaker and with the quotation/paraphrase of what they said) + a photo of the speaker + a text (with the name of the exponent and the quotation). Such a layout of the message is dominated by the same components, usually repeated, so that it is undoubtedly possible to identify the quotation and its author, as shown on the two screens (Figs 1 and 2).

SOURCE AND CONTEXT

Since it is extremely difficult to reveal these mechanisms, as they require a wider context and longer fragments, we will only use two examples. Both apply to the case of the Turów Coal Mine, which caused a conflict between Poland and the Czech Republic and, more broadly, between Poland and the Member States of the European Union. The first example is a Twitter message posted by the weekly newspaper *Sieci*. It refers directly to a leader of one of the opposition parties, Szymon Hołownia, who is also presented in a photo (Fig. 3). Hołownia met entrepreneurs in a city in central Poland. The meeting took more than 40 minutes, during which Hołownia answered questions from the merchants and journalists gathered. One of them referred to the closure of the mine in Turów. Here is the question and the entire reply by Hołownia about Turów. Highlighted in bold is the part chosen by *Sieci*:

Journalist: I have a question about the Turów mine. This is because the Polish Press Agency has informally indicated that an agreement will be reached between the Czech and Polish Prime Ministers, and initially you said that the CJEU's judgment must be obligatorily enforced and as a result the Turów mine should be closed down. So what do say about this agreement?

Szymon Hołownia: I have also said many times to the representative of your station that judicial judgments have to be enforced. However, mining and technology specialists clearly explained also to me, and I am not an expert and know little about mining and technology myself, within the first hours after this statement, that it is simply impossible to stop the operation of such a complicated mining plant overnight, it is simply infeasible. Therefore, since that day I have claimed that we must do our best to reach an agreement with the Czech Republic and carry out restructuring in the region as soon as possible. The news today is, of course, good on the one hand, because it is better to reach an agreement with the Czech Republic, which could have been done a long time ago, than fail to reach an agreement. However, this does not change the fact that Poland will have to pay all those penalties that have been imposed so far before the Czechs withdraw their complaint from the Court. These are millions of PLN that could have stayed in our economy. The second thing is that this does not change the fact that there has been a violation of the law, as the European Court's Spokesperson has already said clearly today that there was an infringement of the law, that Poland had no right to act in this way towards the Czech Republic, planning to extract coal in the years to come. And thirdly, this is a question for the future, because everyone can see how things are. Will anything finally happen to the restructuring plan for Turów and the whole region in general, as regards the decarbonisation that must be implemented? Because **Turów must be closed down. Yet, it cannot be closed downed hurry-scurry**, but it must be closed down within 15 years, there is just no other way, otherwise we will be paying horrendous electricity bills, and those people who work there must be now retrained. I was in Turów, I was standing next to this power plant, and we proposed specific solutions on how to retrain the coal miners and the power engineers from brown coal to photovoltaic systems, to energy storage, to green energy, we suggested for those who

cannot be retrained to be offered some compensation in the form of a specific minimum guaranteed income, before reaching their retirement age. Because people are the priority. So just like the transformation programme was managed to be implemented in eastern Wielkopolska, which was also, after all, a brown coal district, and which will be co-financed by the EU funds, also today we should establish a specific plan for which the European Union has the money and will give them the money as soon as possible, and within 10–15 years we should have this problem solved, the people could be requalified and we would be on the right track ecologically, and we would have no problems with our neighbours which we would not be able to solve (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1113620976061511).

Figure 3. Twitter, *Sieci*, 3.02.2022

Note: Text above the photo: *#Hołownia speaks outright: "Because Turów must be closed down. Yet, it cannot be closed downed hurry-scurry…"*. Text below the photo: *Hołownia speaks outright: "Because Turów must be closed down. Yet…". "This is a mess, not the Polish Deal", said Holownia in an interview with an entrepreneur, presenting "high standards".*

We needed a broad context to show the scale of the problem. The whole statement delivered by Hołownia contains many factual arguments, proposals for solutions, and uses elements of specialised language to prove his competence ("decarbonisation", "photovoltaic systems"). It can also be noted that Hołownia – regarded by part of the society as a representative of the intellectual elite and thus out of touch with "real life" – often uses a common style to get closer to people and get the message through. This approach is applied by the weekly *Sieci*. It selects a piece to deprive the speaker of his credibility, because the receiver is supposed to think: "Apparently he is so cultured and well-educated and yet he jabbers and is vulgar; supposedly he supports the common people, and yet he wants to close down the mine." All the factual arguments regarding the mine closure stages and the reasons why this should be done disappear – to get to them, the receivers would have to find the source material (video)

and watch it up to minute 36 when the topic of Turów comes up. Although it seems obvious that a snippet is needed to quote in social media, the whole context reveals that this is an unrepresentative selection and therefore also unreliable.

The second example shows how one rather short statement can be used in very different ways depending on the political profile and the ideological medium. On 4 February, during a press conference, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki answered a question on an issue related to Turów:

> Journalist: And the second question on Turów, if I may. Have we already paid the Czech Republic and what is going on with the penalty?

> PM Mateusz Morawiecki: We transferred the adequate funds yesterday, that was 35 million, plus 10 from PGE. Let me remind you that it was originally even 55 million, so we reduced it significantly, but it is a process that fortunately is already closed, and so the Czech Republic withdrew its motion, its complaint to the European institutions, and that closes the matter completely. As for the possible penalties charged, we are going to make use of all possible remedies. Our lawyers in the Permanent Representation in Brussels to the European Commission are examining this in every respect. And there appear certain options, that is what is being presented to me, so we will certainly take advantage of all possible remedies in order not to have to pay at all this extremely unfair penalty, because, as I would like to remind you once again, it is a penalty that actually, if addressed in an appropriate manner, we would have to close our power plant and the mine in Turów. This would mean that several thousand Polish families would be deprived of work, would not have central heating, and several million people could have no electricity. It is absurd to deliver such a judgment in the first place.

Gazeta Wyborcza posted two messages on Facebook.

Figure 4. Facebook, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4.02.2022, 11:51

Note: Text above the photo: *The transfer of the funds to the Czech Republic by Poland was a condition for withdrawing the complaint from the CJEU.* Text below the photo: *Prime Minister Morawiecki: Complaint by the Czech Republic on the Turów Mine withdrawn from the CJEU.*

Figure 5. Facebook, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4.02.2022, 16:22

Note: Text above the photo: *The Czech Republic has not received the full amount so far and has not withdrawn the complaint. At least, this was the case when the Polish Prime Minister announced it.* Text below the photo: *Morawiecki: money for the Turów Mine sent, complaint withdrawn from the CJEU. Prague: Not at all.*

The words of the Prime Minister are thus used in both posts to highlight the message: the Prime Minister is lying (the Czech Republic did not receive the entire amount at the time of the announcement; they received it a few hours later – and only then was the complaint formally withdrawn). What should be also emphasized is the selection of a photo in the second post – it does not come from the day of the conference, but it is sufficiently discrediting.

On the other hand, *Sieci* placed the following post on Twitter (Fig. 6).

Figure 6. Twitter, *Sieci*, 4.02.2022

Note: Text above the photo: *The dispute on the Turów Mine is over! Prime Minister: We transferred the appropriate funds, and so the Czech Republic withdrew its complaint.* Text below the photo: *The dispute on the Turów Mine is over! Prime Minister: The Czech Republic withdrew the complaint. "As for the possible penalties charged, we are going to make use of all possible remedies," said Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.*

PEOPLE QUOTED

Another notable issue is the choice of people whose statements are quoted. There are several types of reference sources in the media, and they fall into the following categories: participants in the events (involved, lack of distance, "first-hand" account), their witnesses (observers, who saw the event but are distanced), experts (practitioners equipped with experience and theoretical knowledge of the problem, who generalise and explain the problem), and average people (ordinary people). We regarded the authenticity of first-person speech as the basic value exposed in social media. When a specific, recognisable person speaks, the audience can easily add content to the message (for example, identify the world view of that person, or their party or national affiliation). However, easier identification leads to simplification and stereotyped interpretation of the message (personal views, judgement and emotions become involved).

The institutional broadcasters' profiles show yet another trend, namely the metonimisation of a message that contains a quotation. In place of a precisely defined person, a solution of known rhetorical theory appears: *totum pro parte*, when a collective term appears in place of a particular speaker, referring to a certain category: such as teachers, members of local governments (Fig. 8), fans, scientists, doctors (Fig. 7), Ukrainians, or policemen.

Figure 7. Twitter, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8.02.2022

Note: Text above the photo: *In the nephrology ward, a record number of children after drug overdose and in psychiatric wards a record number of children after suicidal attempts are observed. When will politicians finally deal with real problems?, doctors ask.*

Figure 8. Twitter, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8.02.2022

Note: Text below the photo: *Aid organisations: Without releasing the provisions, Afghanistan is in danger of a disaster.*

DISCUSSION

The multitude of sources filling up accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. causes polyphony to appear on the surface. The quotation has become a multi-level construct: one medium quotes the other, which quotes yet another, and we share the message of one person who cites another; we are the sources of that information ourselves, and so the term "share" is an unlimited incentive to multiply the content. The types of content are myriad, and they have very different statuses: intimate, private, local, regional, professional, fan-related, nationwide, global, political, culinary, economic, ordinary and festive. They constitute perceptions, plans, thoughts, associations, rumours, speculations, memories, news, conferences, documents, and findings. When we browse through social media, we constantly encounter quotations: statements of other people and other media, parts of many other fictional texts, true and reformulated texts, and even our own texts.

I QUOTE – I OBJECTIFY

The first edition of Denis McQuail's book *Mass Communication Theory* dates back to 1983, and in the new online context it continues to lead us to believe that impartiality is more likely to be heard in polyphony, in presenting multiple differing points of view, i.e. in quoting

and citing other people's words. However, at this point, it must be made clear that it will be more about the sender's strategy, about the game of objectivity and what Gaye Tuchman called "strategic ritual":

> The newsmen view quotations of other people's opinions as a form of supporting evidence. By interjecting someone else's opinion, they believe they are removing themselves from participation in the story, and they are **letting the "facts" speak** (Tuchman, 1972, p. 668).

Through the use of other people's words, the senders avoid the allegation of being partial; after all, they show facts that speak for themselves. The receivers, on the other hand, are convinced that they can judge the event on their own, as they do, after all, know who said it (although most probably they do not know why).

Many scenes in social media are based on conflicts, disputes, disagreements, and differences of opinion. They trigger emotions and lead the individual to support one side or another. However, a trap appears – a collection of other people's opinions over an event still needs to be hierarchically organised, arranged not so much chronologically but rather in cause-effect relationships, with the background being expanded. Then one can try to understand. John Fiske describes this trap as:

> Objectivity is authority in disguise: "objective" facts always support particular points of view and their "objectivity" can exist only as part of the play of power. But, more important, objective facts cannot be challenged: objectivity discourages audience activity and participation. Rather than being "objective", therefore, TV news should present multiple perspectives that, like those of soap opera, have as unclear a hierarchy as possible […]. Reporters should be less concerned about telling the final truth of what has happened, and should present, instead, different ways of understanding it and the different points of view inscribed in those different ways (Fiske, 1989, p. 194).

The context applies to TV news, but it seems still valid. Listening to what people say (as in the *We Are Social* report: "seeing what's being talked about") is appealing and social media are the ideal space for that. The great number of opinions, the unclear hierarchy of their importance and the multitude of themes are in fact perfect conditions for callousness to occur, for communication to generate emotions and serve phaticity much more than cognition.

THE POWER OF QUOTATION MARKS

Why do media like quotations? And it should be added: Why do media like direct quotations? The answer is obvious: They are authentic. In Polish, the term "*niezależna*" leads to an association with autonomy, separateness and freedom, while in English "direct speech" is associated with direct and sincere speaking, without filters. Direct quotations reflect expressiveness, actualise real events, and communicate knowledge, emotions, opinions, promises, and more. According to the receiver, they convey exactly what someone said. The forms popular in media coverage are those for which a quotation is a fundamental component: interviews, polemics, debates and discussions. In a conventional sense, they give one the opportunity to make direct contact with others or to get to know their opinions. It must be made clear that this directness is only apparent and results from the specific "invisibility" of the instance that

introduces the words of others. After all, it goes without saying that both direct and indirect quotations are intended to achieve the narrator's goals. It is the narrator that includes them in the text, makes decisions and plans the content. Quotations are thus conducive to dialogicality, and they maintain interest in the message.

In this context, the popularity of social media is also justified. They have reduced the distance, everyone is available, and everyone can be liked and included in a group of followers and friends. Then, what is posted in other people's profiles (websites, accounts of a politician, cook, singer, scientist, coach, celebrity, actress, web developer, activist, neighbour, a work colleague or an uncle from the other side of the world), clearly appears to be first-person, private, actual, unbroken, real, and honest. Even in this case, however, we are sure that many posts are not written by the tagged author, and we do not mean only false information that has been made up, but also information that is commissioned to others. Sometimes an effect of authenticity is achieved by fixing the account holder's idiolect, such as by making minor mistakes, using consistently characteristic expressions or slogans, using expressive elements, applying appropriate metaphors and other linguistic and graphic means (comparisons, block letters). The question of how sharing the words of others can increase levels of misinformation mainly applies to institutional broadcasters: What ways of message construction can be used in order to make such messages sound reliable and credible so that the scrolling receivers notice them, "like" them, comment on them and share.

A few elements can be mentioned intuitively – shortening the message, getting the clearest content to the forefront, using clickbait standards within the glossary and images, and quoting other people's words. All these elements are interconnected and mutually supportive. If someone's words appear, they are instantly direct – because the quotation marks tell the receiver: "He said that!/ She said that! Read it because it is important/ controversial/ shocking/ strange/ funny/ interesting/ bizarre" Therefore, a quotation implies an announcement of a longer text, so its primary role is all to convince the eyes to stop and click, if possible (thus it is persuasion), and only later does its informative value come[3].

WHERE IS THE SOURCE? TAKING OUT OF CONTEXT

It seems obvious that every quote requires an earlier source statement, and that a quotation requires a choice to be made, thus taking what is needed out of the uttered or written text. However, the emphasis is put on features of messages and speakers which reinforce certain values, ideologies and statements, such as the antagonist is speaking nonsense while the protagonist is providing important information. Again, the receiver would have to do the work and check whether the words cited were actually uttered and in what context they were spoken. The original context (relevant to the actual statement made outside the medium) is often overlooked or concealed. One reason behind this is, of course, brevity and the tendency to economise the message, but often these are intentional solutions – in the theory of text these are "taken out of context". This way of using other people's words

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[3] Attention attraction is also subject to oculographic and neurological studies (e.g. the study of Donald Trump's tweets – Gackowski et al., 2018) which check the reception reactions under the influence of visual stimuli (e.g. brain activity).

means concealing them, and this omission limits or modifies the sense. Words have different and/or more radical, controversial, and ambiguous meanings when their original context is considered invalid.

The tone of these statements responds to the users' needs – because the operation of the social media (their algorithms) is based on information bubbles, filters and echo chambers (Flaxman et al., 2016; Pariser, 2011; Sindermann et al., 2020; Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2016), which results in selecting opinions that are close to the receivers and correspond to their preferences, strengthening them and making them easy to accept. At the same time, there are no other opinions within reach, which are distinct, questionable, from different visions of the world, with which one would have to confront, check, consider, and think over.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Using metonimisation (instead of a precisely defined person) creates uncertainty about the actual author of the quoted words, thereby blurring not only the identity of the speaker, but above all the responsibility for the content that the quote contains. This simplification or generalisation is a very practical tool that allows specific opinions to be assigned to a group that is large and diverse, and its diversity prevents a clear position from being established; the group has no media representative or leader. The views expressed in such a form are easily polarised, displayed in the desired way, so that the receiver can easily reject them (by a clear diagnosis what someone says is shocking, ridiculous, absurd, and/or terrifying) or accept them (because I think so, too). This means that quotations constitute a specific policy of the medium and become its very handy tool.

CONCLUSION

Using social media has become habitual and highly "automated". It suffices to look at people on the subway, tram or bus in the morning – most of them are looking at their smartphones and scrolling through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. We fix our eyes on pictures and we only scan the content. We rarely get into the message, preferring superficial viewing of the content. Analysing the selected sources (Facebook and Twitter) for the two institutional media broadcasters (*Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Sieci*), we have noticed that:

1. Our thesis on the dominance of posts with quotations in social media is confirmed – on average it was: 56% on Twitter (45% – *Gazeta Wyborcza*; 85% – *Sieci*) and 64% on Facebook (60% – *Gazeta Wyborcza* and 70% – *Sieci*). Hence, a quotation is a very frequently used structural element in posts, although the nature of the medium requires brevity and the use of few words.

2. Direct quotations in the form of various direct references (among the total quotations[4]) on Twitter accounted for 73% (72% – *Gazeta Wyborcza* and 73% – *Sieci*) and on Facebook,

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[4] The total number of quotations may exceed the number of posts containing quotations, because sometimes it happened that there were several types of quotations in a single post.

61% (71% – *Gazeta Wyborcza* and 47% – *Sieci*). An important criterion for the use of quotations (quotation marks, colon) is their authenticity, truthfulness and reliability (understood as an effect, real or apparent) with a graphic presentation.

3. Indirect quotations influenced by editors are less commonly used: on Twitter, 27% of the quotations are indirect, while on Facebook the percentage is 39%. The high percentage of indirect quotations on Facebook applied to *Sieci*, at 53% (this applies to both indirect speech and narrated speech). It should be noted that this type of quotation is more difficult to observe at first glance only, and the reader should be able to recognize it. Broadcasters thereby include the wording of the quotation in their way of thinking, and it is where a clear and structural area for possible abuses and distortions appear. In particular, the use of narrated speech makes it possible to convey that someone has said something and how they said it, and the broadcaster judges their statement, without revealing what has been said.

4. It is also interesting to look at the people most often quoted – this is linked to the (political?) nature of the outlets, serious, quality media with specific world views and way of perceiving the world. Within the time frame of our interest (January 24–30, 2022), those most frequently quoted were participants in events (usually public figures: politicians, officials and collective entities: institutions, parliament members, doctors), with experts less frequently quoted, and only rarely ordinary people. It should be noted that other media or information agencies also appeared as original sources of quotations. We intend to devote a separate paper to this research area.

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