

A Comparison of Fragmental Constructions in US and British News Broadcasts

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá používání fragmentárních konstrukcí v britských a amerických zpravodajských vysíláních prostřednictvím nahrávek hlavních denních zpráv jednotlivých stanic. Navazuje na výzkum Elisabeth Reber v její práci „On the variation of fragmental constructions in British English and American English postmatch interviews“, a to porovnáním rozdílů ve frekvenci používání fragmentárních konstrukcí mezi britskými a americkými zpravodajskými relacemi. Dále rozšiřuje výzkum Jamese V. Boshe uvedený v jeho práci „Sentence Fragments in the NBC Nightly News: A Grammatical Analysis“, a to zahrnutím dalších zpravodajských kanálů: CNN a Democracy Now!, a BBC, ITV News a SkyNews. Tato práce se rovněž zabývá otázkou, zda má úroveň formálnosti vliv na výskyt fragmentárních konstrukcí, a snaží se vyvrátit stereotyp, že americká angličtina je méně formální, a tedy by v ní mělo docházet k častějšímu používání fragmentárních konstrukcí. Výzkum ukázal, že používání fragmentů nesouvisí s typem anglického jazyka, ale s preferencemi jednotlivých zpravodajských stanic.

Klíčová slova: Americká angličtina, britská angličtina, zpravodajské vysílání, elipsa, formálnost, fragmentální konstrukce

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of fragmental constructions in British and US news broadcasts using recordings of the broadcaster's Top Headlines of the day. It expands on research done by Elisabeth Reber in her "On the variation of fragmental constructions in British English and American English postmatch interviews" by comparing the differences in frequency of use of fragmental constructions between British and US news broadcasts, and research done by James V. Bosh in his "Sentence Fragments in the NBC Nightly News: A Grammatical Analysis" by including CNN and Democracy Now! and BBC, ITV News and SkyNews. This thesis also asks the question whether the level of formality has an effect on the occurrence of fragmental constructions and attempts to debunk the stereotype of American English being more lax, thus more fragmental constructions would be expected and level of formality would be lower. This research revealed that usage of fragments is not linked to the type of English, but rather to the preference of the studio itself.

Keywords: American English, British English, Broadcast news, Ellipsis, Formality, Fragmental constructions

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INTRODUCTION

A widely known stereotype of the English language is that American English is more lax and less formal than British English. According to this stereotype, one would expect to encounter omission more often in American English than in British English, however, this has been proven false in Elisabeth Reber's (2021) analysis of post-match interviews. Her findings say that it was actually the British football players who used a slightly larger variety of fragmental constructions (elliptical constructions) and omission. I wondered if the same could also be applied to scripted events, because Reber stated that one reason for higher number of fragments in BrE could be that American football players were given more time before the interview, thus having time to sort their thoughts, while British players were interviewed on the spot. It is assumed that news casts are for the most part scripted.

Montgomery (2007:31) gives three reasons why news casts are, as he states, "tightly scripted". These include on screen time limitations and legal limitations. Because every inspected broadcasting station has a certain schedule, the news cast should not take more or less time on screen. There is an exception to this rule: breaking or critical news that are aired despite the set schedule (for example a sudden death or hospitalisation of an important figure, declarations of war, pandemics). News casts produced outside of the set schedule, covering such critical news may not be scripted at all, as there is little time to prepare before the news is aired. The scriptedness also may not include interviews, because the interviewee often has to answer on the spot, which is visible by their pauses in speech and corrections they make to their sentence structures. However, it is also assumed that the questions posed by the interviewer and the general structure of the talk are prepared in advance. As for the legal limitations, a country may set rules that limit what news can be relayed and how. For example, UK's Office of Communications publishes guidelines for the broadcasting stations: The Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

James Vanden Bosch in his original (2002) and later in his follow-up (2005) analyses noticed the preference of US news broadcaster NBC for fragmental constructions. The same could not be said about two other major news broadcasters: ABC and CBS.

Bosch's research proves that fragmental constructions can occur in highly formal settings such as television news broadcasts. However, the news broadcasters did not use fragments at similar rates. This could mean that the usage of fragmental constructions is simply a preference of the news broadcaster itself for various reasons, which are talked about in the Conclusion chapter.

This research paper will be based on both of the previously mentioned research papers, comparing the usage of fragmental constructions in AmE and BrE by analysing British and US news broadcasts. Specifically, it focuses on the news anchor in the broadcasting studio. More about this choice is in the chapter 4 Methodology.

Because the terminology appearing in the TV broadcasts varies, here are the terms used in this thesis with explanations:

News anchor – a person presenting the news in the broadcasting studio.

Correspondent – a person who is on site, where the referred to news happened/is happening, who is in contact with the broadcasting studio.

Correspondent report – a short video made in advance by the correspondent, including footage made on site and a voiceover made by the correspondent. May include interviews or footage of people involved in the topic.

Newscast – broadcast of the news presented by the news anchor, often including correspondent reports.

Headlines – the main news of the day, news anchors read these out at the start of the newscast.

I. THEORY

1 FRAGMENTAL CONSTRUCTIONS

In this chapter I will explain what a fragmental construction is, what are its types and which of these types will be counted in the analysis. Omissions, discourse fragments and ellipsis will be grouped into a category called fragmental constructions, as that is how Elizabeth Reber calls them in her analysis, without which this research paper would not exist.

Omissions and ellipsis may appear in the English language as a result of a desire to make utterances more time efficient. Greenbaum claims that ellipsis is used when under time pressure, e.g. in the case of sport commentators and their need to keep up with the acts of the players. This would align with the assumption that news anchors would also use omissions and ellipsis because of their limited on-screen time. However, Greenbaum also suggests that this efficiency might be more reasonable to make use of in dialogues, rather than monologues, as the listener is able to ask the speaker to clarify in case they find some omission confusing.

Omission may exist on several levels of the English language: phonological, morphological, grammatical, semantical. In this research paper, I will focus solely on grammatical omission and present its types more closely in the next section (1.1).

Ellipsis and omission are not the same thing. According to Quirk (1985), “Ellipsis may be more strictly described as ‘grammatical omission’”, however, he also states that the “boundaries of ellipsis are unclear”. For this reason, Quirk (1985) presents several criteria with which to better understand the difference between ellipsis and other grammatical omissions:

- 1) The ellipited words are precisely recoverable.
- 2) The elliptical construction is grammatically ‘defective’
- 3) The insertion of the missing words results in a grammatical sentence (with the same meaning as the original sentence)
- 4) The missing word(s) are textually recoverable and are present in the text in exactly the same form

Not all of these criteria need to apply for the omission to be regarded as an ellipsis. however, the more of Quirk’s criteria are met, the less space there is to argue that the analysed grammatical omission is not an ellipsis. The 4th criterion may also be used to distinguish between coordinated and independent ellipsis which will be explained in 1.1.1.

Grammatical omission is not the only type of omission frequently appearing in newscast. Omission in news presentation can be historically traced back to newspaper and telegraph, where constraints of space and time applied. However, the English of newspaper headlines changed for more reasons than that. The goal of a newspaper headline is to grab the attention of the reader and give them as much information as possible within a single headline. Therefore, parts of the sentence that do not change the semantic meaning may often get dropped. The deletion of articles is plentiful in newspaper headlines and newscast.

1.1 Types of Fragmental Constructions

1.1.1 Coordinated and Independent Ellipsis

Quirk's 4th ellipsis criterion states that the missing words are recoverable from the text in the same form, which does not need to always be the case:

- 1) I dance better than he [0].

Greenbaum calls this ellipsis Independent. In addition to having no coordination, the full recovered form would be *dances*, which cannot be achieved by a simple anaphoric or cataphoric reference, because the predicate would not be in agreement with its subject.

- 2) *I dance better than he *dance*.

In contrast to this is an example (3) and (4):

- 3) Police [0] and firefighter cars appeared on the road.
- 4) Police *cars* and firefighter cars appeared on the road.

This type of ellipsis appears in phrases conditioned by coordination and thus is called Coordinated Ellipsis. The full form of the omitted segment is easily recoverable as this ellipsis works based on simple anaphoric or cataphoric reference and fulfils Quirk's 4th ellipsis criterion.

Coordinated ellipsis will not be counted towards the analysis.

1.1.2 Verb Phrase Ellipsis

To successfully draw the attention of the audience, present tense is often used in news, even for events that already happened. In the case of present continuous tense, the operator may be dropped, as the semantic meaning of the sentence is still understandable by the audience.

- 5) The FDA today banning a controversial red dye found in so many foods sold in the US, citing a risk of cancer. (NBC News corpus)
- 6) The FDA today *is* banning a controversial red dye found in so many foods sold in the US, citing a risk of cancer

The same may apply to sentences in present tense when a lexical verb is not in the operator position.

- 7) And among the stories, we'll be discussing this on the front of the Times.
- 8) And among the stories, we'll be discussing *is* this on the front of the Times.

And lastly, the dropped word may be a lexical verb, if it can be recover using anaphoric or cataphoric reference. It does not need to be in the operator position, as shown below:

- 9) Her career will not then end in a court case. Her estranged husband's [0] may [0] yet. (ITV News corpus)

1.1.3 Noun Phrase Ellipsis

NP Ellipsis may appear in conjunction with numbers:

- 10) A group of tourists got lost on a trip. Five [0] were found dead.

In case of newscast, NP ellipsis modified by a number refers to a certain group of people, who are defined in previous sentences. Often, the NP ellipsis refers to casualties or the wounded.

Additionally, an NP ellipsis may appear in the form of a missing subject head.

- 11) Her career will not then end in a court case. Her estranged husband's [0] may [0] yet. (ITV News corpus)

A fragment will not be counted towards the NP ellipsis if the semantic value of the subject in the sentence is zero. Such subjects are called expletives and often appear in conjunction with weather:

- 12) It is raining.

The 'It' in the sentence in (12) does not refer to anything, nevertheless it cannot be removed as the sentence would then be ungrammatical. Similar applies to existential 'there':

13) There is a cat outside.

Again, ‘there’ does not refer to anything, but without it the sentence would be ungrammatical. Because of these expletives, sentences missing both operator and subject will be counted towards VP ellipsis, rather than NP ellipsis, because semantically, the subject has no value.

1.1.4 Omission of Prepositions and Articles

Another type of ellipsis frequently present in news is the omission of indefinite and definite articles. Montgomery (2007:80) gives this example:

14) Conservative minister [0] at centre of Europe election row

15) *A* Conservative minister *is* at *the* centre of *a* European election row.

Such omission can be reconstructed using grammatical knowledge rather than textual reference. Omission of preposition works on the same principle. In the analysis, this omission appeared when referring to days in Democracy Now! corpus:

16) The cyclone made landfall [0] Sunday in Mozambique, where at least three people were killed. (Democracy Now! corpus)

Using grammatical knowledge, it is certain that the preposition *on* is omitted in this example.

1.1.5 Discourse Fragment

Discourse Fragment is important in broadcasts where the camera switches from the news anchor in the studio to someone else, for example a correspondent on site or an interviewee. It helps the viewers identify who are the participants of the talks and signals the end of a correspondent’s report.

In the case of the end of a correspondent’s report, this fragment consists of three parts: name of the correspondent, name of the broadcasting/newspaper company and location from which the report is given.

17) Jan Novák, XYZ News, Zlín.

There may also be small variations to this fragment like in example (18):

18) Jan Novák, XYZ News in Zlín.

However, when the news anchor is the one uttering the discourse fragment, it looks slightly different:

- 19) Andrew Cunningham from Capital Economics. (BBC News corpus)
- 20) James Landale there. (BBC News corpus)
- 21) Shingi Mararike in Cheshire, right in the Amber zone for us. (SkyNews corpus)

In the collected corpora, the name of the broadcasting station never appears in these fragments, however there are other ways for the viewer to recognize the company for which the correspondent works. News anchors say the name of the broadcasting station at the start of the news cast and thus it is presumable that the correspondents, whose reports appear in the news cast, are also working for the same broadcaster. In addition to that, news anchors are often recognized by the general public as belonging to a certain broadcasting station. Another variation of the discourse fragment is shown in examples (22) and (23):

- 22) Ryan Nobles now with late details. (NBC News corpus)
- 23) Rebecca. (ITV News corpus)

In both of these examples, the location and name of the broadcasting company is missing. The fragment is present as a guideline for the audience, indicating that a correspondent report is about to play out. These fragments may also be used to imitate dialogue between the news anchor and the correspondent. By saying the correspondent's name, the news anchor provides space for the correspondent to commence their speech.

Additionally, discourse fragments uttered by news anchors are often accompanied by expressions of gratitude:

- 24) Shingi Mararike in Cheshire, right in the Amber zone for us. Shingi, thank you.
(SkyNews corpus)
- 25) Ryan Nobles. Thanks. (NBC News corpus)

The frequency of expressions of gratitude in a piece of media has been used as a way to measure formality and it therefore could imply that there indeed exists a link between formality and fragmental constructions. More on this topic can be found in chapters 2.2 and 2.3.

1.1.6 Other fragmental constructions

Fragmental constructions are abundant in spoken language, especially in informal dialogues. As was stated above, Greenbaum suggests that the appearance of fragments is reasonable, as the involved actors can request a clarification in case the uttered fragment is not understood. Look at the example below:

26) A: *Over there!*

B: *What? Where?*

A: *There.* Do you see that?

B: *Absolutely.*

The utterances in italics can be regarded as fragmental constructions, nevertheless, the exact words omitted cannot be recovered.

27) A: *Welcome.*

B: *Thank you.*

28) A: Do you like cars?

B: *Yes. Of course.*

The exchange in example () could also be seen as containing fragments. The recovered dialogue would look like this:

29) A: *I welcome you.*

B: *I thank you.*

30) A: Do you like cars?

B: *Yes, I do. Of course, I do.*

Because the fragments in (27) and (28) are much more common in spoken language than the recovered exchange in (29) and (30), they will not be counted as fragmental constructions towards the analysis.

Quirk (1985:883) also mentions phonological loss, called aphaeresis, and clipping in word formation as a type of omission occurring in the English language. Quirk presents 'cause created from *because* and *flu* from *influenza* as examples of each respectively. However, he also states that this omission is not ellipsis, as it happens on phonological and morphological level, rather than grammatical. For this reason, such omissions will not be subject to the analysis carried out in this thesis.

2 FORMALITY

While measuring formality was out of scope of this research paper, there are other ways in which formality can be compared. These ways do not necessarily include spoken language but are equally important for a thorough analysis. One such way would be to look at the setting: the studio in this case. These include the studio itself and the items that are present in the camera shot. Another way is to look at the clothing and overall appearance of the person on camera. And lastly, the camera work itself: how much of the news anchor is visible in the shot, whether they are in the middle of the shot or to the side etc.

2.1 Definition and measurement

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, formality is "the quality of being suitable for serious or official occasions" and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines formality as "correct and formal behaviour". From these two definitions it can be seen that formality does not impact only language, and as such it can be difficult to properly define what is and is not formal. Although everyone has a certain sense of distinguishing some more extreme cases of formal and informal speech (for example a police spokesperson talking about an ongoing criminal case on camera and a casual conversation between two friends being formal and informal respectively), clearly defining formality is so problematic that the topic baffled many linguists. For example, Irvine (1979: 786) states in her article that formality is a term "so general that it is not very useful as an analytic tool". Additionally, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1995: 265) stated that "investigators found it difficult to separate 'careful' from 'casual' speech in reliable and objective ways". Since everyone has the aforementioned intuition for formality and at the same time, defining clearly what is formal is problematic, formality can be understood as a sort of spectrum ranging from formal to informal. The closer the inspected element is to the edges of the spectrum, the easier it is to say whether the element is formal or not. However, the closer the element is to the middle, the more difficult it is to place the element on a set place on the spectrum, while backing this placement by linguistic tools of measurement. This is especially true when comparing elements that, by intuition, should have about the same level of formality (e. g. a newscast).

Despite these difficulties, Francis Heylighen and Jean-Marc Dewaele managed to create a linguistic tool that can help measure formality of language by creating the F measure. The F measure formula is as follows:

$$F = (\text{noun frequency} + \text{adjective freq.} + \text{preposition freq.} + \text{article freq.} - \text{pronoun freq.} - \text{verb freq.} - \text{adverb freq.} - \text{interjection freq.} + 100)/2$$

When looking at this formula, it is obvious that Heylighen and Dewaele linked the usage of certain parts of speech to affect the level of formality of the text, which was then tested on available corpora from 4 different languages with positive results (the corpora that would be considered to be formal by the intuition scored high on the F measure as was expected).

Additionally, when language register is taken into account, a completely different way to distinguish the level of formality is revealed. People choose their language style to fit a certain situation and may use different synonyms of a certain word in formal settings and casual setting. For example, if the utterance ‘continue’ is considered neutral, then its synonyms ‘go on’ and ‘proceed’ would be considered informal and formal respectively.

Other elements present in media can also be taken into account when deciding on the level of formality, but these elements do not necessarily link to spoken or written language. Their formality can be decided by the intuition of the involved person. Among such elements can be type of clothing, gestures, facial expressions, the amount of clutter in a surrounding area etc.

2.2 AmE and BrE formality stereotype

It is a well-known stereotype that British people are polite are overall more formal than their American counterparts. The American Psychological Association defines stereotype as a “set of cognitive generalizations (e.g., beliefs, expectations) about the qualities and characteristics of the members of a group or social category.” This implies that stereotypes can emerge from a real encounter with a certain person, however this impression is then applied to other members of the same group, and it does not necessarily applies to them. Thus, the stereotype of British being more polite than other people may stem from truth, which is supported by a research article written by Simeon Floyd et al. (2018), that discovered that British use more expressions of gratitude than the other chosen cultures. However, there is also research into an email correspondence that compares AmE and BrE. Rachel De Felice and M. Lynne Murphy stated in their article that it is actually Americans who use more expressions of gratitude. However, Felice and Murphy also state that British used a broader way of expressing gratitude than the Americans. Since formality is so difficult to properly define, there are also conflicting analyses concerning this stereotype, depending on how the author decides to assess and measure the politeness or formality of the media.

2.3 Formality and Fragments

Heylighen and Dewaele's theory of the F measure implies that there is a link between fragmental constructions and formality, as the formula includes frequencies of usage of certain parts of speech. Nevertheless, according to the F measure, the lack of verbs should increase formality, while lack of nouns and prepositions should decrease it. In conclusion, different types of fragmental constructions will affect formality in different ways.

However, when we look at formality from the perspective of style, that is of neutral, formal and informal synonyms of words, then formality and fragments do not seem to have any link, because if the utterance is omitted, then the reader cannot decide with complete clarity what style of the missing utterance was used. In view of that fact, using style to analyse the link between formality and fragments is impossible.

Similarly, using expressions of gratitude as a way of measuring politeness was not possible, because the only fragments that may be put into correlation with expressions of gratitude (namely the phrase 'thank you') are the discourse fragments, as shown in chapter 1.1.5. Moreover, discourse fragments may appear without an expression of gratitude, meaning the correlation is not explicit, further weakening the idea of using the same method that Simeon Floyd et al. (2018) and Rachel De Felice and M. Lynne Murphy used.

In this research paper, because of certain restrictions that will be talked about in chapter 4, CNN 10 news reports had to be chosen. When compared to other broadcasting stations, CNN 10 is informal (going by the intuition introduced in chapter 2.1) and targeted at a younger audience. The language used is vastly different and the overall level of formality is further inspected in chapter 5 and 6.2. Because of this obvious difference, the link between formality and fragments could be inspected from this perspective, but only the collected corpora.

Testing this phenomenon on all the news stations would require a way to measure formality in some way, so that the corpora can be properly compared and that would be out of scope of this research paper, however it can pose an initiative for further research on formality and fragments by, for example, using the F measure introduced above.

3 CHOSEN NEWS STATIONS

3.1 British news broadcasts

3.1.1 BBC

BBC is a licenced public service broadcaster. It was founded on 18th of October 1922, but its daily broadcasts started almost a month later, on 14th of November (<https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/timelines/1920s>). Its most important document is the Royal Charter, which sets BBC's purpose, regulations, and system of governance (<https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/charter>). They state on their About Us page, "We're impartial and independent, and every day we create distinctive, world-class programmes and content which inform, educate and entertain millions of people in the UK and around the world." Its independence could be put into question if Democracy Now! comes into play. Since BBC is a public service broadcaster, its funding comes from the government and thus it could be said that they are dependent on the government. Similar to ITV News, ITN provides BBC's Channels 4 and 5 with content.

3.1.2 SkyNews

SkyNews' first broadcast started on 5th of February at 18:00 1989, as stated on their webpage. It was the first 24-hour news channel in Europe (<https://www.skygroup.sky/our-history>). It is part of Sky UK but has independency in the matter of its publications. Sky UK claims on its About us page, "Sky is one of Europe's leading media and entertainment companies", additionally they claim that they operate in 6 countries. At the moment, the executive chairman for the SkyNews Group is David Rhodes. Its funding comes from the Comcast Corporation, same as NBC News. (<https://news.sky.com/info/policies-and-standards#mission-statement>)

3.1.3 ITV News

ITV News receives its content from ITN (Independent Television News), similar to BBC's Channel 4 and 5. ITN is an independent production company that has been providing news since 1955, and since ITV used to be part of it, it makes ITV the oldest commercial broadcast in the UK (<https://www.itn.co.uk/about-itn>). ITV itself operates in 13 countries and offers a streaming service with a large variety of content. Their funding comes from advertising on their TV channels and streaming platform and distributing their content to third-parties'

streaming services and platforms (<https://www.itvplc.com/about-itv/what-we-do>). The chief executive of ITV is Carolyn McCall.

3.2 US news broadcasts

3.2.1 CNN

CNN (Cable News Network) is a daughter company of Warner Bros. Discovery Inc. and provides news from “every corner of the globe” (<https://edition.cnn.com/about>). It also states that it’s the world leader in online news and gets its news “from almost 4,000 journalists”. It was founded on 1st June 1980 and while SkyNews was the first channel to provide 24-hour news coverage in Europe, CNN was the first to do so worldwide. CNN provides licences to its content and contracts to TV broadcasters abroad as well. One example of this would be the CNN Prima News broadcast in Czech Republic. This contract allowed CNN Prima News, a fairly new channel, to build upon the credibility and experience of CNN and resulted in record views in just the first month (<https://www.skupinaprima.cz/televizni-kanaly-skupiny-prima/>). These contracts and licences help extend the reach of CNN over the reach of any other news broadcaster. “We are available on more screens in more places than any other news source.”(<https://edition.cnn.com/about>).

3.2.2 NBC News

NBC News falls under the NBC News Digital, which encompasses many other news brands. A few of these are MSNBC, TODAY, Meet the Press, Dateline and more. It is also part of the NBCUniversal News Group which in turn is owned by the Comcast Corporation, same as SkyNews. (<https://www.nbcnews.com/information/nbc-news-info/about-nbc-news-digital-n1232178>) Universal was founded in 1910 but NBC did not exist until 1926. However, both Universal and NBC are part of one whole: NBCUniversal. NBCUniversal began regularly broadcasting news in 1949, making it the oldest US broadcaster in this selection. Comcast came into play in 2011 by acquiring NBCUniversal. While CNN is the largest news provider, NBC excels in being the first in various domains; first broadcast Super Bowl, first regular news broadcast, first record 71-hour news coverage of one topic. It also offers a wide variety of shows, movies and live streams, even providing Hollywood blockbusters of its own make to its streaming platform Peacock. (<https://www.nbcuniversal.com/history>)

3.2.3 Democracy Now!

Democracy Now! is an independent non-profit news provider. It was founded in 1996 and initially provided news over radio. Its funding comes solely from donations of its audience, ensuring its complete independence from government and corporations. The news broadcasts involve breaking daily headlines and doing thorough interviews with people involved in the topic (<https://www.democracynow.org/about>). Democracy Now! puts a lot of emphasis on its newscaster and executive producer Amy Goodman, mentioning her previous career prior to Democracy Now! and listing the awards she received at the top (<https://www.democracynow.org/about/history> <https://www.democracynow.org/about/awards>). The station prides itself in covering events that other mainstream media overlooks (its 2004 highlight of interviewing an exiled Haitian President who attempted to return to his home country as an example) and going against the US government and corporations' agenda (its highlights from years 1998, 2000, 2003, 2008).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 What was chosen

The footages were taken in such a way that the amount of text was comparable between the broadcasting stations. The aim was 4 to 5 pages of transcribed speech of the news anchor for each broadcasting station and the footages had to always be a complete newscast. Therefore, some corpora constitute of footages taken over 5 days and some over only 2 days. All the footages were taken during winter and spring 2024/2025.

For Democracy Now! the top headlines of three consecutive days were taken (December 16th and 17th), making up about 20 minutes of footage and about 4.5 pages of text. For SkyNews, two footages, making up about 60 minutes were taken. However while Democracy Now!'s Top Headlines does not have any correspondent reports, SkyNews does have quite a few of them. To make up for this, a longer footage was taken so that the final text, minus the correspondent reports, was again about 4 pages long. The same applies to NBC News newscast and ITV newscast.

However, this did not work for BBC and CNN. Both of these broadcasting stations only offer live TV online streaming to people with a valid TV licence from their respective countries and their YouTube channels have only correspondent reports and interviews, not a full newscast. For this reason, an individual approach was taken with these two broadcasting stations.

CNN fortunately offers an alternative: CNN 10. This show consists of top headlines of the day summarised into ten minutes. While the style of the newscast is different, it is still a newscast of the day's headlines and thus fulfils the requirement for studio newscast. Because CNN 10 also has correspondent reports, more footages were taken to once again ensure that its corpus would have about 4 pages.

For BBC however, the corpus had to be pieced together from their BBC News YouTube channel. The chosen footages comprised of some introduction from the news anchor to the topic of the video and a correspondent report, or a dialogue between the news anchor and a correspondent or another BBC employee. This violated the rule of a complete newscast, however, since there was no other way to get a footage with news anchors, these videos were accepted for the analysis. To ensure the corpus for BBC would be comparable with the other corpora, only the utterances of the news anchor were taken and for this reason, more footages had to be used in order to fill 4 pages with transcript.

4.2 What is the source

For Democracy Now! and ITV their respective YouTube channels were used as a source for the corpora. For BBC the videos were taken from the BBC News channel and for CNN, as mentioned above, CNN 10 channel was used as the source. For SkyNews, their on-website live TV streaming was used to record the footage of their News at 10 on 12th December 2024 and 4th January 2025. Similarly, NBC News Nightly News footage was taken from their website on 15th and 18th January 2025. The footage itself was obtained using a laptop and the built-in software Game Bar. These recordings were then uploaded into Happy Scribe, a transcription software. More information about Happy Scribe can be found in section 4.4. Afterwards, the transcriptions were exported into a text document for ease of finding and highlighting the fragmental constructions, and the utterances not made by the news anchor were removed.

4.3 Why not reports or interviews

While reports are for the most part scripted, they often contain short interviews with locals or individuals involved in the topic, or footages of these people speaking on camera, which do not have to be scripted. When the topic of the report comes from non-English speaking country, such footages may have to be interpreted or translated to English. This can be problematic for two reasons:

- 1) The person in question may not be a native speaker, and their utterances cannot be used in this thesis even if they are speaking English.
- 2) Interpretation and translation both should be as close to the original meaning as possible. This may come at an expense of using fragments. Additionally, the utterances of the individual might be interpreted/translated in several ways which opens the way for doubt over the correctness of such material.

Additionally, a broadcasting stations can have more correspondents than they have news anchors. Thus, it can be difficult to find enough reports from one correspondent in the plethora of reports uploaded to YouTube or available on websites of the chosen broadcasting stations. Sometimes, the correspondent does not introduce themselves and finding the right name for a voice can be difficult.

Another reason correspondent reports were not chosen is because in many reports of negative events like epidemic, war, famine etc. correspondents closely work with the images shown and may use fragments for dramatic effect or to simply label what the viewers see on

their screens. An example of this can be a scene of a town ravaged by war as the correspondent simply says: ‘total destruction’.

4.4 Transcription software

For the transcriptions, a paid software available on happyscribe.com was used. Happy Scribe states that their speech recognition technology which is used in the transcriptions is about 85% accurate. This means that these transcriptions had to be proofread to ensure they were correct before they could be used in the analysis. The machine had most problems with the names of people and places, which are not that relevant to this research paper. Sometimes the machine duplicated words, or the ending syllable of a word. It also had some problems with commas, leaving them out when they were necessary or putting them where they did not belong. These errors were corrected in the work environment of Happy Scribe itself, therefore the exported documents were without these mistakes.

Happy Scribe also provides an option to have the audio transcribed by humans using their network of freelancers to make the transcriptions 99% correct. However, this service at \$2.00 a minute was deemed too costly for a bachelor thesis and thus was not used.

4.5 Application of Artificial Intelligence

Although the research paper itself was created without using AI, the texts from which the corpora were created were generated by AI through the Happy Scribe software. Without the help of AI with generating the transcripts, the corpora would be much smaller and not that many broadcasting stations would be chosen. Therefore, thanks to AI, the research paper could span further than it normally would with only the work of a human behind it.

Throughout working on the thesis, a helpful and ethical application of AI was found: using AI to convert speech to text. The AI of Happy Scribe is still making many mistakes in its generated texts, however thanks to these mistakes it leaves some initiative for humans to go over the text anyway while listening to the audio to correct the errors. In conclusion, the AI does not completely remove the human involvement with generated text, but it helps ease the workload on humans and thus allows for broader and/or deeper research as the saved time can be used to analyse even more pieces of media.

II. ANALYSIS

5 CORPORA

The transcriptions are available on a Google Drive and can be accessed by anyone with the hyperlink:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pCjyAyk2RcDOMAARk1YkyjxAG1jSLbTb?usp=sharing>

The fragmental constructions in each corpus were highlighted in different colours for ease of review. The colour code is as follows:

VP ellipsis: green highlight

NP ellipsis: yellow highlight

Omitted P and A: blue highlight

Discourse fragment: purple highlight

The colour code may differ in case a different software than Microsoft Word is used.

Since performing the F measure is out of scope of the thesis, and language register cannot be used to link formality with fragmental constructions, the levels of formality were decided upon by comparing news anchors attire, their gestures and facial expressions, camera distance, the overall look of the studio and clutter on news anchors' desks. Because this comparison is based on intuition, it is indicative only and is in place to attempt to find the least and the most formal broadcasting station.

5.1 BBC News

5.1.1 Fragments

VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse fragments
4	0	0	4

Table 1: BBC News fragments

Discovered fragments:

Discourse fragments:

- 1) Andrew Cunningham from Capital Economics.
- 2) James Landale there.
- 3) Steve McDonald.
- 4) Sally Bundock.

VP fragments:

- 1) [0] Straight to breaking news.
- 2) Heathrow Airport [0] saying that they will resume some flights later today.
- 3) [0] Plenty more on this breaking development.
- 4) So, some strong language [0] there.

5.1.2 Formality

BBC News news anchors wear formal attire: a suit with a tie or a formal blazer and a blouse. Their desk is not visible, as the camera focuses on the news anchors' torso and head and places them in the middle of the screen. The studio's backstage is visible behind the news anchors, with multiple screens and, presumably, other BBC employees. The news anchors maintain neutral facial expression and make no hand gestures.

Overall, BBC News is formal.

5.2 SkyNews

5.2.1 Fragments

VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse fragments
10	0	0	2

Table 2: SkyNews fragments

Discovered fragments:

Discourse fragments:

- 1) Shingi Mararike in Cheshire, right in the Amber zone for us.
- 2) Tamara Cohen in Westminster.

Examples of VP ellipsis:

- 1) The search for survivors [0] in the aftermath of a tropical cyclone, with a warning that hundreds, even thousands, could be dead in a French overseas territory
- 2) Among the stories we'll be discussing [0] this take on the Duke of York's predicament on the front of Ryan's paper, the headline "Andrew stuffed at Christmas".
- 3) [0] That and more when we come back.
- 4) [0] Delays, cancellations, and collisions tonight as the UK braces for heavy snow and freezing rain.
- 5) Shingi, you're right in the Amber zone, but [0] reports already of disruption right across the country.

5.2.2 Formality

The attire of the SkyNews news anchors is a formal blazer and a blouse. The studio, while shown to have three walls made of glass, has a solid backwall with a screen showing a closed-up image of clock which appears during the opening theme of the programme. The desk has a stack of papers and a keyboard, however these are only visible in the opening shot, as afterwards the camera focuses on the news anchor and places them in the middle of the screen. Both news anchors maintain neutral expression throughout the footage and make no hand gestures.

Overall, SkyNews is formal.

5.3 ITV News

5.3.1 Fragments

VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse fragments
9	1	0	1

Table 3: ITV News fragments

Discovered fragments:

Discourse fragment:

- 1) Rebecca.

NP ellipsis:

- 1) Her estranged husband's [0] may [0] yet.

This sentence contains both a NP and a VP ellipsis.

Examples VP ellipsis:

- 1) Eighty-five people [0] killed today alone.
- 2) More women, more children, [0] gone.
- 3) This father, [0] mourning his little girl.
- 4) [0] Deeply distressing images there, John.
- 5) Her estranged husband's [0] may [0] yet.

The fifth example sentence contains both a NP and a VP ellipsis.

5.3.2 Formality

Julie Etchingham, ITV News news anchor, wears a formal blazer and a blouse in both footages. Her desk has a stack of papers a keyboard and a PC mouse and she holds a pen.

The backstage of the studio is visible behind the news anchor, with multiple screens and presumably employees of ITV News at work. The camera focuses on Julie Etchingham's head and torso and places her in the middle of the screen. The facial expression is neutral and there are no hand gestures visible.

Overall, ITV News is formal.

5.4 CNN 10

5.4.1 Fragments

VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse fragments
4	0	0	3

Table 4: CNN 10 fragments

Discovered fragments:

Discourse fragments:

- 1) Pop quiz, hotshot. (this fragment is present twice in the corpus)
- 2) Ten second trivia.

VP ellipsis:

- 1) [0] Lots to get to, not a lot of time to do it, so let's get to it.
- 2) [0] Embarrassing.
- 3) [0] A viral moment for Terrence, his family, the school.
- 4) We had a panoply of delightful words for your Word Wednesday, [0] so tough to choose just one.

5.4.2 Formality

CNN 10's news anchor, Coy Wire, wears a shirt and a vest in two of the inspected footages and a plain white long-sleeved T-shirt in one footage. There is no desk visible, as the camera stays firmly focused on Coy Wire's head and torso and places him in the middle of the screen. The studio is set up in such a way that it resembles a casual YouTuber setup: a simple red board with the CNN 10 logo printed on it as background. Another thing that makes the news cast resemble a simple YouTuber stream is the fact that Coy Wire smiles at the camera and makes hand gestures. Lastly, the videos contain trivia quiz to more engage the audience, which does not appear in any other newscast.

Overall, CNN 10 is informal.

5.5 NBC News

5.5.1 Fragments

VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse fragments
44	2	0	4

Table 5: NBC News fragments

Discovered fragments:

Discourse fragments:

- 1) Ryan Nobles now with late details.
- 2) Emily Ikett in New York.
- 3) Morgan Chesky in Los Angeles.

NP ellipsis:

- 1) The agreement [0] also celebrated inside Gaza, where more than 46,000 [0] have been killed, according to the government Health Ministry
- 2) More than 100 million [0] [0] under alert for life-threatening extremes and temperatures that could feel like an astonishing 55 below zero for some.

Both of these sentences contain NP and VP ellipsis.

Examples of VP ellipsis:

- 1) President Biden [0] announcing the details at the White House.
- 2) Also, tonight, [0] the desperate search for more than two dozen people missing as wildfires rage in Southern California.
- 3) The Southwest flight delayed five hours, the pilot [0] arrested for DUI.
- 4) The ceasefire deal [0] coming together with just days left in the Biden presidency.
- 5) A lot of moving parts [0] at work here.
- 6) Tonight, just five days before he leaves office, President Biden [0] delivering his farewell address, citing his achievements as a long political career nears its end.
- 7) Today, TikTok, the company and the White House [0] in a war of words.
- 8) A terrifying accident on a ski slope [0] in Spain today.

5.5.2 Formality

The news anchors are dressed in a formal attire: a black suit and a tie. Their desk has no clutter, however the anchors hold a small stack of papers in their hands. The studio is closed off and has a room-wide screen, assisting the news anchor by showing images associated

with the presented topic. The camera shows the news anchors from their thighs up and to the side of the screen while they are monologuing and switches to torso and head when in dialogue. As in the previous cases, NBC news anchors maintain neutral expressions and make little to no hand gestures.

Overall, NBC seems to be aiming to be on the highly formal side with its news anchor attire, the clean studio and the distance from the camera.

5.6 Democracy Now!

5.6.1 Fragments

VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse fragments
1	0	10	0

Table 6: Democracy Now! fragments

Discovered fragments:

Examples of omitted P and A:

- 1) Palestinian Authority police forces have continued raids in the Jenin refugee camp, killing a senior leader of the resistance group Jenin Brigade [0] Saturday.
- 2) Israeli soldiers have also continued near daily attacks in the West Bank, including in Hebron, where Israeli forces shot and killed a disabled 23-year-old man during a raid [0] Friday.
- 3) The cyclone made landfall [0] Sunday in Mozambique, where at least three people were killed.
- 4) In Sudan, at least nine people were killed [0] Friday after a drone strike on the main hospital in North Darfur's Al Fasher city.
- 5) After talks at the State Department [0] Monday, family members have been demanding the US launch an independent investigation into Ayge's killing. ...
- 6) Embattled German Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a no confidence vote [0] Monday, triggering an early election in February of next year.
- 7) Neto's arrest [0] Saturday came after Brazilian authorities accused him of obstructing

VP ellipsis:

- 1) The final vote [0], 204 to 85.

5.6.2 Formality

The news anchor, Amy Goodman is wearing a leather jacket and a plain blouse. The desk at which the anchor is sitting has a red mug and some stacks of papers. The studio has a view into the backstage with numerous screens and, presumably, other employees of Democracy Now! at work. The news anchor has her torso and head visible on camera and is in the middle of the screen, with the initial shot showing the desk and then zooming in on her. Amy Goodman's facial expressions are neutral and she does not make any visible hand gestures, as seems to be the standard for news broadcasting stations.

Overall, it appears that Democracy Now! is aiming to be closer to the viewers with Amy Goodman's casual clothes and the red mug on the desk, while still maintaining some distance from the viewers by having neutral expression and no hand gestures.

6 COMPARISON

In this chapter, the corpora created from the transcripts of chosen newscast and their formality are compared.

6.1 Comparing frequency of fragments

Broadcasting station	VP ellipsis	NP ellipsis	Omitted P and A	Discourse Fragments
BBC News	4	0	0	4
ITV News	9	1	0	1
SkyNews	10	0	0	2
CNN	4	0	0	3
Democracy Now!	1	0	10	0
NBC News	44	2	0	4

Table 7: Comparison of each type of fragment of each broadcasting station

Broadcasting Station	Overall fragments per word	In %
BBC News	8 per 2162	0.37 %
ITV News	11 per 2115	0.52 %
SkyNews	12 per 2178	0.55 %
CNN	7 per 2354	0.30 %
Democracy Now!	11 per 2703	0.41 %
NBC News	50 per 1902	2.63 %

Table 8: Comparison of fragments of each broadcasting station

	Overall fragment per word	In %
British broadcasts	31 per 6455	0.48 %
American broadcasts	68 per 6959	0.98 %

Table 9: Overall comparison of fragments

6.2 Comparing formality

The broadcasting station with the lowest level of formality is CNN 10. Its approach to newscast is vastly different from the other stations. Main difference is the facial expression

and hand gestures of CNN 10's news anchor. Other difference is the clothing of the news anchor. In one instance Coy Wire wore a plain white long-sleeved T-shirt, which is recognized as informal wear. Above CNN 10 in terms of formality is Democracy Now!. While this station is comparable to others in several aspects (the camera focus, neutral expression, backstage view), it differs in the clothing Amy Goodman wears. A leather jacket is less formal than a suit or a blouse. Additionally, the desk has a red mug placed on it, an item that is not crucial for the journalistic profession.

The British broadcasting stations are all comparable in term of formality. The news anchors all wear formal clothing, the desks of ITV News and SkyNews studios both have items associated with journalism: a stack of papers and a keyboard. All three studios use the same camera positioning. The only difference is in the backwall of the studio. BBC News and ITV News have a visible backstage, while SkyNews does not. However, this difference is not enough to distinguish the level of formality of each station.

Lastly, NBC News is the most formal. It is the only station that puts distance between the news anchor and the camera, showing the news anchor from thighs up, standing to the side of the screen. The studio itself is clean, with no items on the desk and a room-wide screen on the backwall that shows images associated with the presented topic.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it is obvious that fragments and formality do not link in a way that was expected. This is visible particularly when comparing CNN 10 with other broadcasting stations. As stated above, CNN 10 treats its broadcasts more like casual YouTube videos rather than a formal news cast, and as such, according to the English language stereotype, it should have many more fragments than other broadcasting stations. However, the opposite is true, and it goes so far as to have the lowest percentage of fragments per word from all the chosen news casts. Additionally, the most formal broadcaster, NBC News, has the highest rate of fragmental constructions.

The second hypothesis, that AmE would have more fragments than BrE was confirmed. American broadcasting stations overall have the rate of fragments about twice as high as the British broadcasting stations, with American being at 0.98% and British at 0.48%. However, since the hypothesis of fragments being linked to formality was debunked, the reason for this phenomenon is different. To find the cause of this disparity, it is important to look at the broadcasting stations as a group as well as individually. When such approach is taken, more information about the occurrence of fragments is visible.

Another point that the analysis revealed is that some broadcasting stations prefer to use a certain type of fragment over the other types. A good example of this is Democracy Now! and its use of preposition omission in conjunction with days. No other chosen station uses these fragments. There could be multiple reasons for this phenomenon. It could simply be a preference of the person who writes the scripts – a style choice, or a peculiarity of the dialect the person is surrounded by. It could also be an attempt to differentiate the station from the competition. Democracy Now! is a fairly small broadcasting station compared to the other chosen broadcasters, therefore the attempt to be different to draw viewers is likely.

Moreover, ITV News is the only broadcasting station to use NP ellipsis that is not in conjunction with a number in a sentence: “Her estranged husband's may yet.” The missing head of the NP refers to a career of Nicola Sturgeon's husband. It is the only occurrence of an NP ellipsis of this type in the analysis. This could be an incentive for further research to see whether NP ellipsis that is not linked to a number is a phenomenon used exclusively by ITV News, or whether it is also used by other British or American broadcasting stations.

A similar thing applies to Democracy Now! and its use of preposition omission in conjunction with names of days. However, unlike with ITV News and its NP ellipsis, PP

ellipsis appears more than once in Democracy Now!'s news casts, thus implying that it is not an outlier in the gathered corpus.

Likewise, NBC News uses a large amount of one type of fragmentation compared to the other chosen stations, a VP ellipsis in particular. Compared to Democracy Now! the rate of fragments is much higher; 2.63 %. When compared to CNN 10, the formality of the setting is also higher. Since NBC News is a well-established business, it most likely will not have the same reasons for using such a large amount of fragments as Democracy Now!. Additionally, unlike Democracy Now!, NBC News uses fragments that are present in other broadcasting stations' news casts, which would clash with the idea of using fragments to differentiate the station from the competition. However, since NBC News uses these fragments about 5 times more often than the other stations, the differentiating itself from competition reason cannot be outright dismissed. This large rate of fragmentation usage makes the NBC News into an obvious outlier in this analysis.

When the results for NBC News are ignored, the rates of the American broadcasting stations are 0.30% and 0.41%, and British broadcasting stations are 0.37%, 0.52% and 0.55%. These results are quite close to each other and would make the conclusion of this thesis be: American and British news broadcasting stations use fragmental constructions at about the same rate (with British stations using slightly more fragments), further debunking the hypothesis the American broadcasting stations would have more fragmental constructions than the British ones. However, because of NBC News, which is an outlier, the scales are tipped in the favour of the hypothesis being correct. More research into the topic of fragmental constructions in British and American broadcasting stations is needed, particularly, research that focuses on more than 3 broadcasting stations from the given country, so that outliers like NBC News can be safely removed without drastically changing the results of the analysis.

SkyNews and NBC News are both owned by the same corporation, the Comcast Corporation, however the rates of usage of fragmental constructions of both broadcasters is vastly different (0.55 % SkyNews, 2.63 % NBC News). This proves that being owned by the same company has no effect on the scripts of the newscast. Similarly, ITV News and BBC News get their news from the same source, but ITV News' fragmentation rate is slightly higher than BBC News and it includes NP fragment, unlike BBC.

As for the discourse fragments, all but Democracy Now! have at least one of those. The reason for Democracy Now!'s lack of discourse fragments could be the structure of its newscast. Other broadcasting stations include one or more correspondent reports, which

constitute using discourse fragments to make sure the viewer understands who is to be talking on camera at the time. Since Democracy Now!'s analysed newscast stays firmly in the studio with a single news anchor talking, there is no need for discourse fragments to appear.

To summarise, the analysis debunked the assumption that increased frequency of fragmental constructions is linked to lower level of formality but proved the second assumption, that American broadcasting stations would contain more fragments than the British ones, is correct. However, this was only true because of NBC News' much higher use of fragments than any other broadcasting station, making NBC News into an outlier without which the result of the analysis would most likely say that American and British broadcasting stations use fragments at about the same rate, with the British broadcasting stations using them slightly more.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AmE	American English
BrE	British English
VP	Verb Phrase
NP	Noun Phrase
P and A	Prepositions and Articles
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
ITV	Independent Television
NBC	National Broadcasting Company

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