(Un)Stable emotions: Media-related transitions and consolidation of emotional communication

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1 Introduction

In the past, negative evaluation of affects as dysfunctional and animalistic hindrances to rational thought led to the neglect, condemnation and oppression of emotions in society as well as within scientific research (see Calhoun/Solomon 1984 for a historical account).[1] However, only a few decades ago, in an upheaval that could be termed an *emotional turn*, the mainstream evaluation of emotions changed considerably, transforming them into a legitimate field of study without the impulse to judge them morally.

Nowadays, a wide range of disciplines including the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences examine emotions with different objectives and methods, but under a fairly affirmative premise. Emotions are considered as crucial and useful factors in evolution, brain function, human behavior and actions, society and culture. Depending on the point of view, emotions are defined as events in the brain, as arousals in peripheral bodily systems, as cognitions, as individual experiences or as socially constructed discourse elements (cf. Oatley et al. 2006 for an introduction). Most researchers acknowledge the multi-faceted nature of emotions and reckon all these traits to be complementary rather than contradictory. Especially neuroscientific studies change the face of emotions and humanity itself, questioning the very idea of free will, supremacy of thought or even the traditional differentiation between body, mind and soul (see the works of Antonio R. Damasio, Joseph LeDoux, and Gerhard Roth, for example LeDoux 2004).

Folk psychology already picked up some popularized bits of information provided by modern science. Guidebooks on the endorsement and benefit of an active and honest emotional life are as popular as courses about the manipulation of emotions (e.g. for business, advertising, rhetoric) (cf. Goleman 1999, an example of an *emotional* bestseller). At the same time the common knowledge about emotions is still preserved. It shapes concepts, metaphors, narratives, and evaluations of emotions (cf. Kövecses 2000). The necessity to process emotions is a matter of interpersonal communication as well as a subject of public discussion.

Emotions are frequently communicated, discussed, and criticized in the media. The World Wide Web is just as much a platform for information seekers and providers

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[1] Throughout this essay English references are preferred. However, in some instances German works are cited due to inaccessibility of equal English sources. If possible, the English bibliographical information is included in the *References* section.

(e.g. media outlets) as it is an application for everyday communication. Even in an increasingly multimodal online environment language is an important tool to describe and express personal emotions. As a linguist with a focus on media and communication studies and a pending dissertation about emotivity in texts, I am interested in language, media, the World Wide Web and emotions to the same extent. Within this context, some questions come to mind:

1) Does the World Wide Web act as a catalyst for the quantity and the quality of emotion(al) talk? (Cf. Bednarek 2008, pp. 11 f. for a definition of *emotion talk* and *emotional talk*, the former being the description of emotions, e.g. *She was scared to death*, the latter being the expression of an emotion, e.g. *Damn!*)

2) New platforms and new communication tools change the face of journalism. Is there a difference between "professional" and "amateur" journalism regarding the handling of emotions and the patterns of emotivity?

3) Online communication has bounced to a new dimension via platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Do rules and paradigms of emotional communication change because of this?

These three questions are not independent from one another. One defining feature of contemporary online journalism is its entanglement with user commentary and instant criticism. The following chapters will not be able to fully answer the questions above. Rather some general points are being made with reference to examples stemming from a media linguistic analysis of English and German platforms. This interlingual and intercultural view shall highlight the fact that there *is* culture- and language-specific communication on the World Wide Web indeed, even though some trends seem to overlap.

Throughout the essay, the practical examples are interwoven with the theoretical backgrounds. A mixture of platforms with very different objectives and characteristics has been chosen to show the trends depicted. The examples fall into two major categories: 1) renowned media outlets on the Web, 2) User Generated Content, blogs, communities. The following table summarizes the platforms and gives brief descriptions.

Online newspapers		
BILD	German	Online equivalent to a tabloid
Daily Mirror	English (GB)	Online equivalent to a tabloid
Der Standard	German (AUT)	Online equivalent to a broadsheet
Die Zeit	German	Online equivalent to a broadsheet
Financial Times	English (USA/GB)	Online equivalent to a broadsheet
Krone	German (AUT)	Online equivalent to a tabloid
New York Times	English (USA)	Online equivalent to a broadsheet
The Sun	English (GB)	Online equivalent to a tabloid
User Generated Content, blogs, communities		
Alles Schall und Rauch	German (CH)	Seemingly personal blog promoting conspiracy theories (more likely organized by a political grouping)
Bildblog	German	Watchblog (critical comments on the journalistic methods of BILD and others)
Huffington Post	English (USA)	News website (without a printed counterpart) with participation of thousands of bloggers
IMDB	German/English	Internet Movie Database (User Generated Content and discussion forums on movies, television series, persons)
Indymedia	German/English	"Independent media center", alternative views on contemporary politics
PerezHilton	English (USA)	Personal blog, but presumably multiple authors, covering celebrity gossip
Spreeblick	German	Several authors, subject-matters range from politics to popular culture, with a critical and journalistic impetus

TABLE 1: Exemplary websites referred to within this essay (cf. *References* section for full URLs)

2 Emotion, Language, and the World Wide Web

At present, the linguistic study of emotivity revolves around lexical, grammatical, cognitive and pragmatic features as well as discourse patterns of talking and writing emotionally. In the talk at hand, mainly surface structural and pragmatic aspects are taken into account (cf. Bednarek 2008, Wilce 2009 and Fussell 2002 for comprehensive introductions to the study of emotion and language from very different starting points – Fussell 2002 being an interdisciplinary overview).

The major distinction to be drawn is the one between describing, expressing and eliciting emotions. The following table gives a brief overview of some typical means of communicating emotions both in German and English. Being genetically related and typologically quite similar, most features are the same and therefore only the English examples are stated. It is important to keep in mind that those means do not describe or express emotions in isolation, but only within a grammatical construction and within a certain context. What is even more important is the fact that neither describing nor expressing emotion is an index of a *real* emotion inside the producer of an utterance.

Level	Typical linguistic means to express and describe emotions (selection)
Phonological/ graphical	• Emphasis (e.g. with *so* and *such*, stress) • Typographical emphasis (bold, italic, underline, different fonts/font size)
Lexical	• Emotion words describing liking and disliking, preference, hope, anticipation, disappointment, approval/disapproval, surprise, concern (e.g. *like, love, hate*) • Interjections (e.g. *oh, wow*) • Intensifying adverbs and modifiers (e.g. *awfully, truly*) • Expressive words/connotations (e.g., *idiot, sensational, freedom*) • Emotive metaphors (e.g. *I am flooded with love*)
Syntactic	• Indicating the cause of the emotion with prepositions (*at, with, about, of, by*; e.g. *I was annoyed about something/at somebody*), infinitive clauses (e.g. *sorry to have missed*), *that*-clauses (e.g. *I was anxious that something would go wrong*) • Sentence adverbials (e.g. *to my regret, fortunately*) • Exclamations (e.g. *What a wonderful time we had!*) • Syntactically realized emphasis (e.g. *Why on earth didn't you tell me?*) • Emphatic negation (e.g. N*ever have I seen*) • Emotive evaluations (see below)
Pragmatic	• Repetitions • Rhetorical questions • Indirect: expressing volition (willingness, wishes, intentions, insistence), permission and obligation, influencing (commands, requests, advice) • Certain speech acts (e.g. greetings, thanks, apologies, condolences)

TABLE 2: Emotive means to describe and express emotions (cf. Leech/Svartvik 1994, pp. 152–177, Schwarz-Friesel 2007 for German counterparts)

Considering the elicitation of emotions, there are certain linguistic devices employed to trigger emotional responses in the hearer/reader, including all the means named above on the basis of empathy and all applications of traditional rhetoric. Some specifically journalistic strategies will be introduced in the next chapter. However, the effects of emotive texts are difficult to predict and they are rather a psychological than a linguistic problem.

In terms of online communication, additional features come under scrutiny. Internet linguistics (a term proposed by Crystal 2007) takes on linguistic characteristics of new forms of self-disclosure and commenting like chats, discussion forums, social networks and communication tools (like Facebook and Twitter). Given the fact that users have multiple opportunities to express their opinions and feelings on the Web, online communication is a most interesting source to find out more about the way people discuss emotions. However, language on the Internet is not representative of emotion(al) talk as a whole, because 1) every person is able to use a multitude of registers in different domains and 2) online language has some distinctive features and therefore is a special register itself. The following list is a small sample of means that are typical of informal emotive communication on the World Wide Web (cf. Crystal 2007, Siever 2006, Thaler 2003). Interestingly enough, again German and English are quite similar in this respect; this is probably due to German speaking users adopting forms they met in English texts (diachronically – meanwhile, also users who hardly

know English use these forms, sometimes without knowing their exact meaning or adapting them to the German language).

- *Characteristics of spoken language*: One feature often debated is the imitation of informal, spoken language and producing the impression of proximity. For example, a lot of interjections are being used, while these are very rarely found in written language offline (e.g. *ouch, hey, oh*). Prosody (stress, for example) is imitated by expansion and gemination (e.g. *heeeey*), punctuation (e.g. *!!!, …* for taboos or silence), and onomatopoetic forms (mimicking acoustic sounds, e.g. *phew!*). Another important feature reminiscent of oral language is the use of colloquial forms and even dialects (which is, by the way, much more common in German than in English online communication).
- *Netspeak/Leetspeak*: Abbreviations (e.g. **g** for *grin*), replacing letters with numbers (e.g. *cul8r*), inflectives (e.g. **scratch head**) and acronyms (e.g. *LOL*) constitute some sort of insider code that users need to learn in order to appear proficient in netspeak. While these devices garnered a lot of attention in the study of online language because of their peculiarity, their use has become self-evident and somewhat worn-out (prompting a negative evaluation as childish and utterly unoriginal by advanced users).
- *Quasi-dialogical structure*: Not only within chats, but also in discussion forums and social networks it is common to react to comments made by other users. This can take on the form of something similar to a dialogue. Framing, for example, is a direct answer to a statement by inserting commentary in the original text and re-publishing it.
- *Deviant orthography and grammar*: Here, *deviant* is not meant as a derogatory term. Common phenomena: omitting punctuation, use of small letters respective capital letters only, and spelling words according to their phonetic sound, and so on. Unintentional typing errors are frequent (see section 4).
- *Emoticons*: Smileys are widely known. They do not simply signal nonverbal behavior (smiling or frowning, for example) but take over a lot of functions. They code attitude, evaluations and hints at the interpretation of an utterance (marking irony, for example). Again, the use of emoticons seems to become a social signal that a user is *so five minutes ago* (a phrase applied to persons who are deemed out of date).

The way people write emotionally depends on several factors: age, socio-economic status, individual language biographies, the current situation, the persons addressed, and many more. It is almost impossible to gain reliable results in this respect because of the vastness, the anonymity and the volatility of online communication. One can only talk about patterns of emotional communication independent of personalized data. Are there differences in emotional communication between certain platforms? Are there culture-specific trends? Is the quality dependent on text types, speech communities, social groups, and

subject matters? Some very basic viewpoints concerning these questions are mentioned in chapter 4.

To add to the complexity, we have to keep in mind that the main feature of online communication is that it is manifold, though. There is not just *the* language and *the* communication situation on the Web. As stated above, the World Wide Web is a conglomerate of most different scopes, organizations, media, modalities, and text functions. Platforms for interpersonal communication and media platforms are not entirely separate from each other and seem to merge more and more. So, does this change anything about traditional concepts of journalism? This question is at the core of the next chapter.

3 Emotion Management in Journalism: Rules and Transitions

In this section, two major topics in journalism are referred to, both having a lot to do with emotional communication: the concept that media have a social responsibility (including gatekeeping authority and ideals like objectivity) and the demand of stylistic integrity. Are those long-standing traditions bound to change on the Web? The most striking test is the advent of citizen journalism through blogs, which is discussed in the third part of this chapter.

Conventionally, news production allows for staff journalists to gather news, for editors to release a news product and for readers to comment on the news (for example via letters) with only limited chance for criticism to become public (cf. Bruns 2008, p. 71). Mass communication is characterized by the "[a]bsence of direct feedback, anonymity, fragmentation and impersonality" (Bednarek 2006, p. 14). On the Web, the situation is quite different.

There are three often-debated and probably well-known aspects that influence the process of gatekeeping (cf. Bednarek 2006, pp. 16 ff.):

1) *Traditional news values*: negativity, recency, proximity, consonance (with recipient's cognitive frames), unambiguity, unexpectedness, superlativeness, relevance, personalization, eliteness, attribution, facticity.
2) *Values in the news process*: continuity, exclusiveness, co-option, composition, predictability, prefabrication.
3) *Values in the news texts*: clarity, brevity, color (in terms of liveliness).

Gatekeeping is about decisions what is "worth investigating" (Bruns 2008, p. 71) – what is worth investigating is decided by beliefs about the values named above. Journalists have the responsibility to know what is important and are supposed to decide to the best of their knowledge. The word *values* itself suggests some kind of affective attachment. It is worth noting, however, that most of these values do not imply ethical or intellectual ideals. In fact, almost every value in the list above is based either on imperatives related to everyday journalistic practices or on the

promise of a strong interest or reaction in the audience. Considering the first factor, "[c]onventional news stories [...] are designed to maximize their use and exchange value for the producers and distributors of news, not necessarily for its users" (Bruns 2008, p. 81). With regards to the second aspect, the emotional consonance is a deciding factor, even if the topic reported about and the justification a journalist would bring forward seem unemotional. The dichotomy between rationality and emotionality or between knowledge and feelings is a historical one, anyway. Emotions can be defined as information – telling us what is important and what to do in certain situations in an existential, not in an esoteric way. Human decisions are hardly ever based on 'cold cognitions' alone.

For example, the extensive news coverage of the tsunami and the nuclear incident in Japan recently is determined by the obvious global relevance of this subject matter as well as by its negativity and emotionality. The relevance is allocated because of the perceived global threat (prompting fear of being affected by the events too) and by the sympathy for the Japanese people. The political and economic implications are just as emotionally charged. The recent Royal Wedding in the UK, one of the most-written about topics this year on a global scale, is solely interesting because of its emotional value.

The Internet and especially the World Wide Web mediate a change in content creation (just a few catchphrases: User Generated Content, virtual communities, breakdown of hierarchical structures, empowerment, peer-to-peer or many-to-many communication, information society, hive mind, collective intelligence, crowdsourcing, ...). Bruns uses the term "Produsage" to describe such new forms of participation on the Web. He defines it as "the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement" (Bruns 2008, p. 21). The main features of Produsage are (cf. Bruns 2008, pp. 19 f., 24 f.):

1) The process of problem solving is open: Everyone involved has the same potential to contribute something from the start. The collective determines the evaluation of a contribution as well.
2) Hierarchies might develop, but primarily on the basis of expertise. Prestige is a matter of knowledge and skill and subject to swift changes.
3) The outcome is always open to further development, comments and annotations. There is never a finished product.
4) The outcome is the property of everyone involved. The motivation to make a contribution is to be a part of something bigger, of a project the user believes in.

Knowledge, information, contents – Produsage seems to be a very rational endeavor. Naturally, a process like this is just as much an expression of the social relationships of everyone involved as it is a document for division of work. In this

context, gatekeeping is not the same as it used to be. This comes about in three steps.

First, users seek and select information more actively and independently – they have more sources of information and make their own decisions about what is interesting to them, also sharing their interests with their peers (by recommending hyperlinks, for example). Knowledge about how to find and how to evaluate information seems to become more important than the information itself. Users have the opportunity and the instruments to review and control media products.

Second, citizen journalism emerges in a new quality and quantity and is embedded in similar review processes and discussions, prompting the ongoing evolution of articles (cf. Bruns 2008, pp. 73 ff.; Lovink 2008, pp. 38 ff.). Once attention to certain topics, persons, or events has developed, it multiplies itself because of mutual hyperlinking, bookmarking and other forms of recommendations between peers.

Third, journalists use social media such as Twitter or Facebook to learn about trends, for their research on topics, and to know what the current mood is like. The perceived emotional states and attitudes of users become a source, just as trends on YouTube, Twitter and Google. Hypes and Internet sensations are monitored and covered by media products, not only online, but also on TV, in newspapers, magazines and so on. To cite a recent example, the music video "Friday" by 13-year-old Rebecca Black was an unlikely hit on YouTube, thanks to the overly negative reactions and ridicule (not to say cyber-bullying) by the community. Reports about this phenomenon appeared in all online newspapers named in Table 1 – albeit with different viewpoints. While the broadsheet-based platforms were more interested in discussing dynamics of online attention, the tabloid-based platforms gave users another opportunity to make fun of the singer or showed their compassion for the girl (e.g. *The Sun, Daily Mirror*). Either way, online communication is about to become an important news item, especially in gossip news. The behavior of celebrities on social media platforms feeds a lot of articles, like the widely covered rants by Charlie Sheen on Twitter lately.

Another trend in this direction seems odd: Moods and opinions of users expressed in discussion forums become part of the news coverage. For example, *BILD* and *Krone* make extensive use of user commentary to enrich news stories. They simply cite opinions expressed by users in discussion forums concerning topics written about in other articles before, especially very emotional ones like soccer (citing angry or enthusiastic comments from users). An example from politics was the resignation of the German Minister of Defense Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg in March 2011. He had to leave his office because of a scandal involving his doctorate (ultimately losing it because of plagiarism). *BILD*, being an avid supporter of the politician from the start, opposed this step early on and launched a campaign to keep Guttenberg in office. The newspaper as well as its online equivalent failed in the end, but what they conceived to be the public opinion was used to authorize the campaign, even drawing heavily from their online discussion forums.

This third step is the most obvious document to the suggested changes in gatekeeping. It is not the function of this essay to judge these developments, but it should be noted that a pessimistic view, lamenting the fragmentation and amateurization of gatekeeping, can be contrasted with the emancipatory potential of user participation. On the other hand, user participation does not automatically mean a disruption of established power nor a breakdown of all hierarchies, as will become clear later on.

Moving on to the second part of this section, I propose the question if the actual news product itself (in this case, texts) is subject to change. There are more or less implicit rules in writing news stories, depending on the exact text type and the concrete publication it is written for. Quality criteria for news stories (as thoroughly investigated in Arnold 2009) are closely related to the news values cited above (for example, relevance) and to ethical considerations (for example, balanced reporting, credibility, respect for personal rights). The emotional implications are obvious and have already been brought up above, but here a further quality criterion is suggested: the need to manage one's emotions when involved in the process of news production.

Hochschild (1990) coined the term emotion management to describe emotional regulation required by social norms at a certain workplace (for example, the need for a flight attendant to be genuinely friendly). The regulation can go as far as producing certain emotions, not just masking or showing them without truly feeling them. Rules of emotion management in journalism do not demand the suppression of emotion but the regulation of expressivity in the texts or verbal reports produced. The main rules are as follows:

- The emotions of the news producers do not come to the fore. On the other hand, they are not denied, disguised or implicitly introduced to a text or news product.
- The news coverage does, however, facilitate 'informed emotional involvement' by giving proper and balanced information about events or subject matters.
- Instead of prompting emotional entropy (confusion), the news coverage promotes the recipient's regulation and handling of the emotions elicited by events.
- The news coverage observes the rules of emotionality of its cultural context and ethical considerations.

What does that mean in practice? The difference between emotionalizing readers, making emotions a topic and expressing one's own emotions was introduced in chapter 2. The first option, eliciting the emotions of readers, is the staff of life for tabloids, while actively pursuing the emotions of the recipients in an explicit and obvious way is deemed inappropriate in broadsheets. The second option, describing the emotions of people involved in an event, is not unusual – what

applies here are general ethical norms of respecting the integrity of the person described. The third option, expressing one's own emotion, is not acceptable in most news products.

These habits are regulated by the journalistic text type as well. For example, in a reportage it is common to set up a mood, to give background information on the opinions and feelings of protagonists, to cite their emotional statements, and even, albeit restricted, take on a certain stance that might involve some emotional expression. In an interview, the emotions of the person interviewed might come up as a topic or they show more or less intentionally. In contrast, a simple report usually just includes straight facts. Commentary, columns and other text types expressing opinion can include humor, a rather strong stance (although fed by arguments) and emotional statements with low intensity.

It is important to note that these are ideals – actual texts can contain blatant violations of these norms, and certain media outlets can decide not to follow them at all. Stance is "the overt expression of the speaker's attitude, feelings, judgements, or commitment concerning his/her message, including the indication of the speaker's degree of commitment towards the truthfulness of the message" (Bednarek 2006, p. 25). There is a journalistic norm that calls for a news text not to promote a certain stance or bias, also describable as the ideal of objectivity. Realistically, rather than being without a stance, "newspapers will try to construct a text which is in line with what they think are the opinions, attitudes and feelings – hence, the evaluative stance – of (the majority of) their readers" (Bednarek 2006, p. 203). The ideal of unbiased passing on of information is naïve, but is it really a boon? Integrating, evaluating, classifying of information are primary functions of the media in our society, and this also applies to appraisal of facts, events, and persons.

In practice, there are loads of common methods that seem to contradict the ideal of emotional adequacy. Ungerer (1997, pp. 314, 313-319) describes a number of principles that are followed by text producers in order to achieve an emotional effect on their readers: 1) the principle of proximity (deictic and other items that establish a local, temporal or emotional relationship between protagonists and readers), 2) the principle of intensity, 3) the principle of animacy (e.g. disaster vocabulary), 4) the principle of rank and number (quantitative expressions), 5), the principle of emotional content (descriptive emotion terms) and 6) the principle of emotional evaluation (e.g. connotations). Tabloids use them to excess.

Sticking with the last aspect, evaluation is a core task of human language, be it in a conversation or in a written text. Bednarek (2006) compiled a list of evaluative parameters in texts. As far as the kinds of evaluations carried out in journalistic texts are concerned the following parameters are crucial: comprehensibility, emotivity (positive or negative evaluation), expectedness, importance and reliability of circumstances as well as the parameters evidentiality (whom the evaluation is attributed to) and mental states (e.g. belief/disbelief) (cf. Bednarek 2006, pp. 42, 44–58).

Bednarek's corpus analysis deals, among other questions, with the differences between broadsheets and tabloids. Tabloids tend to contain more evaluations, especially regarding the parameters emotivity and expectedness, the two parameters being closely related, as well as low reliability (cf. Bednarek 2006, pp. 192 f.). In contrast, broadsheets prefer forms of mitigation and negation, evaluating more cautiously. Broadsheets may make fewer evaluations and more implicit ones, but overall, the difference between tabloids and broadsheets is not striking, neither in quantity nor in quality (cf. Bednarek 2006, p. 206).

Emotive evaluations and references to emotions serve very specific functions. Typical infringements of the ideal of objectivity are evaluations with an unclear reference: If it is unclear who the emotion is attributed to, the writer's objectivity may be in doubt or the article suggests that the writer shares this view (cf. Bednarek 2006, p. 158) – an effect that can be very intentional. Descriptions of emotions are often found in headlines, captions or other prominent positions in the text, often referring to basic emotions. This makes stories more interesting and triggers emotive evaluations (cf. Bednarek 2006, pp. 156 f.). The functions of emotivity and references to emotions therefore are: attracting attention, making stories interesting, prompting an emotional response or positive/negative evaluation of an event, and – last, but not least – promoting the recall of a story (cf. Bednarek 2006, pp. 173 f.).

Being objective (unbiased) is not necessarily the same as being emotionless (negating one's own emotions is just as insincere as manipulating). "In journalism, the emotional and the objective impulses should converge" (Ward 2010, p. 1), especially during a crisis or disaster. This means: 1) Journalists/reporters should not disguise that they are human beings, but still should not be sentimental. 2) They are supposed to countercheck emotions with facts. 3) They should not impose their emotional view on others, intervene or present themselves as saviors in a time of crisis.

So, to sum up this point, on the one hand visible traces of emotive evaluations and emotional expression decrease the credibility and seem to demolish the impression of objectivity. On the other hand, it is a form of reaching out to the audience. The trend towards infotainment is a reflection of these two sides: News coverage is less likely than ever to just depict the facts. (At this point, we leave aside the question if the thought of achieving neutrality is even desirable or simply naïve – even if it is unachievable, the ideal of objectivity in journalism is an often-heard and constant request.) Rather, stories are supposed to be interesting, colorful, close to everyday life, personalized, intimate, authentic, and emotional (cf. Mangold 2004). This trend has shown up long before the World Wide Web and citizen journalism arrived. Looking at the online newspaper of the present corpus, there is no trend observable that is not present in the printed editions as well – with the exception of new forms of user participation that are directly integrated in the online edition but make their way into the printed editions as well (for example, *BILD* invites so-called "reader reporters" to send in photos, videos and articles on sensational observations they made in their surrounding).

In the past, active and public media criticism was not as easy as it is nowadays through blogs, comments, online editions of offline articles and so on. Blogs have attracted a lot of attention in research, one central topic being the merging of 'professional' and 'amateur' journalism. One approach would be to demand professional journalists to research their stories very thoroughly and produce high quality contents without stance or personal evaluation. Checking of facts, evaluation of quality and relevance as well as the emotional appraisal, then, are the main tasks of citizen journalism and bloggers (cf. Bruns 2008, pp. 90 f.).

In practice, this division is not clear-cut. Blogs can serve very different purposes, ranging from a not so private diary to citizen journalism and political activism. One important feature is that blogs are *not* addressing everyone in the world (although it is technically and theoretically possible that they do). They are rather written for certain communities, followers, and recipients. Every blog is written with a clear intention in mind that forms the way it is written (cf. Myers 2010, pp. 24 f.).

Theorists critical of blogs (as Lovink) attack blogging as just another hype. The myths of freedom, democracy, shared content, equality and open(minded)ness have been present on the Web from the start but have always been a double-edged sword, prompting blind enthusiasm and misuse (cf. Lovink 2008, pp. 11 ff.). It is not a mass phenomenon either: The one-percent-rule suggests that only 1 % of users are actively producing contents, while 10 % are communicating actively and 89 % are only passive users (Charles Arthur: "What is the 1 % rule?" In: The Guardian, 2006-07-20, quoted from Lovink 2008, pp. 33 ff.).

So, what are the emotional implications of blogs? Blogs appeal to emotion. Very often, they are utterly personal and celebrate this fact instead of hiding it. This is not necessarily connected to the analogy with diaries that has been made to describe blogs from the start – while the topics and tone of a blog are totally open, the common feature is self-representation and social interaction in some form (for example, self-representation as being smart, funny, but also as an unerring bearer of truth and a serious journalist) (cf. Lovink 2008, pp. 35, 64 ff., Papacharissi 2007). Even fakeblogs and shockblogs serve a similar purpose. Writing blogs also includes emotion management, although its direction is much less clear than it is with professional journalists. The (emotional) functions of blogs can vary considerably between communities and countries. Lovink (2008, pp. 53 f.) remarks that blogs contain a wide range of references to emotions. They are meant to be personal, but still refer to the 'world out there', mixing private and public debates, sentiments and facts. To him, this is a sign of post-post-modern decadence and relativity, a challenge to traditional media outlets. Looking at the Top 100 blogs on Technorati, only few of them are personal in the sense of private. What attracts an audience are blogs of high quality informational, entertaining and applicable contents. Another important point is that generalizations might be misleading.

To name examples from the corpus at hand, *Huffington Post* – according to Technorati the most successful blog currently, though – can hardly be described as a blog but rather as a news site containing different blogs. It is very distinct from renowned, long-standing news sites with respect to the principles underlying the

gatekeeping process and the ideals of text production, instead appraising the primary ideal of the Web (sharing what you know and think or learning what someone else knows or thinks, according to Tim Berners-Lee). The people involved are allowed to express their stance, opinions, and evaluations, which, however, does not mean a farewell to the division between fact and opinion. On the contrary, by being identifiable and transparent about their views, the authors on *Huffington Post* do not cover their agenda. The direct expression of emotion is uncommon, though. *Spreeblick* can be coined the German counterpart to *Huffington Post*, being very similar in character, although on a much smaller scale. *Bildblog*, a typical watchblog, tries to criticize the methods of *Bild* and other media products, not holding back with personal opinions and sometimes being quite humorous, but always backing up articles with facts and evidence. Again, the overt expression of affect is deemed rather inappropriate, although some amount of indignation is often implied. *Alles Schall und Rauch* is full of strong evaluations of all kinds (see above for Bednarek's parameters), but at the same time operates with a multitude of facts, evidence, and hyperlinks to substantiate the claims made. In all these cases, the final evaluation what to believe and what to feel is up to the followers. In the respective discussion forums, all the phenomena that will be discussed in chapter 4 are present with different intensity.

It becomes clear that so called 'A-List-Bloggers' stand out because of their emotion management as well. The same applies to their reception: The motivation to gather information is just as important as emotional factors like personal fulfillment and affiliation (communicating with friends, expression of opinion) (cf. Kaye 2007).

While the characteristics of language in the Internet (see chapter 2) are allowed in blogs written by amateurs, they are hardly acceptable when writing for a news platform. But that is a crass simplification. Almost all the blogs in the corpus use a rather formal style with all the characteristics of written language rather than the features of online communication, the only notable exception being *PerezHilton*. Here, devices like acronyms (especially *LOLs*), elliptical sentence structures, abbreviations (e.g. *U* instead of *you* – by the way, often directly addressing the readers), typical netspeak expressions and words (for example, *epic, gurl*, *yeah, hawt*) are frequent. This makes it the only blog cited that has a very informal style (see section 4 for further remarks). Interestingly, the creator Perez Hilton (a pseudonym, obviously, his real name being Mario Armando Lavandeira Jr.) always writes of himself in the plural (*we think ...*). This has nothing to do with the obvious fact that he has collaborators (which is clear to his readers as well). His blog is defined as a personal one.

In the end, blogs are not that different from news outlets: Their main purpose is to produce feeds (subscriptions) and to be top-ranked. This is quite an elitist concept (cf. Lovink 2008, pp. 25 f.). Credibility, transparency and being critical are the main resources of bloggers. This may result in a complex emotional state called "status-anxiety" (Alain de Botton, quoted from Lovink 2008, p. 35), the wish to maintain the social status achieved within the blogosphere. So, there is some sort of hierarchy in contexts of produsage (as defined by Bruns 2008).

4 Emotional Users: Directives, Commentary, and Criticism

Engaging in online communication requires a considerable amount of identity and reputation management, reputation being the keyword here (cf. Döring 2010, p. 163). In this section, a few ways to gain and keep up reputation in discussion forums and similar online communication contexts are discussed, introduced by some imperatives that are not meant to be a communication coach's recommendations to the readers of this essay. At first, these arguments do not seem to have much in common with the points made in the previous sections, but their connection will be made clear in section 5. Some points are taken from Misoch (2006) and Myers (2010), although not literally. It should be noted that Myers is specifically writing about blogs, but his hints can be applied to online communication in general.

Personalize! Be a brand!
The impression to be anonymous on the Internet is one important factor to explain online behavior, even though the anonymity is rather a myth – technically, but also culturally. Döring (2010, p. 166) calls the phenomenon of managing online identity, roughly translated, *pseudonymity*. Fake identities, avatars and playing with your identities have attracted a huge amount of studies (e.g. about the social structure of virtual communities) and attention in the news (e.g. concerns about sexual offenders who seek victims on platforms).

Here, things are about to change. Nowadays, there is a trend towards personalization and identification. Within social networks like Facebook, it is more common to operate under one's real name than setting up an avatar (at Facebook, this is even mandatory when creating an account – using an obviously fake name can lead to deletion of all data). The protection of identity is rather assured by choosing who to trust and who to exclude from one's personal pages, profiles, and commentary. In personalized tools like Twitter, nicknames are possible, but the transparency of one's publishing history and followers changes the complexion of anonymity.

Most of the time, commenting in discussion forums still happens under the shield of a nickname. But even here identity and reputation management have become more important. The history of an account on news sites or platforms is as transparent as activities in social networks. Commenting under an account that has been created only recently or that has not been used for various topics lessens the credibility of a comment or a review (cf. Döring 2010, p. 166). A common reaction is to utter the suspicion that an account is fake (*fake* itself is an important and very negative evaluative term). Two types of phoniness occur: trolls and campaigners. I was not able to find an accurate English translation for the much more vivid German word "Kampfposter". A literal translation would be something like "fight-commentator", "Kampf" serving as an intensifying element. The expression is a derogatory term for someone who is suspected to be a paid supporter of a certain political agenda, leaving comments on discussion forums to

back up a certain stance. Once exposed, angry reactions or complete disregard are common sanctions.

Be of value to your peers! Address your peers!
There are a lot of skills users need to be perceived as sophisticated. In the end, this is what online communication is about. One example is to give useful hyperlinks. Linking can be creative, even witty, with not-so-obvious functions (the common functions are 'showing more', 'giving evidence', 'giving credit', 'inviting to actions', 'puzzle/surprise', 'contradiction', cf. Myers 2010, pp. 38–44).

Addressing your peers means, for example, to be polite, according to what the specific audience considers the right amount of politeness (which means not to be overly polite, either). Connecting to readers of blogs, other members of the community and people who engage in the same discussion forums can take on many forms: for example, asking questions to show interest in their opinion, creating a shared time and space, referring to expectations and knowledge, and so on (cf. Myers 2010, pp. 77–92). Friendly communication on the discussion forums in the corpus is not as eye-catching as the quarrels and insults, but just as common, especially in blogs with a lot of followers (*PerezHilton* being a negative example – the majority of the people who comment on his articles not only seem to hate him, but say so very straightforward; of course, this is no statement about the passive users).

Be cooperative, but flout conversational maxims in a smart way!
Grice proposed two concepts to linguistic pragmatics that are often cited, often criticized, but still relevant to this day. The first concept is the Cooperative Principle, declaring that every person who communicates is fundamentally cooperative (similar to the reliance principle in traffic). The second concept concerns a list of so called "conversational maxims" (also called Gricean maxims). They are concerned with what is appropriate in conversation and what is deemed a violation of the Cooperative Principle. The maxims concern quantity (give just as much information as needed, but neither more nor less), quality (only say what you believe to be true and what you can prove), relation (be relevant) and manner (be clear, brief, orderly, and unambiguous) (cf. Grice 1975, pp. 45 ff.).

But conversational maxims can be violated without causing any harm. In a lot of situations it is even normal to do so. To cite the classical example by Grice himself: Answering A's question, how C is doing in his new job, B may very well say: "*Oh, quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet*" (Grice 1975, p. 43). This is widely known as sarcasm, a flouting of the relevance maxim.

So, in online communication it is an important skill to know the difference between a violation of a maxim and to flout it (to create *implicatures*, in linguistic terminology). Similarly, it is just as important to realize that someone is only joking, ironic, or witty. Improper reactions (missing the tone of the previous utterances) demolish reputation (cf. Myers 2010, pp. 43 ff.). Discussion boards on *IMDB* are a good example of this. There are heated discussions about statements

that were intended to be ironic but misunderstood, jokes not recognized and statements taken very personally. Emoticons – like twinkling, ;) – can help in the interpretation but they are not always accepted as sufficient excuses for uncooperative behavior.

State your opinion! Give evidence and argue well!
In discussion forums it is not only deemed appropriate, but mandatory to take up a certain stance and be transparent about it. It is even more important to give reasons and arguments for a personal opinion. Taking *IMDB* as a good example again, users are asked insistently to substantiate their claim that they like or dislike a film, if they fail to do so in their first comment – especially, if the intensity of the negative evaluation is very high or if their opinion is deviant from the average.

The division between personal opinion and fact is a journalistic ideal that a lot of bloggers admit to. Even more, they define themselves as watchmen (and -women) who guard this ideal, while the renowned media is said to have lost their authorization. In this paradigm, bloggers are eager to mark their attitudes and feelings as such (for example, by saying *It seems, I would say*, if they are not sure, or by referring to their emotions directly). Aesthetic and moral judgements are flagged by stylistically marked choices. (Cf. Myers 2010, pp. 96-100, 108-112.)

So, attitudes should not be masked, especially when writing a blog. This contributes to the Rich User Experience (one of O'Reilly's, 2005, defining features for the Web 2.0): Successful bloggers write texts that have to be rewarding for their readers in one way or the other to maintain the attention of followers. The recipients themselves guard this deal. Discussions about the texts are an integral part of the experience (cf. Bruns 2008, p. 80). Regarding the users who comment on the sites, it can be said that most users are very vocal about their opinions. There are discussion forums with a higher or lower degree of expressiveness than others, depending on the community, as the next sections show.

Craft your style according to your agenda!
This demand is connected with all the points made so far. Emotion management in online communication seems to be quite easy, because control over written texts is easier than face-to-face or other forms of vocal communication. On the other hand, the presumed anonymity, the speed and almost simultaneity of online communication is tempting outbursts, ranting and destructive uses of language. For example, surveys show that online profiles allow for a correct evaluation of the personality of its creator (cf. Döring 2010, p. 168). The linguistic (especially the pragmatic) behavior on the Web is a significant hint to mechanisms of social evaluation, exclusion or inclusion. It is not, however, advisable to draw conclusions about the personality of a user because of his writing style. As said before, expressing and describing current or past personal emotions is not to be mistaken for an actual emotional process. Countless implicit or conscious considerations,

evaluations and experiences as well as cultural knowledge about norms contribute to the writing style of a user or blogger, especially when it comes to his emotional style.

One example is the more or less deliberate decision between being "snarky" or "emo" when writing (cf. Lovink 2008). Snarkiness is a special writing style: satirical, sarcastic, entertaining. It is informal and impersonal at the same time, a way to show-off how witty and cool someone is. An "emo" style of writing is the opposite: honest, sympathetic/compassionate, friendly. *PerezHilton* is one example of a blog that is sometimes snarky, sometimes emo. Perez Hilton originally rose to fame for his extremely sharp and merciless appraisal of celebrities. He took a lot of criticism for his "nastiness" (an evaluation pushed forward by his followers); publishing illicit nude photos of an underage pop singer (Miley Cyrus) did not help either. After a lot of controversy and bashing he tried to tone down his style, which led to new criticism that he has lost his edge. The peculiarities of online reputation and emotion management prove to be delicate and, at times, random.

Within the German as well as the English speech community, a great deal of the discussion is about language competence and social isolation. Modern communication technology is said to brutalize language as well as the emotional life, especially regarding children. A related branch of discussion revolves around the perceived corruption of orthography and grammar (see chapter 2). There is no general rule whether it is allowed to neglect traditional writing norms or not. Rather, there are context-sensitive tendencies that are subject to change and discussion. The main points are as follows:

- Some orthographical and grammatical mistakes are perfectly acceptable in discussion forums and communities. For example, in German, with nouns usually being capitalized, consequent use of small letters is common and not regarded as a sign of incompetence – at the moment! Grammatical aberrations that are related to the imitation of informal spoken language are normally not responded to (e.g. elliptical structures, features of dialects).
- There is, however, a considerable amount of meta communication about the acceptability of violations against linguistic norms not covered by the previous paragraph. Users making blatant mistakes are criticized, especially if the mistakes reduce the comprehensibility and the readability of a statement. This can go as far as denying users their right to their own opinion. The tolerance to typing errors differs: While some users apologize for mistakes they made in previous comments (even demonstrating shame), others claim their disrespect for orthography (there is a common phrase in German to express this: "Wer Rechtschreibfehler findet, darf sie behalten", which means as much as "If you find typos, you can keep them"). On the other hand, the need for this disclaimer shows some sort of emotional involvement with these norms.

- With regard to blogs, the situation is quite different, again. The credibility and reliability of blogs that are supposed to serve as ambitious examples of citizen journalism rely, in part, on their stylistic integrity. This also includes staying in conformity with the basic rules of orthography, grammar, and pragmatics. Credibility is the main resource of average users too, and it is not independent of their writing style, their language proficiency and their ability to express their thoughts clearly.

Don't engage in destructive practices!
There are multiple methods for enraging other users and therefore corrupt the emotional climate on the Web. Here, only the main ways are listed:

- This rule could also be expressed as follows: *Don't be a troll and don't feed the trolls!* Trolls are "pathological disruptors" (Bruns 2008, p. 25), provoking other users by representing unbearable, indefensible opinions.
- Campaigners ("Kampfposter") were already mentioned above. One method is to spill hatred about political opponents with allegations and personal insults. A different, more sophisticated approach is to spread lies in a seemingly objective manner, for example by linking to online articles supporting the agenda.
- Publishing spam is another way to annoy users. Temporarily, until the community stops them, spammers can take over whole forums. For example, on *YouTube* many discussion forums nowadays consist of badly disguised advertisements for illicit websites offering movie downloads.
- "Godwin's Law" was supposed to be a joke phrased by Mike Godwin in 1990. It states that "As an online discussion continues, the probability of a reference or comparison to Hitler or to Nazis approaches 1" (cf. Godwin 2008). Online discussions tend to become heated the longer they last, especially in political contexts. To accuse someone of sympathizing with inacceptable ideas and mass murderers is an easy way to get rid of an opponent – on the other side, the assumed anonymity on the Web helps people to feel safe and free to commit a breach of taboos by expressing a positive opinion about the holocaust. The very common German expression "Nazikeule" (literally translated "Nazi cudgel") is a related phenomenon: If someone is accused of being a Nazi, he or she can always accuse the attacking person of "swinging the Nazi cudgel" (which, in German, is extremely demeaning and just as disqualifying). It must, however, be stated that on the websites analyzed in the context of this essay, Godwin's Law could not be validated. This does not mean that there are no references to Nazi Germany – they are just not as frequent as stated in the Law (which was supposed to be a humorous remark to be taken with a grain of salt, anyway). A cultural difference between English and German forums is visible here: Discussions where Hitler or Nazis are mentioned, are much more emotional in Germany, because a positive evaluation of Nazi Germany shakes the fundamental consensus of the modern German society to its very

core. The contents of these discussions are obviously and not surprisingly different as well. Here, even a variance between Germany and Austria can be stated, funded in the very distinct processing of historical guilt and shame. In Austria, trolls who try to stir up emotions by giving a positive account on the Nazis are not only more frequent, but also more aggressive (especially within discussion forums on *Krone.at* – here, these references are not always contradicted emotionally).

- Although excesses like all the methods named so far seem to authorize deletions of user commentary, censorship itself can be perceived as an attack on the original idea of the Web (openness, participation, freedom of speech). Exclusion and deleting is a form of power only executed by administrators, even though other users usually have the opportunity to give notice of destructive elements in discussions. Some platforms went on to let users evaluate each other's contributions. On *Der Standard*, for example, users can flag single comments as red or green (red being negative, green positive). On *Die Zeit*, users can list comments recommended by the editorial staff or by other readers. Granting a positive social standing (e.g. praise) or social sanctions (e.g. criticism, ridicule) are a way to effectively control behavior on the Web (cf. Döring 2010, pp. 176 f.). A very specific way to comment on misbehavior is the relatively new term "Facepalm", indicating that a user deems a comment to be stupid and embarrassing (often accompanied by hyperlinks to pictures showing a facepalm, a gesture of laying one or both hands on the face, covering the eyes). While in German forums the English word "Facepalm" occurs often just like this, there is a German equivalent just as popular at the moment (even making it to the title "Word of the Year 2010" in Austria[2]): "Fremdschämen", rougly translated "to be ashamed for someone else" (but as a very expressive compound).

- The rules of argumentation are negotiated in online communication without cease and they are probably the most emotional subject matter (making meta communication a main source of emotions on the Web). The question who has the best opinion und who is to decide about what is legitimate and what is not lies at the center of these negotiations. The best opinion, this can mean the most well-founded as well as the best verbalized or the most popular one. Within all discussion forums observed for this essay, a striking fraction of the discussions deals with the question who is entitled to their opinion und who is not. The answers, however, differ from platform to platform. While on platforms of quality media outlets (e.g. *Die Zeit, New York Times*) the reputation and caliber of a user is determined by his or her ability to bring forward strong and reasoned arguments in a well-groomed manner, the acceptance of a user on platforms based on tabloids (e.g. *The Sun, Daily Mirror*) depends on the degree of accordance with the beliefs of the community.

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[2] URL: <http://www-oedt.kfunigraz.ac.at/oewort/> (2011-04-27).

- Netslutting (also called flirting) means being too nice to people in online discussions, while netshitting (also called flaming) is about being rude and mean to others (cf. Lovink 2008). Flaming is direct, aggressive and related to a topic – it can be defined as a violation to the maxim of manner (cf. Crystal 2007, pp. 59 ff.).
- Finally, lurking is a form of being uncooperative by not engaging in any discussions and exploiting collective intelligence without contributing to it (cf. Crystal 2007, pp. 59 ff.).

As the remarks so far have shown, the proposed rules are constantly broken in online communication – even by those who are not engaged in trolling or other destructive methods. The power to decide between valuable and worthless contributions is in the hands of the collective, with new forms of building hierarchies.

5 Conclusion: Stable or Unstable Emotions?

At last, the different perspectives on emotivity in the World Wide Web are connected. What are the main points of contact between journalistic and communicative norms regarding emotions? The following remarks also include some outlooks on related questions and problems.

The notion of emotion management was adapted to norms of news production and online communication. The dynamics of regulation are quite distinct between the two domains, but also when looking at different exponents within the domains. The traditional distinction between broadsheets and tabloids (transferred to media platforms on the Web) is not sufficient to account for these discrepancies between different media outlets, with trends like infotainment, advertorials and entanglement with social media getting more important. Still, news platforms obey more visible restrictions on emotional expression platforms than users do in the attached discussion forums or within social networks. The self-concept of journalists, textual norms and editorial policies are the main reasons for the actual tone of news coverage, while users involved in online communication follow a different set of norms based on the need for self-representation (including identity and reputation management).

The observation that professional journalism uses online communication as a source, especially when attributing relevance and emotionality to the selection of events in gatekeeping, is particularly interesting. Not only do users have more possibilities of seeking, finding, choosing and even producing ("produsing") information according to their interests, these possibilities are also applied by journalists in two respects: First, all the information on the Web observed by users is available to journalists in their daily research routines too; second, the decisions and preferences of media recipients are transparent and useful in detecting trends and affections that are ultimately picked up in news coverage.

The difference between professional and amateur journalism regarding the emotion management is not clear-cut. In particular, there is no general conclusion to be drawn for blogs. This suggests that blogs are not a text type but rather a wider category mainly defined by technical aspects that can be divided into an indefinite number of sub-categories defined by text function. But even when just comparing platforms that are similar in objectives and structure, the way emotions are integrated or avoided in texts depends on the concrete example under examination. The way emotions are described, expressed and elicited is controlled by a multitude of factors, the communicative domain being only one of them.

The emotional climate of online communication includes virtually all basic emotions as well as the complex ones. Hatred, annoyance, anger – belonging, self-affirmation, joy – envy, guilt, shame – love, sympathy, lust – humor, irony, sarcasm – there are no boundaries to the emotions reported nor to the pragmatic procedures applied. This climate is established by all sorts of signs, modalities and media of communication: Emotions are verbally described and expressed, shown with pictures and films, transmitted with sounds and music – in all these instances, the concepts and conventions of depiction are quite different, but similar emotion concepts are active. In this essay, only written language was considered. The means people use to refer to and express their emotions range from conventional to creative, from appealing to appalling, from standard to vernacular, from codified in dictionaries to transient, from traditional to only recently developed, from widely accepted to only applicable within online communication.

The cultural differences between English and German platforms are discreet. The main developments are definitely similar, while the details differ in some respects. The direction of the influence is very clearly from English to German because of the disproportionate knowledge of foreign languages of the two speech communities. However, it must be noted that English might cease to be the dominant language on the Web.[3] While globalization enables communication between users all over the world and therefore promotes the spread of communicative norms, this does not abolish regional habits, wants and meanings.

Returning to the question posed in the title of this essay, there is no simple answer. Emotion(al) communication and emotions get stabilized as well as destabilized, depending on the point of view. The main emotion concepts and linguistic devices stay the same, although language change is happening every day and affects expressive features of language too. The World Wide Web is only one, but very powerful domain where new linguistic forms turn up, but also disappear. Some of these forms are not new anymore at all, suggesting partial consolidation. Still, on the Web swift innovations in media production as well as in interpersonal communication are always around the corner, albeit based on familiar norms.

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[3] See the statistics provided by the organization *Internet World Stats*, URL: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>, checked on 2011-04-27.

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- Huffington Post: < http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>
- PerezHilton: <http://perezhilton.com/>