

SPEECH REPRESENTATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CREATING AGENCY IN REPORTS ON THE MURDER OF THE DE WITT BROTHERS (1672)

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ABSTRACT In this article, we argue that variation in the representation of speech served as a powerful instrument for reporters of historical events to structure these events and to mitigate or augment the agency of historical figures. The specific case study analysed in this article is a collection of three Dutch texts that report on the murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt on 20th August 1672. These reports have already been studied by socio-political historians, but prior work was restricted to comparison on the level of the reports' content. By contrast, this study primarily compares the linguistic shape of the reports to demonstrate how linguistic choices have played a vital role in shaping public opinions about one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of the Dutch Republic. Building on linguistic, narratological and literary research which has already identified speech as a stylistic device that shapes the agency of story characters, we combine an analysis of the linguistic tagging of speech representation with a literary-narrative analysis of the function of speech. We demonstrate that the reporters of the De Witt brothers massacre did not transmit a clear message about the way readers should understand the political events, but rather used various modes of speech to offer different perspectives, and varied the modes of speech to guide the reader through the story and invites them to reflect on questions about guilt and agency.

1 INTRODUCTION

As other articles in this thematic issue demonstrate, language variation in historical communities is caused by various internal linguistic constraints as well as language external factors. The perspective offered in this contribution

is rooted in literary studies, and approaches language variation and use in a slightly different way. Aligning with historical sociolinguistics and pragmatics, we shift focus from the linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints that govern language variation to the pragmatic functions of language. We approach language variation as a means to construct historical realities. We specifically argue that variation in the representation of speech served as a powerful instrument for reporters of historical events to structure these events and to mitigate or augment the agency of historical figures and themselves.

The specific case study analysed in this article is a collection of three Dutch texts which report on the murder of the brothers Johan and Cornelis de Witt. This murder, carried out by the mob and members of the citizen's militia of The Hague on the 20th August 1672, was the result of simmering political tensions between the two parties of Dutch politics, i.e. the Orangists and the Republicans. The Dutch Republic was organized as a federal confederation of seven provinces in which power was separated amongst the Stadholder, who was traditionally responsible for the maintenance of peace and order, and the representatives in the States General (the Parliament). In actual practice, however, the two most prominent political figures of Dutch society were the Stadholder, descending from the increasingly interrelated Houses of Orange and Nassau-Dietz, and the Grand Pensionary, who was officially the spokesman for Holland's delegation to the States General but in fact functioned as a Prime Minister. This division of power between the Stadholder and the Grand Pensionary provoked hostile debates about the separation of powers in the Dutch Republic. The conflict peaked in 1672, when the Dutch Republic was attacked by several countries and realized how fragile its international position and political structure was (Prak 2005). Spurred by the idea that the Grand Pensionary and its Republican friends were the deeper cause of the Republic's troubles, and thus had to be disposed, the Orangist supporters of the Stadholder murdered Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt and his brother Cornelis in the square outside the Dutch Parliament in the summer of 1672 ('Binnenhof') (Reinders 2010).

The public murder of the De Witt brothers was attended by many people, some of whom made note of their observations, or asked someone else to do so. Among them were Orangist Hendrick Verhoeff, some Republican servants and clerks of the De Witt brothers, and a couple of anonymous bystanders. Some of these stories, circulating in manuscripts, were collected by author Gerard Brandt, possibly with the help of Johan de Witt's son. The stories were published together years later, presumably around 1705, as *Memorable Papers (Gedenkwaardige Stukken)* (1705b).

These reports have already been studied regularly by socio-political his-

torians – inspired by a larger scholarly shift to ‘micro history’ (cf. [Mortimer 2002](#), [Pollmann 2017](#)) – who aimed to reconstruct this pivotal moment in Dutch political history, which is often considered to mark the end of the Dutch Republic’s blossoming period (the ‘Dutch Golden Age’) ([Prud’Homme van Reine 2013](#), [Panhuysen 2005](#)). Scholars have compared the reports mainly with regard to their content, subscribing to the idea that similarities between reports demonstrate the fidelity and objectivity of these texts: when several reporters make the same observations, we may assume that they are true, and hence can be used to reconstruct the historical events in an objective way. Furthermore, the reports themselves seem to support the suggestion of objectivity through their formal characteristics as they are characterized by a factual and chronological ‘and then this happens, and then this happens’ style (cf. [van de Poppe 2018](#)). The approach of this study differs from that of previous work in that it focuses on *variation* rather than similarities between the reports, and on the linguistic shape of the reports along with its content. By doing so, we show how linguistic variation – particularly the framing of speech – was used to actively create the past and its characters, and thus served the shaping of public opinions about one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of the Dutch Republic.

Our linguistic approach to the stories reporting the murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt aligns with scholarly research on early modern ‘news discourses’, i.e. discourses that evolved in early modern European societies as instruments to inform larger audiences about vital social and political events. These early modern news discourses, in particular those that were developed in the British context, have already gained valuable scholarly attention in the past years (see e.g. [Claridge 2010](#), [Brownlees 2011](#), [Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013](#): 183-199, [Facchinetti, Brownlees, Bös & Fries 2015](#), [Palander-Collin, Rattia & Taavitsainen 2017](#)). This type of research has been mainly conducted by pragmatists (e.g. [Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013](#)), who primarily focus on the form of public communication and how the narrative and linguistic shape changed in reaction to contextual factors, such as technological, infrastructural, political, and socio-demographic developments ([Claridge 2010](#): 587). Previous research has thus shown how extra-linguistic conditions influenced both the visual appearance of news texts and their language and style ([Claridge 2010](#): 590ff). Various linguistic characteristics of news discourses have already been identified, including the role of speech representation, lexical diversity, first-person pronouns, and address terms (see e.g. [Claridge 2010](#), [Brownlees 2011](#): 8,113). Previous research has thus identified news reporters and editors as stylistic and creative agents (cf. [Eckert 2012](#): 97), who contin-

uously experimented with their language in order to frame past events and the characters who participated in these events. In this way, these reporters and editors not only informed their readership, but also guided the readers' attention and interpretation.

We follow this line of research by focusing specifically on how speech is represented in written reports. Reported speech has already been identified as a stylistic device that shapes the agency of story characters in previous research conducted in different scholarly disciplines such as formal linguistics, pragmatics, conversational analysis, narratology, and literary studies (Johansen 2011: 2834, Moore 2011: 10-17, Collins 2001: xiv), and was dedicated to several types of historical texts, such as pamphlets, chonical accounts, narrative literature, newspapers and scientific texts (Moore 2011, Evans 2017, Brownlees 2017, Marnette 2003, Collins 2001, Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: chapter 12, Grund & Walker 2020, Jucker 2006). Indeed, through the representation of speech, a reporter not only depicts human action but also frames that action by choosing the speech tag (e.g. 'said', 'answered') and the mode of discourse (e.g. direct, indirect) (Johansen 2011: 2848, Grund & Walker 2020: 2).

We also follow in Daniel Collins's footsteps (Collins 2001), who, in his monograph on reported speech in Russian fifteenth-century trial transcripts written in the chancery variety, explicitly pleads for a synchronic analysis of reported speech in historical texts. He argues that only by synchronic-comparative analyses, scholars are able to understand the factors that motivated reporters to choose a particular form of reported speech (Collins 2001: xiii). Although several scholars have already answered his call through synchronic studies on - in most cases - English texts (e.g. Moore 2011, Evans 2017), this article is the innovative in its choice to focus on three reports of the same historical event. We are also the first to focus on speech representation in the Dutch early modern textual culture.

As Moore (2011) and Jucker & Taavitsainen (2013: chapter 12) have argued before, we consider it crucial to combine expertise and methodology from both linguistics and literary studies. These two disciplines, which were fundamentally interwoven until at least up to the 1960s, have become increasingly separated over the past decades as a result of an ongoing tendency of specialization. However, as speech representation is an instrument with both linguistic and narrative characteristics (cf. Moore 2011: 14-15, Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: chapter 12), we need insights from both scholarly disciplines to understand the variation in speech which historical texts exhibit. In this article, we therefore combine an analysis of the linguistic tagging of speech representation (i.e. the type, tense, aspect, and position of the linguistic tag or

introductory verb and the mode of discourse) with a literary-narrative analysis of the function of speech. We particularly focus on the way characters communicate with their readers by means of speech representations that were shaped and selected by often invisible but nonetheless powerful reporters.

This article will demonstrate that the three reports on the massacre of the De Witt brothers as published in *Memorable Papers (Gedenkwaerdige Stukken)* – representing different sides in the political conflict between the Orangists (supporters of the Stadtholder) and the Republicans (supporters of the Grand Pensionary) – did not transmit a clear message about the way readers should interpret the political event (e.g.: ‘this murder was justifiable’, or ‘the brothers were victims of impudent powers’). Rather, through multiple voices, framed in various modes of speech, they allowed the readers to consider the event from different perspectives, and as such invited them to reflect on questions about guilt and agency.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYTICAL MODEL

Following [Collins \(2001\)](#), we approach ‘speech representation’ as a practice shaped by a reporter who makes decisive choices in the process of selecting and presenting voices in a text. Consequently, speech representation always has “an intentional and creative character” ([Collins 2001: 2](#), cf. [Grund & Walker 2020: 2](#)). The reporter’s first choice, Collins argues, is “whether to make reportedness [...] an issue in the discourse” ([Collins 2001: 4](#)). A reporter can choose who to quote (voices) and which messages to present (content). The second choice for the reporter is whether to inform the reader about the content of the speech and how to shape that content, and as such concerns the linguistic characteristics of reported speech. With respect to this strategy, Collins distinguishes two main clusters of choices. The first involves the linguistic tag, i.e. “how the report is indexed or attributed in the authorial context” ([Collins 2001: 5](#)). The reporter selects not only the introductory verb (e.g. to say, to scream), but also its tense-aspect characteristics and its position (i.e. before or after the quote). The second choice cluster is about the mode of reporting, i.e. “how the report itself is configured” ([Collins 2001: 5](#)). To classify the options to represent speech, scholars generally rely on the standard classification by [Semino & Short \(2004\)](#). The options include direct speech (i.e. a speaker or author presents the speech of someone else in the latter’s own words), indirect speech (i.e. a speaker or author rephrased the words of another speaker or author), hybrid forms, or other instances where the presence of speech is indicated while the speech content itself is not reported (cf. [Semino & Short 2004](#)).

Although previous research indicates that the formal choices early mod-

ern reporters of speech faced did not differ greatly from present day speech, the linguistic features of speech representation in historical texts seem to have been even more vital to early modern practices of reporting. As historical speech representation often lacked any quotation marks or other typographical markers that have become common in modern texts Moore (2011: 125-127), verbal markers and linguistic tags had a key pragmatic role in reporting: they not only marked speech, but also gave meaning to what was paraphrased (van de Poppe 2020b: 69).

In addition to this distinction between historical and present-day quoting practices, we should also take into account other differences. As Collette Moore for instance demonstrated with regard to Early English, language users in historical contexts often did not have “such pronounced distinctions” between direct and indirect speech as contemporary language users, as “the more fluid system lent itself better to greater overlap between the modes of discourse” (Moore 2011: 4).

Furthermore, historical direct speech does not represent the same type of authenticity in every period. Whereas contemporary readers generally assign credibility and fidelity to reports that contain reported (especially direct) speech, medieval and early modern language users did not have the same perceptions of credibility and accuracy as present-day speakers and writers (Evans 2017). This, for instance, is evident from the fact that early modern news reporters were able to present fictional speech, for example of characters whom they have not met, or even non-human characters, such as the mysterious voices of dead people (Moore 2011: 117).

However, a pragmatic function of speech representation that is relevant in both historical and contemporary contexts, and is the central focus of the analysis in this article, is the reporters’ power to recontextualize speech, and thus to mitigate or augment agency and responsibility of themselves as well as the characters they quote. Speech representation is generally characterized as a practice of “dual responsibility” or “double-voicedness”. Volosinov (1973 [1930]: Part III, chapter 2, pp.115-124) was the first to reflect on this characteristic of speech representation, arguing that speech is always shaped in interaction with its new reporting context.

According to (Bakhtin 1981: 324), speech representation “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions”: (i) that of the reporter and (ii) that of the original speaker or source. Thus, what actually happens in the case of speech representation is that two voices (reporter and source) merge, resulting in the recontextualization of the original voice – Collins (2001) aptly refers to this phenomenon by the term “re-animated voices”.

This process of recontextualization or reanimation, [Johansen \(2011: 2848\)](#) has argued, impacts on the creation of agency and the attribution of responsibility. In her research on contemporary conversations within Danish families, Johansen has demonstrated that a child who reports its daily experiences to its parents “creates a specific embedded position of participation from which the child mitigates or augments agency, and hence responsibility, in order to anticipate a blaming episode” ([Johansen 2011: 2846](#)).

The process of attributing agency depends on the specific form of speech representation, as previous research revealed as well. Indirect speech downplays the original speaker’s responsibility and increases the reporter’s control over the interpretation of the speech utterance ([Evans 2017: 33, 48](#)). In this line, Collins has demonstrated for a medieval, Russian context that indirect speech, which “blend in with the surrounding nonreported discourse”, served as an instrument for reporters to create interpretative freedom for themselves, and thus to diminish the agency of story characters who are quoted ([Collins 2001: 290](#)).

Previous research on speech representation in historical and contemporary contexts has also revealed other pragmatic functions of the reporter’s choices. According to Collins, direct speech is sometimes used to create a suggestion of re-enactment among the readers, who seem to become the event’s eyewitnesses themselves by reading the quotes:

“the interpreters were obliged to hear the trial hearing as it were from inside, without any apparent interference from the reporters; they became, in effect, witnesses of the hearings, like the judges who observed the actual trials, with no other vade mecum than their own reconstructive abilities.” ([Collins 2001: 290](#))

Some other scholars, working at the interface between linguistics and literary studies, have already demonstrated that the reporter’s choices with regard to speech representation also involve narrative effects. “Rather than by the impulse to mark accuracy”, ([Moore 2011: 117](#)) argues, the reporter’s motive is “rhetorical and driven by narrative”:

“In the chronicle accounts, therefore, we see that direct speech is used for particularly emphasized speeches: either speeches of high political importance or speeches that enhance the dramatic tone. Direct speech slows down the progression of the action, and allows the audience to experience a representation of the scene (however accurate or inaccurate). In this way, direct discourse is a stylistic tool for chronicles in similar ways to literary texts.” ([Moore](#)

2011: 119)

In a similar vein, [Jucker & Taavitsainen \(2013: chapter 12\)](#) have demonstrated that forms of reported speech are connected to specific parts of a narrative: indirect reported speech is generally used at the beginning of a narrative when the scene and characters are introduced to the readers, while narrative peaks are marked by means of direct speech. That ‘voice-switching’ – switching from indirect to direct speech or vice versa – functioned as a narrative strategy, Moore argued as well:

“switching from indirect to direct discourse seems to be a feature of narration designed to heighten the audience’s sensation of closeness to the action at particularly dramatic points. The ‘markedness’ created by voice-switches can be used by reporters to alert readers ‘to the presence of voice’ or a specific part of the text” ([Moore 2011: 137-138](#)).

Following this line of research, we have developed the following analytical model which identifies the reporter’s choices with respect to speech representation. Our model is inspired by [Collins \(2001\)](#)’s distinction of the reporter’s two main choices (i.e. what to present as speech, and how to shape speech). It is, however, extended by elements of a more advanced model of (present-day) speech representation that has been developed by ([Thompson 1996: 507](#)):

- i. Voices: Which characters are allowed to speak?
- ii. Content: Is the content of speech explicitly reported in the text? Which content is transferred by means of speech?
- iii. Form: What is the form of the speech?
 - a. Modes of representation: Direct or indirect speech, or other variants
 - b. Linguistic tag: introductory verb, and its tense, aspect, and position.

Assuming that linguistic choices also impact the representation of the agency of characters and speakers in texts ([Duranti 2004](#)), we will analyse the pragmatic functions of these choices with respect to the recontextualization of speech, the narrative structure of the story, the intended or expected readers’ experience, and the reporter’s powerful position and interpretative freedom. We combine a quantitative (section 3) and qualitative analysis (section 4) in

order to understand how the representation of speech functioned as an instrument for reporters to mitigate or augment the agency of story characters.

3 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

3.1 Data collection

We have used *Memorable Papers* (*Gedenkwaardige Stukken*), s.n. (1705b), as the oldest traceable edition in which reports on the murder on the De Witt brothers are collected. Although the year of publication is unknown, it is generally assumed that this book was published years after the death of Johan and Cornelis de Witt ([Prud'Homme van Reine \(2013\)](#)), presumably around 1705. This printed edition, however, does consist of reports that were already circulating in Dutch society before they were edited and combined to be published (*Gedenkwaardige Stukken*: preface; cf. [van Doorninck 1970 \[1885\]: 532](#), [Prud'Homme van Reine 2013: 22, 134, 172](#)). Unfortunately, we do not have much information about this early circulation: although some handwritten versions of the reports survived, it is unclear whether these copies were made before or after the print of *Memorable Papers* (see Regional Archive Dordrecht, inventory numbers 508–509). The editing process can of course have affected speech representation. We thus have to take into consideration another set of voices, which can obviously not be traced as earlier versions no longer exist.

Memorable Papers (see s.n. 1705b) consists of three different reports. First, in 'Eenige particulariteyten' (EP, 'Some Particularities', see s.n. 1705a) the reader experiences the murder from the perspective of one of the events' instigators, the Orangist Hendrick Verhoeff. Second, in 'Verhael van 't ombrengen' (VO, Story about the Murder, s.n. 1705d), the reader watches the murder with Johan de Witt's staff. Finally, in 'Verhael tot myner memorie' (VM, 'Story to my Remembrance') is written from the perspective of a bystander s.n. 1705c. As all three reports circulated anonymously – quite usual at the time for this type of texts – we will refer to the reporters as 'reporter' and 'he/him', without us wanting to exclude the possibility that our reporters might have been women.

On the basis of this edition of the reports, we have built a data file containing all instances of speech representation from the three texts. As previous research (e.g. [Semino & Short 2004](#); [Walker & Grund 2017](#)) has shown that speech representation occurred in a large number of forms, we have inspected the texts manually, rather than searching automatically for pre-determined lexical forms. For each speech representation, we have categorized the speaking character, the addressee, and the form of speech representation, i.e. the

| | Direct Speech | Indirect Speech | Direct/Indirect | Verbal Activity |
|-------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| EP | 27 (30%) | 44 (49%) | 2 (2%) | 17 (19%) |
| VO | 31 (42%) | 21 (28%) | 2 (3%) | 20 (27%) |
| VM | 16 (30%) | 21 (39%) | 3 (6%) | 14 (26%) |
| Total | 74 (34%) | 86 (39%) | 7 (3%) | 51 (23%) |

Table 1 Table 1. The total number of speech representations and their distribution over the different categories of speech representation.

mode of discourse (direct, indirect, other) and the linguistic tag (lexical form, tense, aspect).

3.2 *Speech representation and voices*

In all three reports, the instances of speech are linked to a broad range of voices, including identifiable story characters (e.g. Johan and Cornelis de Witt), unspecified characters (e.g. *een ander* ‘someone else’), and larger groups (notably ‘the people’ *het volck* and ‘the citizens’ *burgers*). First, VM contains only four individual identifiable speakers (i.e. Johan de Witt, Cornelis de Witt, Tichelaer and Verhoeff), whilst EP and VM stage ten and twelve different identifiable voices respectively. In VM, the four individuals are responsible for 17 of the instances of speech representation (17/54, 31%). The majority of speech in VM, hence, is uttered by unspecified characters or larger groups. In VO and EP, on the contrary, the majority of speech instances can be traced back to individual and identifiable characters. Second, whilst the voices of the De Witt’s and the silversmith Verhoeff (one of the main figures associated with the massacre, see (Prud’Homme van Reine 2013: 128ff)) are recurring voices in all three reports, the individual reports, and notably VO and EP, also stage voices that are unique to their own report. By employing different speaking characters, the three reports together thus offer a multi-perspective view on the massacre.

3.3 *Modes of representation*

We categorized the different modes of speech representation in the corpus. We rely on the standard categorization of Semino & Short (2004), but as it is designed for contemporary speech rather than historical sources, our categorization slightly differs from it.

The most dominant speech categories are, unsurprisingly, direct and indirect speech. Previous research has pointed out how the lines between these speech categories were often blurry as the distinction between direct and indirect speech was not grammaticalized yet (see e.g. Moore 2011: 4 on English and Demske 2019 on German). Our data, however, show barely any signs of blurriness – probably because of the consolidation of speech categories from the seventeenth-century onwards (e.g. Demske 2019: 97). Although direct speech is not marked visually in EP and VM (as was quite usual for early modern speech representation), direct speech is clearly recognizable as a reported clause that is grammatically independent of the reporting verb. In VO, direct speech is even recognizable through italicization. Indirect speech in our corpus, on the other hand, generally consists of a reporting verb in combination with a concomitant that-clause (1-a) or an infinitive clause (1-b). Only short answers without a verb such as in (1-a) pose difficulties for a clear-cut distinction between direct and indirect speech. Instances such as in (1-c) are categorized as direct/indirect in Table 1 above.

- (1) a. *en seyden aen den Capiteyn dat hy sou marcheeren*
 ‘and said to the captain that he should march.’ (EP: 6)
- b. *nae dat [...] sijn dienaer Jan van der Wissel gelast was uyt te gaen*
 ‘after his servant Jan van der Wissel had been ordered to leave.’ (VO: 34)
- c. *antwoorde neen*
 ‘answered no’ (VM: 17)

Moreover, we have distinguished the category ‘Verbal Activity’ (see table 1 above): instances of reported speech in which the reporter informs his readers about a verbal activity without representing the exact content of the utterance itself, as illustrated in (2). Our category ‘Verbal Activity’ is in fact a merging of Semino & Short (2004) categories NRSA (‘Narrator’s Representation of Speech’) and NV (‘Narrator’s Representation of Voice’). In the first subtype, the reporter does indicate an illocutionary force of the utterance but without representing the exact content of the utterance itself (2-a). The second subtype refers to a verbal activity without any information on its actual form and content at all (2-b). Instances of speech representation such as in (2) show the least involvement of the original speaker in the speech representation, with (2-b) being the furthest away from the original speech event as it does not provide any information on the form and content of the speech. We decided to combine these two subtypes into one category, ‘Verbal Activity’, as it is not often possible to clearly distinguish these subtypes in our historical data. What they share – the representation of speech without reporting the speech utterance itself – is most important in our analysis (see 4.2).

- (2) a. *seggende veel lasterlijke woorden*

- '...saying many defamatory words' (VM: 16)
- b. *Een Heer [...] deede het woordt aen de Burgers, die hem als doen doorlieten.*
 'Approx: A man spoke to the citizens, who subsequently let him through.' (VM: 19)

In general, indirect speech such as in example (1) is the most frequently used mode of discourse in our corpus (n=86, 39%). However, as Table 1 shows, whilst the reporters of EP and VM indeed preferred indirect speech, the reporter of VO chooses direct speech over indirect speech (see also Section 4 below).

3.4 *Speech tags and speech descriptors*

An important aspect of reported speech – i.e., the representation of direct and indirect speech – is the expression which introduces the speech content. Considering the tense of the speech tag, the reporters generally use a past tense (*zei* 'said') or a Present Perfect ('completed' form: *heeft gezegd* 'has said'), both meaning said. In addition, when stringing together multiple events, the reporters employ the present participle (*zeggende* 'saying'), e.g. *schuyvende met beyde handen de Gordijnen open, en seggende; Verrader*, 'sliding open the curtains with both hands and saying: "traitor"' (EP: 11). As is evident from previous research, a broad range of verbs could serve as reporting expressions, but verbs occurring frequently across texts and contexts are e.g. *say*, *answer*, and *report* (see for a short overview (Grund & Walker 2020: 6)). Our data show patterns similar to those found in previous research (Walker and Grund). Whilst the reporters indeed used a wide range of unique speech tags (see Table 2 below – our corpus has a total of 46 unique reporting expressions introducing direct and indirect speech), *zeggen* 'say' is by far the most frequently used speech tag. It accounts for 35% (n=62) of the speech tags in our corpus; the three other most popular tags are *antwoorden* 'answer' (n=25, 14%), *vragen* 'ask' (n=14, 8%), and *roepen* 'shout' (n=10, 6%). Other verbs are used only occasionally, or even only once (e.g. *eisen* 'demand', *dreigen* 'threaten').

This fragmentation of speech reporting expressions is probably related to their rhetorical and communicative functions. Speech tags are not only indicators of speech but they also frame speech and can thus serve to cast a speech representation in a particular light (Grund & Walker 2020: 7, van de Poppe 2020b: 68). Compared to the rather 'neutral' verb *say*, which can be applied for a multitude of speech events, verbs such as *threat* can be used only in specific situation as they indicate the illocutionary force of the utterance and often also frame the speaker of the original speech (e.g. as a threatener).

| | Total | Unique Speech Tags | 'Zeggen' |
|----|-------|-----------------------|----------|
| EP | 75 | 24 | 29 (39%) |
| VO | 57 | 17 | 19 (30%) |
| VM | 42 | 17 | 14 (40%) |

Table 2 Table 2. An overview of reporting expressions, and the frequency of popular *zeggen* 'say', introducing direct and indirect reported speech.

Our corpus thus shows that early modern reporters had a wide range of speech tags at their disposal and could choose, for every individual instance of speech representation, the most appropriate tag to suit their communicative and narrative purposes. However: not every report displays the same richness of different speech tags. In comparison to EP and VO, the amount of unique speech tags in VM strikes the eye. As we have already seen above, VM has the fewest instances of speech representation, as well as the least identifiable voices. The remarkably high amount of unique speech tags seems to correlate to VM's ambition to make readers aware of the power as well as danger of speech, as we will demonstrate in Section 3. With regard to the numbers presented in Table 2, notice that the total number of speech tags is slightly higher than the instances of direct and indirect speech as indicated in Table 1 above. This difference results from doubling constructions as in (3):

- (3) *Hy antwoordende seyde [...]*
'He answering said ...' (VM)

This doubling of verbs can be found in several premodern languages and oral patterns of storytelling (Herlyn 1999). We follow Moore's idea that this doubling is more than a "stylistic strategy that exemplifies the rhetorical figure *de copia*": in these cases, the neutral *to say* has a purely grammatical function, whereas the other verb describes the event of speaking (Moore 2011: 59).

The use of multiple speech tags thus has a function similar to linguistic items known as speech descriptors, i.e. prepositional phrases, adverbs, adjective constructions etc. which describe what the speech event was like (see Grund 2017, 2018). Speech descriptors (41/174, 24%) occur in all three reports. Similar to what Grund has found for early modern English (2017: 57), most of these descriptors serve the function of evaluation (4), although

speech descriptors are also used for communicating frequency (5).

Evaluation markers, according to (Grund 2018: 277), “signal the manner in which speech was delivered or describe the nature of the speech that was delivered”. They can thus describe various aspects of the represented speech, including strength of the voice (4-a). We have also found other physical descriptions regarding the speech event (such as (4-b)) that were not included by Grund in his analysis as they also function to describe the speech situation but not the speech itself.

- (4) a. *Dese personagien [...] begonnen luytkeels te roepen*
 ‘These characters began to shout loudly/at the top of their voices.’
 (VM: 20)
- b. *waer op hy sijn hooft schuddende, seyde [...]*
 ‘...whereupon he, shaking his head, said ...’ [EP]
- (5) *soo seyde [...] de Heer Raedtpensionaris een en andermael [...]*
 ‘so said ... the Grand Pensionary again ...’ (VO: 32)

Although speech descriptors are not that frequent in our corpus, it is meaningful that all reporters used it to frame the speech of the De Witt brothers, as in (4-b). The reporters furthermore employed speech descriptors for the representation of speech from those opposing the De Witt’s, as shown in (4-a). The latter is particularly the case in VM, where speech descriptors are more frequently used than in EP and VO; the majority of these descriptors is used to frame the speech of citizens, which aligns with the function of this story more broadly (see Section 4 below).

The quantitative data presented in this section suggest that certain aspects of speech representation, such as the distinction between direct and indirect speech, were already very much consolidated in Dutch. These quantitative findings further reveal a picture of variation in the introduction of the speech (i.e. lexical variation in the speech tag) and the form of the actual speech (i.e. modes of discourse). In the following section, we will discuss how the individual reporters used the variational possibilities of speech representation to frame story characters and their stance towards these characters and their speech.

4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

4.1 *Eenige particulariteyten: The Distance between Reporter and Character*

The first report presented in *Gedenkwaerdige Stukken is Eenige Particulariteyten* (‘Some Particularities’; s.n. 1705a). The actual author of EP claims a posi-

tion as a reporter who had heard this eyewitness story from the silversmith Verhoeff, who is one of the main figures associated with the death of the De Witt brothers. However: the reporter itself stays anonymous. EP thus further revolves around the personage of Verhoeff. He is voiced not only as the eyewitness who reports to the anonymous author, but also as a story character who speaks within the narrative itself. Consider (6) as an example. Here, Verhoeff is cited as the source of the report (italicized) but within his own speech he is also staged as a story character who prays to kill the De Witt brothers (bold):

- (6) *Weynigh tyts daer na seyde hy Verhoeff [source] dat **hy** smorgens God **gebeden hadde** [story character], dat hy moghte de Witten om hals brengen, ofte self sterven.* (p. 5, emphasis added)
'Shortly after, he, Verhoeff, said that he had prayed to God in the morning to be able to kill the De Witt brothers or to kill himself.'

This key role for Verhoeff in EP is illustrated by our quantitative findings. Being both the reporter, as well as one of the main story characters, Verhoeff holds the majority of speech instances (n=45/90, 50%) – in comparison, the two other story characters around which the story revolves, i.e. Johan and Cornelis de Witt, together are quoted only 6 times (n=7/90, 7%). The speech of Verhoeff as the story's source is always quoted indirectly (see (6)). Verhoeff's speech as a story character, in contrast, is often quoted directly as in (7). Thus, the mode has an organizational function, and helps readers to signal Verhoeff's different roles.

- (7) *waer op Verhoeff antwoorde, soo bent gy lieden alle om hals, want gy lieden bent mede van de factie der Witten en haer geselschap.* (p. 9)
'Approx. Thereupon Verhoeff answered: so you will all be killed, because you are also members of the De Witt faction and their acquaintances.'

In addition to variation between direct and indirect speech, the instances of speech representation also show variation between the name of the speaker as in (7) and the name of the speaker preceded by a support word as in (6). This type of variation serves pragmatic purposes. More precisely, the reporter uses a combination of the personal pronoun 'he' or 'him', *hy Verhoeff*, and indirect speech to structure the story (cf. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: 203, 206): just like in (6), every new episode of the narrative is introduced through a reference to 'he Verhoeff', see (8).

- (8) *Alwaer gekomen, ordonneerde hy Verhoeff de Tambours de mars te slaen [...]*

(p. 7)

‘Coming there, he Verhoeff commanded the drummers to beat the march [...]’

The combination of the support word + Verhoeff + indirect speech thus serves as a discourse marker which marks the beginning of a new episode whilst simultaneously reminding the reader of Verhoeff as the story’s agent who recollects his story in chronological fashion. At the beginning of every narrative unit, hence, the reporter of EP projects the locus of agency onto Verhoeff. Sometimes, furthermore, the reporter briefly interrupts a narrative unit to remind the reader of Verhoeff as the story’s source. These interruptions are stylistically recognizable too, as they are framed as *soo hy seyde*-phrases that are not positioned at the beginning, but in the middle of the reported speech (9).

- (9) *Boven tredende ter kamer, bevond hy, soo hy seyde, beyde gebroeders bewaert met 4 borgers, welcke alle soudon droncken gemaect sijn [...].* (p. 10-11)
 ‘Entering the room upstairs, he [Verhoeff] found, he said, both brothers guarded by 4 citizens who would have been made drunk.’

The fixed *soo hy seyde*-phrase can be regarded a form of evaluation, comparable to speech descriptors (see Section 3.4 above), marking the stance of the author towards the source of the utterance. This phrase alerts the reader that it is not the author’s version of the past and therefore it was used by early modern authors to distance themselves from the content of the utterance (cf. [van de Poppe 2020b](#): 68 and footnote 67 therein). This *soo hy seyde*-phrase is also inserted at other pivotal moments in the text, concerning e.g. the assault of the De Witt brothers and the treatment of their corpses, as shown in (10).

- (10) *Dogh een Bootsgesel wijser als ick, soo de Silversmit seyde, hingh de Lighamen aen hare beenen op, synde sy schelmen na sijn oordeel niet waerdigh dat sy op de gewoone wijs gehangen soudon worden.*
 ‘Approx. However, a boatman who was wiser than me, the silver-smith said, hung the bodies by their legs, because, in his opinion, these scoundrels were not worthy to be hanged the normal way.’

So, at crucial points of the story, the author of EP reminds the reader that the story presented here is the version of the past as presented by Verhoeff. This allowed the reporter to distance himself from Verhoeff’s far-reaching statements concerning the treatment of the De Witt’s as in (10). In this case, speech reporting helps the reporter to show disalignment with the quoted position (on this function of disalignment, cf. [Chaemsaithong 2017](#)). The

author sometimes even further underlines his doubt through other linguistic means. In (9), the author adds the irrealis verb *souden* to further question the liability of Verhoeff's retelling of the past.

So far, we have seen how references to Verhoeff as the source of the eyewitness report helped the author to structure the story into recognizable narrative units as well as to evaluate certain parts of its content. The speech of Verhoeff as a story character served pragmatic functions too, mainly as an effect of the internal variation between Verhoeff's direct and indirect speech (whereas Verhoeff as the source is quoted only indirectly).

Although the reporter of EP prefers indirect quotations (41/69, 59%) over direct forms of reported speech (26/69, 38%), he often quoted Verhoeff in a direct way, as an instrument to structure micro level units of the story. Illustrative in this regard is the episode where Verhoeff has a meeting with a member of the city council. At first, both Verhoeff and the members are cited in indirect speech. When the conversation addresses Verhoeff's intention to kill the De Witt brothers, however, his speech is reported directly:

- (11) *en seyde Verhoeff het sal evenwel geschieden, spaert God myn 't leven, al sou ick het alleen doen, en hebt alhier met den anderen maer een half uur patientie, ick sal u lieden beyde de harten in handen leveren.* (p. 9)
'and Verhoeff said: if God saves my live, it will happen, even if I have to do it alone. And be patient for just half an hour and I will deliver both hearts [of the De Witt brothers] into your hands.'

Because of the switch from the indirect to direct mode of speech, the reported speech in (11) is stylistically marked. The switch, in other words, is an instrument to attract the reader's attention to this narrative peak. Indeed, we can interpret (11) as a particularly emphasized speech because it represents a dramatic high point which is of political importance (cf. Moore 2011: 117). This quote points to murder with premeditation and identifies the city council as witnesses of Verhoeff's intentions. Moreover, unlike indirect speech, direct speech as in (11) allows no visible interference from the author. This not only helps to heighten the reader's closeness to the conversation (Moore 2011: 147), but also challenges readers to become witnesses themselves and to interpret the content and importance of this speech (cf. Collins 2001). Direct speech thus invites the readers to form their own judgement on Verhoeff and his role in the massacre of Johan and Cornelis de Witt (cf. Collins 2001).

From the above, we can conclude that EP, whilst providing a stage for Verhoeff's recollection of the past, is not just a story in support of Verhoeff. The reporter projects agency onto Verhoeff as both the source of the narrative and as a story character, but simultaneously uses that agency of Verhoeff to dis-

tance himself from Verhoeff's interpretation of the events. Reported speech was a vital instrument to reach this purpose: it repeatedly identified Verhoeff as the source of the story in order to make the reader aware that it is not the reporter but Verhoeff who passes on his view of events here.

4.2 *Verhael tot myner memorie: The Power of the Spoken Word*

Section 3 highlighted two characteristics of *Verhael tot myner memorie* ('Story to my Remembrance', see s.n. 1705c), which stand out in comparison to the other two texts: the small number of specified individual voices as well as the large number of speech descriptors. As this section demonstrates, both characteristics help to make readers aware of the power of the spoken word as well as the danger of mass speech.

This vital purpose of VM is also related to a third main characteristic of VM's use of reported speech, which needs our attention: the reporter uses the shifts between direct and indirect speech as a narrative instrument. In the first part of the report, the reporter predominantly uses indirect speech constructions, providing himself some responsibility to interpret and translate his observations. He presents himself as someone who accidentally happened to be passing. During his morning walk, he unexpectedly heard that something was going to happen on the Prison square in The Hague:

(12) *'s Morgens omtrent ten half tien uuren op het Buyten-Hof wandelende, wierd van eenige luyden my bekent gemaekt, dat de Ruaerd van Putten sijne sententie op de gevangen-poort ontfangen hadde* (p. 16)

'In the morning, around half past nine, when I walked in the 'Buitenhof' (Outer courtyard), I was told by some people that the regent of Putten [=Cornelis de Witt] has received his verdict'

The suggestion is that this reporter unintentionally became an eyewitness of a pivotal political drama. After a short introduction, he turns to (mostly) direct speech, a linguistic switch which reinforces his position as an observer who only follows, instead of influences or even interprets the situation. So, in the main body of VM, the reporter lets the facts speak for themselves, while transferring responsibility for the content of the reported speech to the character. What is more, the measure of direct speech increases the readers' experience of re-enactment: the readers now become eyewitnesses themselves.

As a result of his position as an observer and passer-by, the reporter is unfamiliar with many people he sees at the square, and sometimes has to guess who they are: 'I assume that he was a sergeant' (*my staet voor, hy Sergeant was*, p. 20). Therefore, most speaking characters are referred to as part of the

group to which they belong rather than as traceable, named individuals (see also Section 3.2 above). As a consequence, VM most of all reflects the agency of groups and masses of people, especially the 'lower populace' (*canaille*, e.g. p. 17) as well as the 'citizens' (*burgers*, e.g. p. 19). Their powerful agency is fundamentally connected to their speech, as follows from all three levels of our analytic model we introduced in section 2:

- i. A fair amount of represented speech instances is expressed by citizens (n23/54);
- ii. Their messages often reflect that they feel themselves superior to their enemies, e.g. by using speech descriptors that illuminate the strength of their voice: *daer wiert van het schavot seer sterck geroepen, dit zyn de landt-verraders* ('it was shouted very forcefully from the scaffold: these are the traitors to our country', p. 23).
- iii. Their speech is (sometimes) introduced by verbs underlying the illocutionary force of their speech acts, e.g. 'to shout' (*roepen*), 'to threaten' (*dreigen*), 'to foster' (*aanmoedigen*).

As an exception, Willem Tichelaar is one of the few named individuals who is frequently allowed to speak (9/54, 17%). Tichelaar, a surgeon, had accused Cornelis de Witt of planning to murder the Orange stadholder ([Prud'Homme van Reine 2013: 125ff](#)). Tichelaar mostly acts as a speaker at the beginning of the report, when the reporter predominantly uses indirect speech to represent Tichelaar's spoken words. After the first episode of the story, however, the reporter suddenly turns to direct speech in representing Tichelaar's speech, which stirs up the citizens to violence. The reporter adds another layer to this instance of reported speech by specifying that Tichelaar spoke 'with anger' (*met een hevigheid*), thus using a speech descriptor that marks the speaker's mental state:

- (13) *Doen met een hevigheid beginnende te sprecken, sijn hoofd ten vensteren uytstekende, seyde wederom: Mannen, dien hondt sal datelijck met sijn broer uytkomen, die is 'er nu by, belet het, nu is het tijt: wreeckt u nu van die schelmen.* (p. 17)
- 'Then, starting to speak with anger, while sticking his head out of the window, he said again: Men, in a moment the dog will come outside, together with his brother, who is also there, prevent it, for now is the time: revenge yourself on these crooks.'

This single unit of direct speech gives the initial impetus to the explosion of violence. After these words, the mass feels itself permitted to shout as well:

- (14) *Daer op aenstonts de Burgers aen 't roepen; wapen! wapen! het canaille, moordt! moordt!*
 'Immediately, the citizens shout: weapon; weapon! Weapen! the rabble: murder! murder!'

Through (13) and (14), VM implicitly represents speech as an important and powerful weapon, as the course of events suggests the massive aggression and violence to be the effect of the spoken word. To reinforce this suggestion, the reporter explicitly states that Tichelaar's words are circulated among the people who were present at the square: *Dat seggen liep voort van mont tot mont* ('This saying is spread from mouth to mouth', p. 17).

Hence, this sudden switch to direct speech and the involved emphasis on the power of oral speech marks an important narrative turn in VM. The anger swells and results in the horrible massacre. Apart from the direct quote, this narrative peak is also marked by the speech tag. The reporter adds in (14) aspectual 'begin', which is a discourse marker that is regularly used in early modern Dutch texts to underline a switch or peak in the narrative (van de Poppe 2020a).

Whereas Tichelaar is allowed to speak publicly, the De Witt brothers themselves have almost no chance to speak (n6/54, 11%). Only six instances of speech representation can be attributed to them. As most of them are instances in which the speech content is not represented (our category 'Verbal Activity'), Johan de Witt is only quoted in (15) and (16).

- (15) *hy hadde eghter geen gehoor van te kunnen spreecken, seggende gedurigh, wel mannen, mannen wat sal dit sijn?* (p. 21)
 'Approx. he had the potency to speak, but there was no reply, saying all the time: well, men, men, what is happening? Or: he had no audience to speak to, saying all the time: well, men, men, what is happening?'
- (16) *hy antwoorde doen nogh yets, 't geen niet heeft kunnen verstaen worden; dogh het eynde was, wy zyn onnosel ende geen verraders, brengt ons daer ghy begeert en laet ons examineeren* (p. 21)
 'He then answered another thing, which could not be heard; but the conclusion was, we are innocent and not traitors, take us where you desire us to be and examine us.'

In Dutch, (15) is an ambiguous sentence: De Witt's question remains unanswered, or even unheard. In (16) his words are unheard. De Witt is thus presented as a non-agentive speaker. This is underlined through the content of his words: he takes a subordinate position when he says that other people

can take him where they want.

After these two halfway attempts to speak, De Witt tries to say something else, but he is literally silenced by the violence of an axe:

(17) *...wilde hy nogh iets seggen, maer en quamder niet uyt, krygende mede een seer sware slag op sijn hoofd, waer door genootsaeckt was te knielen, valende voort ter aerden* (p. 22)

‘He still wanted to say something, but it didn’t come out of his mouth, because he was struck a heavy blow, and he was therefore compelled to kneel, and fell forward on the ground’

In sum, VM creates an opposition between, on the one hand, impotent people who are not allowed to speak and are silenced by violence, and, on the other hand, powerful people who were represented by means of direct speech acts, lexical variation and speech descriptors, emphasizing the power of their speech. The reporter, a neutral observer who does not explicitly pass his own judgments but implicitly guides the readers’ interpretation by the representation of other characters’ speech acts, aims to demonstrate the effects of speech and the actions in which speech can be resulted. It is the readers’ task to reflect on this episode, and to ask critical questions about the power of speech and violence.

4.3 *Verhael van ’t ombrengen: The Question of Guilt and Agency*

In contrast to the reporters of EP and VM, the reporter of *Verhael van ’t ombrengen* (‘Story of the Murder’; s.n. 1705d) does not explicitly refer to himself via the use of a personal pronoun (‘I saw/heard’), reflexive pronoun (‘seen by myself’), or possessive pronoun (‘my story’). VO is also the only of three reports containing more direct speech than indirect speech (see Table 1 above). What is more, VO uses the most prepositional constructions of all three reports (e.g., ‘x was said by y’): no less than two third of these constructions found in *Gedenkwaardige Stukken* are included in VO (n37/55, 67,3%).

We aim to demonstrate that these characteristics of VO’s speech representations interact in a meaningful way. We argue that this report – written from the perspective of Johan de Witt’s staff members, and as such highlighting the situation within Johan de Witt’s home and the *Gevangenpoort* (‘Gate for Prisoners’) where the brothers were imprisoned – uses prepositional constructions and direct-indirect speech switches to underline the powerless position of the brothers, as well as to explore the question of responsibility regarding the (events leading up to the) murder.

In the first part of the report, however, these issues of power and respon-

sibility are not yet that visible. Here, the reader becomes an eyewitness of a conversation between the maid of the guard of the *Gevangenpoort* and both the Lady of Swijndregt (the wife of Cornelis de Witt) and Johan de Witt, being shaved at that moment. The maid has come to announce that Cornelis de Witt has been released and that he wishes to speak to the Grand Pensionary, his brother. The dialogues between the brothers and the brothers and their staff (p. 30, 32, 33, 34) are characterized by basic linguistic tags like *vraeghde* ('asked'), *seyde* ('said'), *voeghde by* ('added') and *antwoorde* ('answered'), i.e. introductory verbs in the past indicative (realis mood). The instances of mostly direct speech happen in rapid succession and are integrated in long sentences in which the drama is gradually being unfolded. As such, the linguistic and stylistic characteristics reinforce the reader's experience of being part of a dynamic, exciting event (cf. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: chapter 12).

Gradually, the question of agency and responsibility becomes more prominent. In those reported instances of speech and/or conversations between characters that are crucial to the fate of Johan and Cornelis de Witt, the reporter makes use of passive constructions (e.g., *wiert geseyt* 'was said') preceded by prepositional phrases with a form of 'by' (e.g., *door*, 'by' and *van*, all translatable as by). In these instances, the agency of the speakers is distinctly marked and framed as being of central importance.

These passives with a prepositional clause are, above all, used in conversations with citizens, who eventually committed the murder on the brothers. When the Grand Pensionary wants to leave the *Gevangenpoort* after he has spoken to his brother, the citizens have assembled in revolt against the De Witt brothers in front of the *Gevangenpoort*. The citizens refuse Johan de Witt to leave the building:

- (18) *Daer op by de Heer geweest Raedtpensionaris gevraeght sijnde, waerom niet mannen, want ghy weet wel wie ick ben, soo wierdt by eenige van haer geantwoordt, wy en hebben 'er geen last toe; vorder daer op by hem gevraegt sijnde, wat last moet ghylieden hebben, soo antwoorde eenige van haer, van onsen Officier* (p. 32; original emphasis)

'Approx. Thereupon having been asked by erstwhile Grand Pensionary, men, why not, for you know who I am, thereupon being answered by some of them, we do not have permission; then being asked by him, what permission do you men need, some of them answered from our officer.'

In contrast to the reported speech in the first part of the report, speech is now reported via the use of the preposition 'by' and a perfect participle in com-

bination with an auxiliary verb expressing either verb tense ('sijnde', being) or passive voice ('wierdt', was). This auxiliary verb either takes the form of a perfect indicative ('wierdt') or a present participle ('sijnde'). By using this construction, absent in the other two reports, this reporter marks the agency of the speaker and consequently his responsibility of what is being said, by showing the outcomes those words have (i.e., Johan cannot go out and therefore has no opportunity of escaping the evil will of the citizens).

VO's reporter repeatedly uses such constructions to highlight the speaker's agency. Importantly, these verb tenses in combination with the passive voice are being used at moments when Johan and/or Cornelis de Witt try to, but cannot, escape the Gevangenpoort as the citizens prevent them from leaving. As some of the citizens even enter under the pretext of protecting the brothers, Johan thinks they have finally come to take him out safely. This, however, is not the case. On the contrary, he is requested to stay where he is as the citizens are still very hot-tempered ('seer oploopende', p. 34). By using the present perfect ('wierdt...gesegt'; 'wierdt geseyt') in combination with a prepositional clause with 'door' (meaning by), the agency and responsibility of the speaker are marked.

(19) *waer op de Heer Raedtpensionaris [...] opstont, als meenende die Burgers tot bewaringe van sijn broeder de Heer Ruaert te komen ende om hem af te halen, en meende alsoo mede van de kamer te gaen, dogh wierdt door de Burgers gesegt, Hola myn Heer, ghij moet hier mede blijven, soo wiert door meergemelde Heer Fiscael geseyt, myn Heer sal noch wat patientie moeten neemen, om dat de Burgers wat seer oploopende sijn* (34; original emphasis)

'Approx. upon which Sir Grand Pensionary [...] rose, believing the Citizens have come to guard his brother Sir Regent and to collect him, and believing to leave the room too, yet by the citizens was said, Stop Sir, you have to stay here, thereupon was said by the aforementioned public prosecutor, Sir needs to be patient, for the Citizens are very hot-tempered.'

Thus, the prepositional construction functions as an instrument for the reporter to emphasize and linguistically mark those vital moments when the De Witt brothers are brought to bay by dominant others. Because these moments simultaneously highlight the agency of speakers, through the prepositional constructions, VO's reporter directly connects the brothers' powerless position to the question of guilt: who can be held responsible for the failure of escape and the consequent death of the brothers?

Beyond all doubt, however, is the innocent position of the brothers them-

selves: they are represented as powerless. Switches between direct and indirect speech are used to underline their lack of agency. Although the De Witt brothers still act as speaking agents in the first part of the report (they are responsible for 9 of 20 first instances of speech in the report), they become largely unheard in the last part of it. Comparable to the powerless instances of the brothers' speech in VM, Johan de Witt is then quoted only once, while his attempt to speak does not have any effect: *...seggende Siet wat gy doet mannen* ('saying, men, see what you are doing', p. 39). Two indirect speech instances of the brothers also reflect their lack of agency – Cornelis de Witt tries to receive permission to put on his trousers, and only gets it *'barely'* ('ter naeuwer noot', p. 38) – and are contrasted to the citizens' direct quotes, representing the brothers as crooks, dogs and traitors.

By staging a great variety of voices, and making use of prepositional constructions and direct-indirect switches at pivotal moments, VO's reporter urges his readers to view the brothers as silenced victims, while also asking them to judge processes of guilt and responsibility. The readers are invited to balance the consequences of what is said and who said what, forming their own opinion of the events of 20th August 1672 that led to the murder of the De Witt brothers.

5 CONCLUSION

Previous research has already pointed out that speech representation in historical language varieties was not the same as in present day language: standards were not yet fully established and authors experimented with the marking of speech. We see this experimentation reflected in our corpus, for instance in a lack of visually marking reported speech, the emergence of speech descriptors, or the doubling of speech tags. However, the quantitative data presented in this section also suggests that around 1700 authors not only experimented with how to represent and frame speech, but that certain aspects of speech representation were already very much consolidated in Dutch: the texts reflect quite a clear distinction between direct and indirect speech.

In this article, we combined the analysis of the linguistic tagging of speech representation with a literary-narrative analysis of the function of speech, by means of our analytic model focusing on voices, content and form of speech representation. Consequently, we viewed individual instances and linguistic characteristics of speech within their narrative and rhetorical context, and involved the way characters are shaped and are allowed to speak or not. Through approach, we are able to trace different forms of variation in the use of speech representation and as such to identify some overarching patterns in its function. Switches in the mode of discourse (i.e. direct-indirect) often serve as

instruments to structure the narrative: indirect speech is used predominantly at the beginning of the story (or a story/narrative unit), whereas direct speech helps to underline a narrative peak, or creates a suggestion of re-enactment among the readers, who seem to become the event's eyewitnesses through lively direct quotes.

In line with recent developments in historical pragmatic research on speech representation (Grund & Walker 2020), we have investigated how speech and its formal make-up helped to guide the reader. Our analysis has shown that the reporters implicitly tried to invite the reader to evaluate the situation, rather than providing a cut-and-dried interpretation of the events themselves. They, for instance, use direct speech to create some distance between reported voices and themselves, or underline the fact that others (instead of themselves) are responsible for certain utterances and actions. And by using a passive construction with 'by'-phrase, another reporter was able to underline the responsible role of a speaker. So, although the reporters actively guide the readers' reading of the text by means of speech representation, they allowed the reader different points of view through multiple voices, to consider the event from various perspectives.

We suggest to interpret this strategy in the broader context of the Dutch Republic's textual culture at the time. The seventeenth-century Dutch Republic is sometimes characterized as a 'discussion culture': a culture, built upon a high level of literacy and an enormous production of (printed) texts, where many people intervened in discussions on social and political topics, and shared their various arguments and opinions with each other (Frijhoff & Spies 2004). To take part in a vibrant discussion culture, people not only need the functional skills to read and understand texts, but also to assess critically what they read and to consider different perspectives on and levels of specific political events. As such, the reports analysed in this article could be viewed as instruments that not only contributed to people's political knowledge, but foremost helped to spur their level of 'political literacy' (cf. Dietz 2021: chapter 5).

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