**A quantitative comparison of the early English and early French press**

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This paper presents a quantitative comparison of the early press in two languages: French and English. Traditionally, research on the linguistic features of news discourse tended to focus on just one language. In recent years, however, historians and linguists alike have drawn attention to the transnational, transcultural, and translinguistic nature of the historical press (Raymond and Moxham 2016; McLaughlin and Brownlees 2023). Scholars have begun to look beyond the bounds of single nations, cultures, and languages to explain the features of news discourse. For example, McLaughlin (2021; 2022) has shown how the presence of news translated from Germanic languages influenced the way that news was written in the early French press.

This study seeks to move the field forward by prioritizing this comparative approach. We use cutting edge text-analysis software and statistical testing to compare the English- and French-language press in the first half of the seventeenth century. This comparison is based on two existent corpora: McLaughlin’s (2021) 550,000-word corpus of French news which covers the period from 1631 to 1789, and Brownlees’ (2013) 279,000-word Florence Early English News corpus (FEEN) which covers the period from 1620 to 1653. The comparison focuses in particular on the period from 1620 to 1649 because Brownlees (2015) identifies four distinct periods in English newswriting:

1620-1621: news consists primarily of translations of Dutch newssheets

1622-1624: there is more editorial intervention and personal voice

1625-1641: there is a return to the dry, impersonal style of the European press

1642-1649: with censorship gone, domestic news and new kinds of discourse appear

Our study therefore seeks to shed more light on the relationship between the English and European press by comparing English news discourse in these four periods as represented by the FEEN corpus with McLaughlin’s (2021) corpus. We use the part of McLaughlin’s (2021) corpus which overlaps in time with the FEEN corpus. This part consists of all of the issues of the *Gazette de France* which published in January (1632): in total, there are five issues which each consist of two parts (*Gazette* and *Nouvelles ordinaires*) and which in total represent 20,249 words.

The first part of the paper explores some basic features used in corpus linguistics to analyse text types: sentence length, lexical diversity, conjunctions, and hapax legomena. The features investigated in the second part of the paper were selected for a different reason: they are all of particular interest for news discourse as a specific text type. These features are: the use of lexical items of different grammatical categories, speech reporting, and themes and keyword analysis. The study will offer new insights on the evolution of the English-language press and on the features of historical news discourse as a transnational, transcultural, and translinguistic phenomenon.

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