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## From a Bedtime Story to News Release: The Role of the Quantitative Accent in Reading Television News

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#### ABSTRACT

News services are primarily used for obtaining and conveying the news. However, nowadays it is also important to be able to attract the attention of a recipient. Scientific objective: The purpose of the paper is to describe one of the features of the prosody process in the Polish language, which is used to express emotions, which has become part of the way of reading the news releases, which is related to concern for keeping the viewer's attention. Results and conclusions: This measure is a quantitative accent that appeared nowadays in reading the news, examples of which are presented in the paper. For comparison, examples of the news releases presented in the 1990s were also given, when this accent was not used. This is related to the changes that have taken place in the area of media communication aimed at expressing emotions, for which the quantitative accent can be used. Research methods: Analysis of the role of this accent consisted of watching about 200 news releases of contemporary television news services, indicating the location of accent's occurrence and describing how it was used by journalists reading the news. The observations made during the research can be used as part of the journalist's workshop, which must take care of individual prosodic measures, i.e. accenting (including the quantitative accent), a varied intonation line, dynamics, rhythm, tempo. The cognitive value: The skillful use of these elements contributes to a journalist building the image of a professional, as well as may increase the interest of recipients in the transmitted content. One of the elements of prosody used to express emotions is the quantitative accent referred to in this paper.

#### KEYWORDS

accent, accenting, prosody, TV news service, vocal behavior

Many television stations in their 24-hour program include news services, and they are mostly broadcasted in the evening, at the end of the day, which is not without significance for social life. Still, the most common lifestyle is working for eight hours a day, while the evenings are spent with family or friends. Regardless of the changes in the lifestyle, family model, access to modern means of communication, TV stations are still considered an important source of news.<sup>1</sup> And so existing television channels broadcasting the news for a long time now, contrary to prior announcements, do not declare bankruptcy.

News services, as the name implies, are used to convey the news to the audience (Bauer, 2011, pp. 153–154). Moreover, they are seen as the most important programs broadcasted on TV. The news has acquired a peculiar style (Bloch, 2018, p. 294), to which the publication entitled *Television Information Services: Changes in the Way of Reading from the Times of the Polish People's Republic to the Third Polish Republic* has been devoted (Bloch, 2018). It describes prosodic phenomena (accent, intonation, intensity, tempo, rhythm), as well as non-prosodic element, which is content segmentation; all these factors contribute to a better or worse understanding of the news releases. These phenomena coexist, interact with each other, and they cannot be completely separated and described without being combined with other phenomena. For instance, speed-reading affects the rhythm, the flow of reading and accenting creates a specific intonation line, as well as intensity (dynamics) affects accenting, etc.

Nowadays, the specific news style is largely composed of: speed-read of stories, accenting a large number of words in phrases, loudness, intonation with incomplete cadence at the end of sentences (Bloch, 2018). It should be emphasized once again that if the mentioned prosodic phenomena do not cause a lack of understanding of the content, they create a characteristic style that contributes to strengthening the message, showing commitment to presenting the news by a journalist, and thus—showing respect to the audience.

The element of commitment in the manner of communication is considered to be extremely important in the selection of prosodic features used when providing the news. It is associated with emotions that accompany the message, and emotions apply to both a journalist and a viewer. One of the functions of non-verbal communication, which includes vocal signals (i.e. the phenomenon of prosody described here), is the function of expressing emotions (Leathers, 2007, p. 35). Vocal behavior is a common effect used for this purpose, and one of them is the quantitative accent, which often occurs in modern communication space, especially in communication in the media.

Prosodic phenomena in the statements are closely related to the characteristics of languages, which means that within each language one can distinguish its characteristic sound features that allow the distinction from other languages. Many works have been devoted to the prosody process of the Polish language (Dhuska, 1976; Dukiewicz, 1978; Sawicka, 1995; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2002), and the prosody features of the news services has been much less explored in the scientific studies, so it is still an area that should be examined. Among these few works, Dorota Szymaniuk's papers deserve attention—they draw attention to the existence of referential information in spoken language (Osmulska, 2016; Szymaniuk, 2003), which is a natural consequence of the existence of the spoken language. However, there was no literature discussing the role of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> CBOS research conducted in 2019 shows that 58% of respondents derive knowledge of the world from television. See: Credibility of the media. (2019). Message from CBOS research. Retrieved from https://www. cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K\_070\_19.PDF

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quantitative accent in the aspect of expressing emotions, and this is an important element of prosody, closely related to the expression of speaking and reading.

This paper is devoted to one of the prosodic phenomena, one type of accent—the quantitative accent. Three types of word accents are characteristic for Polish: pitch accent, giving the prominence to a syllable; dynamic accent—using stronger sound; and the quantitative accent—by extending the duration of the stressed syllable (Derwojedowa, Karaś, Kopcińska, 2005, p. 101). To make the message fully understandable and attractive, the sender should skillfully use varied accent. As previously noted, none of the prosodic phenomena occurs alone, accentuation contributes to the formation of an intonation line, perceived as the rise and fall of the voice. The amplitude of raising and lowering the tone, when it is longer, depends on the individual characteristics of a speaker. Just as there is a strong relationship between the style of speech and dominance behavior, indicating that dominant people speak faster and louder (Hall & Knapp, 2000, p. 494), so each type of accent used in favor of others causes a specific music of the message and makes the speaker can be assigned with some personality traits. Such a message takes on a specific sound indicating emotion.

Since no prosodic phenomenon occurs in a purely interpersonal communication, also the quantitative accent should be considered in conjunction with other elements to be able to determine what emotions are transmitted by a sender and what this form of expression is for. To examine the presence of a quantitative accent in media coverage, a thorough analysis of 200 news releases of the main news services of leading TV stations, i.e. "*Wydarzenia*" on Polsat TV and "*Fakty*" on TVN, was conducted in the period from June 2019 to January 2020. Fragments of recordings of news services from the 90s of the last century and fragments of bedtime stories used to illustrate the phenomenon of the occurrence of a quantitative accent come from YouTube.

The perceptual method was used to analyze the presence of the quantitative accent in the statements of journalists reading the news releases, as special programs for conducting audio analysis of speech, such as the Praat program,<sup>2</sup> could not be used due to changes in the Copyright Act. The act prohibiting the transfer of image and sound content to the media other than set-top boxes of television suppliers entered into force on September 11, 2015 (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1639). This means that none of the programs can be recorded, even for didactic or scientific purposes, and it was a hard nut to crack when it comes to content analysis. The only available method is therefore the perceptive method, although it does not give the possibility of giving numerical values of the level of loudness.

Combining the quantitative accent with the intensity of the sound can be used to analyze emotions in the statements. In order to present in an orderly way the interaction of these two prosodic phenomena, examples of statements with a three-level scale of loudness: soft, average, loud, have been used.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Praat program, developed by Paul Boersman and David Weenink of the Institute of Phonetics Sciences of the University of Amsterdam as a tool for analyzing speech signals.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Intensity / loudness — the energy value of the sound produced, perceived by the recipient as loudness. The sound level is expressed in decibels, a unit used to measure acoustic signals. The hearing threshold intensity is 0 dB. Very loud audible sound has a volume level of 100 dB, and 120 dB is the so-called pain threshold, that is the volume at which the ear cannot hear. The conversation is placed at 60 dB. On the scale agreed for

The first clear example of using the quantitative accent is the combination of this accent with the loudness. If lengthening of syllables is accompanied by low intensity, i.e. soft loudness, the statement is assessed as mild and the sender as calm, balanced. This way of speaking is sometimes associated with telling bedtime stories to children to make them fall asleep faster. An example of such a sound could be a fragment of the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm read by Wiktor Zborowski. The quantitative accents are implemented by extending the duration of vowel sounds, which are marked in the texts by doubling the accented syllable, and sometimes tripling when the accent is longer than the other ones.

A loong, looong time ago, a happy family lived in a smaall toown. My father woorked and we have never wanted for anything, and mother took care of the farm. They had a daughter whom they loved very, veery muuch. Cruel fate caaused that the girl's mother had dieed, and after some time the father married a second woman and since theen the girl's liife has chaangeed. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IsGjbmwQAs)

Numerous lengthening of accented syllables in conjunction with soft loudness create the mood of the idyll in which the happy family lived, and then thanks to the same process a mood of sadness arises, when it turns out that carefree family life has been disturbed. One can distinguish these two states thanks to another, third characteristic of sound—the timbre of the voice, which in the first part is described as light and warm, when the actor gives the voice of happiness, and in the second—as dark and warm, to mark the transformation of the idyll's mood into sadness. Many stories are read in such a way that they bring the effect of calming the recipient.

Another way of reading to children, using the quantitative accent in combination with loudness, can be found in the poetry of Julian Tuwim interpreted by another actor, Piotr Fronczewski. This time, the quantitative accent is accompanied by average loudness, thanks to which the whole expression gives the impression of surprise with the image depicted, and each subsequent word further enhances this impression. As in the previous example, one can find here the lengthening of accented syllables by doubling the vowels, there are also triple vowels.

A big loocoomootiiive has puulled into toown, heeeavy humungous, with sweeat roolling doown, and driipping with oiil. Huuffing and puuffing and paanting and smeelly, fiire beelches foorth from her fat caast iiron beelly. Poof, hoow she's buurning, oof, hoow she's booiling, puff, hoow she's chuurning, huff, hoow she's tooiling. She's fuully exhausted and all oout of breeath, yeet the coaalmaan coontinuues to strooke heer to deeath. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=sp-hXpPD4BU)

Combining the quantitative accent with the average loudness causes that the emotion of surprise created thanks to this process serves to interest the recipient. It is called to encourage the recipient to continue listening instead of falling asleep slowly, as was the case in the first example.

The next, third way of combining the quantitative accent with loudness is shown by an example from another communication area, illustrating the multitude of vocal behaviors in which

the purposes of this paper, the weak level would be in the range of 30-35 dB, the average level is 55-65 dB, the strong level is 65-75 dB. It is worth noting that the issue of the level of sound intensity in the media also includes such phenomena as, among others hearing adaptation or compression. See *Television Information Services: Changes in the Way of Reading from the Times of the Polish People's Republic to the Third Polish Republic* (Bloch, 2018).

the sound of the voice plays an important role. An illustration of evoking emotions resulting from the combination of a quantitative accent and loudness is a dialogue, or rather a quarrel in which the sender can hear anger.

Whaaat?! Iii haave saaaid that?

(Own materials from observing rehearsals taking place before the semester exams at the A. Zelwerowicz Theater Academy in Warsaw as part of the speech technique classes led by Małgorzata Kaczmarska, PhD)

Extending the duration of a sound in conjunction with its strong intensity evokes the emotions of the mentioned anger, grudge against the interlocutor, strong commitment to the conversation.<sup>4</sup>

Examples of using the qualitative accent in conjunction with loudness to express emotions can be found more in communication space. It is not without reason that illustrating the use of the quantitative accent began with a bedtime story, since recipients usually associate this kind of sound with listening to fairy tales.<sup>5</sup>

News services, which are the most important genre from the point of view of social significance (Godzic, 2004, p. 30), have long been called infotainment (Godzic, 2004, p. 82), because they began to combine information and entertainment. The appearance of emotions in presenting the news seems to be a natural consequence of the development of this television genre. Showing emotions in the voice serves, among others, the quantitative accent appearing more often in the way of reading information. Here are examples of messages in which a journalist used this prosodic tool by doubling the vowels. For the sake of clarity, other types of accents that were used in reading were not marked—only those that were accompanied by a quantitative accent were emphasized.

#### **Combination of a Quantitative and Pitch Accent**

The combination of two types of accents is possible because one of them is implemented by the lengthening of a sound, the other—by raising the tone. The effect of this implementation is to draw attention to the uniqueness of the event, which on the one hand is not surprising, because the news is usually selected so as to be as interesting as possible for recipients, on the other—it brings additional reinforcement in the form of accent, which can be defined by the use of the message. In a word, the appearance of emotions in the news is to cause similar feelings of great interest in the event.

The scenes that you will see in a moment look like from a stunt movie, but it really happened in Rosnówko near Poznań—a passenger driving car suuuddenly loses control of the vehicle and hits the oncoooming car. It is haaard to belieeeve that nobody was killed. The perpetrator had hiiigh levels of alcohol in his blood. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://www.polsatnews.pl/video-program/20191231-wydarzenia-1850\_6762595/)

The recording shows that the quantitative and pitch accents are used quite often by the journalist, because out of thirty-five words and stress combination as many as eight words have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This way of speaking, using a combination of the quantitative accent and strong intensity, can also be heard in the rallies of President Andrzej Duda. This type of making speeches is described by many recipients as a scream in which one can find elements of grievance, reproach against the addressee, political opponent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The author's own materials.

been distinguished in this way, which is close to a quarter of the entire news release, and yet not every word or stress combination is underlined by the quantitative accent. It is worth noting that in the accented words one vowel constituting the main word accent has been extended.

The next example also combines a quantitative and pitch accent that signals commitment in a way of communicating information. And here also in the accented words one vowel constituting the main word accent has been read longer.

A thousand zloty fine for each day of delay was imposed on the prosecutor's office by the court, and the prosecutor's office did noothing after one of its best people was on secondment from Krakow to Wroclaw. I do not waant to cancel the secondment. Such a puunitive policy. The secondment and cancelling were a punishment. Suspeending and ignoriiiing verdicts. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://fakty.tvn24.pl/ogladaj-online,60/wstrzymanie-delegacji-mariusz-krasonia-prokuratura-nie-wykonuje-decyzji-sadu,996707.html)

This information uses fewer quantitative accents than in the previous example, because out of thirty-six words and sets of accented the quantitative accent appeared in five words, which is half as much. Therefore, it seems that when reading the news, the personal predisposition of a journalist to use the quantitative accent is considered as of great importance.

#### **Combination of a Quantitative and Dynamic Accent**

Lengthening and lowering the sound strengthens the mood of the seriousness of the news. This type of sound implementation can be found in the following information:

At the beginning, more than a huundred Polish ciities and protests in defense of the coourts, specifically against the law, proposed by the PiS, diiscipliiniing the judges. Mira Skórka is at the demonstration in Warsaw. Mira, what are the protesters counting on? (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://www.polsatnews.pl/video-program/20191218-wydarzenia-1850\_6761978/)

In the news presented above, twenty-four words and stress combination with the help of a quantitative accent distinguished four words, of which in one more than one vowel was lengthened, which should be emphasized, because such a procedure affects the creation of a specific mood of the news release. The feeling of danger that arises with this way of stressing seems to confirm the role of expressing emotions using the quantitative accent used in the news.

The news in which the dynamic accent appears together with the quantitative accent is interpreted in a different way, but the lengthening was made only on one vowel of the accented word.

It is something like a mural just painted on the walls of an old barn. Recollection of the history of a plaace and people. Arkadiusz Andrejkow painted thirty such works in Podkarpackie voivodeship, on his own initiative and at his own expense. The project is called "Silent Memorial" and you cannoot help but like it. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://fakty.tvn24.pl/ogladaj-online,60/ bieszczady-cichy-memorial-arkadiusza-andrejkowa-niezwykle-murale,995907.html)

Out of twenty-seven words and stress combinations, the quantitative accent appeared three words, which may influence the stronger arousing of interest of the recipients in the information provided. It can be considered that this is a moderate use of a prosodic measure, which is the quantitative accent. However, it undoubtedly contributes to strengthening the journalist's competence.

#### Combination of a Quantitative Accent, Dynamic Accent, and a Pause

In the next example, the quantitative accent in combination with a pause within one information appears only once, at the end, which is already an important means of reinforcing the news release. An additional highlight of the selected stress combination is the pause, implemented by the journalist before the selected words.

In the Sejm he is almost like a chairman, although he hardly got to the Sejm. Deputy Marshal Terlecki, when he says something, everyone listens, and talks about judges, courts, and the opposition. He also talks on the phone when he is conducting the deliberations. The subject of the new law has kept him in the Sejm several times, and this (pause) is not easy. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://fakty.tvn24.pl/ogladaj-online,60/ryszard-terlecki-polityk-ktory-rzadzi-klubem-pis,994628.html)

The decision to implement the sentence accent with the help of the quantitative accent within only one stress combination testifies to a moderate use of prosodic phenomena. This makes the news release more interesting because the overuse of any of them could cause specific reading technique. Therefore, choosing only one word, isolated in this way, causes that it draws more attention to a recipient. Of course, not without significance for the reception of all information is the addition of a pause in front of the selected stress combination, which strengthens the point of the news release by emphasizing the expression of satisfaction with the good performance of journalistic work.

#### Combination of a Quantitative and Dynamic Accent and Rhythm

Rhythmizing is the specific fluency of speaking and reading manifested in the frequent separation of words belonging to the same segment of expression.<sup>6</sup> So this is a kind of disruption to the reading fluency, which contributes to the characteristic of a journalist who presents the text. An example is the lengthening of almost every word in accented syllables, which means that for a recipient, the separation of words occurs in a gentle way, and it is done using the quantitative accent. These extensions within many words delicately separated from neighboring words contribute to the creation of a specific music of language, which can be perceived as expressing emotions of surprise, as if the news release conveyed doubts of a journalist.

Will run, | will not run. | Szymon Hołoownia | interruupts the sileence. | The journalist annoounced that | he is ruunning | for preesideent. | He is noot a pooliticiian | and | it | is supposed to be his advaantage. | I want | to as he says | to fiix it, | what is left brooken. | Opinioon poolls give him | thiird plaace | and poolitical rivaals | not withoout angeer saay | not to undereestimate | the neew caandidate. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://www.polsatnews.pl/video-program/20191208-wydarzenia-1850\_6761339/)

Since two vowels are usually extended within a word, it should be added that the quantity accent in the presented example accompanies both pitch and dynamic accents. Both types of accents accompanying the quantity (pitch and dynamic) are implemented with a slight force, thanks to which the emerging emotion of surprise in the news release does not seem inappropriate in reading, and even constitutes an interesting emotional side of the message.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The phenomenon of segmentation, also known as phrase content, is based on extracting smaller parts from the utterances that are self-significant and form a whole, but within a larger form.

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# Concurrence of a Quantitative and Dynamic Accent, Implemented by the Duration of a Vowel Sound

Emphasizing, as noted at the beginning of the paper, is done by raising, lowering or lengthening vowels. However, there are cases of lengthening of vowels, not only those whose phonetic characteristics allow it, but also those that should not be lengthened by their very nature.

The earthquake that struck Haiti, unbeelievable rescue in Chile, where miners underground waited for help for twoo and a half months, Arab spring in Tunisia and Egypt and terrified children's eyes of the victims of the Syrian war, a miiracle in a Thai cave, fire of the Notre Dame cathedral, Obama's farewell, Donald Trump's Twitteer account. This ending year is also the end of the decade, and the most important events, photos, and moments will be presented by Anna Czerwińska. (Retrieved February 2, 2020, from https://fakty.tvn24.pl/ogladaj-online,60/najwazaże-wydarzenia-ostatnich-czesie-lat,995705.html)

As described earlier, the quantitative accent together with the dynamic button strengthen the journalist's competence and commitment to the news release. An additional element enhancing professionalism seems to be the lengthening of the k sound, which due to the degree of proximity of the speech organs is a plosive, i.e. it cannot be extended, unlike even slit sounds, e.g. the s sound, which can be pronounced longer. A greater plosive circuit, together with the extension of the k-tone, which becomes prolonged, causes the accented word to dominate in its sound, contributing to the mood of the seriousness of the news release.

As results from the analyzes carried out, the quantitative accent frequently appears in contemporary news releases. For comparison, examples of fragments of news services from the early 1990s were given, when the quantitative accent did not appear in the presentation of the release.

All examples come from "Wiadomości," the news program broadcasted by TVP1.

The presidiums of the parliamentary parties of the Center Agreement and Solidarity PSL believe that the extension of the coalition to include a Democratic Union aims to strengthen Jan Olszewski's government. Both political parties supported Jerzy Ejsmont's anti-recession and anti-inflationary economic program. It is in line with the economic interest of the country and social expectations, we read in the pary's statement. (Retrieved January 20, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBPpcj\_8CNI)

There is no quantitative accent in the release. In order for the message to be varied, there are gently implemented pitch and dynamic accents.

According to the Central Office for Planning, positive trends in a significant part of the economy will consolidate this year. Industrial production should increase by 4%, and the gross domestic product by 2%. The private sector's contribution to this GDP should exceed 50%. (Retrieved January 20, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6llGA5UoxA)

There is also no quantitative accent in this news release...

Th Freedom Union leaders who talked with Lech Wałęsa maintain that the president is ready to dissolve parliament. The Freedom Union believes that this would mean a violation of the constitution. SLD leader Aleksander Kwasniewski sees no need to appoint a supra-party government of experts in the current situation, as proposed by the Freedom Union. (Retrieved January 20, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtKusXitHMQ)

The last release presented here, like the previous ones, is also devoid of quantitative accent as distinguishing selected fragments of the message. This proves that there have been changes in the way the news has been presented over the years.

#### Summary

If we take into account that the examples of reading the news presented in the paper come from commercial TV stations, which mainly rely on advertising revenues, we can consider not surprising that journalists make an effort to present the news not only important, but also attractive. Of course, in addition to the importance of the issues presented, it is also important to show competences and commitment in a way of communication to engage a viewer. These processes are associated with the desire to arouse emotions among recipients of the news services. Emotions that increase the chance of keeping the attention of TV viewers, and thus, can create a ritual of watching the news services daily, cause a stronger attachment of a viewer to the content watched, i.e. make the news service a kind of series watched with equal or maybe even greater interest than those that evoke stories broadcasted in series.

In the aspect of expressing emotions, research in the area of non-verbal communication is necessary, which shows that vocal behavior has a significant impact on the reception of both the transmitted content and the perception of the person transmitting the content. Significant fluctuations in tone and volume intensify the impression of competence (Leathers, 2007, p. 202). Also such a feature as self-confidence in the transmission of the news is communicated by means of vocal behavior, i.e. rich expression (Leathers, 2007, p. 203)—the emotional characterization of the sound of a voice. It is not surprising, therefore, that speakers, including journalists, eagerly use prosodic elements that will serve to more effectively interest recipients with the transmitted content. The presented examples show that the quantitative accent significantly contributes to these effects, which covers various forms of expression—from bedtime stories, through dialogue to the news.

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