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Thematic issue

« Migrants », « Refugees », « Boat people » and the Mediterranean Crisis: People in Words, Language Issues

This issue is guest-edited by

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Message from the editor

This issue of *Language, Discourse & Society* is dedicated both to a thematic issue and to a varia section. The thematical part is presented below by Frédéric Moulène (University of Strasbourg & University of Franche-Comté, France), guest editor for this call, entitled “« Migrants », « Refugees », « Boat people » and the Mediterranean Crisis: People in Words, Language Issues”.

Regarding the varia section, it counts two original articles. Joseph Benjamin Archibald Afful and Nancy Boahemaa Nkansah focus on the moves in successful personal statements written by Ghanaian university students to be admitted in university abroad. Their analysis shed light first on how this genre is structured and second on which among the seven moves are predominant. The concrete application of their findings is related to the support they can be for students wishing to study abroad. Benjamin Amoakohene analyses the editorial sections of three Ghanaian newspapers using the genre theory, which enlarges the scope of exploration of situated language uses, including notably academic and professional discourses. Four moves are underlined, one not being systematically used. The practical implications of his findings are related to the training of media practitioners.

The December 2018 issue will be dedicated to “Power and social exclusion: Insights looking at language”, co-edited by Frida Petersson (Göteborgs Universitet, Institutionen för socialt arbete, Sweden) and Stéphanie Cassilde (Centre d’Etudes en Habitat Durable, Belgium). The June 2019 issue will be dedicated to “Symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. Language, power and ethnicity”, and is co-edited by Anna Odrowaz-Coates (The Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University in Warsaw, Poland) and Sribas Goswami (Serampore College in West Bengal, India). For this issue, the call is still ongoing: you may find the whole call for publication below.

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Message from the Guest Editor

The migratory phenomenon took a prominent place in the emerging sociology as a new scientific field. The founders of the discipline had already addressed the economic, spatial and social condition of the stranger: Marx (1867) integrated the question of the Irish workers in England in his theory of « reserve army of labour » and hereafter, Simmel (1908) dealt with the foreigner case through his concept of reciprocal action that opens the way to the theories of othering (Marotta, 2017). These works have been renewed in these times of globalization, respectively with Hobsbawm (2007) and Bauman (1991). Besides, the third wave of immigration in the U.S., with a flow of more than 20 million people, widely contributed to the development of American sociology, notably within Chicago Urban School (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920; Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925; Wirth, 1928).

However, these seminal works focused on the settlement process of migrants on the host territories rather than the migratory movement by itself. Thus, the links between social and linguistic facts have often been seen through the needs for integration and hence language was considered in this perspective and reduced to an epiphenomena¹. This point may be explainable by the process of scientific specialization that made a strict division between linguistics – aimed to investigate language as a full range of phenomena – and sociology – dedicated to human action in society (Moulène, 2015). On the other side, linguistics faced its own challenges to take into account the relations between language and such a social problem as mobility, despite the pioneering works of Labov in the 1960s. Blommaert even regrets « that the Saussurean synchrony survived in modern sociolinguistics » which seems to ignore the fact that “the mobility of people also involves the mobility of linguistic and sociolinguistic resources” (2010: 4) and as well the social integration process. For his part, Clyne (2003) also deplores that “contact linguistics, in the meantime, focused on the sociolinguistics and linguistic patterns resulting from migration”.

Nevertheless, we have to salute the abundant effort, in the contemporary research, so as to decompartmentalize the disciplinary boundaries, such as the works investigating multilingualism patterns resulting from migration (Extra and Verhoeven, 1998). From their part, many sociologists investigate the social *and* language issues of migrants. Thus, the Research committee 25 within the XIXth ISA Congress which takes place right now in Toronto organises special sessions such as “The Language of Multiple Belongings: An Intersectionality Perspective of Everyday Life”, “Migration, Language Integration and Inequalities” and “International Family Migration and Normative Languages”. In the same way, this issue of the RC25's journal *Language, Discourse and Society*, aimed to look at language from a sociological/sociolinguistic perspective, is dedicated to “' Migrants', 'Refugees', 'Boat people' and the Mediterranean 'Crisis': People in Words, Language issues” highlights the relevance and the fruitfulness of the researches related to the connexions between language and the social condition of migrants. Specifically, scholars were invited to explore how words and discourse take part in the process of identification involving the concerned displaced people and those of the host countries (Felder, 2016).

Since 2011, the European Union is facing the dramatic consequences of the political and social turbulences occurred in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa. According to the UN Refugees Agency, over 1.5 million people were forced to leave their countries since 2014.

¹This limit makes even more brilliant *The Ghetto*, in which Wirth analyses how the location names give people some identification frames, with strong consequences on their self-consciousness and behaviour.

The “crisis” reached a peak in 2015, with the civil war in Syria, the emergence of the Islamic State and the intervention of the Western coalition siding with the rebels to Bashar al-Assad's regime, which is supported by Russia. This led to a large-scale population displacement and a potentially critical humanitarian situation (Lopes Andrade, 2016). Media focused on these people's perilous journeys on the Mediterranean Sea, notably the Lampedusa catastrophe in October 2013 after the sinking of a poor condition and overcrowded boat which has cost 366 lives. But it should not distract us from taking into account the case of thousand families, who found a safe place and a generous welcome in many European countries.

There is still much to be learned about how the status and the place of this group are transposed into words. We usually consider “migrants”, “refugees” or “asylum seekers”² as synonyms and interchangeable and this confusion may easily lead to detrimental connotations. Consequently, a clear distinction should be done between the different wordings through which these displaced people are identified (Maley, 2016; Rodier and Portevin, 2016). For the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2006), “asylum seeker” apply for an international protection without yet knowing whether or not their claim will be accepted; among them, logically, “refugees” are those whose the request for asylum is successful and can settle in the country where the proceeding has been lodged. However, the UNHCR glossary is more questionable for “migrants” seen as “persons who leave their countries purely for economic reasons unrelated to the refugee definition, or in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood”. This formulation suggests that the refugee status is completely independent from economic distress whereas this one may often goes with deprivation of freedom and persecution. Indeed, the displaced people does not just need political protection, they also are without resources after forced exile. Hence, we are facing the fundamental problem of arbitrary criteria, which in our concerned case basically avoids the question of the (economic) migrants by rejecting them as potentially illegal³. Yet if it is legitimate to migrate when our homeland does not provide us the minimal resource, we are reluctant, to say the least, to see an economic “migrant” as a “profiteer”.

By this way, the special issue encourages us to distance ourselves from the formal definitions, does not fail to raise this semantic confusion and provides us some precious reflections. They highlight that ordinary citizens but even the speakers who would be very careful with their vocabulary (i.e. political leaders, journalists) usually label (legally) refugees as “(im)migrants” (or “asylum seekers”). However, it is true that this last term is at the same time the more generalizable one (migrating-leaving) and it is the reason why many scholars prefer to use it (Nail, 2015; Berry and al., 2015). However, there is a possible better way, the acronym “RASIM” (Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Immigrants and Migrants) that offers the advantage to weigh the different terms used in the social, media and political discourse, with their each potential of *signifiants* (Baker and al., 2008). By the way, RASIM is frequently used in the current literature.

² Our first intention was to deal here with the potential using of the term “boat people” in the current Mediterranean context. But finally we found two reasons to set it aside, firstly because the fact is marginal (few occurrences), secondly because the contributors did not consider the question.

³ Perhaps this point refers to the different meaning of “liberty” and the debate between the (free market supporters) liberal for whom we are free when we are allowed to decide by ourselves what to do with our resources/work/belongings and the other (progressive) liberal - but also Marxists heterodox economists, economic sociologists and historians following the line of K. Polanyi - for whom this freedom is a complete illusion for poor/unemployed/precarious people. The “bourgeois” freedom requires formal rights (and market economy) while the “progressive” one needs protection against the economical risks.

The four selected articles also point out the power of wording and discourses. Knowing that we use to identify situations and people by naming (Bourdieu, 1982), denomination forms are rarely neutral and often involve some connotations (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1977) and even more, some stereotypes (Katz & Braly, 1933). In this perspective, wording has a key incidence on social status and life perspectives in the host country ... or in case of forced return to the homeland (Groenendijk, 2011; Agier & Madeira, 2017). On the basis of different empirical material that they analyse with a stimulating diversity of method research, they reveal how, also for RASIM and their problems, words *do* situations (Austin, 1962). The 1951 International Refugee Convention (under the responsibility of UNHCR and ratified by 145 Member States) provides to refugees an international protection, that is not the case for the “migrants”, possibly irregular and under the threat of repatriation. Thus, legal texts and global treaties play in the process a crucial role as *felicity conditions*, knowing that it is by definition illegitimate for anybody to infringe legality, especially if this one depends on transnational agreements.

Beyond formal definitions and establishment of right at the international level, discourses regarding RASIM are widely reported by media and political leaders. These one focus on different ways the migratory situation and sometimes are able to impose their own representations linked with their editorial or political line. Maybe the most exemplary case is provided by “migrant” seen *legally* as people landing in Europe by choice (i.e., not for political reasons) and driven by economic motivations. In such a case, the presence of this kind of people is easily questionable and frequently questioned, above all if it fuels anxiety among citizens and suspects social disorder. And the recent Aquarius affair is significant to recall that the 1951 Convention does not more than recommend to the signatory countries, *without obligation*, the principles of the rights for displaced people. This leads us to put into question the term “crisis” as “Eurocentric” discourse with a negative bias towards the problem while the Middle East and a large part of Africa are structurally – and sometimes much longer since the starting of the “crisis” - ravaged by wars and poverty (Chouliaraki and Zabroski, 2017). Obviously, this general climate is badly favourable to RASIM.

In the first article, Tiffany Dykstra-DeVette and Andrew Sutherland show how the fake news involving RASIM play on the reader's feelings of national identification and contribute to develop its hostility to the first ones. Many fake news heightens the tensions in link with religious values and emphasize the idea that RASIM are dangerous and threaten the reader's safety and its rights as citizen, worker and taxpayer (i.e., they would be taking away jobs, supplies, subsidies and opportunities). They analysed seventeen articles using the different tags corresponding to the different naming (refugees, migration, forced migration, asylum seekers, and displaced people). Their corpus brings numerous stereotypes: RASAM are sometimes described as intolerant of our religious customs, sometimes as dangerous especially for “defenseless victims” (women and children), sometimes as potentially involved with terrorism and therefore able to commit a terrible act in which the reader would be among the victims. The scholars analyse fakes news as “strategic narratives” aimed to oppose the readers against RASIM and suggest that the first ones use to seek out some information in accordance with their deeply-held beliefs. On a more practical aspect, they insist on the fact that social scientists have a greater need than ever before to track fake news and encourage us to use efficient tools (as the fast-checking website Snopes.com). The danger of these news is even more huge that activists and leaders (as N. Farage in Britain) support them for political gain. This point may refresh an aspect of Austin's felicity condition: if only an appropriate speaker is able to perform what it says, an utterance is even more strong that it is asserted by an influential voice.

The second article by Gada Mahrouse examines the representations of RASIM in the context of the “jungle de Calais”, at the transit point between the continent and Britain through a corpus study of 127 headlines from *The Guardian* in 2015-2017. She focuses especially the terms chosen to categorise RASIM and explains the gradual tend to use “refugee” (portrayed as victim) rather than “migrant” (voluntary exiled) according the degree of empathy. Besides, the frames linked to the headlines underestimate the violence endured by RASIM (even when it causes their deaths) and paradoxically tend to underline the vulnerability of the French and British citizens, whose safety is not fundamentally threatened. This empirical work seems to corroborate the reversal of the roles analysed by Zygmunt Bauman (2016) – who underlines the crucial role of media in this anxiety production - and asserts that even the centre-left is not immune to the hostility to RASIM. Thus the corpus suggests that the European citizen are as endangered as these ones, which does not tie at all with the quantitative data revealing that the camp's people are overexposed to violence (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In addition, the scholar gives here a brilliant analysis of the “jungle” metaphor as a key element of a discourse racializing our relation to the camps. Once again, naturalization is never trivial in (critical) discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989): by portraying the camp as a “jungle”, the risk is to “bestialise” the residents (Faye, 1972; Brossat, 1998), which is probably the worst way for all of us to live together and treat each other as equals.

In the third contribution, Gavriel Nelken deals with the process of “passivisation” concerning RASIM in three British newspapers (*The Guardian* well known for supporting the centre-left, *The Times* more conservative-oriented and a tabloid, *The Daily Mail* which called to vote for UKIP in 2015) during the migratory “crisis” of 2015-2016 and shows how this vision of agency-less - agency as “individuals' capacities to act independently of structural constraints”(Abercrombie et al., 1994) – with political implications. Analysing the 27 articles corpus with the classical software Nvivo, he highlights that RASIM are generally portrayed as passive in two different ways, sometimes as a threat, that justifies repressive measures (“criminal”, “terrorist”, “sexual offender”), sometimes related to an urgent need, that calls for assistance (“forced migrant”, “women”, “shipwrecked victims”). This argumentative construction ever puts RASIM as completely dependant from the host country's action, makes them voiceless and leaves them outside society. This trend is general, whatever the editorial lines, although the rhetoric of passivating seems to be weaker in *The Guardian* corpus. Thus, if this latter empathises with the solidarity effort in the country, it slips back into victimisation instead of proposing an alternative discourse with RASIM's ability to take charge of their life. The context plays a key role: even *The Daily Mail* reacts emotionally during tragic events (the Calais “jungle” in August 2015; Alan Kurdi's pictures in September 2015) but goes back to “rhetoric of fear”. Indeed the wave of sexual assaults in Cologne during 2016 New Year's Eve, in which many RASIM were involved, was used to justify a “racialisation of sexism” (see also Szczepanik, 2016) with an anti-migration plea. Furthermore, Nelken meets some RASIM, collects their stories before comparing them to the media discourses. Then he discovered that on the contrary of the agency-less vision led by the medias, many RASIM identify themselves as free to choose, although they feel the constraints imposed by the rigid asylum system. On this way, the interactions between the scholar and the RASIM reveal the diversity of the migratory experience instead a one-dimensional identity often highlighted by the media. As well, the lexicon used by these people when they label themselves refers much less to the legal status (they often use “people” that brings us to the human reality of this rude experience) than the context: “refugees” (during the escaping), “migrants” and still “people” (during crossing). As well, the re-personalisation in link with theses narratives highlights that the difficulties do

not stop after their landing: they have to face the administration of the “host country”, with bureaucratic procedures that they don't master⁴.

The fourth paper by Francesca Ieracitano and Francesco Vigneri also analyses a print media corpus, but in the Italian context, regarding the landings in Lampedusa in 2011. Like Nelken, they investigate 311 articles taken from the front pages and the related articles of a wide newspapers panel - *Corriere della Sera* (liberal), *La Repubblica* (progressive), *La Stampa* (moderate), *Il Giornale* (right-wing), *L'Unità* (left-wing), *Libero* (right-wing). Despite of distinctive marks of each media discourse according the line, they insist on a common pattern: the strong coexistence of the “rhetoric of fear” with “humanitarian discourse” - with the exception of *L'Unità*, accepting much more readily the landings and a policy of recognition of rights. Furthermore, following Nelken's call for taking into account RASIM's voice, his colleagues from Rome investigate in what extent the narratives gathered after the crossings fit the media discourse on migration. Then they give the floor to the main protagonists so as to let them revealing the sense of their own decisions and actions, (Weber, 1922; Catalano, 2016; Orelus, 2016) instead of being completely mediated through stereotypes and “de-historicized” (Malkki, 1996). On the same way, the analysis corroborates the process of “passivating” underlined by Nelken. the description of RASIM's experience being indirectly done by witnesses (i.g., rescuers, journalists) rather than the main protagonists.

Hence, the public opinion tends to consider RASIM through the stereotypes conveyed by the media, often opposing on a Manichean way the “good” RASIM (mothers with children, who indubitably need for help) and the bad ones (“illegals”, men without family suspected to abuse the host country's aid and hence deserve to be rejected). On this way, the newspapers offer a “pietistic description” (supporting a humanitarian policy) of RASIM and as well an “alarmist” rhetoric (based on the menace of a “foreign invasion”). Focusing on the headlines, their analysis of content closely follows Nelken's and Mahrouse's results - stereotypes of “good” (poor/desperate) “bad” (“fraudulent”, “terrorist”) RASIM. This underlines how much language practices take part to “symbolic bordering” in the media representations (Chouliaraki & Zabrowski, 2017). This device does not just concern the *common sense* but as well the policies, far beyond the discourses of the right wing forces. Thus, the European Agenda is promoting “a strong common asylum policy” and as well “the prevention of irregular migration”⁵. On this way, the EA *makes* some of them *insiders* and some other *outsiders*, notably allowing the countries to establish visa restrictions with, sometimes, dramatic consequences for those undocumented people who try crossing from Calais to Britain⁶, Italy to France⁷ or elsewhere. This provides a strong argument for considering that the 1951 Convention would need to be substantially revised (Millbank, 2016).

The contributors underline, on different ways, the power of discourse on our relation to RASIM. Dykstra-DeVette and Sutherland use Burke's theory (1969) according to who identification plays a crucial role for individuals in their perception of others and has a significant impact on public policy and popular support for the RASIM. Ieracitano and Vigneri

⁴ The concept of “agency-less” could be put in parallel with the linguistic difficulties mentioned by Blommaert (2010) about the situation of “declared ‘language-less’” RASIM. Here, their language resources are not recognised as “legitimate”, especially to face administration/school/work, whereas they are progressively acquiring linguistics skills, but often not on an academical way.

⁵ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_AGENDA-15-4899_en.htm#4

⁶ <https://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/deaths-at-the-calais-border/>

⁷ https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/06/07/dans-les-alpes-la-fonte-des-neiges-revele-les-corps-de-migrants-morts-en-tentant-de-passer-en-france_5310861_3224.html

insist on the principle that media narratives contribute to shape perception of the migratory reality. And this is as true for public opinion as it is for the authorities of the host countries. Besides they suggest that the tighter migration policy stance under M. Salvini is connected to the bias with which media steer opinion.

The strong influence of CDA in the four contributions is not surprising if we consider this framework as particularly suitable to track down ideology in the media discourses. T. A. Van Dijk (1996, 2015) and the journal *Discourse and Society* edited under his direction have a decisive influence on these scholars and in the following line, we find in the collection some outstanding works from researchers of Lancaster (M. KhosraVinik, 2010). Mahrouse astutely harnesses the CDA's tools (metaphor, naturalization, headlines as “interpretation grid”) which enable her to point out a rhetoric device used by a headline to influence the reader in a particular way (i.g., presenting an inhabitant of Calais as “mother” threatened by RASIM without underlining that she is an activist of a far right organisation). For his part, Nelken claims his CDA-oriented approach when he's seeking how inequality and discrimination are “expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use” (Wodak, 2009:10). Furthermore, he considers a “reverse-CDA” process regarding how RASIM 's identity is naturalized in many media and political discourses, while the “standard” CDA's approach helps us to denaturalize, and deconstruct the stereotypes. This theoretical reference is even more impressive that we find in our collection four sociologists (Ieracitano, Mahrouse, Nelken, Vigneri – Dykstra-DeVette and Sutherland being specialists of communication studies). Perhaps it is a clue that current sociology is increasingly familiar with discourse analysis, including concepts and methodologies coming from linguistics. In this regard, Nelken goes far in his socio-linguistics approach when he emphasizes the fact that the media tend to limit RASIM to *passive* roles by using *passive* form.

Lastly, this collection points out several epistemological questions. Scholars, as ordinary citizens, inevitably have (spontaneous) representations, opinions and feelings about RASIM and the migration policies. Being fundamentally involved in *our* society, we cannot separate our subjectivity from our scientific approach (Elias, 1987). Claiming “a politically committed principle” in a research, as Nelken assumes in his paper, is perfectly acceptable and has been supported by the greatest masters (Hirschman, 1995). In addition, social scientists cannot remain indifferent in front of injustices and discrimination, and many theoretical traditions claim their right to share in social advancement (CDA, after Marxism). Furthermore, the issue shows that research is often impossible without self-involvement, and on the contrary that getting in contact with some RASIM is a crucial opportunity to learn more about them (see also Devereux,1967). On this way, scholars can play the role of “linguistic-cultural intermediaries” for RASIM, knowing that few journalists seem come to them or use to keep an ethical distance.

In closing, I hope that the readers of this issue will take inspiration from these noticeable examples. We have still a lot to know about RASIM, their sociological characteristics in relation to the migration process itself (length, steps, etc.), their unequal ability to escape to violence and persecution. On the linguistics aspects, we would open the debate towards the process of social integration in link with language learning issues, namely assimilation pathways, often difficult, in multilingual and intercultural contexts, in parallel of the lived experiences

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Frédéric Moulène, Guest Editor

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Call for guest-editors for e- journal *Language, Discourse and Society*

Language, Discourse & Society is an international peer reviewed journal published twice annually (June and December) in electronic form. The journal publishes high-quality articles dedicated to all aspects of sociological analyses of language, discourse and representation.

All interested guest-editors are invited to submit a proposal (a call for papers) in order to edit a thematic issue. The editor in chief will consider proposed call for papers based on clear commitment to studies of language. *Language, Discourse & Society* cannot publish proceedings. Guest-editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal. *Language, Discourse & Society* accepts electronic submissions year round. Please send your proposals to: journal@language-and-society.org

The role description of *Language, Discourse & Society* guest-editor is as follow:

Each guest-(co-)editor is responsible:

- for writing the call for articles: within the framework of *LD&S* editorial line and tacking into account that *LD&S* cannot publish proceedings, (co-)editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal.
- for all communications with authors
- for the evaluation process of articles, which includes:
- finding additional reviewers so that each article is peer-reviewed.
- taking a decision regarding the final selection of articles in accordance with the editorial line of *LD&S*
- for keeping the deadline to submit the whole issue to the editor in chief of editing. This includes to take care that minimal requirements are met (front, front size, space, margin, accuracy of references)
- for basic editing regarding the form and the style of each article: the (co-)editor should check whether the references within the article are mentioned in the bibliographical part, whether the references listed in the biographical part are all quoted within the article, and whether the template of *LD&S* is respected (letter font, size, etc.)

The guest-(co-)editor cannot publish an article in *LD&S*, neither as principal author, nor as co-author. His/her name is indicated as follow: “this issue of *Language, Discourse and Society* about {here the final title of the thematic issue} is edited by {here the name of the editor(s)}”.

The position of guest-(co-)editor is unpaid.

Call for Papers

Symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. Language, power and ethnicity

Thematic issues of "*Language, Discourse, & Society*", a journal published by Research Committee 25 "Language and Society" of the International Sociological Association, ISSN: 2239-4192, indexed in ERIH Plus.

Guest Editors: Anna Odrowaz-Coates (The Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University in Warsaw, Poland) and Sribas Goswami (Serampore College in West Bengal, India).

This thematic issue of *Language, Discourse and Society* is dedicated to language as a tool to investigate power, discourses, and cultural and semiotic practices. Language is conceived per se and looking at its social functions entangled in hidden power structures and complex internal and external relations. This subject is closely connected to the issues of globalization and ethnicity crisis. The focus is on symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. Symbolic violence refers to invisible mechanisms of power bestowed by not only verbal and written communication, but also as a tool for social engineering. In this framework, researchers are invited to submit papers on the dynamics of language and the linguistic norm negotiation, through globalization and localization processes in culturally diverse societies. Contributions which are related to children's rights, human rights, issues of gender, governance, ownership, education and socialization are also welcome.

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This thematic issue of *Language, Discourse, & Society* welcomes both theoretical and empirical articles that produce an exhaustive monograph of perceived/hidden symbolic violence in endo-exo symbolic exchanges represented through language, discourse and socio-cultural practises.

The guest editors are notably inspired by the works of Norman Fairclough, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Félix Guattari, Martin Heidegger, Henry Bergson, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Slavoj Žižek, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Walter Mignolo, and Ramon Grosfoguel. Contributions which use other references are welcome to enrich the overall thematic issue. The interest of the guest-editors already lead to the publication of *Symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. A post-colonial critique* (2017, published by Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warsaw).

Language, Discourse, & Society is an international peer-reviewed journal, focused on advancing sociological knowledge concerning language, face-to-face interaction, and other language-related social phenomena. The objective is to investigate language from a sociological and/or a sociolinguistic perspective. This will be taken into account in the selection of articles for this upcoming issue "Symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. Language, power and ethnicity."

In line with *Language, Discourse, & Society* policy, English, French and Spanish submissions will be considered.

Full original articles may be submitted to Anna Odrowaz-Coates (acoates@aps.edu.pl) and Sribas Goswami (sribasgoswami@gmail.com) by the **10th of December 2018**. If you have questions, authors are invited to contact the guest-editors.

This thematic issue will be published in June 2019.

Please follow the author guidelines indicated at the following URL, which includes a **template** for formatting: <http://www.language-and-society.org/journal/instructions.html>

Original Articles

« Migrants », « Refugees », « Boat people » and the Mediterranean Crisis: People in Words, Language Issues

guest-edited by Frédéric Moulène

Constructing Identification and Division through Fake News Reports of Refugees

Andrew D. Sutherland⁸ and Tiffany A. Dykstra-DeVette⁹

Abstract

As news is being accessed via online sources and virally circulated more and more, the question of source credibility and “fake news” is an increasingly important one. Some “news” sources have manipulated information to fit a specific political narrative that constructs refugees as burdens and dangerous to Western populations. This rhetorical media analysis finds that fake news with “refugees” in the subject or title manipulate information to construct a division between the reader of the narrative and refugees. This paper surveyed Snopes.com for fake news with the tag, “refugees” to understand the dominant rhetorical strategies being deployed. Using Burke’s theory of identification and division, these fake news articles promote the idea that the readers should identify with the xenophobic values implied in the articles while promoting division and a sense of inherent difference from refugees. The fake news articles identified in this study engage in specific strategies of identification and division depicting refugees as violating the audience values, dangerous to the audience and the society, and as taking away resources and opportunities from the audience. By using Burke’s theory of identification and focusing on how refugees violate the audiences’ values, are a threat to others, and are taking away opportunities and resources from the audience, the authors of these articles are promoting stereotypes and fear of the other to support a specific political narrative.

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Keywords

Fake news, Refugees, Media, Analysis, Rhetoric

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Introduction

Over the years, perceptions and practices of how countries engage with those who are seeking asylum have evolved, changed, and improved, while individual citizens may become disenchanted with assisting refugees or granting asylum to refugees (Levy, 2010). Where the average citizen may not be as informed about how a country is involved with refugees, what caused an individual to have a refugee status or the facts about refugees, the media, and the internet can offer more insight. The use of media to inform a population about refugees can produce imagery of refugees that does not necessarily correspond with reality (Cloud, 2004). In fact, research suggests that news media often depicts refugees as dangerous burdens, as those who are in need of Western intervention, and sometimes as humanized subjects (Dykstra, 2016; KhosraviNik, 2010). Media also has the ability to provide a voice to those who are marginalized and provide first-hand insight regarding displacement (Alhayek, 2014). However, many sources of media may make inflammatory statements or promote hysteria and hostility towards refugees, asylum seekers, and forced migrants (Khiabany, 2016). Rhetorical strategies in the media can perform a socializing and moralizing function (Burke, 1969), which can, in turn, have a significant impact on public policy and popular support for refugees.

Little is known about the role of fake news in mediated constructions of refugees. Fake news, as a source of (mis/dis)information, has become more prevalent prior to the 2016 United States Presidential Election, due to an increased amount of attention given to it (Cooke, 2017; Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). Fake news can be defined as a strategic narrative intended to divide individuals based on their personal beliefs and identity and can serve as a communication tool to achieve a political objective (Antoniades, O’Loughlin, & Miskimmon, 2010; Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013; Hellman & Wagnsson, 2015). Original conceptualizations of fake news classified this genre as similar to political or news-based satire that was originally intended as entertainment like The Onion or the Daily Show (Baym, 2005; Holbert, 2005). However, during the months leading up to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, more attention was given to fake news as a form of (mis/dis)information (Cooke, 2017; Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). (Mis/dis)information to an audience through social media and online news sites that promoted a specific belief or perspective on social and political issues (Cooke, 2017; Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). A special concern started to arise as these (mis/dis)information articles claiming to be actual news, circulating on the internet and social media and the possibility on how it may affect the 2016 election and possible policies in the future by affecting the perception of the average citizen (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). These concerns are due to how democracy depends on the voters’ ability to make decisions and judgment based on facts and with fake news (mis/dis)informing individual readers, it could facilitate a disruption in democracy in a facilitated way (Persily, 2017). These beliefs were also more concerning where a majority of fake news articles were heavily favoring one candidate during the Presidential election (i.e., President Trump) and discrediting others (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). However, Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) study estimated that even though fake news articles could have changed the possible vote of the individual, played a smaller role in the democratic result. At the same time, individuals who share these fake news article on social media have already chosen their candidate they wish to support (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). At the same time, since social media is more ideologically separated because individuals are more likely to friend/follow people who share their ideological position (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015), there is less of a chance of counter stories to

challenge the ideological stance of the fake news story from appearing on their social media page (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

As a strategic narrative, fake news can challenge individuals' ideals or it can be considered as a counter-narrative to other media sources as it reports information that matches other political or personal beliefs (Hellman & Wagnsson, 2015). However, the goal of fake news is not to report facts, but rather produce content that reinforces a politically driven narrative. Whether the content creators of fake news manipulate current information, use exaggerated examples, or create stories that are entirely false, rhetorical theory suggests that all serve a strategic function for an audience that will not be critical of the information presented (Cooke, 2017). Through online fake news sites, misinformation is spread to damage an individual or individual group to earning money from online users of their websites (Cooke, 2017). At the same time, these fake news articles promote populist ideas of 'fear of others' targeting vulnerable population (i.e., refugees) to promote policies that match their values and promote division (Speed & Mannion, 2017).

Even though fake news stories are being identified and individuals are trying to instruct internet users to use credible sources that provide factual information, readers are still continuing to click on these stories. Research suggests that readers of news articles are now not as interested in information that is factual or objective, but rather are seeking out information that is appealing to their own already preexisting beliefs or their emotions, thus creating a post-truth society (Cooke, 2017; Martin, 2017). With fake news playing a more decisive role in a post-truth society, the fake news articles that manipulate information on refugees surveyed for this study include information that is not based in reality, but instead is considered "alternative facts" or lies (Berghel, 2017). However, for the reader of the information, individuals may be reading the fake news article or seeking out specific information because it is confirming the readers preexisting set beliefs and perceptions, which can be attributed to the idea of confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). For example, previous research found that individuals search for information that confirms their attitudes (Lundgren & Prislín, 1998), a social stereotype of others (Johnson, 1996), and information that benefits oneself at the end (Holton & Pyszczynski, 1989). Through confirmation bias, individuals choose the media content they wish to engage with through select exposure of attitude consistent content and frequently spend more time with content that confirms their attitude, thus reinforcing those beliefs and their identity (Westerwick, Johnson, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2017). In particular, fake news that focuses on forced migration capitalizes on a narrative that constructs individual readers' identities using "value strategies" and emphasizes differences between the reader and refugees through otherization strategies.

As a means of constructing refugees as a social "other", fake news can create and manipulate information that depicts refugees and refugee behaviors as violating the readers' values. Through otherization strategies, media is able to tap into the audiences' sense of fear, (Monson, 2017) perpetuating negative stereotypes (Slavičková & Zvagulis, 2014; Young & Nájera, 2017). For example, Monson (2017), explored the discourse of American mainstream media and Ebola and found that otherization perpetuated the narrative that Ebola is all over or spreading across Africa. By trying to connect with the readers' identity and promoting division by playing to the audiences' emotions, the author of the fake news article is able to promote a certain value of anti-refugees by associating refugees or the other with negative concepts that could affect the audience.

1. Rhetorical Strategies of Identification and Division

To explore the idea that fake news is designed to have readers identify with specific beliefs and recognize differences between themselves and the "other", the theory of identification and division is used to explore a collection of fake news articles identified by the fact-checking website, Snopes. According to Burke (1969), identification is fundamental to being human and allows individuals to identify differences between themselves and others. Through identification, individuals relate to certain values and the “other” do not. In particular, Burke (1969) argues that identification can be useful as a persuasive tool, where the audience produces acceptance to the stance based on perceptions of how they perceive their status with the divine or relate themselves with an inherent good, while separating themselves from those who they perceive as the other. Thus, identification implies division and therefore these functions of language must be analyzed together (Burke, 1969). For example, Steimel (2009) used identification and division in a study exploring a situation that took place at Grand Island, where the media defined the Muslim employees as the least preferred immigrants because the media was promoting division from the desirable immigrant employee. Thus, forming a perception of refugees as lazy and having the audience identify as the hard-working American (Steimel, 2009).

However, with the intentional manipulation of false narratives, and the viral nature of fake news online, identification and division elevate constructions of refugees from locally specific discourses to nationally and internationally significant categorizations and assumptions. Specifically, fake news develops a division between the readers/audience and the refugees with the writer promoting the idea that refugees 1) threaten their values, 2) are threats to public safety, and 3) endanger the rights of the general population. In the following section, we detail the methods used in collecting and rhetorically analyzing fake news constructions of forced migration.

2. Methods

To verify if these news articles are classified as fake news or otherwise spreading inaccurate information, certain websites are committed to debunking and verifying news articles. In particular, Snopes.com is a well-known, nonpartisan fact-checking website which has compiled a list of online gossip, urban legends, fake news, and well-known information to validate or discredit the online narratives through online research and cross checking with other credible sources (DeGroot, 2011; Mikkelsen & Mikkelsen, 2017). Where previous research has used fact-checking websites to verify if the information is authentic and accurate (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). For the purpose of this paper, Snopes was an ideal tool to collect the data set used in this analysis. Seventeen articles were reviewed and analyzed. Data was collected through the search function, using the following tags: refugees, migration, forced migration, asylum, asylum seekers, and displaced people. While many of these articles overlapped with similar tags, all seventeen used the tag refugee, six involved migrants or migration, and six used asylum seekers. Other common tags for these articles used Syria, refugee crisis, and Muslim.

3. Results and Discussion

By using Burke's (1969) perception of identification and division, the fake news articles emphasized certain sets of values to connect with their audience, while promoting division

with the “other.” In many of the articles that were confirmed to be fake, the author would emphasize that the other (i.e., refugees) are dangerous to the audiences' values, safety, and perceived ownership. The first theme in fake news stories focused on a violation of the audiences' values, where the articles focused on religious values, western values, and targeting politically oriented group's values. In the next theme of fake news articles, safety is emphasized by how cultural "others" engage in violent activities, such as terrorist activities, assault, and rape, while focusing on victims who are stereotyped as innocent and defenseless (i.e., pregnant women and children). The final theme focuses on the idea that the audience rightfully deserves and the other is taking it away or using it. Specifically, fake news stories that promote the idea of perceived ownership by focusing on how the other is taking away jobs, supplies, resources, and opportunities for the audience. Overall, fake news stories are trying to promote that the audience should identify as an inherent good while promoting division with the other (i.e., refugees) and emphasizing that the other is dangerous or inherently bad.

3.1. Threat to Values

Fake news tends to focus on a certain set of values that the readers of the content identify with. Whether these are based on personal (westernized) values, religious values, or politically aligned values, the first strategy identified is the introduction of cultural norms and values to create identification and division among readers. To create a sense of division between the reader and refugees, fake news authors wrote articles that focus on how refugees are a threat to values such as religion (i.e., Christianity), western ideology, and political orientation. For instance, one fake news article entitled "Germany bans sausages: Pork removed from cafes and schools to not offend refugees," focuses on the idea that citizens will have to submit to the customs of the refugees to avoid offending them because their religion does not allow them to eat pork (LaCapria, 2016d). Germany is well known for their production and consumption of sausages. Articles like this suggest that refugees threaten even the most mundane cultural norms by targeting anyone who enjoys the occasional pork sausage. The article was pointed out by Snopes to have no factual information, but rather is designed to promote division between Germany reader and refugees by making them feel that if refugees are allowed into their country, they must submit their everyday lives to them, while trying to have the reader identify as a citizen of Germany and having the reader recognize refugees as the other (LaCapria, 2016d). At the same time, the article makes it seem as though the government is more concerned about refugees than their citizens, helping to create a divide between the government and the citizens (LaCapria, 2016d). Similarly, religion is used to target the largest probable audience and appeal to their identification with Christianity and division from cultural "others." One story debunked by Snopes entitled "Sweden bans Christmas lights in public to avoid angry Muslim refugees," manipulated information of where a town in Sweden decided not to put Christmas lights up on street lights because the parking and transportation office thought the new street lights would not be able to hold up Christmas decorations (Emery, 2016). However, rather than looking at the reasoning behind why the city decided not put up lights, the writer decided to manipulate the information to fit the narrative that Muslims would be angry and offended (Emery, 2016). The author of the fake news story is focusing on having the readers identify as Christians and that refugees are trying to violate a "Christian tradition of celebrating Christmas" (Emery, 2016), thus creating division between Christians and refugees.

Through otherization, stereotypes of the “other” help perpetuate certain worldviews and continue to promote differences between one group and the others (Slavíčková & Zvagulis,

2014; Young & Nájera, 2017). In the fake news article titled "Somali Muslims Take Over Small Tennessee Town and Force Absolute Hell on Terrified Christians," from Freedom Daily, created the narrative that Muslim Refugees implemented Sharia Law on the town members of Shelbyville, Tennessee, while being rude and uncaring towards the citizens, and targeting Christians with violent crimes such as a refugee shooting three churches (Emery, 2017b). Upon investigating, Snopes found that in a single year, there were only eleven Somali refugees that resettled in the town and with respect to the church shootings, while the man convicted of the crime had "recently converted to Islam," he was not a Somalian refugee (Emery, 2017b). At the same time, the fake news article was found to be using photos from the 2015 church shootings in Charleston, North Carolina by Dylan Roof (Emery, 2017b). By emphasizing the stereotypes of Muslim refugees being violent, deviant, and promoting Sharia law, the author tries to instill that the “other” violates certain beliefs and behaviors that the reader deems appropriate. The fake news article promotes identity and division by appealing to emotions through false reporting. The author leads those who identify with the Christian faith to feel anger or fear towards refugees who practice Islam, thus promote division through stereotypes.

Finally, many fake news articles capitalize on political identification, constructing stories that involve the opposing political party, and create a negative perception of the party to persuade their audience to reject the opposing political parties' efforts. In one fake news article from a blog titled FreedomDaily.com, an article posted with a misleading headline about a Rochester, Minnesota police raid on an Olive Garden, where President Obama was holding Muslim refugees (Palma, 2017b). The article was proven to be fake because Rochester police never raided an Olive Garden restaurant but arrested two men near an Olive Garden who were suspected of a crime (Palma, 2017b). The article created a division between those who identify with one political party by involving President Obama, when he was not, while also manipulating information that the police were raiding an Olive Garden rather than near an Olive Garden to fit a narrative that Democrats/Obama were smuggling in refugees illegally. The author of the fake news article was trying to create division between those who identify as Republicans and the other as Democrats, where the article implies that Democrats are trying to bring in refugees, while the audience of the article already disagrees with providing refugees status to these individual. The author is implying that Republicans are good, while Democrats are bad, while also associating Democrats with refugees. This idea is similar to a fake news article that claimed Hillary Clinton was smuggling refugees from Africa to Baltimore with her cargo ship, which was proven false by Snopes (Emery, 2017a). This article's target audience were individuals who do not like Hillary Clinton and associating refugees with Hillary Clinton has the reader also associate negative perceptions of refugees with Hillary Clinton and her supporters. However, in these articles, a certain type of language helps promote division between individuals based on their political views.

Continuing with the theme of political differences as promoting identity and division by manipulating information through language, one article, posted by Mad World News, focused on Hope Farm, a farm in South Africa owned by Andrew and Rae Wartnaby, who opened up their home to refugees (Evon, 2015). The fake news article made the claim that the refugees were Muslim and taken in by "bleeding-heart leftists," and after taking these refugees into their home, the refugees threatened to slaughtered the couple if they did not leave their home (Evon, 2015). From this article, Snopes.com used the Wartnaby's personal blog and other credible sources to verify the information. Snopes found that Mad World News reported that the refugees were Muslim while citing other sources. Those sources made no mention of the refugee religion (Evon, 2017). At the same time, while the Wartnaby's were threatened by the

refugees. both the Wartnaby's and other sources stated that the threats came from a small "breakaway group" that felt that their lives were ruined by being put into a refugee camp instead of being at the farm (Evon, 2015). the Wartnaby's did not feel that their lives were in danger, whereas the fake news story claimed the entire community threatened to slaughter them (Evon, 2015). This fake news article focused on the refugee's religion and the Wartnaby's political beliefs to promote a division between readers, the refugees, and the Wartnaby's with the intention of promoting division between both religious views and political orientation. By inaccurately referring to the refugees as Muslim and violent, the author tries to promote a sense of division between the refugees and the reader by suggesting that all Muslim refugees are dangerous. At the same time, language such as "bleeding-heart leftist," suggests that the author is attempting to force readers to identify their political orientation in comparison to the Wartnaby's or the left and claiming that "the left" is making dangerous decision that are possibly going to put others in danger if they try to aid refugees. By using language to connect the readers based on politically oriented values, the readers are able to identify with anti-refugee beliefs and policies.

3.2. Threat to Public Safety

Beyond creating division between the reader and refugees through their values, many fake news articles emphasize that refugees are dangerous and are a threat to the reader's safety. Whether the safety is of one's physical safety, health-related, or the concern for the safety of the innocent. In one article titled "Breaking: 15 people shot in Ohio by Muslim Refugee, Trump going to deport them all in one week. Do you support this," was found to be a fake news story by Snopes that manipulated information about a nightclub shooting to support an anti-refugee and anti-Muslim narrative (Garcia, 2017). The article creates division between the readers, particular Trump supporters and refugees by manipulating information about who the shooter was and emphasizing the religious differences between the reader and the shooter (Garcia, 2017). In reality, Snopes found that two men who were neither Muslim nor refugees were the main suspects of the shooting (Garcia, 2017). To appear more credible, fake news stories create fake quotes of credible individuals to help support their narrative. In this fake news story, the author quoted the governor of Ohio, John Kasich, even though there was no evidence in the quote (Garcia, 2017). This attempts to promote credibility for the article and helps readers recognize their identities as Ohioans, with the intentions to make the audience feel as if this situation can happen to them.

In the case of concern for safety as health-related issues, Snopes found a fake news article discussing how refugees are bringing in flesh-eating diseases to America (LaCapria, 2015b). This is promoting the idea that the reader of the article should identify as clean, while developing a sense of division with refugees, who are depicted as dirty. Since the fake news article depicts the refugees as dirty, the author makes it seem as though refugees are a risk to the readers' health. Finally, authors of fake news article when focusing on safety as the primary reason to be opposed to providing refugees asylum, focuses on stories that involve harm to women; particularly pregnant women, and harm to children. For example, one story entitled "Michigan: 'The Syrian Muslim son of a bitch raped me for hours,' says pregnant white women," discussed how a woman was attacked and raped by a Syrian Refugee (Evon, 2017). However, when Snopes investigated this article, it was found that the woman lived in South America, not Michigan, and she was being abused by her husband (Evon, 2017). The fake news author used Facebook photos of the woman at the hospital to help promote their narrative and add visualization of the injuries (Evon, 2017). While undermining the actual tragic event that this woman endured, the authors of this fake news story capitalized on her

trauma to fulfill a narrative. Through identification, the authors intrinsically make the point that the woman is white specifically to connect to an audience while pointing out the man who did this was Syrian, a Muslim, and a refugee to create division and make the readers create a stereotype of refugees.

In a similar story, another fake news source created another fake story of a pregnant woman being beaten by a Muslim refugee, but Snopes quickly pointed out that the photos used were from the movie "Proxy," as well as there was no evidence of the situation (LaCapria, 2017). In both situations, the authors of the fake news stories actively tried to construct the narrative that created women as the innocent victims and the refugees as barbaric and dangerous. In the case of children, one story by InfoWars entitled "Three Muslim 'refugees' rape little girl at knifepoint" discussed how a little girl was assaulted and raped by refugees and it was covered up by the city council in Twin Falls, Idaho (LaCapria, 2016c). However, through Snopes, it was found that the incident was not caused by Muslim refugee men, but rather by 3 teenage boys (LaCapria, 2016c). This article intrinsically manipulated information to make Muslim refugees seem like a menace to society, while being a danger to innocent children. At the same time, to play off the fears of the reader, fake news sources take advantage of tragic events and point blame at a population associating that population with the perpetrators of the tragic event. For example, after the Boston bombing, fake news sources quickly pointed out that the brothers were here under asylum depicting them as refugee terrorists, but the reality is that the father of the two applied for political asylum and the fake news sources manipulated the information to fit a narrative (LaCapria, 2015a).

These articles intend to divide readers by associating refugees with terrorists or criminals and manipulate the reader to identify as a possible victim or an individual that must protect their country. This is demonstrated in an article by InfoWars titled "Swedish Police 'Cannot Cope' with Huge Numbers of Rapes Since Migrants Arrived," where false claims that Muslim refugees are the causing an increase in rape cases making the Swedish city, Malmö the "Rape capital" of Europe, (Palma, 2017a). While these fake news sources create a mentality of "fearmongering" of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, the article makes a false report that police have stopped investigating rape since asylum seekers arrived in Sweden (Palma, 2017a). Snopes investigation into the article found that, while there has been a shortage of staffing with law enforcement in Sweden, they have not stopped investigating these crimes and there was no connection between the increase in rape reports and the increased refugee population (Palma, 2017a). The author of this article, intended to promote division between the audience and asylum seekers by constructing a narrative that the police force will not protect the reader from refugees, therefore making them feel unsafe. Snopes interviewed the police chief of Malmö, who emphasized that the "newly-arrived refugees" are not responsible for the "new crime wave" (Palma, 2017a). Others still support the fake news article, like the former UK Independence Party leader, Nigel Farage, who tweeted the fake news story via social media, giving the article credibility, and promoting the narrative that refugees of being dangerous (Palma, 2017a). Thus, depicting refugees as savages through the manipulation of information.

3.3. Threat to General Rights

The final theme emerging with fake news stories is a narrative that refugees are taking away resources and opportunities that the audience rightfully deserves. In particular, they focus on jobs, government subsidies, and resources. In the fake news article "American Yogurt Billionaire: 'Hire More Muslim Refugees,'" the author targets the CEO of Chobani yogurt as

he plans on hiring refugees in other countries (LaCapria, 2016b). However, the article manipulates the CEO's quote where he plans on hiring refugees in his other factories around the world by making it seem like the CEO is planning on bringing an "Islamic surge" to the United States (LaCapria, 2016b). Thus, readers identify as future employees and feelings that refugees maybe taking away their job opportunity. By constructing an image that refugees as taking away these opportunities from citizens, the authors of fake news articles are producing an image of refugees as if they are stealing from the reader.

Looking at government subsidies, fake news authors want the reader to identify as a taxpaying citizen and conclude that their taxes are not developing opportunities for them but are being wasted on the "other." One example focuses on President Obama cutting funding for veterans and giving it to refugees in the fake news article "Obama cuts 2.6 billion from veterans while allocating 4.5 billion to Syrian migrants moving to America" (LaCapria, 2016e). It was found that this information was untrue (LaCapria, 2016e). The article intended to manipulate readers against President Obama and refugees. This also goes hand and hand with political ideology and how fake news authors wish to promote division through politics. Another article that emphasizes government resources and the tax dollar narrative is entitled "Taxpayers fund migrants B&B rooms in top holiday destinations" (LaCapria, 2015c). When analyzed, Snopes found that the fake news article was written with no backing or evidence to support its claim (LaCapria, 2015c). The article discusses how taxpayers' money is being used for luxurious hotels for refugees (LaCapria, 2015c). In truth, the author of the fake news article used a random picture from the internet and created a narrative surrounding the idea that refugees are benefiting from the country's people (LaCapria, 2015c). In this situation, the author wants the reader to identify as a taxpayer whose tax dollars are not benefiting the reader.

Finally, there comes the narrative of resources in relation to fake news regarding refugees. Whether these resources focus on food, water, or energy, fake news articles create a perception that refugees are stealing from citizens. The fake news article "Islamic refugee with gas pipeline plans arrested in New Mexico Border County" focuses on how a female refugee was planning to steal information from a gas pipeline company and divert the resources to Mexico, but Snopes found no information on this event actually occurring (LaCapria, 2016a). Rather, this article was designed to make it appear refugees are thieves and are stealing from the citizens and the country and working with another "other" (i.e., Mexico) to promote division with the reader who supports neither group. These articles are designed to create division by portraying refugees as thieves and the author wants the reader to identify as both a taxpayer and a victim of theft.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fake news stories intrinsically manipulate information or create a narrative with no evidence, with the intention of manipulating the audience to perceive refugees with fear or anger. By addressing the reader's values, the reader identifies themselves as an inherent good, while perceiving refugees as those who wish to destroy or control those values. The author of fake news stories capitalizes on the readers' fear while depicting refugees as barbaric or dangerous. Finally, the authors of fake news stories depict refugees as thieves of tax dollars and resources creating division as the reader identifies as a productive taxpaying citizen or the possible employee. The use of fake news and false narratives directed at refugees depict them as a dangerous burden to the western society (Dykstra, 2016). Fake

news tries to capitalize on individuals' emotions and paints a false narrative of a group of individuals by making the reader think of a refugee population as the enemy.

Further limitations of the following study must be considered. The following study relies on the interpretation of the researchers of Snopes.com. By relying on the researchers of the Snopes articles to verify if the “fake news” story is accurate/inaccurate, true/false, or designed to inform/misinform the audience, the following study has an expectation that the researchers of the Snopes article are using credible information to verify the information of the “fake news” stories and that Snopes is a reliable media source. This includes that the fake news explored through the interpretation of Snopes is exploring articles that include falsification and forgery. To prevent this limitation, future research should run verification on the fake news articles through multiple fact checker websites. To verify fact-checking articles, each of the fact-checking websites should have similar finding focusing on fake news stories as fake, falsifications, or forgeries. At the same time, a majority of the fake news articles that were analyzed for this study and that were present on Snopes were predominately right-leaning. This could be because individual online users may be more likely to submit these articles to fact-checking websites for verification or fact-checking websites may have a left-leaning bias (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

As a call to action, it is an individual's duty to think critically about news media that may be considered biased. Identifying themes in fake news' strategies of identification and division is a critical step in helping readers become more attuned to the ways that information is manipulated and implications that these strategies can have. Individuals need to research information that they have read from various and diverse news sources to verify information. At the same time, when reading news articles that may have been manipulated to fulfill a narrative, it is up to the reader to look up the history of the author and the website of the article to see if there is a history of faking news. Finally, when on social media and one sees an article that may be or is known to be fake, the reader should, in a civilized manner inform the poster of the manipulated information. While individuals may have posted the article based on their inherent biases, engaging in civilized discussions can lead the poster of the article to understand the other perspective, while informing them about the misinformation or disinformation and the reality of the article. However, due to confirmation bias, if a reader chooses to read an article that confirms their biases and helps with their identity stability, they may not research information to verify the credibility of the author and article. Through the means of confirmation bias, individuals do research to find evidence to strengthen their stance and commitment to their attitudes and beliefs (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001). While organizations such as Facebook and Google have put in efforts to combat fake news sites from advertising on their platforms (Wingfield, Isaac, & Benner, 2016), individuals will search for information that still addresses preconceived attitudes and beliefs (Jonas et al., 2001).

In Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) article, the authors address the concern of fake news and address the question of “who becomes the arbiter of truth” when it comes to interpreting information. Through the following study, individuals who would write fake news articles on refugees are not looking for the absolute truth and those who are reading about refugees are not looking for facts, but rather both parties are creating or looking for information that confirms their biases or their version of the truth. While Facebook and Google can try to make the efforts to prevent the sharing and the spread of fake news and make sure accurate information is more prevalent (Wingfield et al., 2016), these sites will still have an audience that will wish to confirm their attitudes and beliefs or in reality, the audiences' perception of

the truth. Thus, addressing the idea of a post-truth society and addressing the concern that individuals are searching for information that supports their beliefs, even when not true (Cooke, 2017).

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The construction of European vulnerability in *the Guardian* news headlines on Calais: Portraying migrants as threats and moderating the dangers they face

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Abstract

This article contributes to research on news media representations of migrants in Europe. It examines 127 headlines on the migrants in the Calais, France camps known as the “jungle” that were published in *The Guardian* over a two-year period from 2015- 2017. Two specific themes are examined: the terms used to refer to categorize the migrants and their implications, and how often violence towards migrants is reported in the headlines. The headlines were first searched to consider “the vexed question” of how to characterize the transient people in Calais and contemplate the effects these choices (de Genova 2017: 8). The headlines were then examined for how violence, vulnerability and death are represented. The article reaches two preliminary conclusions. Firstly, that the significant increase of the use of the term “refugee” rather than “migrant” in the headlines suggests a gradual trend toward more empathetic representations overtime. Secondly, the lack of headlines on the violence towards migrants and on the many deaths that have occurred within that period indicate that *The Guardian* headlines perpetuate the idea that it is British and/or French citizens who are equally vulnerable in the face of the migrant “crisis”.

Keywords

Calais, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, vulnerability, news headlines

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Introduction

On February 14, 2016, the British *MailOnline* tabloid (an offshoot of the *Daily Mail*) published an article on how the presence of “migrants” in Calais, France has impacted the life of one French resident of Calais named Simone Hericourt. Written by Corey Charlton (2016), the article’s headline reads: “French mother claims police are barred from ‘Muslim only’ area of Jungle migrant camp as she says Calais residents are terrified of going out after dark” (Charlton, 2016). In bold letters, just below the headline, Hericourt is quoted saying that “she and others live in constant fear” as a result of the supposed increase in crime caused by the migrant population in Calais. The bulk of this news article is primarily a translation of a political speech that Hericourt gave on February 7, 2016—one that subsequently made her an important figurehead in France’s anti-immigration movements.¹¹ Perhaps attempting journalistic neutrality, Charlton ends the article with a brief acknowledgment that Hericourt’s narrative does not necessarily accurately reflect the situation in Calais. For instance, he quotes an official who indicates that the police “have a constant presence in and around the camp, and these claims [i.e. Hericourt’s fears] have no basis in reality.” Charlton also reports that up to 250 riot police were surrounding the camp at that time – in addition to the ongoing regular presence of the military and police. In the final sentence of the article, Charlton draws attention to the fear and violence experienced by the migrants in Calais, writing that they “are increasingly being threatened and physically attacked by some armed civilians.”

This news story is a striking, though perhaps exaggerated, illustration of how news headlines are presented in ways that propagate narratives of migrants as threats to national security. Indeed, a basic application of some of concepts taken from Critical Discourse Analysis such as attention to concepts of metaphor, actor description, social identities, and presupposition (Van Dijk, 2015, 477), reveals that the story is structured to present the migrants as threats and downplays the fears that they face. For instance, by describing Hericourt as a “mother,” the headline implies she is an ordinary citizen and distracts readers from the fact that she is a political figure. Similarly, the term “Muslim only” in the headline suggests that the migrants are taking over significant areas of France. The emphasis on Hericourt being “terrified” suggests that the French citizens of Calais are the ones who are under threat. The average reader would have to read the entire article, up to the very last sentence, to get a sense of some of the threats and dangers that the migrants routinely face. The article also omits to report about the many migrant fatalities that had taken place in and around Calais at that time.

It is not surprising that such a sensationalist headline would appear in the *Daily Mail*. This ‘popular press’ media outlet combines news with titillating crime, scandal, and celebrity gossip. It is well-known for its hyperbolic conservative views and has been criticized by human rights organizations for their coverage of refugee, migrant and asylum issues (see Ibrahim & Howarth, 2015; 2016). For this reason, this article will instead focus on headlines in *The Guardian* broadsheet newspaper – one that is believed to offer more empathetic reporting on the migrant “crisis” (Silveira, 2016). Nevertheless, the *Daily Mail* report is a good entry point for this article because it is a salient illustration of what many have argued – that the media can play a significant role in creating public perceptions of migrants as threats. In his book *Strangers at our door* (2016), Zygmunt Bauman addresses this paradoxical yet now commonly accepted western perspective on migrants. He points out that instead of being defined and treated as a vulnerable part of humanity who are merely searching to restore the basic rights of which they have been violently robbed, they have come to be seen as threats to national security. For Bauman, this has been largely created by news media and politicians who suggest Europeans are vulnerable in the face of such a “crisis”.¹²

¹¹ The *MailOnline* article report includes a link to the video recording of the speech which was first uploaded to YouTube by ‘Riposte Laique,’ a group opposing Muslims in France.

¹² The use of quotation marks around the term “crisis” will be explained further along.

With a focus on language use and discourse in news media communications, this article will investigate *The Guardian* broadsheet newspaper headlines about Calais migrants from 2015-2017. Specifically, it offers an analysis of these headlines to further explain some of the ways in which the plight of migrants and even their actual deaths become overshadowed by the threats they purportedly pose. As stated above, *The Guardian* was specifically chosen because it is widely seen as having a more critical centre-left leaning political stance than other major newspapers (Silveira, 2016) and would thus presumably offer a more nuanced representation of migrants than popular press tabloids like the *Daily Mail*. *The Guardian* was also selected because it is seen as one of Britain’s quality newspapers and has one of the most wide-reaching news websites in the world with a total daily reach of more than 2.2 million people (Berry et al., 2015: 29). The period of 2015-2017 was determined because according to the EU parliament, the number of people applying for asylum in the EU peaked at 1.26 million that year, thereby triggering the start of the current “crisis” (Europarl, 2017).

The analysis focuses on the city of Calais in Northern France because as a border city, its location has drawn several thousands of displaced and undocumented people. Located on the French side of the English Channel, Calais is the closest geographic point from Europe to England and is the busiest port between the UK and North-West Europe. Refugees have set up camps there as they try to find ways to cross the border into the UK. They want to claim refuge in the UK (rather than in France or elsewhere) because they believe it offers them better prospects or because they have existing kinship ties to British Nationals. Many have used Calais’ multi-modal transport links (including the ferry port and the Eurotunnel) to get into the UK by hiding in, on, or under ferries, trains, cars, and trucks. As they seek out opportunities to transport themselves to the UK, they live in tents and have developed networks in Calais and its vicinities. Their presence as well as their risky efforts to get to the UK has resulted in a lot of news attention on the area.

The article begins with a brief review of theories and literature that address the social and political implications of the language and discourses used to describe migrants in Calais, the use of the term “jungle” metaphor to describe the camp, and the framing of the migrants’ presence in Calais as part of the larger European “crisis”, and the way in which discourses of violence and vulnerability are used in reference to migrants. The second section describes the research methods that were used to collect headlines and the main findings. The article concludes with a brief discussion on how the Guardian headlines help to explain Zygmunt Bauman (2016) contention that migrants have come to symbolize European vulnerabilities and insecurities and normalizes the discourse of migrants-as-problems.

1. Language, terms and discursive frames

To understand the current political complexities of the situation in Calais and the terminology that is used to describe it, it is important to note that seeking asylum is a legal right under the international 1951 Refugee Convention. Within this agreement, signatory countries are obliged to examine the claims for protection from persecution of every individual who gets through their borders. However, the agreement does not oblige signatory countries to provide legal entry or safe passage (Millbank, 2016). Consequently, European countries put and keep in place visa restrictions to deny entry to people from poor and war-ravaged countries. Since a visa is needed by many to enter a country and a visa requires money and strict criteria to be met, and since you cannot claim asylum from abroad, many must then take life-threatening risks. As Millbank (2016) notes, entry laws necessitate illegal and clandestine entry to the UK and therefore may explain the countless

injuries and deaths that have incurred through these attempts. For Millbank, these deaths and injuries clearly demonstrate the outdatedness with the 1951 convention.

Calais is a compelling case of this reality. The border politics there have been referred to as a “hellish dead-end (Dembour & Martin, 2011: 124). The UK/France border at Calais is also exemplary of the trend of western nation-states to restrict entry through notions of fear of security. A direct link can be made between these border measures and the escalating harassment, detention, and criminalization towards refugees. For example, the UK government has put in place countless procedures to block their entry and in 2014 pledged £12m to France to assist in “security including building 16ft fences around the port area topped with coils of razor wire and heavily-armed French riot police to guard the gates” (BBC News, March 3, 2016).

The analysis presented here seeks to contribute to scholarship on news media representations of the migrants in Europe in recent years. Studies on the representations of migrants in Western media have identified the existence of several familiar and commonly circulating “figures” (Silveira, 2016; Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore, 2015; Kaye, 1998). In addition, it has been argued that they are represented through “negative” or “positive frames” (Berry, et al., 2015) or archetypes of “good” or “bad” that are made recognizable through gender and race (Szczepanik, 2016). Whereas “bad” ones are depicted as invaders, fraudulent opportunists or as threats to national security and the “good” are typically women and children who are seen as vulnerable victims in need of assistance or rescue. Others have argued that a type of “symbolic bordering” linguistic practice occur in the media representations of migrants, which like the actual geographic borders, determine whether they humanized or vilified (Chouliaraki & Zabrowski, 2017). This article contributes to existing studies on media representations in three specific ways. One, it focuses on headlines and not the content of the article. Two, whereas other studies have compared the Guardian’s more positive coverage to other more right-wing British papers, it focuses exclusively on the Guardian. Three, it focuses exclusively on two themes which together offer insights on the question of vulnerability.

One of themes explored in this article pertains to the categories and terminology used to label migrants in Europe. As Picozza (2017) notes, “the discursive realm of what we call “migration” is much more ambiguous than the obvious regulatory practices of border control, detention, and deportation” (233). To this end, the analysis presented in this article proceeds from the understanding that the particular figures of the “migrant” and the “refugee” have been discursively produced and that in recent years both terms have come to invoke the same iconic figure (Nail, 2015; Rellstab and Schlote, 2015). Recognizing this, and to be more inclusive and to avoid legal inaccuracies, unless I am directly quoting, I use the term “migrant” to refer to the transient people in the Calais camps. This decision comes with the uneasy recognition, however, that it can have the inadvertent effect of detracting from the precarity that the people in the Calais camps face and connotes that they are there out of choice rather than persecution. Nevertheless, my decision to use the inclusive term “migrant” is based on Nail’s (2015) point that it can be used as “a political concept” to identify the common points where different mobile figures including the refugee and the undocumented “are socially expelled or disposed as a result, or as the cause, of their mobility” (11).

Since the categories and terminology are a central point of my subsequent argument, it helps to begin with a discussion of the complex, confusing discursive terrain around the terms “migrant”, “refugee” and “asylum seeker” and their conflation.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2006) glossary, the terms are defined as follows:

Asylum Seeker: An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been

finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker.

Refugee: A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for by international or regional instruments, under UNHCR’s mandate, and/or in national legislation.¹³

Migrants (economic): Persons who leave their countries purely for economic reasons unrelated to the refugee definition, or in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood. Economic migrants do not fall within the criteria for refugee status and are therefore not entitled to benefit from international protection.

Significantly, in these definitions, asylum seeker and refugee are labels that require official recognition based on certain criteria. Part of the confusion around categorizing those in Calais comes from the difficulty in definitively asserting their legal status (Dembour and Martin 2011). Since not all the displaced people in Calais are legally recognized as having qualified for asylum seeker or refugee status, the more generalizable term “migrants” is often used to describe them. However, as the above UNHCR definition illustrates, the parenthetical qualifier of “economic” in regards to the term “migrants” shows that in relation to “refugee” and “asylum seekers”, migrants are distinguished as those who decide to voluntarily leave their countries for economic reasons. As the UNHCR explains elsewhere, “We say ‘refugees’ when we mean people fleeing war or persecution across an international border. And we say ‘migrants’ when we mean people moving for reasons not included in the legal definition of a refugee” (Edwards, 2015)

Despite the differences between them, however, there is a tendency for newspapers to switch between using labels often within the same article. In fact, the Guardian has been found to use these terms interchangeably more than other European newspapers. One example of this trend cited by Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore (2015) is: “Eritreans make up a large proportion of the *illegal migrants* arriving in Southern Europe each year. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, says the number of Eritrean *asylum seekers* rose threefold to over 37,000 over the first 10 months of 2014. (4 February 2015)”. Exploring the different and often interchangeable uses of these terms in three UK broadsheet newspapers *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent* which span the political spectrum (*The Times* – conservative; *The Guardian* – liberal; and *The Independent* – claims to be free from political affiliation), Ron Kaye (1998) argues that compared to “refugee” and “asylum seeker,” the use of the term “migrant” has the effect of casting doubt on the “genuineness” of their claims (167). Kaye’s study also shows that the timeframe of terms used in the newspapers is significant insofar as they shape public perception on about legislation on border control. A more recent comprehensive research study commissioned by the UNHCR also illustrates that the confusing terminology is directly related to “the negative myths associated with asylum seekers and refugees” (Berry et al., 2015: 15). They found that, although the majority of those now in Europe would qualify as “refugees” because they are “fleeing from war, conflict or persecution at home, as well as deteriorating conditions in many refugee-hosting countries,” they are most often referred to as “migrants” (Berry et al., 2015: 36). To sum up, while “refugees” and “asylum seekers” are legally protected under international agreements, “migrants” are not. Moreover, because “migrant” is associated with “economic migrants” who travel by choice (Alia & Bull, 2005 cited in Berry et al., 2015: 36), its use is more likely to provoke public concerns about how their presence lessens the financial resources of the host countries.

This article is also concerned with the circulation of the terms “jungle” and “crisis”. The use of these terms demands careful consideration because of the effective symbolism they carry. For

¹³ There are different sub categories such as “convention” “mandate,” and “prima facie” refugees (for more see UNHCR Glossary).

example, although the term “jungle” was allegedly first coined by the asylum seekers themselves to capture the dehumanizing conditions of the Calais camp (Harker, 2016), the term has now become a shorthand way to invoke the inhuman (Rygiel, 2011; Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Ibrahim and Howarth’s study of the media uses of the “jungle” metaphor in reference to Calais shows that it invokes the “older colonial meanings” of “a barbaric space” found in Kipling’s *Jungle Book* (1894) and Conrad’s (1899) *Heart of Darkness* (2015: 5). In addition, they point out that the representation of the camps as “unordered and unlawful spaces” through the jungle metaphor has enabled the authorities to “justify the razing” and “demolition of the shelters and the dispersing of its occupants” (2015: 1, 7). In other words, despite the original intentions of its use, references to the Calais “jungle” discursively draws racial lines of civilization. Likewise, de Genova explains that the term “crisis” is largely equated with a loss of control over the ostensible borders of Europe” (9) thereby provoking fear and anxiety. Writing about “vocabularies of crisis”, Carastathis, Spathopoulou, and Tsilimpounidi (2018) point out that the term operates as a “frame-braking moment” to refer to a “sudden change, a temporal interruption of a condition of normality” or “a moment of exception”. Furthermore, they point out that the term falsely infers that things will return to “normal.” They explain that this results in “a feeling of nostalgia towards what existed ‘before’”. As Chouliaraki and Zabroski (2017), correspondingly observe, the Eurocentric invocations of the term have framed the one million arrivals in Europe in 2015 as a sudden and unexpected event with exclusively negative effects for the continent. because as De Genova notes, “the naming of this crisis as such operates precisely as device for the authorization of exceptional or emergency governmental measures toward the ends of enhanced and expanded border enforcement and immigration policing” (9). Echoing this, Chouliaraki and Zabroski (2017) write, “while the term is extensively used in academic discourse and public debate, it ignores three important things: (i) the systemic causes that led to the increase in arrivals in Europe – the ongoing conflicts of Central Asia and the Middle East as well as conflict and poverty in East Africa and elsewhere; (ii) the overstretched hosting capacity of non-European countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, which are already hosting approximately five million refugees; (iii) the ongoing nature of refugee flows towards Europe, which, which are equally lethal today as they were in May–December 2015 (632, note1).

A second theme in the headlines examined in this article pertains to discourses of violence and vulnerability. The theoretical foundations for this aspect of the analysis comes from studies on the notion of “deserving” subjects within refugee law and humanitarian reason (Fassin, 2013) and how humanitarian interventions and responsibilities vis-à-vis refugees are understood by the international community (Maalki, 1996). As noted earlier, the analysis presented here is especially inspired by Bauman’s (2016), argument that refugees have paradoxically become symbols of European vulnerabilities and insecurities. This transfer of vulnerability, Bauman argues, is achieved largely through news media which have been instrumental in producing anxieties and fears about the migrant “crisis” for Europeans. Given the focus on violence and death, the paper also draws from Guenebeaud’s (2016) work on how biopower operates at the UK/France border. Guenebeaud uses the work of Michel Foucault to show that the border practices and police encounters in Calais are overdetermined by how migrants are constructed in terms of race and class, and that these border practices and constructions form how we regard the worth of their lives.

2. Methodological approach and findings

The focus on headlines was derived from media and communications scholar Teun van Dijk’s contention that they “play a special role in information processing” and are therefore “more than just the boldly printed first sentences ‘on top’ of news reports” (1988: 226). He explains that the headline is as important as the content of the story. Moreover, van Dijk (1988) argues that headlines both “summarize” and “provide the conceptual and epistemic information” (229) that, in turn, “define the situation” (257); and so “[w]hat is said in the headlines will probably be recalled best,

and again be used in the interpretation of later news reports, as well as in everyday conversations” (229).

Building from these theories, the following methodological design was developed. First, *The Guardian* headlines from a two-year period from 01/01/2015 to 01/01/2017 (inclusive) were collected using broad search (migrant* or refugee* or asylum) *and* (Calais or jungle).¹⁴ In case some headlines did not use the “refugee” migrant” or “asylum” designators, a second search was conducted with the words (Calais or jungle*) *and* (death or die* or kill*). After the duplicates were eliminated, the sample was comprised of 127 headlines. Second, the headlines were then analyzed using discourse analysis methods put forward by Jiwani and Richardson (2011) and van Dijk (1988). Specifically, two levels of coding were conducted. In the first, the sample was analyzed using a coding framework that sought to capture the frequency of the uses of the categories of “refugee” “migrant” and as well as the terms “jungle” and “crisis”. In the second, the headlines were thematically grouped according to explicit references of violence and death. Here only *explicit* references of abuse injury, violence or death were counted. That is, implicit headlines on the threat of violence were not used. For example, the headline “Women and children arriving at Calais's migrant camps 'need greater protection” was eliminated. Headlines in which the violence was represented as being a struggle between two equal sides or when it was not clear who initiated it, such as, “Calais camp scuffles break out as 2,000 refugees prepare to leave” were also eliminated.

2.1. Theme 1: Categories and labels

The headlines were first searched to consider “the vexed question” of how to characterize the transient people in Calais and contemplate the effects these choices (de Genova 2017: 8). As Table 1 reveals, over the examined two-year period “migrant(s)” was used a total of 48 times, and “refugee(s) a total of 73 times. Furthermore, the frequency of the use of the terms migrant(s) and refugee(s) significantly changed over the two years. In 2015, “migrant” was used 44 times. Yet, in 2016 the frequency of the term “refugee” jumped from 18 to 55, and “migrant” was only used four times. In addition, while the word “crisis” appeared 11 times in 2015, it was not used in a headline at all in 2016.

Table 1. Frequency of use of key categories and terms

Terms	2015	2016	total
migrant(s)	44	4	48
refugee (s)	18	55	73
asylum (seeker/claimant)	3	3	6
jungle(s)	1	7	8
crisis	11	0	11

In the 127 headlines, the term “jungle” appeared eight times throughout. Of these, the term was once used to describe a fundraising initiative of a makeshift library space called “jungle books” created by a migrant in the camp (Bausells, 24 November 2015). Although the term “crisis” was used in eleven headlines in 2015, it was not used at all in 2016.

Before interpreting the presence of these terms in the headlines, it is important to reiterate that it is not their accuracy that is of concern. As de Genova (2017) reminds us, the ambivalence and equivocation of the “classifying, naming and partitioning” migrants and refugees are telling signals of the ambiguities and contradictions that bedevil such terminological categories (9). In analysing

¹⁴ The Factiva database was used. Together these parameters resulted in headlines that exclusively focus on the region of Calais.

their use in *The Guardian* headlines, the objective, rather, is to consider patterns of use and what they signify.

Several preliminary findings can be gleaned. Recalling that “refugees” are often thought to be victims whereas the term “migrant” has more derisive connotation of wrongdoer because it connotes they are there by choice for economic gain, the table above indicates a trend towards more empathetic representations in the headlines. The data also reveals a sharp decrease in the panic-provoking term “crisis” and the term “jungle” which, when decontextualized serves to dehumanize the migrants. The increase and more frequent usage of the term “refugee” (vs. “migrant”) in *The Guardian* headlines as well as the less frequent use of the term “jungle” indicates a hopeful discursive trend that helps to lessen the constructions of asylum seekers as lesser human” (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2015: 5). Similarly, the significant decrease in the use of the more discursively sensationalist terms of “crisis” which provokes anxieties and “migrant” which suggest “economic migration driven by choice is indicative of more thoughtful textual choices over the two-year period. One can tentatively conclude then, that at the level of word choice, *the Guardian* headlines optimistically reflect a shift towards more empathetic depictions.

2.2. Theme 2: Violence, death and vulnerability

The question of how violence, vulnerability and death are represented in *the Guardian* headlines unambiguously exposed the core argument presented in this article: that mainstream news headlines portray migrants as threats to national and personal security and downplay the fears that they face. For instance, of the 127 headlines, only the following five focused on explicit violence towards refugees:

- a. French police watchdog investigates video of alleged abuse of Calais migrants
- b. Calais crisis: medics struggle to cope with number of injured migrants
- c. Calais lorry driver's video shows swerve towards refugees
- d. Children in the Calais refugee camp are at risk. Social workers must act
- e. Refugees at risk in Turkey and Calais

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Browsing the Guardian headlines on Calais over the 2015-2017 period, the average reader would likely end up with the impression that the migrants in Calais are only sporadically endangered. Although two of the headlines (a & b) connote that abuse and injure are rampant, the qualifiers “at risk” and “alleged” (d & e) minimize the dangers they face.

More importantly, over the two-year period, an equal number of headlines focussed on the threats of violence that the migrants pose towards Europeans. To be precise, the following five headlines focussed on migrant violence towards Europeans.¹⁵

1. Calais migrant crisis: Chaos will continue until weekend at least, police warn
2. Lorry drivers warn of escalating violence with refugees in Calais
3. Calais refugee violence putting lorry drivers at risk, says victim
4. Disturbances flare in Calais as refugees try to break into lorries to reach UK
5. Dutch journalist mugged by men at Calais refugees' camp

Indeed, unlike the headlines above, in this set of headlines, the word “violence” appears in two of these headlines (3 & 4).

¹⁵ Two of the 127 were eliminated because they were not about Calais. One was about Thailand’s jungles. The second was about the release of the film Tarzan.

This tally reveals that over the two-year period the Guardian headlines focussed on the threats posed by refugees as often as they did the threats that refugees face, thereby inadvertently equating the levels of vulnerability faced by the two groups. Taken together, these headlines give the false impression on the actual conditions of violence that migrants in Calais were facing at that time. Indeed, ample evidence on the vulnerability and prevalence of violence towards migrants in Calais now exists. One quantitative study that surveyed 402 people on the violence endured during their journey and in Calais found that 25.3% of had experienced violence in Calais and that the most common type of violence experienced there was facing tear gas (Bouheniaa, Ben Farhata, Coldironathat, et al., 2017: 338). Humanitarian groups like *Human Rights Watch* have also issued reports indicating beatings and attacks with pepper spray by police and numerous fatalities and ongoing police violence that the migrants of Calais face (2015a; 2015b).

The headlines that focussed exclusively on death were also compelling. Over the two-year period, the following six headlines in some way addressed migrant deaths, dying and fatalities:

- i. Calais migrant crisis: 'Many have died here ... but it will not stop us'
- ii. The horror of the Calais refugee camp: 'We feel like we are dying slowly'
- iii. Pro-refugee activists stage 'die-in' at St Pancras against Calais Jungle clearing
- iv. 'Kids could die in the cold': the race to rehouse Calais refugees
- v. migrant dies on UK-bound freight train near Calais
- vi. Afghan boy killed in Calais in attempt to climb on to lorry to UK

Importantly, only two of these directly report on the deaths of specific migrants (v & vi). Here too an indirect comparison between these headlines and news reports elsewhere reveals a stark disjuncture. For instance, a grassroots group called *Calais Migrant Solidarity* that has been informally documenting police violence and deaths in Calais in what they call “dossiers of violence” have recorded 41 migrant deaths in the two-year period of 2015-2017.¹⁶ While they concede that there is no accurate count of how many people have died, they believe that there are even more. Several international news media outlets have explicitly focussed on migrants’ deaths in their titles and headlines. For instance, within that two-year period an article in the *International Business Times* headline read: “Catalogue of death: Calais migrant toll spikes as border controls take hold” (Paton, 2015), an article in *Time* magazine was titled: “Inside Calais's Deadly Migrant Crisis” (Bajekal, 2015), and Human Rights Watch reported “France - Enough Tragic Deaths in Calais” (Moussa, 2015). In contrast, as a whole, the headlines in *the Guardian* from 2015-2017 tell a different story.

Discussion

Taking these findings into account, one can reach two provisional yet contradictory conclusions. On the one hand these findings reveal that at face value, when it comes to the use of the labels being used in the headlines, over the two-year period indicate a shift towards more sympathetic understandings of their plights. The fewer appearances of the terms “migrant(s)” and “crisis” and the increase in the use of the term “refugee” suggests a trend towards more positive press coverage. On the other hand, when one considers the few headlines on the violence towards migrants, and the equal representation of the risks and inconveniences they pose for the Europeans, a negative frame persists. Moreover, the number of headlines of migrant deaths were disproportionately low. Like the headline about Simone Hericourt in the MailOnline presented at the beginning of this article, headlines about migrants in The Guardian newspaper undermine the dangers that migrants face.

¹⁶ 25 in 2015 and 16 in 2016

Moreover, by failing to report on the deaths of migrants in their headlines, or by focussing as many headlines on the fears of French and British citizens, the headlines highlight the vulnerabilities of the dominant group. Put differently, the threats of danger faced by arguably the most disenfranchised people are being equated with the threats faced by those who have the privileges of European citizenship.

While further study is needed with larger samples and a deeper analysis of the discursive practices to confirm these findings, these findings corroborate and help to explain Zygmunt Bauman (2016) contention that migrants have come to symbolize European vulnerabilities and insecurities. The low proportion of headlines that focus directly on the difficulties experiences of migrants, the equal number of headlines on the ordeals of Europeans and by omitting to report on the high violence and mortality rates of the migrant population in Calais, the Guardian headlines contribute to popular sentiments of migrants as threats or as linked to crime. Taken as a whole, it is evident that even in some of the most empathetic news media outlets, a desensitising and provocative migrants-as-problems discourse is being normalized.

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The Social Construction of Asylum Seekers in the Refugee Crisis: hyper-coverage without agency

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Abstract

Studying the social construction of asylum seekers in the UK during the refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016 raises one paramount set of questions: how is this category becoming central to the political debate, while simultaneously 'silenced'? With a particular attention to ethical and political issues both in its foundations and in its aims, both their lived experience and their public representation are analysed as levels where the lack of agency ascribed to (indeed, imposed on) asylum seekers is connected to the contemporary social reality. The refugee crisis provides a key moment to analyse the processes of passivisation in the discourses on asylum seekers in print media, by applying the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis with the practical tool of the software NVivo. Newspaper articles are studied as providing both a space for and a specific modality of the process of passivisation. Then, the exploration of the social construction of asylum seekers turns to their lived experience, investigated through 3 focus groups. These conversations enable the observer to note not only a stark contradiction with their representation as agency-less, but simultaneously a number of specific features of asylum seekers as a concrete collectivity that help understand why this group is particularly suitable for a hyper-coverage without agency. Finally, the increasing coverage of debates on the management of migration is contextualised in broader processes of social change. By researching how the category of asylum seekers is constructed as lacking agency, this paper contributes to an empirical comprehension of the discursive dynamics structuring the contemporary momentous debate on migration while excluding the voices of the migrants involved.

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Keywords

Asylum seekers, refugees, agency, social construction, critical discourse analysis.

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Introduction and Context

A historic event that, more than most others, has been at the centre of the public debates in Europe in the last years is the 'migrant/refugee crisis'. The term 'refugee crisis' is more appropriate, given that the majority of third-nationals coming to the EU are seeking asylum (Chetail, 2016: 584; De Genova & Tazzioli, 2016). The legal definition of asylum seeker in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is quite straightforward. Yet, the meaning and connotation of the category of 'asylum seeker(s)' (henceforth, AS) change drastically when invoked by different political positions, in different temporal and spatial settings. The refugee crisis, then, prompts the need for an updated analysis of the social construction of AS. The urgency of this analysis becomes apparent with the comprehension that the widespread perception of a crisis is more reflective of political tensions than particularly high arrivals of AS to Europe. As UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon stated: “this is not a crisis of numbers; it is a crisis of solidarity”¹⁸; the actual numbers of refugees of asylum-seekers in European countries are unimpressive, when compared to the millions arrived in countries such as Turkey or Lebanon.

Although the flows involve most countries in the continent, I will focus on the British context. The common debate on the refugee crisis has been a locus of contestation and reaffirmation of a shared European belonging, both on the level of politics/institutions and identity; moreover, particularly in the study of migration, 'methodological nationalism' has been powerfully critiqued. It would thus be paramount to study the refugee crisis on a continental scale (Wimmer & Schiller, 2003; Beck & Sznaider, 2006). However, Stuart Hall has demonstrated that the discourses on migration, as all the discourses of identity-based group construction, are extremely context-specific (1986: 23-4). For this reason, on top of practical constraints of time and access, the data for my analysis of a social construction of AS will be drawn from British newspapers and focus groups with people who have sought asylum in Britain in 2015-2016.

In 2015, 32.414 asylum applications were received by the Home Office, the highest number since 2005, but less than half of the number of applications received any year from 1999 to 2002¹⁹. The countries most represented among AS in 2015 are reported in table 1. The revolution/war in Syria joined other more long-standing causes of flight, such as the war in Sudan and the dictatorship in Eritrea. As obtaining a regular visa through the embassies to fly to the UK is becoming virtually impossible for many prospective AS, the main flows go either through Turkey and Greece/Bulgaria, or the Mediterranean and Italy/Spain. The refugee crisis gained world attention with the tragedy of boats capsizing in the Mediterranean Sea, resulting in the death of thousands of people every year. It is crucial to avoid the reification of borders as walls, naturally excluding outsiders in an undifferentiated manner, hence condemning to death the unfortunate migrants. Rather, their plight is to be understood as the result of a historically specific formulation of borders in the context of neoliberal globalisation, filtering and

	Country	Total Applications (2015)
1	Eritrea	3729
2	Iran	3248
3	Sudan	2918
4	Syria	2609
5	Pakistan	2441
6	Afghanistan	2240
7	Iraq	2185
8	Albania	1504
9	Bangladesh	1084
10	India	1004

Table 1: 10 most represented countries of origin of asylum seekers in the UK in 2015².

¹⁸ “Refugee Crisis”, UN Press Release, SG/SM/17670-REF/1228, 15-04-2016.

¹⁹ Home Office, 26-05-2016, Responsible Statistician: C. Kershaw

qualifying the desirable mobility from the undesirable (Castles, 2011: 312; Bauman, 1998: 69-76; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013: 7; De Giorgi, 2010: 151). The realities I have briefly summarised, summed to the often discriminatory policies within the UK, render ethically difficult, if it ever was possible, to maintain a value-free approach to the study of migrants' life in the UK. Instead, this paper is grounded in a politically committed approach to research that aims to contest academically and politically the injustices of migrants' lives (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013:10-12; Casas-Cortés et al., 2015: 3), focusing on the construction of AS as central to the discrimination of migrants in the context of the refugee crisis.

The key theme that connected both moments of my research, as well as offering valuable insights into the importance of the figure of AS in public debates, is the negation of agency that represents the backbone of the whole idea of AS. The argumentative construction of AS as *a threat* or *in need*, hence requiring punishment or help from 'us', activates the receiving society through a frame of control that deletes the agency of AS. Though the reality of migration undermines this construction, AS are represented as 'forced migrants' with no choice in their movement, inevitably -by their mere existence as AS- requiring 'us' to control them. To understand how this representation is achieved and what its consequences are, I employed the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on a selection of 27 articles from three British newspapers in the year between August 2015 and August 2016, the 'height' of the refugee crisis. Then, I organised and analysed 3 focus groups with a total of 12 recent asylum seekers, in order to investigate potential connections between public representation and their lived experience, focusing mainly on the question of agency.

1. Theoretical and Methodological Standpoint

In order to investigate the public perceptions of AS, I have researched their representation in the media using Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA, which may be referred to as a research program or a 'school' (Weiss & Wodak, 2003: 12), can be traced back to the establishment of the journal *Discourse and Society* in 1990, around which scholars such as Van Dijk, Fairclough and Wodak gathered. This “way of doing discourse analysis from a critical perspective, which often focuses on theoretical concepts such as power, ideology and domination” (Baker et al., 2008a: 273), fits with the intentions of my research primarily in its political focus on how inequality and discrimination are “expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use” (Wodak, 2009: 10). The object of analysis is discourse, understood in CDA as the mediating concept between text and ideology, in a dialectical relationship with both these concepts (Fairclough, 2001). Its sociological relevance is evident in Fairclough and Wodak's formulation:

“discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it.” (1997: 258)

Dominant discourses are dynamically formulated, co-constructed and negotiated in a plurality of interrelated dimensions, ranging from official law-making to informal everyday conversations on the street (Wodak, 2009: 5). Wodak's historical approach to CDA, in particular, enables the researcher to follow the genesis and transformation of arguments in connection with their recontextualisation (2001: 72). Instead, this paper's more limited focus will be circumscribed to the field of media, which Wodak argues to be the most relevant to investigate both the construction of public opinion and the potential (in this case, absent) self-representation of social groups (*ibid.*:68). Among the media, I chose to focus on newspapers as “literature shows printed media still sets the agenda and is perceived as authoritative and a powerful reference point by other media ... They are still, to a great extent, the 'gatekeepers' of information” (Jacomella, 2010: 23).

The justification often advanced for the negative representation of immigrants in the media is that it is caused by more general negative feelings towards immigration in the population at large, as shown by the British Social Attitudes survey (Park et al., 2013). However, the democratic 'watchdog' role of the media is often normatively defended in response to accusations of passive reproduction of dominant narratives, introducing an ethical/political standard against which the results of critical research can be assessed (Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2016: 337; Kaye, 2001). The results of this assessment, however, are deeply problematic (see the Charter of Lampedusa; Jacomella, 2010: 64,71-2; Morcellini et al., 2009). In fact, abandoning any claim to an inclusive style of reporting that voices a plurality of perspectives, the reference point organising any news-making on migration is 'us', namely the receiving nation-state. In this way, the contested nature of any construction is limited to the voices of the host society, engendering a “dangerous tautology between two supposedly separate realms: that of representation and that of policy-making” (Rosello, 1998: 137). Journalism on migration, ultimately, can be criticised for not following its own statements of conduct (Doherty, 2015), surrendering to governmental (*ibidem*: 140; Philo et al., 2013: 167) and economical (Philo et al., 2013: 166) pressures.

The epistemological approach of this research is social constructionism. Obviously, migration is a fact. It is a fact that some people claim asylum, through a complex and questionable, but analytically straightforward, system. A sound social constructionist approach does not deny such facts. Rather, it reminds the researcher that the current “way of classifying people is the product of social events. ... This kind of person, as a specific kind of person, is socially constructed” (Hacking, 1999: 100). Though constructionism has been famously critiqued in its exaggerated application to any object of study (*ibidem*), it is particularly appropriate for (C)DA (Nikander, 2008: 2). In both approaches, the language chosen by individuals is studied not as a resource, but as a topic in itself, as language is taken not just as reflecting but also as constructing and organising social realities (Tonkiss, 2004: 247). On a political level, Hacking defines social constructionism as “critical of the status quo” (1999: 6): it is in the deconstructing process “that constructivism has a political point to make: to show how categories of knowledge are indeed used in power relations” (Velody & Williams, 1998: 9). In sum, both approaches challenge the process of naturalisation of social categories (Foucault, 1991: 75; Tonkiss, 2004: 247); in Mark Fisher's words:

“emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a ‘natural order’, must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable” (Fisher, 2010: 17).

My initial interest into the social construction of AS was stimulated by the realisation that the legal definition of AS²⁰ did not correspond to their public representation, which in turn contrasted with the first-hand accounts I heard. It is necessary to be aware that the social sciences are partially responsible for the reification of this category. A common critique of deconstructive agendas is precisely that, while attempting to critique a tool of social inequality, researchers accept and reproduce it merely by employing it. The alternatives are: a) to creatively attempt new academic categorisations, e.g. 'Dubliners'(Picozza, forthcoming: 3); b) to celebrate powerful self-definitions, such as the Somali word 'raadin'(*ibidem*: 28); c) to study migration in its heterogeneity or autonomy (De Genova, 2005: 56; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013). While all these projects are undoubtedly worthwhile, the study of present oppressive categorisations is crucial in determining *how* an empowered subjectivity can be developed by migrant subjects – conceptualised in Casas Cortes et al. as 'ir-representation'(2015: 10). As Derrida argues, while it is impossible to achieve perfectly fitting identifications (1976), a deconstructive analysis is key in order to achieve non-oppressive

²⁰ 1)<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/asylum-seeker/>

2)<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary>

categorisation, and it inevitably happens “within structures that it shakes up and deconstructs from inside, a certain inside, which nevertheless opens to some outside” (Kamouf, 2011: 36).

It is evident, then, that this research does not stand uncritically on the pedestal of 'value-free' or objective science. Even in the natural sciences it is now often accepted that pure objectivity is not only impossible (Rudner, 1953), but also not desirable (Feyerabend, 1978: 78; May, 2003: 53). Still, validity is a concern of any scientific enquiry. Thus, I will reflexively attempt to substantiate the reliability of my analysis by making my perspective accountable to the reader from the initial stages of the project. Validity is pursued through a thorough “examination of the basis of values and their relationship to decisions and stages in research... The aim is not their elimination, for this is impossible” (May, 2003: 61). In Bordieu's elegant words, “if the sociologist manages to produce any truth, he does so not despite the interest he has in producing that truth but because he has an interest in doing so” (1993: 11). My politically motivated, reflexive and accountable standard for validity, while not as alluring as a pretence to scientific objectivity, continues a tradition that rejects the possibility of a 'value-free' science (Van Dijk, 2001: 352), as CDA “does not simply describe existing realities but also evaluates them” (Fairclough, 2012: 9). A further discussion of the ethical issues of my research will be necessary as part of the section on the focus groups about the lived experience of AS.

The construction of AS has been thoroughly analysed in many studies. This research is unique in that: a) it is set during the refugee crisis; b) it focuses on the issue of agency. The general description of AS aligns with the representation of migrants at large. Among many other topoi, they are depicted as: 1) an undesirable cultural threat; 2) a drain on 'our' economic resources; 3) deviant, illegals, criminals and terrorists; 4) taking advantage of 'our' generosity; 5) intrinsically different to 'us'; 6) powerless victims (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Baker & Gabrielatos, 2008; Jacomella, 2010; Philo et al., 2013; Lueck et al., 2015). The negative depictions (1-5) can be summarised as constituting different forms of threats. Thus, be it as threats or (more rarely) as victims in need of help or protection, what links all those depictions together, which constitutes the meso-level frame of this research, is the inescapable construction of AS as an object seen through what Horsti defines a 'frame of control' by the host society (2007; 2016).

The theorisation of a frame of control is central to my research: be it criminalisation, management or aid, AS are the objects of 'our' control (Horsti, 2016: 11). In this light, the discussion of AS as an 'issue' or 'problem' (Pickering, 2001; Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2009, respectively), or through dehumanising metaphors of animals or natural disasters (SantaAna, 1999; Baker et al., 2008a, respectively), is instrumental to the positioning of AS as objects of 'our' controlling gaze. Not only are AS posed as the external Other that reinforces the common-sense, “banal” nationalism studied in Billing's seminal work (1995), they are consistently silenced so that it is possible for 'us' to increasingly focus 'our' public debates on how to control 'them'. I will investigate what is lost -or deleted- in this process: the agency of AS. Agency, despite the complex debates around this term, can be defined in sociology as “individuals' capacities to act independently of structural constraints” (Abercrombie et al., 1994).

An important precursor of my research is the Lancaster University project on the representation of refugees, AS and immigrants (RASIM) in British Newspapers between 1996 and 2006, which resulted in a number of publications. An interesting quantitative result of their studies was to show that the categories defining different kinds of migrants were commonly conflated (Baker et al., 2008a: 287). In particular, the two categories sharing the higher number of collocates (43%) are immigrant and AS (Baker et al., 2008b: 7), pointing to the increasing use of the latter as an umbrella-term to discuss migration, which makes the analysis of this label in particular especially crucial. The only term deviating from the norm of x (any label) = problem was 'migrant', that carried more positive connotations (Baker et al., 2008a: 287). However, we must note this term had

only recently been introduced to the discourse on migration, precisely as a less discriminatory alternative to 'immigrant'.

Another interesting result of the Lancaster project was its nuanced description of the different roles of various newspapers. As a result of the traditional broadsheet/tabloid divide, given the more explicit and simple choice of words by the *Daily Mail*, and the more creative and covert use of stereotypes by the *Times*, it is argued that “in terms of negative presentation of RASIM, the *Daily Mail* ‘harvests’ and reflects the prejudices in society while *The Times* ‘creates’ and introduces newer versions” (KhosraviNik, 2008: 35), “resort[ing] to ‘newer’ strategies in tapping on the same old concepts” (KhosraviNik, 2010: 4). On the other hand, despite its position as a liberal broadsheet newspaper, *The Guardian's* way of representing RASIM reproduced the pattern established by more conservative publications, with RASIM objectified, backgrounded and collectively functionalised as an 'issue' of political debate (Baker et al., 2008a: 293). Admittedly, *The Guardian* did sometimes move away from a representation of RASIM 'as a threat', but: a) it only did so when “not entangled with heated political rivalry discourses” (KhosraviNik, 2010: 15); b) even then, it failed to build an alternative argumentation strategy, merely proposing a defensive and justificatory victimisation (Baker et al., 2008a: 293-4).

2. Public Representation

In general, discourse analysis is not concerned with sample size as traditional research methods are (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). However, particularly due to its explicitly political standpoint, CDA has been critiqued for its apparent susceptibility to bias (Baker et al., 2008a: 281). Hence, the Lancaster project employed quantitative content analysis methods to ground their results in more solid foundations. My analysis, not supported by quantitative methods, is strengthened by its consistence with their results, but is more modestly aimed at advancing some theoretical propositions. The data, analysed through the software NVivo, is derived from 27 articles chosen, through a mix of quantitative and qualitative downsizing choices adapted from KhosraviNik (2008), as broadly representative of the coverage of AS during the refugee crisis.



The first step was to find, through the portal ProQuest, the amount of mentions of asylum seek* (to include the verbal derivatives) in 2015-16 (see chart). The qualitative principal applied was 'prototyping through key events' as defined by Brosius and Eps (1995), that demonstrates how important events deeply shape all the subsequent coverage of related matters. Thus, the three most covered months were chosen (August 2015, September 2015 and January 2016) and, within them, the days most covered: the 3rd, 5th and from the 7th to the 9th (similar numbers of mentions, and same focus), respectively. Once identified the key event of each day, I chose among the results of the portal search the articles that focused on that topic, and selected three articles from each newspaper considered. These were *The Guardian*, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, to cover the spectrum of liberal/conservative and broadsheet/tabloid. Indeed, the first two appeal generally to the constituencies of the two largest parties in the UK, and the *Daily Mail* is significantly connected with political forces such as UKIP and the anti-EU wing of the Tories, increasingly powerful 'agenda-setters', especially in the discourse on migration.

2.1. 03.08.2015: the Calais Crisis

The first date considered is the moment when there first was a massive widespread perception of a crisis in relation to migrants. The situation in Calais gained media attention both for the allegedly uncountable number of people 'pushing' on the physical borders of the UK, and for the appalling living conditions in the camp later known as 'the Jungle'. Indeed, at this stage the crisis was named 'Calais crisis', only to be connected later with the broader refugee crisis in the rest of Europe. In this first moment, the depiction of AS is very consistent with the standard passivising narrative, based on large-scale anti-migration argumentations mixed with humanitarian victimisation, as described in the Lancaster project and Horsti's studies, among many others. In fact, two initial codes I applied throughout the texts do not show a great imbalance between threat and victim depictions in this first moment of the Calais crisis. Still, if we compare this result with the other dates, it is evident that those depictions vary greatly in response to different events (Table 2). This means that the depiction as victim need not be understood as an exception to a uniform representation of AS as threats. While the emotional reactions of sympathy and fear elicited in the readers are certainly dissimilar, the coexistence of these different depictions over time indicates that merely assessing the relative prevalence of the two codes would not allow us to understand the key pattern that most defines the public representation of AS: their passivisation. Rather than in opposition, these two depictions can be seen to form a temporal line, with AS being forcefully 'set in motion' by apparently self-evident causes such as war, and this very movement constituting a threat or an opportunity for humanitarian assistance.

Change of depictions over time (across all papers)	03/08/15 (Calais)	05/09/15 (Alan)	7-9/01/16 (Cologne)
AS <u>as</u> threats	34	17	58
AS <u>as</u> victims	23	51	4

Table 2: Variation threat/victim depiction in the 3 moments analysed.

Moreover, with the exception of the *Daily Mail's* more common use of derogatory qualifying statements to introduce specific individual or groups of AS into the picture, overt or noticeable qualifying strategies to value or devalue AS' experience are extremely rare (Table 3). One of CDA's strengths, however, is precisely to be able to note, investigate and account for absences as well as presences in the text (KhosraviNik, 2008: 5).

Noticeable/explicit qualifying of AS' position	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Times</i>	<i>Daily Mail</i>
<u>Activating/humanising/valuing</u>	5	3	3
<u>Passivating/objectifying/devaluing</u>	2	6	14

Table 3. Overt qualifying strategies

In this case, the almost complete absence of explicit siding strategies or simply negative depictions suggests that the researcher should analyse a different, less visible, level of discursive construction. In this sense, a tendency towards passivisation materialises in verb patterns and usage in very evident ways, and from those and other micro-level instances it can be traced back to the meso-level of Horsti's frames (threat/victim => control), and finally to general societal discourses,

as I will discuss later. The choice of verbs and the patterns of transitivity are striking, and they remain the same also in the two other moments I analysed. The general tendency is that the subject of any verb connoting action/agency is a member of the national 'us'. For example, out of all the instances of *seeing*, *understanding* or *deciding* (110 in all the articles analysed) only two had AS as their subject. Also, the most common verb used across all data is *make*, and its logical subject is consistently a British individual or institution. Its grammatical subject is an AS solely when the verb is in a passive form. The only exception is in the expressions when *make* denotes movement, as in 'AS who *make it* to the UK', or '[soft measures] are encouraging AS to *make this journey*' (Stevens, 2016). The same is true with *try*, the third most common verb, with AS acting as logical subjects only in expressions such as '*try their luck* in crossing the Mediterranean'. In fact, in general, most actions (approximately 90%) AS perform are their movement (towards us).

Connected with their *coming here* is often a sense of fear, especially when the AS are presented as numerous, or innumerable, as in metaphors such as *flood* or *tide*. Thus, when this is particularly evident, a code I termed 'existential threat' is constituted (admittedly not that present in *The Guardian*), whereby by their mere existing nearer and nearer to the UK a threat to 'us' is established (excerpt 1). Moreover, the residual cases do not represent counter-tendencies, as most of the 10% of sentences where AS are not simply moving are two types of verbs: 1) *need* or synonyms; 2) cases when the action, as banal as it may be, can be clearly framed as an immediate threat.

Excerpt 1: “An academic report this week claims hundreds of thousands of young male migrants arriving in Europe will threaten the peace and stability of Germany and other Western nations” (Reid, 2016)

Excerpt 2: “An organised group of 200 tore down fences and charged past police with tear gas, *chanting* 'open the borders!'” (Slack & Martin, 2015)

Hence, nearly unmistakably, the actions AS perform call for a reaction from the nation, as Horsti theorised. In terms of the role the AS play in sentences, they are: 1) objects or in complements (e.g. 'what to do *with* the AS?'); 2) subjects of passive sentences; 3) subjects of verbs of movement or very explicit need/immediate threat. What Horsti did not stress is what is not there: agency. To move, to need and to threaten immediately are *all* the actions AS are allowed in the British media. Clearly, there are limits and exceptions, but they are exceptionally rare considering I analysed articles specifically about AS. An exception to the grammatical analysis I outlined is “migrants must understand” (McKay, 2015), stated by the then Home Secretary Theresa May, but it is evident that the action here is part of the control apparatus of which 'they' are merely the recipients.

2.2.05.09.2015: Alan's picture

While discursive patterns in the quantitative spike in coverage of AS with articles on the first emergence of a refugee crisis reflect quite accurately the analyses in the existing literature, the event providing the factual basis for the second moment of this CDA evidently shifted reporting toward much more sympathetic narratives. Against simplistic left-wing vs right-wing assumptions, this shift was particularly prominent in the reporting of *The Daily Mail*, yet this sympathy was shown to be short-lived with the return of more classic negative depictions in connection with the third, conclusive, hyper-reported event of the refugee crisis, Cologne's New Year. The key event of the second date I picked was the tragic finding, on 02.09.2015 on a shore near Bodrum (Turkey), of the dead body of a Kurdish-Syrian boy fleeing Syria with his family on the Turkey-Balkan route. Surprisingly, this topic was most covered on the 5th of September (47 instances), rather than the day after the finding (6 instances) or the 4th (11 instances). Hence, the 5th was picked as the key moment

when the narrative on the finding was defined. The story of Alan Shenu's family, widely misreported as Aylan Kurdi²¹, constituted a new and powerful narrative.

Central was the extremely brutal picture of this finding²², powerfully symbolic of the tremendous dangers people encounter to flee from unliveable conditions. The visual grammar of migration would deserve an exclusive focus in itself, as it has been argued that pictures play an essential role in constructing the representation of the migrant (Wright, 2002). In particular, in the binary representation of immigrants, the AS is often represented as the perfect, innocent victim (Gilligan & Marley, 2010), but it is urgent to reflect on all actors in this specific picture: a) Alan (in the centre), lifeless, lying face-down on the shore, inspires pure sympathy and despair; b) a Turkish gendarme (on the right), whose back faces the camera, approaching the dead body, represents 'us' on the stage, our point of view and our role as the active human presence on stage; c) the sea (on the left), the cause of the victim's plight, still touching Alan's legs. In Horsti's frame, the causes of the issue are ignored. I would underline that, in this sense, the sea symbolises the cause of the situation, and - importantly- it is not something 'we' can act upon. Just like in the metaphor of the flood, common in the discussion of AS, the cause is structural: inevitable and substantially inalterable.

This event, particularly due to the emotional power of the picture, drastically changed the narratives on AS. Firstly, apart from the articles in *The Times*, where this change was less evident, there was much greater prevalence of AS being depicted as victims (Table 4).

Change of depictions in the 3 papers	The Guardian	The Times	Daily Mail
AS as threats	2	2	1
AS as victims	26	9	20

Table 4: depictions as threats/victims in articles on the 05.09.2015

Among the different newspapers, the *Daily Mail* was surprisingly strong in the emotional depiction of AS as victims needing help. *The Guardian* reported widely on the initiatives of solidarity by British individuals and organisations. In achieving this broadly positive depiction (required by the empathy inspired by the picture of Alan), the three newspapers *had to* confer a greater-than-usual degree of agency to AS, exemplified by a greater prominence of life-stories and first-person narrating. Indeed, the representation was indeed more empathetic overall, but the AS could not be consistently represented as conscious agents without undermining the general frame of control. So, precisely in connection with the increase in agency awarded, the newspapers employed a number of strategies that can be understood as 'mitigating empathy':

- 1) Even when discussing initiatives of solidarity, the focus is on the actions of British people and organisations.
- 2) In a context of increased empathy towards AS, 'economic migrants' appear to be more vilified (Watt, 2015).
- 3) Even when focusing on AS' life stories, agency is downplayed by posing AS as 'focalisers' (Genette, 1980), rather than actual narrators, of the events.
- 4) Women AS surge to a prominent role, as more suitable to an increase in empathy and solidarity.
- 5) Most importantly, the focus on structural causes presents them as inevitable and substantially inalterable for the foreseeable future, just like the sea in Alan's picture.

²¹ <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/9/whats-in-the-name-of-a-dead-syrian-child.html>

²² https://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/styles/story_medium/public/thumbnails/image/2015/09/02/20/web-refugee-crisis-2-reuters.jpg

2.3.07-09.01.2016: Cologne's New Year

More stereotypical negative accounts of AS as treats were resumed just 4 months after the particularly sympathetic (though mitigated and still inescapably passivising) reporting produced in September 2015. The third and last moment of analysis focuses on articles published between the 7th and the 9th of January 2016. The key event in these dates was reported as a wave of mass sexual assaults occurring during New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne (Germany). The victims were predominantly German women and the perpetrators were apparently of 'immigrant background'. Despite the obscure meaning of this term, AS were collectively held responsible for these acts quite explicitly (Reid, 2016). The notoriety of these events was largely due to the widespread accusation that they were initially minimised, if not covered up, by local police authorities (with the collaboration of media establishments and politicians). Also, these 'uncovering' reports achieved world fame because they played on deep-seated racial/sexual insecurities that have been defined as the 'racialisation of sexism'(Mancini, 2012: 427): non-native men are represented as a sexual threat against the purity of the nation, hence a threat to 'our' women. 'Country', typically posed as the collective victim of these attacks, was the third most used word in the articles of this moment. While this cannot be read as definitive proof, it interestingly suggests a strong nation-building effect of these narratives that contribute to the construction (or better, the restoration after a period of particularly empathetic depictions) of a threatening Other.

Because of my methodological approach, it is particularly significant to highlight that the most common argumentative strategy on this event was built around a sort of “reverse-CDA”. CDA is often structured as a de-naturalisation of negative stereotypes on marginalised groups in media, tracing and denouncing the structures of power that inform the street-level injustices (Van Dijk, 1993). Here, instead, the media were accused of 'covering' (one could paraphrase into 'naturalising') a street-level problem and the responsibility was traced back to political elites (in this case, Chancellor Merkel's policies)²³. This narrative was so powerful that it can be read as the central part of a discursive movement challenging the more empathetic 05.09.2015 representation, to return to a representation more similar to that of 03.08.2015, if not even more focused on the 'threat' depiction. The different positions of the three newspapers were broadly consistent with the results I reported from the Lancaster study, with *The Guardian* refusing the dominant narrative but failing to formulate an alternative. Still, in my data both *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* were advancing new argumentative strategies and reproducing them in turn.

In general, this return to the previous representation focussing on the 'threat' depiction was achieved through the vigorous resurgence of the code of 'existential threat'. The attacks were explicitly connected to AS, and then to other non-specified manifestations of AS criminality throughout Europe (e.g. Reid, 2016). In this way, building on the strong reverse-CDA narrative, hard to ignore or dismiss, the 'coming here' of AS was posed as resulting directly in an urgent need of stricter control. A manifestation of this dynamic is that 'police' is again, as it was in the first moment, the second most common word in this moment. This result is partially due to the genre of writing, a crossover of 'migration report' and 'crime news'. Still, the police is not only presented as investigating the attacks in Cologne but also, often, as the source of the information discussed or as the material proof of 'our' effort to control, rendering this figure significant in tracing the primary

²³ The situation of a 'sexual attack' by migrants somehow enabled by the government is ideal for restoring a strong anti-immigrant narrative. So perfect for provoking a racist backlash that, before the events of Cologne, a Ghanaian-Italian satirical rapper (Bello Figo) produced a number of songs on this topic. He thanked the Italian PM for letting so many AS (his brothers) into the country, and stated he and his brothers “only f**k white p***y”. Indeed, the aghast reaction of large sections of Italian society was strikingly similar to the articles on Cologne's events. Only, since in Cologne it was not a reaction to a joke, but to news reports, I can but imagine the effect of these articles in the readers' perception of AS.

Exemplary video:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCkEgugAuKQ>

concerns of the articles. Charlie Hebdo, the French satirical magazine, on the 6th of January published a sketch that conveys effectively the return to the negative description preceding the shift connected with Alan's tragic death. It depicted highly racialised men lasciviously chasing screaming women, captioned: "What would have little Aylan become had he grown up?". The critics of this sketch argue convincingly that it plays on a racist and distasteful narrative, while its defendants state it is challenging that narrative. Whatever the position, the message is straightforward: the moment of collective empathy towards AS is over, and they have become threats once again.

A final note on the significance of agency is required. Much of the existing literature I have discussed on the representation of AS and migrants includes mentions on their lack of agency, and much theory on silencing includes reflections on migrants and racism (Chouliaraki, 2013; Spivak, 1988). My argument is that the erasure of AS' agency is the defining feature of their contemporary social construction. This argument cannot emerge from common sense reasoning, nor from direct experience, but is based on a sociological analysis of their representation and its causes and consequences in their lives. I have shown that they are mostly represented as immediate threats or passive victims, and that even when describing 'who they are', the focus is almost exclusively on movement. If moving is the only act they do, and any thought they may have on their movement (why they chose to move and where, how they were received, etc.) is erased from the picture, AS become perceived as 'agency-less'. For example, this is evident in the instances of the code I termed 'existential threat', where their mere movement towards Europe is reduced (as such) to a threat 'we' are compelled to confront. If a group is perceived as lacking agency, their political subjectivity cannot be part of the conversation, which inevitably becomes exclusionary in its structure and -not necessarily, but much more easily- in its results: the issue of AS as a problem.

3. The Voices of Asylum Seekers

Notwithstanding the lack of access for AS to shape their depiction in the public discourse, no study of the social construction of a group is complete without the analysis of how this depiction affects the lives of the group in question (Leudar et al., 2008:188). In particular, precisely the connection between the public representation of AS and the possibility they have to change this representation and -consequently- their lives is the focus of this section, continuing to focus on agency as the necessary starting point to achieve this change. Hence, the aim of this section parallels the ultimate aim of this research in general, to create space for the subjective construction of self-descriptions by AS: deconstructing the hegemonical depiction of AS is insufficient without their voices. However, looking for a match between the content of the media representations and the narratives formulated by AS is impossible, since they are only mentioned as conscious agents when 'enjoying five-stars hotels'. Rather, I analysed how they make sense of both their representation and their experiences, as the sources for their understanding of their categorisation as AS, looking for connections that would explain or contest their representation as 'agency-less'.

With this objective, believing issues of collective categorisation would emerge more richly in collective conversations rather than interviews, I organised three two-hours focus groups with people who had been AS in the UK in the period of the refugee crisis (2015/16). The first two groups were composed of only 3 people each, while the last (organised by a participant, my 'gatekeeper' and friend, whom I will name Abu-Shlash) was comprised by 6 participants. Access to the first two encounters, as well as the particularly high level of trust required in migration research (VanLiempt & Bilger, 2012: 459), was gained through my work as an ESOL teacher. Finally, as vulnerable people, the participants are reported anonymously and the contributions of the same participant have not been connected in any way. This was required by the particular safety concerns of AS, but it will result in a less 'humanised' account of their individual participation.

A first interesting statement I recorded from an AS who has been living in the UK for 3 years was that, compared to the moment when he arrived (his English language fluency was already high) “news [about AS] are getting worse, but help is getting better”. The self-evident implication is that the content of the news cannot be understood as a reliable picture of the experiences of AS from their perspective; the typical content of the news is not about their lives in the UK. It is worth, however, to focus on the common use of the dynamic of 'help' offered by 'civil society' actors (churches, NGOs, etc.) as the main setting for the realisation of the experience of AS as AS, together with governmental spaces (Accommodation Centres, Home Office, etc.). Lastly, the statement above is an example of the typical argumentative structure of many reflections by AS on their experiences in the UK: when something negative is recounted, it will be balanced by something positive. In the largest focus group, this was particularly noticeable when a participant did not follow this argumentative structure twice, and a balancing positive aspect of the situation was promptly offered by other participants. The explanation of this dynamic is surely multi-causal, but it can be connected with the common difficulty AS face in complaining about the host country due to the 'thankfulness' they are expected to exhibit (Goodman et al., 2014: 30; Kirkwood, 2012).

In terms of how they are seen by the British public, most participants explained how, in everyday conversations, the majority of people slightly changed their behaviour in negative ways once they knew they were AS. Moreover, there was a general awareness that media representation is negative. However, the idea that British people could consequently be defined as somewhat racist was consistently and loudly refused, and one participant even constructed the British public as 'resisting' the negative media representation. It was useful, in the encounter organised by Abu-Shlash, to avoid flattening my identity performance onto a native/immigrant divide and exploit the subtler dimensions of my ethnicity (Knowles, 2006: 395), namely the fact that I am Italian. In this way, by building on a long-standing joke between Abu-Shlash and me on our shared 'Mediterranean culture' as opposed to stereotypical British behaviours, I posed the question on British people's attitudes towards the participants once the latter's status as AS was known to them. In this case, despite having previously asserted he never experienced any discrimination, a participant stated: “They respect you, but they think that they are better than you just because they are British”.

In general, on top of the experience of help, being an AS is reconnected to the direct experience of the governmental 'asylum system'. Consistently with existing literature (Leudar et al., 2008), the asylum system is primarily described as causing psychological problems, due to the enforced idleness that provokes feelings of extreme boredom and powerlessness. Having shown, in the previous section, how the representation of AS is defined by the negation of agency, it is not surprising that the primary complaint AS move to the asylum system is that it inhibits their need and desire to be active agents of their destiny. Moreover, as I anticipated, on the extent of choice involved in 'coming here', the consensus is that AS represent a complicated picture of individuals that can be placed on a spectrum. This goes from *no choice at all* ('maybe they had to run away because of a bomb and they just gave a lot of money to a random person who took them here') to *a high degree of agency* shown in many aspects of 'coming here' including when to leave and which country to choose. However, the most surprising result that can be introduced to the discussion on agency came as an answer to the question “How do you feel about being an AS? Happy, sad, proud, ashamed, excited?”:

“Happy to be here, but I don't answer happy. I lost many things, so sad about that. The main thing is maybe excited, I mean, now *it's up to me*. I also say this to my friends who don't study the language, or spend their days complaining about everything they lose [sic], saying 'home was paradise'. First, you had to escape, so it was no paradise. Second, now you are here, so it's useless to be sad. Now you have to decide what to do. You are in a place where you have a bit of freedom to make your own life. Now you are here *it's really up to you*: you can cry about what you lost, or you can start again to build your life, and enjoy the opportunities of this country”.

In stark opposition to the representation of AS as 'agency-less', the participant chose as the defining feeling of being an AS the idea that now 'it's up to me', which conveys a centrality of agency, and the individual conquest of agency, as what AS means in her life.

A question that raised deep and multi-layered conversations was: "if you were a journalist, how would you report about AS?". Two particularly interesting answers were: 1) to report less in general to avoid normalisation and desensitisation; 2) to report more about the problems AS face both in the journeys and once in the host country, in order to start a conversation on how to solve them. This second proposal is consistent with my critical analysis of media representation as set in the perspective of control by the state, missing a more factual description of difficulties that AS experience that can be solved. Indeed, almost as an explicit critique of the 'victim' depiction discussed above, a grievance shared by many participants was that "everybody says we help you but it's only words". This was qualified by another participant, by setting it in the aforementioned divide between state and 'civil society' organisations, with "but this is the Home Office, the volunteers want to help, they really try, but often they can't do enough". The root of the problem within the state asylum system was linked to agency again, by stating that it was understandable that they could not solve AS' problems, since there is no way for AS to express the problems they are facing. It is for this reason, on top of a hardly-bridgeable experiential cleavage, that "the Home Office cannot feel what we feel, they don't understand our situations".

Another significant role that the experiences of AS play in their social construction is to offer particularly suitable features that can be used for a representation as 'agency-less'. An effective discursive tool that the AS mentioned could potentially be employed by the positions of power in the asylum system in response to requests for change, therefore dismissing any desire for anything better (from the dinner menu to the procedural times) is: "we saved you from death, anything is better than that". Moreover, a theme that emerged consistently throughout the conversations was genuine thankfulness by AS towards the British state. Many AS have only just escaped from traumatic experiences, where the only possibility of 'saving' came from the British state. In such a situation, it is particularly difficult for people to find the conviction and strength to complain against the British state to change something, the asylum system, which anyway has to be endured only temporarily.

On a more structural level, identity is key to the complex boundary-setting work that defines who can complain and change and who is not allowed to. Many AS say they cannot complain because 'we have only just come'; had they been in the UK for longer, they would allegedly feel more entitled to challenge the discriminatory practices they endure. Nevertheless, at a fundamental level, the main institution that stops AS to be able to shape the treatment they receive is citizenship: the Parliament, that passes immigration legislation, and the Home Office, that organises the everyday level of AS' lives, chiefly answer to their own voting citizens. The lives of AS are organised by the host state, that applies international law in the context of a social construction that deeply shapes what AS means, irrespective to their self-identification. In Jenkins' terms, it is a 'pure category'(2000:9), a limit-case of social group only formally activated by an outside gaze (indeed, some AS do not even realise that they 'are' AS, or what it means). It is accepted as legitimate with the acceptance and embracing of the British legal/political system, and it is experienced mainly through direct control by the state, such as the policies of dispersals, detention and deportations.

4. Research Ethics and Sociological Implications

In the present study, a politically committed approach proved to be not only relevant to the choice of topic, but central to the ethical foundation of research. In fact, during the course of this research, I came to understand how my compliance with standard practices of anonymising the participants

and gaining 'freely given informed consent', though necessary, was not sufficient. In particular, as part of the recurring meta-conversation on consent, I posed a banal question to Abu-Shlash's group that unexpectedly elicited an extremely significant answer. Exploiting the example of numerous instances where Abu-Shlash chose to recount his experience in institutional settings such as schools and community centres, I asked the group: “Do you like talking about your experience as an AS?”. Because of the widespread depiction of AS as 'victims', all the participants were able to elaborate their answer on the basis of a shared experience of frequent formal and informal interactions where they were asked to describe their suffering. The ethical implications of their reflections could be generalised to any marginalised and oppressed group, but, perhaps because of the very definition of their category as 'those suffering persecution', they were particularly aware of the negative consequences of common inclinations towards voyeurism. The conversation provoked by this question started on the dynamics of everyday interactions with curious people or institutional events, but then it organically became a discussion of the unfolding research. Turning towards me, a participant stated: “You don't understand how it feels to be an icon of suffering”.

From this statement, that could be uttered in many sociological research settings, I would infer that artificially placing a person in that position is justified only to the extent that the researcher is attempting to alleviate that suffering. The participants explicitly agreed they like to talk about their experience, but only if it is useful. And useful is defined in collective terms: “Even if they offered me money to publish a book on my story, I don't want. But if it's useful for children, or to change the asylum system, then I'm very happy, even excited, to help”. Thus, in this setting, the formulation of the British Sociological Association is not sufficient when it states: “[members should] anticipate, and guard against, consequences for research participants that can be predicted to be harmful”²⁴. If obtaining 'the voice' of AS, while not necessarily harmful, is impossible without reproducing problematic emotional dynamics, the principle of no harm is not sufficient. Consistently with the political approach of CDA (VanDijk, 1996: 292), the ethical legitimisation for research is derived from the proactive attempt to fight injustice. A typical criticism of CDA is, then, to question the definition of injustice, which -admittedly- has been shown to be simplistic, at times (Weiss & Wodak, 2003:3). In this research, I attempt to contribute to the deconstruction of a social construction based on the elimination of AS' agency. Though AS do not share a homogeneous political position, the fact that their many voices are deleted from the discussion of their situations is unjust, in itself, even for journalistic standards, opening a space for my contribution 'as an ally/accomplice' (Back & Solomos, 2003).

As Chalaby argues (1996), interrupting the study of discourse at a textual level is sociologically lacking. Even including the life experience of a group of people defined by a social construction is not enough to understand the sociological relevance of this category. The specific lens of sociology allows us and requires us to connect the social construction in question (composed of representation and experience) to the broader structures of the social, political and economical reality. Indeed, in a period when politics has increasingly become about the effective management of public resources, pushing many political conversations off the table, the discourse on migration has gained huge importance. It is a defining theme for the most fast-growing (right-wing) movements (Wodak, 2015), and it was a key theme in the debates preceding the two central political events of 2016 (that cannot be discussed here for reasons of space but provide the historical background of this research): Brexit and the election of Trump. Though neither of these events was related primarily to the arrival of AS to Europe, their significance for the present analysis lies in the fact that both events have been understood as reactively symptomatic of neoliberal globalisation (Van Hear, 2016). As Wendy Brown recently theorised (2017), since this era-defining process is presented as

²⁴ Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (March2002): <https://www.britisoc.co.uk/equality-diversity/statement-of-ethical-practice/> [Accessed12/03/2017]

imposing the inescapability of economic competition beyond the political control of individual states or their citizens, the increasing discussion of migration can be understood as providing a space to voice (if not actually address) wider fears of a loss of control.

The hyper-coverage of AS as part of the 'age of migration' associated with contemporary neoliberal globalisation (Castles et al., 2013) is partially due to the use of migration, one of the last themes that can still be discussed 'politically', to address a varying mixture of concerns related to race, gender, the nation-state and class. It has been convincingly argued that the discussion around AS provides a space for the interplay of discourses on neoliberalism, focusing on their supposed economic undesirability, and nationalism, protecting sovereignty and homogeneity (Lueck et al., 2015). Moreover, the discourse on immigrants in general is an eminent nation-building process, as Glick Shiller argues, because it engages those who participate in the public debate in a necessary 'pledge of loyalty'(2010). Still, the main topic debated through immigration is race (VanDijk,1991; 2000), increasingly in its 'cultural(ist)' formulation (Taguieff,1999). Gramsci (1971: 165) first inspired the Western 'left' to grant central importance to the cultural (now we would say discursive) level of struggle. Stuart Hall, building on his legacy, focuses his analytical attention on how the discursive constructions are 'maintained, developed and refined', in particular in the constant transformations of racisms (1986: 24). Within migration categories and the resulting social constructions, labour migration has become extremely rare for low-skilled workers, and the decisions on family-reunification are confined to the juridical sphere. For all these reasons, the hyper-coverage of AS in connection with the refugee crisis made evident the urgency for a critical study of the social construction of this category.

Conclusions

The centrality of the hyper-coverage of AS in the UK cannot be reconciled with the reality of the experiences of AS. If the reporting on AS did not discuss them 'as an issue' and focused on their lives, discrimination and choices, it could not be instrumentalised in discourses of racism, nation-building or neoliberalism. By moving from the fact of migration to the frame of control, the infinite political debates can be completely internal. Thus, the agency and subjectivity must be *sacrificed*. The category of AS is particularly suited for this elimination of agency for the many reasons that emerged in the focus groups, which makes it suitable to be the space for all the political conversations that a neoliberal political scenario does not offer.

Almost as an 'unintended' consequence, the policies shaping AS' life are based on this representation as agency-less. The widespread, and historically unique, use of bureaucratic dispersal in the asylum system (based on cost-efficiency concerns) is widely seen as unproblematic only because it is widely ignored that the choice to come to the UK is often based on previous personal connections (Block, 2002). In turn, the fact that AS become transient objects to be managed reproduces this picture of people without agency (Gill, 2009). When these policies are not based on a lack of agency, they would be threatened by granting greater agency and political voice to AS. Given the huge amount of articles on AS, if their representation included awarding them agency in their life choices, it would be harder to ignore their large-scale detention. Building fences at the French entrance of the Eurotunnel is the effective materialisation of a prolonged nation-building discourse; it would be politically much harder to see it as acceptable if all the people it is built to exclude were included in its public discussion.

In this sense, I agree with Marvakis in his powerful critique of studies of migration that ignore the migrants' agency (2012). Academically, as has been already argued, it is urgent to focus on the 'autonomy of migration' (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013). Politically, it is significant to recognise the importance of the elimination of AS' agency in facilitating both the discriminatory practices of the asylum system and the larger discussion of migration as an object of control. Hence, it is crucial

to support and value the struggles of migrants as defined by De Genova & Tazzioli: in their everyday individual resistance as well as collective action (2016: 26). To redeem AS' agency, crucial as it is, it is not necessary “to make invisible practices visible on the public stage of (official) Politics, but rather to highlight their effective political force and the real impacts of such discordant practices of freedom and resistance” (*ibid*:28).

To summarise, AS are not explicitly dehumanised in media representations, but their agency is deleted. The choice of depiction as 'victim' or 'threat' varies over time and across different newspapers, but their agency is consistently ignored. This is the result of the meso-level frame of control described by Horsti, materialised in the choice of verbs and sentence-construction which constantly relegate AS to passive roles. The exceptions regularly present AS as simply moving, making 'coming here' the only choice/action AS are able to display, and 'coming here' as itself a threatening act. With the picture of Alan Kurdi, a more empathetic narrative was introduced, tentatively balanced by a plethora of mitigating strategies. Then, through events such as the Cologne sexual attacks, a largely negative, on top of passivising, description was re-introduced. As in the infamous Charlie Hebdo comic, Alan has truly become just another racialised threat. What is strikingly missing is a representation of AS as agents capable of choice, which would be necessary for the development of solidarity from the reader, and for the recognition to AS of political value in determining their treatment.

The lived experience of AS both contrasts harshly with this description and explains why this category is particularly suitable for a representation without agency. The main connection between representations of AS as agency-less and AS' lived experiences is that AS' narratives show many concrete reasons why it is particularly difficult for them to contest their negative representation and their discriminatory treatment. The conquest of agency was chosen by a participant as the defining feature of being an AS, and a dichotomy with economic migrants based on 'choice' to 'come here' was widely refuted. The main grievances concerned the enforced idleness and the policy of dispersal, both elements pointing to the relevance of the elimination of agency in the British asylum system.

Still, even if the representation in the media is recognised to be largely negative, protesting the agency-less representation, as protesting at large against an unjust asylum system, was seen as particularly difficult because of the particular position of AS with regards to the safety they were recently granted by the British state. This issue, combined with the material impediments of language and common previous traumas, makes the group of people defined as AS particularly suitable for a hyper-representation without agency. In turn, a representation of a flood of people 'coming here' combined with a lack of agency is ideal for the discussion of internal politics with no regard to the actual needs and problems of the object of discussion. AS are a flood, they arrive here for structural reasons that do not deserve to be discussed at length, and their mere presence constitutes a threat. As a natural event, the agency of a flood is impossible to imagine. Similarly, the agency of AS is deleted, so that the articles can proceed to the discussion of internal political issues. Deconstructing the idea that AS have no agency is key in contrasting the xenophobic positions legitimising a bordering system that both physically and psychologically harms and threatens migrants' lives.

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In "their" words and in "our" words: a comparison between European policies, media narratives and migrants' testimonies of landings in the Mediterranean.

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to highlight convergences and divergences in the narrative patterns used by the Italian press and the migrants, through a comparison between the representations the main national newspapers made of the landings in Lampedusa in 2011, with testimonies and stories directly told by the survivors of the sea crossings in 2014. At the same time, we will use this confrontation as a key to interpret and analyse the recent EU migration policies, in order to understand whether and to what extent their narratives are closer to the media discourse on the migration phenomenon or to the narratives of its protagonists, the migrants. We used a methodological triangulation based on the content and frame analysis of the headlines and their reference to 311 articles about the landings in Lampedusa between February 15th and April 15th 2011. We gathered and analysed the narratives of direct testimonies of migrants landed in Sicily between the summer and autumn 2014. Lastly, we compared the results with the key principles in the European Agenda on Migration, approved in 2015. The results of this comparative analysis allowed us to notice how the European migration policies tend to shift towards the same directives used by the media in displaying the migration phenomenon, distancing themselves from the direct perception its protagonists – the migrants – have of their own experience, despite being the real recipients of such policies.

Keywords

Migrants, Landings, Media, Stereotypes, EU Policies.

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Introduction

In 2001, King and Wood argued that one of the three ways in which media may intervene in the collective experience of migration is the construction of the image that the host country has of migrants (King & Wood 2001: 1). This construction process is mainly made of words, discourses (Santa Ana, 2002), visual images and frames and it can impact the migrants' experience of inclusion or exclusion (King & Wood 2001), because they work on constructing an inclusive or exclusive approach in the public opinion, i.e. fixing stereotypes (Lippman, 1946), (Van Dijk, 1991).

The way in which media narratives frame landings, arrivals and the migrants' presence in the host countries has an important double role. Firstly, the media play a key role in creating social problems. This role mainly consists of presenting an issue to the public attention (Vasterman, 2005). Secondly, in doing so, the media can orient and influence the host countries in the creation of migration policies and promote civic actions for the resolution of the social problem itself (Hubbard et al., 1975), (Terwal, 1996), (Sciortino & Colombo, 2004). In shifting from the first to the second point, the way the phenomenon is presented and the way the subjects of the matter are portrayed and addressed play a fundamental role (Van Gorp, 2005) (Altheide, 1997).

The migration to the Mediterranean shores has proved to be a social problem of great seriousness ever since the landings in Lampedusa in 2011 and 2013, the first one as a consequence of the Arabic revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and, mostly, in Libya, and the second one as a result of the worsening civil war in Syria and the military dictatorship in Eritrea. In both cases, they represent significant moments in the history of migration in Italy, owing to: the unprecedented numbers of arrivals concentrated in a short period of time; high numbers of migrants dead during the sea crossing; the difficulty to manage the reception and relocation procedures with such a high number of migrants landed, which implied problems of co-existence between migrants and the hosting community.

From this moment onwards, the phenomenon has become a transnational social problem that resembles an authentic emergency, owing in particular to its scale (number of migrants landed: 62,692 in 2011, 42,925 in 2013²⁷, and of victims of wrecks²⁸), its extent (number of European countries involved: i.e., besides Italy: France, Greece, Slovenia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania, as well as non-EU countries such as FYROM, Serbia and Turkey²⁹) and the level of attention it has gained among the media and the political agenda of both national and international governments. More specifically, the shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013, which caused the death of more than 360 migrants, contributed, owing to the high attention it gained in media agendas, to giving a greater visibility to the matter. It was the first one of such great importance to be documented all over the world (Belluati, 2014), (Szczepanik, 2016).

As far as politics are concerned, the emergency dimension of the phenomenon led to a redefinition of the reception policies and of the management of the emergency, both on a national and a European level. These policies first went through a strengthening of the

²⁷ Source: www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Sbarchi_serie-2011-2014.xls

²⁸ See: http://www.borderdeaths.org/?page_id=7, a research on the "Human cost of Border Control" by Spijkerboer et al. (2015), VU University of Amsterdam; see also: <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/2011/05/mai-cosi-tanti-1510-morti-in-5-mesi-nel.html>, from Del Grande's blog "Fortress Europe" on migrants dead in an attempt to reach Europe.

²⁹ Source: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf

humanitarian dimension (especially in the immediate phase after the wreck) and then registered a greater attention to security matters – once the attention of the media on the tragedy was subject to a decrease due to the shift on the ever-growing quantity of arrivals³⁰.

In 2015, in particular, the issue of the landings and illegal arrivals went from being an almost exclusively Italian matter to a problem that involves the EU Institutions and the member states. These have immediately shown divergent ideas and promoted policies that would often be in contrast with what the EU institutions would recommend. This led to further restrictive policies³¹.

With regard to the contexts of landings and arrivals, situations like the one in Lampedusa, especially due to their proximity to the points of departure for migrants in Libya and Tunisia, represent frontiers (Proglione & Odasso, 2017). In being so, they were the first to be exposed to and experiment various ways to manage the emergency and implement the security policies (Pogliano, 2016) such as the setting-up of a new model of first reception: the *hotspot*³².

Due to their condition of frontiers, they are highly subject to the media’s attention. The media, in fact, have often used these contexts as a parameter to measure the migration situation in Italy and Europe, becoming real actors during the landing procedures, side by side with the law enforcement, even interfering with the reception operations (Ieracitano & Vigneri 2016).

What emerged from the analysis on the issue (Binotto et al., 2016) is that, due to organisational matters of security, the news can hardly give voice to the real protagonists, the migrants. This can only happen if they explicitly take the floor in riots and protests, which emphasises a “threat” frame. The personalisation of the story, instead, only happens through the media – it is not a direct story migrants tell, but the description of their experience through other witnesses’ eyes: rescuers, doctors, volunteers or the journalists themselves. This tends, instead, to consolidate a pietistic portrayal (Ieracitano & Vigneri, 2016).

The risk is flattening the media’s representation of the phenomenon of the landings on a triple narrative model. On one side, they present reports on the landings deprived of the migrants’ fundamental point of view or their personal experience. Instead, there will be representations that merely involve the migrants: a mediated story about their experience that will often be part of – and reinforce – a pietistic frame (Chouliaraki, 2012). A third narrative model will counterpose the latter: the real voice of the migrants through violent actions and protests, whose frame of reference is the one associated with danger and threat (Chebel d’Appollonia, 2012).

³⁰ *Mare Nostrum* – the operation launched by the Italian government after the tragedy of October 3rd to rescue migrants in distress at sea – was replaced a year later by the EU naval missions with a stronger approach on security: *Triton* and *Poseidon*, coordinated by the European agency Frontex, aimed at the patrol of the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea, and *Eunavfor Med Operation Sophia*, a European Common Security and Defense Policy mission, aimed at the identification, seizure and destruction of the boats used for the smuggling of migrants in the central Mediterranean Sea.

³¹ As an example: it is relevant to mention the opposition of Hungary and Slovakia to the scheme of relocation of the asylum-seekers who landed in Italy and Greece, and their appeal to the European Court of Justice; or the wall built by Hungary along the border with Serbia to keep the migrants away

³² In 2015, the island’s First Reception Centre became the first *hotspot* established by the European Agenda on Migration 2015. It is a new typology of centres for the immediate reception: a first medical screening and identification of the newly arrived through fingerprinting and the transmission of their fingerprints to the European database Eurodac. Such a model was then replicated in other similar contexts such as, in particular, the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, exposed to flows of Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi migrants departing from the Turkish coasts.

In producing the social problem of migrations, the media's personalisation of the story risks orienting the public opinion and the political agenda towards some opposed solutions, in terms of legitimation and promotion of exclusive or inclusive migration policies (Moore, 2012). The use or misuse of some labels or a specific terminology related to the legal status of the incoming migrants can deeply affect this personalisation (Gross et al., 2007). As we know, for instance, defining "clandestine" migrants that have already been recognised as asylum-seekers or refugees, besides creating misinformation, does not favour the creation of an inclusive attitude towards the newcomers.

However, the biggest risk goes beyond the use of labels or the wrong use of legal terminology (Article 19, 2003). The lack of attention to the direct and exclusive experiences of the migrants leads to the creation of an image that, starting from the archetype and stereotype of the good and bad "migrant"³³ respectively – to which the often wrongful use of the terminology contributes: the "refugee" to be given hospitality against the "economic migrant" to push away³⁴ – produces social representations on which both national and European policies are built. Indeed, these policies turn out to reflect archetypal and stereotypical social and cultural representations, distancing themselves from the real situations they are intended to address.

The concept of the archetype of the good refugee evokes the ideal pattern (archetype) of the person in need, reinforced by the media images (Van Gorp, 2005). According to Szczepanik (2016: 32) "the 'refugee archetype' (is) a universal set of normative characteristics (such as poverty, passivity or helplessness, gender-related behaviour patterns) rooted in past geographical and historical contexts". As a consequence, the image of the economic migrant becomes a stereotype since it refers to a person that, not being in need of international protection, moves to Europe in mixed flows with refugees despite not having the same needs. This enhances in the collective consciousness the suspicion (Gatta, 2012) that he/she hides a deception aimed to abuse the EU social welfare and 'steel' the Europeans' jobs (Cerase & Santoro, 2018).

Starting from these assumptions, the aim of this article is to highlight convergences and divergences in the narrative patterns used by the Italian press and the migrants, through a comparison between the representations the main national newspapers made of the landings in Lampedusa in 2011, with some testimonies and stories directly told by the survivors of the sea crossings in 2014. At the same time, we will use this confrontation as a key to interpret and analyse the recent EU migration policies, in order to understand whether and to what extent their narratives are closer to the media discourse on the migration phenomenon or to the narratives of its protagonists, the migrants.

More specifically, the aim of this comparison is to investigate, through the analysis of the frames and terminology:

³³ The opposition between the archetype and stereotype of the good and bad "migrant" – recalled by M. Szczepanik who uses it in reference to the good and bad "refugees" (2016: 24) – is generally associated to the contraposition between the refugee running away from conflicts and the economic migrant often defined as "illegal/irregular" respectively. See also Akoka (2011) and Sayad (1999).

³⁴ This terminological difference is often used by media – as well as in the political discourse – to address migrants even before their legal status is defined from the judicial authorities, often in the light of their geographical origin, despite being a subjective acknowledgement to be established after arrival, not an inherent feature linked to one's own origin. Even the European policy of relocation by quotas among the EU member states is based on the country of origin.

- whether there is inconsistency between the narrations presented by the national newspapers and the migrants’ testimonies and on what such inconsistency is based;
- whether and how this inconsistency is evoked in the narrative patterns of the main European migration policy: The 2015 European Agenda on Migration.

1. The migrants’ experiences in the news about the landings: the theoretical context

As some research outlines, the way some social problems are presented can implicate preferences towards some policies instead of others (Altheide, 1976), (Reese et al., 2003), (Pacelli et al., 2014), depending on whether the media display the news using an individualistic or social explanation. If the public recognises personal responsibilities, instead of social ones, as the cause of criminal actions, poverty or illegal migration, it will less likely approve public actions aimed at improving the social situation, as these will be considered unjustified and unnecessary (Sotirovic, 2003). This is exactly what happens with the attempts of reframing the migration issue in Italy, with the anti-migration campaign promoted by the leader of the political party Lega Nord, Matteo Salvini. The campaign stresses the idea that migrants who land on Italian coasts are irregular migrants and/or potential criminals looking for better life conditions³⁵.

However, as the studies on the news-making show (Golding & Elliott, 1979), some social matters are rarely presented in the abstract, as the tendency to the personalisation of facts serves as a tool to catch the public’s attention. Naturally, this poses risks. According to Sotirovic (2003), the excessive personalisation of the news, while catching the public’s attention and diverting it from the real social causes of the phenomenon itself, leads to the discharge of the responsibility of the institutions. Despite being entitled to power, they personalise the narration as well and focus on the individual responsibilities.

A further risk is the use the media make of narrative structures, language codes and frames that, aimed at the personalisation of the news, activate a process of mystification of the subjects involved. In doing so, instead of allowing contextualising the individual actions, through shedding light into the dynamics that triggered such behaviours, the personalisation ends up harming the understanding of the phenomena itself (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009), (Calvanese, 2011), (Cerase & Lai, 2016). It is thus a filtered, hetero-directed personalisation, which gives little voice to the subjects involved, unless it is to frame it within the double rhetoric of pietism and alarmism (Ieracitano & Vigneri 2016), the two main dimensions of the frame associated to the migration issue. In other words, cultural representations give rise to social representations (Moscovici, 2001) on the basis of which common actions, including those of the institutions, are taken.

As far as our object of study is concerned, many studies focused on the media coverage of the landings off the Mediterranean shores. However, most of them analysed specifically the frames the media used to portray the phenomenon (Bruno, 2015).

The results showed how the presentation of a structural phenomenon happens within the frame of the emergency. Such a frame can assume different variations that go from a pietistic representation of the landings, when the focus is on the sufferance endured by the migrants (“humanitarian crisis”), to an alarmist one, when the emergency then concentrates on the

³⁵ <http://www.ilpost.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/matteo.salvini1.jpg>

quantity of the arrivals and the number of migrants in the reception centres (“invasion”). Other studies highlighted how this double frame reflects in the dynamics of intercultural communication between operators and migrants (Ieracitano & Vigneri, 2016), where the interaction of the former seems to be influenced by the stereotyped image of the latter.

In particular, the research carried out by De Swert, Schacht and Masini (2015) showed how the media coverage of irregular migration and Lampedusa differs among the European countries. The number of arrivals covered by the European press is generally close to real-world figures; however, the Italian and the German news show larger peaks than the British, the Dutch and the Belgian ones, which are less affected by the real-world peaks (De Swert et al., 2015: 513).

The results underline a relative consistency of the media coverage on Lampedusa. Specifically, the scholars claim that the political problems, causes and solutions are across the board only eclipsed by the dramatic pictures of the humanitarian disasters that make Lampedusa so infamous. The study outlined that “The great bulk of news in all five countries (Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, the UK) covered irregular migration and Lampedusa in a context of a ‘humanitarian disaster’ as the main problem behind the phenomenon” (De Swert et al., 2015: 518).

However, the authors underline how, in the Italian newspapers, the personal stories of the migrants themselves, while being so typical of the humanitarian drama coverage, are not very prominent if compared with the other countries (De Swert et al., 2015: 520). This is clear from the percentage of articles that contain direct testimonies of the immigrants. While in the Italian press the value is 7.8%, it is 22.3 in The Netherlands, 13.1 in Belgium, 18.0 in Germany, 23 in the UK out of 522 articles analysed (De Swert et al., 2015: 515). Therefore, the humanitarian dimension of the phenomenon of the landings is mainly based, in Italy, on the pietistic description of the migrants: a hetero-directed, mediated description, not based on their direct experience.

In our opinion, the absence or the low presence of these voices in the news coverage of landings have important consequences in influencing the public opinion on migration as a social problem, as the lack of reference to the reasons, experiences and aspirations of migrants does not allow putting into context the reasons that trigger the migration phenomenon itself.

Equally, the way the media often label the migrants through an incorrect use of the legal concepts linked to their status on the territory – in whose debate they cannot participate – like those of refugee, asylum-seeker, clandestine, can affect the legitimation of the social problem of migration. It can also affect the orientation of social policies towards inclusion or closure, leading to strengthening respectively the humanitarian or the security dimension.

This explains why in Italy, a country particularly exposed to migration fluxes, the media had to come up with tools that would grant a truthful presentation of the issue, through the production of a code of conduct – the “Rome Charter” – as an ethical reference for the coverage of the matters related to asylum and immigration. The Rome Charter acknowledges the fundamental role the media play in orienting and shaping the public opinion on migrants, especially with reference to their legal status, which determines the framing of the events.

The topics addressed in the above mentioned studies and the production of guidelines aimed to encourage a fair representation of migrants and of the migration issue, highlight the trend of the

Italian press to stress the representation of migrants from the hosting countries' perspective rather than through giving voice to the migrants themselves.

Interesting to the matter is the analysis carried out by Szczepanik (2016), who, starting from Malkki's research (1996), focuses on the tendency of the media to shape an abstract image, almost archetypal, of the refugee, that proves to be far from what the law states about the matter. From the media representations, the “good” refugee, according to the author's analysis, is usually a woman with children, therefore in need of acceptance and humanitarian aid. This image is in contrast with the one associated to the “bad” refugee, usually a man with no family that appears to be taking advantage of the aid and help offered by the hosting country³⁶.

As a consequence, “Individuals who do not possess the attributes of a ‘good’ or ‘genuine’ refugee are not only seen as undeserving protection but oftentimes it is also implied that they intend to abuse the system of social welfare” (Szczepanik, 2016: 26). In other words, the image of the refugee created by the media, according to Szczepanik's analysis, is based on what Malkki defines as the archetype of the refugee, a dehumanised, anonymous or sentimentalised subject (pietistic frame). By contrast, “any counterevidence, any story that challenges whom we are used to see as refugee” (Szczepanik, 2016: 30) is associated to the image of the threatening subject (alarmist frame).

This is what happens anytime the media narration focuses on what, in the newly landed migrants' behaviour, is perceived as “abnormal” – the use of smartphones, request of cigarettes, protests and other forms of dissatisfaction towards the reception services, etc.

As an example, when migrants become the protagonists of protests or insurrections inside the hosting centres, the tone and the terminology of the media narratives change (Ieracitano & Vigneri, 2016), contributing to the symbolic creation of an enemy addressed, in the main Italian newspapers, as “undesired”, “riotous” or even “terrorist” (Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014) – in other words, the one who, being in need, has no right to rise up (Gatta, 2011).

Instead of paying attention to their point of view, this contributes to the consolidation of the stereotype of migrants (Stangor & Schaller, 2000 [1996]), (Dal Lago, 2006), seen as deceiving subjects (Gatta, 2012) who benefit from the hospitality, although they do not reflect the features of their archetypal image. As Cuttitta suggests, “although the migrants are often presented as the victims of the smugglers' criminal activity, in other cases, instead, the stigma of the criminality shifts onto them” (2012: 71). Such an approach contributes to the process of legal production of migrants' illegality (De Genova, 2004) typical of the migration control system: migrants are shown as inherently illegal subjects, although their illegality is largely the result of the migration policies themselves, which do not give alternatives to clandestine journeys. In our opinion, this approach is also perpetrated by the media, where low attention is given to the voice of migrants.

³⁶ The author uses the word “refugee” to refer indifferently to all the subjects arrived in Europe during the current migration crisis, regardless of their actual legal status. This status is, in fact, an acknowledgement given to the subject afterwards, only after their formal request for international protection and the judicial authorities' evaluation. However, we will use the opposition between “good and bad refugees” identified by the author to refer to the frequent opposition in the media and the European political debate between those who flee wars (“a right cause” to grant hospitality) and those who came “just” to improve their economic situations, the so-called “economic migrants”, who need to be repatriated.

Moreover, in the mentioned studies related to the media coverage of landings, we identify a lack of sufficient attention to the inconsistency between the “mediated experience” (Thompson, 1995) of the phenomenon of the landings conveyed by the media and the “real experiences” as told by the actual survivors of the crossings.

2. Methodology

In our study, we used a methodological triangulation based on the content of the headlines and their reference to the articles about the landings in Lampedusa between February 15th and April 15th 2011, the most intense months of the landings on the island right after the Tunisian revolution. Afterwards, we gathered direct testimonies of migrants landed in Sicily between the summer and autumn 2014. Lastly, we compared the results with the key principles in the European Agenda on Migration, approved in 2015.

The intent is to understand whether the media narrations and the ones of the protagonists of the events show inconsistencies or different perspectives, anchoring to the archetype or the stereotype of respectively the good and the bad migrant.

As far as the media representation is concerned, the analysis was carried out on the main Italian newspapers chosen according to their distribution and their political-cultural orientation: *Corriere della Sera* (liberal), *La Repubblica* (progressive), *La Stampa* (moderate), *Il Giornale* (right-wing), *L'Unità* (left-wing), *Libero* (right-wing). The choice to focus the analysis on the front pages and the related articles allowed us to notice how the different headlines used the “Agenda effect” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and presented the landings emergency according to their typical editorial style. A data sheet was created with quantitative and qualitative variations (Berelson, 1952), (Losito, 1993), to analyse the content of the news and the modalities used to present the facts, even by the use of language codes and frames (Ieracitano & Rumi, 2014).

We created an analysis sheet divided in three sections: the first one dedicated to the content of the news (description of the protagonists and the events they went through, analysis of the causes and repercussions on the landings); the second one focused on the analysis of the language used (title of the article, terminology to address the protagonists and portray the landings); the third one based on the analysis of the frames used to look into the presence/absence of references to possible legislative solutions and/or in terms of recognition of the migrants' rights.

The monitoring allowed us to identify 311 front page headlines, together with the related articles. This led to noticing elements of consistency among the newspapers in the modalities used to present the matter, but also significant differences in the overview of the landing issue.

The migrants' testimonies are six. The limited amount of testimonies is motivated by the fact that they were spontaneously given by the migrants to the co-author, who was working as a linguistic-cultural mediator on behalf of the local health unit (ASP-06) during the landing operations in Palermo in 2014.

The role of linguistic-cultural mediator – an expressive and cultural intermediary between the migrants and the hosting social context – allowed the researcher to be in touch with the migrants' need to share their stories, which led to the creation of a privileged dialogue and therefore exposed him more directly to migrants' spontaneous tales

The testimonies given by the migrants at their arrival, during the triage and identification procedures at the dock, did not follow a uniform pattern because they emerged as informal dialogues. Moreover, being the very first occasion to share such a recent event, the testimonies would be genuine, without the influences that the regulatory procedures for the recognition of the status cause. Plus, the role of the researcher was disguised, as it would not have been possible to detect such information in the surveilled areas of the landings otherwise; the researcher would take brief notes of these informal dialogues and subsequently put them together right after the landing.

In our study, the decision to disguise the role of the researcher, despite the ethical concerns such an approach raises, is justified by scientific, ethical and logistical considerations.

From a scientific perspective the research concealment can “help reveal what lies beneath without altering the nature of reality”, in particular when the subjects being studied are vulnerable, marginalized and stigmatized groups or individuals (Li, 2008: 111). From an ethical point of view, although the migrants were not informed about the use of their testimonies, the “potential social benefits of covert work often outweigh its ethical risks”; giving voice to marginalized and stigmatized groups of people, who are “made invisible and voiceless in our society (...) serve as advocacy to inform better policy and practice, ultimately bringing positive changes for people being studied” (Li, 2008: 111). In this regard, it should also be mentioned that, as provided for in the Rome Charter³⁷, the testimonies were anonymously treated, preserving the migrants' identity. Furthermore, due to the specific setting where the researcher acted as a linguistic-cultural mediator, the disclosure of the researcher's role would have hampered the mediation activity, which was crucial at that specific circumstance³⁸. Therefore, the authors considered more ethical to preserve the role of the mediator in the interest of the migrants themselves than disclose the researcher's role to migrants, who might have felt uncomfortable in benefitting from the service and exposing their experiences and concerns.

The comparative analysis of these two typologies of content (the national newspapers and the migrants' testimonies) allowed identifying some interpretative categories (Van Gorp, 2005), useful to analyse the migration policies. More specifically, we analysed the main contents, frames and narratives of the current European Agenda on Migration approved in May 2015³⁹, to verify their closeness to either the media discourse on migration or to the migrants' own narratives.

The European Agenda on Migration represents the main European reference framework for both the EU and its member states to face the migration emergency. The decision to focus on EU- level policies, instead of national-level ones, is motivated by the direct impact such policies have on the way national governments – in this case Italy – cope with the migration crisis, significantly affecting their reception, asylum and return rules and procedures⁴⁰. In particular, the 2015 European Agenda on Migration, approved as a consequence of the

³⁷ <http://ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/assets/docs/068/223/47dfc44-3c9f7df.pdf>

³⁸ The role of the linguistic-cultural mediator during the migrant landing operations was to facilitate the health assistance for the newly landed migrants, by making it possible for the medical personnel (doctors, nurses, psychologists, etc.) to properly evaluate their health conditions and treat them accordingly.

³⁹ See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf

⁴⁰ An example is the *hotspot*, a particular category of migrant first reception centres defined in the 2015 European Agenda on Migration, which were opened in Italy even before they were legally regulated at national level.

migration crisis emerged in 2011 and broken out in 2015, implied the immediate implementation of urgent measures with long-term effects aimed at both providing a more effective response to the crisis and committing the EU Member States to sharing the reception of refugees (relocation)⁴¹.

The interpretative categories applied for the analysis of the European Agenda are: the migrants' status and the way they are labelled, the causes of their migration, the migrants' de-historicization and the de-contextualization of their choices and behaviours through the use of rhetoric sentences and metaphors (Van Gorp, 2005).

3. Protagonists in comparison: from the media to the real experiences

3.1. The media representation through the analysis of the Italian newspapers' language

The experience of the landings as told by the media is characterised by the specific terminological choices made in the examined headlines. The first aspect emerged from the analysis involves the words used to address the protagonists of the landings. The most used word is “immigrant”, used 464 times on 311 articles, followed by “migrant”, used 325 times. The frequent use of a neutral terminology to refer to the status of the migrants reveals the effectiveness of the Rome Charter. However, the use of an inappropriate terminology is still frequent, as demonstrated by the widespread use of the words “clandestine” (323 times) and, less used, “illegal migrant” (63) and “irregular” (30). This terminological choice is mostly typical of *Il Giornale* and *Liberio* (right-wing oriented), where the use of “clandestine” shows up, respectively, 143 and 50 times.

The overall data show an on-going terminological confusion on the legal status of the migrants, which leads to a wrongful use of the words “forcibly displaced person” – *profugo* in Italian – (248), “refugee” (135) and “asylum-seeker” (31). Beyond the use of a more or less appropriate terminology, the reference to the legal status of the migrants is present 156 times in the 311 articles examined, while the reference to the ethnic/national belonging shows up 144 times; scarce or non-existent the references to religion (3) or personal data (8).

The analysis of the content showed the use of a terminology that insists on the emotional dimension, where migrants are addressed as “desperate” (59), “shipwrecked” (13) and “poor” (9). Such an emotional dimension contributes to strengthening the ethic-humanitarian interpretation in the reading of the facts. Other words to connote the protagonists are: “livestock”, “damned”, “disowned”, “people with no name”, “dispersed”: words that highlight the ethic-humanitarian interpretation of the facts, shifting often towards pietism and recalling the archetype of the good refugee, as described by Szczepanik (2016).

However, the archetypical representation of refugees is opposed to a stereotypical representation characterised by two main features. On one hand, the stereotype is created by addressing the protagonists using their ethnic-national origin, rather than their legal status (“Africans”, “North Africans”; “Libyans”, “Tunisians”, etc.); on the other hand, it materialises through the symbolic image of the enemy/invader with the use of words like “unwanted”, “rebellious”, “terrorist”, “illegal”, “invader”. Within the representation of the landings, the archetype of the poor “desperate” migrant (or the “good refugee”, to use Szczepanik's

⁴¹ As a matter of fact, the appeals by Hungary and Slovakia against the relocation procedure, determined by the European Agenda on Migration, were rejected by the European Court of Justice in September 2017.

terminology) and the stereotype of the bad threatening migrant (the African foreign and criminal invader) coexist.

The analysis of the headlines outlined interpretative tendencies that can be divided into two semantic areas. Firstly, the lexicon used in the headlines contributed to identifying a first semantic field based on the tragedy, adopted in particularly by progressive, liberal/moderate and left-wing newspapers. It is enhanced in all its dramatic connotation by titles like “Migrants, apocalypse in the sea” (*La Repubblica*, 07/04/2011), “Hell Mediterranean, boat sinks: dead people and hundreds of dispersed” (*L'Unità*, 07/04/2011), “Hecatomb on the way to Italy” (*Corriere della sera*, 07/04/2011), “Massacre off Lampedusa: on the boat 300 immigrants” (*La Stampa*, 07/14/2011), “The great exodus from Libya. Humanitarian emergency” (*La Repubblica*, 02/03/2011).

Equally significant is the impact of the headlines focused on the consequences of the landings on the host countries. The terminology used in this case defines a semantic field related to the emergency, about which it is relevant to notice some differences. In some cases, it consists of a call for help addressed to the national and international institutions, to face the dramatic events; in some others, the emergency turns into a “foreign invasion” syndrome.

The call for help from an interventionist interpretation is exemplified by headlines like “A sea of desperate people invades Tunisia: 75 thousands at the border. The UN: a point of no return” (*La Stampa*, 02/03/2011), “The Pope: let the world help the Libyans” (*La Repubblica*, 07/03/2011), “Napolitano seeks for the EU’s help” (*L'Unità*, 25/02/2011), “the UN to Italy: let the refugees in” (*Il Corriere della sera*, 23/02/2011). This shows the plurality of the institutional actors involved in a matter that has caught the public’s attention not only for its dramatic nature, but also for a stronger request of intervention on a national and international legal basis.

The use of a lexicon that clearly recalls a situation of emergency proves to be even more significant, as it assumes the connotation of a real invasion and, indirectly, the impossibility to manage such a widespread phenomenon.

More specifically, the newspapers *L'Unità* and *La Stampa* show tolerant positions towards the landing phenomenon. On the contrary, the right-wing newspapers – i.e. *Liberò* (64%) and *Il Giornale* (39%) – give more visibility to positions of intolerance, tightening up their editorial perspective towards the landings in Lampedusa.

Some headlines focus on the quantitative figures of the phenomenon, emphasising it: “Calm sea, the nightmare of the great invasion. After seven stormy days, 800 people landed in a few hours” (*La Stampa*, 03/03/2011), “100 thousand ready to land in Italy, Brussels warns” (*La Stampa*, 15/04/2011), “The island awaits the invasion, a non-stop landing” (*La Stampa*, 03/03/2011), “Lampedusa under siege” (*Liberò*, 01/04/2011), “Collapsing Lampedusa” (*La Repubblica*, 30/03/2011). Others focus on the difficulty in facing the emergency: “Immigrants, the Regions in revolt. Berlusconi: it is a human tsunami” (*La Stampa*, 02/04/2011), “The clandestine invasion. Let’s save the Italians” (*Il Giornale*, 29/03/2011), “Lampedusa: the number of the immigrants almost equals the inhabitants” (*Corriere della sera*, 23/03/2011), “They are too many, stop” (*La Repubblica*, 15/02/2011), “Immigrants, hell in Lampedusa” (*La Repubblica*, 28/03/2011).

The analysis of the variables examined so far allowed us to identify the key to interpret the Italian newspapers. On the whole, the examined headlines present the phenomenon of the

landings in terms of a problem that triggers social alarm (45%). This kind of framing is due to the willingness to face a situation that was labelled as a cause of a social alarm in the first place. The attempts of the Italian press for an interpretation aimed at finding solutions for the recognition of the migrants' rights is way less prominent (10%). The same happens with the articles that do not present any reference to expressed framing interpretations. This can be explained with the difficulty in addressing such a controversial phenomenon, like the one of the landings. However, the limited use of an interpretation that aims at the analysis of the causes that trigger the phenomenon (7%) demonstrates how one of the missing links in the representation of the migration phenomena is the attention to the reasons behind the matter.

The analysis of the frames on the different headlines demonstrates how the newspapers *Il Giornale* (51%), *Liberio* (45%) *La Repubblica* (42%) and *La Stampa* (30%) use the social alarm as the prevailing key to interpretation. *L'Unità*, instead, appears to be more oriented towards problematizing the phenomenon from an interventionist interpretation, both on the legislative level (33%) and for the recognition of rights (22%). The exception represented by this newspaper demonstrates how the Italian press struggles to overcome a generally alarmist presentation of the news, to offer analytical/interpretative tools necessary to create a public opinion not exclusively focused on the emergency.

3.2. The migrants' stories through the analysis of direct testimonies

To analyse the migrants' stories, we used the expressions and explanations offered by the migrants themselves on their migration experiences (including the crossings and the landings), to understand how they define themselves and/or the other migrants. We analysed the way the interpretative comprehension of their status and their individual and collective condition develops, making a comparison with the expressions and explanations given by the press. Furthermore, we analysed the reference to other actors with an important role in the migrants' experience, together with the way migrants look at their own stories starting from the causes of their migration to their expectations.

Comparing the results of the analysis on the news content with what emerged from the 6 stories told by the migrants landed in Palermo, it is clear that the terminological choices made by the migrants to define themselves and address their fellows are mostly exemplified in expressions like "refugees", "migrants", but mostly "people". Within the same story, the three words interchange, but their use changes according to the specific phases of the events.

In particular, the expression "refugees" is used to describe the moment of the escape from the country of origin until the "meeting" with the smugglers. As a 40-year-old Palestinian man said: "The escape from Palestine (Gaza strip) to go to Sinai in Egypt happened through an underground tunnel of hundreds of metres we had to crawl through, guided by a man who is paid as a chaperon of the refugees, shedding some light all along the path"; "so many refugees, about to leave like us, did not make it". The words "migrants" and "people" are mostly used to indicate the phase of the crossing. According to an Ivorian woman: "one night, once I got to the port, the lady addressed a big boat full of Syrian migrants that had just left; the boat came closer and I saw the woman negotiate with some men (...). After a while, these people let me on the boat and there we set off".

An element that surely catches the attention is the use of the word "people" to refer to the inhuman conditions of the crossing. It creates such a strong contrast in the narration that it emphasises the process of de-humanisation the migrants are subject to. As a Ghanaian boy

recalls: “They literally threw other migrants from their boat to ours, not like people but objects”. According to the Palestinian man: “a boat left shortly after ours and, presumably carrying hundreds of people, sank (...) all dead!”. Another Palestinian man, a little younger, remembers that: “the boat was evidently too small to carry all the embarked people. However, the recovered people were dislocated in more than one boat”.

The reference to the legal status is almost absent in their stories, if not in a couple of testimonies. In the first one, the Palestinian man talks about himself as a refugee and, in particular, as part of a group that shares the same destiny and status: “Many other refugees, who left like us, did not make it”. A second testimony by a Sudanese man shows a great level of awareness about his own legal status as an asylum-seeker and the relative necessary procedures to obtain such recognition: “In fact, before leaving, I appealed to the UNHCR and I had been presenting my request for asylum in Europe for two years already”.

Along with these two testimonies, the story of the young Palestinian man stands out. He seems to be disoriented in having to go through the bureaucracy of the landing and reception procedures, about which he has no knowledge. Nor does he seem to have any idea on which territory he needs to present his request for international protection. He asks the researcher/mediator for some clarifications, fearing the procedures of recognition might be an obstacle to his migration project. “Now that we are in Italy, I’d like to know some things. Where will they take us? How long will we stay in the centre? Is it true they will make us leave our fingerprints? I am asking because I don’t want to stay here. Tell me, what country would you say is the best one in Europe?”.

When talking about the travelling companions they met during the escape from their countries, the heard migrants express an estrangement that emerges from the different ethnicity. It recalls the mechanisms of in-group/out-group we create to draw a line between ourselves and the others. As the Ghanaian boy says: “on the boat, us black Africans were very few, just 3 or 4. Most of them were Arabs, but there was no hostility, nor did we have any fight or racist insults”. The Ivorian woman says: “I ran to the desert (...). There I met a Libyan woman who spoke little English; at the beginning, I was a little suspicious (...) then I told her about me and she decided to help me. I did not know whether to trust her or not”.

The sense of mistrust and estrangement towards those who share the same experience of the crossing is evident from the fact that any reference to relationships of solidarity and friendship is circumscribed to single individuals. An example is when the Palestinian man says: “(...) Luckily, there are some happy endings, like the story of that man who arrived with us. I’ll show him to you as soon as I see him, so that you can take care of him (...)”.

The reference to a sort of sense of “us” emerges while talking about the shared dangers and the extreme conditions of the crossing: “We started screaming seeking for help and many of us, already weakened by days without eating, started swallowing sea water (...). Luckily, we all survived, none of us died” (a Nigerian man) or: “It was so overcrowded we literally could not move, and from there the physical hurting you see now (...). We were treated very well (by a Turkish merchant) and they were so kind to us” (Sudanese man).

Although the birth of relationships of trust and mutual help with individual travelling companions is presented as unexpected and not obvious, when the stories start focusing on the present and the moment of the landing, the sense of loneliness prevails. The awareness that emerges from their words leads to reducing the importance of the relationships created during

the journey. As the Ivorian woman says: “I lost everything and everyone and I am by myself here, I am afraid (...). I was alone, I didn’t know anyone on the boat (...). Then this boy (a young Ivorian man sitting on the triage area on her right) comforted me and encouraged me, telling me not to be afraid anymore. It was all so terrible. I lost my husband, my kids and two weeks ago my brother, too (...). And now we’re here. But I lost everybody, my brother, I am alone (cries)”. Similarly, the Ghanaian boy asks: “How is it going to be like here in Italy? What should I expect? What will happen to me? I have nobody here. I had my friends in Libya, but I am alone here. I just met Ali”.

Besides the travelling companions, the stories told by the migrants contain references to other actors that intervene in their experience at different stages, from the escape from the country of origin to the crossing, until the arrival. In their narration, they mention institutional actors, like local governments, law enforcement, rescuers, merchants of various and different nationalities and European institutions, and smugglers, too.

In particular, the authorities and institutions of the countries of origin play an ambiguous role, especially when the story focuses on the escape and the migrants are caught by surprise for some behaviours. According to the Palestinian man: “We were given a fake Egyptian ID to show at the inspections (...). Actually, nobody ever checked us at all and I suspect that the Egyptian government has something to do with the whole organisation. Or, at least, the army, since the military, although seeing us, never stopped us”. The ambiguous position of the local institutions is evident in their double role of saviours and persecutors, as we learn from the same testimony: “The boat, right after the departure, because of the rough seas, overturned, but, luckily, shortly after, the Egyptian coast guards rescued us and brought us back to Egypt. As soon as we were back on the land, the army arrested some of us and sent them to jail (...). At that point you don’t have much choice: either jail, or the crossing”.

The representation of the smugglers made by the migrants appears to be singular, especially if compared with the one offered by the press, which surrounded it with the symbolic image of the enemy. The protagonists of the landings describe them as businessmen that take advantage and steal from those in difficulty, while they address the militiamen and the local law enforcement as the real enemies: “We left on a rubber boat, running away. They (presumably the Libyan militiamen) started shooting at us, they shot the rubber of the boat that started deflating to the point it broke and I saw my brother drown” (Ivorian woman).

When talking about the smugglers, what is clear is that migrants were unaware of the travel conditions. Nor did they have any idea of what would happen next. To some migrants the smugglers were the valid alternative to the usually very late institutional aids. As a Sudanese man says: “Had I known how risky the crossing to Italy would be, I would have waited centuries for the international organisations to take care of me and my family. In fact, before leaving, I appealed to the UNHCR and I had been presenting my request for asylum in Europe for two years already. The vain wait made me decide to resort to criminal organisations to be able to come to Europe. They are fearless people, they take our money but they do not care about the people they deal with. I had been working two years to earn enough money to make me and my family leave, 3,500 dollars or so. The prices are crazy. They sometimes make differences whether you are by yourself, in that case you pay more. Big families have a discount on each person. Once they get the money, they do not care about our destiny. It sometimes happens that somebody changes their mind, but they do not get the money back”.

The paradox that emerges from the testimonies is characterised, from one hand, by the great awareness on how the smuggling works, as they got to know it in detail, to the point they define it a real ‘business’: “I made contact with these people who work in the ‘boats business’. For them, this is a real ‘business’ (he emphasises this word). You can always find them in the same spots in the city. You go there, you talk to them and pay the ticket. The ticket is expensive, let’s say around 900 dollars. With the money they get, they buy a boat and as soon as it’s ready and moored at the dock, we can embark to leave. But it is not immediate. It can take weeks and it’s not even sure they let you leave. In my case, this was my second try and I ran out of all my savings. With the first money I guess I bought someone else a ticket. But I decided to try again, so I started working in business (...). So I went to the same spot and talked to the businessmen and I paid my ticket again” (Ghanaian boy).

On the other hand, such awareness is opposed to a sense of blame and incredulity in associating such a complicated mechanism with the inhuman and dangerous travel conditions it causes to the migrants. In some parts of the story, the migrants’ attitude is the same as the one of an unsatisfied customer who pays for a service: “I wonder, with all the money these smugglers get (thousands of dollars per boat) from us escapers, why can’t they provide us with at least something decent to eat and some water?” (Palestinian man).

A common feature of most of the examined testimonies is the reference to the causes behind the decision to emigrate. Regardless of the different ethnicity, the migrants’ testimonies insist on the unbearable situation in their countries of origin as well as in Libya, to the point that going away was the only real way out. Regarding this aspect, another interesting element outlined from the narrations is that the description of the crossing and of the dangers they faced assumes connotations that are more neutral and less dramatic than the ones used to talk about the wars and the critical conditions both in Libya and in their countries of origin.

The emotional dimension, instead, is more evident in the analysis of the causes behind the migrations, as these testimonies show: “In Libya it was terrible! I went away from my village, in eastern Nigeria. I was threatened by Boko Haram, which had already murdered my father. They are killing everyone over there, they kill us, steal from us, rape our women. But I found another hell in Libya. They just shoot at you. I remember running, they would make us hurry, they would shout “go! Go!” (Nigerian man). “We were in Libya, we used to live in Tripoli. But it was unbearable: there is the war, a total war (...) I lost my kids there, two children, a boy and a girl, because of the bombs. I had already lost my husband years ago in Ivory Coast during the civil war in my country. That’s why I escaped with my kids and my brother to go to Libya. Then, a few weeks ago, my brother and I realised we needed to go, we walked to Zwara” (Ivorian woman). “I stayed in Libya and then I decided to leave: it is total chaos over there, staying is too dangerous. People shooting, but mostly bombings, even in these months. They stopped recently and as soon as we could not hear the bombs anymore, we left the houses where we found shelter” (Ghanaian boy).

The dimension of the danger, the threats and the suffering are, in the migrants’ testimonies, still central in the phase before the embarkation, while everything after that, however dramatic and inhuman, is told through the disorientation of the migrants who, having lost everything, need to start over from scratch by themselves.

On the contrary, the suffering dimension is evoked by the news particularly with regard to the crossing and the arrival, and is dramatized to the point of degenerating into a pietistic and humanitarian frame.

The media representation of the migrants, identified with the archetype of the “good refugee” (Szczepanik, 2016), is therefore the representation of a broken and incomplete story, circumscribed to the experience of the crossing, with no consideration of the whole migration process and its causes and, mostly, its human consequences. It is the representation of subjects that are deprived not only of their voice, but also and especially of information regarding such a fundamental part of their own experience: the reasons behind their own actions. As Malkki (1996: 378) recalls, migrants now become de-historicized subjects: “This de-historicising universalism creates a context in which it is difficult for people belonging to the refugee category to be approached to as historical actors rather than simple mute victims”.

4. The political discourse through the analysis of the European Agenda on Migration

The same process of de-historicization is made in the creation of the main policies to manage the migration phenomenon in Europe. From the comparison between the media representation of the phenomenon and the testimonies of the migrants with regard to their own experience, we noticed some salient points, some prevailing directives of inconsistency followed by the media in distancing themselves from the self-representation of the migrants. In doing so, the media tend not only to de-historicize but also to level out – or to categorise imprecisely and in stereotypes – the migrants.

These directives offer interesting hints for the analysis of the language and the content of the main European policies. Specifically, we focused on the analysis of the frames and narratives used in the European Agenda on Migration of May 2015.

Despite noticing a higher accuracy in the legal distinction among the various statuses and a higher focus on the causes behind migration, even the European Agenda tends to uniform and depersonalise the migration phenomenon. Such a de-historicizing depersonalisation tends to lean towards the pietism and alarmism frames, as it happens in the media and differently from what emerged from the stories told by the migrants themselves. We therefore noticed the use of common narrative patterns between the discourse of the Italian press on migration and the one used in the European Agenda. It is common to find expressions that recall both the tragic nature of the phenomenon and the related urgency to handle its challenges effectively, especially considering its extent: “the plight of thousands of migrants”; “the pressure of thousands of migrants”; “the human misery”; “the human tragedy”; “high-volumes of arrivals”; “unprecedented pressure”, and others.

The combination of a pietistic and emergency rhetoric finds its culmination in a double priority – reiterated both in the initial part on the immediate action and even later, when talking about the need of more comprehensive policies. Such priorities include the need of safety of the migrants in distress in the sea as well as that on the European borders, made possible by reinforcing the European border and coast guard (Frontex), the deployment of military tools to combat migrant smuggling, efficient policies of repatriation and cooperation with third countries to grant security at the borders. In this regard, the second paragraph of the section dedicated to the comprehensive policies is particularly emblematic: “Border management – saving lives and securing external borders”.

As previously mentioned, we noticed a higher awareness of the numerous causes of the migration phenomenon and, beyond the immediate actions needed, particular attention is on the

management of the causes at its root. Some explicit references to the risk of generalisations, especially in the introduction, are present: “Every person's migration tells its own story. Misguided and stereotyped narratives often tend to focus only on certain types of flows, overlooking the inherent complexity of this phenomenon, which impacts society in many different ways and calls for a variety of responses”.

However, the focus on the real causes is only limited to a subparagraph of the section and, in promoting enhanced cooperation with third countries to limit the need to emigrate, it seems to basically talk on behalf of the hosting societies, and to defend, therefore, primarily the interests of the Europeans. The following statement confirms this: “Migration should be recognised as one of the primary areas where an active and engaged EU external policy is of direct importance to EU citizens”.

Even the legal difference between refugees and asylum-seekers on one hand (mentioned 28 times), and irregular migrants on the other (mentioned 26 times), is present when talking about the actions needed to make improvements to the European migration system. As far as the first category is concerned, these actions involve the implementation of quotas of asylum seekers and refugees for each member state – though regardless of the migrants’ aspirations – whereas for the latter (“irregular migrants or those whose asylum applications are refused”) swifter return procedures are encouraged and supported. This difference ends up emphasising the journalists’ tendency to oppose the archetypical and stereotypical images of, respectively, the good and the bad migrants: the first ones, generally, refugees escaping wars, who deserve reception; the second ones, addressed as “irregular” or, in the media, “economic migrants”, who need to be repatriated. This opposition, this “gap” created by such a differentiation, is then likely to be filled with xenophobia, rising in the public opinion as well as in the political landscape.

Lastly, however still present, the geographical context of the migrants (i.e. references to migrants’ countries/regions of origin) is only limited; it is used, for instance, to describe the situation of the Syrian refugees in the Middle East or Turkey. The main regions are only mentioned, especially in Africa, where the EU intervened or needs to, through an empowerment of the actions aimed at countering the activities of migrant smugglers. Such a poor level of contextualisation highlights further convergence with media narratives, which, as noticed above, de-historicize the migrant by focusing on the crossing and the landing.

The discourses and narratives analysed are produced by different actors, who have asymmetric powers and roles in defining migration as a social problem. More specifically, the media narratives contribute to framing the landings phenomenon for an audience composed by the citizens of the European hosting countries as well as for their policy makers. The European Agenda on Migration, drafted in 2015 by the European Commission, offers EU Members States and their citizens EU-level solutions on the social problem of migration, using frame and narrative patterns that are close to those used by the media. The discourse of the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers follow counter-narrative patterns compared with the two previous ones, but do not reach out to the same audience as the media and the EU policies, which have different publics and powers. Therefore, despite being the main actors involved in this process, the narratives and discourses of the migrants are not able to affect the representation of their own experiences nor that of the migrants themselves, to whom those policies are addressed.

Conclusion

In the light of the focus on the landings in Lampedusa as a consequence of the crisis in Northern Africa and the Middle East, an important factor emerges from the analysis of the news: the explicit reference to migrants is rare in articles about landings, despite them being the real protagonists of such events. The headlines we mentioned in the analysis highlight the idea of threat associated to immigration on the whole, together with the attempt of generalisation of its protagonists.

In just a few cases the headlines refer to their legal status and, consequently, the causes/reasons behind the arrivals during the considered timeframe. However, the headlines that explicitly refer to the causes of the landings usually recall the idea of threat around the arrival of the “foreigner”.

Whenever the headlines present an explicit reference to the protagonists’ legal status, there is no intention to support the rights related to that specific status, but it is only functional to underline the disadvantages for the receiving country. Firstly, the newspapers characterised by a right-wing editorial line, in particular, tend to support the idea of a foreign invasion by mentioning the risk to disguise illegal immigration behind the reception of asylum seekers. This is clear in headlines like: “Not really asylum seekers, here they come the clandestine immigrants. Out of 16 thousand immigrants in Lampedusa, around 13 thousand are not Libyans, but Tunisians and, therefore, not entitled to international protection” (*Il Giornale*, 24/03/2011), “The clandestine bomb, send the fake refugees home! 80% of the immigrants do not escape war, they only want to get to Europe. Italy needs to send them away” (*Il Giornale*, 24/03/2011). Secondly, the idea of threat is supported by the stress on the great repercussions of the reception of the asylum-seekers and of immigrants on the Italian economic system.

Generally, the prevailing frame used by the Italian press is related to an alarmist presentation of the issue, independently from their political line. The left-wing newspaper *l'Unità*, where the humanitarian frame prevails, is the only exception.

By making a comparison between the media representations and the migrants’ stories, some main discrepancies emerge. A first element is given by the terminology used by the media compared to the one used by the migrants to talk about their experience. The latter use the words “refugees”, “migrants” or “people”, which give their story the style of a report, whereas words like “desperate”, “poor”, “nameless people” used by the media add drama to the narration.

Moreover, one of the most important aspects emerged by our study is that the reference, however proper or improper, to the legal status of the migrants is not only used by the media to create the archetype of the good refugee or the stereotype of the bad illegal migrant. It is also used to define a social problem that burdens on the hosting country. The personalisation of the matter by the Italian press shifts between pietism/dramatization and emergency/alarmism causing the dehumanisation of the protagonists. This is not just due to the little space given to their own experience, but especially because the reference of the media to their legal status is usually related to the reception practices in the hosting society rather than to the reasons behind such events.

However, in the migrants’ stories we do not find rhetoric that circumscribes them within the archetype of the good refugee. These are stories in which the objective dimension prevails over

subjectivity, as confirmed by the references to the context and circumstances they went through and that define the drama around a scenario that does not need self-pity.

By comparing the stories, we do not identify a collective sense of belonging. Each protagonist talks about their own story and not the experience of a group who shares a similar destiny or escapes the same persecutions. The sense of community is strictly related to the extreme conditions of the crossing. On the contrary, the Italian press builds the symbolic image of an ethnically, culturally and legally unified group – aware of the rights they are entitled to – through both the frames of the emergency and those of pietism. The uniformity given to the protagonists by the news is then destroyed by the individuality of each experience faced and told directly by each migrant, whose needs and expectations seem to vanish at their arrival, as their personal background is de-historicized both by the news and the policies.

The analysis of the relation between the media representation and the stories told by the protagonists allowed us to understand where the policies created to face the phenomenon seem to lean to. As in both the media and political representations the protagonists are de-historicised following the same trends – pietism and alarmism – and causing the depersonalisation of the migrants, it was possible to identify, in the main EU migration policies, a correspondence with the inconsistency between the media and the migrants’ self-narration.

As in the media discourse, the text of the EU Agenda often resorts to expressions that highlight the dramatic dimension of migration, with regard, in particular, to the crossing of the Mediterranean (“the plight of thousands of migrants”, “the human misery”, “the human tragedy”) and recalls the commitment to save the life of those in distress at sea. At the same time, the idea of alarm and invasion for the hosting societies is evoked by expressions like “the pressure of thousands of migrants”; “high-volumes of arrivals”; “unprecedented pressure”, which stresses the need of security measures to combat irregular flows, up to making migration a specific component of on-going Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions.

Moreover, as it has already been noticed, references to migrants’ geographical contexts of origin, however present, do not provide much clarification on the dynamics behind the decision to migrate; they are just mentioned mainly to provide a picture of the contexts on which the EU would focus its financial, operational and political efforts.

As a consequence, our outcomes highlight that the migration issue is in general presented from the perspective of the receiving societies and addressed in the interest of the EU citizens; migration therefore appears as a social problem to take charge of and the migrant is referred to as a de-historicized subject, framed as either a person in need risking his/her life to flee a war and therefore worthy of protection (pietism), or as an irregular comer/stayer who needs to be swiftly returned (alarm). In both case, too little account is taken of the migrant’s perspective and very little is said about what is at the very root of his/her condition, as it is the case in most of the press articles we analysed.

The analysed data do not allow us to assume that the media affect directly the design of the European migration policy. However, the outcomes of our study give evidence that both the migration policies and the media tend to follow the same directories when presenting the migration phenomenon, distancing themselves from the direct perception of the migrants, despite these being the protagonists of the events narrated by the media and the real recipients of the policies themselves.

The migrants' representation offered by both the Italian press and the EU Agenda on Migration is that of de-historicized subjects. Consequently, the measures proposed by the Agenda are oriented only to the treatment of de-subjectivized persons who are reduced to two categories: a migrant in need of help (refugee/asylum seeker) and a migrant requiring surveillance (economic or irregular migrant).

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Varia

A move analysis of personal statements written by Ghanaian university students

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Abstract

The personal statement (PS) serves as one of the vital documents in the university admission process for prospective postgraduate students. Yet, it poses a great challenge to students in several English-medium universities worldwide. This paper investigates the schematic structure of 20 PSs written by prospective Ghanaian postgraduate students, drawing on Swales' (1990) genre perspective. The analysis showed that Ghanaian students deployed six obligatory moves (Caption, Background, Programme, Choice of School, Credentials, and Career Objective) and one optional move (Closure). Further, the PSs in the study had average words of 524, with Move five (credentials) occupying the most textual space. The dominant sequence was 1→2→3→4→5→6 and 7, with multiple appearances of moves 2, 3, 4 and 5 throughout a PS. This paper is significant in providing insights on the writing of PSs from an under-researched setting. It also provides some practical implications for academic writing programmes, genre studies, and further research.

Keywords

Genre, Ghana, personal statement, persuasion, postgraduate students

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Introduction

Pursuing a graduate degree is an arduous task which requires circumspection from applicants seeking for admission into a graduate school. Making a decision in respect of the right programme, choosing the best school to enroll in, preparing for higher academic tasks, and ensuring financial stability are some of the issues prospective graduates consider before applying for their chosen field of interest, apart from the many documentary requirements. Among these required documents is the Personal Statement (PS), also termed an Application Letter. The PS, according to Ding (2007), is one of the most important pieces of documentary requirements in the graduate school admission process for it exposes the applicant's writing ability, which in turn evinces the prospective candidate's disciplinary knowledge and tentative proposal of future research. The PS, therefore, provides the door for admission evaluators of graduate schools to examine further the applicants' personal and academic preparedness which no other documentary requirements could provide.

Personal statement, which is technically an essay in form, is an admixture of different language functions, both self-promotional and self-representation. It is both descriptive (or informative) and persuasive for it recounts one's personal experience and proffers arguments or reasons in pursuing a graduate course to convince their reader in considering them for the programme. Therefore, if properly written, it can, to a certain extent, spell success for the applicant. PS, as a genre, has an arcane nature (Vossler, 2007) because it is practiced only by an aspirant to the academic community, and not by a member (Bekins, Huckin & Kijack 2004, as cited in Vossler, 2007). In spite of its importance in the admission process, it is only in recent times that we have begun to learn about its nature and textual features, perhaps because of its 'semi-occluded' status, as claimed by Samraj and Monk (2008). As argued by Swales, studies into such typically hidden genres can provide useful insights. Most genre studies in the past four decades have decidedly focused on genres produced in the academic context. These genres include research articles, abstracts, argumentative essays, job application letters (Hyland, 1990; Swales 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Santos, 1996; Mercado, 2007 or 2000?), acknowledgement (Hyland, 2004; Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2010; and Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2012), introduction (Bunton, 2002; Afful, 2006), discussion (Holmes, 1997), results (Bretts, 1994), and conclusion (Hewings, 1993).

However, PS differs in many ways from the aforementioned genres. According to Ding (2007: 370), it lacks "prescriptive guidelines"; thus, it paves way for "creativity and individuality", providing "space for narratives and stories" which aim "to inform and persuade" its audience. Moreover, the undefined boundaries of the genre pose difficulty to applicants because of their anxiety with the conventions of the genre and expectations of their evaluators. This problem accentuates the gap between the writer (applicant) and its readers (evaluators), with the former being a novice and a stranger to the academic territory where he/she is seeking an admission and who barely has a clue of the readers' expectations, and the latter who is an expert in the field looking for the right qualities of the writer judging from a set of criteria unknown to the writer he/she has set forth.

There is a need for studies of genres that have not been extensively explored, such as the PS. In the midst of globalization and migration, the writing of PS is important. Such a genre particularly needs to be examined in socio-cultural contexts that have not been given attention. Researchers such as Schall (2002), Brown (2004), Barton *et al.* (2004), Bekins *et al.* (2004), Vossler (2007), Ding (2007), Forrister *et al.* (2007), Jones (2012) and Sii (2004) have studied the schematic structure and linguistic features of PS in the Western contexts. The

present study seeks to explore the schematic structure of PSs written by prospective Ghanaian postgraduate students in order to provide some insight into the discursive construction of this “semi-occluded genre” (Swales, 1996; Samraj & Monk, 2008).

1. Literature Review

This section provides the conceptual framework and review of empirical studies of PSs in order to provide a clear background to understanding the analysis and discussion of data.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

The term “genre”, which originally was a term used in classical times to refer to different kinds of literary texts, has extended its meaning and been applied in various disciplines such as Music, Theatre & Dance, Anthropology, and Linguistics. In Applied Linguistics, genre theory has been looked at from three different schools: The New Rhetoric School, American School, and the English for Specific Purposes School (ESP). Whereas the New Rhetoric focuses on the context and professional contexts, the other two perspectives focus on the textual features and students (non-native English and immigrants). The present study is situated within the ESP perspective championed by Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), Hyland (2003), Henry and Roseberry (2001), and Samraj (2002). According to Swales (1990: 58), one of the most cited genre analysts in Applied Linguistics, a genre comprises “a set of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purpose. The communicative purpose shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style”.

The communicative purpose shapes the structure into which a text is organized and it is achieved by rhetorical units known as ‘moves’, which are further realized through sub-rhetorical units called either “steps” or “sub-moves”. These formal characteristics involve giving much attention to the move structure in three respects: identification and frequency of occurrence, textual space, and sequencing of moves-steps. The identification of moves and steps also relates to the content of the genre as the inability of a writer to utilize all the moves may signal a deviation from what is recognizably accepted by members of the discourse community. A genre may have moves-steps which can be obligatory and optional. Further, these moves-steps may be allocated different levels of importance in terms of the amount of space devoted to them. Depending on the text length, we may utilize units of measurement of space such as T-units, phrases, words or bigger discourse units such as paragraphs. The sequencing of moves allows us to see the linearity, cyclicity, and embeddedness of the moves-steps. Further, genre analysts also describe and interpret the choice of linguistic features, which is also influenced by the communicative function of a genre. In other words, an ESP approach to genre also emphasizes the lexico-grammatical features of genres, although the Systemic Functional perspective also does the same.

It is possible that a genre such as the PS in its realization in different cultural contexts will differ in the ramifications described above. In this paper however, we focus on the move structure due to space constraint. Considering the communicative purpose of PSs, we expect that the PSs will be organized into moves and steps.

1.2. Previous Studies on Personal Statements

In practice, it is difficult to distinguish between studies that highlight the themes of PSs and those that highlight the moves, as expected in typical genre studies espoused by influential genre analysts such as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993).

According to Brown (2004), three content areas constitute the core of a typical Clinical Psychology PS. These are the research experience, research interests, and practical experience. The first two (that is, research experience and research interests) are specifically required from applicants. In addition, Vossler (2007) examines the rhetorical characteristics of PSs submitted to Student Information Library System by master's degree applicants. Drawing on Brown (2004), Vossler (2007) argues that there are eight rhetorical characteristics of statements of purpose. These are professional experience, educational background, professional goals, personal, others relating to library, others relating to hope and praise and others that do not fit into any of the rhetorical units.

Forrister, Jones and Liang (2011) indicate the common themes in the Physician Assistant (P.A) program applications. They identify eight themes and sub-themes. The first theme is the altruism and desire to help people which has subthemes as cross-cultural and underrepresented, geriatrics, paediatrics, undeserved rural, and undeserved urban. The second theme is challenges or hardships which comprise academic challenges in the past, family or friend health story, personal health story, international or refugee story, prior P.A. admission failure and poverty. The third theme is experience, which comprises the dramatic patient encounter, health care experience, military experience, mission trips/international experience and volunteerism. The fourth theme is the key accomplishment which has sub-themes as academic achievements, athletic performance, and research project. Personal characteristics constitute the fifth theme, with fascination by science or medicine, compassion or empathy as the sub-themes. The next theme is the positive perception of P.A. career attributes. These include autonomy, flexible or specialty transition, marketability and compensation, more time or involvement for patient care, time for family commitment. Role model, which is the final theme, had the following as sub-themes: family in health care profession, MD interaction, NP interaction, PA interaction, and religious or spiritual quest. Taking into account the PS as an effective way to enhance fairness in the higher education admission process, a more recent research conducted by Jones (2012) examines three key indicators in 309 PSs. These indicators are the fluency of expression, work-related activity, and extra-curricular activity. Applicants are advised to include details of job placements, work experience or voluntary work if it is relevant to the chosen course(s). Almost all the PSs contained some description of extracurricular activities.

Also, Barton, Ariail, & Smith, (2004), as cited in Vossler (2007), discovered four distinct moves in 169 PS used in residency applications. These include the opening move, schooling/training, interests and career goals. According to Barton *et al.* (2004), there is a strong preference for a personal narrative in the first paragraph. Based on their studies of graduate medical school PSs, Bekins, Huckin and Kijack (2004), as cited in Swales (2009), identify five moves. These include the hook, programme, background, self-promotion and projection moves. Similarly, in conducting a multi-level discourse analysis of medical and dental school application letters, Ding (2007) identifies five recurrent moves. These include explaining the reason to pursue the proposed study which comprises: explaining academic or intellectual interest in medicine or dentistry, stating one's understanding of medicine/dentistry, describing the motivation to become a doctor /dentist due to personal or

family experiences. The second move establishes credentials related to the fields of medicine or dentistry. This move had the following steps: listing academic achievements, reviewing research experiences related to medicine or dentistry and discussing professional experiences in clinical settings. Move three discusses relevant life experiences. Move four states future career goals and the final move describes personality.

In recent times more disciplinary studies on personal statements have been noted (Chen & Nassaji, 2014; Chiu, 2016; Chen, 2017). While these have, as far as we know, not differed considerably from the earlier studies by Brown (2004) and Ding (2007) in terms of the themes that are discussed, the inclusion of more disciplines presents the potential of interesting insights. Chen and Nassaji's (2014) study involved biology, engineering, and linguistics; Chiu's (2016) utilised PSs from a multi-disciplinary sources such as Curriculum Studies, Language and Literacy, Educational Linguistics, Higher Education, Science Education, and Education Policy; and Chen's (2017) involved a large number of disciplines in the Arts (e.g. Applied Linguistics, Cultural Studies, Hotel Management, and Political Science) and Science (e.g. Computer Engineering, Information Technology, Material Science, and Environmental Studies). In particular, Chen's (2017) work which foregrounds disciplinary variation indicates that while students in Engineering and Science predicate their self-promotional arguments on their previous research experience and future research prospects, their counterparts in Business, Humanities and Social Science do not.

Another perspective is given by Sii (2004) in his cross-cultural investigation of British and Chinese TEFL and TESL application letters. Using Bhatia's (1993) model for promotional genre, Sii (2004) presents six moves. These include establishing credentials, introducing candidature which comprises offering the candidature and indicating and detailing value of the candidature as steps. The third move is enclosing documents, the fourth is soliciting response, the next is explaining reasons and describing future plans is the final move. Chen and Nassaji (2014) provide another view into cultural differences in the construction of PSs from perspective of politeness strategies. While the Chinese English as Additional Language students preferred positive politeness strategies, the English as First Language students demonstrated flexibility in their PSs by adopting positive and negative politeness strategies equally.

Clearly, from above reviewed literature (e.g. Brown, 2004; Barton *et al.*, 2004; Bekins *et al.*, 2004; Vossler, 2007; Ding, 2007; Forrister *et al.*, 2007) varied disciplines have featured in the studies on the structure of the PSs. Some of the studies have also been presented from a cross-cultural perspective. Also, these PSs were written by students in, specifically, Anglo-Western contexts. Beyond these popular concerns of the studies that have been reviewed, Chen and Nassaji's (2014) study appears to be the only that have taken a pragmatic approach, focusing on politeness strategies. The above studies are, therefore, vital to the present study since it also considers the schematic structure of PSs.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Site

The research site for this study is the University of Cape Coast, one of the ten public universities in Ghana. Established in October, 1962 as a university college affiliated to the

University of Ghana, on October 1, 1971, the college attained the status of a full and independent University by an act of parliament. In August 2014, the university went collegiate and is, therefore, currently organized into five colleges: Humanities and Legal Studies, Distance Education, Education Studies, Agricultural & Natural Sciences, and Health and Allied sciences. UCC's vision is to be a university that is strongly positioned with a world-wide acclaim and the mission of being the University of Choice in Ghana. English remains the medium of instruction throughout the University, as a taught subject in a Department of English and as a university-wide subject popularly known as Communicative Skills (known elsewhere as English for Academic Purposes, Study Skills, Freshman's Composition).

Moreover, the University of Cape Coast is presented because students from University of Cape Coast are increasingly writing PSs because of the imperatives of globalization and internationalization in higher education. Although the writers are from University of Cape Coast, the PSs are not written for University of Cape Coast. Also, when it comes to L2 users of English and the writing of PS, the literature is silent on it; hence, the need for this study.

2.2. Research Design

The research design adopted in the study is mainly the qualitative type. It is particularly helpful in a textual analysis and is known for ensuring a better and holistic understanding of a linguistic phenomenon. This study employs, specifically, the qualitative content analysis. In qualitative content research, the researcher looks for patterns in the data, codes the data by organizing it into conceptual categories and creates themes or concepts (Jackson, 2010). The qualitative content analysis aids in “the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). Since qualitative research focuses on descriptive analysis, it aided the researchers to give an in-depth description and interpretation of the data. The study also makes use of some quantitative techniques such as frequency counts and percentages in order to aid understanding.

2.3. Data Set

PSs from students who had graduated with their first degrees from the University of Cape Coast were considered as the major source of data. PSs were taken from prospective graduate students with different undergraduate degrees who had applied into different postgraduate programmes and had gained admission in universities outside Ghana; that is, successful PSs were used.

While the focus of the paper is on Ghanaian university students, it must be emphasized that Ghanaian universities generally do not require PS as part of the documentary requirements for admissions/ scholarships. It is necessary, however, to find out how they do so in response to the need to obtain university education overseas. These students had obtained their undergraduate degrees across five faculties/schools namely: The Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, School of Biological Sciences, School of Agriculture and School of Business. The researcher used the snowball sampling technique. The snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who then provides the names of other actors (Atkinson & Fint, 2004). In all, 20 personal statements were collected for this study.

2.4. Data Analysis

In categorizing the moves and steps present in the corpus, the hand-tagged method of analysis pioneered by Swales (1990) in his CARS (Create-a-Research-Space) model in analyzing research articles as well as Ding’s (2007) work was employed.

Although there are a number of perspectives on genre studies (e.g. Miller 1984 and 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989 or 1994?), the present study deployed Swales’ (1990) genre approach. He proposes a model of genre analysis by looking at the rhetoric structure and lexico-grammatical features of a genre. According to Swales (1990), the communicative purpose shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains the choice of content and style. Some challenges that we encountered included the coding, labelling of moves, and the establishing of move and step boundaries. However, with the help of two postgraduate students in the Department of English, these issues were resolved. One of them had completed his MPhil in English Literature and the other was a PhD candidate in English Language. Inter-rater reliability was calculated at 75%.

Ding’s (2007) work provides the rhetorical objectives of PS for the present study in terms of its cognitive structuring. He stated that the main objective of being admitted to the programme is by “demonstrating one’s academic background, professional qualifications, and personal strengths”, which will be the benchmark of moves and steps analysis. This organization is explained by Bhatia’s (1993: 26) concept of cognitive structuring; he posited that it is “the conventional and standardized organization” of a written text. This also served as a point of reference in analyzing the rhetorical moves in the present corpus. **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** below presents the summary of moves identified in the present data, and **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** presents a sample of a PS.

Table 1: Move-Step classification

Number		Label	Purpose
Move 1		Caption	It identifies the genre.
Move 2		Background	It serves as an opening.
	Step A	Life Experience	It presents how one’s past has influenced the current decision concerning admission.
	Step B	Motivation	It shows the reason for the application.
Move 3		Programme	It informs readers about selected programme.
	Step A	Importance to applicants	It emphasizes the relevance of the programme as far the individual lives of applicants are concerned.
	Step B	Importance to society	It is concerned with how the programme would benefit the larger society beyond the individual
Move 4		Choice of School	It informs the evaluators about the school applicants are applying to.
	Step A	Academic reasons	The aim is to present the school as an academic oriented institution which has influenced the decision.
	Step B	Social reasons	It shows that the institution provides a holistic training for its students.

Table continues

Number	Label	Purpose	
Move 5		Credentials	This is where applicants prove their suitability for the admission.
	Step A	Academic credentials	It shows their academic prowess in the past.
	Step B	Non-academic credentials	It indicates their achievements beyond purely academic work.
	Step C	Distinctive personal qualities	Applicants state what they possess as distinctive individuals which are peculiar to them (uniqueness).
	Step D	Relevance of credentials	It presents an argument of the readiness of applicants for the programme with their stated credentials as the basis.
Move 6		Career objective	It emphasizes how the admission will help achieve their career goals.
Move 7		Closure	It provides a summary of the arguments raised.

Box 1: Sample of Personal Statement (PS 12)

Statement of Motivation (**Move 1: Caption**)

For several decades, Ghana constantly faces numerous environmental issues ranging from irregular water supply, sanitation, severe deforestation, water treatments, perennial floods events etc., and thus expertise are needed to help avert these situations. More importantly, water bodies (most rivers and streams) in the country have been engulfed by all forms of wastes (especially solid wastes) that have been major contributors to the prevalence of diseases and scarcity of potable drinking water in most communities. This is the prime reason my study interest is directed towards the area of water and environmental management specifically, water treatment technologies. Science and technology are two indispensable tools for improving the environment for everyone. For instance, science and technology has helped in treatment of wastewater, provided various methods for managing wastes, advanced methods for cleaner types of energy. As an ambitious scientist with passion for nature, this motivated me to apply for admission in the University of Cape Coast and studied Environmental Science. (**Move 2, Step B: Motivation**) Indeed, I have never been satisfied of myself in my whole life than the day I was awarded the certificate for pursuing B. Sc. Environmental Science. My undergraduate studies offered me a firm background in Environmental Management, yet, it is worth mentioning that this is not enough considering the complexity of water and environmental management processes and thus making further studies a necessity. After completion of my Bachelor's degree, I was selected as a teaching assistant in the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Cape Coast. (**Move 5, Step A: Academic credentials**)

This gave me a large piece of experiences which makes me apt for a postgraduate degree. (**Move 5: Step D: Relevance of credentials**)

Considering state of the art academic facilities of University of Abertay Dundee and the various courses that are to be undertaken in the program, I am convinced that my application is a step in the right direction. (**Move 4, Step A: Academic reasons**)

My chance to take part in this program will indeed enhance my research capabilities (**Move 3, Step A: Importance of programme to applicants**) and also develop needed technologies to effectively manage water resources and provide solutions to most environmental problems in my country. (**Move 3, Step B: Importance of programme to society**)

After the program, I plan to work with governmental or non-governmental organizations in Ghana that provide services in water and environmental management. Later on, I hope to impart the acquired knowledge, know-how and expertise to students and the public through training programs such as conferences, seminars and workshops thereby improving the knowledge pool and experts in this country in the field of Water and Environmental Management. This will eventually help train more environmental and water resources managers for the country. With this I believe my longing ambition would be achieved. (**Move 6: Career objective**)

Box continues

I am aware of the excellent reputation of the University of Abertay Dundee, and by critical analysis of the structure and learning objectives of the program; my interest in pursuing the program has been further aggravated. I am therefore more than poised to start and complete the program successfully if I am offered an admission. (Move 7: Closure)

3. Analysis and Discussion

This section presents both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the move structure of the PSs. based on the aim of study. It is worth mentioning that the extracts from the samples remain unedited.

3.1. Move Analysis

The PS presents a personal view of applicants with the aim of informing and persuading evaluators. In order to achieve these communicative functions, seven moves were identified in the data. These are the caption, background, programme, choice of school, credentials, career objective and the closure.

Move 1: Caption

This is the first move that was identified in the PS. The caption identifies and serves as a label for the PS. This move draws attention to what the text is about at a glance. The caption move is usually omitted in PSs where the school has provided a caption to an allocated space for the applicant to write the statement. This move is realised as: “Statement of Motivation” (PSs 2, 12), “Statement of Purpose” (PSs 1, 5, 8, 9) and “Personal statement” (PSs 7, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20).

Move 2: Background

This move serves as an opening to grab readers’ attention. The background move comprises the following steps: Life experience and motivation.

Step 1: Life experience

This serves as an opening to the genre. It is usually achieved through an anecdote. Writers state how a personal experience has triggered their desire for the chosen programme. This move adds value to the writer’s personality. The following extracts from the data highlight this point:

Extract 1:

“Working with children during community services in villages through evangelism programs and social work at Cape Coast has enlightened me to know that they need more of behavioural and mental health care services at their convenience.” (PS 3)

Extract 2:

“As a result of my own experience with people trooping into our country due to war situations and tribal conflicts, it seems especially clear to me that the refugees that face the biggest challenges are women. Many have no educational background and few skills that might help them to adjust to the work force.” (PS 16)

Step 2: Motivation

Applicants usually commence their PSs with statistical data or a general background to a problem in the country with the view of being a solution or being part of the solution, if given the opportunity. This move corresponds to Swales' (1990) Create a Research Space (CARS) model where the writer establishes a niche by indicating a gap with the hope of occupying the niche. This step is illustrated below:

Extract 3:

"I grew up in Ghana, a country whose economy is almost entirely supported by revenues from agriculture. Agriculture contributes about 33% of the country's GDP and export earnings... My desire to read science dates back to Senior high school where my interest was inclined towards agriculture because the teacher who taught it made it very interesting." (PS 8)

Extract 4:

"For several decades, Ghana constantly faces numerous environmental issues ranging from irregular water supply, sanitation, severe deforestation, water treatments, perennial floods events etc., and thus expertise are needed to help avert these situations. More importantly, water bodies (most rivers and streams) in the country have been engulfed by all forms of wastes (especially solid wastes) that have been major contributors to the prevalence of diseases and scarcity of potable drinking water in most communities." (PS 12)

This move was also identified in the study by Barton et al. (2004) as the opening move, Bekins et al. (2004) as the hook which is used to grab the readers' attention and as experience in Forrister *et al.* (2011) as that which deals with one's experience relating to the field of health care. The presence of the background move in studies outside the Ghanaian context is a clear indication of how important the introduction of an essay is to readers, as well as how one's life experience shapes the present and future.

Move 3: Programme

The purpose of the programme move is to inform and persuade the gatekeepers about the applicant's choice of programme. The following are the steps identified: Importance of programme to an applicant and importance of programme to society.

Step 1: Importance of programme to applicants

Writers state how the programme they are applying for is beneficial to them as individuals. Usually, the importance of the programme emphasizes the programme's contribution as far as the applicant's career objective is concerned. Applicants show how they are enthused about the programme and their potential to excel. It also deals with issues such as enhancing the applicants' research capabilities and broadening their horizon. Extracts for this step are illustrated below:

Extract 5:

"For me to become an eminent agricultural policy analyst, it is undoubtedly not a mistake to apply for the European Master in Agricultural, Food and Environmental Policy Analysis programme." (PS 5)

Extract 6:

“I believe that a Master’s program in MSc Finance and Management at University of St Andrews would position me strategically to achieve this career objective.” (PS 19)

Step 2: Importance of programme to society

Applicants highlight how important their programme of choice is to them and their society or the country. This move depicts the communal nature of Ghanaians in the sense that though the programme would benefit them as individuals, the society is also thought of. The extracts below illustrate this:

Extract 7:

“I aim to help my country in championing human rights and curtailing negative cultural practices with the knowledge that I seek to acquire in human rights law and Keele University...” (PS 4)

Extract 8:

“...to equip me with the requisite skills to contribute to the development of an improved health care system in Ghana.” (PS 10)

Similarly, the programme move was identified by Bekins et al. (2004), Ding (2007), and Sii (2004) in their research. This indicates that one’s programme of study is as relevant as the school one is applying to. Applicants, therefore, cannot talk about admission without a programme of study as it is at the centre of one’s consideration for admission; hence, its presence in other PS outside this study.

Move 4: Choice of School

In order to persuade gatekeepers, applicants usually state their choice of school and give reasons for their choice in their PSs. Both academic reasons and non-academic reasons are identified as the steps under this move.

Step 1: Academic reasons

This was one of the steps identified under Move 4. Applicants state their schools and the academic reasons for their choice. Academic reasons that influence their choice range from academic facilities, research interests, structure of courses, in-depth nature of programme, innovative curriculum, multidisciplinary nature, conducive environment for studying, and academic staff of the respective institutions. Some also present the schools as ideal institutions for their programme. The following extracts illustrate this step:

Extract 9:

“The professors at Keele University are all current practitioners as well as sound scholars and researchers.” (PS 4)

Extract 10:

“Keele University is my point of call for the Masters in Law (Human rights, Globalisation and Justice Option) because of a very sound and in-depth programme structure that any legal practitioner needs, to take sound decisions as a constitution expert, human rights and justice expert and a legal practitioner.” (PS 1)

Step 2: Social reasons

Writers of PSs give social reasons for their choice as well. These reasons include the schools' relationship with international students and the opportunity to meet people of different cultures. Applicants also bring to the fore how prestigious the institutions are in certain countries, the schools' contribution to the individual's well-being and consequently to the nation. The extracts below buttress this step:

Extract 11:

"I am keen on studying Agriculture and Development in the University of Reading because I would have the chance of studying in a prestigious institution in United Kingdom, a country known for its long history, vast knowledge and experience in academia." PS 8)

Extract 12:

"...is the status of University of St Andrews and its collaborative and conducive learning environment. That is it is a worldwide acclaimed University with state of the art facilities and technology driven teaching and learning materials, ambitious and innovative approach to teaching... I am also attracted to the school's vision, mission and want to be part of the relevant and marketable graduates that University of St Andrews releases to the society and corporate world." (PS 19)

These reasons portray writers as outsiders having an insider's view in order to persuade the admission panel. In this move, students use the adversary-glorification strategy (Bhatia, 1993) where they show admiration for the schools and praise them with the aim of persuading gatekeepers. The choice of school was not identified in the studies reviewed because it is implied in most PS since the school is at the core of the admission process. Also, the PS accompanies other documents which may bear the name of the school; hence, its avoidance in the PS.

Move 5: Credentials

Persuasion is the goal of the credentials move. In this move, applicants highlight their abilities which make them suitable for the admissions. This move had four steps: Academic credentials, non-academic credentials, distinctive personal qualities and relevance of credentials.

Step 1: Academic credentials

With this step, prospective students state their academic-related credentials to show how qualified they are. These include awards received, courses read, and internships had. Research experience and class obtained during undergraduate studies are also stated. Applicants demonstrate how these credentials have ignited their interest in the chosen programme. The extracts below illustrate the academic credentials' step in the data:

Extract 13:

"My background in financial accounting, strategic management, principles of management, economics, financial and Investment management at Senior Secondary School and University has instilled in me the qualities required to meet the rigor of this demanding program and profession." (PS 19)

Extract 14:

“My strong desire to excel in the field of academics has won me several awards including Plan Ghana Scholarship Award (2004-2007), Mathematics, Science and Technology Scholarship Award under Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Ghana.” (PS 5)

Step 2: Non-academic credentials

Achievements not related to academic are also included. These are about the applicants’ nationality, working experience and extra-curricular activities such as recreational interests and hobbies. Applicants also provide offices or positions held, their current work and roles and volunteer work. The non-academic credentials are explicated by the use of the extracts below:

Extract 15:

“My propensity to lead, adjust and adapt quickly to fit into any situation as the need may be, earned me the status of financial secretary in my Hall of residence during my third year at UCC.” (PS 14)

Extract 16:

“... in a bid to complement my academic studies, I volunteered as a school librarian after closing hours, during weekends and during public holidays.” (PS 2)

Step 3: Distinctive personal qualities

Some applicants also state their distinctive qualities such as “good interpersonal skills” and “good communicative skills, “hardworking”, “self-motivated” “determined individuals”, “lively”, “energetic”, “sociable”, “efficient and effective communicator”. This step is illustrated below:

Extract 17:

“The child-family fellowship experience has given me a great insight in to my interpersonal skills and taught me how to deal with a various range of situations efficiently.” (PS 13)

Extract 18:

“I am a hardworking, self-motivated and determined individual who has always wanted to be a development economist to help my country grows.” (PS 20)

Step 4: Relevance of credentials.

Prospective students state how the credentials have helped them and positioned them for eligibility for the chosen programme. They do not merely list their credentials but also use their achievements to make a strong argument about their worthiness. The extracts below explain the relevance of credentials:

Extract 19:

“Based on these awards and my role as a Teaching and Research Assistant in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, I know that I have competitive edge to be a candidate on the final selection list.” (PS 5)

Extract 20:

“This gave me a large piece of experiences which makes me apt for a postgraduate degree.” (PS 12)

These credentials are likely to persuade gatekeepers to consider the applicants for the admission or scholarships. Applicants usually employ self-glorification strategy (Bhatia 1993) in this move, where they praise themselves for their achievements and potentials. Unsurprisingly, the credentials move was identified by Brown (2004), Barton *et al.* (2004), Bekins *et al.* (2004). Vossler (2007) and Forrister *et al.* (2011) labelled it as educational background and accomplishments respectively. This demonstrates the relevance of the credentials move because one’s achievements in the past are an indication that one can achieve even more in the present and the future.

Move 6: Career Objective

No steps were identified under this move. Prospective students state their career goals related to the field that they are applying for. Since this move deals with the future, it deals with how the career would be beneficial to applicants and the development of the nation as a whole. This move also contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the PS: persuasion. The extracts below illustrate this move:

Extract 21:

“My goal is to become a highly learned and proactive human rights lawyer to develop prudent policies....” (PS 1)

Extract 22:

“I aspire to be a lecturer of distinguished professorial rank...” (PS 2)

As in this study, the career objective move was also identified in studies by Brown (2004), Barton *et al.* (2004), Ding (2007), Vossler (2007), Jones (2012), and Sii (2004). The presence of the career objective or goal move in other studies may be attributed to the fact that one’s future is important in as much as the past and the present. It, therefore, buttresses the point that a PS is a balance of one’s past, present and future.

Move 7: Closure

As in the previous move, there was no step under this move. This move is usually a summary of all that has been stated. It is usually a re-statement of the reasons why applicants should be considered because of the arguments presented. Applicants also show their preparedness for the programme and the admission. They also express appreciation and a sense of optimism for the admission. The extracts below clarify this move:

Extract 23:

“I feel that, I am a well-rounded and interesting person, with much to offer in graduate school and in post graduate study.” (PS 2)

Extract 24:

“I am grateful for the consideration of my application.” (PS 16)

The closure move was not identified in any of the studies reviewed probably because of space constraint by writers in other contexts. However, its presence in the present data may be

attributed to the Ghanaian’s knowledge of the traditional parts of the essay as being made of three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. Ghanaian university students are taught the parts of the essay in their Communicative Skills (elsewhere referred to as English for Academic Purposes, Use of English, Freshman’s Composition) course and other academic writing courses and often emphasized. Having discussed the identification and the frequency of occurrence of moves, we now present summaries of the distribution of moves in the data as well as distribution of textual space of the moves in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Distribution of moves in PSS

Moves	Frequency	Percentage
Caption	14	13%
Background	15	14%
Programme	19	18%
Choice of School	18	17%
Credentials	16	15%
Career Objective	18	17%
Closure	8	7%
Total	108	100%

It can be observed that Move 3 had the highest number of occurrence because it occurred 19 times (18%). Next are moves 4 and 6 which appeared 18 (17%) times respectively. Move 5 occurred 16 times (15%). Moves 2 and 1 appeared 15(14%) and 14(13%) times respectively. The least number of moves was Move 7 which occurred 8 times (7%). Based on the frequency of occurrence of the moves, the core moves identified are moves 1→2→3→ 4→ 5→6 and the optional move is move 7. The difference with regard to the percentage figures is because most institutions restrict applicants with a prompt. Therefore, applicants are selective, based on the requirements in the prompt and the number of words required. Applicants, usually, choose what they consider important, thereby contributing to the discrepancy in the percentage figures.

Table 2: Distribution of textual space in PSS

Moves	Textual space (in words)	Percentage
Caption	26	0.25%
Background	2009	19%
Programme	2252	22%
Choice of school	1093	10%
Credentials	3846	37%
Career objective	1019	10%
Closure	234	2%
Total	10479	100%

In communication research, what is regarded as important often receives much space or time (Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2012). The total number of words counted was 10479 and the PSS in the present data set had an average of 524 words. The move with the most textual space is Move 5 which has 3846 words. This confirms Ding’s (2007) assertion that establishing credentials is the most important part of the PS. Move 3 had 2252, Move 2 had 2009 words, Move 4 used 1094 words, Move 6 used 1019 words. Successful applicants on average devoted more space to proposing what they would do in the future (Brown, 2004). Move 7 had 234 words and Move 1 used 26 words. Move five (credentials) had the most textual space because this is the part that most people talk about in order for the panel to know how qualified they are. From the data, the credentials move had the highest textual space.

In the data, the moves differed one from another in terms of its sequence. However, the dominant sequence was 1→2→3→4→5→6 and 7. It is important to note that there were multiple appearances of moves 2, 3, 4 and 5 throughout the data. This challenge may be due to most applicants' unfamiliarity with the conventions of the genre, its discourse community, and its audience expectations (Ding, 2007). This finding confirms the findings of Brown (2004), Barton *et al.* (2004), Bekins *et al.* (2004), Vossler (2007), Ding (2007), Forrister *et al.* (2007) and Sii (2004). Although the demarcation of move boundaries and labelling by the above scholars are different, they are in a way similar since most of their moves were found in the present study. The difference in the move and step boundary may be due to the differences in data sets used by the previous and the current studies. It also differs from previous studies on PSs since there is the introduction of two additional moves: caption and closure move which did not appear in the reviewed literature. The study suggests that there is no marked difference between PS written in the Western contexts and those written in the Ghanaian contexts.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to present the schematic structure of PSs written by Ghanaian students to universities worldwide. Seven moves were identified: six being core and one being optional respectively. The analysis showed that Ghanaian students deployed six obligatory moves (Caption, Background, Programme, Choice of School, Credentials, Career Objective) and one optional move (Closure). The moves which were found were also identified in studies in Western contexts. It, therefore, appears that the socio-cultural context does not greatly influence the PSs written by Ghanaians because the world is a global village and universities are mini global societies. In other words, regarding the successful application related to these PSs, the generic pull seems to be greater than the socio-cultural pull.

In view of the above findings, this study has some implications for theory, pedagogy and further research. First, this study is of immense importance to academia since it has a theoretical value. It, therefore, contributes to existing body of knowledge on genre studies because it considers PS from a context that has not featured much in genre studies. It has also proven that Swales' (1990) rhetorical model for genre analysis is applicable to PSs. Moreover, this study has a pedagogical value. This study will be a guide and enhance the teaching and writing of PSs in schools. It will help writers be familiar with the conventions of the PS as a genre. It also has implications for further research. Since studies on PS outside the western contexts have not received much attention, further studies on PSs written by Ghanaian students in respect of their linguistic choices and a greater data sample are suggested. Also, there could be a comparison of successful PSs and unsuccessful PSs in further research.

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Generic structure potential of the editorial sections of selected Ghanaian newspapers

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Abstract

The media is currently one of the most powerful social institutions in most societies in the world. Based on this, scholars, through various analytical lenses, have explored various discourse types within the media. However, the literature proves that the genre theory, a theory with the potential to describe situated language use within specific domains of discourse, has been underutilized as far as the editorial sections within the Ghanaian context is concerned. This study therefore uses the genre-based theory from the perspectives of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) to explore the move structure and lexico-grammatical resources of 30 editorial sections of three Ghanaian newspapers - *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times* and *Daily Guide*. The findings reveal that the editorial sections of the selected newspapers are typified by four moves: “The Editorial Heading”, “Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion”, “Discussing the Issue Raised” and “The Columnists General Comment on the Issue Raised”. The analysis further confirms that three rhetorical units - “Providing the Editorial Heading”, “Discussing the Issue Raised” and “Passing Columnists General Comment on the Issue Raised”- are obligatory moves whilst the rhetorical unit with the caption “Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion”, is noted to be an optional move. The move patterns in the editorials have a regular sequence. Aside this, the findings further reveal that the move with the name, “Discussing the Issue Raised” occupies much space in the editorial sections of the selected newspapers whilst “Providing the Editorial Heading” has the least space. The choice of linguistic resources in the moves is noted to be influenced by the distinct communicative purpose of individual moves in the editorials. This research has pedagogical relevance for training media practitioners especially those in the print media in general and editorial writers to be specific. It also has implication for the genre theory by foregrounding the potential of the genre theory to explore situated language use from different domains of discourse - academic and professional settings.

Keywords:

genre, newspaper editorials, generic structure potential, move

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Introduction

Genre studies has proved to be a good aspect of material development for language use in specific contexts and this has made it much popular in various fields of study. Thus, after the pioneering work of Swales (1990), of using the genre-based theory to analyze research article introductions, different scholars have applied the same theory to analyze different types of discourses. The term “genre” has been defined by Swales (1990: 58) as:

a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content, and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation.

This definition suggests that texts (whether spoken or written) that are considered as genre have one basic thing in common and this is linked to the sameness of the communicative purpose of that genre. Thus, texts that belong to one genre perform the same function(s) and they also share similarities in terms of the rhetorical stages that typify their structure. That is, genre has been conceptualized as a rhetorical action based on recurrent situation and rhetorical practices rather than a closed one based solely on structure, substance, or aim (Miller, 1984). In this respect, genre can be considered as “a staged goal-oriented and purposeful social activity that people engage in as members of their culture” (Martin, 2003: 25).

The popularity of the genre-based approach in text analysis stems from the fact that the findings of numerous works in genre-based studies have significant implications in applied linguistics, specifically in the teaching and learning of languages, mass communication, writing research, language reform and situated language use in other academic and professional settings (Bhatia, 2002, cited in Tongsibsong, 2012). This means that “the increasing interest in this discipline is motivated by the need to supply models of academic and scientific texts for students, so that they can produce those texts appropriately” (Marefat & Mohammadzadeh, 2013: 1).

The significant implications of the genre-based approach in text analysis have made most scholars apply the genre theory to analyze situated language use in different settings – academic and other professional settings. Sarfo (2011) posits that genre studies has widely been used to explore array of situated language use which include the professional setting (Bhatia, 1993), written discourse (Bhatia, 2004), academic settings (Swales, 1990, 1996), academic writing (Swales & Feak, 1994), oral testimonies in religious circles (Afful & Tekpetey, 2011), rhetoric (Medway & Freeman, 1994; Devitt, 2004), classroom discourse (Johns, 2007; Thompson, 1994) and business letters (Wang, 2007). The literature confirms that in all these studies, scholars explore how discourses in professional and academic settings are “broached, structured and developed” (Sarfo, 2011: 109). The essence of genre analysis therefore is to explore situated language use by bringing out the communicative purpose, the overall structure and linguistic resources that are prototypical of distinct text types. That is,

scholars through genre analytic approach have proved that distinct genres from different settings – academic and professional settings – are characterized by distinct rhetorical and linguistic resources which are mostly influenced by the overall communicative purpose of those distinct genres.

As far as the literature is concerned, it is evident that most of the studies in the early stages, especially within the late 80s and 90s, were based on academic discourse. However, scholars like Bhatia (1993), Trosborg (2000) and Henry & Roseberry (2001) have proved the potential of the genre theory in the analysis of discourse types in other professional settings outside academia, hence its potential to be used to analyze newspaper editorials.

Newspaper editorials can be considered as one of the most important sub-genres as it tends to represent the views and opinions of a particular newspaper. The editorials therefore, are noted to be the most important opinion genre of the print news media (Orosa, Garcia & Santorum, 2013). Though it is very cumbersome to define the exact communicative purpose of editorial sections, it is in the view of most scholars that the editorials have their main communicative purpose of transmitting the opinion of the medium on a current and important affair as well as orienting and shaping the public opinion (Castila, Rodriguez & Quesada, 2014). This means that the editorials serve as a platform for the formal expression of the medium’s attitude and ideological line towards a particular issue (Orosa, Garcia & Santorum, 2013). To a very large extent, the editorial serves as the “compass” that guides the “diagram” of public opinion of newspapers (Mostaza, 1996:186) and as such, serves as a distinct genre worthy to be explored. It is therefore not surprising that this sub-genre has adequately been explored by scholars over the last two decades especially within the Ghanaian context.

For instance, Afful (2014) has shed light on the noun phrase (NP) structure in Ghanaian newspaper editorials. Basing on Quirk et al’s (1985) models of NP complexities, Afful (2014) explores the NP structure of the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic*, with particular focus on editorials of 1988, 1998 and 2008. The study reveals two main findings. The first finding points to the gradual increase in the use of a “head word” plus “prepositional phrases” (PP) in the NP’s of the *Daily Graphic*. Afful (2014) further posits that in most situations, the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic* make use of noun phrases that are made up of a determiner and a headword.

From a cross-cultural perspective, Wornyo and Klu (2017), investigate the differences and similarities that exist in the rhetorical stages of editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic*, a newspaper in Ghana, and the *New York Times*, a newspaper in America. By analyzing 20 editorial sections each of the *Ghanaian Times* and the *New York Times*, Wornyo and Klu (2017) confirm that there are significant differences with respect to the way the two newspapers frame their news content. That is, the *Daily Graphic* frames its editorial sections by appealing to state institutions and individuals involved in the issues that are discussed in the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic* while the *New York Times* on the other hand, criticizes and questions state institutions and individuals for their role in the issues the paper discusses. This significant difference, as far as the rhetorical stages of the editorial sections are concerned, shows a clear indication of how culture can affect texts structure from different socio-cultural contexts though the texts might belong to the same genre and the writers of the text might also belong to the same discourse community.

In their quest to explore the language use in editorial sections, especially within the English as a Second Language context, and within the Ghanaian setting to be specific, Adjei and Opoku

(2017) explore the expansion relations of the clause complexes of the editorials of a Ghanaian daily newspaper. The analytical lens of this research is framed within Halliday's (1994, 2004 and 2014) expansion model which captures elaboration, extension and enhancement as the three main expansion principles. The findings confirm the three expansion model stipulated by Halliday and Hassan (1994, 2004, and 2014). Thus, it is confirmed by Adjei and Opoku (2017) that the clause complexes in the data set are of elaboration, extension and enhancement. However, it is enhancement that is noted to be predominant in the extension relations that typify the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic*.

Aside the above mentioned study, Logogye (2016) also investigates modality and performativity in Ghanaian newspaper editorials. That is, Logogye (2016) makes use of Austin's Speech Act Theory as well as the Context-Dependency and Lexical Specialization of Kratzer (1981) to explore how modal and lexical verbs are used to explore speech functions in the editorial sections of Ghanaian newspapers. After analysing thirty editorial sections of these two Ghanaian newspapers, Logogye (2016) observes that three modal verbs (will, should and must) are dominant in the expression of speech acts by passing comments in the editorial sections. The findings further reveal that there are few instances where strong deontic modal auxiliary verbs are used to express command.

Bolivar (1994) brings a different but interesting perspective to bear when he explores the macro-structure of English newspaper editorials with specific reference to the *The Guardian*. The findings of the study reveal that the internal structure of the editorials with respect to *The Guardian* can be described in terms of three fundamental turns which include the "Lead" (which gives a general overview of the editorial section), "Follow" (which gives a detailed account of the topic raised in the editorials) and "Valuate" (a situation whereby the writer tries to evaluate some suggestions to a particular problem raised in the research article). Bolivar (1994) further argues that these triads - Lead, Follow and Valuate - may, in turn, combine with other triads to make up a higher unit called "Movements".

Bonyadi (2011) also explores the editorials of an American newspaper, *The New York Times*, and the Persian English newspaper, *Tehran Times*. Revealing some genre-specific features of this media discourse, Bonyadi (2011) stresses that the comparison of the two papers in terms of employing auxiliary modal verbs reveals that both papers prefer mainly predictive auxiliary modals such as *will* or *would* to the other kinds of modals. However, the higher number of the predictive modals in *New York Times* suggests the idea that identifying what would happen in the future was the main concern of the editorial writers. On the other hand, comparing the modals of necessity in the two papers reveals that the editorial writers in *Tehran Times* are mainly concerned with what should be done on a particular topic that has been raised in the editorials.

The studies reviewed above show similarities in terms of the genre that was explored but differ in terms of focus, methodology, setting and findings. In so far as this current study is considered in Africa, specifically Ghana, it can be said to be similar to the works of Afful (2014), Logogye (2016), Adjei and Opoku (2017) and Wornyo and Klu (2017) in terms of the context in which this current study is situated. However, the focus of this current study shares some similarity with Bolivar (1994). A close analysis of the reviewed works within the Ghanaian context reveals that not much have been done with respect to the application of the genre theory to analyse and describe the move structure of the editorial sections of Ghanaian newspaper editorials and it is in the quest to fill this gap that this research work is conducted to explore the rhetorical structure, textual space, sequence of moves and some lexicogrammatical features that typify the editorial sections of Ghanaian newspapers. That is, this

study attempts to find out whether, as a situated linguistic behavior in the media setting, editorials within the Ghanaian domain, especially within the selected newspapers, have a cohesive generic scheme that allows for the fulfilment of a communicative purpose.

4. Methodology

4.1. Context

The study has the print broadcasting media as its source of data collection. Specifically, the scope of the study is limited to newspaper editorials from the *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times*, and *Daily Guide*. The study makes use of newspaper editorials from March 2015 to May 2016. The rationale for selecting that time range is to ensure recency of the data.

4.2. Method of Analysis

The study employs the qualitative research design for the analysis of the data. This stems from the fact that the entire research is purely descriptive, though there are few instances that the research makes use of frequency count in determining the status of each move identified. That is, to a very large extent, the research is skewed towards the descriptive approach. The study employs the qualitative research design because it predominantly makes use of general observations, depth and verbal descriptions in place of numerical measure (Priest, 1996). Thus, it allows for an in-depth analysis, description and interpretation of verbal behavior (Afful & Tekpetey, 2011).

Also, the analysis of the newspaper editorials is based on the genre theory which is characterised by three main theories. These theories include the New Rhetoric, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

The New Rhetoric group consists mainly of North Americans working within a rhetorical tradition and mostly influenced by their work in universities and first language composition Hyon (1996). Hyland (2002) posits that this school of thought draws mainly on the seminar paper by Miller (1984) which is represented in the works of Bazerman (1994), Freedman and Medway (1994) as well as Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995). Coe (2002), as cited in Hyland (1992), stresses that this school of thought aims to investigate contexts and study genre as the motivated functional relationship between text type and rhetorical situation. Hyland (2002) further argues that the methodologies from this theoretical perspective (New Rhetorical) tend to be more ethnographic, rather than text analytic, with the objective of uncovering something in relation to the attitude, values and beliefs of the communities of text users that genres imply and construct. The New Rhetoric does not address itself to the classroom, and generally regards the classroom as an unfavorable ground that lacks the condition for complex negotiation and multiple audience (Hyland, 2002). However, this assertion by Hyland (2002) has strongly been contested by scholars like Adam & Artemara (2002) as well as Coe (2002) who are of the view that some recent contributions of this theory have suggested pedagogical implications for academic writing.

The second perspective is the one based on the theoretical work of Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which is popularly known in the United States as the Sydney School. This school of thought emphasizes the social purposes of genre as well as the schematic structures that have evolved to serve these purposes. This school of thought

perceives genre as staged goal-oriented social process (Martin, 1992) which emphasizes the purposeful, interactive and sequential character of different genres and the ways that language is systematically linked to context (Hyland, 1992). This approach seeks to tease out the distinctive stages, or moves of genres together with the patterns of lexical, grammatical, and cohesive choices which “construct the functions of the stages of genres” (Rothery, 1996: 93) as cited in Hyland, 2002). This approach is mainly motivated by commitment to language and literacy education, particularly in the context of adult migrant programs (Feez, 2001).

Aside this, the third perspective which has been widely used in the literature is English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Hyland (2002) emphasizes that the ESP approach steers between both the New Rhetoric and the SFL. Thus, Hyland (2002) argues that like the New Rhetoricians, ESP employs the Bhaktinian notion of intertextuality (a way of accounting for the role of literary and extra-literary materials without recourse to traditional notions of authorship) and dialogism (the quality of an instance of discourse that explicitly acknowledges that it is defined by its relationship to other instances, both past, to which it responds, and future, whose response it anticipates) and also draws heavily on Systemic Functional grammar understanding of text structure as well as relying on Vygotskian principle of pedagogy. Bloor (1998) argues that the ESP approach might be seen as an application of SFL although it lacks a systematic model of language and does not make extensive use of stratified metafunctional grammar.

Despite been justified in the literature that the three schools are complementary rather than contradictory (Hyon, 1996), this current study makes use of the ESP approach from the perspectives of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). The reason for applying the ESP model of genre analysis is based on the fact that it can be viewed as “an analytical framework which reveals not only the utilizable form-function correlations but also contributes significantly to our understanding of the cognitive structuring of information in specific areas of language use which may help ESP practitioners to devise activities potentially significant for the achievement of desired communicative outcomes in specialized academic or occupation areas” Bhatia (1993:1). Bhatia (1993) also considers the ESP approach as a theory that combines grammatical insights with corresponding socio-cognitive and cultural explanations and as such it explains language in use rather than linguistic forms on the surface level.

Coupled with these, the identification of the status of each move is also based on Huttner’s (2010) guidelines of deciding on the status of individual moves. According to Huttner (2010), a rhetorical unit in a text with 90%-100% frequency of occurrence is tagged as an obligatory move. This means that rhetorical units regarded as genre exemplars are usually considered inappropriate or in some way “flawed” without their presence. He also categorizes rhetorical moves with the frequency of occurrence from 50%-89% as core moves. In this respect too, it is argued by Huttner (2010) that rhetorical moves that are classified as core moves are regarded to be typical of the genre and also considered as part of an appropriate and acceptable genre exemplar. Huttner (2010) further argues that rhetorical moves with the frequency of 30%-49% are considered to be ambiguous and as such their status can only be decided with further expert information. That is, they can either be core or optional moves after further consultation with experts in the field. Rhetorical moves with the frequency of occurrence from 1%-29% are also considered to be optional. This means that they are not considered as typical feature of the genre and as such they can be considered in some situations as an acceptable addition.

In order to ensure objectivity in accounting for the rhetorical units in the data set, I accounted for the inter-rater test. This was done by giving the data to four postgraduate students of English at the University of Cape Coast whose findings after their analyses were compared to that of the researcher to find out whether there were some similarities and differences. The differences were analyzed and rectified. The inter-rater reliability text is 90%.

5. Findings

5.1. Generic and Linguistic Descriptions of the Editorial Sections

The findings reveal that the editorial sections of the selected Ghanaian newspapers are characterized by four main rhetorical moves which include *Providing the Editorial Heading (Move 1)*, *Providing Background to the Issue under Discussion (Move 2)*, *Discussing the Issue Raised (Move 3)* and *Providing Columnist General Comment on the Issue Raised (Move 4)*. These findings differ from that of Bolivar (1994) in terms of the number of moves that were identified. That is, whilst Bolivar (1994) identified three main stages (lead, Follow & Valuate) as prototypical of the editorial sections structure, this current study revealed four main stages. However, it can be deduced that two of the moves tagged as “Lead” and “Follow” identified by Bolivar (1994) as integral stages in the writing of editorials correspond to two of the moves identified in this current study in the form of “Presenting the Background to the Issue under Discussion” and “Discussing the Issue Raised” respectively.

Out of the four rhetorical moves identified in this current study, the findings reveal that three of the rhetorical structures are obligatory whilst only one of the moves is a core move. The obligatory moves are present in all the 30 data sets that were analyzed while the core move appears in only 13 out of the 30 editorial sections that were used for the analysis. Seven of the core moves are from the *Ghanaian Times* and 6 are located in the *Daily Graphic*.

Table 1 provides the various rhetorical stages that the columnists of the selected newspaper editorials employ in order for them to achieve their communicative purpose of educating the readers on pertinent issues.

Table 1: Distribution of Moves in the Editorial Sections of the Selected Newspapers

Moves	Rhetorical Names	Frequency	%
Move 1	Providing the Editorial Heading	30	100
Move 2	Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion	13	43.3
Move 3	Discussing the Issue Raised	30	100
Move 4	Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issue Raised	30	100

It is evident from Table 1 that the editorial sections of the selected newspapers have four moves: Providing the Editorial Heading, Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion, Discussing the Issue Raised and Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issue Raised.

MOVE 1: (Providing the Editorial Heading)

Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading) is the first rhetorical unit that typifies the selected newspapers within the Ghanaian context. This move has the communicative purpose of making readers aware of the particular topic or issue that has been discussed in the editorial section. That is, *Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading)* is purposely used by the editorial writers to create awareness of the subject matter that characterizes the editorial sections. Writers of the editorial sections purposefully summarize the main focus of the editorial sections to readers in the form of editorial heading. This rhetorical unit (*Providing the Editorial Heading*), as evident in the data set is an obligatory move because it appears in all the 30 (100%) editorials that serve as the data set for this study. Despite its present in all the 30 editorials of the selected newspapers, *Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading)* has no sub-rhetorical units or steps. The examples below show some instances of how the rhetorical unit, *Providing the Editorial Heading*, featured in the editorial sections of the selected newspapers.

Excerpt 1

1. Can we have a permanent solution to the lightening problems in our beloved country? (*Daily Graphic*)
2. Ensuring peaceful 2016 elections in Ghana, a task for all (*Daily Graphic*)
3. In favor of a national policy on social media, what is your view? (*Ghanaian Times*)
4. Review of rent act long overdue but will it work this time? (*Ghanaian Times*)
5. The various media houses should aim towards comments that will lead to peaceful elections (*The Daily Guide*)
6. The role of parents in preventing teenage pregnancy in Ghana. (*The Daily Guide*)

The examples in excerpt 1 are some of the ways in which the rhetorical unit, *Providing the Editorial Heading* is captured in the data set. The analysis confirms that the columnists of the editorial sections do not have a typical way of capturing that rhetorical move. However, the most predominant way that the editorial writers capture *Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading)* in the editorial sections of the selected newspapers is in the form of statements (example 1), questions (examples 1 & 4) and in some rare situations by the use of prepositional phrases, as demonstrated in example 3 of excerpt 1. The analysis further confirms that the columnists of the respective newspapers strategically capture the headings of the newspaper editorials to make the readers feel integral part of the issue that has been discussed in the editorial sections. For example, as evident in example 2 of excerpt 1 (*Ensuring peaceful 2016 elections in Ghana, a task for all*), the columnist purposely structured the title in order to make readers feel obliged to read the editorials so as to enable them know their respective roles that they have to play in ensuring peace in election 2016. That is, the last part of the title captured in the phrase “a task for all” makes it imperative for readers of that particular newspaper to critically read the editorial section so as to be enlightened with the role that they have to play in ensuring a peaceful election. The predominant use of the personal pronouns “we” and “our” as evident in example 1 of excerpt 1 and in most of the titles captured in the data confirms the strategic use of language by the editorial writers in order to make readers come to the realization that the subject matter discussed in the editorial sections concerns them too and hence the need for the readers to read the editorial sections of the respective newspapers. Aside this, titles that were captured in the form of questions, specifically the wh-questions like the last part of example 3 of excerpt 1 (what is your view), indirectly make readers active members of the on-going discourse in the editorial section and as such, make them feel integral part of the discourse been discussed in the editorial sections.

Move 2 (Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion)

This second move was noted to be an optional move in that it is not found in all the 30 newspaper editorials. That is, out of the 30 data set, Move 2 occurs 13 times representing 43.3%. The findings reveal that Move 2 occurs in only the editorial sections of *The Daily Graphic* (6 times) and the *Ghanaian Times* (7 times). The overall communicative purpose of this rhetorical unit as evident in the data set is to give background information on the topic under discussion in the editorial sections. This makes readers get prior knowledge about the subject matter that has been raised in the editorial sections so as to enhance easy comprehension of the issue under discussion. Typical instances of the use of this move are highlighted in the excerpts below;

Excerpt 2

1. Elections no doubt have become key stabilization factors in many emerging democracies. However, if they are carelessly handled, it can lead to wars and instability. While the global community expects Ghana to go through its seventh general election peacefully, media reports suggest rising political heat stemming from intolerance and the use of intemperate language. It is against this backdrop that president Mahama promised to ensure adequate security before, during and after the elections. The situation becomes even more dicey when the government is accused of the abuse of incumbency, whilst the police are perceived to have taking side with the government and are therefore not neutral. Given such a scenarios one would then ask; how can the government and the agencies ensure peace and safety during this year polls? (*Daily Graphic*)
2. It has always become a mantra for many people that in Ghana, the law does not work. This is as a result of the grave indiscipline that has plagued us as a country- indiscipline on our roads, in our offices, our homes and schools and even in our institution. We have been surrounded by indiscipline to such an extent that it has become part of us. So when one person decides to show a difference by showing discipline in what he or she does he or she is rather seen as the odd person. This is how far indiscipline has brought us – people who do not want to be given names or tagged as the odd ones often end up joining the indiscipline band wagon (*Ghanaian Times*)

The examples in excerpt 2 indicate some instances of how the second rhetorical unit manifests in the data set. That is, in the realization of *Move 2 (Providing Background to the Issue under Discussion)*, the columnists of the selected newspaper editorial sections give a general overview of the main issue to be discussed in the editorial section of the selected newspapers. For instance, example 2 of extract 2 above, serves as the background to an editorial meant to talk about ways the populace of the Ghanaian society can help to curb indiscipline in the society. To make readers understand the discussions made on ways of curbing indiscipline in Ghana, the columnist first creates a general picture about the state of indiscipline in Ghana so as to make readers appreciate the need to read the suggested ways of curbing indiscipline as discussed in the editorials.

Similar to example 1 of excerpt 2, the writer of the editorial in example 2 of excerpt 2 gives the general background to the political tension that was mounting prior to election 2016 and as a matter of fact justifies the significance of the subject matter that is discussed in the editorial section. This move, to a very large extent, has the communicative purpose of facilitating easy comprehension of the main issues that are raised in the editorial sections. This rhetorical structure, unlike move one, is dominant only in the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times*.

With respect to language used by the columnists as far as this rhetorical move (Move 2) in the editorial section is concerned, the findings prove that most of the words that are used in the editorials are influenced by the subject matter which the editorial writers give a background. For example, in example 1 of excerpt 2, the writer uses words like “indiscipline”, “law”, “institutions”, “person”, “decide”, “difference”, “odds” and expressions like “the law does not work”, “most Ghanaians do not obey the law” and “law and order” to give readers the clue that the main subject matter for discussion in the editorial section is about indiscipline within the Ghanaian context. That is, the choice of words in Move 2 consists of what Scott (1999) calls the ‘aboutness’ variety which include words that tell us about the subject matter in the editorial sections that the editorial writers give a background.

Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised)

This move, like that of Move 1, is considered to be an obligatory move. This is so because it is identified to be prototypical of the editorial sections of the three selected newspapers for the study. That is, in all the 30 data set for the analysis, it is observed that *Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised)* was present. This move, like Moves 1 and 2 did not have any sub-rhetorical units or steps. It is realized from the analysis that the main communicative purpose of this move is to present to readers pertinent issues in politics, sports, health, corruption, unemployment among other issues that need serious attention in Ghana. It is through *Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised)* that the editorial writers criticize, provide solutions and educate the Ghanaian populace on pertinent issues that need to be addressed in the society. This move serves as the main body of the editorial section where readers are presented with detailed discussion on topics being raised in the editorial headings of the newspapers. The examples below indicate the various ways in which this rhetorical move (*Discussing the Issue Raised*) is realized in the data set.

Excerpt 3

1. Undoubtedly, organizing peaceful elections is shared responsibility. While the government and the security agencies are expected to play their part in transparent manner, other stakeholders including the Electoral Commission and political parties have an unequal responsibility in ensuring peaceful elections. An independent well functioning and transparent EC is crucial for organizing successful polls. Also, we cannot achieve peace if the political parties themselves behave irresponsible towards one another. The challenge confronting this nation in the view of the *Ghanaian Times* is lack of political inclusiveness. At the same time, the citizenry must desist from actions that threaten the foundations of peace and stability. This is because maintaining peace before and after election is a functional measure requiring every stakeholder to play his or her part by way of contributing towards achieving unity...(*Ghanaian Times*)
2. on the roads especially during rush hours some drivers decide to drive on the shoulders of the roads, thereby keeping dutiful drivers stuck in traffic like fools who do not have anywhere to go or do not work with time. Many a time, other drivers who feel infuriated by the action of the few also follow on the shoulders of the road, when they realize that traffic wardens or policemen stationed here look unconcerned. Other culprits, when it comes to indiscipline and lawlessness on the roads are motor riders. Apart from mostly riding carelessly and weaving through vehicular traffic at top speed, as if they own the roads, they also act as if the traffic lights at major intersections are not meant for them but for only vehicles plying the roads....(*Daily Guide*)

In excerpt 3 example 2 for instance, the focus of the whole editorial section is to account for some acts of indiscipline caused by most drivers who ply various roads across the country. That is, with the rampant rate of road accident within the Ghanaian context, the editorial writer sees it as a pertinent issue that needs to be addressed hence, the need to educate the Ghanaian society on how bad practices that lead to road accidents in Ghana. In this rhetorical unit as evident in example 2 of excerpt 3, the editorial section captures various acts of indiscipline of drivers on our various roads. That is, the rhetorical unit tries to develop the main theme of the editorial. Here, readers are educated that some drivers mostly drive carelessly and also weave through vehicular traffic at top speed as well as disobeying traffic light rules. To a very large extent, *Move 3* serves as the rhetorical unit that the editorial writers use to send their message to the intended audience.

Closely related to *Move 2 (Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion)*, *Move 3* shows the predominant use of words that are influenced by the subject matter which serves as the topic for discussion in a particular editorial sections. It is therefore not surprising that example 2 of excerpt 3 is made up of nouns such as “roads”, “drivers”, “traffic”, “riders”, “speed”, “driver” and “vehicle” which all relate to the subject matter under discussion – some indiscipline acts of drivers who ply the various roads in Ghana. With regard to extract 1 of excerpt 3, the editorial writer focuses on ways that Ghanaians could maintain peace in the 2016 general elections and this subject matter directly influences the choice of linguistic resources that characterize the editorial section that has been highlighted in example 1 of extract 3. Expressions like “peaceful elections”, security agencies, “Electoral Commission”, “transparent EC”, “successful polls”, “political parties”, “political inclusiveness” and “peace and stability” are all expressions that correspond to the subject matter (the role of individuals in ensuring peace in election 2016) that is projected by the editorial writer. That is, most of the predominant words that are used in *Move 3* tell readers about the particular kind of discourse being discussed in the editorial sections.

Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised)

Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised) is the last move that occurs in the data set. Like the two other moves – Move 1 and Move 3 – Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised) is also noted to be an obligatory move. This stems from the fact that Move 4 appears in all the data set for this study. That is, Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issue Raised) occurs 30 (100%) times in the data. The main communicative purpose of this rhetorical unit is to project the view(s) of the editorial writer over the main issue that is discussed in the editorial sections. In most situations, the writers of the editorial either provide ways of dealing with a problem being discussed in the editorial section or their view on an argument that has been raised in the editorial section. Typical instances of the realization of this rhetorical move are indicated in the excerpts below;

Excerpt 4

1. I believe if all Ghanaians make an effort to protect the good name that Ghana has gained over the years as a very peaceful nation, this election will end in a very peaceful way. That is, I believe if the holders in the upcoming elections like the Christian Council, the various Political Parties, the Electorates and the Electoral Commission play their roles effectively, there is no doubt that the upcoming elections will be conducted in chaos. I also have a strong believe that whether the election will be conducted on peaceful elections or not will depend largely on how the various media houses will disseminate information top the populace. They are

supposed to report only issues based on facts and also avoid hyping election irregularities so as to avoid raising tension among the electorates. Various political aspirants should be made to know that they can either win or lose the elections and as such the aspirants should be willing to accept the outcome of the results in good faith (*Ghanaian Times*)

2. As a matter of fact, I believe teenage pregnancy should be eliminated from all societies in the Ghanaian communities. In fact, the social vice has a long way to affect the education of these young ladies in our various villages who most fall victim to this social vice. That is, the drop out of school and subsequently because single parents. I think therefore that the government should make girl child education more attractive in Ghana. This could be achieved when the government initiates a lot of scholarship schemes that are intended to facilitate girl child education. I confidently have a deep feeling that if this is done, there is no doubt that teenage pregnancy will be a thing of the past. (*Daily Guide*)

The excerpts above show the various ways in which Move (4) manifests in the editorial sections of the selected newspapers. That is, it has the main communicative purpose of highlighting some comments that the writers of the editorial section have about the issue(s) being discussed in the editorial section. The writers of the editorials give a subjective opinion about the issue being discussed. Predominantly, this takes the form of either a general comment, implication or a solution to a challenge raised in a particular editorial section. As evident in example 2 of excerpt 4, the writer of the editorial tries to outline the consequences of the predominant rate of teenage pregnancy in the Ghanaian society hence, the need to find solutions to that social vice. Therefore, in a form of finding possible solutions to that social vice, the writer of the editorial advocates the establishment of more scholarship schemes to serve as a source of motivation for young ladies who wish to educate themselves to the highest level. In the first examples too, the comment of the writer comes in the form of solutions that can help eradicate election irregularities in Ghana hence, ensuring peaceful elections.

With respect to the language use in move 4, the analysis confirms that the first person pronoun like “I” and words like “think” “believe” “wish” and “suggest” are very dominant in the data set. The predominant use of the personal pronoun “I” coupled with the use of verbs like “believe”, “wish”, “think” and “suggest” are seen as linguistic choices of the editorial writers to highlight their personal views about the issues that are raised in the editorial sections. For example, the use of the expression “I believe” in the proposition “**I believe** teenage pregnancy should be eliminated from all societies in the Ghanaian communities” projects the editorial writer’s personal opinion about what state institutions should do about teenage pregnancy within the Ghanaian society. Aside this, the expression “I think” as indicated in the expression “**I think** therefore that the government should make girl-child education more attractive in Ghana” also highlights the personal opinion of the editorial writer on the need for the government to make girl-child education more attractive so as to lure more girls to school and indirectly eliminate the rate of teenage pregnancy in Ghana.

Dominant among this rhetorical stage of the editorial sections of the selected Ghanaian newspapers were also the use of modal verbs “will”, “should” and “could”. The findings reveal that the modal verb “will” is predominantly used by the editorial writers to make predictions. For instance, the use of “will” in the expression “I believe if all Ghanaians make an effort to protect the good name that Ghana has gained over the years as a very peaceful nation, this election **will** end in a very peaceful way” is a clear instance of the use of the modal verb “will” to make a prediction. That is, the editorial writers made use of the modal auxiliary verb “will” to predict a peaceful election that was yet to be organized. The use of

“will” to make prediction is also evident in the expression “I confidently have a deep feeling that if this is done, there is no doubt that teenage pregnancy **will** be a thing of the past”. With regard to this statement, the writer of the editorial predicted the total eradication of teenage pregnancy in the future on condition that government initiates a lot of scholarship schemes.

On the other hand, the findings further reveal that the editorial writers consistently make use of the modal verb “could” to show possibility. The expressing of possibility by the use of the modal verb “could” is evident in a statement like “this **could** be achieved when the government initiates a lot of scholarship schemes that are intended to facilitate girl-child education”. The antecedent to this statement is in line with the personal opinion that was given by the editorial writer about the need to eradicate teenage pregnancy in Ghana as indicated in excerpt 4, example 2. The editorial writer further indicates the possibility of the eradication of teenage pregnancy in Ghana on conditions that the government initiates a lot of scholarship scheme and the expressing of this possibility is indicated in the modal verb “could”.

In all instances that the modal verb “should” appears in *Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised)*, it expresses obligations that need to be fulfilled by the parties involved in the issues raised in the editorial sections. A typical instance whereby the modal auxiliary verb “should” is used to express obligation can be identified in the sentences below;

- a. As a matter of fact, I believe teenage pregnancy **should** be eliminated from all societies in the Ghanaian communities.
- b. Various political aspirants **should** be made to know that they can either win or lose the elections and as such the aspirants should be willing to accept the outcome of the results in good faith.

In the examples above, the editorial writer expresses obligation by the use of the modal verb “should”. For instance, in the first example (a), the writer of the editorial expresses his candid view on the obligation of stakeholders to eradicate teenage pregnancy within the Ghanaian society. Example two (b) also highlights the obligation that Ghanaians had to educate the presidential aspirants of the then 2016 general election about the need to accept the outcome of the election so as to maintain peace in the country.

5.2. Sequencing of Moves

This section seeks to account for the order in which the moves in the editorial sections are presented. The data set confirms that the move pattern as pertains in the selected editorials has a regular sequence. That is, all the moves follow a predominant pattern. To a very large extent, one can argue that in the realization of the overall communicative purpose of the editorial sections, editorial writers have a unique way in structuring their information.

A close analysis of the data confirms that the move patterns of the editorial section follow two predominant patterns in the form of 1>3>4 occurring 17 (56.6%) times and 1>2>3>4 occurring 13(43.3%) instances. Across the three newspapers, the analysis confirms that the move sequence in the form of 1>3>4 appears 10(58.8%) times in the editorial sections of *Daily Graphic*, 3(17.6%) times in the *Daily Guide* and 4 (23.5%) times in the editorial sections of the *Ghanaian Times*. That is, predominantly, the editorial writers, in structuring the editorial content mostly have *Providing the Editorial Heading* (Move 1) first, followed by *Discussing the Issue on Board* (Move 3) and *Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised* (Move 4).

On some occasions too the move sequencing follows the 1>2>3>4 order. This means that the moves follow the pattern of *Providing the Editorial Heading* (Move 1), *Presenting Background to the Issue on Board* (Move 2) *Discussing the Issue on Board* (Move 3) and *Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised* (Move 4). Across the three newspapers, the findings confirm that the move sequence of 1>2>3>4 occurs 7 (53%) times in the *Daily Guide* and 6(47%) times in the *Ghanaian Times*. This indicates that the writers have similar ways of arranging their rhetorical structure in the editorial sections. This foregrounds the view that editorial sections within the Ghanaian context share similarities in terms of the communicative purpose, the rhetorical structure and the sequence of moves. That is, the editorial writers of the selected editorials belong to the same discourse community and as such share some similarities in terms of the focus (communicative purpose) of their editorial sections as well as how they structure the content of their editorial sections.

5.3. Textual Space of Moves

This section seeks to account for the textual space of each move in the editorials of the selected Ghanaian newspapers. As noted by Afful (2005), the importance of a move is determined by the textual space allocated to it. That is, the higher the textual space of a move, the more significant of that particular move in the text in which it is located. This means that writers predominantly give much space to the rhetorical units that they rate as very significant.

Table 2: Textual Space of the Selected Editorials

Moves	Daily Graphic	Daily Guide	Ghanaian Times	Total	Per. (%)
Move 1	92	88	60	240	2.1
Move 2	1,501	0	1,185	2,686	23.1
Move 3	3,181	2,300	2,319	7,800	67.1
Move 4	389	301	210	900	7.7
Total	5,163	2,689	3,774	11,626	100

Table 2 accounts for the textual space of each of the four moves in the editorial sections of the selected newspapers. Table 2 shows that with respect to the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic*, move 3 occupies much space in the data. With a total number of 5,163 words in the entire data gathered from the editorial sections of the *Daily Graphic*, Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised) has 3,181 words (87%). This is followed by Move 2 (Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion) which has 1,501 words (29.1%) and Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issue Raised) which is made up of 389 words (7.5%). The analysis as indicated in Table 2 further confirms that Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading) occupies the least space in the editorials of the *Daily Graphic* with 92 words (1.8%).

With respect to the *Daily Guide*, Table 2 confirms that move 3 occupies much space. That is, with a total number of 2,689 words in the editorial sections of the *Daily Guide*, Move 3 has 2,300 (85.5%) words. The next move with the highest number of space as evident in Table 2 is Move 4 which has a total of 301 words (11.2%). Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading), with 88 words (3.2%), has the least space in the editorial sections of the *Daily Guide*. The

analysis further confirms that no space was given to Move 2 (Presenting Background to the Issue under Discussion) in the editorial sections of the *Daily Guide*.

Similar to the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*, Move 3 as evident in Table 2, has the highest space in the editorial sections of the *Ghanaian Times*. Move 3 (Discussion the Issue Raised) in the editorial sections of the *Ghanaian Times* has 2,319 words (61.5%). This is followed by moves 2 (Providing Background to the Issue under Discussion) with 1,185 (31.2%) words and Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issue Raised) with 210 words (5.6%). Move 1(Providing the Editorial Heading) has the least space in the *Ghanaian Times* with 60 words (1.6%).

Across the editorial sections of the three newspapers, the findings reveal that the rhetorical move that has the highest space is Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised). That is, out of the total 11,626 words in the editorial sections of the selected newspapers, Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised) consists of 7,800 words (67.1%). The second move with the highest space as evident in Table 2 is Move 2 (Providing Background to the Issue under Discussion). This move has 2,686 words (23.1%) whilst Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised) is made up of 900 words (7.7%) and is noted to be the third ranked move with the highest number of space. Table 2 further confirms that Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading) across the data, has the least space in the editorial sections that were analyzed from the newspapers in Ghana. That is, out of the total 11,626 words in the entire data set for this study, Move 1(Providing the Editorial Heading), is made up of 240 words representing 2.1% of the total number of words in the entire data.

The findings of the study confirm that the editorial sections of the selected newspapers give much space to the rhetorical move that discusses the subject matter that the editorial writers seek to send to the readers. It is at this stage that the editorial writers highlight and discuss pertinent issues that confront the society. In trying to achieve this communicative purpose, writers use many words so as to help them achieve their aim of enlightening the populace. Move 3 (Discussing the Issue Raised) is followed by Move 2 (Providing Background to the Issue under Discussion) which seeks to provide a general background to the issues under discussion. The third highest Move is Move 4 (Passing Columnist General Comment on the Issues Raised) where the columnists add their views to the ongoing discourse in the editorials. However, the findings confirm that Move 1 (Providing the Editorial Heading) is the rhetorical unit that has the least space in the data set. This means that in capturing the editorial headings, the writers make use of few words to enlighten readers about the purpose of the editorial. That is, the writers use words that can help them summarize the focus of the editorials to the readers.

Conclusions/Implications

This study sought to explore the generic structure potential of the editorial sections of selected newspapers in Ghana. Specifically, the study aimed to account for the schematic structure, textual space, the frequency of moves as well as some lexico-grammatical resources within the identified moves in the selected editorial sections. The study was motivated by the desire of the researcher to understand how editorial writers within the Ghanaian context make use of language in their respective newspapers. The analysis was grounded in the genre-based theory from the perspective of the English for Specific Purposes. The study identified three moves: *The Editorial Heading*, *Background to Issue under Discussion*, *Discussing the Issue Raised* and the *Columnists General Comment on the Issue Raised*. Move 3 (Discussing the Issue

Raised) is noted to be the move with the highest number of space whilst Move 1(The Editorial Heading) occupies the least Space.

The study recommends that there should be a cross cultural study of the schematic structure of the editorial sections within the Ghanaian context and that of other neighboring English speaking countries. Aside this, a comparative genre analysis could be conducted on the editorial sections of both the private and public newspapers in Ghana so as to ascertain the unique ways that writers use language from these two different background. I also recommend for further research to be conducted to ascertain the difference and similarities on how the Anglophone and Francophone countries in Africa structure their editorial sections.

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RC25 Awards

Since their creation, RC25 awards are linked to *Language, Discourse & Society*, as all published articles are eligible to be considered by the Awards Committee. Here is a record of the articles granted and the Awards Committee composition.

2012, Buenos Aires, Second Forum of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee

Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, University of Haifa
Viviane Resende, University of Brasilia
Sergei Riazantsev, Institute of Social and Political Research, Moscow
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, CEPS/INSTEAD, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Academic Excellence Award

Anders Persson (2012), "Front- and Backstage in Social Media", *LD&S*, 1(2), 11-31.

Graduate Student Award

Not granted.

2014, Yokohama, XVIII ISA World Congress

Award Committee

Nadezhda Georgieva, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
Corrine Kirchner, Columbia University, United States
Anders Persson, Lund University, Sweden
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

Academic Excellence Award

Raymond Oenbring and William Fielding (2014), "Young Adults' Attitudes to Standard and Nonstandard English in an English-Creole Speaking Country: The Case of The Bahamas", *LD&S*, 3(1), 28-51.

Graduate Student Award

Nassima Neggaz (2013), "Syria's Arab Spring: Language Enrichment", *LD&S*, 2(2), 11-31.

2016, Vienna, Third Forum of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee

Erzsebet Barat, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, CEU, Budapest
Irina Chudnovskaia, Department of Sociology of Communicative Systems, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia
Roland Terborg, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

Academic Excellence Award

Tiffany A. Dykstra (2016), "Assemblages of Syrian suffering: Rhetorical formations of refugees in Western media", *LD&S*, 4(1), 31-48.

Graduate Student Award

Tomoaki Miyazaki (2016), "The Rhetorical Use of Anecdote in Online Political Discussion", *LD&S*, 4(1), 49-61.

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