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“The Semantics of Migration”. Translation as Transduction: Remaking Meanings Across Modes

Abstract

This paper adopts a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) approach to analyse how meanings are produced and circulated in British major corporate digital media outlets via the multimodal notion of transduction (Kress 1997; Mavers 2011; Newfield 2014). Transduction is a form of translation from one semiotic system to another one, for example from verbal language to images and *vice versa*. However, transductions cannot be interpreted as mere transferrals from one resource to another one, and are here interpreted as multiplying meanings (Lemke 2002). As a case study, this paper will select some online columns from the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian*, drawing from a monitor corpus that is under construction to date and that includes multimodal data from the British digital press reporting on the “European migrant crisis” in 2015. The columns selected for this study deal with how people on the move are and/or should be labelled (e.g. Migrants? Refugees? Asylum seekers? Potential terrorists? See Gabrielatos, Baker 2008; Baker et al. 2008). The columns will be commented qualitatively from a multimodal critical discourse framework of analysis, with the goal of shedding light on how pictorial materials (e.g. pictures and diagrams) can amplify, reduce or even *contradict* what is argued in the verbal text. In the conclusive remarks, some reflections will be presented with a view to possible future lines of research.

Keywords

transduction; multimodal translation; multimodal critical discourse analysis; European migrant crisis; visual/verbal relationship; online newspapers.

1. Introduction

As the number of people arriving in Europe is growing, the media rhetoric of labelling according to explicit and implicit agendas has become the focus of a number of studies. As it has been shown, media reports have an impact that goes beyond influencing public opinions and results in asylum policies (Zetter 1991; Pickering 2000). Studies from different disciplines indicate that the repetition and perpetuation of hegemonic negative labels and collocations (e.g. “illegal” plus “migrant”) produce a pernicious effect on how we understand asylum issues and perceive asylum seekers. It is believed in some quarters that the most obnoxious label is “illegal” and human rights groups, refugee advocates and media corporations have been crusading against it as it is misleading, inaccurate and legally incorrect (Phillips 2014). Commentators have been trying to distinguish between “migrants” and “refugees” arriving in Europe, noting that technical legal arguments guide lexical choices as well as iterated collocations found in media outlets, such as daily newspapers and tabloids (Phillips 2014). As refugees and labour migrants are intertwined, the adoption of labels such as “mixed migration” could be of help for understanding the sometimes blurry difference between people who leave their home countries to escape from political persecution and those who suffer economic hardship.

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The current crossings of the Mediterranean sea, generally described as migration by the media, have been developing a whole linguistic and multimodal repertoire of **othering**, underpinned by neoliberalism and post-capitalistic ideologies, in turn cropped by neo-Nazi and far right political discourses across Europe and in Britain (Cheng 2015; Baker/Gabrielatos/McEnery 2013; Wodak/KhosraviNik/Mral 2013; Wodak/Richardson 2013). The language of othering refers to multimodal and linguistic strategies that are used to characterise, describe and define individuals, groups, or communities as **different** from ourselves. **Representational strategies of othering** that underpin the language of othering include personalisation vs. impersonalisation; individualisation vs. collectivisation; specification and genericisation; nomination or functionalisation; use of honorifics; objectivation; anonymization; aggregation; suppression (cf. van Leeuwen 2012; Machin/Mayr 2012: 77-85). Lamentably, this is nothing new, as such discourses are nourished by wide-spread and purposely-fed fears translated in the language of being invaded or “swamped” of Thatcherian rhetoric, following the 1978 new Commonwealth and the prospect of four million Pakistani migrating to Britain. The swamping of migrants is resurfacing in British political discourse today, for example when Defence Secretary Michael Fallon claimed that “communities are swamped by immigrants” as reported by Martin, writing for Mail Online (2014), backtracking soon afterwards, but at the same time construing a dyad between two differently hierarchized levels of groups, i.e. *communities* vs. *immigrants*.

Within a diverse range of theoretical and analytical tools, multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) has amply debated these issues, shedding light on how linguistic and multimodal resources are used in the media to circulate discourses of power, promote certain ideologies and silence others (see Fairclough 2010; Van Dijk 2008 for a general overview of these topics). However, research is still needed in the field of MCDA, as van Leeuwen aptly put it (2012), specifically defining the rationale and agenda of the emerging field of critical analysis of multimodal discourse that has been practised by both critical discourse analysts focusing on multimodal texts and multimodal researchers that adopt a critical stance.

Within the broad and fluid agenda of MCDA, a promising field of analysis is the attempt to understand critically how *transduction*, i.e. remaking meanings across modes (Kress 1997), works in the media. For example, writing may be remade as drawing or speech-as-action, also involving more than one mode or resource. When in reference to observable semiotic action, the notion of transduction has been defined as a “transmodal moment” (Newfield 2014) that describes the different kinds of changes that take place in processes of transduction – in materiality, genre, meaning, subjectivity and learning – as well as unearthing the situatedness of transmodal semiotic actions. The notion of “transmodal redesign” (Mavers 2011) refers to how form and meaning are combined in response to social framing, thus taking into account how the shift across modes implies choices and selection of new semiotic resources so as to keep consistency in meaning-making.

Considering that some resources do not have direct counterpart in parallel semiotic systems, for example typographical conventions (spelling, case, punctuation, etc.) do not have correspondence in visual communication, the interest of the sign-makers is crucial for the identification of how new configurations of meanings will be realized. In other words, processes can be reconfigured by means of vectors in drawings and thematization of elements with space arrangements (e.g. placement of items in left-right position in Western literate cultures, see Thibault 2000).

Transductions thus have important implications in meaning-making on at least three different levels: 1) how and why the sign-maker decides to move from one semiotic resource or mode to another one; 2) what semiotic resources (including language) are involved in transductions; 3) sociosemiotic implications in the processes of reconfigurations of sign-making at different times and ages. As Mavericks has argued (2011), considering the material variations in the histories of socio-cultural work, there can never be a “perfect translation” from one mode to another. Semiotic and modal practices are situated in specific contexts, hence are historically, socio-culturally and politically configured. Furthermore, other cultural meanings may complement the transductive

process. The way in which phenomena and relationships between resources and modes are represented produces effects on how different aspects of meaning **can** be represented, thus shaping knowledge of the world in different ways: “this challenges the assumption that there can be any direct transfer between or unproblematic, straightforward ‘translation’ of one modal realization into another” (Mavers 2011: 106). It is precisely to investigate this transfer, and shed a critical light on the unproblematic assumptions of a direct “translation” from one mode to another that this study has been designed (see also Lester 2008 and Norris/Maier 2014).

Under the notion of transduction, the ways in which a picture is captioned by verbal language has already been studied (starting from Barthes 1977 in printed media; whereas for digital media see Alo/Ogungbe 2013 and Bresciani/Eppler 2015) in terms of how the combination of semiotic modes and resources (i.e. images plus words) can orient viewers/readers’ opinions, also in MCDA approaches (Machin/Mayr 2012; Sindoni 2014). However, the way in which semiotic modes and resources, including language, are combined, has rarely been studied in *translational* terms (Desjardins 2008). This study argues the case for an approach that incorporates and extends MCDA methods **within a translational agenda**, with the goal of viewing the combination of modes and resources in online newspapers as a **problematic translational act** made possible by multimodal transductions across modes and implying the contribution of several sign-makers (e.g. journalists, web designers, editors, and, broadly speaking, all that makes up a newsroom in the age of digitality, cf. Robinson 2011 and Caple 2013). Translation as transduction should not be interpreted as a mere transferral from one resource to another one, but is a system to **remake meanings** (Lemke 2002). This theoretical assumption will allow us to make claims with regard to the ideological positioning of those who produce media artefacts, with possible ideological shifts on the part of those who receive them. The aim of the paper will be to show how verbal texts are translated in visual texts and *vice versa*.

From this standpoint, some translational/transduction strategies will be illustrated vis-à-vis desired effects on the audience, for example via the combined use of words and images, whereas words are translated into images that convey meanings that can optionally **amplify**, **reduce**, or even **contradict** what is said verbally. Translational/transduction strategies will also be exemplified via some symptomatic case studies about migration across Europe in 2015, as represented in contemporary corporate British media outlets. In Section 2 some background information will be provided, and the rationale, method and the research questions will be introduced. In Section 3, three symptomatic case studies from the digital edition of the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* will be discussed to show how the language of othering is used in verbal and visual texts and how semiotic resources interact in making meanings. In the concluding remarks in Section 4, some reflections will be presented to point out how verbal and visual resources are exploited in discourses of othering with reference to migration.

The combination of verbal and visual strategies points to rapid and relatively unpredictable social and cultural changes. The stage of acceleration and intensification in globalization processes raises fundamental challenges for the ways in which we imagine societies, human beings and their activities (see Eriksen 2001; Arnaut/Spotti 2015; Blommaert/Spotti/Van der Aa 2015).

2. Background, method and research questions

Whilst EU was struggling with the Greek crisis and the politics of austerity gained momentum, a deeper crisis would be under way, when unstable boats packed with thousands of refugees from the Middle East started arriving on the shores of the Aegean islands and in Sicily. The “refugee crisis” started in mid-April 2015, when hundreds of dead bodies were found by patrolling ships in the Mediterranean (Blommaert 2015; Edwards 2015). The “Mare Nostrum” (literally “our sea”, thus linguistically confirming the idea of a “Fortress Europe”) repressive policy was blamed for this tragedy and, following a public outcry, European leaders promoted large-scale on search-and-rescue missions. The rhetoric of the immigrant as fortune-seeker oscillating between criminality and job-theft to hard-working Europeans was accompanied by a changed perspective, where

immigrants were starting to be seen as asylum seekers fleeing from war and extreme poverty, as was the parallel case of Syrian refugees seeking to escape war in their country. As Blommaert has convincingly shown, this change of perspective of public opinion has been mainly visual (2015, see also Bleiker et al. 2013 for a complementary view).

The **language of othering** is a crucial weapon in the armoury of nationalist rhetoric and is also part of strategies for building consent in societies framed by convergent cultures. Media strategies manipulate individual responses to printed and broadcast news, ultimately hinting at how consent is built (see Chomsky 1997, 2002; Herman/Chomsky 2002; Akopova 2013 on this topic). As a case study to illustrate how these processes work in digital corporate media, we will analyse a range of **linguistic and multimodal strategies of othering** (Machin/Mayr 2012) in Section 3. Such strategies span from more to less overt systems to define, describe and characterise migrants, so we will illustrate cases of lexical choices (e.g. overlexicalisation, suppression, structural opposition, use of quoting verbs), visual semiotic choices (e.g. iconography, attributes, settings, salience), representational and ideational choices (e.g. classification of social actors, personalisation vs. impersonalisation, specification vs. genericisation, nomination vs. functionalisation), transitivity and verb processes, also hinting at how newsworthiness is discursively constructed in the media, with reference to both verbal and visual language and their reciprocal interactions (Bednarek/Caple 2012, 2014, 2015). The above mentioned strategies will be analysed in context by drawing on systemic-functional theories of language and semiosis of communication to discover the functions they play in discourse, for example showing how they conceal or take for granted through and via language and visual design in two different online newspapers, namely the *Telegraph* (TT henceforth) and the *Guardian* (TG henceforth).

This study builds upon a broader research that combines corpus linguistics (CL) and MCDA approaches to provide quantitative and qualitative data on strategies that have been used in 2015 in mainstream UK media to represent the phenomenon of the so-called “European migrant crisis”. This paper qualitatively draws some columns from a monitor corpus of UK online newspapers articles (in their online version), spanning from January to December 2015 instead. The in progress monitor corpus used for this study includes multimodal data from *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Observer*, *The Times*, and *The Independent* and its overall goal will be to provide insights onto this international event from a British standpoint, by building on other studies that have before explored the issue of migration from a combined CL/CDA perspective (see Gabriellatos/Baker 2008; Baker et al. 2008).

However, the present study is not based on a quantitative analysis and is qualitatively oriented; it incorporates multimodal data and is exclusively focused on the topic of **translation as transduction** in the media representation of the 2015 European migrant crisis. To this end, we have selected a column from TT (*Telegraph*) and two columns from TG (*Guardian*) that explicitly address and discuss the thorny linguistic question of **how to label people on the move**, also discussing the connotations associated with collective nouns, such as “migrant”, “asylum seeker”, “refugee”, etc. TT is politically centre-right oriented and supported the Conservative party in 2015 general election, whereas TG is left and social-liberal oriented and supported the Labour, Green and Liberal Democrats in marginal non-labour seats in the same year. So it can be expected that the two online versions of these two newspapers present news from different viewpoints. The choice of a metalinguistic issue of labelling people on the move should in theory be helpful to reveal ideologies and hidden agendas in these two different media outlets.

The rationale to this study falls within the broad agenda of multimodal translational practices, with particular reference to transduction, that is here intended as a form of translation that implies a transition from one resource to another, as discussed in Section 1. That online newspaper articles are specific multimodal artefacts incorporating a wealth of semiotic resources is nothing new, as research literature has shown (Knox 2007, 2009; Bednarek/Caple 2012, 2014; Djonov/Knox 2014). For example, Caple argues that research in news was almost exclusively focused on verbiage, but a growing interest in visual communication has changed this tendency. To this end,

she has been developing the theory of nuclearity, where “image nuclear news bites accompany a dominant news photograph, a heading above the image and a short caption either below or to the side of the image” (Caple 2008: 125).

This paper argues the case for a model of analysis that considers the typical, and most frequent, association of text-image in articles as **forms of reciprocal translation**. For heuristics purposes, I will analyse the verbal text and then look at how images and other modes (e.g. hyperlinks) complement the verbal text. The underlying assumption that the verbal text comes **before**, for example in the production process (including layout, use of other resources, such as pictures, captions, hyperlinks, readers’ comments boxes, etc.) is completely arbitrary. This form of prioritisation in the analysis implicitly suggests that the verbal text should carry the fundamental meaning, but this is not the case. In some previous studies, I have investigated this interplay in web-based and on-line environments by evoking the notion of resource-switching (Sindoni 2013), that is the interaction between different resources (e.g. images, pictures, language, videos, gifs, memes, etc.). In a quantitative analysis of personal blogs, I have also shown that despite the much heralded idea of high integration among resources, they tend to be used in clusters, for example identifying posts that use preferentially either images or verbal language.

However, the notion of resource-switching was devised as a heuristics to make sense of the phenomenon in descriptive terms, thus saying nothing about how and why bloggers preferred to use one resource over the others. In this context, however, webpages are not created by personal bloggers, but are designed in the context of corporate media outlets: it can be supposed that the template used is highly standardised in terms of layout and page-constrained affordances. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that single journalists or writers have total freedom of composition (for example in terms of word number for each article), not to mention the chance to select the images to accompany their texts. Third parties did the job, mainly drawing from large corporate databases providing stock images, for example Getty (see Machin 2004 and Machin/Mayr 2012 on this topic). Such associations are made quickly and not by the same authors of these texts, as they are constructed in newsrooms, hence loosening a single authoriality in page construction and composition, in contrast to personal blogging or citizen journalism (see Caple 2013). As shown by Machin (2004), the requirements of global corporations prompted dramatic changes in visual language, also with reference to online newspapers. Stock images are thus characterised by 1) genericity via decontextualisation, use of attributes and use of generic models and settings; 2) “timelessness” (i.e. losing their origins in space and time); 3) low modality, thus lacking “excessive denotation” (see Machin 2004).

In this paper, I will present some symptomatic examples that have been selected manually and analysed qualitatively that respond to the following research questions:

- Assuming that text-image (T-I henceforth) relations are standardised in corporate media outlets and most notably, **not** by the author/s of the written text, how do these relations make meaning? How are they interpreted by the audience?
- Assuming that T-I relations can be interpreted in translational terms, how do images translate texts and *vice versa*?

However, it needs to be pointed out that transductions have been described in this study as translations of the verbal message into the visual one, thus implying that readers assign primacy to the written word and additional or secondary meanings to visuals. However, as multimodal analysts, we know that this is only a heuristic method for the illustration of the relationship between verbal and visual, but we could likewise embrace a reversal of this view, thus regarding the verbal text as a translation of visuals.

3. Examples from the corpus

The corpus of multimodal data is being constructed by sketchengine.com for the verbal component (including news sections and comment/columns sections) and semi-manually for multimodal component. It is relatively small, including 780,000 words to date, but is focused to address some specific research questions. In the example below, the case of **contradiction** will be first illustrated.

- (1) Refugees and migrants are not the same thing. Do not judge Hungary too harshly. Britain may find that it needs to impose draconian border controls, too (Heffer, September 19, 2015, Telegraph)

The opinions of the columnist Simon Heffer aligns with the strict and controversial measures adopted by the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban, who “put up a wall to keep out illegal immigrants who were *pouring* into his country from Serbia.” Heffer uses the flooding metaphors of Thatcherian memory and claims that Orban’s detractors have not realized that “his fellow (i.e. Hungarian) countrymen agree with him” and goes on by saying:

- (2) *I suspect many other Europeans, most of whom face an unprecedented wave of migration, feel the same. It is much easier to attack when you further away from the front line or when, like the Germans, you have in living memory committed grotesque crimes against humanity for which you still feel the need to make very public atonements.*

The rhetoric in (2) is an example of how Conservative discourse is constructed so as to create a sense of othering that plays on two different levels: the *us* and *them*, i.e. British readers and the other participants being talked about and then further differentiating the “them” (Europeans and Hungarians) by structural oppositioning (*I* vs. *you*; *Hungarians/other Europeans* vs. *Germans*). The orchestration of national identities is subtle but recurrent: the *I* of the author is constructed to align with his readership and the *you* is left to those who do not align with his view, namely the Germans, who are named explicitly (i.e. personalisation). Structural oppositioning is not created exclusively by means of pronoun use, but also in the heavy use of mental processes (e.g. *suspect, feel, attack, have in living memory, feel the need, make atonements*) that make the discourse appear as a matter of feelings, thus naturalising the biases implied in his discourse. The “unprecedented wave of migration” is a typical descriptive label attached to the phenomenon and again draws on the flooding metaphor reinforced by the adjective *unprecedented* that is highly modalized and subjective, but presented as a matter of fact. The vagueness of this description adds to its sense of threat and suggests that an unprecedented event should be dealt with via the application of unprecedented measures, thus implicitly justifying the “draconian controls” invoked in the headline.

The political position of Germans under these circumstances – that is not fully explained but merely alluded to, i.e. “Other European countries, led by the Germans, are outraged at him [i.e. Orban]” – is mocked and even put to shame by the open reference to Nazism, when Germans committed “grotesque” crimes against humanity, for which the reader has “living memory”. The adjective “grotesque” is rather striking in that it evokes a caricatural or parodying situation, but is maybe intended to bring to mind the absurdity of the committed crimes. Furthermore, the Germans are ridiculed as they are caught in the act of making “very public” atonements. The amplifier is interesting, as the adjective “public” is not gradable, but is here graded to amplify the effect of hypocrisy characterising Germans.

The article then goes on as follows:

- (3) *We, too, are under pressure to take large numbers of immigrants and, as I have written here before, we should as a civilized nation accept a responsibility – with other civilized nations, and by proper international agreement – to take a fair proportion of those fleeing war zones where they fear for their lives, or fear persecution and death at the hands of an Islamist occupying force. [...] But where the EU is failing, in the first instance, is to differentiate very publicly between genuine refugees and everyone else. [...]“Everyone else” includes not just those from Africa or Asia who are simply looking for a welfare state to settle down in, but those from the Middle East posing as*

refugees who are returning to Europe to engage in acts of terrorist murder. Our security services are, we are told, on that particular case, but their task is hardly made easier by the *enormous flood* of which the potential terrorists are a part, and which the EU's flaccidity (and refusal to end the open borders of the outdated Schengen agreement) encourages.

In (3), the columnist engages directly with his readership (i.e. *We*) and goes on by adopting an apparent well-informed and reasonable stance, calling to act as a civilized nation with other civilized nations and welcome “a fair proportion” of “those fleeing war zones”, but then blaming EU for not distinguishing between “genuine refugees” and “everyone else”. The equation between everyone else and terrorists is then proposed. A sense of menace is framed within the usual flooding metaphor, i.e. “enormous flood”. Considering the linguistic devices listed by Bednarek/Caple (2012, 2014) linked to the expression of stance and newsworthiness, this article makes use of the following:

Evaluative language	Negativity: <i>committed grotesque crimes against humanity</i>	Impact: <i>enormous flood;</i> <i>mass immigration</i>	Novelty: <i>unprecedented wave of migration</i>	Consonance: <i>those from the Middle East posing as refugees who are returning to Europe to engage in acts of terrorist murder</i>
References to emotion	Negativity: <i>feel the same</i>	Superlativeness: <i>Outraged</i>	Consonance: <i>perceived racism</i>	Personalisation: <i>conveniently ignore the unfortunate fact that most of his fellow countrymen agree with him; It is much easier to attack when you further away from the front line</i>
Metaphor, similes	Negativity: <i>The country eagerly joined the EU and ordered the full set menu.</i>	Impact: <i>It now wishes to dine à la carte, and objects to being asked to join an EU-wide plan to accommodate possibly millions of immigrants</i>		
Comparisons	Negativity: <i>Like the Greeks, who having joined the single currency then objected vociferously to being bound by its rules, the country eagerly joined the EU and ordered the full set menu</i>			
References to effects/impact on individuals, entities	Negativity: <i>Many Europeans – and I suspect this includes a fair number of Germans too, beneath their holier-than-thou exteriors – feel they ought to be consulted before their political leaders change the fundamental nature of their cultures by allowing a wave of mass immigration</i>	Impact: <i>We, too, are under pressure to take large numbers of immigrants</i>		

Table 1. Newsworthiness of TT article (adapted from Bednarek/Caple 2012, 2014)

But how is this article, a comment that explicitly and implicitly invites to align with the Hungarian government strict control measures against this unprecedented wave is translated into images

(i.e. transduced)? Are images accompanying the text supporting visually what is predicated verbally? Or, to put the matter differently, how is the text translating the images?

The main images accompanying the article are reproduced below:



Figure 1. Telegraph, © Getty Images, with caption: “A girl is overcome by pepper spray and tear gas after Hungarian police repelled an attempt by migrants to break the border post gate and pull down the razor wire fence”

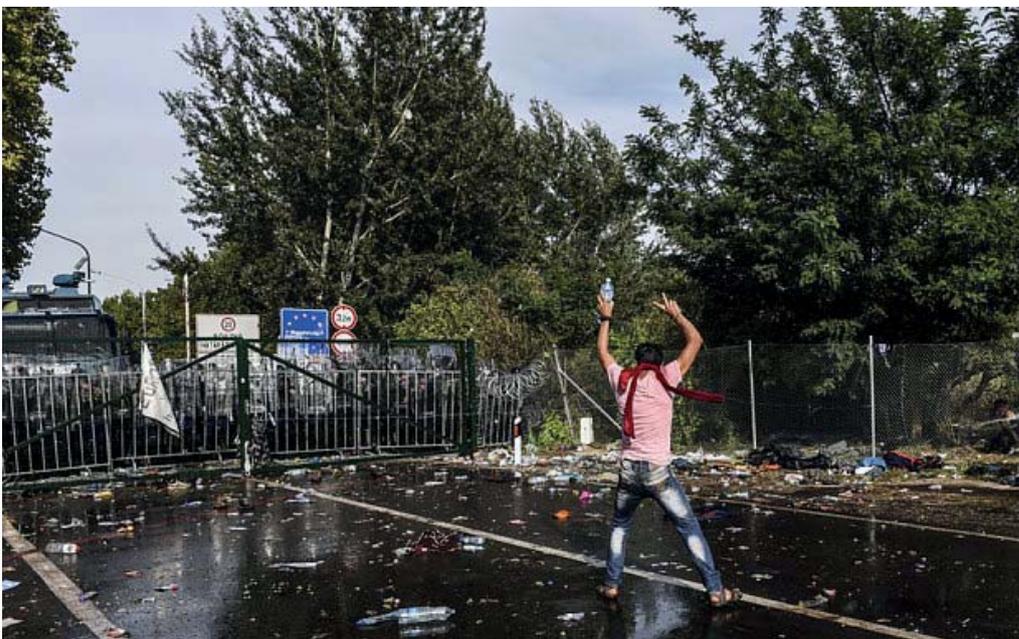


Figure 2. Telegraph image 2, © Getty Images, with caption: “A refugee gestures as Hungarian riot police use water cannon to push back refugees at the Hungarian border with Serbia near the town of Horgos”



Figure 3. Telegraph, © AP, with caption: “A refugee throws a bottle toward Hungarian police at the ‘Horgos 2’ border crossing into Hungary, near Horgos, Serbia”



Figure 4. Telegraph, © AP Photo/Khalil Hamra, with caption: “Syrian children who fled with their families from the violence in their village, sit on the ground at a camp in the Syrian village of Atmeh, near the Turkish border with Syria”

The images reproduced in Figures 1-4 starkly contrast with what is documented verbally. The commentary provided by the columnist develops an argument that can be broadly defined as supporting Orbán’s conservative and repressive policy and doing so by building on previous rhetorical strategies to put forward the following arguments: 1) not “everyone” is a refugee, 2) refugees are a negligible minority, 3) the others are most likely terrorists, 4) it is perfectly reasonable and

in fact advisable to keep them out of Europe. However, the images and related captions used to accompany this kind of arguments disalign with what is argued verbally. Drawing from Bednarek/Caple (2015), we can analyse these images focusing on **content** (i.e. **what is shown**) and **camera techniques** (**how it is shown**). Figures 1 and 4, for example, present innocent children that are in salient positions and thus construct the news value of Personalisation, by showing individuals standing in for a larger group and eliciting an emotional response from the audience. The camera foregrounds them in a close-up shot (Bednarek/Caple 2015: 13-14). Figure 1, in particular, illustrates a girl “overcome by pepper spray and tear gas”. She is presumably being treated by a volunteer and her passive, meek-as-a-lamb figure is likely to produce solidarity and empathy in readers. The same may be said about the salient children in Figure 4, who sit down in a circle and iconically imply innocence, poverty and helplessness. Nothing could be more in contrast than these representations with the idea of terrorism suggested in the verbal text, and this challenges our expectations as viewers/readers, so that, on the one hand, the news value of Consonance (i.e. adherence to expectations) is found in these Figures that display poor and helpless children, but, on the other hand, it is challenged if we compare the Figures with what is told in the verbal text. When it comes to adults, we could expect a different illustration. However, in both Figures 2 and 3, the viewer is imagined by the sign-maker (i.e. the photographer) as outside the frame, standing behind the migrant, so as to adopt their perspective. Furthermore, in both pictures, we see only one refugee throwing a plastic bottle toward the Hungarian police, thus picturing an image of solitary, non-organized, and substantially ineffective action against an highly organized and institutionalized governmental apparatus, i.e. the police. The policemen are visualized as a group of anonymous, genericised people, shielding behind the razor-wire fence, creating a powerful visual composition, in which the resilient powerless is even made more salient, whereas the powerful are symbolized as hyper-protected and difficult to relate to. In Figures 2 and 3, the news value of Personalisation is constructed via singling out one individual who stands for the group, but he is de-personalised at the same time, as the migrant is not captured by the camera frontally and, as such, is denied a personal identity. Considerations about Consonance are similar to those discussed for Figures 1 and 4.

Captions, as already mentioned, accompany the visual message that are contrasted to the article and are usually written by the web sub-editor. The children are “overcome”, (hinting at innocents and powerless abused by the police) and described as they “fled with their families from the violence of their villages” (implying the inevitability of their escape). These visual and verbal statements are in full contrast with the arguments developed in the article. Furthermore, refugees are depicted as ineffectively resisting the police by “gesturing” and “throwing a bottle”, highlighting their despair and thus reducing the potential sense of threat implicit in their adopted (or attributed) form of fighting. The material verb processes used to describe their fight is not exemplified as dangerous.

The next example illustrates a different form of transduction and is taken from a different online newspaper, namely *The Guardian*. It is titled “Europe’s worsening migrant crisis – the Guardian briefing” (written by Mark Rice-Oxley and Peter Walker, published April 20, 2015) and was occasioned by a deadly shipwreck off the Libyan coast, causing more than 700 deaths. The article is defined right in the headline as a briefing as in fact it is structured as such, by different paragraphs that carry subtitles (i.e. “What’s the story?”; “How this happened”; “The key issues” subdivided into four subparagraphs, “The complexity of criminal networks”, “Funding rescue operations”, “Impact on geopolitics on migrant routes”, “Economic migrants or refugees?”; “How can I find out more?”).

Hyperlinks that accompany subheads direct to Frontex statistics updates and annual reports, together with UNHCR regular and annual briefings, as to allow readers to access verified and official information on the phenomenon with constant updating. The hyperlinking technique can also be defined, albeit tentatively, as another form of transduction: hyperlinks are intertextual cross-references to other loci of situated semiotic action (e.g. other webpages, video texts, addi-

tional multisemiotic materials) that add to the overall meaning-making event as designed by the sign-makers. In this sense, hyperlinks here translate what is supplemented elsewhere and, as such, constitute a form of **reduction**, as they point to information that is embedded but not immediately available to interactive participants.

This article is also punctuated by a semantic preference that underscores the plight suffered by the social actors, with lexical items such as “perils”, “toll”, “perished”, describing the situation in (4):

- (4) *economic decay, war, persecution and unemployment gripping* at least a dozen countries on Europe’s southern rim, the surge of migration north has overwhelmed authorities in Europe, which has struggled to articulate a single coherent policy and, say critics, played into the hands of unscrupulous people traffickers.

The briefer thus develops his arguments by providing data, arguing that the surge of migration should not be sensationally defined as a “permanent crisis”, but terming 2015 as “a particularly difficult year”, giving details about the Mare Nostrum operation and its eventual stood down being replaced by a European operation with a “much flimsier mandate”. The surge of migration is then accounted for with reference to a complex geopolitical situation, also distinguishing the different migrant movements, for example from sub-Saharan Africa (Eritrea and Somalia) and from Libya and Syria, also briefly documenting the different reasons behind migration.

A key passage that can be contrasted with the argument developed by TT column is shown below:

- (5) The networks that bring people from war-torn nations to the African shores of the Mediterranean and then on to boats *are not just necessarily criminal*. They are also multinational, informal and ever-changing, with the migrants themselves having minimal contact with the *organising gangs*.

Ex. (5) reinforces the idea that the phenomenon should be treated respecting the differences in different migrant movements, also by evoking other social actors that have nothing to do with migrants, for example criminal human traffickers. This is supported by summarising stories told by the migrants themselves. The impact of geopolitics on migrant routes is then discussed by referring to Frontex, by making again reference to a combination of different factors. The argument put forward to deal with the same question addressed by the TT article is developed in (6):

- (6) One survivor of a sinking off Malta recounted *spending several days clinging to a buoyancy aid* along with a teenage Egyptian whose *hope* was to pay for heart medicine for his father. *The youth drowned before they could be saved*. But the UNHCR notes that those in the three main nations of origin – Syria, Eritrea and Somalia – are *escaping conflict and rampant rights abuses*. This is especially the case for Syrians, said Andrej Mahecic, a UNHCR spokesman.

In (6), another story is told with the effect of creating sympathy and identification with the drowned youth dying in the attempt to save his father. The point is that those in the three main nations of origins are escaping “conflict and rampant rights abuse” and this is buttressed by the reference to the official and trustworthy source, namely Andrej Mahecic, a UNHCR spokesperson. Table 2 reports on newsworthiness of the TG article, by adopting a summary of the main linguistic devices as identified by Bednarek/Caple (2012 and 2014).

Evaluative language	Negativity: <i>drowned; tragedy; perilous journey; deadly shipwreck</i>	Impact: <i>overloaded boats; 2015 is looking like a particularly difficult year</i>	Novelty: <i>making 2015 far deadlier than 2014; a record year for tragedy on the Mediterranean, with more than 3,000 deaths</i>	Consonance: <i>the surge of migration north has overwhelmed authorities in Europe</i>
References to emotion	Negativity: <i>economic chaos, war and human rights abuses</i>	Superlativeness: <i>It is not necessarily an exaggeration to characterise the scale of would-be migrants arriving illegally in Europe as a permanent crisis</i>		Consonance: <i>One perception of the flow of people from poorer nations into the EU is that they are led by a desire to earn money, often to send it back to relatives at home</i>
Metaphor, similes	Negativity: <i>This is likely to be a trail too complex to crack</i>	Impact: <i>While the routes remain constant their relative popularity ebbs and flows due to a combination of factors</i>		
Comparisons	Negativity: <i>With economic decay, war, persecution and unemployment gripping at least a dozen countries on Europe's southern rim, the surge of migration north has overwhelmed authorities in Europe</i>	Impact: <i>Chaos elsewhere can change the picture – according to Frontex, 4,000 Palestinians made the journey in the first seven months of 2013, twice the number for all the previous year</i>	Novelty: <i>This is a large number, but nonetheless a small proportion of the 3 million or so Syrians who have fled abroad, mostly to neighbouring Jordan and Turkey</i>	
References to effects/impact on individuals, entities	Negativity: <i>The surge of migration north has overwhelmed authorities in Europe, which has struggled to articulate a single coherent policy</i>	Impact: <i>Mare Nostrum lasted almost a year, at a cost to the Italian navy of around €9m (£7.15m) a month, a burden the country was understandably keen to share among its neighbours and allies</i>		Consonance: <i>say critics, played into the hands of unscrupulous people traffickers</i>

Table 2. Newsworthiness of TG article (adapted from Bednarek/Caple 2012, 2014)

The visual component used in this article mixes representational and diagrammatic pictures, as well as the TT article. Figure 5 presents migrants on a boat.



Figure 5. Guardian, © Photograph: Giuseppe Lami/EPA, with caption: “Migrants are taken to the mainland after being rescued by the Italian navy last September”

This example of transduction reflects the article’s topic and provides a two-faceted depiction of the described phenomenon: broadly speaking, the picture can be interpreted as both underpinning the stereotype of migration as a scarcely controlled and menacing situation (very long shot, no faces are identifiable, high genericisation, impersonalisation, etc.), and, at the same time, encouraging solidarity through the depiction of the plight lived by the people on the boats. Here the symbolic illustration can be decoded differently by different kinds of viewers, even though sympathy and solidarity can be assumed to be less automatically bestowed on the represented participants if compared, for example, with those depicted in Figures 1 or 4 in TT. Following Bednarek/Caple 2015, 13-14, the news values of Consonance is constructed in this picture, as it represents the stereotypical aspects of the phenomenon of migration, also hinting at Impact, that shows the high significance of an event in terms of its consequences.

Additionally, a visual comparison between the two data-driven diagrams of migrant routes can be useful for further reflections.



Figure 6. Migrant route map (TT)



Figure 7. Migrant route map (TG)

The TT map gives more information with reference to the migratory routes, presenting more possible final destinations than the TG map does. The latter is instead titled and reports its official source and provides a legend for the different routes that is functional for an overall understanding of the different events involved, consistently with what is being discussed in the article, whereas the TT one does not report on such information. Analysing the vectors, the different colours and width used in Fig. 7 helps also understanding the differences, whereas Fig. 6 presents homogeneity of colours and width to report on different migratory routes. Furthermore, by projecting the arrows towards European countries, which do not directly receive migrants on arrival (i.e. Norway and Germany), Fig. 6 contributes to a different but comparable description of migratory flows that are epitomized as generically uncontrolled and spreading across Europe instead.

The factual and informative nature of the TT article, moreover, is conveyed through the insertion of a visual cluster separated by the rest of the article, a FAQ section titled “The Schengen agreement”, with sections “What is it?”, “Who is a member?”, “Why is it under strain?”, “Are checks legal?”, “What does the European Union say?”, “What do Eurosceptics say?”.

These paragraphs present very short and concise statements that address complex issues by resorting to personalisation, respectively 1) the European Union, which is in fact equated with what Jean Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, says about the system (“non-negotiable, irreversible, and the EU’s greatest achievement) and 2) the Eurosceptics, here condensed in the controversial opinions expressed by Nigel Farage, UKIP leader. From a visual standpoint, this cluster is separated by the rest of the text through framing and the text is accompanied by a picture portraying some European flags, hence associating vague ideas of nationality/nationalism and centring the focus of visual attention on Europe as a conglomerate of nation states.

Considering both articles and their explicit and implicit agenda, it can thus be argued that with reference to the transductions discussed in this section, both forms support by **expansion** and **amplification** what is predicated with the written texts (i.e. the columns). However, as discussed in the previous Section, the mimetic and iconic visual components of the TT article features a contradiction when compared to what was predicated with verbal language, whereas the diagrammatic, analytic and conceptual visual component translates more consistently the messages conveyed by the columnist.

Going back to this paper’s title, **the semantics of migration** makes reference to a column by Stephen Pritchard, published by TG (August 16, 2015). The column discusses how the term “migrant” should be used with care. The columnist, while discussing the growing amount of distressing scenes of migrants struggling to flee from their home countries, reports on the debate about the politics of naming, as is also anticipated in the subheading: “some believe the word migrant has become a derogatory term”. This column is explicitly referring to language ideologies, as is also illustrated in the headline with the term “semantics”. After a concise reference to how the phenomenon is propagating that is described in visual, but also compassionate terms, (e.g. “distressing scenes of Syrian refugees bottled up in a football stadium” and “pictures of migrants in France existing in miserable conditions”), the columnist examines the main argument, that is how the term “migrant” has become loaded with negative associations in popular discourse within the hidden ideological agenda of discouraging sympathy.

He refers to a number of official and academic sources to support his argument, such as Robert McNeil of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, who advocated the return to a more neutral meaning associated to the term “migrant” that can be either “a Saudi billionaire moving to Mayfair” or “a poor north African seeking a basic standard of living in Marseille”, thus creating a stark contrast by structural and lexical oppositioning. Other official sources are Professor Bridget Anderson, who pointed out the importance of definitions when counting migrants, as a definition provides guidelines for distinguishing those who count as migrants and those who do not. Building on this, the columnist comments on results of a poll commissioned by the Migration Observatory that tried to find out who the audience had in mind when thinking about immigrants. His arguments are built around the idea that the way in which media uses “terminology” has an

impact in how policies are shaped, citing the extreme case of Australia. This article is built around a group of references and sources, thus approaching the academic style of writing that strengthens the call for a more accurate, nuanced, and responsible use of the term “migrant”. Additionally, other tools to find out more via hyperlinking can be interpreted as a multimodal strategy to consolidate the style of academic writing.

How is this argument developed in visual terms? The transduction that is immediately available to comment on the topic is a main picture that is shown in Fig. 8. Furthermore, a number of hyperlinks adds to the general sense of conveyed accountability of information and reliability of sources.



Figure 8. Guardian, © Photograph: Yannis Kolesidis/EPA, caption: “Syrian refugees arrive on Kos”

Fig. 8 presents a group of people who are caught in the act of coming down from a boat at sunset (or dawn). The light effect makes them dark and, as such, they are de-personalised: we are not told a personal story, but a collective one, constructing a news value of Consonance. This single picture comments almost neutrally on the highly committed stance adopted by the article’s author: no specific sense of solidarity is envisioned between the interactive participants, that are the Syrian refugees, and the readers/viewers. In this sense, the transduction that is operated between the visual/verbal is actually **reducing** the complex events that are being discussed in the text, also because a Consonance news value does not prompt change of views, positions, beliefs in readers/viewers. The picture shows an unnamed, unspecified and ungendered group of refugees, thus creating a visual metonymy of the articulated points brought forward by the columnist, who is in fact evoking the need for “nuanced” uses of terminology. However, visually there is nothing more in contrast with these ideas than the use of a single picture presenting a stylized group of silhouettes. However, as a partial counter to reduction, and consistent with the arguments developed verbally, the caption defines this groups of people as “refugees” and not as “migrants”.

This third and last example has concisely shown how transduction can reduce the impact of what is conveyed through language, thus creating a paradoxical interpretation of the multimodal artefacts presented on the webpage.

4. Conclusions

The case studies presented in this paper have been selected for a qualitative commentary of how the verbal and the visual are intertwined to produce meaning-making in corporate media in the online British press. A combination of multimodal and critical discourse analysis approaches sheds light on how modes and resources interact, but in this paper we have adopted a translational approach as well, thus considering the relationship between verbal and visual as **forms of transductions**. For the sake of clarity, transductions have been considered as moving from the verbal to the visual, thus implying that readers assign primacy to the written word, while considering the visual clusters as carrying additional or secondary meanings. However, as multimodal analysts, we know that this is not always the case and some points could be made to embrace a reversal of this view, thus regarding the text as a translation of the visual. In support of the position adopted in this study, the production process has been prioritised, considering that visual materials are usually supplemented on a second stage, that is once the text has been written and converted into a digital text during the production process and involving third parties. Common practices in newsrooms have been radically transformed in digital newsrooms by the increasingly massive participation of freelancers and different distribution of tasks (see Robinson 2011 and Caple 2013). Production practices in text composition should be bore in mind to account for the final result in digital textuality, that is always the effect of multiple authors, from those who write and those who produce pictures or visual materials to those who fabricate the final digital remediated artefact, including the work of reporters, chief editors, web, news, and chief sub-editors, who work with designers, picture editors, layout sub-editors, and text sub-editors (see Knox 2007, 2009).

The very small sample of examples discussed prevents any attempt at generalisations of these findings but encourages further study to corroborate these partial results. The heuristic, qualitative and highly subjective nature of this selection, analysis and discussion implies a fundamental bias in the paradigm here presented. However, further study on the inherently intersemiotic and multimodal properties of online newspaper articles could be directed at how the association T-I produces meanings. It is in fact established in multimodal approaches to communication that the relationship between text, images, and other resources, including layout, cannot be reduced to a mere accumulation of meanings, but is **multiplicative in nature** (Lemke 2002). The translational approach, here defined transduction, should not be interpreted as a flat and binary transferral from one resource to another, but as a system to **remake meanings**. The application of the multimodal notion of transduction that seeks to understand how meanings are remade across modes and resources, can be a useful tool to problematize how such associations produce meanings in an MCDA light with the goal of unearthing possible undesired contradictory messages conveyed by corporate digital media.

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