(TRANS)GENDER IN THE NEWS: SPECIALIZED LANGUAGE IN THE UK PRESS
A corpus-based discourse analysis

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Abstract – In recent years, gender variant, non-binary and queer identities have become prominent topics of discussion in society as much as in the field of cultural and linguistic studies, and language has been playing a seminal role in the process of shaping and negotiating these identities. The press, in particular, works as one of the most active agents in the creation of discourses linked to those communities. This paper presents the final outcomes of a research project that focuses on the representation of transgender people in the British press as social actors (van Leeuwen 1996, 2005, 2008) and formulates hypotheses with regard to the use of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) in this type of representation.

Keywords: transgender identities; CBDA; LSP; British press.

> *It's not the news that makes the newspaper,*
> *but the newspaper that makes the news.*
> (U. Eco "Numero Zero", 2015,
> Trad. en., p.70)

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to critically address the role of the British press in the representation of transgender people, considering the divide between popular and quality press. The rationale for this investigation lies in the degree of involvement of newspapers in the understanding and dissemination of issues related to trans identities. In fact, as Fairclough (1995, p. 2) argues, the media influence "knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations [and] social identities".

 Scholars of News Discourse and language tend to agree on the fact that "[…] news is socially constructed. What events are reported is not a reflection of the intrinsic importance of those events, but reveals the operation of a complex and artificial set of criteria for selection" (Fowler 1991, p. 2). The

construction of news is realized though language, which is never neutral or a casual choice but always a highly constructed and elaborated conveyer of significance.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic under investigation and to the central role the use of language has in the understanding of transgender identities, it is necessary to adopt a standard for inclusive and non-discriminatory language, as will be demonstrated in the following sections. In fact, when it comes to transgender identities, considerations about word choice or proper grammar use influence and modify the understanding of the identities. It is of the utmost importance to comply with an established and acknowledged use of language, approved and shared by the in-group community. Various guidelines offered by organizations that focus their work on improving transgender people's lives are taken into consideration, among these: GLAAD (https://www.glaad.org); the National Center for Transgender Equality (http://www.transequality.org); All About Trans (http://www.allabouttrans.org.uk); and the Beaumont Society (https://www.beaumontsociety.org.uk/). The perspectives on the use of terminology referring to transgender people are many and vary from group to group; the terminology used here follows the GLAAD guide. These GLAAD guidelines were chosen because they are the most exhaustive and GLAAD specialize in monitoring language use in media. The broad spectrum in which transgender identities are set, together with the understanding that the performative nature of gender identities (Butler 1990), also relates to the concept of transgender community as a social construct that cannot be representative of all transgender people for the very fluid nature of this identity.

The work presented in the following sections looks at transgender individuals as social actors – that is to say, at how the press represents transgender people as "*participants* of social practices" (van Leeuwen 2008, p. 23). The aim of this approach is to shed light on the linguistic practices to which audiences are exposed daily and that consciously and unconsciously work in the background of their minds, shaping their knowledge of issues related to transgender identities. The study also aims at establishing the extent to which terminology related to transgender identities can be considered a type of Language for Specific Purposes.

Sections 2 and 3 will introduce the theoretical and methodological frameworks employed in this work. Section 4 will discuss the analysis and the results emerging in this study, while Section 5 will attempt to draw some conclusions.

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2. The language of the press and the representation of (trans)gender identities

2.1. News Discourse in the UK: The quality and the popular press

One may consider the language of the press as a discourse of its own, with its peculiar features and functions, therefore a type of language for specific purposes. The language used in the press reveals a lot about the news itself and the political and ideological standpoint of the newspaper supporting it. Certain editorial choices by newspapers affect attitudes and affairs in society and create stereotypes and biases in culture (Bell 1991, pp. 3-5). Newspaper articles are the main objects of this investigation; thus, it is necessary to describe some of the specificities of this genre.

The main function of the press is to report news. Bednarek and Caple (2012) suggest that one might approach the study of news discourse from a variety of perspectives, including not only linguistics, but also journalism, communication and media studies. Some of the first studies on news discourse focus on the structure of news' language by looking at genre, register and style. This is the case of, e.g., Crystal and Davy (1969), Carter (1988) and Ghadessy (1988), who focus on lexical choices in news articles, with the aim of defining the language of newspaper discourse. Through a sociolinguistic perspective, Bell (1991) and Jucker (1992) address the link between linguistic structures and social context in news articles. The same approach, but with a diachronic perspective, is chosen by Conboy (2010). Other scholars focus on news values by combining the study of evaluation with corpus linguistics (e.g. Bednarek 2006). The latter approach has increasingly become popular in the analysis of news discourse, and will be adopted in this study. The investigation of News Discourse, through the use of different theoretical and methodological frameworks, has also proved to be an effective instrument to uncover patterns in the representation of minorities, particularly of different social groups and ethnicities (see for e.g. van Dijk 1988 on racism in the press; Baker *et al.* 2013 on the representation of Islam; and Partington 2015 on the representation of the Arab world).

In Great Britain, the first daily newspaper appeared in 1702, at the time known as *The Daily Courant* (Allan 1999, pp. 8-11). Since then, the press has seen many changes, but one feature remains consistent throughout the centuries: the British press has maintained its own internal categorizations, from the 'broadsheet' vs. 'tabloid' classification, to the 'quality' vs. 'popular' dichotomy, moving to the 'up-', 'mid-' and 'down-market' newspaper distinction. Newspapers in the UK are also classified according to their political sympathy (left and right leaning), based on the frequency of

appearance (daily, weekly, Sunday editions) or the geographical area they cover (nationals and locals) (Seymour-Ure 1996 p. 27).

In 1983, Harry Henry proposed a type of classification that divides periodicals in up, mid- and down-market newspapers. This categorization is specifically based on the socio-economic status of the readership. However, today, more newspapers are read across social classes than ever before (Jucker 1992, pp. 48-58). This adjustment is due not only to the increase in the level of education of all social classes, but also to the growing trend in the use of on-line platforms. In light of this, the up-, mid-, and down-market classification results is no longer accurate and is not taken into consideration in this study.

Similarly, the 'broadsheet' vs. 'tabloid' dichotomy, inspired by the size and format of the various newspapers (Jucker 1992, p. 48) struggles to survive following the standardization in size of most British newspapers.

A further categorisation system, relevant to this study, is the dichotomy between 'popular' and 'quality' newspapers. "The quality-popular distinction was sharply drawn by 1945" (Seymour-Ure 1996 p. 27), although the differences in newspapers were already in sight a decade before, since the success of the *Daily Mirror* in 1935, which soon became the first massively distributed popular paper. This distinction is mainly based on the different ways that newspapers chose to prioritize information, and on the linguistic means used to report them.

The differentiation between 'popular' and 'quality' press seems to have always existed. Conboy (2002, p. 5) claims that the term 'popular' in relation to the press closely relates to the definition of popular culture. Here, he refers to Raymond Williams (1976), who points to the origin of the word used to indicate something "[...] 'belonging to the people' but also [*carrying*] implications of 'base or low'". Conboy (2007, p. 7) posits that the popular press can be defined as a "[…] a set of discourses which establish elements of authenticity in part through its rhetoric and is thus able to establish an inclusivity based on its appeal to wide sections of ordinary people". The popular press owes its large number of followers to the fact that it was able to attract a "largely working-class readership because of its commitment to delivering a form of journalism these readers wanted to see at a price that they could afford" (Allan 1999, p. 13). According to Fowler (1991, p. 39), generally speaking, the popular press uses "colloquialisms, incomplete sentences, questions and a varied typography suggesti*ng* variations of emphasis, [where] the written text mimics a speaking voice, as of a person talking informally but with passionate indignation". Moreover, its style includes puns, easy to understand terms and basic sentence structure, while the quality press has a more formal type of language.

Among the characteristics proper of the genre, it is possible to highlight that popular newspapers usually have shorter articles, focus more on national

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stories, and prefer to cover news stories that deal with gossip and the lives of celebrities (Baker *et. Al.* 2013; Conboy 2006). Quality newspapers, by contrast, have a broader area of coverage. Articles in this type of newspapers generally include stories and news related to foreign politics, business and economics, as well as updates from all over the world; the style of writing incorporates specialized terminology and complex sentence structure (Baker *et. al.* 2013; Jucker 1992).

While the aim of all newspapers is more or less similar, i.e. to inform and entertain their audience, specific categories of newspapers assign different priorities to the two aims (Jucker 1992, p. 2). Those newspapers falling under the quality press categorization, such as *The Guardian* or *The Daily Telegraph*, focus on the informative function; while newspaper categorized as belonging to the popular press, like the *Daily Mail* or *The Sun*, give more importance to the entertainment function.

Nowadays, one of the most reliable bodies in charge of keeping track of all newspaper publications, rates of distribution and development of newspaper outlets is the Audit Bureau of Circulation.[1] Information offered by this body has also been taken into consideration in the creation of the dataset under investigation in this study.

2.2. (Trans)Gender identities in the press

As Litosseliti (2002, p. 136) argues, "[n]ewspapers are a prime public site for moral arguments and for constructing values and ideologies". For this reason, news discourse is a great source for the analysis of how ideologies, power relations, and the cultural values of a society are expressed and represented through language. An analysis of the language of the media is useful to identify those discourses that pervade, influence and shape the way people see and understand society, its beliefs and values.

One topic that has gained more and more importance, in this sense, is the study of how gender identities are represented in news discourse. The first issues about gender and language in relation to news discourse analysed by linguists are concerned with the representation of women in the press, and with the percentage of women actually working with and using this means of communication. Carter, Branson and Allan (1998) wrote and published *News, Gender and Power*, a volume which retraces the role of women in the press from different perspectives, from the actual contribution by women in the press to how they are represented and why. Byerly and Ross (2006) published *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction*, extending the study from journalism to media as a more general field of inquiry. Overall, while the linguistic representation of males and females in news stories has been

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[1] http://www.abc.org.uk/

investigated for many years (see also Clarke 1992; and Adampa 1999), that of sexual and gender identities has been considered a topic of scholarly analysis only more recently.

At the beginning of the 21st century, several linguists show their interest in how language might represent non-heteronormative/homonormative gender identities. In 2005, Baker looks at discourse prosodies in two British tabloids in relation to the representation of homosexuality and gay men. He concludes that while both *The Mirror* and *The Daily Mail* newspapers relate gay identity to more negative discourses such as that of a "gay lobby' trying to control the world, *The Mirror* does not frequently discuss politically based discourses in relation to homosexuality, while the *The Daily Mail* focuses more on equality and on how gay propaganda influences children. Similarly, Gouveia (2005) analyses the representation of gays and lesbians in a Portuguese newspaper, from a set of articles published across one week with the heading "gay power" in 2001. In his work, Gouveia argues that homosexuality is a topic rarely mentioned in the press and still considered a taboo. The articles he analyses mirror the discussion about civil unions, on which the Portuguese parliament passed a law just few weeks before. According to the author, despite the clear intention to refrain from discriminating against homosexual people, "there [was] also the construction of a sense of fear associated with homosexuality, via the assertion that gays and lesbians have more social and political power than one would expect" (Gouveia 2005, p. 247). This argument brings forward again the idea of the "gay lobby" observed in Baker's study (2005). Morrish and Sauntson (2007) look at the representation of Peter Mandelson, a gay British politician, in British broadsheets, concluding that not only is he portrayed as effeminate but also in a negative way through derogatory stereotypes generally associated with gay men. Hidalgo-Tenorio and Bartley (2015; 2016) conduct two different studies on a corpus of newspaper articles collected from the Irish press following the issuing of a law that recognizes same-sex marriage. The 2015 study focuses on the verbal processes associated to the terms *gay**, *homo**, *lesbian** and *queer**, that is to say, to transitivity processes and how they were used to represent queer identities. The study concludes that the most frequent verbal process used in this case were 'material'. To put it simply, in their data, queer people are mostly represented as active participants. The corpus also shows strong homophobic discourse, where gay men are demonised, victimised and represented as curable patients, while lesbians seem to be generally more accepted by society. In the 2016 study, the aim is to examine how the perception of homosexuality was filtered through the press (Hidalgo-Tenorio, Bartley 2016, p. 9). Among other results, the study highlights that gay people are mostly represented as a community, a group of people working together.

With the exception of the 2015 work by Hidalgo-Tenorio and Bartley, which includes the word 'queer',[2] the studies presented so far focus on homosexual people, and thus discuss LGBT+ identities only to a certain extent. The representation of transgender identities in the news has been investigated by linguists only more recently, in the past few years. An influential work for this research is a study by Paul Baker, published in 2014. In his work, Baker collects a corpus of newspaper articles from the year 2012 and, through the use of corpus linguistics tools, analyses the way the British press depicted trans people in that year. One of his major findings is that:

> The analysis did find a great deal of evidence to support the view that trans people are regularly represented in reasonably large sections of the press as receiving special treatment lest they be offended, as victims or villains, as involved in transient relationships or sex scandals, as the objects of jokes about their appearance or sexual organs and as attention seeking freakish objects. (Baker 2014, p. 233)

Baker also added that some positive representations were retrieved but were less frequent. Zottola (2018a, 2018b, forthcoming), expanding on Baker's work, analyses the semantic prosody carried by the linguistic choices adopted by newspapers to represent transgender identities in the British press. Zottola (2018a, 2018b) discusses the representation of transgender people in the press in relation to lexical choices that do not always support an inclusive use of language for transgender people. Zottola (forthcoming) tackles different semantic categories of representation used to talk about transgender identities, such as, among others, the world of celebrities or collective representation using concepts such as 'community'. Ferraresi (2018) also writes about the press and its lexical choices related to the representation of transgender people. He focuses on citizen journalism, investigating the extent to which negative stereotypes about transgender people are reversed. Finally, Gupta (2018) contributes to the literature on the representation of transgender identities in the press through an analysis of misgendering practices through pronoun use in news reports on Lucy Meadows, a British teacher who was found dead in her house short after returning to her job in her identifying gender.

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[2] "Queer" is a more general term referring to all those identities which do not conform to the heteronormative and binary definition of gender.

3. Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis

3.1. LSP and identity representation

Although Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) is generally regarded as a type of language used by experts communicating within their area of expertise (Bergenholtz, Tarp 1995), it can also be defined as an array of conventions and rules – sometimes overlapping with those used in general language – that are characterized by specific peculiarities such as topic, communicative goal, audience of reference or context of appearance (Cabré 2003). Bearing in mind the discussion about the language of newspapers introduced in Section 2, it is possible to retrieve a number of these features in the language used by newspaper writers. For example, the audience of reference varies from newspaper to newspaper, in the case of the popular press it differs from that of the quality press, as the former is interested in involving readers from lower, less-educated classes, while the latter is interested in readers from educated, high profile, "white collar" working social classes. The discussion and presentation of topics are peculiar for each news outlet and the style differs from that of other written or oral texts. In the two genres investigated, these vary accordingly, as one is generally interested in covering more local events while the other expands on internationally resonating affairs. The communicative goal enacted by the linguistic choices and style of each newspapers are peculiar of this type of genre. Despite the variation and fugacity of the language of newspapers (Hernández Longas 2001), the structural and communicative features of the language used in this type of media are strongly defined and pursued by journalists. Thus, the language of newspaper is considered in this investigation a variety of LSP. Moreover, if we define LSP against LGP (Language for General Purposes) and define the latter as the language we use in everyday interaction (Bowker, Pearson 2002), it is even more evident that the language used in newspapers is a type of LSP. Additionally, newspapers use a variety of specialized and technical terms when discussing specific issues. This aspect reflects in the corpus analysed in this study, especially considering the divide between popular and quality press.

Against this backdrop, among the features that can be connected to its language being an LSP – the corpus was divided into two sub-corpora each comprising articles from the popular and the quality press respectively - is the gross difference in size between the two sub-corpora in terms of word tokens. In fact, while the number of articles included in each sub-corpus does not differ consistently, the amount of tokens doubles in the quality press compared to the popular. The reason behind this difference results from the structural features of the two genres. The quality press is renowned for its lengthier and text-heavy

content compared to the popular press which generally presents shorter articles
with greater usage of multimodal elements.

Additionally, one might posit that terminology related to transgender
identities is a type of LSP. Section 4 will explore this hypothesis further.

3.2. Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis (CBDA)

The existing literature on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) combined with
Corpus Linguistics (CL) shows that the use of corpora to analyse discourses
and uncover patterns of use in language has been an effective method of
linguistics enquiry (see Baker 2006, 2010, Baker, McEnery 2005, Baker *et al.*
2013, Partington 2012, 2015, Venuti, Nisco 2015). On the one hand, Critical
Discourse Analysis (Baker 2006; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough *et al* 2011;
Hidalgo-Tenorio 2011) provides researchers with a framework that favours a
more qualitative-based investigation and endorses the study of context and the
socio-political implications of language use. CDA considers discourse as a
form of social practice and is particularly interested both in the way in which
ideology and power influence the use of language and the way language is used
in society to determine specific power relations. CDA explores given linguistic
phenomena to determine the way these linguistic events express specific
viewpoints (Wodak, Meyer 2001) and highlights the relations between
language, context, society, history and politics. On the other hand, Corpus
Linguistics (McEnery, Hardie 2012; McEnery, Wilson 1996; Taylor 2008)
allows for the analysis of large amounts of datasets. McEnery and Wilson
(1996) explain CL as an approach for exploring language use through the
analysis of a corpus and the use of a software program that performs immediate
and precise calculation on the data collected. The analysis is carried out through
the application of a number of tools, which allows the linguist to have a general
overview of the text and identify linguistic patterns (Baker *et al.* 2013). The
advantages of using corpus linguistics are rooted in the possibility to investigate
extensive amounts of data at once, thus enabling the scholar to produce highly
representative results.

Baker *et al.* (2008) suggest a systematic top-down framework of analysis
combining CL and CDA. This moves from qualitative to quantitative analysis
and back: Corpus-based Discourse Analysis (CBDA). These two methods
combined together are particularly relevant for the kind of analysis being
conducted in this study. In fact, computerized analysis helps to highlight
important elements of the text, which undergo a deeper examination facilitating
the creation of further hypothesis and a better and wider investigation of the
text (Baker *et al.* 2013). Historically speaking, CDA focuses mainly on single
texts or small collections of texts and is primarily based on qualitative analysis.
The introduction of Corpus Linguistics has made quantitative analyses possible

and consequently the identification of language patterns which unveil hidden meanings of lexical items. The main focus of CDA, i.e. to identify ideological patterns and power relations expressed through language in a text, is facilitated by the contemporaneous investigation of a plurality of texts and of large corpora.

The CBDA approach comprises a nine-step process. The analysis usually begins with a context-based investigation of the topic from an historical, political, cultural and etymological point of view. This initial evaluation enables the creation of research questions and allows the researcher to set out the parameters for the building of the corpus. The corpus, then built, is ready to be investigated by means of frequencies, keywords, collocations and other corpus tools. These procedures highlight potential sites of interest in the corpus and uncover possible discourses. Then, as if applying a magnifying glass, the analysis focuses on a small but representative set of data taken from the overall corpus, which may lead to new findings and possibly to the formulation of new hypotheses or research questions. The new hypotheses are tested through further corpus analysis, including the search for occurrences of intertextuality or interdiscursivity. This further investigation may lead to the formulation of new and final hypotheses. All final results and findings are tested through a last revision of the data. The following section offers an overview of the corpus under investigation: the TransCor.

3.2. The TransCor

The TransCor is a corpus of news articles collected from the British press in the time span stretching from January 2013 to December 2015. All articles in the corpus deal with the topic of transgender identities.

The articles were downloaded from the online platform LexisNexis,[3] an electronic database containing legal and journalistic documents through the use of the following search words: *transgender*, *transsexual*, *transvestite*, *trans*, *trannie*, *cross-dresser*, *sex change*, *shemale*, *gender reassignment*, and *dysphoria* (Zottola 2018a). The terms were chosen following a pilot study conducted on the first six months of 2015. The initial search-word list was longer than the one presented here. It contained all the search terms used by Baker (2014) in his study, plus other terms that had emerged during a background analysis of the literature related to transgender studies. The pilot study highlighted the search terms that would produce results; the other terms were eliminated.

The TransCor includes articles from eight national British newspapers: *The Guardian*, the *i*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* as representative of

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[3] http://academic.lexisnexis.eu/

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the quality press, and the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror* and
The Sun as representative of the popular press.

The corpus comprises 3,138 articles, for a total of 2,201,225 tokens. For
the purpose of this analysis the TransCor is divided into two sub-corpora: the
PopCor (Popular Corpus; this sub-corpus is made of all articles belonging to
the popular press) and the QualCor (Quality Corpus; this sub-corpus is made
of all articles belonging to the quality press). The two sub-corpora are
respectively made of 1,488,352 words and 712,873 words. The following table
illustrates in more detail the distribution of articles and word tokens in the two
sub-corpora.

	2013		2014		2015	
	Number of articles	**Word Tokens**	**Number of articles**	**Word Tokens**	**Number of articles**	**Word Tokens**
QualCor	527	383,846	477	360,750	919	743,756
PopCor	358	197,387	424	252,943	433	262,543
Total	885	581,233	901	613,693	1352	1,006,299

Table 1
Distribution of articles and word tokens across sub-corpora and years.

One of the issues concerned with the selection of articles, for the purpose of
this study, was the decision to include different genres of news articles. All of
the different types of articles (news reports, editorials, opinion columns, sports
news) are kept, except for the weekly television, radio and theatre schedules,
since they do not add any information in terms of the discourses regarding
transgender identities. In fact, I believe that each article adheres in a way to the
point of view of the newspaper and therefore contributes to the externalization
of the newspaper's stance on given issues. The software used for the analysis
is AntConc (Anthony 2014).

4. Analyzing discourses in the British press

The analysis of the TransCor reveals a number of elements with regards to the
way in which transgender people are represented as social actors in the British
press and more generally speaking how language is being currently used by
newspapers in this regard. Following a context-based exploration and given the
purpose of this study, the focus will be on the following research questions:

- Can terminology related to transgender identities be considered a type of
  LSP?

- Does the representation of transgender people as social actors given by the
  British press thus far present considerable differences regarding the popular
  vs. quality dichotomy?

As it is well known among the transgender community, and as the guidelines consulted in the writing of this work specify,[4] the terms transgender and transsexual are and must be used as adjectives. Regarding this aspect, the TransCor reveals an interesting pattern. In fact, considering 10% of the overall occurrences[5] of each term in the two sub-corpora, 3.8% of the term transgender*[6] is found to occur in the QualCor as a noun, while it displays this usage in the PopCor 8.5% of the times. Trans functions as a noun in the QualCor at 7% and 0% in the PopCor; transsexual* functions as a noun 50% of the times in the QualCor and 38% of the times in the PopCor.

Other lexical choices considered in the analysis of the TransCor suggest that transgender-related terminology can be included within the definition of LSP. These patterns, mostly found in the popular press, are exemplified in the following extracts:

(1)   **TRANNY** FURY AT BRIDE-SHOP BAN
        A **CROSSDRESSER** was left fuming after being turfed out of a bridal shop for asking to try on a wedding dress. (*The Sun*, 12 February 2015)
(2)   In another, unrelated, incident it was reported that professional drag queens have been banned from taking part in Glasgow's Gay Pride Rally because they may cause offence to those who are genuinely **transgendered**/**transsexual**/**transvestite** etc. (*Daily Mail*, 24 July 2015)

In support of the hypothesis that terminology related to trans identities is a type of LSP, the above examples show instances of the use of terminology in ways that can be defined as improper. Example (1) uses the terms *tranny* and *crossdresser* as synonyms. This type of construction can be seen as problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, the words *tranny/trannies/trannie*, retrieved throughout the corpus, are considered by some transgender people as derogatory and are classified as offensive by most guidelines on the use of inclusive language in reference to trans identities. Additionally, a tranny is not a crossdresser and it is inaccurate to use the two terms as synonyms.

Example (2) shows another pattern frequently found in the PopCor, that is the tendency to represent several different trans identities together as if they were one and the same thing. This type of construction signals inaccurate use of specific vocabulary. In fact, in example (2) two different issues arise. The first issue is related to the word *transgendered*. This deverbal noun – entailing a process of nominalization through the addition of the inflectional suffix -ed

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[4] For more on this: https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender (30.08.2018).

[5] As some of the terms have very high frequencies, 10% of the overall occurrences were used as a representative sample to identify more general patterns.

[6] The (*) at the end of the word signals that the wild card function was employed in the corpus search.

– suggests the existence of a verb 'to transgender'. In light of what has been said so far with reference to the use of *transgender* as an adjective only, this can be defined as a misuse of terminology. The second issue is related to the collective representation given in the example. Here transsexual and transgender people are associated to transvestite, which is not a gender identity, and most importantly, has no connection to transgender identity. Considering that today the use of the term c*rossdresser* is preferred to that of *transvestite*, the repeated association of the terms might generate a misunderstanding in the reader.

The last pattern endorsing the hypothesis presented here relates to what can be defined as the informative function of the press (Zottola 2018b). In fact, many instances (23%) are present in the TransCor in which the use of terminology related to transgender identities is then followed by an explanation of the meaning of the term used, in a process of popularization of the term, that is in order to make a technical term understood by the layman. This underlines the fact that LGBT+ terminology is not always straightforward in its meaning, a feature characterising LSP (Swales 1990; Gotti 2003).

The language analysed so far belongs to a discourse community which "has acquired some specific lexis" (Swales 1990, p.26) spread, known and widely used within the given discourse community but not equally well established outside of it.

4.1. Transgender people as social actors

An additional set of results emerging from the analysis of the TransCor deals with the representation of transgender people as social actors in the British press. This paper argues that the representations offered by the popular and the quality press present considerable differences. The taxonomy proposed by van Leeuwen (1996) on social actor representation, which serves to investigate transgender people as agents/patients in the corpus, is applied to address this point. This analytical tool falls within the framework of CDA and can be defined as a "*sociosemantic* inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented" (van Leeuwen 1996, p. 32), both linguistically and semantically. The different categorizations presented are linked to a specific linguistic and rhetorical construction and show to be effective for the purposes of this study, as the way social actors are represented usually mirrors the social practices diffused in society. van Leeuwen (1996) identifies two major categories of representation: Exclusion and Inclusion. In line with this, a newspaper can take a stance about a social actor by talking about the social actor, by doing it in a specific way or by not talking about them at all. Inclusion and Exclusion strategies can be considered as a means through which stances are legitimized or delegitimized. For example, in the collection of the corpus investigated in this study, it is necessary to include among the search terms for

the newspaper articles selection the term *sex change*, as some articles, despite their talking about transition and transgender people, never use the term *transgender*, but only refer to it in terms of the pragmatic act of gender reassignment. For the purpose of this work, it is not possible to exhaustively address all categories included in the taxonomy, thus only the ones considered in the analysis will be discussed in detail.

Among the most evident differences between the PopCor and the QualCor is the use of terms related to medical issues, such as gender reassignment, to physical and bodily features of transition, or to terms generally used in relation to trans identities but unrelated to it (i.e. cross dresser). This can be signalled by, for instance, the presence in the two sub-corpora of the search terms. The following table shows the normalized (by 10,000 words) frequency of the search terms in the TransCor.

Search term	QualCor	PopCor
transgender*	175.50	130.45
trans	58.65	12.62
transsexual*	21.83	51.76
sex change*	11.42	61.72
transvestite*	18.34	29.17
gender reassignment	11.28	22.72
dysphoria	4.90	9.11
cross-dress*	2.95	8.41
trann*	2.83	3.50
shemale*	0.33	0.70

Table 2
Dispersion of search terms.

From the frequency of occurrence of the search terms we can conclude that the popular press has a tendency to prefer terms that are strongly related to the physical aspect, such as *transsexual*, or to the process of transition, using both inclusive phrases, such *as gender reassignment*, and more derogatory ones such as *sex change*. A higher frequency of terms unrelated to transgender identity but associated to it in a number of contexts, see *transvestite* or *cross-dresser*, and of derogatory language is observed in the PopCor.

A strong presence of terms related to other gender identities is found in the TransCor. In fact, one of the more frequent representational patters through which transgender people are often represented, throughout the corpus, is in relation to other gender identities considered similar. This strategy can be described as an instance of Aggregation, but also of Association (van Leeuwen 1996, p. 50). In fact, through Association social actors "rather than being represented as stable and institutionalised, [are] represented as an alliance which exists only in relation to a specific activity or set of activities" (van Leeuwen 1996, p. 50-1). Examples (3) and (4) illustrate this pattern.

(3) Marriage equality for **gay, lesbian, transgender** and **intersex** Australians is the final step in a long march, beginning in 1788, for the right in Australia for all consenting couples to legally wed. (*The Guardian*, 3 December 2018)

(4) We believe that diversity is as important in the workplace as it is in the environment,' declares the agency, which has developed a programme of "unconscious bias" awareness training' for staff, as well as the establishment of an Islamic fellowship' to complement our **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** and **women**'s networks'. (Daily Mail, 12 February 2014)

This kind of representation seems to be very popular with reference to transgender identities. Baker (2014, p. 221) argues that "[t]he popularity of this practice of joining together a range of identity groups who are viewed as having minority or diverse sexualities and/or genders is sometimes signified by the acronym LGBT". This pattern can be interpreted as an attempt at inclusivity; however, as Baker notes, the typical positioning of transgender people at the end of the list may also hint at a sort of hierarchical system within the same LGBT+ group. This type of representation is found both in the PopCor and in the QualCor.

Another type of construction, mainly found in *The Sun,* and the popular press more generally speaking, can be defined from the perspective of social actors representations as a form of Determination, more specifically of Categorisation (van Leeuwen 1996 pp. 52-54). This group of strategies looks at social actors by considering the characteristics that each actor shares with others. Categorisation is further divided into Functionalisation, Appraisement, and Identification. Functionalised social actors are represented in terms of an activity or a function they display, i.e. in terms of what they do. Appraisement is realized when social actors are represented through a term which evaluates them. Identification, as opposed to Functionalisation, defines social actors in terms of what they are, rather than what they do. van Leeuwen proposes three types of Identification: Classification, Relational Identification, and Physical Identification. The first category mirrors the major social classes through which society is classified, namely age, gender, race, and education. Classification, in fact, is hard to define, as it is strictly related to the society one lives in when using this strategy, and to the class the social actors belong to, whether it is associated to gender, race or education. Relational Identification represents social actors in terms of the relationship they have with a specific other and is typically possessivised, which differentiates it from Affiliation. Physical Identification depicts the social actors in terms of the physical characteristics that make them unique. This strategy is rendered through the use of pre-modifiers that hint at personal or physical details, or that specify the subject's job. Example (5) offers a (calumnious) instance of Categorisation, or more specifically Physical Identification.

(5)   You would have thought they would have been outraged that Mr Sheen, knowing he was infected with HIV, would have continued to have unprotected sex with girlfriends, hookers and **pre-op transsexuals.** (*The Sun*, 20 November 2015)

Here, we find not only the presence of a pre-modifier which is not necessary to the overall understanding of the piece of news, but also a representation which depicts these people "in terms of an identity and function they share with others" (van Leeuwen 1996, p. 52), which does not represent their identity as a whole. If we focus on this pre-modifier only, there are seven occurrences throughout the corpus in which pre-op transsexual people are identified as prostitutes or as opportunists who rely on other people to live a wealthy and easy life. Similar patterns are retrieved with pre-modifiers such as *post-op*, age or nationality, as example (6) below shows.

(6)   **Brazilian hooker** Naomi and **pre-op transsexual** pal Sabrina set up their sleazy sex den inside a picturesque cottage in quiet Nairn. (*The Sun*, 9 March 2014)

This pattern is mostly found in the PopCor, where the above examples were taken from.

5. Conclusion

A number of results emerge from the analysis of the specialized corpus under investigation, the TransCor. The language analysed is that of newspapers in relation to a specific topic, transgender identities. The adjective vs. noun pattern exemplified in section 4, together with the other instances of language use illustrated in the same section, highlight a use of the terminology related to transgender identities often confused or improperly applied outside of the speech community.

When discussing the extent to which terminology related to transgender identities can be considered an LSP, a number of arguments emerge. Firstly, the very specific use of this terminology, as suggested by the guidelines, and by the specificity of the community of users, grants it the status of LSP, as it is used and understood in its primary meaning within a specific community of users (Swales 1990). This argument is based on the use of unrelated terms as synonyms, the inaccurate use of given terms, and by the informative pattern retrieved in the corpus. The vocabulary analyzed in the TransCor related to transgender identities contains a number of specialized terms that many cisgender[7] people confuse or whose meaning they are not aware of. Moreover, terms such as *transgender* have undergone a process of "de-terminologization"

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[7] Those people whose gender assigned at birth and gender identity correspond. It is notable that the need to insert this footnote corroborates the hypothesis being discussed.

(Meyer, Mackintosh 2000) – typical feature of LSP terminology – and made their way into general language. That is to say that lay people are now using terms initially used specifically in the in-group transgender community or in the medical environment. Specialized knowledge is at the heart of this investigation as it emerges from the analysis presented in the previous sections. The language of newspapers combined with the vocabulary used in relation to trans identities not only suggests reconsideration for what can be defined as LSP, but strongly redefines the boundaries of what is historically known as specialized knowledge. This on the one hand suggests an ever-growing advancement of this field and of the evolution of language, while on the other highlights the need of our society to embrace and endorse this language evolution in order to keep conveying meaning accurately.

As far as the distinction between popular and quality press is concerned, the investigation presented here demonstrates a tendency by the popular press to prefer terms related to the physical aspect, or to the process of transition, using both inclusive and derogatory linguistic constructions. Additionally, the PopCor presents a higher percentage of terms unrelated to transgender identity, but associated to it.

In terms of the way in which transgender people are represented as social actors, two main categories are employed in the TransCor: Association and Physical Identification (van Leeuwen 1996, p. 50). Unfortunately, some of these patterns have been found to be negative, mainly in the PopCor. However, generally speaking, it is possible to say that the press more comprehensively needs to further understand and comprehend the use of this LSP.

The hypothesis presented in this work regarding the status of terminology related to transgender identities being a type of LSP is most likely to change in the next few years as the press is increasingly becoming, together with other forms of media, a means though which this topic is being popularized and disseminated.

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