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The linguistic representation of gender violence in (written) media discourse: The term 'woman' in Spanish contemporary newspapers

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Abstract

'Woman' is a key social actor, and a central conceptualization, in the construction of media discourses of gender-based violence. Scholarly research at the turn of the 21st century (Bengoechea 2000, Lledó 2002, Fernández Díaz 2003; Jorge 2004) showed that in the Spanish press, media discourses had a tendency to naturalize male aggression not as violence but as part of the (private) sexual arrangement between the sexes. In this paper we explore the treatment of the phrase *mujer maltratada* (EN 'battered woman') in intimate partner violence newspaper articles from 2005 to 2010. Our aims are: (i) to

account for the discursive representation of violence against women (VAW) in Spanish contemporary media discourse in recent years; and (ii) to unveil the expectations about gender, sexuality and power implicit in public discourses about VAW, given their apparent objectivity. In doing so, we draw on the evaluation framework for the analysis of news reports proposed by White (2004, 2006) and on Corpus Linguistics tools.

Key words: violence against women (VAW) – Spanish newspapers – linguistic violence – *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* [battered woman/women] – evaluation.

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0. Introduction

‘Woman’ is a key social actor, a central concept in culture and a source of metaphors and interdictions. It is also essential in the construction of violence-related discourses, and particularly in the construction of media discourses of gender-based violences, where the discursive construal of women is part of a political agenda (Weatherall 2002). Undoubtedly, violence against women (VAW) has become a major social concern in the last few years, with large-scale media coverage and ‘visibility’ and more social, political and legal measures. Media represent the social and political arena where VAW discourses are constructed, negotiated, represented or enacted with alleged objectivity. Against this backdrop, in this paper we explore the construction of VAW discourse(s) in the Spanish press, with an emphasis on the presence of subjective evaluation. Specifically, we explore the treatment of ‘woman/women’ in a large corpus (ca. five million words) of gender-based newspaper articles in Spanish (from the quality dailies *El País* and *El Mundo*, which are typically associated with progressive and conservative views), covering the period 2005-2010. We draw on the *appraisal* or *evaluation* methodology (Martin & White 2005), and more specifically on the evaluation framework for the analysis of news reports proposed by White (2004, 2006). We will mainly focus on the evaluative prosody surrounding the phrase *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* [‘battered woman/women’], which might come from the writer or the reader of the news. In carrying out our task, we need to resort to both corpus linguistics (Baker et al. 2008) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough & Wodak 1997) –i.e. a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Our aim in this paper is two-fold: (i) to account for the discursive representation of violence against women (VAW)

in Spanish contemporary media discourse in recent years; and (ii) to help unveil the expectations about gender, sexuality and power implicit in public discourses about violence against women.

This paper is divided into five sections. Section 1 deals with the interplay among women, violence and language, and the different forms of violence as related to discourses of power and heteronormative masculinity. In section 2 we give an overview of the history of violence against women in the Spanish press since the early 1970s until 2010 through the review of the relevant literature on the topic. Our research questions are stated at the end of this section. In section 3 we account for the data and methodology used in the article, with a description of the procedure for quantitative analysis. In section 4 we discuss the results of the quantitative analysis and provide a qualitative analysis of two random extracts from our corpus, using the adopted theoretical framework. Section 5 is for the conclusions.

1. Women, violence and language: The violence(s) against women

A key initial issue is the close connection between ‘woman’ and ‘violence’, and this connection starts with language. *Violence against women* is a widespread, popular expression, which designates a dramatic reality but which is, however, recognised as natural. In contrast, the term *violence against men* also exists, but the link with reality is much weaker, and its use sometimes sounds as an exception or a social reaction. While men may also be the target of intimate partner violence, women continue to be the majority of victims and men the majority of perpetrators. The result is, therefore, that

the identification between woman and violence has become transparent and unproblematic.

At the heart of the discourse on violence there is the question of power and control in a patriarchal society. For Arendt, “violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power” (1970, 35). Though not always, violence tends to be instrumental in the exercise of power. Van Dijk (1996) deals with the discursive reproduction of power, which involves the access to discourse and to a wide range of communicative events; in his view we need

to explore the implications of the complex question *Who may speak or write to whom, about what, when, and in what context, or Who may participate in such communicative events in various recipient roles*, for instance as addressees, audience, bystanders and overhearers. Access may even be analysed in terms of the topics or referents of discourse, that is, who is written or spoken *about*. We may assume, as for other social resources, that *more* access according to these several participant roles, corresponds with *more* social power. In other words, measures of discourse access may be rather faithful indicators of the power of social groups and their members (Van Dijk 1996, 86; emphasis in the original).

At play in most cases of violence against women is a performance of an aggressive hegemonic, heteronormative masculinity. In this context, power “is conceived of as male ‘power over’ women, in that men hold the power that enables them to oppress women through acts of violence” (Shepherd 2008, 44).

Many types of violence are possible. Garver (1958) distinguishes between *overt* and *covert* (or *quiet*) forms of violence –the former includes mugging, rape or murder, all of them characterized by explicit physical assault on the body of a person; the latter does not “necessarily involve any overt physical assault on anybody’s person or property”

(Garver 1958, 260), and may include psychological violence, threats or institutional violence.

Garver also distinguishes between *personal* and *institutional* violence, depending on whether it is carried out either by an individual or by an institution or the state. Galtung (1969) reframes this binary categorization, from the point of view of the victim, as *personal* vs *structural* violence. In the first case, the perpetrator is an individual (e.g. murderer) whereas in the second case violence is part of a system, and is characterized by power asymmetries and inequality in the distribution of e.g. justice, health or education. Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic* violence is a rather elusive concept, closely linked to *symbolic power* and to ways of exercising power, and is defined as

gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, chosen as much as undergone, that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, of all the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour, presents itself as the most economical mode of domination because it best corresponds to the economy of the system (Bourdieu 1990, 127).

Galtung (1990) also proposes another classification in which violence is understood as forming a sort of triangle, and so he refers to *direct* (an event), *symbolic* (a process) and *cultural* (a permanence) types of violence, with violence starting at one of the corners and easily being transmitted to any of the other two, with the evident risk that direct forms of violence (e.g. violence against women) are likely to turn into cultural, institutionalised forms of violence. A recurrent example in all forms of violence thus presented is the perpetuation of women's subordination by men. In many marriages or sentimental relationships, women are likely to experience all forms of violence. In fact, long before physical, overt or direct forms of violence appear, women may experience

covert, institutional, structural or symbolic forms of domination or violence that may be oppressive or constraining and, most tragically, remain socially invisible.

Though many ‘violences’ are at play when we deal with the discursive representation (or construction) of gender-based violence, we will restrict ourselves to linguistic (or discursive) violence. Language is a social practice, as “whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects” (Fairclough 1989, 23). Thus, language may be an instrument of war, of racism, of alienation, of powerlessness, of (de)legitimation of practices and ideological positions.

Tellingly, Ross (1981, 195) claims that “[w]ords can hurt, and one way they do is by conveying denigrating or demeaning attitudes”. Gay (1997) explicitly posits the existence of *linguistic violence* as a type of covert institutional violence, a form of verbal hatred closely associated with subordination, vulnerability, powerlessness.

Language is at the centre of the processes of violence making and representation, and is particularly powerful in the construction of sexual inequality, since it “both helps construct sexual inequality and reflects its existence in society” (Graddol & Swan 1989, 164).

Feminist linguistics has exposed the violence(s) of language, particularly for women.

Spender, in her well-known *Man Made Language* (1980) put forward the idea that language is a male-controlled system, and suggested that language is the result of a patriarchal social system which encodes a set of stereotypical beliefs about women.

Other types of discriminatory language may likewise affect the day-to-day construction and/or enactment of our gender and sexual identities. The example of the widespread use of derogatory terms for gays and lesbians, as well as other non-canonical identity categories, is a case in point. Women, in particular, suffer from all forms of linguistic

violence, in terms of discrimination, strict regulation of their sex-related behaviours, and alienation from language and culture. As Cameron affirms, “[a] whole vocabulary exists denigrating the talk of women who do not conform to male ideas of femininity: nag, bitch, strident. More terms trivialise interaction between women: girls, talk, gossip, chitchat, mothers’ meeting” (Cameron 1985, 155). Ehrlich (2004) analyzes a range of linguistic features which can function to construct rape, in the public arena of legal discourse, in sexist and androcentric ways. As a consequence, heterosexism emerges as a powerful gender and language ideology, whose sometimes physical violent reinforcement “often makes an open discussion of sexual orientation quite difficult” (Gay 2007, 436).

Linguistic violence tends to accompany and reinforce physical, overt forms of violence. “Throughout history, linguistic violence has occurred alongside physical violence, often preceding, facilitating, and rationalizing physical violence” (Gay 2007, 435). Issues of sexist language, rape narratives, media representations of violence against women or hate speech are inextricably linked to the contemporary social and ideological order. In the following section, we provide the history of the media representation of VAW since the 1970s.

2. The portrayal of gender violence in the Spanish press

VAW is a universal phenomenon that has existed since the beginning of time, though only recently has it entered public discourse. For centuries, it has been seen as a private, family issue and especially a social taboo. Viewing VAW as a public issue, however, involves understanding it as a manifestation of social, gendered violence. It is, as well, a

conclusive indication that some measure of institutionalization and social legitimation has been reached.

In Spain, media coverage of violence against women has significantly changed over the last four decades. Fagoaga (1994, 1999), Alberdi & Matas (2002) and Jorge (2004) have identified three different phases. We deal with each phase in turn.

2.1. First phase: The 1970s and mid-1980s

A modest number of short, irrelevant news reports on the issue were published (e.g. 229 texts for the years 1982 and 1983 –see Fagoaga 1999). These were short, irrelevant texts that were found in the crimes sections of the newspapers. VAW was not identified as a crime, nor was it even characterized as a social problem at all. Indeed, the Spanish Criminal Code at the time stated that marriage was an attenuating factor in wife battering. This was so until the law reform in 1989 (Berganza Conde 2003). Rape or even murder were placed along other news items such as armed robbery, corruption scandals or non-sexual murder, narrated from a predominantly judicial or police perspective. No contextual information –i.e. causes and consequences, perpetrator(s) and victim(s)– was offered. Some thirty years ago, Spanish media discourses on VAW tended to naturalize male aggression not as violence but as part of the (private) sexual arrangement between the sexes –gender violence episodes were treated as individual instances of violence inflicted by individual men on individual women in an intimate relationship, mostly due to jealousy. Victims were practically disregarded, and no authorial or editorial reflection was offered.

2.2. Second phase: From the mid-1980s to the end of the 20th century

Thanks to the work of feminist groups and to raising social awareness, VAW turned from a ‘secret, private object’ into an ‘object of public communication’ (Fagoaga 1994, 88), and by the end of this period intimate partner violence news reports have definitely found their way onto the hard news agenda of the two major Spanish daily newspapers (*El País* and *El Mundo*). From the mid 90s onwards, in particular, there is a substantial increase in the quantity of news items published –Fagoaga (1999) states that *El País* published 754 texts between 1997 and 1998. These texts constitute more serious narratives, with growing contextual information (actors involved, circumstances, locations, and other details) and the consolidation of a specific vocabulary to deal with *malos tratos* (‘maltreatment’) or *violencia doméstica* (‘domestic violence’). For Fagoaga (1994), gender-based violence has become thematized or ‘routinized’. Besides, the news items abandoned the crimes section and landed on the current news section. Largely responsible for this new social awareness was the shocking murder of Ana Orantes, a woman from Granada, in December 1997. She was set on fire by her ex-husband, only a few days after appearing on a TV talk show to describe the domestic abuse she had suffered while married. This case drew extraordinary public attention and was to bring about legislative measures, and public campaigns, against gender violence.

2.3. The 21st century

The third phase in news reporting of abuse started at the turn of the 21st century, and it seems to confirm the process described thus far. Today, VAW is undoubtedly a major topic in the Spanish press. As an illustration, in 2010 *El País* published around 640 news items on the issue, while *El Mundo* reached 500¹. This bears witness to an

¹ See Graph 1 below for the number of news items in the years that constitute our corpus per search term.

effective and sustained public interest and a more serious treatment. News texts, in fact, offer more analysis and interpretation, with a wealth of statistics, figures, graphs, and other facts, which help to better contextualize this social malady and which frequently leads to demanding more legal and political measures. This is consistent with Bou-Franch's (2013: 278) statement that "[i]n modern times, Western societies have moved from treating abuse as a private affair to considering it a social public problem". Indeed, VAW – in its extreme manifestations of femicide and rape – has undoubtedly become today a major social concern with increasing media coverage. However, other manifestations of daily sexual abuse or harassment -whether verbal, economic or emotional- tend to remain unknown. This is especially important because most of our knowledge, our image(s) and our discourse(s) of VAW come from media constructions, which are (re)interpreted in terms of our personal experiences and our social membership.

2.4. El País and El Mundo

As we have seen, media accounts of violence against women is a very recent phenomenon in Spain, and is very closely related to two quality dailies, *El País* and *El Mundo*. *El País* is the highest-circulation Spanish daily newspaper, with an editorial line more in tune with progressive policies. It was first published in 1976, and since the beginning, it featured a number of news articles on violence against women: around 50 texts in 1976 and 1977 (Fagoaga 1999). Published for the first time in 1989, *El Mundo*, albeit more conservative, was the first Spanish newspaper (1997) to explicitly offer a wider coverage of gender-based violence. In any case, both *El País* and *El Mundo* are probably the two most respected daily newspapers in Spain today, and constitute

influential benchmarks not only for the population at large but also for politicians or legislators.

2.5. Research on VAW discourse(s) in the Spanish media

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed the growth of a body of research addressing the portrayal of VAW in the Spanish media (Fagoaga 1994, 1999; Bengoechea 2000; Lledó 2000; Alberdi & Mata 2002; Fernández 2003; Jorge 2004). The significance of the topic in contemporary Spanish society, together with its controversial nature offer ample opportunity for further investigation in a variety of fields and directions. Among them, we can cite the images or stereotypes offered by newspapers; the social attitudes toward the issue; the implicit and explicit definition of violence against women offered by the mass media, as well as an analysis of the main labels used (*domestic violence, gender violence, sexual violence, and others*) and their ideological implications; the (de)legitimised voices and sources of information on the topic; the representation (and construction) of the main actors involved, from victims to perpetrators and official authorities; and many others. Previous studies on the representation of domestic violence in the Spanish press (Martín Serrano 2000, Berganza Conde 2003, Sánchez Aranda *et al* 2003) have focused on the representation of the phenomenon as a social problem, with specific proposal on how these representations should be construed in ethical terms. However, in the last ten years there is a lack of studies on the construction and representation of VAW discourse(s) in the Spanish press. Surprisingly, research has not accompanied the increasing social and political interest in VAW, which has led to legal and political measures (e.g. the Spanish *Organic Act 1/2004 of 28 December on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence*).

In fill of this gap, in this paper, in particular, we are concerned with examining evaluative discourse of news reports (White 2004, 2006; Martin & White 2005; Bednarek 2006, 2008) in the representation of *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* ('battered woman/women') in the Spanish press, as this will unveil important aspects of how women are currently represented in the media vis-à-vis violence. Briefly, we wish to address two research questions:

RQ1: Given the alleged objectivity of media discourse, is there evaluative discourse in VAW newspaper articles? If so, in what are its linguistic realizations?

RQ2: Is there any significant difference between the two newspaper data sets analysed (*El País* and *El Mundo*) that may point to ideological considerations?

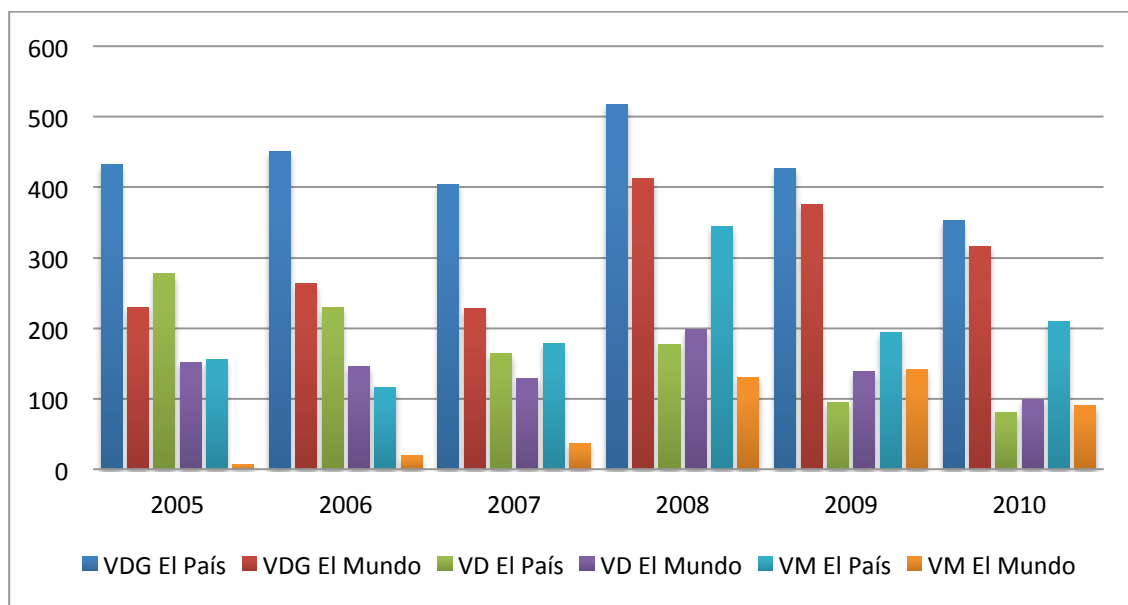
We must bear in mind those discursive representations of VAW “have regulatory (i.e., material) effects” (Ehrlich 2004, 227). They constitute powerful discourses with attendant socio-ideological consequences –they delimit what is (or is not) intimate partner violence, which stories are newsworthy, or which attitudes or emotions are to blame or praise. This discourse constitutes our object of research in this article.

3. Data and methodology: An evaluation framework

3.1. Data

The corpus for this study is made up of ca. 5 million words on VAW newspaper articles from the Spanish quality dailies *El País* and *El Mundo* covering the period 2005-2010. This corpus was compiled and downloaded using *Nexis UK News Databases*, entering the key search terms *violencia de género* (VDG; ‘gender violence’), *violencia doméstica*

(VD; ‘domestic violence’) and *violencia machista* (VM; ‘male violence’). The total number of articles is 7894 (4794 in *El País* and 3100 in *El Mundo*) and their distribution per year and per search terms is the following:



Graph 1. Number of articles per year and search term in *El País* and *El Mundo*

3.2. Theoretical framework

This paper relies on the evaluation or appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005) for the analysis of VAW news, with the aim of investigating subjective (or ideological) positioning in discourse(s) (see White 2004, 2006). Briefly, Appraisal Theory is concerned with (1) how writers communicate attitudinal meanings with a varying degree of explicitness and (2) how they negotiate their subjective position with other similar or divergent ideological stances. This paper focuses on the expression of attitude through *evaluation* –as relevant for gender-violence news reports. Evaluation is defined as:

[T]he text position of its audience to take either negative or positive views of the participants, actions, happenings and states of affairs therein depicted. It is via such evaluative positionings, of course, that the media constructs a particular model of the social and moral order – a model of what is normal and aberrant, beneficial and harmful, praiseworthy and blameworthy, and so on. (White 2006: 37)

This framework distinguishes between different *types* of attitudinal assessment (affect, judgement and appreciation) and different (linguistic) *realizations* by which these assessments are activated in the text (explicitly vs. implicitly). In this respect, the degree of ‘explicitness’ of evaluation, in terms of propositional content, is directly linked to the writer’s negotiation of interpersonal positioning with regard to potential readers, relative to communicative purpose(s).

3.2.1. Means for evaluation: explicit vs. implicit attitude

In considering *attitude* we are concerned with those utterances which can be interpreted as indicating “values by which positive or negative viewpoints are activated” (White 2006: 38), as referred to some individual, action, event or state of affairs. Such evaluations, as said above, can be explicitly conveyed or implicitly invoked. White labels these different means as:

Attitudinal inscription (positioning)

Specific words or fixed phrases which *explicitly* carry a negative or positive sense in that the positivity or negativity would still be conveyed even if the wordings were removed from their current context” (White 2004: 231).

Examples of attitudinal inscription in our corpus are lexical items such as *tormentor*, *brutally*, *vulnerable*, or *murderer*.

(1) *El Mundo* (Aug 17 2006) [authorial emotion]

El musical ‘Casa de Locos’ aborda la *brutalidad* doméstica con un mensaje de esperanza.

*(The musical ‘Mad House’ tackles domestic brutality with a message of hope).*²

(2) *El País* (Nov 28 2010) – on forced marriages [non-authorial emotion]

En muchos casos las víctimas *padecen* también amenazas y agresiones.

(In many cases victims also endure threats and violence).

(3) *El Mundo* (Nov 26 2010) [opinion]

(...) acabar con la *lacra* de la violencia de género exige el compromiso de todos.

(...) To put an end to the scourge of gender violence demands commitment from everyone).

Attitudinal trigger/token (invoked)

Formulations which do not operate so directly or overtly and which rely on implications and on inferences drawn by the reader/listener (White 2004: 234). There is no single item which carries a specific positive or negative value (White (2006: 39).

(4) *El Mundo* (Nov 5 2006) [evoking]

Desde enero, más de 50 hombres han matado (a sus mujeres). A pesar de las medidas judiciales, sanitarias y asistenciales puestas en marcha, *las mujeres siguen muriendo*.

(Since January, more than 50 men have killed (their wives). Despite the implemented legal, health and support measures, women are still dying).

(5) *El País* (Mar 7 2005)

Pascual Maragall (President of the Catalan government at the time, referring to the criticism of the Spanish government against his term of office): “Mi gobierno se siente *como una mujer maltratada*”. (“*My government feels like a battered woman*”).

² All further examples are extracted from the corpus for this study. The translations are the authors’.

As it is the reader who does most of the evaluative work, the intended implicit attitude may or may not be retrieved, depending on the reader bringing a particular set of beliefs and expectations – in terms of socially and culturally conditioned inferences – to the process of interpretation.

To sum up, we can classify attitudinal evaluations according to the amount of work done by the text and the reader/listener respectively, which varies along the explicit and implicit dimensions. This distinction roughly equates the traditional semantics vs. pragmatics distinction and is present in the three types of evaluation (see 3.2.2).

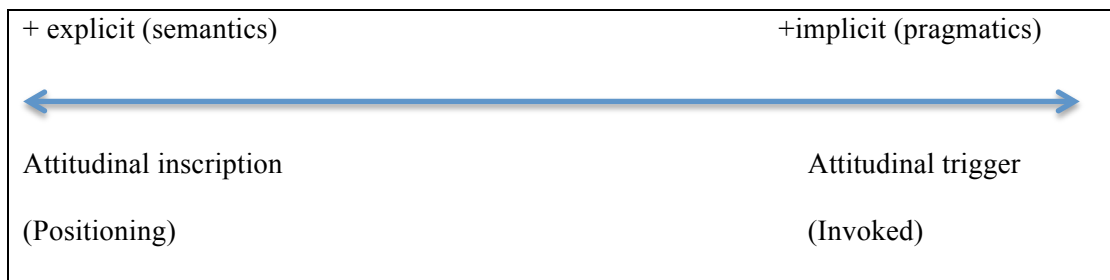


Table 1. Linguistic realisations of evaluation

3.2.2. Types of evaluation: affect, judgement and appreciation

As said above, attitudinal meanings are concerned with evaluations relating to emotional reactions, morality/ethics of behaviour and aesthetics, consisting of the three sub-systems of affect, judgement and appreciation, summarised in Table 2:

BASIC ATTITUDINAL SYSTEM	Affect	(EMOTIONS)	personal <i>feelings</i>
EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL NORMS	Judgement	(ETHICS)	(moral) evaluation of actions / behaviours
	Appreciation	(AESTHETICS)	evaluation of aesthetic qualities

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Table 2. Types of evaluation

As it will become evident, clear-cut distinctions between these sub-systems are hard to pin down, given the diverse ways linguistic resources are used for construing positive and negative evaluation. We will succinctly deal with each in turn:

1. **Affect:** “deals with resources for construing *emotional* reactions” (Martin & White 2005: 35; our emphasis). It “is concerned with registering positive and negative *feelings*” (Martin & White 2005: 42; our emphasis):

(6) *El País* (Feb 28 2007)

El juicio a su ex-marido por asesinato revela el *calvario* de una mujer maltratada.

(The trial of her ex-husband for murder brings to light the torment of a battered woman).

2. **Judgement:** It consists of “resources for morally evaluating human actions, behaviour or character according to a set of normative principles” (Martin & White 2005: 35):

(7) *El País* (Jul 14 2005)

La *escasísima* preocupación social por la violencia de género (...) no se corresponde con el número de denuncias por el denominado terrorismo doméstico.

(The negligible social concern for gender violence (...) is not correlated with the number of reported crimes for the so-called domestic terrorism).

3. **Appreciation**³: It includes resources used to evaluate the aesthetic quality of processes, things and products (and human beings when they are seen as entities), according to the way in which they are valued or not in a given field (Bednarek 2008; Martin & White 2005). For example:

(8) *El País* (March 7 2005) [see (5) above]

(...) las palabras de Maragall suponen “un error” que no es “digno” de un presidente de la Generalitat ni de un dirigente socialista.

((...) Maragall’s words mean “a mistake” that is “derogatory for the dignity” of a President of the Generalitat and a socialist leader).

3.3. Procedure

Our method combines corpus linguistic (CL) tools (Baker et al. 2008) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough & Wodak 1997), thus integrating quantitatively-based research with the qualitative analysis of text. We believe that the results obtained from such a synergy sheds light on the way contemporary Spanish quality dailies (*El País* and *El Mundo*) express and construct affect towards women victims of gender-based violence.

We are aware that CL and CDA have strengths and limitations. A quantitative analysis is useful in showing what meanings readers are regularly exposed to, and thus the way attitudes are construed and spread in society. However, corpus-based computations fall short of providing evidence for inferential processes communicators entertain – both in interpreting explicit and implicit meanings – as a result of this exposure. Besides, these

³ Due to space limitations and lack of statistical significance for the topic at hand, in this paper we do not deal with *Appreciation*. Some facts that may be of interest regarding this are commented on in the conclusions.

meanings often extend over the sentences and are thus not captured in a single concordance line (O'Halloran 2010).

In the quantitative study of our corpus, we use *Wordsmith 6.0* in order to retrieve the most frequent 5R and 5L collocates and the concordance lines for the phrase(s) *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* ('battered woman/women') in order to extract attitudinal inscription that may reveal patterns of evaluation of the content words associated with this phrase. Results are manually classified according to Part of Speech (PoS) (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs), given their typicality in the types of evaluation (e.g. adjectives description emotion tend to appear in the Affect sub-type, which may be indicative of the subjective appraisal of the victims). The results of this analysis are presented in section 4.1.

The second step in our analysis of evaluation of VAW news reports involves the random selection of two extracts (one from each newspaper), which are subsequently analysed qualitatively. Therefore, we focus on the implicit evaluative aspects that news reporters use to characterize violence against women victims and the phenomenon itself. In doing so, we aim to: (1) further answer our research questions by providing a discourse perspective, thus complementing the results obtained in the quantitative part, and (2) extend the collocational analysis by adding a 'textual' and context-bound outlook to evaluation unveiling particular evaluative 'prosodies' with a pragmatic (rather than semantic) substance (Sinclair 1991; Louw 1993; Morley & Partington 2009).

In sum, the need of a qualitative perspective is fully justified as the evaluative force of some propositions may go unnoticed in an automatic analysis of the corpus. The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in 4.2.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. *Mujer(es) maltratada(s)* in Spanish newspapers: A general look at evaluation

The examination of the phrase *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* offers some initial insights into both lexico-grammatical relations and into the authors' semantic, discursive and ideological preferences. With 338 occurrences in *El País* and 265 in *El Mundo*, this phrase seems a fairly well established one in the Spanish press to refer to the victims of VAW. The first observation to be made is that, in evaluative terms, Spanish news reports on VAW seem to show a marked preference for the *judgement* category in both dailies, as compared with *affect*, with *appreciation* lagging far behind:

<i>El País</i> (338)	with EVALUATION: 181	Affect: 40 (22.1%) Judgement: 122 (67.4%) Appreciation: 19 (10.5%)
<i>El Mundo</i> (265)	with EVALUATION: 130	Affect: 33 (25.4%) Judgement: 88 (67.6%) Appreciation: 9 (7%)

Table 3. Evaluation preferences in *El País* and *El Mundo*

These results point out that both *El País* and *El Mundo* favour an analysis of violence against women in social, professional and ethical terms, rather than in emotional ones.

4.1.1. *Judgement*

Table 4 shows the most statistically significant nouns in the corpus used to refer to the phenomenon of VAW with their most frequent (L1/R1) collocates⁴. Although the results also indicate (see 4.1.2) that VAW news reports lend themselves to personal, sentimental narratives (and thus to emphasizing affective meanings), what seems to predominate is a constant moral, ethical and professional analysis of this social malady.

delito (‘offence’)		situación (‘situation’)		problema (‘problem’)		crimen (‘crime’)	
EP (1003)	EM (701)	EP (1081)	EM (665)	EP (1416)	EM (677)	EP (789)	EM (690)
perseguido [<i>indictable</i>] (1.03)	condenable [<i>reprehensible</i>] (0.99)	aterradora [<i>terrifying</i>] (1.15)	indeseada [<i>undesired</i>] (1.15)	endémico [<i>rife</i>] (1.08)	crónico [<i>chronic</i>] (1.09)	execrable [<i>execrable</i>] (1.1)	imperdonable [<i>unforgivable</i>] (1.15)
flagrante [<i>flagrant</i>] (0.89)	gravísimo [<i>most serious</i>] (0.97)	paupérrima [<i>very poor</i>] (1.12)	durísima [<i>very hard</i>] (1.1)	[<i>entrenched</i>] (1)	acuciante [<i>urgent</i>] (1)	aborrecible [<i>detestable</i>] (1.09)	horrendo [<i>horrific</i>] (1.15)
invisible [<i>invisible</i>] (0.75)	execrable [<i>execrable</i>] (0.76)	precaria [<i>precarious</i>] (1.01)	desastrosa [<i>disastrous</i>] (1.05)	[<i>most serious</i>] (0.96)	[<i>extremely important</i>] (1)	encubierto [<i>hidden</i>] (1.07)	execrable [<i>execrable</i>] (0.86)
presunto [<i>alleged</i>] (0.71)	horrible (0.76) [<i>horrific</i>]	caótica [<i>chaotic</i>] (0.98)	penosa [<i>pitiful</i>] (1)	lacerante [<i>wounding</i>] (0.92)	[<i>dramatic</i>] (0.87)	escabroso [<i>rough</i>] (1.01)	brutal [<i>brutal</i>] (0.76)
supuesto [<i>supposed</i>] (0.69)	[<i>alleged</i>] (0.76)	traumática [<i>traumatic</i>] (0.93)	[<i>precarious</i>] (1)	invisible [<i>invisible</i>] (0.77)	[<i>hidden</i>] (0.87)	gigantesco [<i>gigantic</i>] (0.93)	[<i>tragic</i>] (0.68)

Table 4. Five most (1L/1R) collocates to refer to VAW in *El País* (EP) and *El Mundo* (EM)

Both dailies reveal similar attitudinal position in terms of (im)morality, (il)legality or (im)politeness, adding blunt rejection of those (social and individual) attitudes against

⁴ Given the nature of the data subject to analysis and our purposes, ‘statistical significance’ is measured using raw frequency and t-score. The minimum collocate frequency was established at 4 and the percentages of the test under 1.0 were automatically discarded.

the dignity of women. However, the results also evince that negative values of judgement are more ‘combative’ in *El País*, given, on the one hand, the higher number of occurrences of these nouns and, on the other hand, the stronger evaluative semantic prosody of the adjectives used (‘flagrant’ vs ‘very serious’, terrifying vs ‘unwanted’, ‘traumatic’ vs ‘disastrous’, etc.). These convey a sense of guilt, blame or social dysfunctionality.

Positive steps towards the eradication of gender violence are praised, while negative opinions are strongly criticized (9) and ensuing punishments explicitly endorsed (10). They should be read against the backdrop of normative assessments of right/wrong, ethical/unethical, and correct/ incorrect.

(9) *El País* (March 7, 2008)

Suspendido el auto que *obligaba* a una mujer maltratada a dejar su caso

(*Court order that forced a battered woman to leave her home suspended*)

(10) *El País* (October 8, 2008)

Interior *expulsa* a un ‘ertzaina’ por *vejar* a mujeres maltratadas

(Home Secretary dismisses a [Basque police officer] for harassing battered women)

Both authorial and non-authorial endorsement of judgement can be found on the pages of both quality dailies. This stance is confirmed by the extensive use of two strategies

1. Facts, figures and statistics –this is what Bednarek calls *facticity* (2006, 17). In our corpus, statistical relevance is referred to number of battered women (e.g. “17 out of the 55 women killed in 2009...”), those assisted by social or psychological services (e.g. “151 battered women have already received help...”) and, finally, the issuing and enforcing of protective orders (e.g. *a total of 6256 out of the 8388 protective orders issued*):

battered women		social and psychol. services		protective orders	
EP	EM	EP	EM	EP	EM
10 (8.1%)	7 (7.9%)	15 (12.2%)	10 (11%)	9 (7.3%)	4 (4.5%)

Table 5. Facticity in judgement articles in *El País* and *El Mundo*: occurrences and percentages

2. An overwhelming list of social and political agents, institutions, or associations –or, in Bednarek’s (2006) words, *eliteness* (EP 70 [57.3%] / EM 55 [62.5%]).

These two strategies are instrumental in building a more objective judgement discourse and they greatly enhance the evaluative potential of media texts. Focusing on judgement values constitutes a useful rhetorical strategy “for distancing self-blame and constructing appraisal as ‘factual’ and therefore less open to challenge or dismissal” (Painter 2003: 201). Battered women are thus surrounded by an institutional network made up of laws, regulations, courts, judges, political institutions, associations, etc., which newspapers, to some extent, depict as empty terms, in demand of more social coverage.

4.1.2 *Affect*

Although the moral and ethical dimensions seem to be far more frequent than the emotional ones (see table 4), VAW news cannot escape offering a display of the victim’s emotions, from rage to fear, from vulnerability to humiliation. *Affect* is the basis of the system of attitude, and constitutes a crucial semantic dimension in analysing newspaper reports on violence against women, essential to understand the complexity of

aislamiento [‘isolation’]	6	4									
calvario [‘ordeal’]	5	2									
confusion [‘confusion’]	5	3									

Table 6. Affect values attributed to battered women in the corpus

The highest number of occurrences is for abstract, uncountable emotion nouns identifying negative states and feelings associated with gender-based violence victims. These nouns –some of which are nominalisations– constitute a cumulative catalogue of the (negative) traits characterizing both VAW and its victims. The range of uncountable nouns includes *peligro* [‘danger’], *calvario* [‘ordeal, hassle’], *drama* [‘drama’], *angustia* [‘anguish’], *vergüenza* [‘shame’], *culpa* [‘guilt’], *aislamiento* [‘isolation’], *desprecio* [‘contempt’], *confusión* [‘confusion’], *sufrimiento* [‘suffering’]. Both dailies offer a rich inventory of emotion nouns, providing a fairly complete depiction of the emotional states associated with VAW victims. In general terms, *El País* shows a higher number of occurrences, while *El Mundo* is much more limited in characterising battered women: only *dolor* [‘pain’] and *tragedia* [‘tragedy’] show higher occurrences than in *El País*. Equivalent to emotion adjectives, emotion nouns (abstract and concrete) are less direct, less personalised, less explicit in reflecting the evaluative positioning of media texts vis-à-vis battered women.

The results suggest that it is nouns that bear the weight of attitudinal evaluations in Spanish media texts on the victims of gender violence, creating negative discourse prosody around this issue.

Far less numerous and less frequent are emotion verbs and adjectives. Three verbs with a clearly (negative) evaluative meaning were found, *sufrir* [‘suffer’], *padecer* [‘endure’]

and *desconfiar* [‘distrust’]. *Sufrir* is projected onto a number of similarly negative objects, such as *síndrome de la mujer maltratada* [‘the battered woman syndrome’], *mutilación genital* [‘genital mutilation’], *maltrato psíquico* [‘psychological abuse’], *angustia* [‘anguish’], and others. Three adjectives of emotion were found, ascribing qualities to battered women in a more straightforward manner – *incapaces* [‘unable’], *vulnerables* [‘vulnerable’] and *anulada* [‘destroyed’]. An example stands out, in which a man states *Se tiene que sentir tan anulada [...] Tiene que ser una sensación horrible* [‘She must feel so destroyed [...] It must be a horrible feeling’] (*El País*, April 29 2008), in which *El País* endorses an attributed emotion, in which a man sympathizes with women’s suffering. And, finally, only an explicitly evaluative comment adverb was detected – e.g. *desgraciadamente* [‘unfortunately’].

In this section, a close look at the attitudinal meanings observable in a collocational analysis of *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* has made it apparent the difficulty of separating *affect* from *judgement* or *appreciation*. In fact, emotion underlies all three, though each manifestation privileges a different focus. All three are sides of the same (irregular) triangle, dialectically reinforcing each other. In the case of gender-based violence, a basic scheme would look like this. If we concentrate our attention on the key side (*affect*), battered women feel ‘shame’ and are going through a ‘dramatic situation’ (emphasis on the individual emotional response, which is negative). If we look at another side (*judgement*), violence becomes a ‘criminal offence’ (emphasis on a social/ethical negative view of the phenomenon, while at the same time conveying a positive feeling towards the battered person). Finally, if we look at the third side (*appreciation*), gender violence episodes become ‘horrible (cases)’ (emphasis on a qualitative or aesthetic view of the phenomenon, which adds to the negative emotion felt by the victim, the negative social/ethical evaluation of gender violence and the

ensuing sympathetic view of the victim). This preference for negative emotions is “caused by the news value of negativity, which decides that it is the negative that is reported rather than the positive” (Bednarek 2006, 179).

4.2. Mujer(es) maltratada(s) in selected texts: Evaluation in El País and El Mundo

In this section, we provide the qualitative analysis of two randomly selected extracts (one from each newspaper). We focus on both the explicit and the implicit features of evaluation that news reporters strategically use to characterize VAW and the victims, and which inevitably escape computational scrutiny. In doing so, we aim to: (1) provide a more fine-grained picture of subjective evaluation in VAW news reports, thus complementing the quantitative approach and (2) unveil particular evaluative prosodies that bear a pragmatic content.

4.2.1. El País⁵

Excerpt (1)

A parish newsletter of the Archdiocese of Valencia accuses battered women of “provocation”

No one has confessed what the victims did, as more than once they provoke with their tongue”. This is an extract of the article about mistreatment of women, published last Sunday on the parish newsletter *Aleluya*, edited by the Archdiocese of Valencia and authored by the retired professor of Theology Gonzalo Gironés.

(...)

“Without contesting (violence against women), it is necessary to clarify matters. First, no one has confessed what the victims did, as they more than once provoke with their tongues.

⁵ Due to space limitation, we can only provide the (own) translated version of extracts 1 and 2 (below).

Generally, men do not lose their temper due to authority but to weakness: they can't stand it any longer and react venting their anger and crushing the instigator. Second, has anyone considered that, during the same period, there were 80 000 admitted abortions in Spain? For each woman who dies at the hands of their husbands, there were 1350 children killed by the will of their mothers. This is worse.”

(*El País*, Feb 14 2006)

This is a piece of news reports on an article, edited by the Archbishopric of Valencia, which justifies VAW, as women provoke or stir up their husbands to anger. Evaluation is established on two different levels, depending on who the emoter (E) and the trigger (T) are: the journalist (E₁) towards the priest (T₁) and the priest (E₂) towards battered women (T₂).

In the first case (E₁-T₁), with a focus on judgement, the writer shows distance and outright rejection of the asserted opinion by means of attribution –i.e. quoted discourse– and the verb ‘to accuse’, with a markedly negative evaluative prosody. The use of this verb to refer to battered women, a highly sensitive and emotionally loaded conceptualization, aims to trigger an emotional reaction on the reader based on counter-expectation or untypical collocation (‘no one has confessed what the victims did, as they more than once provoke with their tongue’). The alignment of the journalist (E₁) with women seems also corroborated by his use of non-authorial affect somewhere else in the article (data not shown): ‘*Many Catholics* addressed media and the publishing house yesterday (...) to *express their indignation* with the article’. This is a case of emoted, directed and overt affect.

In the second case (E₂-T₂), the author of the controversial ecclesiastical opinion conveys a negative affect value of (battered) women both explicitly and implicitly. Overtly, the priest considers that men act under ‘provocation’ when battering their partners. Women

are portrayed as ‘instigators’ as they ‘provoke with their tongues’. Implicitly, the author attempts to justify battering by conveying a positive affect value of the perpetrators. Men ‘lose their temper’ because of their ‘weakness’, and they cannot stand what women do to them: ‘no one has *confessed* what the victims did’. Finally, the author uses facticity with an evident evaluative purpose: to compare aggression against women with women ‘aggression’ against their aborted fetuses: ‘For each woman who dies at the hands of their husband there are 1350 children *killed by the will of their mothers*. This is worse’). Thus, negotiation of meaning occurs when the author tries to neutralize or invalidate existing (socially-construed) beliefs and assumptions of battered women as individuals to be respected, protected, supported, etc., in stark contrast with the rhetoric delineated in the corpus-based analysis.

4.2.2. *El Mundo*

Excerpt (2)

The aftermath of the ‘tsunami’: one year later

“My husband hit me continuously for the dowry, but the fear of rejection prevented me from telling my family and friends”. For Kalawathy, her joyous wedding bed was a complete nightmare. Trapped in a (too) early marriage, with four little children and an unfaithful and violent husband, should Kalawathy have been born in the West, her injuries, bruises and medical assistance would not have gone unnoticed. Sadly, Kalawathy was born 35 years ago in Sri-Lanka, where domestic violence is a problem for more than 60% of women.

(*El Mundo*, Dec 23 2005)

Kalawathy’s is the tragic story of most women in Sri Lanka. One year after the tsunami, male domination in an abusive patriarchal society has even worsened, depriving women of their most fundamental rights. The article condemns (data not shown) the vulnerable

situation of women, dispossessed of their entitlement to land and dowry and constantly subjected to physical (including sexual) violence (due to men's drinking alcohol).

In contrast to the previous example, in this article the use of non-authorial affect clearly seeks to align readers with the reported value position. The victim –i.e. the emoter– overtly expresses her emotional response through nominalisation (*miedo* 'fear'). In this case of directed affect, the dual trigger compels her to remain silent: (1) fear of being beaten by her husband and (2) fear of being rejected by her own family and friends (*me impidió contárselo a mi familia y amigos* 'prevented me from telling my family and friends about it'). Through authorial affect, the writer's highly subjective presence is distinctly shown using different attitudinal associations. In the first case, the writer uses metonymy (*dichoso lecho nupcial* 'joyous wedding bed') to convey untypical expectations about marriage: 'joyous wedding bed' vs. 'a complete *nightmare*'. The contrast between positive and negative prosodies in this context may implicitly invoke the way the feelings of the victim evolved during her years of marriage or else the contrast between her public and private social images. In the second case, through metaphor, the writer overtly attributes affect values to the victim: *atrapada* ('confined'), an emotional response that again sources in several triggers: *cuatro hijos pequeños* ('four little children') [attitudinal trigger] and *un marido infiel y violento* ('an *unfaithful* and *violent* husband') [attitudinal inscription – explicitly negative portrayal of the perpetrator].

Finally, through judgement, the author indirectly condemns the complicit silence of Eastern societies that often turn a blind eye to what is otherwise evident: the bruises (*moraduras*), injuries (*heridas*) and medical assistance (*hospitalización*). Signs of domestic violence, the author claims, would not have (allegedly) gone unnoticed in Western societies. This is, 'sadly' (*desgraciadamente* – affect as 'comment'), the

tragedy of 60% of women in Sri Lanka, the unpredicted aftermath of a devastating tsunami.

5. Conclusion

VAW is a very serious crime and still conveys an undesired connection between women and violence. Although considerable progress has been made since the 1970s in terms of a more accurate representation of battered women in the media (and in society in general), we believe that there is still a long way to go. In the last decade, violence against women has become thematized or routinized, with growing numbers of news reports which deal extensively with this issue, which offer more serious analysis and interpretation, and which seem to point towards a more strict consideration of violence against women as a social malady (229 [1982-1983] > 754 [1997-1998] > 1140 [EP-EM 2010] – data from Fagoaga 1999 and our corpus). However, the statistical relevance of facticity (Bednarek 2006) in our results – as referred to the actual battering, numbers of victims, protective orders, etc. – signify an over-representation of femicide at the expense of other forms of violence against women.

In this paper we have examined the subjective, evaluative dimension of the representation –and construction– of *mujer(es) maltratada(s)* [‘battered women’] in Spanish newspaper articles on VAW, combining corpus-based and Evaluation (Martin and White 2005, White 2006, Bednarek 2006, 2008) for a more accurate analysis of language and discourse, and for an exploration of the ways in which newspaper writers attribute attitudinal values to VAW and the victims. In media discourse –Caldas-Coulthard (1996: 268) claims– “evaluation is a crucial entrance point to the hidden

discourse”. In this paper, we have focused on the attitudinal types of *judgement* and *affect*, which have helped us begin to uncover the way VAW victims are evaluated in contemporary Spanish press.

The examples analysed from *El País* and *El Mundo* clearly indicate that judgement is the predominant category, with a certain objectification and institutionalization of victims. Affectual (negative) values are mainly conveyed through abstract nouns (‘danger’, ‘drama’, ‘anguish’), in particular in *El País*. Evaluation is mostly done through nouns, and to a lesser extent, by emotion verbs and adjectives.

Collocationally, battered women are lexically surrounded by verbs indicating protection (*proteger* ‘protect’, *ayudar* ‘help’, *defender* ‘defend’ and many others), thus activating a positive, reassuring, euphemistic prosody that ties in with a benevolent social discourse on (weak, victimised) women, who deserve the benefits of a protective institutional environment. Men, in contrast, while explicitly labelled as *agresor* [‘aggressor’] whenever they are referred to, scarcely appear close to *mujer(es) maltratada(s)*. This invisibility “lessens the readers’ awareness of his guilt and contributes to the maintenance of the status quo: male supremacy and female subordination. Violence, thus, becomes the arena of power used to create and maintain male dominance” (Adampa 1999: 21).

The present study only focuses on the discursive representation of battered women in the Spanish press and thus offers a limited perspective. More studies are needed on the topic in order to re-examine the attitude towards women in sensitive socio-ideological texts and to place the discursive representation of women in a broader perspective. It may be worthwhile conducting comparable studies in other languages and cultures. Indeed, further research within GENTEXT aims to conduct these comparable studies with British dailies. Media discourse is powerful, as it creates expectations, imposes

socially accepted images and consistently reinforces constructions of behaviour, endowing them with a commonsensical status. A continuous revision of the linguistic or discursive representation (and construction) of women in media texts on gender-based violence is necessary if we are ever to ensure sexual equality.

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