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A journalistic corpus: a methodology for the analysis of the financial crisis in Spain

Ana Botella^{a*}, Keith Stuart^a, Lucia Gadea^b

^aUniversidad Politécnica de Valencia, Camino de Vera s/n, Valencia 46022, Spain

^bRadio Alcoy/Cadena SER, Doctor Sempere 16, Alcoy 03803, Spain

Abstract

In this paper, we propose a methodological approach to the linguistic study of a journalistic corpus. It analyzes the monitoring of the financial crisis in Spain in 2012 by two of the most important Spanish newspapers. The paper describes ongoing research into expressions of opinion in the discourse of the news about the financial crisis in Spain. In other words, this corpus-driven study investigates the expression of opinions through language in order to develop a semantic analysis of newspaper discourse. The methodological approach involves both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The investigation focuses on the analysis of the language used to present and evaluate the events related to the financial crisis as a prelude to unmask the ideologies implicit in texts.

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Keywords: Evaluative language; financial crisis; journalistic corpus; linguistic analysis; social actors.

1. Introduction

This article describes the methodology that was designed and implemented so as to extract evaluative instances from a corpus of newspaper articles. Our major objective is to outline the stages involved in the process of analyzing our corpus through a selection of examples which highlight the linguistic choices made by journalists to build, maintain and intensify their relationships with readers. We will see how the combination of both quantitative and

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +34-96-652-8495

E-mail address: apbotell@idm.upv.es

qualitative procedures together with corpus-driven techniques provides the basis for a description of evaluative categories in newspaper discourse.

The research focuses on the analysis of a corpus developed from newspaper articles that allows us to grasp the semantic meaning of the opinion sections of *El País* and *El Mundo*, the major newspapers in Spain in terms of dissemination and as representatives in the written media of Spanish bipartisanship; *El País* related to the social democratic party (PSOE) and *El Mundo* (*Partido Popular*) to the conservative party. Both political parties are those who have had the responsibility of government in Spain in the period of the economic crisis. The initial target is to provide a snapshot of the publications in the above media throughout one year (2012), four years after its beginning with the bankruptcy of the U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers and other mortgage companies in 2008. The corpus, which we have called *Corpus de la Crisis Financiera* (CCF from now on), is a diachronic corpus as we have worked on a quarterly basis, which allows the researcher to see how the situation evolves.

The research is being developed with the idea that the journalist, in our case, the written press, uses a series of lexico-grammatical resources in their articles, either to express their own feelings or to put words into the mouth of the main social actors, that is, the names of the principal actors involved in the financial crisis. As we all know, the financial crisis in Spain has had and is having a major social impact, and has strongly impacted on the lives of Spanish citizens. This is a historic moment of great importance in the Spanish society. In this sense, we can state that it is an event which contains the contributing factors to newsworthiness identified by Warren (1975): currency, proximity, consequences, personal relevance, suspense, rarity, conflict, sex, excitement and progress. Another aspect to be considered is that of the subjective factor, which depends on the particular readers of each publication. Subjectivity depends on the reader's interpretation of the news event and the particular treatment that different media give to the same event within the same day. We will discover how journalists carry out a linguistic construction of social reality in their articles.

The concept of evaluation in texts has been essential in our study. The study of evaluative resources in various disciplines has been object of study for many years. Linguists have addressed the issue of evaluation from different perspectives: semantic or functional as in the case of Martin and White (2005), discoursal (Hunston, 1994) and lexico-grammatical (Biber, 1995, 2006). Other related studies are Hyland (1996); Thetela (1997); Hunston (2010).

2. Corpus description and methodology

The methodology implemented in our research begins with corpus compilation and design to then analyzing the CCF by applying Corpus Linguistics techniques (frequency lists, keywords, concordance lines and recurring patterns). With regards to corpus development, the CCF was collected and analyzed, as mentioned above, on a quarterly basis, so that research questions could be both replicated and reformulated as the study was underway. Table 1 below shows how metadata have been extracted from each of the texts included in the CCF and then transferred to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet:

Table 1. CCF: Metadata.

Newspaper	Date	Author / Editor	Article (genre)	Text id.	No. of words
El País	01/01/2012	CARLOS E. CUÉ	Reportaje	EP_01_01_12	2.300
El Mundo	02/01/2012	CARLOS CUESTA	Columna_opinión	OEM_02_01_12	446

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