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SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE 3rd ESTIDIA CONFERENCE

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DIALOGUE AS GLOBAL ACTION: INTERACTING VOICES AND VISIONS ACROSS CULTURES

Cornelia Ilie[1]

This special issue of the *International Journal of Cross-cultural Studies and Environmental Communication*(Volume 4, Issue 2, 2015) has been devoted to selected papers presented at the 3rdESTIDIA Conference that was hosted by 'Ovidius' University, Constanța, Romania. These papers raise and discuss a significant range of current issues related to the theme of the conference "Dialogue as Global Action: Interacting Voices and Visions across Cultures". This issue brings together ten articles devoted to the following four topics: (1) Multimodality of Public-Private Intersecting Dialogues; (2) Voices Sharing Views in Intercultural Dialogue; (3) Dialogue of Voices in Visual Semiotic Perspective; (4) Communication Challenges in Real-life and Virtual Dialogues.

The articles included in this issue address the challenges involved by practices and processes involved in the global dialogue that are being articulated, in different forms, across borders, cultures, professions and scientific disciplines. The focus of these studies is on the intersection, cross-fertilization, convergence and/or divergence of interacting voices and echoes at various levels and with various purposes in interpersonal and institutional contexts.

In a micro- and macro-level dialogic juxtaposition of voices, the interlocutors have an impact on each other and, to different extents, on their social, cultural and political environments. The dialogic exchanges not only have a communicative function, but they also function as vehicles for mediating meaning and meaning negotiations (Leech, 1983).Based on their respective social and institutional roles, speakers and writersare able to induce meaning in the minds of their hearers and readers, just like musicians/singershave the capacity to induce meaning in the minds of theiraudiences (Lévy-Strauss, 1971).

Due to its engaging, emulating and exploratory nature, dialogue is an essential form of human communication, action and interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978), any true understanding is dialogic in nature. As social human beings, we participate in a wide range of dialogues in various contexts and at different levels, in a shared search for increased understanding of issues and phenomena, for questioning ideas and actions, for joint problem-solving. These multi-layered dialogues have dramatically increased with the widespread use of social media, which now enable members of any social, gender, ethnic, racial or cultural group to raise and make their voices heard while articulating current concerns and addressing critical issues of inequality, discrimination, socio-political underrepresentation and misrepresentation. A commonaim of the contributions to

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this issue has been to scrutinize the interplay of local and global dialogues at particular interactive levels by exploring their function and role as a springboard for critical reflection and self-reflection, for in-depth issue problematisation, for multi-voiced interpersonal resonance, for constructive polyphony of intersecting, contradictory and complementary voices. In the Bakhtinian (1981) theoretical tradition, the voices of social-political dialogue not only represent the world, they also convey societal norms and moral values. Hence, multiple voices express not only how people see the world, but also how they feel about it.

For a better understanding of how meaning is created through the mechanisms and strategies of dialogue, it is important to investigate how voices are woven in discourse, how themes and voices intermingle in a polyphonic way. One way of understanding the shifting qualities of individual voices as interactive network-creating generators is provided by Goffman's (1981) concept of participation framework (based on the distinction between author, animator and principal). At the same time, as has been pointed out by Couldry (2010), having a voice is not enough: we need to know that our voice matters, i.e. it has legitimacy. Hence, following Wertsch (1991), we need to realize that in internalizing forms of social interaction, the individual takes on and interrelates with the voices of others, which accounts for the complexity of 'multivoiced' dialogues. While joining in a dialogic polyphony of voices, each voice shares a particular experience, viewpoint, or sets of attitudes to reality, all of which are instrumental in shaping actions, interactions and relationships. As a result, dialogue is the locus where different beliefs, commitments, ideologies come into contact and confront each other through the intermediary of intersecting voices.

Viewed as complex forms of human interaction, the dialogic communication practices can fulfil several functions:

(i) Dialogic communication practices activate multiple social identities: for example, in the case of political leaders, they can activate the following identities: as politicians, as citizens, as professionals, as family representatives (Edelman 1988, Ilie 2010, Browne 2013).

(ii) Dialogic communication practices presume, challenge, reinforce, etc., social and interpersonal relations, which is commonly manifested through various argumentation strategies (Walton & Krabbe 1995)

(iii) Dialogic communication practices shape and are shaped by the societal institutions in which they take place, e. g. educational, legal, political, medical (Maranhão 1990, Schoem& Hurtado 2001, Markova et al. 2007).

The authors of the articles included in this special issue have chosen to investigate a broad spectrum of research topics (both discipline-specific and multi-disciplinary) that regard a number of topical issues transgressing geo-political and cultural borders. A currently debated issue that has been approached from different methodological perspectives by the authors in the first section is the multimodality of dialogues instantiated at theinterface of the public and private spheres: the socially engaged voices emerging fromthe dialogic communication in newspaperblogs; the visual intertextuality of public and private voices on Facebook; the multi-voiced verbal and visual slogans of parliamentary election

campaigns; the convergence of visual and textual dialogic cues in artistic dialogues. The articles of the authors in the second section are devoted to the investigation of multi-voiced interactions and cases of (mis)understanding in dialogic communication in intercultural environments. The polyphonic dialogue of voices in visual semiotic perspective is the focus of the articles in the third section:one article explores the dialogic communication strategies in fashion blogs, while the other examines converging vs. diverging voices across time and space in dialogic practices in films. In the last section of this issue, each of the authors uses an integrated theoretical framework to carry out an in-depth analysis of communication challenges in real-life conversations, and in virtual dialogues developed for pedagogical purposes, respectively.

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MULTIMODALITY OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE INTERSECTING DIALOGUES

MULTI-VOICED SPEECH: NEWSPAPERS' BLOGS ABOUT A HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

Mariselda Tessarolo & Eleonora Bordon[1]

Abstract: *New media, and in particular the newspapers' blogs, allow us to pay attention to the positions of reporters and readers. In these blogs, indeed, one can find the explanations, the suggestions, the opinions and the questions that the readers of famous reporters' posts exchange with the person who writes the news, inside a space situated outside the newspaper. It is a matter of a "small" public domain (Dahlgran, 2005) which welcomes a debate between who writes the news and the opinions on the news, and which therefore reports a modality of "taken for granted", a legitimation of what must be said or made known to one's audience. In a way, by means of comments and interpretations, the readers' posts represent the others' speech, either direct or indirect, but nonetheless a soliloquy (Bachtin, Volosinov, 1997). It is a matter of dialogue interaction intended, in this case, as a set of micro-dialogues that refer to the interiorized relationships self-others, just as Bakhtin meant when affirming that our voices are saturated by those of the others.*

Keywords: *newspapers' blogs, forced immigration, politics and language, multi-voice speech. hey can partially contribute to cause events), as possible roles waiting for a legitimation.*

Introduction

During postmodernity mankind is wandering from the great narration which accompanied it almost since the end of the 20th century: we see a discontinuity due to a removal from tradition of both the extension and intension[2] with the application of the organizational principles inserted in the new conceptual model of the representation of society. In the passage from tradition to modernity moral and juridical rules of social integration are also redefined and, in this passage, Beck[3] sees the strengthening of ecological, individual and globalized problems which is a prelude to the risk foreseen by Luhmann[4], though in his case mitigated by trust. Thematic blogs, also called "journalistic", are dedicated to a specific argument and because of this they are comparable to the articles of a newspaper[5].

Language is deeply social because whatever the social net in which it is used, it provides the environment in which is produced the meaning in reference to

[1] University of Padua, Italy

[2] Lyotard, J.-F. *La condizione postmoderna*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1981.

[3] Beck, U. *Che cos'è la globalizzazione*. Roma: Carocci, 1999.

[4] Luhmann, N. *La fiducia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002.

[5] In Italy, polemics have risen about the fact of considering blogs as newspapers and therefore falling under legislative ties and being subjects to a self-regulamentation or to legislative ties as the press. Until now, though, blogs have not the obligation of registration.

people, events and things; language is decisive in building the reality in which we are living and is therefore a social practice[6].

People are not only and simply colonized by speeches, but these speeches, as we saw, become the resources for the production of new ones. Texts and speeches also constitute a form of appropriation which represents a chance of emancipation, because drawing on texts one gains knowledge, a perspective on the world, which potentially should give the opportunity to generate other speeches and shape other ways of behaving and living. According to Bourdieu[7] it is not possible to analyze language without taking into account the social conditions at the base of its existence: for example, it is the process of a State formation that creates the conditions of a unified market inside which a single linguistic variety assumes the status of standard language. According to Bachtin's enlightening postulate, the words we use belonged and still belong, for the most part, to "others" before belonging to "us". Indeed, not only our unconscious but also our conscience itself are both populated by others' words and intentions. Sartre used to say that "the others are our hell"; more secularly and with more sense of reality Bachtin states that "the others are our reality: I live in a world of others' words"[8]. The strength of his thought resides in the concept of social intersubjectivity, that may be found in words and signs, which substantiates every historical gesture of mankind be it conscious or unconscious: as a consequence such a social intersubjectivity, historical and real, is constituent of the individual subjectivity, as the otherness is of my own subjectivity.

The new space of the public sphere

The journalistic manner of collecting, selecting and spreading the news has been overthrown by the web 2.0 which allowed an interactivity previously not even thinkable. By now one could speak of participative journalism or *citizen journalism*, which puts into discussion the very competences of a professional pressman who does not have anymore the monopoly on the news. His function of mediator which is believed no more necessary is also debated. The *citizen journalism* could be considered a phenomenon at a surfacing stage which comes from the bottom and inside of which the editorial control and the flow of the journalistic work, which determines the decisions of the ones participating, is scarce or totally absent. Journalism is the result of the participation of many people who believe in the mythical possibility of spreading an independent and therefore more reliable, understandable and also democratic information, compared to the one which is officially given on the newspapers and/or online. Blogs are considered true and real innovative online newspapers which are the first to present the latest "news" with redirection to links for exploring more in-depth or expressing personal opinions on a specific topic. The web, with its versatility,

[6] Fairclough, N. *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992.
[7] Bourdieu, P. *La parola e il potere. L'economia degli scambi linguistici*. Napoli: Guida, 1988.
[8] Bachtin, M. *Estetica e ro*manzo. Torino: Einaudi, 1979: 361.

offers many possibilities of creating a personal publishing trade. A blog can be compared to "a newspaper in which the readers' mails occupy the front page" and therefore makes visible the reflections elaborated allowing the active participation of subjects, augmenting and facilitating the creation of a virtual community: a blog is a front of the stage on which one shows his better part[9].

From the debate on the public sphere developed the public deliberation which does not intervene on the final decision, but in the phase in which the solution is elaborated. The public sphere can be seen as a further moment of democracy compared to information and consultation, "but also as a more complete answer to the need for the broadening of the production of the environment's social conscience" (Pellizzoni, 2003, p. 283). It is not important the ambit in which the debate takes place, but the modalities and the articulations of the public sphere speeches oriented to the deliberation meant as discussion which precedes the decision about material matters. The current public discussion is mostly a discussion in which the media have a great importance[10].

The internet, in a certain way, seems to jeopardize the systems of political communication (e.g. the Movimento Cinque Stelle [the Five Star Movement] in Italy), but meanwhile it extends and pluralizes the political debate in the public sphere. Part of the "progressive" readers feel a need for what Lakoff[11] defines "reframing" and which consists in the ability of constantly reshaping the contest and "framing" the various questions, from the wars to the welfare state, in a way congenial to the "liberal" mentality. The "reframing" is inherent to the overcoming of the "rigid thought" consisting in the radicalization of the differences and in the minimization of the similarities between our own beliefs and the opposed objective systems. Mizzau[12] analyzes the elements of "decentralization" applied to interpersonal communication consisting mainly in the use of an understandable language, in the assumption of the other's viewpoint, in the ability of getting the plurality of meanings. Vigotskij[13] speaks of sense to define the subjectivity implied in the language (i.e. its variability) and of meaning to address what remains constant in the language. The egocentric language is not based on a normal retro-communication, but on a paradoxical communication which is based on not listening, on jumping to conclusions too soon, conclusions which are not useful to demonstrate, but to metaphorically strengthen the debate.

It is evident, furthermore, that the lack of argument, which stresses a disagreement at the level of content and of relationship, is a typical attitude of the rigid position in which conflicts can be relative to the content when it doesn't exist an agreement on a certain theme, or relative to the relationship when even though existing a theme on which an agreement could be found, one interactant has the

[9] Goffman, E. *Strategic Interaction*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1969.
[10] Tessarolo, M. Social Change: How tradition renews itself in the Experience of Public Sphere. In *International Journal of Cross-cultural Studies and Environmental Communication*. 39 (2014): 30-40.
[11] Lakoff, G. *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st-Century American Politics with an 18th Century Brain*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2008.
[12] Mizzau, M. *Prospettive della comunicazione interpersonale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
[13] Vigotskij, L. *Il linguaggio come pratica sociale*. Firenze: Giunti.

desire to prevail over the other. This type of conflict of relationship is characteristic of a symmetric communication. Bateson[14] defines in that manner a relationship in which two individuals interact one over the other in terms of competitive equality, a relationship in which a reciprocal adjustment, which emphasizes differences, is made.

Lakoff insists on the concept of frame: the political debate is not, simply because it is addressed to the citizens, a simple confrontation of opposite positions which manifest on single topics time after time. The way citizens perceive and also emotionally interpret the various positions will depend on how these position have been framed by the various actors of the political debate. Indeed, the communicative strategy goes beyond the proposal of argumentations in favor or against the argument in question itself. Inside the frame metaphoric and symbolic elements intersect which orient the listening citizens so as they would arrive to a decision. It is a matter of a small public "sphere"[15] which holds a debate between the person who writes the news and the opinions on them, and which therefore reports a modality of "taken for granted", a legitimization of what must be said or made known to their audience. In a certain way, through comment and interpretation, the readers' posts represent the others' speech, direct or indirect, but still monologic[16]. It is a matter of dialogical interaction meant, in this case, as a set of micro-dialogues which refer to the interiorized relations Self-Others, just as Bachtin intended when claiming that our voices are saturated by the others' ones. The measure of blogs' freedom can be found in the quiescent or contrasting attitude of the readers in respect to the pressman. It can be supposed that the reader would have the desire and the will to cooperate only if there is a dialogue between two parts. It is not sufficient, indeed, to have one voice, but that voice must count, that is to say it must be listened to[17] (Couldry, 2013). The pressman, because of his own job, channels' rules, values, social behaviors shared by society. Reading the posts present in specific blogs, regarding the humanitarian help to the refugees coming from the various shores of the Mediterranean Sea, one ought to have the chance to analyze a multiplicity of voices expressing very different viewpoints of the world. If a voice is in need of legitimization, a newspaper has the means and the power to accomplish it. Individual voices, indeed, can be seen as agency (they can partially contribute in causing events), as possible roles waiting for legitimization.

What determines "the power of words", or the performance efficiency of the speech, does not reside much in the words themselves, but in the conditions which can be related to the concept of authority. This authority needs the cooperation of the ones it rules, something that happens by means of mechanisms, social instructions, able to produce complicity[18]. Thanks to the ability of imposing

[14] Bateson, G. *Verso un'ecologia della mente*. Milano: Adelphi, 1977.
[15] Dahlgren, P. The internet, public spheres and political Communication: dispersion and deliberation. *Political Communication*. 22 (2005): 147-161.
[16] Bachtin, M. Volosinov V. *Il linguaggio come pratica sociale*. Bari: Dedalo, 1997.
[17] Couldry, N. (2012), *Dare voce*. Brescia: La scuola, 2012.
[18] Bourdieu, P. *La parola e il potere. L'economia degli scambi linguistici*. Napoli: Guida, 1988.

a certain vision of the social world, the speech therefore gets a meaningful role in the production, the upkeeping and the change of the power relations. The relation between the speech and the power relations is bound to the opacity, to the unclearness of the implied mediation process. Power is hidden and not explicit, at the point that there is not conscience of its existence[19]. In the contemporary society, among the mechanisms of the practice of power, the most common is the one relative to instill and communicate. The former is used to artificially recreate the universality of knowing and believing which belongs to the one who has the power, because it depends on the authority: to constitute communication and debate, on the contrary, a mechanism of emancipation which is used against the established power.

The blogs

The blogs have a structure in which texts have dates and are presented in the web page in anti-chronological order, i.e. starting from the most recent messages, and most of the times they are introduced by a headline. Dahlgren points out the dimensions of the public sphere: representational, structural and interactional, which allow a detailed examination of the public sphere which can be meant as a set of communicative spaces allowing the flowing of ideas and debates in society. It can be supposed that this "social ecology" is democratically weak and that the representational dimension is inadequate and a little disengaged too. The structural dimension regards the accessibility of the web for civic, legal and economic use which encompasses all that concerns the political communication (equity, pluralism of opinions, agenda setting, etc.). Finally the interactional dimension, a fundamental one according to Dahlgren[20], in which emerge the speeches of atomized individuals who use information in their homes without forming an audience, but constituting what was already the television's audience.

If democracy derives from a set of citizens speaking and arguing among themselves, what can be said of this type of "relationality"? One can think of micro-contexts of interaction: the public sphere that expands its tentacles in order to reach inside the web becomes very dispersive. It is of course a transformation due to IT, but perhaps that is not the way to reach a "fast democracy", on the contrary it sometimes seems that democracy itself is leaving and that it is not easily reachable in the wide space of the media's public sphere. Speaking represents a social practice: speaking is an activity having consequences for those who engage in it. It can be hypothesized that a dichotomic position of acceptation or refusal can exist which is crystallized in the phenomenon being conveyed mainly by emotional aspects and not by a reflection which might lead to a cultural change.

[19] Bourdieu, P. *La parola e il potere. L'economia degli scambi linguistici*. Napoli: Guida, 1988.

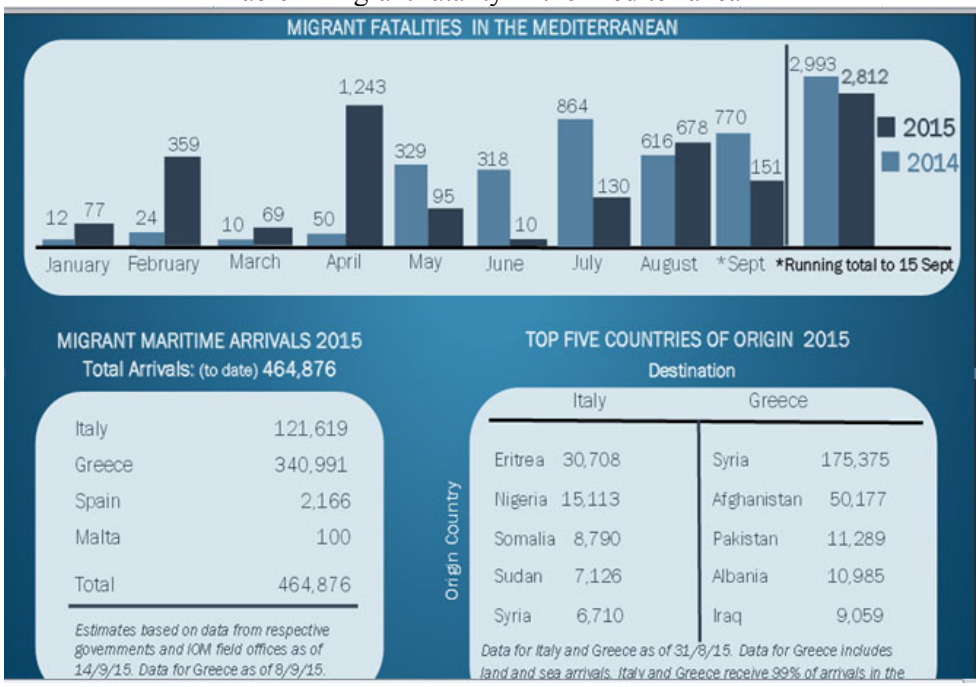
[20] Dahlgren, P. The internet, public spheres and political Communication: dispersion and deliberation. *Political Communication*, 22 (2005): 147-161.

Method and results

To reach our goal we chose two journalistic blogs kept by two well known pressmen (Luca Sofri and Gad Lerner). The choice of the two blogs was founded on a classification of fruition which puts them in the first two positions. The relevance of co-constructing and spreading the information by means of internet results being a practice which in the post-modernity made individuals not only spectators, but also actors in the public life. We analyzed, with a textual analysis program (SPAD), the corpus obtained from the posts about the refugees' landings. From the results we expect that the readers' answers be so pre-fixed by attributions and confirmed by society, that their posts confirm and not oppose the pressmen's opinions. This means that a silent dynamic exists among people even if there is not explicitly a conversation among them[21].

The proposed inquiry forms an explorative study on the construction of the theme of immigration. In an historical moment in which the migratory flow changes its paths and modifies the geopolitical assets of not only the hosting countries but also of the entire planet, it seems interesting to try to understand how pressmen and citizens perceive this phenomenon.

Table 1 Migrant fatality in the Mediterranean



[21] Vigotskij Lev S. *Pensiero e linguaggio*, Firenze, Giunti. 1966.

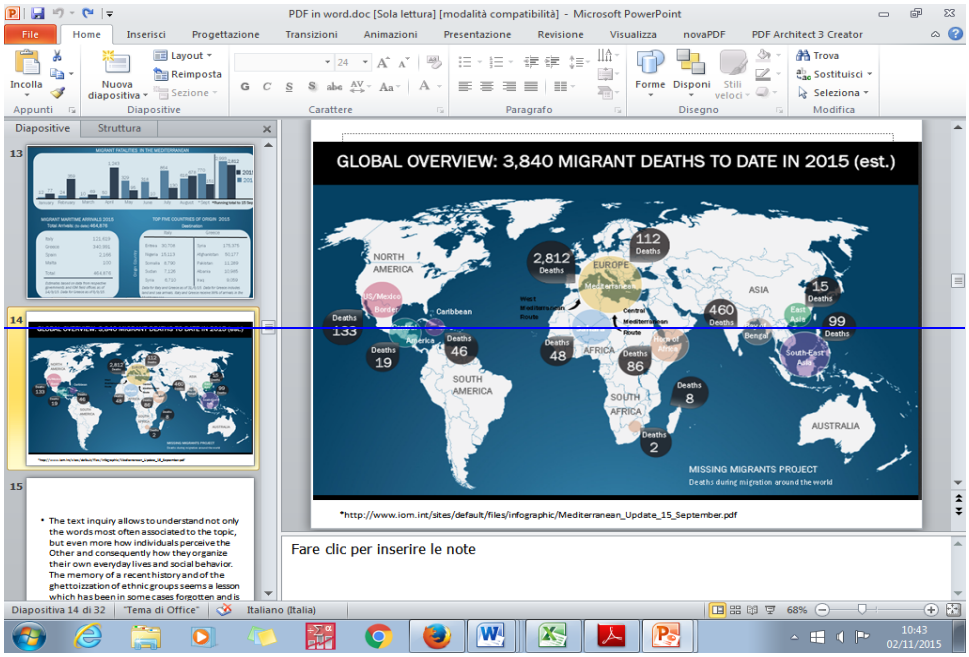


Figure 1 - Global overview migrant deaths

The text inquiry allows us to understand not only the words most often associated to the topic, but even more how individuals perceive the Other and consequently how they organize their own everyday lives and social behavior. The memory of a recent history and of the ghettoizzation of ethnic groups seems a lesson which in some cases has been forgotten and is partially replicated. To analyze the texts we took advantage of Spad-T, a software for the qualitative/quantitative analysis of documents. This tool allowed us to extrapolate the dictionary and observe the frequencies of terms and their relation by means of the factorial analysis. The specificity of the telling is calculated through the application of the test value in the Vospec process.

The sample

In this preliminary study 56 articles taken from the blogs:

- www.gadlerner.it
- www.wittgenstein.it/

The articles of the last three years have been selected from those blogs and they contained the

following key words: landings, immigrates, migrants, refugees (tables 2 e 3)

Table 2
Blog di Gad Lerner

Blog	Gad Lerner			
Key word	Landings	Migrants	Immigrates	Refugees
Post	1058	1937	3167	2432
Articles	8	9	20	10

Table 3
Blog wittgenstein

Blog	Wittgenstein			
Key word	Landings	Migrants	Immigrates	Refugees
Post	0	4	100	10
Articles	0	2	6	1

Results

From the analysis of the headlines and of the articles emerged that the dictionary is composed by:

TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS	22
TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS	27427
NUMBER OF DISTINCT WORDS	5937
PERCENTAGE OF DISTINCT WORDS	21.6

Table 4
List words by counts order

Used words	Counts	Used words	Counts
Italy	55	Migrants	49
Them	55	Others	45
Refugees	54	Left party	40
Europe	52	Country	40
People	50	Sea	39

From the frequencies in the articles emerges with higher relevance the distinction between «us» and «them» in addition to the representations of geopolitical character. The human social dimension is almost entirely disregarded leaving more room to reflections of political kind.

On the basis of the analysis of the pressmen's specificity we see that Gad Lerner distinguishes for a greater use of the terms (see tab 5).