TEN YEARS OF REPRESENTING FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN NEWS DISCOURSE: FROM 2011 TO 2021

Marta Giallombardo

TU Chemnitz

Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia

CASE 02.02.2021

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How are Foreign Fighters represented by the press in English-speaking countries?

- How are the different social actors represented in the articles?

- What changes in the news discourse related to foreign fighters emerge from a diachronic study of the corpus?

TOPIC

- Syrian Conflict;

- Definition of Foreign Fighters;

- Focus on two particular aspects.

- The Islamist FF:

Refers to adherents of global jihadism who believe in using violence in the name of Islam to protect their faith from nonbelievers, to expel infidel from the Muslim lands, to restore the purity of faith, and to eventually install Islamic government based on Sharia. (Pokalova 2020: 4)

- The Returning FF:

The 'returning foreign fighter' is unique in the sense that they traverse the distinction between the internal and external dimension of terrorist threat. […] In particular, it helps to strengthen the notion that the 'open' or 'globalized' society of the EU is 'vulnerable' to acts of terrorism, as well as confirming the logic that increased border control and the development of new technologies of surveillance for 'border crossers' should be essential elements of the EU counter-terrorism response. The discourse focuses specifically on policies designed to 'disrupt' and 'detect' any form of 'suspicious travel'. (Baker-Beall, 2016: 123)

DATA

❑ Corpus: articles from six different newspapers, two for each addressed English-Speaking contry:

- **Australia** ☐ *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald;*

- **UK** ☐ *The Guardian* and *The Times;*

- **USA** ☐ *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post.*

❑ Collected through the *LexisNexis* database

CORPUS

Total amount of articles collected

	The Guardian (UK)	The Times (UK)	The New York Times (USA)	The Washington Post (USA)	The Australian (AUS)	The Sydney Morning Herald (AUS)	Total per year
2011	12	19	39	39	10	3	122
2012	41	26	48	19	19	1	154
2013	35	37	64	50	25	4	215
2014	129	110	139	119	154	88	739
2015	236	99	130	118	237	95	915
2016	109	63	118	65	102	40	497
2017	33	64	134	37	81	45	394
2018	31	125	61	18	45	26	306
2019	95	166	88	27	87	33	496
2020	24	31	25	29	7	6	74
2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Sum	741	719	841	505	766	340	3,912

CORPUS

Total amount of words composing the corpus

	The Guardian (UK)	The Times (UK)	The New York Times (USA)	The Washington Post (USA)	The Australian (AUS)	The Sydney Morning Herald (AUS)	Total per year
2011	8,725	14,058	76,751	37,535	6,237	4,719	148,025
2012	45,891	17,688	68,981	20,868	17,008	1,132	171,568
2013	42,094	21,722	70,358	73,644	20,755	4,632	233,205
2014	115,957	80,537	156,718	127,102	138,565	70,290	689,169
2015	226,152	70,821	176,948	145,911	202,200	81,170	903,202
2016	94,891	40,983	205,415	73,207	103,449	34,539	552,484
2017	54,822	52,694	165,838	40,341	75,862	36,452	426,009
2018	51,740	22,034	86,499	19,738	37,093	25,651	242,755
2019	242,292	34,666	126,297	31,913	72,766	31,433	539,367
2020	58,076	23,566	40,651	31,737	4,758	3,497	97,465
2021	-	-	-	-		-	
Sum	940,640	378,769	1,174,456	601,996	678,693	293,515	4,068,069

METHODOLOGY

- Analysis on both quantitative and qualitative level.

- Quantitative analysis ☐ Corpus Linguistics

- Qualitative analysis ☐ Critical Discourse Analysis

CORPUS LINGUISTICS

- Advantages: it can systematise real language examples and can thus enable an analysis of the corpus' linguistic characteristics;

- Useful to identify the discourses on which the further analysis will be based;

- McEnry and Wilson (2001:1) defined CL as "the study of language based on examples of 'real life' language use";

- Use of special software: WordSmith Tools 7.0;

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- Qualitative part of the analysis;

- Focus: examination of what emerged from the corpus analysis in its original context;

- Main aim of CDA: to "investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use" (Wodak 2002: 2);

CDA AND NEWS DISCOURSE

- This research focuses on news discourse and terrorism;

- Contraposition between *us* and *them:* Van Dijk's *ideological square* (1998).

- Said (1981) :"a misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims, based mainly on ideological and racial prejudices, has helped create a good us, corresponding to the Western world, and a bad them, corresponding to the Islamic world".

EXAMPLE

- Keywords analysis;
- Three newspapers: *The Times*, *The New York Times* and *The Australian*;
- 2011 and 2015;
- Reference Corpus: *Open American National Corpus*.

EXAMPLE

- 2011 corpus:
- ✓ lexemes as *rebel* and *rebels*;
- ✓ Arab Springs;
- ✓ Libya and Gaddafi.

EXAMPLE

- 2015:
✓ *rebel* and *rebels* not even in the list;
✓ Lexemes as *fighter(s)*, *terrorist(s)* and *jihadist(s)*;
✓ Increase in references to the Islamic State;
✓ Syria instead of Libya;
✓ References to religious discourse.

FURTHER EXPECTED RESULTS

- FF are a highly heterogeneous phenomenon;

- Representation of those who die fighting;

- Diachronic aspect and changes in discourses.

TIME CHART

- Early stage of research;

- Corpus collection until March 2021;

- Literature Review;

- Methodological and theoretical chapter;

- Quantitative analysis;

- 31st October 2022.

REFERENCES

Baker-Beall, C. (2016). *The European Union's Fight Against Terrorism. Discourse, Policies, Identity*. Manchester University Press.

McEnry, T., Wilson, A. (2001). *Corpus Linguistics. An introduction* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh University Press.

Pokalova, E. (2020). *Returning Islamist Foreign Fighters. Threats and Challenges to the West*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Said, E. W. (1981). *Covering Islam. How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. Vintage Books.

Wodak, R., Meyer, M., (2002). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Sage Publications.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!