White Rose Research Online

eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk
Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York

Deposited via The University of Sheffield.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/115947/

Version: Accepted Version

Article:
Di Renzo, F. (2020) Exploring online news: What elpais.com's and eldiario.es' narratives tell about the migrant crossings of the Morocco- Spain border. Journalism, 21 (7). pp. 974-989. ISSN: 1464-8849

https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917708866

Di Renzo, F. (2020). Exploring online news: What elpais.com's and eldiario.es's narratives tell about the migrant crossings of the Morocco–Spain border. Journalism, 21(7), 974-989. Copyright © 2017 The Author(s) . DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917708866. Article available under the terms of the CC-BY-NC-ND licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Reuse
This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND) licence. This licence only allows you to download this work and share it with others as long as you credit the authors, but you can't change the article in any way or use it commercially. More information and the full terms of the licence here: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
University of Sheffield
UNIVERSITY of York

Original Article

Exploring online news: What e*lpais.com*'s and e*ldiario.es*' narratives tell about the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border

Abstract

This article explores the narrative construction of online news about the migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border. In particular, it analyses 54 news items that were published in two Spanish news media, *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es*, from September 2013 to May 2015. A semiotic-informed approach is proposed here to discuss how the two news media narrated the migrant border crossings and to outline how they communicated migration-related meanings and cultural values through news texts, images, videos, and hyperlink contents. The results emphasise how readers can engage with online news content in different ways and through distinct although intertwined levels of reading.

Keywords

Online news, news narratives, migrant representations, Spanish online news media, news production

Introduction

As with any other commodity, the news is a cultural product. Groundbreaking works on media culture (Hall et al., 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Carey, 1989; Thompson, 1990) argued that the news both shapes and is shaped by the assumptions and cultural conventions which make the world intelligible to the public and reveals ongoing social and cultural processes within society. While providing information, in fact, the news reflects the cultural values of the society that, ultimately, consumes it. In the case of Spain, the political debate about migration from Africa that has been reiterated by the news media across time has produced changes in meanings (Llorent, 2012; Triandafyllidou, 2013; Grobet, 2014) which have affected the representation of the struggle of migrants' journeys across the Morocco-Spain border and nourished insular approaches to 'the world beyond the West' (Chouliaraki, 2013: 4).

Beyond any political orientation, however, the news media's misrepresentation of migration seems to be due to mundane journalistic practices and working routines (Bennett et al., 2013; Gemi et al., 2013; Triandafyllidou, 2013). The over-reliance on news agencies and institutional sources and the pressure of deadlines, which are particularly tight in online

journalism (Paterson, 2008; Quandt, 2008), are among the factors that influence and limit journalistic communication and investigation.

Nevertheless, in Spain the presence of diverse traditional and independent news media makes plausible the idea that such a plurality of voices has produced different news narratives about migration, both in terms of journalistic practice and news content. This study will compare the news narratives about migrant border crossings that were circulated between September 2013 and May 2015 by two mainstream online news media, which are distinct from their very foundations: the online version of the traditional daily newspaper *El País, elpais.com*, and the digital-born news medium *eldiario.es*. *El País* was launched in 1976 by a commercial media conglomerate whose administration cultivated political affiliations with the socialist party for at least two decades; *eldiario.es* was funded by a group of journalists in 2012 and its innovative business model is based on the contributions of readers, who subscribe in a partnership with the news medium, and commercial revenues (González-Esteban, 2014). Indeed, the digital-born *eldiario.es* appeared on the media scene as an independent editorial project as well as an expression of dissent to the traditional Spanish media system, whose most important representative in the press was certainly *El País* (Barranquero, 2009; Llorens et

al., 2013; Feenstra and Keane, 2014).

Following a summary of the Spanish news media representation of immigration from Africa to Spain after 2000 in this paper I will provide a qualitative approach to the online news about migrant border crossings of *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* to verify if and explore how these two news media produced different news narratives and circulated distinct migration-related meanings and cultural values.

Background: migration in the Spanish news media

The Spanish news media began to focus on the role of migrants within society after 2000 (González-Enríquez, 2009), when violent racist riots broke out in El Ejido, in southern Spain. The pretext for the violence against migrants was the killing of three Spaniards by Moroccans. Years of hostile relations between locals and this group of migrants – for whom the old term *moros* (Moors) was still commonly used in a pejorative sense (Van Dijk, 2005) – had certainly exacerbated the events (Amnesty International, 2002; González-Enríquez, 2009). In addition, in the region of Almería an informal and seasonal labour market had irregularly employed migrants in agriculture for decades and, with a complete lack of immigration and integration policies, migrants were

considered only in terms of a labour force that was replaceable when necessary thanks to a constant seasonal immigration pattern (Martínez Veiga, 2001).

After days of violence in El Ejido and despite a wide condemnation of the riots, the immigrant 'illegality' issue and the security threat became central points of the political discourse and the news media began to extensively cover crime news involving migrants. As a result, Spaniards' feelings of compassion towards migrants turned into fear and concern over immigration as a whole (González-Enríquez, 2009: 142). The media's narratives about the events of El Ejido also reinforced the idea that the integration of migrants within Spanish society was problematic and framed immigration itself as a problem (De la Fuente García, 2007: 381). On the other hand, trade unions and NGOs 'repeatedly accused the government of tacitly favouring irregular immigration in order to make cheap labour readily available' (González-Enríquez, 2010: 263).

After 2005 and 2006, when two events occurred – the mass scaling of the Morocco-Spain border fence in Melilla and the '*cayucos* crisis' on the Canary Islands – the Spanish government's attitude towards migrants became particularly harsh. Initially, with the significant involvement of the Moroccan police, migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan regions, were forcibly returned to their countries or taken and left outside Morocco, sometimes in desert areas

(Jiménez Pinyol, 2007). Hereafter, the militarisation of the Melilla border fence became visible. Ten years after its first installation, in fact, new security measures such as technological monitoring and control systems were introduced. The fence itself was extended in height, tripled, and equipped with deterrent devices such as razor wires and the number of border guards was raised significantly (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008; Casas-Cortes et al., 2012).

A different political approach to immigration was adopted, instead, after the '*cayucos* crisis' in 2006, when about 25,000 migrants sailed from West Africa to the Canary Islands in *cayucos* (small wooden rafts). On that occasion, Spain called for the European Union's diplomatic support in defending the European southern border with Africa and 'secretive patrolling and readmission agreements' were signed with Mauritania, Cape Verde, and Senegal (Andersson, 2014: 69). The Spanish news media narrated the *cayucos*' arrivals on the Canary Islands and in southern Spain through dramatic pictures portraying debilitated and suffering migrants. As was observed (Jiménez Pinyol, 2007; González-Enríquez, 2010), news media were more interested in depicting the migrants' determination to reach Europe, as this had an 'extraordinary effect' on public opinion, than they were about irregular immigration to Spain.

From 2006 to 2012, the narrative of the migrants' journeys from Africa

was employed also in the cartoons which were published by *El País* and *El Mundo* (Dominguez et al., 2014). Although cartoonists represented these attempts to cross the sea towards Spain from an overall benevolent stance, they were not used to characterise migrants' figures and faces. Rather, migrants were usually drawn as 'faceless blurs cramped into the same boat' as 'impersonal figures' (Dominguez et al., 2014: 817) and this did not encourage readers to understand migration as a human condition. In *elpais.com*' and *elmundo.es*' cartoons, in fact, the *pateras* (small boats) crowded with migrants mainly represented a cultural symbol, a metaphor through which the political and societal contexts in Spain could be outlined. The struggle of migrants' journeys across the sea provided effective analogies to describe the social inequality within a society on the brink of a major economic crisis (Dominguez et al., 2014).

It was observed, though, that the pictures of migrants in the news showed an overall positive attitude towards immigration (Llorent, 2012). The analysis of the news published by *elpais.com* and *elmundo.es* between 2009 and 2010 also revealed an overall lack of racial arguments and a 'relative absence of negative connotations concerning migrants' (Llorent, 2012: 145). Nevertheless, *elmundo.es* engaged with integration-related issues and

discussed strategies to assimilate immigrants into Spanish society whilst *elpais.com* tended to focus on the problems and difficulties of a possible coexistence. This affected *elpais.com*'s reader perception of immigration negatively (Llorent, 2012).

The tendency of *El País*' narrative to produce negative feelings about immigration was already being noticed in news articles which circulated from 1996 to 2007 (Checa and Arjona, 2011). During these years, a growing number of immigration-related news items highlighting internal insecurity, increased competitiveness in the job market, and migrant integration issues were published. This amplified worries and concerns within society whilst the European Union's motif of enhancing (qualified) mobility began to subordinate human rights to the flexibility of the labour market and a parallelism between 'illegal' and 'low-skilled' migrants emerged in the public debate (Pastore et al., 2006; García Agustín, 2008; Vollmer, 2011).

To sum up, the news narratives about the mass attempts by migrants to cross the Morocco-Spain border in the mid-2000s provided the public debate with new meanings about migration from Africa (Llorent, 2012; Triandafyllidou, 2013; Grobet, 2014), which also reflected political views and ideological alignments (Llorens et al., 2011; Humanes Humanes et al., 2013). In spite of the

historical relationship between Morocco and Spain, however, nowadays it is the involvement of the European Union in the news narratives that stresses differences and intensifies inequalities across the Strait of Gibraltar (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008; Andersson, 2014). Through the lens of the Morocco-Spain border, which is also the southern border of the European Union, this paper will show how the border fence in Melilla has become the site where migrants are trapped in between, while Morocco and Spain look at each other with a renewed sense of otherness (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008).

Methodological approach: the three-layer analysis

The news analysed here consists of 28 and 26 items (1), published by *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es*, respectively, from September 2013 to May 2015. During this period, the number of migrants attempting to climb the border fence in Melilla increased for the first time after the migration crisis between 2005 and the adoption of new security measures at the border by the Spanish government (Andersson, 2014). After identifying the dates on which migrant border crossings occurred (2), the news articles were retrieved through *google.com* – each of them was the first result displayed by the search engine.

In order to examine how migration-related meanings were constructed in these news items, the analysis considered three levels of reading online news: the visual reading of the news web-page (L1), the reading of the news content and the viewing of news videos (L2), and the further exploration of the hyperlink content (L3) which the news included.

The first layer of analysis (L1) investigated meanings in headlines, standfirsts, and images. The approach springs from Barthes' (1977, 2000) notion of message, in which the meaningful relationship of words and images always unmasks the 'ideological abuse' that is hidden in any text. However, Barthes' work did not provide a structured and repeatable methodology for the analysis of text-image relationships (Rose, 2001) and therefore a set of concepts and qualitative methods was identified to design a systematic approach to online news that would avoid the risk of an over-interpretation.

Hence, in the first layer, the analysis focused on two classes of information for written texts as well as pictures. For written texts, they were explicit and presupposed information, which refer to what is stated clearly and what “is stated, though not directly” (Prince, 1982: 40), respectively. In particular, presupposed information recollects readers' previous knowledge about narrative contexts and it therefore draws attention to the premises and

the motivations on which the narration is built (Prince, 1982). Furthermore, the two classes of information for pictures were explicit information and implicitness, the latter referring to the idea that not all the meanings of images can be perceived at once (Barthes, 1977).

To begin with, headlines and standfirsts appeal to the mental representations which readers share with journalists, since both groups belong to the same cultural community (Perfetti et al., 1987; Kronrod and Engel, 2001; Dor, 2003; Ifantidou, 2008). Moreover, as headlines refer to shared knowledge and beliefs in order to attract readers' attention, they 'consistently underrepresent, or overrepresent, and hence misrepresent, news stories' (Ifantidou, 2008: 700). In the first layer (L1), therefore, the analysis focused on what was explicitly stated in news elements as headlines and standfirsts.

Furthermore, pictures as well as video first-frame were examined to discuss what they represented but also what meanings they suggested to the viewer. News pictures, in fact, are often accepted by readers uncritically due to their 'natural' analogy with reality (Hall, 1981; Messaris and Abraham, 2001; Coleman, 2010; Fahmy and Neuman, 2012). Nevertheless, in images, many possible meanings coexist at the same time and the 'syntactic implicitness' of their visual references can convey ideological meanings (Barthes, 1977;

Messaris and Abraham, 2001). At this stage of analysis (L1), therefore, the notion of anchorage (Barthes, 1977) was employed to investigate the relationship between images and written text: in order to delimit the interpretation of images, their meanings were 'anchored' to those emerging from the news texts.

The second layer of analysis (L2), which draws from Barthes' (1977) narrative theory, explored how the narrative of the news articles was constructed and how migrants' and Spanish institutions' behaviour at the border was represented in the news. The analysis did not isolate semantic features. Rather, this approach attempted to analyse the narratives referring to the actors involved by employing four 'wh-items', tools which are used in the discourse analysis of personal experiences – where, what about, who with, what as/how involved (Martin and Rose, 2005: 70).

Finally, the third layer of analysis (L3) showed how news narratives about migrant border crossings can produce further levels of reading through hyperlink contents (Boje, 2001; Bednarek and Caple, 2012; De Maeyer, 2014; De Maeyer and Le Cam, 2015). This approach enabled the observation of meanings while they were reshaped and transmitted across different online resources. Moreover, it highlighted the ideological discourse that the selection

of news links implied. The linked webpages collected were then analysed by means of the first layer of analysis.

Building upon the idea that specific communities of readers engage with the news differently (Martin, 2004; Caple and Bednarek, 2010), this semiotic-informed approach will show that features of online news such as videos and hyperlinks also influence the ways through which the news can be consumed. Moreover, the analysis of *elpais.com*'s and *eldiario.es*' news items will reveal that online news narratives depend more on the relationship between news text, images, and hyperlink content than on how events are articulated in news articles.

The narrative construction of meaning

In a multimodal environment, 'the value of a combination of different modes of meaning can be worth *more* than the information (…) that we get from the modes when used alone' (Bateman, 2014: 6, emphasis in original). In online news, meanings emerging from written texts, images, and hyperlinks merge into further levels of significance which cannot directly be observed. In the next two sections, the in-depth analysis of online news about migrant border crossings

across three different layers of investigation will show how, in the period of time considered here, the news narratives of *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* produced meanings distinctively. In particular, themes such as the violations of human rights, which are frequently reported in the news about the migrant crossings of the Melilla border fence, will be discussed in the first section, where the main focus will be on the role of images and hyperlink content in the expansion of news narratives. The second section will then consider how the choice of using videos or images to accompany the news article can affect the overall perception of the news event.

The border and the human rights

The analysis of the news about migrant border crossings would not be able to highlight *elpais.com*'s *and eldiario.es'* attitudes if it focused only on semantic features. In the first case, for instance, the analysis would mainly draw attention to the frequent use of a few expressions referring to the scaling of Melilla's fence and to the migrants themselves such as *avalancha de inmigrantes* (avalanche of migrants) and *sin papeles* (undocumented) – from this regard, it is worth mentioning that *eldiario.es* mainly employs the word

personas (persons) to describe migrants. To identify and explore the construction of meanings in news narrative and images (see also Martínez Lirola, 2016), therefore, a multilayered analytical approach was necessary.

The analysis will introduce such a methodological approach by looking at *elpais.com*'s and *eldiario.es*' news articles about the violations of human rights which were perpetrated on migrants at the Melilla border by both the Spanish and the Moroccan police on the 20 June 2014. At that time, the human rights organisation Prodein released a video that documented some Moroccan agents beating small groups of migrants with sticks as they lay trapped between the triple border fence in Melilla on Spanish soil. This happened under the gaze of the *Guardia Civil*, which did not intervene.

Both *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* published the video (L2), which had subtitles through which Prodein firmly denounced the police abuses and accused the European Union of financing dubious security measures at the Moroccan-Spanish border. Nevertheless, the two news articles are different. In *elpais.com*, headline and standfirst (L1) emphasise the major role played in the abuses by the Moroccan police and the news picture (L1) validates this by portraying two Moroccan police officers wielding a stick against migrants. In addition, *elpais.com*'s news article (L2) does not acknowledge the involvement

of the European Union in the border management and the role of the *Guardia Civil* is marginalised. The further analysis of the hyperlink content (L3) also emphasizes the role of the Moroccan police in the events, since six out of eight hyperlinks refer to news items reporting its misconduct at the border.

In *eldiario.es*, on the other hand, the standfirst (L1) utilises a quotation from Prodein stressing that the *Guardia Civil* remained inactive in the face of what was happening and the news article (L2) develops this further (3). Although the news article does not show any type of link (L3), it is legitimate to think that the news was intended to give prominence to Prodein's video as the word *vídeo* is stated in capital letters just before the headline (L1) at the top of the page.

Furthermore, *elpais.com* does not blame either the Spanish government or the border management measures even for the death of migrants in the Strait of Gibraltar. For instance, in the first line of two different news articles (L2) published by *elpais.com* on the first October 2014 and on the 30 January 2015, respectively, it is circumstances that make migrant border crossings tragic. The first news article begins by stating: 'On Wednesday, the Mediterranean Sea has claimed, once again, the lives of two immigrants' whilst, in the second case, the opening line of the news text can be translated, literally, as follows: 'Dawn has

brought the death back to the Mediterranean. Suffering comes back to dye the waters between Europe and Africa' (4).

In comparison, the narrative (L2) of *eldiario.es* draws attention to the delays in the rescue operations of both the Spanish and the Moroccan Navy. It gives space to the testimony of ONGs and refers to the words of Amnesty International about the necessity for a common European system of maritime rescue (5).

Overall, the analysis shows that the migrant crossing of the Morocco-Spain border is a phenomenon deprived of its broader historical context. The news describes actions and reactions of both migrants and institutional actors mainly through the words of official sources and without providing any background to the long-lasting migration from Africa. Moreover, the dominance of the Spanish government at the border is continuously restated in the news. Indeed, by means of the apparatus of defence and rescue – the national police force, *Guardia Civil*, the sea search and rescue organisation, *Salvamento Marítimo*, and the Spanish Red Cross, *Cruz Roja* – the Spanish institutions are the main protagonists of the migration story. The Morocco-Spain border is the space, geographical as well as conceptual, where the Spanish government expresses its power–and its paternalistic attitude–towards migrants.

The news published on the 16 September 2013 by *elpais.com* (6), for instance, emphasises (L1, L2) the successful work of *Salvamento Marítimo* during rescue operations at sea. Nevertheless, four out of the five hyperlinks (L3), which refer to internal pages of *elpais.com*, develop the news narrative further, by highlighting that, after a period of calm, migrants are attempting to reach Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar once again. In a fifth link (L3) then, the interview of a young Spanish operator of the *Cruz Roja* is reported. His touching testimony in the headline (L1), 'Each number is a person, a family that leaves everything behind' (7), remarks the paternalistic attitude of Spain towards migrants (Martínez Lirola, 2016, 2017) while the narrative emerging from the other hyperlinks, which points to a new rise in migrant arrivals, is softened.

How migrant border crossings can be represented differently across the three levels of reading is highlighted also in the news item that was published on the 31 October 2013 by both *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es*. The news story reports the Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs' willingness to install *cuchillas* (razor wires) on the six-metre-high fence in Melilla, precisely in the areas of the perimeter which have witnessed most migrant crossings. Although this type of wire was already being placed on the fence in 2005 and removed the following year due to the criticisms levelled by human rights organisations, according to

official sources its installation would prevent migrants from climbing the border fence in the future.

These pieces of information are given in the headlines and standfirsts (L1) of both online news media' articles. Nevertheless, *eldiario.es* stresses the gravity of the wounds that such a wire produces on migrants' bodies and publishes the picture (L1) of a migrant's severely injured arm, whilst *elpais.com* opts for the publication of a picture (L1) portraying some blood-stained clothes clinging to the fence.

However, once again, it is the analysis of hyperlink content (L3) that enables the observation of how the news narrative is developed further and distinctively by the two news media. In fact, *elpais.com*, which makes a frequent use of links, in this case connects the news article (L3) to only two pages: one of them is internal and refers to a project of reinforcement of the maritime border in Ceuta; the other is an external link that gives access to the blog of a Spanish Geography Professor, who expresses his disagreement with the installation of the razor wire. It is worth noticing that the viewpoint opposing the Spanish government's proposal to install razor wires on the Melilla fence is told here through an outsourced content.

This narrative strategy recalls the one adopted also in the news article

(L2), where the criticism about the installation of the security devices comes from human rights organisations' voices. In addition, it is worth observing that the reference to the border reinforcement in Ceuta conveys a mental shift, from the terrestrial border of Melilla to the maritime border of Ceuta, that seems to prevent the audience from associating the image of small razors with migrants scaling the Melilla border fence.

The hyperlink narrative of *elpais.com* could have been developed otherwise, as *eldiario.es* shows. There, in fact, three out of four hyperlink contents (L3) draw attention to, as follows: the absurdity of the security measures employed in Melilla, through a long reportage (L1, L2) about migrants' life at the Moroccan-Spanish border (8); the language that the media use to talk about borders, which is critically discussed in an opinion article (L1, L2); and, the European Union's hypocritical reaction to the migrants' deaths in the Mediterranean (L1, L2), which expresses shock on the one hand while shielding its external borders on the other.

From this regard, it is noteworthy that the involvement of the European Union in the Melilla and Ceuta border management is largely underreported in the time frame considered in this paper, although it has been substantial since 1995, when the Schengen Agreement entered into force (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008;

Casas-Cortés et al., 2012; Andersson, 2014). In particular, *elpais.com* seems to deal with the political influence of the European Union over Spanish migration policies and border security only when this cannot be avoided, as in the case of the police's acts of violence against migrants which were denounced by Prodein's video. Nevertheless, even in that case, *elpais.com* did not question the nature of the European funding for the reinforcement of the Moroccan-Spanish border.

Furthermore, both *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* refer to the Morocco-Spain border as a European border only occasionally and starting from May 2014, when several migrant attempts to climb the border fences in Melilla occurred (9). In *elpais.com*, this lack of definition keeps the European Union out of the discussion about immigration from Africa. In *eldiario.es*, on the other hand, the news about migrant border crossings focuses on the violations of human rights at the border. Through this narrative's angle, the involvement of the European politics and its interests for border control in Melilla and Ceuta are critically discussed mainly in hyperlink content (L3). In the next section, I will show how the relationship between news texts and images conveys cultural meanings by engaging with audiences' emotions.

Mireille/Mirelle (10): video or picture?

In the stream of information that online news stories convey, videos hold a privileged position in journalistic communication, since they can be accessed and cognitively processed straightforwardly; however, their role in the news is still vastly under-researched (Wise et al., 2009; Joye, 2009). In particular, news videos bring the viewers 'into the story' by moving them from 'getting there', which is the function of images, into 'being there' (Wise el al., 2009: 535). The feelings that videos prompt ease the cognitive processing of messages and the storage of stories into memory. Nevertheless, the advantages given by online news communication are not exploited by all the news media equally. In the case of *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es*, for instance, there is a large disparity in the use of news videos. In the news analysed here, *elpais.com* published videos in 15 out of 28 news items; *eldiario.es*, instead, used videos only six times in 24 news articles (11).

This section will show how *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* conveyed different meanings by accompanying their news articles with one video and two pictures, respectively. The news story, which went online on the 28 February 2014, was developed around Mireille/Mirelle, the first woman to succeed in climbing the

Melilla fence. She was a 15 year-old girl from Cameroon who had already tried to cross the border four times. That day she participated in her last mass scaling with a broken leg.

Here, the different approaches to the news story of the two online news media can be unmasked from the very beginning of the analysis. In the headline (L1), in fact, *elpais.com* identifies Mireille as the *menor* (minor) from Cameroon who scaled the fence in Melilla with a broken tibia; *eldiario.es*, instead, states her name and age there (L1), and defines Mirelle as 'the first woman who climbed the Melilla fence' (12). The two headlines (L1) clearly mark the distance that the narrative voice will then keep from the news subject in the article (L2).

Furthermore, both the two online news media's standfirsts (L1) draw attention to specific key points of the news story. In *elpais.com*, they are listed, as follows: the number of attempts to climb the fence that 'the adolescent Mireille' had already made; the fact that she was injured and that needed crutches to walk; the linked background news story, which reported that 200 migrants had reached Melilla after crossing the border; and, finally, the visual representation of the news story through a link (L3) to a photogallery (L1) that was titled 'The pictures of *los protagonistas* of the climbing'.

It is worth observing that the word *protagonistas* (leading figures) is

anticipated by the determinative article *los*, which refer to plural masculine entities–this may neutralise possible feelings of sympathy for Mirelle as a young woman. The standfirst (L1) used by *eldiario.es*, on the other hand, is based on two sentences, which mention two distinct facts: the *adolescente*'s four previous attempts; and, Mirelle's willingness to climb the fence although she was injured and several Spanish organisations were trying to process a humanitarian visa for helping her reach Spain safely.

In the case of the Mireille/Mirelle news story, the standfirsts (L1) of both *elpais.com* and *eldiario.es* reflect the narrative elements that are then developed in the news articles (L2) and anticipate the two news media's approach to the news story. Overall, in the news about migrant border crossings, *elpais.com*'s standfirsts (L1) are overcrowded with references to the current event as well as past news stories, statistics about immigration from Africa, and findings from institutional sources. *Eldiario.es*' standfirsts, instead, are usually straightforward and summarise the news article's narrative.

Furthermore, in *elpais.com*, the Mireille's news story (L2) acts as a springboard for other narrative developments, as shown further, whilst, in *eldiario.es*, it simply narrates (L2) the story of a *chica dulce* (sweet girl) who 'has turned into a symbol of resistance for other migrants' (13). The interpretation

proposed here is corroborated and strengthened by the visual materials supporting the two news articles. *Elpais.com*, in fact, published a video (L2) in which, in the first frame, Mireille's face is pixelated. Also, she shares the frame equally with another migrant and none of them makes eye contact with the viewer. Moreover, the 37-second video is not about Mireille, who does not appear in it. Rather, it documents overexcited migrants as they run through the streets of Melilla after a successful collective scaling of the triple fence.

The video is labelled *ElPaisTV* and is an edited set of sequences, whose scenes that were filmed at the Melilla's CETI (13) present some ambiguities. There, in fact, migrants are mainly represented with naked torso or wearing t-shirts, although the comparison with similar videos that *elpais.com* published in January and March shows migrants wearing sweaters and denim jackets in several frames, in line with the season. The video accompanying Mireille's news story, which should refer to an event occurred on the 28 February, may rather be archive footage. However, there is no sign flagging the material as archival.

The visual strategy that *elpais.com* adopts here draws audiences' attention to masses of migrants at the border while reinforcing a moralistic angle on the story of Mireille (L2). The main news source in the news article (L2), in fact, is a Jesuit priest, who stresses the circumstances in which the girl used to

live: alone, in a place crowded with young men from which, despite the priest's invitations, she did not want to move. Once more, here *elpais.com*'s news narrative revolves around ambiguous references and meanings.

The visual approach (L1) of *eldiario.es*, on the other hand, is quite explicit and in line with the news article's narrative (L2). The two pictures (L1) accompanying the news text are a short and a larger shot of Mirelle, the latter of which shows that she sits between two other young migrants, equally sharing the frame with her. In this picture, all three look and smile at the camera, by thus expressing positive feelings to the viewer. It is also worth noting that the setting of the image is the same as *elpais.com*'s video first-frame but here Mirelle's face is not blurred out. It may be observed that *elpais.com* chose to blur the girl's face as a precaution due to her young age. Nevertheless, *elpais.com*'s news article links (L3) to the news webpage of the Spanish newspaper *El Periódico de Cataluña*, which published Mirelle's portrayal (L1) straight (16).

Conclusion

The analysis of the news about migrant border crossings provided here has shown that, in *elpais.com,* the overall news narrative requires elaborated

explanations, far more than it is necessary for *eldiario.es*', and conveys ambiguous meanings which usually do not find reference in the communication of its journalistic counterpart. In *eldiario.es*, in fact, the news narrative tries to bring some humanity back to the news stories. It does so by interviewing NGOs' workers who assist and help migrants, voiceless people who lack of the possibility of being represented otherwise, and also by writing about migrants simply as *personas* (people), whose rights are violated at the border.

The focus of *elpais.com* on security issues and defence measures, on the other hand, tends to distract the readers from understanding the migration story as a human story and does not enable them to sympathise with migrants. The news sources which the medium employs tend to highlight only the institutions' viewpoints; if otherwise, the news narrative provides a moralistic angle on migrants' conditions, as the Mireille's story demonstrates.

To conclude, the analysis of the narrative construction of online news that I have proposed in this paper has shown that online news can be consumed in different ways and that the relationship between news images, videos, and selective arrays of links can disseminate distinct meanings and cultural values across different news media's websites. The comparison of two online news media's narratives about migrant crossings of the Morocco-Spain border has

also demonstrated that online news narratives seem to depend more on the elements constituting the news than on how the news events are told in news articles. Indeed, the ways in which online news can be constructed through journalistic practices structured by the use of institutional sources, hyperlinks, and videos and under the pressure of tight deadlines play a central role in the dissemination of meanings and cultural values. Although not plainly stated through words, they nevertheless emerge from a multi-layered reading of the news.

Notes

1 The news items that are analysed in the paper can be accessed through the list of hyperlinks (in chronological order) that is provided here. It is worth mentioning that changes have been made on *elpais.com*'s website following its recent restyling.

- 16 September 2013

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2013/09/16/actualidad/1379318914_241770.html

- 31 October 2013

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2013/10/31/actualidad/1383248597_158835.html

http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/blindajes-Melilla-alambre-cuchillas-antitrepa_0_191081744.html

- 28 February 2014

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/02/28/actualidad/1393604968_540677.html

http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/Mirelle-primera-mujer-saltar-Melilla_0_233776738.html

- 20 June 2014

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/06/20/actualidad/1403249154_546020.html

http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/policia-marroqui-personas-intentaban-Melilla_0_272973130.html

- first October 2014

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/10/01/actualidad/1412181063_855450.html

http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/Salvamento-Maritimo-inmigrante-

desaparicion-patera_0_309019983.html

- 30 January 2015

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/01/30/actualidad/1422621672_176098.html

http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/muertos-naufragio-patera-cerca-Melilla_0_351365292.html

2 To identify the news dates of the migrant border crossings considered in this article, four different online sources were employed. They are: the Migrant Files (http://themigrantsfiles.com/); the UNITED for Intercultural Action network (http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/); the Euro-African network 'Migreurop' (http://www.migreurop.org); and, the Fortress Europe blogspot (http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/).

3 In the standfirst, the original quotation from Prodein is: 'Todo ante la atenta mirada de la Guardia Civil que permaneció inactiva ante los hechos', which can be translated, as follows: 'All happened under the gaze of the Guardia Civil, which remained inactive in the face of the events'.

4 In the first news considered here the original text states: El mar Mediterráneo se ha cobrado este miércoles, de nuevo, la vida de dos inmigrantes*'.* In the second news, the text is, as follows: 'La madrugada ha devuelto la muerte al

Mediterráneo. El sufrimiento vuelve a teñir las aguas que separan Europa y África'.

5 The reference is to news articles which were published on the first October 2014 and on the 30 January 2015.

6 In *eldiario.es* it was not published any corresponding news.

7 The original headline of the news article quoted here is: 'Cada número es una persona, una familia que deja todo'.

8 The headline of this news article can be translated, as follows: 'The reality of the schizophrenic frontier'. The original text is: 'La realidad de la valla de la esquizofrenia'.

9 In particular, three mass attempts were reported in the news on the first, 17, and 28 May. In this last occasion, the news article of *elpais.com* quotes the official statement of a Spanish authority asking for a larger involvement of the European Union in Melilla, which 'does not constitute simply the Spanish border but it is also the connection (of Africa) to the EU'. The original text reports that Melilla 'no es sólo una frontera de España, sino del conjunto de la Unión'.

10 In *elpais.com*, the name of the migrant is spelt 'Mireille'; in *eldiario.es* it is spelt 'Mirelle'.

11 The videos employed by *eldiario.es* to narrate news stories usually are

produced by external civil society organisations. Beyond possible ideological affiliations, this might be due to the costs of the news agencies' services. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in its news articles *eldiario.es* inserts screenshots of Tweets whilst the event is happening. In this way, for instance, *eldiario.es* documented how the Moroccan police set on fire migrants' camps on the Gurugú mountain immediately after a mass scaling of the border fence in Melilla on the 5 November 2013. This fact was not mentioned in the corresponding news article published by *elpais.com*.

12 The original headline of *elpais.com* is: 'Una menor de Camerún salta la valla de Melilla con la tibia rota'. The one of *eldiario.es* instead is: 'Mirelle, camerunesa de 15 años, la primera mujer en saltar la valla de Melilla'.

13 In the original, the news text states: 'Se ha convertido en un símbolo de la resistencia'.

14 This acronym means 'Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes', which can be translated as 'Centre for the Temporary Stay of Immigrants'.

15 In that picture, Mirelle had two hands on her lower face.

Bibliography

Amnesty International (2002) Crisis of identity. Race-related torture and ill-treatment by state. Available at: http://www.amnesty.eu/en/news/press-releases/eu/discrimination/spain-crisis-of-identity-0067/ (accessed 15 October 2016).

Andersson R (2014) *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe*. Oakland: California Series in Public Anthropology, University of California Press.

Barranquero A (2009) The state of the art in citizens' communication for social change in Spain. *Development in Practice* 19(4-5): 643–653.

Barthes R (1977) *Image Music Text*. London: Fontana Press.

Barthes R (2000) *Mythologies*. London: Vintage.

Bateman JA (2014) T*ext and Image: A Critical Introduction to the Visual/Verbal Divide*. New York: Routledge.

Bednarek M and Caple H (2012) 'Value added': Language, image and news values. *Discourse, Context and Media* 1(2-3): 103–113.

Bennett S et al. (2013) The representation of third-country nationals in European news discourse. *Journalism Practice* 7(3): 248–265.

Boje, MD (2001) *Narrative Methods for Organizational & Communication Research.* London: SAGE Publications.

Caple H and Bednarek M (2010) Double-take: Unpacking the play in the image-nuclear news story. *Visual Communication* 9(2): 211–229.

Carey JW (1989) *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Boston, London: Unwin Hyman.

Casas-Cortés M, Cobarrubias S and Pickles J (2012) Re-bordering the neighbourhood: Europe's emerging geographies of non-accession integration. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 20(1): 37–58.

Casas-Cortés M et al. (2015) New keywords: Migration and borders. *Cultural Studies* 29(1): 55–87.

Checa JC and Arjona Á (2011) Españoles ante la inmigración: El papel de los medios de comunicación. *Comunicar* 37(XIX): 141–149.

Chouliaraki L (2013) *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of post-Humanitarianism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Coleman R (2010) Framing the pictures in our heads. Exploring the framing and agenda-setting effects of visual images. In: D'Angelo P and Kuypers JA (eds) *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives.* New York, London: Routledge, pp.233–261.

Collinson S (2000) Migration and security in the Mediterranean: A complex relationship. In: King R, Lazaridis G and Tsardanidēs CG (eds). *Eldorado or*

Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.299-320.

Dauvergne C (2008) *Making People Illegal: What Globalization Means for Migration and Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Cillia R, Reisigl M and Wodak R (1999) The discursive construction of national identities. *Discourse & Society* 10(2): 149–173.

De Genova N (2013) Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': The scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(7): 1180–1198.

De la Fuente MG (2007) La contra-argumentación como estrategia discursiva: La representación mediática de los inmigrantes en los sucesos de El Ejido. *Discurso & Sociedad* 1(3): 370–399.

De Maeyer J (2014) Citation needed. Investigating the use of hyperlinks to display sources in news stories. *Journalism Practice* 8(5): 532–541.

De Maeyer J and Le Cam F (2015) The material traces of journalism. A socio-historical approach to online journalism. *Digital Journalism* 3(1): 1–16.

Domínguez M, Pineda F and Mateu A (2014) Life in a nutshell: Evolution of a migratory metaphor in Spanish cartoons. *Media, Culture & Society* 36(6): 810–825.

Dor D (2003) On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers. *Journal of*

Pragmatics 35(5): 695–721.

Fahmy S and Neumann R (2012) Shooting war or peace photographs? An examination of newswires' coverage of the conflict in Gaza (2008-2009). *American Behavioral Scientist* 56(2): NP1–NP26.

Feenstra R and Keane J (2014) Politics in Spain: A case of monitory democracy. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 25(2014): 1262–1280.

Fekete L (2009) *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe*. London: Pluto.

Feldman G (2012) *The Migration Apparatus: Security, Labor, and Policymaking in the European Union*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Ferrer-Gallardo X (2008) The Spanish-Moroccan border complex: Processes of geopolitical, functional and symbolic rebordering. *Political Geography* 27(2008): 301–321.

García Agustín Ó (2008) Fronteras discursivas: Las politicas migratorias de inclusión y exclusión en la Unión Europea. *Discurso & Sociedad* 2(4): 746–768.

Garner SJ (2007) The European Union and the racialization of immigration, 1985-2006. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinarity Global Contexts* 1(1): 61–87.

Gemi E, Ulasiuk I and Triandafyllidou A (2013) Migrants and media newsmaking

practices. *Journalism Practice* 7(3): 266–281.

González-Enríquez C (2009) Spain, the cheap model. Irregularity and regularisation as immigration management policies. *European Journal of Migration and Law* 11(2): 139–157.

González-Enríquez C (2010) Spain: Irregularity as a rule. In: Triandafyllidou A (ed) *Irregular Migration in Europe. Myths and Realities.* Farnham: Ashgate Publications, pp.247–266.

González-Esteban JL (2014) La transformación del ecosistema mediático español: El caso de *eldiario.es*. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación* 5(2).

Grant S (2011) Recording and identifying European frontier deaths. *European Journal of Migration and Law* 13(2): 135–156.

Grobet A (2014) Responsible reporting and perceptions of migrants in an era of unprecedented mobility. In: Dell'Orto G and Birchfield VL (eds) *Reporting at the Southern Borders: Journalism and Public Debates on Immigration in the US and the EU.* New York: Routledge, pp.47–61.

Hall S (1981) The determinations of news photographs. In: Cohen S and Young J (eds) *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media.* London: Constable, pp.226–243.

Hall S et al. (1978) Policing the crisis. In: Tumber H (ed) *News: a Reader.*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.249–256.

Hansen P and Jonsson S (2011) Demographic colonialism: EU–African migration management and the legacy of Eurafrica. *Globalizations* 8(3): 261–276.

Humanes Humanes ML, Martínez Nicolás M and Saperas Lapiedra E (2013) Political journalism in Spain. Practices, roles and attitudes. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* 19(2): 715–731.

Ifantidou E (2009) Newspaper headlines and relevance: Ad hoc concepts in ad hoc contexts. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41(4): 699–720.

Kronrod A and Engel O (2001) Accessibility theory and referring expressions in newspaper headlines. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33(5): 683–699.

Lahav G and Guiraudon V (2000) Comparative perspectives on border control: Away from the border and outside the state. In: Andreas P and Snyder T (eds) *The Wall around the West: State Borders and Immigration Controls in North America and Europe.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, pp.55–78.

Leach M and Zamora A (2006) Illegals/illegales: Comparing anti-immigrant/anti-refugee discourses in Australia and Spain. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 12(1): 51–64.

Llorens C, Luzón V and Grau HP (2011) Mapping digital media: Spain. Report,

Open Society Foundations, US, November.

Llorent V (2012) The educational role of the digital media in the integration of immigrants in Spain: *Elmundo.es* and *elpais.com*. *Comunicar* 38(XIX): 139–146.

Martin JR (2004) Mourning: How we get aligned. *Discourse & Society* 15(2): 321–344.

Martin JR and Rose D (2005) *Working with Discourse*. London, New York: Continuum.

Martínez Guillem S (2015) Exclusive inclusion. EU integration discourse as regulating practice. *Critical Discourse Studies* 12(April): 1–19.

Martínez Lirola M (2016) Multimodal representation of sub-Saharan immigrants as illegal: Deconstructing their portrayal as victims, heroes and threats in a sample from the Spanish press. *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 93(4): 343–360.

Martínez Lirola (2017) Linguistic and visual strategies for portraying immigrants as people deprived of human rights. *Social Semiotics*, 27(1): 21–38.

Messaris P and Abraham L (2001) The role of images in framing news stories. In: Reese SD, Gandy OH and Grant AE (eds) *Framing Public Life*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.215–226.

Mezzadra S and Nielson B (2013) *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Moreno Lax V (2008) Must EU borders have doors for refugees? On the compatibility of Schengen visas and carriers' sanctions with EU member states' obligations to provide international protection to refugees. *European Journal of Migration and Law* 10(3): 315–364.

Jiménez Pinyol G (2007) España en la construcción del escenario euroafricano de migraciones. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, LA POLÍTICA ÁRABE Y MEDITERRÁNEA DE ESPAÑA 79/80: 87–105.

Joye S (2009) The hierarchy of global suffering. *The Journal of International Communication* 15(2) 45–61.

Pastore F, Monzini P and Sciortino G (2006) Schengen's soft underbelly? Irregular migration and human smuggling across land and sea borders to Italy. *International Migration* 44(4): 95–119.

Paterson C (2008) Introduction. Why ethnography. In: Paterson C and Domingo D (eds) *Making Online News: The Ethnography of New Media Production.* New York, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, pp.1–11.

Perfetti C et al. (1987) Comprehending newspaper headlines. *Journal of Memory and Language* 26(6): 692–713.

Prince G (1982) *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*. Berlin:

Mouton.

Quandt T (2008) News tuning and content management: An observational study of old and new routines in German online newsrooms. In: Paterson C and Domingo D (eds) *Making Online News: The Ethnography of New Media Production.* New York, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, pp.77–97.

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2015) *Tracking the future of news*. Available at: http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/ (accessed 15 October 2016).

Rose G (2001) *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: SAGE Publications.

Thompson JB (1990) *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Cambridge: Polity.

Triandafyllidou A, Ilies M (2010) EU irregular migration policies. In: Triandafyllidou A (ed) *Irregular Migration in Europe. Myths and Realities.* Farnham: Ashgate Publications, pp.23–40.

Triandafyllidou A (2013) Migrants and the media in the twenty-first century. *Journalism Practice* 7(3): 240–247.

Tuchman G (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.

Van Dijk TA (2005) Discourse and racism in Spain. In: *APAC ELT Convention 2005* (ed APAC-ELT), Barcelona, Spain, 27 February 2004, pp.19-25. Barcelona: APAC ELT.

Vollmer BA (2011) Policy discourses on irregular migration in the EU - 'Number Games' and 'Political Games'. *European Journal of Migration and Law* 13(3): 317–339.

Wise K et al (2009) When words collide online: How writing style and video intensity affect cognitive processing of online news. *Journal of Broadcasting Electronic Media* 53(4): 532–546.

Wodak R (2006) Mediation between discourse and society: Assessing cognitive approaches in CDA. *Discourse Studies* 8(1): 179–190.