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Language and Conflict in the Armenian Genocide A Linguistic Analysis of Letters to the Editor of *The Times*

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Abstract

Letters to the editor (LTE) are significant when studying newspapers' ideological stance on a specific news event. They offer a privileged point of view because they are selected to match the newspaper's agenda, to provide a timely comment on significant news events, and to keep specific events "in the news". The massacre of the Christian minorities throughout the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923 was reported in LTE of major international newspapers. A quantitative and qualitative linguistic examination will study the representation of the conflict between victims and perpetrators of the genocide in a corpus of LTE published in *The Times* between 1914 and 1926.

Keywords: Corpus Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Historical English, Letters to the Editor, News Discourse

Introduction

Starting from the Victorian age, letters to the editor (LTE) have been considered a genre of news discourse with its own features and functions (Hobbs 2019). They have been assigned a role of privileged tools of civic engagement that select issues out of the current news discourse to mark their public significance (Cavanagh and Steel 2019; Brownlees, Del Lungo and Denton 2010). LTE have multiple functions within a newspaper. According to Wahl-Jorgensen (2019), LTE comment on events in the news that are important to the newspaper's agenda; they publicly express complaints that demand a reply; and they ultimately strive to actualise social transformations. LTE are perceived as an influential tool because "letters to the editor are understood, by readers and news organisations alike, as a privileged site for forms of public deliberation that might influence broader social, cultural and political developments" (ix).

LTE have offered selected readers a privileged space to be engaged at a textual, referential, and interpersonal level in the news discourse well before the onset of contemporary digital inter-actions with the media. They have offered the possibility to convey criticism, judgement, and to appeal for action (Pounds 2006). LTE have also been used to express polarised representations of different sides in conflict and conflicting ideologies, while keeping alive topics considered relevant to the reading public of a specific newspaper. This was the case of the Armenian gen-ocide (1915-23), when Christian minorities had to be "relocated" out of the Ottoman Empire to complete its transformation into a pan-Turkish state (Elayyadi 2017).

To study the linguistic strategies through which representations of both the victims and the perpetrators of the genocide were polarised in the news discourse at that point in history, linguistic evidence of this conflictual representation (Partington 2015) of the Armenians and the Turks is analysed in LTE. The analysis conducted in this paper is based on textual evidence provided by LEAQ (Letters to Editor on the Armenian Question), a corpus of LTE of *The Times* published between 1914 and 1926 on the Armenian question, and attempts to answer to the following research questions: what are recurrent linguistic characteristics of the representation of the conflict between Turks and Armenians in the letters to the editor of *The Times*? What ideological stance(s) could be inferred from the linguistic representation of the conflict?

To answer these research questions, the analysis conducted in this paper focuses on colloca-tional patterns, concordances, and clusters (Hunston 2002) of the keywords *Armenia*, *Armenian*, and *Armenians*, representing one side of the conflict, and *Turkey*, *Turk*, and *Turks* for the other side of the conflict. A corpus-assisted quantitative and qualitative approach (Partington 2004, 2010 and 2015; Partington, Duguid and Taylor 2013) applies discourse analysis to the key words and their extended co-textual environment. The analysis draws from the study on ideology in the news by van Dijk (2009) to isolate conflicting ideological stances in the representation of the sides involved in the Armenian genocide.

1. Historical Context

The massacre of the Armenian residents of the former Ottoman Empire was initiated on 24th April 1915, when notable Armenians as well as male Armenians accused of fomenting civilian unrest were executed overnight (Alayrian 2018). The survivors were evicted from their homes and forced to death marches towards the Syrian Desert (Rafter 2016; Dadrian 2003), with the German allies of the Ottoman Empire witnessing the violence and not interfering (Battisti 2016). News articles, editorials, and letters to the editor of major international newspapers reported on the violence on the Armenians thanks to war correspondents, political personalities residing nearby, international humanitarian workers who were in the area because of the ongoing World War I (Mamali, Kivu and Kutnik 2019; Elayyadi 2017; Chabot *et al.* 2016; Peltekian 2013).

The desire to "Turkify" the empire by eliminating the Christian minorities (mostly Arme-nians and Greeks) and confiscating their homes and wealth is said to have started the genocide (Üngör 2012). However, Alayrian (2018) and Mayersen (2014) mention that persecution and ethnic violence were already rather common throughout the empire. The Armenian genocide was not the first wide-scale massacre of the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire, as it was preceded by the Hamidian massacres (1895-96) and the Adana massacres (1909). Yet, despite news of the 1915 massacres reached a vast international reading public also by being frequently mentioned in letters to the editor, the international debate on the topic seemed to have failed to prevent further violence at the that time (Chabot *et al.* 2016).

2. Letters to the Editor and Conflicting Ideologies

LTE have had a crucial role in the construction of the media discourse in newspapers through the centuries (Hobbs 2019). They have achieved the status of a genre of its own within media discourse studies, and have been considered relevant to the construction and the performance of cultural citizenship (Cavanagh 2019). Despite this, the linguistic features of the LTE have been rarely analysed. Exceptions are Chovanec (2012), Romova and Hetet (2012), Pounds (2005 and 2006), and Martini (2021 and 2022). In particular, Pounds (2006) focused the analysis on the evaluative language used in LTE by comparing and contrasting Italian and British LTE, providing insightful data on LTE as a tool of democratic participation and public engagement.

Being usually written by influential members of the reading public of a specific newspaper, LTE communicate their writer's point of view and ideology and they foster debate among the same newspaper's readers on contents in line with the editorial stance of the newspaper itself (Richardson and Franklin 2004; Pounds 2006). Published letters sometimes undergo an editorial process that alters the authorial voice and creates mediated news discourse that reinforces the ideology of the newspaper where they are published (Cavanagh 2019). Following van Dijk (2009), ideologies are the axiomatic beliefs underlying the social representations shared by a group. van Dijk (2009) continues by stating that ideological structures are characterised by the polarisation between the positive ingroup Us and the negative outgroup Them, and that ideologies control socially shared attitudes of groups, which, as far as this study is concerned, are represented in the opinions shared through the LTE of the LEAQ corpus. Examining the linguistic choices ascribable to the expression of conflicting ideologies in LEAQ would help to identify the conflicting groups and their representation by selected readers, which ultimately reinforces the perception of each group among the reading public.

Originally a space to share hard news, LTE have become a privileged space where high profile contributors respond to a specific matter mentioned either in a newspaper article, editorial, or in a previous letter to the editor, or initiate a new conversation on a publicly relevant topic (Brownlees, Del Lungo and Denton 2010). LTE authors share their comments and personal opinions, and openly express their ideological stance; LTE ensure not only visibility, but also public recognition particularly when featured in broadsheet newspapers such as *The Times* (Hobbs 2019). There, matters of international politics are often discussed by their actual protagonists, with LTE making public what is otherwise privately discussed (Cavanagh 2019).

This is evident also in the letters making up the corpus for the present research; for the most part, they were written by influential personalities, as reported by Peltekian:

[…] British government officials, diplomats, members of parliament and citizens, some of whom had lived in Turkey; there are also letters written by Armenian notables and delegates (such as Nubar Pasha) or those living in England; there are some letters written by Armenian notables and citizens of other nationalities who deemed it important to convey events and facts as they saw it (2013, vol. 1, xxv).

British and Armenians authors of LTE sent their contributions to *The Times* to share first-hand accounts and sensitize the reading public on the genocide; to call for help and to launch appeals to raise funds in order to relieve the conditions of refugees; and, eventually, to advocate political interventions to solve the crisis in the Near East.

3. Corpus Construction

The Times online archive provides access to OCR-scanned and PDF copies of all the articles from 1st January 1785 to 31st December 1985. The corpus was created by selecting LTE from the archive using the search words *Armenia* and *Armenian*. The search results also included letters mentioning the noun *Armenians*. In the entire time span covered by the online archive (1785-1985), the term *Armenia* occurs 6,361 times, while the term *Armenian* occurs 10,641 times.

The time span under examination was set between 1st January 1914 and 31st December 1926, that is one year before 24th April 1915 and three years after the presumed end of the Armenian genocide (Rafter 2016), to study the representation of the Armenian question before, during, and after the genocide. The corpus is referred to as LEAQ (Letters to the Editor on the Armenian Question) and it features around 120,000 tokens, i.e., "sequences of letters separated by spaces or punctuation" (Hunston 2002, 17). Having eliminated repeated search results, the corpus eventually amounted to 186 letters to the editor of *The Times*.

The corpus was analysed through a quantitative corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli 2001; Sinclair 2004) to obtain statistically significant results as per keywords and their frequent collocations and clusters. Quantitatively significant results were then analysed following the so-called "corpus-assisted" approach (Partington 2004, 2010 and 2015). This approach is particularly useful, once recurrent linguistic patterns have been identified, to perform qualitative discourse analyses to access non-obvious meaning "constructed and reinforced by the accumulation of linguistic patterns" in the extended co-text of the selected words, or "nodes" (Partington and Marchi 2015, 220). Corpus Linguistics software-aided analysis performed on the news has been extremely useful to search for its objective features, as demonstrated, for example, in Sinclair (1994 and 2004), Tognini-Bonelli (2001), Baker *et al.* (2008), Partington (2010), Fotopoulos and Kaimaklioti (2016).

A wordlist was generated Using WordSmith Tools v.8.0 (Scott 2020) and compared with the written section of the BNC XML Edition corpus (2007), a 100-million-word collection of samples of written and spoken language that includes also extracts from regional and national newspapers, to obtain a list of the keywords of the LEAQ corpus. Keywords are crucial in Linguistics software-aided analysis, because through the comparison of the corpus under examination with a larger corpus of similar texts it is possible to identify which words are more statistically relevant in the examined corpus, being unusually frequent in the reference corpus. This gives a clear quantitative indication of the core lexical items orienting the qualitative analysis (Scott 2020). Table 1 shows the first eight relative most frequent keywords by their ranking position on a 500 keyness scale:

Keyword	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq.	P
TURKISH	398	0,34	110	1.408	0,0000000000
TURKS	271	0,23	100	463	0,0000000000
ARMENIANS	227	0,19	102	95	0,0000000000
ARMENIAN	247	0,21	108	258	0,0000000000
TURKEY	266	0,23	90	2.014	0,0000000000
CONSTANTINOPLE	166	0,14	62	249	0,0000000000
ARMENIA	141	0,12	75	322	0,0000000000
GREEKS	145	0,12	53	694	0,0000000000

Table 1 – Keywords of the LEAQ corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 KeyWords

Keywords and their frequency in LEAQ source texts are shown in the first and second column respectively; the percentage of the frequency and the number of texts in which each keyword occurs in LEAQ are represented in the third and fourth columns; the fifth column indicates the frequency of each keyword in the reference corpus (the written section of the BNC XML Edition corpus) and the last column shows the p value referring to the keyness value of the items under consideration.

The most frequent keywords refer to both nouns and adjective of nationalities relating to the Armenian and Turkish national groups (*Turkish*, *Turks*; *Armenians*, *Armenian*) and to related place names (*Turkey*, *Armenia*). It is interesting to notice how, in a corpus created through Armenian-related search words, these occur less frequently than words relating to the perpetrators' side. Another keyword worth noticing is *Greeks*; its frequency is explained with reference to the historical contexts, as Greeks and Armenians were the most numerous Christian minorities to fall victim of the genocide. As discussed by Martini (2021), both Armenian and Greek Christian minorities are regularly mentioned together in the LEAQ corpus; therefore, the ideological stance on the Greeks and on the Armenians is likely to be similar and will not be the target of a specific analysis in this paper, while it is certainly of interest to develop another line of linguistic analysis on the representation of the Greek victims of the genocide in LTE.

The keywords seem to suggest a conflictual representation of the genocide, both in its historical contextualisation, i.e., the opposing views by the victims and the perpetrators reported in section 1, and in its ideological polarisation, postulating different linguistic representations of the two conflicting national identities. All this portrayed within the broader context of World War I, whereby Britain and Turkey were fighting on opposite sides, which is highly likely to influence the ideological polarisation further due to war propaganda.

4. Data Analysis

LTE were analysed using WordSmith Tools 8.0 (Scott 2020); concordance lines were computed and frequent collocations and clusters of the key words representing the two conflicting sides were examined, pairing similar key words according to their category and their frequency in the key word list in Table 1 above. Therefore, the analysis compares and contrasts corpus data organised along three polarised lexical oppositions: adjectives of nationality (*Turkish* vs. *Armenian*); nouns of national identity (*Turks* vs. *Armenians*); place names (*Turkey* vs. *Armenia*).

The results of the concordance lines are given by WordSmith Tools 8.0 (Scott 2020) in chronological order, following the organisation of the file names in LEAQ, where files are archived according to their date of publication. Therefore, it is interesting to examine, for each of the three polarised lexical pairs mentioned above, if and how the evaluative stance expressed by extended co-textual evidence changes between 1914 and 1926. In order to do so, the first and the last concordance line of each frequent collocation will be expanded, together with other lines randomly selected from other listed concordances. Publication dates of the letters are added at the end of each example to provide the time reference of the occurrence of each analysed collocation.

4.1 Turkish vs. Armenian

4.1.1 Turkish

The word *Turkish* directly right-collocates most frequently with lexical words: *government* (20 occurrences), *empire* (19 occurrences), *rule* (16 occurrences), *misrule* (11 occurrences), *Armenia* (8 occurrences). Recurrent L1 left-collocates are instead grammar words: *the* (142 occurrences), *of* (34 occurrences), *from* (11 occurrences), *under* (10 occurrences), *a* (9 occurrences).

These first right-collocates all refer to political entities, with only one collocate (*misrule*) indicating a negative connotation. Expanding the co-text of the first and most recurrent collocation, *Turkish + government* collocates with negative evaluative language, both in the first and in the last mention of the collocation inside the LEAQ corpus, as shown in examples (1) and (2):

(1) *No proper census*, *worthy of reliance,* has been taken by the *Turkish Government* for years, and it is more than doubtful whether an independent and unbiased census has ever been attempted, even clandestinely, by Greek emissaries. (*The Times*, 27 March 1919)

(2) The *best service* we can render to the Armenians is to *cease to interfere* between them and the *Turkish Government*, and this is a fact which I have frequently heard stated in Turkey by the Armenians themselves. (*The Times*, 04 April 1924)

Example (1) expresses negative judgement of the actions of the Turkish government and of the reliability of its data, thus implicitly undermining all Turkish claims that have tried to reduce the extent of the massacres in 1919 as well as up until today. A negative evaluation is therefore evident in the collocated underlined in example (1). In example (2), that is the chronologically last occurrence of the collocation in the corpus, the extended co-text of the collocation *Turkish government* offers a different stance; it is suggesting to putting an end to the interference between the two sides (victims and perpetrators) and to leave them alone to solve their issues. This openly contrasts not only with the negative judgment on the Turkish government expressed by example (1), but also with a recurring negative connotation that emerges in examples (3) and (4), taken from letters published in 1920 and 1922:

(3) The more evidence available is collected and studied *the better and the more clearly* will it be shown that the character and policy of *Turkish Government* is the same now as it was when *it ordered* the *Greek massacres* of 1822, the *Bulgarian massacres* of 1876, the *Armenian massacres* of 1894-6, and the still more awful *massacre of 1915*. (*The Times*, 11 March 1920)

(4) The American Ambassador at Constantinople in 1915-16, Mr. Henry Morgenthau, was a first-hand witness as to the *deliberate organization of the massacring* of *both Greeks and Armenians by* the *Turkish Government* at Constantinople. (*The Times*, 22 March 1922)

These examples show negative judgement towards the Turkish government expressed through the use of a comparative grammatical structures (*The more… the better and more…*; *the still more…*) and negatively connoted language (*massacres, massacre, massacring*), together with words attributing the responsibility of the violence to the Turkish government (*ordered*, *deliberate organisation*). Example (3) mentions previous violence with a coordinated list where *massacres* is repeated after each different adjective of nationality (*the Greek massacres*; *the Bulgarian massacres*; *the Armenian massacres of 1894-96*; *the still more awful massacre of 1915*). The latter makes implicit reference to the Armenian genocide using the singular form (*massacre*), preceded by strong negative emotive evaluative language (*the still more awful*). Example (4) shows language in use to attribute the responsibility of the genocide to the Turkish government (*the deliberate organization*) and the victims (*of both Greeks and Armenians*).

To expand the co-text of the most recurrent left-collocate *the + Turkish*, since the definite article defines the NP that follows, the examination is extended to the cluster *the + Turkish + NP*. Most recurrent NP are *empire* (16 occurrences), *government* (16 occurrences), *population* (6

occurrences), *army* (5 occurrences), *nationalists* (5 occurrences). There is only a partial overlap with the right collocates listed above: only *empire* and *government* occur in the cluster as well, with the same number of repetitions (16 each). It is therefore worth examining the occurrences of *the + Turkish + Empire*. Example (5) and (6) show the first and last occurrence of the cluster:

(5)   The question of the partition of *the Turkish Empire* has lately been dealt with in two articles, both *pleading in favour of* the Turks, though from different standpoints. (*The Times*, 28 May 1919)

(6)   The whole question is international, and it would be disastrous if the British and other Allied Governments led the world to suppose that they were aiming at gain for themselves, or forgetting *the responsibilities which they have undertaken* for the peace and prosperity of the peoples who *have suffered under the Turkish Empire.* (*The Times*, 23 November 1922)

Both examples are indicative of the political debate on the Turkish Empire in the aftermath of World War I, where the Turks were defeated by the Allied forces, and had to accept a significant redrawing of the Empire borders, as well as a loss of territories. Example (5) refers to the political question, example (6), instead, connects the political question to the responsibilities of the Allies towards the inhabitants of the Empire. If the first and last occurrence of the cluster are more neutral in the connotation of their extended co-text, this is not the case in example (7):

(7)   There is not a single member of the Near East Relief staff of over two hundred workers who has any doubt as to the truthfulness of the statements made by Major Yowell and Dr. Ward, and the statements attributed to Mr. Jaquith and Mr. Gillespie are not only absolutely false, but show to what lengths Turkish propaganda is carried in the effort to *deceive* the world concerning the *rear determination to deport* and, if necessary, *exterminate all the Christians* within the bounds of *the Turkish Empire.* (*The Times*, 04 October 1922)

Example (7) shows a clear accusation and an attribution of responsibility of the genocide to the Turkish government and its systematic plan for the Turkification of the Empire. They are conveyed at the end of the sentence, in prominent semantic position (Biber *et al.* 1999), by the negatively connoted verb *deceive*, clearly expressing the stance of the author of the letter on the operations of the Turkish government, and by the phrase *the rear determination*, followed by the genocidal actions (*deport*, *exterminate*) and their target (*all the Christians*).

4.1.2 Armenian

Frequent R1 collocates of the word *Armenian* are *people* (18 occurrences), *refugees* (15 occurrences), *massacres* (13 occurrences), *republic* (13 occurrences), *and* (11 occurrences). *Armenian* frequently left-collocates with grammar words (*the* 98 occurrences, *and* 3 occurrences, *of* 12 occurrences, *an* 8 occurrences). Extending the co-texts of the most frequent right collocation (*Armenian + people*), both examples (8) and (9) show a clear polarisation in favour of the victims of the genocide, and call for action in order to grant some kind of relief to them:

(8)   Sir, Lord Bryce seems still to hope that the *public opinion of the world* may have some effect upon the German Government, and induce it to stay the *deliberate massacre* of the *Armenian people by its Turkish allies.* (*The Times*, 08 October 1915)

(9) May I ask that all those who recognize *our debt to the unhappy Armenian people* should send a contribution of money to the Rev. Harold Buxton, hon. secretary of the Armenian (Lord Mayor's) Fund, at 96, Victoria-street, S.W.1. (*The Times*, 29 July 1924)

In particular, example (8) is an invitation for the German allies of the Turks to listen to the worldwide public opinion and to intervene in order to put an end to the massacre. Here, the responsibility of the Turkish government is clearly indicated through the left-collocation *deliberate massacre*, culminating in the prepositional phrase *by its Turkish allies* in end-position. Openly stating that the massacres are deliberate and that they are perpetrated by allied forces seems to formulate a judgement also on the German government, which, incidentally, was enemy of Britain and the Allied forces during World War I. This example shows not only a polarisation of the two sides involved in the genocide, but also a further polarisation that superimposes on the conflict between the two sides at war during World War I. The polarisation Us vs. Them refers not only to Armenians vs. Turks, but also to Britain vs. Germany, thus extending the borders of the conflict.

Example (9) refers to the last occurrence of the collocation and offers a significant view on the conflict between Turks and Armenians, which again extends its borders and involves the reading public that is asked to acknowledge its position towards the victims. Left-collocates of the phrase *Armenian people* are the evaluative adjective *unhappy* in L1 position, and, further left, the phrase *our debt*. Dating back to 1924, that is nine years after the massacres, which no international intervention successfully managed to interrupt, the local British ingroup is still supporting the victims' side, but from a different apologetic angle. The inability to stop the massacres has made the local ingroup owe a moral compensation to the outer ingroup (the Armenians), to be corresponded with an economic aid.

Examples (10) and (11) show how the position of the victims and the conditions they had to bear were made consistent over the past years, frequently recurring to negative and emotive evaluative language (*wholesale murder*; *unbroken series of misfortunes*; *almost impossible*):

(10) The great practical questions which now await solution are how can the Turks be provided with *an honest and progressive government*, and how can *the remnant of the Armenian people* be secured against *wholesale murder*? (*The Times*, 30 October 1919)

(11) The experience of the last forty-five years has demonstrated that the interference of the Powers on behalf of the *Armenian people* has produced *an unbroken series of misfortunes*, making ultimately the position of this people *almost impossible*. (*The Times*, 26 July 1923)

Example (10) mentions both sides in conflict and socio-political future choices needed in order to provide a better government for the Turks and safety to the survivors of the genocide, suggesting that external interventions are in place to secure peace in the area. Example (11) draws drastic conclusions, accusing the external political interference in the area to have been unable to contribute with beneficial actions, thus ascribing the local ingroup of the allies of Armenia to a further outgroup that caused harm, if seen from the Armenian perspective.

4.2 Turks vs. Armenians

4.2.1 Turks

The word *Turks* right-collocates most frequently with *and* (23 occurrences), *in* (13 occurrences), *are* (12 occurrences), *have* (11 occurrences), comma + *and* (10 occurrences). The most recurrent collocational pattern *Turks + and* coordinates the collective national entity of the Turkish people with other elements (*their* 4 occurrences, *Armenians* 3 occurrences, *Bolshevists* 3 occurrences, *Kurds* 2 occurrences). Examples (12) and (13) show respectively the first and last occurrence of the collocation *Turks + and* in the corpus:

(12) It merely aims at *relieving the terrible distress* existing amongst that *remnant of* the Armenian people who have *escaped massacre at the hands of* the *Turks and their German abettors*. (*The Times*, 16 November 1916)

(13) *The British, with the other Allied Governments,* are committed to the return of the Turkish flag to Eastern Thrace, but it should not be taken for granted that we are thereby committed to any interpretation of the rights of sovereignty which the *Turks and* their friends may choose to maintain. (*The Times*, 23 November 1922)

Example (12) shows a clearly polarised stance against the Turks, who are openly held responsible of the massacres (*at the hands of*), together with their German allies. Referring to the latter with the noun *abettors* implies a clear accusation, which reinforces the polarisation between not only the victims and the perpetrators of the genocide, but also between the opposing powers fighting World War I. Example (13) is related to the ongoing negotiations during the Conference of Lausanne (1922-23) between the Allied coalition and in response to Turkish territorial claims. Example (13) reinforces such overlapping polarisation by mentioning the two negotiating sides and coordinates the negative outgroup Turks with a more general *their friends*. This suggests some sort of disdain for those government associated with the Turks, as they are ascribable to the negative outgroup and to their actions; example (13) dates to the aftermath of the 1922 fire of Smyrna by the Turkish army that destroyed the Greek and Armenian quarters of the city (Tusan 2012).

Example (14) describes the situation of trades in Smyrna, which is now known as the Turkish city Izmir:

(14) You will not find a single guild in Smyrna – with the exception of the porters – which is not overwhelmingly Greek. "Export" trade comprises, of course, both traffic between the place of production and Smyrna on the one hand, and trade between Smyrna and the foreign markets on the other hand. Four-fifths of the first is in Greek hands, with the remainder in those of *Turks and Armenians*. (*The Times*, 21 April 1919)

Dating before the 1922 fire of Smyrna, example (14) shows the multi-cultural co-existence of the three largest national groups (Greek, Turk, Armenian) residing in the city. Coordinating the two conflicting sides (*Turks* and *Armenians*) through *and* implies collaboration and a certain balance in a past status of the organisation of trade in the city, which contrasts with the conflict that brought to the genocide four years earlier.

The word *Turks* left-collocates most frequently with *the* (165 occurrences), *young* (18 occurrences), *and* (10 occurrences). Examples (15) and (16) show the first and last occurrence of the left-collocation *the + Turks*:

(15) It merely aims at relieving the terrible distress existing amongst that remnant of the Armenian people *who have escaped massacre at the hands of the Turks* and their German abettors. (*The Times*, 16 November 1916)

(16) I am sure that the women of England, whose homes and liberty were saved for them by the sacrifices of the men of the Allied armies, have only to realize *the degrading slavery* of *their fellow-Christian sisters*, to *hasten to rescue them*, as their ancestors did of old for the crusaders who were taken prisoners by *the Turks* of those days. (*The Times*, 17 July 1926)

Coincidentally, example (15) is the same occurrence in example (12) and already discussed. In the case shown in examples (12) and (15), the definite article is used to attribute responsibility by explicitly mentioning the perpetrators of the violence, which is not common in newspapers; further research might be helpful in establishing to what extent this might be considered a characteristic of LTE. Example (16), occurring at a later date and among the last letters comprised by the corpus, refers to the negative outgroup with reference to their past role in the crusades (*the Turks of those days*), and draws a parallel of the women belonging to the British ingroup and the Armenian ingroup. Both ingroups share the same Christian identity, as far as the letter writer is concerned, and this should prompt British women to actively intervene in favour of Armenian women, in a sort of re-enactment of the centuries-old opposition between Muslim and Christian identity. Example (16) shows a further complication of the conflict; from two opposing sides of victims and perpetrators of the Armenian genocide to the opposing powers at war, the conflict here extends to the more general religious conflict between religion that has characterised the Mediterranean for centuries.

4.2.2 Armenians

The word *Armenians* right-collocates most frequently with grammar words (*the* 72 occurrences, *and* 67 occurrences, *in* 50 occurrences, *to* 37 occurrences) and with the auxiliary *have* (28 occurrences). Frequent left-collocations are with the grammar words *the* (97 occurrences), *of* (28 occurrences), *and* (18 occurrences). Here as well it is interesting to extend the analysis to co-textual evidence, also because the analysis of the clusters confirms that *Armenians* collocates most frequently with grammar words, i.e., *in* (29 occurrences), *and* (22 occurrences), *and* + comma (12 occurrences), *have* (11 occurrences), *are* (10 occurrences).

A recurring collocation when mentioning the victims of the genocide is with both the definite article *the* and the coordinator *and*, the function of which has already been mentioned in the previous opposition. A frequent collocation of *Armenians* which has not occurred in corpus evidence collected so far is with the preposition *in* (*Armenians + in*). Examples (17) and (18) show occurrences of the preposition *in* used to express location or position:

(17) A few days ago the editor of Azatamart, the leading Armenian journal in the capital, was summoned before a Court-martial for having reproduced an article from the Contemporary Review for December last, in which were sketched certain *grievances and disabilities suffered by the Armenians in Eastern Turkey*. (*The Times*, 14 January 1914)

(18) Just a year after the occupation of Baku by the troops of the same Nury Pasha (who, according to a telegram of Reuter in The Times of April 9, is now *massacring the Armenians in* Karabag) a monument was erected to the memory of Turkish soldiers fallen during the taking of Baku. (*The Times*, 21 April 1920)

Examples (17) and (18) refer to the geographical position of Armenians and feature negative evaluative language related to violence they had to endure. Particularly interesting is example (17), since it refers to a letter published in January 1914, more than one year prior to the genocide. It reports elements that foresee the deterioration of the conditions of the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire using a coordinated lexical pair (*grievances* and *disabilities*) and the negative emotive past participle *suffered*. This passive construction does not make further explicit reference to the entity of these elements, but unmistakably points at the recipients of these negative actions, i.e., the Armenians who live in Eastern Turkey. Little was known to the letter writer how this contribution was anticipating the outburst of violence that was to follow.

Example (18) locates the massacre of the Armenians in Karabag, with reference to the person who is perpetrating the violence there after having slaughtered the Armenians in Baku. Other frequent place names right-collocating with *Armenians + in* are mostly related to the places where massacres were conducted (*Cilicia, Turkey, Mesopotamia, Ottoman Empire*). This suggests that locating the Armenians was needed in order to specify how they were targeted across the Ottoman Empire.

4.3 Turkey vs. Armenia

4.3.1 Turkey

The word *Turkey* left-collocates most frequently with grammar words (*of* 52 occurrences, *in* 33 occurrences, *with* 31 occurrences, *to* 19 occurrences) and with the noun *peace* (15 occurrences) in L2. Expanding the co-text of the most recurrent L1 collocate (*of*), frequent L2 collocates are nouns related to the events affecting the Ottoman Empire after WWI (*break-up, destruction, dismemberment, treatment*), and they all appear in letters dating from 1919 onwards. Also frequent is the L2 collocate *future* (7 occurrences), which connects to the previous collocates as a general term relating to the fate of Turkey. Other L2 collocates of *Turkey* are its related geo-political entities (*population, parts, provinces, rulers*). It is interesting to expand the co-text of the L2 collocate *future*, since it is the most frequent L2 collocate in the cluster *the + future + of + Turkey*; Table 2 shows all seven occurrences:

read Mr. Frank H. Simonds's views on **the future of Turkey** in The Times of June 11. To my mind,
ALI. 41, Sloane-street, S.W.1, June 3. **THE FUTURE OF TURKEY**. APPEAL FROM MOSLEM LEADERS
Yours, &c., GEORGE CLENTON LOGIO. **THE FUTURE OF TURKEY**.
People who are capable of surveying **the future of Turkey** in a detached manner, independently
6, Margaret-street, W., Jan. 7. **THE FUTURE OF TURKEY**. THE PLEDGE OF LIBERATION.
KENWORTHY House of Commons, Feb. 20. **THE FUTURE OF TURKEY**. DIVIDED OPINIONS.
Statesmanlike spirit to help to assure **the future of Turkey** on principles of equal justice to

Table 2 – Concordance lines of the cluster *the + future + of + Turkey*

Four concordance lines refer to different letter titles, and all of them were published between 1919 and 1920, while the Allied forces were discussing the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly enough, the letters make reference to Turkey, and not to the Empire, when mentioning the plans for the future of the area. In the letter titles, the noun phrase *the future of Turkey* collocates with noun phrases that suggest the ideological stance of the matter being discussed (*appeal from Moslem leaders*, *the pledge of liberation*, *divided opinions*). Extending the analysis to some excerpt of the four letters whose title features the phrase *the future of Turkey* confirms the conflicting ideological stances expressed by different letter authors.

Example (19) is taken from a letter from the Indian Moslem leaders, written in support of milder conditions to be applied to Turkey; it shows the conclusion of the letter, whereby a continuity in the predominance of Islam under the spiritual guidance of Turkey is advocated:

(19) For the *defection* of the *unscrupulous adventurers* who *dragged their stricken people*, who had *already undergone great misery*, into the world-war, *Turkey has been sufficiently punished* by the secular expropriation of some of her richest provinces. But we submit that the *maintenance of the Ottoman sovereign's spiritual suzerainty* in those countries, whilst maintaining his <u>prestige</u> and thus *conciliating* Musulman feeling, would be the means of making the position of the Musulman rulers or governors of those countries *unimpugnable*. AGA KHAN. AMEER ALI. 41, Sloane-street, S.W.1, June 3. *THE FUTURE OF TURKEY*. APPEAL FROM MOSLEM LEADERS. THE PRIME MINISTER'S PROMISE. (*The Times*, 06 June 1919)

This example provides further evidence to support the existence of the broader level of conflict between Muslims and Christians; in this letter, the two conflicting sides are attributed an opposite polarisation, following the ideological stance of the letter writer. This is expressed through the initial condemnation of those responsible of the defeat of Turkey in the war, negatively connoted as *unscrupulous adventurers*, who inflicted suffering to the Turkish people. These are referred to as *stricken people*, who had already endured suffering before the war. Clearly, the polarisation of the sides in conflict is reversed, and, while the victims of the genocide are not mentioned in the letter, the two conflicting sides are the outgroup of the Turkish *unscrupulous adventurers* against the ingroup of the punished Turkish people, who deserve the religious supremacy in the area.

Opposite to this ideological stance are example (20) and example (21):

(20) To keep the Turks in the districts in question would be tantamount to our condoning the crimes by the committal of which they have succeeded in establishing their apparent racial preponderance. Yours, &c., GEORGE CLENTON LOGIO. *THE FUTURE OF TURKEY*. (*The Times*, 19 December 1919)

(21) There is, however, some wisdom still in the East, if the West will only look for it; and Indian Moslems might very conceivably embrace this opportunity in a statesmanlike spirit to help to assure *the future of Turkey* on principles of equal justice to Christian and Moslem or to Turk and non-Turk. Your obedient servant, ANGLO-ARMENIAN. February 17. ARMENIA'S FATE. ATTITUDE OF INDIAN MOSLEMS. A SUGGESTED CONFERENCE. (*The Times*, 18 February 1922)

Both example (20) and example (21) reverse the polarisation of example (19). Example (20) refers to the responsibility in the crimes committed by the Turks and the need to remove the

Turkish rule over the territories inhabited by the massacred minorities. Example (21) mentions all the sides of the ongoing conflicts inferred so far from the previous examples: the ethnic conflict (*Turk* vs. *non-Turk*); the religious conflict (*Christian* vs. *Moslem*); the political conflict (*East* vs. *West*). In so doing, the example suggests how the conflict underlying the genocide is ascribable to a more complex conflictual context of which the genocide is only one of the sides involved.

The word *Turkey* right-collocates most frequently with grammar words (*and* 23 occurrences, *of* 10 occurrences, *as* 8 occurrences). Frequent R2 collocates are again grammar words (*the* 17 occurrences, *to* 11 occurrences) and the possessive adjective *its* (9 occurrences); lexical words R2 more frequently collocating with *Turkey* are *Persia* (3 occurrences) and *Constantinople* (2 occurrences). Among the recurrent clusters are *to deprive Turkey* (8 occurrences) and *peace with Turkey* (8 occurrences). The next subsection shows how these linguistic features differ from the linguistic treatment of the corresponding place name of the victims' side (*Armenia)*, suggesting a different ideological stance on the place name *Turkey*. Example (22) shows the first and occurrence of the collocation *Turkey + and*:

(22) On April 3, 1916, at the headquarters of the latter organization in Berlin a lecture entitled "Was Geht Uns China An" was delivered by an influential member of the Prussian Parliament, in which the lecturer claimed that *German world-empire* could be established only on a basis of an *overland dominion* extending from the North Sea to China by way of *Turkey and Persia*. (*The Times*, 16 January 1917)

Example (22) mentions *Turkey* as part of the ongoing German plan of territorial expansion for the creation of an empire; the role of Turkey is instrumental to foreign expansionist policy, and therefore mentioned as one amongst the territories needed to occupy, together with Persia, to build the new German-led area of influence. This is one of the few occurrences where Turkey is paired with another geographical entity; other occurrences are again *Persia* (2 occurrences), *Armenia* (1 occurrence), *Bulgaria* (1 occurrence) and *Greece* (1 occurrence). It is worth mentioning that the collocation *Turkey + and + Armenia* occurs only in one letter title and is not found elsewhere in the corpus. Therefore, corpus evidence demonstrates how *Turkey* is almost never paired with other geographical or geo-political entity, thus allowing the place name of the genocide perpetrators its own individual narrative.

Example (23) analyses one example of the collocate *Turkey + R2*, with R2 being the neutral possessive adjective *its* (9 occurrences). The concordance lines show that, except for the very first mention, the same phrase is repeated eight times as part of a quoted line from a 1918 war speech by the British Prime Minister Mr. Lloyd George. Example (23) shows the extended co-text of *Turkey + R2 its*:

(23) The second factor in the situation is that England has given her word that Turkish sovereignty shall not be destroyed. That word was passed by Mr. Lloyd George on January 5, 1918, in a speech describing our war aims, in which he took particular pains to assure the world that he was speaking in the name of England. He said : " Nor are we fighting . . . to deprive *Turkey of its* capital or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace, which are predominantly Turkish in race". (*The Times*, 30 May 1919)

The quotation reported in Example (23) is used when the international debate over the future of Constantinople is debated in the LTE of the corpus by both sides of the ideological conflict. The declaration of the Prime Minister stating the position of the British Empire as far as the future of Turkey in the aftermath of the defeat in World War I is used in the letters

by the Aga Khan Ameer Ali to support the Turkish side and to remind of the *breach of faith* which would have occurred, had the terms of the declaration been disregarded. However, the same position is expressed by non-Muslim authors of the letters, showing that there was a general movement of opinion that rejected a harsh dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the eradication of the Turkish race, despite what happened with the Christian minorities over the years. The collocation seems to be a reminder to the British Government and to its allied to act not out of revenge, but out of political fairness and honour, with the implication that, by doing this, the positive connotation of the British ingroup would have been reinforced.

4.3.3 Armenia

The word *Armenia* left-collocates most frequently with grammar words (*of* 33 occurrences, *in* 19 occurrences, *and* 9 occurrences) and with the adjective of nationality *Turkish* (8 occurrences). Extending the co-text of the most frequent L1 collocate *of Armenia*, its frequent L2 collocates are related to political matters (*capital*, *control*, *government*, *polity*, *Republic*, *rights*, *territory*, *vilayets*), to negative consequences suffered by Armenia (desertion, destruction, devastation, treatment), to its future (*fate* 4 occurrences, *future* 1 occurrences), and to "Friends of Armenia" (*friends* 5 occurrences), the humanitarian advocacy group (Tusan 2017).

Similarly to the collocation L2 + *of* + *Turkey*, a connection to future events is made evident also in the collocation L2 + *of* + *Armenia*, with L2 being *future* (1 occurrences) and *fate* (4 occurrences). It is interesting to remark how the noun *fate* has a different connotation from the word *future*, as it refers to "the development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power" (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 269). The noun phrase *the fate of Armenia* seems to suggest future events that cannot be shaped by human intervention, which ideologically contrasts with the cluster *the* + *future* + *of* + *Turkey*. Extending the analysis to the co-texts is useful to clarify the ideological stance of which *the fate of Armenia* is an expression. However, in three out of its four occurrences, it recurs in prominent position as letter title in three separate letters (01 March 1921, 10 May 1920, 19 June 1920), and towards the end of the fourth letter by Boghos Nubar, Chairaman of the Armenian National Delegation (30 January 1919), of which example (24) shows its extended co-text:

(24) At the moment when *the fate of Armenia* is being decided at the Peace Conference, it is my duty, as the head of the National Delegation which has no tribune from which its voice can resound, to state once again, in the columns of *The Times*, the important part played by the Armenians in this frightful war. I wish strongly to urge that the Armenians, having of their own free will cast in their lot with the champions of right and justice, the victory of the Allies over their common enemies has secured to them a right to independence. (*The Times*, 30 January 1919)

Here, the letter author advocates for the right of Armenians to gain their independence, which is expressed unanimously also in the letters where *the fate of Armenia* is used as title. There, the right of the Armenians to live in a sovereign state where they are safe from persecutions and massacres is advocated by all three different letter authors. Corpus evidence here suggests a clear polarisation when mentioning similar lexical entities, that is tied to the ideological stance expressed on the victims' side and on the perpetrators' side. The prospects of the victims' side are left to an external intervention, which somehow ought to ensure their right to independ-

ence; on the contrary, the prospects of the perpetrators' side are left to human intervention, and there are contrasting viewpoints on whether to grant their independence or to limit their power. This seems to imply a greater power of intervention in the Turkish situation, and a limited one in the Armenian polity.

The place name *Armenia* right-collocates most frequently with grammar words (*and* 27 occurrences, *which* 8 occurrences, *to* 6 occurrences) and with the noun *Mesopotamia* (5 occurrences). *Armenia + and* frequently collocates with other geo-political entities (*Syria, Cilicia, Palestine, Kurdistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan*) and to the generic adverb *elsewhere*. Martini (2022) has already investigated on the collocation *Armenia + and*, discussing how the coordinator affects the representation of *Armenia* and how it contributes to dilute its prominence in the discourse. Therefore, the position expressed using the coordinator as R1 collocate of *Armenia* is controversial; on the one hand, it suggests how different geo-political entities are suffering from the same Turkish oppression; on the other hand, it has the effect of depriving each individual entity of their own narrative and potentially confusing to the reader.

The same linguistic strategy is in place for the R1 collocation with the lexical word *Mesopotamia*; when examining its five occurrences (two in 1919, two in 1920 and one in 1922), corpus data show that they are all quotations of the speech delivered by Prime Minister George Lloyd on Allied war aims on 5th January 1918 (Arslanian 1978). Example (25) shows one of the quotations, which are all identical in their five occurrences:

(25) "While we *do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish Empire in the homelands of the Turkish race* with its *capital at Constantinople* – the passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea being internationalized and neutralized – Arabia, *Armenia, Mesopotamia*, Syria and Palestine are in our judgement entitled to *a recognition of their separate national conditions*. What the exact form of that recognition in each particular case should be need not here be discussed, beyond stating that it would be *impossible to restore to their former sovereignty* the territories to which I have already referred". This is an *unequivocal pledge*, and those who are urging the Government to drive the Turk from Constantinople and to parcel out the Turkish homelands among the Allies are asking England to be guilty of *as gross a breach of faith as the Germans* committed in violating Belgian neutrality without even their *miserable excuse* of necessity. (*The Times*, 30 May 1919)

Example (25) relies on the declaration of the British Prime Minister to defend the Turkish sovereignty, associating the request to remove the Turks from Constantinople to the German *miserable excuse* that violated the neutrality of Belgium, and therefore to the wrong behaviour of the outgroup of the WWI enemy. The Prime Minister speech supports the need to make different political arrangements for non-Turkish populations that recognised their *separate national conditions*; although the form of such arrangements is not clarified. Despite advocating the need for the independence of the territories previously administered by the Turks, the quotation of the Prime Minister's speech is not used to reinforce the pledge to the recognition of the non-Turk national identities. Reading the letter, it is clear how the ongoing debate over the future of the former Ottoman Empire was divided by the three conflicts isolated so far (ethnic, political, religious).

Concluding Remarks

The analysis of linguistic evidence from LEAQ corpus showed a polarised ideological representation of the two nationalities involved in the Armenian genocide which extended outside

of the polarisation victims vs. perpetrators. The most recurrent keywords in the LEAQ corpus are mostly related to either the Turkish side (*Turkish*, *Turks*, *Turkey*) or to the Armenian side (*Armenian*, *Armenians*, *Armenia*). This polarisation of national groups follows the ideological dynamic positive ingroup vs. negative outgroup discussed by van Dijk (2009), and the linguistic analysis conducted in Section 4 highlights the linguistic strategies through which both groups are represented by examining the most frequent collocates of the keywords. Findings showed an assimilation of the positive ingroup Armenian to the local British national identity, that extended the representation of the original ethnic conflict between Turks and Armenians to a more complex polarisation of the sides in conflict. Armenians are a positive ingroup not only because they are victims of a genocide *per se*, but because the genocide is perpetrated by the World War I enemies of Britain, the Turks, with their German allies not interfering with the massacres, and because it is a genocide conducted against Christian population. The conflict thus depicted is not only ethnic (Turks vs. Armenians), but also geo-political (Britain vs. Turkey) and religious (Muslims vs. Christians). Positive ingroups are the Armenians, Britain, and Christians, represented as victims of the negative outgroups (Turks, Turkey, Muslims).

Such three-fold conflict confirms the historical context whereby the Ottoman Empire and its ally, Germany, were enemies of Britain. Following the ideological square elaborated by van Dijk (2009, 194), findings basically confirmed that the Turks belong to the negative outgroup Them and that their actions are negatively represented and strongly criticised, while the opposite occurred in the representation of the positive Armenian ingroup. Findings also validated the expected political and ethnic divide in the representation of both groups, but also a religious divide. Armenians are Christian and this allows a better identification of the readers, rather than with Muslim Turks, which are referred to as Mahomedans.

However, some letters do not seem to belong to the ideological square depicted so far, as they express open dissent on the positive representation of Armenians vs. the negative representation of Turks. However, replies to those letters are published which strongly oppose their dissent. As a further development of the study conducted so far, it would be worth investigating whether dissenting letters are published in view of their position only, or to allow the existing polarity of the conflicting sides to be reinforced in the discussion that will inevitably follow through the replies of other readers. An examination of the linguistic strategies used when mentioning place names, of which Constantinople is one of the keywords, would complement the findings obtained so far.

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