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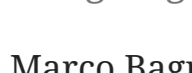
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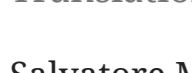


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Isabella Martini

Newsworthiness and Emotivity

The Language of Evaluation in the Letters to the Editor of *The Times* on the Armenian Question in 1914-1926

Abstract

In 1915 the echo of the Ottoman massacres of the Christian minorities living within the borders of the Empire reached the international press at once. The Times functioned as an English-language cross-cultural referential platform for its international readership, and regularly published letters to the editor reporting on the political and humanitarian events involving the Armenians. Those letters to the editor were written in English by notable authors from different national backgrounds and political appointments, including also Armenian notables and delegates. A corpus of letters to the editor of The Times was collected for the purpose of this study and examined through a corpus-driven and a corpus-assisted approach. This article focuses on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of recurring language of evaluation related to discursive news value analysis, with a specific focus on how the parameter of “emotivity” is expressed through the language used in the letters. This study attempts to explain the linguistic strategies through which a cross-cultural intersubjective connection with the readership of The Times was created, and it also attempts to clarify the textual strategies implemented in the letters to the editor of The Times to keep the Armenian events newsworthy.

Keywords: *Letters to the Editor, Corpus Linguistics, News Discourse, evaluation, historical English*

1. Introduction

Letters to the editor have always been a privileged outlet to measure the engagement of Newspapers' readers while keeping the debate alive on selected topics. They have been studied in their political function as a means to express democratic participation (Romova and Hetet 2012; Pounds 2006; 2005), in their sociological features as mediated news discourse with specific functions across different historical and cultural contexts (Cavanagh and Steele 2019), but they have rarely been the subject of linguistic analysis (Chovanec 2012), and so far there

seem to be no linguistic studies on the historical discourse of letters to the editor on the Armenian question, apart from Martini (2021a; 2021b). As far as news discourse is concerned, studies have demonstrated that newsworthiness is construed through linguistic choices and textual strategies that shape the published letter in order to meet the desired effect on its readers, with newsworthiness being subject to variations across time, places, and cultures (e.g. Bednarek and Caple 2019; Bös 2015; Bednarek 2010; 2006; Matheson 2000). Other selection criteria for letters to the editor are relevance, brevity, entertainment and authority (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002).

This article aims to contribute to research on the linguistic features of letters to the editor within historical news discourse, drawing from the existing lines of research on news discourse that examine the construction of newsworthiness using evaluative language. In particular, the methodological framework of our analysis relies on the findings of Bednarek (2010; 2006) and Bednarek and Caple (2019) as regards how evaluation is used in the media discourse. Following Partington (2015; 2010; 2004), a corpus-assisted quantitative and qualitative analysis is performed on a corpus of letters to the editor specifically built for the study.

One hundred eighty-six letters to the editor of *The Times* published between 1914 and 1926 were collected using *Armenia* and *Armenian(s)* as search words to include letters mentioning both the national entity and the population, in order to encompass a wider semantic range of occurrences. The recent events in the Nagorno-Karabakh area reminded the international community of the ongoing controversial acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide, and investigating the letters sent to the editor of *The Times* during the years of the genocide would contribute to our understanding of the textual strategies implemented to keep the Armenian question in the news.

The letters prove that *The Times* was seen as a platform to stimulate an international debate around the events. They were written by notable Armenians, anonymous residents of Smyrna, Greek and Russian delegates, as well as by local citizens and politicians actively involved in relieving the sufferings of the Armenians. Together, they form a cross-cultural variety of voices that, although mediated for publication, are still significant of the role of *The Times* intended as a most relevant international stage.

In order to study the construal of the newsworthiness of the Armenian events, three research questions were investigated within this work:

- How did the news discourse in the letters to the editor describe and write about the Armenian question?

- Were there recurrent discursive patterns of evaluation?
- How and to what extent was the evaluative parameter of emotivity (Bednarek and Caple 2019; Bednarek 2010; 2006) used in the letters to the editor on the Armenian question?

A corpus-driven (Hunston 2002; Tognini-Bonelli 2001) and corpus-assisted (Partington 2015; 2010; 2004; Partington et al. 2013) quantitative and qualitative analysis of the features of the language of evaluation (Hunston 2011; Martin and White 2005; Hunston and Thompson 2000) was performed on the selected letters to the editor, with a specific focus on the evaluative parameter of emotivity (Bednarek and Caple 2019; Bednarek 2010; 2006) with the aim of answering the three research questions mentioned above.

2. The Armenian Question

The recent events in the Nagorno-Karabakh area, the need for its Armenian residents to leave their land to survive and the Azerbaijani military occupation inevitably remind of the events that led to the almost complete annihilation of the Armenian population living within the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The genocide begun in 1915 and lasted until at least 1923 (Dadrian 2003). The refusal of the Turkish government to refer to the massacre of the Christian minorities as a genocide has become a matter of political relevance. The official acknowledgement of the genocide was indeed set as one of the conditions for Turkey to enter the EU on 28th September 2005, as reported in the document of the European Parliament related to the opening of negotiations with Turkey (European Parliament 2005). Also, what is now the Republic of Armenia has been suffering from territorial claims that led to the recent renewal of hostilities triggered by the military occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh area by Azerbaijan. Nowadays, as well as during the massacres in 1915, the events affecting the Armenian population had, and still have, wide international news coverage, which makes the Turkish government's denial of the genocide controversial in the eyes of the international community. Recent studies have focused on the distorting effects of the denial of the genocide on the Turkish population (Aybak 2016), with school textbooks perpetuating the erasure of the cultural and physical memory of the Armenian people (Ferrari 2016). However, connivance with the official governmental line of denial has recently been questioned by Turkish and Armenian intellectuals, who, together, have started to support a more objective narration of the events (Suny, Gocek and Naimark 2011).

3. The language of evaluation as a value parameter of news discourse in the letters to the editor of *The Times*

Newsworthiness has been studied at length in its criteria, rules, and features in news articles (Catenaccio et al. 2011; Cotter 2010; Brighton and Foy 2007; Bell 1991), but rather scantily in letters to the editor (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002). Newsworthy events are not only reported in the news, but some of them also elicit an emotional response in the readers, through letters sent to the editor of the newspaper.

This study examines newsworthiness, following the analytical framework proposed by Bednarek and Caple (2019). According to their study, news values are content elements of a story; when combined, they make events worthy of becoming news. Frequent news values are negativity, timeliness, proximity, prominence, consonance, impact, novelty, superlativeness, and personalization. These values are very often construed by using the language of evaluation, i.e., language items used to convey, more or less overtly, subjective stance or personal opinion (Hunston and Thompson 2000).

Bednarek and Caple (2019, 172) report ten “core and peripheral” evaluative parameters of the language used by news discourse: un/importance; in/comprehensibility; im/possibility or in/ability; un/necessity; emotivity; un/genuineness or in/authenticity; reliability; un/expectedness; evidentiality; mental state. In particular, the parameter of emotivity relates to how positively or negatively a news item is presented. Evaluative emotive language is organized along a continuum with increasing and decreasing levels of either positive or negative evaluation, and choices are made along this continuum to connect with most of the reading audience, and to construe a story that is in line with their expectations, opinions, and feelings. Evaluative parameters and their use in the construal of news discourse are directly connected with the selective parameters according to which letters to the editor are chosen for publication: relevance, entertainment, brevity, authority (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002). According to Richardson and Franklin, letters to the editor “suggest a great deal about the paper and the community it serves” (2004, 461), as they are an expression of a selected minority of that same community, mediated by the intervention of the editor, or animator of the newspaper. Therefore, studying the letters to the editor published in *The Times* on the Armenian question contributes to understanding its relevance for its reading community.

4. Building the corpus

The collection of letters to the editor construing the corpus under examination has been retrieved from *The Times* online archive; it consists of 186 letters published between 1914 and

1926, selected by using the two search words (*Armenia* and *Armenian*), and analysed with WordSmith Tools v8.0 (Scott 2020). It will be referred to as the LEAQ (Letters to the Editor on the Armenian Question) corpus.

The letters to the editor in the corpus all feature the selected search words, not limiting the analysis only to the letters dedicated to the massacre of the Armenians, already collected by Peltekian (2013), but including all the letters with a reference to either search terms (*Armenia* and *Armenian*); this aimed at obtaining a more inclusive picture of the Armenian question through the letters. The time span (1914-1926) was chosen to search for mentions of the events immediately before and after the massacres.

An individual analysis of the letters is available thanks to the size of the corpus (ca. 120,000 tokens) following Partington (2015; 2010; 2003). This analysis allows one to detect the mixed cultural and geographical background of the authors of the letters; the 186 letters can be roughly divided into: letters from British authors; letters from non-British authors; and anonymous letters. Interestingly, signed letters from non-British contributors often make mention of the social position of the authors and their location, as shown in Table 1 below:

Author	N.	Information on the author provided in the letter to the editor	Nationality/Location of the author (when available)
Ameer Ali	9		
Boghos Nubar	4	Président de la délégation nationale arménienne en Europe (the first letter is in French)	Paris
Coles Pasha	2		
Colonel A. Phrantzes	1		Greek
A. Rizo Rangabe	1	Légation de Grèce	
E. K. Venizelos	1		Greek
D. Caclamanos	2	Légation de Grèce	Greek
Vasily Zavoiko	1	Political Assistant to General Komiloff	Russian—written from London
D. Ghambashidze	1	The Royal Societies Club	London
Israel Zangwill	1		East Preston, Sussex
J. Bagratouni, M. Soumbatoff	1		London
Avetis Aharonian	1	Président. Délégation à la Conférence de la Paix	Paris

George Haven Putnam	1		New York
Richard Gottheil	1	Of Columbia University, New York City	University of Strasbourg, Strasbourg
James Cannon	2	Chairman of the Southern Methodist Advisory Committee of the American Near East Relief	London
Total	29		

Tab. 1: Authored contributions from non-British authors, for a total of twenty-nine letters to the editor

Anonymous letters to the editor have always been controversial; willingly concealing their authorship might be essential for vulnerable sources, but, at the same time, legitimate doubts about the accuracy, truthfulness, and verifiability of information arise (Reader 2005). Unsigned letters to the editor, at least until the 1970s, were featured on quite a regular basis in newspapers (Reader 2005), while since then the tendency has reversed. Letter writers may request that their names be withheld from being published, but anonymous letters are not even taken into consideration for reading. *The Times*, nowadays, asks for letters to be addressed via a dedicated e-mail, completing them with the location from where their senders are writing. This is aimed to ensure the verifiability of the information provided, and accountability of their authors, but would this be a limit to the possibility of free expression on the part of letter writers? And would this change the language used by letter writers? Would this also impact the language of evaluation used to convey the stance of letter writers on a certain topic? Table 2 below lists the anonymous contributions to the corpus:

Author	Title	Date	Nationality/ Location of the Author (when available)
A Smyrna resident	Greece and Asia Minor. The Prosperity of Smyrna	23/03/1919	London
A Smyrna resident	Greece in Asia Minor. Extent of the Hellenic Element	09/04/1919	London
A British resident of fifty years in Turkey	Greeks in Asia Minor	22/04/1919	Not stated

Author	Title	Date	Nationality/ Location of the Author (when available)
Cisatlanticus	The Senate and the Treaty. Cooperation or Withdrawal. Mr. Simond's Testimony	19/12/1919	Not stated
Three Smyrniots	Greece in Asia Minor. Dr. Burrows's reply	21/04/1921	Not stated
Armenus	The Armenian in Mesopotamia	08/10/1921	London
Armenius	Armenian Christians	11/01/1922	Not stated
Anglo-Armenian	Armenia's Fate. Attitude of Indian Moslems. A suggested conference	18/02/1922	Not stated
Armeneus	Armenia's Future. Her claim to a national home	23/03/1922	Not stated
Anglo-Armenian	Trade with Turkey	03/08/1922	Not stated
An Armenian	The Armenian remnants	26/07/1923	London

Tab. 2: Anonymous contributions allegedly from non-British residents (eleven letters)

Different authors concealed themselves behind pseudonyms in the LEAQ corpus: "A Smyrna resident;" "Armenus" or "Armenius;" "Cisatlanticus;" "X." While X does not disclose their geographical location, presumably writing locally from Britain, the other two (or more?) authors chose a pseudonym disclosing either their cultural or geographical location. The concealment of their identity with place names or adjectives of nationality shifts the focus from the person to the place and to the people at large, as if the individual was no longer the core of authority; rather, a more collective core is evoked here to meet the parameter of relevance, confirmed through a second layer of newsworthiness provided by the provenance of the authors. "A Smyrna resident" can well provide a first-hand account of facts, and the same could be done by an author who belonged to the population suffering from the event presented in the news. Therefore, the decision to publish anonymous letters seems all the more significant in this case. This table also shows the titles of the letters, which highlight how geographical and national identity are here used to claim authority and reliability, thus contributing to the newsworthiness of each letter itself.

We can assume that those authors of whom no additional information was provided in the letters to the editor were already well-known to the readers of *The Times* in those years, either as prominent politicians (Ameer Ali), or as representative personalities or intellectuals throughout the British Empire (Coles Pasha; Israel Zangwill). Moreover, publishing a letter by Boghos Nubar in French underlines the fact that the target readership was expected to be able to read French, which confirms that the *The Times* was considered as a cross-cultural platform of international resonance for newsworthy events at that time.

Therefore, of 186 letters collected, forty are by authors coming from different cultural or national backgrounds, either known or anonymous. It will then be interesting to see how the language of evaluation is used to build the newsworthiness of the letters to the editor, by comparing not only the anonymous letters with the authored letters, but also by taking into account the cultural and national background of the authors. Writers such as Lord Cromer or Valentine Chirol, besides having the experiential and cultural background to comment on the events, had spent many years abroad, sometimes in prominent positions in the English colonies and, therefore, could belong to a position halfway between British and non-British writers. At the same time, some writers whose name indicated a different cultural origin might be closer to the British culture than others, while anonymous authors, according to their pseudonyms, geographically and culturally claim to belong to the side of the victims (Armenus, An Armenian, Armenius, Anglo-Armenian), and to the places where the Armenians were persecuted and massacred (Smyrna, Turkey).

The section below examines the linguistic features of how anonymous vs. authored letters published in *The Times* make use of the language of evaluation with reference to the Armenian question. The letters authored by a plurality of authoritative voices differing from the national British voices convey the extent to which *The Times* offered its columns as a platform for cross-cultural debate, where experienced reliable voices were made available, and engaged its target readership in a lively discussion on newsworthy topics.

5. The construction of newsworthiness in the letters to the editor on the Armenian Question

As mentioned above, for the purpose of the analysis, the letters to the editor of the LEAQ corpus were divided into three groups, and therefore into three sub-corpora: letters from British authors; letters from non-British writers; and anonymous letters. An accurate division respecting the complexity of the background of each contributor would be extremely difficult in view of the continuous exchanges among colonies.

The three sub-corpora thus obtained (LEAQ Local—LEAQ_L; LEAQ Signed Foreign—LEAQ_SF; LEAQ Anonymous Foreign—LEAQ_AF) allowed for a limited, but significant, comparison of the keywords. LEAQ_L was used as the corpus with which to compare the word lists of LEAQ_SF and LEAQ_AF. Moreover, a further division of LEAQ_AF was possible between Armenian (LEAQ_AF_A) and Smyrniot (LEAQ_AF_S) anonymous author(s). Table 3 below summarizes the results obtained through the comparison of each of the sub-corpora with LEAQ_L, the reference corpus, using WordSmith Tools v.8.0. Ranked by keyness, the table below shows the 5 most frequent lexical keywords occurring in LEAQ_SF, LEAQ_AF, LEAQ_AF_A and LEAQ_AF_S:

LEAQ_SF (29 letters)	LEAQ_AF (11 letters)	LEAQ_AF_A (6 letters)	LEAQ_AF_S (4 letters)
American	American	Armenian	Smyrna
Investigation	Simonds	Merchants	Greek
Yowell	Smyrna	Armenians	Burrows
Christians	Burrows	Wealthy	Resident
Ward	America	Indian	Greece

Tab. 3: Comparison of keywords in the four sub-corpora

It is worth remarking that the only lexical item related to the language of evaluation is *wealthy*, and that it is featured in the anonymous “Armenian” letters. As emerging from the results provided so far, evaluative language items related to the emotive parameter of news discourse are not featured among the keywords. This might be related to the editorial policy of *The Times* implying the rejection of sensation and sensational language. However, the amount of the material collected for this corpus makes it possible to examine word lists also without dedicated software, and to search for examples of evaluative adjectives occurring in the corpus. Word lists were created also for the three main sub-corpora (LEAQ Local—LEAQ_L; LEAQ Signed Foreign—LEAQ_SF; LEAQ Anonymous Foreign—LEAQ_AF) to compare the frequency of evaluative language items with the word list of the entire LEAQ corpus. Table 4 shows the frequency in LEAQ of the most frequent evaluative adjectives related to the parameter of emotivity (Bednarek and Caple 2019; Bednarek 2010) found in the corpus, compared to their

frequency in the word lists of the three sub-corpora. Raw frequency, relative frequency, percentages, and dispersion as obtained with Word Smith Tools v.8.0 are provided below:

Recurrent Evaluative Adjectives	LEAQ (186 letters)	LEAQ_L (146 letters)	LEAQ_SF (29 letters)	LEAQ_AF (11 letters)
Terrible	Fr. 24; 0.02%; Texts 22; 11.83; Disp. 0.80	Fr. 19; 0.02%; Texts 18; 12.3%; Disp. 0.73	Fr. 5; 0.02%; Texts 4; 13.79%; Disp. 0.48	N/R
Unfortunate	Fr. 17; 0.01%; Texts 14; 7,53; Disp. 0,74	Fr. 16; 0.02%; Texts 14; 9,59%; Disp. 0.70	Fr. 2; 0.01%; Texts 1; 3.45%; Disp. 0.00	N/R
Disastrous	Fr. 17; 0.01%; Texts 15; 8.06; Disp. 0.75	Fr. 14; 0.02%; Texts 12; 8.22%; Disp. 0.72	Fr. 2; 0.01%; Texts 2; 6.90%; Disp. 0.35	Fr. 1; 0.01; Texts 1; 0.09; Disp. 0.00
Cruel	Fr. 13; 0.01%; Texts 9; 4.84%; Disp. 0.55	Fr. 9; 0.01%; Texts 7; 4.79%; Disp. 0.57	Fr. 4; 0.02%; Texts 2; 6.90%; Disp. 0.24	N/R
Awful	Fr. 10; 0.01%; Texts 9; 4.84%; Disp. 0.66	Fr. 9; 0.01%; Texts 9; 6.16%; Disp. 0.69	Fr. 2; 0.01%; Texts 1; 3.45%; Disp. 0.00	N/R

Tab. 4: Recurrent evaluative adjectives in LEAQ

Corpus data show that the most recurrent emotive adjectives in LEAQ are all related to a negative connotation and strong disapproval, conveying an authorial stance (Martin and White 2005), aimed at triggering a reaction in the readers. However, it seems interesting to notice that unsigned letters do not make use of those adjectives, apart from *disastrous*, which occurs in the letter signed by “An Armenian,” published on 26th July 1923, and titled “The Armenian Remnants.”

Using WordSmith Tools v.8.0 Concordancer (Scott 2020), lists of concordances of the keywords in the sub-corpora were computed, out of which their most frequent collocates and clusters were obtained. Among them, the analysis of concordances, collocates and extended co-text of most frequent evaluative adjectives sheds further light on how the parameter of emotivity was used in the letters on the Armenian question, sent to the editor of *The Times*. Since *disastrous* is the only evaluative adjective occurring in all three sub-corpora, its contextual occurrences were compared to study its lexical collocates. Table 5 below shows

the only occurrence in the LEAQ_AF corpus concordance lines:

Yet there appears to be no sign of a departure from the political methods which have proved **disastrous** in the past. It was to be hoped that, as a redeeming grace

Tab. 5: Occurrence of *disastrous* in the LEAQ_AF corpus

This individual occurrence, which is statistically not relevant from the point of view of a quantitative analysis of the LEAQ_AF corpus, however, is indeed significant from a qualitative viewpoint. Even from the concordance line reported in Table 5, it is interesting to note that *disastrous* is used to qualify the phrase *political methods* in its only occurrence in the LEAQ_AF corpus, which contrasts with its overall occurrence rate in the corpus. It would be extremely premature to draw conclusions from this single use; however, this individual occurrence might suggest that the overall scarcity of evaluative adjectives in the LEAQ_AF corpus highlights precisely those occurrences where they are used and this, therefore, makes the latter relevant. In this case, claiming that “*political methods* [...] have proved disastrous” conveys a strong, evident stance of the anonymous author of the letter “The Armenian remnants.” Published on 26th July 1923, and anonymously signed by “An Armenian,” the author of this letter directly accuses the Allied Powers and their interference in the area over the past forty-five years to have only caused damage to the Armenian people, as example (1) below shows:

- (1) In 1914 the Armenian people in Turkey, prosperous and strong, occupied a unique position in many respects. To-day, mainly owing to causes best known to the Governments of Britain and France, the remnants of our people are scattered throughout the Near East, mostly homeless and poor. A comparison of this kind may usefully compel a searching of hearts and inner motives among the responsible leaders of those Governments. Yet there appears to be no sign of a departure from the political methods which have proved **disastrous** in the past. It was to be hoped that, as a redeeming grace towards a deceived people, the Allied Powers would have left the Armenian people alone. 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*, 26th July 1923]

Therefore, this letter is an open critique from the perspective of the victims toward the political line of intervention by the Allied forces, which found its way through the letters to the editors of *The Times*. Interestingly enough, the anonymity is tied to the national origin of the author who seemingly writes on behalf of the entire Armenian population who suffered the genocide. The occurrences of *disastrous* in the LEAQ_SF corpus are limited to two letters only, but, as it

will be made evident in the tables and examples that follow, they are connected to completely different contents. Table 6 provides the context of both occurrences:

and its first aim is to combat "this shameful and **disastrous** tyranny." The second document is a Yiddish poster

disapproval, as humanity demanded. And, in view of the **disastrous** reaction that has been set up in India by the ill

Tab. 6: Occurrences of *disastrous* in the LEAQ_SF corpus

The first occurrence as pre-modifier of *tyranny*, seen in its wider context, is a quote from another article, whereby *tyranny* refers to Bolshevism, as example (2) illustrates:

- (2) It contains, as you will see, an article from Vinaver, one of the greatest leaders of that Jewry, and a protest against the attribution of Bolshevism to Jewry from the non-Jewish Bourneff, a former Socialist Mayor of Moscow, and its first aim is to combat "this shameful and **disastrous** tyranny." [*The Times*, 12th January 1920]

The second occurrence of *disastrous* is to be found as a pre-modifier of *reaction* with reference to political unrest in India, as the extended co-textual reference in example (3) illustrates:

- (3) Sir,-If anything was needed to enforce the demand for an investigation into the deplorable incidents in Cilicia, it is furnished by the ghastly story published in The Times of the 19th inst., under the very judicial heading, "Armenians accused of massacres." The statements are circumstantial, and evidence in support of the charges appears to have been placed before the British High Commissioner and the American representative in Trans-Caucasia; but so far they have gone without notice. I did not suppose that the horrors would be filmed; but I certainly did expect some expressions of disapproval, as humanity demanded. And, in view of the **disastrous** reaction that has been set up in India by the ill-advised agitation in respect of Constantinople, a wise policy invited reprobation. This reaction in India will not be mitigated by the amazing demands of the Armenian Patriarch, published in The Times of March 23. [*The Times*, 1st April 1920]

Neither occurrence of *disastrous* is strictly related to the Armenian genocide; the first letter, authored by Israel Zangwill and published on 12th January 1920, however, draws a comparison with the treatments (*massacres*) historically perpetrated on the Jewish people, surpassed only by those (*horrors*) perpetrated on the Armenian people. In hindsight, it will take slightly more than a decade to start seeing the treatment of the Armenians as a preparation for the genocide of the Jewish people. The second letter, by Ameer Ali, highlights the editorial responsibility of

The Times, read throughout the British Empire, of having published news about massacres perpetrated on Muslims by the Armenians, and the disastrous reaction that followed. Both letters from the LEAQ_SF corpus insert the Armenian questions in a broader political perspective, and in both letters the evaluative adjective *disastrous* is connected to political events.

The occurrence of *disastrous*, as reported in Table 4, is more frequent in the LEAQ_L sub-corpus, due also to the considerable number of texts construing this corpus, if compared to those of the LEAQ_SF and LEAQ_AF sub-corpora. Table 7 below illustrates some examples of the occurrences of *disastrous* in LEAQ_L:

if not remedied, will certainly be fraught with **disastrous** consequences in the strenuous years ahead of us.

urging that any departure from the "pledge" of January 5, 1918, would have **disastrous** effects on Moslem opinion in India.

an attitude of defiance and armed resistance to the Allies, and it has proved **disastrous** to the Armenians, as recent telegrams bear witness.

the immensity of the distress caused in Asia Minor by the horrors of a protracted war amid **disastrous** retreat, and in Greece by the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees

for whose misfortunes we cannot, as a nation, disclaim all responsibility, since the **disastrous** adventure of which they are the victims was, in its inception, mainly prompted, and in its later stages encouraged by our Government

Tab. 7: Occurrences of *disastrous* in the LEAQ_L sub-corpus

In the case of the LEAQ_L sub-corpus, *disastrous* collocates with nouns related to cause and effect (consequences, effect, results), to endeavours (adventure), politics (power, retreat, stage, question), and with the verb phrase to prove + adjective + to, where the recipient of the action are the Armenians (*it has proved disastrous to Armenians*). In view of its direct mention of one of the key search words according to which the entire corpus was constructed, this latter occurrence is worth some further examination. The sentence occurs in the letter published on 3rd March 1920 and signed by Harold Buxton, titled "Armenian Massacres. The Turks in Cilicia."

Buxton qualifies as "the agent of the Lord Mayor's Fund for the relief of Armenian and other refugees," and in the letter he comments on the current Armenian situation, with reference to the consequences of the French-Turkish negotiations for the new geopolitical asset of the former Ottoman Empire. In the phrase *it has proved disastrous to Armenians*, the anaphoric reference

established by the pronoun *it* refers to the *conciliatory attitude* of the French troops that replaced the British troops in Cilicia, as shown in example (4):

- (4) Unfortunately the French have not had sufficient forces to deal firmly with the Turks. Their conciliatory attitude was taken for timidity or weakness. It very quickly induced an attitude of defiance and of armed resistance to the Allies, and it has proved disastrous to the Armenians, as recent telegrams bear witness. [*The Times*, 3rd March 1920]

Introduced by the negative evaluative adverb *unfortunately* opening the previous sentence, *disastrous* is connected to an unsatisfactory and counterproductive military conduct of the Allied forces, which, on reading the letter further, is related to the pledge for a US intervention in the area.

Other examples might clarify the political connotative meaning of *disastrous* in the occurrences listed above. Example (5) is taken from a local, though anonymous, letter by “Anglo-Irish,” published on 18th August 1919, whereby the opposition of Ulster to an Anglo-Irish peace is claimed to have a fundamental political influence on the resolution of the questions of Armenia, Palestine, and Arabia:

- (5) This is not an Irish, but an English question, which seriously imperils the solidity of our parliamentary institutions, and, if not remedied, will certainly be fraught with disastrous consequences in the strenuous years ahead of us. [*The Times*, 18th August 1919]

Both examples and contextual occurrences of *disastrous* illustrate that the evaluative adjective is used almost entirely to establish a contact with the reading public, by underlining the negative effects of political choices and interventions in connection with the Armenian questions, while opening up to a wider geographical perspective.

Is it therefore possible to conclude that the use of evaluative adjectives is more frequent in authored letters, with LEAQ_SF representing around 20%-30% of their use. This could be interpreted as a sign that the anonymous authors are less inclined to an emotional connotation of their discourse using adjectives, which reflects the keywords emerged from the comparison with the reference corpus. As shown in Table 8 below, there is, indeed, a slightly more frequent use of emotively connoted nouns emerging from the word lists. Raw frequency, relative frequency, percentages, and dispersion as indicated in Word Smith Tools v.8.0 are provided:

Emotively Connoted Nouns	LEAQ (186 letters)	LEAQ_L (146 letters)	LEAQ_SF (29 letters)	LEAQ_AF (11 letters)
Massacres	Fr. 98; 0.08%; Texts 45; 24.19%; Disp. 0.73	Fr. 66; 0.07%; Texts 31; 21.23%; Disp. 0.73	Fr. 32; 0.14%; Texts 12; 42.86%; Disp. 0.70	Fr. 3; 0.04%; Texts 2; 18.18%; Disp. 0.27
Massacre	Fr. 47; 0.04%; Texts 36; 19.35%; Disp. 0.77	Fr. 39; 0.04%; Texts 30; 20.55%; Disp. 0.75	Fr. 8; 0.04%; Texts 6; 20.69%; Disp. 0.67	N/R
Atrocities	Fr. 31; 0.03%; Texts 21; 11.29%; Disp. 0.74	Fr. 24; 0.03%; Texts 16; 10.96%; Disp. 0.67	Fr. 6; 0.03%; Texts 4; 13.79%; Disp. 0.58	Fr. 2; 0.03%; Texts 2; 18.18%; Disp. 0.31
Horrors	Fr. 20; 0.02%; Texts 15; 8.06%; Disp. 0.74	Fr. 10; 0.01%; Texts 9; 6.16%; Disp. 0.64	Fr. 10; 0.05%; Texts 6; 20.69%; Disp. 0.55	N/R
Danger	Fr. 25; 0.02%; Texts 21; 11.29%; Disp. 0.75	Fr. 23; 0.03%; Texts 19; 13.01; Disp. 0.68	Fr. 2; 0.02%; Texts 2; 6.90%; Disp. 0.35	Fr. 1; 0.01%; Texts 1; 9.09%; Disp. 0.00
Death	Fr. 27; 0.02%; Texts 20; 10.75%; Disp. 0.78	Fr. 19; 0.02%; Texts 14; 9.59; Disp. 0.78	Fr. 8; 0.04%; Texts 6; 20.69%; Disp. 0.73	N/R

Tab. 8: Evaluative nouns related to the parameter of emotivity in the three sub-corpora

The sub-sections below will examine the occurrence of the three most recurrent evaluative nouns, the semantic prosody of which is compared through the analysis of their collocates and, when quantitatively significant, through their clusters and related collocates, as suggested by Samson (2020).

5.1 *Massacres*

Massacres is the emotively connoted noun most often used in its plural and singular forms, for a total amount of 141 occurrences in all three sub-corpora, with varied proportions. *Atrocities*

and *danger* also occur in all three sub-corpora, in different contexts. Table 9 below illustrates the occurrences of *massacres* in LEAQ_AF corpus:

Acts of injustice and oppression may have been committed before the war, but not **massacres** unless he means occasional brawls between Greeks and Turks ending in bloodshed.

Far from adopting sterner remonstrances to stop these **massacres** and deportations, the Greeks evinced, during the earlier days of the war, a pronounced sympathy with the German cause, if not with their methods.

they should be able to largely bear the burden of looking after the hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees and orphans – the remnants of the Turkish **massacres**.

Tab. 9: Occurrences of *massacres* in LEAQ_AF

Denial (*not + massacres*), a call to action (*stop + these + massacres*), reinforcement of the violent actions through a coordinate conjunction (*massacres + and + deportation*) and attribution of the massacres, which pre-modify the noun with an adjective of nationality (*Turkish + massacres*), are the three semantic connotations conveyed by the context in which the evaluative noun plural *massacres* occurs in the LEAQ_AF. A similar semantic prosody is to be highlighted in the LEAQ_SF sub-corpus, particularly with regards to the use with the coordinating conjunction *and*. Table 10 shows relevant examples of this occurrence:

the Turks shall not only have the will, but the power to continue the **persecutions and massacres** of Christians in the Near East,

have prevented, certainly would have greatly minimized, the Smyrna **fires and massacres**. I believe Almighty God will hold the United States Government responsible for inaction

as a great Christian nation, politically disinterested, to demand that **burnings, outrages, and massacres** cease, and thus effectively prevent a probable repetition in Constantinople

the prohibition of **outrages, deportations, and massacres**, and the maintenance of a government based on justice to all men and the protection of property and life.

it is the belief of the most careful observers that the **looting and massacres** of Smyrna would have already been repeated in Constantinople

Tab. 10: Lexical co-occurrences of *massacres* in LEAQ_SF

As shown in Table 10 above, the occurrences of *massacres* with other lexical items show the same grammatical colligation: plural noun(s) + coordinate conjunction (*and*) + *massacres*. *Massacres* occupies the most semantically charged position of the noun phrases and is coordinated with other lexical items related to genocidal violence, contributing to reinforce its semantic connotation in a sort of an ascending climax of brutal acts of violence. This coordinated

structure is reinforced with the attribution of the responsibility of the massacres, through various linguistic strategies, and also with direct left-modification, as shown in Table 11 below:

take whatever steps might be necessary to stop the persecutions and to protect Christians of the Near East from the **cruelties and massacres** of the brutal, fanatical Turks.

if that country minimizes or palliates the **outrages and massacres** committed by the Turks, or if it agrees to any compact or treaty which does not thoroughly safeguard the property and lives of the Christians of the Near East.

with special reference to the needs of the orphans made by previous Turkish **deportations and massacres**, and of the multiplied thousands of helpless, suffering people fleeing from the sword of the conquering Turk.

Tab. 11: Occurrence of *massacres* in LEAQ_SF

The occurrences in Table 11 above show both strategies of reinforcement through coordination of further elements to clarify the extent of the acts of violence and attribution of responsibility. Table 11 above also reports examples of how other lexical items contribute to the newsworthiness parameter of emotivity: the left modification of Turks with two comma-coordinated adjectives (*brutal + fanatical*) openly states the stance of the writer (James Cannon, Chairman of the Southern Methodist Advisory Committee of the American Near East Relief) towards the massacres of the Christians in his letter, published on 13th September 1922 and titled “Safety of Anatolian Christians. An American Warning to Turkey.” It should also be remarked that his letter mentions the word *massacres* nine times, accounting for almost a third of the total mentions of the noun in the LEAQ_SF corpus. This letter is a warning coming from a different geographical and cultural perspective, which is immediately made clear from its title. The adjective (*American*) pre-modifying the noun (*warning*) is the first key word of the sub-corpus LEAQ_SF.

Moving to the LEAQ_L sub-corpus, instead, the co-occurrences of *massacres* highlight some relevant differences, which emerge by comparing locally authored letters with letters by foreign authors, and therefore by comparing results of both sub-corpora examined so far. Out of sixty-six occurrences, the grammatical colligation plural noun(s) + coordinate conjunction (*and*) + *massacres* never occurs. In LEAQ_L, *Massacres* collocates on the left with evaluative adjectives (*appalling, hot-blood, great, horrible, mass, shocking*), with the definite article *the*, and with adjectives of nationality. Namely, *massacres* collocates ten times with *Armenian*; two times with *Turkish*; one time with *Bulgarian* and with *Greek*. The noun phrase *appalling + massacres* occurs three times in three different letters, dated 1918, 1919, and 1921. *Horrible + massacres* occurs two times, while the other collocations occur only once. On a close examination of

publication dates, only two letters of the entire LEAQ corpus date back to 1915, that is to the year when the massacres were officially reported to have started, and they both belong to LEAQ_L, signed by Valentine Chirol and by Lord Cromer. Therefore, letters clearly referring to the massacres of the Armenians are all subsequent to events, and they are all invoking some kind of action to be taken, either to assess the responsibility of the massacres, or to bring relief to the Christian population who suffered from them.

In view of the more significant numbers of letters included in LEAQ_L sub-corpus, four clusters emerge, which are worth examining to understand the construction of newsworthiness of the Armenian genocide, and are listed in Table 12 below:

The Armenian massacres
The massacres of
Massacres of the
Massacres of 1915

Tab. 12: Clusters with *massacres* in LEAQ_L sub-corpus

Examining the extended co-textual references of the most occurring cluster, “the Armenian massacres,” clarifies that the occurrence of the cluster is associated with the attribution of the massacres to the Turkish rule of the time, and to the relations between Constantinople and Germany, as Table 13 below exemplifies:

The attitude of <u>Germany</u> towards the Armenian massacres of the present day, as expressed by Count Reventlow, is not a whit more cynical or brutal than it was already in the nineties,
I had written that "history would apportion the blame for the Armenian massacres between Turk, German, and Kurd." By some typist's error, this sentence was changed to "between Turk, German, and Armenian."
with that memorable visit to Jerusalem – I allude to the Armenian massacres perpetrated by the Turkish soldiers of which it was the sequel.
Mr. Morgenthau entirely disposes of the various excuses urged by the <u>Turks in justification of the Armenian massacres</u> . In this connexion two remarks made by Talaat

Tab. 13: Extended co-textual references of cluster *the Armenian massacres* in LEAQ_L

It could be then concluded that the use of this cluster is conditioned by the semantic pattern of attribution of responsibility, connected with some use of the emotive language of evaluation (*the blame for; perpetrated by; in justification of*), and therefore contributing to the facticity

(Bednarek 2006) of the news item. This same trend is detected in the examination of the collocates of the cluster “*the massacres of,*” particularly of right collocates, i.e., words immediately collocating to the right of word under examination, most of them referring to dates (1915, 1895), with only one occurrence referring to their victims (*the Armenians*), therefore applying the news value of timeliness (Bednarek and Caple 2019; Bednarek 2010), as shown in Table 14 below:

That German missionaries in Asiatic Turkey did their utmost to stop the massacres of 1915 and to save and relieve the victims
I am not ignorant of her history during the last 450 years. I was there a few months after the massacres of 1895 and again very soon after those of 1896
the greater part of the Armenian vilayets in which the Armenians were before the massacres of 1915 the largest single element in the population, may still be left under the heel of the Turks.
If the framers of this grotesque phrase in the address had forgotten the massacres of the Armenians in the glorious days of Abdul Haamid, and the even greater holocausts under the reign of Enver and Talaat
it probably means the extermination by the sword and by famine of so much of the Armenian people as? has survived from the massacres of 1915 . I will not dwell on the political and strategic interests of Britain
the prosecutions which the Allies had forced them to institute against the persons most concerned in the massacres of 1915 , as the accomplices of Enver and Talaat
and the delivery over to their enemies of the refugees who escaped the massacres of 1915 , and whom the charity of England and America has kept alive ever since

Tab. 14: Extended co-textual references of the cluster *the massacres of* in LEAQ_L

This leads to the conclusion that there is only one mention in the entire LEAQ corpus using the grammar construction of *massacres*, the most frequent evaluative noun related to the parameter of emotivity, to specify who has been the victim of the massacres. It is interesting to remark, at this point, how left-modifiers of the node *massacres* are both the adjectives of nationality *Armenian* and *Turkish*, as shown in the examples above, which cast some semantic ambiguity on the phrases (*Armenian massacres* and *Turkish massacres*). Only their contextual reading can resolve and discern between two different connotative meanings of perpetrators and victims which, if extracted from their contexts, are not immediately discernible. On the contrary, they lead to consider both phrases as indicative of the perpetrators of the massacres.

However, the cluster *massacres of the*, deprived of its left-modifying definite article, occurs more frequently with the victims of the massacres, as shown in Table 15 below:

The attitude of Germany towards the Armenian **massacres of the** present day, as expressed by Count Reventlow, is not a whit more cynical or brutal than it was already in the nineties,

These irresponsible adventurers, with German inspiration, decreed the shocking **massacres of the** Armenian people of which the whole civilized world is united is demanding that there shall be no repetition

Is it possible that Sir Theodore Morison is serious in his attempts to extenuate that Turkish **massacres of the** Armenians by two counterclaims-first that more Armenians are stated to have been massacred

Tab. 15: Extended co-textual references of the cluster *massacres of the* in LEAQ_L

Both left- and right-modifying collocates are either adjectives of nationality (*Armenian, Turkish, Armenians*) or adjective of evaluation, one related to the news value parameter of timeliness (*present + day*) and one to the parameter of emotivity (*shocking*). Interestingly enough, the cluster *massacres of 1915* seems to have replaced the victims of the massacres with the year when they happened, thus creating a historically false collocation. The cluster suggests that the massacres of what is now known as the Armenian genocide were limited to 1915, while this is not historically accurate.

The analysis of the emotive evaluative noun *massacres* conducted so far would lead to a tentative conclusion whereby the parameter of emotivity most frequently occurs in letters not coming from the members of the local reading audience. This seems to be a strategy for non-local contributors to establish a connection with local readers, whereas local contributors are likely to be more reliant on denotative language. From a strictly quantitative point of view, the letters mostly referring to the language of evaluation to construct newsworthiness are so far from those belonging to the LEAQ_AF sub-corpus.

5.2 Atrocities

Although not as recurrent as *massacres*, the noun *atrocities* is still related to the language of genocidal violence and appears in all three sub-corpora, like *danger*. However, since the latter occurs only once in LEAQ_AF, the analysis of the occurrences will be performed only on *atrocities*. Table 16 shows the results of the extended co-text of *atrocities* in LEAQ_AF:

Much as they are to be regretted and condemned, these **atrocities** in Asia Minor would cease at once if the Turks were to be assured that their richest province, viz., the Vilayet of Aidin, would be placed under the protection of one of, the three European Powers, mentioned above

hens, and often winked at by the authorities. The **atrocities** and deportations, may I remind him, date from the outbreak of the war They were inspired and fostered by the Germans for purposes

Tab. 16: Occurrences of *atrocities* in LEAQ_AF and related extended co-textual references

With only two occurrences, both dating back to 1919, the co-text of the node replicates the patterns already identified for *massacres*. In the first example of Table 16, the evaluative noun *atrocities* is left-modified by cataphoric evaluative language (*to be regretted and condemned*). It is right modified by a prepositional phrase (*in Asia Minor*) identifying a geographical location and by a mention of their responsible (*Turks*) in the immediate co-text that follows. The second example of Table 16 shows the evaluative noun *atrocities* being right modified by the coordinate conjunction *and*, thus associating *atrocities* with *deportation*, another act of genocidal violence, and using again the grammatical colligation already in use for *massacres*.

Examples of extended co-text of *atrocities* in the sub-corpus LEAQ_SF are shown in Table 17 below:

a lurid exaggeration even of those authentic **atrocities** which Russian Christians have long practised and are still practising upon the Jews.

The hideous story from Azerbaijan proves one fact, that our Armenia friends and protégés' are not above committing **atrocities** as ferocious as they impute to others.

England, with her great power and splendid organization, has not succeeded in stopping **atrocities** in Ireland; and in India riots attended by "massacres" are ordinary occurrences

51, Upper Brook-street, W.I. Oct. 5. TURKISH **ATROCITIES**. A GREEK INDICTMENT.

and an effort was made to appoint a committee of inquiry to investigate the **atrocities** reported by these American workers.

Yowell statement published in The Times, about **atrocities** perpetrated against non-Moslems in Anatolia, is nothing but the repetition of the lies which appeared in the European and American Press some five or six months ago

Tab. 17: Occurrences of *atrocities* in LEAQ_SF

In view of the limited number of occurrences of the noun phrase *atrocities* in LEAQ_SF, all of them are listed in Table 17 above. *Atrocities* collocates with active verbs (*committing, stopping, investigate, reported, perpetrated*), with locations (*in Ireland*), with one adjective of nationality (*Turkish*) in the title of a letter which therefore openly attributes the responsibility of the violence. The analysis of the co-text of the collocation *atrocities* + *in Ireland*, it is evident that *atrocities* here refers to other massacres that the British rule has proved ineffective in preventing, maybe hinting at how ineffective it has proved to prevent the Armenian massacres as well. The letter, signed by Ameer Ali and published on 1st April 1920, is controversial, as it reports the news from India of the reaction to the alleged massacres perpetrated by the Armenians on Muslims, casting a different light on the victims. Quantitatively speaking, most

collocations, however, indicate that *atrocities* stands as an evaluative noun *per se*, without any further lexical element to reinforce its emotive evaluative connotation, as in the case of the coordinate conjunction colligation seen in use with *massacres*. It is also remarkable how atrocities need to be acted upon, and need either to be verified or are reported as inflicted; however, no lexical items directly related to the Armenians occur in the close collocates of the node *atrocities* in LEAQ_SF.

The occurrences of *atrocities* in LEAQ_L illustrate a different use of the evaluative noun, as shown in Table 18:

a question asked by Lord Bryce yesterday in the House of Lords on the most recent Armenian atrocities will not reach the ears of any resident in the Ottoman dominions

these Powers would hold personally responsible for the Armenian atrocities the men who were directing Ottoman affairs.

We have heard a great deal of Turkish atrocities towards the Armenians, but the Turks no doubt have their own version.

the Turkish authorities still permit a repetition of the massacres which from the days since Gladstone raised his appeal after the Bulgarian atrocities have been periodically repeated.

The report of the previous Inter-Allied Commission on Greek atrocities committed during the original landing at Smyrna has never been extracted from them at all.

Tab. 18: Occurrences of *atrocities* in LEAQ_L and related extended co-text

Examining L1 pre-modifiers, *atrocities* is mostly pre-modified by: adjectives of nationality (*Armenian; Bulgarian; Greek; Turkish*, one of which functioning as paratextual element in the title of the letter); by evaluative adjectives (*shocking; infamous*); by grammar words (*the, these, of*). Being pre-modified by adjectives of nationality provides confusing references, as it could be inferred that those atrocities were committed by the nationality modifying the node, mirroring the latent ambiguity of the collocate *adjective of nationality + massacres* examined above.

Analysing R1 post-modifiers, the preposition *against*, which clearly identifies the victims of the massacres, occurs only once, as example (6) shows:

- (6) [...] there has been a general take-over of Turkish ash-bins of the past, and the question of **atrocities against the Christian minorities** has once more been dragged to the light of day. [*The Times*, 4th April 1924]

The general reference to Christian minorities further contributes to generalising the victims of the atrocities, as debated in Martini (2021a), whereby the recurrent association of nationalities blurs the impact of the emotive parameter, although in this case it might appeal to the news

value parameter of proximity, aiming at creating a connection with the reader using the cultural nearness of the events (Bednarek and Caple 2019).

6. Final remarks

The analysis conducted so far provides only a segment of a more elaborate study of the LEAQ corpus, which is currently being examined to study how news value parameters have been used to create the newsworthiness of the Armenian question between 1914 and 1926, i.e., around the events of the genocide. The aim of this wider research is to isolate linguistic trends to provide elements for a better understanding of a possible connection between how the event was reported and what seems to be a general oblivion of the genocide. This article contributes to this wider research by examining the language of evaluation in the letters to the editor of *The Times*, with a specific focus on the most recurrent terms relating to the news value parameter of emotivity, which lies at the basis of the construction of a relation with the reading public particularly in the letters to the editor. *The Times* was chosen for its international circulation in those last decades of the British Empire, and for its status as a highly regarded established broadsheet newspaper, where notable personalities of the time were more than likely to contribute with personal insights concerning international events.

This intrinsic feature of *The Times* allowed me to divide the corpus according to the authorship of the letters, in order to analyse the different uses of emotive evaluative language to connect to the sentiment of the audience, and to isolate different trends, if applicable. As it has emerged from the corpus-driven analysis of data, the parameter of emotivity is mostly used by non-local signed contributors, while local and non-local anonymous contributors structure the newsworthiness of their contributions along other parameters (timeliness) or rely on the facticity of the events. These remarks were made through the analysis of left and right collocates of the most recurrent nodes pertaining to the language of evaluation (*disastrous, massacres, atrocities*) as emerged from the study of the LEAQ word list, in comparison also with the key words of both signed non-local (LEAQ_SF) and anonymous non-local (LEAQ_AF) sub-corpora. A study of available clusters and their collocates was also performed, which further contributed to confirming the implementation of the parameter of emotivity as more specific to non-local contributions from notable personalities.

This also leads me to conclude that these contributions might have been a way to present the local readership with different writing styles and different ways of expressing personal stances on events, which relied on news value parameters that differed from those shared by local contributors. The cross-cultural value of foreign contributions is thus proved to be significant

not only in its formal assessment of being open to different voices, but also in not standardising those voices and allowing them to rely on their own parameters of evaluation of the events, thus confronting the readership with an emotive connotation of the Armenian genocide that the local contributors were reluctant to express.

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