A CORPUS-ASSISTED SEMANTIC PROFILE OF THE NOUN REPRESENTATION IN CAD AND CADS STUDIES ON NEWSPAPER DISCOURSE

DARIO DEL FANTE
UNIVERSITY OF FERRARA

ABSTRACT

The existing literature on newspaper discourse from a CAD (Critical Discourse Analysis) or CADS (Corpus-assisted Discourse Studies) perspective is extensive and there is a large volume of published studies that mention the noun representation in their titles or put the representation in the press as the main object of investigation. Generally, these works focus on the use of language to represent a social phenomenon like migration, Islam, Europe, homelessness, obesity, and many other events. However, except for some works, the explanation of what the act of representation means is often not directly and overtly addressed. However, the fact that the notion of representation is not often clearly defined in many works (generally for a matter of space) does not mean that the notion is taken for granted or the implications are not considered. For this reason, this paper investigates how the notion of representation is presented. On the basis that the meaning of an expression derives from its use in context, which is intended as all its manifestations through which the expression itself acquires its meaning, the aim of this work is to give a corpus-assisted discourse perspective on the use of the lexical item *representation* in the academic discourse focused on the news media.

CONTACT

Dario Del Fante, Departement of Humanities, University of Ferrara, Via Paradiso 12 44121 – Ferrara, dario.delfante@unife.it

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Dario Del Fante

University of Ferrara

1. Introduction

Within the existing literature on newspaper discourse from a Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) (Fairclough, 2015) or Corpus-assisted Discourse Studies (henceforth CADS) (Partington *et al.*, 2013; Taylor & Marchi, 2018) perspectives, there is a large volume of published studies that mention the noun *representation* in their titles or put the representation in the press as the main object of investigation. A simple Google Scholar search for articles and monographs containing the words *representation* and *discourse* in their titles, published between 2000 and 2023, yields 1,190 results, with 108 of them explicitly utilizing corpora. However, as Partington (2015) argues, 'the adoption of this particular term, in preference to other possibilities presumably deemed less functionally appropriate …, is not without some interesting repercussions' (p. 1).

As noted by Hunston (2022), both CDA and CADS studies 'frequently examine news discourse and show how its representation of events and of people both reveal and influence societal attitudes and assumptions' (p. 210). In fact, these works focus on the use of language to represent a social phenomenon like migration (KhosraviNik, 2009; KhosraviNik *et al.*, 2012), Islam (Baker *et al.*, 2013a, 2013b), Europe (Marchi & Taylor, 2008), homelessness (Schneider *et al.*, 2010), obesity (Brookes & Baker, 2021), and many other events. This inclination is further exemplified by the forthcoming introductory textbook on Corpus and Discourse Studies, edited by Heritage and Taylor (forthcoming), which underscores the significance of representation in CADS studies. From the outset, CADS studies have placed representation at the core, emphasizing the intricate relationship between language and representation while presenting readers with a variety of methodologies for analyzing it.

However, we might argue that there is an inclination on not giving a precise, clear and concise definition of representation. Except for some works such as Mitchell (1990) for literary studies, Fowler (1991), Hall (1997) and Partington (2015) for news media studies, Tucker (2007) and Van Dijk (2002) concerning political discourse and, more recently, the work by Brookes and Baker (2021, pp. 2–7) and Taylor and Heritage (forthcoming), the explanation of what the act of representation means is often not directly and overtly addressed.

In general, there are references to concepts such as *discursive representation*, *representation of social actors*, *social representation*, *media representation*, but there is no explicit explanation of what representation precisely means and how it works in language and dis-

course. However, the fact that the notion of representation is not often clearly defined in many works (generally for a matter of space) does not mean that the notion is taken for granted or the implications are not considered. For this reason, it would be interesting to investigate how the notion of representation is presented within the primary literature which explicitly focuses on discourse representation.

Therefore, given the centrality of such concept within CDA and CADS studies, the general aim of this work is to understand what the main discursive image among researchers on the role played by the notion of representation in the press is. On the basis that the meaning of an expression derives from its use in context, which is intended as all its manifestations through which the expression itself acquires its meaning, the goal of this work is to give a corpus-assisted discourse perspective on the use of the lexical item *representation* in the academic discourse focused on the news media.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that this study does not pretend to give a full account of the use of *representation* in general. Its scope is narrowed around such academic research interested in examining how language is used to present reality through newspapers. This work does not offer any definitive answer but, instead, its goal is to stimulate the debate on the relationship between discourse and representation.

2. Representation: a priori definition

2.1. Dictionaries on representation

Following the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023), the lemma REPRESENTATION is either a borrowing from Middle French *representacion, representation* ('representation'), or a borrowing from classical Latin, *repraesentationem* (nominative *repraesentātiō*), which derives from the verb *repraesentare*. It is composed by the intensive prefix *re- + praesentare*, from present participle of *præesse* ('be before someone or something'), composed by *prae-* ('before') + *esse* ('to be'). The meaning is 'to give immediate effect to, bring forward to the present, to present, to view, exhibit, to show or present in person'. So, the verb basically describes an action in which someone shows something to an audience, highlighting that the verb refers to a performative action[1], and the intensive prefix *re-* indicates the idea of reiteration putting this action in a series of repeated events. In this sense, the thing presented or exhibited is not directly the thing itself, but it is a re-proposition, a re-iteration, a re-presentation.

I then checked the definition of the lemma REPRESENTATION in three dictionaries: the Oxford English dictionary (henceforth OED), the Longman dictionary (henceforth LongM), and the Collins dictionary (henceforth CollnS). Two main senses emerge. On the one hand, the noun is listed as uncountable and the sense is mainly referred to the action of 'standing for/in the place of something or someone by someone else'. This definition gets a more political nuance. On the other hand, the noun is listed as countable and

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1 Interestingly, the same form is shared across other languages like Catalan *representació* (14th cent.), Spanish *representación* (early 15th cent. or earlier), Portuguese *representação* (15th cent.) and Italian *rappresentazione* (14th cent) (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

has sense relating to depiction or portrayal, more specific to the world of art, music, literature and cinema. In this case, representation stands for pictures, models, or statues that show something or someone. In the following table there is an overview of the different senses.

Representation	Definition A	Example	Definition B	Example
OED	The action of standing for, or in the place of, a person, group, or thing.	I regard the representation of a guilty and despicable defendant, as one of the highest obligations of my profession. *International Journal Epidemiol. vol. 19 787/1*	A picture, model, or statue of a person or thing as a representation of them.	The very nature of theatrical representation defied 'official' positions on rank and degree. *Studies in English Literature 1500– 1900 vol. 33 311*
Longman		Minority groups need more effective parliamentary representation.		The clock in the painting is a symbolic representation of the passage of time.
Collins		Independent shareholders who own about half the stock now have no representation on the board.		Coloured papers and cardboard representations of Mount Fuji.

Table 1: Sense of representation in three Dictionaries

According to Pitkin (1972, p. 241), the Latin[2] verb mainly referred to inanimate objects and had nothing to do with people representing other people or even the Roman

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2   An interesting avenue for further research concerns the ancient Greek precursor to the concept of representation: μίμησις (mimesis 'imitation' or 'interpretation'). In fact, in his Poetics, Aristotle uses the verb μιμέομαι (miméomai 'to represent') when referring to the act of representing reality in art and poetry. What both Halliwell (2002, p. 1) and Palumbo (2008, p. 12) emphasize is that within the Western tradition of philosophical and literary studies, mimesis has often been interpreted as if it denoted imitation, which has led it to be detached from its original context, rendering it unrecognizable. Regrettably, this confusion could be seen as a potential contributor to the illusion of objectivity in news media. Exploring this connection may be a subject for future investigation.

state, in a political sense. Then, its application has subsequently been extended to both animate and inanimate objects, also acquiring the meaning of 'standing for something or someone' and applied to different contexts, from literature and theatre to history of art, psychology and politics.

These two definitions are not in contrast with each other but highlights two important aspects of the notion of representation. Firstly, a representation stands for an object which is missing. Secondly, what is then presented is the represener who has different means of representation, themselves, as in the case of political representation, or visual elements, paintings photography or words in texts, as in the case of definition B.

As regards this specific work, the interest within CDA and CADS studies lies in the proper representation in newspapers. More specifically, newspaper representations have the shape of written texts provided sometimes with images or videos (in the case of online newspapers). In line with Saussure's work (1959), the 'sign' is the focus of the study, namely anything that communicate meaning, composed of two elements: the 'signifier', namely the form such as a written text and the 'signified', namely the corresponding concept triggered in the reader's head while reading the newspaper text.

2.2. Scholars on newspaper representation

There is a scarcity of works that openly discuss the functioning and the implications of linguistic representation in newspaper discourse. However, there is also a group of studies which openly (and less explicitly) address this topic with a critical lens by providing a structured explanation on what representation is and how representation works (e.g. Fowler 1991; Baker *et al.* 2013a; Partington 2015). These contributions encompass areas ranging from Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to Cultural Studies and Social Semiotics. On the contrary, there are works which mention representation in their title which does not address the topic at all and which does not provide any explanation. For example, the edited collection by Johnson and Ensslin (2007) and the monograph by Talbot (2007) contains in its title the word *representation* but an explanation is not provided.

Considering that linguistic representation aligns with the interpretation of reality through language, I have identified two aspects that receive particular attention in the literature.

As regards the first aspect, the representation of an object is the result of a socio-cultural and linguistic operation where reality is "translated" into language into a specific socio-cultural context. The relationship between reality and its representation, namely a newspaper article, does not involve a simplistic operation of imitation/description: the journalist does not simply describe what has happened, but there is a complex system of roles and relationships involved in news production, which cannot merely be explained in terms of writer and reader (as also argued In Baker *et al.* [2013a, p. 3-4]).

Fowler (1991, p. 25–45) investigates how language is used to represent reality in newspapers, highlighting how this process consists of a constructive practice and events and reality are transformed and modified depending on the newspaper's interests. He

stresses that representation in the press is 'a constructive practice' (1991, p. 25), where the press is used 'by people working under certain economic circumstances, and following certain conventions of production, and habitual use in these circumstances gives rise to conventional significances' (Fowler, 1991, p. 25). On one hand, Fowler acknowledges the role of the newspaper in shaping the representation in alignment with its worldview. On the other hand, he underscores the necessity of posing the reader in a particular creative process where they also select the information to process. 'It should be clear that linguistically constructed representation is by no means a deliberate process, entirely under the control of newspaper' (Fowler, 1991, p. 41), since reading is an 'active, creative practice' (Fowler, 1991, p. 43). With respect to this, there are social, cultural and political elements influencing the reader that go beyond the control of the newspaper.

Hall's (1997) work significantly marks the field of representation studies. He proposes that when we are dealing with representation, two system are involved: the mental representation system and the linguistic system, which are both affected from socio-cultural factors. Discussing this notion from a constructionist approach, he poses representation as the way we create meaning. Reality and objects do not have fixes meanings, but society is responsible for signifying. So, representation is strongly connected to discourse and power, in a Foucauldian sense.

The work by Bell (1991) on news media underscores the role of news value in the representation of reality in newspaper articles. Therefore, the accuracy of such texts and the newspapers' informative value should be subjected to a more critical examination (Bell, 1991, pp. 212–229). He recognizes that newspaper communication involves not only the roles of the speaker and the listener but four distinct roles contributing to the production of news language: the primary source of the news, the author (who writes the articles), the editor (who is responsible of revising written material), the animator (who is responsible for the article transmission). As Bell (1991) notes, his division 'points to a division of responsibility for linguistic form as well as news content' (p. 38). Due to the intricate structure behind news production, informed by both news values and the experiences of each role, the newspaper's representation of reality emerges from a complexity of elements and experiences. Van Dijk (2002) presents a similar argument in his study on political cognition in the context of politics, by focusing on the role of the writer/journalist. He emphasizes that the journalist responsible for writing an article conveys (a) their personal beliefs as individuals, (b) the political inclinations of the newspaper as an employee, and, to a lesser extent, (c) the political system of the nation to which they belong (Van Dijk, 2002, p. 205). His point makes clear that the relationship between reality and a newspaper article regards different level of complexity. Fairclough (2015) does not overtly mention representation as part of his theorization in his seminal work on language and ideology, but gives decisive contribution on the reader's role in text consumption and on the writer's roles in text production. As Fairclough (1989) perfectly explains:

> Notice that, paradoxical as it may seem, both the production of a text and the
> interpretation of a text have an interpretative character. The producer of the text
> constructs the text as an interpretation of the world, or of the facets of the world which

are then in focus; formal features of the text are traces of that interpretation. The traces constitute cues for the text interpreter, who draws upon her assumptions and expectations (incorporated in frames) to construct her interpretation of the text. Thus text interpretation is the interpretation of an interpretation. For neither the world nor the text does the interpretation of what is "there" impose itself; both the production and the interpretation of texts are creative, constructive interpretative processes. (p. 104)

The second aspect regards the objectivity of newspaper representation. When we are dealing with newspapers, it is important to bear in mind that newspaper representation are not 'a neutral vehicle, nor is news production a neutral process, despite the journalist's century-old creed of objectivity' (Schudson, 1978; cited in Bell, 1991, p. 212). The journalists represent and could misrepresent reality as well as the audience understands and misunderstands the news. Additionally, another important concept to consider when influencing the resulting newspaper representation is the concept of news values (as explained in Bednarek and Caple [2017, p. 27–35]), which are criteria that define an event as worthy of being reported as 'news'.

Conboy (2010), quoting Cameron (1990), defines the 'language reflects society' model as 'a regular cliché within lazy-minded interpretations of the role of the newspaper itself as "mirroring society"' (p. 4). Baker *et al.* (2013a) highlights the deliberateness of the journalists or the editorial team in selecting and presenting reality according to their specific views:

> In the United Kingdom, national newspapers function as more than mere 'mirrors' of reality. Instead, they have the role of constructing ideologically motivated versions of reality, which are aimed at persuading people that certain phenomena are good or bad, leading John Richardson (2004, p. 227) to describe journalism as an 'argumentative discourse genre'. (p. 3).

So, the newspaper representations should not be considered as an imitation but as a limited account of reality emerging 'from a dynamic that is shaped by a number of competing forces of differing strengths and directions' (Iggers, 1999, p. 100).

In this regard, Partington (2015) provides an accurate reflection by introducing an additional critical aspect. He argues that the use of the term 'representation' fundamentally implies two general notions (2015, p. 220). Firstly, the representation of an object necessarily implies an *abstraction* of that object – namely a reduction to another dimension. Quoting the Kantian (Kant, 1998[1787]) notions of *noumena,* the things in themselves, and *phenomena*, the specific experiences of that things, he defines the objects of observations as *noumena,* and its corpus-based analysis as *phenomena* or *representations*. Secondly, the study representation implies an *interaction* between the representer, and the thing represented: 'any attempt at describing or even simply observing an event inevitably contains an element of *interaction,* even *interference*' (Partington, 2015, p. 221). In the context of a discussion on the philosophy of science and 'the observer's paradox' (Labov, 1972, p. 209), Partington (2009) speaks of an 'indivisible hermeneutic package — the observer (including mind), observational instruments, observations, object of observation' (p.

296). Each part is necessary, and the entire system is sensitive to any modification that occurs in each of its parts.

As regards the observation performed by newspapers, Partington (2015, p. 221) argues that there is a certain amount of ambiguity about the role of the observer, namely the journalist. Despite the traditional distinction made by newspaper reports and opinion pages, where the former being considered objective and impartial and the second evaluative (Partington, 2015, p. 222), the elements contained in the description or representation of an event in newspapers result from a process of selection on many levels: the person to be interviewed, the begin and end of the account of event, what aspects to mention or omit. Thus, even the news report cannot be considered objective.

Moreover, Partington also makes some important consideration on research on representation. He fundamentally stresses that when it comes to representation, unfortunately, we should consider what is described by journalists and what is reported by the researcher as not being objectively true. In addition to newspaper outlets which make choices and 'therefore do not simply present but re-present a particular picture of their topic' (Partington, 2015, p. 222), the discourse analysts who study newspaper texts are theirselves 'engaged in a recursive process of producing their own representation of other entities' (the media's) representations of a topic' (Partington, 2015, p. 223). The idea of Partington that studying representation is like dealing with representations of representation is linked to the notion of self-reflexivity as in Marchi (2019) and Duguid (2009), who deals with journalists speaking about journalists and with talks about talks respectively. For a paper investigating the influence of the researcher/observer on the research, please refer to Marchi and Taylor (2009).

Additionally, he highlights that the final representer is the reader: 'The reader has their own observational standpoint relative to the discourse analysis they are reading which enables, indeed obliges, them to make a separate mental representation of it' (Partington, 2015, p. 223). Partington reflects whether individuals construct a bottom-up worldview from their representations, or they construct their worldview which influences their representations. It is difficult to answer this question. However, in relation to newspapers, there is generally a pre-existing editorial line/worldview which certainty is in different ways proposed to the final readers.

This review does not pretend to be comprehensive, but I preferred looking at those works which had a theoretical impact on the present contribution. Moreover, I would like to mention three examples that critically address the notion of representation overtly in their research by referring to the works discussed in this section. In his investigation of the discursive representation of discrimination against the Roma in Eastern Europe, Erjavec (2001) shows that newspapers tend to prefer such topics to others depending on their newsworthiness, resulting in establishing a dominant view on such events over different ways proposed to the final reader. Alvaro (2013), by researching the discursive representations of the dissident Liu Xiaob, devotes a paragraph to the explanation of the notion and the act of representation and adopts a constructivist approach to representation, inspired by the work by Hall (1997). Lastly, Brookes and Baker (2021) devote con-

siderable space in their introductory chapter to the discussion of the challenges posed by the study of newspaper representation of an issue, such as obesity, and they put the focus on the problems resulting from the creation of news and the non-objectivity of newspaper representations.

2.3. *A priori definition*

The focus of this paper is on the newspaper representation which will be considered. In this respect, two main points emerge.

On the one hand, there is a definition reflecting a fixed and compact nature. A representation is, by definition, the process according to something stands for something else, which can be of any kind of text, image, video, statue (Saussure, 1959). Following the definition, the notion of representation in newspaper discourse generally corresponds to news article which are representations of reality and stands for it. So, representations are obviously substituting reality.

On the other hand, there is a definition reflecting the complexity of how representations are in language. Any representation is a cultural and social construction enacted by and communicated through a signifying system, also referred to as 'language'. Language is a representational system. The correspondence between the representation and the object of representation is not direct because any representation depends on the representor's experience and on the user (reader/hearer).

In the following section, a corpus-assisted analysis will be conducted with the aim of investigating the semantics of the noun 'representation' on the basis of the discussion above.

3. Data & Methodology

This paper lies within the methodological framework of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (Partigton *et al.*, 2013; Taylor & Marchi, 2018). Instead of proposing an exclusively qualitative review of the primary literature, I will adopt a corpus-assisted approach to uncover those non-obvious and unexpected profiles which are not attainable through close reading. The idea behind this paper has been particularly influenced by Tucker (2007) and Taylor (2008). Specifically, I adopted from Tucker (2007) the idea of understanding the meaning of a concept by conducting a corpus-based analysis. Meanwhile, Taylor (2008) inspired me to conduct a state-of-the-art overview by meta-analyzing a representative sample of works dealing with newspaper representation.

In order to look at the understanding of researchers studying discursive representations, a written English corpus was compiled by collecting a representative sample of open-access papers (or papers I have access to through the University of Ferrara, to which I am affiliated, and the University of Padova, with which I collaborate) whose title contained the words *representation* AND *press* OR *representation* AND *newspaper.* Then only those articles which were adopting a discursive perspective have been selected. The location for each paper has been retrieved through Google Scholar. The Represent_Dis-

course Corpus (henceforth RDC) contains 515,522 tokens and 35,982 types across 52 texts. For a detailed overview of the corpus, please, see Table A in the Appendix. The analysis has been conducted using Lancsbox X (Brezina & Platt, 2023) and WordSmith tools 8 (Scott, 2022). The analysis has been approached through a mixed methodology according to a deductive/inductive[3] reasoning and to quantitative/qualitative techniques. The corpus has been POS tagged using the UCREL CLAWS7 Tagset (Fligelstone, Pacey & Rayson, 1997).

The first step has concerned the formulation of an a priori definition following a deductive reasoning. Through the study of some of the dictionaries and of the main works that deal with the notion of representation and language and newspaper media, a definition has been inferred. I have used the term *a priori* since the works analysed are mainly theoretical and comes from definitions and principles.

The second step involved the analysis of the semantics of the lemma REPRESENTATION by examining the collected corpus to develop an a posteriori definition through inductive reasoning. The term *a posteriori* is used in this context because the definition is derived from empirical observations of various instances of the lemma REPRESENTATION within the RDC corpus.

The semantic profile of the lemma REPRESENTATION was constructed by investigating its collocational context and concordances. To achieve this, I utilized the Key Word In Context (KWIC) tool, which generates a list of all occurrences of a search term within a corpus in the form of a concordance. These concordances were analysed using the Corpus Query Language (CQL) to isolate specific linguistic structures indicating: 1) the objects of representations; 2) the verbs associated with REPRESENTATION as an object or subject; 3) the modifiers evaluating the lemma REPRESENTATION. For each element, the findings were sorted according to the frequency of occurrences in the corpus and their distribution across texts. Subsequently, the most frequently appearing words in the context were categorized by topics and functions. Lastly, a closer look at the specific examples has been given.

4. Analysis

4.1. RDC corpus overview – a distant reading

Before delving into the close analysis, a distant perspective on the corpus has been useful to investigate whether some specific patterns emerged. In this section, two aspects have been taken into account in order to measure the degree to which representation is uniformly spread in the RDC corpus:

- Distribution — the relative frequency of the lemma in each article.

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3   Despite the topic is huge and, for a matter of space, it is not possible to offer an exhaustive overview on the two reasoning, we can broadly differentiate the two approaches according to the way they make general conclusions. Inductive reasoning involves inferring general principles from specific instances. Deductive reasoning, on the other hand, entails describing specific cases by applying general laws.

- Dispersion — the position of the lemma in each article.

Figure 1 has been produced with *Lancsbox* and offers an overview of the size of the different articles in RDC corpus and the distribution of the lemma REPRESENTATION. The size of each dot indicates the number of tokens for each article — the bigger the dot the higher the number of tokens. The colour of each circle indicates the number of hits of the lemma REPRESENTATION expressed through the relative frequency per 1 million words. 1,299 hits (2,519,78 per 1 million words) occurred in the corpus. For example, the reddest dot is a document whose size is around 6,000 tokens, but the relative frequency of the lemma REPRESENTATION is extremely high – 11,000 occurrences per millions of words. Whilst the biggest article in the corpus, which is in the right-bottom sector in the figure, counts 21,000 tokens in total and the lemma REPRESENTATION shows a frequency of 2,000 hits per 1 million words. Thus, it seems that the size of the article is not directly proportional to the number of times REPRESENTATION is mentioned and, so, any trend suggesting the correlation between these two aspects can be identifiable: the distribution of the lemma REPRESENTATION does not depend on the length of the article.
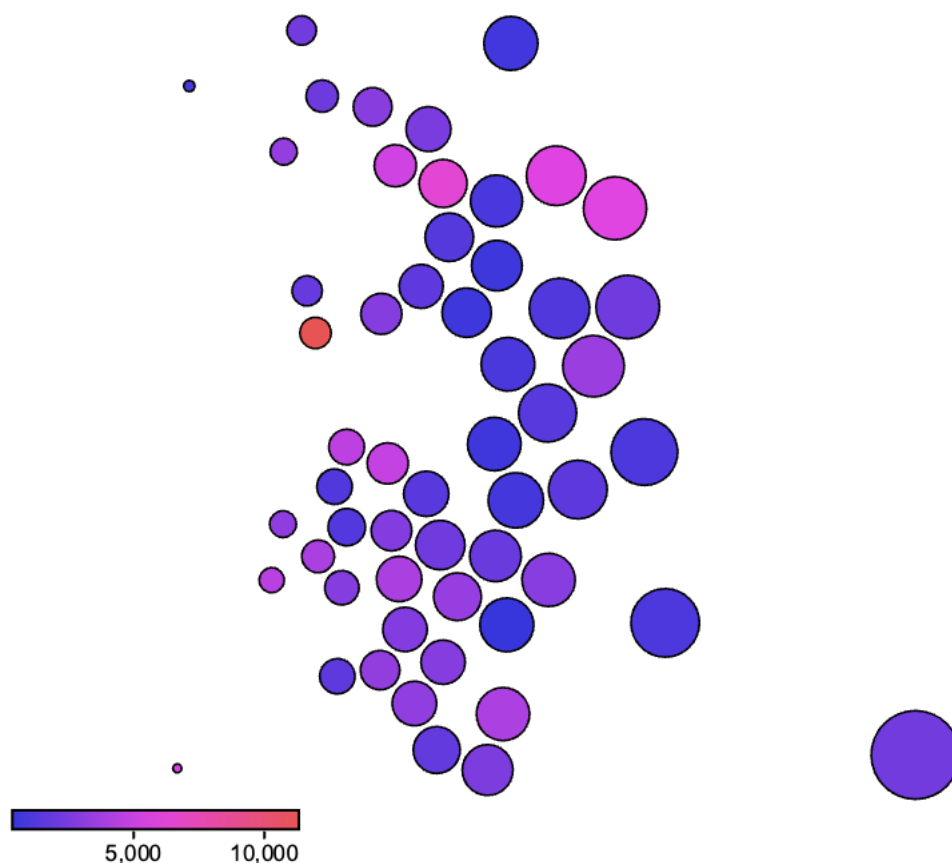
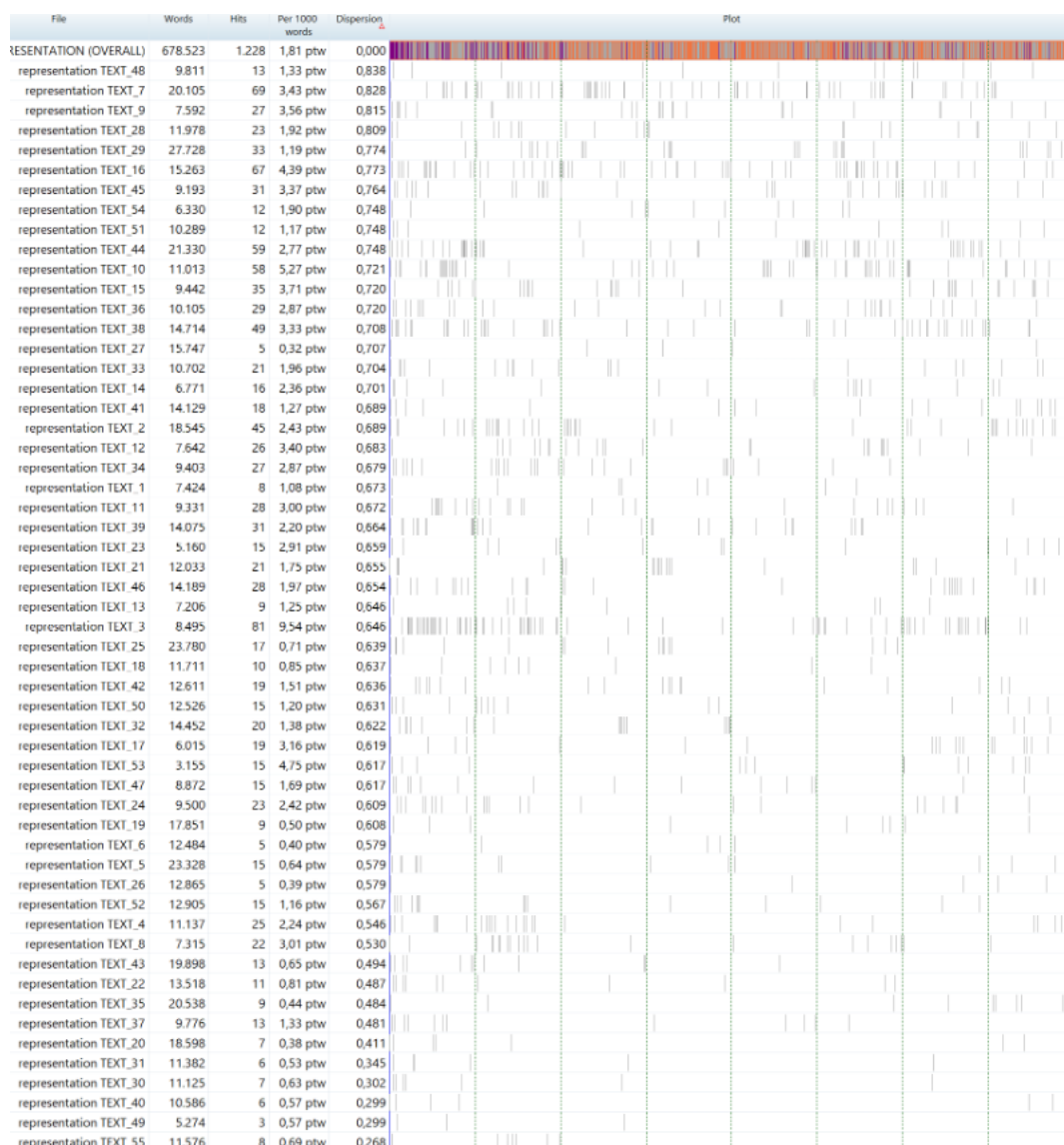
Figure 1: Overview of the RDC corpus in terms of articles

**Figure 2**: *Dispersion plot of lemma REPRESENTATION*

Figure 2 displays all the articles composing RDC corpus ordered in terms of dispersion. Each plot shows where the lemma appears in the article. The left edge of the plot is the beginning of the text file and presumably corresponds to the introduction. The central section corresponds to the method and research. The right edge is the end of the text, namely the discussion section. Considering that the standard organization of the *research paper* genre follows the general schematic IMRD structure (Huth, 1987; Swales, 1990, 2004; Sollaci & Pereira, 2004), Introduction – Method – Results – Discussion, the frequency, and the position of a word across the sections of an article is a meaningful piece of information. Whether the mention of the topic occurs uniformly across the text, or there is a concentration in the introductory or conclusive sections, the evidence might reveal the author/s' behaviour. Figure 2 has been complied through *Wordsmith tool* and

shows that REPRESENTATION occurs 1,228 times and is uniformly mentioned across the sections for most of the articles: the lemma occurs in the beginning, in the centre and in the end. Whilst the last four texts are exceptional. In this regard, the lemma occurs in the beginning and only one time at the end. For example, texts 49 and 55 only mention REPRESENTATION respectively three and seven times in the initial section and, only for text 55, one time in the last section of the text. Texts 40 and 30 show mentions mainly in the initial part of the text. In general, looking at the plot referring to the overall corpus, the starting section expectedly appear to be the location where this topic has been highly mentioned.

4.2.   The object of representation

According to the definitions discussion in Section 2, the object of newspaper representation corresponds to the event or events reported in a newspaper article, namely reality. The analysis on the different objects have showed the variety of interests within the general group of work on newspaper representation. The of-phrase — X of Y — puts the X element in relation to the Y element where 'of' functions as a *specifier* which indicates the material or substance which the representation consists of. So, I have isolated the -of phrase 'REPRESENTATION of' + NOUN to examine which objects of representation are most prevalent in the corpus. Specifically, I was interested in identifying which aspects of reality have been the primary focus of representation studies.

The objects of representation have been categorized into 11 general topics, as shown in Figure 3, which displays the number of articles. *Health*, *Group of People*, *Religion* and *Gender* are the most frequent topics, discussed in nearly half of the texts within the RDC corpus, between 25 and 20. *Gender* then is present in 14 articles and *Critical Issues* in 11 articles. The topics of *Questions, Emotions, Research* respectively in six and five articles and the topics of *Geography, Specific Person, and Events and Facts* are discussed in only three articles. Expectedly, the number of texts varies directly with the overall number of occurrences and there are no topics discussed only in one single article.
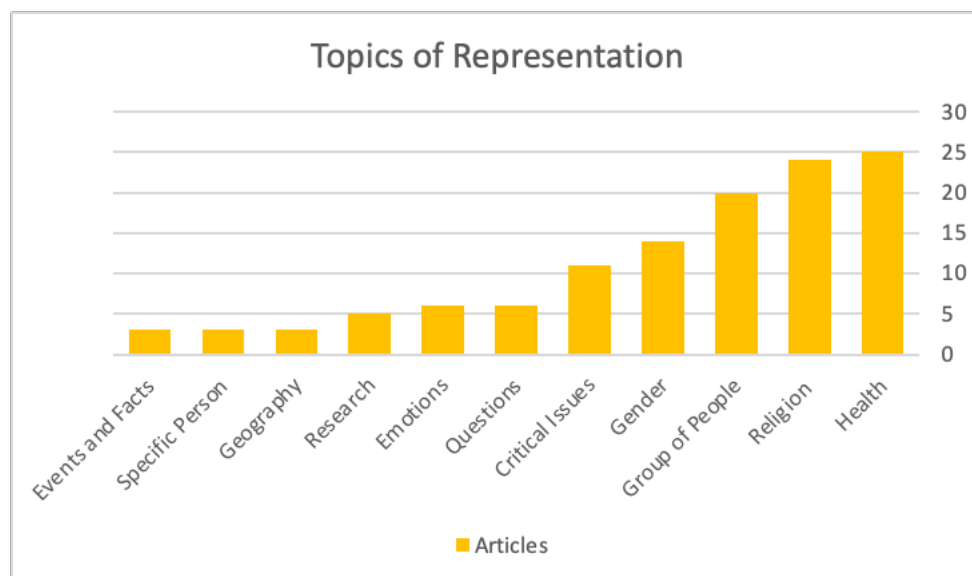
Figure 3: *Distribution of Topics of Representation in the RDC Corpus*

Table 2 presents the topics of representation along with the number of hits and reported examples. *Health* and *Group of People* have the same number of hits, but the former appears in more texts than the latter. The *health* topics encompass articles investigating the media representation of illness, primarily two types of illnesses found in the RDC corpus. On one hand, mental health is examined, including terms like *mental health*, *schizophrenia*, *personality disorder*, and *anorexia*. On the other hand, physical illnesses, such as *tinnitus* and *stuttering*, are explored. Additionally, one article specifically addresses the representation of gene-editing, which, while not an illness, is a form of genetic engineering for DNA modification often applied to health research.

The *Group of People* category pertains to articles studying the newspaper representation of collective groups of people. As shown in Table 2, this topic is primarily characterized by the presence of migration-related nouns, with 69 out of 113 items. The remaining nouns relate to *future generations*, *majorities and minorities*, and *sex workers*.[4]

Religion focuses on the newspaper representation of both religions, such as *Islam* and *Judaism*, and the adherents of those religions, such as *Muslims* and *Jews*. In this category, 80 out of 96 occurrences refer to Islam.

The *Gender* topic is discussed with a specific focus on *women, women as leaders and managers*, and *feminism*. Interestingly, the noun phrase *representation of women* is the most frequent in the RDC corpus, with 53 occurrences.

The *Critical Issues* category pertains to events that might be presented or perceived as critical situations demanding an urgent response. Examples include *the UPS strike, the Zimbabwean crisis, the land issue*, and *the Kurdish issue*. We have included '*Refugee crisis* as well, given that *refugee* acts as a modifier for *crisis*, with the focus being on the noun. This topic is closely related in meaning to the topic of *Questions* which differently includes events

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4   As proposed by an anonymous reviewer, it is worth emphasizing that these identities can be considered intersectional in the sense that they are all generally connected to oppressed groups.

that might be perceived as critical but whose resolution is not expected immediately. This group encompasses topics like *alcohol, labour,* and even more abstract concepts such as *ideologically conflicting ideas* or the *democratic society party*. However, it has a lesser presence in RDC corpus.

Geography presents 26 hits in the corpus, but the topic is discussed only in three texts and the interest is mainly for the representation of *Europe/European Union* (23 hits), and only to a minor degree, for *Syria* (3 hits).

As regards the *Emotions* topic, three feelings are the object of representations under investigation: two negatives, *fear* and *terror,* and one positive *hope,* which is aligned with that of *fear. Social actors* and *participants and processes* are the two object whose representation is categorized under the *Research* topic. Then the *Specific person* topic is the least present with 7 hits in only one article mentioning two Lybian politicians persons: *Qaddafi,* the dictator ruling Libya from 1969 to 2011, and *Megrahi,* head of security for Libyan Arab Airlines.

Topic	Hits	Texts	Example (of NOUN)
Health	113	25	mental health (31); schizophrenia (12); mental illness (12); anorexia (9); people with schizophrenia(9); schizophrenia (5); tinnitus (4); stuttering (3); people with personality disorder (3); gene editing (23); genoma (2)
Group of People	113	20	**refugees, asylum seekers and migrants**(14); sex work (25); **refugees, asylum seekers and migrants**(3); **refugees and asylum seekers** (3); **migrants and refugees** (4); **migrants** (20); **sub saharan immigrants** (16); **migration** (7); future generations (7);

			sex workers (5); RASIM (4); majorities and minorities (3)
Religion	96	24	**Islam** (14); **Islam and Muslims** (37); Jews (10); **Muslims** (27); Judaism (2); **IAM** (2)
Gender	81	14	**women (53)**; **women leaders and managers (13)**; **feminism (13)**; gender relations (2)
Questions and events	28	10	**alcohol (11)**; sexual crime (5); sport (4); prospective industrial technologies (2); ideologically conflicting ideas (2); labour (2); democratic society party (2); science (2)
Geography	26	3	**European Union (9)**; Syria(3); **Europe (14)**
Critical Issues	24	10	the UPS strike (3); the **zimbabwean crisis** (6); the zimbabwean situation (3); **the refugee crisis (**4); **the land issue** (2); the kurdish issue (2); the west toward isis (2)

Table 2: *Topics of* REPRESENTATION

Table 3 indicates the distribution of the top 10 most present objects of representation in terms of frequency of occurrence and distribution across articles. As already mentioned, the REPRESENTATION of *Women* is the most present object of representation in seven different articles for a total of 50 hits, but it is the only occurrence in the top 10 of

the Gender Topic. Then, the top 10 list is composed of three main topics: *Religion, Health* and *Group of People (*with terms related to migration that constitute the majority).

Value	Hits	Texts	Topic
REPRESENTATION of Women	50	7	Gender
REPRESENTATION of Islam	38	4	Religion
REPRESENTATION of Islam and Muslims	31	4	Religion
REPRESENTATION of Mental Health	31	5	Health
REPRESENTATION of Refugees	30	8	Group of People
REPRESENTATION of Sex Work	25	1	Group of people
REPRESENTATION of Refugees Asylum Seekers	21	4	Group of People
REPRESENTATION of Refugees Asylum	21	4	Group of People
REPRESENTATION of migrants	21	3	Group of People
REPRESENTATION of mental illness	10	3	Health

Table 3: *Top 10 overview of the objects of REPRESENTATION*

The interpretation of these data is not straightforward. Certainly, the RDC corpus is a sample, a reflection of media studies that can provide us with insights. While we cannot propose overly general interpretations, what we can assert is that, in relation to the object of representation, i.e., the part of reality studied by these works, the first result is precisely that the topics mainly studied coincide with those that the press predominantly covers and that have a greater social impact. Gender issues, mental health, migration, Islam in the West countries, and sex workers can be considered as very important issues from a political and social perspective. Thus, both newspapers and media studies have been focusing on these topics in a circular relationship: as already discussed, newspapers are more interested in dealing with important and newsworthy events and, consequently,

media studies are more interested in studying these texts. Therefore, in this case, we can affirm that newsworthiness decisively impacts the model from which these representations take shape.

4.3.   Verbs with REPRESENTATION

The second part of the analysis involves examining verbs associated with the lemma REPRESENTATION. This includes verbs with REPRESENTATION as both the subject and the object. The criterion behind this analysis lies in the fact that the use of a verb reflects how the researcher interprets the concept of representation. In general, no pattern has been identified in the analysis, and there are no recurring verbal structures with REPRESENTATION.

Table 4 contains the verbs identified where REPRESENTATION was in the direct object position. The verbs are reported in their infinitive form. Two interpretations emerge.

Value	Hits	Texts
examine	3	3
analyze	2	2
support	1	1
interrogate	1	1
examines	3	3
construct	2	2
discuss	1	1
gain	1	1

Table 4*: Verbs when Representation is Object*

Regarding the first interpretation, REPRESENTATION is intended as a unique, monolithic object. In line with the second definition reported in section 2.3, the newspaper representation seems to be interpreted as a product of a process of representation, such as a statue or a picture, or an object of study.

The examples (1–6) indicate a use of the lemma REPRESENTATION as an entity endowed with corporeality. In (1–4), REPRESENTATION is interpreted as object, like the verb *to gain* indicates, or as a subject of inquiry, as indicated by the verbs *to examine, to analyse*. On the one hand, REPRESENTATION is something that is gained, namely obtained, as if it could be possessed. On the other hand, REPRESENTATION is something under examination, thus it can be manipulated in any way for the sake of investigation.

(1) The mixed-methods approach **of this study enables us to examine representations in detail** and the frequency with which certain **characteristics of those representations**, which have been demonstrated in previous research to be particularly prominent in suicide coverage, appear in these news items.
(Islam & Siddique, 2023)

(2) **This study** aimed **at analyzing representations of mental health** and its treatment and the impact of the 2008 economic crisis.
(Dias Neto ,*et al.*, 2017)

(3) The results **support biased representation** in media discourse, in this case Iran's nuclear program.
(Atai & Mozaheb, 2013)

(4) The articles and images highlight this complex relationship and point to the synthesis brought about by the pressures of competing perspectives by indicating how women both mobilize their rarity value as women in leadership **roles to gain representation in the press** yet also mobilize their femininity, their 'womanliness', as a resource (Stead, 2013, p. 71), for instance by being photographed in glamorous clothes.
(Elllliott & Stead, 2018)

REPRESENATION is also intended as an object or topic of discussion, like in (5) and (6).

(5) The next section **interrogates representation** of the land issue, the economic crisis and Zimbabwe's international relations by the state-owned and privately-owned media.
(Chari, 2010)

(6) The results will then be presented in three sections. The first will look at the changing lexical meaning of bisexual/s and bisexuality. The second **will discuss representations of bisexuality** during the HIV/AIDS crisis and how this era laid the foundations for bisexual erasure and misrepresentation. (Wilkinson, 2019)

These interpretations of REPRESENTATION (1–6), therefore, does not consider the complexity of the object of representation in all its components, as discussed in section 2, and it seems that REPRESENTATION is intended as a fixed and compact object.

The second interpretation emerges from the use of the lemma as if it had a compositional nature, like in (7), (8) and (9):

(7) Different media, such as newspapers, **construct representations** of the social through articles and visual imagery.
(Ellitt & Stead, 2018)

(8) Four themes will be examined to provide an answer to the first and second research questions, which are concerned with societal representation and the approach of the media **in constructing a representation of suicide**, respectively: a) Protecting the accused; b) Blame on the victim for suicide; c) Blame on the victim's family, and d) Creating stories through confusing tales.

(9) It is noteworthy that some articles in the UK corpus attempted **to construct discursively a positive representation** of gene-editing as enhancement by domesticating it and pushing the readership towards accepting it as something normal.
(Nikitina, 2020)

The use of the verb *to construct* in relation to the concept of representation indicates that a representation is seen as a composition of smaller units. This use naturally resonates with the fact that most of the articles in the RDC corpus adopt a discourse-based approach to language.

(10) Taking into consideration the detailed literature review, it can be concluded that the **representation, depiction and construction of Islam and Muslims** in the Western and Australian media is problematic. Research on the representation of Islam and Muslims by US and the majority of European print media reveal that Islam and Muslims are being portrayed and constructed stereotypically.
(Ghauri, 2019)

In any case, this sense is less prominent as it is solely associated with the verb *to construct*, which has a lesser distribution in the RDC corpus.

In relation to the verbs associated with representation occupying the subject position, Table 5 below provides a summary of them. In general, the analysis has revealed the presence of three main characteristics assigned to this notion.

Value	Hits	Texts
relate	1	1
derives	1	1
reinforce	1	1
control	1	1
contribute	1	1
depend (on)	1	1
range (from)	1	1
vary	1	1
focus	1	1
occur	1	1
be constructed	1	1
be related	1	1
impact	1	1
include	1	1

be built	1	1
pose	1	1

Table 5*: Verbs when Representation is Subject*

Firstly, in addition to verbs that might be expected as characterizing academic prose (Deng *et al.*, 2021, p. 4), such as *focus, occur, be related*, and *relate*, there are verbs that position REPRESENTATION prominently. They frame REPRESENTATION as having a social impact factor, as seen in the following examples (11), (12), (13), (14):

(11) These representations **control the production of discourse**, i.e. text and talk, and they may be
expressed directly and indirectly.
(Dragas, 2012)

(12) In sum, 'poor media **representation contributes to widespread biphobia**, which contributes
to poor mental health' (Johnson, 2016).
(Wilkinson, 2019)

(13) **These kinds of representations reinforce the discourse of change** in Zimbabwe and the
idea that it has to be pushed through internal and external forces.
(Ogenga, 2011)

(14) Media **representations may impact reader response**s to people with mental health
problems. For instance, reader attitudes become more negative after reading reports about an
individual with a mental disorder committing an act of violence (McGinty et al., 2013; Wilson et
al., 2016).
(Bowen *et al.*, 2022)

Secondly, also in this case, there are verbs intending REPRESENTATION as a composition of smaller units, as the verbs *be built* and *be constructed* testify in the following examples (15) and (16):

(15) As some representations **were built around** metaphors, the impressive literature on
metaphors in genetics was consulted (Calsamiglia, van Dijk 2004; Nelkin 2001; Nerlich, Hellsten
2004; Pramling, Säljö 2007). Finally, representations were assessed in terms of their positive or
negative **components on** two levels (…).
(Nikitina, 2020)

(16) Thus, social representations are at the same time socially **constructed** products and builders of
social thought.
(Ferràndez-Ferrer, 2021)

Lastly, the verbs *depend, vary* and *range* may indicate the variability of different forms of representation:

(17) Gender representation **seems to vary** by specific topics (Walker and Thompson 1984). A
content analysis of educational psychology journals, for instance, found that women have become

more involved in research publication over time (Robinson et al. 1998).
(Evans & Bucy, 2010)

(18) The predominant representation **depends on** the newspaper analysed, as their ideological stance may influence their discourses and main themes addressed.
(Ferràndez-Ferrer, 2021)

(19) In mental health, social representations **range from** positive elements associated with promotion of well-being and understanding of mental illness to negative elements intimately associated with stigma.
(Dias Neto *et al.*, 2017)

These verbs, transmitting the idea of compositionality (7–16) and variability (17–19), express the complexity of the concept of REPRESENTATION, which is composed of multiple elements that continuously vary: the object of representation, the representer, the one who receives the representation, and also the relationship between the object and representation, between signifier and signified, which is not fixed.

4.4. Modification of REPRESENTATION

Lastly, the modifiers have been isolated to map whether a specific evaluative meaning of representation emerged from the corpus analysis. In this case, the analysis has been conducted by focusing on the most present adjectives in association with the lemma REPRESENTATION. The following Table 6 contains the most frequent adjectives in the RDC corpus. Moreover, each adjective has been assigned a specific function, namely the explanation of the relationship between the modifier and the substantive modified. In total, four functions have been identified: the *type,* the *evaluative,* the *means* and the *object* functions.

Value	Hits	Texts	Function
Media representation	103	30	means
social representation	73	11	type
Newspaper representation	25	10	means
negative representation	22	9	evaluative
positive representation	15	7	evaluative
linguistic representations	15	7	means
discursive representation	8	6	type
political representation	15	5	type
ideological representation	15	4	type

mental representations	7	4	type
visual representation	7	4	means
cultural representation	5	4	type
biased representations	4	3	evaluative
photographic representation	4	2	means
gendered representations	3	2	object
fair representation	2	2	evaluative
under- representation	2	2	evaluative
distinctive representation	2	2	evaluative
true representation	2	2	evaluative
public representation	3	2	type
muslim representation	2	2	object
mediated representation	9	1	means
substantive representation	5	1	evaluative
bisexual representation	3	1	object

Table 6: *Modifiers of* REPRESENTATION

The *type* function features 8 adjectives: *social, discursive, political,* i*deological* and *mental*. These adjectives indicate where the representation takes place. Except for *mental*, the representation is mainly discussed in relation to politics, with *political* and *ideological* occurring 30 times and society, with *social* occurring 73 times. *Public* is more transversal.

The *evaluative* function expresses a judgment on the representation and 8 adjectives are related to it. The essential dichotomic opposition good-bad is expressed through *positive* and *negative* which are also the most frequent of this function. Then, *fair, distinctive, biased, true* and *substantive* are challenging the quality of the representation in terms of reliability and credibility, as in (20) and (21):

(20) In the corpus analysed, the more conservative newspapers offer instances **of more biased representations** while the left-wing newspaper differentiated between voluntary and coerced sex work and was found to recognise the very existence of male sex workers as well as the need for a change in the current regulatory legal framework.
(Sagredos, 2019)

(21) Much of the latest research underwrites Phillips' refusal of a necessary or simplistic linkage between **women's descriptive and substantive representation**, while lending weight to the

contention that women legislators should be present in greater numbers.
(Adcock, 2010)

Curiously, the prefix *under-* is mainly used as modifier in relation to the representation of women in most of the occurrences (four out of 11), as in (22), (23), (24) and (25). The outcome arising from the analysis exemplifies a broader phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in society and about the gender gap (Azcona et al., 2023). If studies on representation also confirm the women underrepresentation, in this sense, this data should stimulate reflection on the topic.

(22) A well-documented reason for **the under-representation of women** in leadership roles is the resilience of gendered assumptions and the constructions of binaries that permeate organizations and shape understandings of who can and should be leaders (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013; Kelan, 2010; Mavin & Grandy, 2012).
(Elliott & Stead, 2018)

(23) Foreign Islam is more conflated with **female under-representation** and violence as compared to the national Islam.
(Ghauri, 2019)

(24) Routine use of metaphors relating to institutions traditionally associated with men (sport, public school, and the pub), many reporters' apparent ease in campaign venues, and reluctance to consider the consequences of women's political **under-representation** imparted a sense of complacent acceptance of the masculinised (and classed) norms of media(ted) politics. (Adcock, 2010)

(25) A continuing challenge for organizations is the persistent **underrepresentation** of women in senior roles, which gained a particular prominence during the global financial crisis (GFC).
(Elliott & Stead 2018)

The *means* function expresses the material through which the representation is realized. Besides the expected results of *media* and *newspaper*, which are the focus of the present study, I also found *linguistic*, *visual* and *mediated*. However, most of the hits are expectedly related to newspapers.

Lastly, the *object* function which defines the object of representation. Three adjectives frequently occur within this function: *muslim*, *gendered* and *bisexual*. This result is in line with the findings discussed in section 3.2.

5.   A posteriori reflections

A CDA or CADS work on REPRESENTATION corresponds to the study of a researcher on how the journal and the journalist signify that object or reality through language. Therefore, in line with Partington (2015), this work represents the study of the representations of representations, and the article itself is a representation of the representation of representations.

Going beyond a potentially infinite vicious circle, what emerges from this study is that, despite not always being clearly expressed, what is meant by representation aligns with the a priori definition provided in Section 2.3. Specifically, the two aspects identified are both present. On the one side, the interpretation of representation as substitution emerges from the analysed articles. Regarding this reading, representation is posed as a monolithic object of study that stands for the object/event it is representing, without allowing space for the complexity of the notion. On the other side, the reading of representation as a complex constructive process comes out. In this case, the notion of representation is transversal, and a huge impact is recognized in relation to discourse in general.

Further research should be carried out by increasing the size of the corpus and the time of reference. Moreover, a comparison with data from different areas of studies, such as philosophy, history of art and theatre studies, and from different genres, could also be conducted to determine the impact of this notion transversally. In addition to this, a cross-linguistic comparison should be considered advisable.

Competing interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix A

Table A proves an overview on the RDC corpus by providing the list of the articles sorted in terms of frequency of tokens and $MATTR_{50}$, and indication of the lexical richness of a text, as explained in Brezina (2018, p. 58).

Name	Tokens	$MATTR_{50}$
Elliott & Stead, 2018	21.096	0,79
Jaworska & Krishnamurthy, 2012	14.895	0,82
Dugales & Tucker, 2012	14.379	0,78
Ogenga, 2011	13.530	0,77
Adcock, 2010	13.410	0,83
Del Fante, 2018	12.955	0,82
Chari, 2010	12.667	0,8
Sagredos, 2019	12.463	0,83
Del Fante & Biasio, 2022	12.243	0,83

Haider, 2019	12.061	0,79
Haider, 2016	11.391	0,8
Davies, 2001	11.071	0,83
Eide & Ytterstad, 2011	11.038	0,84
Heft, 2017	11.000	0,78
Kumar, 2010	10.950	0,82
Oregan & Riordan, 2018	10.892	0,82
Ferrández-Ferrer, 2021	10.864	0,84
Graham & de Bell, 2021	10.588	0,83
Malcolm et al., 2010	10.457	0,83
Al-Ghamdi, 2021	10.286	0,79
Khir allah, 2014	10.258	0,8
Harper & Hogue, 2015	9.974	0,82
Islam & Siddique,2023	9.755	0,81
Ryynänen, 2023	9.661	0,83
Nikitina, 2020	9.597	0,82
Kim & Ju, 2019	9.410	0,79
Marchi & Taylor, 2009	9.073	0,79
Lirola, 2014	9.026	0,84
Michelini, 2021	8.951	0,82
Huang e Leung, 2005	8.878	0,8
Tijani-Adenle, 2016	8.849	0,8
Atai & Mozaheb, 2013	8.827	0,78
Abdi & BasaratiE, 2016	8.761	0,78
Alarcón, 2010	8.359	0,79
Ghauri, 2019	8.163	0,78
Wilkinson, 2019	8.033	0,82
Yuksel-Pecen, 2018	7.789	0,84
Bowen et al., 2022	7.647	0,81

Bowen, 2016	7.393	0,81
Manchaiah et al., 2018	7.049	0,82
Asayama & Ishii, 2013	7.006	0,8
Abbas, 2010	6.988	0,8
Azios et al., 2020	6.790	0,81
Evans & Bucy, 2010	6.489	0,81
Bowen, 2019	6.396	0,81
Asad *et al.*, 2019	6.230	0,8
Dias Neto et al., 2017	6.023	0,83
Darian-Smith, 2016	5.887	0,8
Gardikiotis et al., 2004	5.442	0,78
Ghauri, 2020	5.425	0,79
Dragas, 2020	5.145	0,81
Bowen *et al.*, 2019	3.102	0,81

Table A: *Overview of the RDC Corpus*

Appendix B

The following reference list provides the complete bibliographical details of all the articles comprising the RDC Corpus.

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