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Media and Migration: Some Linguistic Reflections

Federico Faloppa

On the 27th of April 2013, online editions of several Italian newspapers announced the appointment of Cécile Kyenge as the Minister of Integration with similar headlines:

Cécile Kyenge, per la prima volta nel governo un ministro di colore ('Il Messaggero')

Cécile Kyenge, all'Integrazione un ministro di colore ('Il fatto quotidiano')

Chi è Cécile Kyenge, primo ministro di colore ('Il Giornale')

Kyenge, primo ministro italiano di colore ('Il secolo XIX')

Ecco chi è il primo ministro di colore d'Italia: in guerra contro la Bossi-Fini ('Libero')

Céile Kyenge, il medico-attivista del Congo è il primo ministro di colore della Repubblica ('Il Sole 24 Ore')

Storico, Cécile Kyenge primo ministro italiano di colore ('Gazzetta del Sud')

Governo dei record. Sette donne, prima olimpionica e primo ministro di colore ('L'Avvenire')

In their headlines, the online editions of some of the most important Italian newspapers unanimously highlighted the newsworthiness of the new Cabinet minister's *blackness* rather than of her new ministry. Although blackness in Italian politics was not big news (the Somali-born Italian Dacia Valent had been elected to the European Parliament in 1989), Cécile Kyenge's complexion immediately entered into media discourse,[1] and a topic that had been (apparently) dormant for several years – skin colour and the 'colour line' – became suddenly visible and debatable.

Since Kyenge's appointment, the discussion around what terms and expressions one should use to refer to black people in public has emerged again. Right-wing political discourse – especially thanks to the Lega Nord and its overtly racist stances on Cécile Kyenge – has rapidly brought up the

[1] For a short definition of 'discourse', see Lynn Thiesmeyer, *Introduction* to Id (ed.), *Discourse and Silence* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 1: 'The object we are calling "discourse" here consists of publicly accessible language and other forms of expression that circulate widely and consistently throughout a society. They include straightforward uses of language in exchanges of information as well as forms that comment on, analyse, entertain, or criticise other forms and their social contexts…'.

connection between blackness and strangeness, as distinct from the alleged 'whiteness' of the Italian people. Such blackness (*negrezza*, *negritudine*) would supposedly characterize the majority of migrants in the eyes of the Italian people (or, at least, in the eyes of the Lega Nord's supporters).[2] But, more importantly, would be an exogenous element which could enter Italy through migration and integration but which should be rejected, as claimed by the Lega Nord representative Massimo Bitonci in the Senate on the 14 January 2014.

> La gente ha paura ad uscire la sera. Leggo che la Kyenge e la sua consigliera Livia Turco vogliono le quote riservate agli immigrati nella società. Siamo alla demenza. La Turco non sa niente di niente, e la Kyenge non è qualificata per questo incarico molto delicato. La Kyenge non sa cos'è l'integrazione, non sa niente di niente, vuole favorire la negritudine come in Francia, ma noi possiamo farne a meno.[3]

Bitonci was probably echoing political analyst Giovanni Sartori, who in the radio programme *La zanzara* (Radio 24) on the 16 December 2013 had strongly criticised Cècile Kyenge's proposal on the *ius soli*, by connecting people's panic ('la gente ormai ha paura'), blackness ('negritudine'), and migration and migrants' citizenship ('ius soli').[4] In Sartori's statement, *negritudine* is the lynchpin of an articulation of a new racist discourse, in which - as Etienne Balibar has explained - the use of the 'category of *immigration* as substitute of the notion of race […] provides us a first clue'.[5]

Whenever brought up, the 'colour line' gives rise to both linguistic and meta-linguistic considerations. On a lexical level, in the Italian language *negro*, *nero* and *di colore* are still complementary on the paradigmatic axis (on which words are arranged onomasiologically in semantic fields, and it is the speaker who decides what is the most appropriate option within a certain context). Until the Seventies, the three lexical items were still used as synonyms, and with similar connotations with regard to human beings (and their skin colour). As an adjective, *negro* could be used as a graphemic variant of *nero*, without any particular harming or negative

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[2] See Federico Faloppa, *Parole contro. La rappresentazione in italiano e nei dialetti* (Milano: Garzanti, 2004), 120-122.
[3] < www.agi.it >, last access 15 January 2014.
[4] 'La gente ormai ha paura ad uscire la sera e lei vuole favorire la negritudine come in Francia. Ma noi possiamo farne a meno... [lo ius soli] aggraverebbe tutti i nostri problemi... Come idea è demente... perché è dei paesi sottopopolati che vogliono nuova popolazione: sarebbe l'ultimo colpo per consentire l'accesso a tutti, migranti e clandestini'. (< http://www.radio24.ilsole24ore.com >, last access 15 January 2014).
[5] Etienne Baliber, Immanuel M. Wallerstein, *Race, nation, class: ambiguous identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 20. See also Marco Binotto's chapter in this volume.

connotation. As a noun, however, it could identify a human race (the 'razza negra', or 'negri'), with its distinct homogeneous physical (and moral) traits, and it could bear derogatory connotations.[6]

As a consequence of the African-American Civil Rights Movement's claims between the end of the Fifties and 1968, and particularly with the emergence of the Black Power Movement, some Italian left-wing translators stopped using *negro* in favour of *nero*, which – according to them – could translate the Anglo-American *black* more faithfully. The expression *di colore* – calque of the Anglo-American *coloured* – also began to spread as an unmarked alternative to *negro*.[7]

The growing presence of these two lexical options, however, did not immediately inhibit the circulation of *negro*, which – especially as an adjective – was still much used during the Seventies and the Eighties in the media discourse as an acceptable term to refer to the African-American community in the US,[8] and to label the new migrants coming from Africa (who were 'negri' or 'neri' by definition).[9]

The perception of the use of *negro*, *nero*, *di colore* (and *afro-americano*, which would be used with semantic restrictions and only in given contexts and registers)[10] changed at the beginning of the Nineties, when media newsrooms began to take into consideration the 'politically correct' debate that had emerged in Anglophone countries at the end of the Eighties.[11] Together with some linguistic prescriptions (i.e. the ban on *negro*/*nigger* in Anglo-American, which would certainly have an influence on the stigmatisation of the Italian *negro*)[12], this debate had excited a new awareness about the disparaging and offensive value of ethnic labels in multicultural societies and within the power relations system between the 'white' majority and the 'non-white' minorities. In

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[6] Nicola Zingarelli, *Vocabolario della lingua italiana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1954), sub voce *negro*: 'i negri [sono] popoli d'Africa di colore scuro… con cranio stretto e alto, prognatismo… collo grosso, pelle grossolana, statura piuttosto alta, vivaci, facile da imitare…'. See Faloppa, *Parole contro*, cit. 99 sgg., and Id., *Nero negro e di colore*, in < http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/lingua-italiana/consulenza-linguistica/domande-risposte/nero-negro-colore >, last access October 2013.

[7] Ken Johnson, 'The vocabulary of race', in Thomas Kochman (ed.), *Rappin' and stylin' out. Communication in Urban Black America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 140 sgg; Henry L. Mencken, *The American Language* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 381.

[8] See some headlines from the newspaper 'La Stampa': 'A Hollywood la risata è negra' (28 August 1983, for an article on the growing popularity of the new generation of 'attori negri'; 'È negra la prima donna-vescovo' (26 January 1989); 'Negro assassinato' (4 November 1989).

[9] See for example 'Negra muore asfissiata, senza un aiuto' ('La Stampa' 3 November 1988, newspaper headline of an article on the death of a Nigerian girl in Brianza); '... il 24 per cento degli italiani non vorrebbe avere una relazione sentimentale con un negro...' ('Epoca', 13 December 1987, quoted from Luigi Gariglio, Andrea Pogliano, Riccardo Zanini, eds., *Facce da straniero. 30 anni di fotografia e giornalismo sull'immigrazione in Italia* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2010), 103).

[10] Cf. Martino Marazzi, *Preistoria e storia di 'afro-americano'*, in 'Studi di Lessicografia italiana', XXIV, 2007, 249-64.

[11] Cf. Edoardo Crisafulli, *Igiene verbale. Il politicamente corretto e la libertà linguistica* (Roma: Castelvecchi, 2004); Geoffrey Hughes, *Political correctness. A history of Semantics and Culture* (London: Wuley-Blackwell, 2010); Rita Fresu, 'Politically correct', in Raffaele Simone (ed.), *Enciclopedia dell'Italiano* (Roma: Treccani, 2011), Vol. 2, 1117-1119.

[12] Cf. Massimo Arcangeli, *Cercasi Dante disperatamente* (Roma: Carocci, 2011), 121.

Italy, too, it began to influence, columnists' and commentators' lexical habits, and to some extent the public's awareness of the relation between social and language change.

This increasing attention to labels and labelling (despite being generated by a debate that had been imported from elsewhere, and that was leading – according to its detractors – towards linguistic conformism), relegated *negro* to the realm of vituperation, and has made speakers alert to its possible connotations. Nowadays, people who both use the N-word to deliberately insult (either in isolation or in fixed collocations like *brutto negro*, *sporco negro*, *negro di merda*), or people who are insulted and abused by its use[13] – clearly perceive *negro* as an offensive and disparaging word.[14] Even those who polemically claim that *negro* is not derogatory, that it is etymologically justified and therefore acceptable, and that it has been rejected only because of some kind of linguistic hypocrisy (and not for reasons related to the internal evolution of the language), are conscious of its connotations and of the social interdictions which may restrict its usage, so that in their praxis they feel the need to replace it by other formulaic expressions (i.e. *nero* and *di colore*).[15]

As for *nero* and *di colore*, the discussion is still open. *Nero* seemed to prevail when used to indicate dark complexions. If employed by the media as a noun (*il nero, i neri*) to identify and describe someone according to his/her colour of skin, it is used as a blurred category. When used as an adjective, it often sounds pleonastic and lacking a specific contrastive function ('l'atleta nero', 'il calciatore nero', in contexts in which there is no trace of a 'white' counterpart). Nevertheless, it may be used as a self-label by black people, as Cécile Kyenge did on the 3rd May 2013, at the press conference which followed her appointment, when she said: 'In questi giorni ho letto che dicono di me che sono la prima ministra di colore: io non sono di colore, sono nera, lo ribadisco con fierezza'.[16]

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[13] Cf. Judith Butler, *Parole che provocano* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2010); Federico Faloppa, *Razzisti a parole (per tacer dei fatti)* (Roma: Laterza, 2011), 17.

[14] Cf. the entry for *Negro* in Dizionario Treccani < http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/negro/ >, last access October 2013.

[15] Cf. Marcello Veneziani, 'Il Giornale', 5 May 2013: 'Ma si rendono conto i retori dell'integrazione che nero è sempre stata… una connotazione negativa? Nera è la morte, il lutto e la sfortuna… nera è la cronaca dei delitti, nero è il lavoro sfruttato e l'evasione… Nero è il buio, nero è l'uomo cattivo dell'infanzia, nera è la giornata disastrosa… Nero è il futuro negativo, nera è la maglia della vergogna, nero è il volto dell'incazzatura, nera è la minaccia: ti faccio nero… Possibile che con questi precedenti si celebri come un progresso la promozione del negro a nero? Peggio di nero, è vero, c'è solo la definizione di uomo di colore, come se lui fosse un pagliaccio variopinto e noi degli esseri incolori. Più rispetto per i negri, i chiari e i chiaroscuri'. Even more revealing is the comment by Vittorio Feltri published in 'Libero' on the 9 January 2010 (just after the riots in Rosarno): 'negro' appears only in the headline ('Hanno ragione i negri') but never in the body of the article which includes instead a less problematic 'africani di colore'. To the lexical provocation of 'Libero' replied Pierluigi Battista in 'Il corriere della sera' on the 11 January 2012, with the comment 'Perché *negro* è parola da non usare'.

[16] Cf. 'Corriere TV' < http://www.corriere.it/politica/13_maggio_03/kyenge-nera_5b24eea0-b3db-11e2-a510-97735eec3d7c.shtml >, last access October 2013.

On the other hand, *di colore* has for long time been considered semantically neutral by the media (see the expressions *persone di colore*, *gente di colore*, *uomo di colore*), void of any negative or derogatory connotations. But its use has been, and still is, much debated. It is rejected by the same *persone di colore*, as shown for instance by an anonymous poem which has circulated in the web, *Uomo di colore*,[17] or by Esosh Elamé's book *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore*, or by an old vitriolic intervention in the newspaper 'L'Unità' by Dacia Valent, who asked to be called 'negra, quale io sono' instead of 'di colore'.[18] The meaning of *di colore* – often chosen as a politically correct (PC) alternative to *negro/nero* – instead of being perceived as a neutral label, seems to underline the feature (the colour of the skin) which should not be pointed out. As a euphemism,[19] then, it would not represent a useful option and resource, but a trap: by employing it, one would implicitly accept that skin colour – as a feature to identify/talk about people, not matter what the context – cannot be overcome, but only disguised in discourse: and therefore – the critics of the PC say – it would be simpler and less hypocritical to use *negro* or *nero* (although it would be far more logical to question the real salience of that piece of information in a given text, and avoid using any kind of option if it is not crucial for the comprehension of the text).[20]

Apart from the lexicographic dispute, the use of *negro/nero/di colore* would, moreover, constantly re-activate performative categories. As Judith Butler claims, actually, some labels – e.g. 'racial' labels – have not only a descriptive function but also a performative value. To label means every time to create – or re-create – an entity, a group, a 'race' (*i negri/neri*, *le persone di colore*) through a speech act that is individual (involving therefore individual responsibility) but at the same time the result of a collective historicised practice of labelling and defining power relations. According to this view, discussing the possible/preferable lexical options would simply distract the speaker from the real linguistic and cognitive short-circuit: the assumption that the categories expressed by those lexical items are inevitable and natural, the only perceived problem being not

See no 19 below: do you mean to put 'anche' Kate Burridge?

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[17] 'Io, uomo nero, quando sono nato ero Nero/Tu, uomo bianco, quando sei nato, eri Rosa/Io, ora che sono cresciuto, sono sempre Nero/Tu, ora che sei cresciuto sei Bianco/Io, quando prendo il sole sono Nero/Tu, quando prendi il sole sei Rosso/Io, quando ho freddo sono Nero/Tu, quando hai freddo sei Blu/Io, quando sarò morto sarò Nero/Tu quando sarai morto sarai Grigio/E tu mi chiami uomo di colore' (various online sources).

[18] Cfr. Giuliano Zincone, *Contrordine compagni, dire " negro " e' politicamente corretto*, 'Corriere della Sera', 29 November 1995.

[19] For a definition of euphemism, see Keith Allan, Kate Barridge, *Euphemism and dysphemism: language used as shield and weapon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11. Cfr. anche Kate Burridge, 'Taboo, Euphemism, and Political Correctness', Keith Brown (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics* (Philadelphia: Elsevier 2006), 455-462.

[20] On the concept of *salience* in linguistics, see Istvan Kecskes, Fenghui Zhang, *Activating, seeking and creating common ground: A socio-cognitive approach*, 'Pragmatics & Cognition'. Vol. 17 (2009), No. 2, 331-355. See also Giuseppe Faso, *Il colore delle notizie: tinta unita*, in 'Giornalisti contro il razzismo' < http://web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art_9686.html >, last access October 2013.

whether to name them or not, but how to name them in the most acceptable way.[21] On the contrary, as Etienne Balibar points out, speakers should be aware that any semantic restructuring of the terminology of race and racism would not affect only the surface of the lexicon, but also entire semantic fields with their cognitive implications, and more generally the perception (and acceptance/stigmatisation) of the related social phenomena: the reorganization of the power relations among the social actors involved in those phenomena.[22]

This terminological restructuring does not seem to have been accomplished yet. When considering discourses on migration, and the language used by the media to talk about migration for the last thirty years, continuity prevails over discontinuity, and the grey zones of the language seem to function as an ambiguous representation of migrants, fluctuating between inaccuracy, professional idleness, stereotypical images, sensationalism, xenophobia, as neatly elucidated by Lorenzo Guadagnucci in his *Parole sporche. Clandestini, nomadi, vu cumprà: il razzismo nei media e dentro di noi*, and – *ex converso* – by a recent publication edited by the NGO Redattore Sociale, *Parlare civile. Comunicare senza discriminare*.[23]

By assuming that 'non esistono parole sbagliate, ma soltanto un uso sbagliato delle parole', Redattore Sociale has collected and critically discussed a series of lexical items such as – to mention only those related to migration – *badante*, *clandestino*, *negro*, *nuovi italiani*, *rifugiato*, *romeno*, *albanese*, *cinese*, *vù cumprà*. Redattore Sociale has provided the history of these words, the contexts of their usage, and the alternatives deemed semantically 'neutral' and more appropriate from a sociolinguistic point of view (in terms of register), in the attempt to provide newsrooms and media practitioners with a handy guideline. In this context, an entry like *vu cumprà* look paradigmatic for both its history, usage, semantic change and morphological productivity (in the last thirty years *vu cumprà* has been the basis for neologisms like *vù lavà*, *vù parcheggià*, *vù restà*, *vù emigrà*, etc.), and fuzzy connotations.[24] Interestingly enough, *vù cumprà* has been included in the chapter devoted to ethnic names and ethnic adjectives, by supposing that this is how the speakers have often perceived it: as an established name for a 'given ethnic group' rather than as a playful and volatile neologism.[25]

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[21] Butler, *Parole che provocano*, cit.
[22] Etienne Balibar, *Capovolgimenti performativi del nome 'razza' e dilemma delle vittime*, 'Iride – Filosofia e discussione pubblica', 3 (2006), 561-576.
[23] Lorenzo Guadagnucci, *Parole sporche. Clandestini, nomadi, vu cumprà: il razzismo nei media e dentro di noi* (Milano: Altraeconomia Edizioni, 2010); Redattore sociale, *Parlare civile. Comunicare senza discriminare* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2013).
[24] See *Minisemantica del razzismo (da) quotidiano*, a swift analysis on the use of *vu cumprà* in the Italian newspapers the day after the assassination of Samb Modou and Diop Mor on the 13 December 2011 in Florence < http://jumpinshark.blogspot.it/2011/12/minisemantica-del-razzismo-da.html >, last access October 2013.
[25] Redattore sociale, *Parlare civile*, cit., 81-85. See also Faloppa, *Razzisti a parole*, cit., 31-41.

About ethnonyms and ethnic adjectives, the report circulated in 2011 by Master Media, *L'immagine delle minoranze nelle reti televisive e radiofoniche nazionali italiane*, has shown some evidence that the use of ethnic and national adjectives by Italian radio and television in the first decade of the XXI century has not only been redundant for its real informative relevance, and pleonastic for correctly understanding the information,[26] but has also contributed to the creation of a sort of 'appreciation ranking' for ethnic groups living in the peninsula, in which North African countries – especially after the so-called 'Arab springs' in 2011 – have taken the primary positions. As the scholarly literature shows,[27] radio and television would have contributed to the construction and circulation of new social representations, and would have functioned as 'agenzie di socializzazione in grado di produrre e perpetuare stereotipi che poi si cristallizzano nell'immaginario collettivo'.[28] If we read the reports by the Associazione 'Carta di Roma' up to 2012[29], and we pay attention to the daily newsletters circulated by the NGO 'Occhio ai media' since 2011[30], we may conclude that the same situation can be observed in the paper press.

The abuse of ethnic and nationality adjectives by many commentators would consequently have produced a process of 'ethnicisation' – not by chance accompanied by a loose usage of words like *etnia*, *etnico* – on one hand by promoting the 'good', exotic and reassuring ethnic (ethnic food, ethnic music, ethnic dances, ethnic jewellery, ethnic literature, etc.), on the other hand by stigmatising the 'bad', problematic and threatening ethnic (ethnic riots, ethnic conflicts, ethnic crimes, etc.).[31]

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[26] As claimed, among the others, by Giuseppe Faso and Carlo Gubitosa, two of the founders of *Giornalisti contro il razzismo* (www.giornalettismi.it) in their detailed analysis of media coverage of some controversial cases, for instance, the murder of the Milanese traffic warden Nicolò Savarino on the 15 January 2012: 'Anche la deontologia del giornalismo dice che la nazionalità di un criminale è irrilevante. Può esserlo quella di una vittima in caso di persecuzioni razziali, ma quella di un criminale non aggiunge nessuna informazione utile al fatto di cronaca, e si presta a indebite inferenze che estendono il suo comportamento anche ai simili del criminale. Nella carta dei doveri del giornalista, infatti, è scritto a chiare lettere che ogni riferimento a caratteristiche della sfera privata delle persone è ammesso solo quando sia di rilevante interesse pubblico. Ciò nonostante, la cronaca dell'omicidio dell'agente di polizia municipale Niccolò Savarino viene arricchita di molti particolari 'etnici' (Carlo Gubitosa, *Quando la cronaca diventa caccia allo straniero*, 'Giornalisti contro il razzismo', 13 January 2012, < www.giornalismi.it >, last access December 2013).

[27] See Marco Binotto's and Marco Bruno's contributions in this volume.

[28] Master Media *L'immagine delle minoranze nelle reti televisive e radiofoniche nazionali italiane*, 33-34. The whole report is available in < http://www.mistermedia.org/documenti/31-5-12/mistermedia-rapporto-2011 >, last access December 2013.

[29] See www.cartadiroma.org, last access December 2013.

[30] See www.occhioaimedia.org, last access December 2013.

[31] Faloppa, *Razzisti a parole*, cit., 80-91. See also Redattore sociale, *Parlare civile*, cit., 77-78: 'Uno degli errori più frequenti è quello di confondere l'etnia con la nazionalità. Per esempio: "Nella nave c'erano kurdi di etnia irachena". Semmai bisognava dire "iracheni di etnia kurda". Nel secondo esempio, un'etnia sempre in cronaca nera è da segnalare il grossolano errore presente nel titolo e nel sottotitolo, visto che i romeni non sono un'etnia, né tantomeno esiste la razza romena o il dna romeno… In entrambi gli articoli citati si confondono i Rom con i romeni'.

For instance, for years offenders – non-Italian – have been introduced and identified by the media through an ethnic or national adjective (often placed in rhematic/comment position, and therefore textually marked: 'Rapina due donne. Arrestato marocchino', 'Inglese violentata, arrestato rumeno'), in order to draw a line between what was and was not Italian. Very often, this operation has not been justified by the newsworthiness of the event, and has been repeatedly discouraged by several deontological guidelines for the unnecessary specification of the nationality; but it has succeeded in shaping the opinion that ethnic crimes and criminality are a fact, although detailed analysis has failed to demonstrate any clear and indisputable connection between crime and migration.[32]

Even when these labels and their focalizations – for *focus* we intend the element by which the speaker's interest is polarised, and which brings the new information[33] – have been the consequence of an inattentive reiteration of journalistic clichés rather than of implicit xenophobic strategies, they are, for the most part, redundant. One should simply try a commutation proof to verify the pleonastic nature of certain words and to bring into question the *salience* of certain expressions. If an Italian from Bergamo – to recall Giovanni Maria Bellu's provocation – [34] collected all the headlines including the most common specification of nationalities and ethnic status, and replaced them with the adjective 'bergamasco', he/she would end up with texts which would clearly sound odd and overloaded, e.g. 'Capodanno: bergamasca partorisce e getta il neonato dalla finestra', 'Minaccia connazionale e suo marito: arrestato bergamasco', 'Bergamasco arrestato per contrabbando di sigarette', 'Bergamasco provoca incidente poi dà fuoco a due auto', 'Carceri: bergamasco si cuce la bocca e si conficca ferri in testa', etc.

Apart from being redundant, these ethnic labels also refer to collective categories with a lack of precision and descriptive coherence; however, they are very powerful at a semantic level, with regard to the linguistic inputs in cognitive processes, and to the pertinence of the informative *nuclei*.

According to Dan Sperber's and Deirdre Wilson's theory of relevance,[35] an input is relevant to an individual when it connects with background information he/she has available to yield conclusions that matter to him/her: e.g. by answering a question he/she had in mind, improving his/her knowledge on a certain topic, settling a doubt, confirming a suspicion, or correcting a mistaken impression. An input is relevant to an individual also when its processing, in a context of

[32] For an introduction, see Valeria Ferraris, *Immigrazione e criminalità* (Rome: Carocci, 2012).
[33] On the concept of salience in media studies, see Maxwell E. McCombs, Donald L. Shaw, *The agenda-setting function of mass media*, 'Public Opinion Quarterly' 36 (1972), 2, 176-187.
[34] Giovanni Maria Bellu, *Stampa e xenofobia. Istruzioni per l'uso*, 4 February 2007, < www.repubblica.it >, last access October 2013.
[35] Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Id., *Relevance Theory*, in Laurence Horn, Gregory Ward (eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 607-632.

available assumptions, yields a 'positive cognitive effect', i.e. a worthwhile difference to the individual's representation of the world.[36]

The most important type of cognitive effect achieved by processing an input in a context is the so-called contextual implication, a conclusion deducible from the input and the context together, but from neither input nor context alone; other types of cognitive effect include the strengthening, revision or abandonment of available assumptions. If we see a train arriving, for example, we might look at our watch, access our knowledge of the train timetable, and derive the contextual implication that our train is late. If we read a headline like *Terrorismo, arrestato marocchino di 20 anni*,[37] we may be immediately attracted by the element in rhematic/comment position (therefore textually marked), 'marocchino' (the input), access our knowledge of Morocco (e.g. that the majority of the Moroccan people are Muslim), and strengthen our available assumption (the cognitive output) that terrorism has an Islamic imprint. In this case, the salience is maximised: we would look for – and we would easily find – the input that is capable of generating as many cognitive outputs as possible with the least processing effort (with other nationalities – for instance *senegalese* or *rumeno* – the salience would not have been maximised and we should, perhaps, have, reverted to a greater processing effort to link the new information to the background), and we would be facilitated by the marked position of the nationality adjective.

This 'maximisation' also has another effect: it would operate as a cognitive filter, which would let pass the new given information and stop other inputs (i.e. the circumstances of the event, the other actors involved). Through this elaboration process, which would lead the reader from perception to memorization, just a few selected inputs – those immediately taken into account by attention mechanisms – would gain access to the subsequent cognitive stage. We may also assume that, through the analysis of a stimulus, we tend to activate – for cognitive economy reasons – pieces of information that are attached to that stimulus and that are already available.

These cognitive mechanisms would also be activated by other collective names: *clandestini*, *extracomunitari*, *musulmani*, i.e. categories produced by assimilation and reduction (of semantic traits), essentialisation (and naturalization) and prototipicalisation.[38] At a textual level, this would be rendered with a selection of clichés, *topoi*, and *schemata* easy to assimilate, memorise, re-enact, and extremely difficult to eradicate or discuss. The prototypical migrant would be associated with

[36] Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson, *Postface to the second edition of Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
[37] See 'Corriere della sera', 15 March 2012.

[38] Where 'prototype' in semantics stands for a) the best representative of a category, and its focal point; b) all semantic traits typical of that category; c) the semantic centre of the category, that is, the basic meaning to which the speaker compares other specimens of the category, and on which all metaphorical meanings are based.

(proto)typical behaviours – easily stigmatised or ready to be stigmatised – which appear to be permanent, natural, and ontological (to recall the terminology of Moscovici's theory of social representations).[39]

We can also notice how, and to what extent, this ontologisation has coincided with a process of partial grammaticalisation, i.e. lexical items shifting from one grammatical category to another, for instance from adjective to noun. Let us consider the word *extracomunitario*. From a qualifying adjective used with attributive or predicative functions, and provided with temporary and circumstantial qualities (e.g. 'un lavoratore *extracomunitario*', 'quelle persone sono *extracomunitarie*'), it has become a noun used with a referential function[40] (*l'extracomunitario*, *gli extracomunitari*), to name a tangible self-contained entity with its set of selected features/semantic traits.

In the case of *extracomunitario*, the passage from one grammar category to another has coincided not by chance with a passage in the recent history of migration to Italy. The Law 943/86 ('Norme in materia di collocamento e di trattamento dei lavoratori extracomunitari immigrati e contro le immigrazioni clandestine') treated *extracomunitario* as an adjective with its contextual meaning. The aim of that law was actually to find and set some criteria to govern and control the presence of non-Italian and European citizens in the peninsula, and to put them under the umbrella of a comprehensive bill ('Disciplina del lavoro degli stranieri extracomunitari in Italia') with specific areas of intervention which did not concern the whole of the experience of those people, but only their juridical position as foreign workers.

Employed by the media since the first half of the Eighties, the adjective that qualified countries which where adhering to the European Community and their citizens ('paesi extracomunitari', 'cittadini comunitari', lavoratori extracomunitari'), became a noun when the 'Martelli Law' passed (39/1990), to indicate a general category of people which, over time, had acquired anthropological traits (the *extracomunitari* with their behaviours, with their physical features, with their cultural specificity, etc.).

Once created, the noun then became the focal centre of the subsequent bills, of the political agenda on migration, of the media. And its semantic contours became increasingly imprecise in the praxis, if it is true, for instance, that as a hyperonym *extracomunitario* did not include some of its

[39] Serge Moscovici, *Le rappresentazioni sociali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995).
[40] Rainer, Franz (2004), '*Derivazione nominale deaggettivale'*, in Maria Grossmann, Franz Rainer (eds), *La formazione delle parole in italiano* (Tübingen: Niemeyer), 293-314.

potential hyponyms (e.g. *svizzero*, *giapponese*, *americano* etc, which were not in reciprocity with other hyponyms like *senegalese*, *marocchino*, etc.).

Something similar occurred also to *clandestino*. In this case, what is noticeable is not the partial grammaticalization of the lexical item (the noun *clandestino* had already existed) but its semantic shift (from 'hidden' to 'illegal'). In the praxis, moreover, the category went through a process of naturalization, and the noun started to be used not only as an administrative label (defining a temporary juridical status) but also - and especially - an anthropological one, applicable for instance to people who had not yet crossed the national borders (and who had therefore not acquired a specific administrative status in the country of arrival).[41]

Furthermore, with migration policies in the grip of security concerns, and with the construction of the migrant as *the* deviant subject,[42] *clandestino* has been used, more and more, as a synonym of *immigrato*. This has been clearly shown by quantitative surveys conducted through Corpus Linguistics methods.[43] Through a narrow-mesh linguistic analysis conducted on wide corpora of data by means of statistical software, Corpus Linguistics studies the language(s) as expressed in field-collected samples (or *corpora*) of 'real world' text, in natural contexts and with minimal experimental interference, in order to map the cognitive world behind the use of word-patterns.[44] This mapping is achieved by identifying a selected number of entries, calculating their frequency in a selected corpus, checking the collocations that are statistically more frequent, analysing clusters of recurring expressions, i.e. word combinations that recur in the same discourse and that can activate and modify the cognitive process by facilitating the perception of the world through new meanings and metaphors (this has been the case, for instance, in a cluster like 'guerra umanitaria').

Among the Corpus Linguistics-led works dedicated to the Italian media in the last few years, some are worth mentioning for the scope and consistency of the corpus. For example, in *La stampa locale in Piemonte nell'anno Europeo del dialogo interculturale* (2008) Michalangelo Conoscenti has scrutinised all the articles published by the local press in Piemont from January to December 2008 and including four key-lexemes or 'nodes': *intercult**, *extracomunitar**, *immigr**, *rifugiat**

[41] See Faloppa, *Razzisti a parole*, cit., 65-79.
[42] See Joanna Parkin, *The Criminalisation of Migration in Europe. A State-of-the-Art of the Academic Literature and Research*, CEPS papers in Liberty and Security in Europe, No. 61, October 2013, available in < http://www.ceps.eu >, last access December 2013; see also Marcello Maneri, *L'immigrazione nei media. La traduzione di pratiche di controllo nel linguaggio in cui viviamo*, 'Anuac - Rivista dell'Associazione Universitaria degli Antropologi Culturali', I (2012), No. 1, 24-37.
[43] See for instance Fabrizia Uboldi, *Discorso e pregiudizio. La rappresentazione della figura dell'immigrato nella stampa*: *un'analisi linguistica*, Tesi di Laurea inedita, Università di Bologna, a.a. 2007-2008, 42
[44] See the classic Douglas Biber, Susanne Conrad, Randi Reppen, *Corpus Linguistics, Investigating Language Structure and Use* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

(where the asterisks stand for any possible derivational morphemes, as *immigr-ato, immigr-ati, immigr-azione*, etc).

If we consider the node e*xtracomunitar**, we see that its analysis points out specific semantic areas for 2008: jobs, security and public order, education. By looking at the security/order semantic field, we can notice the very high frequency of the lexeme *problema*, whose co-collocates are *extracomunitar** (*extracomuniario, extracomunitari, extracomunitarie*), 'security' forces (*forze dell'ordine, Polizia, Vigili, Carabinieri*, etc.) and *territorio*. A very high frequency is recorded also for the co-collocate *cittadini*, but in only 10% of the contexts do we find the collocation 'cittadini extracomunitari', whereas in the remaining 90% of the examples there is an opposition between *cittadini* and *extracomunitari*. A relatively high frequency applies to co-collocates *arrestato, permesso, soggiorno, tribunale, denunciato, furto* too, against the very low frequency of *tolleranza*, mostly used co-collocation with *zero* in the fixed cluster *tolleranza zero*. Significant is the presence of the adverbs *generalmente* ('generalmente extracomunitari') *probabilmente* ('probabilmente extracomunitari'), and *chiaramente/di chiara provenienza*, which reveals a certain conceit on the part of the journalists, who presumably know how to distinguish an *extracomunitario* from anybody else.

Despite being equally important from the quantitative point of view, the node *immigr**, when compared to *extracomunitar**, seems to be less focused on specific aspects. The semantic overlapping between *immigrato* and *extracomunitario*, for instance, would have transferred to the latter – especially if used as a noun – most of the criticality of the discourse on migration. In 2008, and according to the specific corpus analysed by Conoscenti, the use of *immigrato* would have been less influenced by bias and stereotypes, to the extent that – though being statistically irrelevant – its collocations *grazie agli immigrati, immigrati di seconda generazione, voto agli immigrati* have a positive connotation. Having said that, the most important clusters for *immigrazione* (*immigrazione è cresciuta, immigrazione è fuori controllo, immigrazione clandestina, immigrazione clandestine e sfruttamento, lotta contro l'immigrazione, controllo dell'immigrazione, legge sull'immigrazione*) underline the construction of a moral panic, strengthened also by the collocations of *sicurezza, insicurezza, paura*, which explicitly reveal how knowledge is not based on data and facts, but on subjective comments by the journalist.

In 2008, the representation of refugees and asylum seekers seems to be neutral and does not imply a negative approach to foreigners. However, *rifugiato/i* mainly appears with its administrative meaning, within collocations that are quite typical to the node (*politici, asilo, richiedenti, status, accoglienza*), and through a very rarified use of the adjectives which could qualify the refugees'

condition: very little is known about them, and even less the media is willing to share with its readers.

On a national scale, these findings and results have been partially confirmed by Charlotte Taylor's works.[45] Taylor has claimed that, during the first decade of the XXI century, the semantic areas around the nodes *immigrati*, *clandestini* and *extracomunitari* were, above all, the area of legality and order (with very high co-collocations of these three words with *prostituzione*, *irregolari*, *diritti*), the area of national identity (i.e. ethnic names as co-collocates), the area of quantity (*milioni*, *tutti*, etc.), the area of civic roles and responsibilities (*comunità*, *integrazione*), and the area of family relationships (*figli di*, *giovani*). Not surprisingly, the area of rights and citizenship was barely mentioned.

In following works, Taylor has successfully integrated Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodologies, in order to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. CDA investigators are interested not only in specific analysis of the lexicon or syntagmatic structures, but also in the so-called textual 'metafunctions' (transitivity, modality, topic-comment structure, etc.) and in the conceptual evaluation of the relations among language, social norms, political actions and ideologies.[46] They are interested also in what does not appear in the corpus, in what is systematically and purposely hidden to make mysterious the events and more specifically the role of the social actors involved in the events, and their reciprocal relations.

By looking at political and journalistic corpora, for instance, CDA has shown how the absence of social agents caused by the abuse of the nominal style (e.g. 'L'uccisione dei dimostranti' instead of 'X ha ucciso i dimostranti'), passivisation ('i dimostranti sono stati uccisi' without expressing the agent) or the lack of precision when dealing with the *agency* ('uomini armati hanno ucciso i dimostranti', without any other specifications) could lead to a manipulation of the informative *nuclei*. Taylor has shown to what extent this inaccuracy about the agency can influence the reader's knowledge and interpretation of the data, in particular with regard to migration and migration policies. By collecting articles on a shipwreck near Lampedusa taken from six different Italian newspapers between the 28th and the 30th March 2012 ('Repubblica', 'Corriere della Sera', 'La Stampa', 'Il Sole 24 Ore', 'Il messaggero', 'Il Fatto quotidiano'), and by comparing this corpus

[45] See in particular Charlotte Taylor, *The representation of immigrants in the Italian Press*, CIRCAP Occasional Papers, No. 21, 2009; John Morley, Charlotte Taylor, 'Us and them: how immigrants are constructed in British and Italian newspapers', Paul Bayley, Geoffrey Williams (eds.), *European Identity: What the Media Say*, 'Oxford University Press Scholarship Online', September 2012, available at < www.oxford scholarship.com >, last access October 2013.

[46] For an extremely successful attempt at combining Corpus Linguistics and CDA methodologies in the study of the representation of migrants/otherness in the press, see also the several outputs of the ESRC-funded project *The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the UK Press, 1998-2008*, at < http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-3536/read >, last access October 2013.

to an equivalent corpus of British press, Taylor has focused in particular on what the Italian corpus did not include (which therefore could not been analysed through the Corpus Linguistics lens only), namely words that were present in the British corpus and that should have been present in the Italian one: words identifying the status of the people involved in that dramatic event (i.e. *rifugiato/i*, *richiedente/i asilo*), words identifying responsibilities and roles (the Libyan authorities, Italian and Libyan smugglers, the Italian coastguards, the international community, etc.). Absence from the corpus did not mean absence from the *discourse*. On the contrary, it may imply a deliberate erasing, hiding, manipulating of the information.

Working on absence in discourse is particularly rewarding when dealing with what cannot be explicitly mentioned in the current debate. In May 2013, after the appointment of Cécile Kyenge as Minister of Integration, and her firm intention to propose a bill to grant Italian citizenship to all those born in Italy, the debate on *ius soli* vs. *ius sanguinis* broke out. A discussion on citizenship rights should involve different actors: legislators and legal experts, members of the cabinet (like the Minister of Integration), politicians for or against, local administrations, commentators of various provenance, and – of course – the beneficiaries of the *ius soli*, i.e. the people born in Italy of non-Italian citizens. However, if we assemble a corpus from a newspaper like the 'Corriere della Sera' including all the articles which in May 2013 contained the expression *ius soli*, we notice that from that media discourse the latter are almost absent. Either they are simply the passive recipients of a controversial policy, which they cannot discuss or influence, or they are not mentioned at all. Their agency is not contemplated: they are silent, and silenced.

As we learn from the works of Niklas Luhmann, the goal of using discourse to silence other discourse (in our case, that of the second generation) is to remove the potential for an audience to obtain the unacceptable discourse.[47] The audience – i.e. the readers, public opinion – will be rendered incapable of hearing or noticing the existence of certain discourses because they differ too much from those normally used within the daily life of the community, or because – to recall Stuart Hall's reflections about discourses of national identity as narratives that constitute cultural power (1996)[48] – they are not seen to fit into the definition of a unified group, of a common identity. Within that debate, the second generation was still perceived – at least at that particular time, by that particular medium – as a non-agency: a presence to hide, a social actor without a voice. An exogenous element in the Italian society, as much as Cécile Kyenge and her 'dangerous' *negritudine*.

[47] See in particular Niklas Luhmann, *The reality of the mass media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
[48] Stuart Hall, *Modernity: An introduction to Modern Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).