A critical-discourse study of the representation of unaccompanied foreign minors in a sample of the Spanish press

Estudio crítico-discursivo sobre la representación de los menores no acompañados en una muestra de la prensa española

Estudo discursivo-crítico sobre a representação de menores desacompanhados em uma amostra da imprensa espanhola

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Abstract

The arrival of unaccompanied foreign minors (UFM) to Spain has increased in the last decades. The objective of this article is to study the discursive representation of UFM in a sample of the Spanish press to deepen the understanding of how they are portrayed. The data consist of a corpus of all the news items on UFM published in the digital editions of the newspapers *El País*, *ABC* and *El Mundo* from January 1st 2012 to January 1st 2022. The methodology is mixed, i.e. quantitative data will be obtained using the software *Antconc* for concordance analysis and cluster lists. Thus, a corpus-linguistic analysis is made to observe the main linguistic patterns associated with UFM. Moreover, qualitative data will be offered by using the discursive model of social actors proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008). This model will be used to delve into the main categories employed by the Spanish press to refer to UFM. For this purpose, patterns of assimilation vs individualization and role allocation and identification are described. The study reveals that UFM are mainly associated with criminalization and exclusion. Thus, their representation is associated with social problems.

Keywords: Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (UFM); critical discourse analysis; corpus linguistics; social actors; Spanish press.

Resumen

La llegada de menores extranjeros no acompañados (MENA) a España se ha incrementado en las últimas décadas. El objetivo de este artículo es estudiar la representación discursiva de los MENA en una muestra de la prensa española para profundizar en la comprensión de cómo esta los representa. Los datos consisten en un corpus de todas las noticias sobre los MENA publicadas en las ediciones digitales de los diarios *El País, ABC* y *El Mundo* desde el 1 de enero de 2012 hasta el 1 de enero de 2022. La metodología es mixta, es decir, se obtendrán datos cuantitativos mediante el software *Antconc* para análisis de concordancias y listas de vocabulario. Así, se realiza un análisis basado en la lingüística de corpus para observar los principales patrones lingüísticos asociados con los MENA. Además, se ofrecerán datos cualitativos utilizando el modelo discursivo de actores sociales propuesto por Van Leeuwen (2008). Este modelo se utilizará para profundizar en las principales categorías empleadas por la prensa española para referirse a los MENA, por lo cual, se describirán patrones de asimilación vs. individualización y asignación e identificación de roles. El estudio revela que los MENA se asocian principalmente con la criminalización y la exclusión. Así, su representación está asociada a problemas sociales.

Palabras clave: Menores Extranjeros No Acompañados (MENA); análisis crítico del discurso; lingüística de corpus; actores sociales; prensa española.

Resumo

A chegada de menores estrangeiros desacompanhados (MED) à Espanha tem aumentado nas últimas décadas. O objetivo deste artigo é estudar a representação discursiva da MED em uma amostra da imprensa espanhola para aprofundar a compreensão de como a imprensa a retrata. Os dados consistem em um corpus de todas as notícias da MED publicadas nas edições digitais dos jornais *El País, ABC* e *El Mundo* no período de 1º de janeiro de 2012 a 1º de janeiro de 2022. A metodologia é mista, ou seja, os dados quantitativos serão obtidos por meio da software Antconc para análise de concordâncias e listas de clusters. Assim, é feita uma análise corpus-linguística para observar os principais padrões linguísticos associados à MED. Além disso, dados qualitativos serão oferecidos utilizando o modelo discursivo de atores sociais proposto por Van Leeuwen (2008). Este modelo será usado para aprofundar as principais categorias empregadas pela imprensa espanhola para se referir à MED: ou seja, são descritos padrões de assimilação versus individualização e alocação e identificação de papéis. O estudo revela que as MED estão associadas principalmente à criminalização e à exclusão. Assim, sua representação está associada a problemas sociais.

Palavras-chave: Menores Estrangeiros Desacompanhados (MED); análise crítica do discurso; linguística de corpus; atores sociais; imprensa espanhola.

1. Introduction

Media have a relevant role in transmitting social realities; often, the audience knows certain realities just from the media. This gives them power, because the discourses that they create have an ideological burden that contributes to making the audience see social facts in a particular manner. Consequently, media are important in the construction of social security or threat (Perelló and Lacomba, 2020) because they influence public opinion. Thus, the role of the media in general and of the press in particular is crucial in the way the reality of unaccompanied foreign minors (UFM) is transmitted. In fact, social media (including the press) recreate social identities. Previous research shows that UFM appear in the press when their presence and behaviours threaten the security of the main group, which perpetuates their association with criminalization (Bravo and Santos-González, 2017). Theirs constitute a new type of migration that follows the trajectories of adult migrations.

Unaccompanied Foreign Minors are defined as children under the age of 18 that arrive in other countries without a responsible adult with them. The UFM are actually immigrants who leave their countries of origin in order to improve their families' lives and their own lives. Lázaro (2007) lists some of the main characteristics of UFM that arrive in Spain in his news analysis study: most are men between 15 and 18 years old and come mainly from Morocco; they arrive in Spain usually to find a job; a minority are women and children with mental illnesses; they normally arrive in small boats; they come from big families; they move between different regions in Spain and in the European Union; they have low education and they do not want to go back to their countries of origin.

Most UFM start their journey without documents and have clear objectives because they want to help their families in their countries of origin and ant to acquire job training so that they can access the labour market (Santana *et al.*, 2016). Their low socio-economic background means that their families have encouraged them to emigrate in order to find a better future. They mainly leave their country in the back of a lorry or in fishing boats (*pateras*). Bone age testing proves that not all young boys that arrive are minors (Lázaro, 2007).

The main hypothesis of this paper is that the Spanish press problematizes UFM in discourse by associating them with criminality. Delving into the language used by the press to portray UFM can contribute to increasing the critical consciousness of the readers and help the audience be aware of the main tools that the press uses to be a discourse of security and power. Following the sociocognitive approach of Van Dijk (2009), the study focusses on the discursive reproduction of social inequalities and power by taking a critical perspective to unveil the negative representation of immigrant minors in a sample of the Spanish press. The discursive model of social actors proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008) will be used to explore the representation of UFM as social actors in the sample of the Spanish press under analysis. The aim is to investigate how the press portrays and recreates immigrant minors and to reveal the discursive problematization of UFM. Thus, the objective of this paper will be accomplished by observing the way discourse problematizes the migration of UFM, combining the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with the methodology of corpus linguistics (CL). This leads to the following research questions: How are UFM represented as social actors in a sample of the Spanish press? and In what way can the representation of UFM and the topics associated with them contribute to their criminalization and social exclusion?

After this introduction, the paper is divided into sections: sections two and three offer the literature review and the theoretical framework and methods. Next, the data sources and methodology used for the study are outlined. This section is followed by the results and discussion. The article ends with some conclusions based on the analysis.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1. Literature review

UFM (children, young people and adolescents) who arrive in Spain to have a better future are present in the Spanish migratory panorama of the past years (Bhabha *et al.*, 2018). Their migration receives transnational treatment and is framed within the context of adult migration (Martínez Lirola, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2021). Immigrant minors started to arrive in Europe in the nineties, and since then there has been research on their arrival from different perspectives such as the reasons why the emigrate, their needs in the countries of arrival and their problematization (Fernández-Ramos, 2019).

The fact that Spain is so close to Morocco makes it an attractive crossing area to set foot in Europe. Their legal designation is *unaccompanied minors* because when they arrive they are under 18 years old and are not accompanied by an adult (Council of the European Union, 1997). In addition, when they arrive in the Spanish territory they have to be welcomed by the local child protection agency (Gimeno-Monterde, 2018; Menjívar and Perreira, 2019). Most of the minors arrive from Morocco, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Nigeria or Ethiopia (Garavito *et al.*, 2018).

Generally, media represent immigrants as *the others* (Vickers and Rutter, 2018) and they include the UFM (Rosen and Crafter, 2018). However, they do not highlight the necessity of creating new political measures and actions that guarantee the security and the rights of the newly arrived minors (Pelaez, 2018). The control access of each country is combined with the defence of human rights of the minors that arrive (Gómez-Quintero *et al.*, 2021; Knezevic, 2017). This is a complex process

for the welcoming society, due to the challenges and consequences that derive from the immigrant minors' arrival (Bravo and Santos-González, 2017; Zatz and Rodriguez, 2015).

The main reasons why immigrant children come to Europe in general and to Spain in particular have to do with family problems, insecurity or poverty in their countries of origin, labour exploitation, violation of human rights or war (Fernández-Ramos, 2019; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). They normally risk their lives to cross the straits of Gibraltar because the lack of economic resources does not allow them to use safe transportation and because they would not be allowed legally into the country. Most are men with low education, which prevents them from having access to the labour market legally. They contribute to their families through informal sectors of economy, and they do not speak Spanish (Alonso-Bello *et al.*, 2020; Etxeberría *et al.*, 2012; González and Torrado, 2008). Moreover, they do not know about the administrative procedures, and they are alone; they arrive with no family to support them and have an irregular administrative situation that does not facilitate their integration, labour and social independence (Bravo and Santos-González, 2017).

There are studies that focus on the process of detention and deportation of minors (Rodriguez, 2018), on their employability skills (Alonso-Bello *et al.*, 2020), on the vulnerability they suffer when they arrive in Spain (Asín, 2012; Garavito *et al.*, 2018; Gimeno-Monterde, 2010; López, 2020) and on their right to education (Neubauer, 2020). There are also studies on the problems that young bands create in Spain (Scandoglio, 2009; Martínez and Cerdá, 2009) and on the problems that UFM create in the areas where they live (Ardévol, 2009). Very few studies pay attention to their health and psychological needs (Harkensee *et al.*, 2021).

2.2. Theoretical framework

Discourse creates social realities. For this reason, the perspective of CDA has been chosen because it concentrates on the deconstruction of discourse in order to uncover social problems, power abuse or discrimination. The combination of the different semiotic resources is used to express meanings with certain possible communicative ends. CDA describes the way discourse is produced and into the ideology and social contexts connected with it, i.e., language is understood as a *social practice* (Fairclough, 1995). In this sense, each linguistic choice has implications, in Baker *et al.*'s words (2008):

> We understand CDA to be an academic movement, a way of doing discourse analysis from a critical perspective, which often focuses on theoretical concepts such as power, ideology and domination. We do not view CDA as being a method nor are specific methods solely associated with it. Instead, it adopts any method that is adequate to realize the aims of specific CDA-inspired research. (p. 273)

This research will focus on the CDA model proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008) to analyze social actors (see section 5). The author proposes the categories listed in Table 1. The application of these categories to the corpus analysis will allow delving into the way UFM are portrayed by the Spanish press, which affects the way the audience perceives them.

Table 1

Categories proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008, pp. 32-51) to analyze social actors

1) role allocation (social actors as agent or patient)

2) generalisation (general reference to social actors)

3) specification (representation as social actors, as classes or as individuals, i.e., generic or specific reference)

4) assimilation (social actors are represented in groups)

5) association (there are associations of social actors)

6) dissociation (unformed associations of social actors are observed)

7) indetermination (the representation of social actors is unspecified)

8) differentiation (the different social actors are specified)

9) nomination (the unique identity of social actors is mentioned)

10) categorisation (functions and identities shared with others)

11) functionalization (functions of the social actors represented)

12) identification (social actors are referred to by something they do or what they are)

13) personalization (personal information and representation as human beings)

14) impersonalisation (social actors are referred to as human beings or not)

15) overdetermination (the social actors represented appear as participants of several social practices).

A corpus-linguistic analysis was performed to observe regularities in the language by analyzing a large corpus of Spanish media texts (total number of words, source, years). The corpus-linguistic approach includes collocations, keywords and concordances that provide word lists and frequencies in the context of UMF.

The combination of CDA and CL provides a systematic and reasonable objective approach to variation in patterns of language use (Baker *et al.*, 2008, 2013; Baker and McEnery, 2015; Fuster *et al.*, 2020; Gries and Berez, 2017; McEnery and Hardie, 2012; Paquot and Gries, 2020; Pérez, 2021). The analysis of language patterns involves clarifying the relationship between discourse and social structures. The said relationship will show how the different choices re-create social relations and whether they suggest equality or inequality of actors. Assuming that social structures and discursive structures are interrelated cognitively (Van Dijk, 2017), language usage provides information about society and aspects of power, manipulation or exploitation.

3. Data and methodology

Data consists of all the news items on UFM published in the online version of the Spanish newspapers *El País, ABC* and *El Mundo* from January 1st, 2012 until January 1st, 2022, from Monday to Friday, 341 news items in total. The motivation behind the newspapers' choice is that they are among the most widely read Spanish newspapers. *El País* has always leaned towards progressivism and social-liberalism and *El Mundo* is considered liberal and independent (Alcaraz-Mármol and Soto-Almela, 2022). *ABC* supports conservative political ideas (Martínez Lirola, 2022). Table 2 shows the number of texts analyzed distributed by year and newspaper and the number of tokens.

Table 2

Corpus metadata

Newspaper	*El País*	*ABC*	*El Mundo*	Total
No. of texts	133	133	75	341
No. of tokens	93,725	48,216	30,639	172,580

The methodology of this article is mixed, i.e., both quantitative techniques proposed by CL are used complemented by more detailed qualitative textual analysis. The purpose of applying CL for the analysis in this article is to delve into the lexis used to refer to UFM in the corpus and to observe the main ways they are represented as social actors in discourse. In addition, the model of social actors proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008) is used to contextualize the analysis and to deepen on the social discourse on UFM in a sample of the Spanish press.

The Centre of Study and Documentation on Immigration, Racism and Xenophobia's database called MUGAK was used to compile the corpus. Once the news items were compiled, they were converted to a txt. format and coded considering the following criteria: the initials of the newspaper, EP for *El País,* EM for *El Mundo* and ABC for *ABC*. The initials of each newspaper were followed by the day, month and year in which the news article was published; the last digit altered in the case that there was more than one example per day (e.g. ABC-210115-1.txt), which makes clear that on that specific day there were two examples related to women in the news item under analysis.

After the selection of the newspapers and the compilation of the news items, the software Antconc (Anthony, 2020) was used for concordance analysis[1], i.e., to calculate collocations, keywords, lexical and phrasal frequencies, etc. related to the search words *menor* and *menores* (Table 3). This resulted in a list of concordances that contains the search word strings *menor* (minor) and *menores* (minors) in order to explore patterns in UMF discourse and other words and collocations (Table 4).

Table 3
Rank and frequency of the query terms

Word	El País	Rank	Frequency	ABC	Rank	Frequency	El Mundo	Rank	Frequency
Menores (minors)		19	700		13	464		16	250
Menor (minor)		47	163		49	91		55	46

Observing Table 3, it is significant that although *El País* and *ABC* have the same number of news items on UFM, *El País* shows a higher frequency of the words *menores* and *menor*. Moreover, although the rank of the words is similar in both newspapers, the rank of the word *menores* is higher in *ABC*, followed by *El Mundo* and then *El País*.

Next, the test for a statistical significance measure called log-likelihood (LL)[2] of p < 0.01 (critical value = 6.63)[3] (Log-Likelihood and Effect Size Calculator, 2020) was used in order to compare a significant difference in the frequency (%DIFF) of certain terms (as done in Gabrielatos, 2018) in the news items of *El País* (O1) with those of *ABC* and *El Mundo* (O2, 78,855 tokens between the two newspapers). This test is useful to observe how much evidence there is for a difference between two corpora; i.e., the log-likelihood significance test compares two corpora by observing the words that are used more frequently in each.

LL is obtained by introducing the frequency in corpus 1 (O1) and the frequency in corpus 2 (O2). An LL of more than 5 is considered significant in social sciences; %1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts: + indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2 and - indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2. %DIFF is a straightforward and simple effect-size metric for keyness analysis. It

indicates the proportion (%) of the difference between the normalized frequencies of a word in two corpora. The results obtained using LL are presented in Table 4.[4]

Table 4

Comparison of the two corpora using LL

Item	O1[5]	%1	O2	%2	LL	%DIFF
Inmigrantes (immigrants)	82	0.09	233	0.30-	103.88	-70.39
Prostitución (prostitution)	2	0.00	28	0.04 -	31.61	-93.99
No acompañados (unaccompanied)	30	0.03	66	0.08 -	20.77	-61.76
Menores (minors)	700	0.75	714	0.91-	13.09	-17.52
Inmigrante (immigrant)	5	0.01	20	0.03 -	12.41	-78.97
Policía (police)	112	0.12	144	0.18-	11.45	-36.56
Menores inmigrantes (immigrant minors)	14	0.01	30	0.04 -	9.05	-60.74
Menores migrantes (migrant minors)	25	0.03	8	0.01 +	6.50	162.92
Violencia (violence)	22	0.02	34	0.04 -	5.08	-45.56

Firstly, it should be specified that the results of LL presented in Table 4 are only the ones that are above 5, which is the number to start considering a word or collocation significant in social sciences (Gabrielatos, 2018). In this sense, referring to minors as immigrant/s, unaccompanied is significant in the second corpus, i.e. *ABC* and *El Mundo,* whereas the collocation *menores migrantes* (migrant minors) is more common in *El País.* The references to prostitution, to the police and to violence are also more common in the second corpus, which suggests that the association of UFM with violent behaviours or ilegal activities such as prostitution are less common in *El País.* The %DIFF is very clear in the terms already mentioned. Thus, the collocations found in the corpus justify that out of the different categories proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008) to refer to social actors, the next section focuses on the ones that predominate in the corpus: assimilation vs individualization, role allocation and identification. This selection is determined by the number of words and tokens associated with these categories (see 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4).

4. Results and discussion

The discursive model of social actors proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008) was chosen due to its usefulness to explore how UFM are portrayed in the compiled corpus**.** Once the query terms presented in Table 3 *menor* (minor) and *menores* (minors) were chosen to start the research, the collocations where this key terms appeared determined the main categories of the ones proposed by the author that were taken into consideration in the analysis, *inmigrante* (immigrant), *no acompañado* (unaccompanied), etc. (see Table 4). Moreover, in order to confirm or deny the hypothesis presented in the introduction, other terms were chosen such as *violencia* (violence) and *policía* (police).

In this way, the limitations of quantitative CL and qualitative CDA are overcome because CL is criticised for not taking into consideration the social context of texts and CDA for using small data and mainly qualitative analysis.

4.1. Assimilation vs. individualization

The most significant observation in the entire corpus (see Table 3) is that the word *menores* (minors) appears more often (1,414 times) than the word *menor* (minor) (300 times). Following Van Leeuwen (2008), the participants in the news articles can be referred to members in a group (assimilation) or as individuals (individualization). The fact that UFM are referred to as a group implies that they arrive in Spain in groups, which can contribute to creating a sense of threat or invasion. This is even more highlighted when the number of those who arrive is specified (cf. examples 1 and 2):

(1) en la ciudad autónoma. Entre 15 y 18 menores extranjeros no acompañados de origen marroquí[5] (in the autonomous city. Between 15 and 18 unaccompanied foreign minors of Moroccan origin). (ABC-120115.txt)

(2) 70 inmigrantes de origen magrebí, 61 de ellos menores de edad, que se encontraban en (70 immigrants of Maghreb origin, 61 of them minors, who were in). (ABC-070514.txt)

The said sense of threat of invasion is confirmed by the massive arrival of immigrants from Morocco on May 17th 2021. Out of the 8,000 immigrants who arrived, 1,500 were UFM. During May 17th –19th there were more arrivals of UFM than in three years, which generated a crisis in Spain. Therefore, this shows that the number of news items in 2021 was much higher than in the rest of the years. Examples 3 and 4 belong to 2021.

(3) pasada semana. Ante el enorme número de menores que sortearon los espigones ceutíes desde Marruecos (last week. Given the huge number of minors who raffled the Ceuta breakwaters from Morocco). (EP-260521.txt)

(4) tras la llegada de más de 5.000 menores, la mayoría marroquíes, a las costas andaluzas (after the arrival of more than 5,000 minors, most of them Moroccan, at the Andalusian coast). (EP-020621.txt)

From their arrival in May 2021, Spain had to take care of the said minors in reception centres, although the main objective was to repatriate them due to the delicate situation in Ceuta from May on, as example 5 shows.

(5) ciudad sigue desbordada y con más de 1.200 menores a los que cuidar cada día. (the city is still overwhelmed and with more than 1,200 minors to care for every day). (EP-030621.txt)

The repatriation of UFM that started in May 2021 had to be stopped in August because the procedure used by the Ministry of Interior was not considered appropriate, as examples 6 and 7 demonstrate.

(6) mantiene la paralización de las devoluciones de menores a Marruecos contra el criterio de Interior (maintains the paralysis of the returns of minors to Morocco against the criteria of the Interior). (EM-240821.txt)

(7) Todos los traslados de menores a Marruecos quedan suspendidos durante las próximas horas (All transfers of minors to Morocco are suspended for the next hours). (EP-170821-1.txt)

4.2. Active vs. passive

Regarding the role allocation given to UFM, the general tendency is to represent them as passive, receiving the actions that the people of the main group in society do for them. As Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 33) makes clear: "Activation occurs when social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity, passivation when they are represented as 'undergoing' the activity, or as being 'at the receiving end of it'". The references to the Civil Guard in example 8 or to the government officials (*agentes*) in example 9 make a clear difference between *we* and *they*. Examples 10, 11 and 12 refer to minors as passive.

(8) la Guardia Civil rescata a un menor de una patera/Las mafias que (the Civil Guard rescues a minor from a dinghy. /The mafias that). (EP-121213.txt)

(9) que los agentes pudieron extraer al menor del hueco donde estaba alojado (that the agents were able to extract the minor from the hole where he was housed). (ABC-281217.txt)

(10) Recuperado el cuerpo del otro menor desaparecido en el Miño Uno de (Recovered the body of the other minor who disappeared in the Miño Uno de). (EP-050613. txt)

(11) juegos. El comunicado indicó que el menor fue llevado al Centro de Procesamiento (games. The statement indicated that the minor was taken to the Processing Center). (ABC-250419.txt)

(12) frontera letal. El cadáver de un menor ha sido hallado esta mañana en (lethal frontier. The body of a minor was found this morning in). (EP-080120-2.txt)

The analysis of roles is important to delve into the problematization of UFM. The immigrant minors are presented as criminals but also as victims. Thus, the discourse used by the press takes into consideration different social situations associated with them. When immigrant minors are arrested, they are clearly associated with criminality, and thus, immigrants are clearly associated with social exclusion because of the actions they did before being arrested. When this news is shown by the media, they create a discourse associated with fear and rejection in the Spanish population by portraying them as the agents of negative actions. The explicit idea of these minors being against the law is shown in the following examples:

(13) realizando tocamientos por el cuerpo. Los menores fueron detenidos por los agentes después (performing body touching. The minors were detained by the agents after). (ABC-211112-1.txt)

(14) grupo como presuntos autores. Los seis menores fueron detenidos y trasladados a los (group as alleged perpetrators. The six minors were arrested and transferred to the). (EM-130917.txt)

(15) d'Esquadra detuvieron ayer a un menor acusado de intentar agredir sexualmente a (d'Esquadra arrested yesterday a minor accused of trying to sexually assault). (EP-300619.txt)

(16) a dos dominican, uno de ellos menor de edad, acusados de intento de (two Dominicans, one of them a minor, accused of attempting to). (EM-221214.txt)

(17) Detenido un menor tutelado por un intento de agresión (Arrested a ward for an attempted assault). (EP-300619.txt)

(18) hasta cometer los presuntos abusos. Los menores están acusados de un presunto delito (until committing the alleged abuses. The minors are charged with an alleged crime). (ABC-211112-1.txt)

(19) Detenidos seis menores por supuestos abusos a dos niñas (Six minors arrested for alleged abuse of two girls). (EP-120917.txt)

Victimization through discourse portrays the reality of UFM as people who have problems or that need the help or support of the members or institutions of the welcoming society. Thus, the needs of minors are presented (education, housing, etc.) and, in a way, this discourse asks for compassion and solidarity. Examples 20 and 21 portray them as victims and vulnerable human beings in need of help.

(20) todo, para asistir a cualquier víctima menor de edad y procurarle toda la (everything, to assist any minor victim and provide all the). (ABC-150421.txt)

(21) el repunte migratorio ha traído nuevos menores africanos necesitados de un hogar. En (the upturn in migration has brought in new African minors in need of a home. On). (EP-180121.txt)

UFM are also portrayed as victims when they are the ones that suffer violence, normally from members of bands but also from pederasts, which is another way of portraying them as vulnerable, in danger and in need of protection, as examples 22, 23 and 24 show.

(22) Apuñalado un menor en una pelea entre bandas latinas (Stabbed a minor in a fight between Latino gangs). (EM-221214.txt)

(23) Un menor muerto en una reyerta entre bandas (A minor killed in a brawl between gangs). (EM-260916.txt)

(24) impunidad de los delitos graves contra menores, entre ellos la pederastia, dando más (impunity for serious crimes against minors, including pedophilia, giving more). (EP-130521.txt)

4.3. Identification

The examples of identification are the ones that predominate in the corpus. Van Leeuwen (2008) distinguishes three types:

> Classification (major categories established by society to differentiate classes of people including gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.), relational classification (social actors are represented by their personal, kindship, or work relations to each other), and physical identification (references to social actors by their physical characteristics). (p. 42)

The predominant way of identifying minors is by their age, as examples 25-28 show.

> (25) supuesto para su integridad física. El menor, de 17 años de edad, fue detectado (supposed for his physical integrity. The minor, 17 years old, was detected). (ABC-030815.txt)

> (26) las pruebas, que confirman que es menor de edad y que tiene 16 años (the tests, which confirm that he is a minor and that he is 16 years old). (EP 251116.txt)

> (27) inmediatamente la maleta, rescataron a un menor subsahariano de 8 años, al que se (immediately the suitcase, they rescued an 8-year-old sub-Saharan minor, who was). (EP-070515.txt)

> (28) Policía Nacional han liberado a una   menor de 17 años que ejercía la prostitución (National Police have released a girl under 17 years of age who was a prostitute). (ABC-120516.txt)

Religion is used to identify them in very few examples (see example 29). Similarly, there are very few examples of immigrant minors named and referred to by their names (see example 30). This contrasts with the high number of examples of immigrants identified with their nationality (cf. examples 31-34).

> (29) El menor islamista ceutí que marchó a Siria (The youngest Ceuta Islamist who marched to Syria). (EM-070513.txt)

> (30) vivido un caso como el del menor Adou. Después de haber estado un (lived a case like that of the minor Adou. After having been a). (ABC-090615.txt)

> (31) junto a su madre, una emigrante menor de edad de Costa de Marfil (together with his mother, a minor immigrant from the Ivory Coast). (ABC-271216.txt)

> (32) Las ONG denuncian que los menores, de nacionalidad siria, tuvieron que abandonar (The NGOs criticized that the minors, of Syrian nationality, had to leave). (EP-110116.txt)

(33) puerto de Tarifa (Cádiz) a un menor de edad marroquí que viajaba oculto (port of Tarifa (Cádiz) to a Moroccan minor who was travelling in secret). (ABC-281217.txt)

(34) la repatriación sin garantías de un menor marroquí. Después vinieron otras muchas, hasta (the unsecured repatriation of a Moroccan minor. Later came many others, until). (EP-230118.txt)

Gender is another way of showing identification. In most cases, the examples refer to men, but there are others that refer to young women, who are mainly associated with being victims of prostitution. Consequently, they are passive recipients of the negative actions of others, mainly mafia, as examples 35-37 show:

(35) constató que en ese inmueble las menores estaban siendo explotadas sexualmente. (found that the minors were being sexually exploited in that building). (ABC-210115-1.txt)

(36) la mujer quien inició a la menor en la prostitución, explicándole cómo debía (the woman who initiated the minor into prostitution, explaining to her how she should). ABC-120516.txt)

(37) Una menor, que ha sido rescatada de una (A minor, who has been rescued from a). (EP-180321.txt)

4.4. Exploring other examples of problematization and victimization of UFM

Apart from problematizing UFM by associating them with criminality (see section 5.2), they are presented as *problem people* by highlighting the *we-they* dichotomy and foregrounding that UFM are presented as a burden for the Spanish society (cf. examples 38, 39 and 40). This is explicitly stated in some examples that make reference to the amount of money that Spain has to invest in them.

(38) critica el gasto que supone un menor extranjero no acompañado a la Comunidad (criticizes the expense of an unaccompanied foreign minor to the Community). (ABC-040521.txt)

(39) invertirá 140 euros al día en cada menor migrante no acompañado El Ejecutivo licita (will invest 140 euros a day in each unaccompanied migrant minor The Executive bids). (EP-031019.txt)

(40) muchísimo dinero en protección de los menores, concretamente 8 millones de Euros al año (a lot of money in the protection of minors, specifically 8 million Euros a year). ABC-130314.txt)

There are other cases where the problematization of UFM is clearly associated with their violent behaviours (cf. examples 41 and 42), the intervention of the police (cf. examples 43 and 44) or with their association with gangs, where violence is a common practice that can even involve killing, as example 45 shows.

(41) centros que soportan cada día la violencia de los menores extranjeros no acompañados (centres that endure the violence of unaccompanied foreign minors every day). (EP-260719.txt)

(42) convivencia más difícil «con casos de violencia» entre chicos, hacia los trabajadores o (more difficult coexistence "with cases of violence" between boys, towards workers or). (ABC-290721.txt)

(43) de la Brigada Móvil de la Policía Nacional identificaron a las tres menores (of the Mobile Brigade of the National Police identified the three minors). (ABC-140920.txt)

(44) de Alcorcón ha detenido a una banda de menores, de entre 16 y 17 años (of Alcorcón has arrested a gang of minors, between 16 and 17 years old). (ABC-190813.txt)

(45) menor muerto en una riña de bandas latinas en Vallecas El fallecido por (minor killed in a fight between Latin gangs in Vallecas The deceased by). (EP-270916.txt)

To sum up, UFM are associated with victimization in some examples in the corpus, in three main ways: a) when they are victims of gangs that then oblige them to behave in violent ways (cf. Example 46), b) when they suffer different types of violence in the gangs (cf. eamples 47 and 48) and c) when they are victims of abuse or child labour (cf. example 49).

(46) cierra una ardua investigación contra las mafias y detiene a 14 personas, 13 de ellas menores (closes an arduous investigation against the gangs and arrests 14 people, 13 of them minors). (EM-240221.txt)

(47) Estos menores son vulnerables a la violencia física, psicológica y sexual, y están (These minors are vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual violence, and are). ABC-120613.txt)

(48) primer caso conocido de menores varones víctimas de abusos de mujeres (first known case of male minors being abused by women). (ABC-021116.txt)

(49) 5 y 14 años son, en la actualidad, víctimas del trabajo infantil, con mayor incidencia (5 and 14 years old are currently victims of child labour, with a higher incidence). (ABC-200612.txt)

However, what predominates in the corpus is not the vulnerability and necessity of protecting UFM, but the references to UFM in plural and their association with criminalization and violence. Thus, their problematization from the moment they arrive in Spain does not favour their integration or the possibility of delving into the main reasons that force them to leave their country of origin, trying to improve the lives of their families as well as their own.

UFM arrivals have to be understood paying attention to the socio-economic situations in their countries of origin. This is not easy because the news items do not offer information about their situation in their countries of origin, what is behind their migratory journey. Moreover, the necessity of creating political measures with their countries of origin (mainly Morocco) is not present, which suggests that there is no work being done on preventing their arrival and on improving their social situation there so that they do not have to emigrate.

Combining CDA and CL has enables us to identify offered the main collocations and lexical patterns regarding UFM, and explore the social situation that frames discourse. The language patterns observed portray UFM in a negative way, associating them with social problems; i.e., discourse reproduces discrimination and marginalization. There should be news items that focus on the rights of UFM, considering international regulations and the importance of offering them protection and training so that they avoid criminal and violent situations.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of articles on UFM in the dominant Spanish press, both left and right wing, shows the exclusion and discrimination of UFM, which has an effect on their portrayal as *others* and on the way the native population perceives them. It seems that the political ideology of the Spanish newspapers does not make any significant differences when it comes to the general discourse towards UFM. The examples analyzed reveal the association of UFM with two main patterns: on the one hand, a sense of invasion due to the number of UFM that arrive in Spain. In this sense, the arrival of UFM is presented as a phenomenon of certain magnitude (see the examples of May 2021 in section 5.1, where around 1,500 UFM arrived in Ceuta). On the other hand, the second pattern is associated with the fact that UFM are violent and dangerous due to their origin; i.e., they are street children.

The way UFM are represented in the corpus analyzed promotes ethnocentric attitudes and perpetuates the *we-they* dichotomy, being them the minority group and the one presented as discriminated and problematized. This article has offered a social perspective on the discourse that a sample of the Spanish press gives on UFM, by foregrounding the relationship between the discourse on immigrant minors and the social situation that frames them. The association of UFM with social problems does not only favour their negative representation in the Spanish press but also prevents them from becoming integrated in Spanish society. In this way, stereotypes of and prejudices against immigrants are perpetuated.

UFM are associated with behaviours outside the law that affects Spanish society; they have no documents and they are in need of social resources from Spain when they arrive and need to go to reception centres. This involves action from the institutions in Spain because the police have to intervene when they are associated with criminal behaviours, they need resources from shelters from minors, etc. Therefore, they are excluded from the majority group, who is clearly associated with citizenship.

Perceiving UFM as threatening and problematic, associated with deviant social behaviour such as problems in centres for minors, crimes or violence, creates fear and rejection in Spanish society that is far from promoting the acceptance of cultural differences and of UFM. Thus, the general association of minors with punishable behaviours and social problems does not facilitate their integration or

understanding the reasons why they migrate. On the contrary, racist attitudes can be highlighted due to the portrayal of UFM as *problem people.*

The combination of CDA and CL has been used in the deconstruction of unaccompanied minors from a discoursive perspective. The different linguistic choices used by the press to refer to UFM re-create the social context framing the news items. Thus, it can be deduced from the texts that the context does not benefit the integration of these minors or the understanding of how they can contribute to promoting interculturality in the welcoming society.

Notes

[1] In a frequency list, *AntConc* ranks all the words a corpus consists of by frequency of occurrence. A cluster allows researchers to look at a given number of words that occur most frequently surrounding the keyword.

[2] See Log-Likelihood Calculator at http://ucrel.lancsac.uk/llwizard.html

[3] The critical value (6.63%) corresponds to 99 % percent possibility that the results are not due to chance.

[4] Only the words that were significant considering LL were taken into consideration, with the critical value (6.63).

[5] News items published in *El País.*

[6] News items published in *ABC* and *El Mundo.*

[7] The translation to English prepared by the author is given after each example.

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Author's contribution

The author has done this research alone. Therefore, she designed the research, obtained the data and wrote the article. The author approves the version of the article published in the journal.

Conflict of interest

The author does not have any conflict of interest.

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