



MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF OCTOBER, 2019 SOCIAL OUTBREAK IN CHILE¹

Representación mediática del estallido social de octubre del 2019 en Chile

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to reward readers with insights into the media representation of the first week of October, 2019 social outbreak in Chile in the national mainstream press. We have chosen to focus on the printed media since it plays an important role in shaping public opinions as well as setting agendas regarding certain topics. The study stands on the premises taken from Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics, and concentrates on the verbal signification in the headlines. Results of the study show that in the context of news media discourse on October social outbreak, its representation is guided by the ideological and political standpoints of the medium, leaving behind the main aim of the media to cover diversity and promote pluralism in society.

KEYWORDS: printed news media in Chile; October social outbreak; ideology in language; Critical Discourse Analysis; Corpus Linguistics.

RESUMEN

Este artículo trata de la representación en los medios de comunicación de la primera semana del estallido social de octubre de 2019 en Chile. Para aquello, nos hemos centrado en los medios impresos, ya que ellos juegan un papel importante en la formación de las opiniones públicas, así como en el establecimiento de agendas con respecto a ciertos temas. El estudio se basa en las premisas tomadas del Análisis Crítico del Discurso y la Lingüística del Corpus, y se concentra en el significado verbal en los titulares. Los resultados del estudio muestran que, en el contexto del discurso de los medios de comunicación sobre el estallido social de octubre, su representación se guía por los puntos de vista ideológicos y políticos del medio, dejando atrás el rol principal de los medios de cubrir la diversidad y promover el pluralismo de opiniones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: prensa escrita en Chile; estallido social de Octubre del 2019 en Chile; ideología en lenguaje; análisis crítico del discurso; lingüística del corpus.

Fecha de Recepción

2020-04-24

Fecha de Evaluación

2020-05-13

Fecha de Aceptación

2020-06-04

¹ This article was supported by the National Research and Development Agency (former Chilean Sciences and Technology National Council – CONICYT) under the Grant number FONDECYT-CONICYT 11180178, where Anna Ivanova is the principal investigator.

INTRODUCTION

The October, 2019 social outbreak in Chile was the first time these kinds of social events took place in the country since the decade of 1930s (Navarro & Tromben, 2019). It occurred in a broad regional context of social mobilizations in South America. Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia experienced their own social movements, each characterized by the particular demands, and marked, in its turn, by the recent political history. A crosscutting element in the citizen demands of the aforementioned events was the established criticism of the advent of South American states to economic neoliberalism, the privatization of basic services and the distancing of the political class from the reality experienced by the media, and low social strata in the respective countries.

In Chile, the social outbreak began on the 18th of October, 2019 with a massive evasion in the metro of Santiago, organized by school students and coordinated through social networks. This evasion expressed general discontent by the increase of 30 pesos in the price of the metro pass, which was recommended, in its turn, by the panel of experts (technical economists) and promoted by the government, presided by Sebastián Piñera (a right-wing businessman).

The citizen demonstrations on the following day (October, 19th) spread throughout the national territory to support and express specific local demands such as improvements to the integrated health service, improvements to the pension system, demands for free and quality education, environmental issues, etc. Nowadays, all these areas are characterized by a high presence of private control in Chile.

No doubt, October, 2019 social outbreak attracted the continued attention of the mainstream news media: television, radio, online and print press in the country, the latter being of particular interest for this study. As rightly put by Conboy (2010), newspapers have always been more than “a dry account of the events of the day”, or a mere channel to transmit information (p. 3). Instead, they construct ideological versions of reality, aimed at persuading lay people that certain issue is good or bad (Verón, 1987; Conboy, 2010). Newspapers tend towards the confirmation of status quo by including and excluding certain issues from its content. In particular, the high degree of attention and direct privileged access is given to established elites or points of view, and often negative or non-equal treatment to non-institutional or deviant behavior (McQuail, 2010).

Chile is a deeply neoliberal country and, paradoxically, opposite to the principles of neoliberalism itself, the economic development is highly concentrated in broad industrial and

service sectors (CDC, 2015), which include the cultural industry in general, and the print media in particular (Sunkel & Geoffroy, 2001; Couso, 2011; Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017). In the latter case, they are represented by two main conglomerates: El Mercurio SAP (newspapers *El Mercurio*, *Las Últimas Noticias*, *La Segunda*) and COPESA (newspapers *La Tercera*, *La Cuarta*) (Monkeberg, 2011), owned by two families of the Chilean economic élite: the Edwards and the Saieh respectively. All in all, this duopoly controls 90% of the print media circulation in the country (Poderopedia, 2015; Valida, 2019).

The establishment of this duopoly is understood as a direct consequence of the ideological control imposed on the press by the Pinochet regime, censoring and closing any media that attempted to investigate and report on the situation in Chile (Mastrini & Becerra, 2011). With the return of democracy, these media did not change their ideological position (Ulloa, 2014), standing nowadays as right-wing media with liberal economic and conservative political orientation.

Furthermore, the mass media industry does not escape the vices of the markets where it is developed. Thus, as a result of a controversial direct agreement with the state-owned company Metro S.A, the newspaper *Publimetro* entered the print press market in Chile in January 2000 (at that time it was simply called METRO). This new media actor differed from other national media outlets, such as *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, by its free distribution, seen at the beginning as a barrier to enter the Chilean print media market.

One distinctive feature of cost-free media and, therefore, of *Publimetro*, is that their income comes almost entirely from advertising, which occupies large spaces within the newspaper (López, Bellón & de Mateo, 2014). In addition, it is built with foreign direct investments that are not necessarily representative of any given political or ideological trend.

Thus, the aim of this article is to uncover how October, 2019 social outbreak, an anti-system mobilization in the country, was mediatized by the major Chilean media outlets *El Mercurio*, *La Tercera* and a fee-free *Publimetro* to pinpoint their powerful instruments of representation. In order to do so, we combined two types of analysis in our research: critical discourse analysis, which analyzes the language with the context of its production, and corpus linguistics, which uses special software to uncover linguistic patterns across a large number of texts. We believe, this combination will contribute to obtain more accurate empirical results and their discussion.

The study largely ignored the typographical choices, graphic format of the page and visual tools, which are, no doubt, of immense importance in newspapers, as they dynamically interact

with the language. Rather, it concentrated on the lexical choice used to refer to October, 2019 social outbreak and voice distribution in the texts. In doing so, we stand on the premises that, when there are options of lexicalization, choosing one word rather than another often has ideological reasons, and therefore, media portrayal of October, 2019 social outbreak is influenced and restricted by institutional arrangements of each media outlet.

In the following sections, we briefly outline the previous research on mass media, language and social movements. Further on, after describing the methodological approach of this study and the corpus used in our analysis, we present our findings and final remarks.

MASS MEDIA, LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Mass media produce social reality as a collective experience and stand as the main source of public knowledge both for the elites and lay public (Verón, 1993; Van Dijk, 1998). By mass media we refer to any medium used to diffuse mass communication: radio, television, newspapers, books, the Internet, among others. In this regard, the news media represent one of the most important facets to empower the citizenship with the latest news.

In order to do this, the news media, first, choose what events and social problems are relevant for the public (agenda), and then, focus public attention on these issues (setting). This process is called agenda setting (McCombs & Evatt, 1995; Muñiz, 2006), and it stands on the premises that our knowledge of the facts and their priorities is based on what the media decide. According to Hall (1978):

The media do not simply and transparently report events which are “naturally” newsworthy in themselves. “News” is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories. (p. 53)

As a consequence, agenda setting partially influences public opinion and public attitudes towards certain issues (Checa et al., 2012). However, agenda setting does not function autonomously, rather it is intimately linked with the future public and with the actions and opinions of agencies of symbolic and material power (Verón, 1984; Richardson, 2007).

In this regard, newspapers represent the medium that circulates with great agility (Parodi & Ferrari, 2007) and with an easy and frequent access by general public (Godoy & Gronemeyer, 2012). In addition, they are considered to be a powerful source of information and space for cultural production (Kircher, 2005). Metzger (2009) argues that even in the era of the Internet as a

mass distributor of media content, traditional newspapers and their online versions still remain the main source to acquire information.

Newspapers, as the rest of the media, do not merely report news, but they also interpret it, which involves personal beliefs and opinions interfering in this process. In addition, newspapers normally have social, economic and political sponsorship, which means that all news is reported from a particular angle. That said, newspapers function as a social and political actor, or as a mediator between the state and the citizenship. The mainstream press is usually corporately owned or controlled, which results in a high degree of ideological influence (Giró & Jarque, 2006), and “ideology inevitably co-determines what gets reported, when it is reported, and how the reporting is done” (Verschueren, 1985, p. 3). Therefore, in spite of the freedom of the press, it is ultimately responsible for the prevailing discourses it transmits, which are usually imposed by the third parties. As a result, news discourse, far from being a neutral reflection of social reality and empirical facts, intervenes in the the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1976).

In this regard, language takes a prominent place in newspaper discourses since it transmits media output to the general public. Language is then seen as a tool to form ideas and beliefs, becoming a highly constructive mediator (Fowler, 1991). As rightly put by Edelman (2001), “the concepts and categorizations that language constructs are therefore not instruments of expression but potent creators of what we accept as reality” (p. 13). There are always different alternatives to describe the same thing, therefore, each particular linguistic choice in a news text (words, syntax, etc.) is not random but made for a reason. This choice is often a reflection of ideological differences (Fowler, 1991).

With this in mind, mass media are relevant to the study of social movements since they either transmit movement ideas to the bystander public and legitimate movement claims, or do not pay any attention to them. Therefore, the media have a certain power to influence the nature and development of social movements (Kielbowicz & Scherer, 1986). Scholars have argued that media coverage of social movements tends to simplify the coverage of the event and amplify the sensationalist aspects along with the threat of violence often to the detriment of the social movement (Gorringer & Rosie 2008; Rosie & Gorringer 2009a). The protesters, in their turn, are usually portrayed as social deviants (Arpan et al., 2006). Thus, assessing how social movements are represented in the media is of undeniable value, since this research can make transparent ideological bias based on the difference in their representations by different news media outlets.

That said, our study focuses on the choice of words made by the national press while covering October, 2019 social outbreak in Chile.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The first step of the study consisted in the corpus selection. For this purpose we chose three Chilean newspapers: *El Mercurio*, *La Tercera* and *Publimetro*, published during the first week (October, 18th-October, 25th, 2019) of social demonstrations.

This selection is justified by the fact that *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera* are the newspapers represented by the most important press houses in Chile: El Mercurio SAP and Copesa SA (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2017). Both newspapers have a seven-day circulation on the national level and are available in paper and online format in exchange for a fixed fee. They follow a formal writing style, extensive article format and they cover a wide range of topics from politics to sports. In terms of political ideology, *El Mercurio* belongs to the right wing, and *La Tercera* to the center right one. In its turn, *Publimetro* is a free newspaper delivered only during the weekdays, normally at the metro entrance in Santiago. It follows less formal writing style and its articles contain less written text. It does not belong to any of the above press houses, nor to any political party in particular.

Further on, we concentrated on the headlines and leads of each newspaper since, functionally speaking, they set the initial story and represent simplifying mechanisms that summarize and attract readers' attention to what comes ahead (Andrew, 2007). According to Van Dijk (2012), "the formulation of headlines and leads reflects the way the newspaper frames the topics and how these organize the meaning of the whole text" (p. 22). Moreover, media studies demonstrated that most readers skip complete articles and focus on headlines, which are then seen as cognitive shortcuts that grab and impact public attention (Bell, 1991). The use of particular lexicon in headlines and leads, therefore, can greatly impact how someone perceives the entire issue.

Providing that, the second step was corpus collection using manually-retrieval method. For this purpose, the data were collected through an online interface of the newspapers by reading through each issue. The main sections to identify the headlines were: "Nacional" for *El Mercurio*; "Temas de Hoy" and "Nacional" for *La Tercera*; and "Crónica" for *Publimetro*. In order to verify the accuracy of data collection, each headline was read and analyzed by both authors. Thus, the final

‘tailor-made’ corpus (Maunter, 2009) presented a collection of three .txt documents (one for each newspaper). Overall, 316 headlines were identified in one-week period.

Having this in mind, step three of this research was to study the aforementioned corpus by drawing on a multi-layered interpretative framework (MacCarthy & Carter, 1994), involving corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis advocated by Van Dijk (1993). This combination allowed for “an objective and verifiable description of the relevant linguistic features” (Macleod, 2005, p. 61) in the selected newspapers.

In particular, we concentrated on the text linguistics with a special focus on: a) lexicalization, or lexical choice around the concept of social outbreak, and b) actor description (agents/patients of an action) (Van Dijk, 1998). In order to facilitate this work we used the corpus linguistics software *Antconc* to automatically generate frequency content word lists for each corpus.

These lists were then analyzed from the critical discourse analysis perspective, which stands on the premises that language is strongly connected to the context of its production, and more in particular, to the power and ideology transmitted through it.

The results of this analysis and the final remarks on the study are presented below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first stage of our analysis consisted in a simple frequency count of the headlines connected to the social movements events during the first week. Figure 1 presents the final numbers of the articles about this issue published in the selected newspapers.

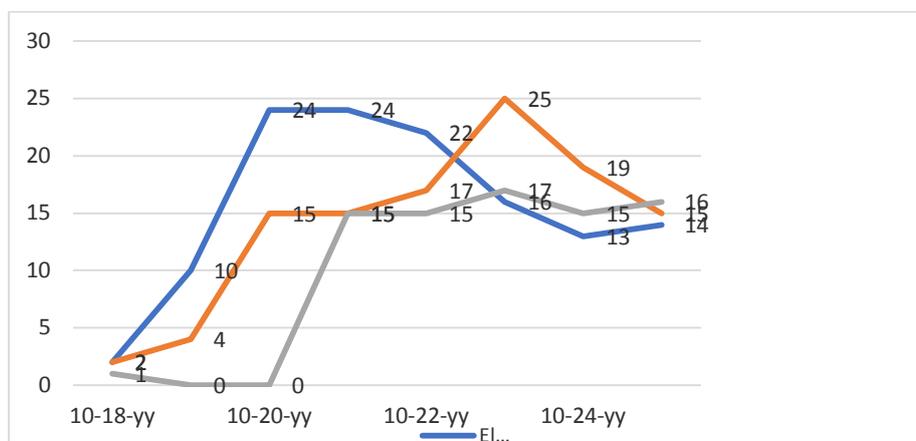


Figure 1: Number of articles about social movements in the corpus (Source: own elaboration).

► **Artículos:** Media representation of October, 2019 Social Outbreak in Chile.

As demonstrated, the topic gained relevance in the country with *El Mercurio* (N=125) being the leader in the number of articles, followed by *La Tercera* (N=112) and *Publimetro* (N=79). It is clearly seen there was a significant rise in the media coverage from the third day of the movements in *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, and the fourth day in *Publimetro*, since it is not issued at the weekend. In addition, the three newspapers maintained a steady rhythm of media coverage and experienced a slight decay by the end of the first week.

Further on, each corpus was ran through the *Antonc* program in order to obtain word frequency lists, which, in their turn, contributed to give a general picture of each corpus by focusing on the content words. In doing so, we automatically obtained quantitative evidence of which terms were used in the headlines of each newspaper while covering social outbreak events.

Table 1: Top-20 words from *El Mercurio*, *La Tercera* and *Publimetro*

<i>El Mercurio</i> (N=number of times in the corpus)	<i>La Tercera</i> (N=number of times in the corpus)	<i>Publimetro</i> (N=number of times in the corpus)
Estado (N=29)	Metro (N=20)	Chile (N=12)
Jornada (N=24)	Crisis (N=19)	Manifestaciones (N=11)
Metro (N=23)	Gobierno (N=18)	Crisis (N=10)
Violencia (N=23)	Presidente (N=17)	Social (N=9) + sociales (N=4)
Crisis (N=19)	Emergencia (N=15)	Presidente (N=6)
Emergencia (N=16)	Saqueos (N=12)	Ciudadanos (N=5)
Presidente (N=16)	Estado (N=10)	Descontento(N=5)
Gobierno (N=14)	Chile (N=9)	Gobierno (N=5)
Protestas (N=14)	Protestas (N=9)	Guerra (N=5)
Saqueos (N=14)	Violencia (N=9)	Medidas (N=5)
Queda (N=13)	Queda (N=8)	Nacional (N=5)
Personas (N=12)	Alza (N=7)	Estado (N=4)
Estaciones (N=12)	Manifestaciones (N=7)	Estallido (N=4)
Social (N=12) + Sociales (N=7)	Moneda (N=7)	Expertos (N=4)
Desmanes (N=10)	Personas (N=7)	Heridos (N=4)
Incidentes (N=10)	Estallido (N=6)	Metro (N=4)
Mandatario (N=10)	Mandatario (N=6)	Orden (N=4)
Manifestaciones (N=10)	Militares (N=6)	Personas (N=4)
Nacional (N=10)	Chequeo (N=5)	Primavera (N=4)
Transporte (N=10)	Comunas (N=5)	Proyecto (N=4)
Total words in the corpus: 7017	Total words in the corpus: 4648	Total words in the corpus: 2569
Word types: 1843	Word types: 1422	Word types: 885

Source: own elaboration.

As we can see from this table, *El Mercurio* has a notorious prevalence in corpus size, and, as a result, in topic coverage, followed by *La Tercera* and *Publimetro*. Below we present in details the evolution of the media coverage of social movements in each newspaper, focusing on the lexical choices used to refer to this issue and the voice distribution in the headlines.

EL MERCURIO COVERAGE OF OCTOBER, 2019 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN CHILE

The newspaper starts its October, 18th issue with two articles on social movements. From the very beginning, these events were covered by the newspaper as violent acts of (massive) invasion, unprecedented damage and confrontations:

[1] “The metro suffers its most violent day and they alarm on a low effectiveness of anti-invasion actions” (“Metro sufre su jornada más violenta y alertan sobre baja efectividad de medidas anti-invasión”).²

[2] “Beatriz Sanchez and the massive invasion in the metro” (“Beatriz Sanchez y evasión masiva en el metro”).

[3] “Unprecedented damages and confrontations at the metro stations Santa Lucía, San Joaquín and Los Héroes” (“Destrozos inéditos y enfrentamientos en paradas como Santa Lucía, San Joaquín y Los Héroes”).

On the second day (October, 19th), *El Mercurio* maintained this tendency and added to its list the terms *unleashed violence* (violencia desatada), *wave of violence* (ola de violencia), *serious damages* (graves destrozos), *serious outrage* (graves desmanes), *protests and their vandal effects* (protestas y sus efectos vandálicos), *civil disobedience* (desobediencia civil), *day of violence* (jornada de violencia) and *delinquency* (delincuencia).

As we can see from Table 1, the words *violence* (violencia), *crisis* (crisis) and *emergency* (emergencia) top the list of the most frequent words in the corpus. Further on, they are followed by *protests* (protestas) and *sacking* (saqueos). All in all, there are seven words in the top-20 with negative semantic prosody. With this lexical choice the newspaper puts upfront the results of the movements, emphasizing destruction and violence, and inclining towards social movements representation as violent, and yet, serious events.

Further on, on the 20th of October the newspaper introduced the term “crisis” and held on to it for the rest of the week:

[4] “Frente Amplio and PC confront transverse criticism for their position in the face of the crisis” (“Frente Amplio y PC enfrentan críticas transversales por su posición ante crisis” – 21.10).

[5] “Five distinctive features of an unprecedented crisis” (“Cinco rasgos distintivos de una inédita crisis” – 21.10).

[6] “Government mistakes and successes in the crisis” (“Errores y aciertos del Gobierno en la crisis” – 22.10).

[7] “5 opposition controversies during the crisis” (“5 controversias opositoras durante la crisis” – 23.10).

[8] “President of the Senate summons rectors and study centers to analyze the crisis” (“Presidente del Senado convoca a rectores y centros de estudio a analizar crisis” – 24.10).

² From here and onwards the translation is done by Anna Ivanova.

[9] “Academics, former ministers and study centers ask to open a national dialogue to respond to the crisis” (“Académicos, exministros y centros de estudios piden abrir un diálogo nacional para dar respuesta a la crisis” – 25.10).

In addition, the close reading of the corpus revealed a clear quantitative prevalence of the government as the main protagonist of the actions. As we might see from Table 1, *state* (estado) is the most frequent word in the corpus, followed by *president* (presidente), *government* (gobierno), *head of state* (mandatario) and *national* (nacional). In grammar terms, the protagonist role means that the President or other political members function as the subject of the sentence, the agent or the doer of the action (Wang, 2017), in most of the headlines:

[10] “President decrees state of emergency in Santiago in the face of serious outrages” (“Presidente decreta estado de emergencia en el Gran Santiago ante graves desmanes” – 19.10).

[11] “President Piñera announces a project to reduce the subway ticket after a tense day in La Moneda” (“Presidente Piñera anuncia proyecto para rebajar pasaje del metro tras tensa jornada en La Moneda” – 20.10).

[12] “President and The Congress agree on a dialogue to reorder priorities and contain social movements” (“Presidente y Congreso acuerdan diálogo para reordenar prioridades y contener estallido social” – 21.10).

[13] “President calls parties to ‘social agreement’ amid complex senator negotiations to reorder priorities” (“Presidente convoca a partidos a ‘acuerdo social’ en medio de complejas negociaciones de senadores para reordenar prioridades” – 22.10).

[14] “President asks for forgiveness and announces a minimum income of \$ 350 thousand pesos and a tax increase to higher income sectors” (“Presidente pide perdón y anuncia ingreso mínimo de \$350 mil y alza de impuestos a sectores de mayores ingresos” – 23.10).

[15] “Army mobilizes its reservists for 13 days” (“Ejército moviliza a sus reservistas por 13 días” – 24.10).

[16] “Mayors share the need for a greater military and police presence in their comunas” (“Alcaldes comparten necesidad de mayor presencia militar y policial en sus comunas” – 25.10).

Van Leeuwen (2008) claims that being an agent means to possess certain power, and it does not seem accidental that the right-wing media grants this ability mainly to the right-wing government while covering social movements in the country. This grammatical choice endows the rest of the people with passive and powerless social roles. In so doing, the media, consciously or unconsciously, disqualifies the nation from taking prominence in the events. In the scarce number of headlines, where the agent was not the President (or any other government / political entity), *El Mercurio* places the results of the movement as the subject of its headlines, or employs a third-person neutral “they”:

[17] “Unleashed violence strikes Santiago: vandals destroy twenty metro stations and burn the Enel building” (“Violencia desatada golpea a Santiago: vándalos destruyen una veintena de estaciones del metro y queman el edificio de Enel” – 19.10).

[18] “A more ‘catastrophic’ scenario to transport is foreseen for tomorrow”³ (Prevén escenario más ‘catastrófico’ para transportarse mañana – 20.10).

³ This kind of sentences are translated into English with Passive Voice.

As the headline [17] subtly implies, the public is willing to engage in violence to achieve their goals. Moreover, *El Mercurio* does not recognize the role of students in starting October events, referring to them as *people* in its headline from the 18th of October:

[19] “Hundreds of people broke into at least 15 stations, leaving destroyed turnstiles and broken doors, causing service disruption” (“Cientos de personas irrumpieron en al menos 15 estaciones, dejando torniquetes destruidos y puertas rotas, y causando la interrupción del servicio” –18.10).

To sum up, *El Mercurio* coverage of the October 2019 social movements in Chile is characterized by a strong presence of violence related lexicon accompanied by the government prominence in the narration chain.

LA TERCERA COVERAGE OF OCTOBER, 2019 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN CHILE

In opposition to *El Mercurio*, *La Tercera* did not rely on violence terms in its headlines and leads on a large scale. As demonstrated in Table 1, the word *violence* (*violencia*) occupies the 10th place in the top-20 word list for this newspaper. The close reading of the corpus revealed that during the first two days *La Tercera* referred to the social movements as *massive evasions* (18.10) or *violent protests* (19.10), however, in the major part of its headlines, it opted for *manifestations* (*manifestaciones*) and *protests* (*protestas*):

[20] “Frente Amplio points to ‘low wages’ as a cause of protests” (Frente Amplio apunta a ‘bajos salarios’ como causa de manifestaciones” – 18.10).

[21] “This is how La Moneda lived its worst crisis” (“Así vivió La Moneda su peor crisis” – 19.10).

From the second day, *La Tercera* referred to the situation in the country as the *crisis* (cf. [21]), and “war between the government and the opposition” (19.10) by publishing the interview with Eugenio Tironi where he talks about the government “not paying attention to the everyday misery”.

Further on, the close reading of *La Tercera* corpus did not show a tendency to give the floor to a specific party, rather it demonstrated a critical approach to news presentation:

[22] “The failure of Chile” (“El fracaso de Chile” – 20.10).

[23] “The outbreak inside La Moneda. The government has failed to contain citizen discontent and acts of violence” (“El estallido puertas adentro en La Moneda. El gobierno no ha logrado contener el descontento ciudadano y los hechos de violencia” – 21.10).

[24] “The government has gone 24, 48, hours late in each of the measures” (“El gobierno ha ido 24, 48 horas tarde en cada una de las medidas” – 21.10).

As one might see from the examples above, *La Tercera* reported on the events by putting the current government policy in question. In spite of the fact that both the government and the President were often mentioned in the headlines (cf. Table 1), they were not non grata participants.

Instead of addressing the President's actions and agenda during the crisis, the journalists of *La Tercera* focused on reporting the current situation of the events from both sides of the barricades. The word *rise* (*alza*) in Table 1 indicates on the discussion of the main cause that initially provoked metro invasions, and the word *outbreak* (*estallido*) – on the journalists' consciousness to call the things by their names.

All in all, the findings suggest a neutral choice of lexicon while covering October 2019 social movements and a vast variety of voices in *La Tercera* headlines: the government and the president, lay people, prominent intellectuals and public figures.

PUBLIMETRO COVERAGE OF OCTOBER, 2019 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN CHILE

Publimetro is a newspaper mainly oriented towards the public who is on the move, that is why, the articles are not extensive, and the major part of the news is covered in headlines and leads. In sharp contrast with *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, *Publimetro* published only six issues during the first week due to its circulation on weekdays. This explains the small size of the corpus.

Regarding the lexicon employed by the newspaper to cover October 2019 social movements, *Publimetro*, as *La Tercera*, chose not to rely on violent terms in its headlines. In fact, the word violence is not present in the top-20 word list for this newspaper. The terms that appear on its pages were *crisis* (*crisis*), *manifestations* (*manifestaciones*), *discontent* (*descontento*) and *outbreak* (*estallido*) (cf. Table 1).

The public, in its turn, is called *citizens* (*ciudadanos*), *people* (*personas*) and *wounded* (*heridos*), the latter being an open reference to the military actions during the manifestations. In this regard, the word *war* (*guerra*) was used to cite the President's discourse of October, 20th, where he declared to be at war against a powerful enemy.

Further on, the close analysis of the corpus demonstrates a balanced reporting on the events by publishing the articles about two participant parties without any visible preference towards one particular side:

[25] “We are going to act against the vandals who are on the street’. General Javier Iturriaga, head of the Metropolitan Region Zone, issued the warning yesterday by announcing the reiteration of the curfew, which started earlier than Saturday” (“Vamos a actuar contra los vándalos que están en la calle’. El general Javier Iturriaga, jefe de la Zona de la Región Metropolitana, hizo la advertencia ayer al anunciar la reiteración del toque de queda, que comenzó más temprano que el sábado” – 21.10).

[26] “Silence and little empathy: experts disapprove of La Moneda crisis management” (“Silencio y poca empatía: los expertos reprueban gestión de crisis de La Moneda” – 21.10).

[27] “And now what? In search of the way out of the crisis. The great error of the Government, according to the analysts consulted, is that there are no statements on the merits of the matter and they only limit themselves to talking about public order” (“¿Y ahora qué? En busca del camino para salir de la crisis. El gran error del Gobierno, según los analistas consultados, es que no hay pronunciaci3nes respecto al fondo del asunto y sólo se limitan a hablar del orden público” – 22.10).

In addition, our findings present a certain tendency of the newspaper to explain the current situation in the country. For example, the headline from the 21st of October openly addressed the reasons behind the events and mentioned school students as the initiators of the evasions in the metro:

[28] “The reasons behind the fury and the social outbreak. Peaceful demonstrations and others with destruction and looting. It all started with the announcement of the rise of the Metro and acts of evasion by the students. There was no timely reaction from the authorities, experts accuse. The accumulated discontent would be a fundamental reason for this powerful social mobilization” (“Las razones detrás de la furia y el estallido social. Manifestaciones pacíficas y otras con destrozos y saqueos. Todo comenzó con el anuncio de alza del Metro y actos de evasión por parte de los estudiantes. No hubo reacción oportuna de las autoridades, acusan los expertos. El descontento acumulado sería un motivo fundamental de esta potente movilización social” – 21.10).

Or another headline addressing the same topic:

[29] “The obligation is to understand people's deep unease at inequalities” (“La obligación es comprender el profundo malestar de las personas por las desigualdades” – 21.10).

All in all, the findings depicted that *Publíméetro* organized the media coverage of October 2019 manifestations in an explicative way, avoiding direct reference to the lexicon with negative semantic prosody and maintaining a neutral tendency in voice distribution. In this regard, the newspaper functioned as a mere news digest leaving aside critical interpretation of the events.

FINAL REMARKS

News media is a broad term which refers to how reality is represented in broadcast and printed media. In this study we were interested in news media in their narrowest sense, focusing on the printed mainstream news media in Chile. Essentially, we concentrated on the study of their verbal signification, i.e., how language was used in newspapers to form ideas and beliefs. In this sense, we departed from the idea that newspaper language is not neutral, but a highly constructive mediator, thus, its lexicon and linguistic structures play a certain role in the construction of ideas in the press.

In order to facilitate our analysis, we combined corpus linguistics and critical discourse studies, where corpus linguistics allowed to reveal features of the text that were not seen at first reading (such as quantitative prevalence of content words), and critical discourse analysis

facilitated their further interpretation and discussion taking into consideration the context of the corpus.

The results of the corpus demonstrate a clear polarization in the strategic means to cover October, 2019 social outbreak in Chile by *El Mercurio* on the one side, and *La Tercera* and *Publimetro* on the other. In the first case, the newspaper resembles the President's agenda, giving a day-by-day description of the government actions in the current situation, and yet, lacking a critical analysis of the events so far. The newspaper, then, represents the October, 2019 outbreak from its outcome angle, concentrating mainly on the violent results. As such, the headlines and their leads in *El Mercurio* are often centered either on President's orders / actions or on the violent actions during the manifestations, rather than on the causes that provoked social movements.

This approach to highlight violence and the Government's radical actions to suppress it and shadow the reasons which provoked such a strong reaction of the public, is tightly connected to the right-wing ideology of the medium, which a priori determines the agenda setting as pro-government with a high concentration on the President's actions and little or no attention to the social demands. In its turn, we might suggest that this kind of outbreak representation is expected from the potential readers of *El Mercurio*, who are likely to favor the current government policy.

In their turn, *La Tercera* and *Publimetro* chose a different strategy to cover October, 2019 social outbreak. In particular, they concentrated on reporting the events and explaining their causes rather than on the violence provoked by the public clashed with the military forces. In the case of *Publimetro*, the strategy is explained by its target audience, which is different in socio-economic and cultural terms from *La Tercera* and *El Mercurio*. The *Publimetro* audience is the one who received all the consequences of attacks in the metro and its immediate closure. Thus, from the ideological point of view, concentrating on the violent acts on its pages will pour more oil on the flame.

The similar strategy was chosen by *La Tercera*. As its format allowed for a more substantial analysis, the newspaper included comments on the situation from multiple voices. However, the prevailing part of this variety of voices corresponded to the élites such as politicians, writers, academics, etc. In its turn, it is not seen as a pitfall for the objective coverage of the issue, but it draws a line in the representation approach. Thus, the *La Tercera* ideology does not enhance the newspaper towards a radicalized violence representation of social movements by standing on a neutral (i.e., center right neutral) ground in its verbal choice.

With this in mind we claim that the October, 2019 social outbreak in Chile is presented as a liminal space (Turner, 1988), where, on the one hand, part of the society manifests the death of the prevailing economic and social model, while advocating for a new Political Constitution that guarantees the development of the proposed changes. On the other hand, the new Chile begins to develop with the resistance of the economic and political elite, who take notes of the given message, but are reluctant to share all their privileges.

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