

Intersubjective and Intercultural Reading of the News Coverage of the Events in Ceuta and Melilla¹

Lena de Botton, Laura López, Jordi Male, Cristina Pulido, Miquel Àngel Pulido, Ababacar Thiak and Iolanda Tortajada

- *What kind of reality do television stations show when treating a conflict? This article explores the new coverage of the events in Ceuta and Melilla. The analysis has been worked out by people and organisations from the cultural groups concerned. Discussion groups were organised to examine the speeches, images and points of view showed by the stations at the moment of introducing and developing the information. Is it conflict the main news criterion when we talk about immigration? Is the information given by the station basically the same? Which are the actors who give their testimony in the news? The final paragraph includes both the conclusions and some recommendations and suggestions in order to achieve a more appropriate media treatment of this kind of news.*

Key words

Immigration, television, media representation, public agenda, news bulletins, conflicts

Communication should be the first companion of society
—(CDG2)²

Introduction

In a relatively short period of time, Spain has reversed its migration trend to become a new entry port into Europe and a new destination for people to establish themselves. The transformation of our societies into a demos that hosts a great cultural, religious and linguistic plurality is an unquestionable fact today. But the increasingly multicultural transformation of our societies and the arrival of immigrants is not a conflict-free process. The complexity of the migration phenomenon, the contradictions it leads to with regards citizen status and human rights, inequalities between cultures, etc. have lately been highlighted via media coverage of the arrival of immigrants from Africa to Europe across the border fences in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

This CAC-funded project studied the news coverage of the events in Ceuta and Melilla. It involved a content analysis, carried out jointly with associations that represent the cultural groups concerned³, of the way a number of Spanish and Catalan television stations covered the events. In particular, we sought to: (1) specify the audiovisual treatment provided by the TV stations TVE, La 2, TV3, Antena 3 TV and Tele-5 to the events in Ceuta and Melilla on the basis of a content analysis of their evening news shows between 5 and 12 October; (2) specify the perspective (preferred reading) with which the events were addressed and (3) compare the news coverage received from each of the abovementioned stations.

As well as having strong political, social and cultural connotations, the migration is a complex and multicausal

Lena de Botton, Laura López, Jordi Male, Cristina Pulido, Miquel Àngel Pulido, Ababacar Thiak and Iolanda Tortajada

Members of CREA (Center of Research on Theories and Practices that Overcome Inequalities)

phenomenon. Consequently, its coverage it should reflect this complexity; however, as we found, this was not always the case. Research can contribute towards finding elements and strategies that enable coverage to improve – this is a goal that all the people who took part in the project (researchers and other participants) aspired to and explains why we awarded great importance to the incorporation of the voices of all the people and groups linked to the analysed events in order to evaluate the suppositions of objectivity and the scientific nature of the research.

From this approach, we tried to make the analysis together with people and organisations from different cultural groups that are usually invisible in the coverage of this type of news story. This approach enriched and validated the content analysis with a reading and the voices of the very groups that featured in the stories and showed we do not consider an opinion to be better or worse because it comes from a group of a particular ethnic origin or from people in a particular profession (researchers, journalists, etc.). A profound analysis is achieved via a plurality of viewpoints and a dialogue established throughout the research work.

Talking About Immigrants, But In Their Absence

We are accustomed to looking at the world from an ethnocentric stance whether regards the media or media analysis. One of the aspects that the people and associations who took part in this research often mentioned was the lack of focus on immigrants' voices in the explanation of a news story. This was expressed by a participant in the DLCA, who commented on the lack of arguments in news stories and thus a lack of elements that can help viewers reflect on the causes of events.

And I have also noticed that, after politicians, it seems the second-most-common protagonists are police officers...and the voices you hear belong to police officers, not immigrants...They do not speak... — (DLCA1)

With respect to this point, authors like Van Dijk (1997) and Giroux (2000, 2003), among others, say that in creating the

images broadcast about cultural minorities, the media often base them on social prejudices and end up contributing to their reproduction. We share this belief and feel it will be hard to escape from this dynamic unless we stop “talking about” and start “talking with” the ‘others’.

In this study about the coverage of the events in Ceuta and Melilla, in which one of the most affected groups was people migrating from Africa, one thing we wanted to avoid was ignoring and shunning cultural groups from the media, as the theory shows in the sphere of communication and the public itself.

The immigrant population might not have been the only agent involved in the events, but it was no doubt a key element in approaching the reality to analyse. What are the benefits of including immigrants' voices in the study of the coverage of the arrival of Africans to Spain via the fences?

The distaste expressed by immigrant groups about research projects that posit cultural minorities as simple study objects or where arguments have not been scientifically validated is increasingly being heard. From many points across the globe (e.g., the US via Afro-American Studies or New Zealand and Australia through protocols for including the voices of indigenous groups), cultural minorities are demanding to change the research work done to date. This need arises because of a type of treatment that objectifies these communities and the predominance of interpretations shown through a Western filter on understanding the reality of these groups. Immigrants, in this case different African groups specifically, condemn studies that shore up and even promote stereotypes about their people, which often involve theses based more on supposition and lucubration than scientific rigour, with arguments grounded on prejudice or intuitions that have their roots in a lack of knowledge about African immigrants.

When a research work disregards arguments from immigrants and the associations that represent them, it limits the scientific nature of its content and is vulnerable to the prejudices of the researcher. A work that establishes a dialogue between researcher and researched subject introduces more reflection and quality into the information obtained. The methodological perspective that best enabled us to include the voices of cultural minorities was the critical communicative methodology, which considers that objectivity does not come from distance or the exclusion of the

arguments of the study subjects but quite the opposite, i.e., that the strength of each argument contributes to the work, regardless of who made the contribution. We will discuss this methodology in more depth in the following point.

Starting Point

To carry out this research work, we started from the critical communicative methodology⁴ used by some of the leading authors in the international scientific community today⁵. Its main premises are:

- **Universality of linguistic and communicative competences**
All people, by having communicative linguistic abilities, have the ability to interact through dialogue.
- **Transformative Social Agents**
Everybody is able to elaborate reflective interpretations and create knowledge to influence and modify social structures and thus make headway in the discovery of new forms of coexistence more appropriate to the information society and its multicultural wealth.
- **Egalitarian Dialogue**
This involves seeking processes of dialogue or understanding using arguments guided by aspirations of validity and not aspirations of power. Dialogue and communicative action are essential for making progress towards new, more solid models with a greater ability to respond to new social requirements.
- **Disappearance of the presumption of interpretative hierarchy**
The researcher does not necessarily hold more solid ontological precepts than those held by the people being researched.
- **Rupture of Methodological Inequality**
The researcher participates (both as a speaker and listener) under the same conditions as the others during the research process and when interpreting actions.
- **Participatory Attitude of the Researcher**
If a researcher wants to understand or explain a phenomenon, he or she has to take part on an equal basis with the people with whom he or she wishes to discuss different aspects. We do not consider researcher participation to contaminate research. It is not seen as

manipulation but as understanding between the participants in the work, who decide to share the research goals and generate knowledge together.

- **Dialogic Knowledge: Intersubjectivity as a Solution to Objective Problems**

Dialogic knowledge is created through the intersubjective analysis given to interactions between researcher and researched. Many objective problems are better resolved through egalitarian dialogue than through “neutral” objectivist methods.

- **Common Sense**

Our subjective sense depends on our life experience and consciousness within our cultural context, so we cannot interpret an action without taking people’s common sense into account.

To the basis of these fundamental premises, the critical communicative methodology adds four criteria of scientific rigour to the universals of triangulation, crystallisation of change and coherence of the discourse itself and the social usefulness/impact of the research, which are:

- **Internal Consistency**

Methodological design must be consistent with the theoretical framework of the research and with the formulation of problems and hypotheses and/or objectives.

- **Responsibility of the Research Team**

Power relations are not awarded but strength of argument prevails. The commitment and responsibility of each researcher are important. Each researcher assumes his or her responsibilities and makes a commitment to the research.

- **Intersubjective Dialogue**

It is through the participation of all the people involved in the intersubjective dialogue that truth criteria are reached.

- **Process of Understanding**

Processes of understanding are aimed at reaching agreements between the different people participating in the research. Because a dialogue process is involved, it is important that, for example, a person in a communicative discussion group should coordinate speaking turns while the others dialogue. The process of understanding the problem to research is expanded as people assume the research as their own.

It thus involves overcoming the methodological inequality that separates researcher from researched (Habermas, 1987) and makes the African population the active subject of the research. Diverse benefits are obtained from this methodological approach.

On the one hand, by creating this intersubjective dialogue between researcher and person participating in the research (in our case, people that participate in cultural associations) a richer knowledge of the analysed reality is generated and a greater variety of arguments contributed. To this we should add an important element of social usefulness, as both the goals and analysis carried out are founded on a constant exchange with all the agents concerned. Going into the causes of the situation in depth enables us to later overcome a number of existing inequalities, such as the lack of presence of these groups in the media, and the way to promote them.

The greatest change provided by the critical communicative methodology therefore refers to questioning the knowledge of experts. In this regard, individuals in today's societies are increasingly demanding more arguments from experts instead of passively accepting their decisions. Also, cultural minorities are demanding that studies about them be prepared starting from dialogue with them and not using them as simple sources of information. We would like to mention two examples of previous research work that CREA developed and which validate the approach taken:

(1) In an RTD project carried out by CREA entitled *Workaló: The Creation of New Occupational Patterns for Cultural Minorities. The Gypsy Case (2001- 2005)*⁶, the inclusion of the voices of a traditionally silenced group such as the Gypsy community (which in this case took part in both the definition of the objectives and the previous research requirements, such as the results evaluation) had a significant impact on the political, social and cultural spheres precisely because the methodological perspective guaranteed the scientific rigour of the conclusions and the proposals made. The *Workaló* results were presented at a European Parliament conference in Brussels. At the meeting, a Spanish Euro MP agreed with the president of a gypsy association that was in attendance (and which had taken part in the project) to take the recognition of the Gypsy people to the Spanish parliament. The lower house recently gave unanimous approval to the Bill on the Re-

cognition of the Rights of the Gypsy Population⁷. Adding the voice of the gypsy community gave a very important meaning to the research from its first definition, as it enabled more scientific and socially useful results.

(2) The Advisory Board is one of the most important assessment bodies of the Ministry of Education and Science's R,D&I project entitled *AMAL: Immigration and the Labour Market (2001-2005)*.⁸ The Board includes associations and organisations related with Arab and Muslim immigration, as well as other cultural minorities. It also includes members from the economics and education areas. The Board assesses the analyses carried out by research teams and makes new contributions to projects. In other words, results obtained can be adjusted to a more careful analysis of the reality, which in turn makes it possible to adjust the inclusion proposals from the Arab and Muslim community to the job market. The *AMAL* project also involves a multicultural research team.

Analysis

To carry out our present content analysis, the research team firstly defined the analysis categories, which were discussed with the research participants and used to guide the reading of the different stations' coverage of the events in Ceuta and Melilla. The monitoring of the news shows and the content analysis were carried out jointly with the associations that participated in the project in different meetings, some individually (one association) and others in group sessions (different members of the association, diverse associations).

What we wanted to compare between stations was the preferred reading the broadcasters took towards the events and the point to which the framing and closing elements enabled the public to reflect on them.

The eight analysis categories we defined were:

- **News Criteria:** What news criteria were prioritised in the construction of the story? Some of the criteria we took as reference points were: currentness of the story, proximity, consequence (future repercussion of the events), personal relevance (newsmakers), suspense, rarity, conflict and emotion (human drama). We did not try to make a list or description of the news criteria but rather

determine the criteria on which the stories we analysed were based.

- **Objectivity:** What appeared in the story? Was a supposedly neutral position taken through which events spoke for themselves (e.g., taking part of a statement of a politician and nothing else)? Was any mention made that an objective task was being done? Was the information confirmed? How were figures and testimonials used?
- **Type of Discourse:** Related to the previous point, we took into account whether the person presenting the story or report made spontaneous or reflexive interpretations in the story or news context. By spontaneous interpretations, we mean, for example, the decontextualised use of testimonials, whether the informants contributed something to the story, whether the explanation was decontextualised, etc. By reflexive interpretations we mean, for example, whether there were theoretical or analysis elements in the story (involving causes), whether confirmed information was provided, whether the aim was to get the viewers to take some type of action as a result of reflection, etc.
- **Reflexivity:** Related to the previous point, we checked whether throughout the news story the stations provided analysis elements on the situation to offer a reading of the events that could contribute to viewer reflection or whether no care was taken with the language or it was used in the station's own interests.
- **Protagonist's Viewpoint/Voice:** We looked at who the protagonist of the story was, the viewpoint from which he or she spoke and the person who gave an opinion: politician, presenter, expert, immigrant, etc., and also how the things said were termed (the tone used) and what was not said that might also have been included.
- **Labelling:** In particular, we wanted to discover how immigrants and their actions were classified and, broadly speaking, how the other protagonists in the story and their actions were classified.
- **Respect:** Related to the previous point, we checked whether the facts were addressed by presenting them as a problem from a sensationalistic viewpoint or whether care was taken with regards the language and images used.
- **Inclusion:** Was the story addressed from a viewpoint of

social cohesion? Were solutions to the situation or alternatives of some kind offered? Were associations and/or people who work for inclusion given a voice? Were there testimonials from people who had already immigrated and were currently living normally among us here?

Results

Antena 3 TV

The main news criterion found was conflict: in expressions such as “remains of the battle” in reference to how the fence was seen or when bloody images were shown. These two examples were mentioned in particular in the DLCAs and CDGs.

The news stories emphasised both political and social conflict. In terms of the former, it was the confrontation between political parties, and in terms the latter, the station repeatedly focused on the human drama suffered by immigrants and identified the events with a broader social problem, i.e., immigration. If in the first few days the confrontation between the parties seemed to be the most important part of the crisis, later stories focused on the situation of the immigrants at the border and the solidarity actions undertaken by the Spanish public in different towns. A calmer situation was presented on 11 October, but the problem still persisted.

The coverage also included suspense generated by a situation: on the one hand, possible prognostics given uncertainty, e.g., when it said that everybody in Melilla knew the immigrants were going to try to jump the fence before winter arrived.

A further news criterion found was emotion. Stories focused on emotions such as pain and compassion in expressions like: “abandoned to their fate”; “crowded together, in handcuffs, without food or drink” and “others, with tears in their eyes, begged desperately for help”. We also found stories that sometimes focused on the lack of knowledge about the real situation of hundreds of people, something which contributed to building emotional empathy: “nobody really knows the final destination of the nearly 1,000 sub-Saharan immigrants”.

With regards objectivity, one of the people who took part in

the DLCAs said the story he heard had lacked arguments. It was also said that facts weren't given but rather inserts broadcast featuring statements by politicians or where the viewer could see coordinated police action, but not always with enough context to contain elements about what was really happening. In the station's approach there was no involvement with facts or concern for seeking the voice of immigrants.

People also said facts were generally presented through the use of testimonials, but few references were made to the sources used. Organisations like SOS Racismo were quoted for particular figures or information. However, sources could be ambiguous: "Some NGOs have announced that hundreds of immigrants are being deported", or not specified: "The NGOs believe Rabat is pretending it doesn't know what is going on". This ambiguity contributed to the impression of confusion and lack of control that the very discourse of the story emphasised. With regards witnesses given a voice, on numerous occasions this involved the spokespeople, workers or volunteers of NGOs and at other times it involved would-be immigrants. Organisations were asked to analyse the situation. Immigrants were asked to recount their experiences or personal requirements or were shown requesting help. There were no other witnesses or analysis on the part of people from different cultural groups.

In one of the CDGs, the different activeness/passiveness of witnesses was evaluated as particularly negative. If the selected witness was a person who had just jumped the fence, it is not surprising he would be confused and tired, and the image that reached us was of someone who was helpless. People in the CDGs also said this person would have had enough work on his plate determining where he was without having someone throw questions at him. Maintaining this news criterion with respect to sources that are important to take into account means generating an association of the immigrant-who-doesn't-know, the immigrant-who-needs-help.

Besides the aspects commented on, and in terms of objectivity, we could say that, all up, events were presented without elements for analysing causes or consequences or that invited viewers to reflect. Very occasionally, an image or words were used to help establish society's overall responsibility. For example, at one point a camera zoom focused on a placard someone was holding up at a

demonstration: "Europe: Your Responsibility?" But throughout the news stories broadcast by Antena 3 TV there was no questioning of the use of the fences or any analysis about the home countries of the people concerned. People from the associations with whom we did the analysis commented that, as the causes of the events presented in the stories were not explained, this had particular consequences such as people looking at them in a particular way (e.g., with fear, paternalism or curiosity).

In terms of protagonists, over time the focus moved from the politicians, who still continued to have an important role, towards the immigrants who had scaled the fence and were shown in police stations and reception centres, being transported in coaches or lost. NGOs also had an important role in the stories: they were shown as sources of information and agents who acted on the ground and who demanded respect for human rights.

The representation of the different groups was 'active' in the case of politicians, NGOs and journalists:

Politicians talked, took decisions, deliberated, recriminated each other for different actions and proposed solutions. The station highlighted the discrepancies between the parties and the opinions of the main opposition party and without making specific comments managed to take up a position - as the slant it gave was positive towards a representative of the Popular Party: "[Rajoy] wanted to learn first-hand about the conflict and had an affectionate message for the people", and neutral or negative towards PSOE representatives.

NGOs denounced the situation and also intervened actively. On one occasion, a short report was done on the clandestine aid activities of an NGO.

Journalists also had an active role: they were on the ground where the events occurred, they reported and they asked questions of the people affected.

The police were the other protagonists of the stories and received a positive coverage. One story not just showed a coordinated and welcoming police body, but also wanted to emphasize how hard the police worked, using shots like one of a police car which had been involved in an accident when it was heading towards the fence.

On the other hand, in the case of immigrants, the representation was repeatedly passive. There were shots of young men, always portrayed as victims, defenceless,

dependent, scared or tired. When they appeared, they were shown begging for aid or explaining their grave situation, with petitions along the lines of “help us, please, please”; “we can’t go back, we have been living hidden in the forest for a year”. Their faces and gestures were of fear, suffering, tiredness, resignation and impotence. Similarly, footage showed them receiving aid and eating, hiding or waiting in a reception centre, or with nothing to do: sitting down waiting, wandering around aimlessly, looking around them.

No immigrant was asked to make an analysis of anything beyond his present situation or to provide his viewpoint. People from other cultural groups not present at the place of the events did not appear either, except occasionally in demonstrations called in a number of cities where we could see Spaniards and people from other countries jointly demanding solutions and respect for human rights.

Finally, although it did not go so far as to represent a lack of respect for immigrants, the use of some expressions and images did reinforce labels and stereotypes about them. Expressions like “illegal” immigrants and an “avalanche” of immigrants were used.

I don't like these terms because above all else they are human beings...They shouldn't talk about an 'avalanche' as if they were talking about an avalanche of animals or an avalanche of snow...they are people first and foremost... —(DLCA3)

For the people involved in the DLCAs and the CDGs, the word ‘avalanche’ had exclusive (even offensive) connotations involving something not human, something disastrous. This was frequently remarked upon, as was the fact that the abovementioned images were also exclusive (the one most people best remembered was of immigrants lying on the ground). On the other hand, in some of the DLCAs people commented that, implicitly, there was a rejection of Morocco and the generation of stereotypes with respect to it because the country was identified as being responsible for or the only one guilty of the current situation, and the discourse with regards the Moroccan government and police was solely negative. People even commented on the tone in which the presenters sometimes said the word ‘Morocco’.

Using images like one of a shirt hanging from the fence

also demonstrate a sensationalistic approach and the use of pictures not always respectful with regards the situation. This image in particular was emphasised in most of the dialogues we held:

What's the story with that shirt hanging there?...That person, where is he? I know...it's that...images that, I don't know, that affect you, I don't know how to explain it...They leave it there, so you could think anything, but the most likely thing to think is that that person is no longer, no longer alive. —(DLCA1)

In general, the news stories covered immigration as a problem, usually with statements from politicians: the problem of illegal immigration must be dealt with. In short, through the human drama of the people suffering, but also from the viewpoint of political conflict and the insecurity the situation generated, the issue of immigration was treated as a problem.

Tele- 5

We could see from the analysis that the news criterion that predominated at Tele-5 was conflict. Most commonly this was political conflict, focused on the actions of the Spanish government to seek solutions to the situation and the repeated condemnations of the main opposition party, as well as diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco and the call for remaining part of Spain that was heard in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Less commonly it was social conflict, exemplified in the irregular situation of the immigrants and the way they were abandoned in Morocco, as well as the Spanish public’s response to this news. Other news criteria were emotion and suspense, particularly in the reports from correspondents on the ground. In this sense, more than a news story they involved assemblies or edits because events were fictionalised to create emotional empathy and personal stories were made very intense in the form of dramatisations.

With regards objectivity, we found that, except in isolated cases (on one occasion a story quoted the Guinea-Conakry Consul), there were no references to information sources and figures given were not reliable because they often did not coincide with what the images were showing. Groundless statements were also made. There were translation

errors and words were put into the mouths of witnesses. For example, one boy said he had not seen what had happened and he was translated as saying the police had maltreated him. Another time, there was a contradiction between what the news presenter and the correspondent in Morocco said: the former said the immigrants that had been unable to scale the fence had been put into a truck and sent south, where they were to be returned to their home countries; while the latter said they were walking home of their own accord.

However, in some of the stories broadcast, for example the ones of 9 October, the testimony of someone who had already immigrated and was currently working as a street salesman was used. The participants in one of the CDGs remarked that this witness contributed an idea that had not emerged at the other stations, which was that the reality that immigrants face when they reach Spain is complicated and leads some people to think that perhaps they would have been better off not coming. This contributed a new element that was not present in the other stories.

With regards type of discourse, it was generally felt that stories were built on spontaneous interpretations along the lines of “Here’s a disoriented person” and that sometimes the language used was hugely exaggerated. Also, this type of spontaneity was often fictionalised in a type of mixture of genres aimed at creating a certain realism of a non-existent daily life.

The discourse generated, according to the participants in the DLCAs and CDGs, ended up promoting the rejection of immigrants. That is why, more than any other station, it is necessary to present the news in a more reflexive manner and with more respect for people in order to make viewers aware of the events presented. We found that, except in very isolated cases, the coverage of the events did not promote reflection but rather put up barriers.

The protagonists were the politicians and political parties. The confrontation between the parties was shown, along with the discourse of the politicians, without interpretation or contextualisation, such as when statements were taken from politicians without any accompanying commentary. Proposed political solutions featured prominently, such as with regards aid to be granted to tackle the situation. Government action was underlined through expressions such as: “The government reacts”. Immigrants were of se-

condary importance, featuring as objects of the story rather than active subjects. Politicians, on the other hand, usually appeared in an active fashion (most frequently in actions of conflict, i.e., mutual accusations, but also a number of images showing them reaching an agreement). Although immigrants featured in the stories with a frequency very similar to that of the political actors, they were presented in a passive fashion, with images of defencelessness (lining up for a shower, lying or sitting on the ground), which, added to the lack of presence of active actors from cultural groups, meant the direction of the discourse and the images at the end of the day ranged from passivity to negativity.

H: “The government reacts”

A: Yes, “immigrants were turned back” as if they were saying ‘thank goodness’...I don’t know...if there were other terms that were a bit different...well then...”The government has reacted with the immigrants”...terms...if they could use other terms... — (CDG II)

Unlike the other stations, and with significant frequency, a number of Tele-5 journalists – particularly the special correspondent – became the protagonists of the news because they took part in the personal stories or dramas they were reporting on, which were narrated by and in part starred themselves.

Footage of NGOs worked as a counterpoint and aid agencies were presented as the public voice calling for the defence of human rights.

There are Moroccan NGOs but they don’t appear, they are never shown in the media...They exist and they do a lot of work. —(DLCA3)

We have already mentioned that the images that showed immigrants generally showed them to be defenceless. Similarly, Tele-5 showed the protection the Spaniards on the ground offered the immigrants, in an attempt to spark emotion.

The Moroccan police were labelled negatively as Ramadan was related with a supposed lack of vigilance.

The image most often provided of the Spanish police was of an officer hitting an immigrant.

In this regard, it is as if sometimes the journalists were who sent to report from the spot were trying to 'hunt' a story. In fact, in some of the stories there were constructions where immigrants were used to narrate a series of circumstances that bore little resemblance to the truth. Some of the participants in the DLCAs and CDGs felt the station did not cover the situation humanely and believed it often sought sensationalism. They also said the focus was nearly always negative in every way. Positive images were occasionally shown, such as a shot of Moroccans enquiring after the destiny of the people who were moved off, handcuffed, in coaches.

Both the language and images were used in a sensationalist manner. As in the case of Antena 3 TV, Tele-5 also used the 'avalanche' concept, but gave it an exaggerated and alarmist tone.

I think the language is very over-the-top (...), you know? They play it up a lot and turn it into a circus....And it is a really important story, they are red-hot issues.. —(CDG 1)

TV3

The news criterion most commonly present at TV3 was social conflict and, to a lesser extent, political and cultural conflict, in that order. However, it could be argued that conflicts were analysed and did not arise purely from a criterion of generating sensationalism or using political interest one way or another.

I think these were the first news stories we saw where the people who spoke weren't politicians or presenters. At least there was the odd immigrant who discussed why he had left his country and they also provided...they also spoke about...I liked...they looked at the problems, why people leave their countries: war, famine, plagues...They didn't focus on the confrontation between the PP and the PSOE but instead tried to base the stories on the problem of immigration and immigrants, why they leave their countries...That's important, isn't it?. —(DLCA1)

With regards objectivity, TV3's news stories in many cases included a look at the reasons for the situation and the

station took a position in statements like "the fences separate the rich from the poor". Over the days, different voices were included: as well as politicians, there were the voices of NGOs, immigrants (not just in the forest or at the police station, but also in the desert), non-Spaniards in Melilla and Moroccans. Unlike the other stations, we heard immigrants talk and their testimonials were contributions to the story rather than an example of them simply being used. Now and then they were subtitled. There were also explanations about the reality of the different countries the immigrants were leaving and references to the social and political reasons, as well as the personal ones, behind their decision. Immigration was posited as a worldwide phenomenon and there was mention of the risks people take when they emigrate.

Also, the figures offered were confirmed with the presence of testimonials and the translations were reliable. This gave a general impression of consistency, although sometimes sources were not quoted (e.g., when pictures were broadcast from Moroccan TV stations without any credit).

The station also featured demands by NGOs and demonstrations and concentrations carried out by people who wanted a change in immigration policies. Civil society played an important role in general, as well as in the vocabulary used.

The station introduced debates about some of the political solutions provided, e.g., the internment centres.

Another general impression about TV3's coverage was that reflection was promoted, particularly in the 5 October evening programme. One issue mentioned in the DLCAs was that it didn't talk about an 'avalanche' so much as a 'human drama'. This approach meant that from the first day it marked, in the opinion of the people from the different associations that took part in the content analysis, a very important difference with respect to the other stations' coverage.

There is an important difference at TV3, i.e., not 'avalanche' but 'drama', showing something that is real, that people have to react to, that another thing...I think it is very good to show it as a human drama. —(DLCA2)

However, it was also found that some of the shots used,

e.g., a pile of wooden ladders leaning against the fence, stereotyped immigration as they reinforced the aspect of misery and precariousness. Also, and in keeping with the other stations, TV3 used images that showed immigrants in situations of defenceless, such as a line of people at the police station, immigrants crying on the coaches, left in the desert and internment camps, with clothes given them by the heads of the reception centres, etc. Situations were shown which, when not compared with other, more positive shots of the cultural groups affected, only served to promote an image of inferiority. In the case of TV3, however, it must be said that these types of shots were less common than at the other stations and were made up for by the presence of other, more diverse ones. On the other hand, facts were also occasionally fictionalised, e.g., in a report that featured the brother of a boy who had scaled the fence. The station followed the boy on a day-long quest to find his brother.

Mention was made in the DLCA's and CDG's that coverage was generally respectful and focused on immigration rather than confrontations between parties and countries. Once again, this was particularly so on 5 October.

The information given could lead to a favourable reaction, a desire to act to change the situation, and we found the coverage contributed many reflexive elements that can lead to a better understanding of the immigration phenomenon and thereby promote the social inclusion of immigrants, particularly when groups that work towards this inclusion were given a voice on-air.

La 2

The two main news criteria found at La 2 were political conflict and emotion. The latter was shown in expressions such as: "For many sub-Saharan, the time they had to wait to scale the fence has remained behind the wall." One of the recourses used to emphasise the emotion was, for example, shown by journalists who tried to put themselves in the minds of immigrants so they mentioned and focused on their interpretation of the feelings that someone who had just scaled the fence might have.

They try to address the stories according to their criteria - they focus them how they like. I don't think they want to go into depth, to ask the person most affected. —(CDG II)

On the other hand, as happened at Antena 3 TV and Tele-5, issues were addressed in an ad-hoc manner so that statements or explanations about events were made that did not relate to the news story or connect with it or expand upon it with other figures.

With regards type of discourse, La 2 usually built/fictionalised one that explained it, which, together with the emphasis on things of an emotive nature, created a feeling of little credibility with respect to facts. The analysis found this construction was supported both on the treatment of discourse and the selection of images. One example came on 11 October: the evening news began with the arrival of a fishing boat used in illegal immigration and then went on to the monitoring of events in Ceuta and Melilla to end with the statement: "For now, the dream of thousands of Africans burns before a wire fence or on a beach in Africa", with a shot of a boat in flames as the context.

Looking at the footage in more detail, we found it was not always related with the commentary:

And finally, they didn't show anything that talked about immigration or true testimonies or respect or anything. Just the shot and that's it, and the shot didn't have much to do with the commentary... — DLCA3

Also, there was not necessarily any agreement between what was said or what the journalist said the immigrants were thinking and the footage shown. For example, there was a story on whether there was concern for the fate of the repatriated immigrants – however, figures were not given nor was there any follow-up about the question of repatriation.

Therefore, as the discussion groups found, although the type of discourse was aimed at reflection, the station presented a very limited vision of the reality and did not include the information needed for viewers to construct their own critical reflection. In this sense, some of the participants pointed out the importance of programmes basing stories on more profound reflections about the facts they report on and enabling the visualisation of the parties most affected, treating them with the dignity and respect they deserve, as we can see from the quote shown above.

With respect the viewpoint and voice of the protagonists of the stories, unlike the other stations that give more weight to

political characters, the actors most usually represented on La 2 were the immigrants involved in the events, although the treatment of their presence was very diverse. The station usually offered a dramatic representation in which we found both cases where immigrants were asked for their opinion and others where only pictures of them were shown in different emotional situations, such as crying or screaming, without contextualising what was happening.

We also found, less frequently, other protagonists, i.e., the representatives of the major political parties. In this sense, La 2, as with TV3, showed on 11 October incredulity with respect to the effectiveness of the diplomatic route, and particularly highlighted the condemnations of the NGOs: "Today we find ourselves facing two different images - Moratinos congratulating Morocco and NGOs condemning the way in which the deportations are being carried out".

NGOs were also protagonists of the stories, playing the role of the critics - as they also did at the other stations - of the situation presented and voicing the defence of immigrants' human rights. A voice was thus given to groups that fight for social inclusion, something which enabled these groups in turn to call for social mobilisation and the search for solutions: "We are calling on the people, because it is the people who are stopping this".

Sometimes, however, the treatment given to immigrants was more sensationalistic than reflexive or mobilising: "On a beach on the African coast, these sub-Saharanans with planks of wood in their hands, are getting ready to build their own boat...we don't know much more, just that later the boat was seen up in flames and surrounded by Moroccan police officers...we don't know who set it on fire".

We can therefore conclude that, on the one hand, the immigrants involved and the NGOs had a bigger voice than on the other stations and it seems the direction was positive and condemnatory but, on the other hand, the stories were very sensationalistic.

TVE

The main news criteria were the political and social conflicts. In this regard, and unlike the other stations, the TVE news shows put a positive spin on the conflicts and the Government's action. Overall, the aim was to show that the situation was 'under control', at least in relation to the political confrontation. There was occasionally a certain

playing down of the problems of the situation. The emphasis was put on the solutions being sought and the advances being made via the actions of the Spanish government, e.g., when it was emphasised that the presidents of the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla had emerged content from a meeting with the Vice-President of the Government, or when the Minister for Foreign Affairs was shown having arrived to manage the crisis. In contrast, TVE's stories condemned and put more emphasis on the difficulties the Moroccan government was having in handling the situation and on its errors. It contrasted the official silence from the Moroccan authorities with denunciations from NGOs and other sources. However, in one of the discussion groups, somebody mentioned that even though these statements were presented as objective facts, the images themselves contradicted the discourse that everything was under control or that political will/action was really solving the situation.

One contradiction is that the pictures suggest it is a common problem and that they want to solve it, and you see the government involved and the NGOs as well, but in that there is a problem, because it turns out that they don't take full responsibility for the immigrants but move them off in a coach and leave them to their fate, and this contradicts what they said before about wanting to find a solution to the problem...—(CDG II)

Also in the political sphere, the station provided a more negative view of the opposition party in comparison to the Spanish government. When mentioning Rajoy's visit to Melilla, the journalist said: "Metres away, and without mentioning them (referring to the immigrants), Rajoy visited the reception centre". Statements from the head of the opposition with regards the need to expel all illegal immigrants were repeated. However, the station also indirectly repeated (via shots of press conferences introduced without any comment, just to present them as facts or responses to the statement of somebody else) what the opposition should do and what it should have done when it was in power.

The social conflict was basically reflected in the conditions the immigrants were living in. They were shown being helped by the police, handcuffed and put on a coach, sitting

on the ground tired and dirty, collecting food, crying and screaming. Sometimes the pictures wanted to represent people's dreams or frustrations, such as when an image was shown of immigrants behind the fence of a reception centre with the shadow of a plane overhead.

With regards objectivity, the resources the station had at its disposal were noticeable as they used many inserts and live broadcasts from places where the events were evolving, including Melilla, Ceuta, Rabat, the Moncloa Palace, a hospital, a reception centre, a demonstration in Ceuta, etc. and various places could be shown within the one story. The camera crews entered the coaches that transported the immigrants, obtaining very detailed pictures of the facilities and equipment set up for them, and were present at ministerial meetings.

The station also included reports within the same news unit, something uncommon among the other stations. For examples, there was a brief report on the expulsion of immigrants, or a report about a mosque.

However, we found information was not always checked and once the presenter and witnesses gave contradictory information within the same story. Similarly, not all the images corresponded with what was being said. One example involved the desert, where the footage used did not show immigrants there at the time, although that was what was being said. In any case, the reports also included a certain construction of narrative fiction, as when, featuring a shot of immigrants praying, the voiceover said: "They are asking God to allow them to stay here, to achieve their dream of finding a future in Europe". However, this was not common.

In principle, there were no elements that specifically promoted viewer reflection or contributed to any type of action or participation on the part of the public, but the station's reports did contribute analysis elements beyond the transmission of events and the previously mentioned examples of lack of precision. For example, some stories were illustrated with an analysis of what the Moroccan press was saying (an element that the participants in the DLCAs and CDGs commented on as being positive) and explanations were sought in contexts such as mosques, outside of the particular place where the events unfolded. This type of report could have an ambivalent potential. On the one hand, it reinforces what was deduced from the

content analysis about TVE focusing on the greater responsibility (fault) of the Moroccan government with respect to the situation but at the same time gave more profound information by including the voice of the Moroccan press, which could help viewers make a more complete reading or reach their own conclusions about the events.

The station also included testimonies and opinions from Moroccans, Muslims and other cultural groups not directly affected by the problem. One representative of a Moroccan immigration-aid association made a harsh denunciation of the decision to expel people by coach, while a representative of the Melilla Islamic Committee prioritised the human condition over the role of religion. In this way, testimonies were used that contributed information about the reality of the immigrants.

In some cases, it was the immigrants involved in the events themselves who featured in the stories, but they were nearly always in the background and did not address the public directly.

The discourse used was based on spontaneous interpretations along the lines of 'the immigrants were sad'. In general, we found footage that showed immigrants behind the fences, quiet or lying down and which was taken from ground level. Common shots were of the injured and defenceless - but overall the human factor was less important than the political one because the one that had most intensity was the justification of the actions of the Spanish government.

There was also an important police presence. The Spanish police were contrasted against the Moroccan one and stories focused on how Moroccan officers mistreated immigrants. This point was the source of debate in the different groups. They agreed that Moroccan authorities have less respect for human rights, but they also found this idea was repeatedly shown by contrasting the two sides and not by specifying the situation. They concluded that one of the ideas transmitted was that the Spanish police went about their jobs and the immigrants were keen to go to the police stations (to be helped by the police) when in general they were just looking for their companions.

In terms of footage, labelling and respect towards immigrants, we found TVE introduced a certain plurality of voices and images as well as ones that focused specifically on groups that tried to scale the fence, people who were

handcuffed, etc. Another conclusion was that the shots of defencelessness used in terms of the immigrants involved in the events had, along with the reports broadcast, an ambivalent potential. It was felt the images were negative and did not respect the immigrants because they breached people's privacy and generated a distance between them and us.

Finally, we found the station tried to take a certain amount of care with regards language, such as when it avoided the expression 'illegal immigration' in favour of 'irregular immigration'.

Conclusions

In general, all the television stations used conflict as the main news criterion: Antena 3 TV, Tele-5 and TVE focused particularly on political conflict, the first two from a negative viewpoint and the third trying to put a positive spin on it; La 2 and TV3 focused particularly on social conflict and TV3 also tried to analyse the conflicts as well as reflect, expand upon or play them down, something TVE also did to a lesser degree.

One of the issues that came up in one of the discussion groups with regards this production criteria was that the issue of immigration was only discussed when there were conflicts. "We have to wait for another 'avalanche' to talk about immigration. What comes after the avalanche? Do we just wait for other another one?" and that it could be discussed on other occasions.

We found that the reality the different stations covered was partial and there were clear contradictions between the information the stations offered beyond the approach taken. A participant in one of the discussion groups said that what he liked least about the stories was that it was hard to know whether the media was covering the stories according to particular interests or whether that was the reality. From the point of view of people who have immigrated and are now involved with the associations, the different stations did not talk about how immigrants, once they have scaled the fence, run into more difficulties. The stories did not always follow the news interests of the immigrants. In this sense, the associations felt this could be addressed within the reports included in the news.

With regards objectivity, generally speaking there was a simplified and limited reading of reality. For example, the use of the word 'avalanche' by La 2, Tele-5 and Antena 3 TV was not faithful to the situation because it was alarmist and not descriptive. Another example was using only one testimony – from a person who had just scaled the fence - as if this person alone could help explain the whole of the real situation.

One area of objectivity where the stations fell down was the provision of unconfirmed information, such as in the case of Antena 3 TV. The least-consistent station was Tele-5, because not only did it not check information or make good use of testimonies, it used a type of spontaneous discourse and fictionalised everything it said to the extent that it finally resulted in the stories being seen as ad-hoc edits rather than pieces of information.

Also, there was a difference in figures mentioned by Antena 3 TV and Tele-5:

Here they talk about 500 people while on A3 they said 1,000 in the desert...There is a very important difference in figures. —(DLCA3)

We found that, in the comparison between the stations, TV3 sought to make a diagnosis of the immigration phenomenon and featured reports that contributed elements that enabled viewers to compare information and reach their own conclusions. It also made good use of computer graphics. In the case of TVE, the reports did not try to analyse the causes of immigration but did include the Moroccan NGOs that were helping the immigrants.

It was felt that at all the stations the type of discourse mostly used was a spontaneous one. The most frequent case was Tele-5 and the less frequent was TV3. This discourse included the way the political parties used the immigration situation in their confrontations and awarded a greater role to the political conflict than to immigration. There was no elaboration of the news. This was also reflected in the language employed, which often contained prejudices, such as for example using 'illegal' instead of 'irregular'. In this area it was TVE who took the most care with language.

With regards reflexivity, TV3, unlike the other stations, diagnosed the phenomenon and tried to explain the causes

of the situation, as well as place the phenomenon in an international dimension.

The associations gave a great deal of importance to reflexive elements because they believed that, if not taken into account, information could generate a limited interpretation of the reality. In one of the discussion groups a real fact was given as an example – that of a woman who ran into one of the group participants: ‘You run into an old lady who says “Aren’t you better off here?”’ he reported.

It was mentioned that in general the media did not go to the heart of the problem but reported a political conflict and political reactions: “We talk about immigration and the problem of immigration, and who is shown but politicians and police. What the PP says to the PSOE, what the PSOE says to the PP”. This was particularly noticeable at TVE, Antena 3 TV and Tele-5.

Sometimes the stations made their reporters the stars of the story or the only interpreters of reality. One person who took part in the discussion groups commented that television gave its point of view but not that of someone who was suffering a situation: ‘From (the point of view of) the television stations, they (the immigrants) have got what they wanted, which was to enter Europe’. More or less all the stations took this approach. Of particular note, however, were the edits of Antena 3 TV and Tele-5, which were considered sensationalistic, but they could also be found at TV3 or when a journalist took a starring role such as at La 2: “Only the crickets break the evening silence. We cannot record their thoughts but we can imagine them”.

Another issue mentioned in the comparison between stations was that European media portray Africa as being devoid of anything. The direction of the coverage is therefore negative, as if Africans are all poor and have nothing, are helpless and without recourses. This means they end up being seen as second-class citizens. Furthermore, the word ‘immigrant’, the classification the stations used most commonly to define the people, was used with differing criteria. Famous sportspeople are not considered immigrants even if they have not been nationalised and have just arrived, and are known by their nationality, something which did not happen in the case of the events in Ceuta and Melilla, except for once on TV3 when one of the witnesses was presented as a citizen of his homeland, although he was living in Catalonia. This was

also considered contradictory - even though the participants in the group discussions preferred it to the label of ‘illegal immigrant’ or just ‘immigrant’. All the stations emphasised the fact that a person was an immigrant above anything else: immigration was seen not a temporary condition, i.e., a process in which a person is currently involved, but as if migration was a state of being: ‘the immigrant’, not ‘a person who is migrating’. From the contributions of the associations we can see that this vision has to change, because the fact of emigrating does not make you an immigrant for your whole life. It is a temporary situation and this should be specified more in the oral discourse of the news stories.

I can't spend my whole life being an immigrant! Now I am here, I have migrated, I am a migrated person...It has to be delimited...For me, personally, an immigrant should stop being known as an immigrant after a year, now they are here, they have arrived...I am also a citizen, we are active but unrecognised citizens, as we participate and do many things... —(DLCA2)

One participant in a CDG felt that, despite everything, there has been a certain transformation in media coverage (extendible to all the stations) because the media have changed a number of practices.

With regards the footage that represented the immigrants involved in the events, the stations generally chose shots of passivity and defencelessness, La 2 and Tele-5 in particular. In some cases, this was somewhat compensated for by testimonials or a greater diversity of images.

All the stations used pictures that showed immigrants in a situation of defencelessness, such as a queue of people outside a police station, immigrants crying on the coaches, in the desert or interment centres, with clothes they had been given by the centre staff, etc. In the different DLCAAs and CDGs, people said these images could imply both defenceless and denunciation, i.e., there was an aspect of making viewers aware because they made them reflect on the situation the immigrants were suffering.

The news programmes occasionally generated positive labels to justify the actions of the Spanish authorities and compare them with other countries that supposedly did not act in such a positive fashion. This was particularly so at TVE.

With regards inclusion, the participants understood that confirmed information that tried to explain the reality would spur politicians and NGOs into action.

They said it was associations that, again through the media, had become aware of the issue and considered it important to mobilise, independently of station coverage. That was why the associations themselves got in contact with the media. Some local radio stations had also done interviews, which led other outlets to react, but in the local sphere. In general, the participants said, both the content analysis and the fieldwork carried out found that immigrant associations and cultural groups had virtually no voice in the media.

Some of the suggestions established over the course of the analysis were:

- It is necessary to avoid using expressions such as 'avalanche', 'mass arrival of people' or 'drama' when speaking about immigration. It would be more precise to give figures: '65 people', 'less than 500 people in all', 'out of every 10 people who emigrate in Africa, 8 remain on the continent and 2 go to Europe', etc. 'Avalanche' should not be used when talking about human beings and nor should 'drama'. Perhaps we should use the word 'arrival' and that's it.
- Words themselves may not be as important as tone used and images that accompany them. It is important to listen to how people want to be called, a claim that usually reaches us via their own associations.
- It is important that journalists, when preparing information on newcomers/immigrants, bear in mind the people in the host country, who are the ones who experience it on a daily basis but who are not used to having a voice in the media.
- It is important not only to use the testimony of someone who has just scaled the fence the minute after they land on the other side, or someone who arrived only a few hours before, but also that of people who have been in Spain for some time and now participate in society.
- It is necessary to talk with immigrant associations so they may explain their experiences and contribute their viewpoints to afford them the chance to also reflect on the immigration phenomenon and because they have things to say.
- It is important to show positive coexistence.

- It is important to check information and study problems in greater depth because African immigration has changed greatly and these changes were not reflected in the media. The complexity of the issues was not addressed and there was a simplification of the causes.
- It is important to monitor issues. One of the demands expressed by the people who took part in the research was the need to monitor the issues that shape a news story at a given time. For example, various stories referred to the majority of would-be immigrants being taking back to their homelands by plane or coach. But no station followed up on how this repatriation was carried out. No station covered it and although viewers might have wondered what happened to the people and if they were ok, they would learn nothing about their fate because, once expelled, it seems the story ends. In this sense, the people who participated in the research called for a more humane, dignified and empathic (not sensationalistic or dramatic) coverage.

Notes

- 1 This article is by Lena de Botton, researcher at the University of Barcelona (UB); Laura López, researcher at the UB; Jordi Male, professor at the University of Lleida (UdL); Cristina Pulido, researcher at the UB; Miquel Àngel Pulido, researcher at the UdL; Ababacar Thiak, member of the Ujaranza Foundation; Iolanda Tortajada, professor at the UdL and members of the CREA (Center of Research on Theories and Practices that Overcome Inequalities).
- 2 Quote from the participants.
CDG= Communicative Discussion Group (1 or 2 because two discussion groups were formed)
DLCA= Daily Life Communicative Accounts (1,2, 3 or 4 because 4 accounts were involved)
- 3 Project participating organisations: Lleida solidària – Fundació MPDL (Lleida), Associació Catalana de Residents Senegalesos (Barcelona), Associació Sahbi (Barcelona), Grup Multicultural de l'associació Àgora (Barcelona), Associació de Mali de Lleida (Lleida), Associació de Gàmbia de Lleida (Lleida) and Iniciativa per a la integració social i el desenvolupament social (Lleida).
- 4 For further information on the critical communicative methodology:
<http://www.pcb.ub.es/crea/metodologia.htm>
- 5 Chomsky, Searle, Mead, Vygotsky, Habermas and Beck, amongst others.
- 6 Project results can be consulted at:
<http://www.neskes.net/workalo>
- 7 To consult the resolution taken by the lower house, see:
http://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L8/CONG/DS/PL/PL_114.PDF
- 8 Detailed project results can be consulted at:
<http://www.pcb.ub.es/crea/proyectos/amal/index.htm>

Bibliography

- VAN DIJK, T. Racismo y análisis crítico de los medios, Barcelona: Paidós, 1997.
- GIROUX, H. “¿Son las películas de Disney buenas para sus hijos?” (“*Are Disney Movies Good For Your Kids?*”). In: STEINBERG, SH. R.; KINCHELOE, J. L. (comps.), *Cultura infantil y multinacionales*. Madrid: Morata, 2000. pp. 65-78.
- GIROUX, H. *Cine y entretenimiento. Elementos para una crítica política del filme*, Barcelona: Paidós, 2003.
- HABERMAS, J. *Teoría de la acción comunicativa I and II*, Madrid: Taurus, 1987.