An exploration of the representation of immigrant women in a sample from the Spanish press

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Abstract

The number of women immigrating to Spain in search of a better life has increased in recent years. However, very few news items pay attention to the reasons why they emigrate. A corpus of 30 pieces of news related to immigrant women was collected from February 2012 to April 2013 from the digital version of the main Spanish newspapers *El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*. The main hypotheses in this research are: Immigrant women are not very visible in the Spanish press; they are mainly represented as vulnerable and as victims; and they are normally connected to social problems. To confirm or to disprove said hypotheses, this article employs critical discourse analysis, including visual grammar, to analyse the main topics of the pieces of news dealing with immigrant women, and the main linguistic and visual characteristics used to describe them. It transpires that immigrant women are portrayed in the Spanish press as dependent, passive and confined to their homes. Moreover, the majority of the articles on immigrant women associated them with prostitution. The partial representation of immigrant women observed in the corpus of examples does not favour the development of a society established on principles of democracy and equality. In this sense, it is necessary to rethink the depiction of immigrant women in the press, in order to question their role in modern-day migratory movements.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, immigrant women, multimodal texts, press, visual grammar

Introduction

In most societies, masculine and feminine roles differ. This is clearly evident in the division of work and tasks, in which women have concentrated on taking care of others and on doing housework in order to please others (Pérez et al. 2006, p. 18). These differing roles are present in reports offered by the news media.

Each society ascribes different roles or functions to its members. Some of those functions are dependent on gender, while each society has certain criteria aimed at establishing those functions. Sometimes functions are determined by belief systems. For example, certain domestic tasks are predominantly associated with the female gender, therefore most people believe women should perform them. In addition, socialisation implies that women have to be mothers and wives. These two roles are respected and are essential in any society, whenever they are chosen freely, without depriving women of the chance to reconcile these roles with working outside the home, or with being active in places where decisions are taken.

There is the view that the media in general, and the press in particular, should perform an educational and pedagogical role in respect of every topic they address, be it on-screen or in

writing. This is really important when the topics are immigration and other cultures, because avoiding stereotypes in this respect contributes towards a society in which people live together respectfully and peacefully. Therefore, there should be a commitment to integrate the different cultures currently represented in Spain, by highlighting positive facts about immigrants in general, and immigrant women in particular, so that society is well informed.

Nowadays, there is greater diversity in terms of the images of women and men portrayed in the media, yet stereotypes and a lack of sensibility towards topics related to gender remain in reports produced by the media, regardless of whether they are public, private, local, national or international. In general, women are less represented than men in the media. In addition, it is difficult to find examples in which women appear as leaders, experts or authorities. The majority of the pieces of news show women in private situations and men in public ones (Urriola 2008, p. 34).

For this reason, it is necessary to increase not only the number of news items, but also the number of images of women in the public sphere and men in the private sphere. Different national and international studies indicate that women are all but invisible in the media (see Bach et al. 2000; Berganza 2003; Nuñez Puente and Establier Pérez 2008; Peñamarín 2006).

Such 'invisibility' affects immigrant women in particular, because although they are the protagonists of between 45 and 50 per cent of migratory movements (Martínez Lirola 2013; Pham 2014), they hardly ever feature in the press. Also, the essential roles they play in society, as caretakers of the elderly and of children, tend to be hidden and undervalued.

As regards the migratory process of both genders, various authors have pointed out that women and men develop different strategies when starting the migratory process and when arriving in a new country (Bouchoucha 2010; Martín 2006; Martín and Sabuco 2006). Women have different opportunities, responsibilities and functions in their countries of origin from those in the country welcoming them, and their lives are different from those of men for social, cultural, educational, religious and political reasons (Pérez Grande 2008, p. 137). As Sadiqi (2010, p. 17) notes:

> In general, women have less freedom to choose because more women than men are poor, illiterate, and culturally marginalized. In a world where political and economic events are moving faster every day with the advent of globalization, it is urgently necessary to take gender issues into consideration when dealing with migration. A gender approach to migration can help to foster a 'win-win' approach to North/South migration.

When women decide to emigrate, they face an uncertain future. Known and familiar places are left behind, people who can offer physical or emotional support are now far away, and their customs have to be replaced by new ones. Although it is difficult to start a new life, immigrants in general and immigrant women in particular emigrate because they expect to improve their lives, and to leave behind the war, injustice, violence and poverty prevalent in their countries of origin.

The main topics that appear in the press in respect of people from other cultures/immigrants (without distinguishing between women and men) are the following (Van Dijk 2005, pp. 37–39): border/influx controls, delinquency, prostitution and violence. Neutral topics include legislation, migratory politics, perceptions, and racism and discrimination against immigrants. The author concurs with Van Dijk's (2005, p. 5) statement: 'The everyday lives and concerns of minorities are

seldom covered. Their negative acts, and especially crime and drugs, are enhanced, whereas their major contributions to culture and society – except in sports and entertainment – tend to be ignored or belittled.'

This article focuses on the main topics of 30 different pieces of news, and their main linguistic and visual characteristics used by the newspapers to refer to immigrant women. The main research questions we intend to answer are the following: What do we know about immigrant women through the Spanish press? How are immigrant women portrayed, linguistically and visually?

Our main hypotheses are the following: Immigrant women are not very visible in the Spanish press; they are portrayed mainly as vulnerable and as victims; and they are normally associated with social problems such as prostitution (the majority of the reports on migrant women related to prostitution, see below). To confirm or to disprove said hypotheses, this article will analyse the main topics of 30 news reports dealing with immigrant women, and the main linguistic and visual characteristics used to describe said women. The items will be analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA) and visual grammar.

CDA was used because it is concerned with the social dimensions of discourse: It studies language in relation to social issues (see the section on methodology and data). Consequently, CDA can help to unpack issues of gender inequality and gender relations, by observing the way immigrant women appear to be represented in the texts under analysis. Lexical and visual choices are not random but are related to the distribution of power in discourse. Analysing language-in-use constitutes a social practice. In this sense, the partial representation of immigrant women in the sample of texts under analysis does not favour the development of a society established on principles of democracy and equality. Gender, religious, ideological and cultural differences should be considered as enriching society, rather than being perceived as a threat, so that the concept of citizenship is not an abstraction but a reality (Cortina 1998, p. 93; Pham 2014, p. 29).

The article is organised as follows: The next section concentrates on the main characteristics of female migration as reflected in the press; followed by an outline of the methodology used for this study and the data obtained. Next, the findings are analysed, paying attention to the general and the specific characteristics found in the sample of texts subjected to a detailed analysis. A discussion follows of the main findings from the corpus. Finally, the article ends with some of the conclusions reached.

Literature review

Women migrants are not a new phenomenon, but their numbers have increased in recent years. However, only recently have immigrant women been considered as migratory actors, therefore the gender variable has become a factor in studies on migration. For this reason, there has been an increase in the number of studies related to women's migrations (Balbuena 2004; Casal and Mestre 2002; Checa 2005; Juliano 2000).

Studies done in Spain on male and female immigrants show that migrating women are understudied. The first such studies concentrated on the women's importance for family regrouping (Yuval-Davis 1997). We concur with the findings of Román et al. (2011), who note that only

recently have women been considered actors in migrations, making the variable of gender a factor in any analysis.

Studies on the representation of immigrant women in the press (Martínez Lirola 2010a and b; Nash 2000 and 2004; Rodríguez 2002; Román et al. 2011) found that reportage on the female migratory movement does not reflect its true importance in society. This can be ascribed to the fact that the media discourse does not make immigrant women visible, and therefore immigrant women's presence and recognition are minimised.

A discourse that makes women invisible has a negative effect on the audience, because it excludes women from reports on migrations, and therefore the migratory movement is strongly associated with men. In this way, feminised migrations are neglected, causing the migratory phenomenon to be presented in a biased way.

When immigrant women appear in news reports, the press does not make explicit that they leave their countries of origin for different reasons, which include, amongst others, helping their families in their country of origin (and especially their children); single women emigrating in order to promote themselves and help their families financially; young women emigrating in order to live a different experience abroad; women leaving their countries of origin to follow their husbands in a migratory project; and young women (second generation) coming to Spain to rejoin relatives who have already emigrated (Colectivo IOÉ 1998, pp. 21–23). According to Bouchoucha (2010, p. 20) there is one main difference between female and male migration: 'Female migration takes place largely to effect family reunion and marriage, while male migration occurs mainly to secure employment or to improve living conditions.'

The main characteristics of the representation of immigrant women in the press (Aierbe 2008; Masanet and Ripoll 2008; Nash 2007) are the following: They are not very visible and when they are represented, they are mainly portrayed as dependent, homogeneous, and victims. These ideas imply that immigrant women evoke social problems. However, immigrant women in Spain are a very diverse, complex and heterogeneous group: They belong to different ethnic groups, come from different countries and cultures, emigrate for different reasons, and differ in personal respects. None of this variety is reflected in depictions of immigrant women in the press, yet the women may be students, domestic workers, researchers or activists, etc.

In general, immigrant women are portrayed in the press as married, dependent, passive and limited to the home environment. They are defined as a key figure in the process of grouping families (Nash 2007, p. 60). This implies that the women are associated with family, maternity and reproduction, and does not take into consideration their individuality or their role in their own migratory projects. The women are represented as homogeneous and unitary (i.e., one individual represents the entire migrant community). In this sense, following Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 26), women become carriers of the group (*portadoras del colectivo*), since they are the biological reproducers of the community. Moreover, their image is negative and stereotyped because they are normally linked to negatives such as gender violence or networks of prostitution.

This traditional media discourse is based on immigrant women's dependency and lack of capacity, which leads to them being portrayed as passive. It is therefore necessary to increase the power of a discourse that portrays women as individuals, as the protagonists of their migratory

project, and with their own projects. However, Agrela (2005) points out that public discourses transmit, on the one hand, a representation of immigrant women as responsible for the wellbeing, harmony and integration of their families while, on the other hand, reinforcing the existing notion of immigrant women as fragile and vulnerable.

In addition, it is possible to refer to a triple type of discrimination against immigrant women, for the mere fact that they are women, poor and immigrants (Parella 2003). Instead of speaking about immigrant women we need to reflect on their diversity in terms of language, ethnicity, religion and social class, rather than presenting them as homogeneous, which implies a simplistic and incomplete analysis of their situation.

Thus far in this article, women from other cultures are generally linked to traditional female roles in the press, i.e., in the role of taking care of others (Anderson 2000; Parella 2003) or as involved in prostitution or subject to gender violence (Martínez Lirola 2010a and b). Generally speaking, immigrant women are depicted in the press according to stereotypes and are under-represented, despite the fact that between 45 and 50 per cent of migrants are women (Benhabib 2005; Lipszyc 2004).

Methodology and data

Our corpus comprised the digital versions of the following Spanish newspapers: *El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*. We collected all news reports related to immigrant women published from Monday to Friday, 1 February 2012 to 31 December 2013. A sample of 30 articles was obtained: 13 from *El País*, 14 from *ABC* and three from *El Mundo*. Quantitatively this constitutes a low number, but it is possible to offer a detailed analysis of the texts, and to draw certain conclusions.

Discourse reproduces social reality. In this sense, the discourse (written and visual) used by the press to discuss immigrant women is a way of understanding their social situation, therefore it helps to create an ideology. For this reason, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and visual grammar were selected to analyse and deconstruct the linguistic and visual representation of immigrant women in a sample of the Spanish press. The use of CDA as a methodological strategy can elucidate gender relations, as will become evident in the analysis below. Through CDA the representation of the immigrant women as social actors can be observed, as well as the main features according to which they are referred to, in the news items under analysis. CDA can help to deconstruct social issues in general and gender inequality in particular, by analysing how the press employs certain main visual and linguistic characteristics to create an image of immigrant women. Paying attention to said women is a social and political matter, and consequently, the tools that CDA offers allow for an intersection with gender analysis, since it is through a critical analysis of texts on immigrant women that we can explore their social situation.

CDA entails, above all, the establishment of a position, therefore it is vital to study text and talk in discursive forms of domination. Its character is interdisciplinary because it gives special importance to the relationship between discourse and society, especially through an analysis of the relationships between power, inequality and domination, as well as resistance through text and talk. Teun van Dijk (1997, p. 16 and ff; 2011) notes that the bulk of our social and political knowledge,

together with our ideology and beliefs about the world, come from the pieces of information we read or listen to every day.

Also employed will be Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar analysis, which analyses the place where elements are located in visuals (information value); the use (or lack) of frames (framing); and the way elements in the composition create a message which catches the audience's attention (salience). In addition, Van Leeuwen's analysis of social actors (2008) will be used to observe how immigrant women are represented in the texts under analysis (as individuals or groups, as active or passive, etc.).

As regards the analysis, we will mainly concentrate on the image, its caption, the heading and the subheading of each report, since these textual elements help to capture the readers' attention. The two news reports which are analysed in greater detail here, have written text and a visual. Of the articles analysed, 76 per cent featured a visual, while the remainder (24%) consisted solely of written text.

Results: Exploring stereotypes of migrant women in the Spanish press

General characteristics of the news items

One of the general characteristics of the news reports analysed, is that the voices of immigrant women do not appear. This reinforces their invisibility and serves to privilege the voices of the elites. However, immigrant women's nationalities are often mentioned. The main nationalities or countries of origin noted in this corpus are the following: Nigeria, Morocco, Guinea, Romania and Brazil. Moreover, the main topic in the reports on immigrant women was prostitution. Other topics are health issues and gender violence.

Another general characteristic of the analysis is that the women referred to in the reports have hardly any contact with the Spanish population. However, the women do have relationships with men, normally their husbands, who maltreat them or force them into prostitution, amongst others.

Whereas immigrant men are often represented in the press as delinquent, immigrant women do not have that image. While they do not appear very often, when they do the facts are conflicting, yet they are almost always depicted as victims: On the one hand, they are prostitutes or victims of a network of prostitution; on the other hand, they have arrived pregnant or with a baby in a small boat. They are represented as poor, fragile victims and tend to be objectivised (Martínez Lirola and Olmo in press; Sobrados 2006).

Before offering a detailed analysis of two pieces of news that are representative of the majority of the reports on immigrant women in the Spanish press, the focus briefly falls on three pieces of news that contrast with the majority of news items offered by the press, because they deal with two immigrant women getting married, a woman wearing a veil (*hiyab*) while presenting a television programme and, finally, Facebook and Twitter being used to campaign against female circumcision. The news item on two women who married appeared in *El País* on 24 February 2012 (http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2012/02/23/actualidad/1330022624_660998.html). A similar news item appeared in the same newspaper on 22 March 2012 (http://sociedad.elpais.

com/sociedad/2012/03/21/actualidad/1332349850_424393.html). Both break with the traditional stereotype of immigrant women being dependent on their husbands, assuming a passive role or fulfilling the traditional role of housewife. These women demonstrated the courage to create their own model of marriage and womanhood, i.e., they do not belong to a homogeneous community of immigrant women whose role is to have children, become home-makers and please their husbands.

Notable is the fact that they chose Ceuta to get married, because same-sex marriage is not permitted in many countries. This report shows that immigrant women are a diverse and heterogeneous group in society, with different interests and life projects.

The report on a woman wearing a *hiyab* to appear on national television in Egypt to read the news for the first time, was published in the newspaper *ABC* on 3 September 2012 (http://www.abc.es/20120903/internacional/abci-egipto-presentadora-velo-telediario-201209022113.html). Although this report is not about immigrant women, it was selected because it breaks with the traditional stereotype of women from Arabic countries working at home, and not having tertiary qualifications. The journalist, Fatima Nabil, admitted that appearing on public television wearing a *hiyab* corrected an abnormal situation in Egypt, and cleared up mistaken assumptions. This news item informed the audience about the improved lot of female journalists, two months after the Islamist, Mohamed Mursi, came to the power. Apart from the written text there is a photograph of the journalist facing the audience, wearing a *hiyab*.

The third news item, published in the newspaper *ABC* on 6 February 2013 (http://www.abc.es/sociedad/20130206/abci-ablacion-mundial-201302051257.html), points out that some women use their Facebook and Twitter accounts to raise funds to campaign against female circumcision. Although this report concerns a traditional practice that affects African women, it is Spanish women (whose names are given) who are in charge of raising funds to prevent female circumcision in Mali and Kenya. They women work for the non-governmental organisation (NGO) World Vision Spain. This piece of news is different in the sense that new technologies are used to cooperate with said NGO, and also because readers receive some information on the practice of female circumcision. Readers are told there is an international day against female circumcision – a practice employed in 28 African countries, certain Asian countries, as well as more than 12 industrialised nations where immigrants follow this tradition.

The three news items mentioned earlier have something in common: They highlight positive changes in women's lives, although the third piece focuses on activism on the part of Spanish women. A very important shared characteristic is that they all provide the names of the female protagonists in each piece: Ingrid Roselyne, from the Republic of Guinea and Danielle Nicole Mboume from Cameroon are the married couple; Fatima Nabil appeared on Egyptian television in a headscarf; and Isabel Llano, Mabel Lozano and the Social Network Mothers CharHadas (Red Social de Madres CharHadas) supported the use of Facebook and Twitter to fight against female circumcision. In addition, these news items informed readers about different aspects of women from other cultures, highlighting activities far removed from the traditional stereotypes that present immigrant women as passive, victims of abuse, powerless or uneducated. In the three examples the women are portrayed as educated, active, and having agency. Finally, the reports

are significant because they do not generalise about the situation of immigrant women, but reflect specific situations which modern-day women face, and raise awareness amongst their readers.

Specific analysis of certain news items

Having studied the general characteristics of news reports on immigrant women in a sample of the Spanish press, it transpired that the majority of the articles analysed related to prostitution (42%). For this reason, this section offers a detailed analysis of two pieces of news on the topic.

• Analysis of Figure 1
ABC, 20-02-2012
Desarticulada una organización que explotaba sexualmente a mujeres africanas. Las captaban en sus países de origen con el ofrecimiento de estudiar en Europa, pero luego eran obligadas a prostituirse.
[Capture of an organisation which sexually exploits African women. The women were enticed in their countries of origin with the offer to study in Europe, before being forced into prostitution.]

Figure 1: Juan Flores. *Imagen de archivo de una redada policial contra la prostitución.* (Image from archive from a police round-up against prostitutes.)

As the heading makes clear, this report makes reference to the fact that the police caught members of an organisation which forced African women into prostitution. The voices of the immigrant women affected are not heard in the text. The heading makes it clear that said women are represented as exploited by the illegal organisation, while the police are the agents who rescue the women.

There are three social actors in the foreground: First, on the right, where the most important information in the shot is located, according to the principle of information value (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 177), are the police – that information appears on the back of the man's t-shirt. The fact that his back is turned to the camera implies that there is no interaction with the reader. Second, two black women appear on the left – where less important information is usually located. The women do not interact with the viewer because they are covering their faces with their hands and hair, so as not to be identified. Moreover, the bodies of the three social actors have been cropped, which, from a visual point of view, makes it clear that they are only partially represented.

In general, the colours of the visual are dark, since the photograph was taken at night. Following Van Leeuwen (2011, p. 15), 'despite the efforts of psychologists to construct universal psychological meanings for colour, there does not seem to be a single "language of colour". Instead there is a multitude of codes, conventional associations and uses of colour, many of them with limited contexts of application and limited semantic domains.' Two people are partially visible in the background. However, there are points of light in the white t-shirts worn by both women, and in the very revealing miniskirt worn by the woman in the center of the image. The policeman's and the other woman's elbows are vectors pointing towards the woman in the center of the image, thus highlighting the fact that her legs are bare.

The policeman's elbow is also a vector pointing towards the semi-naked breasts of the woman on the left. Other vectors serve to establish a link between the three social actors represented: There is a clear one between the policeman's shoulder and the head of the woman in the center, and there are also vectors between the two women's heads. Notable is the parallelism between the two women's arms, which are positioned to cover their faces, thereby indicating that they are ashamed of their situation. This vector serves to present the two immigrant women at the same level, i.e., as belonging to the same social group.

The location of the policeman on the right and the two women on the left is not random: There is clear division between the main group of the population represented by the policeman and that of the two black women, who belong to a minority group. The main part of the information is located on the right, therefore, importance is afforded to the police(man) as the one responsible for cracking down on the illegal organisation. Locating the women on the left evokes the sense that they are passive recipients of the rescue actions performed by the police.

• Analysis of figure 2
ABC, 19-03-2012 CARLOS HIDALGO/ M.J. ÁLVAREZ / MADRID
Las prostitutas «toman» Villaverde. Unas 250 mujeres hacen la calle cada noche en el polígono de El Gato, para eludir la presión policial de la colonia Marconi.
[Prostitutes 'take' Villaverde. Around 250 women work the streets every night in the development area of El Gato, to avoid police harassment in the district of Marconi.]

Figure 2: José Alfonso. *Tres rumanas esperan la clientela al calor de una hoguera.* [Three Romanians wait for clients beside a fire.]

The language of the heading is noticeable because the women are presented as active, and we are informed that they have organised to avoid police harassment. The figure 250 makes it clear that many women are affected. As was the case in the preceding text analysed, three social actors are represented in the second image. In this case they are three female prostitutes from Romania who are waiting in the street for clients, as indicated in the caption and image. The fact that the three women are shown lounging about, doing nothing, contributes to their social exclusion. This contrasts with the reference to the women as 'active' in the heading. The point of light is the fire foregrounded in the centre of the image, with the three women near the fire. The background is dark because, as was the case in the preceding image, the photograph was taken at night.

The woman on the right is given greater importance not only for her position in the image, but also because she is alone, lying down and looking at the viewer, i.e., she establishes interaction and invites a response from the people looking at her. The two women on the left appear to be semi-naked and are looking down – this reinforces their social exclusion, since it suggests they are ashamed of their social situation. In addition, the women represented here are linked through clear vectors between the heads and feet of the two women on the left; and the vectors between the feet and knees of the woman on the right, which point towards the other two women.

Discussion

The majority of the news reports on immigrant women from the corpus under analysis are linked to prostitution. It is therefore necessary to rethink the images created of immigrant women in the press, by questioning their role in modern-day migratory movements. In general, immigrant women are not highly visible in the press, due to the fact that they are both female and foreigners. Women who work in domestic service hardly ever appear in the press, whereas it is quite common to refer to those who work as prostitutes. Earlier, reference was made to the news item concerning two women who got married in Ceuta, and the female television presenter wearing a *hiyab* – they were exceptions.

The news items selected do not offer the voices or testimonies of the female protagonists of the scenarios portrayed. Moreover, the reports do not offer any information about the daily lives of the women represented, how they live, how they work, what they desire or the problems they face. In this sense, the partial representation of immigrant women observed in the corpus of examples does not promote the development of a society established on principles of democracy and equality. Consequently, it is necessary to rethink the images of immigrant women in the press, in order to question their role in current migratory movements.

One of the main characteristics is that immigrant women are associated with negative contexts, being presented as passive actors who need help to improve their social situations. Therefore, the women represented in the latter texts are linked to prostitution. The fact that they are shown out on the streets, semi-naked, reinforces their social exclusion, as does the fact that they are presented avoiding eye contact with the viewer.

The women portrayed here are subject to 'collectivisation', because the journalists use collective nouns to describe them, e.g., African women, young Africans, 250 girls, a small army of women, sergeants, the black girls, the Romanian ones, the Nigerians, prostitutes, etc. As regards their visual representation, it is obvious that the women do not always appear alone in the texts under analysis (in Figure 1 they appear with the police and in Figure 2 they appear as a group), yet they are represented as anonymous individuals (Van Leeuwen 2008, p. 38). Another general characteristic is that the immigrant women in Figure 1 are static, which contributes to the representation of the main group as dynamic and empowered.

The first image creates in the viewer a sense of immediacy, whereas the second suggests some distance between the viewer and the social actors depicted in the photograph, reinforced by the barrier of fire in the foreground. The images analysed here are examples of visual dysphemisms, because they highlight some of the worst aspects of the women represented: They are naked, they hide their faces, they are idle, etc.

The analysis demonstrates that the press has the power to include or exclude whatever aspects journalists decide to portray about the social actors in the photographs – in this case, immigrant women. As a consequence, the purpose of this analysis has been to understand the essence of the representation of immigrant women in a sample from the Spanish press, and to detect any evidence of manipulation and discrimination in their representation.

To counter the invisibility of immigrant women and their victimisation in the press, all the figures and data on immigration should be captured, and their numbers should be categorised according to sex, regardless of whether the figures are global or related to specific groups of people. The next step should be to canvas immigrant women's opinions, i.e., to stop talking *about* immigrant women and start talking *to* them. In this way, the press could offer authentic testimonies detailing why they emigrated, social conditions in their countries of origin, and the situation they currently find themselves in. This would be a very effective way of starting a social debate on the situation of immigrant women in the labour market, the reasons why they emigrate and their plans for the future. Readers would thus be conscientised about the role and the importance these women have in the labour market.

Conclusion

Due to the fact that immigrant women's reality is transmitted by the main group, it is not surprising that they are normally discriminated against, as indicated by the visual dysphemisms arising from this analysis. An investigation of the main linguistic and visual characteristics of the texts analysed here, shows that the press has the power to influence our understanding and perception of these women, through the different editorial decisions made in creating news reports.

In general, immigrant women are not very visible in the press, precisely because they are women and foreign; however, when they are represented, they are normally associated with social problems such as prostitution or gender violence. The analysis presented in this article makes it clear that the representation of immigrant women is based on examples related to negative phenomena such as prostitution, where the women are portrayed as passive victims lacking agency. This way of presenting immigrant women reinforces their sense of exclusion and being discriminated against. The findings show that the Spanish newspapers selected for this analysis tend to construct an image of immigrant women using discourse dominated by notions of passiveness and victimisation.

Our proposal is that viewers personalise and humanise the information the press offers on immigrant women, so that traditional stereotypes (victim, prostitute) lose their importance and more information is offered on the women's situation and their migratory projects. Therefore, it is necessary to demand that the press stop representing immigrant women in this way: People from other cultures – women especially – do not necessarily require constant help. On the contrary, it is imperative to normalise immigration and universalise social services, so that these are available to everybody who needs them, be they immigrants or locals.

Little is shown in the press about migrant women's contribution to Spanish society. As active citizens, we have to respect the principle of equality in our treatment of them, and to avoid discriminating based on gender, ethnicity or race. This implies that the media must help to construct a new ideology that highlights the importance of migrant women in Spanish society, so that everyone can work towards real integration.

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