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The Armenian Question between 1914-1926  
in Letters to the Editor – *The Times*

Abstract

This paper investigates words and phraseology used to refer to the 1915 genocide of the Armenians before the word genocide itself was first used thirty years later. As of today, Turkey has refused to call “genocide” the systematic massacre of potentially more than one million Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, despite international pressure and press coverage. The historical events and the fate of the survivors received a considerable and uninterrupted attention in numerous letters to the editors (LTE) of major English broadsheets, amongst which *The Times* (Peltekian 2013). Letters to the editor have mainly been studied from a broader sociological, historical, and political perspective (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002, Richardson and Franklin 2004; Cavanagh and Steel 2019) but have rarely drawn the attention of linguists (exceptions are Pounds 2005, 2006; Romova and Hetet 2012). The methodology adopted in this study is a mixed one. A corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli 2001) integrates with discourse analysis of the most frequent words and of their phraseology (Partington 2004) used to refer to the violence against Armenians. The findings highlight the linguistic strategies used to refer to what is today considered a genocide.

1. *Introduction*

The word *genocide* was coined by Raphael Lemkin and officially used for the first time in his 1944 *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* to describe the modern development of the centuries-old human practice of destroying nations or ethnic groups. A new term was needed in view of the unprecedented pervasive system of actions systematically and consciously implemented with the sole aim to erase minority populations that were not worth being germanised (Lemkin 1944) in National-socialist Germany. These actions included not only mass

killings, which were not a ‘new’ practice, but also economic, social, political, cultural, biological, and institutional measures undertaken at the national level. Lemkin (1944, 79) states that genocide

[...] does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.

The systematic and coordinated plan of interconnected actions, orchestrated at the national level to annihilate a minority group by destroying their personal liberties as citizens and, ultimately, their lives, was evident not only for the populations targeted by German National Socialism but, in retrospect, also in the treatment of Christian minorities under the Ottoman rule between 1915 and 1922. The massacre of the Armenians is considered the first ‘modern’ genocide, and it has been recognised by many countries around the world, including Italy. The Turkish government has refused to acknowledge the massacre of the Armenians as a genocide despite its current international recognition, and despite the significant international press coverage of the events at the time, which is still available today thanks to online newspaper archives and the work of international researchers.

Examining the political issues and implications raised by the refusal of the Turkish government to use the word *genocide* lies outside the scope of this paper. Studies on the linguistic implications, of the use, or of the lack of use, of the word “genocide” when referring to the Armenian massacres of 1915 have been conducted, applying discourse analysis, for example, on political speeches by former US Presidents George Bush Barack Obama (Tchaparian 2015; Zolyan 2019) and on examples of U.S. political discourse (Solhi et al. 2012; Hakobyan 2014). A few linguistic studies exist on the news discourse on the genocide (Chabot et al. 2016; Gasparian 2016;); however, it seems that no studies have been published so far analysing the linguistic strategies used to refer to what is

today considered the Armenian genocide in letters to the editor (LTE), apart from Martini (2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2022, 2023a, 2023b).

LTE have been a crucial and integral part of news discourse for centuries (Cavanagh and Steel 2019; Facchinetti et al. 2015) but are rarely the subject of linguistic investigation (some exceptions are Pounds 2005, 2006; Romova and Hetet 2012). The lack of such studies on LTE on the Armenian question is addressed by this study, which further integrates the above-mentioned studies by Martini, applying the tools of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to a corpus of the letters on the Armenian question (LEAQ) published in *The Times* and dating back between 1914 and 1926 to cover the years before and after the outburst of violence (1915-1923; see Dadrian 2003).

Therefore, there are at least two research questions that this paper aims to answer: the following questions:

1. Which linguistic strategies were used to refer to the different actions aimed at destroying the Armenians, before the word genocide was coined?
2. Could there have been some linguistic strategies in use in news discourse that might have contributed to lower the status of the massacres, and, indirectly, to the current Turkish claims?

After a brief outline of the historical context, the theoretical and methodological framework applied to the corpus is presented. The construction of the corpus is then explained, and the research questions are addressed using a corpus-assisted methodology following Partington (2004, 2010, 2015), focusing on the most frequently occurring lexical items (words and phraseology) that express genocidal violence against the Armenians.

## *2. The Armenian Genocide*

Preceded by the disarming of the Armenian soldiers of the Ottoman army serving in World War I at the end of January 1915, the systematic deportation and massacre of the Armenian population and other Christian minorities across the Ottoman Empire was formally initiated on the night of 24th April. While male Armenians were caught and executed almost immediately, women, children, and elderly people were forced into marches towards Aleppo and the Syr-

ian and Mesopotamian deserts that anticipated the infamous death marches along which many survivors of German concentration camps were killed in the very last days of the Third Reich (Rafter 2016; Dadrian 2003). While marching to the desert, the deportees were prey to violence from escorting soldiers of the Turkish army, from nomads and irregular troops, left starving and with no water supply. Civilians were prevented from helping the deportees at the cost of their lives (Üngör 2012).

The massacres, which started in 1915 and lasted well into 1923 (Dadrian 2003), were not isolated episodes. The so-called Hamidian massacres in 1895-96 and further massacres of Armenian civilians in the years before 1915 were committed in the name of maintaining the existing balance in the Ottoman Empire and to discourage ethnic and religious minorities from their nationalistic claims. By 1914, Turkish ultra-nationalistic movements had spread and achieved a permanent position, igniting a nationalistic trend among most of the Turkish inhabitants of the Empire. The ‘Turkification’ of the Empire seemed necessary to prevent alleged treason while fighting against enemies in World War I. The disaster of the Caucasian campaign in December 1914 was justified by the supposed treason of the Armenian soldiers, who, from then on, were disarmed. Accused of treason and considered a threat to the political unity and national security, the conditions of the Armenians rapidly deteriorated. This paved the way for the resolution to annihilate the Armenian minority and to the mass killings that ultimately turned into genocide (Steel 2021).

Detailed accounts of the violence and the sufferings inflicted on the deported Armenians were provided by high-profile Armenians living abroad, and by international citizens residing in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the massacres, among whom Henry Morgenthau, the United States Ambassador in Constantinople (Üngör 2012). Many of their accounts appeared in quality newspapers, such as *The Times*, to stir the conscience of the readers and call for interventions to stop the violence occurring in plain sight of the international community (Chabot et al. 2016). However, which linguistic strategies were used to discuss and denounce events that, in hindsight, required a new word as the existing ones were no longer enough to convey their atrocity? The next section will discuss why letters to the editor are significant for news discourse analysis and the studies on linguistic strategies used to talk about the Armenian genocide.

### 3. *LTE and News Discourse*

LTE have had a fundamental role in newspapers since the onset of the printed press (Facchinetti et al. 2015). Originally viewed as a privileged space for selected voices to comment/share their views on topics made relevant in the news, they have been recognized as a genre of news discourse in view of their own specific features. (Cavanagh and Steel 2019). Especially in broadsheet newspapers such as *The Times*, high-profile contributors could either respond to a specific matter or initiate a new conversation on a topic selected for its public significance (Brownlees et al. 2010).

LTE generate a guided debate with contents published by the newspaper (news reports or editorials), reinforcing the editorial line of the newspapers and guiding the reading public towards a specific reaction (Cavanagh and Steel 2019). Sometimes, they undergo an editorial process that alters the authorial voice (Ibid.). LTE published in broadsheet newspapers often discuss current matters of international politics through their actual protagonists, thus making LTE newsworthy and timely (Ibid.). Indeed, in her study on LTE, Wahl-Jorgensen (2002) identifies as selection criteria for LTE not only their newsworthiness and timeliness but also their relevance and/or potential for entertaining the audience targeted by the newspaper.

LTE have been studied for their sociological, historical and political significance within the news discourse (e.g. Richardson and Franklin 2004; Nielsen 2008; Torres Da Silva 2012; Cavanagh and Steel 2019), but, as already mentioned, rarely have they been the target of linguists, apart from Martini. Significant exceptions are Pounds (2005, 2006), Landert and Jucker (2011), Romova and Hetet (2012), Chovanec (2012), Sturiale (2018). Particularly relevant for the LEAQ corpus are Pounds (2005, 2006) and Chovanec (2012). Both articles demonstrate how LTE express democratic participation and public engagement of external voicing in both early and recent news discourse; moreover, Pounds (2005, 2006) focuses on how evaluative language is used to voice criticism and appeal for action.

Evaluative words and phraseology relate to those lexico-grammatical occurrences whereby the speaker/writer's opinions are conveyed, reflecting their value systems and those of their community, constructing relationships between speakers and readers, and helping to organise texts (Hunston and Thompson 2000). Evaluative meanings can be either implicit or explicit (Partington et al. 2013; Partington and Marchi 2015) and operate at a word or phraseological level;

phraseology, according to Hunston (2011, 5) “describes the general tendency of words, and groups of words, to occur more frequently in some environments than in others”. Directly connected to the concept of phraseology as words that tend to co-occur together in similar co-texts is the concept of evaluative prosody (Partington et al. 2013), whereby the evaluative meaning is conveyed through larger textual environments.

The connection between the language of evaluation and its use in news discourse to achieve newsworthiness in hard news has been described, among others, by Bednarek (2010) and Bednarek and Caple (2019). In the latter, Bednarek and Caple describe the most frequent news values and evaluative parameters used to make events newsworthy. The news values according to which events are considered news, i.e., that make events newsworthy, are negativity, timeliness, proximity, prominence, consonance, impact, novelty, superlativeness, personalization. The evaluative parameters are “the standards, norms and values according to which we evaluate something through language” (Bednarek and Caple 2019, 171). The authors outlined a list of the more recurrent ones according to their findings: un/importance, in/comprehensibility, im/possibility or in/ability, un/necessity, emotive, un/genuineness or in/authenticity, reliability, un/expectedness, evidentiality, mental state. Their theoretical framework is applicable to LTE as well, since LTE are selected according to newsworthiness, timeliness, relevance, and entertainment (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002), overlapping the news values identified by Bednarek and Caple in their 2019 study.

In the present study, LTE are analysed through a corpus-driven (Tognini-Bonelli 2001) and a corpus-assisted (Partington 2004) approach. Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) are particularly useful when an in-depth study of some portion of discourse is needed to investigate non-obvious meanings (Partington 2004, Partington et al. 2013). Such is the case of this study, where the word genocide is invariably missing because it was still to be coined, and reference to its meaning is to be retrieved from other lexical material.

#### 4. *The LEAQ Corpus*

The LEAQ corpus includes 186 letters to the editor of The Times, selected from *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* digital online archive using the search words *Armenia* and *Armenian*, the latter including results for *Armenians* as

well. The online archive hosts the complete collection of the articles published from 1785 and 1985, and complies with the criteria of completeness for corpus building (Hunston 2002). As mentioned before, letters were selected from 1914 to 1926 to investigate mentions of the genocide while unfolding and after its alleged completion in 1923 (Dadrian 2003), and to see whether some related events had made the news before 1915. The LEAQ corpus differs from the collection of LTE published by Peltekian (2013) because, while limited to The Times only, it is not limited to LTE specifically dealing with the Armenian genocide, but it covers all mentions of the Armenian events.

There are around 120,000 tokens in the LEAQ corpus. The corpus was processed with WordSmith Tools v.8.0 (Scott 2020), and its word list was compared with the written part of the BNC XML Edition corpus (2007), a 100-million-word collection of samples of written and spoken language that also includes extracts from regional and national newspapers. The keywords of LEAQ were obtained by comparing the frequency of each word in the LEAQ corpus wordlist with the frequency of the same words in the wordlist of the reference corpus. Keywords in a corpus are those words that are unusually frequent compared to their frequency in the reference corpus (Scott 2020). Keywords in LEAQ are mostly nouns and adjectives of nationality and place names. Table 1 shows the first most frequent keywords by their ranking position on a 500 keyness scale.

KEYWORD	FREQ.	%	TEXTS	RC. FREQ.	P
Turkish	398	0,34	110	1.408	0,000000
Turks	271	0,23	100	463	0,000000
Armenians	227	0,19	102	95	0,000000
Armenian	247	0,21	108	258	0,000000
Turkey	266	0,23	90	2.014	0,000000
Contsantinople	166	0,14	62	249	0,000000
Armenia	141	0,12	75	322	0,000000
Greeks	145	0,12	53	694	0,000000
cannot	88	0,07	67	7	0,000000
editor	197	0,17	183	3.826	0,000000
Smyrna	89	0,08	30	32	0,000000
massacres	98	0,08	44	93	0,000000

Table 1. LEAQ keywords.

Keywords are shown in the first column; their frequency in the source texts of LEAQ is shown in the second column; the percentage of the frequency in the third; the fourth indicates the number of texts in which each keyword occurred in LEAQ; the fifth, its frequency in the reference corpus (the written section of the BNC XML Edition corpus); and in the last column, the p-value referring to the keyness value of the items under consideration.

LEAQ keywords are all related to the specific nationalities involved in the Armenian question between 1914-1926. Knowing the context of the events, these keywords alone tell the story of the genocide of the Christian minorities in Turkey (Armenians and Greeks), the former place names of the cities where the main events happened (Constantinople, where the arrests and killings began, and Smyrna, where its Armenian and Greek areas were burnt down, and where the Armenian deportees were gathered before making them head towards the desert). *Editor* is related to the text type (LTE) since each LTE of *The Times* starts by addressing the Editor, while *massacres* is the most recurrent word used to describe the violent events.

Apart from the last keyword (*massacres*), the other keywords are apparently not related to the semantic area of genocidal violence. For an analysis of collocations and clusters of the adjectives and nouns of nationality see Martini (2022). It would be interesting, however, to expand the analysis presented here and examine their collocations and clusters of city nouns as well. Studying the keyword list further, many words directly or indirectly expressing meaning related to genocidal events or meanings were found in the corpus. The analysis of their collocates and clusters of the keyword *massacres* discussed in Section 5 tries to understand the linguistic strategies used to speak about the Armenian Genocide before the word existed.

### 5. *Data Analysis*

A quantitative and qualitative analysis was conducted on corpus data. The first quantitative examination followed a corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli 2001) and was applied to the keyword (*massacres*) to obtain its collocates and clusters. Recurring words expressing the semantic area now covered by the word *genocide* (Lemkin 1944) were then retrieved from the corpus keyword list obtained with WordSmith tools v8.0 (Smith 2020).



The findings of the quantitative analysis show two different sets of results, both construing the news value of negativity. The first set of results, quantitatively more significant, makes explicit reference to the genocide, while the second set, less frequently occurring, makes implicit reference to the genocide. As for the first results, a first subset of nouns expressing negative vocabulary (Bednarek and Caple 2019, 60), or “disaster vocabulary” (Ungerer 1997, 315) was retrieved: *massacres* (98x), *massacre* (47x), *atrocities* (32x), *deportations* (22x), *extermination* (15x), *sufferings* (17x), *horrors* (20x), *destruction* (26x), *victims* (24x), *crimes* (18x), *cruelty* (13x), *oppression* (12x), *injustice* (11x), *minority* (22x)/*minorities* (32x), *sacrifice* (11x). Negative vocabulary construes the news value of negativity (Bednarek and Caple 2019), the most frequent news value through which news stories are selected (Partington 2015). Negatively connoted vocabulary refrains from directly conveying the opinion of the author until the co-text is examined. Negative evaluative adjectives occur frequently too, including participial adjectives (Biber 1999, 530), and refer to the condition of the victims and what they had to undergo: *massacred* (28x), *deported* (18x), *terrible* (24x), *brutal* (12x), *suffered* (24x), *horrible* (10x), *homeless* (10x). The second subset of results is construed by the negative vocabulary that makes implicit reference to the genocide, and that refers to political activities – *misrule* (15x), *propaganda* (33x), *tyranny* (17x), *domination* (19x) – and to evaluative participial adjectives *perpetrated* (17x), *appalling* (14x). A further subset includes general expressions that refer to the genocide only when examined in their co-text: *facts* (43x), *events* (29x).

Following Partington (2004, 2015), a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the concordances of the noun *massacres* was made, as it is the most frequent in the corpus with 98 occurrences and the first occurring keyword expressing genocidal violence. The qualitative analysis was conducted by applying discourse analysis to the most frequent key lexical items. Explicit and implicit references all express evaluative meaning in their simple word form, or in their phraseology, and, according to the parameters of evaluation already mentioned above (Bednarek and Caple 2019), they can be interpreted through the parameter of negative emotivity. This relates to the features of the commentator’s voice (judgement, affect, appreciation), which is typical of LTE and used to either positively or negatively condemn or praise (Martin and White 2005).

### 5.1 *Massacres*

The examination of the concordances of *massacres* shows that the noun is more frequently pre-modified by the definite article *the* (21 occurrences in L<sub>2</sub>, 19 in L<sub>1</sub> collocates) and by the coordinating conjunction *and* (10 occurrences in L<sub>1</sub>). The node is also frequently post-modified by the definite article *the* (13 occurrences in R<sub>2</sub>), and by the coordinating conjunction *and* (12 occurrences in R<sub>1</sub>). Therefore, it can be said that *massacres* is pre-modified and post-modified by the definite article *the* and by the coordinating conjunction *and* in LEAQ according to a total of five different grammatical patterns:

- L<sub>1</sub> definite article (*the*) + *massacres*
- L<sub>2</sub> definite article (*the*) + *massacres*
- *massacres* + R<sub>2</sub> definite article (*the*)
- L<sub>1</sub> coordinate conjunction (*and*) + *massacres*
- *massacres* + R<sub>1</sub> coordinate conjunction (*and*)

As reported by Biber et al. (1999, 69), the definite article “marks the noun as referring to something or someone assumed to be known to speaker and addressee”. In the LEAQ corpus, this implies an assumed shared knowledge of the topic in the minds of the writers of the letters, of the editor and of the readers of *The Times* in those years. Upon closer examination of the concordance lines, further considerations can be made.

#### 5.1.1 L<sub>1</sub> *Definite Article (the) + massacres*

The pattern L<sub>1</sub> *the + massacres* shows a variety of collocates, both pre- and post-modifying it. Pre-modifying collocates are mostly active verbs (*condemned, organized, stop, escaped, approved of, escaped*), while post-modifying collocates are two recurrent PP: preposition + place name (*in Cilicia*), shown in Table 2; ‘preposition + year’ (*of 1915*), shown in Table 3. They both rely on the news value parameters of proximity and timeliness. Table 2 shows concordances for the cluster *the + massacres + in + Cilicia*:

India had not, as far as I knew, condemned	<b>the massacres</b>	<i>in Cilicia</i> . It was not to those very recent
uttered a word of condemnation regarding	<b>the “massacres</b>	<i>in Cilicia.</i> ” The statement is misleading and
es. Yours faithfully, March 8. AMEER ALI.	<b>THE MASSACRES</b>	<b>IN CILICIA</b>

Table 2. Concordances for the collocate *the + massacres*.

Of the three occurrences, one is the title of the LTE; the other two occurrences both appear in end-position, preceded by the evaluative lexical items *condemned* and *condemnation*. The second and third occurrences appear in the letter written by Ameer Ali, published on 10th March 1920, while the first one is in the letter published on the following day and written by Lord Bryce, from whose speech Ameer Ali takes the cue for his letter. It is not within the scope of this paper to comment on the historical and socio-political context and its prominent figures; therefore, only the names of the letter writers will be mentioned here, leaving further analysis to specialists in the fields of the historical and social contexts of the British Empire. Suffice it to say, however, that both Ameer Ali and Lord Bryce were prominent politicians of the time. It should be noted that in the second occurrence, the NP is inserted in inverted commas, which is usually the case when something must be highlighted for varied reasons. The reason for this specific choice can be envisaged when providing its related co-textual environment in example (1).

- (1) Among other inflammatory remarks, he is reported to have said that the Mahomedans of India had not uttered a word of condemnation regarding the **“massacres in Cilicia.”** The statement is *misleading* and reprehensibly inexact. The Mahomedans of India are as *horrified* at the reports as anyone else here or elsewhere, and they hold that if there has been *deliberate butchery* of innocent people, *no* punishment can be *too severe* for the culprits. But they demand that there should be an *impartial* investigation by an *impartial* Allied Commission into these *horrors*, and its report should be published so that they, along with their British fellow-subjects, may know the true facts from the beginning.

Here, the view from the Indian Muslim (*Mahomedan*) community is provided, which tries to defend itself from the accusations of not having *uttered a*

*word of condemnation* on the massacres by retaliating with the need for an impartial investigation of the facts *from the beginning*, implicitly claiming that the events that led to the alleged massacres should be put in a wider context, and ultimately doubting their shared representation. The inverted commas used to highlight the NP could signify *so-called*, which implies a strategy of detachment from the official representation of the treatment of the Armenians. This diminishes the lexical choice of referring to the violent events with *massacres*, conveying the stance that the use of *massacres* is exaggerating the extent of the events. This claim for accuracy is accompanied by emotive evaluative language (*horrified, deliberate butchery, horrors*). As far as the place name Cilicia is concerned, it is worth remarking that it refers to what now corresponds to the present-day province of Adana, Turkey, where, in 1909, one of the most extensive massacres of Armenians was conducted (Chabot et al. 2016), anticipating the genocide.

As far as post-modifying collocates of LI definite article (*the*) + *massacres* are concerned, Table 3 shows concordances for the cluster *the* + *massacres* + *of* + (*year*), which rely on the news value parameter of timeliness:

in Asiatic' Turkey did their utmost to stop	<b>the massacres of</b>	1915 and to save and relieve the victim
450 years. I was there a few months after	<b>the massacres of</b>	1895 and again very soon after those of
vilayets in which the Armenians were before	<b>the massacres of</b>	1915 the largest single element in the
of the Armenian people as has survived from	<b>the massacres of</b>	1915. I will not dwell on the political
against the persons most concerned in	<b>the massacres of</b>	1915, as the accomplices of Enver and T
their enemies of the refugees who escaped	<b>the massacres of</b>	1915, and whom the charity of England

Table 3. Concordances for the cluster *the* + *massacres* + *of*.

These concordance lines show mentions of the victims of the genocide through nouns and adjectives of nationality (*Armenians, the Armenian people*); through general nouns connected to the persecutions of the genocide (*victims, refugees*); and through lexical verbs (*stop, save, relieve; sur-*

*vived, escaped*) related to the genocide. However, this is indicative of the choice to use some recurrent fixed expressions, such as ‘*the massacres in + place name*’ and ‘*the massacres of + year*’, to mention the genocide. These are understated shared references made by either using the definite article alone, or the location of the massacres, or the year when they started, while the explicit mention of the victims is relegated to further co-textual reference, as in example (2):

- (2) If so, that means that the greater part of the *Armenian vilayets* in which the *Armenians* were before **the massacres of 1915** *the largest single element in the population*, may still be left under the heel of the Turks.

Example (2) shows how the implicit reference to the Armenian genocide made through the cluster ‘the massacres of + year’ (*the massacres of 1915*) is made explicit with the left-collocates *Armenian vilayets* and *Armenians* referring to the national identity of the victims, and with a general right collocate (*element*) that anaphorically connects with the words of nationality. A conclusive evolutive PP (*under the heel of the Turks*) adds the stance of the writer as to the role of the perpetrators and the quality of their rule. In the PP ‘*under the heel of + noun*’, the noun refers to the entity exercising domination or control over another entity; figuratively, it makes clear reference to how that domination is exerted to crush their recipients.

Despite co-textual evaluative language, the node *massacre* is deprived of a fundamental piece of information because there is no explicit mention of who are the victims of the massacres in its immediate proximity, leaving to the reader the construction of explicit meaning.

Only one occurrence shows *the + massacres* post-modified by the NP of the Armenians, and its co-text is provided in Example (3), taken from a letter written by T. J. Bennet, a member of the House of Commons, as stated in the LTE, and published on 24th February 1920:

- (3) He [the Viceroy] might at least have protested against a plea for recognising “the essential humanity of the Turks.” If the framers of this grotesque phrase in the address had forgotten **the massacres of the Armenians** in the *glorious* days of Abdul Haamid, and the *even greater holocausts* under the reign of Enver and Talaat, the Viceroy had an opportunity of reminding them of these examples of “the essential humanity of the Turks,” which he might usefully and most properly have turned to account.

Dealing with historical texts makes it impossible to ascertain authorial linguistic choices; however, this single explicit occurrence seems to confirm the tendency to implicit reference detected so far. In this case, the explicit reference is used to criticise the lack of responses to the plea mentioned in example (3) and to make an unmistakable reference to the atrocities. It is also worth noticing that, in this same excerpt, the word *holocausts* is used, which, after 1945, will be commonly used to refer to the genocide of Jews across Europe. It should also be noted that when relying on L1 *the + massacres* alone, the readers are implicitly asked to remember to which massacres the letter is referring; in addition, limiting the massacres to 1915 is historically inaccurate, as it makes reference to the outburst of violence only, which instead lasted at least until 1923 (Dadrian 2003).

#### 5.1.2 L2 *Definite Article (the) + massacres*

A counterpoint to what has been suggested so far can be made when analysing the words pre-modifying the node in the L2 *the + massacres* pattern. They are mostly adjectives of geo-political entities (*Armenian, Greek, Turkish, Cilician*), which are consistent with the events commented on in the letters. Both Armenians and Greeks were the Christian minorities targeted by the Turks. Other pre-modifiers are negatively evaluative adjectives (*appalling, shocking*) in line with the evaluative parameter of negative emotivity (Bednarek and Caple 2019); attributive adjectives (*great*); and one city name (*Van*), which refers to one of the massacres occurred in a city formerly predominantly Armenian.

Moving on to a closer examination of the pattern L2 *the + massacres*, the understated familiarity of the readers with the topic is reinforced by the frequent use of the adjective *Armenian* as left-modifier of the node, which signals its status of a 'given' information inside the NP (Biber et al. 1999). Table 4 shows concordances for the most recurrent cluster *the + Armenian + massacres*:

head." The attitude of Germany towards	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	of the present day, as expressed by
CHIROL. 34, Carlyle-square, Chelsea, S.W., Oct. 7,	<b>THE ARMENIAN MASSACRES.</b>	
if not the encouragement, of	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	is an apt illustration, and unless the
history would apportion the blame for	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	between Turk, German, and Kurd."
visit to Jerusalem-I allude to	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	perpetrated by the Turkish soldiers,
No one can read the accounts of	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	, and the treatment also of Greek
urged by the Turks in justification of	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	. In this connexion two remarks made
1822, the Bulgarian massacres of 1876,	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	of 1894-6, and the still more awful
the most flagrant. It is on account of	<b>the Armenian massacres</b>	that the Turks are being judged and

Table 4. Concordances for the cluster *the + Armenian + massacres*.

These occurrences would disprove the claim that readers were deprived of the reference to the victims of the massacre, but it should be noted that *Armenian* is mentioned as pre-modifier of *massacres* only 9 times out of 98 mentions in the entire LEAQ corpus. As example (4) shows, the cluster *the + Armenian + massacres* recurrently collocates with negatively evaluative language in its extended co-text:

- (4) No one can read the accounts of **the Armenian massacres**, and the treatment also of Greek colonists, without feeling that if these men who directed these proceedings of *utter and shameless ruthlessness and brutality* are allowed to *escape the consequence of their crime* then *justice is defeated and right flouted*.

The three negative evaluative phrases – *utter and shameless ruthlessness and brutality*; *escape the consequence of their crime*; *justice is defeated and right flouted* – are in line with the evaluative parameter of negative emotivity and the news value of negativity (Bednarek and Caple 2019), and at the same time they express negative social judgement directed at the perpetrators of the massacres.

However, an ambiguous connotation can be noticed when comparing adjectives of nationality occurring in LI. If the first most frequent adjective is *Armenian*, the second most frequent adjective is *Turkish*, as shown in Table 5.

by the Greeks in retaliation for	<b>Turkish massacres</b>	is as the dust in the balances compared
children who have escaped from the	<b>Turkish massacres</b>	In the interior regions not occupied by All
<i>amazement</i> and <i>horror</i> upon the	<b>Turkish massacres</b>	of recent years, beginning 1805, followed
refugees and <i>orphans</i> -the remnants of the	<b>Turkish massacres</b>	. In The Times to-day an “ Ex-Political
in his attempts to extenuate that	<b>Turkish massacres</b>	<i>of the Armenians</i> by two counterclaims-

Table 5. Concordances for the collocate Turkish + massacres.

Victims and perpetrators occupy the same position, pre-modifying the same referent (*massacres*). Following Radden and Dirven’s (2007) cognitive approach to grammar, pre-nominal adjectives are associated with permanent and characteristic properties. This is particularly valid for denominal adjectives, which are non-gradable adjectives relating to the referent by being its characterizing property, such as the case of the adjectives of nationality. Also, pre-nominal adjectives provide restrictive qualification to the referent, which varies according to the referent itself. But in Tables 4 and 5, it is the qualifying adjective that changes (*Armenian* in Table 4, *Turkish* in Table 5), while the referent remains the same (*massacres*). Readers are therefore required to perform an additional interpretative action and discern what is the function assigned in each of the two qualifications, as one pertains to the meaning of ‘the massacres of the Armenians’, while the other to ‘the massacres by the Turks’. This disambiguation can be performed only if the phrases are read in their co-texts, and with previous knowledge of the events because if read outside of them, those same meanings can be switched. Example (5) shows how this disambiguation is made possible with reference to co-textual references:

- (5) From *Syria* and *Cilicia* in the south, from *Erivan* and *Urumia* in the north, from *Ismid* and *Constantinople* in the west, there comes the same tale of *famine* and *disease*, and the



want of clothing for the *hapless and homeless* women and children who have escaped *from the Turkish massacres*.

The example presents initial geographical references (*Syria, Cilicia, Erivan, Urumia, Ismid, Constantinople*), which locate the massacres and allow one to understand their scale. Then, evaluative language is used to describe the conditions of survivors (*famine and disease, hapless and homeless women and children*). All lexical items in these phrases are connected with the coordinator, thus accumulating the evaluative stance towards the final position of the sentence, occupied by the node (*massacres*) in the very last position and by its left-modifying collocate PP (*from the Turkish*). The syntactic organisation of the sentence and the ascending climax of emotive negative language contributes to the disambiguation of the collocation of the Turkish massacres and clarifies that, in this occurrence, the pre-nominal adjective left-modifying the nodes refer to the massacres *by* the Turks.

### 5.1.3 Massacres + R2 Definite Article (the)

Examining the concordance lines of *massacres + R2 definite article (the)*, *massacres* right-collocates with *and*, *of*, *that* and *as*. A cluster given by WordSmith Tools v.8.0 is *massacres + of + the*. Examples are shown in Table 6.

attitude of Germany towards the <i>Armenian</i>	<b>massacres of the</b>	present day, as expressed by Count
Albigenses, Bartholomew's Eve, the	<b>massacres of the</b>	Vosges ("Avenge, o Lord! our slaughtered
German inspiration decreed the <i>shocking</i>	<b>massacres of the</b>	Armenian people of which the whole
phrase in the address had forgotten the	<b>massacres of the</b>	<i>Armenians</i> in the glorious days of Abdul
land be compared with <i>Turkish</i> mass	<b>massacres of the</b>	character of which Western nation have
in his attempts to extenuate that Turkish	<b>massacres of the</b>	<i>Armenians</i> by two countercalims-first
of the Near East from the <i>cruelties</i> and	<b>massacres of the</b>	<i>brutal, fanatical</i> Turks. The Secretary of

Table 6. Concordances for the cluster *massacres + of + the*.

In this case, the definite article *the* introduced a specification, and the roles of victims and perpetrators are clearly expressed, particularly when co-textual environment is provided. The Armenians are massacred by the Turks, and negative evaluative language collocates with the node (*shocking, cruelties, brutal, fanatical*). Even the concordance line where no explicit reference to the Armenians is made, when expanded, clearly refers to a negative judgement of the genocide attributed to the Turks, as the example (6) shows:

- (6) The *policy pursued in Armenia* has been as *ruthless* as anything that men have done for several hundred years, including the *persecution of the Albigenses, Bartholomew's Eve, the massacres of the Vosges* ("Avenge, O Lord! our slaughtered saints"), *Cromwell in Ireland, pogroms of Jews, &c.*

The genocide is listed among other mass exterminations perpetrated on minorities throughout history and defined with a clearly negative evaluative adjective (*ruthless*). Therefore, the analysis of the definite article *the* as collocate of *massacres* shows that it refers to a decreasing degree of semantic ambiguity according to its position as either L<sub>1</sub>, L<sub>2</sub>, or R<sub>2</sub> collocate. The attribution of the massacres is openly stated more frequently when it occurs in the R<sub>2</sub> position when post-modifying the node and adding information to it. On the contrary, both in L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>, it requires a further interpretive leap on the part of the readers because it refers to supposed shared knowledge and eliminates reference to the victims.

#### 5.1.4 L<sub>1</sub> Coordinate Conjunction (and) + massacres

The results of the quantitative analysis show that the coordinating conjunction *and* is the second most frequent collocate of *massacres*. In view of its grammatical role, *and* links elements which have the same syntactic role and share the same level of syntactic hierarchy, therefore establishing a relation of equivalence between the two units coordinated by *and* (Biber et al. 1999). The collocational pattern *and* + *massacres*, with *and* left-collocating the node in L<sub>1</sub>, is mentioned 10 times in the LEAQ corpus, as shown in Table 7.

untry minimizes or palliates the <i>outrages</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	committed by the Turks, or if it agrees to a
f feats of arms on the part of the Greeks	<b>and massacres</b>	and <i>treachery</i> on the part of the Turks. It w
he most careful observes that the <i>looting</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	of Smyrna would have already been repeated i
d the truth about the Samsun <i>deportations</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	, but neither of them was dismissed by the
ut the power to continue the <i>persecutions</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	of Christians in the Near East, the Christia
tians of the Near East from the <i>cruelties</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	of the brutal, fanatical Turks. The Secretar
he prohibition of <i>outrages</i> , <i>deportations</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	and the maintenance of a government based
ested, to demand that <i>burnings</i> , <i>outrages</i> ,	<b>and massacres</b>	cease, and thus effectively prevent a probab
have greatly minimized, the <i>Smyrna fires</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	. I believe Almighty God will hold the United
ans made by previous Turkish <i>deportations</i>	<b>and massacres</b>	, and of the multiplied thousands of helpless

Table 7. Concordances for the collocate *and + massacres*.

The coordinator here connects left-collocating words explicitly related to genocidal violence (*outrages* 3x, *looting*, *deportations* 3x, *persecutions*, *cruelties*, *burnings*, *fires*) in a list of actions that accompany the climax of the genocide. Only one instance of these concordance lines seems to escape the pattern, as reported in example (7).

- (7) The Greeks are, of course, only too anxious to avail themselves of this opportunity to revenge themselves on their old antagonists in their present crippled condition, and we shall hear communiqués of feats of arms on the part of the *Greeks* **and massacres and treachery on the part of the Turks**. It will soon be forgotten that the *Greeks* and *Armenians* have been of their own choice living quietly with and making money out of their Moslem neighbours for years.

Example (7) shows how the collocation *and massacres* operates as right-collocation, right-coordinating *massacres* with *treachery*, and specifying on which part massacres are attributed, with a PP qualifying the two coordinate NPs (*on the part of the Turks*).

5.1.5 massacres + *R<sub>I</sub> Coordinate Conjunction (and)*

Data show that the collocation *massacres + and*, therefore with the coordinator in *R<sub>I</sub>* position, is the most frequent one with twelve occurrences; however, only seven are actual coordination of NPs, following the pattern ‘*massacre + and + NP*’ and shown in Table 8:

adopting sterner remonstrances to stop these	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>deportations</i> , the Greeks evinced, during
this refers to the population since the great	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>deportations</i> it is, I venture to say,
in the field to the greater losses through	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>deportations</i> , we find that over. a milli
by the influx of Armenians who escaped the	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>deportations</i> of the war, and, being
They see no reason for expecting that such	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>barbarities</i> will not again occur if the
no such horrible episode as this. The great	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>persecutions</i> of the past seem almost
the field to the greater losses through	<b>massacres and</b>	<i>treachery</i> on the part of the Turks. It

Table 8. Concordances for the collocates *massacres + and*.

The right-collocation of the coordinator replicates the syntactic hierarchy highlighted in Table 8, connecting words related to genocidal actions (*deportations*, 4x, *barbarities*, *persecutions*) and the despicable political action of *treachery* already mentioned above. Therefore, the coordinator *and* collocates with *massacres* to reinforce its implications with other NPs of similar meaning, explicitly conveying to the readers the extent of the actions perpetrated against the Armenians.

So far, the most frequent collocates of the node *massacres*, i.e., *the* and *and*, have been examined in their most recurrent positions on the left or on the right of the node. At the same time, the definite article seems to add ambiguity when used in a specific position (*L<sub>1</sub>* or *L<sub>2</sub>*, due to the adjectives of nationality *Armenian* and *Turkish* used interchangeably in the same position), the coordinator adds clarity by linking the node with more examples of the violence perpetrated against the victims, in both its *L<sub>1</sub>* and *R<sub>I</sub>* collocation.

## 6. Final Remarks

The analysis of the most recurrent term to indicate genocidal violence in LEAQ (*massacres*) highlights both explicit and implicit linguistic strategies in the representation of the Armenian genocide. In particular, ‘direct’ lexical strategies using the evaluative parameter of negative emotivity combine with ‘indirect’ lexical strategies using the news value of timeliness and mentions of place names, and in some occurrences of the definite article *the*.

A frequent linguistic strategy involves making implicit reference to the victims of the genocide, which affects the representation (Partington 2015) of the genocide itself to the readers and its reception. Could depriving readers of the immediate reference to the victims have contributed to the oblivion of the Armenian genocide? Indeed, more data are needed to answer this question, but this might be considered a legitimate doubt.

Focusing on the most recurrent clusters of the node *massacres* allowed me to concentrate on frequent grammatical patterns constructed using the definite article *the* and the coordinator *and*. The analysis conducted so far proved that both grammar words permitted the identification of the linguistic strategies used when referring to the genocide before the words itself was coined. *Massacres*, *massacre* and *massacred* represent the most frequent words used to refer to genocidal events, and the analysis of the grammatical patterns in recurrent clusters of the most frequent of them (*massacres*) in their extended co-texts shows how meaning was constructed around the clusters.

Negatively connoted evaluative language (adjectives, nouns, verbs) pertaining to the news value parameter of emotivity (Bednarek and Caple 2019) frequently occurs in extended co-textual references to reinforce the node (*massacres*), as if the word *massacres* itself was no longer enough to convey the scale of the atrocities. The frequent coordination of genocide words (*horrors*, *atrocities*, *violence*, etc.) with *massacres* through the connector *and* constructs recurrent lexical bundles that emphasise the news values used for the representation (negative emotivity) and that, at the same time, make explicit the extent of the violence.

However, the results of the analysis highlighted strategies that, to a certain extent, seem to blur the focus on the events and lessen their impact, possibly contributing to lower the status of the massacres, and, indirectly and most likely unintentionally, to reinforce the Turkish claims denying the Armenian genocide. Particularly frequent in clusters when *massacres* collocates with

the definite article *the*, recurrent expressions are used to mention the genocide without mentioning the victims, thus making indirect shared references to a supposedly shared knowledge of the events. This implicit strategy is implemented by either using the definite article alone (*the massacres*) to refer implicitly to the massacres of the Armenians, or by specifying only the location of the massacres through PP (*the massacres in Cilicia*) or by indicating the year (*the massacres of 1915*). The latter also creates a misleading reference, as the massacres were not limited to 1915 (Dadrian 2003).

A further semantic ambiguity is also detected in the adjective of nationality pre-modifying the collocate L2 *the + massacres*. As discussed, in *the Armenian massacres* and in *the Turkish massacres* victims and perpetrators occupy the same position pre-modifying the same referent (*massacres*). Pre-nominal adjectives provide restrictive qualification of the referent (*massacres*); here, they are adjectives of nationality referring to either the victims or the perpetrators and carry an opposing meaning within the dynamics of the genocide. Disambiguation is, however, made possible through the analysis of the extended co-textual environment, which shows a recurrent evaluative prosody of condemnation of the events through negative emotional phraseology, thanks to the frequent use of negative evaluative language.

As it is not possible to know if the linguistic strategies were intentional, we are left with pure speculation based on the combination of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of corpus results. More research on other frequently occurring nouns referring to genocidal violence (e.g., *atrocities, deportations*) in the LEAQ corpus is likely to provide further elements contributing to the analysis conducted so far, to establish the linguistic strategies used to refer to genocide before the word was used for the first time. An examination of the socio-political implications and context also exceeds the scope of this linguistic analysis, which could nonetheless provide data for further examinations of the LEAQ corpus.

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