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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate current trends in the representation of LGBT people within the speeches of British and Italian PMs. Considered the formulaic nature of PMs' institutional interventions and their social resonance, the objective is to investigate how LGBT* people are discursively presented in the institutional discourse of two traditionally androcentric and patriarchal contexts, with an eye on similarities and differences in the two discursive productions. Starting from a multi-disciplinary approach which strengthens up in the framework of Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Studies, the linguistic choices and the discursive strategies used to convey a given representation of LGBT* people as social actors are uncovered. Subsequently, the study develops into a contrastive analysis focused on revealing emerging commonalities and differences between the two cases with the end of delivering a productive output where further discussion could be raised.*

Key words: *corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis; language, gender and sexuality; queer linguistics; Italian PM discourse; British PM discourse*

1. Introduction

Over the last decades the discussion on gender and sexuality has caught the attention of the public sphere to such a degree that since the 1990s lexical coinages and new acquisitions have appeared respectively in the English and in the Italian language. In particular, among these the most popular one is the acronym LGBT, an initialism originally standing for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. With the discussion getting into more complex and yet promising terms, and with the raise of Queer Theory deconstructing strict gender and sexual categorizations (Butler 1990; Livia and Hall 1997; Campbell-Kibler et al. 2002), the acronym has undergone a process of extension and shortening ranging from the reader-unfriendliness of LGBTQI+ or even longer variants¹ to the more reconcilable version LGBT* with the asterisk as an inclusive expedient accounting both for the various non-aligned and yet not entirely recognized identities and behaviours².

The cross-linguistic investigation of this study is motivated by the stigmatization of LGBT* people, broadly affecting Western societies to a greater or lesser degree (Gray 2016). In particular, the Italian and the British

cases are investigated for the two countries share resistive patriarchal and androcentric values (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 2004; Zanola 2014) that, despite gradual and overt inclusive moves, still remain an issue for a real integration. Due to the vast implications stemming from institutional and social recognition of LGBT* identities and tendencies, a high quantity of studies tackles with aspects concerning LGBT* people. Among these, labour economy (Martin 2006), sociology (Zanola 2014), psychology (McDermott et al. 2008) and medicine (Della Pelle et al. 2018) investigate the contemporary reception of LGBT* people and the general awareness on this status quo. The majority of these studies, due to the complex cultural aspects and the social resonance involved, explore issues regarding the LGBT* spectrum from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to grab the different socio-economic and cultural aspects at stake. In the same vein, studies more centred on a linguistic perspective analyse specific aspects such as UK parliamentary debate on age of consent (Baker 2004) and newspaper lexical choices to describe same-sex unions in Italy and in the UK (Vigo 2015). These studies prove its usefulness for a better understanding of the current state-of-the-art which has unsurprisingly revealed as LGBT* contexts appear to be problematic, though at different degrees and with various exceptions and distinctions. In both countries the tendency is to refer to matters around the LGBT* status as an 'issue', thus confirming the controversial and vulnerable situation of contemporary non-normative sexual and gender identities. This on the one hand aligns with recent reports conducted by NGOs and trans-European organizations (HRWF 2013) on discrimination perpetrated on the basis of sexual tendency³ or gendered behaviour, on the other hand it confirms the delay of academic discussions on this topic (Zanola 2014: 383) and the actual partial success in eradicating prejudice and stereotypes addressed to LGBT* people (Della Pelle *et al.* 2018: 1).

Despite more recent contributions from various viewpoints on discourses surrounding people who identify themselves in the acronym LGBT*, including on the one hand gay and lesbian self-representations (Jones 2018), on the other the way newspapers describe gay people (Rivera Santana et al. 2014) and transgender people (Zottola 2018), the focus of the analysis has not yet included any outsiders' perspectives such as that of institutional high-ranking state officials. Specifically, we refer here to a cross-linguistic analysis conducted on PM official speeches. That having said, while committing to enrich research on the given linguistic representations of LGBT* people, this study centres on a contrastive analysis of speeches uttered by PMs in the UK and in Italy. Unlike previous contributions, the type of discourse investigated here hovers between the discourse of institutions and political discourse. This kind of discourse does not entail interactional switch, meaning that the unidirectional level of communication prompts distinct outputs for the recipients, differently from events where speakers' alternation occurs.

Provided that a link exists between the language used by politicians and its re-elaboration within people's mind (Lakoff 2008) and considered also the interconnectedness between a specific use of language and the social practices it creates (Wodak 2009: 7), the way PMs present LGBT* people is crucial in endowing the audience with adequate lenses to interpret different social group. In order to explore such institutional representations a combination of

quantitative and qualitative methodology has been adopted to answer the following research questions:

- How are LGBT* people lexicalized and positioned in the institutional speech of each political leader?
- Which discursive devices are used to present LGBT* people as social actors?
- What are the similarities and differences in the discursive construal of LGBT* people in the two countries?

To this aim, Section 2 introduces the theoretical and contextual underpinnings of the study as well as the macro-contextual background of the two countries. Section 3 describes the methods and procedures, with this leading to a seamless implementation of qualitative and quantitative analysis. Section 4 presents the two separate analyses, while in Section 5 results obtained are summarized and contrastively examined.

2. Background

This section provides the theoretical framework; then an overview of the macro-contextual situation follows. This leads to the formulation of some context-driven hypotheses.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

Given the multiplicity of fluid identities and viewpoints encompassing LGBT* people, the theoretical roots of this study are unarguably cross-disciplinary. The major disciplines involved are Queer Linguistics (henceforth, QL), Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) and Corpus-Assisted Analysis; the last two ultimately converge into Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CACDA) whose methods have been pioneered by Baker *et al.* (2008).

As for QL, this relatively new branch of applied linguistics originates in an area of study where language, gender and sexuality intersect. Influenced by Foucault's (1976) post-structuralism on the discursive construction of gender and sexual dichotomies, Butler's (1990, 1993) studies have paved the way both for the theorization of QL and for the social dismantling of binary classifications like male/female, masculine/feminine, gay/straight. Motschenbacher (2010: 10) claims that

for Queer Linguistics all identity categories are problematic because they normatively regulate and exclude those who do not fully meet their normative requirements. This is true for the categories 'woman' and 'man', but just as well for 'lesbian' and 'gay', which are not treated as internally homogeneous.

Therefore, QL suits the present study in that it does not document linguistic and discursive aspects of fixed sexual categories (gay, lesbian, transgender); on the contrary, it tries to reconceptualise dominant discourses in light of an always-developing and fuzzy-bordered view whose ultimate aim is to

downplay heteronormative stances, i.e., dominant discourse-bound behaviour requiring everybody to align to their prescribed norms.

However, as noted by Baker (2008), when being against any given identity and categorization, one should be wary of potential misunderstanding given by the fluidity of Queer Theory. The same scholar suggests that QL can be conceived as an additional perspective aiding critical enquire not to remain anchored to a strict heteronormative model which regulates sexual and gendered identities via the normalized production of a discourse accepted as the only way possible.

At this point it can be argued that also social labelling like the acronym LGBT* falls within heteronormative classifications. Indeed, in a queering discussion, the acronym itself is challenged as it is witnessed by its possible semiotic variants and its different semantic associations. In line with Wodak's (2001) suggestion on overtly stating the researcher's position in critical studies, we adhere to an understanding of LGBT* as a transiently intrinsic set of identities and behaviour.

The specific goal of QL of uncovering dominant discourses allocates it within the broad field of poststructuralist-minded linguistic disciplines. Despite the core characterizations of QL, this exhibits a degree of intra-disciplinary heterogeneity, especially with CDA (Weiss and Wodak 2003). The two scholarly enterprises draw on a Foucauldian view of discourse whose notion we here briefly recall in order to avoid confusion. Discourse is perceived as a social constitutive process which is always interpretive:

There is no finite set of discourses [...] they are historical and transient, continually produced and reproduced. Each individual will see the same discursive traces and will recognize and re-construct different discourses. (Sunderland 2004: 7).

CDA and QL share the rejection of given behavioural norms and both adopt a critical attitude aimed to raise acknowledgement on the socio-cultural and political structures stabilizing and simultaneously changing the 'orders of discourse'. For this reason, these disciplines are subject to the criticism on their supposedly biased and weak arguments (Wodak 2009; Motschenbacher, 2010). In order to mitigate this, synergic approaches are to be preferred (Motschenbacher 2010; Milani 2013) and, in particular, the cross-contamination of qualitative and quantitative analysis seems a sensible choice already adopted by a significant number of scholars who investigate issues involving language use, gender and sexuality (Baker 2014; Bachmann 2011; Milani 2013; Jones 2018). In particular, corpus approaches have been extensively used in combination with CDA (Baker *et al.* 2008; Baker 2014) as a form of triangulation for fine-grained results. The resulting framework – Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis (Partington 2010) – has proven its usefulness in reducing major criticism, thus the latter is legitimately adopted here with the sole exception of adding a critical viewpoint. CACDA, entailing moving back and forth from corpus to macro-textual evidence, combines CDA with Corpus Linguistics (henceforth, CL). At the micro-level it involves frequency, concordancing, collocation and keyword analyses which are then compared with the broader macro-contextual level via analytical tools offered by CDA. The difference with Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis lays in that,

adding the Critical enquiry, researchers recognize their explicit position and advocate awareness on the examination of data which is caught within a social and historical context where reception, reproduction, intertextuality and interdiscursivity happen.

Although every effort is made to minimize contextual subjectivity, it should be acknowledged that the way research is conducted is itself part of the social structure which is being challenged. In this sense, agreeing both with Wodak (2009) and Marchi and Taylor (2009) the lack of bias is not viewed as a prerogative of quality research; indeed, it is doubtless that the very research questions of a study emerge out of a specific interest and are fed by social, economic, politic and cultural motives.

2.2 Macro-Structural Background

Data analysed in this study are produced not only in two different languages, i.e., Italian and English, but also appear in two different cultural and social contexts that need to be considered. In addition to this, following the synergy of CACDA, a context-based analysis is fundamental to locate aspects of the wider context in order to firstly formulate adequate hypotheses, secondly process the resulting linguistic outputs.

Considering the pan-European level, ILGA Europe (2018) review points out that 2017 and 2018 proved to be years of renewed visibility and attention to LGBT* people. In particular, several directorates of the European Commission took steps towards integrating LGBT* rights into areas such as health, education and combating hate speech. Nonetheless, ILGA Europe agrees with supranational EU agencies like FRA (2018) on the concern for a fully granted recognition of equality rights to LGBT* people still facing stigmatization. Another challenge involves improvement measures for providing information and training on the rights and specific needs of LGBT* people, in particular for asylum seekers. In this sense, a survey⁴ conducted on LGBT* living standards in European countries ranks the UK in the third position, while Italy occupies the twenty-third position.

As already acknowledged, social recognition of LGBT* identities and behaviours have produced important implications at the legal and judicial level, especially for healthcare and civil matters, as well as pension schemes and economic incentives. This has triggered institutional debate on where positioning and how addressing LGBT* people who, construed as weak and problematic, need the creation of legal frameworks and social awareness in order to motivate their affirmation as a diverse group.

At the European level, the EU provided an input for institutional commitment towards LGBT* people with two main directives, namely the Equal Treatment Directive 2006-54 and the Employment Framework Directive 2000-78 whose merits lay, among others, in the conceptualization of the gender mainstream – the understanding of multiple gendered and sexual dimensions – and in the enhancement of tangible actions to contrast discrimination on grounds of sexual and gender identity. This led to significant evolution over the course of the last decade as far as LGBT* rights are concerned. In fact, it seems likely that both directives prompted changes in the legislation of both Italy and the UK.

As for the UK, even if at present day it is considered among the top-three countries in Europe where LGBT* rights are widely guaranteed, still some concerns seem legitimate. In fact, there is lack of a clear stance in a number of matters like blood donation and conversion therapy. Moreover, scholarly literature recognizes the treatment of LGBT* people as problematic (McDermott et al. 2008), since despite the mainstreaming of different sexual and gendered identities, there is ongoing marginalisation and stigmatisation. A national survey commissioned by the UK Government (2017) revealed that although LGBT* respondents were generally positive about the UK's record on their rights, some people experienced troubles in the areas of safety, healthcare, education and employment. As far as public reception is concerned, according to 2017 ILGA-RIWI (2017) global survey⁵, 51% Britons strongly believe equal rights and protection should be applied also to LGBT* people. At the legislative level, the UK enhanced a number of recognitions during the last two decades; namely, in early 2000s the UK Government issued bans on LGBT discrimination in the workplace and in the army. In the same period, transgender people were allowed to legally change their gender without surgery and in 2004 the *Civil Partnership Act* gave same-sex couples the status of civil partnerships. The latter was changed in 2014 when same-sex marriage came into force with the *Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act*. In addition to this, same-sex adoption is legal and IVF treatment is available for lesbian couples since 2008.

Figures slightly overturn when looking at LGBT* rights in Italy. The peninsula counts a number of blank spaces both at the academic and at the institutional and legislative level. To the author's knowledge there is no current official data freely available to gain insights on how LGBT* people consider their living standards in Italy. As for the social reception, the same global survey by ILGA indicates 50% Italians strongly believe equal rights and protection should be applied also to LGBT* people⁶; however, the number of people surveyed does not equal in the two countries so these figures are just indicative of a sample of a cross-cultural trend. At the legislative level, transgender people have been allowed to legally change their gender without surgery since 1982. As for banning LGBT* people to enter the army, no mention has ever been present. LGBT* discrimination was banned in 2003, but only as far as the workplace is concerned. Indeed, in many other fields the Italian law lacks legislative procedures. After a much prolonged debate (Mancina and Vassallo 2016), same-sex unions were legally recognised in 2016. Even if today Italian same-sex couples are granted the majority of the rights of marriage, they are still precluded by many practices like adoption. Generally, Italy's record on LGBT* rights is perceived as incomplete (Baraldi 2008; Lingiardi et al. 2015). There is ambiguity on a number of matters like housing, blood donation and conversion therapy. At the academic level, scholarly literature (Zanola 2014; Vigo 2015) laments the unambiguous delay on the socio-linguistic discussion of LGBT* people in Italy, tracing the reasons for this to the influence of the Vatican and the heteronormative family model highly rooted in the Italian society. It can be said that reluctance and unwillingness to tackle LGBT* issues have been shown at the political and the institutional level as this theme has often been considered frivolous and of lesser importance. It must be noted that the absence of laws against LGBT* people in the past does not mean that non-traditional sexual and gender identities were tolerated; on the contrary,

they were not even recognized, thus their existence was further denied. In addition, at present time, apart from the 2003 anti-discrimination law, no other legal measure has been enacted nationwide.

As CADS moves from theoretical hypotheses eventually verified or rejected by both the corpus analysis and the CDA framework, the discussion on the macro-context conducted so far leads us to gather some initial speculations. From the analysis of the socio-political context, it can be inferred that there has been a positive attitudinal shift towards LGBT* people in both countries. Nevertheless, although the two legal and political systems have enacted inclusive measures for LGBT* people, 'atypical' gender and sexual identities still face stigmatization.

3. Methods

This section describes the parameters for data collection and corpus building and presents the methodological features. CL features, more prone to quantitative research, are applied to detect both lexicalization of LGBT* people and their presentation as social actors. Qualitative CDA features, instead, mediate in the elicitation process for the representation of social actors. Following Baker *et al.* (2008), the two methodologies interact continuously since CL tools help signposting discursive phenomena recognized via CDA, while CDA tools, in turn, aid in the interpretation of corpus findings.

3.1 CL Procedures: Corpus Building

Corpus data consist of official speeches uttered by UK PM David Cameron (henceforth, DC) and Italian PM Matteo Renzi (henceforth, MR). The time span of the corpus covers the period 2013-2016. This is motivated by a number of factors. First of all, at the beginning of the 2010s the national recognition of EU directives on the reception of the gender mainstream served as a trigger. Indeed, it prompted discussion at national level to enact legal actions to contrast discrimination on grounds of sexual and gender tendency. Secondly, given the inherent differences in the parliament successions between Italy and the UK, and considered also the intent to analyse the speeches of only one PM per country, for Italy the choice fell on the PM who run for the longest term. In addition to this, due to the unsteady political situation and to the sudden changes of incumbency, Italian PMs who were in office before MR did not even have the official occasion to tackle with the representation of LGBT* people, hence including their speeches seemed pointless.

The selection of speeches follows a lexical criterion, i.e., speeches containing words of the key-topic relevant for the purpose of this study. The search words are: *LGBT*, for the English language and *LGBT, diritt* civil** for the Italian language. The range of words has been restricted to these terms since otherwise the speeches could cover broader topics and this could mislead the research focus. The criterion chosen for the selection of words of key-topic derives from the notion of relevance⁷, which has proved its productivity and

efficiency in linguistic studies with a CDA focus (Sperber and Wilson 1997; Abbamonte 2018).

The process of data collection was different for the two cases due to dissimilar availability of the speeches. For the UK, the transcribed speeches were freely available on the PM website (GOV.UK n.d.), whereas MR's speeches were only partly available on the official website (Governo Italiano n.d.). For this reason, when there was no transcription, the speech was manually typewritten via watching the entire intervention on the official YouTube or Twitter account of the Italian Parliament⁸.

The resulting specialized corpora are of relatively small dimension, namely 32,908 words for the Cameron Corpus (henceforth, CC) and 25,080 words for the Renzi Corpus (henceforth, RC). Well aware that corpus representativeness has recently raised concerns in the academic debate (Davies 2015), in this specific case the small dimension of the corpora is motivated by the fact that these address a specialized type of discourse which in its very nature is limited in size (Williams 2002).

The tool for the corpus analysis is *AntConc* (Anthony 2014), a corpus-query software offering a multitude of functions like concordancing, collocation and keyword analyses, which are obtained through statistical measures, thus avoiding confirmation bias.

3.2 Corpus Tools

Among the various analytical tools offered by CL, the apparatus of this study centres on concordances and collocates. Concordances are identified as meaningful patterns in language use that can help identify regularities and repeated use, while collocations consist in the systematic co-occurrence of certain words in each other's neighbourhood (Baker 2006). Systematicity of collocates is given by statistical measures establishing the strength of the connection between two words. In this study collocation analysis is conducted on a span of +/- 3 words; the statistical measure is MI-score, which, as highlighted by Glabasova et al. (2017), points to exclusivity, i.e., rarer combinations prompt higher values.

Analysis of collocations helps to show associations, connotations and therefore embodied assumptions. The semantic extension of collocations are semantic preference and discourse prosody. While the former points to semantic relation, the latter is evaluative, suggesting the attitude of the speaker/writer (Stubbs 1995). Determining the discourse prosody of a set of terms is indicative to understand whether they convey a favourable or an unfavourable message.

In these processes human input intervenes in the interpretation of the data otherwise the study limits itself to a descriptive analysis (Huntson 2010). This is precisely the reason why moving back and forth between single concordancing and broader context, together with the intervention of critical investigation, are fundamental aspects.

3.3 CDA Procedures and Tools

CDA studies on the representation of marginalized groups have drawn on Discourse-Historical approach (Wodak 2001) and on socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk 2006). These two, having reached a high variety in the implementation of methods for the representation of social groups (van Leeuwen 1996; Teo 2000), can count on a multitude of discursive and linguistic strategies. As suggested by KhosraviNik (2010), studies on the representation of certain social groups should focus on a three-level framework: social actors, social actions and argumentation. The (non-) existence of actors, their actions and inherent argumentations are to be critically investigated in terms of what is (not) actually present in the text, together with how it is expressed, thus considering not only the inherent textual choices but also the available linguistic possibilities that have been excluded. These three elements, being part of the intra-textual level, represent the micro-level of the different levels of context theorized by Wodak (2001)⁹. Starting from the micro-level, the various levels combine in a dialogical relationship with higher levels of textual, discursive and social realizations that need to be related when studying the representation of social actors. Needless to say, this process of contextualization does not adhere to strict systematization, nor all elements are always prone to analysis. In addition, depending on the peculiarities of the texts, the analyst can resort to move back and forth from linguistic elements *sensu strictu* to features of the broader context while all these elements enjoy a dialogical relationship with one another.

Among the various linguistic and discursive strategies for actor descriptors, in this study practices of exclusion, impersonalisation and categorization (van Leeuwen 1996) have been detected. Representations to exclude social actors may include backgrounding and passivation. In the first case, social actors are not mentioned in relation to an interrelated event, while in the second case the action attribution is de-emphasized by the transitivity structure (Halliday 1985). Impersonalisation may happen at different levels; among these, genericisation symbolically removes actors from direct experience; when genericised actors are presented as heterogeneous groups collectivization is realised. Social actors can be further presented in terms of the activity they perform, i.e., functionalization, or in terms of the major categories by means of which a given institution differentiates among classes of people, for example, by their ethnicity, gender and sexual tendency. The latter strategy is called classification.

4. Analysis

Section 4.1 analyses the Italian discursive construction, while section 4.2 deals with the British one.

4.1 RC Implemented through CDA Procedures

From the frequency list, a clear-cut evidence emerge as there is little presence of descriptors directly referring to LGBT* people; indeed, the corpus count gives only one hit of the acronym *LGBT* and one hit of *omosessuali*

[homosexual people]. Looking at the concordance of the latter, *omosessuali* is used as a noun, thus going against academic and institutional guidelines (Baker 2005; GLAAD 2017). The latter agree on the usage of terms encompassed in the LGBT* acronym in adjectival form as a device of inclusive language because these denominations add information about an aspect of a person and are not the only condition to be considered. Aside from this, in the micro-context of this instance there is no description of the inherent social group; in fact, the occurrence is simply part of the phrase *i diritti degli omosessuali* [gay people's rights] which serves as a genericisation linked to the urgency to enact same-sex unions. Arguably, the intended close connection between gay people rights and same-sex unions is not immediate since gay people rights go beyond the sole legal recognition of their marital rights. *Omosessuali*, being the only word overtly referring to some identities included in the LGBT* acronym, is looked up in the *Treccani Dictionary* (2019) in order to understand the semantic connotation given by a prescribed source. This indicates that the term, used both as an adjective and as a noun, has no negative connotation and is to be preferred in the majority of contexts¹⁰. In addition, it can refer to females and males; in fact, when looking up *lesbica* [lesbian female] the definition is 'donna omosessuale' [homosexual female]. This gives an indication that female and male sexual dyads are articulated in the Italian language starting from the word *omosessuale* which is prescriptively defined as a non-connoted choice. In order to gain some pragmatic insights, the words *omosessual**, *gay* and *lesbic** are searched on the *Italian Web 2016*, a 201,204,942-word corpus containing language from the Internet. The analysis reveals that although the three words are broadly used, *gay* and *lesbic** mainly pertain to informal and juvenile contexts and bear a semantic preference of triviality. Because of this semantic preference, it is sensible to infer that MR purposely uses *omosessuali* as a non-connoted choice, thus avoiding mentioning *gay* and *lesbic** which could raise conflict and criticism. The same could be said for the terms *transessual**, *bisessual**, *transgender*, *intersessual**, *queer*. From a search on the *Italian Web 2016* no government official use of them is given, thus signalling that the diverse gendered and sexual dimensions find no space in the speeches of the Italian PM.

As for the key-topic phrase *diritt* civil** [civil right*], only its plural form is present. Looking at concordances, when the word *diritto* [right] appears in the singular, it refers to different juridical matters, while the plural form *diritti* [rights] has a tendency to link rights with non-aligned sexual and gendered dimensions. In particular, out of 31 hits of *diritti*, one specifically refers to LGBT* rights while 28 refer to the broader field of civil rights. On the one hand, this gives a clear morphological indication, i.e., LGBT* rights are referred to only in plural form; on the other, it seems that overt speaking of LGBT* people is foreshadowed in favour of more generic terms. Both the use of the plural form *diritti* and the tendency to refer to LGBT* people only in terms of civil rights, as if civil rights were the only topic LGBT* people can be meaningfully and legitimately represented, reveal a high degree of vagueness, if not inaccuracy, and reticence.

LGBT* people are indirectly implied through oversimplified collectivisation. The only ways MR can present LGBT* people seems to be in terms of legal

recognition. The following excerpts illustrate some discursive and linguistic strategies aimed to disengage from the core point:

- (1) *Ho visto che domani ci sarà anche una manifestazione dei sostenitori dei diritti LGBT. I ministri sono liberi di andare a tutte le manifestazioni che vogliono, non vedo perché dovremo essere arrabbiati se uno o più ministri parteciperanno al family day o se altri andranno ad altre manifestazioni.*

[I have noticed tomorrow also a demonstration of LGBT rights supporters will take place. The ministers are free to go to all the demonstrations they want, I do not see why we need to be angry if one or more ministers will join the family day or if others will go to other manifestations].

- (2) *Io ho sempre detto che i diritti civili stanno in un pacchetto che parte dalle riforme costituzionali. Una volta che il Parlamento avrà terminato di votare queste, discuteremo anche su quella che ritengo essere una assoluta e corretta rappresentazione delle civil partnership, sul modello tedesco.*

[I have always said that civil rights are in a set [of reforms] that stems from constitutional reforms. Once the Parliament has finished voting on these, we will also discuss what I believe being an absolute and correct representation of civil partnerships, on the German model].

Both excerpts refer to the timeframe prior to the legal recognition of same-sex unions, leading to strong collisions both from grass-root movements – i.e., pro-LGBT manifestations *vs.* ultra-conservative events like the ‘family day’ – and from parliamentary wings. In (1), the attention is shifted from LGBT rights to the freedom of each minister to join a given event. In addition to this, the pro-LGBT manifestation is mentioned in the same vicinity of the ‘family day’, an event promoting anti-LGBT views, thus creating a sound antithesis. In (2), civil rights are metaphorically presented as a bundle of reforms, thus being devalued as an aggregated set of actions postponed for the future. From this, another strategy is enacted at the morpho-syntactic level through the use of future tense; the event is suspended and attention is shifted to the authoritative job of the Parliament. Appeal to authoritativeness both of the Parliament and of the German model does not miss to de-emphasize the focal point. In various parts of the RC the continuous reference to the German model has been noted. This is meaningful, as the Italian PM wants to put Italy in a metaphorical competition with Germany. He often makes comparisons to Germany, positioning this country partly as an example to follow, partly as a challenging ally with whom Italy can engage in an anti-discriminatory competition. In (1) and (2) the presence of loan words, i.e., *family day*, *civil partnership*, testifies both to the detaching stance and the lack of adequate knowledge on the related subject. It could be argued that the resort to foreignisms denotes insufficient political discussion on this field, as well as cultural reticence and awkwardness to face certain topics. Secondly, a gradual deletion of agent occurs in both examples: although the sentences start with

MR positioning himself as an active agent, the strength of the action gradually diminishes and falls upon the ‘ministers’, a general ‘we’, and the ‘Parliament’ respectively.

Given the scarce presence of descriptors collectively referring to LGBT* people, only collocates of *diritti* and *diritti civili* are presented. The collocation analysis involves the first twenty collocates, ranked by statistical measure. In the following charts collocates that even indirectly relate to LGBT* people are shown:

Freq.	MI score	Collocates
1	950.171	togliere
1	950.171	tematiche
1	950.171	sostenitori
1	950.171	soddisfare
1	950.171	rimasti
1	950.171	ricosce
1	950.171	restituiti
1	950.171	parificati
1	950.171	pagando
1	950.171	omosessuali
1	950.171	lgbt
1	950.171	divenire
1	950.171	acquisiti
2	891.675	Sesso
1	850.171	doveri
1	850.171	aggiunge
18	838.623	civili

Table 1. Collocates in the RC – *Diritti*

Freq.	MI score	Collocates
1	950.171	Tematiche
1	950.171	Rimasti
2	891.675	Sesso
17	830.377	Civili
1	791.675	Vincolante
1	750.171	Questione
3	738.623	Tempi
2	717.978	Stanno
1	691.675	Grandi
1	691.675	Faremo
1	669.435	Settembre
1	591.675	Ancora
1	559.482	Termine
4	541.425	Legge
2	533.178	parlamento

Table 2. Collocates in the RC – *Diritti civili*

Comparing the two lists of collocates, some of them can be grouped semantically. Semantic associations that can be related to LGBT* people are:

- **Conflict:** Words like *togliere* [subtract them], *sostenitori* [supporters], *pagando* [paying], *vincolante* [binding], *questione* [question] are associated with the semantic domain of struggle and imply a discourse prosody of a strained and problematic situation.
- **Recognition:** *Soddisfare* [satisfy], *ricosce* [acknowledges], *restituiti* [restore], *parificati* [equalize], *aggiunge* [adds up], *grandi* [great] are mainly linked to a positive situation that has finally reached its public acceptance. This, in turn, recalls a process of struggle to obtain final recognition; therefore, also here a discourse prosody of effort and conflict is implied.

- **Lengthy procedures:** *Divenire* [becoming], *rimasti* [remained], *tempi* [time], *stanno* [are in the process of], *faremo* [we will do], *settembre* [September], *ancora* [still], *termine* [expiry], *legge* [law], *parlamento* [parliament]. The use of tenses in progressive or in future forms indicates either the action is not complete or it has been delayed. In addition, verbs like *divenire* and *stanno* carry the connotation of something that is in the process of happening, in contrast with *rimasti* denoting stagnation. Resorting to delay and clumsiness of the public system seems to be another strategy used to shift the attention.

LGBT* people are only covertly implied by blatant collectivization as the discussion is generally limited to same-sex union recognition. This explains the presence of the collocate *sessu* in both charts, as MR refers to *coppie dello stesso sesso* [same-sex couples]. It is noteworthy that MR specifies there are also *doveri* [obligations] together with (civil) rights. This might be considered an attempt to call the out-group to action.

Looking at the very few verbs emerging from collocates and concordances, in an effort to relate them to action attribution, it must be noted that no member of the LGBT* community has ever been given the possibility to take action. Verbs are usually conjugated in the impersonal and passive voice, therefore implying avoidance to refer to a precise actor. In two verbs denoting action, *restituti* and *acquisiti* [acquired], the process is abstractly performed by *diritti civili*. This frames the real actors as a third external party benefitting of something which is granted without them having to fight for it. When it is the PM speaking in the first person, he cautiously uses neutral and accommodating words, while he resorts to the inclusive use of ‘we’ both when he wants to explicitly refer to recent success of his party policy, and when he encourages all the conflicting parts of his government to take action.

Collocates like *tematiche* prompted the individuation of some lexical patterns used to avoid overt reference to sensitive topics. The patterns emerge in the form of *noun + dei diritti*. This gives further insights on the representation of civil rights, which seem to be the only element related to LGBT* people in the speeches of MR. Recurring patterns are: *campo dei diritti civili* [field of civil rights], *questione dei diritti civili* [question of civil rights], *tematiche dei diritti civili* [themes of civil rights], *tema dei diritti civili* [subject of civil rights], *pacchetto dei diritti civili* [package of civil rights], *nuova stagione dei diritti* [new season of civil rights]. Exception made for the last instance, where an element of novelty is present, MR tends to frame civil rights in terms of a miscellaneous set that should be tackled with care. Considered the relatively small amount of data analysed, the emergence of such diverse ways to refer to civil rights testifies to how various euphemisms serve to avoid reference to problematic topics that may trigger interdiscursive references with past negative events or, even worst, may prompt attacks from the most conservative wings of society.

4.2 CC Implemented through CDA Procedures

The agent descriptors, and the same acronym LGBT*, are widely present in the CC. Their frequency list is here displayed:

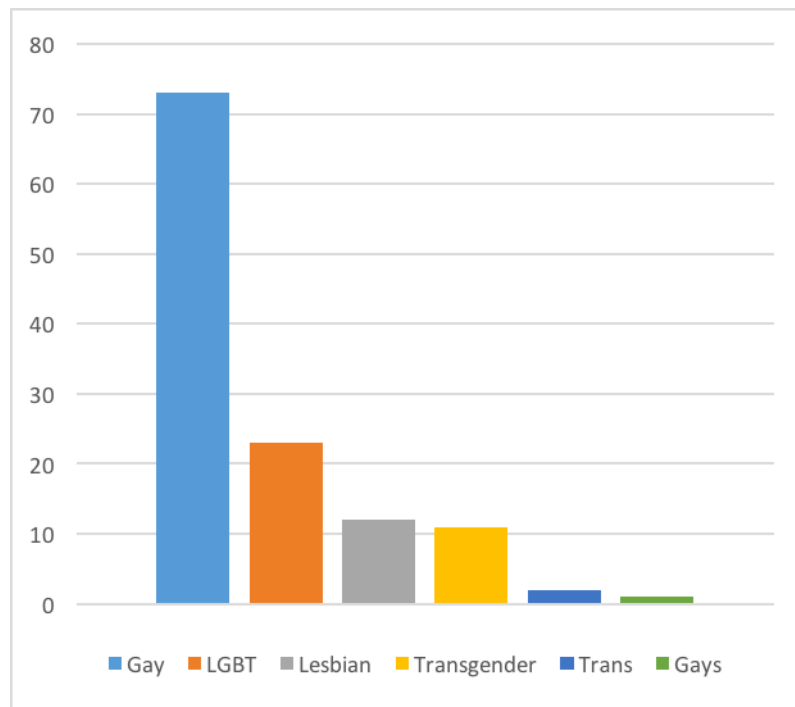


Figure 1. Absolute frequencies of actor descriptors of LGBT* people in the CC

As can be noted, *gay* is the most frequent of the descriptors and is used both as a noun and as an adjective. The same grammatical alternation is true for *lesbian* and *transgender*. As already noted, this signals a derogatory connotation of the word and is considered to be a non-inclusive use of language. *LGBT* is present with no other alternatives at the morphological level. The occurrence of *trans*, referring both to transgender and transsexual people, stands out since this term is defined as an informal shortening in the Oxford Dictionary of English (OED). The omission of other descriptors referring to LGBT* people on the one hand testifies to the way in which genericisation happens also in the CC; on the other hand, the absence of terms like *transsexual* could be motivated by political correctness since advocacy groups discourage its use. Even if *homosexual* is not a descriptor of LGBT* people, in light of Baker's (2005) observation on its negative semantic connotation, the term is searched in the CC; it appears only once in adjectival function in the following instance:

- (3) 'We will promote better recording of hate crimes against disabled, homosexual and transgender people, which are frequently not centrally recorded'.

This phrase pattern incorporating homosexual people, disabled people and transgender people signals ghettoized and marginalised communities that are potential victims of stigmatization, as is shown also in the example. Instead of being agents, they are backgrounded to the role of passive 'patients' (van Leeuwen 1996: 33) whose action is totally neglected.

For the CC it seems pointless choosing other key-topic items as the simple search with *LGBT* proves its usefulness. In addition, contrary to what happens

with speeches uttered by MR, for DC the phrase *civil right** does not relate specifically to LGBT* people. In fact, as already argued, civil rights do not necessarily pertain to LGBT people; in DC's speeches this broad category of rights includes non-discrimination of women and assistance to seniors or disabled people. Therefore, choosing this phrase as a key-topic item could be misleading.

Beside being considered a static group, LGBT* people are presented also as vulnerable and unreliable. The following examples show strategies that simultaneously emphasize a problematic situation and foreground the policy maker:

- (4) 'At home, tackling hate crime remains key. The police are now collecting data on hate crimes against LGBT people'.
- (5) 'There are subjects we must continue to tackle: not least taking a zero tolerance approach to homophobic bullying, and caring for elderly members of the LGBT community'.

The above examples are taken from celebrative events favouring LGBT* awareness. In (4) overt reference to homophobic events signals a marked social issue. If on the one hand this points to a difficult situation, on the other it is DC who allocates the matter to public officials. (5) presents a problematic context likewise; in this case the conservative leader refers to a collective 'we' meaning that his party supporters must take action to defend the weak out-group. In both cases, although the troublesome situation is brought to the fore, the ultimate discursive intent is that of emphasizing the crucial action of state officials. Despite his political moves, it must be acknowledged that DC shows awareness of the long journey for a full integration of LGBT* rights in the British society.

The high assortment of descriptors for LGBT* people admits various degree of impersonalisation for recourse to collectivisation and functionalism abounds. Namely, LGBT* people are presented either as a vast community or for the specific function they perform in the given discourse. In addition, the total lack of evaluative adjectives betrays reticence to focus on their lives and inadequate knowledge to meaningfully speak about them. In this sense, approaching LGBT* people as an outsider, DC uses narratives to get closer to this diversified reality. In the following examples, opposing strategies of inclusion and exclusion signal a real, though veiled, clash between the in-group and the out-group:

- (6) 'It's also really important to parents. A mum came up to me the other day in the street in my constituency and said: "Why I'm so pleased about this is that I've got a straight son and a gay daughter, and I now know I'm going to be able to go to both of their weddings, and that makes me really happy". I am very proud of this'

- (7) ‘Rest assured, this government will work tirelessly to make sure this happens. As the sun shines this week on our country, the LGBT community now know that the unique bond of marriage is available to them’.

In (6) we notice *gay* can be used for females and males as a rather neutral choice, opposite to its Italian equivalent. As for the narrative in (6), in order to please conservative views that could otherwise raise criticism, DC strategically gives voice to a mother and frames the matter of same-sex unions within the picture of a family. A striking note is given by the oppositional pair ‘straight/gay’, which creates an oxymoron in mere semantic terms. Moreover, it reinforces the perceived deviant nature of gay people, here metonymically associated with LGBT* people. Another gross example of undifferentiated collectivisation is witnessed in (7) by overlapping same-sex marriage with all the diversities coexisting among LGBT* people. A significant aspect lies on the paternalistic attitude and on the numerous praise shown by DC towards LGBT* people. This, framed within a conservative mind-set, recalls the model of the complacent leader who has to continuously support and encourage the weak groups. Both in (6) and (7) DC gives voice to other people in an attempt to reframe his vague declarations in a passionate campaigner tone but the result resembles more a compassionate shift. Even if in the narratives DC stresses allegiance to local pro-LGBT* campaigners, actually he is in first line only when his government and his policy are involved. He is never part of the narratives; on the contrary, he makes other people speak, thus covertly reinforcing his detached stance and the contrast between ‘their’ narration ‘our’ narration.

Among the first 20 collocates of both ‘LGBT’ and its descriptors, the ones related to LGBT* people are displayed below (Tables 4-8). Also in this case, some collocates can be grouped semantically. In particular, recurring semantic associations with LGBT* people are discussed below:

- **Conflict:** Words like *effort, hate, crimes, sad, bullying, issue* reveal once again a discourse prosody of collision and struggle. On the one side LGBT* people are the victims, but on the other the ‘strong’ institutions are committed to abolish the perceived issue.
- **Safeguard:** *Assured, treat, protection, charity, supporter* are collocates pointing to a discourse prosody of solid shelter where the feeble out-group can feel safe. Notably, this sense of protection is offered by external forces.
- **Advocacy:** *International, association, organisers, equality, launching, Europe* carry a discourse prosody of endorsement for LGBT* people. In particular, DC promotes the UK as a champion of LGBT* at the international level. This is a strategic move to present the country a role model.
- **Collectivisation:** *Community, immense, members* carry a discourse prosody of heterogeneity. This recognizes the presence of LGBT* people and simultaneously relegates them to a specific category.

- **Rituals:** *Month, sporting, history, festival, show, address.* These collocates relate to the various celebrative events where DC has the opportunity to present LGBT* people. The presence of declarative verbs enforces the ritualistic situation and intervenes in the formation of a discourse prosody of commemorative remarks.

Freq.	MI-score	Collocate
1	10.63910	suffering
1	10.63910	persecution
1	10.63910	charity
1	10.63910	assured
2	10.05414	protection
3	9.63910	month
6	9.41671	community
1	9.05414	efforts
2	8.83175	bisexual
1	8.63910	sporting
1	8.63910	shows
3	8.41671	history
2	8.17967	transgender
5	8.10305	equality
1	8.05414	hate
1	8.05414	crimes
1	7.83175	members

Table 4. Collocates in the CC – *LGBT*

Freq.	MI-score	Collocate
1	8.97284	treat
1	8.97284	supporter
1	8.97284	schoolchildren
1	8.97284	sad
1	8.97284	organisers
12	8.97284	lesbian
1	8.97284	jewish
4	8.97284	festival
1	8.97284	destination
2	8.97284	consensual
1	8.97284	choir
7	8.97284	bisexual

Table 5. Collocates in the CC – *Gay*

Freq.	MI-score	Collocate
1	11.57770	treat
1	11.57770	addressing
6	11.35531	bisexual
1	10.57770	immense
1	9.99274	contribution
3	9.70324	transgender
2	9.57770	association
2	9.25578	international
1	8.99274	plans
12	8.97284	gay
5	7.25578	or
3	6.65487	by
4	5.50624	are
1	4.89120	work
2	4.56090	be
7	4.19277	and

Table 6. Collocates in the CC – *Lesbian*

Freq.	MI-score	Collocate
3	12.28820	survey
1	11.70324	homosexual
5	11.21781	bisexual
1	10.70324	launched
1	10.11827	disabled
3	9.70324	lesbian
1	9.38131	full
1	8.70324	tackling
1	8.70324	bullying
2	8.31092	europe
2	8.17967	lgbt
6	8.09837	gay
1	7.61577	policy
1	7.24380	issues
1	6.89588	being

Table 7. Collocates in the CC – *Transgender*

Freq.	MI-score	Collocate
1	12.35531	addressing
2	11.77035	trans
6	11.35531	lesbian
5	11.21781	transgender
7	8.97284	gay
2	8.83175	lgbt
1	7.89588	issues
4	7.71146	or
1	7.49733	equality
4	6.28385	are
3	3.74798	and

Table 8. Collocates in the CC – *Bisexual*

Linking core topics of LGBT* people to the conservative party is a tendency DC broadly exploits to favour his policy and the democratic merits. For example, semantic associations implying a degree of commitment and effort can be inscribed within the conservative framework. In any case, defense always comes from forces external to LGBT* people. These, in fact, seem to hardly ever perform any engaging move. The only positive and active

examples are registered in terms of getting married and in gay sportive events, while the presence of passive verbs justifies collocates like *by*. Action usually falls on DC, his team, and local volunteers to whom collocations connoting activity (*plans, launching, work*) are attached.

Focusing on collocates of the descriptors for *LGBT*, i.e., *lesbian, gay, bisexual* and *transgender*, the broad tendency is classifying each descriptor merely in terms of sexual preference or gendered behaviour. This emerges also from extended reading of *be* collocates in 1L position, signalling the verb is used in the copular function. This means that what comes after describes the quality of the subject. In this case the common pattern is: *be + gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender* as in

- (8) ‘They are concerned about what society thinks of them because they are gay or lesbian’

In this sense, the same descriptors of *LGBT* seem to be the only qualities that can be mutually attributed to *LGBT** people, thus constituting a self-referential class. This motivates also the presence of *gay, lesbian, bisexual* and *transgender* among high-ranked collocates of each descriptor. When looking into each term, *gay* prompts more differentiated results. Exception made for *sad*, indicating ongoing conflict and marginalisation, collocates of *gay* show no overt negative discourse prosody signalling that *gay* is used as a neutral and inclusive term. There is a high tendency to categorize, especially in terms of functionalization and religious classification; namely, gay people are referred for the social function they perform in the normalized society (*organisers, choir, schoolchildren*) or for their religious beliefs (*Jewish*). In addition, the fact that all collocates of *gay* have the same MI-score means they share the same combination between exclusivity and frequency, signalling the rare occasions presenting gay people through something that is not their sexual and/or gender identity.

Collocates of *lesbian* pointing to activity are *contribution* and *work*; the former, even if referred to *lesbian* people, reveals abstractness, while the latter case involves Government action. The pattern *lesbian and/or gay* shows high productivity and, once again, a purpose of classification.

Even if *transgender* counts among inclusive language-use, in the CC it bears a more marked discourse prosody of segregation. Indeed, terms indicating other marginalised groups (*homosexual, disabled*) allocate in its proximity. A noteworthy collocate is *survey* indicating that transgender people can have their say on government policies. But also in this case their action remains unexpressed as the active verb (*tackling*) refers to the government. As for *bisexual*, fewer collocates indicate that this term is less discussed and presented separately. From collocates *or, and* the patterns *bisexual and/or transgender* indicate that the term is usually part of a list and in semi-final position.

5. Results

This session elaborates the single outputs and presents a contrastive analysis between the two cases.

Comparing the positioning of the two PMs, MR is the one who struggles in the most awkward way for clearly representing LGBT* people. The lack of overt mention of descriptors of LGBT* people could be motivated by the fact that these have not entered the official register in the Italian language, but still there is no interest in examining them; therefore, reticence and vagueness can be interpreted as a form of distancing. Indeed, MR covertly implies LGBT* people by blatant collectivisation and genericisation as the discussion is limited to the recognition of same-sex unions; these, in turn, seem to totally constitute an oversimplified version of civil rights. Seemingly, the only aspect where he can legitimately refer to LGBT* people is the legal one, namely in the phrase *i diritti LGBT* [LGBT rights]. As for the descriptors referring to the various identities of LGBT* people, only *omosessuali* is present as a noun. This unique attempt to name gay people witnesses the clumsiness of MR who inevitably fails to use inclusive language. There are no other overt intents to present the social actors; their actions are not even mentioned and this omission stands for the argumentative structure alike. Absences, ambiguous uses of terms and euphemisms point to a strategic use of words, underlying the non-inclusive representation of the out-group through imprecise linguistic choices to refer to 'them'. As argued in Schröter and Taylor (2018), 'discursive absence' can be a strategy for downplaying certain social groups in existing discourse topics and this seems to be the case. Results suggest that terms MR uses to indirectly refer to LGBT* people relate to the broad category of civil rights. This misleading shift incorporates another subject into the discussion, which, no matter how much serious it could be, leads astray. But even in this case, the linguistic devices used – among these: vague word choices, vast resort to euphemisms, loan words and passivation – reveal the discursive intent to downplay an out-group reality. This mis-representation of LGBT* people creates an opaque and unfair picture of the given group, which resonates in the speeches of MR.

The CC reveals more dynamic outputs for the linguistic representation of LGBT* people. This is motivated by the high productivity of the English language, which, apart from being the coining language of the acronym, has experienced more linguistic reflection and awareness-raising for the creation of inclusive language. As social actors, LGBT* people are broadly presented in the CC but they are purposefully connected to British and conservative values. At the intra- and inter-textual level LGBT* people are presented in terms of how they can be fitted into society. The most used discursive devices are collectivization, classification and functionalisation. Narratives, usually prompting for closeness and inclusivity, in this case reveal the detached stance of DC whose linguistic choices unveil the contraposition between the in-group and the out-group. In terms of social action, LGBT* people are conceived as passive actors who benefit from positive activity empowered by state officials or grass-root movements. Also in the CC there is no space for action and argumentation enacted by LGBT* people, as these are limited to celebrative purposes. The imposed marginalization of LGBT* people, together with static and possibly mystifying aspects attached, produce a gap broadening the

distance between 'we' and 'they', even if in some instances 'they' are praised for their merits, which in any case stand on an abstract level. Despite a higher degree of consciousness and various inclusive linguistic choices, LGBT* people are still conceived as a deviant category of society, often opposed to their 'straight' counterpart.

Both MR and DC raise awareness on the problematic condition of LGBT* people, though MR expresses it indirectly via reference to the broad category of civil rights. DC, on the other hand, does not relate LGBT* people to civil rights. In the CC the lexicalisation of LGBT* people has more space but the arguments of the out-group are wisely linked to the Conservative party programme with a backgrounding intent. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that DC claims awareness of the long journey for a full integration of LGBT* people. On the other side, MR embraces LGBT* awareness in terms of a political urge to face a legislative delay.

Despite the fact that LGBT* people are more lexicalized in the CC in comparison to the RC, reticence happens in the CC too, though at a different degree. Indeed, strategies as collectivisation, classification and functionalism demonstrate how there is no other intent of presenting LGBT* people if not in terms of what they do for the hetero-normalized society. In addition, although the CC reports more lexicalisation for LGBT* people at the micro-textual level, at the inter-textual level they constitute a closed self-referential category as apparently they can be meaningfully presented in no way other than making reference within each other.

Overall, it can be said that MR avoids overt reference to LGBT* people shifting the attention to other matters and minimizing the core topic. DC, conversely, engages in the discourse contributing to the representation of LGBT* people but his attempts betray exclusion and ultimate political aims. Looking at the micro-text, the two leaders show a tendency to present the social actors through genericisation, though with a set of different discursive devices. If MR resorts to euphemism, loan words and a high degree of vagueness and reticence, DC chooses to be more direct as he clearly lexicalizes LGBT* people but then confine them to a marginalised group via abstract impersonalisation and passivation. Their ultimate aim is downplaying the social actors who are consequently removed from the immediate reality. Well aware that they are dealing with a thorny issue, the two leaders are very cautious when referring to LGBT* contexts. However, as much as this can be interpreted as political correctness, when reticence and vagueness exceed, the risk is that of giving an opaque representation of reality. Despite the perceived clumsiness and the lack of proper knowledge on LGBT* people, both leaders advocate for a guiding role of their parties on diversity-friendly matters. Apart from being seen as a political move, in a QL view this attitude could be encompassed within a discursive strategy materialized by the the heteronormative society to reproduce an opaque view of reality.

5. Conclusions

The results emerged so far confirm that the diverse gender and sexual dimensions are constructed as problematic and deviant. Reasons for this might be on the one hand the conflictual inter-discursive references they evoke, on the other the lack of knowledge and taboo attached to LGBT* people. Nonetheless, being representatives of the integrity of their countries, and bearing enormous civic and social responsibilities, PMs are called to give a balanced image of vulnerable groups, with the view to mitigate prejudices. For this reason, presenting LGBT* people only on grounds of sexual preference and gender identity seems unacceptable because it restricts the existence of LGBT* people only to these spheres.

Due to the scarce presence of descriptors to directly present LGBT* people, for the Italian case the analysis has focused on the macro-contextual level and on indirect references to LGBT* people, i.e., civil rights and same-sex unions. On the contrary, the high productivity of the English language has prompted the attention on overt references to LGBT* people. From both analyses the two leaders share the acknowledgement that discourses on diversity are upsurging both from grass-root movements and social turmoil. Starting from such discursive productions, the two leaders try to build up their own discourses. MR, more constrained by socio-cultural legacies, avoids overt reference to LGBT* people and shifts the attention to other matters. The only topic that could be related to LGBT* people is civil rights in its oversimplified realization of same-sex unions. But also in this case MR shows a high degree of vagueness and reticence via genericisation and collectivization strategies. As for DC, even if he engages with a linguistic representation of LGBT* people, the underlying exclusion strategies of his discourse unveil a distancing attitude. Moreover, in the CC the representation of the social actors through collectivization and functionalization reveals DC's ultimate intent of backgrounding the out-group for emphasizing his political party. At this point, it seems reasonable to wonder whether MR and DC used motives that do not pertain to their mind-sets exclusively for political purposes, or whether they really meant a serious commitment to a more inclusive society. This hypothesis seems justified by the fact that the two PMs resort to vagueness and reticence with the ostensible reason of using non-connoted language given the high sensibility of the topic. Even if this might be interpreted as political correctness, the risk is that of delivering a mis-representation of reality which can fuel social prejudice.

While it can be argued to what extent LGBT* people are represented by political institutions, one thing is certain: the current period is pervaded by discourses about diversity and this growing awareness cannot be ignored even within the most conservative and heteronormative stances. As much as hard it might seem to discriminate diversity, our state officials are clearly still in the stage of understanding how to address LGBT* people in order to appreciate this multifarious reality and spread a diversity-friendly message.

Recognizing that social appreciation of LGBT* people is still far from achieved, this study is by no means to be considered definitive. As LGBT* identities are in progress, always producing new acquisitions and awareness, the present work constitutes an attempt to critically evaluate an evolving process in a given context.

Notes

- 1 One of the longest variant, LGBTTQQIAAP, encompasses also queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, allies and pansexual dimensions.
- 2 Due to space constraints and as a form of inclusive language, in this study the acronym LGBT* is used to incorporate any member recognizing themselves into the non-conforming sexual tendency and gendered behaviour community. No form of disrespect is intended here in not using other initialisms.
- 3 In this work the expression sexual tendency is used instead of sexual orientation because the latter is less dichotomy-driven.
- 4 From Rainbow Europe (2019). The ranking is based on six areas concerning legal and policy matters which have an impact on the lives of LGBT* people, namely equality and non-discrimination, family matters, hate crime and hate speech, legal gender recognition and bodily integrity, civil society space and asylum-seekers rights. Rainbow Europe, which is part of ILGA Europe, provides insights and statistical data into the political and social developments in each European country.
- 5 In 2017 ILGA International and RIWI made a global survey on 'Global Attitudes to LGBTI people'. To the question 'Equal rights and protections should be applied to everyone, including people who are romantically or sexually attracted to people of the same sex' out of 2264 British respondents, 51% strongly agreed, 12% somewhat agreed, 22% neither agreed or disagreed, 5% somewhat disagreed, 10% strongly disagreed (ILGA-RIWI 2017). Although we recognize the potential limits such a huge survey could have, this is still useful to get generalized tendencies, especially for countries like Italy which would otherwise have been excluded since it does not provide any updates on national data.
- 6 To the question 'Equal rights and protections should be applied to everyone, including people who are romantically or sexually attracted to people of the same sex' out of 1145 Italian respondents, 50% strongly agreed, 12% somewhat agreed, 20% neither agreed or disagreed, 7% somewhat disagreed, 10% strongly disagreed (ILGA-RIWI 2017).
- 7 The notion of relevance has increasingly been used in qualitative research like CDA. It seems to derive from Grice's maxims of conversation. Moving from the latter, Sperber and Wilson (1997) developed the Relevance theory positing that the pursuit of information contextually and cognitively relevant is a constant factor in human mental life.
- 8 It seems fair to make a consideration on the spoken nature of the data as this may pose challenges related to practical difficulties and biases in the transcriptions. In this study, the texts in English had already been typewritten so the researcher just double checks for spelling errors or involuntary omissions via listening of the speech; as for the speeches in Italian, the manual transcription is double reviewed by another Italian mother tongue.
- 9 Wodak (2001) theorized four levels of context, i.e., (1) Intra-textual, text-internal; (2) Inter-textual, between texts; (3) Extra-linguistic socio-historical situation; (4) Socio-political, society's collective 'old knowledge'.
- 10 'Termine non connotato negativamente, e quindi preferito in alcuni contesti' [term with no negative connotation, therefore preferred in some contexts] (Treccani 2019).

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