



Naming people on the move according to the political agenda: A study of Belgian media

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to study the different denominations used to name people on the move in the Belgian French- and Dutch-speaking press. The so-called ‘refugee crisis’ has received huge media attention in Europe. In Belgium, media landscape is divided amongst Dutch-, French- and much smaller German-speaking communities, all of which harbour different journalistic traditions. The country is then an excellent case study to observe the divergences between the linguistic repertoire of denominations referencing people in the two main linguistic communities. To explore this, an exhaustive corpus composed of press articles was collected between 2015 and 2017. The analysis combines Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics as they complement one another. At first, the repertoire of common nouns in each corpus seems similar, but differences lie in the frequency of denominations used to qualify people on the move and also in the collocations that construct their meaning. In both corpora, the word *refugee* is strongly collocated with *status* and administrative terms. One important finding lies in the difference in frequencies of the word *migrant*, which is used less often in the Dutch-speaking corpus than in the French-speaking one. This article also gives special attention to the terms *transmigrant* and *newcomer*.

Keywords

Corpus linguistics, denominations, discourse analysis, migrant, migration, newcomer, newspapers, refugee, transmigrant

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Introduction

Fairclough and Wodak (1997) conceptualize language as a form of ‘social practice’ which is called *discourse*. They argue that not only do social relations determine discourses but also that they, that is, social relations, are reflected in discourses. Studying the context of language and the underlying agenda of discourses is of crucial importance as ‘in discourse people can be legitimizing (or delegitimizing) particular power relations without being conscious of doing so’ (Fairclough, 2001: 33). This paper contributes to the understanding of how denominations participate in the construction of social issues, such as immigration.

As they rely on discourse and not on material reality (Kaufmann, 2006; Searle, 1995), denominations are the main condition for social phenomena to exist. According to Siblöt, naming social phenomena depends on the point of view taken by the speaker and is always a choice commanded by societal or generic needs which may vary according to languages and cultures. It helps ‘not only to design and categorize, but also to perceive the world’¹ (Siblöt, 2001: 195).

The constituent features of the categorizations are capitalized in the denominations; some of these [. . .] are selected and updated after operations to adjust the meaning during the discourse. It is the repetition of these discursive updates that gives meaning to the constituted category and transforms use into customs [. . .] (Siblöt, 2001: 195–196).

These discursive updates enrich and develop the semantic content of a term. Because denominations ‘endorse language practices’ (Siblöt, 2001: 195) this research focuses on how denominations regarding people on the move, in the context of the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015–2017, are influenced by the context and, in addition, how this context (co-occurrences, repeated segments, cotext, etc.) changes the sense of the denomination.

The so-called ‘refugee crisis’ has, as in Belgium, received huge media attention in many European countries (e.g. De Cleen et al., 2017; De Cock et al., 2018; Rea et al., 2019: 12). Nonetheless, there is no *Belgian* coverage of the situation. Indeed, the Belgian media landscape is divided amongst a Dutch-, French- and a much smaller German-speaking community, all of which harbour different journalistic traditions (Jacobs and Tობback, 2013: 408; Raeymaeckers and Heinderyckx, 2018: 14). In Belgium, asylum is a federal matter, while integration is a regional one (Adam and Jacobs, 2014: 67–69). Both linguistic communities ‘are not exposed to the same media coverage and, on the whole, to the same discourses and images about migration’ (Mistiaen et al., forthcoming). As a consequence, ‘there is no such thing as a unified Belgian debate’ about these matters (De Cleen et al., 2017: 26). There are two different public spheres in which different discourses have evolved. For these reasons, Belgium is an excellent case study to probe this issue. In particular, the question asked is if the social issues of the ‘refugee crisis’ are constructed differently in Belgian French- and Dutch-speaking media via the choice of denominations used.

A large set of denominations exist in language to refer to people on the move, some follow legal definitions (*refugee*, *asylum seeker*), other come from the common terminology (*migrant*, *immigrant*. . .) and are charged with the context in which they were

used in the past (see, for example, how the word *immigrant* was negatively charged in France in the 1980's in Bonnafous, 1991). To describe new realities, it is not unusual to observe the creation of new word construction such as neologisms (e.g. *migrant en transit/transitmigrant* – ‘migrant in transit’, *nieuwkomer* – ‘newcomer’ and *primo-arrivant* – ‘newcomer’) nor to avoid the connotations that another denomination could carry (e.g. the emergence of the word *sans-papiers* – ‘undocumented’ in Akin, 2018).

Even if all these words have their own unique meaning, the use of *migrant* and *refugee* as near synonyms by French journalists has been observed (Calabrese and Mistiaen, 2017). Baker and his team studied the terms *Immigrant*, *Migrant*, *Asylum seeker* and *Refugee* in a 140-million-word corpus composed of British news articles and concluded that they all share the same ‘consistent collocates’ (Baker et al., 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008), thus meaning that they are often used as synonyms in news articles. Blommaert and Verschuren (1998) state that the categorization of the ‘other’ in Flemish public discourse could be split into two dichotomies: *vreemdelingen* (‘foreigners’) opposed to *buitenlanders* (someone who lives outside the country) and *migranten* (‘migrants’) opposed to *vluchtelingen* (‘refugees’) and/or *asielzoekers* (‘asylum seekers’) (pp. 45–46). The authors argue that additional properties might ‘structure speaking and thinking about the ‘other’ in Belgian society’ (Blommaert and Verschuren, 1998: 45) such as the geographical origin, legal statute and motivation. For instance, Turks, Moroccans, Africans and East Europeans are more often qualified by the terms ‘third-generation (im)migrants’ even if they have been in the country for a long time and have Belgian citizenship.

It is clear that denominations are of importance as the way people on the move are named not only affects the issue of their asylum procedure (Van Neste-Gottignies and Mistiaen, 2019) but also the way they are perceived, especially when their image is spread throughout the media. ‘Choosing and using a specific term to describe a category of individuals can have substantial impact on how we perceive them’ (de Massol de Rebetz, 2018). Terms used to categorize people are also discussed in the media. Indeed, the context of the Syrian war, massive shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea and divergent political reactions led Barry Malone, the online editor from Al-Jazeera English, to declare, on the 20th of August 2015, that he will no longer use the term ‘migrant’, which, according to him, dehumanized the people who had been labelled under this denomination (Calabrese and Mistiaen, 2017). This meta discursive event initiated many discussions about the use of the word *migrant* in European media (Calabrese, 2018). As a matter of fact, ‘our earlier conceptions of *immigrant* and *migrant* no longer suffice. The word *immigrant* evokes images of permanent rupture, of the uprooted, the abandonment of old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture’ (Schiller et al., 1992: 1).

As ‘thinking differently requires speaking differently’ (Lakoff, 2014: xiii), this article will investigate how denominations to name people on the move are used and conceptualized in two linguistic communities within the same country.

The Kingdom of Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy officially run by King Philippe, who is the head of State but has very limited prerogatives. The country has a parliamentary system divided into three levels: Federal State, regional governments and parliaments (of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Region) and the two main linguistics communities (Dutch communities of Belgium and Wallonia-Brussels Federation).

Brussels-Capital City is a bilingual (Dutch and French) region. The regions are mainly socio-economical entities, while the communities are rather linguistic and cultural (Evens and Raeymaeckers, 2020). As a consequence, communities are, for instance, in charge of integration policies, but the constitution has allocated naturalization and migration policies to the federal government and parliament. In practice, asylum seekers ask for protection at the national level and are then sent to a reception centre managed either by Fedasil (Belgian Federal Agency for Reception of Asylum seekers) or the Red Cross. These centres then have to deal with regional policies regarding the integration processes.

Due to the construction of the federalism and because of cultural inheritance, the two main linguistic communities not only harbour different journalistic traditions (Jacobs and Tobback, 2013: 408; Raeymaeckers and Heinderyckx, 2018: 14) but also political agendas (Adam and Jacobs, 2014). The French-speaking community of Brussels acts according to a ‘laissez-faire assimilationist immigrant integration policy’ (Adam, 2013: 9), Flanders opts for a more interventionist policy, while the Walloon Region ‘does not clearly define[s] the policy frame wherein [. . .] [the] integration centres [. . .] function’ (Adam, 2013: 10). In general, Flanders privileges the local level of government, and, thus, more policy developments occur at that level, while the French-speaking community of Belgium remains attached to federal institutions. This creates an ‘asymmetrical’ federation (Adam, 2013: 13).

The first part of the paper, based on a literature review, outlines the hypotheses; the second part details the corpus and methodology. Then the results of the analysis are presented before moving to the conclusion.

Hypotheses

Previous studies show that denominations to name people on the move might vary according to, amongst others, different media outlets, countries or journalistic cultures (e.g. Baker et al., 2008; Calabrese and Mistiaen, 2017). This research investigates the main differences between the French- and the Dutch-speaking media coverage of the ‘refugee crisis’ in terms of actor denominations.

- H1: In many European languages, the most common terms coined to name people on the move are *refugee*, *(im)migrant* and *asylum seeker* (Berry et al., 2015: 7–8). The first two are often used as near synonyms (Baker et al., 2008), and while this is also true in French (Calabrese and Mistiaen, 2017), it is not always the case in Dutch-speaking Belgium as *migrant* often scored lower in terms of frequencies (Blommaert and Verschuren, 1998: 45–46; Mistiaen et al., forthcoming). We hypothesize that both linguistic communities use, after the most common terms (*refugee*, *(im)migrant*, *asylum seekers*), different denominations to name people on the move because French- and Dutch-speaking Belgian media diverge further from their respective political agendas (Adam and Jacobs, 2014; Mistiaen et al., forthcoming) and journalist traditions (Jacobs and Tobback, 2013: 408; Raeymaeckers and Heinderyckx, 2018: 14).
- H2: Because, during the period under study, federal politicians responsible for migration policy were all (native) Dutch-speakers, the Belgian Dutch-speaking

media adopted the terms *transmigrant* or *transitmigrant* quicker than the Belgian French-speaking press. The Dutch-language media reflects the political use of these terms.

- H3: Whereas migration policy is determined at the federal level, integration policies are regional. According to Ilke Adam (2013), this ‘offers explanatory insight into how immigrant integration policy frames diverge in Flemish and Francophone Belgium’ (p. 2). As integration policy has existed for much longer in Dutch-speaking Belgium, the Belgian Dutch-speaking media mentions the term *new-comers* (*nieuwkomers* in Dutch and *primo-arrivant* in French) more often than the Belgian French-speaking press.

These hypotheses will be the basis for further research investigating the extent to which the meaning of the same denominations differs in the Belgian French- and Dutch-speaking media coverage of the ‘refugee crisis’.

Corpus and method

In order to test the hypotheses, this research focuses on broadsheet and popular news outlets with the largest circulation in each linguistic community: *De Standaard* and *Het Laatste Nieuws* for the Dutch-Speaking Corpus (DSC), *Le Soir* and *La Dernière Heure* for the French-Speaking Corpus (FSC). A lexical query with the lemmas *migrant** and/or *refugee** was conducted in the database GoPress and an exhaustive corpus was collected. The latter spans from March 2015 (prior to the first media hype focused on ‘massive arrivals’ of refugees in Europe) to July 2017 (when the number of arrivals decreased). In total it counts 6,417,230 words and 14,006 articles and is included as a part of my PhD thesis², which studies the evolution of the terms referring to people on the move by means of a discursive analysis of media discourses (newspapers and evening news) in French and Dutch during the so-called ‘refugee crisis’.

There are slightly more francophone newspapers articles (7098) than Flemish ones (6908), for the period under study. Moreover, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, the Dutch-speaking tabloid, has many more articles compared to the Flemish broadsheet, *De Standaard*. Whereas in the French-speaking press we observe the opposite: the broadsheet (*Le Soir*) has more articles than the tabloid (*La Dernière Heure*). Because of this imbalance, all statistics were calculated in relative values.

Table 1. Corpus description .

Newspaper	Words	Articles
French-speaking	35,44,747	7098
<i>Le Soir</i> (Broadsheet)	27,84,236	4812
<i>La Dernière Heure</i> (Tabloid)	7,60,511	2286
Dutch-speaking	28,72,483	6908
<i>De Standaard</i> (Broadsheet)	10,02,779	1837
<i>Het Laatste Nieuws</i> (Tabloid)	18,69,704	5071
Total	64,17,230	14,006

The corpus was processed with the lexicometric software Hyperbase. In order to verify the above-mentioned hypothesis, different lexical tools were used: the keyword list, collocates, the concordance tool, distribution tool, theme distribution and correlate graphs. As Hyperbase does not allow processing of non-parallel multilingual corpora, the different statistical tools were run separately, as recommended in Hermand (2015). As social issues are naturally of a complex nature, a multidisciplinary approach is needed to analyse them (Van Dijk, 1993: 252). For this study, the methodology is a mix of Corpus Linguistics (CL), Discourse Analysis (DA)³ and documentary research. If DA provides the concepts and theoretical framework to analyse discourse, using a

corpus linguistics methodology allows for a higher degree of objectivity – that is, it enables the researcher to approach the texts (relatively) free from any preconceived notions regarding their linguistic or semantic/pragmatic content. When the starting point is keyword analysis, the analyst is presented with a list of words/clusters which will then be examined in (expanded) concordances for their patterning and contextual use (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008: 7).

DA and CL are methods usually closely combined to be as exhaustive as possible. These methods have been complemented by documentary research in the Belgian political context of the time, including documents such as dictionaries, media reports and articles with interviews from journalists and media representatives.

The first hypothesis is mainly tested through CL tools while the second and the third hypotheses are explored with the help of CL and DA, including historical and political documentary research in which the words *transmigrant* and *newcomer* appear.

Results

Corpus overview

In order to have an overview of the denominations present in the corpus, a ‘correlate graph’ composed of all the nouns mentioned in both corpora was generated. Both linguistic corpora are quite similar, and, in fact, the lexical fields composed of nouns show a comparable distribution. A lexical (or semantic) field enables words to be organized into a system which shows their relationship to one another. As a consequence, the lexical fields found in the corpus organize the content of it into ‘categories’.

The FSC presents a distribution of the usual lexical fields linked to migration. The top five lexical fields of the FSC are related to the following topics:

- The lexical field of *migration*: *authority, camp, hundred, thousand, influx, controls, borders, boat, smuggler*. . .
- The lexical field of *refugee*: *victim, conflict, violence, threat, death, freedom, body, women, child, man, police, justice, chance*. . .
- The lexical field of *asylum*: *reception, centre, welcoming, foreigner, protection*. . .
- The lexical field of *integration*: *language, work, condition, economy, experience, service, activity, associations, housing*. . .
- The lexical field of *politics*: *citizen, minister, opposition, responsibility, minister, solidarity, country, decision, return, repatriation*. . .

According to this distribution, it seems that *refugee* and *migrant* are not, in fact, overlapping terms as previously noted in other studies (see, e.g. Baker et al., 2008). Nevertheless, this does not mean that each occurrence of these two words is used according to their legal nor dictionary definition. It only means that they may be more likely to be collocated with the above-mentioned words.

The DSC presents similar characteristics. Two other lexical fields emerged from the graph: ‘family’, which contains ‘humanizing words related to actual human beings, such as “human”, “child”, “son”, “life” or “woman”’ (Galyga et al., 2019: 21) and what we have named as the lexical field ‘hope’, encompassing words, such as *world*, *live*, *escape*, *future*. The presence of the first field (‘family’) could show that the Flemish press underlines the human aspect of the migratory path more. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no other study has shown similar results. As a consequence, this point should be further investigated to prove its veracity. Another explanation could be that integration policies have been implemented for much more time in Flanders than in francophone Belgium. Such policies focus more on the human and his/her integration into the new country or community than on the way (s)he arrives in the country of destination and the implemented political policies. Nevertheless, previous content analysis has shown that there was no significative difference in the number of individuals mentioned in the French- or Dutch-speaking press (De Cock et al., 2018: 319).

People denominations

To study denominations more precisely, a list in both corpora, respectively, was generated. All possible denominations to name people on the move that occurred more than 10 times in each corpus were kept. Language divergences require different methodologies when composing the respective list. For the FSC, the lemmatized forms in the keywords list were sorted. For the DSC, the wordlist (generated by forms) was first analysed, then each grammatical form of each denomination included in the list was searched for in absolute value with the distribution tool and the ‘ET’ code to cumulate the various flexions. If the word had an adjective and a noun value, the general tendencies were first studied with the help of the concordance tool to identify which form was the most common. From this analysis, it was observed that words such as ‘*Iraqi*’, ‘*Syrian*’, ‘*Afghan*’, ‘*Eritrean*’, ‘*Moroccan*’ and ‘*Christian*’ were mostly used with an adjective value in French and with a nominal value in Dutch, and vice versa for words such as ‘*illegal*’. Only those words with a nominal value were kept on the list. Table 2 presents the occurrences of each denomination in both languages (in relative values).

More than 60 different denominations to name people on the move were found in our corpus. Of course some denominations (such as ‘*Person*’, ‘*People*’, ‘*Father*’, ‘*Mother*’, ‘*Child*’, ‘*Victim*’, ‘*Minor*’, ‘*Man*’, ‘*Woman*’, ‘*Girl*’, ‘*Boy*’, ‘*Occupant*’, ‘*Travellers*’, ‘*Baby*’. . .) may encompass many more persons than only people on the move, this will be more deeply researched in a later study.

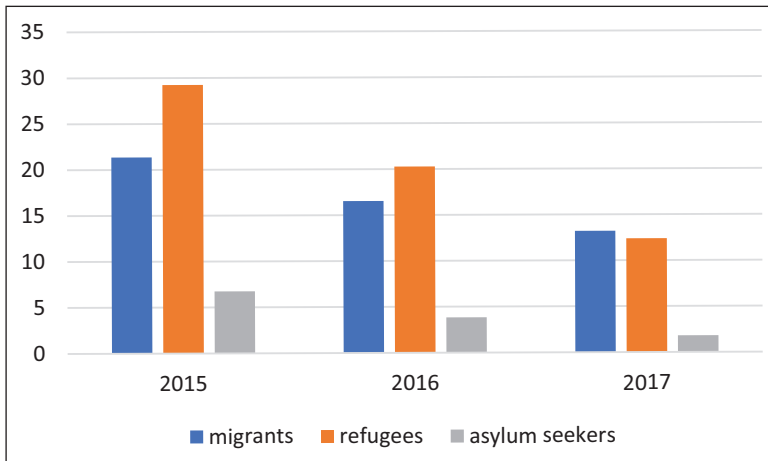
Table 2. People denomination in FSC and DSC.

Denomination (lemma)	French-speaking newspapers Relative value (10^{-4})	Dutch-speaking newspapers Relative value (10^{-4})
Refugee	27.920	48.889
Migrant	19.683	07.210
Person	12.974	02.096
Man	08.051	09.810
Child	07.036	13.326
People	06.330	29.424
Asylum seeker	05.439	14.402
Foreigner	05.526	00.627
Family	05.611	03.753
Woman	05.425	06.973
Victim	02.502	01.838
Candidate	02.404	
Girl	01.918	01.737
Father	01.856	01.779
Community	01.758	00.195
Body	01.563	00.606
Mother	01.453	01.932
Minor	00.979	01.323
Boat refugee		00.825
Illegal	00.818	
Individual	00.719	
Refugee candidate	00.699	00.146
War refugee		00.675
Allophone		00.696
National	00.556	
Resident	00.542	
Boy	00.508	01.716
Adult	00.485	00.592
Newly arrived (<i>primo-arrivant</i>)	00.463	
Without document	00.449	00.219
Youth	00.446	
Baby	00.429	
Unaccompanied Minor	00.403	00.696
Transmigrant	00.206	00.339
Beneficiary/recipient	00.386	
Allochthone		00.362
Passenger	00.375	00.219
Transit migrant	00.090	00.334
Child refugee		00.324
Occupier	00.310	
Stateless	00.310	00.303
Immigrant	00.092	00.383

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Denomination (lemma)	French-speaking newspapers Relative value (10^{-4})	Dutch-speaking newspapers Relative value (10^{-4})
Homeless person	00.099	00.543
Dead body	00.260	
Survivor	00.257	00.160
Newcomer (<i>Nouvel arrivant/nieuwkomer</i>)	00.346	01.838
Fortune hunter		00.160
Undocumented migrant	00.152	00.205
Travellers	00.121	00.104
Occupant	00.110	
Shipwreck sailor	00.067	00.188
Profiteer	00.048	00.122
Asylum seeker candidate		00.097
Returnee		00.091
Labour migrant		00.070
Guest worker		00.070
Grandchild		00.038

**Figure I.** Distribution (relative values) of 'migrants', 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' in the FSC.

The most common denominations of the corpus: (lm)migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The term *refugee* is the most mentioned word in both corpora. However, this legal term is mentioned 1.6 time more often in the DSC than in the FSC. What is particularly noteworthy is the place of *migrant* in the DSC, which is much lower than in the FSC. To be precise, it is used twice as much in the FSC as in the DSC. Nevertheless, the term *immigrant* is mentioned more often in the DSC, but the difference is less substantial than for

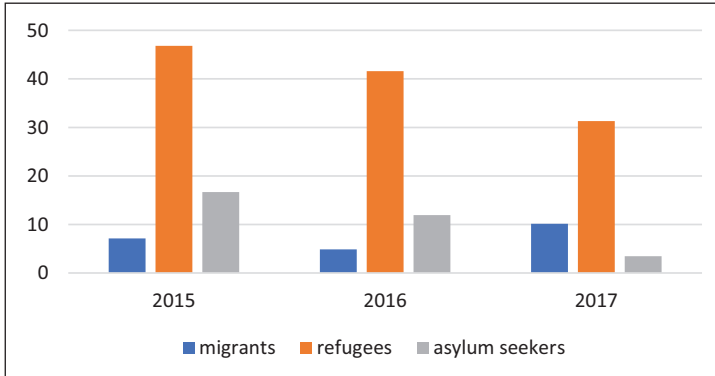


Figure 2. Distribution (relative values) of ‘migrants’ ‘refugees’ and ‘asylum seekers’ in the DSC.

the term *migrant*. Comparing the other classic terms used to name the individuals of the migratory crisis, the table shows that *asylum seeker* and *unaccompanied minor* are mentioned much more in the DSC. These terms that occur a lot in the DSC are actually more accurate as they correspond to a legal category of people; whereas the French-language newspapers under study seem to use fuzzier words to name these individuals (*migrant* or *foreigner* which are mentioned five times more than in the DSC).

Moreover, a long list of terms (such as *boat refugee*, *allophone*, *war refugee*, *child refugee*, *fortune hunter*, *returnee*, *foreign-born*) mentioned in the DSC are absent from the FSC. The absence of these terms in French is also due to noun construction in the language. The Dutch language, as other Germanic languages, can concatenate two or more words to mean the same as their sum, in other words: a compound noun, whereas in French this kind of association results in multi-word expressions, such as *réfugié de guerre* (‘war refugee’).

The words mentioned most often in both corpora (*migrants*, *refugees* and *asylum seekers*) have evolved similarly. As the DSC is not lemmatized, comparing the results was based on an analysis of the most typical word form occurrences, that is, the masculine plural. When comparing Figure 1 and Figure 2, we observe that the mentions of the words *refugees* and *asylum seekers* clearly diminished from 2015 to 2017. One possible explanation for this is that, at the same period of time, the number of asylum seekers also diminished in Belgium.⁴ Between 2015 and 2016 we observed a diminution in the usage of the word *migrants* in both corpora. In previous research conducted on French newspapers *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, the occurrences of the lemma *refugee* and a diminution in the mentions of *migrant* was observed after Al-Jazeera’s late 2015 decision to stop using the term *migrant* (Calabrese and Mistiaen, 2017). This could be one of the explanations for this diminution. Nevertheless, in the DSC the occurrences of the word *migrants* rose again in 2017. As previously mentioned, the word *migrant* is less often used in the DSC than in the FSC.

To evaluate whether the terms are used similarly in both corpora, the co-occurrences of these three terms were studied. In the DSC, the lemma *refugee* is mainly collocated with

‘OCMW’ (local public welfare centre), ‘welcome’, ‘recognized’, ‘stay’, ‘status’, ‘housing’ and ‘Stateless’. The lemma *migrant* is linked to ‘Italy’, ‘economic’, ‘Libya’, ‘coast guard’, ‘sea’, ‘border’ and ‘Calais’. *Asylum seeker* is associated with ‘welcoming’ ‘Fedasil’, ‘places’, ‘extra’ ‘reception centre’, ‘municipality’ and ‘number’.

In the FSC, *refugees* are mainly ‘Syrians’ who are located in ‘Lebanon’ or in ‘Turkey’. They benefit from a ‘status’ given by the General ‘Commissioner’ for Refugees and Stateless Person (CGVS). They are ‘welcome’ and deal with the ‘HCR’ (High Commissioner for Refugees). *Migrants* are ‘rescued’ in the ‘Mediterranean Sea’. They are located in ‘Calais’, in ‘Greece’, in ‘Libya’ or in ‘Italy’ and are managed by the ‘IOM’ (International Organization for Migration). *Asylum seeker* is firstly collocated with the lemma ‘place’ (in ‘centres’), then with ‘Theo’ and ‘Francken’ (Flemish nationalist N-VA politician), the State ‘Secretary’ for Asylum, Migration and Administrative simplification at that time. Francken runs the Foreign ‘Office’ and has much to say on the policies of ‘Fedasil’.

In fact, this corresponds to quite a similar distribution of meaning between these three terms:

- Refugees are recognized, they have a status that allows them to be welcomed and to find accommodation in Belgium. In the FSC, special attention seems to be paid to the nationality of these people and to the two host countries which have welcomed the most Syrians. National and international organizations are also much more collocated with *refugee* in the FSC while *refugee* in the DSC is strongly collocated with local welfare centres (OCMW).
- Migrants mainly come for economic reasons, travel from Libya to Italy via the Mediterranean Sea, meet coast guards and cross borders.
- Asylum seekers are received by the Foreign Office and are placed in reception centres managed by Fedasil. In the DSC, we observe a particular focus on the need for ‘extra places’ in reception centres and reactions that this triggers in municipalities.

The lemma *refugee* is the most mentioned term in both corpora, followed by *migrant* in the FSC and by *asylum seeker* in the DSC. These three most mentioned terms share many collocates, so it is very likely that their meanings are equivalent in both corpora. This also highlights the usual distinction made between the ‘genuine refugee’ who deserves to be welcomed and the ‘economic migrant’ who is viewed as being a ‘bogus refugee’ (Akoka, 2011; Holmes and Castañeda, 2016).

Less common denominations used to name people on the move. Table 2 indicates that the DSC counted few occurrences of economic terms, such as ‘*labour migrant*’ or ‘*guest worker*’. Even if, at this stage, the precise co-text of these words is unknown, the aim is to better understand and clarify the way these terms have been used. Remarkably, we also found the expression *sans-papiers* (‘undocumented’) written in French in the DSC, even though a translation, *mensen zonder papieren*, exists in Dutch. This term, created by activists (Akin, 2018), ‘avoids the denunciatory connotation of “illegal” (“clandestine” in French) which has the added disadvantage of perpetuating a classic confusion between clandestine work and clandestine presence on the territory’

(Siméant, 1998: 439). Another unexpected element of the corpus is the word *profiteer*. It occurs in both languages but even more so in the DSC. Looking closely, it actually occurs only in broadsheets but not in tabloids. In both corpora, the word *profiteers* is mainly used to distinguish the respective public from refugees, who may be viewed as enjoying the social welfare system. In the DSC, the term also appears in political quotes opposing Bart De Wever (N-VA) who is against Christian Democrats and Liberal politicians that defend the stance that newcomers also enrich the country. As seen in a previous study on Belgian French-speaking public broadcasting and commercial television (Mistiaen, forthcoming), this could be done either for clarification or to offer a larger understanding of the situation.

This confirms the first hypothesis (H1) which suggested that the press of the two linguistic communities mainly uses *refugee*, *(im)migrant* or *asylum seekers* to name people on the move. Nonetheless, after these three, the linguistic repertoire of each community diverges and, sometimes, the meaning carried by the context of the same word might also diverge (as is the case for *profiteer*). Of course, further research is needed to analyse other terms featured in the wordlist and their usage (such as *dead body*, *victim* and also *person*, *people*, *child*, *man*, *woman*, *father*, *mother*. . .).

Transmigrant and transitmigrant. Relatively new terms in their usage (at least in Belgium at the time of publication) such as *transitmigrant* or *transmigrant* also appear in the corpus. As expected in the second hypothesis, these terms are more often mentioned in the DSC (H2). When *transmigrant* and *transitmigrant* (*transmigrant* and *migrant en/de transit* in French) are grouped, we count 95 occurrences in the DSC and 40 in the FSC (respectively 0.331 and 0.113 in relative values). As acknowledged by researcher de Massol de Rebetz (2018),

in recent years (2015–2018), the term *transmigrant* or *transitmigrant* became part of the common vocabulary used by politicians and media when talking about matters of migration and border control. Since 2017, both terms are considered as synonymous by the dictionary *Van Dale*, which is the leading dictionary for the Dutch language [in Belgium].

In Dutch, *transitmigrant* is defined as a synonym of *transmigrant* by the *Van Dale* dictionary and has two definitions. In its broadest sense it means a ‘migrant who is temporarily staying in another country on their way to their country of destination’ (*Van Dale*) and in Belgium (or at least in Flanders): ‘a migrant or illegal migrant from Africa and Asia who wishes to go to the UK and stays on the Belgian or the French northern coast in the meantime’ (online *Vlaams Wordenboek*). For some reason, this word has not appeared in any French-speaking dictionaries (yet) even if the verb *transmigrer* is recorded in many French-speaking dictionaries. It also has two definitions: the act of leaving one’s country for another, and a more philosophic/religious one: to go from one body to another (*Larousse online*; it has to be noted that *Le Petit Robert online* only includes the last definition). In public discourse, the usage seems to lean towards the expression ‘*migrant en/de transit*’. *Transmigrant* is mentioned only eight times in the FSC, and in five of these occurrences, the word is followed (in brackets) by ‘migrants en

transit' or as explained later in the same article ('to name persons without document who are crossing Belgium and have the intention to go on with their travel', *La Dernière Heure*, 2017). One explanation of this low usage in French compared to the Dutch-language could also be attributed to the language itself. Indeed, Dutch, like German, is more often influenced by English, and its morphology tends to present a preference for prefixing. In both corpora, the term is more often mentioned in 2016 (only very few occurrences in 2015: 8 in the DSC and 1 in the FSC).

However, the verb *transmigreren*, with the two above-mentioned definitions, was already used in French in the 16th century,⁵ and according to VRT's (Flemish Public Broadcasting) journalist Ruud Hendrickx the word *transmigrant* is not new neither. It was used in the first article of the Law of The Netherlands on the 31st of December 1936 (p. 1) and denotes 'persons, not residing in The Netherlands, who travel across The Netherlands to a country outside Europe [. . .] for the purpose of settlement and (or) acquisition of means of subsistence, including their family members, who accompany or follow them'.⁶

The word is not new in academia either. For example, in the 1990's, *transmigrant* was also used in the USA for migrants who experienced 'transnationalism' by developing and maintaining 'multiple relations – familial, economic, social organizational, religious and political – that span borders' (Schiller et al., 1992: 1). According to researcher Mieke Schrooten, a *transmigrant* is someone who migrates more than once: (s)he leaves his or her origin country to another one where (s)he establishes herself/himself before moving to another country (Schrooten et al., 2015: 9–10). French anthropologist and sociologist Alain Tarrus studies changes that occur in space and time during the migratory journey. For him, a *transmigrant* is a migrant who discovers otherness through professional collaborations at border crossings (Tarrus, 2000). This concept is, thus, mainly economic.

In Belgium, according to the French-speaking Public Broadcasting (RTBF), no media spoke of 'transmigration' before September 2015, and then the word is always linked to a police operation or a declaration of Jan Jambon (N-VA), the Minister of Interior at that time. For the period under study, Ruud Henderickx noted that on the 27th October 2015, Jan Jambon used the term *transmigrant* for the first time on Dutch-speaking public radio, while the RTBF has the first time that he used the term on the 15th of March 2016 in response to a set of parliamentary questions in the Home Affairs Committee at the Parliamentary Chamber ('We have [. . .] the transmigration crisis', Leherte, 2018). The word was then officially written into the National Security Plan 2016–2019 on the 7th of June 2016. In December 2016, the term was also mentioned by the Public prosecutor of East-Flanders. Since then, the term has regularly been used in official reports and in the Flemish media (Claes, 2018), and discussions about its usage are everywhere in the Flemish media.⁷ It seems that it was only in January 2018 that the word crossed the linguistic border and became common in the French-speaking media. Moreover, on the 21st of January 2018, the word appeared in the title of a Dutch-language Belga press release relating a police evacuation of Maximilian Park in Brussels, a park situated in front of the Foreign Office where (trans)migrants gather before being admitted into the Office and later sent to a reception centre or before continuing to travel to their final destination (which is often the UK). All of the Flemish press agencies used it without modification, whereas the French-speaking press was more careful and waited until the end of the

month to mention the term coming from the translated press release. Unfortunately, the corpus under study stops in July 2017, which does not allow us to analyse the impact of this Belga press dispatch.

As reported by freelance journalist, Sven De Potter, the word *transmigrant* has quickly, and sneakily, crept into the Flemish language. If *transmigrant* is used to distinguish migrants for whom Belgium is not a preferred final destination (as opposed to migrants who do wish to establish themselves in Belgium), the information director of the RTBF, Jean-Pierre Jacquemin, informed the chief redactors that the word ‘transmigrant is a communicational choice of the government’ and, as a consequence, the media should be careful not to absorb it or, at the very least, to explain its context and who uses it (Leherte, 2018). According to some journalists, civil society associations and scholars, the term *transmigrant* tends to be dehumanizing, thus reducing human people to a statistical category (De Potter, 2018) and underlining the difference between ‘voluntary’ and ‘involuntary’ migration. The former being more likely to create hate reactions, while the person who migrates involuntarily, that is, they are forced to leave their country, generates compassion and support (Verkuyten et al., 2018: 904). Ann Lamon (2019) studied the frame in which the word *transmigrant* was mentioned in the Flemish press and social media, and she concluded that the usage of the word contributes to dehumanizing the person categorized under this denomination. According to Loïc Fraiture,⁸ Secretary of the far-left French-speaking party, Theo Francken’s cabinet insists this term has been used to avoid the need to protect people who could possibly ask for asylum in Belgium and, thereby, justifying the hard policy put in place. ‘[. . .] One could argue that this almost clinical term might have been chosen and instrumentalized to serve a certain political agenda given the governmental priority to fight against irregular migration’ (de Massol de Rebetz, 2018).

Another interesting pattern emerges when we look at the type of newspaper. Indeed, in both corpora, tabloids quote these terms more often. In the FSC, *Le Soir* (broadsheet) does not mention the term *transmigrant*, we only read it in *La Dernière Heure* (tabloid). In the DSC, *transmigrant* and *transitmigrant* are used twice as much by *Het Laatste Nieuws* (tabloid) than by *De Standaard* (broadsheet). Finally, it is interesting to note that in French two different expressions coexist: *migrant en transit* (‘in transit’) and *migrant de transit* (‘of transit’). *Migrant de transit* never appears in the French-speaking broadsheet *Le Soir* and seems to be used less in common language (more results on Google for ‘migrants in transit’ and ‘migrants of transit’ is officially used by the bilingual Myria (Federal Migration Centre) while ‘migrants in transit’ is used by active NGO’s in Belgium such as CIRE⁹ and Caritas International).

The second hypothesis (H2) is thus confirmed as the Dutch-speaking press not only adopted the term *transmigrant* (or *transitmigrant*) quicker but also uses it much more often than the French-speaking press. Moreover, during the period under study, Jan Jambon (Dutch-speaking politician of the N-VA) is the first politician to officially use it. The two Public broadcasters from each linguistic community do not agree on the first time the term was used as the first time was in the Flemish language without a follow-up translation (in October 2015 at the VRT, Public Flemish radio), while the second was used in a bilingual context (at the Home Affairs Committee in March 2016). As previously studied, this also underlines the fact that Belgium experiences two different public spheres (Mistiaen et al., forthcoming).

Nieuwkomer (newcomer) and *primo-arrivant* (newly arrived/newcomer) in the Belgian context. *Nieuwkomers* and *primo-arrivants* were grouped under the same subheading because they are often used as translations of each other. It seems that these terms were first proposed in Europe to categorize migrants who had arrived after the 30-year, post-war boom (1945–1975). Later, *primo-arrivant* was redefined to group people who migrate for economic and political reasons (CBAI-CRAcs, 2016: 8).

The CIRÉ found at least ten different definitions of the term *primo-arrivant*, of which two common features emerged, that is, a necessary geographical displacement and a relative length of the stay (CIRÉ, 2007: 28). Other examples of this plethora of definitions and realities are the main co-occurents of the term. For example, the Belgian French-speaking office for Birth and Childhood (ONE) speaks of *mères primo-arrivantes* (‘newcomer mothers’) while the French Community of Belgium speaks of *élèves primo-arrivants* (‘newcomer pupils’), and the Flemish education uses *anderstalige nieuwkomers* (‘allophone newcomers’). Such as for the term *transmigrant*, if the definitions of these terms appear in dictionaries, they are absent from the list of key migration terms published by the IOM.¹⁰

Some sources argue that the neologism comes from the ‘Communication of the Commission on Immigration, Integration and Employment’ published by the Commission of European Communities on the 3rd of June 2003. Nonetheless, after scanning the French

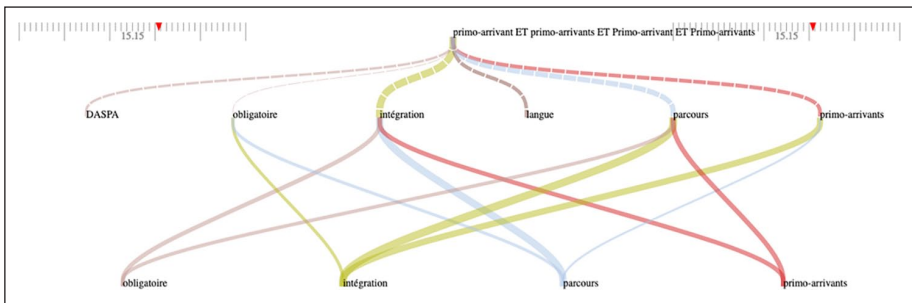


Figure 3. Theme distribution of the lemma ‘primo-arrivant’, FSC.

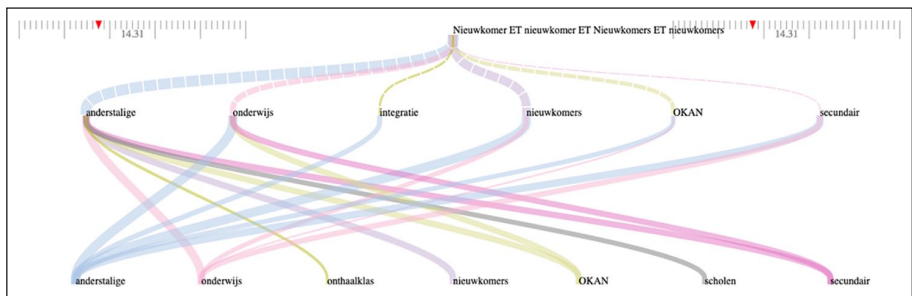


Figure 4. Theme distribution of the lemma ‘nieuwkomer’, DSC.

version of the text, no *primo-arrivant* was found. In the Dutch version, *nieuwkomers* occurred three times (and twice in the English version) in reference to policies which had been implemented in The Netherlands (already since 2002) and in Sweden. Instead, in the French version the following synonyms are used: *immigrés récents*, *nouveaux immigrants*, *immigrants nouvellement arrivés* ('newly arrived immigrants'), *nouveaux arrivants* ('new comers') and the opposite *anciens arrivés* ('old comers'). Even if the first time the term was exactly used cannot be attested, it is evident that the meaning is still unclear with various realities and criteria according to European countries (Siréas asbl, 2010).

In Belgium, the terms are linked to integration policies which are managed by the three regional governmental bodies, respectively, and which all define the term differently. French-speaking Brussels and Walloon decrees (respectively on the 18th July 2013¹¹ and the 27th of March 2014¹²) define the 'newcomer' as 'any foreign person over 18 years of age who has been living in Belgium for less than 3 years and who has a residence permit for more than 3 months and is registered at the aliens' register of a Walloon or Brussels municipality'. Citizens of a Member State of the European Union, the European Economic Area, Switzerland and their family members are excluded from the Walloon decree, whereas they are considered as newcomers in the French-speaking Brussels decree. In the Flemish decree of the 7th of May 2013,¹³ a newcomer is defined as

any foreign person aged 18 and over who comes to settle in Flanders or Brussels on a long-term basis or a person of Belgian nationality born outside of Belgium or a person with at least one of whose parents was not born in Belgium.

In practice in Belgium, as illustrated in the corpus, these neologisms are mainly linked with language learning and education. Indeed, the Flemish education defines 'allophone newcomers' as 'children of young people who have not lived in Belgium for a long time and cannot correctly speak Dutch. This includes various groups of people [such as]: refugees' and asylum seekers' children [. . .]'.¹⁴ Actually, as Figure 3 and Figure 4 show, in both sub corpora, the term co-occurs with 'integration' (*integration*) and 'language' characteristics (*anderstalige* ('allophone') in the DSC; *langue* ('language') in the FSC) as well as 'education' (*OKAN (Onthaalklassen voor Anderstalige Nieuwkomers)/onthaalklas, onderwijs* and *secundair* in the DSC; *DASPA (Dispositif d'Accueil des Primo-Arrivants)* in the FSC). While in Flanders it is mainly collocated with education, the FSC also underlines the 'compulsory' (*obligatoire*) 'process' (*parcours*) of integration with the help of *BAPA (Bureau d'Accueil pour Primo-Arrivants)*. It seems clear that in Belgium, in both linguistic communities, *primo-arrivants* and *nieuwkomers* refer to a newly arrived person who takes part in the integration process and learns the language (and culture).

Although the integration procedure in Flanders for newcomers has been mandatory since 2016, but has, in fact, existed since 2003, it is more recent in Wallonia, where it existed in 2014 and became mandatory in 2016. In addition, in Brussels it existed in 2013 and became mandatory in 2016. This explains why in the FSC the lemma is mentioned more around the time of the discussions concerning the creation of an integration process (in 2015; 0.96 in relative values) and, then again, at the moment it became compulsory (2016; 0.44 in relative values). In 2017, the discussions in the FSC accused the mandatory integration process of 'assimilation'. Nevertheless, in the DSC the opposite trend is

observable. Indeed, the occurrences of the lemma increases over the years. In the year 2016, the project of Wim Caeyers (Public Welfare President of Mol), which assigns a godmother/godfather to a refugee, took a large part of the coverage, while in 2017 it is the similar ‘buddy’s project’ from the Tienen Municipal Council for the Development of Community Life which took up a large place in the Dutch-speaking newspapers.

This partially confirms the last hypothesis (H3) as in both sub corpora the term is linked to the integration procedure and it seems to come from political decrees. As hypothesized, the DSC presents more occurrences of the lemma ‘*newcomer*’ than the FSC (00.346 in the FSC for 01.838 in the DSC; relative values, see Table 2). This may be attributed to the fact that integration policies are older in Flanders and, as a consequence, are mentioned from the beginning of the corpus. Nevertheless from 2015 to 2017, the occurrences decrease in the FSC and increase in the DSC, whereas it was expected that it would generate more discussions in the FSC in the year 2016 as the integration path was implemented that year in French-speaking Belgium. Instead it has been shown that it still generates discussions in the DSC.

Conclusion

This paper explored how media denominations used to name people on the move vary between the Belgian Dutch- and French-speaking press. A corpus composed of 14,006 articles of broadsheet and tabloid news media with the largest circulation in each linguistic community were analysed with Corpus Linguistic (CL) tools and Discourse Analysis (DA). CL tools, such as the concordancer and the specificity index, allowed the main characteristics of the corpus to be featured. Patterns observed were then analysed more closely with the help of DA.

Three hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis (H1: because political agendas and journalistic traditions diverge, the media of the two linguistic communities do not use the same linguistic repertoire of denominations, except for the most common terms) is only partially confirmed. While both corpora present a similar distribution of the usual lexical fields linked to migration and share the most common lemmas (*refugee*, (*im*)*migrant* and *asylum seeker*) with other European newspapers (Berry et al., 2015: 7–8), the linguistic repertoire varies in each community. Indeed, *migrant* is less mentioned in the DSC, which instead favours *asylum seeker*. Furthermore, the DSC presents a list of words that are never even mentioned in the FSC (such as *allophone*, *allochthone*, *war refugee*, *child refugee*, *fortune hunter*, *returnee*, etc.), while only one term from the FSC was not found in the DSC (*beneficiary*). This can be explained by the way nouns are built in both languages (the Dutch language can concatenate two or more words to mean the same as their sum whereas in French this kind of association results in multi-word expressions), but the use of a specific term can also work to clarify, as much as possible, the situation of the individual. As Flanders has applied a more interventionist (and assimilationist) migratory politics, there is a need for new words to categorize people entering the country and integrating into Flemish life. Of course, further research is needed to confirm this. In other respects, the three most mentioned terms in both corpus share (almost) the same collocates. As a result, each ‘category’ of people was depicted similarly in both corpora, underlining the well-known caricature of the refugee who has to be welcomed

and must obtain a status, whereas asylum seekers are to be found in reception centres dealing with administration and procedures. Finally, as in many other studies, the migrant carries an economic connotation and transits via the Mediterranean Sea to Italy and (illegally) across borders.

The second hypothesis (H2) was confirmed as the occurrences of the term *transmigrant* (or *transitmigrant*) were more prevalent and appeared earlier in the DSC. In its Belgian context, during the period under study (2015–2017), the term *transmigrant* was first used by Flemish nationalist N-VA Minister of the Interior, Jan Jambon. As a consequence, the Belgian Dutch-speaking media reflects the political use of these terms; moreover, the Dutch-language media adopted it quicker than the Belgian French-speaking press. Indeed, three politicians holding a key position in the government, and who freely express their views on Belgian migration policy, are members of the Flemish nationalist N-VA party (Mistiaen, 2019). During the period under scrutiny, the term appeared in the Flemish media almost 1 year before their French-speaking counterparts. Discussions over the term are more numerous in the Dutch-speaking media and cover a larger set of positions (some being positive) while the French-speaking media seem to agree on the negative connotations carried by the term.

Nevertheless, the last hypothesis (H3) has shown that a term (here ‘newcomer’) can also have the same meaning in both linguistic communities as it has mainly shared the same co-occurrences in both sub corpora even though it is, as expected, more often mentioned in the Dutch-speaking corpus. As a matter of fact, ‘newcomer’ is linked to the integration process and language learning which had been implemented much earlier in Flanders (2003) than in French-speaking Belgium (2014).

This study shows that the most common lemmas to name people on the move are shared by both linguistic communities of Belgium. Moreover, the lexical field and collocations associated to them are similar. However, an in-depth analysis suggests that Belgium operates on two different levels in terms of understanding federal migration policies and implementation of regional integration policies. This is reflected in the media as the corpus under study demonstrates that some terms, such as *transmigrant*, not only have different meanings in both linguistic communities but also generate various media reactions. Other terms, such as *newcomer*, may have the same meaning (sharing the same co-occurrences) but show a dissimilar distribution in both linguistic communities probably because of the two different models of integration policies.

To conclude, at first media from both linguistic communities present similar patterns regarding people denominations, but when we look in more detail, people denominations diverge and reflect language used by politicians in office. As many Flemish N-VA politicians held a position related to migration in the government at that time, Flemish media were inclined to use words such as *transmigrant* or *newcomer* quicker than their francophone counterparts.

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Notes

1. All translation are ours.
2. The corpus will be available online when the thesis has been published.
3. Under the label DA we consider French Discourse Analysis as well as Critical Discourse Analysis, two theoretical frameworks belonging to the same family as they share a common origin in Foucault's and Bakhtin's writings. Even if they developed a different set of concepts, they still remain perfectly compatible and particularly complementary.
4. The Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) in Belgium observes a peak in asylum seeker applications in 2015, 2016 and 2017. However, the latest count reveals more resettlement and relocation refugees. Available at: <http://www.cgra.be/en>. (accessed 20 January 2020).
5. The first definition mentioned by *TLFi* and *Base Historique du Vocabulaire Français* refers to the act of moving from one country to the other in a literal sense. The second one is the same as the above-mentioned: to go from one body to another. Available at: Base historique du vocabulaire français (Datations et Documents Lexicographiques) (2020) Transmigrer. <http://atilf.atilf.fr/jykervei/scripts/dl/cherche.exe?13;s=818882265>; (accessed 12 September 2020) and ATIF (Analyse et traitement informatique de la langue française) (2020) Transmigrer. <http://stella.atilf.fr/Dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/advanced.exe?8;s=1988728170>. (accessed 12 September 2020).
6. Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1936) Available at: <http://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl/>. (accessed 21 January 2020)
7. Henderickx R (29 January 2018) Trans(it)migranten. Available at: <https://vrttaal.net/nieuws/transitmigranten>. Redactie. Wat is dat juist een 'transmigrant'? En hoeveel zijn er in België? Available at: <https://www.hln.be/nieuws/>. (accessed 21 January 2020)
8. Roelant G (2017) Francken creëert zelf beeld van transitmigranten. Bruzzwebsite. Available at: <https://www.bruzz.be/samenleving/francken-creert-zelf-beeld-van-transitmigranten-2017-08-11>. (accessed 21 January 2020)
9. Created in 1954, the non-profit organization CIRÉ (Coordination et initiatives pour réfugiés et étrangers) has been defending the rights of exiled people, with or without a residence permit. It has subsidies granted by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Available at: <https://www.cire.be/a-propos/>. (accessed 19 October 2020)
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