

MUSLIM WOMEN ISSUES IN THE PRESS: A CORPUS LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE BURKA'S REPRESENTATION IN THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an investigation of media representation of Muslim women (MW) issues. The study tries to examine the way in which the controversial Islamic dress, the burka, is represented in one of UK's most circulated newspapers, the Daily Telegraph, and to identify the key topics the Daily Telegraph uses to address Muslim women issues and how they are represented in those topics. The paper is informed by Baker's (2004) framework of Corpus-Assisted discourse analysis which has recently been widely integrated in discourse studies of newspaper articles. The corpus tools used to realize this research are: keyword analysis, concordance analysis and collocation. The analysis has focused on the burka representation as it has recently been one of the most salient topics in the Telegraph concerning Muslim women. The concordance analysis has revealed the basic patterns the Telegraph uses to deal with the topic of burka in particular and Muslim women in general. It is found that in the majority of cases the Telegraph negatively represents the burka, occasionally shows it neutrally, and only rarely presents it positively. The paper concludes with a discussion of the main findings by highlighting the Telegraph's discourse that turns around the topic of burka.

Keywords: Burka, concordance, corpus linguistics, keyword tool, Muslim women.

INTRODUCTION

The events of 9/11 and the aftermaths of the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively by the US Army and its allied forces are considered a landmark in the new history of the relationships between Islam and the West. Since that date, Islam has been put under the lights of Western media and soon it has become the new enemy of Western and global values, sometimes viewed as an extremist violent religion that pushes its followers to terrorism and violence and other times as a symbol of intolerance, dictatorship and misogyny (Abbas, 2000; Pool, 2002). Topics like terrorism, Islamic intolerance, Muslim women dress such as hijab and burka are among the most discussed topics.

This paper is part of a larger study that adopts mixed research methods informed by the use of quantitative Corpus linguistics and the qualitative interpretations of text production and consumption proposed by Baker (2004). Using such techniques the paper aims to answer the following question: How are Muslim women discursively represented in one of Britain's most prominent newspapers, The Daily Telegraph? Studying media discourse and its effect on the way the public in the West perceives reality and events is a topic that has been called for by many researchers in the fields of media and discourse, notably by Bell (1991), Van Dijk (1998), and Richardson (2007).

Using the potential of corpus linguistics in investigating the lexis used in a given corpus through its various corpus tools, this paper is an attempt to identify the key topics the Telegraph focuses when reporting on Muslim women and to reveal if Muslim women and their issues are represented positively or negatively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The representation of Islam and Muslims in the media has been a topic of considerable discussion and contentious debates since the start of the third millennium AD. As one of the most controversial minorities in the West, Islam and Muslim issues have attracted the attention of a number of researchers (Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005; Kabir, 2006 ; Saeed, 2007). Most of these studies argue that Islam and Muslims are negatively represented in the Western media. Among the various Muslim issues that have attracted researchers' interest is the topic of Muslim women in the media. A number of researchers have tried to unveil the way some Western media outlets tend to represent Muslim women such as Falah's (2005), Posetti (2006) and Ozcan (2012) but hardly any of them covered the topic of the burka in press. The reason this paper focuses on the burka is because it is seen even by Muslims as an extreme form of modest dressing especially in the context of modern ideals of liberal secularism, human rights, and the rise of nationalistic movements in the West.

Muslim Women in the Press

Studies about Muslim women representation in the media take different orientations and various approaches. Some researchers focus on the visual representation of Muslim women and how media, and especially newspapers, tend to visualize Muslim women. For instance, Fahmi's study (2004) on Associated Press images of Afghan women and Falah's (2005) research on the visual representation of Muslim/Arab women in some U.S daily newspapers are two studies that show how US media leans towards a simplistic negative representation of Muslim women and reports them as victims. They also use some positive, unrealistic portrayal of Muslim women in order to justify the liberating missions landed by the US forces in the Middle East and Afghanistan (Fahmy, 2004; Faleh, 2005). In addition to that, other studies may focus on some issues that relate to Muslim women especially the topic of veil or hijab. These latter issues have drawn the attention of many researchers such as MacDonald (2006), Posetti (2006), and Ozcan (2012).

Posetti (2006) argues that the two basic patterns the Western media use to portray Muslim women through the veil are either as a threat to Western secular societies or as passive victims of their native societies. In addition, Ozcan's (2012) study on the visual depiction of Muslim women in the German media shows that although the German media deals extensively with the issue of Muslim women dress, it does not aim to provide information about this migrant minority but to show how incompatible and inconsistent they are with the German modern life. Accordingly, this paper aims to reveal whether the Daily Telegraph follows Western media in dealing with the same topics in similar way or if there are some new patterns.

METHODOLOGY

This section is set to discuss the method that was used to collect articles from the Daily Telegraph and the process of corpus compilation. Also, it discusses the methodological framework used to analyze and interpret the newspaper articles.

Data

The main corpus of this study consists of articles compiled from the UK's newspaper, the Daily Telegraph. This latter was chosen because of its large readership and circulation as it was the most circulated daily newspaper within the UK in 2010 and the second most circulated UK newspaper after the Guardian worldwide in the same year (National Readership Survey, 2010). The news articles included are those that appeared from 2010 to 2016. The search terms used for the compilation were: Muslim woma(e)n and Arab woma(e)n. Another reference corpus has been compiled from the Guardian newspaper using the same search terms as the Telegraph corpus and from the same period. The purpose of this latter corpus is to be used in the keyword analysis as a reference corpus to sort out the main topics appearing in the Daily Telegraph corpus.

Research Questions

In order to reveal how Muslim women issues are represented in the Daily Telegraph and show how Muslim women are represented in those topics, this study puts forward some questions for the purpose of framing our research and obtaining unbiased results. These questions are:

RQ1: What are the key topics used to address Muslim women issues?

RQ2: Are those topics positive or negative?

RQ3: How are Muslim women represented in those topics?

Analytical Framework

In order to answer the above questions, a research method was designed which is informed by the use of corpus linguistic quantitative and qualitative analyses that are based on the process of text production and consumption (Baker, 2004). The corpus linguistic tools that are used for the data analysis are the keyword analysis tool, concordance and collocation tools.

Keyword analysis

keywords are “words which appear in a text or a corpus that are statistically more frequent than would be expected by chance when compared to a corpus which is larger or of equal size” (Cvrček, 2016). However, Keyness is not measured through high frequency of words but through their statistical significance when compared with other words in another corpus. The mathematical formula that is used to calculate Keyword analysis is used in this study in order to identify the key topics that are addressed by the Daily Telegraph when it reports about Muslim women. According to Rayson, P., Berridge, D., & Francis, B. (2004) Keyness E_i is calculated by following formula:

$$E_i = \frac{N_i \sum_i O_i}{\sum_i N_i}$$

Note that the N values corresponds to the number of words in corpus one ‘c’ and the number of words in corpus two ‘d’. The Observed value (O) corresponds to the frequency of word in corpus one ‘a’ and frequency of word in corpus two ‘b’.

Concordance analysis

Concordance allows researchers to study the use of words in context in order to make statements about the overall discourse by revealing the various semantic relationships that exist between words (Scott, 1996). This tool is used in the present paper in order to make a

further analysis of the keyword terms that were generated through the keyword analysis process. Concordance analysis is able to show how words are used in a specific context.

Collocation

It is a combination of words in a language that occurs very often and more frequently than would take place due to chance only (Scott, 1996). Native speakers of a language tend to use one word instead of another to the extent that using one in the place of the other is considered as wrong or inappropriate. Collocation helps in identifying the context where words appear which is considered as vital for understanding their meaning and discourse.

Each of these tools has its function. Keyword analysis is used to identify the most salient topics in the studied corpus while collocation and concordance analyses are used to reveal the discourse around these salient topics through the textual information and use of those topics. Fortunately, keywords and concordances are not counted manually as some corpus linguists have developed software to do an automatic fast calculation such as Laurance Antony's (2014) AntConc (3.3.4W) software which is used in this study.

RESULTS

In this section, corpus linguistics tools of keyword analysis, concordance and collocation are applied in order to identify the main topics in the Muslim Women Telegraph Corpus (MWTC) and reveal the discourse that turn around MW from an analysis of the strongest key topic in the main corpus. The study starts first with the keyword analysis, then concordance analysis and finally with a discussion of the results.

Keyword Analysis

The keyword analysis is set to identify key themes in the Muslim Women Telegraph corpus MWTC. It is worth mentioning that frequent words in a corpus do not necessarily constitute the key topics in a text (Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnnery, 2012). For this purpose, Corpus Linguistic (CL) uses a mathematical algorithm to count keyness in a text based on a probability value given to each word in a text and its likelihood to appear more or less frequently in a corpus when compared with another reference corpus. As mentioned above, the reference corpus that is used to sort out keywords in the Telegraph's main corpus is compiled from the Guardian newspaper articles. The two corpora were compiled and preserved in a txt form and in separate files called the Muslim women Telegraph Corpus (MWTC) and the Guardian Reference Corpus (GRC).

Using AntConc (3.4.4W) software, the two corpora were first downloaded into the software, the Log-Likelihood option was then chosen to compare between the two corpora, and finally, a list of 100 keywords ranked by their keyness was created.

After filtering the list and removing irrelevant words that are related to the newspaper information such as *telegraph*, *edition*, *pg*, *dttl*, *cent*, *graphic*, *London*, *page*, *daily*, *national*...etc, a table is set up to show the top 20 keywords in the MWTC to try and provide an analysis of the words that appear to be key terms in MWTC. Table 4.1 shows the top 20 keywords in the MWTC. The words are classified according to their strength in keyness. The first thing that attracts the researcher's attention is that keyness is not identified by frequency; the most frequent words are not necessarily the key words in that corpus. For instance, the word *burka* appears less than the word *ban* (159, and 271 times respectively) yet, *burka* is ranked above *ban* and it is likely to have more keyness value.

Table1 Top 10 keywords in MWTC.

Rank	keyword	Frequency	Keyness
11	burka	159	436.724
13	veil	280	337.983
15	veils	163	2.44.769
20	Face	336	234.609
21	Miss	123	230.470
23	remove	107	204.710
24	niqab	125	203.251
29	code	411	195.647
30	Ban	271	195.453
37	Mrs	74	174.037

As Table 4.1 indicates, words such as *burqa*, *veil* and *niqab* are the top keywords in the MWTC. This means that the topic of veiling and Muslim women dress continues to dominate the news reports about MW in the Western media and the Telegraph shows no exception. Although Muslim practices have existed in Europe for a long time, the issue of *hijab* or the *veil* is still something Britain seems to regard as alien and incompatible with Western ideas and values.

Since the basic aim of making a keyword analysis of the MWTC is to identify key topics in the corpus, it was decided to group words from the same lexical field into different semantic categories because it was noticed that some words that are used to talk about the same topic such as veils, veil, burka, niqab can be grouped in the semantic category of veiling or hijab. Henceforth, the 200 keywords are grouped into different semantic categories. Each semantic category is said to be a key topic in the MWTC. Table 4.2 summarizes the key topics or semantic macrostructures of the MWTC.

Table.2 Semantic topics in the MWTC

Semantic category	Keywords
Veiling and Dress	burka, veil, veils, niqab, face, remove, code, wearing, wear, burkas, dress, burkini, veiled, facial, breasts, covering, eyes
Court and law	Judge, court, trial, defendant, jury, guilty, witness, evidence, ordered, banned, ban , plea, allowed, stabbed, police, killed
Religion	Faith, sheikh, god, religious, Islamist, Muslim, Sharia, Church, Islamic, Koran, Christian, guidance
Terrorism	Isil, quada (they use Al Qaeda?), knife, Seleka, jihadist, Chabab, fighters, front, Islamist

Keywords are grouped into four semantic categories which are: *Veiling & dress*, *court & law*, *religion*, and *terrorism*.

A preliminary reading of the key topics in the MWTC reveals that the Telegraph tends to regard the issue of MW veil and dress a prominent topic and something that needs a lot of coverage and discussion. Although the presence of Islam and Muslims has a long tradition in

the British society and MW are known by their veils since a long time ago, something that should be seen normal because of its long existence, the Telegraph seems to report the Muslim veil and MW dress as something in odds with multicultural British values and traditions. However, the researchers do not claim that reporting about veil and MW dress is all negative. This issue needs further analysis. The other topics include court, religion and terrorism. It is believed that these three topics are controversial and always reflect heated debates especially religion and terrorism. The latter is said to be a very negative topic in the West since the 9/11 attacks to the extent that Muslim and terrorist are almost synonymous words nowadays. The topic of *court & law* reflects the various difficulties Muslims in general and MW in particular are facing in the West in legalizing their religious practices. In this respect, the topic of veiling appears to be the dominant topic of law and court debates. One can refer to the various laws that have been issued in many parts of Europe that call for banning the wearing of hijab in public spaces, especially in France. All in all, the researchers believe that these topics are negative topics. Hence, the Daily Telegraph tends to report MW in association with negative themes.

Although the keyword analysis is a practical step toward tracing the properties of the discourse of the Daily Telegraph about MW and revealing some basic elements of this discourse (e.g. identifying the key topics in the MWTC and see whether the topics are negative, positive or neutral), keyword analysis alone cannot reveal how such topics are dealt with in context. For instance, although it is believed that associating MW with topics such as terrorism and war is something that would make readers formulate a negative perception about MW, the researchers believe that a further analysis of the context where such topics and keywords appear is needed. In this respect, Baker (2004) asserts that keyword analysis is not a complete process unless when those keywords are studied in context. He stresses that “Examining how such keywords occur in context, which grammatical categories they appear in and looking at their common patterns of co-occurrence should therefore be revealing” (Baker, p.3, 2004). Since concordance analysis shows how keywords are used in context, it is also called keyword in context (KWIC) by some corpus linguists such as Baker (2004). It reflects whether the key topics are negatively or positively reported in the context where they appear in the MW articles. The current study tackles the most salient topic in the Telegraph corpus which is veil & dress.

Keywords in Context: a Concordance Analysis

This section is set to analyze the key topics in the MWTC in the context where they appear in the corpus. The concordance analysis shows all the sentences where such keywords appear and the researcher’s work is to analyze these sentences from a lexico-grammatical point of view. The analysis is meant to reveal the discourse that turns around such topics. The analysis will include only the strongest key topic which is veil and dress.

Veil and Dress

The analysis of keywords in contexts starts with the most prominent topic in the MWTC. As seen in *Table 4.1* words pertaining to the topic of MW veiling and dress are the strongest key words in the corpus under investigation with the words burka, veil, and niqab occupying the top of the list. Yet, the analysis will only consider the strongest keyword in this topic, the word *burka*.

Burka

It is the strongest keyword in the corpus and in the topic of veiling. It appears 159 times and only 147 times when removing duplicates. The word burka (also **burkha**, **burqa**)

pronounced /'burka/ as defined in Oxford Online Dictionary (2017) is “an Arab word used to refer to a long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet, worn in public by women in many Muslim countries”. After scanning the 147 concordance lines as displayed by AntConc (3.44), it is found that the Daily Telegraph uses three main patterns to represent this issue. These patterns are summarized in Table 4.3

Table 3 burka's representation patterns

Pattern	N ^o of Lines	Percentage
Positive	13	8.84%
Negative	93	63.29%
Neutral	41	27.89%
Total	147	100%

Figure 1 illustrates the first twenty concordance lines as they are displayed in AntConc (3.4.4). The software organizes word concordance as they appear in the corpus. It is up to the researcher to group the different lines that point to the same thing into topics.

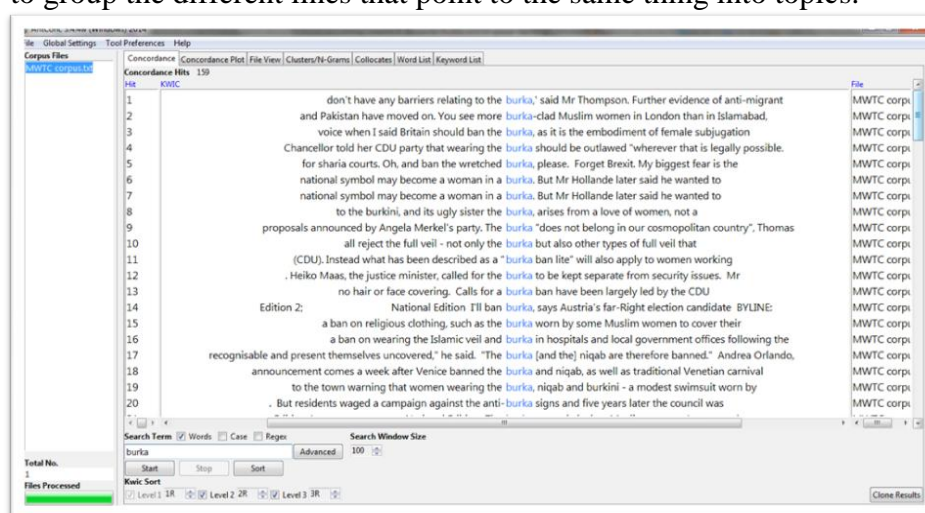


Figure 1 Burka negative concordances

The negative representation of the topic of burka by the Telegraph has two main patterns: a) giving much space to the voices of burka ban and b) reporting the burka as a primitive dress that threatens the Western values and identity.

Lines number 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18 in figure 1 all point to the same topic which is the *burka ban*. This latter is regarded as the most negative topic in the Telegraph's pattern of burka representation. Line 3 as shown in Figure 4.1 for instance is an explicit and direct call for banning the burka in Britain because, according to the writer, the burka embodies female subjugation. Moreover, the burka is something *wretched* that should be outlawed (lines 4 and 5). The following lines are some other examples about *burka ban*:

“Oh, and ban the wretched **burka**” (The Telegraph, December 7, 2016)

“told her CDU party that wearing the **burka** should be outlawed, wherever that is legal” (Telegraph, December 7, 2016).

“Call for burka ban has been largely led by the CDU” (Telegraph, August 20, 2016)

Other lines refer to the burka ban that is being called for in some European countries including Germany (line 13), Austria (line 14), Italy (line 17) France and Belgium (line 51) as the following lines show:

I'll **ban burka**, says Austria's far-right election candidate (Telegraph, August 15, 2016).
comes a week after Venice **banned** the **burka** and niqab, as well as traditional Venetian carnival (Telegraph, December 12, 2015).
France became the first European country to **ban** the **burka** in public in 2011. (Telegraph, September 17, 2013).
Belgium moves closer to **banning** the **burka** (Telegraph, April 1, 2010).

Lines number 2, 6, 9, and 10 in figure 1 are about burka and European national identity. For instance, the newspaper reports about the German Chancellor Angela Merkle's party saying: "the burka does not belong to our cosmopolitan country" (line 9). Lines 2 and 6 show how the burka is portrayed as invading Europe to the extent that women in burka are reportedly seen more in London than in Islamabad, and where the burka is going to be the national symbol of France because many Muslim women tend to wear it. The following are some examples:

"You see more **burka**-clad Muslim women in London than in Islamabad" (Telegraph, December 8, 2016). For me this line strikes some fear in the hearts of the readers.
"national symbol may become a woman in a **burka**" (Telegraph, October 13, 2016).
"formal resolution describing the **burka** as an affront to French values" (Telegraph, May 12, 2010).
"a devout Muslim and she wears the **burka** and niqab in accordance with her religious faith" (Telegraph, July 2, 2014).

As the concordance lines show, the reporting of the Muslim women burka and its representation turn around two major negative themes: first, the call for a European campaign towards a ban of this Islamic, 'anti-Western' dress that "denigrates women"; second, the burka is reported purely as an Islamic practice that threatens the European identity menacing its very existence because of the growing number of Muslim women who come to Europe with their religious rituals and cultural practices. Hence, an indirect but a strong Islamophobic discourse is being propagated by the Daily Telegraph via the issue of the Muslim burka, despite the knowledge that the majority of Muslims do not regard wearing the burka as a religious obligation. This claim is supported by a collocation analysis showing that *burka* collocates with verbs such as *ban* and *banning*, and with countries such as France and Britain that refer to Europe where the debate over the *burka* and the European identity is so heated, especially in France.

Neutral presentation of the topic of burka in the Telegraph appears in a few instances where it reports some stories of burka ban in some European countries and the battle being fought by Muslims in order to legalize this dress. Moreover, the Telegraph reports on stories to define the burka as a dress, how it is required in some Islamic schools and countries and how some Muslims look at this dress. Some examples below reflect this pattern:

53 "no right to evaluate culture," he said. "A **burka** is not better or worse than a short" (Telegraph, September 19, 2013).
54 yesterday, requires all pupils to wear a **burka**, or a full-face veil and a long black (September 19, 2013)

55 Islamic schools, require pupils to wear a **burka** or *jilbab* (headscarf) The Ayesha (The Telegraph, September 19, 2013).

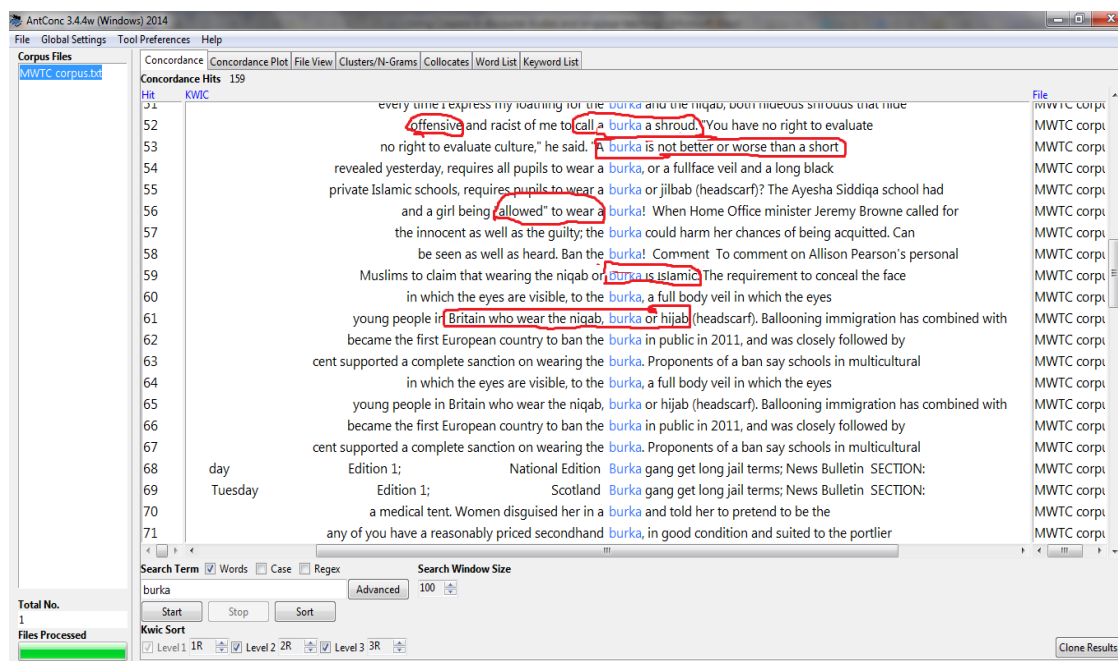


Figure2 Burka neutral concordances

As far as the positive depiction of the burka is concerned, stories about this pattern include some instances where the burka is shown as a free choice made by some Muslim women. In addition to that, the positive representation of the burka is reflected in rare instances where the burka is said to be another way of presenting the beauty of women but from a different perspective. The following are examples of this pattern:

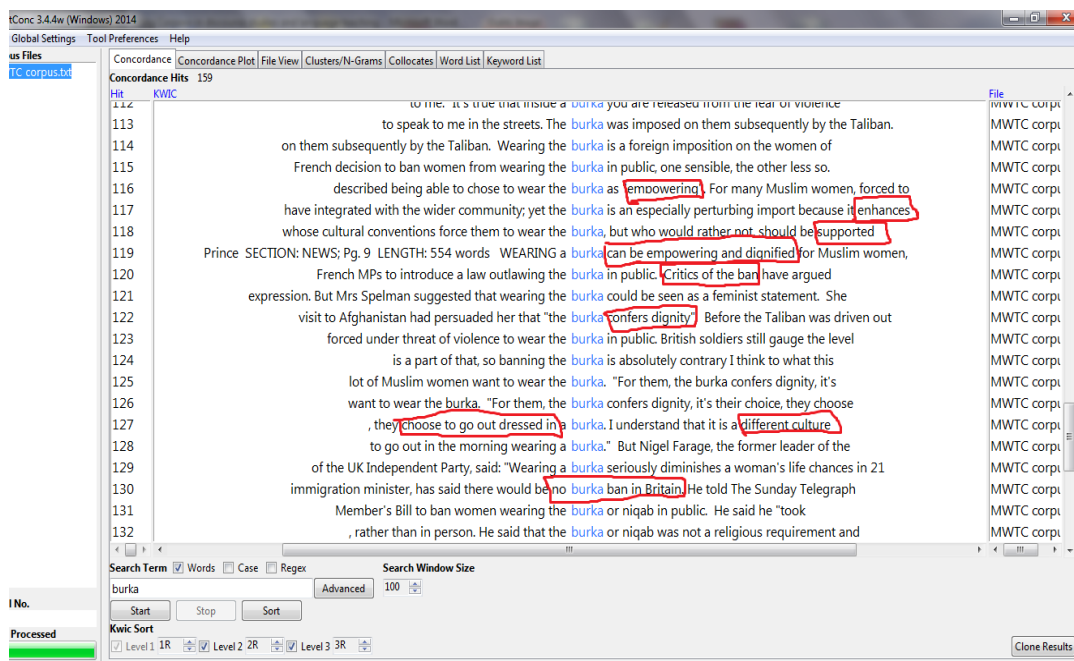


Figure3 burka positive concordances

116 described being able to choose to wear the burka as "empowering".(Telegraph July 19, 2010)

122 Visit to Afghanistan persuaded her that "the burka confers dignity" (Telegraph, July19, 2010).

125 They choose to go out dressed in a **burka**, I understand that it is a different culture (Telegraph, July19, 2010).

DISCUSSION

The data analysis has revealed that in general the Daily Telegraph focuses on negative topics when it deals with issues related to Muslim women. The keyword analysis of the MWTC has shown that these topics are *burka* and *veil*, court & law, and religion. It is claimed that these topics reflect how the Daily Telegraph uses cliché topics such as women dress to report on Muslim women in a superficial negative way. Thus, the newspaper is clearly missing the opportunity (intentional or otherwise) to inform and enlighten its readers about the real issues and challenges Muslim women face within and outside the UK and Europe, knowing that dress has never been a real obstacle for Muslim women to achieve success and development. Examples of very successful veiled Muslim women are numbered, and among them are: the American activist and writer Linda Sarsour who has been named as the Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in 2017 (The Times, 2017), the Yemeni journalist and human rights activist Tawakol Kerman, who was a Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2011.

Moreover, when the Telegraph deals with Muslim women dress, it focuses on the burka or the full face veil although a very tiny minority of Muslim women tends to wear it, not only in Europe and the UK but also in many Arab and Islamic countries. The Telegraph reports and supports the views of those against the burka by giving them much more space to spell out their negative views about it and to spread their exaggerated fear of a Europe with more Muslim women wearing burka in Europe than in Islamabad. On the contrary, it gives very little space for Muslim women to voice their views about the burka and other Islamic dress although they are the first who should be concerned about their issues. Consequently, the Muslim veil, or the *hijab*, is no longer a key topic in the Western media as shown in previous studies (Al Hejin 2012; Ozcan 2012). The focus seems to have shifted toward the controversial burka.

However, the Telegraph representation of Muslim women issues is not all gloomy and negative. Sometimes, the newspaper gives space to Muslim women to talk positively about their issues and show their capacity to defend themselves and fight the stereotypical images that surround them. It is hoped that the Daily Telegraph and other Western media outlets will do more to promote positive images about Muslim women and Islam for a world free from prejudice and conflicts between cultures and religions.

CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to investigate a British depiction of MW through an analysis of news articles that appear in the Daily Telegraph, one of the most circulated quality newspaper in the UK and worldwide. The study is an attempt to enrich the literature being produced about Islam and Muslims in general and MW in particular in order to unveil the spreading clash of civilization between Islam and the West since 9/11 attacks.

The framework adopted for this study is a mixed method proposed by Baker (2004) which consists of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. The main corpus tools used are keyword and concordance analysis integrated with an interpretation of text production.

The keyword analysis has revealed the salient topic in the MWTC. The Daily Telegraph's topics that dominated the news about MW were negative topics including veil and dress, court and law and terrorism. The concordance analysis of the strongest key topic of veil and dress has shown that the pattern of burka's negative presentation was a dominant theme especially when the topic of burka ban is provoked. Examples of such negative pattern have shown that The Daily Telegraph uses a negative and Islamophobic discourse to report MW burka. Yet, it also gives some little space for neutral and positive representation of this controversial dress, something that would not be expected from a supposedly unbiased, high quality broadsheet newspaper.

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