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GRAO EN INGLÉS: ESTUDOS LINGÜÍSTICOS E LITERARIOS

An Analysis of Trans-Inclusionary and Trans-Exclusionary
Discourse

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Year 2022

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Abstract

In the past century, with the boom of the advocacy for gender equality, transgender individuals have also pushed for their rights, although they have faced—and still do—some animosity. This dissertation explores how the English language is used by transgender people and trans allies on the one hand and by gender-critical (GC) feminists—who have variedly negative views on transgender identities—on the other. In the past few decades of the 20th century, discourse analysis appeared and branched into three main approaches. The last of these approaches, that is, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), utilises a mixed methodology in which linguistic, textual and social elements are considered. The present study has been carried out by following CDA and, more particularly, Fairclough’s approach to it, which involves looking into different linguistic features through the glass of socio-historical context. Fairclough’s model emphasises the division of the three levels present in CDA: the textual dimension, the discursive dimension and the social dimension. This dissertation studies thirty-two essays posted on online blogs in the past 6 years: sixteen have been written by trans-inclusive feminists and activists and the other sixteen have been posted by GC radical feminists. This dissertation shows, by scrutinising the published material in as much detail as a work of this magnitude and kind allows, how the use and repetition of certain terms and some linguistic subtleties has a very real and relevant ideological purpose. To this end, I have focused on elements such as compounding, deixis and connectors, emotional appeals, modal verbs and private verbs, among others. This analysis has proven my initial hypothesis that linguistic and textual elements are being used for the writers’ own profit, thus influencing the readership.

Keywords: CDA, transphobia, feminism, transgender, discourse.

Introduction

With a more open discussion of gender once feminism became part of mainstream culture during the second half of the 20th century, subbranches of feminism began to appear. One of such movements was radical feminism, off which gender-critical discourse emerged during the 1970s; its discussions sat in opposition to that of transgender individuals, who also began to gain recognition for their identities and gender expressions. Every active member of either of these two groups uses language to their ideological advantage, and one should recognise the premeditated use of certain phrases and expressions by each group. The conscious weaponization of language they make is sometimes palpable, but many times it is well veiled behind other discursive phenomena.

This dissertation intends to study the manner in which activists from both sides of gender discourse try to shape the thoughts of other like-minded people for whom they seem to write, as there appears to be little persuasion involved. It will focus on the past 6 years, from 2016 to the present (2022), in hopes of portraying the contemporaneousness of the language as well as the slang and jargon used, also taking into account the exponential increase in internet users from that point to the present times. This study will carry out a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the material compiled, which consists of articles posted on a number of online blogs by—mostly women—writers from different English-speaking countries.

To achieve my aim, I have structured this work so that section 1 will inspect the theoretical approach adopted, explaining important concepts relating to the study and offering a review of the literature. Section 2 will focus on the methodology chosen and the account of the texts under scrutiny. It will, thus, delve into the methods typical of Critical Discourse Analysis before describing the texts selected in some detail. Section 3 will portray how trans-inclusive and trans-exclusive discourses discuss their views on trans identities and issues regarding them by using CDA and, most precisely, Fairclough's approach to this discipline. This will be followed by a section containing some final remarks.

1 — Background

1.1 — Literature Review and Key Concepts

Before broaching the topic of this dissertation deeply, there is a series of relevant studies that must be overviewed, as well as certain terms most utilised and pertinent for this work. Henceforth, to clarify and set some definitions in order to aid the readers and to further my own knowledge on the topic at hand, I have read a number of texts. For this purpose, *encyclopedia.com*, a collection of encyclopaedias and varied works, has been of great use as a starting point. From it I extracted numerous definitions from a variety of other encyclopaedias, including the following definition of one of the most important concepts to define in this dissertation—*feminism*:

Feminism may broadly be defined as a movement seeking the reorganization of the world upon the basis of sex equality, rejecting all forms of differentiation among or discrimination against individuals upon grounds of sex. It urges a worldview that rejects male-created ideologies. At another level, it is also a mode of analysis and politics, committed to freeing all women of gender-based oppressions. (New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, n.d., para. 1)

Because of the extensive reach of feminism, especially nowadays, providing a specific definition would prove to be counterproductive, and this definition is generic enough whilst being clear.

Notwithstanding this, one should note the difference that has been made between gender and sex¹ since the second half of the 20th century. Rubin differentiates these two concepts in her essay (1975) when she defines her “sex/gender system” (p. 40). She defines sex as the biological and reproductive characteristics humans have and compares it to gender, a set of

¹ For a deeper approach of this dichotomy, see Sedgwick, E. K. (1990), *Epistemology of the Closet*, chapter 1, and McNay, L. (1992) *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*, pp. 21–28.

cultural and social constructs which create and establish a series of roles for individuals (pp. 39–41). Mikkola (2022) proposes further insight into these two concepts, as she explains that “‘sex’ denotes human females and males depending on *biological* features (chromosomes, sex organs, hormones and other physical features) [and] ‘gender’ denotes women and men depending on *social* factors (social role, position, behaviour or identity)” (para. 3).

Another significant concept that must be defined is *second-wave feminism* (1963–the 1980s), an era in feminist activism focused on wanting “to address the issues of equality of the sexes in the workplace, a woman’s right to choose, feminine sexuality and a furthering of political action to bring women’s issues in the patriarchal society to light.” (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, para. 1). From this ideology stemmed radical feminism, born around the 1980s and defined as a link from “women’s oppression to patriarchy,” as radical feminists “see its manifestations in personal relationships and sexuality. [...] Many radical feminists celebrate lesbianism, although all radical feminists are not lesbians.” (New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, para. 12). One of the main objectives of radical feminism is the abolishment of gender, as the hierarchies created with gender roles are considered one of the strongest weapons of the patriarchy.

It is from this branch of feminism that gender-critical thinking emerges. Finding a proper definition for this term has proven to be difficult since it has hardly been discussed in academic settings; however, Mikkola expresses that “[t]he so-called ‘gender critical feminists’ in social media and public fora have also recently argued against the sex/gender distinction” (para. 63). She also notes that “[...] ‘gender critical feminist’ positions [...] are critical of the prevalent feminist focus on gender, as opposed to sex” (para. 108). Since gender-critical feminists (GC feminists from hereon) do not differentiate between sex and gender (they view gender as some sort of bio-essentialism connected to sex), they argue

that transgender people cannot identify themselves with any other gender than the one they were assigned at birth.

Because of this, they are frequently referred to as TERFs (also written in lower case and standing for Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist), a term often considered offensive by GC feminists and therefore excluded from my dissertation with the exception of citations from the texts with which I work. According to *Dictionary.com*, a TERF may be defined as the following:

[C]isgender women who self-identify as feminists but who are opposed to including transgender women in spaces they reserve for people who were assigned female at birth. This is because they believe trans women are men and since men cannot coexist with their feminist ideologies, they exclude them from their beliefs and support. (Para. 1)

This definition consequentially introduces two concepts that ought to be explained, as they will appear in this dissertation. One must note that, on the one hand, *cisgender* (often shortened to “cis”) denotes “a person whose gender identity corresponds with that person’s sex assigned at birth” (*Dictionary.com*, para. 1). *Transgender* (oftentimes shortened to “trans”, on the other hand, makes reference to “persons whose gender identity varies from that traditionally associated with their apparent biological sex at birth” (Tauches, para. 1). Transgender individuals frequently have gender dysphoria, which is a “formal diagnosis given by mental health professionals to people who experience distress because of a significant incongruence between the gender with which they personally identify and [the sex] with which they were born” (Bryant, 2019, para. 1). Yet another term worth commenting on is that of *LGBTQ*. This acronym refers to “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer” (Gutterman, 2010, p. 97), and often a plus sign is added to it in reference to the other identities, making LGBTQ+ (also LGBT

and LGBT+ are used). All of these forms refer to the community comprised of non-cisgender and/or -heterosexual people.²

One important inspiration for GC thinking has been lesbian feminism, which started in the 1970s (Lesbian Feminism, n.d., para. 1)—making it part of second-wave feminist theory. These feminists “challenged homophobia and heterosexism [within the] movement” and also “struggled against antilesbianism and antifeminism in other social movements.” In addition to this, “[m]any lesbian feminists advocated separatism,” and, “[f]or many lesbian feminists, lesbianism was the logical outcome of feminism—as one lesbian feminist put it, ‘feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice’” (para. 1). Although this current saw its most popular moment shortly after it flourished, it is still present nowadays.

Multiple academics argue that, with the flourishing of the internet, a fourth wave of feminism arose. Munro (2013) explains: “it is increasingly clear that the internet has facilitated the creation of a global community of feminists who use the internet both for discussion and activism” (para. 7). In relation to fourth-wave feminism, she also defines *intersectionality*: “[o]ne of the key issues for contemporary feminism is intersectionality – the idea that different axes of oppression intersect, producing complex and often contradictory results” (para. 10). These axes Munro mentions make reference to classism, racism, sexism, etc. Therefore, building from this idea, transgender-rights activists will often link women and transgender issues.

On another note, the meaning of *transphobia* must also be defined, as it appears in multiple primary texts, and it may be described as the following:

[T]he hatred and prejudice—sometimes subtle, sometimes not—that transsexual and transgender people experience in everyday life. Obviously inspired by the term homophobia, transphobia came to describe the feelings

² In Butler’s book *Undoing Gender* (2004), they explore these issues around gender and other queer identities.

and thoughts associated with a fear or disgust of trans people. (Hill, 2016, p. 1272)

This attitude is often attributed to GC feminists by other activist groups, transgender people and their allies, being referred to as discriminatory and offensive. An ally is “someone who helps and supports other people who are part of a group that is treated badly or unfairly, although they are not themselves a member of this group” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., entry 3). That makes a transgender ally (usually simply “trans ally”) a person who shows support to transgender people and the issues they face.

As explained above, some of these concepts have yet to be profoundly explored, with the exception of some discussions of gender theory. Gender theory surged in the 1970s and 1980s and was developed principally in the United States and Great Britain (Smith, n.d., para. 1). In Smith’s words,

[e]ssentially this theory proposed looking at masculinity and femininity as sets of mutually created characteristics shaping the lives of men and women. It replaced or challenged ideas of masculinity and femininity and of men and women as operating in history according to fixed biological determinants. In other words, removing these categories from the realm of biology, it made a history possible. (Smith, n.d., para. 1)

The dates between the development of this current of thought and concepts previously presented such as the second wave of feminism and radical feminism correspond incredibly well with each other. This is no coincidence, as the more exhaustive and serious discussions around sex and gender were inspired and encouraged by second-wave feminists and, in turn, gender theory enthused radical feminism and the GC philosophy that stemmed from it.

1.2 — Theoretical Approach

As stated above, the approach to the texts under study falls within what has been referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); therefore, establishing a definition of the term discourse seems in order before anything else. This term was first defined by Foucault (1972) as “a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus [one] should be able to speak of clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p. 107). However, since its meaning is so broad, there are multiple definitions that have been brought forward from his seminal work. This way, Baker and Ellece (2011) suggest multiple possible definitions, among which is the one referring to discourse as “particular contexts of language use [...]. For example, we can conceptualize political discourse (the sort of language used in political contexts) or media discourse (language use in the media).” (Baker and Ellece, 2011, p. 31). Gee (1989), in turn, brings forth an interesting approach when he defines it as the “ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes” (Gee, 1989, p. 6). Much more than language is thus included under this integrated view of discourse.

As claimed, it is vital to understand the basic shades of discourse to be able to carry out a discourse analysis. As Foucault addressed different areas of study in his life, his ideas also developed differently. That is, similar to how there are multiple definitions for discourse, there are different branches within what has been called Discourse Analysis. Hodges, Kuper and Reeves (2008) describe the three main approaches in their article “Discourse Analysis”. The first one, called Formal Linguistic Discourse Analysis, focuses on written and oral language and is based on the microanalysis of linguistic, grammatical and semantic uses of the text; secondly, Empirical Discourse Analysis (e.g., conversation analysis) is grounded on the language in use, taking samples of written texts and oral language, as well as data on its uses within a social situation; and lastly, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or Foucauldian

Discourse Analysis includes characteristics of the two previous methods, but also the information on the institutions and individuals who produce and are shaped by the texts. This approach examines how discourses guide individuals and institutions toward what they need to think and say (Hodges, Kuper and Reeves, 2008, p. 571). In other words, CDA takes into account both linguistic manifestations and the socio-historical context in which they are produced. It is this broader approach the one that has been chosen for this project.

A particularly useful approach within CDA used for this dissertation has been Fairclough's three dimensions, described in his *Discourse and Social Change* (2006). The first one, the textual dimension, includes a purely linguistic analysis—from syntax to vocabulary (p. 74). The second dimension encompasses a more discursive practice, which “involves processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, and the nature of these processes varies between different types of discourse according to social factors” (p. 78). The third and last one, the social dimension, focuses on the socio-political events surrounding the discourse under analysis, as the name suggests. All these concepts will be dealt with in more detail throughout this dissertation.

2 — Methodology for Data Collection and Analysis

The materials in this dissertation include thirty-two primary texts produced between 2016 and 2022; some of these texts, however, lack a specific date but have been approximately dated to this period taking into account other publications in the blogs they belong to. These online articles and essays, procured from different blogsites, are divided into two groups, as briefly pointed out in the introduction. The first of these includes trans-inclusive discourse at the hand of transgender individuals and their allies, whilst the second set focuses on GC radical feminists and their trans-exclusive discourse. The texts have not been separated into the countries the authors are from due to the internet's cross-cultural and boundaryless nature. Since I intend to study linguistic manifestations from the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis, the criterion for selection was simple: if the texts included relevant mentions of feminism and transgender and women's issues, they were accepted for consideration. The obtention and analysis of primary sources for this dissertation followed a very exhaustive methodology. In what follows I provide an account of data collection and the steps taken for the analysis itself.

Once the pertinent texts had been selected and classified, I began the close-reading phase. I focused on both collocations and specific words and expressions; however, what is told overtly is not my only interest, as I wanted to analyse what is implicit too. For this, the texts consulted and mentioned in my "Literature Review" regarding the relevant socio-politics have been of great use. After selecting the most productive blog sites focused on the topic at hand, the majority of the articles in them were discarded either because they were not fully relevant to the subject, or they barely mentioned it without specifying anything. This means that, after reading over a hundred blog posts, only thirty-two were carefully chosen, which has amounted to a 55265-word corpus, although this dissertation will not be a quantitative study but rather a qualitative one.

Each of the selected online articles focuses on a slightly different issue regarding the topic of transgender identity. Among these thirty-two essays, one may find the following topics:

dangers transgender people pose on women, the negative effects of gender discussions in education, the transgender experience in school, different views on womanhood, allyship (how to help transgender persons, namely), rejection of considering trans women as women, trans women in sports, how legal changes on gender equality will apparently negatively affect (cis) women, how transgender individuals cause conflict within the LGBTQ+ community, female and lesbian erasure, the importance of protecting women and children against transgender people, misgendering, gender-equality bills, online transphobia, sexuality crisis because of a gender-non-conforming partner, hormone-replacement therapy, direct critique of a GC feminist’s work, the biography of a transgender woman, exploring (gender) identity during quarantine, definitions of *gender critical* and *TERF*, and the benefits of transitioning.

Below can be observed the different texts of this corpus, including title, authorship, and date of publication.

Title	Author	Date of publication
<i>Any Women (Without Penises) Left out There?</i>	Buffone, P.	28 Sep 2018
<i>What Kids Are Being Taught about Their Gender Identity</i>	Buffone, P.	20 Apr 2019
<i>Did Radical Feminism Open the Door to Transitioning Children?</i>	“Dirt”	16 Nov 2019
<i>How I Became a TERF</i>	Djinn, A.	8 Apr 2018
<i>Sex Segregated Sports & the New IOC Guidelines</i>	Djinn, A.	27 Mar 2016
<i>The Gender Recognition Act Consultation Proves Women Are Not Full Human Beings (Unless They Are Men)</i>	Djinn, A.	22 Oct 2016
<i>Gender Is Not an Identity, It Is a Tool of Patriarchy</i>	Gender Critical Greens	15 Aug 2016
<i>On The Same Page: Some Thoughts on Gender and Sexuality</i>	Heuchan, C.	2 Dec 2020
<i>Sex, Gender and the New Essentialism</i>	Heuchan, C.	7 Feb 2017
<i>The Problem That Has No Name Because “Woman” Is Too Essentialist</i>	Heuchan, C.	15 Mar 2017
<i>Shape-Shifting Misogyny Has Invaded Mainstream Feminism</i>	Holland, J.	7 Feb 2022
<i>“Transgender” Simplified</i>	Jo, B.	24 Aug 2018
<i>Taiwanese Women Hit Back as Government Tries to Roll Out Self-ID Law</i>	Joseph, J.	19 Dec 2021

<i>Tell U.S. Department of Education Proposed Title IX Rules Must Protect Women and Girls</i>	Keith, L., et al.	20 Dec 2021
<i>WoLF Submits Amicus Brief to Oppose Child “Gender Transition”</i>	Keith, L., et al.	22 Nov 2021
<i>“Gender Critical” or “TERF”?</i>	The Gender Critical Group	n.d.

Table 1. Title, author, date of publication pertaining to trans-exclusionary-language users

Title	Author	Date of publication
<i>Gender Diversity in School — Jacob Atkins</i>	Calero, I.	12 Sep 2020
<i>Why I Dislike the Term “TERF.”</i>	DaBrooke, F.	17 Mar 2017
<i>Being a Trans-Ally</i>	Dawood, T.	20 Sep 2021
<i>The Day My Wife Was Misgendered</i>	Knox, A.J.	4 Oct 2016
<i>Trans Rights Happened in Canada Today, and I Am All Tears</i>	Knox, A.J.	16 Jun 2017
<i>World, Meet My Non-Binary Child</i>	Knox, A.J.	8 Apr 2020
<i>Am I a Lesbian?</i>	Natalie	27 Feb 2018
<i>My HTR Introduction</i>	Natalie	14 Dec 2017
<i>My Journey to Becoming a Trans Ally</i>	NHSBSA (editor)	22 Aug 2019
<i>Close Reading: Hinsliff on Gender</i>	Nicholson, A.	11 May 2018
<i>Then Was Not the Time</i>	Nicholson, A.	11 Jan 2018
<i>A Silver Lining? Opportunities during a Quarantine</i>	Tando, D.	21 Apr 2020
<i>Activist Peter Tatchell on Why the Trans Community Deserve Our Support</i>	Tatchell, P.	6 Sep 2020
<i>10 Steps Faculty Can Take to Support Trans Students</i>	Zimman, L.	7 Dec 2017
<i>Actual Medical Group Supports Trans Kids While Media Seems to Only Listen to Fake Medical Groups</i>	Williams, C., and Rafferty, J.	n.d.
<i>TERF: What It Means and Where It Came from</i>	Williams, C., and Rafferty, J.	n.d.

Table 2. Title, author, date of publication pertaining to trans-inclusive-language users

3 — Analysing the Data

Since it has been decided that the corpus will be analysed following Fairclough’s example—thus dividing this third part into three subsections according to his three-dimensional perspective—, a deeper explanation of what each dimension entails is due. Fairclough (2010) considers that “any text can be regarded as interweaving ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ meanings” (p. 94). This can be observed in Figure 1 below, where these three dimensions must be understood as being one inside the other; therefore, when analysing the second level (which will be called meso-level), the first level (or micro-level in Fairclough, 2006, p. 72) will be present, and when looking at the social level (or macro-level, as described in p. 72), the other will influence it too.

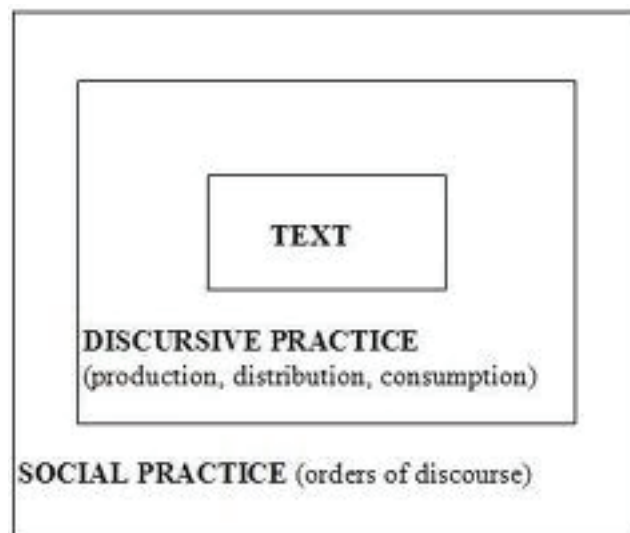


Figure 1. Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse, 2006

The first one, the textual analysis, centres around “four main headings: ‘vocabulary’, ‘grammar’, ‘cohesion’, and ‘text structure’” (Fairclough, 2006, p. 75). Fairclough goes on to explain that vocabulary deals “with individual words,” whilst grammar focuses on “words combined into clauses and sentences,” cohesion on “how clauses and sentences are linked together,” whilst, finally, structure “deals with large scale organizational properties of texts” (p. 75).

This micro-analysis is done by examining the type and organisation of sentences, the choice of words—along with their compounding and combination. The relation between this level and the other two is clear: certain words and structures are chosen to respond to certain social purposes. While a purely linguistic analysis of the texts is interesting since “any sort of textual feature is potentially significant in discourse analysis” (Fairclough, 2006, p. 74), this must be put into perspective with the meso- and macro-levels. A key point of interest in the analysis of this dissertation has been, as Fairclough says, “alternative words and their political and ideological significance, upon such issues as how domains of experience may be ‘reworded’ as part of social and political struggles [...]. Another focus is word meaning, and particularly how the meanings of words come into contention within wider struggles” (2006, p. 77). This is especially true when regarding trans-exclusionary language—for example, as will be analysed later on, through the use of certain terms and devices such as compounding.

The meso-level, the discursive practice, involves “text production, distribution and consumption” (p. 78)— the relationship between the text and its immediate surroundings. This dimension studies the context of the text because they “are consumed differently in different social contexts” (p. 79). In this respect, the distribution of the texts selected is quite vast, as they are online resources accessible to whomever chances upon them. The discursiveness can be further observed in these blogposts by the comments left by some of the readers, which, although they are not the focus of my work, are also quite interesting from a discursive viewpoint. What Fairclough calls “orders of discourse,” i.e., “total configurations of discursive practices in particular institutions, or indeed in a whole society” (p. 9) must also be considered. In the case of this dissertation, these orders are quite small and/or close, as the intended circle of influence does not intend to reach far.

There are three more headings apart from the ones mentioned above, and those are “the ‘force’ of utterances [...] (promises, requests, threats, etc.) [...], the ‘coherence’ of texts; and the ‘intertextuality’ of texts” (p. 75). The force discusses whether the emitter is being forceful

or assertive, giving orders or promises, asking, etc. Coherence entails the relationship between the parts of the text so that they make sense to the reader and the message can be properly understood. Finally, intertextuality indicates the ability texts possess to affect and refer to each other—whether to agree or not. This is observable in a number of the articles chosen (Fairclough, 2006).

The final dimension, the social practice, tries to illustrate how discursive events belong to larger social practices and contexts. For this, power plays an important role according to Fairclough (2006, p. 86), and he divides his focus into hegemony and ideology. Hegemony is understood as “the power over society” (p. 92). It “is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating [...], to win their consent” (p. 92). This is an especially insightful perspective when one considers how it has been mentioned that the authors under analysis appear to write to like-minded persons. With this in mind, it becomes clear how one of the goals of their articles may be to smother reluctance in the readers’ minds. Therefore, hegemony and discourse are linked through the set of certain discursive practices (the aforementioned ‘orders of discourse’) that are affected.

Regarding ideology, Fairclough (2006) provides a Marxist sociolinguistic interpretation. He creates three claims about it:

[T]he claim that it has a material existence in the practices of institutions [...];
that ideology ‘interpellates subjects’, which leads to the view that one of the
more significant ‘ideological effects’ which linguists ignore in discourse [...]
is the constitution of subjects [...], that ‘ideological state apparatuses’ [...]
are both sites of and stakes in class struggle. (p. 87)

Bearing these theoretical claims in mind, Fairclough explains that he understands ideologies “to be signifiers/constructions of reality” (p. 87). This means that ideology is interweaved within discursive practices and contributes to its changes. Additionally, a key point Fairclough explains is that “[t]he ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they

become naturalized, and achieve the status of ‘common sense’ (p. 87). This may also be observed in the blog posts, as it appears to be a resourceful form of propaganda.

After delving into Fairclough’s three-dimensional practice, it must be mentioned that this introductory section will not include a general study of the texts, as each side of the argument—whether pro- or anti-trans—has too differing ideas and methods to be grouped into a homogenous analysis. Therefore, the analysis will be done below, within the corresponding subsections.

3.1 — Textual Dimension

As explained above, this dimension focuses on the linguistic phenomena that can be found in the texts. Fairclough's four headings (2006) that would correspond to this microlevel (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure) will be studied here; however, due to the interrelations among these headings, no classifying separation will be made among the four. In what follows I will provide a general analysis that focuses on the most relevant occurrences, dividing them into two groups: language spoken by trans-exclusionary users and that uttered by trans-inclusionary individuals, respectively. It is important to bear in mind that many aspects discussed in this subsection will be further analysed in the other dimensions.

3.1.1 — *Trans-Exclusionary Language Users' Analysis*

By way of illustration, I have chosen different examples that set out Fairclough's (2006) model regarding the four headings. Following his proposition, the most relevant idea to focus on is the careful choice of specific vocabulary at the hands of the GC radical feminists.

After the close-reading phase, it became obvious that every article had used the plural pronoun *we*—and, with less frequency, *us*, *ours* and *our*—, although some had a more prevalent usage than others. Its utilisation seems to align with the idea that they speak to like-minded individuals, hence grouping them all together with them when expressing their opinions, as seen in example (1) below:

(1) if **we**'re to enjoy freedom and choice and justice and all of the positive attributes of our civil society that I hope most of **us** still appreciate (Buffone, 2018).

This appellative use tries to create a stronger connection between the author and the readership so that its message reaches them more effectively. This serves a double purpose: to create an “us-versus-them” mentality, placing trans activists at the other end, and to generate even more affinity so that the readers may adopt some of the opinions and ideas if they did not previously

have them or were not completely convinced. It must be noted, however, that *we* and the other words are also used in their most traditional manner, that is, to refer to more than one person without any additional connotation or purpose.

Another term worth mentioning is *power*, as in (2), with its variations *powerful*, *powerless*, and *empowered*, seen in (3), (4) and (5) respectively, all of which appear in numerous articles and can be seen in the examples below. As can be observed, all of these are used in the context of patriarchy and gender-related social imbalances, which will be discussed in the macro-dimension. What must be mentioned in this subsection, however, is the reinforcement of the abovementioned “us-versus-them” mindset, in this instance scoping the rest of society and not only transgender individuals and allies.

(2) the system that granted the men in their lives more or less absolute **power** over them. (Djinn, 2018).

(3) a woman can't be **powerful** in this society (Gender Critical Greens, 2016).

(4) where a trans identity can result in a violent male offender being housed with vulnerable and **powerless** women (Gender Critical Greens, 2016).

(5) I expect more and more women will be **empowered** by those who are brave enough to speak out against self-ID in Taiwan. (Joseph, 2021).

By showcasing the power imbalances that they perceive, GC feminists are able to utilise their experiences within the patriarchy and their views on gender to further their agenda and connect better with their readership, as they appeal to their emotions.

Another manner in which they make an emotional appeal is through alarmism. This alarmist language happens through fearmongering by the use of words with specific semantic content, which is also based on this “us-versus-them” attitude described in the previous examples. Some instances are the use of *paedophile* in (6) and *attackers* in (9) to refer to transgender people—specifically, women. The usage of *rape* such as in (6) and (7) as well as that of *invade* (and its derived words) such as in (8) also seem to try to share this feeling of

alienation and aggravation these GC women feel with their readership. They feel like they are under attack and like the patriarchy, the system they are trying to dismantle, is infiltrating their safe spaces, as can be seen in Holland's article in (8), where she refers to transgender people entering feminism as “[s]hape-shifting misogyny” (Holland, 2022).

(6) a male convicted **paedophile** who “feels like a woman” **rapes** and assaults multiple women (with his penis) (Djinn, 2018).

(7) How many of these men have been supported by “LGBT” centers to **rape** young women? (Jo, 2018).

(8) Shape-shifting **misogyny** has **invaded** mainstream feminism (Holland, 2022).

(9) Often when the issue of “transgender” comes up, we are told how many are attacked and killed, but it's rarely said that the **attackers** are male. (Jo, 2018).

All of these words are carefully chosen so as to show the danger these feminists see in these women whom they misgender³ and refer to them as men, whether consciously or not. Since they see their status quo and identities being altered, they feel threatened, so they attempt to convince others to understand them by means of direct or emotional appeals.

As already noted, the creation and use of compounds is a powerful linguistic resource and one of interest in Fairclough's conception (2006). Henceforth, the compounding of *trans* (short for *transgender*) and *woman*, creating *transwoman*, or, with far less frequency, *trans* and *man*, resulting in *transman*, as seen in examples (10) and (11), serve a very specific purpose:

(10) Someone born male-bodied who identifies as female is referred to as a **transwoman**. (Heuchan, 2017).

³ According to the *Collins Dictionary*, to misgender somebody is “to refer to (a person) using a pronoun or title that does not correspond with that person's gender identity” (see <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/misgender>).

(11) the TiM running the group told her she was a “**transman**” and should have surgery and start hormones as soon as possible. (Jo, 2018).

This subtle detail only perceivable in writing has a very precise aim, which is to separate the idea of simply “woman” (that is, a cisgender woman) from the Other (that is, a transgender woman) (the same idea applies to trans men, but it is far more aggressive regarding trans women). Since transgender individuals do not truly belong within the gender that they see themselves as according to GC feminists, they are separated and othered. This, in turn, reinforces this “us-versus-them” ideology that these feminists are trying to project onto their readers. It must be noted that the term *transwoman* only appears in one trans-inclusive article (Williams, C., and Rafferty, J., n.d.) and only in reference to its use by GC radical feminists.

The dialogic and easily intelligible style that GC radical feminists develop in their blog articles makes their points and ideas unequivocally understood, which can be seen in the generally short sentences. Passivisation is also widely used to change the weight of the sentence and to emphasise certain parts of the text, as can be seen below:

(11) My analysis **is based** on what **we were led** to believe **are approved** school board materials and the positioning of the so-called “gender spectrum” which **is** quickly **becoming** the generally accepted standard (Buffone, 2019).

Passivisation is often used to make an argument and present it as an objective fact regardless of its objective nature. It also creates some distancing between the speaker and the object they are referring to, which further feeds into this impartiality that the authors attempt to create.

Generally speaking, this microanalysis shows that trans-exclusionary writers try to make their content as available as possible to their like-minded readership. Their constant appeal to negative emotions—as covert as it is—attempts to cause the readers to realise the seriousness they see in the situation whilst creating a bigger gap and distancing themselves even from the gender-related Other—transgender people, in this case.

3.1.2 — *Trans-Inclusionary Language Users' Analysis*

When it comes to trans-inclusive language, before following a similar analysis to what has been done for the previous subsection focused on trans-exclusionary discourse, it ought to be noted that the topics discussed in this second group of articles are far more varied than in the first one. Whilst the former group focused mostly on women's issues in relation to transgender people and their effects on them, the latter set of texts vary from personal experiences as trans people or allies, discussing legislation and GC radical feminists, to name a few.

The use of *we* and related words are utilised in the same manner as they appear in trans-exclusionary texts in the sense that it is understood that the readership will have ideas akin to those of the author, including them in this sharing of ideas. This may be observed in (12), where the use of inclusive *we* strengthens the connection between the author and their readers, so the transferring of opinions happens more efficiently and effortlessly, as the readers are led to believe that these ideas have also been their own.

(12) **we** cannot expect our trans students to educate us. (Zimman, 2017).

This seems to be where the similarities in discourse between trans-inclusionary and trans-exclusionary individuals end, however, as, even though both groups also share the method of emotionalization, their approaches are vastly different. Whilst GC radical feminists appeal to more negative emotions by pointing out potential danger and separating themselves from the Other, transgender activists and allies seem to do the opposite. They seem to seek connection and invoke compassion not only for themselves but for others as well, as may be seen in the examples that follow:

(13) The biggest **hope** that I hold is that the next generation of rainbow youth will be able to **feel safer existing** at school than I have. (Calero, 2020).

(14) If we want these people to **see us as complex individuals**, then **it's only fair** that we endeavor to **see them the same way**. (DaBrooke, 2017).

As may be observed from these examples, it is not individual words that aim to cause a specific reaction in the readers but more so the use of particular expressions and collocations, although words like *hope* are used to cause the same effect. This makes their ideology more inconspicuous yet not less effective.

Nevertheless, if one were to inspect the use of specific words for emotionally appellative effect, then the appearance of *acceptance* such as in (15), *accept* in (16) and *accepting* in (17) should be highlighted:

(15) The Academy stands against stigmatization and marginalization of TGD youths and emphasizes the need for their **acceptance** as members of our families, communities, and workforce. (Williams, C., and Rafferty, J., n.d.).

(16) They trust these people to **accept** them and allow them to explore this part of their identity. (Calero, 2020).

(17) Times are changing, society is becoming more **accepting**. (Calero, 2020)

With such derivative forms, the authors appear to be explicitly trying to show the importance of connection for trans and other queer individuals with the larger society and are trying to replicate the same with their readership. This means that they are trying to achieve the opposite of what GC radical feminists are writing as has been analysed in the previous subsection. Whilst GC feminists are trying to antagonise trans people against themselves and society since they see them as a threat, transgender individuals seem to be trying to connect with all.

In addition to these examples, another interesting phenomenon is the use of *they/them* pronouns with a singular meaning so as to not assume the gender of the speaker, as seen below:

(18) If someone feels trapped and can not [sic] express **themselves**, it prevents **them** from having a more cohesive identity as **they** enter adulthood. (Calero, 2020).

(19) For example, someone may identify as a man, and may express **themselves** through wearing “women’s” clothing, such as dresses and skirts. (Calero, 2020).

It is true that this practice⁴ has existed for hundreds of years, yet it has been branded as a grammatical mistake many times. However, in more recent years, it has become more widely accepted by the general public and has been adopted by many gender-non-conforming individuals to want to be referred to. This explains why the trans activists in the articles under study in this subsection use it with the high frequency that they do, even in the context of not assuming someone's preferred pronouns, as seen in (19). In contrast, GC feminists seem to only use *they* and *them* as a plural form.

One last fact that should be analysed is the lesser amount of passivisation that appears in these pieces of trans-inclusive discourse in comparison to the previously observed trans-exclusionary texts. As already explained, the passive voice helps the author's ideas appear more objective and truer, which is the objective of the GC radical feminists' articles. However, it can be deduced that transgender activists and allies do not have such a goal in mind since they are trying to connect with their readership through experiences, which are inherently subjective, hence their use of the active voice:

(20) At about this time, or perhaps a little earlier, I **had come to realise** that if I **was** trans, I **was** also a lesbian. (Nicholson, 2018)

In general, it can be seen that, in contrast to what trans-exclusionary writers attempt to achieve in their texts, this microanalysis illustrates how trans-inclusive internet discourse is more focused on creating connections. These connections are not only sought from their target readership—i.e., people with similar views—but also from whoever may find their articles. This explains their focus on the use of the appeal to positive emotions such as compassion, acceptance and hope, as they are trying to close the gap between transgender and cisgender individuals.

⁴ For more information, consult the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in <https://public.oed.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-singular-they/>.

3.2 — Discursive Dimension

This intermediate level, which focuses, as its name suggests, on the discursive aspect, has been also discussed before. This segment of the dissertation focuses on how the texts directly affect their surroundings, including how far they are meant to reach and how much they actually manage to affect their surroundings. Fairclough (2006) includes three additional headings for this dimension apart from the four textual ones, which are the following: the force of the utterances, essentially what causes the direct emotional reaction on the reader; the coherence within the text, or how understandable and well-written a text is; and its intertextuality, or the relationship a text establishes with other texts akin to itself or not. The following subdivisions will delve into this meso-analysis following the three headings, partly taking into account what has been explored in the textual dimension. It is understandable that the use of different linguistic methods when expressing each group's viewpoints affects the relations between different parts of the text and between various texts, which is why this dimension has been subdivided as well.

3.2.1 — *Trans-Exclusionary Language Users' Analysis*

When it comes to the force that trans-exclusionary discourse carries with it, the microanalysis has already briefly scrutinised some parts of it. The use of assertive and self-assured language is constantly prevalent throughout the articles, as previously demonstrated, whether it be through techniques such as passivisation or through the use of other specific linguistic forms. The utilisation of the passive voice has already been explored in the discussion about the previous dimension, so it is unnecessary to delve into it further. However, it ought to be mentioned that the use of specific modal verbs manages to exacerbate this effect. This group of modals, called “of ‘obligation’ and ‘logical necessity’” by Quirk *et al.* (1985, p. 142), includes verbs such as *must* and *should*, both of which appear in every article a number of times—especially *must*, which is quite frequent.

(21) our gender-non-conforming girls have been being encouraged to think that they **must** be male. (Gender Critical Greens, 2016).

(22) Radical Feminists believe that the patriarchy **should** be dismantled and that no one, male or female, is truly free until it is. (The Gender Critical Group, n.d.)

This force on the utterances causes the authors to sound not only assertive and/or sure of the outcomes as in the example (21), but also creates a somewhat forceful tone. This means that the authors try to express that the point(s) they are trying to make is/are the only one(s) valid, as they leave little to no space for any other viewpoint with the assertiveness expressed by these modal verbs. Because of this, their ideas are able to reach and convince the target audience with far more ease, managing to create little doubt in the readers' minds.

Even though Fairclough (2006) conceives a varied number of utterances that fit into this heading such as promises, requests and the like, it is these more self-assured ones that pervade most often. Nonetheless, one may understand that the constant insistence on the threat trans women especially pose to cisgender women and feminism feeds into the texts' force.

(23) There is **very real risk** [sic] that the presence of transwomen who have been raised male and may have **full male genitalia** will have an **impact on this respite and the freedom** that a female-only sporting environment gives **girls and young women**. (Djinn, 2016)

In this sentence, example (23), one may see multiple noun phrases highlighted in bold. In all these noun phrases their semantic content is highly loaded with negative shades of meaning. The words themselves lack any sort of negative connotation, but it is the manner in which they are intermingled that provokes this negative sensation.

According to Fairclough (2006), another intra-textual focal point to study apart from the force is coherence within the text. The most obvious sign of it is the proper use of connectors; however, GC radical feminists do not seem to use too many of them, as they are rather scarce. In the list below, marked as (24), one may observe most of the ones that appear in the texts.

(24) *Actually, after all, also, and, but, even if, for example, however, in addition, meanwhile, nevertheless, now, then, yet, etc.*

The explanation for the scarcity of connectors may lie in the fact that, as already mentioned, due to the conversational tone these authors have when writing, they are more direct and less focused on linking ideas. Moreover, the prevalence of the aforementioned short sentences in this style does not fathom the use of too many connectors. Additionally, they may believe that this intensifies their assertiveness as if every sentence possesses important pieces of information.

What the articles in the blogs lack in connectors is compensated with ample use of deixis throughout the texts, as can be seen in example (25). This ensures that the ideas remain connected whilst maintaining the assertiveness and almost forcefulness characteristic of the texts.

(25) The public at large is unaware of **this** happening. (Holland, 2022).

(26) I sought out four of the women leading this campaign, and **they** graciously allowed me to interview **them** as long as I kept **their** identities secret and used false names. (Joseph, 2021).

Once all the texts have been read, one may see that there are barely any temporal deictic elements. This is due to the abstractness of the topics they cover, which leaves most deixis to be either spatial—only when referring to ideas—, such as in example (25), or personal, such as in (26).

Finally, intertextuality is present in some form or another in every text. It can be seen in every article except for two—“*Transgender*” *Simplified* (Jo, B., 2018) and *Gender Is Not an Identity, It Is a Tool of Patriarchy* (Gender Critical Greens, 2016)—in the form of hyperlinks. This is a prime example of the optimal use of a blog site by referring to other texts that either support their arguments as in (27), redirect the readership to past articles of the author as in (28) or lead the readers to further explanations and definitions as in (29).

(27) In the last decade, Britain has seen a **4400% increase** [linking <https://quillette.com/2020/01/02/the-ranks-of-gender-detransitioners-are-growing-we-need-to-understand-why/>] in the number of girls referred for transition treatments. (Heuchan, 2020).

(28) For more on the need for women-only spaces, see **What is a Woman?** [linking <https://thefeministahood.wordpress.com/2015/04/05/what-is-a-woman/>]. (Djinn, 2016).

(29) I have mentioned umpteen times on social media and written **categorically** [linking <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/categorically>] here on the miscalculation/hapless strategy Radical Feminists place/d on *Gender*. (Dirt, 2019).

Apart from hyperlinks, one may find traditional citations—although not academically referenced—in one of the articles, Bev Jo’s *‘Transgender’ Simplified* (2018) as endnotes. These link to different articles and even videos. In addition to these two forms of intertextuality, the comments the authors’ like-minded readers leave could also be taken into account in this seventh heading. For example, one may read @SistaJendaNoBeliever’s input into Gender Critical Greens’s (2016) article, part of which may be seen in (30) below, although there are multiple other examples, some less lengthy or argument-based but that affect the original text nonetheless, such as (31).

(30) Excellent and thoroughly balanced discussion. Men who self-declare as women are not women. Many women have been supportive of transgender but now with a TG push to re-define our sex out of existence and equate our biological sex with a feeling is unacceptable [...] (In Gender Critical Greens, 2016).

(31) You are about as “feminist” as Adolf Hitler.

See, REAL feminists include trans women. You lot are just scumbag TERFs who should be put down. (Sharon Stenton in Gender Critical Greens, 2016).

After analysing the three extra headings that Fairclough (2006) describes, one may see how the linguistic manifestations explored in section 3.1.1. affect those scrutinised here. Assertiveness and objectivity are expressed through modals and passives, but other less specific word constructions must be looked into as well. The lack of connectives also impules this self-assuredness and forcefulness, although the different parts of the texts are not completely severed from one another thanks to the use of deixis. Apart from this, the constant reference to other texts and the appearance of others' input is of great interest too.

3.2.2 — Trans-Inclusionary Language Users' Analysis

Trans-inclusive discourse has already been said not to seem as assertive or aggressive as trans-exclusive language is, so their discursive approach differs as well. Both passivisation and the use of modals of necessity appear far less frequently because their focus is not on appealing to more negative emotions but the opposite. On another note, hedges or downtoners are, according to Quirk *et al.* (1985), phenomena that “have a generally lowering effect on the force of the verb or predication and many of them apply a scale to gradable verbs” (p. 597) and pertain, hence, to the heading of the force of utterances. One of the categories Quirk mentions is that of private verbs (1985, p. 1183), used to express beliefs and particular feelings or ideas, and they are extensively used by trans activists and allies.

(32) I **believe** identity is at the core of who we are, and if we can't be ourselves, we're not really living. (Knox, 2020).

(33) Most non-binary people, I **think**, say that their gender falls somewhere on a spectrum, between the traditional binary extremes of male and female. (Nicholson, 2018).

One may see in these examples how they place emphasis on the writer's perceptions, which tones down the assertiveness of the message, thus potentially placating the readership and raising the level of empathy and compassion these authors have been shown to want to evoke.

(34) I **wish** for young people to be able to feel safe at their place of learning.

(Calero, 2020).

Hypothesis verbs (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1183), such as the one in (34) above, also appeal to the more sympathetic side of the reader by communicating the author's desires, emotionalising the text further. Thus, they manage to attract the readership toward their own standpoint.

Besides the different linguistic elements mentioned so far, an extralinguistic element that aids in the soothing and compassionate tone of the texts is the use of emojis. Even though they rarely appear in my material, their utilisation must be brought out, as they are a highly clever manner of showing the precise expression the piece is expecting from the reader, leaving no space for misunderstandings as set out in the example below:

(35) I think everyone should do [therapy] even if you haven't been suppressed or confused about your gender. I do! 😊 (Natalie, 2017).

In this instance, for example, the smiling emoji is used to convey the good nature of recommending therapy, as it may be misinterpreted as an offence.

Regarding the resources used to express coherence, there is little to add to deixis, although connectors are more widely used by this group than by GC feminists. This may be due to the fact that they do not feel the need to sound more assertive and/or aggressive, so they may link their ideas more freely. This also provides them with a more serious attitude, more appropriate for writing and typical of essay-style literature. Nevertheless, they do not impede the conversational and relaxed character of the texts, giving them enough seriousness to be properly considered but not too much as to appear too stern. Some of the most frequent connectors may be seen in (36) below and exemplified in (37):

(36) *Even if, finally, for example, however, on one hand [sic], on the other hand, overall, so, etc.*

(37) **However**, I couldn't be further from the truth. (NHSBSA (ed.), 2019)

We cannot mention a wide variety of connectors here. On the contrary, their inventory is not very large, but the items in it are frequently repeated. This should not probably be attributed to a lack of lexical richness but to a conscious intention to link ideas in a particular way so as to create a particular type of logical argument.

When it comes to intertextuality, since the format of the texts is the same—articles posted on blog pages—, it is no surprise that the trans-exclusionary and trans-inclusive ideological blocks share the same elements. This includes hyperlinks, like in (38) and comments from readers, as in (39), all of which are used in the same fashion as with the GC feminists.

(38) I support reform of the [Gender Recognition Act](#), along the lines advocated by the trans community. It is long overdue. (Tatchel, 2020).

(39) I'd agree that bodies are material realities; however, I can't agree that your thoughts about bodies exist outside of your head. You can argue that ontologies aren't culture all you like but it won't make you right. It never ceases to amaze me how reticent sex essentialists are to admit that their thoughts don't comprise material reality. (@SocialJusticeWizard in Williams, C., and Rafferty, J., n.d.).

As can be seen from the commentary above, in this particular dimension, both blocks studied in this dissertation do not differ too much except when it comes to the force of utterances, as this is where intentions are best seen and theirs are completely different. Instead of sureness and alarmism, trans-inclusive discourse resorts to an appeal to empathy and compassion through specific hedging and emoticons. Deixis is used, along with connectors, and, although the latter appear more frequently, they do not intervene in the casual tone, seamlessly joining ideas. There is little to add to intertextuality in this subsection, as it coincides completely with what has been said in 3.2.1.

3.3 — Social Dimension

The final dimension proposed by Fairclough (2006), the social macro-level, has already been described as focusing on power—more specifically on both hegemony and ideology. The societal currents that influence the viewpoints of these two activist groups and these streams of thought can be observed in the texts through the linguistic and discursive levels. To explore the different aspects of these two concepts, this third subsection will not be further divided into two like the two previous ones, as it concerns both trans-inclusionary and -exclusionary discourse as much, even if they may have slightly varying perceptions of them.

Once again following Fairclough's subdivisions (2006), hegemony consists of “constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating” (p. 92). In the particular context of this dissertation, this entails the almost propagandistic attempts to connect with the readership, either by tapping into their anger and fear, as the GC radical feminists have been proven to do, or by engaging with the readers' compassion, as the trans activists and allies did. Ideology has also been said to directly affect reality, which makes it be interlocked with discursive practices, thus constantly changing both. It is important to remember Fairclough's words when he explains that “[t]he ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become naturalized, and achieve the status of ‘common sense’” (2006, p. 87). In relation to this idea lies what is often called *language ideologies*, *linguistic ideologies* or *ideologies of language*, defined by Woolard as to how they focus on language itself without being so “encoded *in* or *through* language” (2020, p. 1). Related to this, Irvine explains in her article that linguistic ideologies are both politically and morally charged representations of the structure, nature and utilisation of languages in societies (1989).

Bearing all this in mind, there is one main social system that seems to rule over the rest, and that is patriarchy. Sylvia Walby defines in her article such a complex concept as follows below:

[A] system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The use of the term social structure is important here since it clearly implies rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one. (1989, p.214).

Walby's definition of *patriarchy* as a "system of social structures" (1989, p.214) allows for other ideas such as *transphobia*, *misogyny* and *transmisogyny*, which will be dealt with further along, to be considered as parts of it and thus directly affected by it. They are different facets of the same ideological construct and thus affect the writers of every text in some form or another. *Transphobia* has already been defined at the beginning of this study; however, *misogyny* has not. *Misogyny* may be understood as the following:

[T]he standard definition of misogyny as 'hatred of women' encourages us to underestimate [misogyny]. [A]lthough only a few people might hate women outright, all Westerners share a culture that expresses hatred of women through such means as ridicule, belittlement, and marginalization, and all Western women experience the negative effects of this hatred" (Bennet, 1991, p. 183).

Henceforth, taking both definitions of *misogyny* and *transphobia*, *transmisogyny*⁵ is a type of misogyny that specifically targets transgender women and feminine-presenting people.

All of these concepts appear in the texts as already mentioned, whether explicitly or not, in some manner, and this is relevant for the analysis proposed here. For instance, according to these definitions, GC radical feminists possess transphobic views against transgender people—namely women—to defend themselves against what they perceive are misogynistic and patriarchal attacks, as seen below:

⁵ For a definition of the term, see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/transmisogyny>.

(40) Radical Feminist desperation for internal/external power superseded any care for the **children harmed (many mortally harmed) by the MEN** [meaning transgender women] proposing the brain is born out of experience (constructed) rather than sex (biology) idea. (Dirt, 2019).

This example from one of the most aggressive blog posts illustrates this transmisogyny as the author misgenders the people to whom she is referring to prove that she does not view them as women but as men committing a misogynistic attack on women and children. Example (41) also shows this transphobia slightly more discreetly—although misgendering is still present:

(41) Since then, I've found mothers sharing their **heart wrenching accounts of daughters getting hormone pills within a day of showing up at a Dr's office, teenagers get mastectomies** while trans activist Doctors cheer them on and say not to worry, they can always get their boobs back in the future if they want some, **a biological male has won the women's world championship cycling title, a male convicted paedophile who "feels like a woman" rapes and assaults multiple women (with his penis) before and after being admitted to a women's prison and the British parliament is silenced** from having any kind of reasonable discussion about the matter. And now **the Editor of a prestigious university philosophy newsletter lost his job for saying "women don't have penises"**. The world has gone mad. (Buffone 2018).

Conversely, trans-inclusive discourses are by nature obviously neither transphobic nor transmisogynistic; nonetheless, they still explore these topics in their articles. They view GC philosophy as inherently transphobic and, more importantly and ironically, transmisogynist. According to them, the irony lies in the fact that GC women call themselves feminists, so their being called misogynistic in any way, especially by transgender activists and their allies, will be unacceptable for them. Example (42) showcases the sentiment many trans-inclusive individuals hold towards GC feminists and their transmisogyny.

(42) There's a subset of **transphobes** who define themselves as "**gender critical.**" The rest of the world tends to call them "**TERFs,**" or Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (**they are anything but feminist.**) **GCs or TERFs hate transgender people.** They believe **trans women are men who fetishize womanhood or use transition to get closer to cisgender women so they can assault them, take away their rights and other nonsensical theories.** They believe **trans men are confused lesbians who have been taught to hate their bodies or sexuality and/or seek male privilege.** (Knox, 2020).

As can be seen, these ideas are conveyed by constructions such as *anything but*, verbs such as *hate* and noun phrases such as *nonsensical theories*. Below is another example of the same nature:

(43) We are the ones who are experiencing PTSD after unknowingly RSVP-ing to an **unwelcome gender and sexual identify [sic] crisis being caused by the discovery of our spouses [sic] own deep-rooted struggle with their gender and sexual identity crisis.** We are the brave ones **asking the hard questions that our society isn't ready to answer.** (Natalie, 2018).

These two examples show the social effects of the aspects of patriarchy that are being discussed. They present the reaction to external transphobia and transmisogyny (which includes misogyny), in this case at the hand of GC feminists, as seen in (42), and internalised prejudice, as seen in (43), due to societal pressure and bigotry.

To summarise these ideas, the social dimension is the last layer that wraps around the other two levels, and, in what concerns this dissertation, it focuses on the patriarchy and three of its social structures that actively harm women and other non-men. Both trans-inclusive and trans-exclusionary people have their views and therefore their discourse affected by them, which is consequently reflected in their speech.

Final Remarks

In this dissertation, I have tried to analyse the specific language used by activists from the GC current and trans-inclusivity to see how they utilise discourse, including linguistic phenomena, intra- and intertextuality to convey their beliefs to their like-minded readers. To do this, I approached the blog articles following CDA, that is, focusing on the socio-ideological context, key concepts, and the particular beliefs of individuals. I was more precise in my approach by including Fairclough's methodology, which divides discourse and its analysis into three levels: the textual dimension, the discursive one and the social one.

After performing a close reading, I decided against doing a quantitative study on top of the qualitative one, as it would become an excessive amount of work for my dissertation—although I recognise it would be ideal for a larger-scale project. Hereafter, I extracted those terms and constructions I considered more relevant for my analysis and concentrated on words with full meaning, but also on grammatical entities apparently innocent words such as personal pronouns. I realised they were used with the intention to convince and provide an interpretation of reality at the service of each of the groups' beliefs and ideologies. The tripartite analysis that Fairclough proposed and that I adopted for my research has proven to provide a more profound and diverse study. The more evident social and ideological focus it has helped create has been able to construct a well-rounded dissertation that expands from merely linguistic phenomena.

My analysis seems to confirm, therefore, that language is a powerful weapon, both due to what it expresses overtly and to what is silenced. In this sense, CDA and, more concretely, Fairclough's input, has proved to be an adequate approach for this study of its inextricable connection with reality.

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