

**Conspicuous by absence?
Analysing the absent in corpus/discourse analysis**

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types of absence

A [...] problem with corpus data is that they will not tell us what is *absent* in a corpus. For example, if we compare the number of times that different words referring to homosexuality appear in a text, we may be tempted to only focus on the words that appear rather than the words that don't. So if *gay* appears 50 times and *faggot* appears once, we may point this out, but omit to mention that other words, such as *queer*, *homosexual*, etc. never occur.

Baker (2005:35)

When approached with the right methodological tools, corpora *do* provide negative evidence, i.e., evidence that allows us, in principle, to distinguish between constructions that did not occur but could have (these could be referred to as ‘accidentally absent’, and constructions that did not occur and could not have (these can be referred to as ‘significantly absent’ structures)

Stefanowitsch (2006: 62)

absence in the discourse

- a long-standing interest / issue in critical linguistics / discourse analysis:
 - there are always different ways of saying the same thing, and they are not accidental alternatives. Differences in expression carry ideological distinction (and thus differences in representation)” (Fowler, 1991: 4)

why absence? (1)



why absence? (2)

‘presence tends to take precedence over absence in a corpus, because we may not know what is missing’

Baker (2006: 183)

which absence? (1)

- Absences in the discourse e.g. what (salient) information is omitted?
- Absences of alternative discourses e.g. what other ways of talking about / constructing **migrants** are possible?

which absence? (2)

- Absence in/of discourses based on **expectations of presence** which are not met

> To investigate absence in a principled way we need systematic and **replicable** means of generating expectations of presence

investigating absence

Corpus linguistic starting points

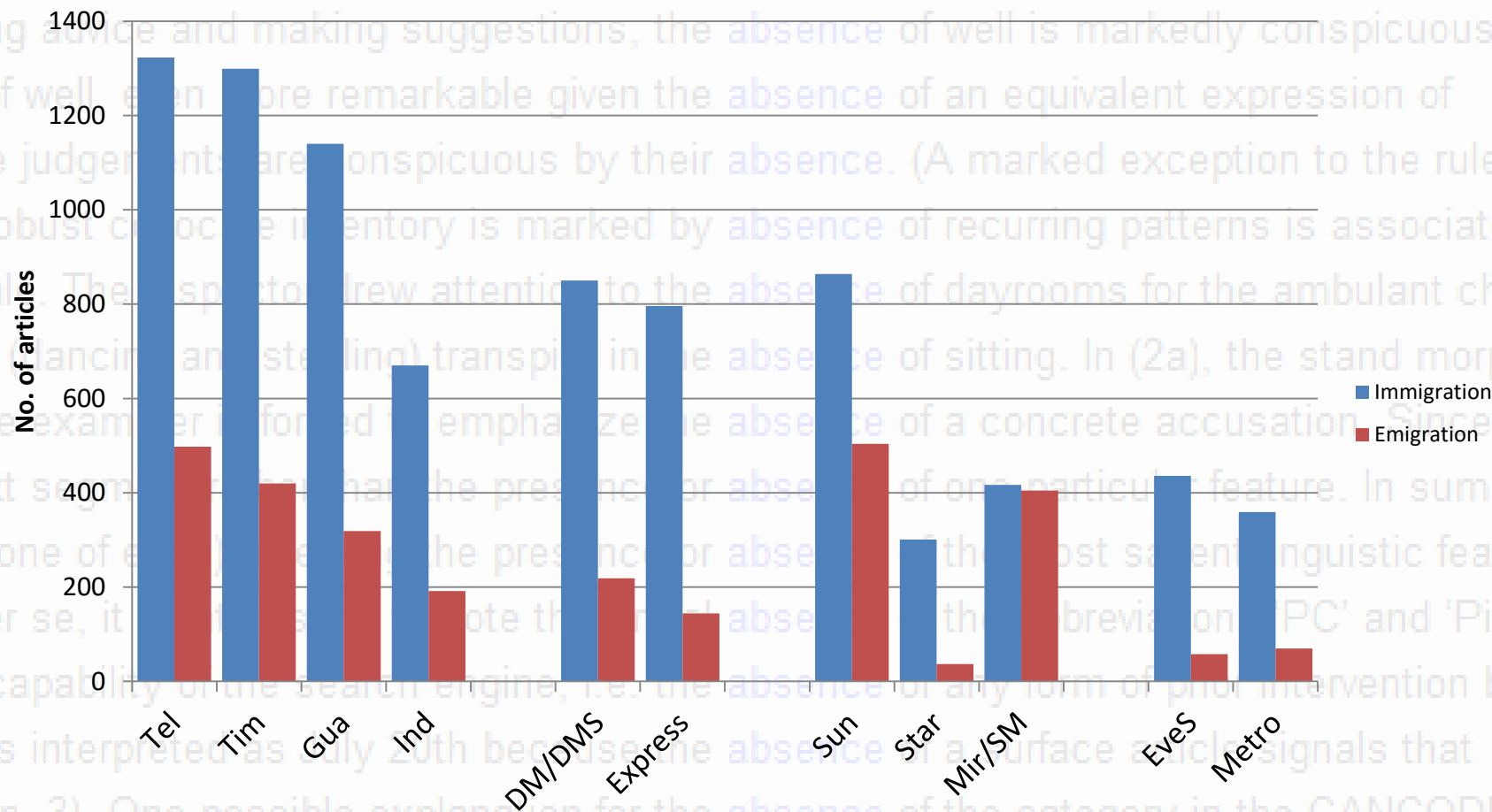
Discourse analysis starting points

Employing external data

absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- frequency (e.g. Partington 2014)

frequency of articles referring to *immigrants* / *emigrants*



absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- frequency (e.g. Partington 2014)
- keywords / key clusters / key semantic domains
 - ‘much can be inferred from what is absent’ (Scott 2005)
 - e.g. O’Halloran (2012)

absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- keywords / key clusters / key semantic domains
 - much can be inferred from what is absent (Scott 2005)
 - Absence in migration discourses in the press:
 - Newspaper types (national/regional, broadsheet/quality)
 - Political orientation
 - Time period
 - Other institutions e.g. Govt. authored publications/ NGOs...
 - Non-institutional voices e.g. general web forums
 - Quieter voices e.g. migrant authored publications
 - ...

absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- What is absent in RASIM *Guardian* 2012 compared to RASIM *Jordan Times* 2012?

Anti-war Architecture_houses_and_buildings Attentive Belonging_to_a_group **Business:_Selling** Business:_Generally Calm Cause&Effect/Connection Chance_luck
Change Cheap Comparing:_Varied Decided **Difficult** Evaluation:_Accurate Farming_&_Horticulture General_actions_/_making Geographical_names Getting_and_giving:_possession Giving
Government Grammatical_bin Green_issues Health_and_disease **Helping** Hindering Important important In_power Inclusion Knowledge Law_and_order Measurement:_Distance
Measurement:_Length_&_height Measurement:_General Measurement:_Size Measurement:_Volume Medicines_and_medical_treatment Mental_object:_Means_method **Money_and_pay**
Money:_Cost_and_price **Moving,_coming_and_going** No_change No_obligation_or_necessity Non-governmental Numbers **Participating** Participating Participation
Personal_relationship:_General **Places** Quantities Quantities:_many/much Quantities:_many/much Reciprocal Residence **Safe** Social_Actions,_States_And_Processes
Speech:_Communicative Strong_obligation_or_necessity Substances_and_materials:_Liquid Success_and_failure **Time:_Beginning**
Time:_Period Time:_Future Time:_Beginning Time:_New_and_young Time:_Late **Trying_hard** Unilateral **Unmatched** Wanted Warfare_defence_and_the_army:_weapons

absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- frequency
- keywords / key clusters
- collocation comparisons
 - grouping collocates > comparing patterns

UK broadsheets	UK tabloids	Italian nationals	Italian regionals
<i>abuse; attacks; behaviour; language; words; comments</i>	<i>abuse; attacks; language; comments; remarks;</i>	<i>confronti; violenza</i> [violence]; <i>cori</i> [chants]; <i>insulti</i> [insults]	<i>violenza</i> [violence]; <i>episodi, confronti; cori</i> [chants]; <i>insulti</i> [insults]; <i>scritte</i> [writing]; <i>frasi</i> [terms]
<i>football; BNP; party institutional; police,</i>	<i>football BNP; Griffin; party; police</i>	<i>Balotelli; paese</i> [country]; <i>Italiano</i> [Italian]; <i>l'italia</i> [Italy]	<i>calcio</i> [football]; <i>Balotelli;</i> <i>presidente</i> [president]; <i>italiani</i> [Italian/Italians]; <i>paese</i> [country]; <i>societa'</i> [society/football club]
<i>accused, called</i>	<i>accused; branded; alleged</i>	<i>accusa</i> [accusation]; <i>accuse</i> , [accusations]	<i>accuse</i> [accusations]
<i>sexist; homophobic</i>	-	<i>xenofobia</i> [xenophobia]	<i>xenofobia</i> [xenophobia]
<i>black; white</i>	<i>black; white</i>	-	<i>colore</i> [colour]

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EX speaking English they are **afraid** of being
EX ity groups to integrate for **fear** of being
EX ite working class without **fear** of being
EX t with as people were **frightened** to be
EX e to express them without **fear** of being
EX eel unable to complain for **fear** of being
EX blicly on such matters for **fear** of being
EX ith as people were **frightened** of being
MAIL SIAN PUPILS FOR **FEAR** OF BEING
MAIL o tolerance' approach for **fear** of being
MAIL ice their worries 'without **fear** of being
MAIL king English they are **afraid** of being
MAIL ottingham says neither a **fear** of being
MAIL ass immigration 'without **fear** of being
MAIL out their worries 'without **fear** of being
MAIL lay blame because we **fear** we will be
STAR **fear** that if they complain they will be
STAR ut, " he said. "They are **afraid** of being
STAR pproach in this country. **We fear** being
SUN Government that lives in **fear** of being
SUN with the local council **fearful** of being
SUN d to speak up. They are **afraid** of being

branded a racist or being accused of belonging
branded racist. Britain is in a rotten state. But i
branded as racist." City banker Mr Miraj, 35,
branded racist. "There is no one less *racist* than
branded a racist." But former Labour Minister F
branded racist. The stark report warned there w
branded as racist. To ignore or trivialise the
branded racist. "There is no one less *racist* than
BRANDED RACIST HE GAVE HIS name as He
branded racist themselves. They worry that by
branded racist'. In the furore that followed, Fran
branded a racist.' Mr Kumarasiri grew up in a vi
branded racist, nor intimidation from his landlo
branded a racist when all they really want are
branded a racist'. The findings, produced by M
branded racist. I travelled to Ethiopia at the
branded "racists" in politically correct Britain.
branded a racist. "I don't expect immigrants to
branded a racist if we speak out. "He's come he
branded racist if it criticises such non-integratio
branded racist by persecuting a "minority". Ho
branded racist. "Perhaps it's a view better comin

absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- frequency
- keywords / key clusters
- collocation comparisons
 - grouping collocates > comparing patterns
 - direct comparison of two items: Sketch-Diff

immigrate/emigrate

enTenTen [2013] freqs = [33,386](#) | [38,947](#)

immigrate 6.0 4.0 2.0 0 -2.0 -4.0 -6.0 emigrate

and/or	592	890	0.00	0.00
emigrate	29	0	4.2	--
migrate	16	0	1.0	--
relocate	9	23	0.1	1.4
starve	0	10	--	0.6
perish	0	6	--	1.0
immigrate	0	29	--	4.3

object	1,656	2,096	0.00	0.00
Mexicans	6	0	2.3	--
Europeans	6	0	0.8	--
Italian	8	0	0.6	--
Germans	9	7	0.5	0.1
grandparent	41	48	1.9	2.1
ancestor	20	24	0.4	0.6
grandfather	0	20	--	0.4
Jew	0	46	--	1.4
Scot	0	8	--	1.7
westward	0	9	--	4.2
great-grandparent	0	14	--	5.3

subject 11 302 12 787 0.00 0.00

pro_subject	4,173	4,883	0.00	0.00
he	0	2,250	--	0.2

modifier	4,079	3,880	-0.00	-0.00
lawfully	16	0	4.1	--
here	700	0	1.4	--
newly	154	19	3.0	0.0
legally	365	53	5.3	2.5
illegally	249	51	6.3	4.1
recently	315	172	1.8	0.9
freely	22	13	1.4	0.6
permanently	69	59	3.4	3.1
eventually	83	126	1.2	1.8
annually	7	11	0.6	1.3
north	9	17	0.3	1.2
many	12	26	0.6	1.7
separately	6	13	0.4	1.5
subsequently	19	44	1.0	2.2
west	6	17	1.5	3.1
voluntarily	7	29	1.2	3.2
elsewhere	8	36	0.1	2.3
abroad	18	110	1.6	4.2
overseas	6	54	1.1	4.3

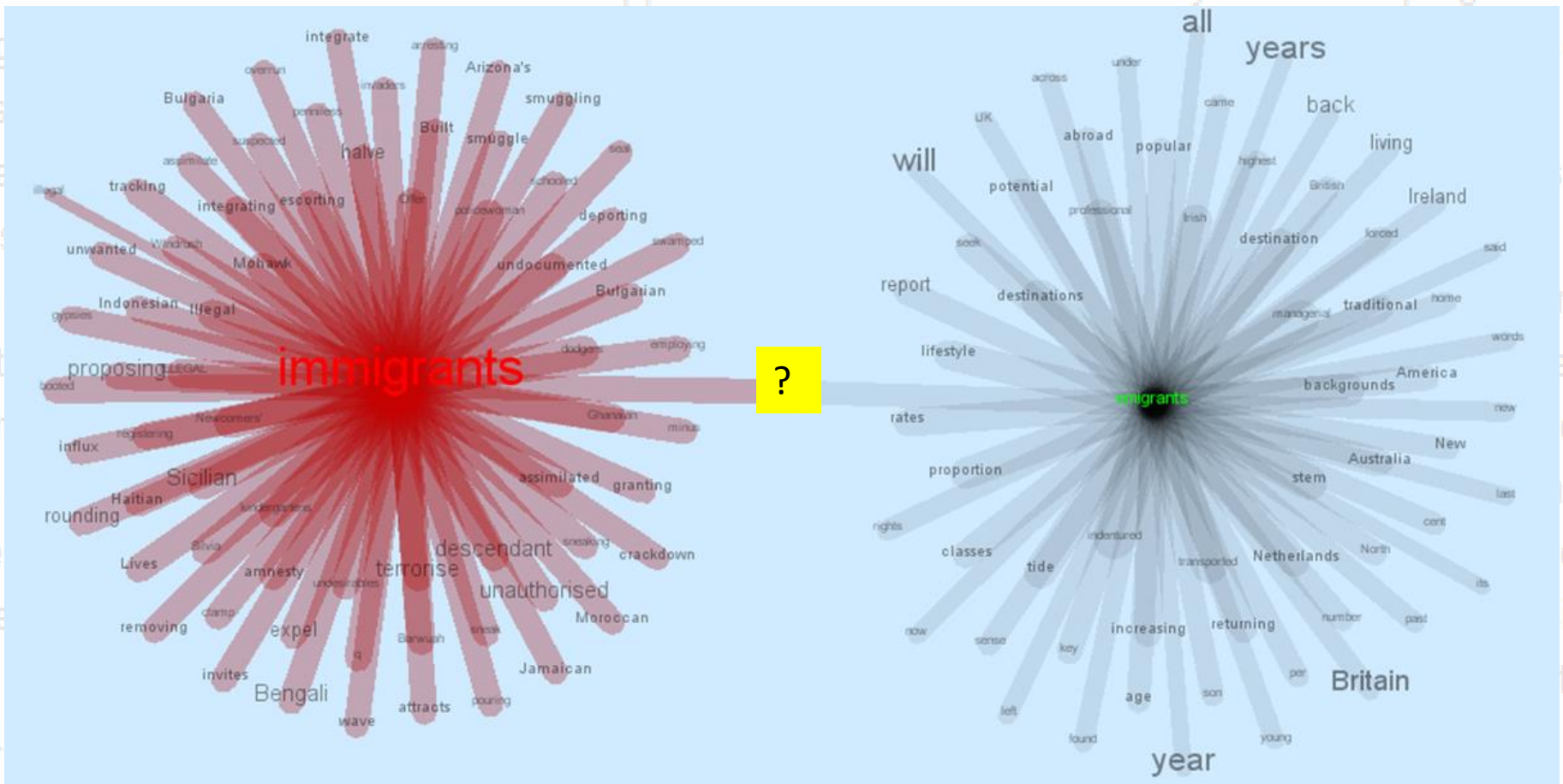
technical words are characterized by the absence of exact synonyms, resistance to

tagtransition probabilities) is to see how the absence of tagtransition statistics affects

absence: corpus-linguistic approaches

- frequency
- keywords / key clusters
- collocation comparisons
 - grouping collocates > comparing patterns
 - Sketch-Diff
 - Visualisations (GraphColl*)

collocational networks for *immigrants* / *emigrants*

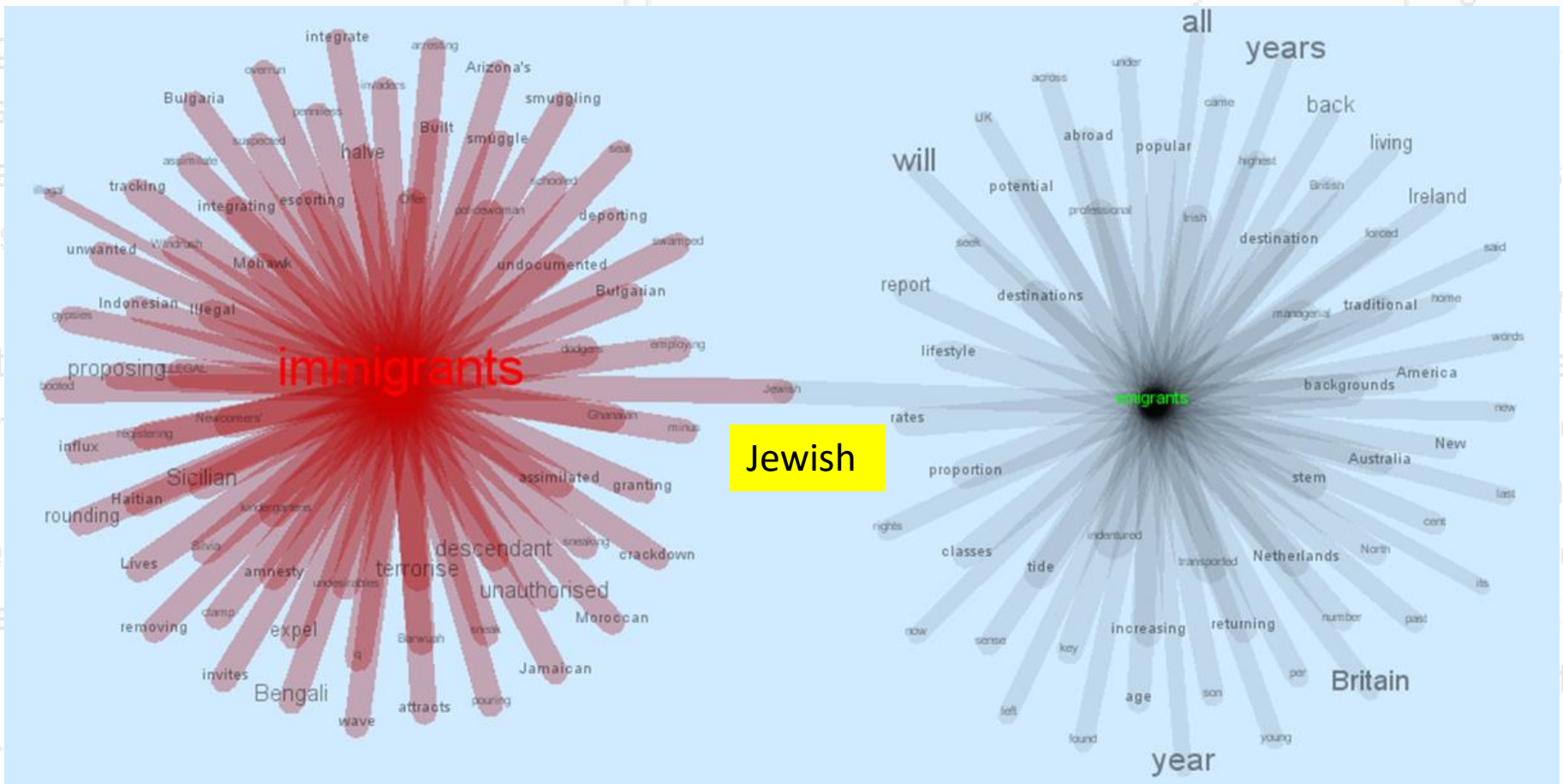


(p. 3). One possible explanation for the absence of the category in the CANCODE

technical words are characterized by the absence of exact synonyms, resistance to

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collocational networks for *immigrants* / *emigrants*



(p. 3). One possible explanation for the absence of the category in the CANCODE technical words are characterized by the absence of exact synonyms, resistance to tagtransition probabilities) is to see how the absence of tagtransition statistics affects

investigating absence

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graph TD; A(( )) --- B[Corpus linguistic starting points]; A --- C[Discourse analysis starting points]; A --- D[Employing external data];
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Corpus linguistic starting points

Discourse analysis starting points

Employing external data

absence: discourse-analytic approaches

- **Grammatical relations**

- e.g Marchi & Taylor 2009

grammatical relations

- Who was fighting in the 2003 Iraq war?
 - If you do not *fight the war*, you will not control the peace. (*Daily Mirror*, 2003)
 - Today we can see the consequences of *fighting a war* in our sitting rooms. (*Daily Mail*, 2003)
 - The Pentagon has proved itself great at *fighting wars*, but not very good at dealing with their aftermath. (*New York Times*, 2003)

absence: discourse-analytic approaches

- Grammatical relations

- e.g Marchi & Taylor 2009

- Textual relations

- e.g. Lishinsky 2011

absence: discourse-analytic approaches

- Grammatical relations
- Textual relations
 - e.g. Lishinsky 2011
- Frame-based approach
 - e.g. Schröter & Storjohann (2015)

absence: discourse-analytic approaches

- Grammatical relations

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- Moral panic frame

- e.g. Taylor 2009/2014

Italian regional newspapers '09	(North) Africa	Eastern Europe	Nigeria
Object of offence	Material processes: 58% = threat to society	52% of occurrences refer to crimes for which the EE was responsible Sex-related offences	Dominant semantic field in collocates = crime / law but the crime is generally being an immigrant
Moral entrepreneur	?	Citizen patrols	
Consequence	Areas change their identity (<i>the new Chinatown</i>)		
Corrective action	<i>Give up the liberalist attitude</i>	Citizen patrols	
Desired outcome			
Rhetoric	Aligned with other unfavourably evaluated groups. Invasion topos Professionals of crime	Generalisations; emphasis on intentionality / professionals of crime	

absence: discourse-analytic approaches

- Grammatical relations
 - Textual relations
 - e.g. Lishinsky 2011
 - Frame-based approach
 - e.g. Schröter & Storjohann (2015)
 - Moral panic frame
 - e.g. Taylor 2009/2014
 - Metaphorical representations

absence: discourse analysis approaches

N	Concordance	File
1	open-door asylum system and benefits culture are a magnet for Afghans, Kurds and Eritreans.	EX09.txt
2	Party, said the new mini centres would act as a magnet for asylum seekers trying to get into Britain.	EX09.txt
3	opposition to any sort of centre which might act as a magnet for illegal immigrants and the people	MAIL0903.txt
4	to any sort of reception centre which might act as a magnet for illegal immigrants, traffickers and	MAIL0904.txt
5	centre at Sangatte, near Calais. The centre became a magnet for illegal migrants before it was shut down	MAIL0901.txt
6	could be seen on a clear day, was believed to act as a magnet for illegal migrants from all over the world.	MAIL0903.txt
7	tenants pay no rent. This epic laxity also acts as a magnet for immigrants who, contrary to socialist	EX09.txt
8	and Intelligence Unit, warned: 'Britain is becoming a magnet for increasing numbers of criminals from the	MAIL0908.txt
9	are turning up in Scotland - as the country becomes a magnet for killers and gangsters. Crooks from	SUN0906.txt
10	crisis is like 'the worst days of Sangatte', which was a magnet for migrants. A spokesman for the French	MAIL0907.txt
11	idea despite concern that any large facility will act as a magnet for more migrants. Immigration Minister Phil	EX09.txt
12	UK-bound lorries. Border guards say it has become a magnet for refugees. France's Immigration Minister	STAR09.txt
13	U.K. 1st Edition Overgenerous benefits system a magnet for UK SECTION: LETTERS; 64 LENGTH:	EX09.txt

(4a) is interpreted as July 20th because the absence of a surface article signals that (p. 3). One possible explanation for the absence of the category in the CANCODE technical words are characterized by the absence of exact synonyms, resistance to tagtransition probabilities) is to see how the absence of tagtransition statistics affects

investigating absence

Corpus linguistic starting points

Discourse analysis starting points

Employing external data

absence: external data

- **Comparison against previous research**
 - e.g. Taylor 2009 identifies migrants from China as the scapegoat in a moral panic in the Italian press; in 2009 they are not foregrounded

absence: external data

- **Comparison against previous research**
 - e.g. Taylor 2009 identifies migrants from China as the scapegoat in a moral panic in the Italian press; in 2009 they are not foregrounded
- **Comparison with 'real-world' data**
 - e.g. Taylor 2009/2014 compares press mentions of groups of migrants with population statistics

Estimated population resident in Italy, 2009	% change from 2008
Romania	+27
Albania	+10
Morocco	+10
China	+9
Ukraine	+16
Philippines	+8
Tunisia	+7
Poland	+10
India	+19
Moldova	+30
Macedonia	+14
Ecuador	+9
Peru	+10
Egypt	+7
Sri Lanka	n.a.

Co-occurring identities: Italian national newspapers		Co-occurring identities: Italian regional newspapers	
UK/GB/England	62	Morocco	410
Romania	58	China	382
Africa/North Africa	54	Albania	238
Eastern Europe	48	Tunisia	238
France	46	Eastern Europe	212
Morocco	40	Romania	189
China	35	Africa/North Africa	174
Egypt	34	Senegal	161
Tunisia	28	Egypt	131
Libya	26	UK/GB/England	96
India	23	Germany	90
Rom	21	Nigeria	79
Somalia	21	Pakistan	76
Eritrea	20	Rom	68
Albania	19	France	61

Estimated population resident in Italy, 2009		% change from 2008	Co-occurring identities: Italian national newspapers	Co-occurring identities: Italian regional newspapers	
Romania	796477	+27	UK/GB/England	62 Morocco	410
Albania	441396	+10	Romania	58 China	382
Morocco	403592	+10	Africa/North Africa	54 Albania	238
China	170265	+9	Eastern Europe	48 Tunisia	238
Ukraine	153998	+16	France	46 Eastern Europe	212
Philippines	113686	+8	Morocco	40 Romania	189
Tunisia	100112	+7	China	35 Africa/North Africa	174
Poland	99389	+10	Egypt	34 Senegal	161
India	91855	+19	Tunisia	28 Egypt	131
Moldova	89424	+30	Libya	26 UK/GB/England	96
Macedonia	89066	+14	India	23 Germany	90
Ecuador	80070	+9	Rom	21 Nigeria	79
Peru	77629	+10	Somalia	21 Pakistan	76
Egypt	74599	+7	Eritrea	20 Rom	68
Sri Lanka	68738	n.a.	Albania	19 France	61

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Ecuador	80070 +9
Peru	77629 +10
Egypt	74599 +7
Sri Lanka	68738 n.a.

Nationalities most frequently involved in domestic work in Italy 2009-2010:

- Romanian (19.4%)
- Ukrainian (10.4%)
- Philippine (9%)
- Polish (7.7%)
- Moldovian (6.2%)

(expressed as % of total domestic workforce)

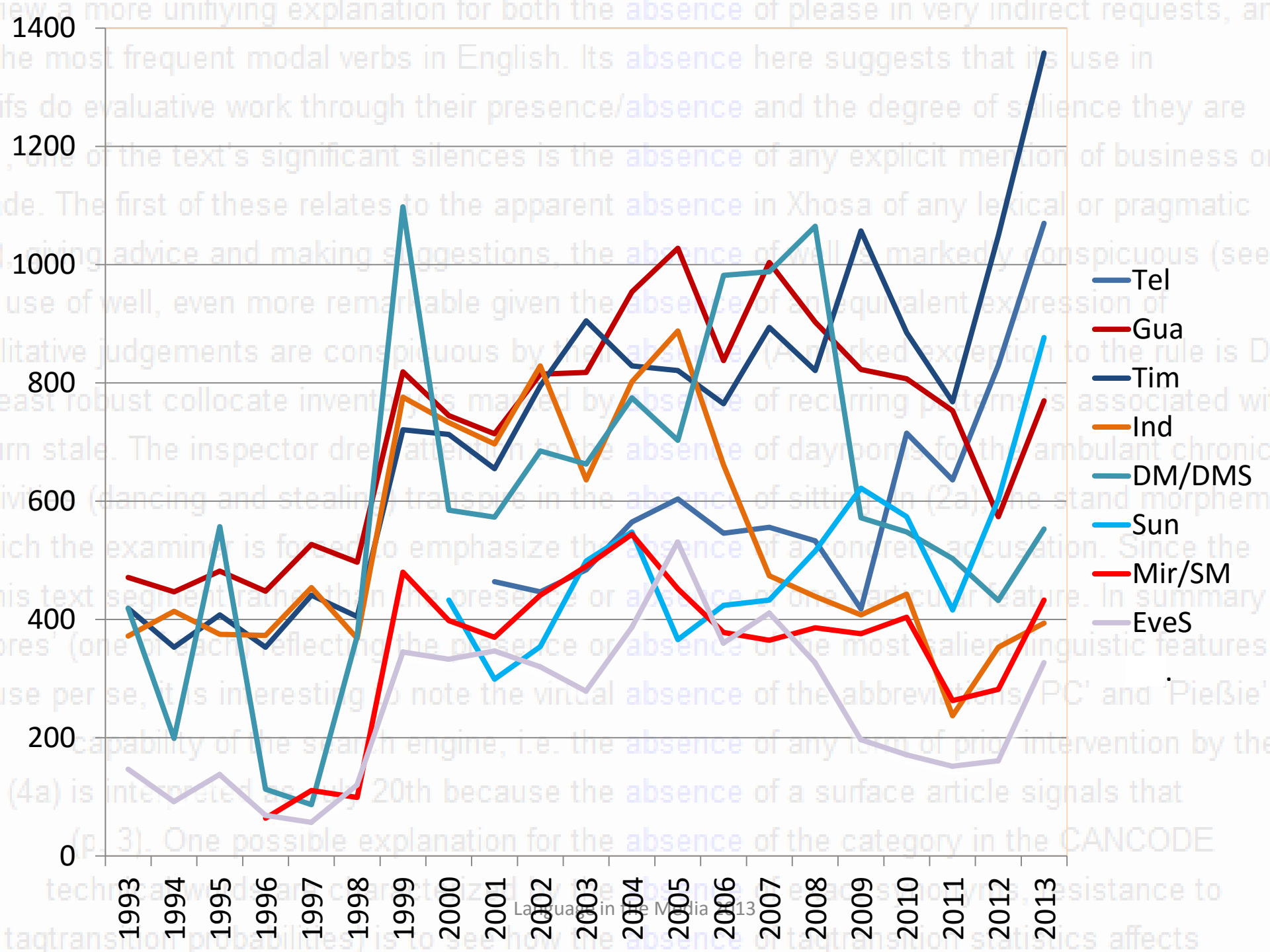
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absence: external data

- Comparison against previous research
- Comparison with 'real-world' data
- Meta-linguistic approach
 - Schröter 2012 investigates 'silence' in the German media discussions / evaluations of Angela Merkel.

(perceptions of) absence in migration discourses

- THE MOST OPEN COUNTRY IN THE WORLD? NOT WHILE SIR HUMPHREY'S MINIONS *WON'T TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT **MIGRANTS*** (Daily Mail)
- Eager to parade their own progressive credentials senior Conservatives have tried to *avoid talking about **immigration***, despite opinion polls which show that it is one of the public's biggest concerns. (Express)
- You *can't have a discussion* with these ideologues without being branded something or other. They have a name for everyone with views they do not like. Anyone opposed to unrestricted **immigration** is a racist or a xenophobe. (Metro)
- Many will say it is **racist** to say so but it seems too many young Asian men have rather abhorrent views on many matters. We must not be *afraid to talk* about this issue, otherwise it is only spoken about by the far-right and they gain electoral ground. (Sun)
- Indeed, David Cameron can certainly claim that, since he came to power, there are 236,000 more jobs for those of working age. But what the Prime Minister *won't tell* you is that this is entirely accounted for by a rise in **foreign-born workers**. The number of UK-born people in work is falling. (Telegraph)
- Many on the left *avoided talking about "cultural integration"* as the phrase was seen as code for **assimilation**. It conjured up images of white politicians telling others that their way of life was inferior. (Times)



absence: external data

- Comparison against previous research
 - Comparison with 'real-world' data
- Meta-linguistic approach
 - Introspection / prior knowledge/ (close reading)

Prior knowledge: investigating naming choices

- Ask our right. September 2008.
- Approximately 200/300 asylum seekers held a protest march in Rome.
- The newspaper headlines retrievable from the internet did not use the terms *rifugiati* [refugee] or *richiedenti d'asilo* [asylum seeker]

segui su

L'OROSCOPO DI BRANKO
IL METEO - Roma

HOME PRIMO PIANO ECONOMIA CULTURA SPETTACOLI SOCIETÀ SPORT TECNOLOGIA

Roma, immigrati in corteo chiedono asilo in Italia

Traffico nel caos, tensione con la polizia

CONDIVIDI L'ARTICOLO

0 0

Tweet +1

OGGI IN PRIMO PIANO

Casini avverte: dopo Monti c'è Monti Alfano: bis solo se si candida Il premier: il governo dei tecnici è a tempo

ROMA - Il leader dell'Udc, Pier Ferdinando Casini, rilancia la...

la Repubblica **ROMA.it**

Domenica 09.09.2012 Ore 19.11

Cerca: Archivio

Cerca: Cerca nel Web con Google

Home Cronaca Sport Foto Video Annunci Aste-Appalti Lavoro

IN EDICOLA

CONDIVIDI:

VERSIONE STAMPABILE INVIA

Immigrati, corteo in centro, tensione e traffico in tilt

Hanno attraversato tutta la città camminando per più di trenta chilometri con addosso una t-shirt bianca con su scritto "We ask our right". Oltre trecento immigrati etiopi, somali ed eritrei, venuti dal centro di accoglienza di Castelnuovo di Porto ieri hanno

absence: external data

- Comparison against previous research
 - Comparison with 'real-world' data
 - Meta-linguistic approach
 - Introspection / prior knowledge
 - Prior awareness or intuition about what is possible in language should help to make us aware of [...] absences, and often comparison with a larger normative corpus will reveal what they are

Baker 2005: 35

investigating absence

Corpus linguistic starting points

Discourse analysis starting points

Employing external data

conclusions

- What is absent is part of the discourse
- And, where the absent could be expected to be present, it is a salient part of the discourse
- Multi-method approaches give us multiple ways into absence
- including *identification, location, quantification* in Partington's (2014) terms

& questions

- What other ways of accessing the absent in discourse are out there?
- And when we have found the absent, how do we analyse it?

[***absencediscourse.wordpress.com/***](http://absencediscourse.wordpress.com/)

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