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# A linguistic analysis of the representation of Kate Middleton and Meghan Markle in the British press: A corpus-based study

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## **Abstract**

The study of gender discourse has mainly focused on the differences in the speech produced by men and women. However, there has been comparatively less discussion about the language used to represent either gender, not to mention the influence that the cultural background of people belonging to the same gender exerts on their representation. With the aim of contributing to filling this gap, this dissertation focuses on the representation of two females who belong to the same social group (the British royal family), as found in present-day British online press. These women are Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge, and Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex. Although they share gender and rank, their cultural backgrounds set them apart and that is hypothesized to influence their representation in the press. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to reveal if there is a defamatory and disparaging discourse towards one of the two women. For this purpose, a balanced corpus has been compiled taking two main extra-linguistic variables into account: the political stance of the newspaper as well as the sex of their authors. Likewise, several intra-linguistic variables are analysed: names and epithets, binomial expressions and adjectives in reference to both Middleton and Markle. In doing so, this thesis is intended to point out which the social tendencies and attitudes are in today's British press.

## **Keywords**

gender discourse, royal women, cultural difference approach, corpus linguistics

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## 1. Introduction

The study of gender discourse has mainly focused on the differences in the speech produced by men and women. Therefore, a large amount of linguistic researchers have been carrying out corpus-based studies in order to present a reliable analysis of the communication features presented in both male and female speech. Additionally, other studies have been focusing on the differences in language use that exist when representing both men and women in a corpus (Baker 2014; Norberg 2016). However, there has been comparatively less discussion about the language used to represent either gender, not to mention the influence that the cultural background of people belonging to the same gender exerts on their representation. Although there is not an extensive amount of coverage regarding the female representation, it has been claimed that “women experience linguistic discrimination in two ways: in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language use treats them” (Lakoff 1973, 46). Thus, with the aim of contributing to filling this gap, this dissertation focuses on the representation of two females who belong to the same social group, the British royal family, as found in present-day British online press. These women are Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge, and Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, who have generated great interest amongst Britain’s readership. Although they share gender and rank, their cultural backgrounds set them apart and that is hypothesised to influence their representation in the press. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to reveal if there is a defamatory and disparaging discourse towards either of the women.

For this purpose, a balanced corpus has been compiled taking two main extra-linguistic variables into consideration: the political stance of the newspaper as well as the sex of their authors. The data for this corpus has been compiled from a total of six different British online newspapers ranging from 2010 to 2019. Following the classification presented by YouGov (2017), I have selected *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Mirror* on behalf of left-wing newspapers, and *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* in place of right-wing ones. Concerning the analysis of the corpora, a first reading of the corpus was carried out in order to pinpoint the three intra-linguistic variables explored in this study: names and epithets, binomial expressions and adjectives in reference to both Middleton and Markle. Subsequently, a more in-depth analysis of the results from this first reading was carried out with *AntConc* version 3.5.8 (Anthony 2019). Thus, a quantitative analysis of the most frequently used names and epithets and binomial expressions is presented. Moreover, a qualitative analysis of the adjectives with the highest frequency found in the corpus has been carried out taking Biber et

al.'s semantic classification of adjectives (Biber et al. 1999, 508). Finally, I briefly present some thought-provoking examples using the adjective *black* in reference to Markle. In doing so, this thesis is intended to point out which the social tendencies and attitudes are in today's British press.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

A rather large amount of researchers have been approaching the study of gender and language from two different perspectives: "the 'cultural difference' approach, as opposed to a 'power' or 'dominance' approach" (Tannen 1994, 9). According to Tannen, the latter implies that there is an established set of hierarchical relations between the two genders (9). Therefore, she pinpoints the groundless claim "that women's and men's styles can be understood in the framework of cultural difference are represented as denying that dominance exists" which refutes by stating that the cultural difference approach contributes to the explanation of how dominance is created in face-to-face interaction (9-10). Gender dominance can be explicit but in most of the cases it is so seamlessly integrated and rooted in our own culture that it goes unnoticed. Likewise, following Butler's words, "there is a 'doer' behind the deed" (Butler 1990, 25). As a consequence of this dominance, social inequality emerges from what Tannen calls the "negative stereotyping of minority cultural groups" (Tannen 1996, 9). For this reason, it is necessary to consider Middleton and Markle's cultural background who as females belong to a minority group. Additionally, in Markle's case, apart from being discriminated against for her sex, she is also disfavoured by her ethnicity.

Lakoff, in turn, asserted that women suffer a linguistic discrimination in two different ways: "in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language use treats them" (Lakoff 1973, 46). Unlike other studies (described in more detail further on in this section), this essay presents a comparative study case of the language used in reference to two females in the current online British press. Butler defines female representation within politics as "the normative function of language which is said either to reveal or distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women" (Butler 1990, 1). This, as she claims, has been central in feminist theory since depending on the cultural background a woman belongs to, that woman would be "either misrepresented or not represented at all" (1). Thus, for the purpose of this present paper, I will focus on the written representation of Middleton and Markle to reveal if there is a real distorted discourse towards one or another, or both. Although they share gender

and rank, their cultural backgrounds set them apart and that is hypothesised to influence their representation in the media.

As reported by Tannen, the analysis of conversation is the main key to prove that subordination and dominance arise from interaction (Tannen 1994, 10). There are four principles which are fundamental to interactional sociolinguists:

(1) roles are not given but are created in interaction; (2) context is not given but is constituted by talk and action; (3) nothing that occurs in interaction is the sole doing of one party but rather is a “joint production,” the result of the interaction of individuals’ ways of speaking; [...] (4) linguistic features (such as interruption, volume of talk, indirectness, and so on) can never be aligned on a one-to-one basis with interactional intentions or meanings, in the sense that a word can be assigned a meaning (Tannen 1994, 10).

Lakoff stated that the main reason why the two main types of linguistic discrimination mentioned above take place is due to a clear deep-rooted preconception of women there is in our culture (Lakoff 1973, 49), which is closely connected to the “negative stereotyping” previously mentioned (Tannen 1994, 9). Therefore, the context established by what Tannen calls “talk and action” (10) will play a very important role in the data analysis of this paper. In Gregory Bateson’s book *Steps to an Ecology of mind* published in 1972 and in Erving Goffman’s book *Frame Analysis* published in 1974 (quoted in Tannen 1994, 11) “no language has meaning except by reference to how it is ‘framed’ or ‘contextualized’”. This idea was acknowledged later on by Kendall and Tannen’s “context-sensitive” feature (Kendall and Tannen 2001, 551). They claim that the gender-related variations found in language use are in all likelihood to due to this context-sensitive feature (551). For this reason, this paper presents a linguistic analysis of the language used to refer to both duchesses to reveal whether certain words, which at a glance present a neutral connotation, can shift into a negative meaning.

In Lakoff’s own words, “women are discriminated against (usually unconsciously) by the language everyone uses” (49). To date, there is still a deeply engrained custom in our culture to unceasingly identify a woman in relation to a man. Lakoff refers to it as the sexual definition of women which inquires “that a woman in most subcultures in our society achieves status only through her father’s, husband’s, or lover’s position” (62-65). Therefore, the data analysis in this thesis includes a section that focuses on the examination of the main binomials used regarding both royal women. According to Kopaczyk and Sauer, binomials are defined as “a coordinated pair of linguistic units of the same word class which show *some* semantic relation” (Kopaczyk and Sauer 2017, 3). For the purpose of the paper, I will explore the most frequently used

gendered binomials. That is to say, binomial expressions that follow either the male-female or the female-male pattern (e.g. *William and Kate, Meghan and Harry*).

Even though this thesis focuses on the comparison of how these two duchesses are represented in online British press, it is interesting to add “another type of gender bias” (Baker 2014, 92). In Freebody and Baker’s *The Construction and Operation of Gender in Children’s First School Books* in *Women, Language and Society in Australia and New Zealand* published in 1987 (quoted in Baker 2014, 92) they refer to “male firstness”, which claims that in cases where both sexes are being mentioned the male is more likely to occupy the first position. Thus, the order of any possible gendered binomials regarding both duchesses will be closely analysed as well.

As Lakoff infers “we can interpret our overt actions, or our perception, in accordance with our desires, distorting them as we fit. But linguistic data are there, in black and white, or on tape, unambiguous and unavoidable” (Lakoff 1973, 46). Consequently, corpus-based studies have been increasing over the past decades to give a real representation of current gender issues and language use, and show that linguistic imbalances are worth studying since they offer a real representation of the inequities there are in the world today (73). Thus, in the last part of this section, I explore which are the main gender discourse studies that have been carried out most recently, and from which I will base my own. Lakoff (1973), Baker (2014) and Norberg (2016) focus not only on the speech and communication differences between males and females, but also on the analysis of collocational patterns used in reference to both genders.

In Lakoff’s study, linguistic evidence is presented to reveal the inequity between the roles of men and women (Lakoff 1973, 46). In order to do so, she focuses on both the way women speak by exploring the lexicon, the syntactic structures and the type of language used to refer to the two genders (45). Thus, she explores the following pairs of words: *lady: woman, master: mistress, widow: widower*, and *Mr.: Mrs., Miss*, to study the differences in connotation these present (45). In turn, Baker (2014) and Norberg (2016) focus on how male and female are distinctively represented in corpora. Baker’s book is aimed to both corpus linguists and gender researchers. Thus, he presents a thorough introduction to what gender studies are and what the way to approach them using corpora is. The two main analysis given in his book from which I have based my own are: the analysis of the discourse prosodies used by the *Daily Mail* in the representation of gay men in this newspaper and the study of collocational patterns of the lemmas BOY and GIRL (Baker 2014). The latter corpus-based study found in Baker’s book has been expanded in Norberg’s study in which she examines “what verbs collocate with lemmas BOY and GIRL as subject and object and what words modify them in a worldwide corpus of



English” (Norberg 2016, 2). For the purpose of this paper I have followed a similar methodology used in the above mentioned studies. Although these two papers analyse how both male and female are differently represented in a corpus and I focus on the representation of two females, I explore whether Middleton and Markle’s cultural background differences influence on their representation in the press.

### **3. Methodology**

The data for this study has been compiled from a total of six different British online newspapers. Two main variables have been taken into account in order to gather the articles that form this corpus: the political stance of the newspaper – left-wing and right-wing – and the sex of their authors. In order to select and classify these six newspapers, I followed a recent survey taken in February of 2017 in which the British audience was asked their views on “where mainstream national newspapers sit on the left-right political spectrum” (YouGov, 2017). Following their classification, I have chosen the three newspapers that fell in each side of the spectrum. Therefore, left-wing articles have been gathered from *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Mirror*. In turn, right-wing articles have been compiled from *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*.

Consequently, I have built a balanced corpus of articles raging from 2010 to 2019. All the articles in this corpus were individually gathered from the already mentioned newspapers’ webpages by typing the names of the duchesses (e.g. *Kate Middleton*, *Meghan Markle*) in the search bar. Thus, the most recent articles would load directly. I would like to emphasise that the coverage given by left-wing and right-wing newspapers is counterbalanced. Left-wing newspapers do not tend to write as much articles about the royal family as frequently as right-wing ones. Additionally, I have noticed that the current coverage on Markle, in both left-wing and right-wing newspapers, is wider than the one on Middleton. For this reason, I had to expand the period back to 2010 in order to have a similar amount of articles and words for each duchess and maintain my corpus balanced in that respect. However, although I tried to maintain the same number of articles in regard to the sex of their authors, the lack of male columnists in both left-wing and right-wing newspapers has made it impossible to maintain this extra-linguistic variable balanced in the corpus. In sum, this corpus amounts to a total of 361 articles and a total of 222,520 words (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of articles and words for the compiled corpus.

Author(s)		Kate Middleton						Meghan Markle					
		Number of Articles			Number of Words			Number of Articles			Number of Words		
		M	F	M+F	M	F	M+F	M	F	M+F	M	F	M+F
Left Wing	<i>The Guardian</i>	13	21	1	11,696	12,668	1,160	14	16	1	9,109	11,870	762
	<i>The Independent</i>	4	23	1	4,583	10,217	500	6	20	-	2,048	10,918	-
	<i>The Mirror</i>	13	24	3	7,192	10,413	1,597	6	20	4	3,666	10,214	6,894
Right Wing	<i>The Daily Express</i>	15	28	-	6,049	11,788	-	13	22	-	6,436	11,183	-
	<i>The Daily Mail</i>	5	12	1	4,782	10,910	1,936	3	8	3	344	11,401	10,969
	<i>The Sun</i>	9	26	-	4,046	10,783	-	8	17	1	3,209	11,848	1,382
		59	134	6	38,348	66,780	5,139	50	103	9	24,812	67,434	20,007
Total		199			110,267			162			112,253		

In order to carry out the analysis of the corpora, I did a thorough reading of the articles. In doing so, I wrote down the most frequently used epithets and adjectives that collocated with the first names (e.g. *Kate, Meghan*), full names (e.g. *Kate Middleton, Meghan Markle*) and/or official royal titles (e.g. *Duchess of Cambridge, Duchess of Sussex*) of both duchesses. Besides, a list of the most used binomial expressions (e.g. *Duke and Duchess, Harry and Meghan, William and Kate*) was gathered at the same time. The main reason for this highly time-consuming first manual analysis was the impossibility of carrying out an automatic analysis due to the variety of names and epithets these women are given by the different columnists. Subsequently, a more in-depth analysis was carried out with *AntConc* version 3.5.8 (Anthony 2019).

For the purpose of this paper, a quantitative analysis of the most frequently used names – first name, full name and official royal title – comparing both left-wing and right-wing articles will be presented along with the most frequently used epithets (e.g. *Catherine, Meg*) for each one of the duchesses. Additionally, a similar quantitative analysis is given in regard to the fifteen most frequently used binomial phrases (e.g. *William and Kate, Meghan and Harry, Kate and Meghan*). Plus, in this section, I will explore the order in which gendered binomials following a male-female and a female-male pattern are presented. Finally, I will carry out a qualitative analysis of the adjectives with the highest frequency found in the corpus for both Middleton and Markle. To do this, Biber et al.'s semantic classification of adjectives has been followed (Biber et al. 1999, 508). Their classification includes the following types of adjectives: (i) color, (ii) size/quantity/extent, (iii) time, (iv) evaluative/emotive and (v) miscellaneous descriptive (508-9). However, I have only focused on one of the semantic groups, namely on

the evaluative and/or emotive adjectives particularly. To close the analysis, I briefly present some thought-provoking sentences using the adjective *black* with the aim of exploring the “negative stereotyping of minority cultural groups” (Tannen 1996, 9), since it presents a rather high frequency when making reference to Markle.

## 4. Data and Discussion

### 4.1. Names and Epithets

To start with the analysis, frequency data for the most used names examined in reference to both duchesses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Most frequently used names for both Middleton and Markle.

		Kate Middleton			Meghan Markle			
		Total frequency	LW	RW	Total frequency			
First name	<i>Kate</i>	1455	647	808	<i>Meghan</i>	1799	680	1,119
Full name	<i>Kate Middleton</i>	323	158	165	<i>Meghan Markle</i>	411	186	225
Official royal title	<i>Duchess of Cambridge</i>	401	198	203	<i>Duchess of Sussex</i>	259	117	142

LW = frequency in Left-wing newspapers

RW = frequency in Right-wing newspapers

The total number of times both duchesses’ first name is used in the corpus is very close, 1455 for *Kate* and 1799 for *Meghan*. However, a chi-square test discloses that the difference between the absolute frequency of *Meghan* is significant ( $\chi^2 = 18.2285$ ;  $p < 0.00002$ ). Given these results, this could indicate the fact that Meghan Markle’s recent marriage to Prince Harry in 2018 has been the main focus of newspapers in the UK. Besides, there is a slight difference in the total number of hits for *Duchess of Cambridge* in comparison to *Duchess of Sussex*. Thus, as it has been shown by a second chi-square test, the disparity between the absolute frequency of *Duchess of Cambridge* is significant ( $\chi^2 = 17.4379$ ;  $p < 0.00003$ ). Considering this, it could be mentioned that *Duchess of Cambridge* has been acknowledged by the public since Prince William and Kate Middleton’s wedding in 2011. Consequently, she has been on the British national landscape with that royal title for more than eight years. Thus, it is reasonable that the number of hits for *Duchess of Cambridge* nearly doubles the number of hits for *Duchess of Sussex*, whose engagement with Prince Harry was made public in 2017.

In addition, it is interesting to see the disproportion between the numbers for *Meghan*, considering that left-wing newspapers have a total of 680 hits compared to a total of 1,119 hits in right-wing newspapers. Hence, a third chi-square test reveals that the difference between the absolute frequency of *Meghan* in left-wing and right-wing newspapers is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 54.3582$ ;  $p < 0.0000$ ). Given this results, it seems that right-wing newspapers tend to overuse Markle's first name as a way of showing a subtle rejection towards the figure of the Duchess of Sussex and her role within the royal family.

In this section I also present an analysis of the most frequently used epithets for both duchesses. It might be reiterated that an automatic analysis for the study of these epithets was impossible to carry out. Therefore, all examples have been checked manually. The most common ones in reference to Middleton are listed in Table 3. Epithets such as *Kate*, *Kate Middleton*, *duchess* or *Duchess of Cambridge* were eliminated from this list since not only have they been already discussed in Table 2, but also they are the most straightforward when representing the duchess. Consequently, the first example with the highest frequency is *Catherine* (Middleton's full first name). Even though she has always been referred to as *Kate*, *Kate Middleton* and/or *Duchess of Cambridge* by the public, some columnists still refer to her as such.

Table 3. Most frequently used epithets for Middleton.

	Total frequency	LW	RW
<i>Catherine</i>	40	19	21
<i>mum-of-three</i>	10	5	5
<i>commoner</i>	8	8	No hits
<i>girl next door</i>	2	2	No hits
<i>Prince William's fiancée</i>	1	1	No hits

However, as shown in (1), *Catherine* is followed by a peripheral dependent (e.g. *Duchess of Cambridge*) in order to emphasise the role she plays within the royal family. Surely, there is a certain tendency of columnists to use this epithet accompanied with other names. See (2), where *Catherine* is used as part of a binomial phrase together with *William*.

- (1) IT seems that *Catherine*, Duchess of Cambridge, won't be able to return the favour as bridesmaid when it comes to sister Pippa Middleton's nuptials. (*The Sun*, 2016-November-03)

(2) William and *Catherine* surprised many with their choice of Thomas's Battersea for George over more traditional royal schools. (*The Daily Mail*, 2018-December-27)

Although the epithet found in (3), *Prince William's fiancée*, is not as frequent compared to binomials expressions, it is intriguing to note that left-wing columnists tend to make reference to Middleton in relation to her husband. Nevertheless, a closer analysis to binomial structures and how these women are related to their respective husbands can be found in section 4.2.

(3) *Prince William's fiancée* represents a level of social climbing. (*The Guardian*, 2010-November-21)

Additionally, when columnists refer to Middleton solely, the vast majority of examples make reference to the attire she is wearing either to formal events or public places. This is clearly illustrated in (4) and (5) respectively.

(4) 30 photographs from a selection of 200 which show *Catherine* arriving on the terrace in a red robe, before applying sun cream and sunbathing. (*The Guardian*, 2012-September-16)

(5) The *mum-of-three* coupled the gown with dazzling Jimmy Choo heels. (*The Mirror*, 2019-February-10)

In turn, the most frequently used epithets for Markle are shown in Table 4. In this case, epithets such as *Meghan*, *Meghan Markle*, *duchess* or *Duchess of Sussex* have been disregarded from the list as well.

Table 4. Most frequently used epithets for Markle.

	Total frequency	LW	RW
<i>Meg</i>	35	3	32
<i>mother-to-be</i>	11	1	10
<i>divorcee</i>	4	4	No hits
<i>Duchess Diva</i>	3	No hits	3
<i>American upstart</i>	2	2	No hits

The name with the highest frequency is *Meg*, a hypocoristic form of Meghan (Markle's first name). Interestingly, the recurrence of this diminutive form in right-wing tabloids is very high. Although *Meg* is used to refer to the duchess as the subject of a clause (see [6] below), it is more commonly used to construct sensational and attractive headlines (see [7], [8] and [9] below).

(6) *Meg* will be flying home refreshed and relaxed - and with a lot of new baby clothes.'  
(*The Daily Mail*, 2019-February-27)

(7) *MEGGING* AMENDS. It's up to 'senior' Kate Middleton to end 'feud' with royal newcomer Meghan Markle, relationship expert insists.' (*The Sun*, 2019-February-20)

(8) *BIG MEG-STAKE*. The Queen fears Meghan Markle's lavish £300K baby shower is 'rubbing people's noses in her wealth', says Piers Morgan.' (*The Sun*, 2019-February-22)

(9) *MEG-A CLOSE*. How does Meghan Markle know Serena Williams and how long have they been friends? (*The Sun*, 2019-February-21)

The second most commonly used epithet for Markle, particularly in right-wing newspapers, is *mother-to-be*. This appellation generally presents a fairly neutral connotation as it can be seen in (10) and (11).

(10) The *mother-to-be* dipped incredibly low after shaking hands with King Mohammed VI in Rabat on Monday evening. (*The Daily Mail*, 2019-February-2019)

(11) Other reports claim the *mother-to-be* has tried to reach out to her father to no avail.  
(*The Daily Express*, 2019-March-2)

According to *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage* edited by Lewis Jordan in 1976 (quoted in Fasold 1987, 189) discloses that "besides avoiding designations that are obviously disparaging — such as doll, weaker sex or the little woman — we should be aware of undesirable subtleties of meaning that can be conveyed in some contexts by otherwise

innocuous terms like housewife, comely brunette, girl, grandmother, divorcee, sculptress and numerous others”. Nonetheless, *The Guardian* makes use of the word *divorcee* several times. A term naturally classified as innocuous once it is given a context its connotation is none other than a pejorative and detracting one (see [12] and [13]). Example (12), in particular, shows a clear hierarchical dominance. Harry, a white British *prince* is married to a foreign female who has already been married before. On top of this, this epithet is preceded by the adjective *American* in both cases. Nonetheless, *American* as an adjective will be further analysed in section 4.3.

(12) Harry, a prince, is married to an American *divorcee*. (The Guardian, 2018-November-28)

(13) Just over 80 years later, another American *divorcee*, Meghan Markle, is set to give the British monarchy a new lease of life. (The Guardian, 2018-April-20)

## 4.2. Binomial Expressions

Following the same manual analysis used to compile both names and epithets, these binomial expressions have been gathered, first, reading the whole corpus and writing them down, and secondly, using *AntConc* to examine the frequency of the results from that first reading. Thus, a list of more than thirty gendered binomials has been compiled. However, for the purpose of this paper, I have studied the fifteen most frequently used ones (see Table 5).

According Kopaczyk and Sauer, binomials are defined as “a coordinated pair of linguistic units of the same word class which show *some* semantic relation” (Kopaczyk and Sauer 2017, 3). The binomials explored in this paper fall into the semantic category of “relational expressions”, which mainly relate a male and a female (e.g. *mum and dad*, *men and women*) (Biber et al. 1999, 1033). However, the examples presented above are more specific since they make use of either the first name, the full name or the official royal title of both duchesses and their respective husbands. As seen in Table 5, out of the fifteen examples, eight follow the male-female pattern, four follow a female-male pattern, and just three follow a female-female pattern.

Table 5. Most frequently used gendered binomials.

	Total frequency	LW	RW
<i>Duke and Duchess</i>	180	106	74
<i>Harry and Meghan</i>	106	65	41
<i>Meghan and Harry</i>	81	41	40
<i>William and Kate</i>	73	28	45
<i>Duke and Duchess of Sussex</i>	61	36	25
<i>Duke and Duchess of Cambridge</i>	57	34	23
<i>Kate and William</i>	50	21	29
<i>Meghan and Kate</i>	37	6	31
<i>Kate and Meghan</i>	35	19	16
<i>Meghan Markle and Prince Harry</i>	31	14	17
<i>Prince Harry and Meghan</i>	22	13	9
<i>Prince William and Kate</i>	20	9	11
<i>Harry and Meghan Markle</i>	13	9	4
<i>Meghan Markle and Kate Middleton</i>	12	5	7
<i>Kate Middleton and Prince William</i>	11	5	6

Lakoff defined the “sexual definition of a woman”, which refers to the fact that “a woman is identified in terms of the men she relates to” (Lakoff 1973, 65). In turn, in Freebody and Baker’s *The Construction and Operation of Gender in Children’s First School Books* in *Women, Language and Society in Australia and New Zealand* published in 1987 (quoted in Baker 2014, 92) they refer to “male firstness”, which explains that in cases where both sexes are being mentioned the male is more likely to occupy the first position. A part from the three cases in which both duchesses are paired together, following a female-female pattern (e.g. *Meghan and Kate*, *Kate and Meghan* and *Meghan Markle and Kate Middleton*), the rest of binomials relate Middleton and/or Markle with their respective partners. Thus, it is interesting to see that four out of the five most frequently used binomial phrases in the corpus follow a male-female pattern. Taking this into account, I would argue that there is still a deeply engrained custom in our culture to unceasingly identify a woman in relation to a man. For this reason, the tendency that the vast majority of columnists have to follow this male-female pattern is not groundbreaking. After comparing the frequency levels in Table 5, there is just about the same number of hits in both left-wing and right-wing newspapers, which shows general tendency towards male firstness in the current British press.

In order to present a closer analysis, I have examined whether the end-weight principle is applicable in the twelve examples that follow either a male-female structure or a female-male structure. The principle of end-weight is defined as “the tendency for long and complex elements to be placed towards the end of a clause” (Biber et.al 1999, 898). Even though I am



studying binomial phrases and not clauses, by counting the number of words of each part comprised in the structure in question, the weight can be calculated. Furthermore, I have counted the syllables in each of the parts as well to see if any discrepancies could be found in comparison to the word count (see Table 6).

Table 6. End-weight principle analysis on binomials following both male-female and/or female-male pattern.

	End-Weight Principle (Syllable count)	End-Weight Principle (Word count)
<i>Duke and Duchess</i>	A	SW
<i>Harry and Meghan</i>	SW	SW
<i>Meghan and Harry</i>	SW	SW
<i>William and Kate</i>	NA	SW
<i>Duke and Duchess of Sussex</i>	A	A
<i>Duke and Duchess of Cambridge</i>	A	A
<i>Kate and William</i>	A	SW
<i>Meghan Markle and Prince Harry</i>	NA	SW
<i>Prince Harry and Meghan</i>	NA	NA
<i>Prince William and Kate</i>	NA	NA
<i>Harry and Meghan Markle</i>	A	A
<i>Kate Middleton and Prince William</i>	NA	SW

A = Applicable  
 NA = Not Applicable  
 SW = Same Weight

Interestingly, in both *Prince Harry and Meghan* and *Prince William and Kate* the principle of end-weight is not applicable. The longer part of the binomial phrase is placed at the beginning in both cases, likewise the weighty part makes reference to the duchesses' husbands. Therefore, these two examples illustrate the male firstness feature. Moreover, in cases such as *William and Kate*, *Meghan Markle and Prince Harry* and *Kate Middleton and Prince William*, the word count analysis states that the end-weight principle stays neutral, since both parts present the same weight. Contrarily, the syllable count analysis reveals that the end-weight principle does not apply in these gendered binomials. Thus, in cases like *Meghan Markle and Prince Harry* and *Kate Middleton and Prince William* where the male is not given precedence and the female is placed at the beginning, I would question whether it may be due to whom the columnist wants to focus on in that part of the article. Nonetheless, further research is needed in this respect. A thorough analysis on the context given in each of these cases should be carried out in order to present a more conclusive answer.

### 4.3. Adjectives

This section presents the analysis of the most commonly used adjectives regarding both Middleton and Markle. In order to do so, I have followed Biber et al.'s semantic grouping of adjectives (Biber et al. 1999, 508). Within the two main semantic domains (descriptors and classifiers), the latter includes the following types of adjectives: (i) color, (ii) size/quantity/extent, (iii) time, (iv) evaluative/emotive and (v) miscellaneous descriptive (508-9). I have namely focused on the evaluative and/or emotive adjectives in particular, which are used to denote judgements, affect and emphasis (509). For the purpose of this paper, the list of adjectives has been reduced to the five most frequently used adjectives for Middleton and Markle. Methodologically, after a first reading of the corpus making note of the most striking adjectives, I proceeded to use *AntConc* to carry out a more detailed search. Thus, by inserting the most commonly used names regarding both duchesses (see Table 2) in the search bar, I was able to study each example individually. Adjectives such as *royal*, *private*, *black* and *pregnant* have been dismissed from these lists for several reasons. For instance, *royal* presents a total of 1257 hits in the corpus, and knowing that this word can function as a noun and as an adjective a manual analysis to distinguish its function in each of the examples was impossible to carry out. Likewise, adjectives such as *private* and *pregnant* presented a similar problem. With a total of 174 and 156 hits respectively, a detailed analysis was unattainable. However, at the end of this section I will briefly present several thought-provoking examples that make use of the colour adjective *black*, with the aim of exploring the “negative stereotyping of minority cultural groups” (Tannen 1996, 9) in reference to Markle.

The most frequently used adjectives for Middleton are presented in Table 7. The number of adjectives that collocated with either *Kate* or the *Duchess of Cambridge* in the attributive position was very scarce, since the vast majority of examples collocated with *William* (e.g. *William and Kate*) or with the definite article *the* (e.g. *the Duchess of Cambridge*). Thus, I have found a larger number of examples of adjectives in the predicative position.

Table 7. Most frequently used adjectives for Middleton regardless their connotation.

	Total frequency	LW	RW
<i>topless</i>	28	21	7
<i>stylish</i>	14	4	10
<i>determined</i>	12	8	4
<i>thin</i>	8	7	1
<i>hands-on</i>	5	2	3

The adjective with the highest frequency presents a negative connotation. In 2017, several *topless* photographs of Middleton sunbathing, which had been taken before she got married with Prince William, were leaked by a French magazine. Thus, the British press made sure to provide an extensive coverage of such scandal. Interestingly, left-wing newspapers present a total of 21 hits for *topless*, which compared to the total number of 7 hits in right-wing newspapers is reasonably higher. This result was fairly surprising, since the data analysis presented until this point has indicated that right-wing newspapers were more likely to follow a tendency towards sensationalism. Examples (14) and (15) illustrate the use of this adjective in both the attributive and the predicative position respectively.

(14) Trial of *topless* Kate Middleton photographers is delayed five months. (*The Independent*, 2017-January-4)

(15) DUCHESS NUDE CASE Trial begins for six accused of profiting from pictures of Kate Middleton sunbathing *topless*. (*The Sun*, 2017-January-4)

The second most commonly used adjective to refer to Middleton presents a positive connotation. *Stylish* is generally found in the attributive position (see [16]), providing a direct judgment of the duchess. However, if it is used in the predicative position, it makes special reference to her attire (see [17]). Therefore, the emphasis is given to the sophisticated clothes and/or complements she is wearing, which in many cases accents who the designer is, or even the cost of the piece of clothing.

(16) An *ever-stylish* Kate cut a classic figure in a red custom made Catherine Walker dress coat with a burgundy collar and matching hat. (*The Daily Mail*, 2018-December-27)

(17) Kate Middleton indulges her need for tweed in a chic and *stylish* Chanel suit. (*The Mirror*, 2019-February-13)

Another positive adjective, mainly found in the predicative position, is *determined*. This adjective is mostly used to highlight the duchess' attitude towards social concerns and environmental issues as seen in examples (18) and (19). Overall, this adjective presents Middleton as a very caring and resolute duchess.

- (18) As a mother of three, the Duchess is *determined* to raise the profile of children's mental health as one of her key roles in the Royal Family. (*The Mirror*, 2019-February-5)
- (19) The 36-year-old duchess [of Cambridge] is *determined* to push ahead because she sees it as potentially as big an issue as climate change. (*The Daily Mail*, 2019-February-6)

The fourth adjective in this list is *thin*. Even though *thin* is a neutral adjective used to describe a person's physical condition, in both (20) and (21), it is used negatively. After her wedding with Prince William back in 2011, columnists (left-wing in particular) started questioning Middleton's physical state and contemplating the possibility of this being caused by her new life style as new member of the royal family (see [21]). Interestingly, both examples are preceded either by a noun (e.g. *pencil*) or an adverb (e.g. *too*) to further intensify the negative connotation in which this adjective is presented.

- (20) Her [Kate's] *pencil-thin* appearance has led to speculation. (*The Guardian*, 2012-March-20)
- (21) 'Duchess of Cambridge is *too thin* and has a "bastard of a job", Germaine Greer says.' (*The Guardian*, 2014-September-29)

The last adjective in regard to Middleton is *hands-on*, a positive adjective which mainly collocates with the *mum* (see [22]). Despite having a very busy lifestyle, Middleton is portrayed as a very caring mum by the media. She definitely shows her mothering side to the public, which results in a positive representation of her being involved in the daily life of her three children.

- (22) Kate is a *hands-on* mum. She takes four-year-old Prince George to school as much as possible and helps Princess Charlotte up when she stumbles. (*The Daily Mirror*, 2018-August-15)

Table 8 presents the five most frequently used adjectives for Markle. *Former* and *American* are the highest in frequency with a total number of 102 and 98 hits respectively. At a glance, the difference between left-wing and right-wing use of these two adjectives seems fairly equal.

Table 8. Most frequently used adjectives in reference for Markle regardless their connotation.

	Total frequency	LW	RW
<i>former</i>	102	40	62
<i>American</i>	98	66	32
<i>lavish</i>	65	14	51
<i>difficult</i>	30	16	14
<i>successful</i>	21	16	5

Both left-wing and right-wing newspapers make use of *former* quite recurrently to make reference to Markle’s past career unbiasedly (see [23] and [24]).

(23) The *former* actress married into the Royal Family. (*The Daily Express*, 2019-February-22)

(24) The *former* Suits actress who married Prince Harry in May. (*The Daily Mail*, 2018-December-27)

However, there is a clear tendency for left-wing newspapers to make use of the affiliate adjective *American*, use to define “the national or religious group to which a referent belongs to” (Biber et al. 1999, 509). Examples (25) and (26) illustrate the constant use of this adjective to make reference to Markle, which distinctly accentuates the idea that Meghan is not British. Therefore, I would maintain that this presents a relentless hint of disapproval in having a foreign duchess in the royal family.

(25) A mixed race *American* divorcee actress. (*The Guardian*, 2018-May-20)

(26) We have our first African-*American* princess. (*The Guardian*, 2018-May-19)

The third and fourth adjectives in Table 8 present a negative meaning as well. Even though *Lavish* does not make direct reference to Markle, it is repeatedly used to point out how expensive-looking and luxurious Markle’s events are, in particular her baby shower celebrated in New York last February (see [27] and [28]). Interestingly, right-wing newspapers have a total number of 51 hits for *lavish*, compared to a total of 14 hits in left-wing newspapers. This emphasises the constant tendency of right-wing newspapers towards rumours and scandals, which results on continued exasperation from their readership towards Markle.

(27) The eye-watering cost and extraordinarily *lavish* nature of Meghan's trip to New York has caused some disquiet in Britain (*The Daily Mail*, 2019-February-26)

(28) I think Prince William will be angered by all of Meghan's *lavish* extravagance this week and the fact her baby shower looked so 'celebrity' rather than 'royal'." (*The Mirror*, 2019-February-23)

In turn, *difficult* is mainly used in collocation with *Duchess* (see [29] and [30]). In (29), in particular, the right-wing columnist is making a play on words in which the use of alliteration can be spotted (e.g. *Duchess Dazzling* to *Duchess Difficult*). Once again, this stresses the recurring tendency towards sensationalistic phrases when making special reference to Markle. Particularly in (30), where “the UK press negativity” is discussed by Markle’s close circle of friends. This reasserts this unfavorable and pejorative portrayal of Meghan Markle in the British press.

(29) Meghan has quickly morphed from *Duchess Dazzling* to *Duchess Difficult*. (*The Sun*, 2019-February-16)

(30) Meghan's friends have seen her depicted in the UK press negativity, labelled as *Duchess Difficult*. (*The Mirror*, 2019-February-6)

The last adjective from Markle’s list is *successful* which is predominantly used by both left-wing and right-wing newspapers to illustrate her past career as an actress in a positive manner (see [31] and [32]).

(31) Meghan's life now is nothing to scoff at: she's a *successful* actor and has an impressive career. (*The Independent*, 2017-November-27)

(32) Meghan is clearly a smart, independent woman with a *successful* career. (*The Daily Express*, 2019-March-2)

In the last part of this section, I briefly present several striking and thought-provoking examples of the use of the adjective *black* in reference to Markle, particularly in left-wing newspapers. This colour adjective presents a total number of 221 hits, thus a systematic analysis

was unattainable since the vast majority of examples were followed by nouns such as *accessories, boots, clutch, dress, handbag, heels, leather, outfit, skirt* and *tights*, among others. However, when used in regard to Markle, it presents a pejorative and disapproving discourse towards the duchess (see [33], [34] and [35]).

(33) Meghan’s casting as a Disney villain a *black* female divorcee. (*The Guardian*, 2018-December-3)

(34) The excitement about a *black* princess simply underlines how anachronistic the royal family really is. (*The Guardian*, 2018-May-20)

(35) The rumour itself is enough – the angry *black* woman [Markle] making a Defenseless white woman [Middleton] cry is exactly the kind of thing the press has prepped for since Meghan entered the royal family. (*The Guardian*, 2018-December-17)

The examples listed above illustrate what Tannen calls the “negative stereotyping of minority cultural groups (Tannen 1996, 9). The rejection towards Markle is unquestionable: not merely is she a woman, but she is also biracial. Additionally, the use of the colour adjective *black* underlines the idea that she is a foreigner and reasserts once again the rejection towards her role within the royal British family. Likewise, following Tannen’s words, “roles are not given but created in interaction” (10). Due to the constant interaction between British columnists and their readership these two females are prejudged and criticised by the engrained prejudiced fixed in our culture. In example (33), Markle was assigned the role of the villain from the first moment she entered the British national scene. Thus, this “joint production” created in both left-wing and right-wing newspapers is accentuated by the constant “talk and action” (10) of their readers. In truth, the more sensationalist and scandalous headlines are, the more appealing they are for general public. Consequently, these contributions enforce the buildup of these negative stereotypes, which at the same time influence the representation of these two women.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this investigation confirm Lakoff's words in regard to the linguistic discrimination exerted on women by the way language is used to represent them (Lakoff 1973, 46). Although what has been presented in this paper is a fairly preliminary analysis, I have come to some conclusions worthy of mentioning. As it has been demonstrated in the analysed data above, right-wing newspapers show a clear tendency towards sensationalism. Evidence of this can be found not merely in the use of catchy and to some extent scandalous headlines, but also in the constant use of hypocoristic forms and first names (e.g. *Meg* and *Megan*) in order to refer to Markle. By doing this, a certain rejection towards the figure of Markle and her role within the British royal family can be grasped when reading the articles from which the examples presented above have been taken from. Left-wing newspapers are not far behind in presenting a similar representation of Markle. Although they do present a more muted discourse towards both women, they still make use of troublesome adjectives: *topless* and/or *thin*, in relation to Middleton, and *American*, *divorcee* and/or *black* to refer to Markle. At a first glance, these adjectives seem innocuous, but once they are analysed within the context presented in the articles, they portray a negative description towards its antecedent. Thus, it must be acknowledged that both left-wing and right-wing newspapers contribute to the linguistic discrimination towards these two females.

Notwithstanding Middleton's overall representation is comparatively more positive than Markle's, it still presents some negative stereotyping as well. However, I would like to emphasise that this negative stereotyping is found in concrete articles concerning her past behaviour before entering the royal family. However, Markle's overall representation and the numerous examples presented throughout the analysis hints this relentless disapproval from the columnists in having a foreign duchess in the royal family. In light of this, I argue that this study does reveal that there is an unambiguously objectionable and pejorative discourse towards Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex. As Butler claims there is always "a 'doer' behind the deed" (Butler 1990, 25). By stating these, I do not intent to place the blame on the columnists and their readership. Nonetheless, their interaction does portray the deep-seated prejudices engrained in our society that contribute to the negative stereotyping of Markle, because not only is she a woman, but she is also biracial. Thus, I would affirm that *we*, as in *our culture*, are the "doers" behind this indisputable linguistic discrimination towards Meghan Markle. Nonetheless, this explanation must remain speculative, since this paper represents a rather small



part of the British press' articles in regard to both duchesses. Therefore, further research on this topic is needed and encouraged.

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