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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE DISCOURSE OF CONFLICT
IN NORTHERN IRELAND:
FROM THE IRA TO GLOBALISATION

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Abstract

This paper addresses the discourse of the conflict that has been going on for centuries in Northern Ireland (NI) between Unionists and Republicans, Catholics and Protestants, reaching its peak with the "Troubles" of the 1970s, with negotiations starting in the early 1990s, and finally evolving into full devolution in 2007. Meanwhile, the 2001 attacks on the US have changed the very notion of terrorism, and the effects of the globalising trends emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall and boomed in the 1990s and 2000s are still shaping the current politics, economies and societies of nations worldwide. This study intends to present a contemporary, historical view of the discourse of rival NI politicians, as it is expressed in their own words and in the media. Results are expected to shed light on the correlation and influence between the discourse of the conflict and the conflict itself.

1. Background[1]

The so-called "conflict" in Northern Ireland[2] is rooted in ancient history. Since the Norman occupation of the island began in the 12th century under Henry II, the coexistence of the English, Protestant and local Irish, Catholic communities – to which immigrants from Scotland (mainly Presbyterian) were added, as they also started colonising the northern part of Ireland in the 17th century – has never been peaceful. It was not until after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, however, that English rule firmly established itself over the land, with colonisation and exploitation programmes continuing throughout the 18th century, until the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland was created in 1801. Northern Ireland was then partitioned from the rest of the island in 1921, following the Irish independence process. A thirty-year period of political and social unrest followed (1968-1998), known as "The Troubles" (see O'Maolain 1989, Miller 1994, Moloney 2002, Jackson 2005, Bellocchio 2006 for extensive historical and political background).

1.1 Politics

A distinction is proposed here between the armed stage of the Troubles (1969-1993) and the Northern Irish peace process that began in 1993 and reached a peak in 1998 with the Belfast (or Good Friday) Agreement, followed by another difficult decade until devolved government was finally returned to Belfast after the 2007 election. Adopting this distinction, the 1969-1993 period is seen as a moment of *armed* conflict, denoting neither a forced nor a peaceful solution, whereas the 1999-2007 period is considered one of *political* conflict, implying the parties had started to work on a solution they sought through negotiation, i.e. through *communication*. It is precisely when the conflicting parties stopped fighting and started communicating that a "language of the conflict" (and not of "war") could emerge and consolidate in Northern Ireland; it is this linguistic and communicative aspect that the project investigates.

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[1] This paper reports on a long-term, ongoing project on the discourse of conflict in Northern Ireland (NI). The original core of this research was first presented as a doctoral thesis in Grego (2005), *The Language of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Gerry Adams vs. Ian Paisley*, later edited and published in Grego (2010a). The current stage sees a development and expansion of the previous research on the subject.

[2] The terminological issue of what to call the NI situation, whether a 'conflict', 'war' or 'guerrilla', is discussed at length in Grego (2005, § 2.1).

1.2 Linguistics

Conflict is a multifaceted notion that is found at all levels and in all sorts of human interactions. Terminologically, the first issue to contemplate is whether to use the words 'conflict', 'struggle' or 'war' in reference to Northern Ireland's recent history. The definitions overlap:

> CONFLICT
> a. An encounter with arms; a fight, battle.
> b. esp. A prolonged struggle.
> c. The clashing or variance of opposed principles, statements, arguments, etc.
> STRUGGLE
> a. An act of struggling; a resolute contest, whether physical or otherwise; a continued effort to resist force or free oneself from constraint; a strong effort under difficulties.
> b. A strong effort to continue to breathe, as in the death-agony or under conditions tending to produce suffocation.
> WAR
> a. Hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state; the employment of armed forces against a foreign power, or against an opposing party in the state.
> b. transf. and fig. Applied poet. or rhetorically to any kind of active hostility or contention between living beings, or of conflict between opposing forces or principles.[3]

In fact, they are cross-referential: 'conflict' is defined using 'struggle', 'war' using 'conflict'. As a consequence:

> a war is certainly a conflict, but a conflict is not necessarily a war. […] a war is just one type of conflict: it belongs to the "conflict set", as a subset delimited by specific features. Looking again at the definitions, the main characterising feature here seems to be the adjective "armed", so a first logical definition of war could be "a type of conflict characterised by the use of arms". If a war is "a type of conflict characterised by the use of arms", then the years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland were definitely one; still, the word "conflict" continues to be largely associated to Northern Ireland.[4] (Grego 2005: 36-37)

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[3] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, September 2014, s.v. CONFLICT, STRUGGLE, WAR.
[4] For instance, the large and interesting section that BBC online dedicates to the Troubles, within the *Wars and Conflict* section, clearly refers to the "Northern Ireland conflict", not

This and the previous studies on the subject have thus adopted the following definitions:

- 'Conflict' will be considered "a struggle between two or more opposed parties";
- 'Armed conflict' will be considered "a struggle between two or more opposed parties (= a conflict), which involves the use of arms, which is conducted between sovereign and non-sovereign states, with the employment of regular and non-regular forces";
- 'War' will be considered "a struggle between two or more opposed parties, which involves the use of arms (= an armed conflict), which is conducted only between sovereign states, with the employment of regular forces only".

As such, the situation of Northern Ireland (and of similar contexts) – not involving a sovereign state, but opposed groups within one – can be considered an 'armed conflict'.

Understandably, the notion of conflict underlies multiple and multidisciplinary issues that can only be addressed by employing different approaches. For example, a "discourse of conflict" has long been identified and investigated not only from a political viewpoint (on NI, see for example Nye 2000 and Ryan 2003), but also from linguistic and communicative perspectives and in professional/specialised settings (e.g., Eadie and Nelson 2000; Gotti, Heller and Dossena 2002). The contribution offered by linguistics to the field goes by the label of "language(s) of the conflict", and has studied rhetorical and argumentative structures in negotiation (e.g. Gotti, Heller and Dossena 2002; Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2009), with a distinctive focus on law and business as negotiation-oriented domains.

2. Objectives and methodology

This project aims to provide a critical analysis of the political discourse of Northern Ireland from a short-term diachronic perspective. The main research questions are: a) how the language of conflict in Northern Ireland has evolved since the beginning of the peace process (1993); and b) how language, politics and society have influenced each other in the course of action. This paper reports on the initial stage of the project and introduces

"war". "The Troubles: An exploration of the Northern Ireland conflict", *Wars and Conflict*, *History*, *BBC*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/troubles/index.shtml.

the current stage of the project, along with future challenges and possible developments.

The approach adopted draws from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Genre Analysis (CGA), and makes use of Tools from Corpus Linguistics (CL).

CDA was chosen as the underlying reference model for its descriptive, ethical, ideological and institutional stance (Fairclough 2003, 2006; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; Van Dijk 2008; Wodak 2013), which can suitably be employed to account for change, hybridity and globalisation as relevant issues in any analysis of contemporary politics and political language. This approach has produced satisfactory results in previous research on the ethics of institutional communication (Grego 2008, 2010b; Grego and Vicentini 2011; Vicentini, Grego and Russo 2013), although with reference to the medical-scientific domain. However, ethical and ideological concerns also apply to any political conflict, especially where religion is at stake; CDA thus seems all the more relevant to tackle issues related to the Northern Irish context.

CGA (Bhatia 2004, 2008; Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones 2008) offers prescriptive tools best applied to professional (con)texts at the intertextual and interdiscursive levels, differently yet likewise useful in accounting for change, hybridity, globalisation and especially when dealing with a domain like politics, which employs numerous well-established and "new" web-based genres.

Tools from Corpus Linguistics (CL) such as *WordSmith Tools 6.0* (Scott 2012) have been used in screening and analysing corpora (see Baker 2006), although only to support a quality-based approach.

3. Initial stage

The original stage has been previously reported and summarised in Grego (2010a), which introduced the issue of political conflict from a linguistic perspective, and identified political speeches as a valuable source of material for investigation. It presented the compared analysis of two corpora of speeches by leading NI politicians on opposing political sides, namely the annual speeches to their party conferences by Ian Paisley (d. 2014), then leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin (SF). These two corpora were believed to provide homogenous and comparable material that, thanks to their annual nature and politically oriented audience, could well represent the evolution of the conflict. The first ten speeches of both leading politicians since the

beginning of the peace process (1993) were thus collected, as in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Gerry Adams' *Presidential addresses to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis*	
1993	(8,923 words)
1994	(14,097 words)
1995	(2,990 words)
1996	(8,221 words)
1997	(4,797 words)
1998	(2,287 words)
2000	(6,118 words)
2001	(7,908 words)
2004	(5,478 words)
Total	***60,819 words***

Table 1. Gerry Adams' *Presidential addresses to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis*

Ian Paisley's *Leader's speeches to the DUP annual conferences*	
1993	(4,600 words)
1994	(5,005 words)
1995	(3,489 words)
1996	(extract; 1,052 words)
1997	(3,532 words)
1998	(extract; 139 words)
2000	(4,669 words)
2001	(2,683 words)
2004	(1,970 words)
Total	***28,139 words***

Table 2. Ian Paisley's *Leader's speeches to the DUP annual conferences*

The analysis looked at multiple aspects, for which multiple tools were employed. At the (inter)textual level, the text genres, coherence and cohesion, and rhetorical aspects were considered. This was achieved mainly through a lexical analysis based on frequency wordlists. At the (inter)textual level, the aim was to highlight the underlying social practices and ideologies behind and beyond the texts themselves. In this case, the

syntax was also qualitatively analysed for recurring patterns, their communicative effects and possible social meanings.

As a main result, the study highlighted a significant diachronic variation across the corpora.[5] Unsurprisingly, the change was confirmed by representative data at all linguistic levels – lexical, syntactic and discursive in general. Not only did the terms used to refer to the conflict vary during the 1993-2004 period, but so did the type of rhetoric employed and even the audiences addressed. Specifically, the latter expanded in more recent years to include other (opposed) parties. The language of the NI conflict, however, was also discovered to show diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variations, especially in the terminology used to refer to the political situation, reflecting the speakers' differing regional, religious, political and educational backgrounds. These overall promising results encouraged the idea of continuing and expanding the research, turning it into a longer-term project and updating it in light of the emerging web-based genres and global trends.

4. Current stage

The project as currently laid out envisages developments along three lines, aimed at:

1. expanding (emphasis on quantity);
2. focusing (emphasis on quality);
3. deriving (emphasis on theory-methodology).

4.1 Expanding

The effort aimed at expanding the corpus would clearly regard the quantity of the material analysed. *Updating* the original 1993-2004 corpus could be a natural first step: adding Paisley's and Adams' speeches up to the present would turn it into a unique 20-year monographic collection on these historical leaders of Northern Ireland. Expansion, however, does not only mean updating, and could also imply *integrating*. The inclusion of speeches by other major NI party leaders or representatives from the same years (e.g. from the Ulster Unionist Party, UUP, or the Social Democratic and Labour Party, SDLP) could widen the representation and add more corpora while keeping them comparable.

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[5] A detailed summary is provided in Grego (2010a).

An example of corpus *updating* is given below, where the first paragraph of a recent (2013) Gerry Adams Presidential address to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (or assembly) is reported.

> A chairde,
> Tá failte romhaibh uilig chuig Ard Fheis Shinn Féin i gContae Maigh Eo. Támid an an sásta a bheith anseo san Iarthar.
> A special Céad Míle Fáilte also to Friends of Sinn Féin from the USA, Canada and Australia; to our comrades from the Basque country, South Africa, Palestine, Cuba, Britain and to all foreign dignitaries.
> I want to extend solidarity from this Ard Fheis to the Palestinian people and urge the international community to take decisive action for peace in the Middle East.
> **A Border Poll**
> This week saw the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin is proud of the pivotal role we played with others in forging that Agreement. (Adams 2013)

Some twenty years separate the beginning of the Peace Process in 1993 and – in contrast to what happened in the early 1990s, when online material was scarce and some even had to be retrieved on site in Belfast (Grego 2010a: 84) – Adams's 2013 speech, which, like most similar material nowadays, is easily available online on his party's website. Moreover, the video of the delivery also features below the speech, thus offering a multimedia and multimodal experience unimaginable twenty years ago. This adds vast linguistic information on accent and intonation, as well as gestures, facial expressions and other non-verbal communicative aspects, and on the setting (e.g. audience, lights, sound, and so on). A video-corpus of the most recent available speeches could thus be created, and all the elements listed above could be included or taken into consideration in the analysis.

Figure 1. Gerry Adams' TD Presidential address to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 2013

As an example of corpus *integration*, Alasdair McDonnell's leader speech to the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) 2013 conference may be considered. For this speech, blogger Alan Meban from Belfast appears as the best source. He published McDonnell's entire address in audio format in two parts on his *Alainbelfast* blog (Meban 2013)[6] (see Figure 2 below). Again, considerations on accent and intonation – at least – also apply to this text which, integrated by others from the same period, could be well used to expand the corpus of NI leaders' speeches to their party conferences. Other parties whose leader's speeches may be considered are the Ulster Unionist Party, the Alliance Party, the Progressive Unionist

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[6] In contrast to McDonnell's blog, the SDLP's official website does not feature a transcript or a video or audio recording of the 2013 leader's address.

Party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, the Ulster Democratic Party and Labour, all of which signed the 1998 Belfast Agreement.[7]

Figure 2. Alasdair McDonnell's Address to the 2013 SDLP conference (Meban 2013)

4.2 Focusing

This line of research aims at an in-depth exploration of specific aspects of political language and communication that are typically investigated according to a CDA framework. There are three areas that are particularly worth focusing on:

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[7] Ironically, the late Rev. Paisley's DUP was the only party that did not sign it, and won the following (2003 and 2007) elections.

- *ethics*: chiefly as regards institutional communication and genres;
- *ideologies*: to study local vs. global events, practices and structures;
- *hybridity and hybridisation*: especially as originated and spread by web-based multimodality and multimediality.

In other words, focusing could be conceived as looking at the same social events through other social practices, thus considering texts other than the speeches such as, for instance, institutional or media reports and commentaries on the speeches and the events mentioned in them. This would be a way of expanding the quality of the communicative event (the speech) beyond its strictly verbal format and into its social and historical setting. Examples of events that have affected, and so are present, in speeches by NI politicians since 1993 are given below.

   Local events:
- the Good Friday Agreement (10 April 1998);
- the publication of the Saville Report on Bloody Sunday (15 June 2010);
- the New Belfast riots (September 2012-January 2013).
   Global events:
- the Twin Towers attack (11 September 2001);
- the London bombings (7 July 2005);
- the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in Belfast (27 Jun 2012).

One example of focusing could be considering the Queen's visit to Belfast in 2012 on her Diamond Jubilee, when she, in a historical gesture, shook hands with the former commander of the IRA, Martin McGuinness. This royal visit could be analysed not only through politicians' speeches, but also by looking at news reports in institutional commentaries and press releases. This could be done considering differing political stances, ethics and ideologies. A US source, *CBS News* (2012), titled "Queen Elizabeth II, ex-IRA chief Martin McGuinness shake hands in reconciliation landmark", but the event was also thoroughly covered by the Irish, British and world media. Notably, the headline calls McGuinness with a specific military term, "chief", and a correct one, as the commanders of the IRA took the name of "chiefs-of-staff" (Moloney 2002). The language of the Northern Irish conflict, similarly to other conflicts, is indeed made of specialised terminology that only the insiders – a proper community of discourse – understand and use correctly. The Irish American communities' interest and support for the Republican cause is traditional

and well known: what ideological stance emerges from US sources on this piece of news? How does the American report compare to Unionist/British reports, for example? Did the relatives and friends of IRA victims comment on this? And, back to the protagonists' own words and voice, how did they publicly (e.g. in statements, press releases) react to the event? These are all examples of questions that could be addressed when focusing on the ethical and ideological sides of the political discourse of Northern Ireland.

An example of the hybrid nature of events in the era of multimedia and multimodal communication can be made taking the case of the 2013 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis. The first lines of the transcribed presidential address are as reported in section 4.1. The filmed delivery of the speech is also still present on the same webpage (http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/26448). The *text* itself is thus fully available in more than one format, but external and internal references could be investigated too: how was the *event* represented by different actors using different media? For instance, the coverage of the event provided by the main Irish newspaper *The Irish Times* chose a dynamic, "tweeting" style, with live comments, links, pictures and hashtags posted by reporter Mary Minihan (2013). Although the genre is highly hybridised and looks impartial as in a chronicle, real ideological positions as well as mere personal evaluations do emerge ("Big cheer for his criticism of dissident Republicans", "Thatcher gets a mention at Sinn Fein ard fheis from guest speaker from Mandate […] her form of capitalism is a busted flush which didn't work then and didn't work now. Cue applause from delegates").

BBC News also covered the event, but, on the same day (13 April 2013), the main article on the Ard Fheis dealt with McGuinness's attack on dissident Republicans (BBC 2013). Adopting a more ideological stance, it also employed a more traditional genre: a classic mix of plain text with a single colour picture of McGuinness.

A third, interesting point of view is the Sinn Féin's own report of its Ard Fheis, as given on its Facebook page, with a mix of original posts, links to multimedia broadcasts, photographs, quotations, graphics, and all the other multimedia/multimodal possibilities offered by this social network, the first of which is interaction.

The tools and opportunities for linguistic and communicative investigation made possible by the web are multifarious and impressive, especially if compared to the 1990s when the NI peace process began. The availability and the hybrid nature of data and information is now overwhelming, almost disorienting, and the ways of looking at social events from a qualitative viewpoint are many. The focusing effort, therefore, could be made more systematic with the support of theoretical-

methodological considerations drawn from the first results of the research project. These, in turn, may also find further applications on the language(s) of other conflicts.
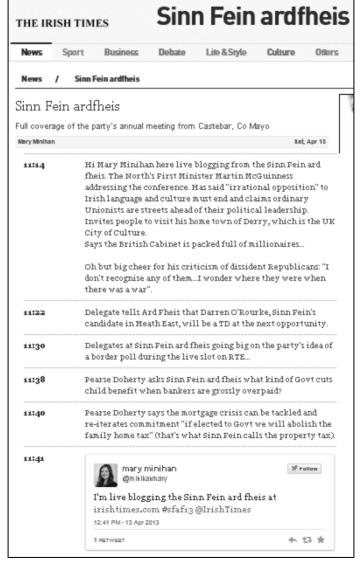

Figure 3. *The Irish Times*' Sinn Fein Ard Fheis live report

4.3 Deriving

Fairclough's (2006: 25) specific vision of CDA sees discourse as "a facet of globalization" embedded in cultural political economy, where "discourse can only be effective in the social construction of globalization subject to certain conditions", which "include structural characteristics of particular societies, features of their institutions, aspects of their history, as well as factors to do with the beliefs, attitudes and values of their people". Starting from such a vision, and given the speed at which societies, conflicts and ideologies are evolving these days, any theoretical guidelines for the analysis of the current language of conflict should be devised not in stative but in dynamic terms. Applied to the discourse of Northern Ireland, this means looking, at the very least, at three different discursive shifts:

- from illegal to institutional;
- from local to global and back to glocal;
- from minority to mainstream.

The first shift relates to the beginning of the NI peace process in the early 1990s, when the need to negotiate with the armed wing of the Republican protest brought about the need to change, terminologically as well as ideologically, the social representation, or discourse, of the "other": from terrorists ("There is no such thing as political murder, political bombing or political violence. There is only criminal murder, criminal bombing and criminal violence. We will not compromise on this. There will be no political status", Thatcher 1981) to (political) interlocutors ("There is an opportunity to end violence for good in Northern Ireland. We believe that it is now up to those who have used, or supported, violence, to take this opportunity. The door is open to them", Major 1993) and to institutional figures ("Deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland Martin McGuinness has said that he shook hands with the Queen 'to extend a hand of friendship, peace and reconciliation' to unionists in the region" BBC News 2012).

The second and third shifts concern the local-global antithesis, with the new "glocalization"[8] dimension. An example from the NI corpus is Gerry Adams' addressing the Palestinians in 1994 ("To the people of South Africa and the Palestinians, we extend our warmest greetings and best wishes for the future") and, much in the same words, doing the same

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[8] "The action, process, or fact of making something both global and local; spec. the adaptation of global influences or business strategies in accordance with local conditions; global localization" (OED, s.v. GLOCALIZATION).

almost twenty years later in 2013, as seen in section 4.1 ("A special Céad Míle Fáilte also to Friends of Sinn Féin from the USA, Canada and Australia; to our comrades from the Basque country, South Africa, Palestine, Cuba, Britain and to all foreign dignitaries"). Of course, the Palestinians he was addressing in 1994 were quite different from those of 2013, and their conflict, though still taking lives and creating suffering, has also ideologically evolved through a second Intifada, failed road maps and the debris of the 2011 Arab Spring. In 1994, the "little" local NI conflict was reaching out for and to support other local conflicts. In 2013, on the contrary, the change of paradigm in the notion of terrorism brought about by the 9/11 attacks had created a new global order and balance of power. Those who used to be outlawed terrorists now sit in the Northern Ireland Assembly from where, as representatives of the institutions, they can even welcome the "British dignitaries". Obviously, those that used to be local (meaning restricted) conflicts, with few or no (especially economic) interests outside the region involved, have succumbed to the global terror and been relegated to the background (e.g. Northern Ireland, the Basque Country). While the word "terrorism" has become mainstream, starting from the early 2000s, it has been less and less associated with "local" conflicts and increasingly and almost exclusively with a "global" one, in a historic change of scale. Not surprisingly, Adams' 2001 presidential speech (dated 29 September) opens with the words "I want to begin my remarks by extending solidarity and condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania". Even the political arm of the IRA could not condone such violence and, with those words, he acknowledged how much the notion of terrorism had escalated both in its quantity and quality.

5. Conclusion

As exemplified above using the case of Northern Ireland, when studying the language of conflict, today's evolving times, societies, conflicts and ideologies require considering evolving materials and technologies, for instance in how the information is updated, collected and stored. They also require using evolving frameworks, approaches and methodologies, considering, in particular: a) multi-modal /-medial texts, genres, tools; b) the hybridity of issues, ethics and ideologies; c) the glocal / mainstream dimension. Only thus could a methodological framework hope to prove applicable to other situations and settings of political conflict, whose discourse and language will no longer be local but glocal, not just written

or spoken but multimodal, and based on fluid, evolving ethics and ideologies.

At the practical/local level, results are expected to keep shedding light on the correlation between the discourse of the NI conflict and the NI conflict, and how they have been influencing each other in their historical development. The analysis of the NI situation is a long-term project, which will hopefully see an end when the residual conflictual issues find a solution (linguistic signs of this emerged even in the original Grego 2005 corpus). The collecting and monitoring effort is significant and, within the project, BA and MA theses have been and are being assigned to interested students to deal with specific aspects.[9]

At the theoretical-methodological/global level, methods of analysis – stand-alone or integrated – may be further developed and made applicable to conflict discourse at the global(ised) level, i.e. the local contexts of global interest, where English is not a first language, but communication nonetheless occurs in English as a lingua franca (e.g. Syria, North Korea). This could (sadly) be a virtually endless project, as situations of conflict seem to spring up endlessly worldwide. The methodological tools and models emerging from this project could be updated and adapted to interpret conflicts other than that of Northern Ireland, or even non-armed political or ideological conflicts, conflicts in business, law and negotiation settings, and "metaphorical" conflicts, such as those occurring in sports (e.g. Vicentini 2009).

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[9] For example, Cardillo (2011) *IRA Statements and their Coverage in the News: a Discourse Analysis Perspective* and Giovanardi (2012) *I Troubles in Irlanda del Nord: Stampa, Televisione e Cinema*, both MA theses by students of the Degree programme in Languages and cultures for international communication and cooperation offered by the Department of Studies in Language Mediation and Intercultural Communication of the University of Milan, where the author works.

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