

L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI SCIENZE LINGUISTICHE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

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OH! WHAT A HUMANITARIAN WAR! A COMPARATIVE CORPUS-ASSISTED STUDY OF HUMANITARIAN/ UMANITARIO IN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN OPINION ARTICLES

AMANDA MURPHY*

1. Introduction

This paper presents a comparative study of the concept of 'humanitarian' in English and Italian in a corpus of contemporary opinion articles in the British and Italian press. The reason for focusing on the lexical items 'humanitarian/umanitar*' is their emergence in the characterization of recent military interventions. The study is a contribution to work on cultural keywords, which was started in English by Williams¹ and has been carried forward in various research areas by scholars such as Wierzbicka² (semantic analysis), Rigotti and Rocci³ (argumentation) and Stubbs⁴ (corpus-based lexical analysis), to name just a few. As Bigi⁵ points out in an overview of various studies of cultural keywords, there is a lack of agreement on exactly how a keyword should be defined, what its role in textual analysis is, and how the link between keywords and culture should be made. The present contribution does not attempt to resolve this issue, but continues in the line of Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS)⁶, which traces the existence of ideological stances through quantitative and qualitative discourse analysis. The research question can be summed up thus: if 'humanitarian/umanitar*' is a keyword describing military conflicts in the current era, how is it being used by opinionists in the English-speaking and Italian press?⁷

* I would like to express my appreciation to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on the research.

¹ R. Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*, Croom Helm, London 1976. This was updated by T. Bennett, L. Grossberg, M. Morris and R. Williams as *New Keywords: a revised vocabulary of culture and society*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2005.

² A. Wierzbicka, *Understanding cultures through their key words*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997.

³ E. Rigotti – A. Rocci, *From argument analysis to cultural keywords (and back again)* in *Proceedings of the Fifth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation*, F. Van Eemeren, et al. ed., Sic Sat, Amsterdam 2002, pp. 903-908.

⁴ M. Stubbs, *Text and Corpus Analysis*, Blackwell, Oxford 2001; M. Stubbs, *Words and phrases*, Blackwell, Oxford 2006.

⁵ S. Bigi, *Focus on Cultural Keywords*, "Studies in Communication Sciences", VI, 2006, 1, pp. 45-62.

⁶ A. Partington, *Corpora and discourse, a most congruous beast*, in *Corpora and Discourse*, A. Partington – J. Morley – L. Haarman ed., Peter Lang, Bern 2004, pp. 11-20.

⁷ For the sake of non-Italian-speaking readers, all quotations, dictionary definitions and findings from the corpora in Italian have been translated into English by the author of this paper.

1.1 Fact and comment

Before describing the data and methodology used to answer this question, I wish to focus on the type of article in which ‘humanitarian’ is being investigated. Opinion articles, also known as op-eds, since they are traditionally placed opposite the editorial page⁸, have the social function of provoking thought and debate, starting from a personal standpoint. There is a traditional dichotomy within media discourse between fact – in the form of news reports – and personal or editorial comment. The importance of this distinction is also underlined in the first clause of the Editors’ Code of Practice⁹ (www.pcc.org.uk), which reads thus: “The press, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.” In an unstated scale of public values, fact tends to be accorded supremacy over comment. A much-quoted aphorism by an esteemed newspaper editor, C.P. Scott, reads “Comment is free but facts are sacred”¹⁰. The implication is that facts are untouchable, and must be respected as such; good journalism reports facts accurately.

Comment or debate is necessary in society, and opinionists who sign their articles and invite feedback through email or blogs play an important role in public debate, similarly to television interviewers and anchors of chat-shows. Discussion, in both written and spoken form, helps human society assimilate and digest events and issues. As the philosopher and writer Hannah Arendt¹¹ reminds us, the constant interchange of talk was what united citizens in a *polis* in Ancient Greece:

For the world is not humane just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse [...] We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.

1.2. ‘Humanitarian war’ – the power of the opinionists

Many of the wars that have stirred heated debate in Europe over the last decade – in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya – have been distinguished in the news by what appears to be a positive epithet “humanitarian”. This creates a curious set of oxymora, including the apparently nonsensical ‘humanitarian war’ and ‘humanitarian bombing’.

⁸ H. Diller, *Kenneth Starr and Us. The Internet and the Vanishing of the Journalist*, in *English Media Texts Past and Present*, F. Ungerer ed., Benjamins, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 197-213.

⁹ Code of the Press Complaints Commission www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html (accessed 25 September 2011).

¹⁰ “Manchester Guardian”, May 5, 1921.

¹¹ H. Arendt, *On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing*, in *Men in Dark Times*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Orlando 1960, pp. 3-33. Translated by Clara and Richard Winston, p. 24.

In one of the opinion articles in the specialised corpus compiled for this study, a speech by Tony Blair in Chicago in 1999 is said to be the origin of the term ‘humanitarian war’. In this speech, as Benedict Brogan comments in “The Daily Telegraph” (3 March 2011), Blair apparently “expanded the idea of the national interest to include the threat posed by failing states, and the moral obligation of those with the means and the will to act against tyranny.” According to Simon Jenkins (erstwhile editor of “The Times”), on the other hand, in this speech Blair advocated “a new generation of liberal humanitarian wars”¹². In actual fact, if one consults the transcript of that 1999 speech, the inverted commas – which usually denote accurate quotations – are misused. Blair did not use the term ‘humanitarian war’: in fact, he mentioned humanitarian ‘aid’ twice and, humanitarian ‘distress’ once. The passage that is probably being paraphrased reads as follows: “War is an imperfect instrument for righting humanitarian distress; but armed force is sometimes the only means of dealing with dictators”¹³.

Far from attempting to correct a historical inaccuracy in defence of an ex-prime minister of Great Britain, my point here is to provide evidence that opinionists can appear to report facts, when in fact their commentary is a re-interpretation. This hence the opinion that ‘humanitarian’ is an adjective Blair used to advocate his version of international wars¹⁴. My second point is that this is an example of how social realities can be constructed on opinion rather than on fact. Blair’s official speech is available online, but the comment of a columnist, who has regular readers, may travel further in the world of text than the original words. Opinionists are not accountable for what they write in the way that an editorial representing the official opinion of a newspaper might be; they can put words in the mouths of politicians¹⁵, without having to source their comments in the same way as one might expect from reporters.

1.3. Methods and Data

The meaning of ‘humanitarian’ in texts describing a military conflict could be explored in many ways. Watching events through embedded reporters on television¹⁶ is one means of

¹² Simon Jenkins, “The Guardian”, 23 February 2011.

¹³ Speech by PM Tony Blair to the *Chicago Economic Club*, April 22, 1999, see www.pbs.org.

¹⁴ Interestingly, in the 2009 supplement of the *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell’Uso* (UTET, Torino), edited by E. Sanguineti, the expression ‘guerra etica’ (ethical war) is attributed to Blair in a similar article from “La Rivista del Manifesto” December 1999. s.v. *umanitario*: C’è una grande abbondanza, a sinistra, dell’uso della parola ‘etica’, come sostantivo e come aggettivo. Il culmine si è avuto con la espressione guerra ‘etica’, di origine blairiana ma prontamento ripreso in Italia dal segretario DS e da altri. (Usage of the word ‘ethical’, as a noun and an adjective abounds on the left. This tendency reached its height with the expression ethical war, of Blairite origins, but readily copied in Italy by the DS secretary and others.)

¹⁵ R. Iedema – S. Feez – P.R.R. White, *Media Literacy*, Disadvantaged Schools Program, NSW Department of School Education, Sydney 1994.

¹⁶ Cfr. C. Clark, *Wide angles and narrow views: how embeds reported the Iraq conflict in Evaluation and stance in television news: a linguistic analysis of American, British and Italian news reporting of the 2003 Iraqi war*, L. Haarman – L. Lombardo ed., Continuum, London 2009, pp. 97-115.

seeing the “brute” facts, as Searle¹⁷ would call them, although human intervention, in the persona of the editor, clearly shapes what is publicly shown of such facts. The methodology adopted here draws firstly on the most significant dictionaries in both languages, written from a historical point of view, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*¹⁸, and those reflecting common use, such as the *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell’Uso*¹⁹, the latest editions of corpus-based dictionaries for advanced learners, such as the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, dictionaries of usage, such as *Fowler’s Dictionary of Modern English Usage*²⁰, and lastly, collocation dictionaries, such as the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary*²¹. Secondly, the methodology combines corpus linguistic tools which investigate the semantic preferences and collocations of a term in corpora, and discourse analysis techniques, normally applied to specialised corpora. As Partington²² says, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS) is inherently sociolinguistic, and shifts between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. It involves extensive and close reading of the texts beyond the concordance lines, which is particularly important in small corpora. The software used for the quantitative searches in the present study is Scott’s WordSmith Tools 5²³.

The corpora investigated in the study are of different types. As reference corpora, the General English Corpus (GEC)²⁴ and British National Corpus (BNC) were used for English, and the Corpus di Italiano Scritto (CORIS) for Italian²⁵. Four specialised corpora of English and Italian were consulted: two corpora regarding the 1999 Kosovo crisis (Kosovo-EN and Kosovo-IT, compiled in 2000) and two regarding the 2011 Libya crisis (Libya-EN and Libya-IT, compiled in 2011). They are comparable corpora, each amounting to 100,000 words. They contain opinion articles from what Morley²⁶, among others, calls the quality daily/weekly newspapers or electronic magazines in English and Italian. In each corpus, the papers represent a spectrum of political viewpoints. The papers in English, listed from political left to right, are “The Guardian”, “The Independent”, “The International Herald Tribune”, “The Financial Times”, “The Times”, “The Daily Telegraph”, and in Italian “La Repubblica”, “L’Espresso”, “La Stampa”, “Il Corriere della Sera”, “Il Giornale”, “Il Foglio”. In 2000, when the Kosovo corpora were collected, 100,000 words corresponded to 99 articles in English and 101 in Italian, while in 2011, when

¹⁷ J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1995.

¹⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989 and 3rd ed. (online) 2011.

¹⁹ See note 11.

²⁰ H.W. Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 1st ed. 1926, reprinted with a new introduction and notes by David Crystal, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

²¹ *Oxford Collocations Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

²² A. Partington, *Evaluating Evaluation and Some Concluding Thoughts on CADS in Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies on the Iraq Conflict*, J. Morley – P. Bayley ed., Routledge, London 2009, pp. 261-304.

²³ M. Scott, *WordSmith Tools*, Version 5, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010 (Software programme).

²⁴ GEC is a corpus of one million words taken mostly from “The Economist” (2003-2009), compiled by Denise Milizia at the University of Bari.

²⁵ The BNC was accessed via Brigham Young University, while CORIS was compiled and is held at the University of Bologna.

²⁶ J. Morley, *Reporting politics: Hard news, soft news, good news, bad news in Rites of Passage: Rational/Irrational/Natural/Supernatural/Local/Global*, C. Nocera – G. Persico – R. Portale ed., Rubbettino, Soverina Mannelli 2003, pp. 405-414.

the length of the average op-ed has clearly been shortened, they amount to 123 and 144 articles respectively. Since the corpora are almost identical in size, the numbers used in the study are often raw frequencies.

The paper proceeds as follows: in Section 2, on the basis of the evidence that, according to the Keyword function in Wordsmith Tools²⁷, 'humanitarian' is a keyword in the specialised corpora, definitions of the adjective 'humanitarian' and its most immediate translation equivalent, 'umanitario', are explored in dictionaries of various types in English and Italian. In Section 3, the adjectives 'humanitarian' and 'umanitario' are then investigated in two comparable reference corpora of English and Italian to check their functional equivalence. This is done by comparing their semantic preferences and collocates. Section 4 reports on a previous study by Bayley and Bevitori²⁸ of the adjective 'humanitarian' in a corpus of media texts on the Iraq war, while Section 5 presents the results of detailed investigation into the usage of the two adjectives in the specially compiled mirror corpora of opinion articles in English and Italian. This section of the research is both sociolinguistic and cross-cultural, and seeks to examine whether the social value of the term 'humanitarian' has changed over ten years, at least in the perception of the opinionists. Reflections on the study and conclusions are presented in Section 6.

1.4 A note on contrastive studies

In contrastive studies, as Johansson²⁹ points out, it is not always immediately clear what should be compared. The basic problem is one of equivalence, since languages do not necessarily use similar resources for the same functions. This paper starts research from the English adjective 'humanitarian', and seeks to investigate its assumed equivalent adjective in Italian, 'umanitario'. There are various reasons for positing the equivalence of the two adjectives thus: firstly, given the power of news agencies working in English, opinionists around the world read the news in English. This undoubtedly affects the way they write about the news in their own language, and allows for influence of English on the Italian in which articles are written. In the dictionary *Grande Dizionario del Lessico Italiano* (see section 2.2), it is stated that 'umanitario' is a calque of 'humanitarian'. Secondly, the two international organizations involved in the conflicts in Kosovo and Libya, NATO and the UN, use English as one of their official languages, making this influence even more likely. In fact, frequent references are made in the Italian corpora to the press in English.

²⁷ To obtain keywords with Wordsmith Tools, a word list of the study corpus/corpora is compared against the wordlist of a reference corpus. The words which appear unusually frequently in the study corpus, compared to the reference corpus, are keywords. GEC (see footnote 24) was used as a reference corpus against the English specialized corpora, Kosovo-EN and Libya-EN. It was not possible to carry out the same research on the Italian corpus, due to the lack of a downloadable Italian reference corpus.

²⁸ P. Bayley – C. Bevitori, 'Just War', or Just 'War', in *Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies on the Iraq Conflict*, J. Morley – P. Bayley ed., Routledge, London 2009, pp. 74-107.

²⁹ S. Johansson, *Reflections on Corpora and their Uses in Cross-linguistic Research in Corpora in Translator Education*, F. Zanettin – S. Bernardini ed., Brooklands, Manchester 2003, pp. 135-144.

2. Dictionary definitions of 'humanitarian/umanitario'

This section deals firstly with the entries for 'humanitarian' as both noun and adjective (since the adjectival uses of the word clearly derive from the noun) in the historically-based *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). At present, the OED is in its third edition (2009), which has been online since 2011, and it is updated four times a year. In the online version, it is possible to consult the second edition of the dictionary (1989), which is a useful exercise in our case, given that the third edition has revised the entry for 'humanitarian', and a certain amount of diachronic semantic development is visible. For ease of reading, the entries for 'humanitarian' as a noun and as an adjective are presented in table format, so that the differences from the previous edition are clear. It can be seen that the first attestation of the word has been moved backwards by nearly forty years, and that recent examples have been added, as well as usage labels such as 'rare', 'obsolete', 'historical'.

3 RD EDITION NOUN MEANING AND EXAMPLE	COMMENT ON DIFFERENCES FROM 2 ND EDITION
1. <i>Theol</i> a. A person believing that Christ's nature was human only and not divine. Now <i>rare</i> .	The label 'rare' is not present in the 2nd edition.
Five examples: ?1792 – 1912. ?1792 B. Hobhouse Reply to Rev. Randolph's Let. v. 85 Some Humanitarians would tell you that the doctrine of the atonement is perfectly compatible with the simple humanity of Christ.	In the 2 nd edition, there are only two examples, both from 1819.
†b. = anthropomorphite n. Obs. rare.	The labels 'obsolete' and 'rare' are not present in the 2 nd edition.
2. Chiefly with capital initial. A person who professes a humanistic religion, esp. an adherent of the socialist religious ideas of Pierre Leroux (1797–1871). Cf. humanism n. 5. Now hist.	The specific association with Pierre Leroux has been added, compared to 'various schools of thought and practice' in the second edition. The label 'now historical' has been added.
Five examples: 1831-1997 1831 Fraser's Mag. 4 54 Herder in his work, entitled, the History of Humanity, is merely what may be termed a Humanitarian. 1997 N. Walter Humanism 39 The Humanitarians and Positivists were attempting to rescue religion from the superstitious errors of theology.	A modern example from 1997 has been added: in the previous edition, the examples ended in 1882-3

<p>3. A person concerned with human welfare as a primary or pre-eminent good; esp. a person who seeks to promote human welfare and advocates action on this basis rather than for pragmatic or strategic reasons; a philanthropist. Chiefly <i>depreciative</i> in early use, with the implication of excessive sentimentality (cf. <i>humanity-monger</i> n. at <i>humanity</i> n. Compounds 2).</p>	<p>The label ‘chiefly <i>depreciative</i>’ is a mitigated version of the 2nd edition label ‘Nearly always contemptuous’.</p>
<p>Eight examples: 1843-2001 1843 Times 1 Feb. 4/4 Such is the argument used by modern humanitarians, to the great scandal of justice and common sense. 2001 R. F. Grover in R. C. Roach et al. Hypoxia: from Genes to Bedside 5 Jack and his wife Carol are true humanitarians. They have spent many weeks each year in Ukraine as part of a medical missionary group.</p>	<p>There are twice as many examples and they have been updated: there were 4 in the 2nd edition, and the latest was from 1897.</p>

Table 1 Noun senses for *humanitarian* in the OED (3rd ed.)

The meanings and examples of the adjective ‘humanitarian’ are displayed in Table 2, which follows the same scheme as Table 1. It can be seen that the meanings of the adjective have developed between the second and third edition, particularly sense 2, which is the use of the adjective with which the present article is concerned.

3 RD EDITION ADJECTIVAL MEANING AND EXAMPLES	COMMENT ON DIFFERENCES FROM 2 ND EDITION
<p>1. Of, relating to, or holding the views or doctrines of a humanitarian (sense A. 1a). Now chiefly <i>hist.</i></p>	<p>As for the noun, the label <i>historical</i> has been added.</p>
<p>6 examples: from 1792-1992 ?1792 B. Hobhouse Reply to Rev. Randolph’s Let. v. 104 Whether the text be right as it at present stands, or whether Sir Isaac Newton’s opinion be just, there is nothing adverse to the Humanitarian creed. 1992 D. Young F. D. Maurice & Unitarianism i. 31 Belsham determined, so far as he could, to restrict the name Unitarian to those who held a strictly humanitarian Christology.</p>	<p>In the 3rd edition, the first example is more than 50 years older than in the second. There are no modern examples; the last is 1886.</p>

<p>1. a. Concerned with humanity as a whole; spec. seeking to promote human welfare as a primary or pre-eminent good; acting, or disposed to act, on this basis rather than for pragmatic or strategic reasons (chiefly <i>depreciative</i> in early use, with the implication of excessive sentimentality).</p>	<p>From the 2nd edition, the words “broadly philanthropic” have been eliminated, while the label <i>often contemptuous or hostile</i> has been mitigated to <i>chiefly depreciative in early use</i>.</p>
<p>9 examples: 1844-2003 1844 U.S. Democratic Rev. Aug. 210/2 O’Connell is not a humanitarian philosopher, because Ireland has too ma[n]y ills of its own to think of dissertating synthetically upon the ills of the human species. 2003 ‘S. Pax’ Weblog Diary 30 Mar. in Baghdad Blog 139 He was ... all alone and holding up a sign saying in Arabic ‘Iraqis refuse to take any humanitarian aid from Jordanians and Egyptians.’</p>	<p>The 3rd edition contains three times as many examples as the 2nd, and there are three from the 20th century and one from the 21st century, probably indicating that the word is used most in this sub-sense.</p>
<p>2b. Designating an event or situation which causes or involves (widespread) human suffering, esp. one which requires the provision of aid or support on a large scale.</p>	<p>Sense 2b is the new sub-sense of the word, not present in the 2nd edition.</p>
<p>5 examples: 1933 – 2007 1933 Brainerd (Minnesota) Daily Disp. 11 Dec. 1/2 They will exert every effort to wind the drive up as soon as possible and their initiative and generous response in giving their time and service in this great humanitarian emergency is inspiring. 2007 New Yorker 17 Sept. 60/1 Prevent a humanitarian catastrophe on the scale of Rwanda.</p>	<p>The examples are from both the 20th and the 21st century and in these examples the adjective collocates with <i>emergency, disaster, crisis, tragedy</i> and <i>catastrophe</i>.</p>
<p>3. Of a religion: having the welfare, progress, or development of the human race as its object; humanistic. Also: of or relating to such a religion. Cf. sense A. 2.</p>	<p>In the 2nd edition, the word religion is not present, but rather ‘object of worship’.</p>
<p>6 examples: 1857-2000 1857 E. Pressensé in E. Steane Relig. Condition Christendom II. 484 On this basis M. Comte wishes to construct a Humanitarian religion. 2000 Rev. Politics 62 282 This new humanitarian religion would be characterized by peace, love, and mutual sympathy among members of different cultures.</p>	<p>There is only one example in the second edition, from 1861.</p>

Table 2 Adjectival senses of ‘humanitarian’ in the OED (3rd ed.)

From the analysis of entries for both the noun and adjective in the OED, it emerges that the 3rd edition includes many more examples, including recent ones, and that some pragmatic labels have been added or changed since the 2nd edition. Not surprisingly, sense 1 of ‘humanitarian’ (both as noun and adjective) does not occur in either the Kosovo-EN or Libya-EN corpus³⁰. The second definition, which is new in the 3rd edition, is extremely pertinent to the comparable corpora to hand. In sub-meaning 2a, the meaning denotes ‘goodness’ in an action seeking to promote human welfare, while sub-meaning 2b designates a ‘bad’ situation of widespread suffering, requiring intervention. The difference, in fact, appears to be one of collocation, as the note on collocation in Table 2 points out. It is interesting to note that the ‘good’ sub-meaning was originally depreciative. This pragmatic note is precisely the nuance which is creeping into contemporary use of the word by journalists when referring to military operations.

2.1 Investigating ‘humanitarian’ in Usage Dictionaries, Learner Dictionaries and Collocation Dictionaries

There is a tradition of usage dictionaries in English which one cannot ignore in lexical enquiries. In the case of ‘humanitarian’, however, neither the first nor the second edition of Fowler’s *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*³¹ contains references to the noun or adjective. Williams’ *Keywords*³² notes, in accord with the OED, that the use of the adjective in the 19th century was often hostile or contemptuous, and the revised version of his book (Bennett et al. 2005³³) makes the perceptive observation that the currency of the adjective “has come into some disrepute because of skepticism about the benevolence of some interventions thus labeled”. This links to the label in the OED for sense 2° of the adjective (chiefly ‘depreciative’ in early use), and ties in with the findings of the corpus-based investigation explained in Section 3.

Contemporary learner dictionaries offer a different perspective, partly because they are corpus-based. This means that the most frequent uses of a word tend to be given prominence, and, on the evidence of these dictionaries, it would seem that in the early 21st century, the second sense of ‘humanitarian’ is the one that dominates. The latest editions of the five major advanced learner dictionaries³⁴ all concentrate on this second sense.

³⁰ The entrance of this adjective into English in the 18th century, linked to French socialist thinkers such as LeRoux and Comte, is an intriguing research path. Translations of these authors into English exist from the 1850s, but the OED traces the first use of the word to ?1782. The story of the penetration of these words into the common English language is, alas, beyond the scope of the present paper.

³¹ 1st ed. 1926, reprinted with a new introduction and notes by D. Crystal, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2nd edition revised by Sir E. Gowers, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1965.

³² See note 1.

³³ See note 1.

³⁴ *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, Macmillan, 2nd ed., Harlow 2007; *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 3rd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009; *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 6th ed., HarperCollins with Heinle Cengage, 2009; *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 5th ed., Pearson Longman, Harlow 2009, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, 8th ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

To quote just one of the dictionaries consulted, the *Macmillan Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, ‘humanitarian’ is defined as

relating to efforts to help people who are living in very bad conditions and are suffering because of a war, flood, earthquake, etc.:
 humanitarian aid/supplies/relief (= food, clothes, medicine, and shelter)
Humanitarian relief efforts have been stopped by the attacks. A humanitarian disaster/crisis.

The two sub-senses of the second meaning in the OED have been conflated here: humanitarian indicates efforts to help people who are suffering. The second set of examples (‘a humanitarian disaster/crisis’) do not appear to belong to this definition, but they illustrate sense 2b in the OED (Designating an event or situation which causes or involves (widespread) human suffering, esp. one which requires the provision of aid or support on a large scale).

The last investigation of the ‘humanitarian’ in English dictionaries turns to collocation dictionaries. There are currently four such dictionaries on the market³⁵, and only one of them, the *Macmillan Collocation Dictionary* actually contains collocations for the adjective ‘humanitarian’. In this dictionary, the meaning of the adjective is given briefly at the beginning of the entry, together with the grammar pattern in which the word is found, followed by the groups of nouns that it commonly occurs with, divided into areas of semantic preference. The explanation provided is that it simply ‘involves’ people affected by disastrous situations.

Humanitarian

Involving people affected by war, flood etc.

ADJ + n bad situation *catastrophe, crisis, disaster, emergency, situation, tragedy* Food, supplies, etc. *aid, assistance, relief, supplies*

Attempt to give help *effort, intervention, mission, operation, programme*

Organization or person providing help *agency, organization, worker*

The conclusion that may be drawn from this comparison of entries is, unsurprisingly, that the OED is indeed the most complete of the English dictionaries, and that the updating it is currently undergoing certainly makes it more accessible and comprehensible, in terms of examples. One of the features studied in Learner Dictionaries is how to present complex information in as clear a way as possible, particularly in terms of definition style: the changes between the second and the third edition of the OED would seem to indicate

³⁵ *LTP Dictionary of Selected Collocations*, Language Teaching Publications, Hove 1997; *Oxford Collocations Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, *BBI Dictionary of English Word Collocations* 3rd ed., John Benjamins, Amsterdam 2010; *Macmillan Collocation Dictionary*, Macmillan, Harlow 2010.

some attention to this feature too. Overall, the investigation of dictionary definitions reveals that in the 20th century, ‘humanitarian’ is used mostly in situations where there is widespread suffering, and it characterises actions or situations that aim to promote human welfare. No dictionary uses a pragmatic label to indicate a sceptical use of this word, although Bennett et al. (1995) do suggest that the word is generally used sceptically.

2.2 Definitions of ‘umanitar*’ in Italian Dictionaries

While the Accademia della Crusca produced a weighty albeit sometimes contested *Vocabolario* in 1612, 150 years before the first major *Dictionary of the English Language* was written in England by Samuel Johnson (1775), Italian lexicography seems to have been less of a national passion than in Great Britain, in that the discipline has not produced a plethora of dictionaries, particularly in recent years. This section is consequently shorter than the sections on dictionaries in English, because Italian does not offer the same range. The dictionaries consulted for the present study are the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (GDLI)³⁶, which is the largest dictionary of Italian, running to twenty-one volumes, with supplements published in 2004 and 2009; three recent standard dictionaries, the *Treccani* (online edition³⁷), *Devoto-Oli* (Le Monnier 2008)³⁸ and the *Grande Dizionario d’Italiano*³⁹ (Garzanti 2009). Lastly, De Mauro’s GRADIT, the *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell’uso*⁴⁰, a more usage-based dictionary, was consulted.

In the GDLI, we find two definitions for the adjective ‘umanitario’:

1) umanitario, che è animato da sentimenti di solidarietà umana, che si adopera per migliorare le condizioni di vita dell’umanità. – In partic., esponente del movimento umanitaristico sviluppatosi in Europa nel XIX sec. in seguito al diffondersi dell’industrializzazione e del capitalismo sulla scorta delle teorie egualitarie degli illuministi; filantropo. – Anche sostant. (humanitarian, someone animated by sentiments of human solidarity, who works to improve the living conditions of humanity. – In particular, someone belonging to the humanitarian movement which developed in Europe in the XIX century following the spread of industrialization and capitalism, along the lines of the egalitarian theories of the Enlightenment; philanthropist. Also noun).

³⁶ S. Battaglia ed., *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, UTET, Torino 1961-2002.

³⁷ www.treccani.it/Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana (accessed 25 September 2011).

³⁸ D. Giacomo – G. Oli, *Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Le Monnier, Firenze 2008.

³⁹ *Grande Dizionario della lingua italiana*, Garzanti Editore, Milano 1989.

⁴⁰ *Grande dizionario italiano dell’uso*, T. De Mauro ed., UTET, Torino 2000.

One of the two examples provided is:

Beltramelli I-608 Io non sono un Professore di Università, né un filosofo umanitario, né un deputato con dieci legislature, né un uomo politico con, dietro, “le sante memorie della vecchia Destra”. (I am not a University Professor, or a humanitarian philosopher, nor an MP elected for ten legislatures, nor a political man with “holy memories of the old Right” behind me).

The second meaning regards philanthropy, the well-being of man.

2) Che riguarda il miglioramento delle condizioni di vita dell'uomo; che promuove il benessere dell'umanità.– In partic.: che è proprio, che si riferisce all'umanitarismo filantropico del XIX sec. Stampa periodica milanese. I-171. Merito che la ‘Rivista viennese’ ha comune [sic] con gli altri giornali è il diffonder i lumi ... , sostenere la causa umanitaria.

(which regards the improvement of conditions in the life of man; which promotes the well-being of humanity. In particular,: which refers to the philanthropic humanitarianism of the 19th century. Milanese Periodical. I-171. A merit which the Viennese Magazine has in common with other newspapers is spreading light ... sustaining the humanitarian cause.

It then includes two sub-meanings, concerning social currents in history; humanitarian socialism and Christian humanitarianism:

i) Stor. *Socialismo umanitario*: tendenza libertaria in seno al movimento socialista ottocentesco basata sulla contrapposizione della libertà dell'individuo alla coercizione statale (ebbe vari esponenti fra i quali Proudhon, il pittore Courbet, Kropotkin, Andrea Costa e vari appartenenti al movimento anarchico). – Anche: ogni concezione politica storicamente successiva ispirata e improntata a tale tendenza. (Historical. Humanitarian Socialism: a libertarian tendency within the heart of 19th century the socialist movement based on the contraposition between the individual's freedom and State coercion (various members included Proudhon, the painter Courbet, Kropotkin, Andrea Costa and others who belonged to the anarchic movement).– Also: every successive political conception inspired by that tendency.

An illustrative example comes from the 20th century writer, Giorgio Bassani:

3-165: Dal suo socialismo di tipo umanitario, alla Andrea Costa, non si sarebbe potuto cavare granché, si capisce. (From his humanitarian type of socialism, Andrea Costa style, it was clear that we weren't going to gain much)

ii) Cristianesimo umanitario: insieme delle dottrine sociali cristiane originatesi dal sansionismo con P. Leroux, Lamennais, Bouchez, Chevalier; in esse le proposte di riforme sociali ed economiche si mescolavano con una teorizzata ‘religione dell’umanità’. (Humanitarian Christianity: the group of social Christian doctrines originating from sansionism with P. Leroux, Lamennais, Bouchez, Chevalier; the proposals for social and economic reforms were mixed with a theorized ‘religion of humanity’)

Nencioni, 2-83: Le idee sansimoniane e democratiche, il cristianesimo umanitario a cui fu iniziata da Pierre Leroux e da Lamennais, le [a George Sand], dettarono ... molti romanzi filosofici e religiosi, i meno letti e i più ‘passati’ dei suoi tanti volumi. (The sansimonian and democratic ideas, the humanitarian Christianity to which she (George Sand) was initiated by Pierre Leroux and by Lamennais dictated many philosophical and religious novels to her, the least read and the most ‘passé’ of her many volumes).

The entries thus focus more on cultural aspects of the word ‘umanitario’, detailing the names of the philosophers, for example, known for humanitarian beliefs.

The most interesting finding in GLDI, perhaps, is that the 2009 compiled by Sanguineti⁴¹ makes explicit mention of the binomial ‘guerra umanitaria’ (humanitarian war), as a new meaning, declaring that it is a calque of the English expression ‘humanitarian war’:

NA (nuova accezione) Umanitario (new meaning) Humanitarian
agg. guerra umanitaria (adj. Humanitarian war)

R. 3. Guerra etica, umanitaria: quella intrapresa sulla base di argomentazioni di natura etica, di salvaguardia della popolazione civile, ecc. (e sono calchi delle espressioni ingl. Ethic war e humanitarian war) (ethical, humanitarian war: wars undertaken on the strength of ethical argument, safeguarding the civil population, etc. (and they are calques of the English expressions ethic war and humanitarian war). (“Corriere della Sera”)

13-VIII-1992, 8: Qualcun altro invece preferisce discutere della guerra cosiddetta ‘umanitaria’, che ritiene necessaria a garantire in Bosnia l’ordinato affluire degli aiuti. Ma nel mondo reale la guerra umanitaria non esiste. *A. Tortorella*. (Someone else prefers to argue about so-called ‘humanitarian’ war, which they think necessary to guarantee an orderly flow of aid to Bosnia. But in the real world humanitarian war doesn’t exist.)

This is the only dictionary of all those consulted in English and Italian which includes the expression ‘humanitarian war’.

⁴¹ See note 10.

In the three more traditional dictionaries, *Treccani*, *Devoto-Oli* and *Garzanti*, we read that the word derives from the noun ‘umanità’: (humanity) through the French ‘humanitaire’, and the definition given is:

Che orienta il suo pensiero e la sua azione a migliorare materialmente e moralmente la vita umana e la convivenza dell'uomo nella società: *un filosofo u.*; *uno spirito u.*;
(Whose thought and action aim to improve human life and the life of man in society both materially and morally).

This definition gives no words in context, and mentions the idea of improving life from a moral point of view, which is not present in the English dictionaries.

In *Devoto-Oli* (2008), the definition is:

Diretto ad apportare un miglioramento alle condizioni umane dal punto di vista economico, etico e sociale, filantropico.
Con riferimento a situazioni internazionali di tensione o di guerra e a regioni dove sono in pericolo i più elementari diritti etici, economici e sociali. Derivante da umanità sul modello del francese *humanitaire* (1838).
(directed at bringing an improvement to human conditions from the economic, ethical, social point of view; philanthropic.
Refers to international situations of tension or war and to regions where the most elementary ethical, economic and social rights are in danger)

In this definition, similarly to the *Treccani*, there is an emphasis on improvement, of the ethical side of human conditions, and mention of international sites of tension, such as war.

In the *Garzanti* dictionary, the definition reads:

che è animato da sentimenti di solidarietà umana; che si adopera per migliorare le condizioni di vita dell'umanità: spirito umanitario; ... (who/which is animated by sentiments of human solidarity; which works to improve the living conditions of humanity: humanitarian spirit)

These three Italian dictionaries unanimously indicate the principal meaning of ‘umanitario’ as being ‘improving the conditions of human life’, with some references to the ethical aspect of life, which is not present in the English dictionaries.

The last dictionary to be consulted, one nearer to the spirit of corpus-based dictionaries, is GRADIT⁴². Here, besides definitions, we find examples of nouns often used with the adjective, although not strictly collocates in the statistical sense of the word.

⁴² See note 35.

1. agg.sm. che, chi è animato da sentimenti di solidarietà umana; che, chi si adopera per migliorare le condizioni di vita dell'umanità: medico, filosofo u. (masc. Sing. Adj. Who/which is animated by feelings of human solidarity; who/which acts to improve the living conditions of humanity: humanitarian doctor, philosopher)
2. agg. improntato ai migliori sentimenti umani; che promuove il benessere dell'umanità: attività, istituzioni umanitarie, socialismo u., ideali u., (adj. Aiming for the best human sentiments; who promotes the well-being of humanity: humanitarian activities, institutions, humanitarian socialism, ideals)
3. agg. dir. intern., che tutela e difende i diritti umani, spec. di intere comunità: intervento u., azione umanitaria (adj. from international law, which protects and defends human rights, particularly whole communities: humanitarian intervention, action).

The investigation of 'umanitario' in the Italian dictionary has shown a consensus around the attempts (whether socialist, christian, philosopher) to improve well-being and living conditions. The more recent dictionaries, such as GRADIT, mention humanitarian action in an international context, protecting a whole community, and the most recent dictionary of all, the 2009 supplement to GDLI, mentions 'humanitarian war' as a war fought for ethical reasons. The next section investigates the adjectives within corpora.

3. *'Humanitarian/umanitar*' in reference corpora in English and Italian*

To check that the two terms, 'humanitarian' and 'umanitario', are actually functionally equivalents, their collocates were sought in reference corpora in both English and Italian. Using corpora for this type of search is a way to find the evidence for what should be in dictionary definitions.

The adjective 'humanitarian' was sought in the BNC and found in all the BNC sections (Speech; Fiction, Magazine; Newspaper; Non-academic; Academic; Miscellaneous). It occurs most in the non-academic legal texts, followed by the news reports. The collocates of the adjective (calculated according to the MI score, with a minimum 5 occurrences out of 100 million) fall into roughly five areas of semantic preference – relief, abstract reasons or aims, official or international bodies, countries and disasters – the most frequent collocate being AID (1.22%; MI score 7.92). These collocates are now listed in their five areas of semantic preference:

- a) RELIEF: aid, assistance, convoys, flights, food, intervention, mission, operations, relief, supplies;
- b) ABSTRACT REASONS/AIMS: appeal, concern(s), grounds, ideals, needs principles, purposes, reasons, rights;
- c) OFFICIAL/INTERNATIONAL BODIES: international, law, organizations, UN;

- d) COUNTRIES: Bosnia, Iraq, Kuwait, Somalia;
- e) DISASTER: conflict, refugees, victims.

Examples 1, 2 and 3 from the BNS show some of these collocates in context:

- 1) With the exception of Western *humanitarian aid*, none of their hopes for a rapid improvement in the economy was fulfilled. *New Statesman and Society* (1985-1994)⁴³
- 2) It's described as the largest *humanitarian crisis* to afflict Europe since the second world war. (Central TV News scripts) (1985-1994)
- 3) The CND was a sort of emotional hold-all. Most people joined it for *humanitarian reasons*, but it was an outlet for all kinds of disgust. (The fifties: portrait of an age. Lewis, Peter. London: The Herbert Press Ltd, 1989)

A similar search was conducted in CORIS, which is comparable to the BNC in size, date of compilation and composition⁴⁴. CORIS is made up of six sub corpora: Press, Fiction, Academic Prose, Legal and Administrative Prose, Miscellanea and Ephemera, all of which contain prose written between the 1980s and the 1990s⁴⁵.

The lemma 'umanitar*' in its four forms ('umanitario', 'umanitaria', 'umanitari', 'umanitarie') was sought in the corpus and found most in the Press sub-corpus. Subsequently, the collocates of the four forms were sought. Due to limitations in the Query language of CORIS, the collocates had to be calculated for each single form of the lemma and then added together. The masculine, feminine, singular and plural forms of the collocates (e.g. 'aiuto' and 'aiuti' are both the equivalent of 'aid') were also added together. A final list was then drawn up of collocates of the lemma 'umanitari*' which occur more than five times in the corpus.

The Italian collocates were compared against those of the English adjective 'humanitarian', and a very similar picture emerged. Grouping the Italian collocates into macro semantic areas, four of the five macro areas match across the two languages – relief, abstract reasons or aims, official or international bodies and disaster. As in the BNC, the most common collocate of 'umanitario' is 'aiuto/aiuti' (assistance/aid). The only missing group in the CORIS collocates, compared to the BNC, is that of countries. Grouped into the four areas of semantic preference, the collocates are:

⁴³ In the interface to the British National Corpus used for this study, available at <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/> the dates for entries are sometimes given within a time span (as in examples 1 and 2) and other times as a precise date (example 3).

⁴⁴ Since the data analysis, the corpus has been updated and extended to 120 million words. The present research was conducted on the corpus when it was still 100 million words.

⁴⁵ In detail, the Press sub-corpus includes newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, both national and local, specialized and non-specialized; the Fiction sub-corpus includes novels, short stories for adults and children, crime, adventure, science-fiction and women's literature; the Academic prose sub-corpus includes books and reviews from the human and natural sciences, experimental sciences and physics; the Legal and Administrative sub-corpus contains books and reviews on legal, bureaucratic and administrative topics; the Miscellanea sub-corpus contains books and reviews of religion, travel, cookery and various hobbies and the Ephemera sub-corpus, private letters, leaflets and instructions.

- a) RELIEF: accoglienza (welcome), affari (matters), aiuto/i (assistance/aid), appello, appelli (appeal/s), attività (activity/ies), atto (act), azione (action), convoglio, convogli (convoy/s), corridoio/corridoi (corridor/s), gesto (act, gesture), ingerenza/ingerenze (intervention/s), iniziativa, iniziative (initiative/s), intervento, interventi (intervention/s), missione/missioni (mission/s), opera (work), operatori (workers), operazione, operazioni (operation/s), piano (plan), progetto/progetti (project/s), programma, programmi (programme/s), protezione (protection), soccorso/i (help), soluzione (solution);
- b) ABSTRACT REASONS/AIMS/FEELINGS aspetto/i, (aspect/s), carattere (character, nature), causa/e (cause/s), considerazione/i, (consideration/s), diritto/i (law, rights), finalità (aims), fini (ends), impegno (commitment), materia (subject), motiv/i (motive/s), natura (nature), principi (principles), questione/i (question/s), ragione/i (reason/s), scopo/i (aim/s), sentimento/i (feeling/s), spirito (spirit),
- c) OFFICIAL / INTERNATIONAL BODIES agenzia/e (agency/ies), associazioni (associations), gruppo/i (group/s) organismo/i (organism/s), organizzazione/i (organization/s),
- d) DISASTER catastrofe/i (catastrophe/s), crisi (crisis/es), disastro/i (disaster/s), emergenza/e (emergency/ies), guerra/e (war/s) tragedia/e (tragedy/ies);

Some of these collocates are illustrated in examples 4, 5 and 6 from CORIS:

4) dagli alleati Nato: celati dalla logica dell'aiuto umanitario, sia gli uni che gli altri ammazzano innocenti. (PRESS) (from the Nato allies: hidden by the logic of humanitarian aid, both sides kill innocent people).

5) In nome dello spirito umanitario la Nato ha creato la più grave crisi umanitaria dal dopoguerra. Le parole di denuncia dell'ambasciatore cinese (PRESS)⁴⁶ (In the name of humanitarian spirit NATO has created the most serious humanitarian crisis since the war. These accusatory words from the Chinese ambassador...)

6) e Londra potrà decidere sulla scarcerazione per ragioni umanitarie solo quando il processo sarà finito (PRESS) (and London will be able to take a decision about release for humanitarian reasons when the trial is over)

The available evidence from the two reference corpora shows that the lemmas 'humanitarian' and 'umanitar*' often occur in the press, mostly in similar contexts, and that they share many collocates from the same semantic fields. Of course, this may also be due to the fact that the texts in the corpora were collected from the same period, but if the corpora are to be comparable, then a similar timeframe is a necessary factor.

⁴⁶ In CORIS the only sources given are broad categories, e.g. PRESS.

4. *A study on the attitudinal assessments of 'humanitarian'*

The investigation into 'humanitarian/umanitar*' so far has shown that they occur in similar types of texts and share many equivalent collocates. In a study of the adjective in a corpus of media discourse in English on the Iraq War of 2003, Bayley and Bevitori⁴⁷ report that the adjective appears to be semantically neutral, but that it occurs in both positive and negative attitudinal assessments. Apart from occurrences with institutional bodies, they distinguish the following two meaning patterns:

- 1) the first foregrounds positive actions on behalf of victims and carries positive semantic orientations towards 'providers', e.g. *I hope that a united effort to provide humanitarian relief for the people of Iraq and to support them in reconstructing their country will help to bring that about;*
- 2) the second highlights future or present negative consequences of an event and carries with it negative semantic associations; e.g. *That is the most horrifying humanitarian possibility.*

They report that the meaning pattern foregrounding positive actions is found most in a corpus of British government debates (it is important to remember that the British government under Tony Blair was one of the staunchest supporters of the Iraq war), while the pattern which highlights the negative consequences of an event is most frequent in the discourse of the then Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, who resigned from the Labour Cabinet in protest over the Iraq war. Bayley and Bevitori's research brings to light the fact that 'humanitarian' has meaning patterns in association with grammatical features. The positive meaning pattern is associated with modal meanings of duties and obligations, such as "the coalition has duties of humanitarian care" (example taken from the CorDis corpus of media discourse used in their research), while the negative meaning pattern is associated with modal meanings of possibility and with resources of graduation (Martin and White⁴⁸), which intensify meanings through adjectives such as 'serious', 'severe' and 'horrifying'.

Bayley and Bevitori also compare their findings with the collocates and meaning patterns of 'humanitarian' in the BNC. There they find that, although the meaning pattern highlighting positive semantic associations is still present, the collocates which usually occur in a positive pattern, such as 'aid', are sometimes accompanied by features of negative appraisal, such as the phrase 'under the guise of'. Their conclusion is that the meaning of 'humanitarian' can also be linked to political interests, hidden by only apparently good motives. This is a similar finding to those that emerge in the investigations of the adjective in the Kosovo and Libya corpora, illustrated in Section 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*

⁴⁸ J.R. Martin – P.R.R. White, *The Language of Evaluation*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2005.

5. *'Humanitarian/umanitar*' in the Kosovo and Libya corpora*

As explained previously, the Kosovo and Libya corpora are specialized corpora which contain opinion articles regarding the international military conflicts in Kosovo (1999) and Libya (2011). The first investigation of the collocates of 'humanitarian/umanitari*' led to the close reading of the contexts in which these adjectives occur. The main finding of the research is evidence of increasing disillusion with the sincerity of those waging humanitarian wars.

The collocates of 'humanitarian' in each sub-corpus are illustrated in Table 2, grouped into the same semantic categories as for the BNC and CORIS, with two extra categories: words indicating instinctive behaviour, speech and war action.

The six areas are:

- a) relief and ethical actions or behaviour
- b) abstract reasons, aims, aspects
- c) official institutions, groups
- d) nouns indicating disaster
- e) instinctive behaviour, speech or metaphors
- f) nouns regarding war action

Semantic preferences	Kosovo-EN Raw Freq: 88	Kosovo-IT Raw Freq: 61	Libya-EN Raw Freq: 72	Libya-IT Raw Freq: 95
A Relief and ethical attitudes or behaviour	Aid Assistance Course Promise Response Work (6)	Accoglienza Corridoio Etica (4)	Aid Transport ASSISTANCE Duty Help Mission Relief Responsibilities Supplies Tasks work (17)	AIUTI Assistenza Bel Gesto Corridoio/i Impegno Doveri MISSIONE Sforzo/i Soccorsi (23)

<p>B Abstract reasons, aims, aspects</p>	<p>Alternative Argument Aspirations Concerns Goal Grounds Ideals Justification/s Motivations Objective Position Principle Point of view Purpose Reasons Violations</p> <p>(21)</p>	<p>Aspetto Carattere Dimensione Argomento Calcoli Conseguenze Motivi Ragione/i Piano/i Principi Scopo/i Scrupoli</p> <p>(16)</p>	<p>Ends Gain Grounds Motives Nature Objectives Order Purposes Reasons Standpoint</p> <p>(17)</p>	<p>Conseguenze Fine/i Fattore intenzioni Ipotesi Modo Motivo/i Natura Obiettivi Paradosso Preoccupazione Principi Ragioni Riflessi Scopi Sensibilità Senso Teorie Volto</p> <p>(22)</p>
<p>C Institutional nouns</p>	<p>Group Law Movement</p> <p>(3)</p>	<p>Diritto dell'ingerenza umanitaria Diritto umanitario Organizzazione Partito</p> <p>(9)</p>		<p>Associazioni Fondo Organizzazioni bandiere</p> <p>(4)</p>
<p>D Instinctive Behaviour/ speech or metaphors</p>	<p>Impulse/s Instincts Rhetoric Sharks</p> <p>(4)</p>	<p>Imperative Retorica Slancio</p> <p>(3)</p>	<p>Embarrassments Imperative Impulse Juices Urge</p> <p>(7)</p>	<p>Trappola Belletti</p> <p>(2)</p>
<p>E Disaster nouns</p>	<p>Atrocities CATASTRO- PHE Crimes DISASTER Horrors Outrage Problem Tragedy</p> <p>(33)</p>	<p>CATASTROFE Crisi Escrescenza</p> <p>(7)</p>	<p>Catastrophe Crisis/es Disaster Nightmare Plight Tragedy</p> <p>(11)</p>	<p>Crisi Disastro Emergenza/e</p> <p>(6)</p>

F War action	Act Action Bombing INTERVEN- TION Victory War (19)	Azione Bombardamento GUERRA Ingerenza Interposizione INTERVENTO/I Intrusione (20)	Action Ground force commitment INTERVEN- TION Role Wars (17)	Atto di Guerra Bomba GUERRA INGERENZA INTERVENTO Invasione Operazione/i (35)
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Table 3 Semantic preferences: ‘humanitarian-umanitario’ across the four corpora
Key: Figures in brackets indicate raw occurrences. Collocates occurring more than five times (also in the BNC and CORIS) are in capitals.

5.1 Macro cross-linguistic observations about the semantic preferences of ‘humanitarian/umanitario’

The following collocates occur five or more times in these corpora of 100,000 words – all of them also occurred more than five times in the BNC and CORIS. In Kosovo-EN, we find ‘catastrophe’, ‘disaster’ and ‘intervention’; in Libya-EN, ‘assistance’ and ‘intervention’; in Kosovo-IT ‘catastrofe’ (catastrophe), ‘guerra’ (war) and ‘intervento’ (intervention) and in Libya-IT, ‘aiuti’ (aid), ‘guerra’ (war), ‘ingerenza’ (intervention, interference), ‘intervento’ (intervention), and ‘missione’ (mission).

Several tendencies can be observed regarding these frequent collocates. One notable cross-linguistic difference is that there is a clear preference for disaster nouns occurring with ‘humanitarian’ in the English corpora. A greater variety of nouns are used in this category – ‘disaster’, ‘horrors’, ‘tragedy’, ‘atrocities’, ‘nightmare’ in English. The Italian corpora include fewer terms and they are used less often. A change can also be observed diachronically. A decrease in emotive nouns can be seen in the Libya corpora in both languages, although this is particularly evident in English. In Kosovo-EN, there are three times as many disaster collocates as in Libya-EN. This would seem to indicate a drop in the degree of sensationalism with which war is described after ten years.

In the group of nouns regarding war action, the neutral English noun phrase “humanitarian intervention” is one of the most frequent collocations in both the Kosovo and the Libya corpora. In the Italian corpora, the situation is slightly different: ‘intervento’ (intervention) is still frequent, but it is joined in the Libya corpus by a partial synonym, ‘ingerenza’. If translated neutrally, ‘ingerenza’ is rendered by ‘intervention’. However, it can also be interpreted with negative semantic prosody, in which case it translates as ‘humanitarian interference’, which carries an ingrained negative judgement. In the English corpus, ‘humanitarian’ is not found with a negatively evaluative synonym, such as ‘interference’, or even ‘intrusion’, which also occurs in the Italian version ‘intrusione’.

Thirdly, the phrases ‘aiuto umanitario’ (humanitarian aid) and ‘humanitarian assistance’ become among the most frequent collocates in the Libya corpora, indicating a shift in focus towards the concrete help that is part of humanitarian war aims. ‘Missione umanitaria’ (humanitarian mission) is also frequent ‘only’ in Libya-IT, indicating that in this conflict the Italian opinionists focus on the desirable social characteristics of participation in the war, more than in the Kosovo war. It is perhaps useful to point out that Italians are bound by their constitution not to be involved in aggressive war: Article 11 of the Italian Constitution “rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedoms of other peoples and as a means for settling international controversies; it agrees, on conditions of equality with other states, to the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an order that ensures peace and justice among Nations; it promotes and encourages international organizations having such ends in view”⁴⁹. This article has conditioned Italy’s participation in all the latter 20th century wars, perhaps increasingly so.

Sections 5.2 – 5.5 examine the contexts of ‘humanitarian/umanitario’ in greater detail, one sub-corpus at a time.

5.2 Humanitarian in Kosovo-EN

The humanitarian principle was a strong point in the Anglo-American defence of the Kosovo war. In Kosovo-EN, although ‘humanitarian’ combines with most of the semantic preference groups illustrated in Table 2, it occurs above all with disaster nouns and war action nouns. Examples 7 and 8 are taken from these groups:

7) We are probably heading towards *the worst humanitarian disaster* in Europe since the Bosnian war. (Carl Bildt, “The Financial Times”, 5 May 1999)

8) Unlike national interest, *humanitarian intervention* knows no natural limits. (Mark Almond “The Sunday Independent”, 6 June 1999)

In 7, a ‘humanitarian disaster’ may be understood as a ‘disaster afflicting humanity’, whereas in the second, a ‘humanitarian intervention’ is an intervention ‘for the benefit of humanity’.

Kosovo-EN contains an explanation of the coining of the term ‘humanitarian intervention’, explained by Chomsky:

9) There is at least a tension if not an outright contradiction between the rules of world order laid down in the UN Charter and the rights articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a second pillar of the world

⁴⁹ L’Italia ripudia la guerra come strumento di offesa alla libertà degli altri popoli e come mezzo di risoluzione delle controversie internazionali; consente, in condizioni di parità con gli altri Stati, alle limitazioni di sovranità necessarie ad un ordinamento che assicuri la pace e la giustizia fra le Nazioni; promuove e favorisce le organizzazioni internazionali rivolte a tale scopo. (both versions are taken from www.senato.it).

order established under US initiative after World War II. The Charter bans force violating state sovereignty; the UD guarantees the rights of individuals against oppressive states. The issue of “humanitarian intervention” arises from this tension. (Noam Chomsky, 2 April 1999, www.zmag.org)

In this passage, ‘humanitarian intervention’ is placed in inverted commas, perhaps because it is being defined, but possibly also because the writer is indicating that the term is contentious. This use of inverted commas, or in this case, scare quotes, is one of the commonest devices in the corpora to indicate writer attitude towards the adjective. In Kosovo-EN, scare quotes are used in 11% of the uses of ‘humanitarian.’ These instances of the term mostly indicate occasions on which the writer expresses a lack of belief in the good motives or the goodness of the action itself. Examples of such scare quotes follow:

10) The aerial assault on civil targets [...] suggested to the world that Nato was led by careless bullies whose “humanitarian” concern was for their own soldiers, not the evicted Kosovans or those killed and maimed by the bombs. (Simon Jenkins “The Times”, 11 June 1999)

11) Opposition to NATO’s war is particularly widespread in Eastern Germany, but is growing in the West as well in view of the miserable results of “humanitarian” bombing. (Diana Johnstone, 20 May 1999, www.zmag.org)

It must be observed, however, that most of the occurrences of ‘humanitarian’ encased in scare quotes are written either by the same opinionist in “The Times” or by opinionists published within the same online zmag (www.zmag.org). The suspicion that personal or editorial style and slant might thus play a part arises. There are, however, other examples of ‘humanitarian’ without scare quotes, where the writer’s stance indicates that the ‘good’ meaning of the adjective is undermined. In example 12, the opinionist invites readers through rhetorical questions to answer ‘no’, and thus disapprove of the leaders’ ‘humanitarian instincts’, and in 13, the contrast between the action verb “we have killed hundreds”, (note also the inclusive-we), and the “pursuit of humanitarian ideals” makes it clear that these ideals are of questionable goodness.

12) Isn’t our high-minded motivation obviously sincere? Shouldn’t that be enough to stifle reservations at home and abroad? Western leaders assume that their *humanitarian instincts* are shared by the rest of humanity. Unfortunately, that isn’t the case. (Mark Almond, “The Sunday Independent”, 6 June 1999)

13) We have now killed hundreds, if not thousands, of Serbs, Montenegrins and Albanians, even some Chinese, in our pursuit of *humanitarian ideals*. (Walter J. Rockler, “Chicago Tribune”, 23 May 1999)

In both these cases, the sincerity of the actuation of these instincts or ideals within the conflict is questioned. A further characteristic in Kosovo-EN is writers commenting on the exaggeration or hypocrisy with which ‘humanitarian’ is used:

14) The cleansing has not been, as Nato spokesmen claim, *the worst humanitarian outrage* since the Second World War, an exaggeration many Africans and Asians might consider racist. (Simon Jenkins, “The Times”, 21 April 2011)

15) The *humanitarian concerns* expressed are the merest hypocrisy since what really counts is the expression of US power. (Edward Said, 5 April 1999, www.converge.org)

Thus scare quotes, accusations of exaggeration and hypocrisy and indications of writer scepticism, begin to characterize the use of ‘humanitarian’ in Kosovo-EN.

5.3 ‘Humanitarian’ in Libya-EN

In Libya-EN, collected eleven years later, ‘humanitarian’ is used slightly less frequently than in Kosovo-EN, despite many parallels drawn in Libya-EN between the two conflicts. There are only two examples of scare quotes around ‘humanitarian’, suggesting that the opinionists are more frank when referring to the nature of the war.

As in Kosovo-EN, the most frequent collocate of ‘humanitarian’ in Libya-EN is ‘intervention’, and this is a key site of the opinionists’ scepticism. According to a Guardian opinionist, ‘humanitarian intervention’ is widely interpreted as “code for regime change”. He does suggest however that it need not mean that.

16) Right now, *too many believe that interventions will always be code for regime change*, that they will always succumb to mission creep, that they will always drag on for years. What better way to disprove that than by showing that sometimes a *humanitarian intervention* can be just that – a short, sharp action designed to avert a catastrophe. When there was a clear and present danger, it was right to act. When that danger has receded, it’s right to stop. (Jonathan Freedland, “The Guardian”, 30 March 2011)

For Mary Riddell in the right wing “Daily Telegraph”, “humanitarian intervention is [*sic*] code for Western imperialism” (1 March 2011), while in the left-wing “Guardian”, Seumas Milne is equally cynical about the honest intentions of humanitarian intervention, sarcastically coining the expression “à la carte humanitarian intervention”:

17) The point isn’t just that western intervention in Libya is grossly hypocritical. It’s that such double standards are an integral part of a mechanism of global power and domination that stifles hopes of any credible interna-

tional system of human rights protection. *A la carte humanitarian intervention*, such as in Libya, is certainly not based on feasibility or the degree of suffering or repression, but on whether the regime carrying it out is a reliable ally or not.

A recurring criticism of action in the war is that the humanitarian factor in the crisis is merely a pretext for the real reasons for interference, which are linked to oil supplies. This is illustrated in example 18:

18) With Colonel Gaddafi and his loyalists showing every sign of digging in, the likelihood must be of intensified conflict – with all the heightened pretexts that would offer for outside interference, from humanitarian crises to threats over oil supplies. (Seumas Milne, “The Guardian”, 3 March 2011)

The same criticism is repeated in other words by Andreas Whittam Smith in “The Independent”:

19) What British ministers are now saying to themselves is that, having obtained the UN resolution *on humanitarian grounds*, they would now like to use it as the basis for an intervention designed to bring about regime change. (24 March 2011)

Example 19 is worthy of comment, in line with Section 1.2, showing no attempt to source the attribution to any particular minister on a particular occasion, and implying that the ministers are cheating the public. This is part of the total freedom that an opinionist enjoys, what Iedema et al.⁵⁰ call ‘commentator’ voice in the media.

Another way in which opinionists discredit the war as a humanitarian mission is the repetition of the message that the Kosovo crisis must not be looked at as a model for the Libyan one, since Kosovo was not a success:

20) As they weigh up whether to support the attack on Muammar Gaddafi’s regime, some western commentators are taking comfort from the 1999 Nato air war against Serbia, which is widely viewed as a successful humanitarian mission that protected Kosovans from Serbian aggression.[...] In reality, Kosovo presents little basis for optimism with regard to Libya. Its success is based on a series of myths. (David N. Gibbs, “The Guardian”, 22 March 2011)

‘Humanitarian’ also occurs in contexts where adverbs such as *ostensibly* make it clear that the opinionists do not believe in the good motives behind the war. Direct challenges

⁵⁰ R. Iedema et al., *Media Literacy*, p. 200.

to the reader are also made, making belief in the humanitarian motives seem absurd, as examples 21 and 22 show:

21) In spring, when Nato launched its no-fly zone *ostensibly for humanitarian purposes* ... (Andrew Murray, *The Guardian*, 28 June 2011)

22) For the first time in more than 60 years, Western control over the world's biggest pots of oil was being rocked by a series of revolutions our governments couldn't control. The most plausible explanation is that this is a way of asserting raw Western power, and trying to arrange the fallout in our favour. *But if you are still convinced our governments are acting for humanitarian reasons*, I've got a round-trip plane ticket for you to some rubble in Pakistan and Congo. The people there would love to hear your argument. (Johann Hari, "The Independent", 8 April 2011)

Overall, in approximately 20% of the occurrences of 'humanitarian' in Libya-EN, there is scepticism shown on the part of the opinionists, regardless of their political stance. The evidence suggests that among the English-speaking commentators, consensus has grown over ten years that there is a basic contradiction in waging war for humanitarian reasons.

5.4 'Umanitar*' in Kosovo-IT

In Kosovo-IT, the adjective 'umanitar*' occurs 25% less than in the comparable English corpus. However, the occurrences of 'umanitar*' in which it is clear that the writer doubts the sincerity with which the word is used account for 23% of cases, which is a higher proportion than in Kosovo-EN. In 11 out of 13 cases, scare quotes indicate that the adjective is being used sceptically, as in example 23:

23) Occorre domandarsi se ha senso affrontare una guerra "umanitaria" preoccupandosi soltanto di missili e aerei invisibili, senza predisporre la protezione militare e l'assistenza ai profughi (we need to ask ourselves if it makes sense to face a "humanitarian" war being concerned solely with missiles and invisible planes, without setting up military protection and assistance to refugees). (Curzio Maltese, "La Repubblica", 4 August 1999)

In example 24, the main clause containing the predicative adjective 'umanitari' functions as a concession to the reader, and is belied by the contrasting coordinated clause introduced by *ma* (but), which implies that the adjective has been delexicalized:

24) siamo forse umanitari, ma sappiamo ben distinguere fra popoli occidentali eletti alla vita e carne da macello balcanica (we may well be humanitarian, but we know how to distinguish clearly between western peoples elected to life and Balcanic flesh for slaughter) (Lucio Caracciolo, "La Repubblica", 23 May 1999)

In 24, the writer also adopts a reader-involving strategy by using the first person plural: the reader is encouraged to share the guilt of pretending to be ‘humanitarian’ and then admit that it is a sham. In example 25, we see a different strategy at work: hyperbolic or emphatic language makes it clear that the adjective ‘humanitarian’ has been emptied of any referential content:

25) Dopo tanta profusione di retorica umanitaria, come spiegheremmo, innanzitutto a noi stessi, un simile esito? (After torrents of humanitarian rhetoric, how could we explain such a result, first of all to ourselves?)

Overall, Kosovo-IT contains fewer references to humanitarian actions or events, but, compared to Kosovo-EN, a higher proportion of these references show the writer’s reluctance to believe in the good will behind humanitarian claims.

5.5 ‘Umanitar*’ in Libya-IT

Libya-IT contains the highest proportion of sceptical uses of the adjective: 31.5%. This attitude is signalled either by scare quotes or by features in the co-text, such as paraphrases of adjectives meaning ‘so-called’, or oxymoronic elements, which create some kind of contrast with the ‘good’ meaning of ‘humanitarian’.

Example 26 shows the use of an equivalent to ‘so-called’, (i.e.) ‘proclamato’ (proclaimed).

26) A quel punto, due ipotesi. O americani e alleati assistono dall’alto dei cieli libici allo stallo – e quindi al prolungamento dei massacri – che hanno contribuito a creare. O gli americani (forse con un paio di inglesi) mettono gli stivali sulla sabbia e guidano le colonne degli insorti fino alla capitale. Nel primo caso, si produce il contrario del proclamato fine umanitario. (At that point, two hypotheses. Either the Americans and allies watch the stalemate from on high in the Libyan skies – and therefore the prolonging of the massacres – which they have helped create. Or the Americans (perhaps with a couple of the English) put their boots on the sand and guide the columns of the rebels to the capital. In the first case, the opposite of the proclaimed humanitarian goal would be produced. (Lucio Caracciolo, “La Repubblica”, 8 March 2011)

Oxymoronic features can be seen in the co-text of example 27 – warships flying humanitarian flags seem to be a contradiction in terms – and the interjection ‘appunto’ draws attention to this contradiction.

27) Navi da Guerra, battendo per ora bandiere appunto umanitarie, stanno facendo rotta verso le coste che furono fenicio, poi Mare Nostrum,

poi Impero Ottomano, poi Costa dei Barbari, poi Tripolitania, oggi Libia. (Warships, flying flags which are – as we said – humanitarian, are wending their way towards the coasts which were once the Phoenicians Kingdom, then Mare Nostrum, then the Ottoman Empire, then the Barbarians' Coast, then Tripolitania, today Libya). (Vittorio Zucconi, "La Repubblica", 26 February 2011)

Example 28, however, illustrates the opinionist's cynicism through the use of the metaphor of cosmetics, used to cover up the real reasons for the war:

28) Alle richieste del presidente americano, Barack Obama, di un "regime change a basso costo" – vero obiettivo della politica estera americana al di là dei *belletti umanitari* con cui l'Onu ha truccato l'iniziativa – i militari rispondevano che ... (To the requests of the American President, Barack Obama, for a "low-cost regime change" – the real objective of American foreign policy regardless of the *humanitarian cosmetics* which which the UN has covered up the initiative – the soldiers answered that...) (Mattia Ferraresi, "Il Foglio", 22 April 2011)

Through the comparison of Kosovo-IT with Libya-IT, it can be seen that the Italian opinionists gradually lose confidence in the motives for war that promote human welfare as a primary good. Their scepticism, already more pronounced than that of their English counterparts during the Kosovo crisis, is on the increase.

6. Reflections and conclusions

It has been shown that, in the statistic sense, the adjective 'humanitarian/umanitario' is a keyword in the specialised corpora of op-eds regarding contemporary military conflicts. After the investigations into the way the adjective is being currently used, I would argue that it reflects a cultural change, and can be added to the list of 21st century cultural keywords.

On the basis of the evidence from corpora, then, the research question regarding the use of 'humanitarian/umanitar*' can be answered at least partially. In the majority of cases, 'humanitarian/umanitar*' is used by opinionists writing in both English and Italian to indicate attempts to alleviate situations of widespread suffering, which is one of its main meanings in the dictionaries. There is, however, a notable and increasingly strong current of scepticism, in both the British and Italian op-eds, which displays and foments distrust of the genuineness of the term, when it is supposed to indicate efforts to promote human welfare as a primary good. This corroborates Bayley and Bevitori's research (see Section 4) which pointed out that the term often covers up other political motives,

and also gives evidence for Bennett et al.'s perceptive remark in 2005⁵¹. One presumes that opinionists affect what their readers think, and given that the humanitarian motive has now been employed for all the conflicts in which Great Britain and Italy have been involved since the Kosovo crisis, if opinionists' scepticism continues to grow, and word becomes deed, there could be increased resistance in civil society towards involvement in 'humanitarian' wars.

It could be asked whether there is a place in a corpus-based dictionary for attitudinal or pragmatic labels such as 'often sceptical', in the same way that the OED signals 'chiefly historical' or 'chiefly depreciative' in some definitions of 'humanitarian'. In this war-mongering age, debate about humanitarian wars shows no signs of abating, and if the sceptical trend that has been confirmed by this investigation continues, there will soon be a case for adding such a label to the entries for 'humanitarian'.

Another of the results of this research is greater awareness that investigating collocates across languages is an under-developed area, particularly in the case of Italian. The use of corpora of Italian is not yet an established practice, and corpus-derived tools, such as collocation dictionaries, either do not exist, or have not significantly changed the way in which one can investigate the Italian language. The investigation of 'umanitar*' has shown that the concordance line is a short measure for the Italian language, and reading the context around the node word is fundamental. Further ways of exploiting such methodologies with students, even with relatively small comparable corpora, could be usefully explored.

⁵¹ See note 1.