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Linguistic perspectives on ageing issues, ethics and ideology

Edited by Alessandra Vicentini & Kim Grego

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La rivista intende applicarsi agli ambiti specifici della Linguistica, della Letteratura e della Comunicazione, intersecando gli aspetti teorici al monitoraggio delle realtà esistenti, in prospettiva sincronica e diacronica. Saranno privilegiate le riflessioni su temi precisi e circoscritti, legati anche a valenze pragmatiche. Le intersezioni fra le tre componenti, considerate nella loro sfera d'azione più ampia, costituiscono un obiettivo prioritario del progetto.

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"We're three old guys." Ageist discourse in Hollywood movies – a case study[§]

Stefania M. Maci

Abstract

World Population Prospects: 2017 Revision published by the UN (2017) shows that the population aged over 60 is expected to double by 2050 and triple by 2100. Besides, the older population is growing faster than the younger population. Ageing is clearly becoming one of the most relevant social changes of our century with implications for the social, labour and financial markets in relation to public systems for healthcare, pensions and social protection for a growing older population.

Although it has been demonstrated that, from a medical perspective, all over the world many people over 60 people enjoy good health and lead active lives, ageing is associated with mental decline and physical impairment (Kalache 1999), and identified as a life phase treated as undesirable and unpleasant. In other words, as claimed by Zeman and Geiger Zeman (2015), getting old is perceived as a process filled with taboos, fears, prejudices and stereotypes. The discourse of ageism as portrayed in popular entertainment seems to support and perpetrate these fears, prejudices and stereotypes (Gatling 2013).

Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and with a corpus linguistics approach, this study will investigate whether

§ The research on which this study is based is part of the MIUR-funded research project of national interest (PRIN) *Knowledge Dissemination across media in English: continuity and change in discourse strategies, ideologies, and epistemology* (COFIN grant no. Prot. 2015TJ8ZAS_002), directed by prof. Marina Bondi of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia – local coordinators, prof. Maurizio Gotti (until 30.09.2019); Stefania M. Maci (from 01.10.2019).

ageist discourse thus represented in the movie industry has changed over time. As claimed by van Dijk (2013), CDA investigation helps to uncover the implicit ideology in a text, with particular regard to the complexities of discourse production and comprehension. After investigating the issue of ageism in the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the *Open American National Corpus* (ANC), we will compare the results thus found with those emerging from a linguistic (and multimodal) analysis of two movie scripts, *Going in style* (1979 and its 2017 remake), to see the extent to which, if any, perceptions of ageing issues have been modified in the period between the 1979 and 2017 films.

More specifically, in the first step of the analysis, we will focus on the detection of keywords (Scott 2012) in each script of the two movies, generated one against the other, to find any differences over time. Secondly, these will be analysed in comparison with the BNC and the ANC: the concordance lists these keywords collocate with in the scripts *and* in the two corpora will be useful to see the differences, if any, in ageist discourse in both movies and in real world. In this way, it will be possible to detect where stereotypical and biased discourse lies. Finally, the scripts of the two movies will be run in USAS, the tag suite of WMatrix (Rayson 2008), in order to detect possible semantic domains used in relation to ageism.

The results seem to indicate a difference in the use of terms related to ageist issues when comparing the two keyword scripts with the BNC and the ANC. Furthermore, both the USAS investigation and the socio-semiotic study seem to underline the fact that the language used in these movies reinforces existing ageist stereotypes in real world.

Keywords: ageism, discourse of discrimination, CDA, corpus linguistics, keywords, semantic fields

1. *Introduction*

World Population Prospects: 2017 Revision published by the UN (2017) shows that the population aged over 60 is expected to double by 2050 and triple by 2100. On top of that, the older

population is growing faster than the younger population. Ageing is clearly becoming one of the most relevant social changes of our century with implications for the social, labour and financial markets in relation to public systems for healthcare, pensions and social protection for a growing older population.

Although it has been demonstrated that, from a medical perspective, all over the world many people over 60 enjoy good health and lead active lives, ageing is associated with mental decline and physical impairment (Kalache 1999), and it is identified as a life phase treated as undesirable and unpleasant. In other words, as clarified by Zeman and Geiger Zeman (2015), getting old is perceived as a process filled with taboos, fears, prejudices and stereotypes. The discourse of ageism supports and perpetrates these fears, prejudices and stereotypes (cf. McCann & Giles 2002: 164). As Gendron *et al.* (2016) underline, the language of ageism lacks any form of 'political' correctness: the very term *anti-ageing* not only illustrates this, implying that older adults are not allowed to be referred to as a non-marginalized group, but also reveals that "discrimination based on age, is extraordinarily complex and is often covert" (Gendron *et al.* 2016: 997).

While there is a trend of abundant research on the language of discrimination, in particular in the area of sexism and racism (cf., for instance, Eherlich, Meyerhoff, Holmes 2017, who deal with discrimination in the field of gender and sexuality; Reisigl & Wodak 2001, who, in a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, analyse the discourse of antisemitism), apart from Gatling (2013), there is little investigation on the language of ageism, discrimination on this ground and how this is elaborated by the entertainment industry. Therefore, drawing on CDA, this study will investigate whether ageist discourse represented in the movie industry has changed over time. In particular, we will carry out a linguistic analysis of two movie scripts, *Going in style* (1979 and its 2017 remake), to see the extent to which, if any, perceptions of ageing issues have been modified in the period between the 1979 and 2017 versions. This linguistic investigation will, whenever possible, be linked to a sociosemiotic, multimodal analysis in order to understand the extent to which, in these two movies, the use of particular linguistic

forms or patterns related to ageist issues is amplified by iconic elements. In order to carry out this investigation, the paper is divided into the following sections: after this *Introduction*, a literature review will be presented, followed by Section Three, presenting the *Methodological Approach*. In Section Four, the *Results* will be presented and, after a *Discussion* of the results in Section Five, the paper will be concluded in Section Six.

2. *Literature Review*

The language of discrimination is well documented in the literature. For instance, Roberts, Evelyn,Tupps (2014) document how prejudices and discriminations are constructed in the daily practice of human interactions. Quite a lot has been written about language and discrimination based on gender (cf., for instance, Eherlich, Meyerhoff, Holmes 2017; Sczesny, Formanowicz, Moser 2016), with implications involving gender and race issues for the workplace, too (as described in Edo, Jacquemet, Yannelis 2019), particularly when investigating discrimination in relation to LGBT communities (see the volumes by Baker 2008, and by Milani 2108) or in relation to immigration and immigrants (Baker, McEnery, Gabrielatos 2007; Baker *et al.* 2008; Wodak 2012; Welply 2018). There has, however, been little investigation about the language of ageism. Ageism is defined as discrimination based on age and, as claimed by Gendron *et al.* (2016), this is often covert. Not only the process of getting old is accompanied by fears, taboos and stereotypes (Zeman & Geiger Zeman 2015), but also ageist discourse perpetrate them (McCann & Giles 2002). Since the discourse of ageism is often covert, the act of speaking in an ageist way, encoding and decoding discriminatory stereotypes and scripts (Ng 2007), can be the result of subconscious processes, because "these language-based discriminatory patterns are normalized and potentially internalized" (Gendron *et al.* 2016: 998). According to Levy (2009: 333), stereotypes about age become internalized across one's life span and can operate unconsciously; in addition, they "gain salience from self-relevance, and utilize multiple pathways" (which are, es-

sentially, physiological, psychological and behavioural). Furthermore, they follow a top-down trajectory – from society to the individual, and an across-life one – from childhood to old age (cf. also Ayalon & Tesch-Römer 2018). The latter is identified as the *age stereotype embodiment theory*. It proposes a process of stereotype assimilation across one's life span from the surrounding culture, popular values, beliefs and societal norms, which influence everyday interactions (Levy 2009). The type of stereotypes one can internalize about old age are normally elaborated by younger people against the oldest, in such a way that ageist discourse is prompted when speaking about old people. When the young reach old age, this internalization transforms the old age stereotype into a form of ingroup discrimination by means of which older adults marginalize and discriminate against other older people, for instance, by denying commonality with other old adults within the same group – so that they do not want to be associated with 'old people', or they want to look young (cf. Gendron *et al.* 2016).

Since age identity is also constructed through face-to-face interactions, analysis of the types of language used to communicate attitudes and perceptions of ageing and older adults can help to understand implicit ageism. In particular, such implicitness can be unveiled when investigating how popular forms of culture, such as movies, unknowingly influence society (Gatling 2013). Indeed, the media promulgate inaccurate 'knowledge', particularly in the case of topics related to old age, thus enhancing and supporting old-age stereotypes (Gatling, Mills, Lindsay 2014). According to Chivers (2011: xxii), there is certainly cultural illiteracy vis-à-vis old age in films, which can have devastating consequences for society. Yet, Chivers claims (2011: xxii), the emergence of age in films due to the presence of famous (ageing) actors, on the one hand, and an ageing (former baby-boomer) audience, on the other, will determine the attention paid to cultural literacy in later life, which will develop a growing awareness of the presence of one's elders as well as changes to the perceptions of growing old. In Gravagne's (2013: 5) opinion, films portray ageing by sharing meanings, discourses and narratives in a philosophical schema combining essentialism, which equates ageing with acquiring negative or

declining characteristics and behaviours; and social construction, which maintains that our knowledge about ageing is culturally constructed. Culture, therefore, has a powerful role in shaping meaning (Medina 2018).

These aspects, to the best of our knowledge, have never been investigated from a linguistic perspective. It is the aim of this paper, therefore, to detect the extent to which ageism, if any, is represented in movies; and whether ageist discourse, if present and as represented by the movie industry, changes over time.

3. *Theoretical and methodological approaches*

The theoretical approach for this corpus-based (Tognini-Bonelli 2001; McEnery & Hardie 2012) investigation draws on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As claimed by van Dijk (2013), CDA investigation helps to uncover the ideology implicit in a text, with particular regard to the complexities of discourse production and comprehension (Fairclough 2006). This will be combined with a corpus linguistics (CL) methodology (cf. van Leeuwen 2005: 11; Baker *et al.* 2008: 274), because in synergy and yet distinctively they will contribute to discourse analysis and help to triangulate the findings. Two film scripts will be analysed, namely, *Going in style* shot in 1979 and its remake in 2017. Both films will be watched and the scripts downloaded, respectively, from https://www.scripts.com/script/going_in_style_9113 (7,251 running words) and https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=going-in-style-2017 (8,509 running words), both retrieved on 9/7/2018.

In the first step of the analysis, we will focus on the detection of keywords (Scott 2012) in each of the two movie scripts, generated one against the other ($p \leq 0.001$), to find any differences over time. In the second step of our investigation, the list of keywords described above and generated from each film script will be cross-checked against the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the *Open American National Corpus* (ANC) to see the differences, if any, in ageist discourse in both movies (with the forms analysis) and in reality (with the latter analy-

sis). In this way, it will be possible to detect where the emphasis on stereotypical and biased discourse is put in both society and popular culture. Thirdly, the scripts of the two movies will be run in USAS, the tag suite of WMatrix (Rayson 2008), to detect possible semantic domains used in relation to ageism.

4. *Results*

4.1 *Background:* Going in style

Before discussing the results, a brief background of the film *Going in style* seems necessary.

In the 1979 version of *Going in style*, Joe (George Burns), Al (Art Carney) and Willie (Lee Strasberg) are three old friends, retired seniors, who boringly spend their time in a park in Queens, New York, where they are made fun of by children. Tired of this life, Joe proposes to his friends that they rob a bank. They manage to do that and get US$35,000, but the stress is fatal and Willie dies of an infarction. Al and Joe decide to leave $25,000 to Willie's nephew, Pete (Charles Hallahan), and to go to Las Vegas to spend the rest of the money. In Vegas, Joe and Al win more than $70,000 playing craps. After returning to New York, Al dies while sleeping. Joe is then arrested by the police and spends the rest of his life in prison.

In the 2017 version of the film, Joe (Michael Caine), Albert (Alan Arkin) and Willie (Morgan Freeman) are three colleagues and old friends. Joe lives with his daughter and granddaughter; Albert is single and Willie, whose family live far from him, has a kidney problem. One day, Joe goes to the bank to get some information about his pension but he is involved in a bank robbery, where the leader of the robbery gang sympathizes with him because of his financial situation. A few days later Joe discovers that their company has been taken over by another company and because of this their pensions will no longer be paid. This situation is terrible for them: Joe will lose the house where he lives with his family; Willy will not be able to pay for his kidney

transplant. Joe, inspired by the bank robbery he experienced a few days before, decides to rob a bank. His friends, at first opposed to the idea, then agree to do it. They plan the robbery, rehearse it and create their alibi with the help of a man who, in the end, they discover is the leader of the bank robbery Joe experienced before. During the robbery, Willie has an almost fatal kidney failure and a child, a hostage in the bank, helps him to breathe better. They do, however, manage to run away with the money but are soon arrested by FBI Agent Hamer (Matt Dillon), who suspects them after watching a bank surveillance video. All charges, however, are dropped because they stick to their alibis and the child does not want to recognize Willie in the police lineup. As free men, they give some of the money to their families and friends. Joe can have his house back, Willie has a kidney transplant and Albert gets married.

4.2 *Discussion*

Apart from the different endings of the two versions of the film – the 2017 happy ending contrasts with the moralistic ending of the 1979 one, given the deaths of the secondary characters and the punishment in prison of the main character – there are difference in the types of keywords found in the two scripts. As described in the methodology section, keywords are generated from the script wordlists of both films, one against the other. The resulting keywords are indicated in Tables 1 and 2, below:

N	Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq	RC. %	Keyness	P
1	SIX	31	0.43	1	3	0,004	31.45	0.0000000175
2	THROW	19	0.26	1		0	29.43	0.0000000550
3	PETE	19	0.26	1		0	29.43	0.0000000550

Table 1. KEYWORD LIST – Going in style (1979).

N	Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq	RC. %	Keyness	P
1	OH	54	0.64	1	1	0.01	58.50	0.0000000000
2	SIX	3	0.04	1	3	0.43	-31.45	0.0000000175

Table 2. KEYWORD LIST – Going in style (2017).

In both tables, we can see the keywords (second column) listed in order of frequency (third column) and percentage (fourth column) and their presence in the text (fifth column) compared to the reference corpus (RC), where the corresponding frequency (RC.Freq., sixth column) and percentage (RC.%, seventh column) are indicated. In the eighth column, the keyness value is shown, together with the p value (ninth column), which, here, is for the keywords under investigation.

The list of keywords yielded by the 1979 script versus the 2017 script is *six*, *throw* and *Pete*. Items *six* and *throw* go together and collocate with expressions referring to *casino craps*, as we can see in Table 3, below:

N	Concordance		
1	You want a six now. Shoot a	six.	Make a hard six. -Shoot a
2	ease? Change coming in on a	six.	Six will win. Ten. Ten, ea
3	like this existed. You want a	six	now. Shoot a six. Make a ha
4	anything you want, but throw a	six.	Four and two, three and th
5	-Hold it, he says. Throw a	six,	Al. Do anything you want,
6	Make a hard six. – Shoot a	six.	-What? -Shooting for six.

Table 3. Concordances for *six* in the 1979 keyword list.

In Table 3 above, *six* refers to the number on the dice Joe would like to see when throwing it, as can be seen in concordancing lines 1-6 in which the most frequently verb used is *throw*, the concordancing list of which can be seen in Table 4, below, given that *throw* is a keyword:

N	Concordance		
1	right. Okay, Al, now you can	throw	them. -Ready, folks? -Ready
2	? Come on. Forget it. Here,	throw	this in there. -Put that i
3	-Just throw the dice. Just	throw	the dice and shut up. Stay
4	Give me half. No, you	throw	the dice. Here they go.
5	-What do I do now? -Just	throw	the dice. Just throw the dice
6	throw 11t, sir. -$100 on the line.	throw	them nice now. -Just two?
7	roll. -Throw a five. -Quick.	throw	in a four and a five-Five
8	friend Al throws them right. -	throw	it. -Here they go. They roll
9	Let it roll. -All right.	throw	them. -They roll, they go.
10	Throw 15. -Get them down	throw	a five. -Quick. Throw in a
11	Hold it. -Hold it, he says.	throw	a six, Al. Do anything you

Table 4. Concordances for *throw* in the 1979 keyword list.

The key verb *throw* collocates with *dice* (as can be seen in lines 3-5) and is clearly linked to the gambling world.

Pete is the third keyword found in the 1979 movie. The reference is to Willie's nephew to whom the money is given; it is not particularly relevant as an item indicating ageism issue, and this can be seen in the excerpts below: *Pete*, an adult man with a family, is told what to do and how to do it – in a word, he is considered young, inexperienced and, therefore, to be instructed in life, by old wise Joe (our emphasis):

> [1] You're a good kid, *Pete*. I want you to take care of this right away.
> [2] No matter what happens, do exactly like I told you, *Pete*.

In the 1979 film, the characters are represented as senior citizens characterized with a negative attitude towards the world, in particular Joe, the main character, who is always sarcastic. Al is sprier and lively, and Willie is a representation of a frail old person. These representations reproduce the way in which ageism is usually reported via stereotypes (cf. Levy 2009).

Table 2, above, indicates the keywords found for the 2017 version of the *Going in Style* film. As we can see, there are two keywords: the interjection *oh* and the cardinal number *six*. Unlike in Table 1, however, *six* in Table 2 has a negative key

value. It means that the keyword is unusually *infrequent* compared to the reference corpus. Therefore, compared to the 1979 script, it is not a frequent item. When we analyse the concordance lines of *six* in the 2017 version of the film, we see that *six* refers to time, as in "It's six o'clock": this expression is important for the plot, in that it indicates timing in rehearsal for the robbery that Albert, Willie and Joe are organizing, but it has no relevance to our investigation.

As regards the interjection *oh*, it is normally found accompanying ironic or sarcastic expressions, as indicated in excerpts [3] and [4] below (our emphasis) for example:

[3] – We'll be all right?
– Sure, we will. It always works out in the end.
– And then you die.
– *Oh*! thanks for the inspiration.
[4] – I think I may rob a bank.
– What was that?
– I'm thinking of robbing a bank.
– *Oh*! I'm thinking about buying a Ferrari.

In excerpt [3], Joe, Willie and Albert are spending the evening together, and after dinner they watch the TV show *Blind Date*, which they sarcastically comment on as old, 'wise' people who know better. When the programme ends exactly in the opposite way the friends supposed, they decide to go home. It is at this moment that Willie wants to be reassured by Joe that they will be alright: they are old and have no pension. Joe does try and comfort his friend. Yet Albert, who is cynical, replies, "And then you die" – no matter what happens, everybody will die. Joe, then, answers sardonically, "Oh! Thanks for the inspiration."

In excerpt [4], Joe, Albert and Willie are in the lodge with their fellow members. While they are talking about the birthday present Willie got from his niece, Joe is looking around and we can see through his eyes the miserable life of his senior fellows: old people who are unable to do the simplest things, such as eating; people who are alone and miserable. Ageist stereotypes are here constructed from senior citizens against sen-

iors – clearly Joe does not want to spend the rest of his life like them. He therefore says, "I think I may rob a bank." It is Willy who unbelievably asks him, "What was that?" Joe repeats what he has just said. And, then, Albert, sarcastically, replies: "Oh! I'm thinking about buying a Ferrari."

The schema is always the same: Joe, the leader, speaks, reassures, organizes, controls. Willie follows the leader. Albert cynically intervenes. The type of humour Albert presents is always against any ideas Joe suggests. The three men seem to represent three stereotypes of ageism as indicated by Levy (2009): Joe represents the positive-cognitive stereotype of the old wise man, as he is seen as the leader of the group; Willie the negative-physical stereotype, since he is physically and psychologically frail; whereas Albert represents the negative-cognitive stereotype, given his sardonic attitude. However, once they decide to rob the bank, they add to themselves, in particular Albert, the positive-physical stereotype, as they all become lively and distinguish themselves from the rest of their fellow members of the lodge (cf. Levy 2009: 336).

The list of keywords generated against the BNC and the ANC can be seen in Table 5, below, where the first 20 keywords are shown. In the second and third columns there is the list of keywords generated against the BNC and ANC, respectively, for the 1979 version of the film; in the fourth and fifth columns, there is list of keywords generated against the BNC and ANC, respectively, for the 2017 version of the film. Generally, all keywords are present in both the BNC and the ANC for both film versions, but they occupy different rankings. So, for instance, "I", which in the 1979 corpus occupies position no. 13 in the keyword list generated against the BNC, occupies position no. 26 in the ANC; "get", which can be seen in position no. 17 in the 1979 corpus in the keyword list generated against the BNC, occupies position no. 21 in the keyword list generated against the ANC. Similarly, "what", which in the keyword list generated against the ANC in the 2017 corpus occupies position no. 16, occupies position no. 22 in the keyword list generated against the BNC. Of course, the keywords analysed at the beginning of this section are included too. For instance, "throw", "six" and "dice" are all found in

the top 20 keywords generated against the ANC (second column, no.s 16, 19 and 20, respectively). The only items as keywords which have exactly the same position in the keyword list in both the 1979 and 2017 films are "know" (position no. 1 in the keyword list generated against the ANC) and "you" (position no. 1 in the keyword list generated against the BNC and position no. 2 in the keyword list generated against the BNC). Furthermore, "yeah" is a keyword in the 1979 corpus generated against the BNC, but it cannot be found either in the ANC or in the 2017 corpus corpus; "that's" is a keyword in the 2017 corpus generated against the BNC, but it cannot be found either in the ANC or in the 1979 corpus.

	1979 film		2017 film	
	BNC	ANC	BNC	ANC
#	keyword	keyword	keyword	keyword
1	you	know	you	know
2	okay	you	I	you
3	Al	Willie	I'm	me
4	Willie	Joe	hey	I
5	Joe	me	you're	bank
6	right	Pete	my	you're
7	don't	gonna	okay	I'm
8	gonna	got	me	Willie
9	Pete	okay	get	my
10	got	what	oh	hey
11	here	go	going	got
12	we	here	Willie	your
13	I	right	Joe	going
14	yeah	Al	that's	get
15	me	we	here	Joe
16	go	throw	bank	what
17	get	we'll	don't	here
18	what	don't	got	want

19	throw	six	uh	okay
20	that	dice	your	shit

Table 5. Keyword list generated against the BNC and the ANC for the 1979 and 2017 films.

The keyword "yeah" in the 1979 corpus has no cluster. The concordancing lines found indicate that it is mainly used as a reply to such questions as "you all right?", "are you ok?, "is everything all right?"; or as feedback, such as "yeah?".

Examining the context of the keyword "that's" in the 2017 corpus and its cluster allowed the identification of a relevant expression, namely, "that's my bank", as can be seen in excerpt [5] below (our emphasis):

> [5] – Willie: Oh! Here! It's in print! "Wechsler's pensioner's fund, and assets to be distributed to current debtors."
> – Joe: They're using our retirement money to pay utility bills.
> – Willie: And that isn't all. Check this. "Williamsburg Savings Bank will manage the liquidation of
> the fund, and the restructuring of Wechsler's corporate debt."
> – Joe: *That's my bank*.
> – Willie: *That's my bank*.
> – Albert: *That's my bank*! They're stealing our goddamn pension!
> – Willie: That's what it says.
> – Albert: Forty years I worked for that goddamn company, and now they're stealing our pension. […] I'm in. I want to rob that bank!

This is the point at which Joe and Willie manage to convince Albert to join the group and rob the bank. Albert, who has now just started a relationship with a woman and from the negative-cognitive stereotype is turning into the spry positive-physical stereotype, stops directing his negative attitude towards his friends and directs it towards what he considers to be an injustice. Since he has been robbed of his pension by his bank, he re-establishes the equilibrium by robbing *that* bank.

The pronoun "you" is obviously a keyword, given the dia-

logic nature of the films – analysis of the concordances does not reveal anything related to ageism, but something related to the interactions existing between the various characters in the 1979 and 2017 films.

As for the keyword "know", found in both the 1979 and 2017 corpora in first position when the list of keywords is generated against the ANC, analysis of the clusters and their context in the different corpora reveals a different use according to the context.

In the 1979 corpus, "know" can be found in the clusters:

Don't know
You know
To know
Didn't know

So, for instance, *don't know* is used in a context in which people are not sure about what to do, as in [6], below (our emphasis here and there):

[6] – What are you gonna do with all that money anyways?
– *I don't know*.

In other cases, *you know*, or *to know,* is used to reassure a character about something, as in [7] and [8]:

[7] We've got plenty of room... and the kids love playing with you, too, *you know* that.
[8] Willie, we're gonna need your help. But I respect your feelings. If you don't wanna go, you don't have to. I want you *to know* you'll still be our partner.

Finally, *didn't know* refers to things of which the characters had no knowledge, as in excerpt [9]:

[9] He must have had a million kinds of bullets. I *didn't know* which were for which guns, so I took them all.

In the 2017 corpus, "know" is found only with the cluster

I don't know, as can be seen in excerpts [10]-[12], and it expresses a lack of knowledge:

[10] – Where did they go?
– *I don't know*!
[11] *I don't know* how you do it. So what's the point? You're no good, you don't like it, you're not gonna be a professional. You wanna end up like me, working in a factory?
[12] I *don't know* what's going on in the world anymore.

While in the 1979 film the clusters suggest:
– inability to do things because of old age (not knowing what to do with the robbed money, or not knowing what type of bullet to take, hence the decision to buy all the bullets); or,
– inability to adopt proper behaviour (staying in a family with grandchildren, supporting friends),
in the 2017 film, the only cluster suggesting ageism is the one as reported in (11), reproducing the stereotype of the old wise man, complaining about a corrupt world – with the irony that the man himself will soon be a criminal.

Analysis of the 1979 script with WMatrix allowed the detection of key semantic fields, which are listed in Table 6 below. Each semantic field is identified by a letter and a number (e.g. G3 – first column) and by a description of the detected semantic domain. In each semantic domain, the item (first column), the frequency (second column) and the relative frequency (third column) are indicated. Key semantic domains are computed with log likelihood statistics (further information available at http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/).

As can be seen in Table 6 below, the types of key semantic domains which characterize the 1979 film are related to the fields of *weapons*, *anatomy*, *beauty*, *masculinity* and *disease*. Although most items belonging to these various semantic fields are hapax, the semantic domains detected are indeed indicative of the 1979 film's main themes: weapons are included because of the robbery; anatomical parts and diseases are detected because of the old age of the main characters who suffer from diseases affecting them in various parts of their bodies. The positive evaluation is related to their robbery experience, which

G3 Warfare, defence and the army; weapons			B1 Anatomy and physiology			O4.2+ Judgement of appearance: Beautiful			S2.2 People: Male			B2- Disease		
shooter	7	0.1	sleep	4	0.06	nice	7	0.1	guys	6	0.09	disease	2	0.03
guns	5	0.07	tired	4	0.06	-pretty	3	0.04	boy	6	0.09	hurt	2	0.03
stickup	4	0.06	back	3	0.04	beautiful	3	0.04	boys	2	0.03	cause_disease	1	0.01
shoot	4	0.06	bones	3	0.04	attractive	1	0.01	gentlemen	2	0.03	sick	1	0.01
war	3	0.04	wake_up	3	0.04	look_snappy	1	0.01	guy	1	0.01	scratch.	1	0.01
pistols	3	0.04	bums	2	0.03	snappy	1	0.01	fellows	1	0.01	crazy.	1	0.01
rifles	3	0.04	piss	1	0.01	do_up	1	0.01	-boy	1	0.01	exhausted	1	0.01
gun	2	0.03	shit	1	0.01	amazing	1	0.01	man	1	0.01	headache	1	0.01
bullets	2	0.03	breathe	1	0.01	look_comfortable	1	0.01	gentleman	1	0.01			
shot	1	0.01	hearts	1	0.01	amazing.	1	0.01	men	1	0.01			
world_war	1	0.01	head	1	0.01	nice.	1	0.01						
Shooter.	1	0.01	brains	1	0.01	beautiful.	1	0.01						
-shooting	1	0.01	hands	1	0.01									
forces	1	0.01	stomach	1	0.01									
			heart	1	0.01									
			crying	1	0.01									
			pissing	1	0.01									
			-come	1	0.01									
			bones	1	0.01									
			tired	1	0.01									
			joints	1	0.01									
			asleep	1	0.01									
			woke_up	1	0.01									
			face	1	0.01									

Table 6. Key semantic fields – Going in style (1979).

is *nice, beautiful*, *amazing*, while *boy, boys*, *guys* refer to the semantic domain pertaining to them, the main characters.

Table 7, below, shows the key semantic domains found in the 2017 film script. Table 7 seems to indicate that the 2017 corpus - different from the 1979 one -, emphasizes old age aspects: apart from the pension issue present in the Money and Pay (I1.1) semantic domain, all the other semantic fields are linked to Health and disease (B2), Medicine and medical treatments (B3), Time and age (T3) and Life aspects (L1). The latter, in particular, is related to the notion of death although, in this film, no characters die (which, in contrast, does occur in the 1979 version of the film). Nevertheless, thoughts about death are present from time to time in the film.

In both scripts the *disease* domain is present, but the words included in this semantic field are different. Although the 1979 and 2017 semantic fields of *disease* have some identical words, such as *hurt* and *scratch*, in the 1979 we see more general terms, such as *disease, sick*, *exhausted* and *headache,* while in the 2017 version of the film, the semantic domain of disease centres around more severe diseases, such as *stroke* or *cancer*. It seems, therefore, that the 2017 version of the film depicts age issues more realistically when it comes to health issues.

4. *Conclusions*

In the 1979 film, Joe, decides to rob the bank out of boredom; his old two friends, Al and Willie, are convinced by him only because he is their leader. Joe is represented as a senile character, characterized by the typical negative-cognitive stereotype depicted by Levy (2009); Willie and Al are more fragile. Indeed, Willie dies immediately after the robbery, while Al dies after the Las Vegas trip – the stress of both the robbery and a night playing craps proves fatal, as if this has been caused by activities more related to younger people. Overall, in the film, the main characters are represented as old people and described as *old in a society for the young*: we get to know they have hearing impairment, and in the scenes before, during and after the robbery, they behave as old people are expected to behave:

I1.1 Money and pay			B2 Health and disease			B3 Medicines and medical treatment			T3 Time: Old, new and young; age			L1 Life and living things		
pension	9	0.11	hurt	4	0.05	ambulance	2	0.02	old	10	0.12	die	4	0.05
savings	4	0.05	pain	3	0.04	nurse	1	0.01	stale	1	0.01	dead	2	0.02
fund	3	0.04	casualty	1	0.01	pill	1	0.01	outdated	1	0.01	died	2	0.02
pensions	2	0.02	stroke	1	0.01	pills	1	0.01	pensioner	1	0.01	killing	2	0.02
payments	2	0.02	venereal_disease	1	0.01	dialysis	1	0.01	grew_up	1	0.01	dying	1	0.01
fundraiser	2	0.02	arthritis	1	0.01	healthcare	1	0.01						
banking_professional	1	0.01	gout	1	0.01	psychiatrist	1	0.01						
pay	1	0.01	shingles	1	0.01	drug	1	0.01						
banking	1	0.01	looks_painful	1	0.01	medical	1	0.01						
pension_plans	1	0.01	scratch	1	0.01	drugs	1	0.01						
assets	1	0.01	cancer	1	0.01	prescription	1	0.01						
social_security	1	0.01	hurt.	1	0.01	transplant	1	0.01						
			light-headed	1	0.01	doctor	1	0.01						
			crazy	1	0.01									
			panic_attack	1	0.01									
			pass_out	1	0.01									
			sick	1	0.01									
			diverticulitis	1	0.01									
			rabies	1	0.01									
			distemper	1	0.01									
			neutered	1	0.01									

Table 7. Key semantic fields – Going in style (2017).

they forget things, they cannot move rapidly, they do not know what to do, they have the same physical reactions as old people are expected to have. In short, they reproduce ageist stereotypes. The money they rob is the cause of their misfortune: they either die or are put in prison. It seems as if the moral order is re-established.

In the 2017 version of the film, Joe decides to rob the bank because he believes the company is cheating him. His friends, Willie and Al, support him. Their motivation is revenge. But in this there is a sense of justice, as they want to rob only the money they are owed. Joe is described as the leader, the old wise man who can help everybody. He mirrors the ageist positive-cognitive stereotype, whereas Willie is the negative-physical one, due to his physical frailty. Albert, in contrast, is at first stereotypically depicted negative-cognitively as senile, and then positive-physically as spry (cf. Levy 2009). This spryness is then applied to all the main characters as they experience petty crime, and smoke cannabis, while Albert begins a relationship. In other words, they are described as having activities more related to young people while living with other people who are definitely described as *old in a society for the young*. As a matter of fact, the old people with whom Joe, Albert and Willie interact daily have physical and hearing impairments, have dementia, are cheated by banks. The main characters are old but do not behave as expected, as they think 'outside the box'. Here, however, the robbery is not the cause of the main characters' misfortune: the moral order is re-established by the characters themselves.

Ageing is delivered in the two films in a distorted way and with a bias. In the 1979 movie, the three main characters are old people represented as greedy, complaining, inflexible, lonely, neglected, sad, tired, sexless, slow-moving, with two characters (Al and Willie) dependent on the main one. In the 2017 movie, the three main characters are old people who are depicted behaving as young people in a context of old people who are lonely, neglected, sad, tired, sexless, slow-moving and, above all, sick. The linguistic analysis of the scripts indicates this direction: ageism is visible in the keyword list found in the 1979 corpus (*six* and *throw*), and in the 2017 one (*oh*); in

the keywords generated against the BNC and ANC, as well as in the list of semantic domains found.

The stereotypes about elderly people are maintained and amplified by the relationship between the script and the visuals: in the 1979 version, ageist stereotypes are applied to the main characters themselves; in the 2017 version, ageist stereotypes are applied to all old people in two ways: from the audience and from the main characters who do not want to be part of the old group at the lodge but are themselves wise/ senile/ frail/ spry. In other words, drawing on Levy (2009), we can say that age stereotypes in the two films are constructed in the different ways the targets (i.e. older adults) are perceived. While in the 1979 film old age is primarily seen as negative, in the 2017 film, old age is also seen as a denial of commonality with other old adults within the same group (Gendron *et al.* 2016) – in both cases discrimination occurs: in the former case it is external (from the audience to the main character), in the latter it is both external and internal (from the audience to the main characters *and* from the main characters to other older people), with stereotype embodiment (Levy 2009).

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