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Tracing the Use of *Bisexual* in Contemporary American English: A Corpus-based Study

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Abstract

Queer Studies and Linguistics have paid close attention to several lexical items enclosed in the LGBT+ group, such as *gay* or *lesbian.* However, bisexuality has either been overlooked or faced with prejudice from both inside and outside the LGBT+ community, often being described as transphobic or exclusively binary. Despite the negative reading, this label has a long history of evolution and change that might explain its current denotation and connotation, but which remains largely underexplored. In order to partially fill in this gap, this dissertation studies the term *bisexual* in a 560-million-word corpus of contemporary American English – COCA, which covers the period 1990-2017 – with the aim of uncovering the speakers' unconscious associations of this concept. A total of 1,935 occurrences of the word were carefully analysed according to grammatical and semantic criteria and entered into a database with the aim of profiling the recent use of the term. The different connotations attached to *bisexual* from 1990 to 2017 are, then, interpreted as related to different changes in the social context.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

Bisexuality, a concept that was first used to refer to sexuality in the 19th century, is one of the most problematic labels within the LGBT+ community. Not only is bisexuality often erased – both in real life and in fiction –, but also, when it is visible it is presented with significant stigma due to its constant stereotyping (Callis 2014, 67). Its definition is constantly changed and reformulated by people both in the community and outside of it. One of the main causes for these never-ending changes is that bisexuality has been considered to be a non-inclusive label based solely on its supposedly implied gender binary of the prefix *bi-* (Elizabeth 2013, 333). It is described as a binary and transphobic concept for its use of the aforementioned prefix by scholars who claim that since *bisexual* is "rooted in gender-binary discursive structures […] it support[s] rather than challenge[s] dominant discourses" (Motschenbacher 2011, 157). Because of these claims, new labels to define multisexuality – in opposition to monosexual labels like *gay* or *homosexual* – such as *pansexual* or *queer* have emerged, becoming non-binary identities in their own right (Callis 2014, 72). These terms, which are very similar to bisexuality in their definitions, emphasise that the attraction felt by the people who identify as such is regardless of gender, and some might prefer them to describe their non-binary identities over *bisexual* (Rust 2000, 38). However, bisexuality is not a limiting concept by definition – although there might be people who might use it in such a way.

Having been introduced as a sexuality label in the 19th century, it is one of the four oldest identities recognised in the community, the ones that are part of the acronym: *lesbian, gay, bisexual,* and *transgender* – previously *transsexual,* an outdated and inaccurate term. Although bisexuality entitles a break from the sexuality binary (MacDowall 2009, 6; Elizabeth 2013, 335), its first definitions of the term relied heavily on the gender binary – since at the time not many studies had been carried out concerning gender – but nowadays the definition has evolved and changed, keeping up with poststructuralist views on gender. The prefix *bi-* is no longer only used to imply two genders, instead it has developed a new number of meanings. Furthermore, to say that bisexuality is transphobic is to imply that transgender people are inherently "other", incapable of being described within the gender binary. Even if we take an outdated definition of bisexuality that only takes into consideration the gender binary, transgender people identifying as either male or female would be included, thus making this label not transphobic.

Although *bisexual* is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "sexually or romantically attracted to people of both sexes" (OED 2018) it is necessary to go beyond the

scope of prescriptive linguistics to define this term. Thanks to the separation of gender from sex "gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice" (Butler 1999, 10) and it becomes clear that gender is performative (178) and that "the gender binary is a cultural accomplishment, not a natural order, and often requires coercion" (Eckert 2014, 530). These poststructuralist views lead to *bisexual* being widely defined nowadays as "the quality or characteristic of being sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender" (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, n.d.). This term has undergone a process of lexical variation and finally, change. The first dated occurrences of the term *bisexual* refer to biological sex and not sexuality. Bisexuality then was "used in the fields of anatomy and physiology to refer to forms of life that are sexually undifferentiated or thought to exhibit characteristics of both sexes" (MacDowall 2009, 4). This word has evolved, and new meanings have been attached to it.

By the early 20th century, the word started being used in terms of sexuality under the definition of "attracted to both sexes" (Rust 2000, 34), which is still the most widespread understanding of this label. However, since it is now widely accepted by scholars that gender exists on a spectrum and it is no longer viewed as a binary opposition, *bisexuality* can no longer refer to only two genders. The quality of *bi-* might keep its meaning of two, however, the referents are no longer male and female but same and other – that is, attraction to the same gender and to other genders, thus deconstructing the stereotype of bisexuality as a binary identity (Flanders et al 2016, 52). Because of the novelty of this understanding of the label, it is still not as universally accepted, but it is definitely gaining force. The aim of this study is to analyse the perception of the term *bisexual* from a linguistic point of view, thus pointing out the negative connotations that have been historically associated with it – those being bi-erasure, transphobia, and non-inclusivity of non-binary identities among others. In doing so, my hypothesis is that there is a growing tendency to steer away from the negative perceptions associated to bisexuality, moving towards a more positive understanding of this label.

2. Theoretical background

Many studies (Queen 2007, 322; Cameron 2005, 496) have been devoted to analysing the LGBT+ community from a linguistic point of view. However, the approach taken by Queer Linguistics has in many cases focused on the workings within the community or on Lavender Linguistics (Leap 1995) – a term advanced by William Leap that describes the study of how language is used by the collective – and not on how it is shaped by the words that are used to describe it. Additionally, despite *bisexuality* being one of the main labels within the LGBT+

community, not as many studies have been written about it. Moreover, the works that have been produced on the topic mostly focus on a rather outdated binary understanding of the term. Homosexuality has always been at the forefront of Queer Studies, being studied thoroughly (Kulick 2000, 247; Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 470) whilst bisexuality has been neglected or faced with negative views, both from within the community and from outside of it.

A rather new approach to sexuality and gender research is the implementation of corpora to study this field. The use of corpora has indeed gone beyond strictly linguistic research and is now being applied to the many fields of social research (Baker 2008, 146; Freed 2014, 635). The combination of the two disciplines, however, is what is most interesting in the present research. Using corpora results to study a social aspect or problem demonstrates how this linguistic tool can be useful for more than Corpus Linguistics. Baker outlines the benefits of using corpora to carry out research on sexuality and points out how this field should not be understood as only quantitative (Baker 2018, 3). These should always be combined with qualitative analyses to avoid generalizations, since "a potential problem of quantitative approaches is that they methodologically enforce categorization, thereby covering up problematic cases and prototype effects" (Motschenbacher 2011, 167). Corpora has indeed been used in the field of Queer Studies, however, the focus of these studies has mostly been centred around research on the sexuality binary – that is, homosexuality and heterosexuality – because of a lack of results outside of it (Eckert 2014, 531).

Queer Linguistics, despite its evident advance and development (Leap and Motschenbacher 2012, 4), has often been limited to studies conducted on the perception of sexuality through the use of speech by the LGBT+ community (Podesva and Van Hofwegen 2016, 168; Levon 2014, 545). Additionally, this research has been biased towards male gayness (Levon 2007, 536) – and sometimes female homosexuality – completely forgetting in most cases the other two letters in the acronym belonging to bisexual and transgender identities by claiming a lack of understanding of these terms (Kulick 2000, 272), and obviously not even acknowledging the existence of labels beyond these. Lavender Linguistics has not paid attention to bisexuality, leaving a gap in its research. Moreover, because Lavender Linguistics focuses only on the workings of language within the community, there have not been as many studies about identification and labels or the perception of these. Additionally, the existing studies are mostly based on the sexuality binary, only recently starting to analyse labels that do not fall under this categorization (Elizabeth 2013, 333; Callis 2014, 68; Flanders et al 2016, 41).

Bisexual research is then, lacking both in the field of Queer Studies and Queer Linguistics, with monosexual identities being chosen over it, a reflection of its position in real life. In corpora, its lack of presence or its erasure is quite evident in the number of results it provides compared to labels such as *homosexual* or *gay* (Baker 2008, 147). This points directly at bisexual erasure (Angelides 2006, 136), a term "which refers to the ways in which bisexuality as a mature form of desire is deferred, elided, or made invisible" (MacDowall 2009, 4). Moreover, when bisexual people "are mentioned in different corpus texts, they are often the subject of denigration" (Baker 2008, 148). However, if a change in tendency has occurred since is yet to be seen.

3. Methodology

The following is a corpus-based study of the term *bisexual* in contemporary American English. The corpus that I have used is the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2008). This corpus contains more than 560 million words of texts divided evenly from 1990 to 2017. It is the largest, balanced corpus of American English, thus serving the purpose of this study. My analysis revolves around the word *bisexual,* which has been chosen over *bisexuality* because of the limited number of occurrences of the latter, which only amounted to 198. Other non-monosexual labels such as *pansexual* have also been discarded for their lack of occurrences. The actual number of tokens extracted from COCA amounts to 1,974, but 39 of them have been found to be repetitions of other tokens and as such they have been discarded. The 1,935 remaining have been introduced into a database where I have proceeded to study the different variables that have been taken into account in the analysis. It must also be mentioned that there are a number of instances in which the context of the word is not clear enough to infer the information needed – either they are names of organisations or *bisexual* appears in isolation among numbers from different studies. In these cases, I have classified them as unclear instead of deleting the occurrence so as not to alter the number of results. In any case, the number of unclear cells is minimal.

Because the study wants to be focused on sexuality, I chose to use the Oxford English Dictionary and its entries on *bisexual*, hence setting apart the occurrences which refer to *bisexual* as a term from the branch of biology or zoology. These, despite having been classified, are not relevant in terms of connotation, and are rather just used to contrast the number of results of the different meanings of the word. In the end, instead of classifying results in the exact divisions provided by the dictionary, a more general division has been used because of a lack

of occurrences for many of the entries. Thus, the meanings are divided into "referring to animals and plants" and "referring to humans".

The occurrences have been divided by text-type and the year of production. This is the only part that has not been collected manually. Instead, because COCA allows it, they have been automatically extracted. The rest of variables have been manually studied and labelled for each of the 1,935 results. I have classified these by part of speech – adjectives and nouns – and depending on this, a number of subclassifications have been applied. In the case of adjectives, I have divided them in terms of their position within the sentence – attributive or predicative – and I have indicated the noun that they refer to. For nouns, their function is indicated – subject or object, which include predicative complements of the subject – as well as the verb used in each occurrence. Finally, a differentiation between active and passive structures applies. Moreover, I have complied up to thee collocations for each occurrence of *bisexual*. The final step was to provide a classification in terms of the connotation for each line of results. The first division was to be between positive, negative or neutral, however, I have opted for unifying the positive and neutral division since only 12 results were classified as positive, and even those were extremely subjective and obscure. In some other cases there has not been enough context to establish this clearly, in which case, the condition of neutral has been applied. The results have been classified as negative if *bisexual* was associated to negative views of the term, to sexually transmitted diseases, to alienation or discrimination of people identifying as such or if the label was referred to as inexistent and thus, contributing to bisexual erasure.

The approach I have taken in order to analyse the data has been that of a diachronic study of the evolution of *bisexual*. To do this, the frequency of use of *bisexual* as a noun or as an adjective for each period has been calculated. Then, I have focused on the text-type per period, making a division between spoken, academic, and non-academic texts. Whether there has been a relevant shift in the use of the word in its different meanings through the years has also been analysed, as well as if this has anything to do with the text-type. Finally, I have studied whether there is a change in connotations in the different periods, and whether the collocations remain the same or there is a clear change. I have then used a chi-square calculator (Stangroom, n.d.) to confirm whether the difference in results is significant for every aspect. The final part of the study focuses on grammar. In this subcategory, I have not followed the same division of 7-year periods, but rather I have created a divide between the 20th and the 21st century. I have studied the shift in function of the noun *bisexual* and the change in position of the adjective *bisexual* to see if these changes are really relevant in the way bisexual people are perceived.

4. Data analysis

Each sub-category of this analysis is based on the division of 7-year periods from 1990 to 2017, except for last section. The number of words per periods is not identical and for this reason all results must be contrasted to the sample obtained for each 7-year grouping. There is also a difference in the frequency of occurrences to be aware of.

Table 1: Raw and normalised frequencies of *bisexual* per sub-period

	1990-1996	1997-2003	2004-2010	2011-2017
FREQ	415	326	539	655
WORDS (M)	142,8	141,6	140,3	145,4
PER MIL	2,91	2,3	3,84	4,5

All examples from COCA used from this point onwards will provide the source of the text as well as the text-type and year of production.

4.1. Frequency by periods

The difference between the use of *bisexual* as a noun and as an adjective is significant in the four different periods established, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Bisexual* as a noun and as an adjective per period
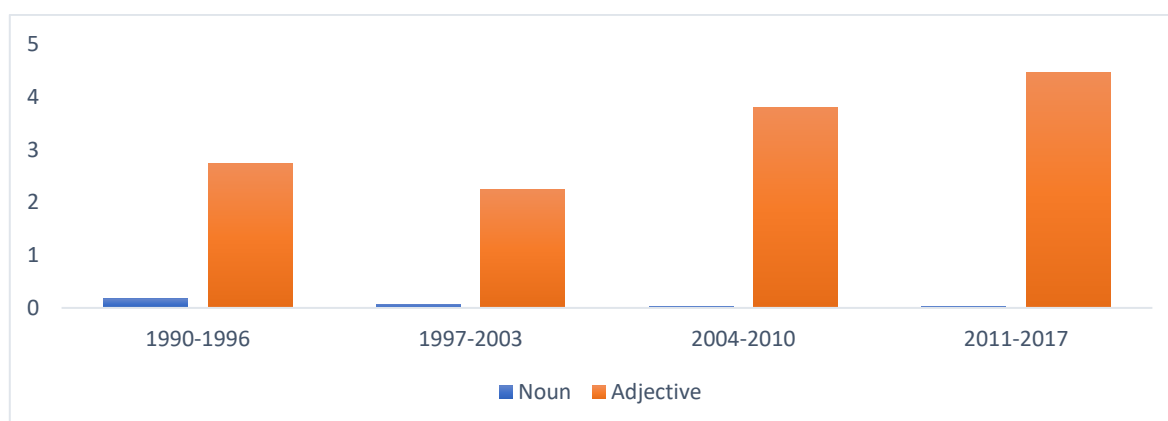
It is predominantly used as an adjective, with the noun form having already a small presence in 1990-1996 and declining over the years to almost entirely disappear. These results might also be caused by the exclusion of the plural form of the word. However, a preliminary search of *bisexuals* on COCA, with a total of 213 occurrences, shows that, because of the great difference in the number of tokens, its inclusion would not have had much weight.

Examples of the noun form and the adjective are as follows:

(1) Lots of gay people I know say there's no such thing as a *bisexual*. (SPOK: IND_Geraldo 1994)

(2) This means the end of her relationship with her lover, who is also *bisexual*. (SPOK: NPR 2017)

Example number 1 is a clear depiction of bisexual erasure, the label being denied of validity. The year of production of each example is also a reflection of Figure 1, for the noun form belongs to the first period whilst the adjective belongs to the last. This shows the decrease in the use of nouns and the increase of adjectives.

The difference in number of occurrences between the adjective and the noun could be due to a great number of factors. Increasing tendencies towards political correctness have advocated for the elimination of nominalised adjectives to define people on the grounds that doing so is reducing the individual to just one of their defining characteristics and not focusing on the multifaceted character of each person, since "once a person has been labelled by a noun, it becomes difficult to imagine the same person along different social dimensions" (Maass, Suitner, and Merkel 2014, 336). The advancement of this movement could be the reason behind the decrease of *bisexual* used as a noun.

4.2. Text-type

In order to study differences in use across registers, the five text-types in COCA have been classified into spoken, academic, and non-academic texts. The latter encompasses fiction, magazine, and news media. In this way, we can see the interaction between register and the connotations attached to the term.

Figure 2: Text-type per period
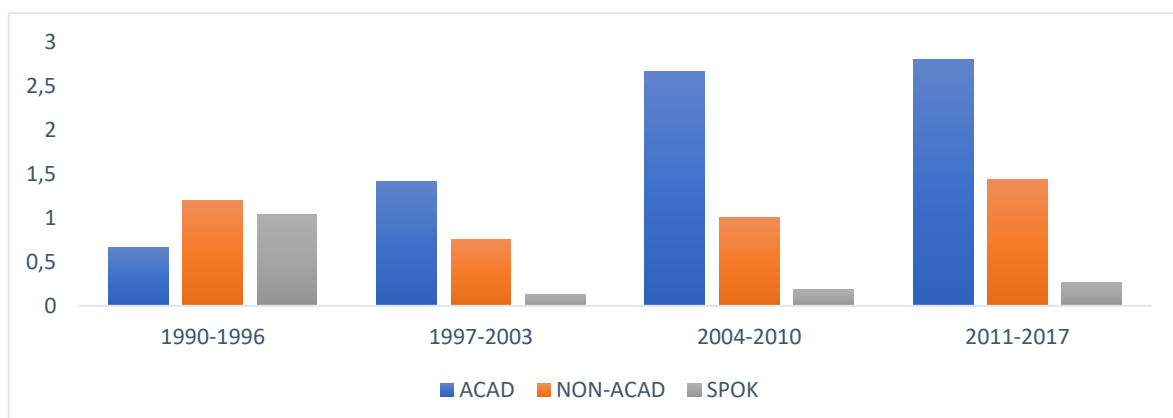
The tendency has indeed changed through the periods, as seen in Figure 2. From 1990 to 1996 the frequency of the term in the all three text-types is very similar, but from then onwards there has been an increase in the number of academic texts produced on the topic of *bisexual.* On the other hand, there has been a significant decrease in the spoken medium. Non-academic texts have suffered the least dramatic change of the three, decreasing slightly in the 1997-2003 period, but slowly increasing again afterwards.

The increase of academic texts on this topic is due to the advance of Queer Studies. Despite of the reduced number of studies on bisexuality as opposed to homosexuality, the expansion of this discipline is evident. Sexuality and gender are topics that have been thoroughly studied through the years, and the increasing number of occurrences of the term *bisexual* in the established periods only confirms this. Words are constantly being changed in this discipline, and the graph reveals as much. A very striking result concerns the decreasing frequency of *bisexual* in spoken language. This could be due to the appearance of other terms – such as *pansexual* – that have admittedly gained popularity in the community (Callis 2014, 72) but that have not necessarily yet been the subject of as many studies due to their novelty. It can also be because in spoken language – which we take to be more informal – the reduced form of the label, *bi*, might be used. A preliminary search of this clipped form on COCA shows how this word is indeed used in spoken contexts as well as in non-academic texts. In non-academic texts the changes in the frequency of use of *bisexual* are not as notable.

I have then, moved on to analyse the connotations of each text-type in the four different periods to establish whether there is a clear tendency towards either negative or neutral implications.

Figure 3: Connotations in academic texts per period
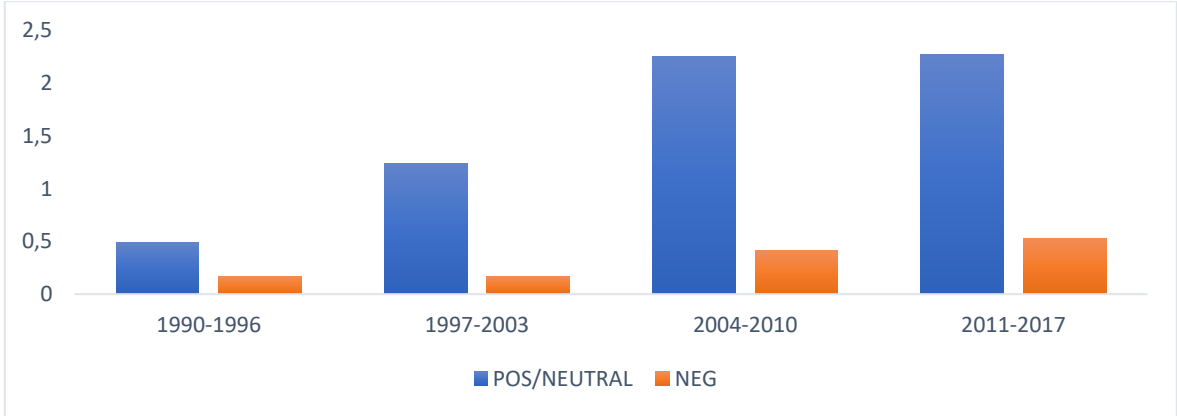
In academic texts there is an increase of both negative and neutral – or positive – connotations through the years, as Figure 3 shows. The periods of 2004-2010 and 2011-2017 show the exact number of neutral connotations with a slight increase of negative ones. This can be due to the appearance of newer labels for multisexuality, which has in turn shed a negative light on *bisexual* by negating its inclusivity (Elizabeth 2013, 333). An example of neutral and negative connotations in academic texts respectively:

(3) More than eight million individuals within the current workforce identify as gay, lesbian, *bisexual*, or transgender. (ACAD: Iowa Law Review 2017)

(4) Studies demonstrate that gay and *bisexual* men experience discrimination at both structural and institutional levels, including in housing, employment, etc. (ACAD: American Journal of Public Health 2012)

Example 4 shows some of the backlash faced by bisexual people, in this case referring to discrimination, whereas in example 3 we cannot infer any kind of connotation.

In non-academic texts, the prevalence of negative meanings associated to *bisexual* is more notable, as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Connotations in non-academic texts per period
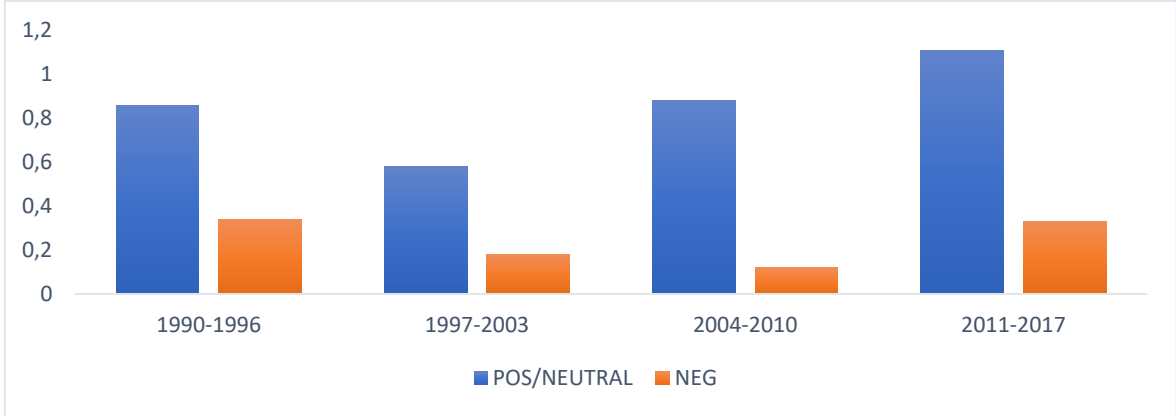
The slight decrease in 2004-2010 can be due to the growth of political correctness, a movement "characterised as an excessive attention to the sensibilities of those different from the norm" (Mills 2008, 100) which would condition texts written in its rise. Once again, an increase is seen in 2011-2017, which we can attribute to the appearance of newer terms which place bisexuality as the less desirable option, in the same way as we have seen in academic texts. An example in non-academic texts:

(5) Dunn was glad to be able to write freely about meds, mental health and *bisexual* visibility. (MAG: Newsweek Global 2015)

(6) Then I discovered my husband was not only injecting drugs, he was *bisexual*. (NEWS: New York Times 1993)

An overall decrease can be seen in spoken language, shown in Figure 5, which is in part due to the difference in sample.

Figure 5: Connotations in spoken language per period
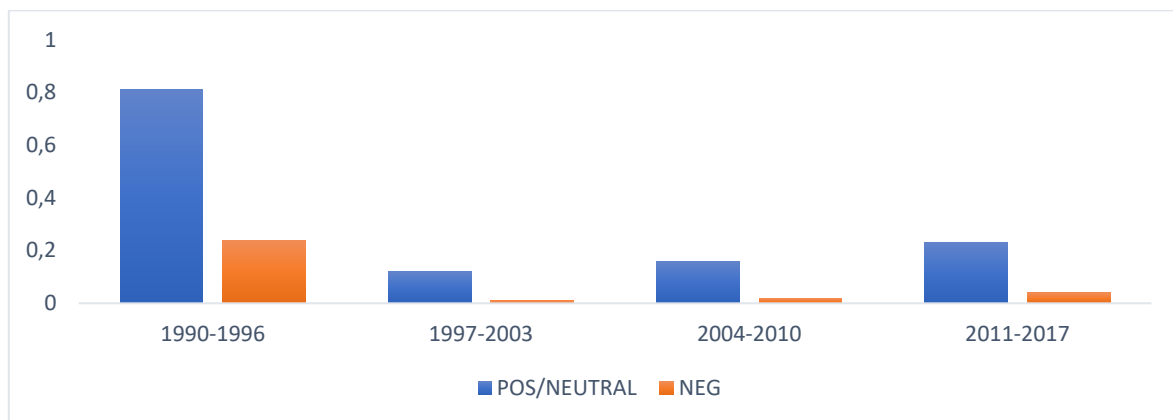
However, we can still observe a slow increase in both connotations from 1997 onwards. As for the 1990-1996 period, we can infer that a great number of results refer not to people but to flowers – which will be studied further later –, in which case, the connotation cannot be anything other than neutral, so it is not really representative of the perception of *bisexual* at the time. Examples in spoken language of neutral and negative connotations are:

(7) She will be the first openly *bisexual* person to serve in Congress. (SPOK: PBS 2012)

(8) RIVERA: Dr. Sloan, is there really something *bisexual*, or is it just an uncommitted homosexual? (SPOK: IND_Geraldo 1994)

In example 8, *bisexual* is once again depicted as negative. In this case the implication is the reoccurring belief that bisexual people are promiscuous and uncommitted (Lucal 2008, 530).

4.2.1. OED meaning

The most encountered meaning in all periods is "sexually or romantically attracted to people of both sexes; engaging in sexual activity with both men and women" or "characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to, or sexual activity with, people of both sexes; involving or relating to bisexual people or bisexuality" both taken from the Oxford English Dictionary and falling under the entry on "psychology and psychoanalysis". These two have been studied as one category –

A2 – because the difference between them is reflected only in the noun they refer to, which I have considered not to be relevant for the purpose of this particular analysis. In Figure 6, A1 is for adjectives referring to plants and animals, A2 is for adjectives referring to people, and B1 is for nouns referring to people. No nouns referring to plants or animals have been found.

Figure 6: Meaning per period
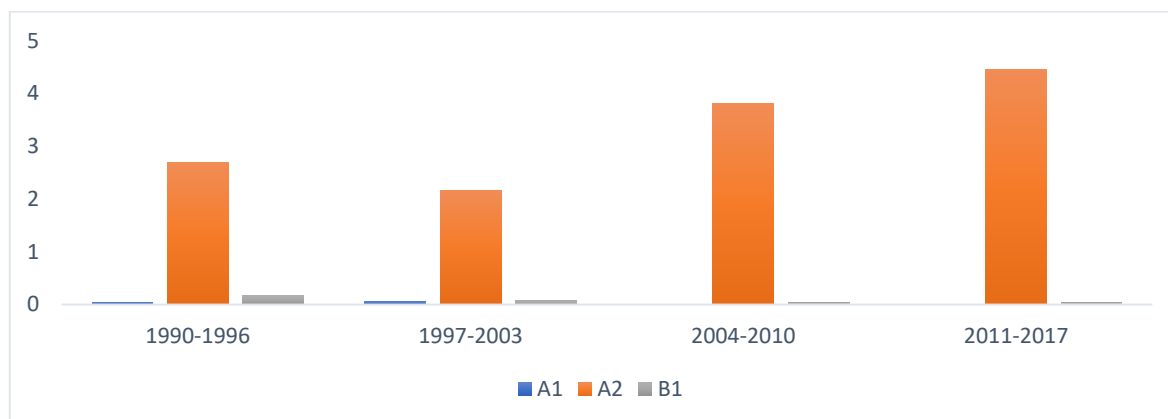
It is evident that the main use of *bisexual* is in relation to people's sexuality and sexual practices, and it is illustrated in examples such as:

(9) UNIDENTIFIED-MALE: If Jim is gay or *bisexual*, whatever - it is a little strange that he is so anti-gay rights. (SPOK: CBS_Rather 2005)

However, instances of it being used in reference to plants or animals however minimal, also exist, with most, although not all, occurring in the first two periods:

(10) In contrast, all spores of homosporous species can become *bisexual* gametophytes, bearing both eggs and sperm on the same individual. (ACAD: Bioscience 2002)

Because of these results, we can conclude that the meaning is not directly linked to the text-type. Although, upon further analysis of the results, we see that the majority of A1 results coincide with academic texts. In meanings related to sexuality, however, this clear link does not exist.

4.2.2. Connotations and collocations

For connotations, the majority of results fall under the grouped category of neutral and positive associations to the word in all periods, as seen in Figure 7. However, there is a slight decrease in the 1997-2003 period due to the smaller sample. There has also been an increase in negative

connotations for *bisexual*. These have been previously tackled through the three different text-types, however, a general overview is provided here.

Figure 7: Connotations per period
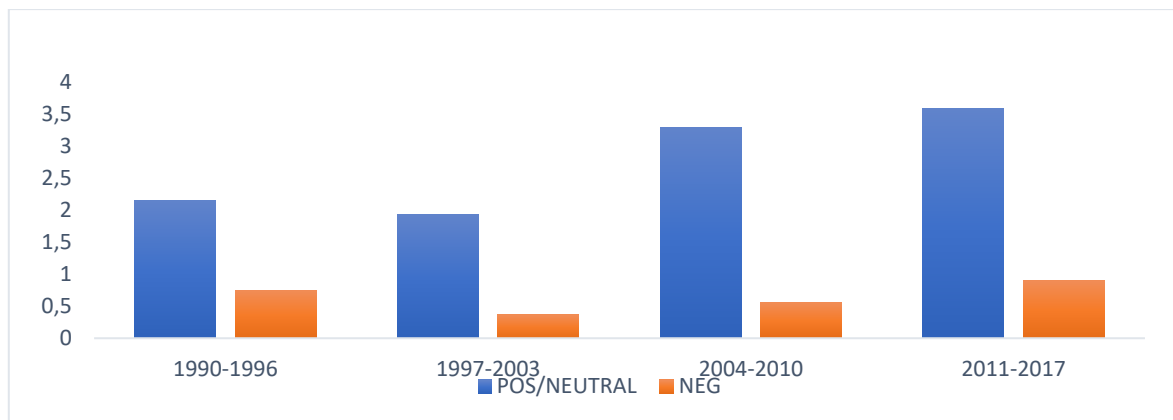
Collocations have been manually extracted through a qualitative analysis. There is a wide range of variety, however, some are certainly more relevant than others because of the number of times they appear. The most repeated collocations were *gay, lesbian,* and *transgender* which appeared always together accompanying *bisexual* in reference to the LGBT acronym. These instances are not representative of the perception on *bisexual* but rather neutral cases of the use of this word or an impression on the community as a whole.

(11)   National survey to date focused on the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, *bisexual*, and transgender (LGBT) older adults. (MAG: Medical Xpress 2017)

The second set of collocations that have been extremely reoccurring are *HIV* and *AIDS,* following the belief that bisexual people are "at risk from or carriers/transmitters of HIV" (Baker 2008, 148). An example of this is:

(12)   The surge of AIDS into Brazil's female population is revealing the hidden *bisexual* tendencies among many Brazilian males. (NEWS: New York Times 1993)

(13)   Girls are getting AIDS from older, *bisexual* men. (NEWS: Washington Post 1992)

In both instances, bisexual people are signalled as the ones spreading the disease.

As for the remaining collocations, there is not a clear formula, but we can certainly find positive or neutral and negative ones:

(14)   Revealing the sexual orientations of familiar faces like Kya and Avatar Kyoshi, who was *bisexual*, makes both Avatar and Korra retroactively more inclusive. (MAG: A.V. Club 2017)

(15)   Many people think that being *bisexual* is greedy and that you should choose. (MAG: Essence 2004)

In example 14, *bisexual* is presented as a label that puts forwards inclusivity and as such receives a positive connotation, while in example 15 it is synonymous of being greedy and unable to choose, a common stereotype of bisexual people as promiscuous, unfaithful, and immature (Lucal 2008, 530).

Despite these two clearly polarising views on the term, the majority of collocations fall under the neutral category, where *bisexual* is simply followed by declarative terms that do not have implications of any kind. This is a clear reflection of the results of Figure 7, where neutral and positive is much higher than negative connotations.

4.3.   Grammar

This section does not follow the 7-year periods used until now. Instead, the only divide is between the 20th and 21st centuries. The sample of texts from the 21st century is bigger than the one from the 20th and that must also be considered. Because of this new divide the normalised frequencies are different, and I have made the pertinent calculations.

Table 2: Raw and normalised frequencies of *bisexual* per sub-period

|	20th cent	21st cent
FREQ	502	1433
WORDS (M)	203,8	366,5
PER MIL	2,46	3,91

As has been previously stated, and shown in Figure 1, the use of nouns has overall decreased. This can be further explored in Figure 8, where it is very clearly reflected in the use of the noun *bisexual* in object position, which we must remember also includes PCs results. This function of the noun has suffered the most drastic change. *Bisexual* in subject position has also decreased in its used, however, the results are not as extreme. However, because of the reduced sample of *bisexual* used as a noun and according to the chi-square calculator used, this change is not significative. As such, neither is the wide range of verbs that these nouns accompany.

Figure 8: *Bisexual* as a noun in subject and object position
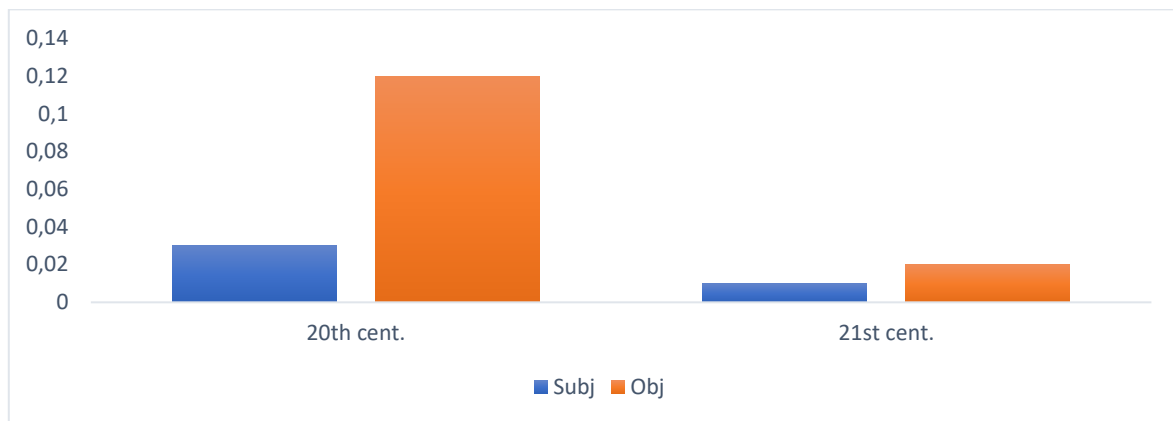
On the other hand, the change suffered in *bisexual* as an adjective is in fact significative. In Figure 9 we can observe an increase in the attributive position while the predicative one remains stable.

Figure 9: *Bisexual* as an adjective in attributive and predicative position
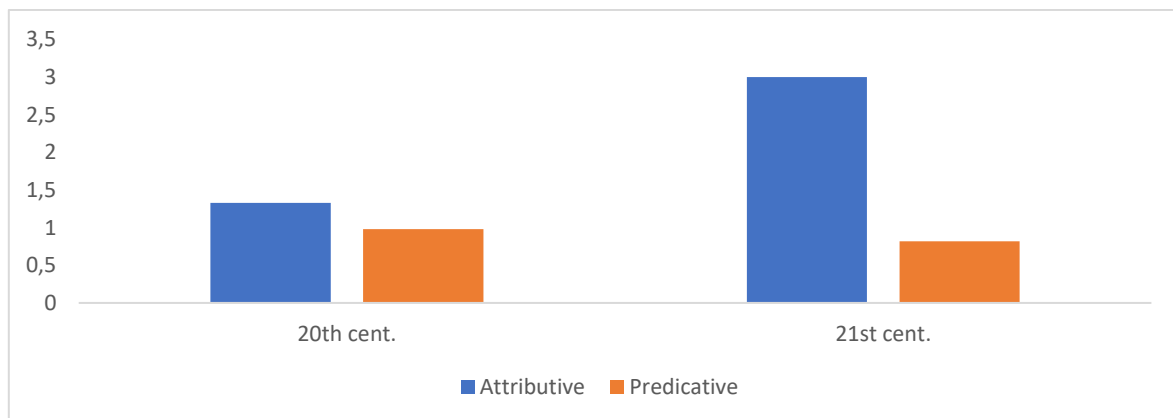
This could be caused, once again, by the increase in political correctness. By using *bisexual* in an attributive position, we are integrating one aspect of a person within the sentence, and not giving it more importance than is truly necessary. Whereas if we use it in predicative position, we are giving more attention to this aspect above the rest, making it a more central characteristic of the person we are referring to (Maass, Suitner, and Merkel 2014, 336).

The collection of nouns referred to does not show any clear tendency. Instead there is a wide variety of more than a hundred of nouns that are accompanied by the adjective *bisexual*.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

With the advance of Queer Studies, the label of *bisexual* has been further analysed, and thanks to poststructuralist views it has steered away from strictly binary definitions, becoming more

inclusive of non-binary identities (Flanders et al 2016, 52). In spite of the negative consequences that have sometimes stirred from the creation of new terms to define multisexuality (Callis 2014, 72), this has also allowed scholars to discuss these identities further (Elizabeth 2013, 333). The ever-growing number of studies on the term has a positive repercussion, giving much-needed visibility to the bisexual community.

We must not forget that bi-erasure (Angelides 2006, 135) is also a factor to be taken into account when analysing these results. Its existence makes it impossible to collect all instances of *bisexual* since they are not recognised as such. For this reason, the sample used is considerably reduced, and that must be kept in mind. If those occurrences were properly labelled, we could make a more complete analysis of the perception of bisexuality.

The raise of political correctness has also meant a change in the use of *bisexual,* its prevalence as an adjective being much higher than as a noun. In being used as an adjective, *bisexual* is considered to be just one aspect of a person instead of the defining characteristic of an individual (Maass, Suitner, and Merkel 2014, 336). Used as a noun it can be alienating, so this development is another way to move towards a more positive understanding of *bisexual.*

Additionally, the shift in meaning from *bisexual* to define plants to it defining humans is also relevant. From its first definition in the field of biology, this label has progressively been less used to explain physicality (Angelides 2006, 132). Instead, its meaning in relation to psychological processes has gained force, becoming almost entirely the only use of the word. Since most negative connotations associated to bisexuality come from the wrong understanding of it as a physical phenomenon – first in relation to reproductive organs and then to physical desire –, this change serves as a way to stray from it and into newer and more modern understandings of attraction as not solely physical.

This study supports the hypothesis that *bisexual* is progressively being perceived in a less negative way. We have seen that, despite the backlash that the term *bisexual* has suffered and continues to suffer, the overall tendency is towards a more understanding and positive view of the label. This research, however, is not all-encompassing, and covers only up until 2017, so, whether the tendency has changed in the last two years remains unstudied.

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