
Antonio Iáñez Domínguez

aiadom@upo.es

Doctor en Antropología Social y
Profesor Titular de Universidad.
Departamento de Trabajo Social
y Servicios Sociales, Facultad
de Ciencias Sociales.
Universidad Pablo de Olavide,
España.

Borja González Luna

bgonlun@gmail.com

Doctorando. Facultad de
Ciencias Políticas y Sociología.
Universidad Complutense de
Madrid, España.

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The Representation of Physical Functional Diversity in the Spanish Press

Abstract

This article presents the results of research into the treatment of physical functional diversity in the Spanish press. The research has involved the analysis of news items referring to functional diversity in two high-circulation newspapers in Spain (ABC and El País) between 1978 and 2012. The results show that the number of news items on functional diversity has risen over this period, with an evolution in the terminology and approach to the information. The creation of communication departments in some of the organizations in the sector, the production of style guides and/or norms and the recommendations of international organizations may have encouraged these changes. Even so, news items still appear in which the news is the functional diversity in itself, which does not help to deconstruct the stereotyped image that has accompanied this group for many years.

Keywords

Functional diversity, disability, media, press

1. Introduction

The image of functional diversity¹ has been socially and culturally constructed over the years from different areas of society: political, legislative, educational, social, labor, etc. A historical review shows that in each context and period, a conception, practices and attitudes have been generated, and these have been marked by the cultural values of that moment. It is evident that the historical and cultural context influences the social development of disability (Priestley, 1998).

¹ The term 'functional diversity' arose after the debates which took place between the members of the *Foro de Vida Independiente-España* (Forum for Independent Living-Spain), in its attempt to avoid negative or pejorative terms (invalid, crippled, disabled, etc.). The Forum was created in 2001 as a virtual community for reflection, mutual aid and the construction of knowledge about everything related to functional diversity. We shall use the term functional diversity throughout the text, although we maintain the terms which appear in the news items, speeches, etc., in order to remain faithful to the references we use and the historical context in which they were used.

In the construction and representation of the image of functional diversity, the mass media are an extremely important agent. Not only do they represent the vision that society holds of reality, but they are also producers and generators of opinion. The social image of disability projected through the media is a reflection of the perception of whoever transmits that image, and at the same time it contributes to shaping the attitudes of whoever receives it (Auslander & Gold, 1999).

In the 1990s, so-called social journalism burst onto the scene in the US, opening up the possibility of reporting on social issues that mattered to the public, in contrast to the traditional news topics of politics and economics. This type of journalism takes society into account and reports on public initiatives with the capacity to transform society (Cytrynblum, 2000). Obviously, this has favored an increased in social news coverage, including stories about functional diversity, through the voices of different agents, but above all through non-profit organizations. Social journalism subsequently spread to other parts of the world, reaching Spain a few years later.

In the knowledge of the power that they hold to influence the public, there has for some time now been great interest in improving the presentation of the information published about functional diversity, either through events and meetings or through the publication of style or good practice guides. Examples of style guides produced in the US include the guide created in 1987 by the Associated Press Stylebook together with the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas². In Spain, an example is Casado:

Regarding disability, I can offer news of some North American initiatives, which arose as early as the beginning of the eighties, which aim to promote a style which we would today call politically correct in the verbal treatment of persons with disability and communicational practices related to disability (2001: 9).

In 1989, the Spanish organization, *Real Patronato de Prevención y de Atención a Personas con Minusvalía* (Royal Society for Prevention and Attention to Persons with Handicaps) drew up some “style guidelines”³. In 1992, the INSERSO (National Social Services Institute) organized the “Handicaps and the Media” meetings and, since then, events on the subject have been held. This indicates the importance of the role of the media in improving the representation and image of persons with functional diversity.

The main results set out here can be presented as a consequence of the changing paradigm that took place during the period analyzed (1978–2012) (Ferreira, 2008; Díaz, 2009; Toboso, 2013; Rodríguez & Cano, 2015). In the late 60s, the independent living movement emerged in the US and England, which gathered strength and status in the 70s. Finkelstein and later Oliver were the first, within the academic realm, to propose a materialistic vision of functional diversity. Finkelstein (1980) argued that this was a relationship that was influenced by interactions between social and economic structures and functional diversity. On the basis of these proposals, and taking the independent living movement as a reference point, Oliver (1983) went on to formulate the “social model of disability”.

In Spain, the social model and the independent living movement were not received until the first decade of the 21st Century. Up to that point, the Social Integration of the

² Guidelines for avoiding demeaning and sensationalized words:
<http://www.ragged-edge-mag.com/mediacircus/styleguide.htm>
<http://ncdj.org/style-guide/>
<http://ncdj.org/2016/01/journalists-should-learn-to-carefully-traverse-a-variety-of-disability-terminology/>
http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_127002/lang--en/index.htm

³ Real Patronato de Prevención y de Atención a Personas con Minusvalía (1990). *Discapacidad y medios de comunicación. Pautas de estilo*. Madrid

Disabled Act (*Ley de Integración Social del Minusválido*, April 7th 1982) was the main framework of reference, which was more medical than social in its approach (Toboso, 2013). Although this act developed issues such as accessibility, school integration, labor integration, etc., it also tackled aspects such as special employment centers, occupational centers, residential services, non-contributory pensions, etc. It developed a hybrid model supported by the existing structures of non-profit organizations that had emerged towards the end of Franco's dictatorship (Díaz, 2003), leading to the professionalisation of that sector, prioritizing the views and judgments of doctors, psychologists, educators, social workers, etc., whose opinions were held to be more legitimate than people with functional diversity themselves (Ferreira, 2010).

When the Equality, Non-Discrimination and Universal Accessibility Act (*Ley de Igualdad, No Discriminación y Accesibilidad Universal*, December 2nd 2003) was passed, Spain began to see a change in paradigm (Toboso, 2013), and later when the Act Promoting Personal Autonomy and Assisting People in situations of Dependence (*Ley de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Ayuda a las Personas en situación de Dependencia*, December 15th 2006) was introduced, the Independent Living Forum began to gain status and visibility by managing to include in the wording of the act the figure of the «personal assistant». This figure is a symbolic condensation of a new framework of reference that alludes to the international independent living movement and the drive for “deinstitutionalization”.

This change in paradigm, which has been taking place internationally and also within Spain, is reflected in certain milestones within the United Nations Organization: the World Program of Action concerning Disabled Persons (UN, 1982), the Declaration of the Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), and the adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993) which guided the specific actions of the UN when passing the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 (Rodríguez & Cano, 2015).

The results presented here show how the social image of people with physical functional diversity has been constructed and tracks the treatment they have received from two national Spanish newspapers (ABC and El PAÍS), over a period of three decades (1978-2012). It is important to stress that the social image of disability and people with disabilities is not, as Fernandez-Cid (2009) rightly points out, constructed exclusively by the mass media, which is in turn shaped by different scenarios and agents. In her own words:

The central role they have been assigned with regard to their influence – their effects – on forming public opinion and social awareness is being called into question. Information – in this case from the media – is updated through different processes of constructing meaning and symbolic creation; it is impossible, therefore, to generalize conclusions about the public's interpretations on the basis of a media content analysis (2009: 107).

And we might also add that it is similarly not possible to ascertain on the basis of such analysis the contexts in which news contents have been produced.

Our analysis has allowed us to establish how news stories about functional diversity have been positioned within the press (sections, journalistic genres, themes, etc.), objectify how people with functional diversity have been labeled, observe the reporting relevance of women and men, analyze how the demands made by non-profit organizations have evolved, and see that functional diversity is a current affair in journalism, which has seen coverage increase quantitatively over time, although logically it appears with greater frequency at certain moments (when drafting and enacting legislation, during the Paralympic Games, the International Day, election periods, etc.). The influence of social journalism, the changes in paradigm, the struggles of non-profit organizations, the placement of functional diversity on the agendas of political representatives, as well as the incorporation of press offices into

certain organizations in the sector, justify the increase and constant coverage of news stories in the press. Although this increase could be interpreted as a positive outcome, which it undeniably is from the perspective of visibility, the production of contents about functional diversity has not always been exempt from prejudices and stereotypes. In the words of Balas:

It is not a case of simply achieving greater visibility, it is a matter of conveying an image of disability that reflects reality, free of stereotypes and prejudices, uncontaminated by patronizing attitudes, without negative connotations. An image, in short, which does not infringe the fundamental rights of persons with disability (2006: 2).

2. Methodology

For the analysis of the representation of physical functional diversity in the press, it was decided to elaborate a sample of news items⁴ from the national newspapers ABC and El País, as these two newspapers had the highest circulation in Spain between 1978 and 2012.

The search for and selection of the units of analysis was performed using the search engines provided by each newspaper on their websites. To use the search engines correctly and to achieve the purpose of the research, the “key terms” that would allow a diversification of the search were defined. The idea was that different terms would be associated with different historical moments and that these would be reflected in the written press. After several tests, the terms selected were: “*disminuidos físicos*” (physically diminished), “*minusválidos físicos*” (physically handicapped), “*discapacidad física*” (physical disability) and “*diversidad funcional*” (functional diversity); a semantic chain of terms that shows the transformations that have taken place since the first International Classification published by the World Health Organization in 1980 (Ferreira, 2008).

A table was then created with all of the units of analysis that appeared in each newspaper for each key term and year. This served to establish the proportion of units of analysis that needed to be selected for a theoretical sample of 300 units of analysis. The sample finally consisted of a total of 435 news items: 202 in ABC and 233 in El País⁶. Table 1 shows that there are more news items from recent years, as it can be seen that, since the mid-nineties, there has been an increase in the number of news items. This means that in absolute terms, more news items are located in these periods of time. It can, then, be deduced that the presence of news items related to functional diversity has increased, and that they are, therefore, of current journalistic interest.

⁴ The units of analysis do not correspond only to news items, strictly speaking, as editorials, opinion columns, reports and letters to the editor have also been analyzed.

⁵ Two of the terms used in the text are difficult to translate. One, *minusválidos físicos*, could be translated as ‘physically handicapped’. The other, *disminuidos físicos*, is slightly more difficult and could be translated literally as ‘physically diminished’, though it has no equivalent in English. This is an example of discriminatory language used in Spain; in the English-speaking world there must be others of which we are unaware. What we want to highlight is the terminological evolution in Spain, rather than possible translations, that is, the changes in the conceptions that accompany the terms: diminished, handicap, disability and diversity. We believe that it is better to translate the problematic terms into English as we are interested in highlighting important aspects such as the nominalization of the adjective, (for example, persons with disabilities >> disabled) and the terminological evolution that we have mentioned. We will therefore use the term ‘physically diminished’ even though it is not semantically equivalent, in order to highlight that there are many ways of referring to this group, as is emphasized in the text.

⁶ The theoretical sample appears to be overrepresented because we decided to select all interviews and letters to the editor as additional units of analysis.

Table 1. Displays by newspapers (every four years)

<i>Years</i>	ABC	PAÍS	<i>Total</i>
1978-1981	18	13	31
1982-1985	11	15	26
1986-1989	28	11	39
1990-1993	32	11	43
1994-1997	25	31	56
1998-2001	23	44	67
2002-2005	20	38	58
2006-2009	25	36	61
2010-2012	20	34	54
<i>Total</i>	202	233	435

Source: Authors

The different social news stories that seek to secure a place in the press as part of our current affairs coverage, following the birth of social journalism, leads us to think that functional diversity is taking on an emerging protagonism (Perujo, 2001; Fernández, 2010); that emergence is not so much in the sense of it being something new, but rather that it is becoming more frequent and more visible.

Table 2 shows a representation of the four terms included in the search, and it can be seen that there is a greater number of news items using the term “*physically handicapped*” (148), which reflect the fact that, in absolute terms, there was a greater proportion of news items using this term during the period analyzed.

Table 2. Number of news by keyword and newspapers

<i>Terms</i>	ABC	PAÍS	<i>Total</i>
Physically diminished	64	56	120
Physically handicapped	76	68	148
Physical disability	42	77	121
Functional diversity	20	32	46
<i>Total</i>	202	233	435

Source: Authors

The criteria for the selection of those units came from a hierarchical order of the different journalistic styles: editorial, opinion column, report, news story and news item. That is to say, each journalistic style, in the established hierarchical order, acted as a filter for the selection of the quota corresponding to each year. The starting point for the selection of the unit of analysis was to choose, firstly, those units of analysis which contained a greater discursive content, rather than news, strictly speaking, which had a more descriptive and objective content.

The news items were analyzed from two perspectives: (1) an analysis of the content and (2) an analysis of the discourse. A number of specific categories to be identified in each news item were defined so as to obtain representative results. The main categories for the analysis of the contents were: headline, section, journalistic genre, subject matter and context, while for the analysis of the discourse, the categories established were: headline, strapline, newsworthy event, terminology, subject matter, thematic variation, discursive positions and model of representation. The analysis of the content was undertaken by recording the information in an Excel database, and the discourse analysis used the Atlas.ti program. The most relevant information was recorded in Word files⁷.

From an epistemological perspective, we advocate the combined use of quantitative perspectives, such as content analysis, and qualitative perspectives, such as discourse analysis, but with a view to obtaining complementary results, and under no circumstances to conduct a methodological triangulation to verify the results obtained. Content analysis has allowed us to show the semantic dimension of discrimination, whereas discourse analysis has enabled us to construct the symbolic dimension of this exclusion.

3. Terminological evolution

The use of language is not neutral, since it is language that constructs and/or can change the meaning and the vision of a phenomenon. According to Vehmas (2004: 2010), “words do not merely or primarily represent reality but construct and produce it”. Furthermore, their use is a reflection of the schemes of perception in which a person has been socialized and the historical context in which he or she lives. For this reason, it is interesting to analyze the use and evolution of the terminology employed in the press, taking for reference both the terms which give rise to the headlines and those which appear in the body of the news item.

Table 3. Evolution of the frequencies of the terminology in the headlines

	Physically diminished		Physically handicapped		Physically disabled		Physical disability		Functional diversity	
	ABC	PAIS	ABC	PAIS	ABC	PAIS	ABC	PAIS	ABC	PAIS
1978-1980	3	2	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	2	3	32	19	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991-2000	4	6	29	20	7	13	2	1	0	0
2001-2010	1	2	1	4	17	16	2	5	0	0
2011-2012	0	0	0	0	3	6	1	3	0	1
Subtotals	10	13	65	49	27	35	5	9	0	1
Totals	23		114		62		14		1	

Source: Authors

Starting with the headlines, in Table 3, it can be seen at first glance that, in absolute terms, the most often-used expression was “the handicapped” (occurring 114 times),

⁷ This article presents mainly the results obtained from the analysis of the contents, accompanied by some notes taken from the analysis of the discourse.

followed by “the disabled” and, lastly, “the diminished”. If we examine our more immediate surroundings, the frequency of the use of the term “the handicapped” is not surprising since, in Spain, it is still common to refer to: parking spaces reserved for the handicapped, lavatories for the handicapped, pensions for the handicapped, etc. (Romañach & Lobato, 2005).

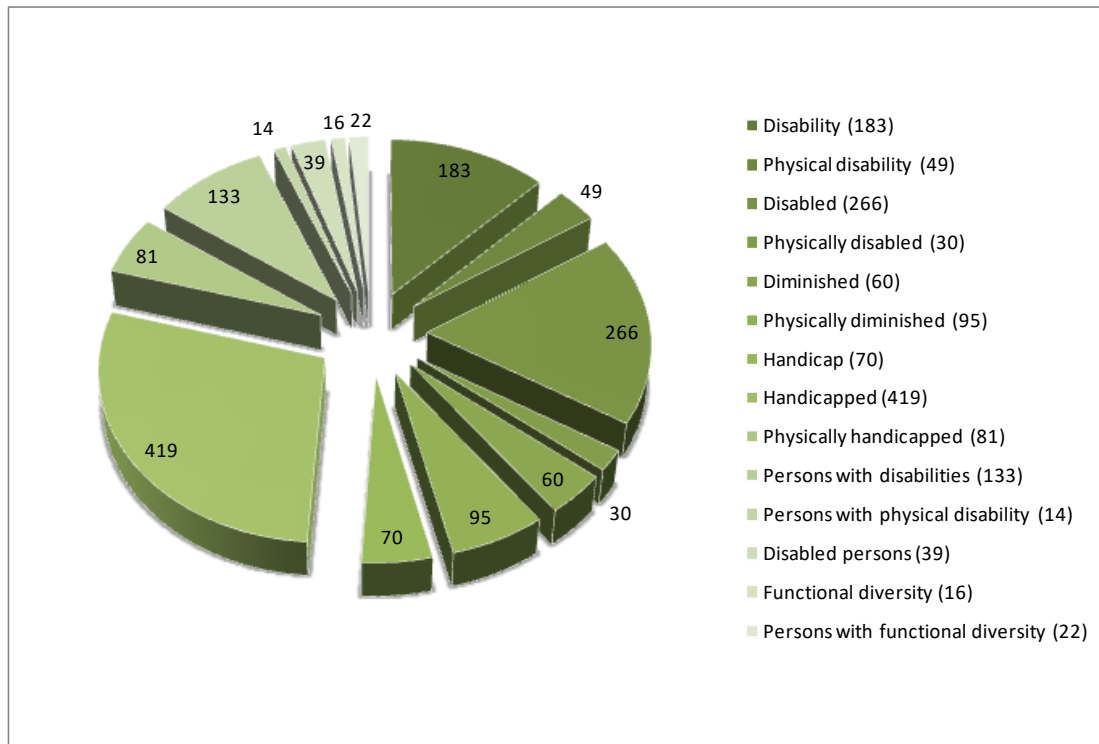
A breakdown by historical periods shows that the most outstanding feature is how the terminology referring to this group of the population has evolved. During the eighties and nineties, the term “the handicapped” was used more frequently, falling considerably after the year 2000, when the term “disability/the disabled” came to the fore. These terms began appearing in the nineties, and were first identified in 1994 in *El País* under a headline “The disabled demand more aid and work” (04/2/1994) and in 1996 in *ABC*, “The district has the only circuit for persons with disabilities in the capital” (24/11/1996).

In the analysis of the content of the news items, 31 different ways of cataloguing this group of people have been identified⁸: *mutilados, incapacidad, incapacitados, incapaz, personas incapacitadas, inválidos, disminuidos, personas disminuidas, paralíticos, parapléjico, tetrapléjico, deficiencia, personas con deficiencia, cojo, discapacidad, discapacitados, personas discapacitadas, personas con discapacidad, minusvalía, minusválidos, personas con minusvalía, personas minusválidas, movilidad reducida, personas con movilidad reducida, dependencia⁹, dependientes, personas dependientes, diversidad funcional, diversos funcionales, persona con diversidad funcional and personas con limitaciones funcionales*. A graphical representation of the aggregate frequency of the use of these terms would be as follows.

⁸ These terms, which do not all have exact equivalents, are: the mutilated, incapacity, the incapacitated, incapable, incapacitated persons, invalids, the diminished, diminished persons, paralytics, paraplegic, tetraplegic, deficiency, persons with deficiencies, lame, disability, the disabled, disabled persons, persons with disabilities, handicap, the handicapped, persons with handicaps, handicapped persons, reduced mobility, persons with reduced mobility, dependence, dependents, dependent persons, functional diversity, the functionally diverse, persons with functional diversity and person with functional limitations.

⁹ As a result of the preparation and publication of the Law on the promotion of personal autonomy and attention to persons in a situation of dependence in 2006, the terms ‘dependence’ / ‘dependents’ became popular in journalistic language. Their use is localized in the specific historical context in which the Law appeared.

Graphic 1. Most frequent terms in the body of the news¹⁰



Source: Authors

The graph shows that, as in the case of the headlines, the most frequently used terms, in absolute numbers, were “the handicapped” (419), followed by “the disabled” (266). It is understood that many of these terms bear a certain similarity to each other, since they are variations on the same semantic root. Grouping these terms into the lexical sets corresponding to the four key terms, which make up the basis of our search for news items, we find that those that refer to “disability” increase considerably, moving up to the first position. This evolution does not mean that, on occasions, terms with negative or pejorative connotations, (and even some which are considered to be in disuse, such as *handicapped* or *diminished*), are no longer used.

Over the timeline (1978 – 2012), it is easy to see not only the variety of the terms used in the press, but also their evolution and the preponderance of one or another at a given moment.

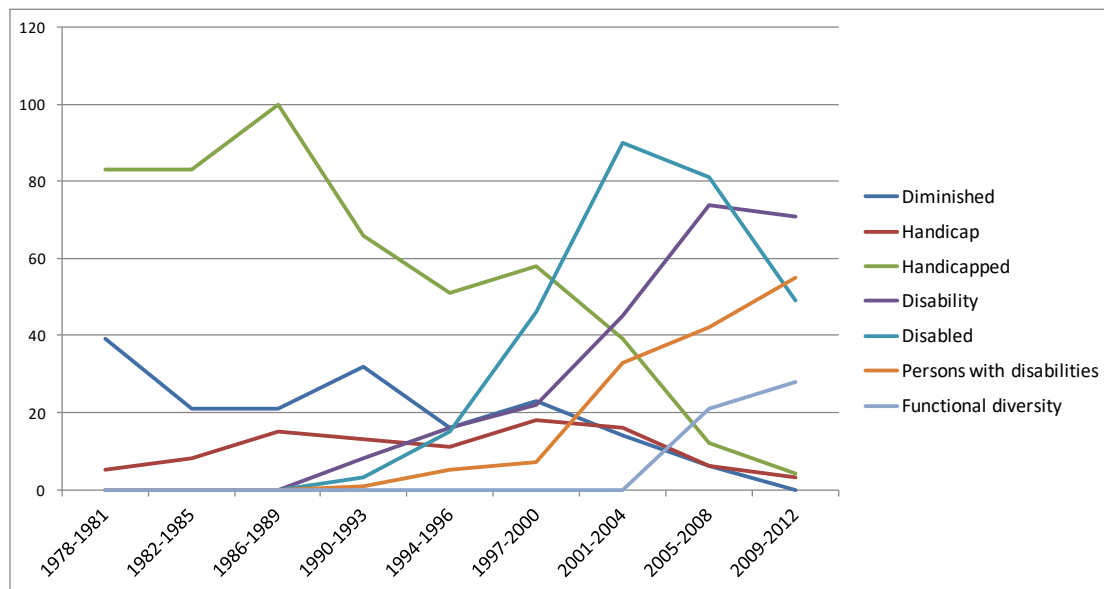
¹⁰ This table is an aggregation of the frequencies of the different terms in both newspapers. For coding has been used Atlas.ti.

Table 4. Frequency terms for years

	Diminished	Handicap	Handicapped	Disability	Disabled	Persons with disabilities	Funcional diversity
1978-1981	39	5	83	0	0	0	0
1982-1985	21	8	83	0	0	0	0
1986-1989	21	15	100	0	0	0	0
1990-1993	32	13	66	8	3	1	0
1994-1996	16	11	51	16	15	5	0
1997-2000	23	18	58	22	46	7	0
2001-2004	14	16	39	45	90	33	0
2005-2008	6	6	12	74	81	42	21
2009-2012	0	3	4	71	49	55	28
Totals	172	95	496	236	284	143	49

Source: Authors

Graphic 2. Timeline¹¹



Source: Authors

¹¹ This table is an aggregation of the frequencies of the different terms in both newspapers. For coding has been used Atlas.ti. Later in Excel have been added the frequencies corresponding to the same "family" terminology, ie, 'Diminished' it is constructed by aggregating frequencies 'Diminished' + 'physically diminished'; 'Handicap' + 'People with handicap'; 'Handicapped' + 'Physically handicapped'; 'Disability'; 'Disabled' + 'Physically Disabled'; 'People with disabilities'; and 'functional diversity' + 'People with functional diversity'. It has chosen to maintain a wider range of items in the 'disability' family for being the terms most used today.

This evolution in the terminology is due partly to changes in the conception and representation of persons with physical functional diversity. The period analyzed covers the transition in the use of terms derived from the concept of “handicap” towards the use of terms derived from the concept of “disability”. The explanation of this transition is related to the paradigm shift seen in the 1980s and 1990s, from conceptions based on the paradigm of rehabilitation to conceptions based on the paradigm of personal autonomy. Similarly, the Classifications drawn up by the World Health Organization have helped to transform the ways of referring to people with functional diversity, an influence that is obviously reflected in the press.

In the analysis of the terminology, the use of different descriptions for the same social group is striking, and it is a feature which is not seen in other groups and, of course, much less so for persons without functional diversity, who are, paradoxically, the ones who construct these terms. Most of them focus on the deficit, difficulty, illness, dysfunctionality, etc., and are derived from the traditional view of the medical model (Romañach & Lobato, 2005). The use of terms with a clearly negative connotation also has the clear intention of converting the information into newsworthy, which represents “a clear declaration of principles by the journalist and the determination of a focus which marginalizes the remotest possibility of social normalization through the press” (Perujo, 2001: 258).

This variety of terminology and, therefore, the difficulty in reaching a consensus between the members of the communities with different functional diversities is one of the facts which evidences a lack of collective identity and awareness (Rodríguez & Ferreira, 2010). In attempting to avoid this pejorative terminological focus and to embrace all of the persons involved, the Forum for Independent Living-Spain proposed the term “person with functional diversity” in 2005, understanding that it “described a reality in which a person functions in a manner which is diverse or different from the majority of society” (Romañach & Lobato, 2005: 4). Although it appears little in the press, its incorporation is significant, as it is the first time ever that a negative or medical meaning is not attached to a human reality (Iáñez, 2010a), even though the term is not without controversy (Rodríguez & Ferreira, 2010; Moscoso, 2011).

I move in a wheelchair, that is, I am what used to be called a cripple, paralytic, invalid, handicapped or disabled. People like me are struck and driven to react by the fact that the idea still exists that people with functional diversity are human beings who are in-capable, un-abled or dis-abled, because “in/un” and “dis” are particles which indicate negation. We are just as valid as everyone else and, like them, we are more able in some tasks than in others. Since the purpose of a reputable newspaper like the ABC includes the dissemination of a more equitable reality than that which sometimes surrounds us, I congratulate you for the informative and educational work which you are doing, also in the socio-semantic field, rejecting discriminatory terminology unrelated to reality, like that mentioned above, and adopting the expression “persons with functional diversity” to refer to us¹².

In this terminological evolution, it can be seen that the question of terminology is not neutral, but that it is a social construct which changes with the changes in our society (Díaz, 2009).

4. Functional diversity in the headlines

The pressure of time means that many readers of the press, when they have the newspaper in their hands, read mainly the headlines and only read the body of the news item which is relevant to their particular interests. In this way, the headline acts as a filter for the selection of the news they read in detail. The headline arouses the interest of the reader

¹² Letter to the editor sent by Maika Imedio Granullaque under the title: ‘As capable as the rest’ (ABC, 27/03/2011).

and, for this reason, it is more than just a header in bold type which precedes the newsworthy event. The headline summarizes the text and forms part of the discourse. It is “information and, in turn, an opinion” (Gómez, 1982: 9). If we consider that the mass media in general –and the written press in particular– are the producers and generators of opinion, we must come to the conclusion that, very often, the image that is given of a given newsworthy event is conditioned by the sentence in bold type that defines the news item. Let us see, then, the role played by headlines in the representation of functional diversity.

The use of the singular or plural in the drafting of headlines is not irrelevant. There is a clear intention behind what is communicated by using one form or the other. Most headlines are drafted in the plural, thereby alluding to a group in general as if it were a *homogenous group*. However, when headlines are drafted in the singular, it is because the intention is to place the *actor above the action*. According to Perujo (2001):

The extreme personalization of the news has the purpose of making the recipients of that news feel an inevitable inclination to put themselves in the place of the suffering protagonists, considerably raising the emotional bar and taking an unreserved position at a point closer to sensationalism and further from journalistic rigor in the strictest sense (2001: 265).

In this way, what could have been an ordinary event becomes extraordinary, since the protagonist is “handicapped” or “disabled” (Perujo, 2001), as in the following headlines:

“A handicapped person attacks President Alemán”, ABC, 20/06/1981.

“Manuel, a disabled youth, walks the Pilgrim’s Route to Santiago”, ABC, 08/01/1998.

“Three youths jailed for beating up an invalid”, El País, 05/03/2006.

“Parents to be allowed to leave all of the family wealth to a disabled son”, El País, 12/02/2003.

In this same manner of emphasizing the condition of a “disabled” person in order to highlight a newsworthy event, frequent use is made of the nominalization of the adjective. To see this, it is sufficient simply to refer at random to any of the news items, as it will probably be found. Some examples are:

“The information about the physically diminished is not applied correctly”, El País, 25/10/1978.

“The handicapped and their conflictive social integration in the cities”, ABC, 25/07/1982.

“The European Commission demands the integration of the handicapped in ordinary education”, El País, 01/06/1990.

“The local council is to promote sport for the handicapped”, ABC, 02/01/1996.

“The EMT prevents the access of the handicapped in wheelchairs by buying buses without anchoring points”, El País, 08/06/1999.

“Two thousand physically handicapped to work from home by Internet”, ABC, 18/02/2003.

“The main railway stations to offer attention for the disabled”, El País, 25/02/2008.

“Work inspectors to enforce the obligation to hire 2% of the disabled”, ABC, 30/01/2012.

It can be seen, then, that over these years (1978–2012) the nominalized adjective has consistently been used to refer to a group of persons who reject a negative, stereotyped conceptualization. Although there is no unanimous proposal to refer to this group, it does appear clear that highlighting the condition above the person does not help to deconstruct the stereotyped image generated around functional diversity. For this reason, it would appear that the drafting of the following headlines is more appropriate, even though they are a minority among all of the news items analyzed, and they are examples of good practice as they do not use the nominalized adjective:

“The district has a single circuit for persons with disability in the capital”, ABC, 24/11/1996.

“University program for the integration of students with disabilities”, ABC, 10/01/2000.

“Persons with reduced mobility demand direct economic aid in the Parliament”, El País, 25/05/2005.

“Persons with disability demand accessible universities”, El País, 08/01/2007.

5. The representation of women with functional diversity

There were very few news items in which the protagonists are women with functional diversity. There is a particularly significant “invisibilization” which is explained in most cases by “linguistic sexism”, that is to say, the generic masculine form in Spanish is used to cover both sexes: *discapacitados*, *minusválidos*, etc. These expressions, which are typical and traditional in the Spanish language to refer to both men and women, relegate women to the background and deny them their rightful place in the context of the specific news item. This linguistic sexism is commonly found in journalistic writing referring to all subject matters, that is to say, it forms part of the manner in which journalists communicate the information.

In this research, gender has been a transversal variable in the analysis of both the content and the discourse. If we examine the headlines, it can be seen that linguistic sexism is found throughout all of the historical period analyzed and, therefore, this demonstrates that there has been practically no evolution in the use of inclusive language. It is important to remember that, according to the latest Survey on Disabilities, Personal Autonomy and Situations of Dependence (2008) in Spain, 59.8% of the persons with functional diversity are women¹³. Nevertheless, very few news items refer to them or take them into consideration. It is only when the news item refers to the personal situation of a woman or particularly concerns women that the headline is drafted, obviously, in the feminine form.

“A tetraplegic woman [*tetraplégica*] asks the British courts to be allowed to die”, El País, 07/03/2002.

“Physically disabled women [*Las discapacitadas*] suffer 13% more abuse than the rest”, ABC, 26/10/2005.

“42% of disabled women [*las discapacitadas*] face barriers in their own home, according to a survey”, El País, 30/12/2006.

“You never get used to the abuse. The station master at Linares prevents a woman in a wheelchair from using the toilets”, El País, 07/10/2007.

“One ticket for the woman passenger [*pasajera*] and another for the wheelchair”, El País, 19/08/2009.

“Spanair obliges a woman in a wheelchair to buy two tickets for occupying more space”, ABC, 20/08/2009.

“Disabled women [*Las discapacitadas*] end their lock-in”, El País, 29/11/2011.

The body of the news also evidences a lack of a “gender perspective”, that is, the different position occupied by women and men in the social structure is not highlighted and the presence of women is not visibilized. This represents the double discrimination that women suffer because of their sex and their functional diversity. Some news items were found that did put the accent on the different ways in which women and men with functional diversity face their daily lives but, however, in the drafting of these items, linguistic sexism appears at some point. The news item headlined “The disabled [*Los discapacitados*] are second class citizens in practically all countries of the world” referred to a study on functional diversity worldwide carried out by the World Health Organization. In

¹³ The rates of functional diversity in Spain, by age, are slightly higher among males up to 44 years of age and the situation is reversed from the age of 45 onwards, the difference growing with age.

it, there was a clearly differentiated section on “disabled women” [*mujeres discapacitadas*], but the headline in Spanish used the generic masculine term, making them invisible.

Almost 300 million women in the world suffer some type of physical, intellectual or sensory disability, which represents 10% of all women in the world. In developing countries, three quarters of disabled persons are women. Between 65% and 70% of them live in rural areas. In many developing countries, their reproductive health and rights are often disregarded. Furthermore, it is the women –whether disabled or not– who attend to dependent members of the family, in most cases replacing the social services which should be provided by all states (ABC, 22/12/2002).

The newsworthy events which treat women, in general, tend towards sensationalism, perhaps motivated by the situation noted by Peláez (2008):

offering a somewhat distorted view probably caused by the selection of partial aspects of reality and a treatment of that reality which leads to reductionism and the simplification of many aspects, such as: the capacity and characteristics of these women, with fatalistic or exaggeratedly optimistic stereotypes prevailing (irreversible, kindness...). On other occasions, the image of the women with disabilities themselves has been used as a motive to raise funds for institutions or individual cases (tele-marathons...) reflecting a fatalistic view, with the intention of moving, drawing tears and calling for charity, which is more typical of past times. (p. 214–215)

6. Getting inside the newspapers

In the newspapers, the news is classified into sections, a practice which in general helps readers who are interested in a specific aspect of the news: the geographical sphere (international, national, local), a specific subject (economy, sport), general interest (society, culture), etc. This information is usually given at the top of the page on which the news is printed. Analysis has allowed us to determine the sections where news about functional diversity tends to be published.

Table 5. Number of news by sections

SECTIONS	Absolute value	Percentage
International	16	3,7
National	56	12,9
Local	74	17,0
Society	153	35,1
Culture	8	1,8
Sports	12	2,8
Economy	1	0,2
Diary	3	0,7
Opinion	110	25,3
Religion	2	0,5
Total	435	100

Source: Authors

Most of the news items by far are published in the society section. This is the section which arouses greatest interest among the readership. It is important to underline the volume of news items in the opinion section, which indicates that the issue of functional diversity is of interest and, consequently, it generates debate and pronouncements on matters of current interest which affect this group. On occasions, the opinions are those of persons with functional diversity, which corroborates the activism of this group in their persistent struggle against social exclusion and oppression.

The volume of news items at local and national level is also high, compared to other sections (international, sport, culture, economy). The very low number of news items in the sport section is striking when, nevertheless, it is a matter which appears frequently in the analysis of the news. This means that sport is unquestionably present, but from a different conception, that is, sport conceived as a means to integration, personal improvement, rehabilitation, etc., and these are the reasons which explain the appearance of news related to sport in other sections.

When offering information about a matter of current interest in the press, the journalist can do so in different ways, depending on the treatment they wish to give: information, opinion or interpretation. The manner in which the content of the newsworthy event is communicated is known as the journalistic genre. Great importance has been attached to this in the research, as it has been the main criterion used for the selection of the news items.

Table 6. Numbers of news by journalistic genre and terms

	Editorial		Article view		Reportage		News		Letter		Total
	ABC	PAÍS	ABC	PAÍS	ABC	PAÍS	ABC	PAÍS	ABC	PAÍS	
Diminished	0	0	11	2	7	11	56	31	2	19	139
Handicapped	0	2	11	7	1	7	57	26	10	28	149
Disability	0	0	0	4	8	13	29	47	6	17	124
Functional diversity	0	0	2	4	0	3	3	3	10	14	34
Total	0	2	24	17	16	34	145	107	28	78	451

Source: Authors¹⁴

The news item¹⁵ is the most common journalistic genre used to offer information. At a lower level, we find reports and opinion articles. Although the news item was the last choice in the scale established for the selection of units of analysis, its protagonism can be seen. Although, on the one hand, this is logical, since it is the leading genre in newspapers, it is nevertheless curious that this volume of news items has not generated a greater volume of editorials, opinion columns, reports, news stories, etc.

¹⁴ The number of analyzed units is 435, the highest value shown in the table corresponds to twice selected units.

¹⁵ The 'news item' is in itself a journalistic genre, but there is usually a certain generalization of the genre, and so all of the information or content of a newspaper is often called 'news'.

6.1. The evolution of the themes

The oppression and exclusion suffered by persons with functional diversity for decades in Spain has led them to be constantly campaigning to protect their rights, to achieve equal opportunities, for their dignity, for their participation in society, etc. This has meant that, on most occasions, we see them represented as “active subjects”. This means that they are the promoters of the actions which give rise to the newsworthy event; rarely are they presented as “passive subjects”. This tells us that they are a campaigning group which shows initiative and which is committed to improving the situation of oppression (Abberley, 1987; Barnes, 1996) and exclusion (Iáñez, 2010b). It can be seen from the following headlines how the verbs used indicate action:

“The handicapped demand specific action to improve their social situation”, El País, 05/12/1978.

“The handicapped take the law on integration as a starting point”, ABC, 13/03/1982.

“135 handicapped demand that the regional government provide sheltered housing without architectural barriers”, El País, 08/05/1991.

“Demonstration by the handicapped on the nº 27 to demand adapted buses”, ABC, 30/03/1994.

“Physically and intellectually disabled disagree over payment for social services”, El País, 28/12/2000.

“The disabled criticize the lack of employment policies in the Region”, ABC, 21/05/2001.

“Persons with disability demand accessible universities”, El País, 08/01/2007.

“The disabled and professionals reject segregated education”, El País, 05/04/2010.

The pressure exercised has in many cases influenced the political agenda of local and national governments which, little by little, have taken up these demands. The press has not been indifferent to these situations and, in fact, has reported the different demands that have been made over the years and has also informed of the actions taken by the governments. An analysis of the issues reported in the press allows us to take an interpretative look at the questions which have aroused the interest of persons with physical functional diversity over the years.

The issue most often identified is accessibility and mobility, with most of these news items falling into two main blocks: the elimination of architectural and urban planning barriers, and adapted transport. These two subjects have concerned the associations in Spain since their formation, as shown by a news item on the first National Conference of the Physically Diminished, organized by the National Coordinator of the Handicapped in 1982.

Over the last weekend, over two hundred persons representing all of the Spanish regions, except Catalonia, which only sent an observer, debated the main proposals that the national coordinator of the handicapped has been making since its creation. Architectural barriers, participation, integration and the strategy regarding the law on social integration were the subject of debate¹⁶.

During the eighties, different demands were drawn up which, by the end of the decade, formed a political agenda, in such a way that, by the mid-nineties, these matters had become priorities in the manifestoes of the political parties, translated into agreements, decrees, laws, etc. Attention passed from architectural barriers in buildings and in the streets to the adaptation of urban transport. Later, demands were made for the accessibility of housing, technology, etc. Since the year 2000, universal accessibility and mobility became one of the demands in order to be able to live an independent life.

Employment is another issue frequently mentioned in the press in news items which give percentages of persons with functional diversity who are unemployed or those who, on

¹⁶ ‘First National Conference of the handicapped held’ (El País, 04/11/1982).

the contrary, achieve professional *success*. Issues relating to the business community are also published, such as the failure to implement the Law on the Social Integration of Persons with Disability (LISMI), special employment centers, the right to work, etc. An oft-repeated theme is the value of employment as a means to social integration, and an entire discourse in this line has been constructed. A large number of news items reflect the discourse of different stakeholders defending this principle of integration through work. This discourse was at its strongest during the eighties, although it does not disappear at any time during the period analyzed. Another argument which has been advanced since the nineties is that the employment of a person with functional diversity reduces the structural cost of the special system of social and economic benefits for these persons who, if they do not work, are not included in the Social Security system.

Matters related to education are equally visible, giving the impression that, despite the progress achieved, this is a matter which remains unresolved, since news reflecting the same debate continues to appear from time to time. With respect to primary and secondary education, which is obligatory in Spain, the two main positions in the discourse relate to the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive or special education. The proponents of the former defend its benefits, but repeatedly demand qualified human resources and specific economic resources. Those in favor of special education accept the benefits of the former, but highlight the specific needs which, they say, are not covered by the inclusive model.

News items about higher education appear to a lesser extent and are found mainly from the year 2000 onwards, evidence of the occupation of their space in the universities by persons with functional diversity. The training of teachers, the necessary support, architectural barriers, etc., are always questions which arise when speaking of higher education. Most of these news items are related to the Support Services for students with functional diversity which have appeared in the different universities.

News items on sport are also to be found throughout the historical period analyzed, becoming especially visible during the Paralympic Games, an event which has become institutionalized over time and attracts media attention. Leaving this sporting event aside, it should be noted that most of the news items about sport are not found in the sports section, as the content focuses more on highlighting sport as a means to rehabilitation, integration or personal improvement.

The president of the Sports Federation for the Physically Handicapped stressed the fundamental importance of sport both for recuperation and for the integration of these persons¹⁷.

This focus on sport explains the fact that, when analyzing the sections in which the news items appear, the sports section appears infrequently. It is opportune, then, to note the distance which separates the presence of sport as a matter for press attention and its appearance in the sports section.

Also of note are the news items about specific centers for persons with functional diversity (attention, occupational and residential centers) informing of their opening, of the need for their creation, including information about some of the activities in them, etc. These news items are directly related with the institutionalization offered, above all, to those persons with greater need of support. This type of resource has been identified from practically the very beginning of the period studied, with a sharp upturn in the nineties, when the administration began to sign agreements with third sector organizations to provide services through subsidies.

News items about housing are fewer in number, but perhaps the interesting aspect in this case is not so much the frequency, but the moment at which they appear. The focus has

¹⁷ 'The City Council is to promote sport for the handicapped' (ABC, 02/01/1996).

until now been on accessibility and mobility, employment, education, sport and institutionalization but, as from the nineties, the issue of adapted housing becomes another matter that manifested the inequalities faced by persons with functional diversity to live a decent life in equal conditions.

Another important issue in the eighties was access to culture, which was closely related to architectural barriers and adapted transport. Together with access to culture and sport, in their recreational and relational dimensions, another important issue was Leisure, in the widest sense. The different news items analyzed reveal new demands which evidence the conquest of new spaces in everyday life, such as public and private sports facilities, cinemas, museums, parks, bars, etc. These demands also extended to demands for an adapted tourism offer with hotels, beaches, rural accommodation, footpaths, etc., and even for adapted fashion. All of this signifies that *integration* was beginning to be seen in a wider sense and not just in terms of labor integration.

News items related to independent living appear mainly in the letters to the editor analyzed since the first decade of the 2000s. The new issues addressed included questions of a change of terminology, de-institutionalization, personal assistance and independent living. These are new spaces that the Movement for Independent Living has brought to the traditional issues of education, employment, accessibility and mobility, leisure, etc. The issue of sexuality also appears among the news items analyzed from the year 2000 onwards, though infrequently. The same is true of other issues such as domestic and gender violence, which are not representative and not very visible in the press material analyzed.

Lastly, we find news items related to personal improvement: “Stories from the heart that speak of improvement”¹⁸, “My crutches should not be more decisive than my talent or my academic training”¹⁹; or, in contrast, dramatic histories of marginalization and social exclusion: “Three youths jailed for beating up an invalid”²⁰, “A tetraplegic woman asks the British courts to be allowed to die”²¹. In these items, the newsworthy element is the disability and, on occasions, it makes news of insignificant events.

In this analysis of the issues, it can be observed that, today, the old issues remain side-by-side with the new. What is significant is the conquest of new spaces in everyday life by persons with functional diversity, which indicates that something is changing in our society. These issues and these spaces, in turn, correspond to the different models which focus on the way functional diversity is addressed (Toboso, 2013).

7. Conclusions

News items about functional diversity in the press have increased over recent years in quantitative terms. There is no doubt that persons with physical functional diversity are represented in the press, with functional diversity being news in its own right. Although this is a fact which is positive from the point of view of visibility and presence in the media, the treatment given to the issue is not always appropriate. The press, by itself, cannot change attitudes but it can be considered an agent which is able to encourage change, due to the influence it has over its readers.

Throughout the period studied, we have seen a conceptual evolution in the attempt to avoid terms with negative or pejorative connotations, although the use of such terminology is still widespread. The term most frequently used, in absolute numbers, over the period analyzed is “*minusválidos*” (the handicapped), although the tendency today is to use different

¹⁸ ABC, 22/05/2010.

¹⁹ El País, 20/03/2012.

²⁰ El País, 05/03/2006.

²¹ El País, 07/03/2002.

variations on the term “disability” (the disabled, disabled persons, persons with disabilities), with a clear preeminence of the nominalization of the adjective, emphasizing the condition of disability rather than the person. According to Casado (2001, p. 16): “from the stylistic point of view, the traditional term is more fluid than the corrected version (person with disabilities)”.

Likewise, a significant invisibilization of the female population can be detected, which is explained in most cases by linguistic sexism, that is, the use of the generic masculine to refer to both sexes. Linguistic sexism could be avoided through the use of other means of expression which are possible in the Spanish language, such as using both masculine and feminine forms (*discapacitados* and *discapacitadas* - male disabled and female disabled), the use of the stroke (*discapacitado/a*), the use of inclusive language (persons with functional diversity, personas with reduced mobility, etc). In fact, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities itself, in the preamble, emphasizes “the need to incorporate a gender perspective in all efforts to promote the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities”.

It is especially interesting to see that with expressions which have also been found in the press, such as “persons with functional diversity”, “persons with disabilities”, “students with disabilities”, “persons with reduced mobility”, etc., not only is inclusive language being used, but the use of the nominalized objective is also being avoided. This is an interesting proposal for journalistic language, which is preoccupied by the aesthetics of the text and economy of space. Logically, terminological change does not always achieve a change in values and attitudes, but it contributes and offers a different view of functional diversity.

Most of the headlines are drafted in the plural since they refer to matters concerning the group in general, which at times leads to a uniform image being offered of functional diversity. When the singular is used, it is because a person with functional diversity is involved in the newsworthy event, in which case the protagonist is given priority over the action.

The section of the newspaper where news items about functional diversity are predominantly found is the society section, which includes news items on different matters (sport, economy, etc.), but as the subject is functional diversity, it is *de facto* included in this section.

As regards subject matter, though there are issues which recur throughout the historical period analyzed, there is a preponderance of certain matters in each decade. Over time, the old subject matters are combined with new, and new spaces in everyday life are occupied. In the decade of the eighties, the most frequent issues were architectural barriers, adapted transport, employment, education, culture, pensions, etc., and in the nineties, institutionalization, accessibility and mobility, leisure, etc. When these subjects began to become exhausted, without having achieved all of the objectives, in the following decade, as from the year 2000, issues related to independent living, de-institutionalization, sexuality, personal assistance, etc., began to appear. We believe, *a posteriori*, that the emergence of the Independent Living Movement can be considered a relevant case for the empirical study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing (Scheufele, 2000).

The celebration of certain events concentrates the appearance of news, such as the International Day, the Paralympic Games, the enactment of laws, election campaigns, etc. Likewise, news about personal improvement or, in contrast, discrimination and exclusion are also found in the press.

In general terms, it can be seen that there has been a positive transformation in the treatment given to functional diversity in the press: more news items, changes in terminology, new issues, new spaces, paradigm shifts. Some changes are possibly brought about as a result of transformations which have occurred at international level through the International Classifications (1980, 2001) and United Nations initiatives (Global Action Plan,

Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) (Toboso, 2013). The organizations of the sector have also contributed to change as a result of most of them creating communication departments and/or drafting style guides with recommendations. This has undoubtedly contributed to the improvement of the image of persons with functional diversity in the press.

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