**A lack of well-being as persuasion during the 1857-58 uprisings in India. A corpus linguistic analysis of letters in the British press and published diaries**

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In 1857-58, the outbreaks of unrest among the Indian troops marked the beginning of a crisis which in imperial terms came to be known as the Indian or sepoy “mutiny”, or as the first “national-popular imperialist war” fought by Britain in its Empire, or, in nationalist terms, as the “First War of Independence” (Dawson 1995; Blunt 2000). During the uprisings, many letters were written home by women and men and were frequently published in the press, delivering the public with first-hand information and personal perspec­tives on the dramatic events taking place. Thus, the letters soon turned from unmediated into highly mediated texts while the addressors’ point of view on the uprisings contributed to morally orientate readers’ views (Samson, in press). Likewise, many diaries collecting and recording the authors’ personal thoughts, reflections and feelings while restricted to a cantonment under siege, once published turned from private to texts written for a variable and multilayered audience (Rutten and Krogull 2022).

This study, compares the representations of the 1857-58 uprisings and the consequent lack of well-being of those involved in the events in two different specially compiled small corpora: Private Letters Published during the 1857-58 Indian Uprisings in the British press (PLEPIU) and Diaries Published After the Uprisings (DPAU). The purpose is to highlight 1) the recurrent linguistic features typifying the two corpora, 2) their possible variations, 3) how personal perspectives are construed and used in the letters as well as in the diaries to represent the events, 4) the verbal expressions indicating a lack of well-being and its use as a form of public persuasion.

The methodology adopted is a mixed one. It starts with a corpus-driven approach to extract the most frequent key words and their relative clusters in each corpus. The quantitative approach is then integrated by discourse analysis and comparison of the clusters and their construal of meaning in each corpus. The findings suggest although the letters and diaries vary in their linguistic features, they are nevertheless used to build an English identity while persuading the public for military retaliation and justification deriving from the lack of wellbeing of those involved in the 1857-58 uprisings.

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