



Gender Discrimination on the Labor Market: A CDA approach

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I. Abstract

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In the past three decades, news production and its ideological implications have become the focus of many research studies about both the structure of the news reports and the ideological manipulation of news discourse. This paper is a case study that deals with the relation between discourse, discriminatory acts and biased ideology as reflected in Spanish and English written news. The approach used is critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the aimed outcome is the examination of a news item about female treatment on the labor market in Spain. It is the topic structure and the discursive strategies that are to be examined in order to detect if they succumbed to sexist prejudice: in other words, if they enact, perpetuate and even legitimize gender discrimination in the printed press. At the academic level, this study aims at contributing to further research, through the establishment of an evaluative framework from the critical vision about the role of discourse in (re)producing social inequality. Moreover, its goal is to promote a critical perspective for other social groups to control discourse properties, by taking a position and fighting against social shared biased models. Finally, it aims at revealing discourse principles in the contemporary media, as well as in the Spanish working contexts.

Key words: CDA, news discourse, gender discrimination, labor market, sexist language, text

II. Introduction

News structure and the ideological implications of language use have been the main focus for many scholars such as Bell (1991), van Dijk (1988), Fairclough (1995b), Fowler (1991 and 1996), among others. Fairclough, on his part, offers a critical study of language and ideology on discourse representation in the media and other public discourse. When he publishes *Language and Power* (1989), CDA starts to be used as a method of analysis, whose objective is to demonstrate that these two concepts are entirely linked. He shows that through its capacity to produce insights into the manner in which discourse reproduces (or fights against) social and political inequality, such as power, abuse or domination, CDA does not limit its analysis to specific structures of text or talk, but relates them to structures of the sociopolitical context.

Nonetheless, a special research on the news discourse has been carried out by van Dijk (1991), who pays attention to the thematic analysis of the corpus in relation to a specific ideology, such as race and power. Van Dijk (1991) also claims the existence of important evidence demonstrating common practices that have implemented various forms of discrimination.

The present study is a contribution to a series of research projects conducted within the Group for Research on Academic and Professional



English (GRAPE) at Universitat Jaume I of Castellon. Following this line, it focuses on the critical analysis of news discourse related to gender discrimination on the labor market, as exhibited in the Spanish printed press. The novelty of the topic selection is precisely the interdisciplinary junction between press discourse, labor market, gender discrimination and sexist language. Moreover, its goal is to turn into a useful example for the analysis of other discriminatory acts in media practices.

As this study intertwines press discourse with the current situation of the Spanish companies on a difficult labor market, I have paid full attention to the manner in which news common discursive strategies are products of and legitimize gender discrimination (van Dijk, 1993). Briefly, this study aims at intercepting gender reflection in media discourse, by describing the patterns it nurtures from and leads to it. Hence, its structure is drawn by the following general lines such as:

- 1) Discourse structuring in two apparently similar news discourses
- 2) Strategies for discriminatory acts in current media practices
- 3) The manner in which a biased social image may affect female professional life

Ultimately, the final aim is to draw the public attention on journalism writing practices and to stimulate scholars and students for further news discourse research, in such a way that society members become more sensitive and more critical to gender discrimination in society, in any type of written productions.

III. Corpus selection

This is a corpus-based study. For a proper demonstration of the sample analysis, data have been limited to two articles. They were selected from *El País*, in its both English (Saturday, October 9, 2010) and Spanish (Friday, October 1, 2010) editions. The fact that the study has been conducted in two languages and their respective cultures makes it twofold. Consequently, a comparative and a contrastive analysis have been also performed.

Since a limitation regarding the space for such theme coverage has been imposed and a quantitative analysis would have been irrelevant for the purpose of the study, its approach is qualitative rather than quantitative.

Firstly, the division of the news items into steps or moves (Swales, 1990), has allowed a more complex discourse analysis method. Then, topic description and news structure have given some indications about the sequences that link the structure of the news stories, intuitive knowledge and, implicitly, ideological generalizations. Next, detailed textual structures and strategies enabling journalists to reproduce biased language use have been revealed. Finally, the study will conclude with a reflection upon the organization, socio-cultural practices, ideological and



shared beliefs embedded into the text. Thus, aspects such as whether texts organization is well-balanced, as well as the economic and social conditions of the protagonists, the reproduction of a certain ideology, and hence the legitimization and the perpetuation of gender discrimination will be pointed out.

Moreover, this study makes an attempt to highlight the beliefs and biased ideas hidden behind an apparently objective text, with important consequences on current social practice. In this line, the methodological process – of both structural and linguistic procedure – applied to the study has been selected to reveal a possible relation of inequality between men and women, especially in the working or labor environment.

The election of a specific publication such as *El País* has not occurred at random; it has been motivated by its importance at the national and global sphere. Another important reason for this choice is the fact that it has a daily English edition, in collaboration with *The International Herald Tribune* (IHT).

Table 1. Articles selected from “*El País*” (01.10.2010 and 09.10.2010)

Date	LG	Heading	Symbol	Source
09.10.2010	E	I've been laid off... Now what? (generations in crisis/ PART 4) Youth unemployment (See Appendix)	NE	Pdf English Edition with The International Herald Tribune
01.10.2010	S	Me han despedido... ¿Y ahora qué? (PRE)PARADOS/ 11 http://www.elpais.com/articulo/espana/han/despedido/ahora/elpepiesp/20101001elpepinac_9/Tes	NS	<i>El País</i> , printed edition

Corpus collection activity entailed a very detailed observation of a great amount of articles.

Firstly, the selection and analysis of news items revealing a highly social and economic content has been carried out. The texts have been expected to recount the unemployment situation among Spanish youth, in the context of the financial crisis started in 2008. The topic should have a special effect on both Spanish readers that may identify with the social actors leading the news features, and the international audience, especially because of the global effect of this phenomenon. Although readers worldwide have been familiar with these events, they have had particular relevance for the Spanish public, since the unemployment rate in this country has reached an impressive level that exceeds the European average.

The final sample, consisting of one article written in Spanish and its counterpart in English has been considered already illustrative to reflect the main goal for further studies on Gender Discrimination on the Labor Market, at the ideological level of news discourse. Elements such as title, author and date have secured that the former is a translation or an adaptation of the same article in Spanish, needed for a symmetrical and similar sample collection (Connor & Moreno, 2005) and a further comparative and contrastive analysis.

The two items from *El País* are recent news stories, dated 01.10.2010 and 09.10.2010. Both texts are of global reach, but the original has a very strong local value, as it reports country's situation within the general economic crisis and unemployment difficulties Spanish people have to face.

IV. Theoretical and methodological framework

a) Critical discourse analysis approach

Since analyzers suspect news producers of trying to inculcate within their texts the ideological position of the corporation they work for - or even of the journalists themselves, CDA procedure applied here is meant to reveal a possible relation of inequality between men and women, in the labor environment in Spain. The two features elected from the corpora refer to *Female unemployment, their precarious labor conditions and layoffs justified by gender and future maternity* and they are included under the general theme: *Fired young people look for a pathway to follow*.

I will start by referring to the linguistic procedure applied, that involves a combination of factors standing for a macro, as well as for a meso and a micro-analysis (Fairclough, 1995). The steps followed aim to:

- 1) identify the general theme or topic;
- 2) discover specific topics, including various sub-themes;
- 3) derive qualitative data on the length and the structure of the headings selected;
- 4) analyze subheadings as more specific up front parts of the stories;
- 5) subject the lead – as the stories leading phrase – to a close observation;
- 6) pay attention to the text first paragraph, from a structural point of view;
- 7) highlight the structural and semantic relations of the texts.

Topic analysis standing for the way themes are organized within NE and NS indicates that their structural difference best fits in the objective of this study. News structure has been pointed out that the high-level topics contain information about the general socio-economic situation in Spain, while those placed on the next levels refer mainly to actors' broader context and background. Thus, the topic order in the up-front part is dictated by the *prominence criterion*, that is, "important information must come first" (van Dijk, 1988:16).

Furthermore, what I aim to identify is the manner in which the same topics are reflected within text sentences or paragraphs. The analysis performed tends to establish how propositions are semantically incorporated in the more comprehensive category of news topic. This

process takes place on the base of *news scripts* (idem, p.21), such as economic crisis, labor market, unemployment and layoffs.

Next, a textual or content analysis has been also applied, in order to reveal and detail specific elements that compose news syntactic, stylistic and semantic structure. The coming stage of the analysis is meant to discover the essential points of the news discourse, and it consists of rhetorical operations such as:

a) sentence structure or grammar (morphology, syntax, semantics and lexicon);

b) sequential structures or text grammar, where cohesion and coherence can be included.

These steps have been performed to detect more concrete and subtle components leading to news stories semantic content. Without being enumerated in a specific order, they run as follows: argumentation, rhetorical figures, style (variations of syntax and lexicon), storytelling, structural emphasis, quotation, implicitness, etc.

Within the third category, I have examined detailed linguistic resources to verify if language related to the female participants is appropriately used and if conditions, modalities or messages leading to gender discrimination have been avoided. Consequently, aspects such as discriminatory treatment through the use of language, stereotypes transmission, lack of symmetry, invisibility and androcentric points of view have been the main criteria for the analysis of the lexical implications.

Finally, the last step explains the link between discourse, social cognition and social structures, since they stand for the means by which biased ideology appears in any exercise of inequality and discrimination (re)production.

b) Corpus analysis

Comparative and contrastive analysis between heading, subheading and lead's features demonstrates that:

1. The two headings have identical structure, given by the same constituents, with hardly any attempt to adapt it for the benefit of the target readers. In fact, the English heading is a genuine translation of the original one into Spanish.

NE: I've been laid off... Now what?

NS: Me han despedido... ¿Y ahora qué?

More specifically, it consists of an affirmative statement in the first person, followed by suspension points (*I've been laid off.../ Me han despedido...*), and a rhetorical interrogative sentence (*Now what?/ ¿Y ahora qué?*) that highlights the dramatic meaning of the previous



declaration. According to Fairclough (1995:55), the headline overlaps the distinction between direct and indirect mode. Even if the structure of the headline has the form of a quotation of a news participant’s declaration, the punctuation fails in indicating the speaking voice, since it is not marked by inverted comas.

2. Some adjustments have been done regarding the subheadings; therefore the international printed edition has a slight different content than the Spanish counterpart. The structuring difference of the two subheadings consists of a slight deviation of the target text from the original and, implicitly, from the news perspective. Here are the examples:

Table 2. Subheadings in NE and NS

NE	NS
<i>Experts recommend entrepreneurship, further study or moving abroad.</i>	<i>Completar la formación con cursos y posgrados, montar un negocio, opositar e irse al extranjero a perfeccionar un idioma, entre las salidas más habituales</i>

The Spanish part consists of a greater number of nominalizations, standing for solutions for young unemployed. They are organized under the form of a complex, impersonal enumeration. In the English subheading, expert-recommended solutions take a verbal form and appeal only to three possible pathways for unemployed to follow in order to get a job. These differences show text specificity towards the target audience.

3. Both NE and NS are provided with a lead that answers, although partially, the five Ws questions and prevent information from slipping directly into the first paragraph. Even so, the news producer has modified the original source text by means of omission. The leads in the table below, apparently used for the benefit of the intended audience, appeal to readers’ background knowledge, but, in fact, they offer two different points of view about the socio-economic situation in Spain.

Table 3. Leads in NE and NS

NE	NS
<i>Facing a lack of job opportunities and an unfavorable entrepreneurship culture, young Spaniards look across borders for solutions. Though not yet a stampede, the increasing flight of qualified tech professionals have some fearing brain drain</i>	<i>Desde el 1 de enero de 2008 se han destruido 1.267.200 empleos de menores de 31 años. Varios expertos y jóvenes que han sido despedidos analizan las diversas opciones para salir del bache y qué hacer mientras dura.</i>



4. Specific topics support and complete the idea transmitted by the up-front elements. They offer supplementary information for the story presented in the news discourse. Thus, the main topic appeals to various sub-themes, especially to the social and economic background on which the actual crisis on the labor market in Spain takes place:

- Spanish youngsters' layoffs have both justified and unjustified causes;
- Young Spaniards are advised to head abroad for a job, as the only or the best option;
- Unemployed youngsters must prepare different plans for the future, consisting in studying or retraining;
- Spain is facing uncertain times regarding the labor market, which is immobile and rigid.

The examples above demonstrate that the two news stories have simply adapted their main theme and sub-themes to the attempt to design a clear panoramic view on the current unemployment situation in Spain. As stated, the news headline provides, together with the sub-heading and the lead, the news story major theme for their readers.

5. In both NE and NS, first actor's direct speech (*A surrealist paradox*) shows an intriguing fact and stands for the text leading paragraph.

The next stages of the analysis identify news stories essential moves. The remaining text is organized in 8 long paragraphs and a box in NS, while the target text NE displays 22 shorter paragraphs. The news content in the remaining paragraphs of NE originates directly from the source text and, except from some occasions, the content in the English version corresponds exactly to the source text.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning that 6 paragraphs, from 13 to 18 in NE are not reflected in the source text. Thus, the target text is longer, but this does not mean that it contains specific information. It neither has been provided with a box containing statistics information, as NS has.

Although NE has been reshuffled here and there, this strategy has not given way to short unconnected paragraphs in the English version. On the contrary, it can be argued that the target text may have been carefully built considering the target culture, since it seems that the journalists have used NS only as a base. This has been translated, rearranged and complemented with more explicit information than the one for local readers.

However, it is fair to state that the news item NE has been biased towards the English readership. This affirmation is supported by the idea that the paragraph which implies references to the treatment the female workers have to face sometimes has been removed from the target text.

To conclude, the topic analysis performed on NE and NS exhibits the manner in which their internal elements are organized and gives an insight into their structural difference. The global organization of the article indicates that:

(i) The journalist first introduces the topic in a creative manner. Participant's (Actor 1) catching phrase is presented first, for the public to focus on the story. Then, the paragraphs alternate almost symmetrically, with details about the socio-economic context in Spain and the subjects' private background in both NE and NS, taken separately.

(ii) The alternative sections in the topic scheme indicate that moves distribution varies between English and Spanish news and show an overall unbalance of the two stories. The differences are highly significant in terms of content, rather than of length or structure.

(iii) A much clearer contrastive and comparative analysis evidences the missing parts: the information about female Actor 3 appears in the Spanish edition, but her case is not reproduced in the International edition.

Table 4. Missing part in NE

Spanish version	English version
<p><i>"Beatriz Zotes, bilbaína de 30 años, también ha optado por ampliar sus estudios. Licenciada en un campo "de hombres", Ingeniería, no duda de que perdió su trabajo por ser mujer. "Anuncié que me casaba y el jefe me dijo que en breve estaría embarazada. Supe que me iban a echar porque, para ellos, yo ya no era Beatriz sino un útero", se lamenta. Como lo veía venir, poco antes de acabar en la calle se matriculó en un "máster por la UNED". A finales de septiembre terminan las prácticas de su posgrado. "Y entonces, ¿qué?", se angustia".</i></p>	<p>[No translation into English of Beatriz Zotes' case in the International edition of <i>El País</i>]</p>

(iv) Further insights into the causes, conditions and consequences of this layout have revealed intricate relationships between text features and their contribution to the reproduction of social and gender inequality (van Dijk, 1993) Short text samples and commentaries about the content exposed within it are necessary, with special reference to the semantic structure and its ideological implications.

In this sense, forms of dominance and social power in NE have been detected, as for instance:

- **Power abuse:** The personal power of the female actor (A3) is ignored, since she is denied the access to social forms of communication as news items.
- **Institutionalized power:** It seems that the abuse is may have been enacted at the institutional level (the editorial group of *El País*) and reproduced by a possible censorship in the International edition.
- **Hierarchy of power:** We may also observe that members of the press group (seen as dominant) are endowed with special roles of decision over



the process of power depriving. This could lead us to conclude that Beatriz is finally subtly excluded from telling the story about her layoff topic.

Other many subtle structures indicating marginalization and discrimination can be identified in both NE and NS CDA. They are strategies of dominance embedded into various forms of usage of lexical sexism, such as:

- **Invisibility:** Female participant is hidden behind certain formulas of the language use or sometimes these formulas prevent from her complete identification (*bilbaína*, but not *ingeniera*). Moreover, in NE, Beatriz Zotes' presence is silenced and her personal and social contribution is quashed. The missing paragraph in the International edition could be interpreted as a denial for the female participant and for her presence as a social figure. This practice may contribute to the perpetuation and consolidation of those stereotypes belonging to patriarchal and androcentric societies. Both news items exhibit an unbalanced presence of men and women in their texts: there are 9 male experts, and 2 male and 1 female participants in NE, compared to 9 male experts, and 2 male and 2 female participants in NS;
- **Discriminatory treatment of the female participant by the use of language may be detected:** through the linguistic choice, Beatriz' womanhood could be associated with negative or pejorative values, such as humiliation;
- **Discredit of the powerless individual:** It seems that the dominant group (the press company) sees Beatriz (the powerless member) as a burden on company's economic resources (paid maternity leave);
- **Lack of symmetry:** Certain lexical forms can highlight a biased treatment of the female participant and sexual factors are systematically used.
- **Androcentrism:** Predominance of masculinity as the universal model is suggested by the qualification of the engineering profession as *campo de hombres* and of the individual in charge with making important decisions in the company as *el jefe*;
- **Quoting credible witnesses:** In NE and NS, the socio-economic background is built by quoting reliable sources consisting in male experts. Their wealthy professional position contrasts with the two women position of marginalized unemployed professionals;
- **Transmission of stereotypes:** Beatriz is identified by and associated to certain roles traditionally ascribed to females: (*licenciada en un campo de hombres*, *Ingeniería*; *Anuncié que me casaba y el jefe me dijo que en*



breve estaría embarazada...). By Beatriz' invisibility as a woman who activates in a predominantly masculine labor field, the idea of masculine and feminine professions may be also promoted.

Apart from these, other discriminatory messages have been detected in NS. They are supported by specific discursive strategies as for example:

- **Argumentation:** Negative self-representation and evaluation as a consequence of the facts presented. Beatriz' self-identification is a third person declaration that presents her as a victim in a hostile labor environment.
- **Sexual denomination and negation of the intellectual value in the case of women:** it seems that men are referred to by identifying their profession or function as a masculine attribute, while women are named according to their sex, the relation of dependence with a man, rather than by their personal values and identity; i.e.: *el jefe; campo de hombres, Ingeniería vs. Beatriz Zotes, bilbaína de 30 años; anuncié que me casaba; para ellos, yo ya no era Beatriz sino un útero.*
- **Rhetorical figures:** synecdoche as a semantic change is used, when Beatriz is described by a single body part ("*uterus*"), which comes to represent her; hyperbolic enhancement of her negative and weak position, compared to the privileged one;
- **Story telling:** Beatriz counts negative events as personally experienced and offers credible details about negative features of the happenings: (*Anuncié que me casaba y el jefe me dijo que en breve estaría embarazada ...*);
- **Structural emphasis:** The presence of "I" in negative actions, in the headline (*I've been laid off... Now what?*) and of the implicit pronoun "they" in structures that marks the distance between the female participant and her masculine labor environment (*supe que me iban a echar and campo de hombres*).

The aspects revealed above focus on "fundamental understanding of social problems" (van Dijk, 1988) and indicate, in the scholar's terms, "the relation between society, discourse and social cognition" (idem, p.251). The ideological implications of the topic structure and the language use indicate biased visions and beliefs of both journalistic and corporation policies. These visions point out serious problems that threaten women's access and permanence on the labor market and are identified as critical targets for CDA.

V. Preliminary results

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First of all, NE heading, as the most important up front element, arouses public's interest in the personal situation of the news actor whose words are supposed to be reproduced, but there is no paragraph including that participant's experience. Hence, power resource supported by the ideological policy of the media corporation may be identified in Beatriz Zotes' denial of access to press discourse, by which she could have denounced her position as a victim of gender discrimination within her labor environment.

This type of text manipulation, as defined by van Dijk (1993) may respond to the strategies of *cognitive control* (by the press group over a member of minority group), that takes the form of *changes in the mind of others*, and leads to social inequality. It also can demonstrate Fairclough's opinion (1993:195), that "the media helps build up 'mnemonic frameworks of definition' in terms of which news stories are subsequently interpreted".

As the media group is empowered with the planning and decision-making of the news productions, it is supposed that Beatriz' manifest against gender discrimination would be allowed to reach the Spanish audience, that might sympathize with their fellow countrywoman and ally with her in her public protest. But a suspicious censorship in the International edition seems to hide the foreign audience such flagrant practices of social and labor inequality in Spain. *El País'* news producers may have thought that the reproduction of a manager's biased gesture could affect even more the Spanish corporative image in general, during the current economic crisis.

It is worth mentioning that the absent female participant's first person declaration is mentioned first in the headline of the International edition, even if her case is not treated later in the article's body. It is precisely the practice Fairclough (1995) identified: that feature writers use the active-verb construction together with concrete explanations to add more personality to their prose. From an ideological perspective, these changes that emanates from an authoritative source lead to ambivalence regarding the news heading. Moreover, they do not reproduce the exact form of the words employed by the source.

1) Since readers in Spain are not supposed to consult the two editions of *El País*, apparently small differences in content between the two versions would have passed undetected. However, for the aim of this research and after a detailed observation and analysis, important ideological implications have been drawn. Results indicate the use of discursive strategies that produce social inequality, in terms of power and gender discrimination related to the labor market in Spain.

2) Furthermore, one major aspect found refers to the fact that NE skips a whole paragraph about Beatriz Zotes (Actor 3 in NS) and,



implicitly, the text makes no reference about her labor discrimination topic. This way of acting, far from being a simple omission of a paragraph, suggests further ideologically constraints or a second message beyond the visible one. A detailed analysis at the stylistic level (including semantic, lexical and rhetoric analysis) emphasizes the importance of what has been left apart, without being transmitted.

VI. Major findings

Ultimately, the results obtained in this research try to provide lines of evidence on the media discourse strategies related to gender discrimination in the press. Thus, the methodological approach applied on the corpus selected indicates specific characteristics such as:

- a) A direct relation between the ideological circumstances in which news stories (NE and NS) are produced and the way their discourse is structured. In this respect, the information in the international edition seems more cautiously selected.
- b) A case of gender discrimination on the labor market in Spain is reproduced in NS. Consequently, the text gathers a complete sample of biased use of language that makes the readers aware of the discriminating discourse strategies. On the other hand, NE excludes the paragraph, being suspicious of institutionalized power abuse, women's invisibility promotion and stereotypes transmission.
- c) The most common stereotypes identified in NS discourse emanate from power abuse, lexical sexism and cultural androcentric beliefs regarding women's position on the labor market in Spain.

VII. Further research

Undoubtedly, further research is needed on the press discourse of *El País*, in order to demonstrate linguistic factors predisposing to gender discrimination within the news texts. In my opinion, this study has reached its aim by measuring the impact and effectiveness of the methodological frame used here. Of course, its strengths and weaknesses may also be identified, to make improvement. In any case, the same type of research on more extended corpora may reveal similar findings, even form a quantitative point of view.

VIII. References

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IX. Appendix

TEXT NE, numbered paragraphs

www.elpais.com

EL PERIÓDICO GLOBAL EN ESPAÑOL

ENGLISH EDITION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

EL PAÍS, Saturday, October 9, 2010

FEATURES Youth unemployment

GENERATION IN CRISIS (PART 4)

I've been laid off.... Now what?

Experts recommend entrepreneurship, further study or moving abroad.

Facing a lack of job opportunities and an unfavorable entrepreneurship culture, young Spaniards look across borders for solutions. Though not yet a stampede, the increasing flight of qualified tech professionals have some fearing brain drain

1. "A surrealist paradox." That's how 30-year-old Fátima Vasco defines the situation in which she finds herself as an unemployed career adviser.
2. She has been looking for work since July when Andalusia's regional government and Estepona town hall, in Málaga province, cancelled the Integral Service for Employment where she worked for "economic reasons."
3. With a diploma in social education and a teaching degree, she now sends out résumés while she thinks about what to do next. "I could do a masters, take a civil service exam, set up an academy, go to Malta or London for whatever reason to learn English..."
4. It is not easy to decide, especially knowing that 16.4 per cent of graduates aged 25 to 29 are also unemployed, double the 2008 number, according to the latest Active Population Survey (EPA). And also that, as all the experts agree, one's first layoff is a good moment for reconsidering one's future.
5. Rafael Saiz, a coach who specializes in high performance, recommends that unemployed youngsters ask themselves: "What do I want to do?" as well as consult family and friends about what they are good at and decide whether they want to be "employed, self-employed or an entrepreneur."
6. Spain has not traditionally been a country of entrepreneurs, but this generation seems different. According to a 2009 study by Metroscopia for the Bertelsmann Foundation, more than half of Spanish youngsters would like to have their own business.
7. But what most really wants is a job that matches their skills, a difficult aspiration when 44 per cent of young graduates hold a position that is below their abilities, says the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
8. César Castel, director of operations at Adecco Professional, advises youngsters to be "realists and try to square their interests with the demands of the market." Carlos Alemany, director of headhunting firm Korn/Ferry in Spain, recommends that people dream, but that they also be practical: "You need to have a plan A, as well as a plan B in case the first one fails, which is normal."



9. When A and B both fail, many see continuing to study as the only way out. Rodrigo Barahona, of consultancy Tea- Cegos, says your chosen course should be “the most specific, short and operative possible,” while Alemany also recommends doing a “masters, if possible abroad.”
10. That’s what Ricardo Coloma, a 29-year-old consultant did. He headed off to the University of California at Berkeley after being laid off from one of the big four consultancies in June. “I was the last to arrive and the first to leave,” he says. Ricardo has just started a financial accountancy course and hopes the “added value will tilt the balance.”
11. Languages are the star subjects to study. “If speaking English opened doors before, today those doors close to all those not speaking it,” stresses Barahona. Saiz agrees, adding that Arabic and Chinese are also worth studying. The experts advise people to lose their fears and complexes and head abroad, where, says Alemany, “the Spanish are valued for their creativity and ability to improvise.”
12. Sandalio Gómez, professor of human resources at the IESE business school, says “a global world requires a global mentality” and urges Spaniards to stop searching for work at home and do it “out in the world.” “It isn’t a curse like going to Germany was in the 1950s, but an enriching experience,” he says.
13. And it’s true that going abroad to enrich oneself personally, professionally and economically has become the only, or at least the best, option for many young Spaniards in recent years.
14. Those who go are usually fairly well-qualified professionals: “countries tend to feed other types of jobs through different kinds of immigration,” notes Manuel Pérez Yruela, a teacher who specializes in the Sociology of Higher Advice for Scientific Investigation.
15. Erasmus grants are one of the factors that mean that today’s youngsters do not have to think too much about moving abroad: “A phenomenon of internationalization has been generated that wasn’t there in previous generations, who were more deeply rooted in their villages.”
16. And the crisis has widened the profile of those leaving. Now it’s not just the scientists and health professionals who are emigrating, but also engineers, architects and computer experts who have lost jobs in Spain or who consider that their work will be better valued abroad.
17. One of this new breed is 29-year-old José Florido, who left Spain three years ago to go to work for Google in Zurich. “The salaries are low, the opportunities are limited, there are hardly any important companies,” he says. “At the moment I’m not planning on going back, and if I did, it would be to set up something by myself.”
18. Florido and his wife and work colleague Ana Belén Ramón, 28, are autodidacts who worked creating their own internet projects and ended up working in one of the biggest companies in the world. Now they are preparing to move to Google’s main headquarters in San Francisco, and are thinking of starting a family in the States.
19. Gómez, though, warns of the dangers of a massive brain drain, asking “Once they have gone, how you get them back?” That said, though the amount of 16- to 34-year-olds moving abroad might have been increasing since 2003, the crisis has not provoked a stampede. 2009 was the first year since then to see a modest decrease in young emigrants (from 13,083 in 2008 to 12,498 in 2009).
20. Ceferí Soler, human resources teacher at ESADE Business School, offers a glimmer of hope for Spain’s unemployed youth. “They are going to find work, but after a much longer period than they would hope and would like,” he says.
21. In his judgment, the problem is, that “confronted by an immobile and rigid market” there is a “generation which is ready and self-motivated, but spoiled, too comfortable and without language skills.
22. “They must adapt to temporary jobs that will allow them to apply for others that are more stable further on,” he continues. But they must do so with patience, because we are facing “uncertain and complex” times.