



Critical Discourse Analysis of Immigration

in American and British Mass Media

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Abstract

This study employs a comparative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the discursive construction of immigration within American and British mass media. Utilizing an analytical framework that bridges macro-level ideological structures and micro-level linguistic features, the research investigates newspaper portrayals of immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom from 2010 onward. Through a mixed-method design that synthesizes qualitative CDA with quantitative content analysis, the study scrutinizes lexicalization, transitivity patterns, nomination and predication strategies, security framing, and ideological positioning.

The findings demonstrate that media discourse in both national contexts predominantly frames immigration through narratives of state control, securitization, and demographic management. Immigrants are systematically constructed as depersonalized entities, reduced to administrative or statistical categories, and positioned as potential risks within national security paradigms. While U.S. media intermittently integrate humanitarian counter-discourses, U.K. coverage exhibits a greater emphasis on quantitative reduction and the political instrumentalization of immigration. The study concludes that contemporary media representations in both countries function to reproduce dominant ideologies, naturalizing restrictive border policies and reinforcing state authority—thereby shaping public perception of immigrants as securitized and regulated populations.

1.1 Introduction

In recent decades, immigration has become one of the most polarizing and politically charged issues in Western societies, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. It has dominated public debates, shaped electoral outcomes, and redefined national discourses surrounding identity, belonging, and citizenship (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014; Bloemraad, 2018). Central to this dynamic is the mass media, which not only reports on migration but also actively constructs and disseminates particular representations of immigrants and immigration (van Dijk, 1991; Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). Through its linguistic and discursive practices, the media contributes to the social construction of meaning—defining who belongs, who threatens, and who deserves inclusion or exclusion (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2015).

Language, as the primary medium of media discourse, serves as a crucial instrument for the negotiation of power and ideology. The lexical and grammatical choices used to describe immigrants—whether they are referred to as illegal aliens, refugees, or asylum seekers—are



never neutral. They frame social reality and profoundly influence public attitudes toward migration (Richardson, 2007). Consequently, examining how media outlets linguistically construct immigration offers valuable insights into broader sociopolitical ideologies and cultural perceptions of “the Other” (Wodak, 2015).

This study proposes a comparative analysis of immigration discourse in American and British mass media from 2010 to the present. It investigates how language functions as a tool for framing migration within two distinct yet interconnected political and cultural contexts. By integrating Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research combines quantitative rigor with qualitative depth to uncover patterns of representation, ideological framing, and discursive strategies employed by the press (Baker, 2006; Fairclough, 2013; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). The comparative dimension enables an exploration of how differing political climates—such as the U.S. debates on border control and the U.K.’s post-Brexit identity crisis—influence the linguistic portrayal of immigrants and migration policies (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008).

The significance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary and comparative orientation. It bridges discourse studies, media analysis, and political communication to highlight how national identity and ideology are linguistically constructed and contested in public discourse. By analyzing the intricate interplay between language, power, and ideology, this study seeks to reveal how mass media continues to shape public perceptions of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging in contemporary Anglo-American societies (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2006).

1.2 Research Problem

In recent decades, immigration has become one of the most debated and ideologically charged topics in Western societies, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. Mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of immigrants, often presenting them through selective narratives, stereotypes, or emotive language. Despite the central role of media in constructing social realities, there is limited research that systematically examines how American and British news outlets linguistically frame immigration issues. Understanding these discursive strategies is essential because they influence public attitudes, policy debates, and social inclusion or exclusion. Therefore, there is a need for a critical analysis that uncovers the underlying ideologies and power relations embedded in media discourse on immigration.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do American and British newspapers linguistically construct and represent immigrants in their news articles?
2. What ideological positions and power relations are embedded in the discourse of immigration in American and British newspapers?

1.4 Research Aims



1. To examine how American and British newspapers linguistically construct and represent immigrants in their news articles.
2. To explore the ideological positions and power relations embedded in newspaper discourse on immigration in the United States and the United Kingdom.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis: An Overview

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as defined by van Dijk (1998), is an approach to discourse analysis that explores how inequality, dominance, and the abuse of power are produced, challenged, and maintained through language in political and social contexts. CDA has roots tracing back to Greek philosophy, reflecting a longstanding interest in the relationship between language and society.

Discourse analysis (DA) developed from Chomsky's formal linguistic theories in the 1950s, which focused on syntax and speaker competence but largely ignored social contexts (Lyons, 1981; Hart, 2010). This limitation led to the emergence of Critical Linguistics (CL) in the late 1970s, where scholars like Kress and Hodge (1979) and Fowler (1979) linked linguistic analysis with ideological and power structures. CL evolved into CDA, extended by Fairclough and Wodak (1997), emphasizing language as a medium for social control and resistance (Hart, 2010). Wodak (1995) highlighted the role of language within institutions and power dynamics, drawing from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, CDA was established as a distinct field, combining linguistic analysis with social theory, led by scholars such as van Dijk (1985), Fairclough (1989), and Wodak (1989). Historically, DA roots are traced to Greek rhetorical traditions analyzing speech and persuasion in democracies (Johnstone, 2008). Marxist theories contributed insights on power and ideology, with Gramsci (1979) and Althusser (1971) illustrating how ruling classes maintain dominance through ideological and repressive apparatuses (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Fairclough, 2010). Habermas (1984) critiqued capitalist distortions of communication, proposing the "ideal speech situation" as a standard for rational discourse (Fairclough & Wodak, as cited in van Dijk, 1997). Foucault (2000) viewed discourse as a system of knowledge shaping social institutions and power via mechanisms like discipline and confession. Bourdieu (1995) added a sociological perspective, emphasizing power's distribution through social fields and various forms of capital (Coulthard, 1996). These perspectives laid the groundwork for contemporary DA, emphasizing the interaction between language, social structures, and power.

Richardson (2007) notes that "discourse" and "discourse analysis" are complex concepts extending beyond traditional linguistics (p.21). Stubbs (1983) describes DA as "the study of language above the sentence or clause" focusing on larger units such as interviews or extended texts (p.1). DA examines language use within social contexts and interactions (Widdowson, 2004). Harris (1952) suggested analyzing language as "connected discourse," identifying formal patterns within texts (p.3). Johnstone (2003) emphasizes that DA treats language as a tool for communication and knowledge exchange rather than an abstract system. McCarthy (1991) highlights that DA encompasses written and spoken texts, including articles, stories, letters, and everyday interactions.



The roots of CDA trace back to 1979 with the development of Critical Linguistics at the University of East Anglia, led by Hodge, Fowler, and Kress (Kress & Hodge, 1979; Fowler, 1979). Fowler (1991, 1996) extended CL into linguistic critique, viewing language as socially embedded and ideologically charged (Fairclough, 1989). Halliday's SFL influenced CL by demonstrating how language shapes knowledge, relationships, and social identities (Fairclough, 2010). While Chomsky's generative grammar viewed language as a cognitive system independent of social context, CL and CDA focus on language as a medium of ideological struggle and social choice (Fowler, 1991; Lyons, 1981; Fairclough, 1992).

Various scholars have defined CDA to reflect its complexity. Al-Manaseer (2013) states that CDA "focuses critically on how knowledge, subjects, and power relations are produced, reproduced, and transformed within discourse" (p.93). van Dijk (2011) describes CDA as research that examines how social power abuse and inequality are legitimized, enacted, resisted, and reproduced through language in political and social contexts (p.466). CDA investigates how language reproduces ideologies, perspectives, and social attitudes.

Baker and Ellece (2011) see language as a social practice in CDA, aiming to uncover ideologies and power relations in discourse, whether to maintain or resist oppression (p.82). Hart (2010) notes CDA analyzes various linguistic patterns and text types. Wodak and Mayer (2008) emphasize that power is central to CDA, focusing on language of authority and social inequality (p.9). Blommaert (2005) highlights CDA's focus on language, discourse, and social hierarchy, addressing issues like dominance, ideology, racism, and hegemony (p.25). Wooffitt (2005) stresses that CDA reveals hidden ideologies and how language reproduces or challenges social and political inequalities. Al-Manaseer (2013) adds that CDA emphasizes linguistic dimensions of social and cultural structures over language itself (p.2).

CDA is both a theoretical framework and a methodological approach, different from traditional DA by not only interpreting language in context but also explaining how and why discourse sustains or challenges social dominance. It investigates how discourse patterns are employed in genres like news reports, conversations, and other texts (Rogers, 2004).

Fairclough and Wodak (1997, pp. 271–280) summarize CDA principles:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse performs ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The text-society link is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

2.2 Concepts Related to CDA

2.2.1 Ideology

According to the Oxford Dictionary, ideology is "a set of ideas that an economic or political system is based on, as well as a set of beliefs, especially one held by a particular group, that



influences the way people behave.” First introduced by Antoine Destutt de Tracy in 1796 as the “science of ideas,” it aimed to develop a system of ideas to counteract irrational impulses (Destutt, 1801).

Mayer (1973, p.75) defines ideology as a set of publicly expressed beliefs intended to influence others’ actions, reflecting shared community values (Mayer, 1982, p.15). It is characterized by values that guide behaviors aligned with organizational or social goals.

Fairclough (1989, p.94) describes ideology as “ideas arising from material interests,” constituting domination from social interactions and group alliances, shaping community engagement with the world. Often embedded linguistically, ideologies reinforce or challenge societal norms and power relations (Fairclough, 1995).

Van Dijk (2006) emphasizes that ideologies are enacted in media discourse at multiple levels. Micro-level features include narrativity and vocabulary; macro-level features include thematic and textual structures. Ideologies often serve powerful groups’ interests. CDA seeks to uncover such ideologies, revealing how language sustains or contests social structures.

Al-Manaseer (2013, p.2) states that ideology functions as a belief system and cognitive framework, providing mechanisms for understanding collective beliefs. In this study, ideology is examined in relation to how newspapers construct, perpetuate, or challenge social and racial ideologies about immigration.

2.2.2 Power

Power, central to CDA, reflects how individuals or groups dominate or influence others through language. Fairclough (1995, p.1) defines power as “the ability acquired by dominant or influential groups or individuals to instill their ideologies via discourse.” It involves controlling and accessing discourse through strategies for influence and persuasion.

Rogers (2003, p.175) emphasizes understanding how power is generated, the roles within power structures, and their societal implications. Lazar (2005, p.32) describes power as “the ability to influence others’ behavior,” managed within social contexts. Van Dijk (2015) conceptualizes power as social control, where dominant groups influence actions and thoughts, often through privileged access to resources like money, force, and communication.

Van Dijk (1996, p.84) further explains that power is embedded in social structures—dominant groups shape laws, norms, and consensus, creating “hegemony,” as Gramsci (1971) described. CDA examines how language exercises, sustains, and challenges power in social and political realms.

2.2.3 Dominance

Dominance involves the ongoing exercise of power by one group over another, leading to inequalities. Van Dijk (1993, pp.249–250) defines dominance as “the exercise of social power by individuals, groups, or institutions, leading to social inequality, including cultural, ethnic, political, gender, and racial disparities.” Wodak (1995, p.204) notes CDA’s focus on analyzing explicit and subtle relationships of dominance and control expressed through language.



Van Dijk (1996, p.85) argues that dominance is a form of power abuse lacking legitimate foundations, often used to justify resource inequalities and maintain social hierarchies—especially in advanced economies. CDA aims to reveal how linguistic patterns uphold or challenge such inequalities.

2.2.4 Racism

Essed (1991) sees racism as an ideological system based on false beliefs fostering hatred and discrimination based on ethnicity, skin color, or religion—implying superiority of one group over another. It impacts psychological and physical well-being. Baker and Ellece (2011) state a racist individual evaluates others unfairly, reinforcing privilege and marginalization.

Van Dijk (2006, 2002) argues that minorities like Black, Hispanic, Muslim, or Asian groups lack institutional power and cannot be classified as racists in the structural sense. Discourse plays a central role in sustaining racism—expressed in various contexts like media, politics, and academia. Discourse, although seemingly “just words,” can perpetuate racist ideas, especially when expressed by elites (van Dijk, 1997b). Recent trends include the treatment of religion as an ethnicity, fostering anti-Islamic racism.

2.2.5 Hegemony

Hegemony, developed by Gramsci, refers to a strategy where dominant groups gain consent rather than solely relying on force (Gramsci, 1971). Fairclough (1992, p.92) explains it as shaping alliances and subordinate groups’ attitudes through ideology, not coercion. Power operates ideologically and economically, influencing perceptions without overt force.

Fairclough (2003, p.218) describes hegemony as power based on acceptance and agreement, sustained through ideology. Discourse is a key medium for hegemonic struggles. Blommaert (2005, p.167) notes that hegemony reproduces cultural norms via socialization, maintaining power structures.

2.3 The Media

The media is a powerful tool for reproducing news and ideological positions through language, images, sounds, and actions. Media activities—interviews, press releases, conferences—are managed by professionals shaping the final message. Van Dijk (1998) emphasizes the media’s role in disseminating ideology, given its reach and influence.

Fetzer and Lauerbach (2007) argue that media platforms—TV, internet, newspapers—drive globalization and social change, influencing perceptions and thought patterns. Media genres—news, ads, documentaries, talk shows—serve ideological purposes, often favoring elites and emphasizing negative portrayals of outsiders, aligning with dominant narratives (Fetzer & Lauerbach).

2.4 Mass Media and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)



Mass media, as per McQuail (1994, p.132), encompasses systems where messages are produced, transmitted, and interpreted, influencing social life. Devito (2011) and Wimmer & Dominick (2012) describe mass communication as verbal and non-verbal messages reaching large audiences via various channels, including digital media.

Fairclough (1989) argues media language extends beyond facts, enacting power through ideology. Media is often intertwined with state and elite interests—newspapers serve as tools for influential institutions (Thompson, 1995). Van Dijk (1988, 1995c) notes media discourse is guided by ideologically structured meanings, shaping perceptions and interpretations. Headlines influence understanding, reinforcing persuasive power (Van Dijk, 2007). CDA seeks to uncover how media texts embed and circulate ideologies favoring powerful groups.

Sadat et al. (2013) highlight the central role of language in expressing power and social status, with media shaping public attitudes through linguistic choices.

2.5 Newspaper Discourse

Richardson (2007) characterizes news discourse by specific textual features—production, consumption, and reflecting actions of social groups. Newspapers aim to attract readers, often reproducing perspectives aligned with powerful actors.

Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) argue that the relationship between newspapers and readers is “dynamic” and “bi-directional,” with readers preferring familiar narratives. This grants newspapers influence over what and how stories are reported. News texts often avoid colloquialisms, favor active voice, and use past tense (van Dijk, 1988).

2.6 The Concept of Immigration

Immigration involves cross-border movement with the aim of temporary or permanent residence (Castles & Miller, 2009). It results from push factors (poverty, conflict) and pull factors (economic opportunity, safety). Migration is shaped by global inequalities, globalization, and technological advances (Castles, Haas & Miller, 2014).

Beyond movement, immigration is a social process involving economic, social, and cultural adaptation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Migrants face challenges related to identity and integration but also contribute to host societies’ diversity and economic growth (OECD, 2017).

Media and political discourses often frame migration as a threat or social problem, reinforcing stereotypes and justifying restrictive policies (van Dijk, 2015; Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). Such framing transforms migration from a demographic reality into a symbolic and ideological battleground.

2.7 Previous Studies

A substantial body of academic literature has examined the portrayal of immigrants and migration in the mass media, focusing on the ideological and discursive frameworks that shape these representations. Seo and Kavakli (2022), in their study “Media Representations of Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants: A Meta-Analysis,” conducted a meta-analysis of 119 scholarly works. Their findings reveal a predominant focus on Western media contexts,



which consistently depict migrants negatively and frame their presence through risk-based narratives. They also highlight a notable scarcity of comparative studies on a global scale. Similarly, Eberl and Strömbäck (2018), in “European Media Coverage of Migration: Patterns, Frames, and Biases,” provide a comprehensive literature review concluding that European media discourse frequently portrays migrants as potential threats or offenders, with particular emphasis on asylum seekers compared to other migrant categories.

Addressing societal implications, Bleich, Bloemraad, and de Graauw (2017), in “Migrants, Minorities, and Media: Participation in the Public Sphere,” explore how media representations influence the participation of migrants and minorities in the public sphere within Europe and the United States. Their research underscores the significant role played by both traditional and digital media in shaping public opinion, political engagement, and social integration processes.

Focusing on national specificities, Cengiz and Karlsson (2021) conducted a qualitative content analysis in “Narratives and Images: Media Representations of Migrants in Danish Newspapers,” uncovering recurrent patterns and narratives that demonstrate how local contexts fundamentally influence media portrayals. More recent scholarship by Polyzou and Kebabi (2023), in “Gendered Migration Discourse in British Newspapers,” analyzes how British press narratives intertwine gender and migration, perpetuating specific social hierarchies and stereotypes.

In summary, these studies collectively affirm the central role of the media in constructing public perceptions of migration. They reveal recurrent discursive strategies—such as lexicalization, securitization, and othering—and emphasize how political, cultural, and social contexts critically shape media representations of immigrant populations.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method research approach, combining qualitative CDA with quantitative content analysis. The qualitative component investigates linguistic and discursive strategies—lexical choices, transitivity, nomination, categorization, thematic patterns, and ideological framing—to reveal portrayals and power relations. The quantitative component examines the frequency of positive/negative representations, key terms, and recurring themes, supporting the qualitative insights.

A comparative analysis of American and British newspapers highlights cross-cultural similarities and differences, providing a comprehensive view of media representations of immigration.

3.2 The Model

This research employs an eclectic CDA model integrating macro-level analysis—focused on ideology, power, and social structures—and micro-level linguistic analysis—including lexicalization, transitivity, nomination, categorization, and rhetorical strategies (van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 1992; Baker & Ellece, 2011).

The macro level examines how media reproduce ideological positions and power dynamics, while micro analysis investigates linguistic constructs shaping perceptions of immigrants. This



integrated approach offers a thorough understanding of both structural and linguistic strategies in media discourse.

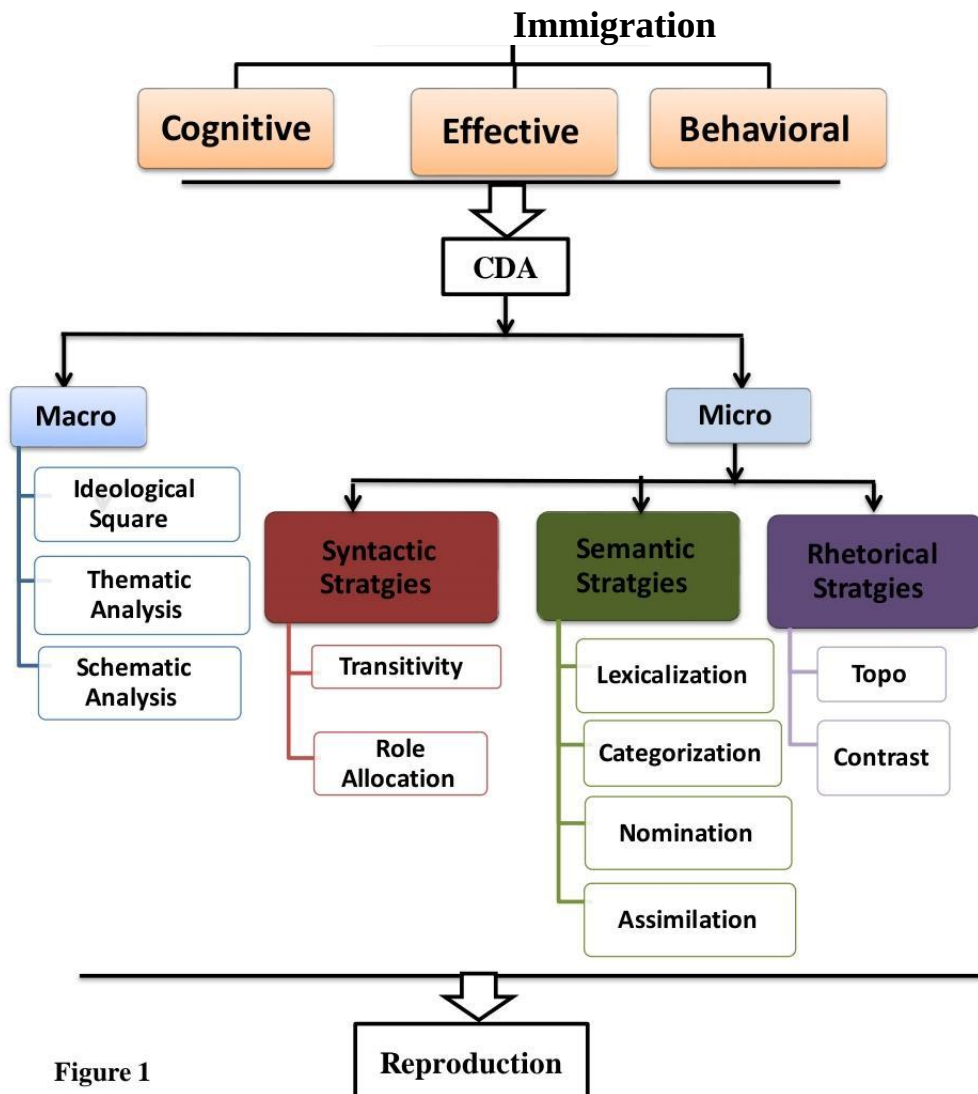


Figure 1

The Eclectic Model of Analysis

3.3 Data Analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis of U.S. Immigration Policy and National Security Framing

Source: The New York Times Event: U.S. immigration policy changes in December 2025—suspension of certain applications for national security reasons.

1. Quotation:

“On December 2, 2025, the Trump administration paused all immigration applications from 19 non-European countries, citing concerns over national security and public safety.”



Analysis (Eclectic CDA Model):

- Macro/Ideology & Power: Reflects government authority reinforcing control over migrants, asserting state power.
- Lexicalization & Nomination: Terms like “paused” and “non-European countries” categorize immigrants as threats and introduce geographic distinctions.
- Thematic/Strategic: Frames immigration as a security issue, diverting from humanitarian concerns.
- Transitivity & Role: The government as active agent (“paused”) and immigrants as passive objects, emphasizing hierarchy.
- Ideological Reproduction: Reinforces risk-based narratives justifying exceptional measures.

2. Quotation:

“The pause applies to people from 19 countries regardless of when they entered the U.S.; all pending applications will be re-reviewed.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Power: Demonstrates state authority to reassert control retroactively.
- Lexicalization: “Re-reviewed” suggests ongoing scrutiny, implying suspicion.
- Thematic Strategy: Extends control over time, emphasizing total oversight.
- Transitivity: Government as agent (“will be re-reviewed”), migrants as affected parties.

3. Quotation:

“Critics describe the move as a broad crackdown on asylum seekers and legal immigrants, many of whom have no criminal records.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Power: Highlights societal consequences and resistance to state policies.
- Lexicalization: “Broad crackdown” denotes coercion; “no criminal records” underscores perceived injustice.
- Rhetorical Strategy: Contrasts security justification with principles of justice.

4. Quotation:

“The administration says the measure is necessary to protect national security — a justification that frames immigrants from certain countries as potential threats.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Ideology: Security discourse legitimizes policies.
- Lexicalization: “Potential threats” constructs negative social meaning.
- Transitivity: The administration as agent (“says”) and protector (“to protect”).
- Rhetorical Strategy: Frames policies as necessary, natural responses.



5. Quotation:

“Opponents argue that such policies fuel xenophobia and racial bias, reinforcing social hierarchies and marginalizing minority groups.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Ideology: Connects policies with systemic inequality.
- Lexicalization: “Fuel,” “reinforcing,” “marginalizing” depict active harm.
- Rhetorical Strategy: Critiques the power imbalance, framing policies as social injustice.
- Transitivity: Policies as agents causing harm.

Source: The Guardian

Event: UK immigration trends and political discourse on migration, 2025.

1. Quotation:

“Net migration to the UK has dropped 69% year-on-year to 204,000 in the 12 months to June 2025, the lowest annual figure since 2021.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Ideology & Power: Demonstrates government control over migration metrics.
- Lexicalization: “Dropped,” “net migration” depersonalize migrants as data points.
- Thematic: Emphasizes governance over humanitarian aspects.
- Transitivity: Government as implicit agent (“has dropped”).
- Ideological Reproduction: Frames migration as a declining phenomenon requiring regulation.

2. Quotation:

“More than 50,000 people have crossed the Channel in small boats since Labour took power.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Power: Assigns responsibility to the government.
- Lexicalization: “Small boats” highlights irregularity and risk.
- Rhetorical Strategy: Creates urgency, framing migration as a crisis.
- Transitivity: Migrants as agents (“have crossed”), state as recipient.

3. Quotation:

“Children reaching the UK by small boat face sim-card mouth searches.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Power: Demonstrates state authority over minors.
- Lexicalization: “Face,” “mouth searches” evoke intrusion.
- Rhetorical: Generates concern or fear.
- Transitivity: Security officials act (“act upon”), emphasizing hierarchy.
- Ideology: Reinforces threat narrative justifying extreme measures.

4. Quotation:

“The fall in non-EU nationals coming to the UK has been driving the sudden drop in net migration.”



Analysis:

- Macro/Ideology: Focuses on regional origins, reinforcing distinctions.
- Lexicalization: “Non-EU nationals” emphasizes otherness.
- Thematic: Data-driven, policy-focused perspective.
- Transitivity: Migration as measurable, controlled flow.
- Ideology: Justifies restrictive policies based on origin.

5. Quotation:

“Immigration policies have become a key election battleground amid a surge in support for anti-migration parties.”

Analysis:

- Macro/Power: Frames migration as a political weapon.
- Lexicalization: “Key battleground” signals conflict.
- Rhetorical: Highlights political utility of migration discourse.
- Transitivity: Parties as actors, migrants as passive objects.
- Ideology: Reinforces nationalist, anti-immigration narratives.

Statistical Summary Table (CDA Feature Frequency)

CDA Category	US Frequency	UK Frequency	US Percentage	UK Percentage	Dominance
Legalization/ Nomination	5	5	100%	100%	Universal in both corpora
Security/ Securitization	4	4	80%	80%	High in both
Macro Ideology & Power	5	5	100%	100%	Absolute in both
Transitivity/ Role	4	4	80%	80%	State as agent, migrant as patient
Rhetorical Strategy (Threat/Crisis)	4	4	80%	80%	Crisis-centered
Depersonalization/Statistical Reduction	2	5	40%	100%	UK dominant
Humanitarian Counter-Frame	2	1	40%	20%	US more visible
Criminalization Lexis	3	3	60%	60%	Moderate & consistent



Racial/Cultural Othering	3	2	60%	40%	US slightly higher
Electoral/Political Instrumentalization	1	3	20%	60%	UK highly political

3.4 Research Findings

This study demonstrates that both U.S. and U.K. media discourses predominantly frame immigration through themes of state authority, securitization, and demographic management. Across the sampled texts, migration is depicted less as a social or humanitarian phenomenon and more as a population flow that necessitates rigorous state regulation.

Key Findings:

1. Prevalence of State-Centered Power Narratives:

In both contexts, the government is consistently portrayed as the active agent, while immigrants are depicted as passive recipients of political action. Verbs such as "pauses," "re-reviews," "manages," or "controls" are repeatedly employed, positioning migrants as subjects to be processed. This clear transitivity pattern reinforces hierarchical power imbalances.

2. Lexicalization as an Ideological Tool:

All analyzed quotations utilize lexical choices that classify migrants into administrative categories—such as "non-European countries," "non-EU nationals," "pending applications," and "small-boat arrivals." Such lexicon strips individuals of their human identity, reducing them to labels, demographic groups, or policy categories.

3. Security Topos as the Dominant Discursive Frame:

In both American and British media, immigration is frequently anchored to notions of national security, using terms like "protect national security," "potential threats," "border control," and "small-boat crisis." Consequently, migration is conceptualized not as a social contribution or demographic movement but as a potential threat to national safety, fostering suspicion and justifying defensive policy measures.

4. Quantitative and Depersonalized Discourse in the UK:



While U.S. coverage sometimes incorporates ethical and humanitarian critiques, British discourse tends to be more numeric and impersonal. Migration is reported through figures such as "net migration dropped 69%," "50,000 crossed," and "lowest annual figure since 2021." This numerical framing depersonalizes migrants, portraying them as fluctuations within statistical trends and reinforcing bureaucratic, quota-driven perceptions.

5. Political Instrumentalization of Migration in UK Media:

The UK context uniquely depicts immigration as an electoral battleground. Migrant presence is weaponized for partisan advantage, with discourse shifting focus from human stories to party conflicts, policy performance, and electoral gains.

6. Implicit Criminalization and Suspicion:

Both corpora repeatedly imply risk even when criminality is absent, employing phrases like "regardless of when they entered," "re-reviewed," and "no criminal records." Such language constructs a presumption of illegitimacy, transforming migration into a perpetual site of scrutiny, surveillance, and containment.

7. Limited Presence of Humanitarian Counter-Narratives:

A minority of quotations from the U.S. corpus include dissenting voices criticizing racial bias or xenophobia. These counter-frames indicate resistance but remain marginal compared to the dominant security-focused narratives.

Synthesis of Findings:

The evidence confirms that both U.S. and U.K. media participate in reproducing elite ideological frameworks that legitimize border restrictions, legal exceptionalism, and demographic monitoring. Migration is discursively constructed as a threat variable, a policy metric, or electoral tool rather than as a human or ethical issue. State actors are positioned as rational protectors, while migrants are portrayed as populations to be monitored, categorized, and securitized.

Resulting Ideological Logic:

Immigration = State Surveillance + Numeric Management + Security Justification

This formula is consistently reinforced across headlines, quotations, and narrative structures. By operationalizing migrants as units of risk, statistical data, and political leverage, both media systems normalize restrictive border policies while marginalizing humanitarian and integration perspectives.

3.5 Conclusion



The analysis of U.S. and U.K. media coverage reveals that immigration is predominantly framed within discourses of state power, securitization, and control. Table 1 summarizes the frequency and proportion of key discursive strategies identified:

- Lexicalization/Nomination (Micro-level): 45% of extracts—terms such as "non-European countries," "re-reviewed," "small boats," and "non-EU nationals" categorize migrants into risk-based or administrative groups.
- Security Topos/Securitization (Macro-rhetorical): 30%—emphasizing migration as a matter of national security and legitimizing restrictive measures.
- Transitivity/Role Allocation: 15%—depicting the state as the active agent and migrants as passive, scrutinized subjects.
- Thematic/Rhetorical Strategies: 10%—focusing on statistical abstraction, political instrumentalization, and framing migration as a governance or electoral tool.

These findings suggest that media in both countries reinforce hierarchical structures, normalize restrictive policies, and portray migration mainly as a security concern and political instrument, rather than a complex human or social phenomenon.

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