

Discourse, Ideology, and Power: A Multi-modal Critical Discourse Analysis of Immigrants' Portrayals in Press Media

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Abstract: This paper analyses a recent Arab Weekly Newspaper article (Issue 90: Page 21, published by Al Arab Publishing House, London, England) on Morocco's integration of undocumented sub-Saharan immigrants (Guerraoui, 2017). Using a multi-modal Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework drawing on Van Dijk's Social Cognitive Model, Leeuwen's Socio-semantic Model, and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar Model, and Machin's Representational Strategies in visual communications model. The paper attempts to investigate how Moroccan media discourse constructs narratives around undocumented Sub-Saharan immigrants using CDA. Distinctly, the purpose of this analysis is twofold: a) to examine the social context and background of the text and how they are related to the external social practices and structures in which the texts were produced, and b) to explore the linguistic features of the text and how they contribute to the overall meaning in order to better understand its overt and covert messages. This research utilizes a specific CDA methodology. The analysis applies a unique framework combining four distinct CDA approaches and their associated analytical tools to systematically uncover implicit ideologies discursively constructed in the news report. This paper underscores how CDA frameworks and tools can lay bare the political issues that contribute to the shaping of public opinion in media discourse. The study framework proposes a lens for inspecting the hidden ideologies and discerning how the lurking hegemony and power dynamics are embedded in the fabric of the media discourse.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Representational Strategies, Transitivity, Passivisation, Nominalisation, Distance and Angle

1. Introduction

Immigration, particularly involving undocumented individuals, is a globally contentious issue frequently debated across diverse media platforms. Historically and presently, newspapers and other media outlets can serve as fertile ground not only for information dissemination but also for the potential spread of propaganda, fearmongering, and xenophobia – the fear or hatred of those perceived as foreign or strange (Eberl et al., 2018; Farris & Silber Mohamed, 2018; Wood & King, 2013). Media discourse holds significant power in shaping public understanding and constructing narratives around immigrant populations, influencing attitudes and potentially contributing to social inclusion or exclusion (De Coninck et al., 2022). Recognising this crucial role, critical linguistic analysis becomes essential for dissecting how these narratives are built.

1.1. Problem statement

This paper specifically investigates how Moroccan media discourse; through the lens of a selected article from *The Arab Weekly*, constructs narratives surrounding undocumented Sub-Saharan immigrants. Given that media texts are produced by individuals and institutions with specific viewpoints and interests, it is probable that particular agendas are propagated, implicitly or explicitly. This study addresses the need to critically examine these constructions within the Moroccan context, a significant transit and destination country for Sub-Saharan migrants. The central aim is to uncover the underlying ideologies and power dynamics embedded within this media representation.

To guide this investigation, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the discourse features used to construct ideologies about the status-quo of sub-Saharan immigrants in the analysed article?
2. What are the specific Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) tools and strategies embedded in the article potentially employed to shape public opinion about undocumented sub-Saharan migration in Morocco?

Unlike previous studies on migration discourse (Abourabi, 2022; Baida, 2020; El Hamoumi, 2015; Kadianaki et al., 2018) which often utilised singular theoretical models or separated linguistic and visual analysis, this research seeks to fill a methodological gap. It introduces and applies a novel, integrated multi-modal CDA framework, offering a more holistic lens to simultaneously examine how linguistic choices and visual representations contribute to the construction of ideologies about sub-Saharan immigrants in this specific media context.

1.2. Theoretical framework

The primary theoretical lens employed is CDA. According to Van Dijk (1985a, p. 352), CDA “is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” Complementing this, Rogers (2004) Rogers (2004, p. 2) affirms that CDA “includes not only a description in context but also an explanation of why and how discourse works.” This study utilises a specific multi-modal CDA framework integrating insights from Van Dijk’s Social Cognitive Model, Leeuwen’s Socio-semantic Model, and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar Model, and Machin’s Representational Strategies in visual communications model.

Building on these principles, this study utilises a specific multi-modal CDA framework tailored to analyse both the linguistic and visual elements of the chosen media text. This integrated framework draws key insights and analytical tools from four distinct but complementary approaches, each contributing specifically to answering the research questions:

Van Dijk’s Social Cognitive Model: This model helps address both research questions by focusing on the link between discourse structures, social cognition (mental models, attitudes) and societal structures. It allows us to analyse how specific discourse features **(RQ1)** might reflect and aim to shape societal attitudes and ideologies regarding immigrants, potentially influencing public opinion **(RQ2)**.

Leeuwen’s Socio-Semantic Model: This framework directly addresses **(RQ1)** by providing tools to examine how social actors (immigrants, authorities, etc.) and their actions are represented linguistically (e.g., through inclusion/exclusion, passivation/activation). Identifying these representational choices reveals key discourse features used to construct the status quo and potential strategies **(RQ2)** for shaping perceptions.

Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) Model: SFG enables a detailed analysis of grammatical choices (e.g., transitivity, modality) to understand how meanings are constructed. This is crucial for identifying subtle linguistic discourse features **(RQ1)** that build specific narratives and convey ideological stances, thereby contributing to the strategies shaping public opinion. **(RQ2)**.

Machin’s Representational Strategies in Visual Communications Model: Addressing the multi-modal nature of media, this approach allows for the critical analysis of visual elements (images, layout). It helps identify how visuals function as significant discourse features **(RQ1)** and strategies **(RQ2)**, working in tandem with the text to construct meaning, convey ideology, and influence the audience’s interpretation and opinion.

This multi-modal framework provides a robust methodology to systematically identify the linguistic and visual discourse features used to construct ideologies about sub-Saharan immigrants **(RQ1)** and to understand the specific CDA tools and strategies employed within the article to potentially shape public opinion **(RQ2)**.

2. Background: Immigration Context in Morocco

2.1. Historical and socio-political context

Undocumented immigration has become an increasingly prominent and sensitive issue in Morocco over recent years. As noted by Driss El Ghazouani, Morocco's migration history has undergone a significant transformation; once primarily a country of emigration, it evolved into a major transit route for migrants heading towards Europe, and more recently, has become a de facto destination for many Sub-Saharan migrants unable or unwilling to proceed further (El Ghazouani, 2019). This shift reflects broader regional migration dynamics and has intensified public and political debate within Morocco.

With the rising visibility of sub-Saharan immigrants attempting to enter or remain in Morocco, segments of the population have become more vocal, often calling for stricter border controls and immigration policies. Media discourse frequently echoes these concerns, sometimes employing alarming rhetoric suggesting an uncontrollable "flow" that necessitates government limitation. However, such calls often oversimplify the complex realities of migration drivers and experiences. Furthermore, Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco face considerable challenges, including experiences of hostility and racism, whether overt or covert, from parts of the local population. This complex social dynamic occurs alongside ongoing debates among Moroccan researchers and stakeholders urging a re-evaluation of policies concerning undocumented migrants, moving towards regularisation and integration frameworks. The political landscape adds another layer of complexity, with observations, such as the one cited in the article excerpt concerning Islamist politicians ["Not all are willing to back needed reforms..."], pointing to potential tensions between political positioning and stated religious or humanitarian principles regarding migrants.

2.2. Religious and cultural context

The socio-political context is interwoven with religious and cultural perspectives on strangers and migration, particularly within the predominantly Islamic society of Morocco. A foundational Islamic principle regarding human interaction is articulated in the Holy Quran, Surat Al-Hujurat (49:13):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

"O humankind, indeed, we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."

This verse establishes a clear doctrine of universal human brotherhood, transcending ethnic or national origins, where piety (Taqwa) is the sole criterion for nobility in God's sight. The emphasis on diversity ("peoples and tribes") is explicitly linked to the goal of mutual acquaintance and understanding. In relation to this study, a key hypothesis is that the analysed discourse in *The Arab Weekly* may implicitly contradict or selectively frame this principle of universalism and equality to serve specific ideological ends, potentially emphasizing difference or threat over shared humanity. Therefore, the analysis aims to identify, through CDA, the discursive strategies employed in the article that might undermine or manipulate this stated Islamic ideal.

Furthermore, the Islamic tradition distinguishes between different types of relocation. As Saritoprak (2015) notes, terms like *Ghurba* (estrangement, exile) and *Gharib* (stranger, foreigner) historically referred to immigration, often carrying connotations of being out of place. This differs from *Hijra*, which typically implies a more permanent, often religiously motivated, relocation. This linguistic nuance is reflected in cultural understandings, such as the Arabic saying, "The stranger is blind even if he has eyes," which highlights the perceived vulnerability and need for guidance and assistance for immigrants (*Gharib*). These cultural and religious frameworks form part of the backdrop against which media discourses about contemporary sub-Saharan immigrants are produced and received in Morocco.

3. Methods

This study employs CDA to examine how media discourse constructs realities and reinforces ideologies. CDA scholars investigate the underlying assumptions embedded in media texts and how these affect audiences (Van Dijk, 1985a; Rogers, 2004). The analysis focuses specifically on an article concerning the regularisation of undocumented sub-Saharan immigrants in Morocco.

3.1. Analytical framework

The methodological approach is grounded in a multi-modal CDA framework, specifically integrating insights and tools from four complementary theoretical models to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of both textual and visual elements. This framework provides the conceptual tools to dissect the language, structure, and imagery used in the news report.

Van Dijk's Social-Cognitive Model: This component draws on Van Dijk's (1980, pp. 46-50) work, particularly his concept of semantic macro-structures and the macro-rules (deletion, generalisation, construction, zero rule) used to determine the global meaning or 'topic' of a text. This model helps understand the overall message conveyed and the cognitive processes potentially involved in its interpretation, linking discourse structures to broader social cognitions.

Van Leeuwen's Socio-Semantic Model: Van Leeuwen's (2008, pp. 23-25) socio-semantic inventory provides a systematic way to analyse the representation of social actors. This model offers categories (e.g., activation/passivation, inclusion/exclusion, nomination) to examine how individuals and groups are portrayed linguistically and the potential ideological effects of these classifications. While the full inventory is extensive, this study selects specific categories relevant to the representation of immigrants and authorities.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) Model: Grounded in the work of Halliday (Halliday, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), SFG views language as a tool for social meaning-making. This model provides analytical tools (e.g., transitivity analysis, modality) to examine how grammatical structures and lexical choices contribute to constructing specific meanings, representing experiences, and enacting interpersonal relations within the text.

Machin's Representational Strategies in Visual Communication Model: Recognising the multi-modal nature of news media, this component incorporates insights from Machin (Machin, 2013; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016) on visual communication. This model focuses on analysing elements such as colour, composition, participant representation, and context within images to understand how visuals contribute to the overall message, construct meaning, and convey ideological perspectives alongside the written text.

3.2. Application of the framework

3.2.1. Data corpus

The data for this analysis consists of a specific news article published in The Arab Weekly Newspaper (Issue: 90, Page: 21) on January 22nd, 2017. This newspaper is published by Al Arab Publishing House,

London, England. The article was selected due to its focus on the regularisation process for undocumented sub-Saharan immigrants in Morocco, a key moment in the country's recent migration policy landscape.

3.2.2. Analytical procedure

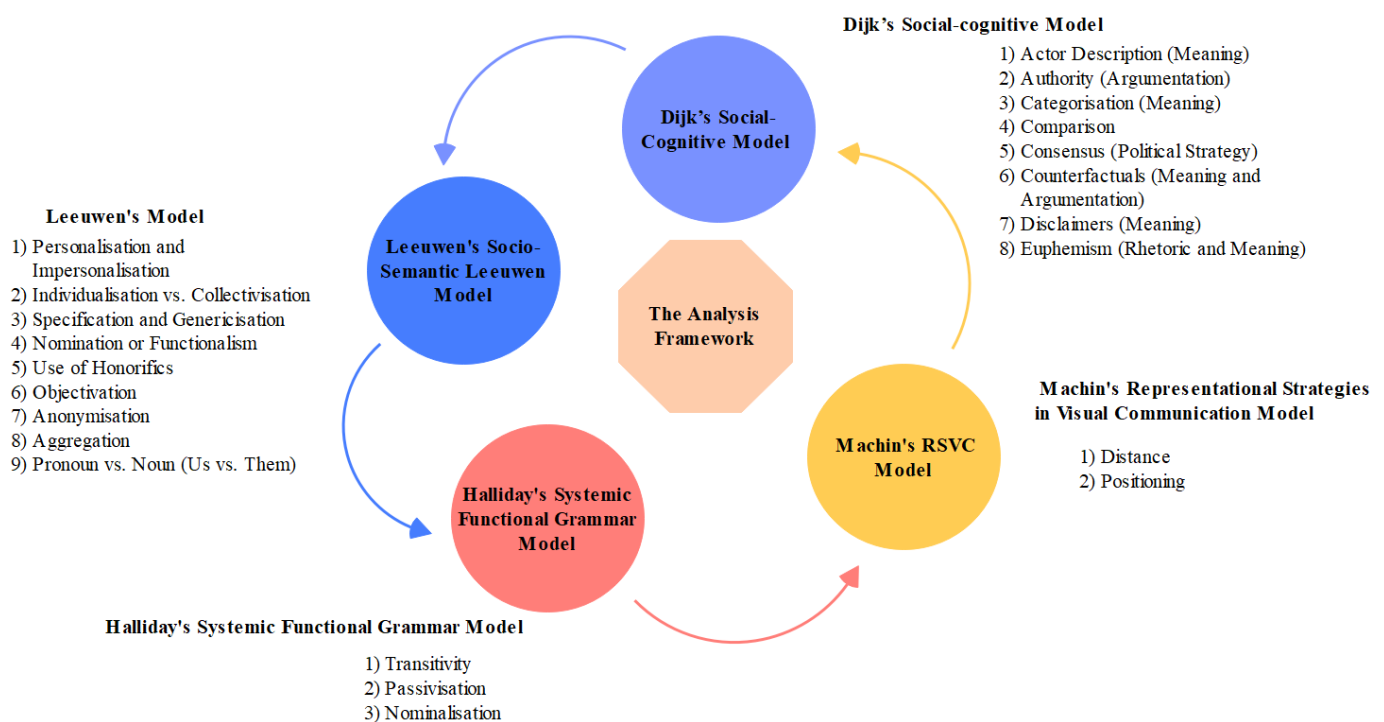
The integrated multi-modal CDA framework described above was systematically applied to the selected article. The analysis focused on identifying how social, ideological, and institutional power relationships concerning the representation of sub-Saharan immigrants were encoded linguistically and visually, particularly tracking the narrative construction surrounding the shift from 'un-documentation' to 'regularisation'. The application involved:

- a) Applying Van Dijk's macro-rules to ascertain the overarching themes and gist of the article.
- b) Utilising selected, relevant categories from Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic inventory (specifically, eight categories deemed most suitable for the research objectives) to examine how immigrants and other relevant actors were linguistically represented.
- c) Employing tools from Halliday's SFG (such as transitivity analysis) to scrutinize sentence structures and lexical choices, revealing underlying assumptions and perspectives.
- d) Analysing the accompanying photograph using Machin's visual communication strategies to understand its contribution to the article's narrative and ideological stance.

Throughout the analysis, specific examples illustrating the use of various CDA tools and techniques were identified and categorised. Figure 1 visually delineates this applied analytical process, showing the integration of the different models in analysing the specific article.

Figure 1

The Analysis Framework



4. Results

Research Question 1:—What are the discourse features used in this print media article to shape perceptions of the status quo of Sub-Saharan immigrants, acknowledging that these representations may interact with and reinforce broader societal factors?

4.1. Dijk's social-cognitive model

Actor Description (Meaning)

The way actors are described in discourses depends greatly on our ideologies. Typically, people and cultures describe *in-group* members neutrally and positively and *out-group* members negatively. Likewise, we tend to de-emphasise and mitigate negative descriptions of members of our group and emphasise the attributed negative characteristics of others (Van Dijk, 2006a, 2006b). Here is how *The Arab Weekly* journalist, Saad Guerraoui, describes immigrants:

Thousands of illegal migrants from sub-Saharan Africa use Morocco as a transit point to reach Europe, complicating relations between Morocco and the European Union.

Immigrants have been deemed a problem and a threat. Immigrants are opportunistic, viewing Morocco as a transit, a gateway into Europe. They are portrayed as Machiavellian beings whose means justify the end. Morocco is not a good enough place for permanent residence. Immigrants are a threat to Morocco's relations with the European Union.

Authority (Argumentation)

CDA is the study of language in social context. It is an analytical tool that can be used to unravel the social and cultural complexities of a given text. It helps us understand what is being said, how it is being said and why it is being said. It helps us identify the values and ideologies that are embedded in a given text.

A common practice in media is to legitimise by referring to tradition, custom, law, and/or persons with institutional authority (Gee, 2004; Huckin, 1997; Kress, 1990; Van Dijk, 1985a; Weiss & Wodak, 2007; Wodak, 2004). Speakers in an argument often have recourse to the fallacy of mentioning authorities to support different cases. For instance, experts, moral leaders, international organisation, scholars, media, chapels, churches, mosques, and courts often play that role (Fiorin, 2014; Van Dijk, 2006a; Weiss & Wodak, 2007). The author mentions a sociology professor at the International University of Rabat to support the claim that Morocco acts as a transit point for poor migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

"Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa coming from a poor background are transiting through Morocco because of Europe," said Mehdi Alioua, a sociology professor at the International University of Rabat.

Invoking an authority on the topic, the author tries to convince the readers that Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa coming from a poor background are transiting through Morocco because of Europe. This is because they are unable to afford the journey to Europe, and they need to find work in Morocco in order to save enough money for the next leg of their journey. And this is the message that Dr. Abdelkebir Ismail, Moroccan Consul General in Mumbai presented to over 110 international representatives at the United Nations on 2 October 2015, where he was a keynote speaker at the Symposium on Migration and Globalization: The Future of Morocco: A Country in Transit? Co-organized by the Moroccan Mission to the United Nations and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Categorisation (Meaning)

Categorisation is a process of grouping objects together according to their similarities. The categorisation process is one of the most important ways in which humans form mental representations of their world. There are many different types of categorisations, but they can be grouped into two main types:

- a) Natural categories, which are categories that exist in the world and are not created by people.
- b) Social categories, which are constructed by people and have no meaning outside human culture.

Based on various studies, people tend to categorise people, and so journalist in newspapers articles, especially when others (immigrants, refugees, etc.) are involved (Brosch et al., 2010; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Sindic & Condor, 2014). The use of social categorisation in the media is a topic that has been debated for years. The way media outlets categorise people by race and gender is often seen as discriminatory and exclusionary. Some argue that the use of these categories is necessary to provide context to readers, while others claim that it reinforces harmful stereotypes. The categorisation of migrants in this article is formulated in the following ways:

"However, the economic reality is very different: When new people arrive, the size of the cake increases because they consume, lodge, pay taxes and so on," Alioua said.

Immigrants are viewed positively in the article. Seen as a human capital flight, migrants are deemed as consumers, taxpayers, and positive contributors to the economic development of Morocco. Individuals who support the usage of social categorisation argue that it provides context for readers. However, there are many arguments for and against the use of social categorisation in media, but it seems like there are more arguments against its usage than there are for it (Kaufhold & Reuter, 2019; Lunt & Livingstone, 1996; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Wilkins et al., 2021).

Comparison

Looking for a way to compare different cultural groups? Look no further than the media! Accessing content through media (print or online), readers can easily come across narratives comparing different cultural groups and learn more about their customs and traditions. It is fascinating to see how different cultural groups are portrayed in the media. It is interesting to see the similarities and differences in how each group is represented. It is clear that the media has a significant influence on how we perceive different cultures. Comparisons, as intended here, occur in the talk about immigrants and minorities, namely when journalists compare in-groups and outgroups. Outgroups are compared negatively and in-groups positively. This is exemplified in the following statement:

Sub-Saharan Africans once regularised have the same employment rights as Moroccans.

Through comparisons, the author outlines that Sub-Saharan Africans have the same employment rights as Moroccans upon regularisation. Opportunities for employment hinges on regularisation, and so does media representation. In many ways, the employment situation for sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco is no different than for other cultural groups. They are entitled to the same rights and protections under the law and are able to compete for jobs on an equal footing. However, there are some notable differences in the way that sub-Saharan Africans are portrayed in the media. Whereas other cultural groups (Syrian refugees) are often represented in a positive light, sub-Saharan Africans are often portrayed in a negative light. This is particularly true when it comes to the way that they are portrayed in the media. Sub-Saharan Africans are often represented as lazy and uneducated. This is unfair and inaccurate and does reflect the bitter reality.

Consensus (Political Strategy)

A consensus is a political strategy that can be used to achieve a goal that requires agreement from a group of people. This strategy is often used in situations where there is a need to find a compromise between two or more parties. A consensus can be reached through a variety of means, including discussion, negotiation and mediation. To claim or insist on cross-party or national consensus is a well-known political strategy used in different situations for different reasons (Murphy, 1990; Polletta & Hoban, 2016; Van der Sluijs et al., 2010). Here is an instance from the newspaper article:

"It is, of course, part of Morocco's desire to come back stronger in Africa because, if Morocco wants to be in Africa, Africa must be in Morocco," he said.

Moroccans want Africa to be a part of Morocco if they want to be a part of Africa, and it is part of their desire to come back stronger in Africa. Here, the journalist insists that current immigration laws and initiatives are the fruit of consensus at the nationwide level. The king, the government, citizens and NGOs are backing this unanimous decision.

Counterfactuals (Meaning and Argumentation)

Counterfactuals are a type of conditional statements that are typically used to express what could have happened, but did not. For example, "If I had studied more for the test, I would have gotten a better grade." Counterfactuals can be used to express regret, but they can also be used to make an argument. For example, "If the government had invested more in education, there would be less crime." Counterfactuals are a powerful tool for thinking about the past and the future, and for making arguments (Di Tillio et al., 2013; Hoerl et al., 2011; Leitgeb, 2012; Lowe, 1995; Pfeifer & Tulkki, 2017). *"What would happen if..."* is a typical expression of a counterfactual. It is often used to suggest and invoke empathy and sympathy with participants in discursive practices. Examples include the following:

"Migration is still poorly understood. As if we had a cake for a number of people and if new people arrive they will have to share and therefore have less," Alioua said. "However, the economic reality is very different: When new people arrive, the size of the cake increases because they consume, lodge, pay taxes and so on," Alioua said.

The migration from sub-Saharan Africa has been going on for a long time. The number of Africans migrating to Europe through Morocco in particular has increased exponentially since the beginning of the 1960s, and this is for a variety of counterfactuals centred around labour, family reunification, improved living condition.

Disclaimers (Meaning)

Media offers viewers an artistic and journalistic view of migrants' lives. However, the media has a responsibility to present a balanced view of migrants' living situations. A well-known combination of the ideologically based strategy of positive self-representation and negative other-representation are the many types of *disclaimers*. Disclaimers are somewhat an expression of attitudinal ambiguity, in which both positive and negative aspects of immigrations are mentioned (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975; Kadianaki et al., 2018; Musolff, 2022; Van Dijk, 1985a, 1985b, 2006b).

"Since these regularisation campaigns concern not only Africans but also all migrant populations with irregular status, such as Spain and the Philippines, this logic must be understood as a desire to strengthen the rule of law and to improve the multicultural aspect of living together in Morocco."

Sub-Saharan migrants have long been a part of our national consciousness. They have become an intrinsic part of the social texture. As the number of migrants has increased over the years, so has the public's awareness of them. Many media sources portray sub-Saharan migrants as dejected and downtrodden individuals forced to live in poverty and squalor. These depictions are not always false but may contribute to public opinion about the situations of migrants.

Euphemism (Rhetoric and Meaning)

Politicians use euphemisms to avoid appearing inconsiderate of people's issues when discussing unsettling, embarrassing, or distasteful topics. It is a well-known rhetorical figure of speech, often as a semantic move of mitigation. It plays an important role in talk about immigrants. Thus, racism or discrimination will typically be mitigated as resentment or unequal treatment (Abrantes, 2005; Chilton, 1987; Crespo-Fernández, 2018; Crespo Fernández, 2014). Euphemism is usually invoked in reference to the harsh immigration policies of the government, and thus mitigates the actions of the government.

With the number of migrants and refugees in Morocco growing, King Mohammed VI in 2013 called for the government to address their status. Since then, Morocco has regularised the status of more than 20,000 migrants, granting residency permits and setting up programmes to integrate migrants into a society struggling to accept their presence.

The word 'presence' softens the bitter reality of the sub-Saharan immigrants' illegal stay in Morocco. The government has indicated a willingness to adopt integration measures and policies that respect migrants' rights so long as migrant-origin countries continue to support Morocco in its 40-year conflict over the Sahara. Thus, the Moroccan government in 2014 regularised about 24,000 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, giving them accompanying work rights and access to social services.

4.2. Leeuwen's socio-semantic model

Personalisation and Impersonalisation

Through the judicious use of personal or possessive pronouns, proper names, or nouns whose semantic meaning includes the feature 'human,' social actors are represented as human beings (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46). The reader is drawn closer to the social actors due to such a humanisation strategy. Impersonalisation differs from personalisation by removing the 'human' element from social actors. There are two ways to realise impersonalisation: (i) abstraction and (ii) objectivation. For the former, social actors are depicted by means of a 'quality assigned to them by and in the representation' (p. 46).

In terms of *personalisation* and *impersonalisation*, the extent to which the participant is *impersonalised*. The following are cases of *impersonalisation*.

A statement from the cabinet...

In 2003 Morocco criminalised illegal migration....

As a representational strategy, impersonalisation is used to give less weight and conceal certain issues through the use of the term's *cabinet* and *Morocco*. Personalisation is used by the author to not conceal who believes what and who is responsible for what each case entails.

Mehdi Alioua, a sociology professor at the International University of Rabat.

Media discourse is a powerful tool in today's society, and it can be used both to personalise and to depersonalise information. It can be used to reinforce particular views of the world, such as highlighting certain aspects of a topic and ignoring others (Musolff, 2022; O'keeffe, 2006; Van Dijk, 1985b). This has the potential to shape how people perceive the world and how they interact with it. At the same time, media discourse can be used to distance people from each other, removing the personal connections between different groups and individuals.

Individualisation vs. Collectivisation

Individualisation and *Collectivisation* are used to create a sense of distance or to emphasise a particular point of view. This can have a powerful effect on how people view and engage with each other and can lead to wider social implications, removing the personal connections between different groups and individuals. By definition, *individualisation* is the extent to which participants are described as *individuals*. Naming, as a representational strategy, makes participants individualised, and bring them closer. Example of the process is as follows:

The monarch ordered the Council of Ministers to extend migrants' residency permits...

This device helps to zoom in and show empathy to participants through the term *monarch*. Unlike *individualization*, *collectivisation* is the extent to which participants are described as part of a *collectivity*. Lack of additional referential information prevents individualising participants, not allowing us to feel empathy towards participants. In this respect, readers can hardly humanise with participants. Here are some instances from the newspaper article:

Sub-Saharan Africans....

Migrants and refugees....

Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa....

This kind of collectivisation here can have the effect of creating an '*other*' that is outside of the group, and therefore not subject to their rules or morality. This can be used to create a sense of superiority and inferiority, thus further distancing people from each other, which can lead to negative consequences. The use of individualisation in media discourse can also be used to create a sense of personal responsibility, which can in turn lead to positive outcomes such as increased empathy and understanding between individuals and groups. Through using both *individualisation* and *collectivisation* in media discourse, it is possible to both personalise and depersonalise information to achieve different goals (Bandura et al., 1977; Kadianaki et al., 2018; Musolff, 2022; O'keeffe, 2006; Wilkins et al., 2021). For example, when discussing sub-Saharan crime statistics, the focus of media discourse may be on the collective rather than the individual people involved. In this way, media discourse can be used to both personalise and depersonalise information. In a word, the *individualisation, collectivisation* tool can be used to homogenise and collectivise, reducing the impact of individual voices and experiences (Asiru et al., 2018). This can lead to a situation where certain groups are marginalised and excluded from the conversation, making it more difficult for them to be heard. This shrewd tool highlights the importance of understanding how media discourse is used and how it can shape the way people perceive and interact with each other. In this way, media discourse has both individualising and collectivising power.

Specification and Genericisation

Specification and *Genericisation* are two of the main tools used to shape how people perceive the world. *Specification* refers to the extent to which participants are represented as *specific individuals*. *Specification* involves highlighting certain aspects of a topic or issue and drawing attention to them, whilst *genericisation* removes individual connections and reduces particular topics to their most general form. This can be particularly powerful when used to distance individuals from each other, reducing them from individuals to categories or archetypes. At the same time, it can be used to personalise information and form connections between different people. There are a few instances of specification in the article. There is a single instance:

King Mohammed VI in 2013 called for the government to address their status...

In contrast, genericisation is the extent to which participants are represented as a generic group. The article is laden with instances of genericisation. Let us consider these examples:

Children of migrants ...

Non-Moroccan citizens...

Islamist politicians...

Assigning generic categories to participants, it is intended to show emphasise features relating to extremism and otherness in terms of religion and culture. Whenever used, genericisation reveals a racist stance. When examining media discourse, it is important to consider both the process of specification and genericisation. Specification involves highlighting certain aspects of an issue or topic, narrowing the focus and emphasising particular points of view. This can be done through a variety of techniques, such as through the use of language and imagery. On the other hand, genericisation involves widening the scope of an issue and making it less personal.

Nomination or Functionalism

Nomination and functionalism are two important components of media discourse. Nomination is the process by which a particular meaning is attached to a particular thing or event. On the one hand,

nomination denotes the case wherein participants are nominated by who they are. This is done by giving an object, person or even a name or label. Functionalism, on the other hand, is the process by which a particular meaning is attached to an object, person or event through its use in a particular context. On the other hand, functionalism refers to the case wherein participants are functionalised by what they do.

Mohammed VI in 2013 called for the government to address their status.

The *king's* initiative makes sense given the situation.

The *monarch* ordered the Council of Ministers to extend migrants' residency permits.

Nomination or functionalism in media discourse make use of language and other symbols to name something and assign it a specific function or purpose. This enables the media to categorise, structure and label events or objects, creating a context of meaning which allows for interpretation. For example, newspapers often refer to political situations using language that implies a particular point of view, such as "*the crisis in the Middle East*" or "*the war in Iraq*". This can be seen as an attempt to assign certain meanings to a certain issue and thus influence individuals' attitudes towards it. The bottom line is that these devices have different effects. Functionalism sounds more official, suggesting legitimacy. Yet, nomination sounds more personal. Nomination and functionalism in media discourse are powerful concepts that can be used to create opinionated media narratives. They involve the selection of certain topics and facts in order to focus the audience's attention on a particular issue. This is deliberately done in order to manipulate and shape public opinion and to influence decisions. In this article, it was used to frame the migration of sub-Saharan Africans in a positive light, emphasising the regularisation campaigns while downplaying or ignoring illegal immigration.

Use of Honorifics

Honorifics, a type of language that conveys respect to the receiver, are a common feature of media discourse. They are often used to address someone with a title indicating their social, occupational, or academic standing. For instance, when referring to someone with a professional title such as doctor, professor, or judge, they would be addressed using honorifics. In addition, honorifics may also be used to address someone formally or informally. Simply, honorifics are terms that suggest a degree of seniority or a role that require a degree of respect (*President, lord, judge*, etc.). In recent years, an increasing number of news outlets have been using honorifics, such as Mr., Mrs., or Doctor, in their reporting to convey respect or formality when referring to someone. Such titles can be used in a variety of contexts, from casual media discourse to formal interviews and stories. While there are some advantages to using honorifics, there are also potential drawbacks that should be considered.

The *cabinet* said: "Procedures for the issuance and renewal of residency permits..."

Mehdi Alioua, *a sociology professor* at the International University of Rabat.

Alluding to honorifics in the article, they are used to signify the superiority of certain groups or individuals, either in a positive or negative light. An example of this can be seen in the way certain news outlets report on political candidates or government officials. The take-away is that honorifics highlight the importance of a social actor or specialisation. Furthermore, the use of honorifics makes the speaker appear more important and authoritative.

Objectivation

Media discourse often assumes an objective stance, one which suggests it is not influenced by external forces. This serves as a reminder to readers that the information they are receiving is honest and unbiased. As a result, readers can trust that the content they are consuming and highly regard what is reported as a true and accurate representation of the facts. However, this assumption may not be fully

accurate. Objectivation frequently occurs in media discourse. In this type of representation, actors are identified with the place or thing they are associated with, either as a person or as an action they are engaged in (Fairclough, 2013; Gee, 2004; O'keeffe, 2006). Under the framework of *objectivation*, participants are represented as a feature.

Morocco as a transit point to reach Europe.

Morocco turned into a destination for migrants and refugees.

Very frequently, however, objectivation serves to add purposes and/or legitimations to the representation (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Objectivation also allows social actions to be classified and labelled. As shown, the terms *transit* and *destination* are being deployed to objectify Morocco in media discourse.

Anonymisation

Anonymisation of sources is an important element of media discourse and has become a popular tool for journalists in the digital age. Through protecting the identity of their sources, reporters are able to provide impartial accounts of events without putting their sources in harm's way. This is especially crucial when covering politically sensitive topics, as it allows people to speak freely without fear of retribution. Moreover, it provides the media with a way to verify information while protecting those who are providing it. Participants in texts can be *anonymised* for specific reasons.

Civil society groups said, however, the law was no longer compatible with Morocco's migration policy.

Anonymisation is used here to avoid specification and develop a detailed coherent argument. It is a way to summon arguments that are easy to dismiss later on. As clearly illustrated, anonymisation is an important factor when discussing current events and topics in the media. As implied in the article, anonymisation allows the journalist to provide information to their audience without revealing the identities of anonymous sources (civil society groups). This protects both the sources and the media outlets, as it allows them to provide accurate, timely information while still preserving the anonymity of their sources. Anonymisation also helped increasing the trustworthiness of the media organisation, as it shows that they are willing to protect those who supply them with information. Anonymisation of sources has become a tool for media organisations to protect the privacy of their sources while still delivering the truth. By anonymising sources, journalists are able to ensure that the source remains anonymous while still providing the integrity and accuracy of their stories. This allows for media organisations to protect the identities of minors, victims of crimes, or people with sensitive information that could potentially put them in danger. In a nutshell, anonymisation is an effective way to avoid potential legal ramifications in certain cases.

Aggregation

In order to ensure that readers are receiving unbiased news from multiple outlets, media organisations have turned to the practice of aggregation. Aggregation is the practice of collecting information from multiple outlets and combining it into one comprehensive story. Through collecting stories from various sources, media outlets are able to create an overall picture of a given event or situation without relying on the bias of any one outlet. This kind of objectivity is essential in the modern media landscape and is being promoted as an invaluable tool for creating unbiased content. *Aggregation* in media discourse is a common practice whereby participants are *quantified* and treated as *statistics*. Aggregation involves taking data from a variety of sources and compiling it together in one place. This approach is seen as a viable way to create stories that are accurate, unbiased, and well-researched. The author, in the study context, utilises many facts, figures, and digits to create an impression of objectivity and scientific credibility, as it allows text segments to provide their audience with the most up-to-date information from a variety of sources.

4 million citizens living abroad...
 Thousands of illegal...
 Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa...
 20,000 migrants granting residency permits
 A number of people...

Aggregation is believed to give an impression of objective research and scientific credibility. Specific figures are not given for a reason (Fairclough, 2013; Fiorin, 2014; Kress, 1990; Kress & Leite-Garda, 1997; O'keeffe, 2006). This process is crucial in providing a more objective view of the facts seeing that it takes into account multiple perspectives and eliminates any biases that may exist within the story.

Pronoun vs. Noun (Us vs. Them)

The language used by journalists and editors plays an important role in the objectivity of the story as well. Thus, a writer can create a sense of alignment and opposition to a given perspective through using nouns and pronouns carefully. This creates a balanced narrative that fully allows the audience to understand both sides of the story. Furthermore, it creates an accurate portrayal of the facts without taking sides, which is essential in producing unbiased news reports. Linguistic choices between *nouns* and *pronouns* can align us alongside or against ideas.

4.3. Halliday's systemic functional grammar model

Transitivity

Within Systemic Functional Grammar, transitivity has a different meaning than traditional grammar's conception. Speakers use transitivity to encode their experience of both the external world and the inner world of his consciousness, as well as the participants in these processes and the circumstances that accompany them (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009). Transitivity thus focuses on the ideational meta-function of language about participants, processes, and circumstances. Essentially, it is a reflection of the writer's worldview. Hence, studying transitivity will allow us to reveal the writer's ideology. It is important to remember that there are different processes and participants based on the kinds of verbs. Therefore, the verbs utilised in the two newspaper articles analysed in terms of transitivity are listed in order to detect the types of processes and participants that are operative in the article in question:

Morocco *criminalised* illegal migration, *set* severe sanctions for the support and organization of irregular migration and *increased* human and technical control capacities at its borders.

More specifically, transitivity patterns can reveal how the writer represents who acts (the agent) and who is acted upon (the patient). Here, Morocco, the agent, is acting and taking measures against illegal immigrants, the patient, in order to remedy the problem. Transitivity is a powerful tool in media discourse surrounding immigration worldwide, and Morocco is no exception. Studies show that the media often frames the issue of illegal immigration from a political perspective, which can lead to a skewed public opinion towards immigration. This can have a detrimental effect on the public's understanding of the immigration system in Morocco, and ultimately lead to a negative perception of immigration.

Passivisation

Another linguistic tool that is widely used in the field of CDA is *passivisation*. Passivisation, as described by Van Leeuwen (2008), can be further divided into subjects (social actors that are treated as objects) and beneficiaries (the third party in a discourse that benefits from it). In fact, the use of passivisation in discourse is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is used by writers to hide agency or foreground actions. On the other hand, *passivisation* can be used as a tool of analysis to reveal agency and/or foreground actions. It is the latter aspect that is of interest to critical discourse analysts. In our context,

passivisation is going to be dealt with in order to uncover the hidden participants and the foregrounded actions in the newspaper article that is under study. In this respect, examples of *passivisation* are going to be exposed in order to highlight the hidden agents and the foregrounded actions in both articles. Going over the article main text sentence by sentence allows us to detect several cases of *passivisation*. The first case of *passivisation* can be found in the following sentence:

The government is led by an Islamist party that has allied itself with pan-Arabists.

This system allows the clause to be broken down into three general components: the process, the participant and the circumstance (Bloor & Bloor, 1995; Halliday, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009). The process is the fact that the current government is being led by an Islamist party. The participant is the Islamist Party, and the circumstance is the fact of aligning its policy with pan-Arabists. The *passivisation* is used not to hide agency as the agent can be inferred from the circumstances. However, it is used to foreground the action of leading the affected participants, namely the government. Another example of *passivisation* includes the following:

Migration is poorly understood.

Again, the affected participant is foregrounded in that they take the position of the topic in the structure of the sentence. We cannot presume by whom the migration poorly understood. Is it the Monarch, the government body, politicians, citizens, or NGOs?

Procedures for the issuance and renewal of residency permits will be accelerated and simplified to the maximum extent possible.

In this case, it does not only hide the agent, but it attempts to emphasise the gravity of its actions as well. In general, *passivisation* is used to hide agents or foreground actions due to ideological purposes. It is noteworthy to stress that illegal immigration is a serious issue in Morocco, and the media discourse surrounding the topic is often dominated by rhetoric that *passivates* the issue. This *passivation* of illegal immigration in media discourse allows for the public to go without fully understanding issues that are so prevalent in Moroccan society.

Nominalisation

Nominalisation is a powerful tool in the hands of writers. It allows them to hide a vast array of information from the reader or listener, without the need for lengthy explanations. The process of nominalisation eliminates the necessity to explain or expand upon a concept, making it an effective tool in the creation of concise yet powerful messages. Unlike *passivisation* which turns patients into subjects and hides agents, nominalisation turns processes into entities. It is used mainly to hide the agents as well as the patients in a given process. In our context, the article under examination was scrutinised for cases of nominalisation with the purpose of unravelling the ideological reasons behind its use. Cases of nominalisation are embedded in the following sentence:

Morocco criminalised illegal migration, set severe sanctions for the support and organization of irregular migration and increased human and technical control capacities at its borders.

To begin with, the noun “migration” hides the actor and the affected participants in a material process. In more latent terms, it implies that immigrants, wherever they come from, are regarded as criminals, officially declaring that the action (of migrating into Morocco) or the offense, is a serious mistake. Concerning the remaining cases of nominalisation, they really hide the participants, who are the sub-Saharan immigrants. In so doing, the newspaper article has managed to leave out some participants, especially the actor and the affected participants in the material processes given that the latter are the dominant in the newspaper article. Such transformations may be associated with ideologically significant features of texts such as the systematic mystification of agency: both allow the agent of a clause to be deleted. Using this technique, the writer illustrated the core of their point in efficient and

condensed language, whilst also giving their work an authoritative tone. Last but not least, nominalisation was used to encourage readers to think beyond the bare facts and details, and alternatively the focus is placed on the overall concept or theme.

Research Question 2: What are the CDA representational tools and strategies embedded in the article to shape public opinion about illegal sub-Saharan migration in Morocco?

4.4. David Machin's representational strategies in visual communication model

In the case of the illegal immigration of sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco, a multi-modal discourse analysis approach can be used to gain a clearer understanding of the issue. This approach facilitates the deconstruction of complex discourse on any issue into component parts, allowing for better understanding in both the macro and micro levels. Through this analysis, a more holistic view of the facts, feelings, and experiences of migrants can be gathered. Furthermore, this approach can help to inform more effective policy solutions and identify potential areas for improvement. A discourse analyst can analyse different affordances of linguistic and visual representations by asking how each could carry meaning that the other could not (Han, 2015; Ledin & Machin, 2020; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016).



Positioning

The photo is a medium shot, taken by Reuters, in January 2017, during a regularisation campaign in Rabat targeting sub-Saharan illegal immigrants. In the background, the photographer or page editor wants us to see a large number of illegal immigrants. The picture in the background is blurry. No faces are on clear display. There is a cameraman documenting the event. The blurriness of the photo in the background connotes the mist and confusion wrapping up the future of these undocumented immigrants. In the foreground, the photographer or page editor has decided to take us close to these undocumented immigrants and police officers, their non-verbal communication, inner states, feelings, and worries supported by the language in the text.

Distance

The people in the picture (illegal immigrants) do not look right at the viewer. The photo does not engage the viewer. This medium shot shows that these people are afraid, anxious and unsure of the process. The photo hints at the everyday racism linked to the imaginings of migrants as undesirable foreigners, lack of education about migrants' cultures and countries and stereotypes. The way the police officer addresses the two illegal immigrants is quite revealing. He granted the illegal immigrant, who is seemingly holding an envelope containing regularisation papers, access to the administrative

institution. However, he uses the STOP gesture to address and deny the access of the illegal immigrant, who is apparently not holding an envelope. The photo at hand sheds light on the new migration policy. Morocco has adopted a double-contradictory approach that aims to appease both of its allies. Police treatment of migrants varies by location. Morocco emphasises security along the border while practising a *laissez faire* approach¹ in others. Morocco has developed a new migration policy as part of its new African integration policy under Mohammed VI. The Moroccan approach to migration has traditionally focused on managing the Moroccan diaspora. Moroccans are paying special attention to the regularisation of migrants from the South, despite the low percentage of African migrants compared to European migrants (Abourabi, 2022).

5. Discussion

The analysis reveals how the discourse within the examined *Arab Weekly* article actively constructs specific narrative surrounding undocumented sub-Saharan immigrants in Morocco. These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work demonstrating how media discourse often frames and reinforces existing biases and stereotypes about immigrant populations (Arowosola, 2020; Banjo, 2014; Majok, 2020; Mawadza, 2012; Pindi, 2018; Ramaprasad et al., 2015; Tarisayi & Manik, 2020). Consistent with the literature, this research found that specific linguistic and visual strategies were employed to portray immigrants, frequently characterising them as problematic or threatening to the host nation.

CDA has proven instrumental in unpacking such representations across various contexts. For instance, these results reflect those of Wenham et al. (2009), who used CDA to show how Australian media constructed the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa in ways aligning with industrialised nations' agendas. Similarly, Reitmanova et al. (2015) employed CDA to highlight the racialisation of immigrant health in Canadian press, revealing embedded power dynamics. In accordance with the present results, Vezovnik's (2015) study on Slovenian media demonstrated discursive strategies used to construct Balkan immigrant worker identities, often reinforcing negative stereotypes. This finding broadly supports the work of Barkho (2011) regarding the influence of internal guidelines on structuring news narratives and Bukhari and Jarrar (2018) concerning implicit ideologies in comparative news reporting.

The specific discursive mechanisms identified in *The Arab Weekly* article operate through established media effects principles. The selection and salience of particular aspects of the immigration issue align with Entman's (1993) conceptualisation of framing, whereby certain attributes (e.g., illegality, potential burden) are emphasised to promote a specific problem definition and evaluation. Furthermore, by focusing attention on these framed aspects, the article contributes to the media's agenda-setting function (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), influencing what audiences think about regarding immigration, potentially foregrounding conflict or problems over integration or shared humanity.

The implications of such framing for public perception are significant. As argued by Esses et al. (2013), media portrayals emphasising threat or uncertainty related to immigrants can directly foster prejudice and discriminatory attitudes among the public. A possible explanation for this effect, is that negative media cues associated with immigrant groups can trigger anxiety and public opposition. The linguistic choices (e.g., lexicalisation, passivation) and visual representations identified in this study, therefore, do not merely reflect reality but actively shape public understanding and sentiment towards sub-Saharan immigrants in Morocco (Brader et al., 2008).

Moreover, these media narratives hold potential consequences for policy. Drawing on Kingdon's policy streams model (Blomkamp et al., 2017), the consistent framing of immigration as a problem within

¹ "Laissez-faire" is a French term that translates to "let it be" or "leave it alone." In economics and politics, it refers to a policy or attitude of letting things take their own course, without interfering. A laissez-faire approach means minimal government intervention or regulation (Richards, A., & Martin, P. L., 1983).

media discourse, as observed here, likely contributes significantly to the 'problem stream,' making restrictive policy options appear more plausible or necessary to policymakers and the public. This aligns with Van Dijk's work within CDA, which posits that dominant discourses, particularly those propagated by powerful institutions like the media, function to reproduce social power relations and legitimise specific social orders, including potentially exclusionary policies (Van Dijk, 1985a, 1985b, 2006a, 2006b; Van Leeuwen, 2008). Although this study did not directly measure policy impact, the identified discursive strategies that construct immigrants as an 'other' create a climate where such policies may find greater public acceptance, resonating with Boswell's (2007) observations on the influence of political discourse on migration policy complexities.

In brief, the current results and previous findings combined underscore the crucial role of CDA in unpacking the ideologies and power dynamics embedded in media representations. The patterns observed in the analysed article – using specific discourse features to construct difference and potentially justify exclusion – are in agreement with a substantial body of research showing how media can perpetuate negative stereotypes and power imbalances. Therefore, a careful investigation of the discourses surrounding immigrant portrayals is essential to detect the mechanisms constructing identities and reinforcing stereotypes.

It is critical to consider how these media portrayals likely impact public opinion and potentially influence policy decisions regarding immigration in Morocco. The portrayal of Sub-Saharan African immigrants is a complex issue requiring nuanced analysis (Baida, 2020; El Hamoumi, 2015). Challenging the stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes identified in media discourse, as Narisetti (2023) implicitly calls for through critical engagement, is vital for fostering greater understanding, inclusivity, and a more equitable societal dialogue surrounding migration. Ultimately, the media holds significant responsibility in shaping perceptions, and critical analysis remains paramount to ensuring fairer and more accurate representations.

While this study primarily focused on the discursive strategies within a single *Arab Weekly* article, the findings strongly indicate the ideological position manifested in its coverage of undocumented sub-Saharan migration in Morocco. The consistent framing of immigrants as problematic or threatening, the use of linguistic and visual strategies to construct an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy, and the subtle justification of exclusionary perspectives, as revealed by the CDA, suggest an ideological stance that aligns with nationalist concerns and prioritises state security and control over narratives emphasising shared humanity or integration challenges from the immigrants' perspective.

This ideological leaning likely shapes the newspaper's editorial choices, influencing how the issue is framed (Entman, 1993) – selecting aspects that highlight potential burdens or threats – and what aspects are deemed newsworthy (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), contributing to an agenda where undocumented migration is primarily viewed as a security or social problem. As Van Dijk (1993) and Fairclough (1992) suggest, such media discourse, emanating from established institutions, does not merely report events but actively participates in the reproduction of dominant ideologies and power structures. Therefore, the ideological position reflected in the analysed article appears to reinforce existing societal hierarchies and potentially legitimises more restrictive approaches to immigration policy by shaping public perception (Esses et al., 2013) in line with this perspective. The analysis suggests *The Arab Weekly*, in this instance, adopts a discourse that resonates with more conservative or state-centric viewpoints on migration management.

6. Conclusion

The current study was geared towards deploying a new framework to analyse the discourse of an article, which appeared in the *Arab Weekly Newspaper*, under the *issue 90 p. 21*. The article reports on a regularisation campaign to grant sub-Saharan illegal immigrants residency permits. The researcher

opted for a new multi-modal framework to critically analyse illegal migration in Morocco and track the road from documentation to regularisation. This approach is unique in the way it provides an opportunity to explore the multiple modes used to communicate meaning in media discourse. This includes verbal, non-verbal, and graphic elements. Through this analysis, the researchers shed light on the underlying implications of language use in certain contexts and drew conclusions about what is being communicated overtly and covertly. Question marks were raised about various CDA tools that are employed in the article under this study and how they were manipulated in such a way that they would serve the ideologies of the writer. This research underscores the significant role of media in shaping public discourse on immigration, often perpetuating existing biases and stereotypes. The analysis reveals how linguistic and visual strategies in a news article contribute to the framing of immigrants as a threat or problem, potentially impacting public opinion and leading to discriminatory policies. Recommendations include promoting media literacy, encouraging diverse voices in reporting, enforcing ethical guidelines, and implementing robust fact-checking mechanisms. Future research should investigate the role of social media and visual communication in shaping perceptions of immigrants, as well as conduct comparative and longitudinal studies to better understand the dynamics of media discourse and its effects. In doing so, stakeholders (concerned parties) are well positioned to pave the way for a more inclusive and informed public conversation on immigration.

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