

The Representation of Immigration in Fox News (2014–2019): A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis^(*)

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Abstract

This study investigates the discursive construction of immigration in Fox News coverage between 2014 and 2019, a period marked by intensifying political polarization around U.S. immigration policy, coinciding with the final years of the Obama administration and the early years of the Trump presidency. Drawing on a corpus-based collocation analysis, the study examines the lexical environments surrounding four node words: *refugee*, *asylum seeker*, *immigrant*, and *migrant* (henceforth RASIM), to uncover patterns of semantic prosody that reflect the outlet's ideological stance. The corpus used in this study, comprising Fox News articles from 2014 to 2019 retrieved via RSS feeds, was both compiled and analyzed using Sketch Engine, an online corpus query tool. The study employs Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA), an approach that integrates corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to examine both quantitative patterns and their qualitative implications. Quantitative collocation analysis is supplemented by interpretive strategies drawn from the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), focusing in particular on referential and predication strategies. These strategies help uncover how RASIM are labeled, categorized, and evaluated across shifting political contexts. The findings reveal a consistent pattern of securitization, threat framing, and numerical amplification, particularly under the Trump administration. These collocational choices frequently position RASIM as burdensome, unlawful, or destabilizing, with Fox News employing a discourse of control that reinforces restrictive ideologies and public anxiety through linguistic framing. By integrating corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, the paper highlights the media's role in shaping immigration narratives in contemporary political contexts.

Keywords : Corpus linguistics, Critical discourse analysis, Collocation analysis, semantic prosody, immigration discourse

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الملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة البناء الخطابى للهجرة في تغطية قناة فوكس نيوز بين عامي ٢٠١٤ و ٢٠١٩، وهي فترة شهدت زيادة حدة الاستقطاب السياسي حول سياسة الهجرة في الولايات المتحدة، متزامنة مع السنوات الأخيرة من إدارة أوباما والسنوات الأولى من رئاسة ترامب. بالاعتماد على تحليل التلازم القائم على المدونة الإحصائية، تفحص الدراسة البيئة اللفظية المحيطة بأربع كلمات محورية: لاجئ، طالب لجوء، مهاجر، ومهاجر غير شرعي التي سيتم الإشارة إليها لاحقاً باسم (RASIM)، للكشف عن أنماط الدلالة المعنوية التي تعكس الموقف الأيديولوجي للقناة. تم بناء المدونة الإحصائية المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة، التي تضم مقالات فوكس نيوز من ٢٠١٤ إلى ٢٠١٩ المستخلصة عبر RSS، وتحليلها باستخدام أداة استعلام المدونات الإحصائية على الإنترنت "سكيتش إنجن". تستخدم الدراسة تحليل الخطاب النقدي المعتمد على المدونات الإحصائية (CACDA)، وهو نهج يجمع بين لغويات المدونات الإحصائية وتحليل الخطاب النقدي لفحص الأنماط الكمية وآثارها النوعية. يتم دعم التحليل الكمي للتلازم باستراتيجيات تفسيرية مأخوذة من النهج التاريخي التحليلي (DHA)، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الاستراتيجيات الإشارية والتنبؤية. تساعد هذه الاستراتيجيات في الكشف عن كيفية تصنيف وتسمية وتقييم RASIM عبر السياقات السياسية المتغيرة. تكشف النتائج عن نمط ثابت من تأمين الهجرة، وتأطير التهديدات، والتضخيم العددي، خاصة في ظل إدارة ترامب. غالباً ما تؤدي هذه الاختيارات التلازمية إلى تصوير هذه المجموعات كعبء، أو كعناصر غير قانونية، أو كمصدر لزعزعة الاستقرار؛ حيث توظف فوكس نيوز خطاباً تحكيمياً يعزز الأيديولوجيات التقيدية ويغذي القلق العام من خلال البناء اللغوي. ومن خلال الدمج بين لغويات المدونات وتحليل الخطاب النقدي، تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على دور وسائل الإعلام في تشكيل السرد المرتبط بالهجرة ضمن السياقات السياسية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لغويات المدونات، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، تحليل التلازم اللفظي، دلالة السياق المعنوي، خطاب الهجرة.

1. Introduction

Media plays a key role in shaping public perception by informing audiences and framing events in ways that promote particular interpretations. Language is central to this process, serving as a persuasive tool that influences how individuals understand and respond to news (Fairclough, 1995). Media discourse not only reflects the interests of powerful social groups such as politicians, elites, and journalists, but also reinforces dominant ideologies and contributes to social change by legitimizing specific versions of reality (Fowler, 1991; Happer & Philo, 2013). Ideology, in this context, refers to a shared set of beliefs and attitudes within a social group (Van Dijk, 2006b). As Ullmann (2017) and Fairclough (1995) note, the language used in journalism is deliberate and ideologically charged, with significant social implications.

This raises a pertinent question regarding the extent to which the ideological orientation in media coverage remains consistent, especially when addressing political issues that are subject to change. Political systems are dynamic, and a shift in political power, such as a change in leadership, often results in the introduction of new ideological frameworks and policy agendas. This highlights the importance of examining how media outlets respond to such shifts—whether they adapt their stance, maintain their pre-existing ideology, or change their narrative entirely.

Immigration, which has become a highly politicized issue in the United States in recent years, offers a compelling example of this dynamic. The issue reached a critical point during President Obama's second term, beginning in 2013, when he signed landmark immigration laws intended to address long-standing concerns in the system. These laws provided temporary relief for millions of undocumented immigrants, deferring their deportation until lawmakers could devise comprehensive immigration policies (Richterová, 2015; Skrentny & Lilly, 2013). Additionally, the Obama administration admitted 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2016 at the height of the Syrian Civil War, bringing the total number of refugees admitted that year to 85,000.

In stark contrast, the Trump administration pursued a drastically different approach, advocating for a sharp reduction in the number of immigrants entering the country. Immigration was a cornerstone of Trump's

2016 presidential campaign, during which he made bold promises to curb immigration, including constructing a “border wall” on the U.S.-Mexico border to stop illegal immigration. Trump’s policies also included measures such as banning immigrants from certain Muslim-majority countries, reducing visa categories, and focusing on deporting undocumented immigrants, including those with minor offenses (Kaba, 2019). The contrasting positions between the Obama and Trump administrations raise an important question: how have U.S. media outlets navigated these shifts in policy, and have their discourses on immigration changed in response?

Given this political backdrop, two potential scenarios emerge regarding how the media would address the topic of immigration in light of a political shift. One possibility is that media discourse would reflect the ideological stances of the new political leadership, shifting its portrayal of immigration to align with the new administration’s agenda. Alternatively, media outlets may maintain their own ideological frameworks, continuing to present immigration issues through the lens of their pre-existing beliefs and values, regardless of the political shift.

This study aims to explore the extent to which media discourse is influenced by these shifts in power. Specifically, it investigates how the portrayal of immigration in U.S. media changed during the Obama and Trump administrations. To this end, the study uses an integrated approach combining Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). A corpus of American news articles from Fox News is analyzed, spanning the period from 2014 to 2019. This timeframe captures the transition from the later years of the Obama administration to the early years of the Trump presidency, providing a basis for examining the ideological shifts in immigration discourse between the two administrations.

The study focuses on the most frequent collocates of key terms related to immigration—refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants (henceforth RASIM)—which are extracted using the corpus tool Word Sketch on the online corpus *Sketch Engine*. These collocates are then analyzed using qualitative methods, employing Reisigl and Wodak’s (2001, 2009) Discourse-Historical Approach and Louw’s (1993) framework of semantic prosody. This methodology aims to uncover underlying ideologies in media discourse and examine how shifts in political power impact the framing of immigration. The research seeks to address the following

questions: (1) *What are the most frequent collocational patterns occurring with RASIM?* (2) *What kinds of semantic prosodies are associated with these collocates?* (3) *What are the ideological implications of these patterns, and how do they reflect the political shifts from the Obama to the Trump administration?*

2. Review of Literature

This review situates the current research within these key theoretical and empirical traditions, outlining concepts of collocation and semantic prosody, the principles of corpus-assisted critical discourse studies, and previous findings on immigration discourse in media coverage.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis: Concepts and Approaches

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) originated in the early 1990s as a development of critical linguistics, with roots in the work of Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (Fowler & Kress, 1979). It emerged from the conviction that language is not ideologically neutral but functions as a site where power relations are enacted and reinforced. Central to CDA is the view that language use is shaped by and shapes social practices and structures (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001). Adopting Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as a linguistic foundation, CDA emphasizes how language represents ideologies through what is said and what is left unsaid. It, thus, seeks to "demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies" and expose how language perpetuates unequal access to social goods, resources, and representation (Wodak, 2001, p. 10).

Within the broader tradition of CDA, several theoretical models have significantly influenced how scholars study the relationship between language, power, and ideology. These include Fairclough's socio-cultural model, van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework, and Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA). Fairclough (1995) conceptualizes discourse as operating across three interconnected levels—text, discursive practice, and social practice, arguing that language functions as a medium through which power relations are enacted and sustained. van Dijk (1998, 2015) foregrounds the cognitive dimensions of discourse, emphasizing how shared mental models and ideological schemata shape the way social groups construct representations of themselves and others. His "ideological square"

provides a useful heuristic for examining polarization in discourse. Wodak's DHA, meanwhile, highlights the importance of historical context, political conditions, and intertextuality in shaping discursive practices. Its emphasis on diachronic analysis, triangulation, and contextualization makes it particularly well-suited for examining evolving media narratives on politicized issues such as immigration (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Together, these approaches contribute to the study's theoretical grounding, offering a multidimensional lens through which discourse can be understood as socially situated and ideologically motivated. These insights are further operationalized through a corpus-assisted analytical framework.

Despite its valuable insights into the relationship between language and ideology, CDA has faced considerable criticism, particularly regarding its methodological limitations, subjectivity, and lack of analytical rigor (Fowler, 1996; Stubbs, 1997; Widdowson, 1996, 2000; Orpin, 2005). Critics argue that CDA often relies on small, non-representative text samples, lacks statistical validity, and is susceptible to analysts' ideological biases, raising concerns about the reliability and generalizability of its findings (Baker et al., 2008; Duguid, 2010; Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019). Moreover, CDA has been accused of decontextualizing texts and neglecting historical and social factors (Bloomaert, 2005). Nevertheless, many of these critiques are embraced by CDA scholars as part of a reflexive practice, prompting constructive debate and methodological improvements (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Catalan & Waugh, 2020). In response, scholars like Stubbs (1997) advocate for integrating corpus-linguistic methods, such as large-scale text analysis and comparisons with language norms, to enhance the reliability and objectivity of CDA. This study aims to explore such integrations and examine how triangulated methodologies can address the limitations identified in both CDA and corpus linguistics.

2.2 Corpus Linguistics

Corpus linguistics (CL) is a methodological approach that emphasizes the empirical study of language through large, systematically compiled text corpora. These corpora, which represent real-life language use, are analyzed with specialized software, enabling researchers to uncover patterns that would be difficult to detect manually. This method allows for data-driven insights into language behavior, enabling the development of hypotheses and general theories about linguistic phenomena. One of the key characteristics

of CL is its reliance on computational tools for the analysis of large volumes of text, which facilitates the identification of recurring linguistic patterns (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Wilson, 2001)

A central component of CL is the study of *collocation*, which refers to the phenomenon where certain words frequently appear together in specific contexts, forming patterns of association that reveal underlying meaning. Baker (2006) defines collocation as the tendency for words to appear near each other with a statistically significant relationship. This phenomenon leads to the emergence of collocates—words that regularly co-occur with a node word (the word being investigated for its collocates). Collocate analysis typically involves examining a predefined span, often five words to the left and right of the node. Statistical measures like Mutual Information (MI), t-tests, z-scores, Loglikelihood, and logDice are used to assess the significance of collocates and to determine whether they co-occur by chance or if there is a meaningful pattern in their relationship (Evert, 2005, 2009; Sinclair, 1991). This computational approach allows for the discovery of both frequent and subtle patterns in language, enabling researchers to delve deeper into the layered associations between words and their contextual meanings.

Examining collocates of a particular word may reveal and bring into light the presence of a crucial relatable phenomenon, known as *semantic prosody* (henceforth SP). SP refers to the evaluative meanings that arise from the habitual collocations of a word, functioning as what Baker et al. (2008, p. 278) call the “semantic extension of collocation.” The term was formally introduced by Louw (1993), though the phenomenon had earlier been observed by Sinclair (1987), who later demonstrated that certain expressions, like *set in*, commonly occur with negative states such as rot or infection (Sinclair, 1991, p. 74). This implies that meaning can be transferred from the surrounding context to a lexical item, as seen in Stewart’s (2010) analysis of *break out*, which carries negative SP due to associations with conflict and disease. Other researchers, including Hunston (2002), Stubbs (1995), Tognini-Bonelli (2001, 2004), and McEnery & Hardie (2012), have since expanded on SP, emphasizing its relevance in corpus-based studies.

Linguists typically classify SP into three categories: positive, negative, or neutral/mixed (Stubbs, 1995). If a word often appears with negative contexts, such as *utterly* with *destroying* or *ruining*, it acquires a negative prosody (Louw, 1993). Conversely, frequent associations with positive terms

suggest a positive SP, while a mix of both produces a neutral tone. According to McEnery and Hardie (2012), the frequency and nature of these collocates are central in determining SP. Some scholars, like Louw (2008) and Stubbs (1995), argue that negative SP is more common than positive. Beyond categorization, SP also serves a pragmatic function—communicating attitudes or speaker stance—making it attitudinal and evaluative in nature (Sinclair, 1996, as cited in Stewart, 2010, p. 10; Stubbs, 2001).

Semantic prosody has been the subject of considerable debate, particularly due to concerns over its subjectivity. Stewart (2010) notes that the evaluative meaning inferred from corpus data is ultimately a “subjective process” (p. 121). Similarly, Bednarek (2008) argues that identifying whether collocates are positive or negative is “problematic”, as such judgments can vary across scholars and interpretive communities (p. 5). Parallel concerns have been raised about corpus linguistics more broadly. While corpus-based analysis offers objectivity, generalizability, and a reduction of analyst bias through quantitative methods, it has been criticized for its lack of contextual depth. Paterson and Gregory (2019) caution that frequency counts alone do not account for how linguistic features are used, and that decontextualized examples may obscure deeper discursive patterns (p. 22). Likewise, Koller and Mautner (2004) warn that analysts risk becoming overly absorbed in data processing, treating corpus tools as ends in themselves rather than as means to critical insight.

However, Baker et al. (2008) counter these criticisms, suggesting that they arise from “restricted conceptions of CL” and that corpus analyses can provide deeper insights when paired with critical, qualitative analysis (p. 279). Analysts can infer contextual elements by examining concordances. These caveats have, in fact, encouraged many linguists and researchers to incorporate corpus approaches to CDA. Combining both approaches has been argued to enhance precision, systematic rigor, and generalizability by balancing each method’s limitations with the other’s strengths (Baker, 2006, 2010, 2012; Baker & Levon, 2015; Baker & McEnery, 2015; Baker et al., 2008; Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Orpin, 2005; Partington et al., 2013; Stubbs, 1997, 2001). This integrative approach has led to the emergence of Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA).

2.3 Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA)

Defined by Partington et al. (2013) as a “subset of corpus linguistics,” CACDA involves the use of computerized corpora to study language as communicative discourse (p. 10). Although the term Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) was introduced by Partington (2004a) to reflect the eclectic nature of the approach, it has been widely adopted in research since the advent of corpus linguistics (Baker, 2006; Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Partington et al., 2013, p. 10). According to Partington (2008), CACDA aims to analyze written and spoken discourses to uncover “non-obvious meaning” that might elude surface-level analysis. Hardt-Mautner’s (1995) early work emphasized the facilitative role of corpus-based techniques in CDA, a view supported by numerous researchers including Baker (2006), Baker et al. (2008), Baker and McEnery (2015), Koller and Mautner (2004), Mautner (2009), Orpin (2005), and Stubbs (2001).

Baker (2006) outlines several advantages of incorporating corpus techniques into CDA. He argues that it restricts researchers’ “cognitive biases” by limiting data selection and avoiding “cherry-picking” (p. 12). However, Baker and McEnery (2015) caution that one should not overestimate CL’s ability to eliminate bias, since “there is no such thing as unbiased human research” (p. 9). Baker further notes that corpus methods effectively capture the “incremental effect of discourse,” whereby repeated language patterns construct shared representations and shape perceptions (p. 13). This view aligns with Fairclough (1989), who argues that the power of media discourse lies in its cumulative impact, and with Stubbs (2001), who sees repeated evaluative meanings as socially shared. Additionally, Baker points out that corpus tools can detect “resistant and changing discourses” over time (p. 14). Mautner (2009) reinforces this by emphasizing the ability of corpus-based methods to handle larger datasets and provide both qualitative and quantitative insights, thus expanding the empirical base and enabling identification of discourse functions (p. 139).

2.4 CACDA in the Study of Immigration Discourse

Over the past two decades, a growing body of research has emerged combining corpus linguistics (CL) with critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate how migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are represented in media and political discourse. One of the foundational studies in this domain

is by Baker and McEnery (2005), who analyzed British newspaper texts and UNHCR publications to explore representations of refugees and asylum seekers. By using collocation, concordance, semantic preference, and semantic prosody techniques, the authors found that both sources dehumanized refugees, portraying them as indistinct masses or threats using metaphors like “packages” or “pests.” This sets a precedent for how corpus techniques could reveal underlying ideologies and shared narrative structures across different genres of discourse.

Building on this work, Baker et al. (2008) extended the analysis to a larger 140-million-word corpus of UK press articles spanning 1996–2005, covering the broader category of RASIM (refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants). The study demonstrated how statistical techniques such as keyword and collocation analysis can surface recurrent patterns and categories of representation, particularly highlighting the polarizing discourse in tabloids compared to broadsheets. It also showed how corpus methods support CDA by allowing researchers to detect metaphorical framings, topoi, and evaluative patterns at scale, strengthening the argument for the synergy between the two approaches in ideological discourse analysis.

Further demonstrating this integrative power, Baker (2012) conducted a corpus study of 20,000 British press articles to examine the portrayals of Muslims and Islam. Without preset hypotheses, the study began descriptively, identifying collocates of “Muslim(s)” and mapping patterns of association. The results confirmed earlier criticisms that British media often link Muslims with extremism, emphasizing the importance of interpretive caution despite the objectivity of corpus tools. Baker concluded that while corpus methods may mitigate personal bias, they do not eliminate it entirely, reinforcing the need for critical reflection in interpretation, a position echoed in other studies, including Baker and Levon (2015), who used both corpus and qualitative analysis to examine media portrayals of masculinity. Their comparative approach revealed overlapping and complementary findings, illustrating how corpus and qualitative CDA can mutually reinforce insights.

Recent studies have continued to explore this methodological synergy in various geopolitical contexts. Al Fajri (2017), for instance, employed both CL and CDA to examine the representation of “immigrants” using the ukWac corpus, showing how immigrants are frequently framed as “illegal”

and dehumanized through inanimate collocates. In a similar vein, Aluthman (2018) analyzed the Brexit debate corpus to trace how immigration was constructed by Leave and Remain campaigners. His findings revealed that immigration was framed through both negative economic fears (e.g., “job-destroying”) and more positive portrayals as entrepreneurial contributors. These studies underscore the flexibility and efficacy of the CACDA approach in capturing layered ideological patterns and contextualizing them within broader socio-political narratives.

The present paper builds on a growing body of research that examines the relationship between language use, ideological positioning, and media discourse. Central to this investigation are the concepts of collocation and semantic prosody, which highlight the ways in which words develop evaluative meanings through patterns of co-occurrence (Louw, 1993; Stubbs, 2001). By drawing on the methodological framework of Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA), this study combines quantitative corpus tools with qualitative discourse analysis to uncover how linguistic choices contribute to the construction of immigration narratives. Prior research has shown that media representations of RASIM frequently rely on discursive strategies such as securitization, criminalization, and victimization (KhosraviNik, 2009; Baker & McEnery, 2005). However, limited attention has been given to how these patterns manifest in U.S. media, particularly within right-leaning outlets like *Fox News*. This study addresses that gap by analyzing *Fox News* coverage from 2014 to 2019, a period spanning the transition from the Obama to the Trump administration, to explore the extent to which shifts in political leadership influence media discourse. Specifically, it investigates how the linguistic portrayal of immigration evolved during this change in authority.

3. Data for the Study

The data for this study was drawn from the *JSI Timestamped English Corpus*, a large-scale news corpus available through *Sketch Engine*, an online open-access corpus tool. *Sketch Engine* hosts over 400 corpora in more than 80 languages, with individual corpora containing up to 20 billion words, making it an essential resource for corpus-based linguistic research. The *JSI Timestamped English Corpus*, launched by the *Jozef Stefan Institute in Slovenia*, compiles a large corpus of news articles collected from global RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds. This technology allows for the

automatic and continuous retrieval of news content from subscribed outlets, resulting in a highly diverse and regularly updated reservoir of real-world media language since 2014. For the purposes of this study, examining ideological representations of RASIM in U.S. media discourse, a down-sampling method, inspired by Baker et al. (2008), was employed to build a targeted sub-corpus of articles exclusively from *Fox News*.

Fox News was purposively selected for its high readership and clear ideological alignment. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, 93% of those who named *Fox News* as their primary news source identified as Republicans. This strong partisan alignment makes *Fox News* an ideal case study for investigating how immigration is discursively constructed in right-leaning U.S. media. The chosen time span spans two presidential administrations, Obama's and Trump's, providing a valuable framework to assess how discourse shifts in response to political transitions. The compiled sub-corpus, comprising a substantial portion of the larger corpus totaling 26,542,176 tokens (22,790,667 words), forms a solid foundation for critically examining the linguistic and ideological strategies embedded in *Fox News*' coverage of immigration-related topics.

4. Method of Analysis

This study adopts a two-phase analytical approach that integrates quantitative corpus-linguistic methods with qualitative discourse analysis to investigate the representation of RASIM. In the first phase, collocational patterns of the node words are explored using Word Sketch on Sketch Engine, which enables the extraction of collocates based on grammatical relations. To ensure analytical reliability, a minimum frequency threshold is applied to focus on the most statistically significant collocates. Due to the limitations of statistical association measures like LogDice—especially their tendency to highlight low-frequency but exclusive combinations—collocates are prioritized based on raw frequency. These collocates are then thematically categorized using lexicographic tools (e.g., *Cambridge Smart Vocabulary*) and discourse-analytical frameworks (e.g., Baker & Gabrielatos, 2008), facilitating an initial mapping of how RASIM is discursively constructed across the corpus.

The second phase involves a qualitative concordance analysis of the top ten most frequent collocates in their textual contexts to determine their

semantic prosody and ideological function. This step draws on both corpus-based evidence and critical discourse analysis, with particular reference to the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009). Central to this analysis are the strategies of nomination and predication, which are used to examine how RASIM groups are linguistically constructed and evaluated. Nomination strategies focus on how social actors are named or referred to, while predication strategies uncover the traits, attributes, or actions ascribed to them—often through adjectives, appositions, or predicates. A sample of 20 concordance lines per collocate is analyzed to identify these discursive patterns. This step is crucial for uncovering both explicit and implicit evaluative meanings, and for establishing more rigorous semantic prosody values through triangulation between statistical frequency, linguistic form, and socio-political context. Ultimately, this combined approach allows for a detailed interpretation of how immigration and RASIM-related groups are framed ideologically in the selected corpus.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Quantitative Analysis: Collocation Trends Across Fox News (2014–2016 vs. 2017–2019)

The collocation analysis of Fox News during Obama’s second term in office (2014–2016) provides insights into the linguistic patterns used to frame immigration-related topics. Table 1 below presents the top ten most frequent collocates occurring with RASIM, their percentages, and the semantic categories to which they belong, which highlight a dominant focus on issues of legality, with *illegal*, *undocumented*, and *deport* collectively comprising 68.2% of the total collocates.

Table 1

Top ten most frequent collocates with RASIM in Fox News (2014-2016)

<i>No.</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Semantic Category</i>
1	Illegal	1,024	47%	Legality
2	Undocumented	424	19.4%	Legality
3	Syrian	384	17.6%	Nationality
4	Mexican	98	4.4%	Nationality
5	Cuban	75	3.4%	Nationality
6	Flee (s)	53	2.4%	Plight
7	Deport (o)	41	1.8%	Legality
8	Resettle (o)	30	1.3%	Residence
9	Minor	25	1.1%	Age/demographics
10	Resettlement	24	1.1%	Residence
Total		2,178		

This strong emphasis on legal status unravels the portrayal of immigration as a matter of law enforcement and regulation. Notably, collocates associated with *nationality*, such as *Syrian*, *Mexican*, and *Cuban*, account for 25.4% of the total, reflecting attention to specific nationalities within immigration discourse. Additionally, the collocates *flee* and *resettlement* indicate a minor focus on the humanitarian dimensions of immigration, including the circumstances driving migration and the settlement of immigrants.

On the other hand, the collocation analysis of Fox News during Donald Trump’s first term (2017–2019) reveals a stronger emphasis on themes related to legality and national security in immigration discourse. As illustrated in Table 2 below, the ten most frequent collocates demonstrate a marked focus on enforcement, restriction, and the scale of immigration, with legality-related terms comprising up to 93.8% of the top collocates and appearing in a wider range of forms.

Table 2

Top ten most frequent collocates with RASIM in Fox News (2017-2019)

No.	Collocate	Frequency	Percentage	Semantic Category
1	Illegal	3,103	77%	Legality
2	Undocumented	383	9.5%	Legality
3	Detain	130	3.2%	Legality
4	Syrian	124	3%	Nationality
5	Deport (o)	93	2.3%	Legality
6	Apprehend	54	1.3%	Legality
7	Resettlement	39	0.9%	Residence
8	Shield	35	0.8%	Plight
9	Caravan	24	0.5%	Numbers
10	Unauthorized	24	0.5%	Legality
	Total	4,009		

With *illegal* dominating at 77% of the total collocates, followed by *undocumented* (9.5%), *detain* (3.2%), and *deport* (2.3%), the data reflects a heavily legality-driven discourse. This prevalence suggests a dominant narrative centered on framing immigrants as subjects of law enforcement and control.

Notably, collocates such as *Syrian* (3%) and *resettlement* (0.9%) present nationality and residence-related topics, albeit with less emphasis. Additionally, terms like *caravan* (0.5%) and *apprehend* (1.3%) amplify the portrayal of immigrants as part of a broader influx or crisis. The inclusion of *shield* (0.8%) from the *plight* semantic category adds depth, hinting at polarized debates on protective measures versus restrictive policies. Overall, the findings, herein, underscore a discourse that intertwines legality with concerns over numbers and immigration control. This overview sets the stage for a closer examination of each collocate, its contextual use, and its semantic prosody.

Overall, it is observed that Fox News demonstrates a consistent emphasis on legality and enforcement throughout both periods, with notable shifts during the Trump administration. Central to this framing, collocates

like “*illegal*” and “*undocumented*” remained prominent, though the frequency of the former skyrocketed under Trump, further reinforcing the network’s increased focus on the legality of immigration. In contrast, the frequency of collocates such as “*Syrian*” and “*Cuban*” saw a significant decline, indicating a reduced focus on specific refugee groups during the later years. Additionally, collocates like “*deport*” and “*resettle*” saw a noticeable increase under Trump, reflecting an increased emphasis on policies related to deportation and residence, which became central to the immigration discourse under his administration. This shift highlights how Fox News’ coverage adapted to the evolving political climate, marking a clear focus on immigration control and enforcement during the Trump era.

5.2 Qualitative Analysis: Semantic Prosody Shifts through a CDA Lens

The in-depth qualitative analysis of collocates across the two terms in office reveals distinct thematic patterns in how RASIM-related terms were framed in Fox News. Broadly, the collocates can be semantically categorized into six major themes: *legality and enforcement*, *plight and crisis*, *provenance and nationalities*, *residence and resettlement*, *religion and ethnicity*, and *numbers and movement*. The analysis is particularly focused on the first four categories owing to their high frequency and significance. Each thematic category is examined, tracing its evolution across the two time spans in Fox News. This approach allows for a comparative perspective on how this news outlet framed immigration-related discourse over time, shedding light on shifting emphases, emerging patterns, and broader ideological tendencies.

5.2.1 Legality and enforcement

In Fox News coverage, the xenonyms *illegal* and *undocumented* stand out as the most frequent collocates within the legality category of immigration discourse. Their prominence and noticeable shifts between Obama’s second term and Trump’s first term reflect broader changes in media framing and political rhetoric. While other legality-related collocates—such as *deport*, *detain*, *unauthorized*, and *apprehend*—are present, their lower frequencies make them less suitable for meaningful trend comparison. As a result, the analysis centers on *illegal* and *undocumented* to provide a more focused examination of how immigration enforcement

discourse evolved over time in Fox News.

During Obama's term (2014–2016), Fox News predominantly used the collocate *illegal* to depict immigrants in a highly restrictive light, associating them with crime, legal violations, irresponsible behavior, and economic strain. This pattern reflects a broader tendency to portray immigration through a lens of legal enforcement and national security, often emphasizing law breaching and its perceived consequences. This is evident in phrases like “charged in shooting death of 17-year-old high school student” and “detained by federal agents,” drawn from the concordance examples below, which depict them as violent criminals:

1. Three **illegal immigrants** were charged Saturday in connection with the murder of a 17-year-old Virginia high school student who was gunned down on his way to a bus stop Friday morning.
2. The targeted groups include **illegal immigrants** who failed to show up for court dates to hear their asylum applications after they were detained by federal agents.

The negative evaluation of *illegal* is further reinforced through instances like “giving illegal immigrants with jobs in the U.S. the chance to apply for legal status”, where a contradiction is implied between illegality and lawful employment.

Additionally, *illegal* frequently co-occurs with the phrase “crossing the border” as in “the recent flood of illegal immigrants crossing the borders”, which emphasizes law violation via *overlexicalization* that entails the repetition of terms describing the threat in conjunction with immigrants which are in this case *illegal* and *crossing the border*. This discursive strategy also further strengthens an evaluative response positioning these groups as outside the law. The discourse also portrays *illegal immigrants* as irresponsible, particularly in legal contexts, with phrases such as “skipped court date after release” and “who failed to show up for court dates”. Overall, negative semantic prosody accounts for 60% of the inspected concordances, underscoring a dominant framing that positions *illegal immigrants* as a societal and legal threat. This high proportion of negatively connoted instances suggests a deliberate emphasis on illegality as a defining characteristic, reinforcing narratives of criminality and rule-breaking in discussions of immigration.

A key feature of *Fox News* coverage during this period is its emphasis on numbers, often employing pre-modifying quantifiers such as *thousands* and *millions*. This numerical framing functions rhetorically to magnify the scale of immigration, constructing it as a mass phenomenon that demands urgent control. When coupled with movement and water metaphors, the discourse presents illegal immigrants as an overwhelming and uncontrollable force. Phrases such as “the recent flood” and “the continuing surge” evoke imagery of natural disasters, positioning immigration as a threat to national order. Examples from the corpus include:

3. Abbott told Gibson that President Obama has made it clear that “The Rule of Law no longer matters” with his administration’s lack of law enforcement dealing **with the recent flood of illegal immigrants** crossing the borders.
4. Arizona’s two Republican senators are set to introduce legislation next week to deal with unaccompanied children and others illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border that includes ankle-bracelet monitors for those awaiting deportation hearings, an alternative to President Obama’s request for an additional \$3.7 billion to help with **the continuing surge of illegal immigrants**.

This framing not only underscores concerns about border security but also taps into anxieties about the labor market, particularly in response to President Obama’s 2014 *Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Legal Permanent Residents* (DAPA) program. By providing work authorization to an estimated five million undocumented immigrants, DAPA fueled concerns over employment competition, particularly for American workers in low-skilled job sectors. Overall, the discourse during this period criminalizes not only the legal status of *illegal immigrants* but also their actions, reinforcing an “us versus them” dichotomy and overlooking the conditions that forced them to migrate and leave their hometowns.

In comparison, during the Trump administration (2017–2019), *Fox News*’ coverage exhibited a noticeable shift toward an even more punitive and criminalizing tone. The frequency of *illegal* tripled, appearing significantly more often in headlines and reports. While *illegal* continued to be used to describe legal status, it was increasingly associated with criminality, as evidenced by its collocation with words from the domain of crime, such as *arrested*, *apprehended*, *crimes*, *drugs*, and even highly violent

acts like a *nail gun rampage*. The following examples illustrate this shift:

5. Since the shutdown began, border officials in the Rio Grande Valley Border Patrol Sector in Texas **have arrested** over 14,000 illegal immigrants and **confiscated over 14,000 pounds of marijuana and 800 pounds of cocaine**, border patrol sources told Fox News.
6. Illegal immigrant who's been deported previously **accused of nail gun rampage**. Jesus Ascencio Molina, 24, an immigrant from Mexico, was arrested last week after he allegedly attempted to kill a co-worker with a nail gun.

These associations reinforce a narrative that frames *illegal immigrants* as lawbreakers, legitimizing stricter immigration enforcement and punitive policies. The discourse's intensified criminal framing aligns with Trump's broader immigration agenda, which emphasized border security, increased deportations, and the construction of a border wall. By linking *illegal immigrants* to crime and drug trafficking, Fox News' coverage during this period contributed to a heightened sense of urgency surrounding immigration control, reinforcing public support for more aggressive policy measures.

Furthermore, even instances where the discourse appears to advocate for the rights or acceptance of these groups are countered by references to official punitive actions against those who support *illegal* immigrants. This counter-narrative is linguistically expressed through phrases such as "to take punitive action against cities that are making themselves havens for illegal immigrants", "taxpayers paid \$127G in legal bills for judge accused of helping illegal immigrant avoid ICE", and "allowing access to welfare benefits may serve as an inducement for illegal immigrants to remain in the U.S. illegally". These phrases not only criminalize the individuals themselves and frame them in association with legal violations but also extend this criminalization to those who attempt to assist or advocate for them.

In Fox News' coverage, the collocate *undocumented* appears less frequently than *illegal* but still plays a significant role in shaping immigration discourse, particularly through a lens of legality. During **Obama's second term**, the term *undocumented* occasionally appears in contexts suggesting inclusivity—such as discussions around paths to citizenship, driver's licenses, or deportation relief—which evoke empathy

and humanitarian considerations. However, these instances are outweighed by more frequent negative framings that associate *undocumented immigrants* with criminality, threats to public safety, or economic strain. The examples below reveal a semantic prosody that leans toward disapproval and securitization:

7. Experts on opposite sides of the immigration debate generally agree on one thing dealing with the tragic death of a San Francisco woman in recent days at the hands of an **undocumented immigrant** with a long criminal history.
8. Hundreds of **undocumented immigrants** convicted of drug offenses will likely be deported in the next few months after they are freed in the largest one-time release of federal prisoners.

Under Trump's first term, the negative framing of *undocumented* becomes even more pronounced. The term frequently co-occurs with crime-related language such as "caught with", "killed by", "rapist", "drug dealer" and is embedded in narratives emphasizing law enforcement, national security, and punitive action. Verbs such as 'cracked down', 'deporting', 'bar', and 'lashed out' further reinforce a tone of exclusion and urgency. This usage frames "undocumented immigrants" not as potential contributors to society but as legal liabilities or security threats, signaling a clear shift toward a more rigid and enforcement-driven discourse during this period.

5.2.2 Plight and crisis

The semantic category of *plight and crisis* is primarily shaped by the collocates *flee* and *shield*, each contributing to a particular framing of immigration. Across both periods, these terms highlight narratives of large-scale displacement, urgency, and securitization. *Flee* often appears in contexts emphasizing forced immigration due to conflict or persecution, yet its framing varies –at times evoking humanitarian concerns and at others reinforcing a sense of instability. Although *shield* typically conveys protection or safety, its usage is largely neutral. It either provides factual descriptions of policies without emotive framing or appears in contexts that balance opposing political and social perspectives on immigration. Collectively, these collocates shape a central theme that alternates between acknowledging hardship and reinforcing security-driven discourses.

The examination of the concordance lines of the collocate *flee* in

Fox News during Obama's term makes it obvious that refugees flee in an attempt to escape the appalling conditions of civil war, genocide, an oppressive regime or a terrorist group that threatens their lives and security. This essence is captured in 40% of the inspected instances that reveal a negative semantic prosody as expressed by phrases as "*untold thousands have died*", "*a humanitarian crisis*", and "*fleeing religious genocide*":

9. In Iraq and Syria, **untold thousands have died** and hundreds of thousands of **refugees** are **fleeing** their homes and homelands.
10. **Refugees** who have **fled** to Kobani have recounted seeing their villages **burned and their neighbors beheaded**.
11. But the failure by Iraqi forces to hold the city has already led to a **humanitarian crisis**, as an estimated 25,000 Iraqi refugees have **fled** for safety, most of them heading along Route Michigan for Baghdad.

This habitual collocation with negative events and outcomes instills the word 'flee' with a sense of danger, desperation, and peril. In this context, it underscores the severity and urgency of the refugees' plight, highlighting the hazardous conditions they face while escaping from conflict or adverse situations.

The vast majority of the examined concordances, nonetheless, exhibit neutral connotation. This is revealed in some contexts, up to 55% of the inspected instances, by balancing both positive and negative aspects. For example, in the case of "*refugees fleeing war zones*" due to Germany's open-door policy, the collocate *flee* is used to describe the movement of individuals escaping violence and instability. The neutrality comes from the presentation of both the positive obligation Germany sees in offering asylum and the criticism from opponents about the country's capacity to accommodate refugees:

12. There's been **widespread criticism** of Merkel's **open-door policy** for **refugees** fleeing war zones, which Merkel asserts is Germany's obligation given its own role in creating so many refugees generations ago.

Similarly, the mention of Jordon in "*With its arms open to refugees fleeing across its borders*" acknowledges the nation's role as a safe haven but also highlights the strain of housing 750,000 refugees in "*it is struggling under*

the burden”, balancing both the positive reception and the challenges Jordan face:

13. With **its arms open to refugees** fleeing across its borders from both Iraq and Syria, it has become the safe haven so many yearn for. Yet with enemies on all sides, and 750,000 refugees it is struggling **under the burden**.

This balanced framing suggests that *flee* with *refugee* does not inherently carry a positive or negative prosody but instead adapts to the surrounding discourse. By acknowledging both humanitarian obligations and logistical challenges, these instances reinforce a neutral semantic prosody that reflects the complexity of refugee movements and responses.

During Trump’s term, *flee* no longer appears among the top ten most frequent collocates. Instead, it is replaced by *shield*, which, though less frequent, is the only collocate associated with the plight category. It is closely associated with actions taken to protect illegal immigrants from deportation or legal action. Despite its inherent positive connotation, which implies protection or safety, *shield* is mainly used in a neutral context. It is either employed in a neutral manner, providing a factual explanation of policies and their legislative status without adding evaluative or emotive framing, or used in balanced contexts that reflect polarized political and social attitudes towards immigration during Obama’s and Trump’s administrations.

The collocate *flee* is used in 50% of the inspected concordances in a neutral context referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and other initiatives aimed at protecting vulnerable immigrant groups from deportation. The description focuses on the function of the DACA program and its legislative implications without overt evaluative or emotive language. The emphasis is on the policy dynamics and the associated political negotiations, maintaining a balanced tone. This is manifest in:

14. The program shielded illegal **immigrants** who came to the U.S. as children from deportation.
15. The first step would be a deal to legislate the expiring DACA policy -- an Obama-era executive order that shielded some illegal **immigrants** who arrived in the country as children from deportation.

16. A bipartisan group of six senators said Thursday afternoon they reached “an agreement in principle” with each other on immigration, including a plan to shield illegal **immigrants** brought to the United States as children from deportation, though it’s unclear if President Trump or others in Congress will go along with it.

In these instances, it is introduced as an appositive or a participle phrase, providing descriptive unbiased information about the program. In a similar vein, neutral sentiments surrounding the collocate *shield* are also captured in instances that frame the concept of *shielding* from the lens of political disagreement and negotiations rather than evaluative language about the program itself, keeping the prosody balanced without significant positive or negative connotations. This is linguistically manifest in the examples below by phrases as “*to end a program that shielded*”, “*ending the Obama-era decision to shield*”, and “*ended by Trump last year*”:

17. He also tangled publicly with Trump White House Chief of Staff John Kelly over his support of the decision to end a program that shielded young illegal **immigrants** from deportation.
18. President Trump slammed his political foes early Monday, tweeting that Democrats “don’t want” to make a deal on the Obama-era program shielding **immigrants** brought to the U.S. illegally as children from deportation.

The broader contexts shed light on political disagreement and negotiations rather than evaluative language about the program itself, keeping the prosody balanced without significant positive or negative connotations.

On the other hand, *shield* takes on a more negative connotation in contexts that align with Trump’s policies and the reversal of protective measures, which makes around 30% of the inspected instances. In this view, *shield* is seen as obstructive, impeding the enforcement of immigration laws and potentially enabling unauthorized residence in the country. This usage often appears with phrases like “*threatening sanctions for cities that shield*” and adjectives as ‘*controversial*’ in:

19. Now, with President Trump in office, and Monday’s announcement from Attorney General Jeff Sessions **threatening sanctions** for cities that shield illegal **immigrants**, Tranchant sees a new era dawning.

20. San Diego now joins Orange County, the state's third-most-populous county, in **rejecting** a state law that shields criminal illegal **immigrants** from deportation.
21. Illinois Rep. Luis Gutierrez had leveled the criticism at Kelly over his support of President Trump's decision to end **a controversial program** that shielded young illegal **immigrants** from deportation.

The framing suggests disapproval of the law by multiple governmental entities, and the collocate *shield* in this context is associated with a policy that is being opposed due to its perceived protection of criminal illegal immigrants. This association with conflict and rejection contributes to a negative evaluative tone.

The transition from *flee* to *shield* in Fox News' discourse reflects a shift in how the plight of RASIM is framed. Under Obama, *flee* at least implicitly acknowledged external hardship, whereas under Trump, *shield* suggests a focus on protection from legal consequences rather than humanitarian needs. This aligns with broader restrictive immigration rhetoric, where the emphasis is not on why people leave their countries and migrate but rather on whether they are receiving protections that Fox News may portray as unjustified or problematic.

5.2.3 Nationalities and provenance

The semantic category of *nationality and provenance* shapes immigration discourse by linking RASIM to specific geographic identities. These associations influence whether immigration is framed through humanitarian, security, or political lenses. For example, *Syrian refugees* amid the civil war often evoked humanitarian concerns, while *Mexican immigrants* were frequently discussed in the context of border security and illegal entry. The key collocates that are to be identified in this category are *Syrian*, *Mexican*, and *Cuban*, with the analysis primarily focusing on the first two due to their significant frequency. Comparing their usage across different periods and news outlets provides valuable insights into how media discourse constructs legitimacy, urgency, or threat based on the origins of RASIM groups.

Among the extracted collocates in this category, *Syrian* emerges as particularly significant, especially in Fox News' coverage during both administrations. Its prominence reflects the media's engagement with the

Syrian refugee crisis. However, shifts in its frequency and framing between Obama's and Trump's terms suggest changing discursive patterns that deserve closer examination. During Obama's presidency, *Syrian* appeared 384 times, making it the most frequent collocate in this category, whereas *Mexican* was a distant second with 98 occurrences. This aligns with the heightened focus on the Syrian refugee crisis following the outbreak of the civil war, as well as ongoing debates about U.S. refugee policy.

However, the collocate *Syrian* was framed negatively in 70% of concordances, suggesting that Fox News' coverage often emphasized security concerns, potential threats, or challenges associated with refugee resettlement. Inspecting a random sample of this collocate reveals its use primarily in contexts that unravel an unwelcoming attitude toward Syrian refugees triggered by security concerns and the perception of potential risks pertaining to terrorism as shown in:

22. Congressional Republicans are moving quickly to address the potential **security risks** associated with the Obama administration's new plan to allow 10,000 **Syrian refugees** into the United States over the next year, as part of a broader plan to accept more refugees from around the world.
23. There should be an immediate **moratorium** on admission of Syrian **refugees**, we need **to stop the importation of terror**.
24. McCaul's committee also released a report Wednesday on the Syrian refugee flow, saying it reveals "**alarming gaps** in the vetting of Syrian **refugees** at home and abroad".

Such concerns are, moreover, triggered by fear of potential terrorist groups that may sneak into the country along with this group of refugees. This is manifested by governors' announcements in the aftermath of Paris attacks "*to keep Syrian **refugees** from resettling in their states, expressing fears that militants could plan a terror attack and enter the country under the guise of a refugee*", as mentioned in the concordances.

Examining the socio-political context surrounding this time span may justify such fear of embracing refugees. The Paris attacks that took place in November 2014 made the acceptance of Syrian refugees "a major security concern" for many Western countries (Carlier, 2016, p. 59). It also resulted in the U.S. House of Representatives placing a ban on Obama's plan

to resettle 10,000 refugees. This, as a result, may justify the persistent calls and proposals for implementing more strict measures to enhance the screening processes of refugees as exemplified by the use of phrases like “*better screen Syrian refugees before allowing them into our country*” and “*improve screening measure for Syrian refugees*”, that focus on policy and procedural concerns. It is believed that the emphasis on the need for enhanced screening measures before allowing Syrian refugees into the country reflects cautious or critical sentiment. Overall, the use of this nomination strategy; namely nationyms in a negative context, serves a strategic function of excluding these groups via constructing in-group (us) and out-group (them), fostering fear and threat, and legitimizing restrictive immigration policies.

Mexican, along the same lines, carried a 75% negative prosody during Obama’s term, reinforcing the securitized framing of Mexican immigrants within discussions of unauthorized migration and border control. Manual examination of a concordance sample unveils relating Mexican immigrants to crimes and illegal acts in the instances examined that describe Mexican immigrants as ‘*illegal*’, as shown in:

25. “And if you talk about it, it's racist”, Trump told Fox News, days after a purported illegal Mexican **immigrant** deported five previous times **allegedly killed a woman in San Francisco**.
26. The gun used by a Mexican illegal **immigrant** when he allegedly **shot dead a 32-year-old woman** at a San Francisco pier belonged to a federal agent, a source confirmed to Fox News Tuesday.
27. A federal court ruled years earlier that parents of **a girl killed by a Mexican illegal immigrant** in 2004 could not sue Austin and city officials. </s><s> The court said the fault lies with the immigrant criminal, not the city.

Mexican immigrants are further even associated to violent crimes through the use of modifiers as ‘*rapists*’, ‘*drug dealers*’, ‘*violent criminals*’, and ‘*undesirable*’, accounting for nearly more 30% of the investigated instances. The discursive strategy employed here is the association of these groups with criminal acts considered by the American society as the worst types of crimes. The communicated semantic prosody is, hence, utterly negative.

Under Trump, *Syrian* remained the most frequent provenance-based

collocate in Fox News but saw a sharp decline to 124 instances, while *Mexican* disappeared from the list of top collocates. Notably, the negative prosody of *Syrian* dropped to 45%, indicating a potential shift in focus from a predominantly security-oriented narrative toward broader policy debates. The reduction in negative prosody (to 45%) and increase in neutral coverage (40%) suggest a relative de-escalation in hostile rhetoric toward Syrian refugees. This may be because Trump enacted policies that largely restricted their entry, such as the travel ban on predominantly Muslim countries. With these restrictive measures in place, there was less need for alarmist coverage, as Fox News' audience likely perceived Trump as successfully addressing the issue.

The absence of the collocate *Mexican* among the highest collocates suggests a shift in Fox News' immigration discourse, possibly focusing more on broader themes like border security and enforcement rather than nationality-specific framings. These patterns highlight how changes in political leadership and policy can influence the prominence and framing of different migrant groups in media discourse, shaping public perceptions of immigration based on shifting priorities. Instead of emphasizing the threat of Syrian refugees, Fox News' coverage during Trump's term may have pivoted toward broader concerns of border enforcement, illegal immigration from Latin America, and domestic security. This shift explains both the disappearance of *Mexican* as a top collocate and the rise in the frequency of terms related to legality, with the percentage in the legality category increasing from 68.2% to 93.8%.

5.2.4 Residence and resettlement

The thematic category of *residence* explores the language surrounding the relocation, resettlement, and living conditions of refugees, emphasizing the transitional aspects of displacement. This category includes key collocates such as *resettle* and *resettlement*, which reflect the processes and challenges RASIM face as they seek stability and security in new environments. By examining how these collocates are framed in Fox News and across time, we gain insight into how media discourse shifts from viewing resettlement as a humanitarian effort to a contentious political issue.

The declining presence of the *residence* category in Fox News, from 2.4% under Obama to just 0.9% under Trump, suggests a decreasing

emphasis on refugee resettlement as a major topic of discussion. During Obama's presidency, both *resettle* and *resettlement* appeared, with a considerable proportion of negative prosody (60% and 50%, respectively), indicating that resettlement was often framed as problematic or controversial. This negative framing is evident in contexts emphasizing economic burden, security risks, or the strain on local communities associated with refugee relocation as shown in the instances below:

28. Canadian premier wants Trudeau to halt plan to **resettle** 25,000 **refugees** by year end </s><s> TORONTO - A Canadian provincial leader wants new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to **suspend his plan** to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of the year after the Paris attacks.
29. And they say a UN plan to **resettle** 1 million **refugees** in Western nations would turn the situation into **a full-blown security crisis**.
30. The Latest: Canadian PM Trudeau **slows down** Syrian **refugee resettlement** for **security concerns**.
31. An expanding number of mayors, some Democrat, also are attempting to fend off calls for more **refugee resettlement** -- citing **mounting costs** that, in the words of Springfield, Mass., Mayor Domenic Sarno, are piling "poverty on top of poverty".

Both collocates are utilized in contexts associated with security concerns, framing the arrival of refugees as a potential menace and risk to national security. They are also constructed as a huge financial burden, having a potential influence on public opinion owing to foregrounding the economic impact.

Under Trump, however, *resettle* disappears completely from the top collocates list, leaving only *resettlement*, which carries a lower negative prosody (35%) and a higher neutral prosody (60%). This suggests that while refugee resettlement remained a topic in Fox News, its framing may have become less explicitly negative, possibly reflecting Trump's restrictive refugee policies, which significantly reduced resettlement numbers. With fewer refugees being admitted, resettlement may have been covered in a more procedural or neutral manner rather than as a controversial issue as manifest in:

32. The organization wrote Thursday to the U.S. Office

of **Refugee Resettlement**, which has jurisdiction over minors who enter the U.S. illegally unaccompanied by their parents, saying it believed the teens' detentions violated a federal court order and U.S. law.

33. Scott Lloyd, the director of HHS' Office of **Refugee Resettlement**, has also said that he believes teens in his agency's care have no constitutional right to abortion.

In these examples, reference is often made to The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) as an official organization that offers support to those in need, helping them integrate into American society. The linguistic framing suggests a mostly neutral portrayal, stressing the organizational support available to refugees.

Overall, the shift indicates that Fox News placed less emphasis on refugee resettlement in its coverage under Trump, possibly because his administration's policies made the topic less politically contentious. The change in prosody also suggests that resettlement was no longer framed as a pressing concern but rather as a secondary issue within broader immigration debates.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has examined the semantic prosody of the most frequent collocates associated with RASIM-related terms in Fox News across two political periods: President Obama's second term (2014–2016) and President Trump's first term (2017–2019). Through a combination of corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis using Reisigl and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, the analysis has revealed both continuity and shifts in how immigrants and immigration are discursively constructed in mainstream media. These constructions are shaped not only by linguistic choice but also by underlying ideologies, political perspectives, and broader sociopolitical contexts. Drawing on four key semantic categories: *legality*, *provenance and nationality*, *residence*, and *plight and crisis*, the study examined how these themes were emphasized or downplayed to promote either positive self-presentation or negative other-presentation (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009).

A quantitative overview of semantic prosody percentages, summarized in Figure 1 provides a comparative snapshot of how Fox News discursively

positioned RASIM. This figure confirms and contextualizes the ideological orientations emerging from the qualitative analysis.

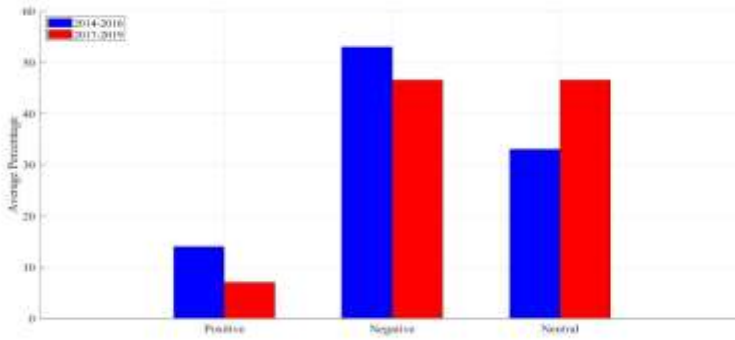


Figure 1. Average percentage of positive, negative, and neutral semantic prosody across Fox News (2014–2016 and 2017–2019)

As the findings suggest, Fox News maintained the highest proportion of negative prosody across both periods, peaking at 57% during the Trump era, while positive framing remained limited. These shifts underscore how this news outlet’s semantic framing is not only ideologically driven but also responsive to changing political climates.

A central finding is that semantic prosody serves as a powerful indicator of underlying attitudes toward immigration. Fox News overwhelmingly favored a discourse of criminalization, emphasizing legality-related collocates such as *illegal*, *deport*, *detain*, and *apprehend*. This consistent usage underlines the portrayal of immigrants primarily through the lens of enforcement and border security, contributing to a dominant negative semantic prosody. Particularly under the Obama administration, Fox News’ use of *illegal* constituted nearly half of all top collocates, reinforcing a strict law-and-order approach that portrays RASIM as lacking legal or moral legitimacy. During the Trump administration, this emphasis intensified, with legality and enforcement-related collocates making up 93.8% of the top collocates. This marked increase reveals an even stronger focus on legality and national security themes in immigration discourse, indicating a heightened ideological framing of immigrants as security threats and legal violators.

The diachronic comparison highlights the influence of political context and the ideology of the ruling party on media framing. During the

Obama administration, Fox News maintained a consistently negative portrayal of immigrants. Under Trump, however, the network intensified its punitive framing, reinforcing ideological narratives that depict immigrants as threats to national security and social cohesion. Even when addressing vulnerable groups such as children or asylum seekers, the coverage continued to emphasize themes of illegality and burden. This evolution illustrates how shifts in political leadership can recalibrate media strategies and semantic prosody to align with, support, or amplify dominant power structures.

Furthermore, the contrastive examination underscores that negative or positive prosody cannot be interpreted without context. Instead, they must be examined in relation to how and why these collocates are employed, requiring rigorous contextual interpretation. This confirms that semantic prosody is ideologically charged and context-dependent, supporting DHA's proposition that discourse is a social practice rooted in power relations and shaped by historical context.

This study emphasized the importance of examining language critically. The analysis revealed that collocates are not merely linguistic ploys, but ideological tools strategically deployed to frame immigration. Semantic prosody, though often subtle, plays a key role in shaping public perception, influencing policy debates, and reflecting social ideologies. By uncovering these diachronic patterns, this study offers a plethora of insights into the dynamic relationship between media, language, and power in the discourse on immigration, a subject that continues to demand critical attention.

Ultimately, the findings of this study can support efforts to enhance media literacy by showing how specific language patterns shape public understanding of immigration. By recognizing how nomination and predication strategies frame RASIM groups, readers and educators can become more aware of how media texts may promote certain ideologies or emotional responses. This awareness is especially important in politically polarized environments, where discourse can influence support for or opposition to immigration policies. Policymakers and media professionals may also benefit from such insights by reflecting on how language choices can impact public opinion and contribute to either constructive dialogue or social division.

7. Limitations and suggestions

While this analysis is based on a rigorous analysis of data, it also opens avenues for future research. One limitation is that this study focused on high-frequency collocates, potentially overlooking less frequent but ideologically significant terms. Further research could explore low-frequency or emergent collocates that signal shifting discourses. Additionally, expanding the dataset to include more recent coverage, or alternative media sources such as social media or international outlets, could provide a more multi-faceted picture of contemporary immigration discourse.

Another limitation of the study concerns the qualitative sampling strategy used for the analysis of discursive strategies. Specifically, only 20 concordance lines were selected per collocate for in-depth analysis using the nomination and predication framework. While this number was chosen to ensure manageable and focused close reading, it may not fully capture the broader range or variability of linguistic patterns present in the corpus. A larger sample size or a stratified sampling approach—accounting for variation across time, source, or context—could have provided a more comprehensive and representative account of how RASIM groups are constructed and evaluated. This limitation is acknowledged as it may affect the generalizability of the qualitative findings.

Although this study has revealed the ideological implications of collocational and force-dynamic patterns in RASIM media discourse, it opens the door to additional lines of research. One promising direction is cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparison. Examining how RASIM terms are constructed in non-English media or in different cultural contexts, such as European, Middle Eastern, or Latin American outlets, could reveal whether the ideological patterns identified in this study are globally consistent or culturally contingent. Additionally, future research could broaden its scope to include nontraditional news sources, such as social media platforms, podcasts, or independent blogs. These forms of communication often operate outside institutional editorial constraints and may reflect more polarized or grassroots discourses around migration.

Another valuable avenue would involve longitudinal studies that extend beyond the 2014–2019 period. In particular, analyzing media discourse during and after the COVID-19 pandemic could shed light on how

new global crises intersect with preexisting narratives about border security, public health, and mobility. Multimodal discourse analysis also presents a rich opportunity for further work. While this study focused on textual patterns, future research could explore how visuals, headlines, and page layout contribute to ideological framing, especially in digital news environments.

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