

## Comparing the portrayal of immigration in two Spanish newspapers: a semantic prosody analysis

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## Abstract

This study focuses on the semantic prosody (SP) of the word *inmigración* and its comparison in two Spanish newspapers which represent two different political ideologies. Our objective is to determine whether there exists a negative prosody of the item *inmigración* in the newspapers analyzed. We also intend to explore whether any significant differences can be elicited in how both newspapers portray the phenomenon of immigration. The analysis focuses on two corpora formed by more than 400 immigration news which were published between 2003 and 2013 and extracted from the digital library of *El País* (classified as centre-leftist) and *El Mundo* (with right-wing views). The results suggest that the word *inmigración* has a very similar negative prosody in both newspapers, regardless of their political ideology. Therefore, the portrayal of immigration seems to be rather a matter of social concern that goes beyond the political thought of conservatives and progressives.

**Keywords:** semantic prosody; immigration; corpus; newspapers; ideology.

## 1. Introduction

By no means can immigration be considered a recent phenomenon. It has always been present in the history of ancient and modern civilizations. Spain has traditionally been a source of immigrants, but its situation has changed in the last decades, so that it has become a recipient for immigrants more than a source. The so called developed countries, among which Spain is included, have publicly advocated their need to control the migratory flow, which has been continuously growing due to economic crises, wars and totalitarian regimes. These factors, among others, have led part of the world population to leave their place of origin in search of other places to live in.

Immigration is close to be considered a state affair. It would be strange not to find at least one headline about it in the mass media almost every day. The media are considered the fourth state given their great influence in society. Media texts build ways of seeing the world (Croteau, 2003), so that we get to see the world through the media. The media do not reflect, but construct. Political and economic powers behind mass media get newspapers, magazines or TV programs to project a biased image of reality. An example of this can be found in the news. The TV channel that we watch or the newspaper that we read will determine the way we perceive an event.

Thus, the European Network Against Racism (2006-2007) warns about the influence the mass media have on the immigrants' bad image in Europe. In the case of Spain, data conclude that xenophobic feelings are partly rooted in the negative picture the media build of immigration. The last report published in 2014 by the CIS (Spanish Centre of Sociological Research) about attitudes towards immigration in Spain reveals that almost 22% (21.6%) primarily related the word "immigration" to some kind of negative concept or threat such as economic or working threat, illegality, irregularity, crime, inequality, problem, or even excessive flow. What is more, almost 14% (13.9%) of the respondents had "poverty" as the first idea that came into their minds when hearing the word "immigration".

The media have been used as a source for the study of immigration, which has been traditionally carried out from a sociological and psychological perspective (Antonín & Tomás-Sábadó, 2006; Buades et al., 2010; Checa & Arjona, 2011). However, in the last three decades more and more studies have arisen that adopt a linguistic approach. A relatively recent linguistic phenomenon such as the semantic prosody (SP) opened a new line of research in the study of lexical units. Scholars such as Sinclair (1987), Louw (1993, 2000), Stubbs (1995, 1996, 2002) or Schmitt and Carter (2004) have explored the semantic environment of words through SP. A particular feature of this phenomenon is that it goes beyond the denotative meaning of a word. It pays attention to the meaning that a word may convey when co-occurring with others. Research on SP has been usually focused on verbs such as *end up* (Louw, 1993), *commit* or *happen* (Partington, 1998), *occur* (Stubbs, 2001a), and phrasal verbs, namely *sit through*

(Hunston, 2002) and *come about* (Partington, 2004). Another category that has been explored is the adverb, namely, *utterly* (Louw, 1993; Partington, 2004) and other adverbial intensifiers such as *absolutely*, *perfectly*, *entirely*, *completely*, *thoroughly* or *totally* (Partington, 2004). Most of these words have been analyzed in the context of general English corpora, including texts from different scopes and of different genres.

Our study differs from the previous ones in two ways. Firstly, the object of the analysis is the noun *inmigración*, whereas SP has been mainly explored in verbs and some adverbs. Secondly, the study is carried out in a corpus-specific scope, where the selected corpora belong to the genre of the written press.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Immigration and the media

The media may arouse public interest about a specific topic (Cachón, 2009) and reflect an issue, contributing to its creation and becoming part of the process (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This is in the line of the so called Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which is based on the idea that the perception of social issues by individuals is partly influenced by the mass media (Scheufele, 2000; Van Dijk, 2003). Thus, Martínez Lirola (2008) claims that journalists are discourse builders and that their position is somehow found in the text. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the relationship between the media and public opinion is not unidirectional or simple, since the media also tend to reflect public opinion, they being producer and reproducer at the same time (Norris, 2000).

The phenomenon of immigration is one of the hottest debates nowadays in Western societies, as it has increased sharply in Europe in general and Spain in particular over the last two decades (Donato & Armenta, 2011). The presence of immigration in the media indicates that this phenomenon worries institutions and feeds social controversy, giving birth to a considerably great amount of information. Although much is still to be done, many scholars claim that attitudes towards immigration are affected by the way it is represented in the media (Dunaway et al., 2011; Fetzer, 2013; Freeman et al., 2013; Lahav, 2013).

According to Thorbjornsrud (2015: 776), the coverage of migration is “contentious and polarized” by the media. She claims that immigrants tend to be pictured as victims or criminals, and there is no medium term. The report of the European Network Against Racism (2006-2007) shows that the media shape a poor image of the phenomenon of immigration, which is seen as one of the main causes of racism in Spain.

In their study about the perception of immigration in Spain, Checa and Arjona (2011) show the evolution of Spaniards’ opinion about immigration between 1996 and 2007, and the role of

the media in this process. The role of the media was analyzed within six sociological parameters. Accordingly, immigrants were seen as negative elements, and attitudes on immigration showed the negative sentiment that is notably found in the media. The authors concluded that the media are one of the main instruments in creating public opinion.

Stephan et al. (1998) made use of the Threat Theory as a predictor of attitudes towards immigrants in Spain and Israel. A group of Spaniards and Israelis completed questionnaires about Moroccan—in the case of the former—and Russian and Ethiopian people—in the case of the latter. Questionnaires had been built upon four variables of the Threat Theory: i) realistic threats or competition for scarce resources or welfare of the group; ii) symbolic threats, that is, threats to the group world view, norms moral values and beliefs, which may be undermined by people coming from other places; iii) intergroup anxiety that is related to prejudice and rejection for the perception to be dissimilar; and iv) negative stereotypes or negative expectations about the other. The four variables were shown to be predictive of threat feelings, the strongest being intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes, both closely related to prejudice and negative expectations. And the media are one of the most efficient tools to promote these feelings (Stephan et al., 2009). In the same line, Cea D'Ancona (2009) confirms this negativity around the out-group. The author introduces new parameters such as having an immigrant as a neighbor or to be within the official census, which made no significant difference, supporting previous research on the negative sentiment towards the phenomenon of immigration.

The Framing Theory is frequently used in sociological studies about immigration (De Vreese, 2003; Igartua et al., 2005; Vliegthart & Roggeband, 2007). It consists of viewing an issue from a variety of perspectives implicating several values or considerations. It studies how people conceptualize an issue in a specific way, adopting an attitude about it (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Vliegthart and Roggeband (2007) focus on the debate about immigration in the Netherlands during almost a decade between 1995 and 2004. They explored the link between the media and the parliament, and how this may affect the perception of the phenomenon of immigration, especially after 9/11. Igartua et al. (2005) analyze how information about immigration is handled by Spanish media. They discuss how the media contribute with the construction of stereotyped images about immigrants and the negativity towards the phenomenon.

The phenomenon of immigration has also been studied from a linguistic perspective. Most linguistic studies on immigrants and immigration are carried out from the Critical Discourse Analysis. Some recent examples are Van Dijk (2005, 2006, 2011), Bañón (2004) and Ridao (2006). Van Dijk's research focuses on the powerful elites and institutions and how they get to affect what is published by the media. Bañón and Ridao are more specific in their research and explore how the media deal with immigration in relation to education. The three authors adopt an essentially qualitative perspective and all of them offer a similar picture of how the

out-group and immigration in general is conceived. Their studies show the role of media in how immigration is seen and the non favorable attitudes towards immigrants in educational contexts and in a wider and more general scope.

Others combine the Critical Discourse Analysis with other disciplines such as Visual Grammar or Discourse Psychology. This is the case of Martínez Lirola (2008) and Crespo and Martínez Lirola (2012). The first one includes two texts on immigration published in a local newspaper of Alicante. The second one contains eight multimodal texts about immigration. Both studies make use of linguistic features (headline, written text, collocations, use of passive voice) and visual features (image size, frames, body position or colors). The two studies conclude that immigrants are represented as a threat and a burden to society, they being frequently associated to negative events such as unemployment and poverty. There is also another minor perspective which shows immigrants as workers who seek livelihood, but this image is reduced to a minor group of locals. In the line of identifying immigrants with negative concepts such as poverty, war or occupation, Cisneros (2008) explores the metaphor of “immigrant as pollutant” found in the media and the consequences that this image may have in terms of social integration.

The study conducted by López-Maestre and Lottgen (2003) combines Critical Discourse and Discursive Psychology. It examines how immigration is perceived by a group of university students in Murcia. Students were asked to express their attitudes on immigration through the writing of an essay. The aim of the study was to explore how attitudes were discursively expressed. The authors analyzed lexical choice, use of pronouns and other linguistic features. Results revealed that the view on immigration was negative and problematic, conceiving immigrants as a political and economic problem.

Within the linguistic research on immigration and the media, there exist some corpus-assisted studies (Baker et al., 2008; Taylor, 2009) that share the idea that the phenomenon of immigration is often represented in the press negatively. In their analysis of a 140-million-word corpus of British news articles about refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants (RASIM), Baker et al. (2008) establish eight categories of reference to classify their observations and state that “these categories are regularly used in ways which negatively reference RASIM” (2008: 286), being the newspapers’ attitude towards RASIM negative rather than positive.

Later on, Taylor (2009) carried out a corpus-assisted study to explore the representation of foreign migrants in the Italian press. Her work was a para-replication of the Lancaster group’s research into RASIM. Taylor observed that the node items *immigrati*, *clandestini*, *extracomunitari* and *stranieri* were also frequently constructed negatively in the Italian newspapers, but certain nationalities appeared more threatening than others. In particular, in her corpus, people from China in Italy were “the subject of a moral panic story” (2009: 35). In a re-

cent study, Alcaraz-Mármol and Soto-Almela (in press) analyzed news on immigration from national Spanish newspapers. However, their research goes a step further than most studies by paying attention to the semantic environment of the Spanish lexical items *inmigración* (immigration) and *inmigrante* (immigrant). Their study consisted of identifying which type of SP—whether negative, positive or neutral—these two terms had in the media. Results are in the line of previous sociological studies and discourse analysis studies by showing a negative sentiment towards this phenomenon.

## 2.2. Semantic prosody

Firth was the first one to use the term “prosody” in 1957 within a phonological context. He referred to a phonological coloring spreading beyond semantic boundaries. It was the post-Firthian corpus linguist Sinclair (1991) who could observe the phenomenon of SP in the collocational behavior of items. He noticed that many uses of words and phrases showed a tendency to occur in a given semantic environment, although the concept of SP as such was not coined until 1993 by Louw. Stubbs (2002: 65) points out that SP is “a feature which extends over more than one unit in a linear string”. The term has been fine-tuned by linguists such as Hoey (2005) and Hunston (2007) who define SP as the overall discourse function of a “unit of meaning” in a text.

Semantic prosody can be approached from two different perspectives: discoursal or corpus-based. Sinclair (2004a) describes the first one in terms of the evaluative speaker’s intention, whereas the second one has to do with the attitude towards a phenomenon in a given text. In this second perspective there is an analysis of items that appear together many times in many texts.

This linguistic phenomenon can be part of what is known as “priming” (Partington, 1998; Xiao & McEnery, 2006; Morley, 2007). Nevertheless, SP is not a univocal concept (Whitsitt, 2005), and it has been described from different points of view, which have provided prosody with various nuances. One of these refers to diachronic (Louw, 1993; Bublitz, 1996) versus synchronic (Sinclair, 2003). In a diachronic study of SP, this phenomenon is defined as an attached meaning or as a meaning which is transferred from one word to another during the course of time (Stewart, 2010). In the diachronic perspective the development of negative prosody happens with co-occurrence through time (Morley & Partington, 2009; Whichmann et al., 2010; Zhang, 2013). By contrast, our analysis focuses on SP as a synchronic process in which the meaning is extended over groups of words and “goes well beyond the single orthographic word” (Partington, 2004: 131-132).

In 2000, Louw amplifies his definition of SP going beyond this “aura of meaning” (1993) to clearly distinguish it from connotation. In the context of SP, connotation is understood

as evaluative meaning. Therefore, although connotation and SP can be closely related, they should be considered different phenomena. Connotation is more obvious and consistent, as well as related to individual items, whereas SP is less evident and more prone to changing with context: “the latter is expressed over stretches of discourse, whilst by and large lexicographers [...] find it easy and natural to think in terms of individual word meaning” (Morley & Partington, 2009: 151).

Louw (2000) claims that while SP depends on the co-text and thus can be explored in a corpus through regular co-occurrences of an item, connotation is related to instinctive semantic associations that are often made of an item, regardless of the collocates.

Semantic prosody should not be confused with semantic preference, either. Sorli (2013: 101) states that any of them can be directly observable, but the former “can be stated upon the examination of the preferred lexis”. As for the difference between SP and collocation, the latter is not related to the evaluative meaning or the pragmatic function which is given by the writer or speaker to a certain item, but to the other lexical items the node co-occurs with regularly.

Semantic prosody can be positive, negative or neutral. We consider that words have one type or another of SP depending on the meaning of the words they co-occur with, that is to say, whether that meaning is negative or positive (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Most authors have identified many more negative examples than positive ones of SP (Louw, 2000). For instance McEnery et al. (2006) compiled a list of lexical items in English where they could only identify three examples of positive prosody in their corpus, namely *build up to*, *provide* and *career*. By contrast, they found numerous cases of negative prosody such as *break out*, *happen*, *set in*, *bent on*, *cause* or *commit*, to name but a few.

Our study can be classified within local prosody (Tribble, 2000), which points towards a type of prosody which is analyzed in a specific text type, in this case written media.

Stewart (2010) advocates for a role of intuition and introspection in the study of SP. He suggests not to discard intuition and introspection from analysis and thinking “twice before stigmatizing” them (2010: 134). Nevertheless, many other authors agree that we should go beyond native speakers’ intuitions and introspection, and explore SP by using attested data from corpus and computational methods (Stubbs, 1995; Channell, 1999; Widdowson, 2000; Hunston, 2002; Hoey, 2005). In fact, Zhang (2013: 64) claims that “it is computational research and corpus linguistics that make it possible to reveal its existence [SP]”. In the same line, Huston (2002) adopts this way of approaching SP. He justifies this approach as he considers that it is through the use of corpus tools that we can observe this linguistic phenomenon, given that a large number of examples of a lexical unit are needed for the analysis. Louw (2000) and Sinclair (2003) share the same opinion and warn that mere introspection may not be enough for the study of SP.

### 3. Purpose of the study

This study primarily aims to compare the SP of the Spanish noun *inmigración* present in two representative national newspapers of different ideology. In particular, we intend to explore whether there exists a negative prosody of the item *inmigración* in the analyzed corpora, and whether any significant differences can be elicited in terms of SP between the two newspapers, given their opposite ideology. The initial hypothesis is that *El Mundo*—being the conservative one—will present a more negative degree of semantic prosody than *El País*, which belongs to a more progressive ideology.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Description of the corpora and selection criteria

This study is based on more than 400 news articles about immigration in general selected from two well-known Spain's national newspapers, *El Mundo* and *El País*, totalling over 278,000 words. According to the last report by *La Oficina de Justificación y Difusión* (2012), they represent the most widely read newspapers in Spain and both are originally written in Spanish. Despite being very similar in importance and number of readers, they differ in ideology. On the one hand, *El Mundo* was created in 1989 by Pedro J. Ramírez. It has a conservative tendency and it identifies with the centre-right wing. On the other hand, *El País* is more progressive and can be classified as centre-leftist. It appeared for the first time in 1976 under the supervision of PRISA corporation group.

The amount of words collected from the two newspapers is comparable with 139,627 from *El País* and 139,209 from *El Mundo*. The searching procedure was carried out in the digital library of each newspaper, and the time span for the articles selection covers 10 years, from 2003 to 2013. Indeed, this decade is seen as especially interesting concerning immigration issues in Spain since, at the beginning of the 21st century, the phenomenon of immigration started to expand exponentially in this country. The focus on this decade will enable us to offer a contemporary, present-day view of the linguistic item analyzed.

### 4.2. Analysis procedure

The corpora were run by the software Wordsmith, which enabled us to examine how words behaved. In order to remove all non-informing or potentially misleading words, we used a “stoplist” which contained highly common words such as determiners, conjunctions or prepositions, which were filtered out prior to text processing. However, special mention has to be made to the preposition *contra* (against), which may have a specific weight for the purpose of this study. In fact, words such as *contra* may be considered semi lexical terms. Sometimes,

the distinction between functional words and lexical words is too simple to categorize some linguistic items. This is the case of *contra*, which is placed within the functional category of prepositions; however, it displays a strong negative meaning which should not be ignored (Corver & Van Riemsdijk, 2001). Based on this idea and given the social bent of our study, we decided not to include *contra* in our “stoplist”.

Wordsmith offers the words that co-occur with the node *inmigración*. Hoey (2005: 158) suggests that SP should be explored “within a fairly restricted window”. Thus, in order to be as precise as possible, we narrowed down our research to the five closest right and left words to the node. Furthermore, we limited our analysis to the words that occurred ten or over ten times with *inmigración*. We considered that this figure is quite significant, taking into account that the so called window in Wordsmith comprehends the five closest words to the node.

Our study is primarily focused on the analysis of lemmas, being understood as the base forms of words. Therefore, inflected forms, such as verb tenses, plural, or -s third singular person were counted just as one single lexical item. For instance, the lemma *luchar* represents the inflected forms *lucha*, *luchas*, *luchan*, *lucharemos*, etc. However, derivational forms—that is, those that contain semantic affixes such as prefixes or suffixes—were counted individually. We consider that inflection does not essentially change the meaning of the lemma; yet, derivation, which is the use of prefixes and suffixes, does imply a change of meaning.

## 5. Results

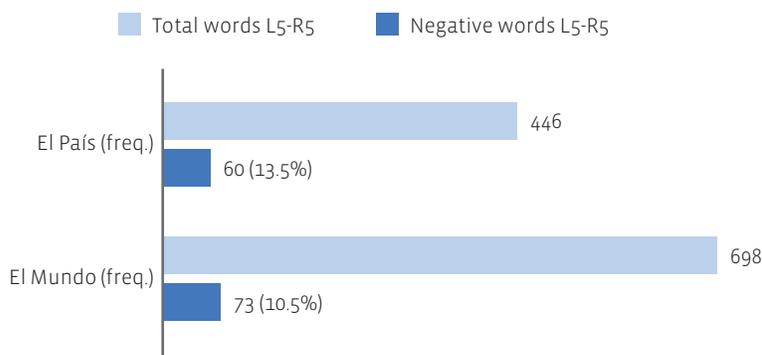
The item *inmigración* is the content word that occurs more frequently in both corpora with 1,269 times in *El Mundo* and 740 times in *El País*. *Inmigración* occurs 698 times with a content word in a close position (L5-R5 window) in *El Mundo*, whereas the co-occurrence in *El País* points to 446 times. These differences show that *El Mundo* includes a greater amount of content words than *El País* (see figure 1).

Among all the content words co-occurring with *inmigración* in a L5-R5 window, 73 have a negative meaning in *El Mundo*, which represents 10.5%, and 60 words are negative in *El País*, representing 13.5% of the total amount of content words, indicating 3% more in the use of negative words by *El País* than by *El Mundo*.

Regarding the total number of negative lemmas in a L5-R5 window, *El Mundo* presents 51, that is, 7 lemmas more than *El País*, which contains 44. Some of these negative lemmas co-occur with *inmigración* up to 10 times or even over 10 in any of the corpora. However, no significant differences were found between the two corpora as to the amount of negative lemmas co-occurring 10 times or more. *El País* contains 13 lemmas which appear 10 times or

**FIGURE 1**

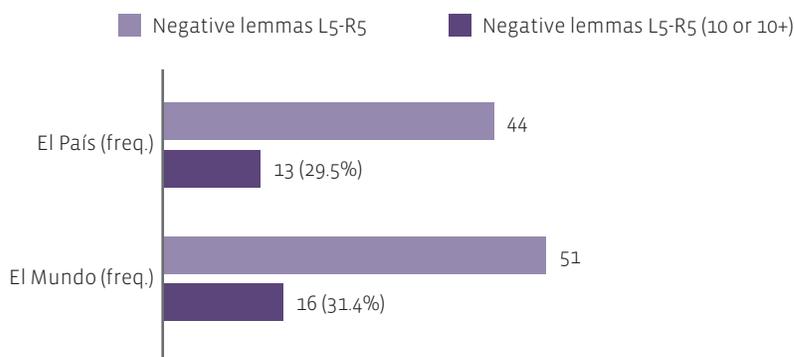
Frequency of total words and negative words L5-R5 in both corpora



more, representing 29.5% of all negative co-occurring lemmas, whereas *El Mundo* has 16 lemmas in this situation, representing 31.4%. Thus, the difference between the two newspapers hardly reaches 2%.

**FIGURE 2**

Frequency of total negative lemmas L5-R5 and those appearing 10 or more times



These negative lemmas co-occurring with *inmigración* 10 or more times are displayed in table 1 and table 2 according to their number of occurrences, from the most frequent to the least frequent. As can be noted, many of the lemmas coincide in both corpora, namely *ilegal*, *contra*, *luchar*, *clandestina*, *problema*, *irregular*, *control*, *delincuencia*, *combatir*, and *frenar*, although their frequency varies. Some of them even occur over 50 times in both corpora such as the top three lemmas: *ilegal* (illegal), *contra* (against) and *luchar* (fight). The most frequent negative lemma is *ilegal* with 262 occurrences in *El Mundo* (20.6%) and 133 occurrences in *El País* (18%). This is followed by *contra* co-occurring with *inmigración* 135 times in *El Mundo* (10.6%) and 104 times in *El País* (14.1%). *Luchar* is also worth mentioning with 73 co-occurrences in *El Mundo* (5.8%) and 52 co-occurrences in *El País* (7%).

The sum of all the negative occurrences in *El Mundo* rises up to 781, which represents about 61%. This means that every 100 times *inmigración* co-occurs with a content word in *El Mundo*, it appears 61 times with negative prosody, given the occurrence of any of the lemmas shown in table 1. In *El País*, the total of negative occurrences is 522, leading us to state that *inmigración* presents a negative prosody in over 70% of its occurrences. It means that every 100 times *inmigración* appears with a lexical item in L5-R5 in *El País*, it co-occurs about 70 times with a negative lemma such as the ones presented in table 2.

**TABLE 1**Top negative lemmas in *El Mundo*

NEGATIVE LEMMAS	TOTAL OCCURRENCES
ilegal	262 (20.6%)
contra	135 (10.6%)
luchar	73 (5.8%)
clandestina	48 (3.8%)
problema	46 (3.6%)
irregular	44 (3.5%)
control	40 (3.2%)
delincuencia	33 (2.6%)
frente	18 (1.4%)
combatir	13 (1.02%)
inseguridad	13 (1.02%)
dura	13 (1.02%)
negativa	12 (0.9%)
frenar	11 (0.87%)
criminalidad	10 (0.7%)
crisis	10 (0.7%)
Total	781 (61.3%)

**TABLE 2**Top negative lemmas in *El País*

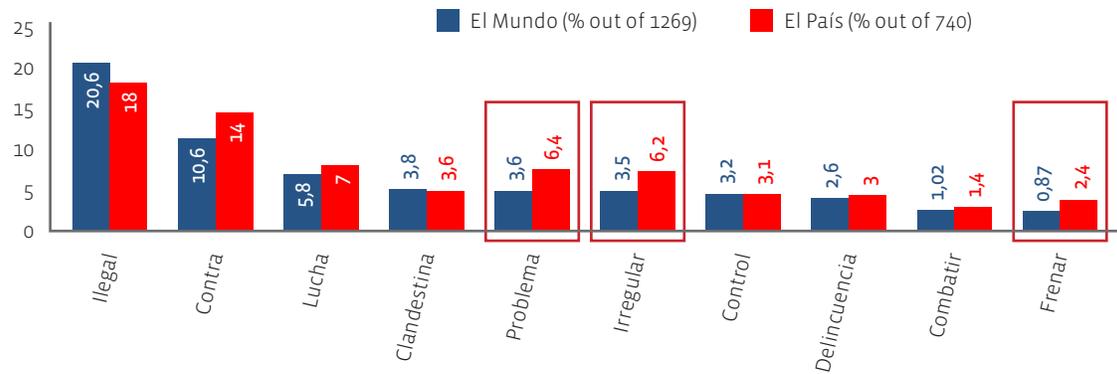
NEGATIVE LEMMAS	TOTAL OCCURRENCES
ilegal	133 (18%)
contra	104 (14%)
luchar	52 (7%)
problema	47 (6.4%)
irregular	46 (6.2%)
clandestina	27 (3.6%)
control	23 (3.1%)
delincuencia	22 (3%)
frenar	18 (2.4%)
medidas	18 (2.4%)
endurecer	12 (1.6%)
expulsión	10 (1.4%)
combatir	10 (1.4%)
Total	522 (70.5%)

Ten negative lemmas occur simultaneously in both corpora. These lemmas are shown in figure 3 together with the percentages they represent in each of the corpora. Each percentage has been calculated with respect to the total frequency of the word *inmigración* in *El Mundo* (1,269 times) and in *El País* (740 times). As can be observed, 7 lemmas are more employed in *El País* while just 3 have a higher percentage in *El Mundo*. This is the case of *ilegal*, *clandestina* and *control*, which seem to be slightly more frequent in *El Mundo*. The lemmas that most differ in use are *problema*, *irregular* and *frenar*, which present a greater percentage of co-

occurrences in *El País*, being this percentage almost doubled in the cases of *problema* and *irregular* and even tripled in the case of *frenar*.

**FIGURE 3**

Lemmas coinciding in both corpora with a frequency of 10 or higher



Regarding the sum of percentages of the negative coinciding lemmas, we could state that *inmigración* presents a negative prosody in 55.6% of its occurrences in *El Mundo* and 65.1% in *El País*.

It is also interesting to mention that some of the coinciding lemmas occur in a specific position due to their own nature (see table 3). This is the case of *ilegal* (illegal), *clandestina* (clandestine) or *irregular* (irregular), which occur in R1 position bringing about the frequent chunks *inmigración ilegal*, *inmigración clandestina* and *inmigración irregular*. *Combatir* (combat) or *frenar* (stop), which mostly appear in L2 position, give rise to the chunks *combatir la inmigración* and *frenar la inmigración*. Some other words such as *contra* (against), *luchar* (fight), *problema* (problem), *control* (control), and *delincuencia* (crime) also lean towards a specific position. For instance, *contra* occurs 120 out of 135 (in *El Mundo*) and 91 out of 104 (in *El País*) in L2 position, giving place to the chunk *contra la inmigración*. In fact, this chunk is often completed with the lemma *luchar*, prompting *luchar contra la inmigración*, which is the third most frequent chunk in both corpora.

Our analysis has focused on those lemmas that occur at least 10 times with *inmigración*. Nevertheless, there are some other lemmas that, in spite of appearing in both corpora, do not occur 10 times or more in one of them. These lemmas are also worth mentioning because of their apparent negative burden. This is the case of *frente* (face something), *inseguridad* (insecurity), *criminalidad* (criminality) or *crisis* (crisis), which co-occur with *inmigración* 10 or more times in *El Mundo* but under 10 times in *El País*. On the contrary, *expulsión* appears 10 times in *El País* and just twice in *El Mundo*. Table 4 shows the frequency of the coinciding lemmas that occur under 10 times in one of the corpora. As can be observed, these frequencies represent

**TABLE 3**

Linguistic chunks: positions and frequencies

CHUNKS	EL MUNDO		EL PAÍS	
	Position	Frequency (%)	Position	Frequency (%)
“inmigración <u>ilegal</u> ”	R1	255/262 (97.3%)	R1	127/133 (95.5%)
“ <u>contra</u> la inmigración”	L2	120/135 (88.8%)	L2	91/104 (87.5%)
“ <u>luchar</u> contra la inmigración”	L3	67/73 (91.8%)	L3	51/52 (98%)
“inmigración <u>clandestina</u> ”	R1	48/48 (100%)	R1	27/27 (100%)
“ <u>problema</u> de la inmigración”	L3	25/46 (54.3%)	L3	33/47 (70.2%)
“la inmigración es un <u>problema</u> ”	R3	4/46 (8.7%)	R3	9/47 (19.1%)
“inmigración <u>irregular</u> ”	R1	42/44 (95.5%)	R1	45/46 (98%)
“ <u>control</u> de la inmigración”	L3	13/26 (50%)	L3	14/16 (87.5%)
“ligar/relacionar/unir inmigración con <u>delincuencia</u> ”	R2	6/7 (85.7%)	R2	7/15 (46.7%)
“ <u>combatir</u> la inmigración”	L2	12/13 (92.3%)	L2	5/10 (50%)
“ <u>frenar</u> la inmigración”	L2	10/11 (91%)	L2	15/16 (93.8%)

between 0.2 and 1.4% of the close co-occurrences with *inmigración*, but they are mentioned given their negative burden and the fact that they coincide in both newspapers.

**TABLE 4**

Coinciding lemmas that occur under 10 times in one of the corpora

LEMMAS	EL MUNDO	EL PAÍS
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Frente	18 (1.4%)	9 (1.2%)
Inseguridad	13 (1.02%)	2 (0.3%)
Criminalidad	10 (0.7%)	2 (0.3%)
Crisis	10 (0.7%)	2 (0.3%)
Expulsión	2 (0.2%)	10 (1.4%)

## 6. Discussion

In our study, the most frequent occurrence for *inmigración* is *ilegal*, which was used 20.6% in *El Mundo* and 18% in *El País*. These percentages—together with those obtained for other common occurrences in both corpora such as *clandestina* and *irregular*—show that the two newspapers under study portray immigration as a phenomenon in which illegality, secrecy, and irregularity are the rules rather than the exceptions. This idea of illegal phenomenon is present in sentences such as “El Gobierno ha logrado atajar la ‘marea de inmigración *ilegal*’, que en 2006 se convirtió en la primera preocupación de los españoles” (*El Mundo*).

These results are parallel to those obtained by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford in its Report on Migration in the News (2013). One of the most remarkable patterns of this Report was the prominence of the phrase “illegal immigrants”. However, as it is stated in this Report, “although illegal far outnumbered any other modifier of immigrants [...], it is worth noting that immigrants with legal status far outnumber those without it, according to the best estimates of the size of both types of migrant populations” (2013: 24).

Both newspapers pay considerable attention not only to the lack of legal authorization, but also to the problem of immigration, which is sometimes put on the same level as crime and lack of public safety. Indeed, *problema* and *delincuencia* appear in sentences like “El Gobierno canario ha advertido de que la inmigración es un *problema* de todos los españoles y europeos” (*El Mundo*) or “El PP reparte planfletos que asocian *delincuencia* e inmigración” (*El País*).

Moreover, immigration is portrayed as an expanding phenomenon that must be fought, stopped, or controlled. In fact, *luchar* (fight), *control* (control), *frenar* (stop) and *combatir* (combat) are habitual lemmas found in the co-text of the node *inmigración* in both corpora. The representation of immigration as an uncontrollable phenomenon is present in sentences such as “El Gobierno pide ayuda a la UE para *frenar* la inmigración y refuerza su presencia en África” (*El Mundo*); “La UE promete más ayuda para el *control* de la inmigración” (*El País*); or “En materia de flujos migratorios, *combatir* la inmigración ilegal seguirá siendo una prioridad absoluta” (*El Mundo*).

The word *contra* (against), which contributes to the perception of immigration as a negative phenomenon, is also highly present in the two newspapers, being indeed the second word that most co-occurs with *inmigración* in both corpora. *Contra* appears in sentences like “las medidas adoptadas *contra* la inmigración incluyen la introducción del delito de inmigración clandestina” (*El Mundo*) or “han desplegado desde hace meses una telaraña de medidas *contra* la inmigración” (*El País*). In these examples *contra* has a negative effect on the word *inmigración*. However, being against something may have sociological positive results, for instance *being against child abuse* is good for society and it is seen as a favorable

attitude towards that issue. From a linguistic point of view, the construction *being against something* (*estar contra algo*) indicates that the concept after *contra* is always negative. Expressions such as *estar contra el abuso de menores*, *estar contra la guerra* or *contra la obesidad* have a sociologically positive result; yet, linguistically speaking, they are negative because *contra* indicates that *abuso de menores*, *guerra* or *obesidad* are being opposed. Indeed, these three concepts have a denotative negative meaning. Similarly, in examples which are not so clearly negative like *electric cars* or *government* in *being against electric cars* or *against government*, these words are also perceived as negative terms in these examples, although electric cars or government are not denotatively negative. However, we cannot omit that the criterion with which the prosody should be inferred seems to be one of the unconcluded dilemmas in studies on SP: is the concept denoted by the co-occurrence unfavorable in the mind of the person who produces the utterance, or is it a generally unpleasant concept?

In addition, it is worth mentioning that most of the coinciding lemmas suggest linguistic chunks that are repeated along both corpora. These lemmas occur in specific positions within the chunks since they belong to different parts of speech. For instance, adjectives such as *ilegal*, *clandestina* or *irregular* mostly occur in R1 position, giving rise to the frequent chunks *inmigración ilegal*, *inmigración clandestina* and *inmigración irregular*, so that *inmigración* frequently involves being outside the law, as it has been stated previously. The transitive verbs *combatir* or *frenar*, which chiefly appear in L2 position, bring about the chunks *combatir la inmigración* and *frenar la inmigración*. Immigration is considered to be a societal problem in both newspapers and this is expressed through two different linguistic chunks: *problema de la inmigración* and *la inmigración es un problema*, where the word *problema* leans towards L3 and R3 positions respectively. *Contra* largely occurs in L2 position, giving place to the chunk *contra la inmigración*, which often appears along with the lemma *luchar* in L3 position, prompting *luchar contra la inmigración*.

The profiles of *El Mundo* and *El País* are very similar in how immigration is presented in terms of the SP regardless of ideology. Semantic prosody of the word *inmigración* points to negativity in both newspapers. The progressive ideology that is attached to *El País* does not seem to predict the way immigration is treated. Expectedly, progressivism has shown a more favorable and positive attitude towards the phenomenon of immigration. By contrast, conservatism is expected to be more reticent to people coming from other countries with the intention to stay in and look for new opportunities.

Despite the fact that the two newspapers are classified as different in ideology—*El Mundo* is considered to belong to the centre-right wing, whereas *El País* is classified in the centre-left wing—, this distinction cannot be observed as far as the treatment of the word *inmigración* is concerned. For space reasons, we will not discuss here how the two newspapers offer different versions of phenomena other than immigration. The analysis of the news about im-

migration shows comparable percentages of negative prosody in both papers. What is more, some of these percentages are higher in *El País*, which, paradoxically, should have a more positive attitude towards the phenomenon or, at least, less negative than *El Mundo*. What results have revealed is that not only does *El País* show a negative view of immigration, but this view is slightly more negative than that reflected by *El Mundo*. *El País* was initially expected to present a significant lower degree of negative prosody than *El Mundo*, but our results do not reveal this. If it is generally accepted that the media need to refer to and inform about a social, political and security problem that is always described in the same (negative) terms, it is at least appealing the fact that no significant differences have been found between the two newspapers in terms of the degree of negative prosody. According to the different ideology of the two newspapers, a significantly lower degree of negative prosody would have been expected for *El País*. By contrast, and to our surprise, not only were significant differences not found, but the more liberal newspaper, *El País*, showed a higher degree—although not significant—of negative prosody for the word “inmigración”.

In summary, it was found that the two newspapers under analysis seem to use very similar and even coinciding lemmas to address this phenomenon. The way immigration is portrayed by two of the most important mass media in Spain is not related to the different ideology that each of them represents. It does not seem to be a question of political ideology, but a systemic social feeling, a general and generalized perception. Our analysis shows that immigration is a social issue beyond conservatism and progressivism, crossing the borders of political thought.

## 7. Final remarks

The media seem to exert an important influence on the way reality is conceived by society. One of the hotly debated issues nowadays is immigration. The present study analyses how this phenomenon is dealt with by the Spanish written press from the perspective of the SP.

The results obtained show that views about immigration may go beyond ideology. The two newspapers analyzed are related to different political wings, but as it comes to the way immigration is portrayed, they show no significant differences. In both newspapers the word *inmigración* frequently co-occurs with negative terms. It appears as being far from a positive or at least neutral and objective perception of the phenomenon.

Despite the fact that our initial hypothesis does not seem to be supported by our results, they deserve to be considered. In the first place, to our knowledge, there is a lack of studies that deal with the phenomenon of immigration in the press from the perspective adopted in this study. In the second place, our results show how two newspapers of different ideology share the way of picturing immigration leaving their ideological principles behind.

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