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## BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES Migration discourse in EU parliamentary debates<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** – Immigration has emerged as a prevalent political issue throughout the entire European Union over the past few years. Hardly a day goes by without news stories of people fleeing the Middle East and Northern Africa to reach the shores of Europe, or without an act of violence, the emergence of a new association or political party, or debates on policy initiatives taken by EU Member States. In this respect, and in ways which were almost completely ‘unexpected’ some years ago, nearly every single aspect of political discussion has been affected by the issue of immigration. In every European country new movements have emerged, anti-immigrant political parties have obtained electoral advances and have altered the balance of political forces. This new balance has influenced policy changes in the EU as Members States have attempted to deal with the challenges that threaten understandings, agreements, social policy and the political and social construction of Europe itself. By adopting CDA (Fairclough 1995, 2013; van Dijk 1984; Wodak 1997) and Zapata-Barrero’s distinction between re-active and pro-active discourse (2007), this work analyses a corpus of EU parliamentary debates on migration. The aim was to ascertain whether and to what extent the interventions taken into consideration negatively react against the process of integration and multiculturalism resulting from the arrival of migrants or whether they instead positively accompany the process and consider it a historic opportunity and not a threat. The *ad hoc* corpus, which covers a time span of three years – from 2016 to 2018 – will be investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to identify the most frequent lexemes and their co-occurring patterns of usage along with the most recurrent or relevant phraseology in the verbatim reports. The interventions under scrutiny deal with migration issues, such as the flow of migrants legally or illegally entering the EU, asylum seekers, undocumented residents, borders and boundaries, thus allowing for the exploration of re-active and pro-active discourse constructions and of the strategies of legitimation used by MPs who try to demonstrate that their policies and actions towards immigration are legitimate, and executed within the boundaries and barriers of moral order and correct procedures (van Leeuwen, Wodak 1999; van Leeuwen 2007).

**Keywords:** EU parliamentary debates; immigration; CDA; Corpus Linguistics; legitimation.

*[...] the Constitution draws inspiration ‘from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which developed universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of Law’. The Preamble goes onto define Europe in cultural terms as a ‘continent open to culture, learning and social progress’ and that ‘the peoples of Europe are determined to transcend their former divisions, and united ever more closely, to forge a common destiny’ in a Europe that is a ‘great venture which makes of it a special area of human hope’*  
(G. Delanty “What does it mean to be a ‘European’?”, 2005, p. 406).

### 1. Introduction

Over the past few years, immigration has emerged as a decisively prevalent political issue throughout the European Union. Hardly a day goes by without news stories of people

<sup>1</sup> Though this paper has been jointly conceived, organised and developed, Michela Giordano is responsible for Sections 2, 3, 4, and 5, while Antonio Piga is responsible for sections 1, 6 and 7. The general plan and editing was a cooperative, shared effort.

fleeing the Middle East or Northern Africa to reach the shores of Europe. Other aspects to consider are regular acts of violence, the emergence of new associations or political parties, or debates on policy initiatives undertaken by EU Member States. In this respect, and in ways which were almost unthinkable until fairly recently, nearly every single aspect of political discussion has been affected by the issues of immigration, refugees, borders and security. New movements have emerged in every European country; anti-immigrant political parties have obtained electoral victories and have altered the balance of political forces. This new balance has influenced policy changes in the EU as Member States have attempted to deal with the challenges that threaten understandings, agreements, social policy and the political and social construction of Europe itself.

This study defines and discusses aspects of local and global semantics within a discourse analysis perspective. As explained by van Dijk (2000c, p. 104) “[i]deologies not only monitor the overall, global meaning (or topics) of discourse, but also their more local meanings, as they are actually expressed in, and implied by a debate’s words and sentences”. Specifically, this investigation analyses occurrences and collocations in a quantitative perspective and examines some ideological discursive aspects of legitimation of EU political discourse on immigration within the frame of pro-active and re-active migration discourse (Zapata-Barrero 2007).

Political discourse is indeed one of the most ideological of all discourses (Chilton 1995; Fairclough 1989; Wodak, van Dijk 2000a). The same type of discourse “may be uttered [...] but it becomes a political discourse simply by the fact that it is uttered by a politician speaking and writing in a political context” (van Dijk 1997, p.19). It goes without saying therefore that political discourse could be defined as the discourse of politicians *stricto sensu*. However, according to van Dijk (2001), this does not mean that any informal conversation given by a politician can be construed as political discourse. In this respect, the Scholar states: “the discourse must be produced by the speaker in her professional role as a politician and in an institutional setting. This means that discourse is political when it accomplishes a political act in a political institution” (van Dijk 2001, p. 6). It means that only the discourse of politicians which is contextually produced in institutional settings can be considered as political discourse; what makes discourse political is nothing but its role in political situations and its function in the political process (van Dijk 1997, 2001).

The official documents selected for analysis in this study were gathered from the official website of the European Union. In order to limit the text types under investigation, the main corpus consists of 33 original documents obtained through a preliminary search of texts bearing the word “migration” in the title. Nevertheless, only the actual debates in these documents were considered, i.e. the 14 verbatim reports in the English language, which were examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. These 14 Parliamentary debates cover a period ranging from March 2016 to November 2018, comprising a total of approximately 52 thousand words.

Given that EU Parliamentary debates are conducted by parliamentarians in a political context, they are a direct expression of political power; they enable speakers to control the agenda, topics and other important aspects of institutional talk, and constitute a noteworthy example for legitimating discourse. Furthermore, since ideology and power relations are not always easy to identify in political texts, the discursive reproduction of dominance is sometimes hidden. Parliamentary debates are generally well-prepared, well thought-out, persuasive texts designed to be effective and authoritative. They are also detailed, heavily monitored and of course, intended to be recorded. Being institutional discourses, they are devised and delivered by people authorized to make formal

declarations and to take part in parliamentary debates. The speakers in these debates are powerful and influential political decision-makers, who do not though speak for themselves alone, but rather on behalf of their political group; such debates allow EU citizens to hear and learn about the broad outlines of the ideology of EU immigration policy directly from government officials.

EU politicians justify their actions on immigration as morally and politically defensible and as beneficial for the immigrants in some way or another. Throughout their discourse on immigration, they try to demonstrate that their policies and actions towards immigration are legitimate, and executed within the boundaries and barriers of moral order and correct procedures. In focusing on local semantic structures and the strategies of legitimation, this article aims to question the legitimation process of EU official political discourse on immigration and analyses the contribution of micro- and macro-structures to legitimating discourse.

## 2.Theoretical framework

A number of studies have investigated the language of migration (and racism) in various fields, i.e. media, politics, and institutional contexts and from different perspectives, i.e. sociological and sociolinguistic, rhetorical, political, legal, religious (among others, Charteris-Black 2006; Eberl *et al.* 2018; Faedda 2014; Hart 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Kaye 1998; Krotofil, Motak 2018; Scarpa 2002; van Dijk 1991, 1993, 2018).

In this study, CDA was employed (Fairclough 1995, 2013; van Dijk 1984, 1988; Wodak 1997) along with Zapata-Barrero's distinction between re-active and pro-active discourse (Zapata-Barrero 2007; Zapata-Barrero, Yalaz 2018), in order to analyse a corpus of EU parliamentary debates on migration. The main aim was to ascertain whether and to what extent the interventions in the EU parliament taken into consideration negatively react against the processes of integration and multiculturalism brought about by the arrival of migrants and refugees or whether they might in fact positively support and promote these processes and consider them to be significant opportunities for development rather than threats to European culture and people. In order to carry out this investigation, works that explain the linguistic and generic features of parliamentary debates, i.e. van Dijk (2004) and Ilie (2006, 2016) were taken into consideration; other works consulted were those that reflected on the issue of migration and racism in parliamentary debates, such as van Dijk and Wodak (2000), van Dijk (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2004) and Kralj (2013).

Additionally, useful insight was gained from studies that apply corpus linguistics and quantitative analysis to texts dealing with people moving into or across national and supranational borders, such as Baker and McEnery (2005), Manca (2015), Grego and Vicentini (2015) and Al Fajri (2017). Finally, other studies that deal with legitimation discourse provided models and methods for the present investigation, e.g. Rojo and van Dijk (1997), van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), van Leeuwen (2007), and offered additional knowledge and understanding.

Therefore, the present contribution builds on the above prior research and aims to further explore the specific field of migration.

### 3. Data and methodology

The *verbatim* reports under scrutiny here were drawn from the [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu) website: the parliamentary term under consideration was 2014-2018, and the sittings chosen for analysis go from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2018. A search was made for all the debates with the word “migration” in the title, and the system provided 33 hits as a result. After this preliminary search, only the verbatim reports of actual debates in English were selected and 14 texts were obtained. The *ad hoc corpus* (called Migration corpus-EU Parliamentary Debates 2016-2018) covers a time span of three years – from March 2016 to November 2018 –and is shown in Table 1. Each debate bears its actual chronological number in the preliminary search for easier identification and reference (EUPD1, EUPD2 and so on); dates of the sittings and number of words are also indicated. The *corpus* amounts to a total of 51,916 words.

#	Migration corpus- EU Parliamentary Debates 2016-2018	Dates	# of words
EUPD1	Communication on implementing the European agenda on migration	08-03-2016	4,698
EUPD2	The situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration	12-04-2016	5,541
EUPDE5	State of play of the external aspects of the European migration agenda: towards a new 'Migration Compact'	07-06-2016	8,845
EUPD6	Legal migration package - Action plan on integration of third country nationals	07-06-2016	2,595
EUPD7	Human rights and migration in third countries	24-10-2016	1,716
EUPD10	EU policies and actions to protect children in the context of migration	26-10-2016	2,825
EUPD11	Afghanistan, notably EU commitments and the EP role in the EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on migration issues	26-10-2016	3,060
EUPD16	Managing migration along the Central Mediterranean Route	01-02-2017	3,868
EUPD17	Recent developments in migration	12-09-2017	4,592
EUPD19	Progress on UN Global compacts for safe, orderly and regular migration and on refugees	17-04-2018	4,224
EUPD22	Protection of children in migration	02-05-2018	3,285
EUPD25	The migration crisis and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and at its borders	03-07-2018	1,876
EUPD29	EU Member States support for the UN Global compact for migration	13-11-2018	2,724
EUPD31	The preparation of the Marrakech Intergovernmental Conference of 10-11 December on the UN Global compact for Migration	29-11-2018	2,067
	Total 14 debates		51,916

Table 1  
The 14 debates in the corpus.

Going against established research practices and procedures which consider context to be paramount and inescapable in linguistic analysis in general and in the discursive interactions of parliamentarians in particular, the present work specifically investigates the individual, pre-determined interventions in English, daringly and duly extracted and isolated from the general debate. The interventions in English are taken out of the general multilingual context and dialogical confrontation and investigated as isolated pieces of communication through

which fundamental issues (such as the flow of migrants legally or illegally entering the EU, asylum seekers, undocumented residents, borders and boundaries, security threats, regular migration and refugees) are scrutinized for the exploration of re-active and pro-active discourse constructions (Zapata-Barrero 2007) at various levels, i.e. lexical, phraseological, syntactic and textual. As explained by Zapata-Barrero, the conflict about immigration in the debates and in the general wider social and political context is characterized both negatively and positively and, as his own words in Spanish recite “[e]l discurso re-activo lo interpreta como algo negativo, como amenaza; el discurso pro-activo lo interpreta como una oportunidad histórica y como formando parte del proceso de socialización multicultural en el que está envuelta nuestra sociedad” (2007, p. 319).

The *corpus* was then investigated both quantitatively (Al Fajri 2017; Baker, McEnery 2005; Manca 2015) and qualitatively (van Dijk 2000a, 2000b, 2018; van Dijk, Wodak 2000; van Leeuwen 2007; van Leeuwen, Wodak 1999) in order to identify the most frequent lexemes and their co-occurring patterns of usage, and the most recurrent phraseology. The topics of debates were looked at as part of the global analysis. Additionally, the investigation focused on the strategies of legitimating discourse which MPs adopt in order to justify their actions and choices in the context of particular migration policies and in the general debate concerning European borders and security threats.

#### 4. Parliamentary debates as a genre

Following Bayley, it can be affirmed that dealing with representative assemblies or parliaments entails focussing on “special discourse communities working within specific political institutions”. Parliamentary talk can therefore be considered “a sub-genre of political language and represents its most formal and institutional variety” (Bayley 2004, p. 1). Van Dijk argues that parliamentary debates do not have any exclusive linguistic features at the structural level of analysis, but they may have some prototypical non-exclusive features that deserve further analysis (van Dijk 2000b, p. 47). For instance, Bayley lists some of the features which involve various levels of linguistic analysis such as phonological features, interaction strategies, intervention length, terms of address, metadiscourse and argumentation, direct and indirect quotation, epistemic modality, subordinate structures such as conditional and concessive clauses, along with rules of politeness, concepts of irony and humour, the preference for abstract or concrete political language and so on (Bayley 2004, pp. 13-14).

Van Dijk introduces what he calls a naïve prototype definition of parliamentary debate: a parliamentary debate “is (typically) a formal gathering of a group of elected representatives, members of various political parties, engaging in a discussion about what collective action or policy to undertake concerning an issue of public concern” (2000b, p. 53). All scholars dealing with parliamentary debates agree on the fact that they represent a ritualised and rule-bound type of discourse, governed and managed by traditions and regulations which all Members of Parliament have to follow and respect (Bayley 2004; Ilie 2006, 2016; van Dijk 2000b) and “(t)he discursive interaction of parliamentarians is constantly marked by their institutional role-based commitments, by the dialogically shaped institutional confrontation and by the awareness of acting in front and on behalf of a multi-level audience (Ilie 2006, p. 190). As such, parliamentary discourse “displays particular institutionalized discursive features and ritualized interaction strategies” (Ilie (2006, p. 190).

Since parliamentary debates are partly defined by their complex, institutional context (van Dijk 2000c, p. 99), their generic features will first be investigated here. To begin with, van Dijk takes into account the chair-controlled allocation of speaking time, duration and order, as well as interjections and interruptions. As he explains, parliamentary sessions take place on a specific day and time and time management is crucial and regulated by a set of specific rules: the Speaker or the President of the Parliament can allow MPs to talk for some minutes, and whole sessions have to last for a certain number of minutes or hours (van Dijk 2000b, p. 49). He adds that in different countries, Parliamentary sessions can have different lengths, therefore one debate may extend over various sessions, or various debates on different issues can take place within one morning or daily session. (2000b, p. 50).

Another feature is the reading of prepared speeches which, in some cases, are actually read out *verbatim*, while in other cases are more or less spontaneous, especially when it comes to interruptions. All debates are transcribed and then published in an official record, which is sometimes accessible via the Internet. In this regard, as Ilie (2006, p. 190) underlines the fact that “most parliaments have established their presence on the web makes the legislative process and parliamentary proceedings more transparent and subject to public scrutiny”. The interventions are regulated by a strict etiquette of address: in some parliaments, MPs are expected to address the President or the Speaker who is the only one who can allocate turns for speaking (van Dijk 2000b, pp. 52-53).

All speeches are regulated by formalised rules and overall strategies of persuasion. Researching debates within a discourse analysis framework involves considering certain features, especially those that characterise parliamentary debates as a social and political phenomenon. Van Dijk selects six categories which deal with meaning and its structures and which are relevant for various countries and contexts. They include *topics*, *disclaimers* or semantic moves, *presuppositions*, *actors and group descriptions*, *argumentation* and *rhetorical devices* (van Dijk 2000b, p. 57). Attempting to analyse all these features in one single paper would of course be impracticable and unfeasible, since each one of them would deserve a thorough and in-depth separate investigation. The present study will certainly focus on *topics*, i.e. “the (macro) propositions that constitute the global meaning (or semantic macrostructure) of text and talk” (van Dijk 2000b, p. 58). As will be seen later in this study, the majority of speeches and interventions in the debates under scrutiny here topicalize and conceptualize the issue of immigration in terms of “a problem” which must be solved in some way.

Last but not least, one of the features that characterize parliamentary debates and which is the most pertinent characteristic for the present investigation, is the polarisation of content between government and opposition speakers (van Dijk 2000c, p. 99). This is something that cannot be disregarded as it must be considered as a typical feature of this “deliberative genre”, i.e. an oratorical discourse targeting an audience that is asked to make a decision by evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of a future course of action (Ilie 2006, p. 190). It is a feature strictly linked to the “lexicalization of underlying conceptual meanings” that van Dijk talks about (2000b, p. 67); the words used to describe immigrants and asylum seekers in the debates under analysis tell us whether they are represented in a more positively or more negatively-oriented mental model.

A quantitative and qualitative lexical examination, dealing with local semantics, can highlight certain words and expressions which reveal implicit or explicit ethnic attitudes (or ideologies) and shows us whether the discourse about immigrants is pro-active or re-active (Zapata-Barrero 2007), thus revealing that these debates can often be competing and adversarial. Rojo also deals with the way in which “the controversy about immigration

policies is reflected in the selection and development of topics, in the conceptualisation of the phenomenon and in the representation of the immigrants” (Rojo 2000, p. 170). He goes on to underline the dynamics of debates which “demand competition between the contenders” (Rojo 2000, p. 180). He notes how MPs criticise, disavow and delegitimise their adversaries and their actions, views and arguments, also by legitimizing or delegitimizing certain actions, opinions and proposals, being them their own or others’. As van Dijk points out (2000a, p. 101), as an institution of political power, parliament and its members typically engage in acts of legitimation of its own existence and especially of its own policies and legislation. Some political acts (such as for example, restricting immigration) are (and should be seen as) consistent with norms, values and national and international laws, along with international principles of human rights. Members’ speeches need to be legitimated as warranted and justified interventions in the social or political debate as “particularly credible, true and authoritative” (van Dijk 2000a, p. 101).

## 5. Quantitative analysis: a problem to be solved and a challenge to manage

The quantitative analysis starts from the assumption taken from Baker and McEnery that “(a) corpus-based approach is [...] useful, in that it helps to give a wider view of the range of possible ways of discussing refugees and asylum seekers” (2005, p. 223). The scholars explain that:

“[...], the corpus-based approach enables the researcher to arrive at a more complete understanding of the meanings and functions of certain word choices in texts about refugees and asylum seekers. The connotative use of language in critical discourse analysis is one of the most fruitful areas of analysis available to researchers [...]” (Baker, McEnery 2005, p. 223)

A quantitative analysis of the transcripts was carried out using Sketch Engine, a corpus manager and text analysis software (developed by Lexical Computing Limited in 2003). By using this concordance software, the *corpus* was first examined from a basic and general statistical point of view. Table 1 above has shown the title of every text, the number of words and the dates of the debates. In Table 2, other data is provided such as the number of tokens and the number of sentences in the 14 documents under scrutiny.

Migration <i>corpus</i>	counts
Tokens	58,373
Words	51,916
Sentences	2,206
Documents	14

Table 2  
Other data of the Migration *corpus*.

The most frequent 50 nouns in the debates under scrutiny (see Table 3) include **migration** (308 occurrences, ranking n. 1 in the list), **refugee** (130 occurrences, ranking n. 12 in the list) and **migrant** (104 occurrences, ranking n. 16 in the list). Other relevant occurrences among the nouns in the corpus are **immigration** (31 occurrences, ranking n. 81) and **Migration** (with a capital M, in proper nouns such as Migration Compact, International Organisation for Migration, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and

EU Agenda on Migrations, 30 occurrences in total, ranking n. 84). The noun **immigrant** is not frequently used in this corpus (just 5 occurrences, ranking n. 535 in the list of 566 total nouns) and therefore it is not shown in Table 3.

Lemma	↓ Frequency ?	Lemma	↓ Frequency ?	Lemma	↓ Frequency ?	Lemma	↓ Frequency ?
1 migration	308 ***	14 Commission	113 ***	27 time	80 ***	40 Libya	57 ***
2 country	239 ***	15 way	108 ***	28 work	68 ***	41 solution	57 ***
3 child	199 ***	16 migrant	104 ***	29 asylum	66 ***	42 responsibility	54 ***
4 people	188 ***	17 Mr	100 ***	30 partnership	64 ***	43 action	54 ***
5 European	184 ***	18 policy	98 ***	31 Parliament	64 ***	44 number	54 ***
6 Union	178 ***	19 border	98 ***	32 cooperation	61 ***	45 UN	53 ***
7 Member	159 ***	20 issue	97 ***	33 crisis	61 ***	46 support	50 ***
8 EU	159 ***	21 right	97 ***	34 today	60 ***	47 question	47 ***
9 Europe	153 ***	22 year	92 ***	35 Africa	59 ***	48 partner	45 ***
10 President	141 ***	23 protection	89 ***	36 situation	59 ***	49 proposal	45 ***
11 States	140 ***	24 system	88 ***	37 problem	59 ***	50 development	43 ***
12 refugee	130 ***	25 approach	87 ***	38 life	59 ***		
13 compact	114 ***	26 debate	81 ***	39 need	58 ***		

Table 3  
The most frequent 50 nouns in the corpus.

The noun **migration** was investigated for both adjectival and verbal collocations and phraseology. The most frequent adjectives for migration appear to be *legal* (13), *global* (7), *regular* (7), *national* (5), *economic* (4), *international* (4), *European* (4), and *illegal* (3). Verbal collocations for migration include *manage* (in its forms *manage*, *managing* and *managed*, 22 occurrences in total), *address* and *addressing* (4), *control* (3). The verbs *limit*, *restrict* and *tackle* collocate with migration only once each.

The phraseology associated to the word migration was also scrutinized: *children in migration* appears to be the most frequent with 14 occurrences, followed by *approach to migration* (10), *agenda on migration* and *causes of migration* (8), *issue of migration* (5). While *impact of migration* and *control of migration* appear only once each. Consider the following excerpts taken from the debates (emphasis added):

The Commission, as you will remember, announced in its communication of 10 February 2016 a comprehensive approach to the protection of all **children in migration**, including unaccompanied minors. These actions are geared towards strengthening child protection systems in the Member States and are now being implemented (EUPD10)

More than a year ago we adopted, as you will remember, the European Union's **Agenda on Migration** which this House has welcomed. The EU **Agenda on Migration** set out our common strategy on the basis of this principle. A common challenge demands a common European response. (EUPD11)

The collocations here listed and shown in the excerpts involve the co-text on the left of the word migration. Analysis of right hand collocates reveals the presence of the words *policy/policies* (21) *crisis* (13), *flows* (12), *management* and *issues* (7) as in (EUPD1), (EUPD5), and (EUPD31)



In a world of mobility we cannot have an EU without a proper economic **migration policy**, taking into account global developments, and then cooperation with third countries and, of course, coordination with the economic sector. (EUPD1)

This framework rethinks how all actors - Member States, EU institutions and third countries - work together to bring order to **migration flows** and strive for well-managed migration. (EUPD5)

We will continue to work to improve **migration management** worldwide, which is already done today on the European side, on the basis of the work strands that are developed under the Global Compact. (EUPD31)

As for the noun **refugee**, among the 130 occurrences, various collocations and phrases can be identified but their frequency is not relevant: the only collocation which can be considered significant is with the word **crisis** (12 occurrences) as in the following excerpt:

There is a **refugee crisis** and a big influx of people. Challenging this phenomenon, we need to establish well-coordinated European policies oriented at making our borders secure and under smart control. (EUPD2)

The word **migrants** in the plural form is used 100 times and it generally collocates with adjectives such as *irregular* (14) (as shown in Fig. 1), *illegal* (4) and *economic* (3).

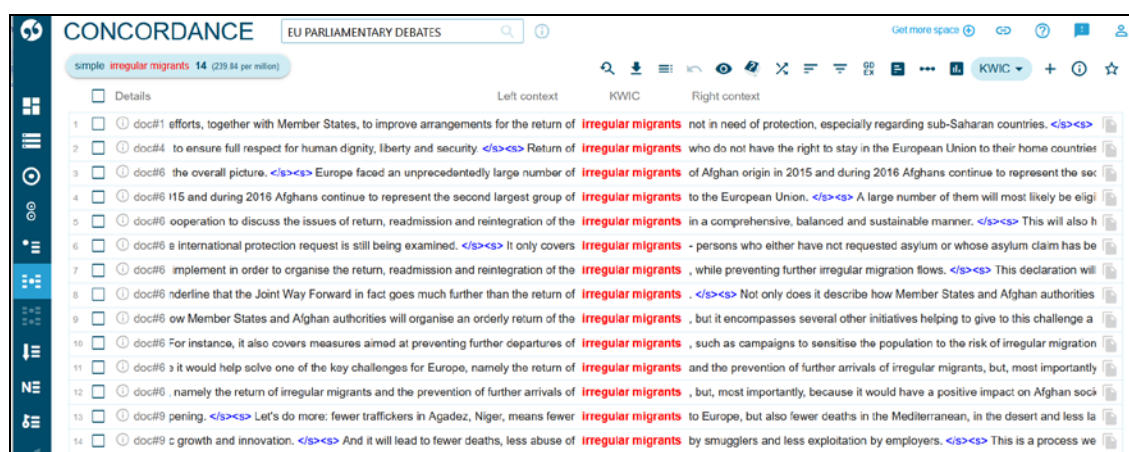


Figure 1  
“irregular migrants” concordance lines.

The binomial formed by the word migrants and the word refugees appears 4 times as *migrants and refugees*, and 9 times as *refugees and migrants*, with a different order of the two items in their construction with the conjunction *and*.

Regarding the word **immigration**, used 31 times across the *corpus*, it can be found only once with the adjective *irregular* as in the following excerpt, in juxtaposition with the adjective *regular*, underlining the contrast between negative and positive connotations, i.e. re-active and pro-active discourse:

Mr President, the shortcoming of the solutions proposed by both the Commission and Parliament is that they focus on the question of how we could **make irregular immigration more regular**. This is what we mean when we talk about creating more legal pathways into Europe. (EUPD2)

Similarly the adjective *illegal* is juxtaposed to the adjective *legal* in the following excerpt:

“People who force their entry into a country are not migrants: they are illegal migrants. This compact wants to solve the problem of **illegal immigration by making it legal**, thereby encouraging even more immigration into Europe”. (EUPD29)

Additionally, another adjectival collocation for immigration is *uncontrolled* (3 occurrences).

In the context of opposing pro-active and re-active perspectives on immigration, two phrases can be found which noticeably explain this dichotomy: *benefits of immigration vs. negatives of immigration*. Consider the following excerpt from (EUPD19)

Mr President, too often immigration is considered **good or bad**. I take a different view. I see **the benefits of immigration**, but only if it is managed, controlled and legal. But I also see **the negatives of immigration** on communities if we continue the chaotic, uncontrolled mass migration policies that we see from many in this Chamber and the global elites who support it. (EUPD19)

The debates in the *corpus* deal with a *compact*, i.e. an official agreement which must be reached and signed in order to improve the current migration situation: the word *compact* is used 130 times and collocates with *global* 71 times in expressions such as *a global compact for refugees*, and *a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration* (both in EUPD7), and *a global compact for migration and refugees* (EUPD19). The global compact is seen as “*the most powerful tool*” (EUPD31) and its implementation is seen as “*a political, non-binding, cooperative framework that will guide our work over the coming decades*”, as explained by the MP in (EUPD31). As it was noticed from the concordances, the word *compact* is always used as a proper noun, even capitalized on several occasions. No occurrences of the word *compact* used in its adjectival function were found in the corpus.

As underlined in Section 4 above, the majority of speeches and interventions in the debates under analysis here topicalize and conceptualize the issue of migration in terms of “a problem” which must be somehow solved. Generally, some social or political phenomenon is under discussion in Parliament and it is often defined as a *problem*, something that proves to be true for migration issues. Thus, if no appropriate action, policy or legislation is taken, there will be negative *consequences*. Parties in the debate will deal with the current policy and action either positively or negatively. So, in Zapata-Barrero’s words (2007, p. 359) immigration is both a problem to be solved (*un problema que resolver*) and a challenge to manage (*un reto que gestionar*). As Faedda puts it:

“Faced with a very low birth rate and aging population, Europe needs immigrants to keep the labor market alive and to maintain an expensive welfare system, but the general attitude toward immigration seems to be hostile. Immigration is viewed as a constant emergency; **it is a problem that no country in Europe has been able to solve, although it is a common assumption that immigration is an integral part of European (and global) history**” (Faedda 2014, p. 115).

There are 59 hits for the noun **problem** in the *corpus* and the following are some examples taken from the debates:

The only guarantee is real cooperation on the part of Member States, not the marketing games led by some politicians. There is only one honest political message: be open to solving the human dimension of the **problem** and separate the matters of refugees and terrorists rather than connecting them. What about migration? This is a **challenge**, especially now vis-a-vis the many social fears all over Europe. (EUPD2)

That is why all of us in the European Union need to do more, in a spirit of solidarity among Europeans and with our partners, who also have to take some ownership of the management of

this **problem**. (EUPD16)

I think the Global Compact will definitely help us to manage human mobility in a much more orderly and effective way. And in particular for Europe - because for us, as Europeans, the **problem of migration** is so important, because all neighbours around us want to come to Europe. (EUPD29)

Stigmatising refugees is part of the **problem**, putting people against people (EUPD1)

Together with the word **problem**, the word **crisis**, with 61 occurrences, is amongst the 50 most frequent nouns in the corpus. Right hand collocates have been scrutinized and they are indicated in Table 4: *migration crisis* appears 13 times, *refugees crisis* 12 times, *political crisis* 3 times, and *humanitarian crisis* appears twice. Other collocates of the word crisis are: *current*, *existential*, *global*, *long-running*, *man-made*, *migratory* and *multi-dimensional*, all of them appearing just once in the debates. The low frequency of certain collocates does not make them less relevant for lexicological analysis. What can be underlined instead is that a certain number of different collocates accounts for a greater lexical variety.

Collocations with <i>crisis</i>	
migration crisis	13
refugee crisis	12
political crisis	3
humanitarian crisis	2
current crisis	1 each
existential crisis	
global crisis	
long-running crisis	
man-made crisis	
migratory crisis	
multi-dimensional crisis	

Table 4  
Collocations with *crisis*.

Some examples taken from the debates point to the deficiencies and the shortcomings of the European system, of European policies on immigration and cite the disastrous way in which the crisis has been tackled:

But nor can we continue to have uncontrolled irregular flows of migrants passing swiftly north through one border after another, in fundamental contradiction with the principles of the Common European Asylum System and the Schengen rules. **The crisis has exposed serious deficiencies at parts of the external borders** (EUPD1)

More generally, **the current crisis has shown that the present system is not working**, and many elements are reflected in your report. In particular we need to overhaul the asylum system (EUPD2)

**Applying the method of deduction to the migration crisis shows the weaknesses of our current system and politics**, which arose as a result of delaying foreign and security policy. **It also shows the current weaknesses in our value system, our border-security system** and in internal cooperation between different institutions, as well as weaknesses in the institutions themselves. (EUPD2)

Some other examples leave way to hope and good will to work hard and achieve success together and adapt to the new era of human mobility:

It is about a concerted approach in which we can work in an orderly way whilst the underlying problems are resolved. **In this crisis everything is linked to everything, and we need to work on all tracks in parallel.** (EUPD1)

The picture sometimes looks very dark. I will not hide from you that my first thought every morning is whether **we as Europeans will overcome this crisis and turn it into an opportunity instead of a disaster. But I still want to believe that we are all now realising the need to adapt to a new era, which is characterised by human mobility.** (EUPD2)

Similarly, great lexical variety is provided by the left hand collocates of the word **approach**. As can be seen from Table 5 the word **approach** (89 occurrences) collocates with *holistic* (10 occurrences), *comprehensive* (7), *partnership* (6) and *global* (5).

The noun <i>approach</i> left hand collocates	
holistic approach	10
comprehensive approach	7
partnership approach	6
global approach	5
right approach	3
common approach	2
multilateral approach	
strategic approach	
win-win approach	
common EU approach	1
concerted approach	
constructive approach	
coordinated European approach	
development-oriented approach	
genuine European approach	
harmonized approach	
human rights-based approach	
long-term approach	
new approach	
piecemeal approach	
result-oriented approach	
soft-hearted approach	
step-by-step approach	
tailor-made approach	
'wave-through' approach	

Table 5  
Collocations with *approach*.

Almost all the collocates in Table 5 imply a positive and pro-active reaction and attitude towards the approach to be undertaken, such as *genuine*, *result-oriented*, *tailor-made*, *strategic* and *win-win*. But some of them again point to the weaknesses and the failures of the system in certain cases, when the problem has been tackled by means of a *piecemeal approach*, probably meaning in a haphazard, fragmentary manner. Other times the approach has been too *soft-hearted* and maybe a stronger decision and resoluteness was desirable instead. The pro-active attitude is shown in the following example, just one amongst many of this kind:

**The win-win approach is what we need because, if this is a global phenomenon, we need to manage it together.** This means that these countries, which are at the same time countries of origin, of transit and of destination, all need our support to manage better their internal challenges when it comes to hosting refugees and migrants. (EUPDE5)

To conclude this part on the lexical and quantitative analysis, attention must be put on some peculiar phraseology which explains the various positions and attitudes towards immigrants and their situation. Table 6 shows a pro-active attitude towards *those* immigrants who are fleeing war and poverty and are looking for a better life. These immigrants should be welcomed and hosted because they have the right to be in the EU and they can even contribute with their skills.

<b>Pro-active attitudes towards immigrants-Phraseology</b>
<i>those who are looking for a better life</i>
<i>those who need to come to Europe</i>
<i>those who can contribute with their skills</i>
<i>those fleeing conflict</i>
<i>those fleeing war and poverty</i>
<i>those fleeing was and persecution</i>
<i>those who have to flee</i>
<i>those people in need</i>

Table 6  
Pro-active attitudes towards immigrants-Phraseology.

However, other terminology uses the same structure starting with the determiner “those” to single out the right group of people, and thus appears instead to be re-active against those immigrants who have no right to stay in the EU, those who are not eligible and do not meet the criteria for international protection, as shown in Table 7. ‘Those’ who should not be accepted and hosted.

<b>Re-active attitudes towards immigrants-Phraseology</b>
<i>those who have no right to be in the EU</i>
<i>those who have no right to stay</i>
<i>those who are not eligible</i>
<i>those that are not entitled to international protection</i>
<i>those that are not in need of protection</i>
<i>those not eligible for protection</i>
<i>those that do not meet the criteria for international protection</i>

Table 7  
Re-active attitudes towards immigrants-Phraseology.

The following examples clearly exemplify the attitude of parliamentarians and show their mind-sets and positions towards different groups of immigrants, i.e. those who are considered eligible and those who have no migration rights. The attitude should be different towards these two groups, “*humane*” in one case and “*firm*” in the other.

I am convinced that we can have a situation where we are **humane** with those in need of protection, but **firm** with those who are not eligible. This careful balance must be the basis of any policy and I am happy to debate this at any time. (EUPD10)

Let me repeat this: we will not change our strategy and we call on everybody to uphold it. We need large-scale relocations, effective return of **those who have no right to stay** and, of course, secure common external borders. (EUPD1)

## 6. CDA and legitimation

The qualitative linguistic analysis is framed within the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis. Discourse may in itself be (de)legitimated, since it conveys a very important role in the expression and formulation of ideologies. The point of departure is that “parliamentary debates are, by definition, ideologically based. MPs do not speak as individuals but as group (party) members. [...] This (theoretically) implies that contributions to a debate are a function of the ideology of the party as interpreted by the speaker. [...] Not only will MPs express (intentionally or not) their ideologically based mental models of a particular event (e.g. the immigration of asylum seekers), but other MPs (and the public) will typically hear such discourse as ‘partisan’ and hence as ideological” (van Dijk 2002, p. 99).

Consequently, this study analyses the different linguistic pathways along which ideology is constructed in pro-active and re-active discourse (Zapata-Barrero 2007) in order to provide justification to legitimize or de-legitimize immigration. In this perspective, legitimation is a justification of a certain kind of behaviour, which is performed through ideological argumentation, namely by providing ‘plausible’ justifications that explain our social actions, ideas, thoughts, declarations, etc., to seek our interlocutors’ support and approval (van Leeuwen 2007; van Leeuwen, Wodak 1999). Some of the categories of legitimation proposed by van Leeuwen (2007) will be considered, for example *authorization*, which is the reference to figures of authority or tradition; *moral evaluation*, which is the reference to a value system; *rationalization*, defined as the reference to goals and uses of institutionalized social actions; and *mythopoesis*, which is described as the narrative that rewards legitimate actions.

### 6.1. Qualitative analysis

The aim of this analysis section is to examine the process of discursive (de)legitimation. More specifically, the purpose is to display how, through the various discursive practices and speech events, EU parliamentarians create and enforce both authority and (de)legitimacy within their official statements on immigration issues. The following linguistic analysis evaluates the detailed properties of the (de)legitimizing discursive act, and focuses on semantic macrostructures as they are one of the most important discursive structures to analyse pro-active and re-active discourse on immigration policy.

Discourses are not only locally coherent, but also have global coherence that may be defined in terms of themes and topics. In the previous section, single words or collocations were extensively analysed from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, but the meaning of discourse is not limited to the meaning of single words or collocations but also to sentences and extended textual structures which convey more global meaning. Topics regulate the overall coherence of discourse and are expressed through high-semantic macrostructures which underline the thematic and propositional framework that enable the text to hang together (van Dijk 1980). In this respect, semantic macrostructures of discourse are crucial for establishing what dominant groups think and believe, and also signal the most important information of underlying models by (in)directly expressing ideological group representation about the us-and-them figuration. Thus, high semantic structures acquire great significance in the analysis of parliamentary debates, since they point out how speakers are defining a situation and how they construct the events.

## 6.2. Authorization

In the case of Authorization, van Leeuwen (2007) characterizes legitimation as an answer to the tacit and unexpressed ‘why’ question – ‘why should people do that?’ or ‘why should people do it in this way?’. A plausible answer to this type of question would be ‘because someone says so’, where ‘someone’ is a person “in whom some kind of authority is vested” (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 94). Van Leeuwen (2007) distinguishes different kinds of Authorization:

- 1) Personal authority
- 2) Expert authority
- 3) Role model authority
- 4) Impersonal authority
- 5) The authority of tradition
- 6) The authority of conformity

The following sections deal with expert authority, impersonal authority and the authority of conformity. No other forms of Authorizations were found in the *corpus* under scrutiny.

### 6.2.1. Expert Authority

In this section, only re-active legitimation by the voices of expertise has been taken into account. This legitimation strategy is provided by the voices of expertise that the political actor, or any kind of speaker, brings into the here-and-now speech event to support his or her position and ideas concerning a specific issue or event (van Leeuwen 1996, 2007; van Leeuwen, Wodak 1999). In other words, it is a type of “authorization” (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 94) that the speaker brings into the immediate context in order to consolidate and support his or her position.

From a Systemic Functional Linguistic viewpoint, expert legitimation requires forms of verbal process clauses (*say, state, announce, report, etc.*), e.g. ‘The Professor has *said* so-and-so’) or mental process clauses (*think, believe, assume, etc.*), e.g. ‘The Professor *believes* so-and-so’ with the expert as Agent (Sayer) in a verbal process and (Senser) in the mental process respectively. The speaker employs this type of discursive strategy to support his or her argument, and therefore it is in his or her best interest to make sure that the audience knows he/she is evoking someone else’s words, affirming that following particular courses of action and not others is ‘the best idea’.

In the following political discourse taken from EUPD2, in order to support re-active claims against immigration, the parliamentarian is evoking in the here-and-now moment of discourse a voice of the expert Trevor Phillips (“The former chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality”), who is metonymically presented with reference to a study that he has carried out:

The most comprehensive study of British Muslims – and I would say Muslims in Europe, actually, - ever conducted, by Trevor Phillips, [...] draws some very disturbing conclusions, particularly for the socialists in this House and the members of the Committee on Woman’s Rights and Gender Equality. 39% of British Muslims *say* that a woman must always obey her husband and submit to chastisement from him. (EUPD2)

Strategies of legitimation can be used individually or also in combination with others. In the following excerpt, taken from the same debate, the political actor endeavours to be even much more persuasive and convincing in her re-active position against immigration, by invoking indicators of precision and exactness, such as numbers and percentages:

More than 100 000 British Muslims said that they had sympathy for people who take part in suicide bombings. Only one out of three would report to the police if they knew someone was supporting terrorism in Syria. A quarter would like Sharia law to take precedence over English law. We are currently not talking about a tiny minority. Unfortunately, these are widespread views among the Muslim communities in the UK. (EUPD2)

According to van Dijk (1984; 1988), numbers and percentages can support and be part of the authority of those voices, thereby reinforcing the legitimization process.

Therefore, no motives or reasons need to be given, no other answer to the implicit ‘why’ question, namely ‘why should we re-act against immigration?’, than a mere ‘because an expert says so-and-so’ and because ‘a great number of immigrants themselves believe and say so-and-so’. As a result, the only ‘reasonable’ consequence for the political actor who is taking part in the debate is:

I think the so-called refugees on our borders need to be repatriated to Muslim countries, as their values are clearly incompatible with our liberal western democracies. This will avoid the current clash of cultures that denigrates the achievements of Western civilisation and flouts the protection of women, the gay community and vulnerable children, who are being attacked by Muslim gangs and migrants who deplore our way of life. (EUPD2)

According to Wodak (2001), the different forms of social exclusion and discrimination can be discussed *inter alia* by means of *topoi*, both arguing for and against racism, ethnicism and nationalism. Within argumentation theory, ‘topoi’ or ‘loci’ could be described as part of argumentation conveying its *ratio*, which is based on “either explicit or inferable premises” (Wodak 2001 p. 74).

In the previous example, there-active approach against immigration is based on the argumentation scheme related to the *topos* of culture (see Wodak 2001), which states that the culture of a specific group of people is as it is, and that therefore specific problems may arise only when specific situations may threaten people’s identity and culture. Otherwise stated, in this specific case, the appeal of the *topos* of culture can be paraphrased as follows: the biggest mistake we Europeans, or we Western Countries can make is to put our identity, our cultural heritage and civilization in danger. Therefore, in order to guarantee to we-Europeans the right to have a fatherland in which our ancestors are born and in which our children will grow, we must introduce a ‘Europe first’ petition. This strategic populist move is just one particular drastic step in the policy of instigating hostile emotions against all foreigners or, in this case, a specific group of them. This step is having an increasingly greater impact on the main field of political actions in many European countries (Austria, Hungary, etc.), namely in areas of law making, in the formation of public political opinion, in political advertising etc.

### 6.2.2. The authority of conformity

In the case of “conformity” as an instance of “Authorization”, the answer which legitimizes the ‘why’ question is: ‘because this is what everybody else is doing’ or ‘because the majority of people do that’. Therefore, the implicit message is ‘since everyone else is doing this, you should do the same’, or ‘since most people are doing this, so should you’. In this respect, conformity legitimation takes the form of an explicit (or implicit) modal subordinate comparison introduced by *like*, *in the same way as*, etc., as in the excerpt taken from (EUPD2) below:

Like the European Agenda on Migration, your report rightly stresses the need to work on all aspects of migration in order to reduce the incentives for irregular migration, assist migrants in



need of protection, secure our external borders and attract skills to support our economic growth. We cannot work on one of the aspects and ignore the others. We cannot pick and choose what to focus on. We need to enhance all aspects of our policy in parallel, to coordinate with all key players and be both realistic and ambitious looking ahead. (EUPD2)

Other times, Authorization conformity is realized by noun or prepositional locutions conveying a sense of conventionality and high frequency modality, as in the following example taken from (EUPD7):

Migration is the new normal and is now an integral part of our political dialogue with partners, very much in line with the global strategy. (EUPD7)

According to van Leeuwen (2007), in the age of statistics and figures it is possible to witness a slippage between what is related to the rule of law and what is verified by the rule of conformity and compliance. Contemporary politicians and law makers are increasingly persuaded by the law of averages, believing that if the majority of people are doing so, it cannot be wrong and thus it should be legitimized.

### 6.2.3. Impersonal Authority

Not all types of Authority legitimation are personal. There is also a type of impersonal authority, conveyed impersonally by laws, rules and regulations. In this specific case, the answer to the unexpressed question is not ‘because a personal authority says so’ or because ‘an expert says so’ or again ‘because many people do it’, but ‘because the laws (regulations, rules, policies) say so’. From a structural point of view impersonal authority, just as personal authority, can be the Sayer, that is the subject of ‘verbal process clauses’ (‘the rule says that...’; ‘the laws state that...’, etc.). It therefore follows that, unlike ‘mental’ processes, ‘verbal’ processes do not require a conscious participant. In other words, the Sayer can be “anything that puts out a signal” (Halliday, Matthiessen 2004, p. 254), as can be seen in the following excerpt taken from (EUPD7):

This regulation respects fundamental rights and observes the principles recognized by Article 2 and 3 of the TEU and reflected in the Charter. In particular, it seeks to ensure full respect for human dignity, liberty and security. (EUPD7)

Or again, as in the following excerpt taken from (EUPD1), in which nouns and cognate adjectives and adverbs expressing the idea of ‘obligation’, or something ‘mandatory’ can also appear in impersonal clauses:

No state or organisation can escape from its obligations under international human rights law to protect and ensure respect for the human rights of migrants irrespective of their status (EUPD1)

As can be seen in the previous excerpts taken from EUPD1 and EUPD7, the pro-active aspect in favour of immigration is based on the *topos* of humanitarianism (see Wodak 2001), which can be paraphrased by the following conditional: if a political action or a political decision does not conform with human rights and does not ensure respect for immigrants, humanitarian convictions and values, the EU should not perform or enact it. This *topos* is essential in every situation in which the European Union argues against unequal treatment and discrimination and for the recognition of ethnic, religious, status values. The close connection with the *topos* of justice (Wodak 2001), whose claim is ‘equal rights for all’, ensures that under EU law persons, actions, situations are equal in all respects and should be treated and dealt with in exactly the same way.

### 6.3 Moral Evaluation

Moral evaluation legitimation is based on moral values, rather than being imposed by some kind of authority (van Leeuwen 2007). As social actors, one way of legitimizing people's actions is to suggest they are beneficial to other people. In other words, doing things for others, especially the vulnerable, the poor and innocent, is well perceived in contemporary society and thus it can be employed as a mode of justification. In parliamentary debates, or political discourse in general terms, politicians and leaders state that their actions will benefit 'other people', where 'other people' normally is used to refer to the immigrant, or people without the benefits of democracy, the poor etc. Therefore, this legitimation strategy justifies its rationale of the various actions we need to take in order to enhance other people's well-being and provide them with the opportunity to live better.

In this respect, in some cases moral values are simply expressed by predicate or attributive adjectives such as 'good' or 'bad', "which freely travel between moral, aesthetic and hedonistic domains" (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 97). Political actors legitimize their actions by projecting moral value through a pure altruistic motivation, for instance by providing service and help, not only by protecting immigrants and refugees in general, but especially by unconditionally protecting children as the most sensitive and the most vulnerable. In these cases therefore, moral evaluation is linked to specific discourses of moral values, which are not made explicit and above all are made of issues which are not debated and that should simply be addressed, urgently and jointly. According to van Leeuwen (2007), these discourses are only hinted at by means of adjectives and nouns such as 'useful', 'natural', 'priority', etc., and trigger moral convictions (van Leeuwen 2007), which, according to Habermas (1976, p. 36), are largely employed to "ensure mass loyalty", as seen in the following excerpt taken from (EUPD10).

As I said at the beginning, protecting the most sensitive and the most vulnerable in this refugee crisis –and those are indeed children- is of paramount importance to the Commission. It is one of our priorities. But it needs many more stakeholders and actors involved to make this happen. The Commission counts on the European Parliament as its partner of this. I would like to close by saying that this is not an issue that should in fact be debated. It is an issue that should simply be addressed, urgently and jointly. (EUPD10)

Another specific form of moral evaluation is what van Leeuwen (2005, p. 31) calls "the time summons". As regards this form of legitimation, it is not so much the action or the activity itself that is noteworthy, but its timing which is legitimized through some implicit timely-measure of urgency and necessity, as shown, for instance, in the following example taken from (EUPD5):

In conclusion, 1.8 million people crossed into Europe last year. 3 771 drowned in the Mediterranean. This year already more than 77 children have died. This is the magnitude of the situation we are facing and, as politicians, all of us have a duty to take a stand to ensure that these are not just nameless statistics. We cannot allow ourselves to become desensitised to the fact that migration is, above all, a human issue. These are real people with real lives, and we must all do better. **It is time for action, and I hope that you will vote precisely for that today.** (EUPD5)

Again, the image of doing good things for others is also displayed in the following excerpt, in which the logic behind helping other people reverberates in the very saving of their lives not only when this happens through mass media representation in which a system of appearance manifests and reigns, but also through concrete operations 'behind

the scenes' in the attainment of this scope. In this respect, it is vital to clarify that self-interest is not a motive. Rather, all actions are merely a sign of pure altruism.

With our operation Sophia, we have saved already tens of thousands of lives. All others have to do the same. Also, **because it is not only the people that are dying at sea that we have to save, it is also the thousands of people dying in the desert before they reach the shores of the Mediterranean - they are not on our TV screens, but they are also human lives.** (EUPD5)

Altruistic manifestation is thus a strategic means by which social actors legitimize their decision and their actions. It seems that when people's decisions and actions benefit other groups, especially the unprotected, the poor, the innocent etc., they are more likely to be accepted and approved by our interlocutors. In political discourse, therefore, altruism presents the action as beneficial for a community, but at the same time circumvents, in a clever and perhaps dishonest way, judgment about the selfishness of the speaker (Lakoff 1991). In some parliamentary debates taken from the *corpus* under investigation, self-interest and not pro-active legitimation could be the motive. In this sense, the action that the speaker wants to take does not seem to be merely a sign of authentic altruism, but one of alleged altruism, and thus authentic egotism. The unspoken question: 'Why must I help you in your own country?' is followed by the implicit or unspoken answer: 'simply because I don't want to welcome you in mine'.

For our part we need to establish projects in the transit countries or in the countries of origin to give them a life, an expectation and a future in these countries of origin. (EUPD5)

[...] the Member States - must put up the money to help build capacity in third countries. We need to pump investment into developing countries, a form of Marshall Plan that will give people a chance of a future there without fear. (EUPD5)

[...] we can work to build capacity in their law enforcement, judicial and, crucially, asylum systems, so that people in need of protection can also find safe haven in states outside of the European Union. (EUPD5)

The *ratio* behind this form of social exclusion seems to be based on the *topos* of disadvantage/uselessness, which is related to a specific causal argumentation scheme that relies on a conditional clause and refers to a situation which may exist and whose possible consequences are considered to be the result of a given action. If it is possible to anticipate that the prognosticated consequences of a decision will not occur, or that if some other political actions are more likely to lead to the declared aim, then the decision has to be rejected (Wodak 2001):

The message from the Socialist MEPs **is that we will re-open our borders; our borders will be open.** Even the NGOs were actually shocked at that, **saying this would lead to riots in the camps.** (EUPD5)

In the previous excerpt taken again from (EUPD5), the *topos* of danger (also known as *topos* of threat) seems to be based on the following conditionals: if a political decision and action may bring about specific dangerous or threatening consequences, it would be better not to perform or carry them out. Otherwise stated, if there are specific dangers or threats caused by them, such decisions should not be taken. The *topos* of threat seems to go as follows: if a considerable number immigrants or even refugees enter a country, or the EU in general, the population will not be able to cope with the situation and could become hostile to foreigners. This argumentation scheme appears to generate a sort of paradox

leading to a “victim-victimizer reversal” (Wodak 2001, p. 75). The victims are thus made responsible for the prejudices and intolerance directed towards them, legitimizing in some way a nonsensical and unreasonable justification for hostility and discrimination.

#### **6.4. Rationalization**

According to van Leeuwen (2007, p. 100), in contemporary discourse moralization and rationalization keep each other at the same “arm’s length”, although in the case of moral evaluation, rationalization has become subordinate. As it is possible to see in this section, in the case of rationalization, morality is “oblique and submerged”, even though no rationalization can function as legitimation without apprising some sense of it. Van Leeuwen (2007) distinguishes two main types of rationality: instrumental rationality, which legitimates practices by reference to the effects, uses and goals; and theoretical rationalization, which legitimates practices by reference to the natural order of “the way things are” (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 103). Only examples of instrumental rationalization were found in the debates under scrutiny.

##### **6.4.1. Instrumental Rationalization**

As far as instrumental rationalization is concerned, aims and purposes are constructed in discourse in order to explain the reason why social practices exist, and what the function associated to the forms they take might be. However, in order to serve as legitimations, these types of purpose constructions must include one element of ‘moralization’, or, otherwise stated, what Habermas (1976, p. 22) defines: “strategic-utilitarian morality”. In other words, it describes the utility of institutional action and its cognitive validity in accepted knowledge, which involves functions, specification of purposes, effectiveness and so on. Instrumental rationality appears in discourse as a “teleological action” (Habermas 1976, p. 22), namely as the straightforward and rational “concrete material justification” of practices or part of practices by reference to the purpose they serve, or the need they feel, or the positive effects that they have (see also Weber 1964).

Focusing on teleological action, consider the examples below taken from (EUPD5) and (EUPD6):

The European Agenda [...] stresses the need to work on all aspects of migration [...] and attract skills to support our economic growth. (EUPD5)

The EU needs to establish a more efficient, transparent and simpler scheme for attracting highly skilled workers. (EUPD6)

As can be seen, all the examples above contain the same three structural lexical-semantic constituents: 1) that it is an activity (‘work on aspects of migration’; ‘establish a more efficient, transparent and simpler scheme’, 2) a purpose link (the preposition ‘to’ or ‘for’ introducing a purposive clause) and 3) the purpose itself, which may be another activity (‘to support our economic growth’; ‘for attracting highly skilled workers’), as in the previous examples above, or also a state in the form of a predicate complement, as in the following excerpt taken from (EUPD6):

[immigration] is an opportunity and we have to seize this window of opportunity [...] to fully contribute to our economies and societies. (EUPD6)

Of course, predicate complement also applies to the idea of purpose itself (van Leeuwen

2007; Wodak 2001). Predicates such as ‘it is useful’, ‘it is effective’, ‘it is an opportunity’ and so forth, are themselves legitimatory, as they derive from philosophical traditions related to utilitarianism and pragmatism (Habermas 1976; Weber 1964), and thus explicitly convey a sense of purposefulness, usefulness and effectiveness.

Van Leeuwen (2000, 2007) distinguishes different subtypes of instrumentality: “goal-orientation”, “potential”, etc. (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 102). In the case of “goal-orientation”, purposes are constructed as conscious or unconscious motives, aims, purposes, goals, etc. (van Leeuwen 2000; 2007). This requires that a) the agency of the purposeful actor is explicitly expressed, and b) that the purposeful action and the purpose itself have the same agent. To put it differently, the formula is ‘Someone does X in order to do Y’.

In both excerpt staken from debates (EUPD5) and (EUPD6), the Actor of the purposeful action, namely ‘the EU’ (metonymically expressed by “The European Agenda”) in the first example, is explicitly expressed, and secondly ‘the EU’ is the Actor of both the purposeful action (‘work on all aspects of migration’, ‘establish a more efficient scheme’) and the purpose itself (‘support economic growth’, ‘attracting highly skilled workers’). Another subcategory focuses on the “potential” (van Leeuwen 2007, p.102) of specific actions for serving particular purposes and uses clauses conveyed by “facilitating’ processes” (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 103) such as ‘help’, ‘bring’, ‘enhance’, ‘promote’, ‘facilitate’, etc. :

Immigration will bring substantial benefits to the European Union in terms of innovation, transfer of technology and increased investment flows. (EUPD6)

This [immigration] will enhance the European Union's competitiveness and help create new jobs. (EUPD6)

As can be seen in both examples ‘immigration’, expressed with the anaphoric pronoun ‘this’ in the second excerpt, is the subject of the purposeful action while the purpose object complements are ‘investments’ ‘competitiveness’, ‘jobs’, etc.

## 6.5. *Mythopoesis*

The fourth major category concerning legitimation is *mythopoesis*, or legitimation through the telling of stories. In other words, it is a type of legitimation conveyed through narrative, that is through the telling of a story or an event which “is taken as an evidence for a general norm or behavior” (Coban Doskaya 2002, p. 77). In moral tales, protagonists are rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices or for trying to restore the legitimate social order, and after facing and mediating so many obstacles, they manage to overcome this trauma and experience a happy ending of some kind (van Leeuwen 2000, 2007; Wodak 2001). The key categories of *mythopoesis* are:

- i) *Moral tales*, in which the protagonist follows socially legitimate practices and is rewarded for this with a happy ending.
- ii) *Cautionary tales*, the protagonist engages in social behaviour that results in an unhappy ending.

Only examples of moral tales were found in the debates under analysis. Consider this example taken from (EUPD10):

I have visited the Calais and Dunkirk camp several times and I have seen hundreds of desperate children stuck in limbo. Only last weekend I talked to Yazidi children in a camp in Kurdistan where the Turkish authorities are doing nothing. I am particularly concerned today

by the situation that will result from the clearance of the Calais Jungle taking place as we speak. Beyond the issues of relocation and identification procedure, which must be ethical and compassionate, we must ensure access to education and put in place mechanisms to support and heal children who are very often experiencing immense suffering and trauma, often resulting in serious mental health issues. This must be done by taking into account the special needs of children with disabilities and young women and girls. I also want to highlight the role of non-formal and informal learning, including sport, volunteering, arts and culture, which by providing safe spaces for intercultural dialogue and exchange not only facilitate the social inclusion of refugee children into their new communities, but also address stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination in the host countries. We must act in a concerted way at European level to offer protection to children in the context of migration. A whole generation of children, especially girls and young women, face a bleak future without education. The eight-year-old Yazidi girl I talked to on Saturday is desperate to go to school. We need to invest in her future and the future of all displaced children. (EUPD10):

As stated above, in moral tales protagonists “are rewarded [...] for restoring the legitimate order” (van Leeuwen 2007, p. 105). Although parliamentary debates are not conceived to be stories, the previous intervention is based on a script that is structured somehow like a story – a case story – with purposes and legitimations added. Indeed, in spite of the fact that this script can be rearranged and generalized to create an expository text, such as a political debate in this specific case, the plot of the story still comes across.

Although it is just one of the many stories related to immigration, it is one version that is unique, as it shows what may happen when a political actor, for the sake of truth, witnesses with his own eyes and lives the lives of the displaced children (or immigrants in general), albeit for only a single day; he becomes able to render a version of reality which serves more the interests of the immigrants rather than the interests of the immigration bureaucrats and officials.

Clearly this story represents not just immigration in the narrow sense of the term, but symbolically all the domain where ‘anonymous’ and powerless people without voice experience solidarity, and their stories become emblematic. Just as fairy tales symbolically distance their readers from the actuality and the reality of a description of the subject matter in places that are far away and in long ago times, so this story distances its readers from the cold and detached bureaucracy of the rules and regulations related to immigration, allowing the de-legitimation of all these distant domains and legitimizing another scenario in which ‘life’, ‘people’, ‘the human race’, and individuals are the real ultimate values. Stories use symbolic actions, specific actions that represent much more than a simple domain of institutionalized social practice, and thus they provide a symbolic and mythical model of social action (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001).

## 7. Conclusions

This article has examined some properties of discourse at a microtextual and macrotextual level. At a microtextual level, collocations, phraseology, binominal constructions were analysed from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. Preliminary findings suggest that from a local semantics point of view there are many instances indicating positive representation of immigrants, but there are still too many which are negative and equate migration with terrorism, unemployment, riots and acts of violence. The majority of speeches and interventions in the debates topicalize and conceptualize the issue of migration in terms of “a problem”. The social and political phenomenon of migration is under discussion in Parliament and it is defined as a *problem*. Thus, if no appropriate action, policy or legislation is taken, there might be negative *consequences*. Therefore,

parties in the debate deal with the policies and actions either positively or negatively, thus showing that immigration can be both a problem to be solved and a challenge to manage. Some peculiar phraseology was found which explains the various positions and attitudes towards immigrants and migration. A pro-active attitude is undertaken towards *those* immigrants who are fleeing war and poverty and are looking for a better life: they should be welcomed and hosted because they have the right to be in the EU. On the contrary, other phraseology uses “*those*” to single out the right group of people, and to be re-active against those immigrants who have no right to stay in the EU, those who are not eligible and do not meet the criteria for international protection.

The macrotextual level analysis expresses the general ideological principle of EU parliamentary debates concerning the thematic of immigration, showing how EU politicians justify their social practices through: (1) Authorization, (2) Moral evaluation, (3) Rationalization, (4) and Mythopoesis. These different legitimization strategies unfold in a general scenario in which political actors present their discourses as ‘truth’. Moreover, in a dichotomy, legitimizing one position automatically implies the (de)legitimation of the alternative position. The approach has been interdisciplinary, employing theoretical methodology from Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Legitimation can be pursued in the here-and-now moment of discourse through voices of expertise, that is people the community admires or people with authority, such as previous leaders, writers, etc. These voices allow speakers, EU politicians in this case, to validate their proposals or their social actions by associations with those voices. Or again, if people’s actions are presented as beneficial for other people or members of a community, especially the innocent and the unprotected, people are legitimizing by means of altruism to acquire approval from their interlocutors. Legitimation is also achieved through instrumental rationalization, namely by presenting their proposals as making sense, as logical, as the right thing to do, and therefore the result of a thoughtful and measured process leading to the utility of a given social practice; the functions they serve and effects they have are always positive. Finally, legitimation can also be pursued by appealing to emotions and predisposes the interlocutors, in this context Members of EU Parliament, to agree with the speaker by activating certain feelings such as sadness and pity derived from narrations and stories. It seems to be clear from the above analysis that the main concern of EU MPs officials is to legitimate their actions in one way or another. Throughout their discourse on immigration, EU MPs endeavour to show that their policies and actions towards immigrants are executed within the boundaries of ‘ethic and moral’ order. Employing each of the legitimization strategies mentioned above, this study makes it clear that an early and still partial ideological analysis stresses two key points in immigration discourse: a) firstly, most of the legitimization strategies are pro-active, especially due to mythopoesis and moral evaluation, which focus on the humanitarian aspects of the migration “problem”; b) not surprisingly, legitimization strategies which belong to the categories of expert authority and razionalization are openly and clearly re-active, therefore against the immigration process, and they seem be driven only by utilitarian and teleological motives.

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