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**Collocational analysis as a gateway to critical discourse analysis** The case of the construction of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in the UK press

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#### Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of discourses surrounding the representation of minority groups in newspapers and demonstrates how this discourse in turn constructs these groups' identity. The analysis took place in the context of a project looking at the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in UK newspapers. A corpus was built for the purposes of this study and comprises 140 million words (175,000 articles from 15 UK newspapers), spanning 1996-2005. The paper focuses on the contribution of corpus research to (critical) discourse analysis and, more specifically, on the collocational analysis of the words refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants (RASIM). It does so by developing the notion of *consistent collocates* (akin to key keywords; i.e. collocates present in at least seven out of the ten annual subcorpora). Collocations are a suitable vehicle for the discoursal presentation of a group, because they can contribute to "a semantic analysis of a word" (Sinclair, 1991), and because "they can convey messages implicitly and even be at odds with an overt statement" (Hunston, 2002). The analysis also employs the related notions of semantic preference, semantic prosody, and discourse prosody. The clustering of consistent collocations provides evidence of systematic semantic associations as well as metaphors commonly employed in racist discourse. Arguably, these patterns reveal elements of the underlying discourses relating to RASIM.

The presentation draws on work carried out for the ESRC funded project, *Discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press 1996-2006* (October 2005 - March 2007).

The project combined Corpus Linguistics (CL) and the Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (DHA-CDA).

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### Link with other CL aspects of the project

Differences between the representation in broadsheets and tabloids.

#### Overlap in terms of …

- □ phraseology surrounding *RASIM*
- □ semantic/discourse prosodies (in)directly relating to RASIM
- □ stance towards *RASIM*
- Differences are in terms of degree:
  - Positive stance mainly in broadsheets; negative stance more in tabloids, but more balanced than positive stance.
  - Instances of mixed presentation: articles reporting the drowning/suffocating of refugees while trying to enter the UK also contain (in)direct references to their 'illegality'.
- Examination of the frequency/use of specific collocations and expressions in individual newspapers can provide a way to quantify 'quality' in the press.
- A B/T distinction is helpful, but has to be seen as scalar, rather than either/or.

(Baker, et al. 2008; Gabrielatos, 2006; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2006a, 2006b, 2008)

# Findings from relevant study

(Baker & McEnery, 2005)

#### Refugees commonly described in terms of:

- □ provenance
- □ temporary residence
- □ destination
- □ quantity
- □ movement
- □ plight

#### Asylum seekers frequently linked to:

- issues of legislation related to immigration
- □ problems allegedly stemming from their presence in the host country
- would-be / illegal / unsuccessful immigrants

#### Focus of analysis

Consistent collocates of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, migrants (RASIM).

C-collocates shared by the four terms - particularly between RAS and IM.

 Categorisation of c-collocates informed by *topoi, topics* or *metaphors* recognised in CDA (DHA). (Reisgl & Wodak, 2001; Sedlak, 2000; van Leuven, 1996; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000).

□ Overlap of c-collocate categories between *RASIM*.

C-intercollocations between the terms, refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, migrants.

## The RASIM Corpus (1996-2005)

Articles: 175,139
Words: 139,510,037
Sub-corpora:

per newspaper
broadsheets/tabloids

per year

Business Evening Standard Express Daily Mail + Mail on Sunday Daily Mirror + Sunday Mirror Guardian + Observer Herald Independent + Independent on Sunday Liverpool Echo People Star Sun Telegraph + Sunday Telegraph Times + Sunday Times

(Gabrielatos, 2007)

### The Query

refugee OR asylum OR deport\* OR immigr\* OR emigr\* OR migrant OR illegal alien OR illegal entry OR leave to remain AND NOT deportivo AND NOT deportment

Derived on the basis of two tests:

- Keywords in the pilot corpus as compared to two general corpora (BNC, FLOB).
- Relative relevance of key and other intuitively identified terms to the core query (refugee\* OR asylum seeker\*).

(Gabrielatos, 2007)

### Informing concepts (1) Collocation

Collocation is the above chance co-occurrence of two word forms within a pre-specified span (Sinclair, 1991).

#### □ It is a formal relation.

- The strength and statistical significance of the cooccurrence are statistically calculated.
- The calculation takes into account the frequencies of the node (the word in focus), the collocate, and the collocation.

#### Collocational network (Phillips, 1989)

- □ Shared collocates of *RASIM*.
- Intercollocation: pairwise collocations between the terms in focus (RASIM).

## Informing concepts (2) Semantic preference

- The relation "between a lemma or word form and a set of semantically related words" (Stubbs 2001, 65).
- Can be seen as the semantic extension of collocation.
- The examination of the contextual meaning of strong collocates can provide "a semantic analysis of a word" (Sinclair, 1991: 115-116).
- Semantic preferences of RASIM index the concepts, topics and issues routinely associated with them (see also Phillips, 1989).

## Informing concepts (3) Semantic/discourse prosody

Collocation patterns "are often unavailable to intuition or conscious awareness. They can convey messages implicitly and even be at odds with an overt statement" (Hunston, 2002: 109).

- Semantic prosody (Louw, 1993)
   Discourse prosody (Stubbs, 2001).
- The "consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (Louw, 1993: 157).
- "A semantic prosody is attitudinal and on the pragmatic side of the semantics/ pragmatics continuum" (Sinclair, 1996: 87, also Stubbs, 2001: 66).
- Contextually determined.

□ Index attitudes and evaluative stance towards *RASIM*.

## Informing concepts (4) Topics, topoi, metaphors

- Topic: The subject matter of the discussion (Sedlak 2000, 129-130)
- Topoi: "Conclusion rules that connect the argument with the conclusion" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 74–76).
- Topoi are framed within discourse units of a compatible topic, and are frequently embodied in metaphors.
- Used to refine categories emerging from concordance analysis.

## Interrelations of informing concepts: The argument

Semantic/discourse prosodies can help create a topos (i.e. lead the reader from premise to conclusion without explicit argumentation), in that the reader is more likely to attend to the connotational or evaluative level of specific frequent collocations (e.g. swarms of refugees), or, in other words, accept the metaphor rather than engage critically with it.

□ This seems more likely if we consider that frequency of a semantic prosody is usually far greater than that of the different collocation patterns which embody or give rise to it (e.g. illegality: *bogus asylum seekers, illegal immigrants*).

### Interrelations of informing concepts: An example

- □ Topos of number. RASIM come in inordinate numbers and are, therefore, a problem or threat (Sedlak, 2001).
- Topos of burdening/weighing down: "if a person, an institution or a 'country' is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens" (Resigl & Wodak, 2001: 78).
- Both topoi can be supported and reinforced by the use of 'quantity' or 'group' collocations, embodying 'water' or 'war/crime' metaphors (e.g. *flood/river/tide/wave of refugees*; *army/hordes/gangs of refugees*), which give rise to negative semantic/discourse prosodies related to their inordinate number, and, therefore, threat.
- Further connections can be made with the topos of definition: "if an action, a thing or a person (group of persons) is named/ designated (as) X, the action, thing or person (group of persons) carries or should carry the qualities/ traits/ attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 76).

### A problem with the collocation analysis

□ The RASIM corpus is diachronic.

□ Some newspapers were unavailable between 1996-2000.

Extracting collocates from the whole corpus can be expected to include a large number of 'seasonal collocates'.

□ Confirmed by collocational analysis of annual sub-corpora.

Term	1 year only	Up to 2 years	Up to 3 years	Up to 4 years	Up to 5 years
refugees	56.7%	73.3%	81.9%	87.0%	92.3%
asylum seekers	58.2%	76.6%	83.7%	88.9%	92.8%
immigrants	50.8%	68.8%	78.2%	83.5%	88.3%
migrants	62.3%	77.4%	86.1%	90.2%	94.7%

The vast majority of collocates were 'seasonal'.

### Solution: consistent collocates

- Scott (1998: 97-98) uses the notion of consistency in relation to word lists and keywords: a consistency analysis shows the number of texts or sub-corpora that a word is found in.
- □ Collocates of *RASIM* were calculated for each annual sub-corpus.
- Consistent collocates were deemed those present in at least seven of the ten annual sub-corpora.
- C-collocates index core elements of meaning and semantic associations, and can point towards semantic/discourse prosodies.

Term	Ratio of c-collocates
refugees	7.7%
asylum seekers	4.5%
immigrants	8.9%
migrants	4.0%

Their consistency and low frequency render the existence of even a single ccollocation highly significant for the analysis.

#### **C-collocates:** Calculation

- Collocates calculated in each annual sub-corpus (using WordSmith Tools, Scott, 1999).
- □ Annual collocates tabulated, and c-collocates established manually.
- Category inclusion established through concordance analysis (expanded concordances up to whole texts).
- $\Box$  Span: ±5 (within sentence boundaries).
- MI determines strength of collocation, but not statistical significance (McEnery, 2005: 22).
- LL determines statistical significance.
- Cut-off point for collocates in sub-corpora: MI≥3 and LL≥6.63 (p≤0.01).
- □ Minimum frequency of collocates: 5 (3 for *migrants*).
- ⇒ Minimum frequency of c-collocates: 35 (21 for *migrants*).

#### C-collocates: quantitative breakdown

Total word forms:
 Shared c-collocates between *RAS* and *IM*

Content words:
 Shared content c-collocates

Categorisable content words:
 Shared categorisable content c-collocates

152 41 *(*27.0%)

135 (*88.8%*) 32 *(23.7%)* 

117 (*86.7%*) 28 *(*2*3.9%)* 

The vast majority of content c-collocates cluster around only 8 categories (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2006b, 2008: 21).

# **Definitions (1)**

	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003)	Refugee Council
refugee	Someone who has been forced to leave their country, especially during a war, or for political or religious reasons.	Someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution back home.
asylum seeker	Someone who leaves their own country because they are in danger, especially for political reasons, and who asks the government of another country to allow them to live there.	Someone who has fled persecution in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.
immigra nt	Someone who enters another country to live there permanently.	
migrant	Someone who goes to live in another area or country, especially in order to find work.	[economic migrant] Someone who has moved to another country to work.

# **Definitions (2)**

Dictionary definitions	Technical/legal definitions	
refugee $ ightarrow$ asylum seeker	asylum seeker $ ightarrow$ refugee	
efugee need not be/become an ylum seeker.	A refugee has been an asylum seeker.	

International Association for the Study of Forced Migration
 *Forced migration:* refugees and asylum seekers
 *Voluntary migration:* immigrants and (economic) migrants

Category	Definition and examples
Provenance / transit / destination	Used to refer to all forms of <i>RASIM</i> . Words referring to the country, region or continent that <i>RASIM</i> come from (provenance) e.g., Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey, China; or the country, region or continent they want to go to (destination) e.g., UK, or the place that they temporarily stay, or are held, while waiting to be allowed go to their place of destination, or while waiting for their case to be decided (transit) e.g., France. As the same word may refer, in different texts, to more than one sub-category (e.g., <i>France</i> is both a country of destination and transit), these collocates were grouped together.
Number	Used mainly to refer to refugees, these are words denoting their large number (e.g., <i>flooding</i> , <i>pouring</i> , <i>streaming</i> ).
Entry	Used mainly to refer to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, these are verbs denoting entry to the country of destination/transit (e.g., <i>arrive, come, enter</i> ), verbs denoting their journey (e.g., <i>cross</i> ), verbs denoting their (illegal) attempts to enter (e.g., <i>trying</i> ), verbs denoting their being in transit (e.g., <i>waiting</i> ), or the place of entry (e.g., <i>borders, Dover</i> ).
Economic problem	Mainly used on asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants, these are words denoting either that they are a financial burden, because they receive state benefits (e.g., <i>benefits, claiming, receive</i> ), or a financial threat, because they compete for jobs with existing citizens (e.g., <i>jobs, working</i> ).
Residence	Mainly used on refugees and asylum seekers, these are words denoting their residence during transit ( <i>e.g.</i> , <i>camp</i> , <i>shelter</i> , <i>temporary</i> ), or in the destination country (e.g., <i>housed</i> , <i>settled</i> ), or verbs used to express opposition to the latter (e.g., <i>allowed</i> , <i>granted</i> ).
Return / repatriation	Mainly used on refugees and asylum seekers, these are words referring to <i>RASIM</i> returning, or being made to return, to their country (e.g., <i>back, refused, return, sent</i> )
Legality	Mainly used on asylum seekers and immigrants, these are words concerning the legal status of <i>RASIM</i> . They are either direct, that is, attributative (e.g., <i>bogus, genuine, illegal</i> ), or indirect, that is, they imply their illegality (e.g., <i>caught, detained, smuggled</i> ).
Plight	Mainly used to refer to refugees, these are words referring to the situations that necessitated their leaving their country (e.g., <i>fear, forced, persecution</i> ), the manner of their leaving (e.g., <i>escape, fleeing</i> ), their current/recent state (e.g., <i>displaced, homeless</i> ), or their current needs (e.g., <i>aid</i> ).

# Plight

refugees	asylum seekers	immigrants	migrants
aid desperate displaced driven escape fear fighting fled flee fleeing	fled fleeing	fled [!]	fleeing [!]
forced homeless homes leave persecution torn	forced		

### Residence

refugees	asylum seekers	immigrants	migrants
allowed asylum camp	accommodation allowed		allowed asylum [!]
camps granted	granted housed housing live living	living	
seek seeking settle settled		seeking [!] settle settled	seeking [!]
shelter sheltering stay waiting	stay temporary	stay	

# **Return / Repatriation**

refugees	asylum seekers	immigrants	migrants
allowed back refused return returned returning	refused sent	[!]	[!]

## **Economic burden/threat**

refugees	asylum seekers	immigrants	migrants
allowed	allowed benefits claiming economic		allowed
economic	entitled receive	jobs	jobs
		working	work

#### economic burden

economic threat

#### Shared c-collocates: Proportion (non-directional)

Pairs of terms		% of shared c-collocates
immigrants	migrants	59.0%
asylum seekers	immigrants	43.0%
refugees	asylum seekers	40.5%
refugees	immigrants	33.5%
asylum seekers	migrants	32.0%
refugees	migrants	28.0%

#### Shared c-collocates: proportion (directional)

	refugees	asylum seekers	immigrants	migrants
refugees		34%	33%	18%
asylum seekers	47%		46%	26%
immigrants	34%	40%		39%
migrants	38%	38%	79%	

### Shared c-collocates: Categories

↓ ↓	refugees	asylum seekers	immigrants	migrants
refugees		ENTRY NUMBER ECON. BURDEN RETURN	ENTRY RESIDENCE	ENTRY
asylum seekers	ENTRY PLIGHT NUMBER RETURN		ENTRY LEGALITY PTD RESIDENCE	ENTRY
immigrants	ENTRY RESIDENCE PLIGHT NUMBER	ENTRY PLIGHT RESIDENCE LEGALITY		ENTRY ECON. THREAT
migrants	ENTRY RESIDENCE PLIGHT PTD	PLIGHT	PTD ENTRY RESIDENCE ECON. THREAT LEGALITY	

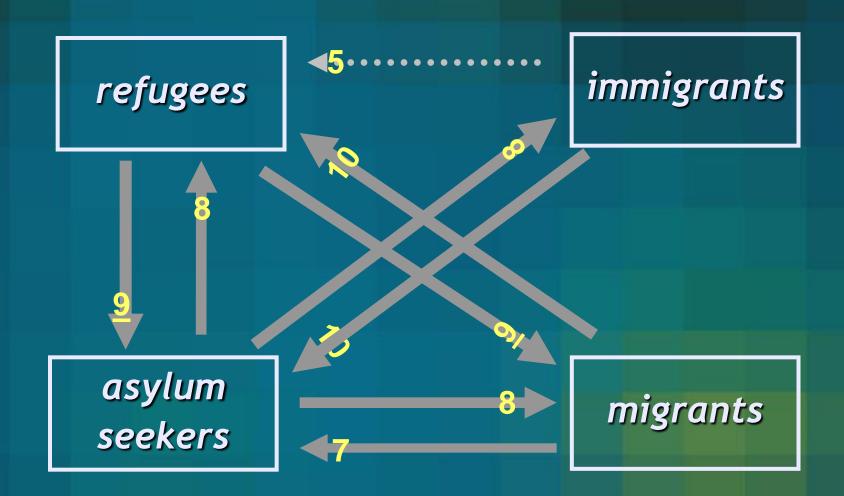
#### C-collocates indexing different categories: The case of *allowed*

Entry	FRANCE finally closed a loophole yesterday which has <i>allowed</i> thousands of illegal immigrants to sneak into Britain on Eurostar trains. ( <i>Daily Star</i> , 5 February 2002).
Residence	Jack Straw faced embarrassment last night as it emerged that almost one-third of new asylum seekers have been <i>allowed</i> to remain in Britain. ( <i>Daily Mail</i> , 26 November 1998)
Economic burden / threat	<u>Burden</u> : But illegal immigration and bogus asylum seekers have been allowed to pour into Britain to live off our taxes. (The Sun, 21 April 2005). <u>Threat</u> : Job firms in the South have been inundated with pleas for jobs from illegal migrants who are allowed to work. (Sunday Mirror, 16 April 2000)
Return	Only a small number of refugees have been <i>allowed</i> to return home, and there has been muted progress in merging Serb-controlled areas with those of the Muslim-Croat federation. ( <i>The Times</i> , 25 September 1997)

#### Shared c-collocates indexing interchangeable use of *RASIM:* The case of *trying*

- English, Welsh and Scottish Railways (EWS) warned last night that it cannot, and will not, endure another six months of lost revenue - (pounds) 10m so far - arising from security problems caused by asylum seekers in France. EWS services to and from Europe have fallen by 60% since November because so many refugees are trying to board trains bound for Britain via the Channel tunnel. (The Herald, 7 May 2002)
- CHANNEL Tunnel security came under scrutiny last night after 44 illegal immigrants were intercepted trying to reach Dover. The desperate asylum seekers walked seven miles in complete darkness before being caught. (The Mirror, 31 August 2001)
- All the passengers were illegal immigrants trying to make their way to Greece. Survivors identified them as Pakistanis, Moroccans and Bangladeshis. Mr Dokuzoglu said Indian and Afghan refugees were also believed to be on board. (The Guardian, 2 January 2001)

## **Consistent intercollocations of RASIM**



Figures indicate the number of annual sub-corpora in which terms intercollocate.

#### **Intercollocations: Contexts**

#### Problem/issue (here, economic problem):

A CRACKDOWN on London's black market jobs racket for asylum seekers and illegal immigrants will be launched today by David Blunkett as he unveils sweeping reforms of the immigration system. (*The Evening Standard*, 7 February 2002)

#### Plight

The scheme helps the homeless, refugees and asylum-seekers, young people leaving care, the elderly, and women fleeing domestic violence. (*Liverpool Daily Echo*, 26 August 2005)

#### □ Scepticism about *RAS* being genuine

Mr Blunkett must find a much faster way of sorting out genuine refugees from economic immigrants. (*The Express*, 5 September 2001)

#### Confusion/conflation of use

Gradually - very gradually - a policy solution seems to be emerging. Countries start by allowing entry to job-creating entrepreneurs. Then they admit workers with skills that are in short supply. They also accept, perhaps for a limited period, large numbers of unskilled workers needed to keep hospital floors swept and construction projects going. Then they allow in some immigrants who are genuine asylum seekers. (The Times, 30 July 2000)

#### A closer look

Examination of instances of *suffocated* and *drowned* in relation to RASIM.

Focus on the presentation of victims as 'illegal'.

Presentation was direct or indirect.

#### Direct

#### Through **attribution** by

- modification with the adjective illegal
- reference to the victims as illegal cargo.

In June, 58 **illegal immigrants** from China **suffocated** in the back of a lorry in Dover, after a journey across Europe" [*The Express*, Nov. 2000].

"A Dutch lorry driver was jailed for 14 years for killing 58 Chinese **immigrants** who **suffocated** in his trailer as he tried to smuggle them into Britain. Perry Wacker, 33, closed an air vent during the Channel crossing so that the ferry crew could not hear his **illegal cargo**" [*The Daily Mail*, June 2001].

### Indirect

Through **framing** the report of the suffocation/drowning within ...

- references to *illegal immigrants* etc. in general;
- indirect references to 'illegality' creating negative semantic prosodies (e.g. suspected asylum seeker, sneak across the perilous straits);
- references to smuggling, trafficking, illegal entry/transport etc.;
- references to problems with, or laxity of, the existing immigration system.

China is among the top four countries whose citizens are **sneaking in**. It does not want a repeat of such tragedies as the drowning last year in Morecambe Bay or in 2000 when 58 Chinese **suffocated in the back of a lorry** heading for Dover. [*The Times*, Sept. 2005].

The risks of **trafficking** were highlighted last summer by the deaths of 58 Chinese **immigrants** found **suffocated** in a Dutch-owned truck which arrived in Dover from Belgium. **Illegal immigration** is also expected to be high on the agenda of an Anglo-French summit in Cahors, southern France ... [*The Guardian*, Feb. 2001]

# **Overall picture**

		<b>T%</b>	<b>B%</b>
Attribution	suffocated	28.3	19.6
[Direct]	drowned	36.2	23.3
Framing	suffocated	17.5	26.2
[Indirect]	drowned	17.2	15.8
ΤΟΤΛΙ	suffocated	45.8	45.8
TOTAL	drowned	53.4	39.0

#### Comments on suffocated / drowned

- There is no statistically significant difference in the proportion of negative presentation - which is very high in both groups (almost half of the reports).
- The only difference is that broadsheets seem to prefer to use indirect rather than direct negative presentation (though this, too, is not statistically significant).
- Both broadsheets and tabloids seem to try to project a humane face, while at the same time explicitly or implicitly communicating the notion that, since the victims were party to an illegal act, they were somehow (at least partly) responsible for their fate.

### Conclusions

- □ The large proportion of shared c-collocates of *RASIM*, and the strong intercollocations of the four terms ...
  - □ indicate that these terms are used in the same contexts.
  - suggest overlap in their usage, and, in some cases, their use as near synonyms - i.e. no distinction is made between forced and voluntary migration
- The examination of expanded concordances of shared c-collocates ...
   revealed further instances of conflation in the use of *RASIM*.
   established that c-collocates index shared semantic/discourse prosodies.
- Discourses related to RASIM seem to revolve around a small number of categories, all but one denoting negative stance.
- □ Overall, c-collocates index the treatment of *RASIM* as a problem.

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