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# Representation of refugees and asylum seekers in UK newspapers

Towards a corpus-based comparison of  
the stance of tabloids and broadsheets

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# Focus

- ❑ Focus mainly methodological.
- ❑ Relevance of corpus-based approach to (critical) discourse analysis.
- ❑ Examples of techniques and findings

# Characteristics of the corpus-based approach

- ❑ Large amounts of data
- ❑ Frequency
- ❑ Co-occurrence and patterns
- ❑ Annotation and grouping
- ❑ Quantification
- ❑ Statistical significance

# Merits of corpus-based analysis

- ❑ Helps recognise the 'big picture'.
- ❑ Indicates areas of interest.
- ❑ Also allows for closer (qualitative) analysis.
- ❑ Examination of a large number of instances of a specific pattern (through concordances).
- ❑ Triangulation / checking of intuitions.

(Baker, 2006: 10-21, 175-183)

# Corpus-based concepts and tools

## ❑ **Key word/cluster**

- ❑ Word/cluster which is significantly more frequent in a corpus when compared with another.
- ❑ Significance ...
  - ❑ is calculated statistically
  - ❑ takes account of corpus sizes
  - ❑ reflects the probability that differences are due to chance

## ❑ **Collocation**

- ❑ The co-occurrence of two words with frequency above chance.
- ❑ Statistically calculated.

## ❑ **Semantic prosody**

- ❑ The "consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (Louw, 1993: 157).

## ❑ **Discourse prosody**

- ❑ "A feature which extends over more than one unit in a linear string" (Stubbs, 2001: 111-112).

# 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 a general corpus (BNC Sampler)
  - ❑ Relevance of KWs and other intuitively identified terms.

# The Corpora (1996–2005)

<b>Tabloids</b> 50,476 articles 29,883,001 words	<b>Broadsheets</b> 100,242 articles 87,001,072 words
<i>Express</i>	<i>Business</i>
<i>Daily Mail</i> + <i>Mail on Sunday</i>	<i>Guardian</i> + <i>Observer</i>
<i>Daily Mirror</i> + <i>Sunday Mirror</i>	<i>Independent</i> + <i>Independent on Sunday</i>
<i>People</i>	<i>Telegraph</i> + <i>Sunday Telegraph</i>
<i>Star</i>	<i>Times + Sunday Times</i>
<i>Sun</i>	

# Areas examined

- ❑ Key words related to *topoi*  
(e.g. Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000).
- ❑ Collocates of *refugees* related to *topoi*.
- ❑ Clusters containing *illegal* + *refugee(s)*, *asylum seeker(s)*, *immigrant(s)*, *migrant(s)* [RASIM].
- ❑ Discourse around *suffocated* and *drowned*.

# Key words

- ❑ Probability that differences are due to chance lower than *1/100 billion*.
- ❑ **Red** indicates more frequent in *tabloids*.
- ❑ **Blue** indicates more frequent in *broadsheets*.

# KWs 1: Query and related terms

emigrated

emigrating

immigrant

immigrants

immigration

migrants

refugee

refugees

claimant

emigre

emigres

foreign

## KWs 2: Entry

<b>General</b>	arrivals, arrive, arrived, arriving, passengers
<b>Mode</b>	eurostar, ferries, ferry, container, train, trains, truck, trucker, truckers, lorries, lorry
<b>Place/ Route</b>	calais, channel, chunnel, dover, eurotunnel, heathrow, tunnel
<b>Legality</b>	passport, passports, smuggle, smuggled, smuggling, sneak, sneaked, sneaking, stowaway, stowaways

# KWs 3: Topoi

<b>Number</b>	dozens, flood, flooding, hundreds, influx, number, numbers, rocketed, swamped, thousands
<b>Abuse</b>	abuse, abused, abusing, bride, brides, cheat, cheating, cheats, marriage, marriages, married, marry, marrying, racket, racketeers, scam, scams, wedding, weddings
<b>Cost and Finances</b>	<b>`Their' side:</b> benefit, benefits, handout, handouts, job, jobs, scroungers, spongers
<b>Abuse/ Profit</b>	<b>`Our' side:</b> cost, costing, expense, jobless, rocketed, strain, taxes, taxpayer, taxpayers
<b>Threat</b>	<b>Crime:</b> crime, criminal, criminals, cronies, crooks, gang, gangmasters, gangs, gangsters, murder, murdered, murderer, murderers, murdering <b>Terrorism:</b> antiterrorism, antiterrorist, anthrax, extremists, fanatic, fanatical, fanatics

# KWs 4: Other categories

<b>Residence</b>	Citizenship, claim, claimants, claimed, claiming, claims, permit, permits
<b>Legality</b>	authentic, bogus, failed, fake, false, genuine, illegal, illegally, illegals, legal, legally, legitimacy, posing
<b>Issues with system</b>	crisis, laws, lax, loophole, mockery
<b>Unwelcome</b>	boot, booted, crack, crackdown, deport, deportation, deported, deporting, kick, kicked, leave

# KWs 5: Plight

airstrikes, ceasefire, conflict,  
conflicts, coup, desperate,  
desperately, devastated, devastating,  
displaced, dissident, dissidents,  
earthquake, exile, exiles, genocide,  
holocaust, horrific, horrified, horror,  
insurgency, massacres, militants,  
military, militia, militiamen,  
militias, nationalism, nationalist,  
occupation, occupied, rebel, rebels,  
sanctions, survivors, misery, tragedy,  
tragic, tragically, victim, victims

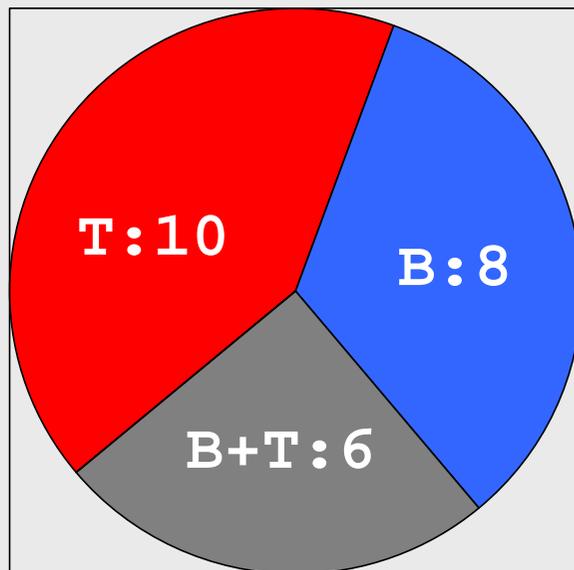
# Collocates of *refugees*

- ❑ Probability that differences are due to chance lower than *1/100 billion*.
- ❑ **Red** indicates collocation only in *tabloids*.
- ❑ **Blue** indicates collocation only in *broadsheets*.
- ❑ **Black** indicates collocation in both.

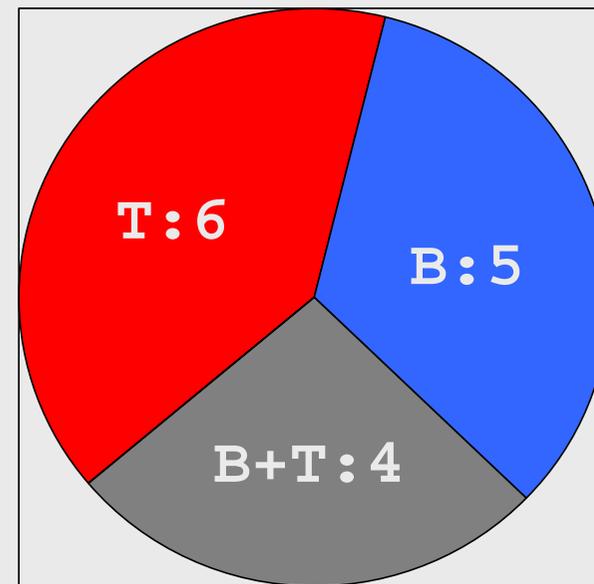
# Related to quantity metaphors

convoy, flock, flocked, flocking, flood,  
flooded, flooding, freight, herded, load,  
million, numbering, overcrowded, pour,  
poured, pouring, stormed, stream, streamed,  
streaming, swamp, swamping, swarmed, swells

**Word forms**



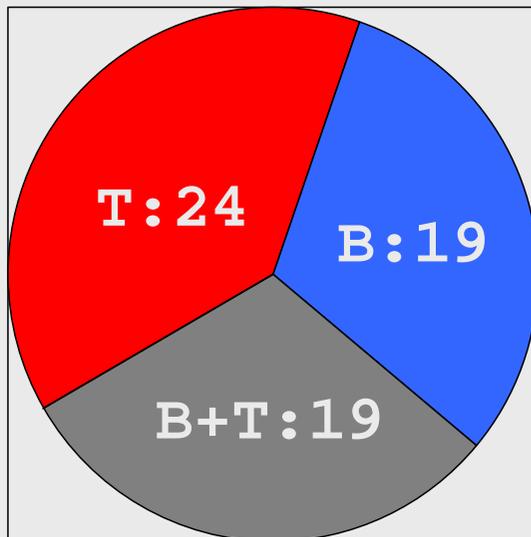
**Headwords**



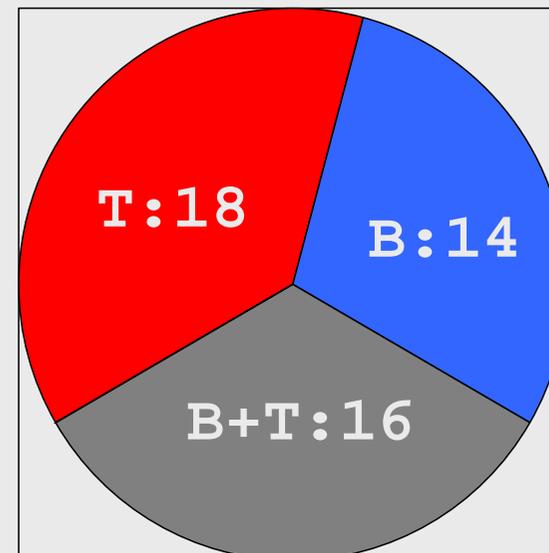
# Related to 'plight'

bombed, brutality, carnage, cleansed, crammed, despair, desperate, destitute, devastated, dispersed, displaced, drowned, endured, evicted, eviction, exhausted, fate, fled, flee, fleeing, forced, forcibly, freeze, freezing, herded, holed, homeless, horrific, hunger, hungry, huddled, massacred, ordeal, persecution, plight, plucked, prevented, ravaged, scattered, scramble, shelled, shelter, sheltered, sheltering, slaughter, slaughtered, squalid, squalor, squeezed, starvation, starved, starving, stranded, subjected, suffer, suffering, suffocated, torn, tragic, trapped, vanished, weep

## Word forms



## Headwords



# Key clusters with *illegal*

- ❑ Calculated manually.
- ❑ Method: examination of right-sorted concordance of instances of *illegal*.
- ❑ Includes modifying adjectives denoting origin, ethnicity, race, age, religion, type of work.
- ❑ **Red** indicates more frequent in **tabloids**
- ❑ **Blue** indicates more frequent in **broadsheets**
- ❑ **Black** indicates difference is not statistically significant

rcumstances. People think it will help us stop illegal asylum-seekers from coming here and ripping of lottery money to a campaigning group that helps illegal asylum seekers frustrate the immigration considered and found wanting, but this group helps illegal asylum seekers frustrate the immigration ry and to help operate its own policy of resisting illegal asylum seekers. Geoff Dossetter, Head NNEL NOW. Since the Tunnel opened the flood of illegal asylum seekers has increased massively. NNEL NOW. Since the Tunnel opened the flood of illegal asylum seekers has increased massively. sylum applicants since 1998 and the coast to remove illegal asylum seekers has rocketed by GBP 7milli st predicted by MPs. We may not know the number of illegal asylum seekers here, but we do know the n to stem the sharp increase in immigration and send illegal asylum seekers home. The new move com he way the Government is pussy-footing around with illegal asylum seekers. "I wonder if Hamza th it to a halt.' Under a new Government crackdown on illegal asylum seekers, immigration officials hav of the channel last sunday in a fresh crackdown on illegal asylum seekers. In a ground-breaking deal S WHAT YOU THINK BODY: WHAT do you think about illegal asylum seekers in Britain and what should s HEADLINE: ASYLUM FACTS BODY: THE debate over illegal asylum seekers in this country is far mor de of the Channel tomorrow in a fresh crackdown on illegal asylum seekers. In a ground-breaking out Tony Blair's latest plan to curb the flood of illegal asylum seekers into Britain. The PM f e new fine on lorry-drivers whose vehicles brought illegal asylum-seekers into Britain and added: "T . The same criminals also smuggle thousands of illegal asylum seekers into Britain. These fi s may have been stolen to order by gangs smuggling illegal asylum seekers into Britain, it was feare . Citizens will demand evidence that the flood of illegal asylum seekers is ebbing. Streets mus . He is apparently convinced that the flood of illegal asylum seekers is a political issue which s HEADLINE: ASYLUM FACTS BODY: THE debate over illegal asylum seekers is far more complicated th s called a racist because he speaks his mind about illegal asylum seekers. It doesn't matter wha SO the Government is finally getting to grips with illegal asylum seekers. It hopes tough measur hat would compromise the Government's crackdown on illegal asylum seekers. It takes some brass n en though the Government is taking a tough line on illegal asylum seekers, its commitment to racial mber of immigration gardai to tackle the influx of illegal asylum seekers. Justice Minister John re now facing a "mini- sangatte" refugee camp. Illegal asylum seekers know that once they set fo with Jeremy Paxman after refusing to say how many illegal asylum seekers live in Britain. Cheri fice is now talking about snatch squads to pick up illegal asylum seekers on the streets. Legal advi ity. Nor will their introduction lead to fewer illegal asylum seekers or immigrants coming to Br an to carry out the Government's wishes in keeping illegal asylum seekers out of the country. Tr for claiming to be antiracist while trying to keep illegal asylum seekers out of the UK. Le Pen, keteering that is rife among what we must call the illegal asylum seekers population, frequently aid uation in this country, where tens of thousands of illegal asylum seekers pour in each year, will on ht. It is not racist to be alarmed by the flood of illegal asylum seekers pouring into Britain. arned that EU borders must be strengthened to stop illegal asylum seekers pouring into the continent in No10. He spelled out his ambitions to STOP illegal asylum-seekers, REFORM Brussels and TAKE policy as he concentrates on reducing the number of illegal asylum seekers settling in Britain. M s. Her boss Mr Olaitin said: "we do not employ illegal asylum seekers. She is now here legal ause the Government fails to kick out thousands of illegal asylum seekers. Sir Andrew Green, who

# illegal ...

<b>Illegal entry</b>	arrivals, crossing(s), entrant(s), <b>entry/entries</b> , <b>stowaways</b>
<b>Illegal residence</b>	alien(s), asylum seeker, <b>asylum seekers</b> , ADJ+asylum seeker(s), emigrants, emigration, foreigners, <b>immigrant(s)</b> , ADJ+immigrant(s), <b>immigration</b> , <b>immigrant population</b> , ADJ+migrant(s), migrant(s), migration, overstayer(s), <b>refugee(s)</b> , ADJ+refugee(s), residence, residents
<b>Illegal means</b>	documents, <b>marriages</b> , <b>passport</b> , passports
<b>Illegal work</b>	economic migrants, economic migration, <b>employment</b> , job, <b>labour</b> , labourers, migrant labour, work, <b>worker(s)</b> , workforce, <b>working</b> , foreign workers, <b>immigrant workers</b> , migrant workers, ADJ+worker(s)
<b>Misc. problems</b>	<b>immigration crisis</b> , <b>immigrant problem</b> , immigration problem, <b>immigration racket</b> , immigration rackets, <b>immigrant racket</b> , immigration reform
<b>Clusters with and</b>	<b>immigration and crime</b> , <b>immigrants and criminals</b> , <b>immigration and fraud</b> , immigration and smuggling, <b>immigrants and terrorists</b> , <b>immigration and terrorism</b>

## Clusters with *illegal*: overall picture

Cluster	<i>T/million</i>	<i>B/million</i>
<i>illegal</i> [TOTAL]	457.10	180.31
<i>illegal</i> entry	11.91	7.62
<i>illegal</i> residence	325.40	121.18
<i>illegal</i> means	0.57	0.10
<i>illegal</i> work	18.98	8.85

## A more complex picture: Clusters with *POSE AS*

Method: concordances of *POSE AS*  
containing RASIM ( $\pm 25$ ).

	<i>T/mil</i>	<i>B/mil</i>
<i>POSE AS</i>	24.19	8.66
<i>POSE AS</i> in relation to RASIM	7.16	0.89

Tabloids use *POSE AS* more frequently than broadsheets:

- In general (x3)
- In relation to RASIM (x8).

# **X pose as RAS to gain entry**

**X** = beggars, criminals, crooks, fanatics,  
foreigners, gangs, militants, spies, terrorists

## **1. Presented as fact, or taken for granted**

<b>Stance</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>
▪ Positive stance towards `tougher measures`	51.4%	58.9%
▪ Negative stance towards RASIM.		

## **2. Reported view (e.g. by politician)**

<b>Stance</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>
▪ Negative stance towards `tougher measures`		
▪ Positive/neutral stance towards RASIM.	0%	11.5%

Albanian Plakici, 26, posed as a frightened refugee from war-torn Kosovo when he arrived in Britain seven years ago. He was first granted political asylum and was given a British passport in January 2002. The skilled linguist was so plausible he landed a string of jobs as an interpreter with firms of solicitors specialising in immigration and asylum cases. He even tricked BBC producers into hiring him as an expert for a documentary on the controversial subject. In reality, Plakici was a ruthless trafficker in naive young women from the poverty-stricken former Soviet bloc. He lured them to Britain with promises of work as barmaids or waitresses, only to force them into the vice trade once they arrived.

[*The Express*, December 23, 2003]

Sarajevo has long been condemned by Britain and others as an easy backdoor route to Europe for Islamic terrorists posing as asylum-seekers. Muslims do not need visas for Bosnia and only cursory checks are made on the identities of incoming passengers.

[*The Times*, October 11, 2001]

Comfort Afolabi, the head of the DSHU, has been accused in a documentary made by BBC Radio Five Live of putting [the reporter - who was posing as an asylum seeker](#) - in touch with an associate who agreed on a fee of pounds 800 for a fake passport and national insurance number. Mrs Afolabi has strongly denied any wrongdoing. **The BLF said it would conduct an inquiry to establish whether the lottery funds awarded to the DSHU were used for their intended purpose - to provide support for asylum seekers.**

*[The Daily Telegraph, February 28, 2005]*

# *X* pose as *RASIM* to expose problems with asylum system

*X* = police, reporters

Stance	T	B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Positive stance towards practice</li><li>▪ Positive stance towards 'tougher measures'</li><li>▪ Indirectly negative stance towards <i>RASIM</i>.</li></ul>	22.9%	16.7%

Our girl investigator posing as an illegal Russian immigrant arranged to meet the crooked secretary who works at the Angel College in Islington which prepares students for entrance to universities as well as teaching them English. College bosses are unaware of her bent sideline. In a hotel lobby, Elena told us she charges between £25 and £75 for each document and said they are foolproof.

[*The People*, June 5, 2005]

Rosseti specialises in what he calls "the Italian package" - a genuine Italian passport which comes complete with driving licence and identity document. **Last week a Sunday Times reporter approached Rosseti posing as a Yugoslavian refugee needing a passport to remain in Britain.** They met at a coffee bar in Soho, central London. "If you want to sleep easy at night take the Italian Job," said Rosseti. "All the documents are genuine and I can guarantee you will be registered by computer as an Italian citizen."

[*Sunday Times*, September 28, 1997]

# RASIM pose as X to exploit system or 'citizens'

**X** = artists, athletes, doctors, EU citizens, nurses, scientists, sports fans, students, taxi drivers, tourists, workers

Stance	T	B
Negative stance towards RASIM	23.4%	0%

HUNDREDS of asylum seekers are pouring into Britain posing as nurses. They are ruthlessly exploiting a desperate shortage in NHS staff to sneak into the country carrying bogus medical qualifications. Their documents - supplied at a huge price by criminal gangs - trick authorities into believing they are properly trained and ready to work in British hospitals.

[*Daily Star*, December 1, 2002]

# Criminals etc. pose as X to exploit/harm RASIM

X = aid workers, peacekeepers

Stance	T	B
Positive stance towards RASIM.	1.9%	0%

Serbian soldiers posed as peacekeepers to capture refugees, a war crimes court heard yesterday at the trial of the commander accused of the 1995 massacre of Moslems at Srebrenica. General Radislav Krstic, the highest-ranking Bosnian Serb officer to face the tribunal, denies command responsibility for genocide in which 7,500 people were killed or are still missing. Prosecutors showed video footage which revealed how Serb troops tricked Moslems with confiscated UN clothing.

[*The Daily mail*, March 15, 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>
<b>Attribution</b> <b>[Direct]</b>	<i>suffocated</i>	28.3	19.6
	<i>drowned</i>	36.2	23.3
<b>Framing</b> <b>[Indirect]</b>	<i>suffocated</i>	17.5	26.2
	<i>drowned</i>	17.2	15.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><i>suffocated</i></b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>45.8</b>
	<b><i>drowned</i></b>	<b>53.4</b>	<b>39.0</b>

## Comments on *suffocated/drowned*

- ❑ There is no 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 is not statistically significant).
- ❑ Both broadsheets and tabloids seem to try to project a humane face, while at the same time communicating the notion that, since the victims were party to an illegal act, they were somehow (at least partly) responsible for their fate.

# Observations so far

- ❑ Overlap in terms of ...
  - ❑ phraseology surrounding RASIM
  - ❑ semantic prosodies (in)directly relating to RASIM
  - ❑ stance towards RASIM
- ❑ Differences are in terms of degree.
- ❑ Positive stance mainly by broadsheets.
- ❑ Negative stance more balanced.
  
- ❑ T/B distinction not helpful.
- ❑ Examination of individual newspapers.
  
- ❑ Combination of automated and manual techniques.

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