

THE LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMMIGRATION AND SECURITY IN ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE

Summary

Immigration has been one of the most important social issues in Italy for decades, as also indicated by the fact that today 8.7% of the total Italian population are immigrants. Numerous papers in the field of linguistics point out that immigrants in the Italian media frequently become objects of criminalisation, we can also find analyses on the language use of certain politicians or parties, but very few studies deal with the texts of parliamentary debates, and no analysis that covers more parliamentary cycles has been carried out globally. Therefore the dissertation seeks to answer the question of whether, as in the majority of texts in the Italian media, immigration is also presented as a security issue in parliamentary debates.

The analysis is based on a corpus of transcripts of eight parliamentary debates preparing immigration laws adopted between 1986 and 2019, of a total of more than 1,360,000 words. Due to the size of the corpus, the texts were first examined using quantitative methods provided by the corpus analysis software Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff 2014), and then those that were deemed relevant based on their micro-context were analysed with qualitative methods as well.

The theoretical background of the research is provided by corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, with special regard to the discourse-historical approach (Wodak, Meyer 2006). The latter examines language phenomena at five discursive levels and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Reference, nomination: How are persons named and referred to linguistically?
2. Predication: What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?
3. Argumentation: By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimize the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others?
4. Perspectivation and framing: From what perspective or point of view are these labels, attributions and arguments expressed?
5. Intensification and mitigation: Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or are they mitigated?

At all discursive levels, we used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate whether immigration is presented as a security issue in Italian parliamentary debates. At the referential and predicative levels, with the help of the aforementioned software, we searched all occurrences of the keywords *immigrato* (immigrant), *extracomunitario* (immigrant from outside the European Union) and *clandestino* (illegal immigrant) in the eight subcorpora, identified the collocations linked to them, and also looked at the verbs and adjectives they co-occur with in the sentences and the types of predicates they are associated with.

The argumentation strategies were examined using Aristotle's concept of enthymeme (Aristotle 1982: 36) and Toulmin's (1958) model of argumentation. Based on the list of Wodak and Reisigl (2001: 75-80), we identified the *topoi* that, as rules of inference, form a bridge

between the initial data and the conclusion in argumentation. We found that danger is one of the most frequently occurring *topos* in the texts of parliamentary debates. In the second part of the chapter, we dealt with errors in argumentation, listing the errors that occur regularly in parliamentary speeches and illustrating each category with examples.

The theoretical background for framing is provided by Goffman (2001), Fillmore (1982) and Lakoff and Ferguson (2006). We examined the framing strategies observed in the corpus through conceptual metaphors (Lakoff, Johnson 1980). According to our results the ones that run through all eight subcorpora are based on the source domains of disease (as well as on the human body in general); burden; goods, machines and tools; civilization (within the category of which several biblical references appear as well); war and battles; and slavery.

Intensification and mitigation strategies «are applied to qualify and modify the epistemic status of a proposition, the degree of certainty, and to modify the speakers' or writers' expressiveness as well as the persuasive impact on the hearers and readers. They either intensify or mitigate the illocutionary force of racist, antisemitic, nationalist or ethnicist utterances.» (Wodak, Reisigl 2001: 81) Among both intensification and mitigation strategies, we can observe different rhetorical tropes and a set of solutions at different syntactic, lexical and semantic levels. Given the genre of parliamentary debate, the corpus is naturally characterised by a significantly higher proportion of solutions that reinforce the illocutionary force of the propositions compared to those that mitigate it.

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the five discursive levels described above, we conclude that immigration and security are intertwined in different ways in the texts of Italian parliamentary debates, and that the trends observed in the media are also characteristic of the corpus built for our research purposes. The different perspectives are reflected linguistically through a wide range of morphological, lexical, semantic, syntactic and rhetorical devices in the texts of the parliamentary debates.

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