Tanulmány

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The representation of Venezuelan immigrants in Colombian press articles

A microstudy based on three Colombian newspapers

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse how the phenomenon of Venezuelan immigration is framed in Colombian press, based on the articles of three well-known newspapers available online. The Venezuelan exodus is one of the most significant migration processes of our times, comparable to the one faced by Europe on the arrival of immigrants coming from Northern Africa and the Middle East. Since there is, at the time of writing, still no research dealing with the portrayal of immigration in Colombian newspapers, our work should be considered as purely exploratory, while the dimensions of the study preclude us from offering representative results. This paper identifies and analyses different framing strategies, such as the importance of nominational strategies, the presence or absence of figurative language, and the agency of the verbs used.
Keywords: immigrants, corpus-study, framing, collocations, metaphor

1   The context of the Venezuelan exodus

Due to their historical relationship and more than 2000 kms of shared border, Venezuela and Colombia have always been deeply interconnected. In the second half of the XXth century, especially in the 1970s, Venezuela became a country of Colombian immigration, due to intense economic growth based on oil extraction and the resulting demand for labour. Meanwhile, the prolonged conflict between the Colombian government and communist guerrillas, mainly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (commonly known as FARC), formed a significant push factor. In this context, more than a million Colombian immigrants settled in Venezuela (Robayo León 2013: 1), many of them for decades.

In 1999, Hugo Chávez became president of Venezuela. In the first years of his presidency, unemployment dropped, inflation was at its lowest levels and poverty decreased significantly. Venezuela's economy improved dramatically, until the world-wide economic crisis of 2008 and – more significantly – the oil price collapse in 2013 (Kozameh & Kozameh 2013). Since there was an extreme economic over-reliance on oil, many industries began to suffer the effects of the crisis. Rather than take appropriate measures to rebalance the economy and curb public spending, Chávez' government continued with unsustainable public spending programs. (Corrales 2015).

After Chavez' death in 2013, his chosen successor, Nicolás Maduro, came to power. By this time, inflation was extremely high, foreign private businesses were leaving the country and many domestic businesses had been expropriated by the government. Spiralling unemployment, poverty and virtual collapse of the public health system ended in one of the most severe economic, social and humanitarian crises in recent history, forcing growing numbers of Venezuelans to leave their homeland.

Colombia, essentially an emigration country until this time, received the largest proportion of Venezuelan immigrants, followed by Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina and Brazil in Latin America, and Spain in Europe. According to the official data of Migración Colombia,[1] the Colombian customs agency responsible for monitoring and carrying out immigration control, there were a total of 1.408.055 Venezuelans living in Colombia in June 2019. 742.390 were regular migrants and 665.665 were termed irregular.

While the government of president Iván Duque opened its doors to its Venezuelan neighbours, Colombia was not prepared for such a massive immigration. On the 30th of November 2019, the United Nations team in Colombia expressed concern at the increase in signs of discrimination and xenophobia directed against the Venezuelan immigrant population.[2]

2 Framing

The academic approach to frames and framing varies across fields including sociology, psychology and – as we are primarily concerned here – linguistics. According to Lakoff and Ferguson (2006a): "frames are mental structures that allow us to understand the world. They are pre-linguistic – in the realm of concepts, not words. Framing is about characterizing values, concepts, and issues." Another definition that we have adopted in this paper is that of Entman (1993: 52, quoted by Scheufele 1999: 108): "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."

Why is it important to examine how the media frames an issue? As Pluwak (2011: 310) explains, the general public relies on news media, mainly newspapers and television, for staying up-to-date about the most important events and issues, since we cannot witness directly all that happens in the world. Most of the time, media audiences adopt the ready-made interpretations prepared by the media or by politicians. The problem is that media audiences almost never question these received perspectives and for this reason we can consider public communication as a *battlefield of perspectives*. This refers to the fact that according to Ensink and Sauer, we cannot adopt two different points of view of the same issue; although we are capable of comprehending both, ultimately only one can "win" (Pluwak 2011: 312). That is why the media coverage of a certain topic is so relevant: it can significantly shape our opinion and attitude. Van Gorp (2005: 486) explains this phenomenon as: "the linkage between, on the one hand, the journalistic approach of shaping the news within a frame of reference and according to a latent structure of meaning and, on the other hand, the stimulation of the public to adopt these frames and to view reality from the same perspective as the journalists do."

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[1]   Cf. Proyecto Migración Venezuela. ¿Cómo saber cuántos venezolanos hay en Colombia? (September 2019).
[2]   Cf. United Nations's internetsite.

Lakoff (2006: 12) distinguishes between surface framing or wording, and deep framing. "Deep frames are mental structures through which we conceptualize our values, principles, and fundamental ideas. Surface frames are the frames that are evoked by words and slogans (…)." Why are words so important? Because a certain wording can orient our attitude towards being positive or negative, and it can also influence the way we think about the whole question (Pluwak 2011: 311). For instance, the framing of undocumented immigrants as 'illegal aliens' activates the audience's frames of *illegality→criminality* and *alien→otherness*. Since both words evoke negative feelings, they are more likely to prompt a rejective response from the audience, whereas if we say that 'refugees escaping from the humanitarian crisis are arriving in need of help', the audience's response is more likely to be empathetic.

According to Lakoff (2004: 14) in order to successfully build a surface frame, we must first carefully enlist the values of the ideology that we intend to transmit, and it is this prior selection process that consequently, informs our choice of words. Another key step is to define the problem and determine an appropriate solution, as both determine the position taken. Deep framing, as we have already mentioned, refers to the cognitive structures being activated. Returning to our previous example, the surface framing of 'illegal aliens' recalls the deep framing of the issue portrayed either as a border security problem or a criminal issue, addressing immigrants themselves as the core of the problem, while the surface framing of 'refugees in need of help' refers to the deep framing of the humanitarian crisis as the core of the problem, emphasizing the tragedies immigrants had to face before leaving their home. "By framing social and political issues in specific ways, news organizations declare the underlying causes and likely consequences of a problem and establish a criterion for evaluating potential remedies for the problem." (Segvic 2005: 471) Therefore, if we accept that media presentation has such a deep impact on our perspective in this way, we should consider it fundamental to analyse the frames applied by newspapers and other media, in order to gain a more accurate picture of events and issues, and to recognise and examine media and political biases.

One of our findings regarding the relationship between the media and the audience is that public opinion can also have an impact on what is published in the newspapers, engendering a kind of dialogue with the readers, in which newspapers react to what they consider to be their audience's points of view, as we are about to see.

3   Methodology

As different newspapers represent different ideologies, we sustain that for a complex analysis of written media coverage it is necessary to choose a range of newspapers including those considered to be more conservative, and those considered to be more liberal; or if it is possible to categorize certain newspapers as openly left-wing or right-wing, we should take both sides into consideration. For our purposes, we chose three well-known Colombian newspapers that are also published online, *El Tiempo* (which generally espouses a social-democratic ideology), *El Colombiano* (which generally represents conservative points of view) and *La República* (a newspaper that deals mainly with economic topics). We then searched for the keywords 'inmigración Venezuela' and 'inmigrante venezolano' in their databases. We limited the search to a timespan from the 1st of January 2018 to the 31st of December 2019, because it is in the last two years that immigration has raised drastically.

Media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers corresponds with an increasingly un-favorable perception of refugees among the public (McKay, Thomas, & Blood 2011, quoted by Ghazal Aswad 2019: 362), at least in many Western-European countries; one of our primary research objectives was to verify if the same tendency is observable in Colombian press. Our initial hypothesis was that the articles of *El Tiempo* would be more favorable regarding the topic of migration, those of *El Colombiano* would be more critical and more centered on the defense of national identity, and those of *La República* would be more neutral.

After analysing qualitatively the 40 articles returned by our search (26 in 2018 and 14 in 2019), we identified the main themes (or deep frames) present in the texts. There were a total of 7 themes found: humanitarian crisis (and the ethical responsibility of the host country to help immigrants, mostly portrayed as victims); an increasing risk of xenophobia and stigmatization and the urge to fight it; negative examples of other host countries and their errors; immigration seen as a law-related and/or border security question; immigration seen as an opportunity for the host country; immigrants portrayed as victims in the host country; and immigration seen as an economic (or, less frequently, a political) burden. We found articles with only one main theme, but there were several that contained more than one, up to a total of three.

In order to decide if the issue of Venezuelan immigrants was framed negatively, positively or in a balanced way in each article, we used the evaluation criteria elaborated by Mollard (2001: 6), as indicated in Table 1:

Negative articles	Balanced articles	Positive articles
– Uses negative words and phrases to describe asylum seekers and discuss issues surrounding the asylum debate. – Uses racial stereotyping to describe asylum seekers and discuss issues surrounding the asylum debate. – Presents asylum myths as facts. – Makes open suggestion that asylum seekers should all be sent back to their country of origin. – Presents openly hostile views about the presence of asylum seekers. – Questions/denies the legitimacy of the claims of persecution without good reason.	– Presents (correct) information about asylum issues without further comment. – Presents both sides of the asylum debate equally. – Does not rely on negative/racist language or asylum myths to criticise asylum seekers/issues.	– Contains only facts. – Discusses the benefits of the inclusion of asylum seekers into society. – Critical of excessively negative attitudes to and coverage of asylum seekers/issues. – Presents views from those in the asylum debate who support the rights of asylum seekers in the host country. – Gives information about the conditions, attitudes, and treatment experienced by asylum seekers in the countries from which claimants are seeking asylum. – Includes the views of those seeking asylum.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria elaborated by Mollard

In the following section, all the main themes will be analysed in order to give a more profound view on the framing of Venezuelan immigration in the selected articles.

To enable a more rigorous analysis of framing strategies, we combined the qualitative analysis with the quantitative methods of corpus linguistics. We used the text analysis software "Sketch Engine",[3] which showed us the keywords of the corpus (keywords are individual words which appear more frequently in the focus corpus than in the reference corpus, in our case, a Spanish Web corpus from 2018[4]), listed in Table 2, leaving out proper names. We were also interested in how the words were typically used, in which context they appeared most frequently and what the typical word combinations were.

First 20 keywords	
1. venezolano	Venezuelan
2. xenofobia	xenophobia
3. éxodo	exodus
4. migración	migration
5. migratorio	migratory
6. migrante	migrant
7. inmigración	immigration
8. venezolanos	Venezuelans
9. inmigrante	immigrant
10. xenófobo	xenophobic
11. paisas	a paisa is a person coming from the northwest of Colombia
12. migraciones	migrations
13. discriminador	discriminatory
14. humanitario	humanitarian
15. guajira	guajiras are the people of the indiginous Amerindian ethnic group called the "Wayùu" in northern Colombia
16. estigmatizar	to stigmatize
17. colombiano	Colombian
18. apátrida	stateless
19. delinquir	to sin
20. emigrante	emigrant

Table 2. Keywords of the corpus identified by Sketch Engine

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[3]   Cf. Kilgarriff et al (2014).
[4]   This corpus contains 17,553,075,259 words and is built up by sources from Spanish Wikipedia, European Spanish web and American Spanish web.

4 Results

4.1 Humanitarian crisis

The portrayal of the immigration phenomenon is framed as the result of a deep humanitarian crisis in a total of 10 articles, 6 of which were published in *El Tiempo*. According to the evaluation criteria of Mollard, all of them present the facts in a neutral tone, portraying immigrants as victims, but without promoting the welcoming of people arriving unconditionally and beyond measure. An example of this balanced view is presented here:

> (1) ″Al final del encuentro, 11 de los 13 países emitieron una declaración de intenciones en la que **se comprometen a seguir acogiendo a los emigrantes dentro de un sentido de «hermandad» y «solidaridad», pero también salvaguardando la «seguridad» de las sociedades receptoras.**″
>
> "At the end of the meeting, 11 of the 13 countries issued a declaration of intent in which **they commit to continue welcoming migrants in a sense of «brotherhood» and «solidarity», but also safeguarding the «security» of the host societies.**"

An interesting finding regarding the six *El Tiempo* headlines is that although all of the articles were written in a neutral way, two of them could have been expected to show a more negative perception judged by the titles: *OEA se suma a la preocupación de Colombia por inmigrantes venezolanos* (*Organization of American States joins Colombia's concern for Venezuelan immigrants*) and *El país solo tiene 10% del dinero necesario para atender venezolanos* (*The country only has 10% of the money needed to attend Venezuelans*). In the latter case, the issue of the lack of money is only mentioned towards the end of the text – an interview – with the apparent aim of presenting the dimensions of the crisis and evaluating if the phenomenon of immigration is a burden or an opportunity: the article concludes by emphasising the opportunity.

Two of the articles in the 'Humanitarian Crisis' category were published in *El Colombiano*, with both articles clearly framing immigrants in a positive way and emphasizing the need for empathy, with explicit reference to Colombia's historical obligation towards Venezuelan people, as shown below:

> (2) ″Lo importante es que prevalezca el trato amable con los inmigrantes, **una cierta solidaridad, un sentido de gratitud por lo que hicieron por los inmigrantes colombianos en el pasado y la capacidad de imaginarse como estaría uno en otro país en esas circunstancias.**″
>
> "The important thing is that kindness to immigrants prevails, (along with) **a certain solidarity, a sense of gratitude for what they did for Colombian immigrants in the past and the ability to imagine how one would be in another country in those circumstances.**"

The reason behind this type of framing could be the importance of national values, since *El Colombiano* is a conservative newspaper. The fact of historical Colombian emigration to Venezuela during a period when fortunes were reversed also plays a crucial role in this framing,

not least because a certain number of these former Colombian emigrants have now returned to Colombia as Venezuelan emigrants.

An even warmer (and maybe surprising, given the economic character of the newspaper) description of the bond between the two countries is expressed in La República:

(3) ″En conclusión, **nuestra alma está hecha de lo mismo**. (…) Si **nuestra alma está unida**, debemos reconocer como parte de nuestra obligación acoger responsable, solidaria, legal y ordenadamente **a nuestros hermanos** que llegaron con sus hijos, padres y sueños remendados.″

"In conclusion, **our soul is made of the same**. (…) If **our souls are united**, we must recognize that part of our obligation is to accept in a responsible, supportive, legal and organized way **our brothers** who arrived with their children, parents and patched dreams."

This, without any doubt, points to a positive representation of Venezuelan immigrants, while the other *La República* article exhibits a neutral tone.

Overall, the semantics in these texts are positive, even to the extent that emotive nouns like 'solidarity' or 'fraternity' are more present than negative ones. Their strategic use contributes to the framing of immigrants as people in need of help and empathy, and avoids negative framing of immigrants as a burden for the host country.

4.2   Risk of xenophobia or stigmatization and the urge to fight it

Although the question of xenophobia is mentioned in all three of the newspapers ('xenophobia' and 'xenophobe' appear among the first 20 keywords of the whole corpus) it is only in six *El Tiempo* articles that xenophobia is identified as the main frame. Of these six, two may be classified as neutral and four as positive. This frame provides, undoubtedly, the most frequent use of figurative language, with a high rate of metaphors, for example, 'to fall into a trap':

(4) ″Peñalosa dijo que atender a un **hermano venezolano** es igual que atender a un antioqueño, a un costeño, a un tolimense o a cualquier ciudadano de otra región. En este sentido, hizo un llamado a todos los habitantes de la ciudad para **que no caigan en la trampa del odio y la xenofobia**, pues si bien reconoció que hay algunos delincuentes que son de esa nacionalidad, resaltó que estos son una ínfima parte.″

"Peñalosa said that caring for **a Venezuelan brother** is the same as caring for one coming from Antioquia, Costa Rica, Tolima or any citizen of another region. In this sense, he called on all the inhabitants of the city **not to fall into the trap of hatred and xenophobia**, because although he acknowledged that there are some criminals who are of that nationality, he stressed that these are a very small part."

Nominational strategies have an important role in framing, since they can determine the tone of a sentence, a paragraph, or even the whole article, depending only on the way we decide to address the people entering the country. Naming Venezuelans as brothers goes openly against

xenophobia, since it is a feeling towards compatriots. The trap metaphor refers to a risk waiting along the road and everyone has to walk carefully to avoid falling into it.

We also found a nature-related metaphor – that of illness, most commonly, cancer:

(5) ″El aumento de las migraciones y los desplazamientos provocados por conflictos sociales, políticos, económicos o religiosos (…) **fortalecen hoy los cánceres de la xenofobia y el racismo en el mundo**. (…) **Esos tumores están haciendo metástasis** y abriendo las puertas al odio, la ira, la discriminación y **el Belcebú** de la trata de personas en países de América Latina (…)″

"The increase in migration and displacement caused by social, political, economic or religious conflicts (…) today **strengthens the cancers of xenophobia and racism in the world.** (…) **These tumors are metastasizing** and opening the doors to hatred, anger, discrimination and **Beelzebub** from trafficking in persons in Latin American countries (…)"

The cancer metaphor is expressed in a complex and extended way, with the whole development process portrayed: a comparison is drawn between cancerous cells spreading to the vital parts of the body and the spread of xenophobia and racism across the population, weakening its integrity. Furthermore, while the simpler 'trap' metaphor suggests xenophobia may be avoided through caution, the more complex 'cancer' metaphor implies that once xenophobia takes root, its spread cannot be easily prevented.

The 'Beelzebub' metaphor is stronger still. Since Beelzebub is a synonym for the devil, identifying it with human trafficking (a common consequence of mostly irregular migration) demonizes human trafficking.

There are other similar examples:

(6) ″ (…) **la quimioterapia contra la xenofobia y el racismo** tiene que empezar por cada uno de nosotros. Por las fotos que aparecen en la página web de la ONU sobre el acuerdo, **migrantes somos todos**, y así debemos asumirlo.″

"(…) **chemotherapy against xenophobia and racism** has to start with each one of us. Based on the photos that appear on the UN website on the agreement, **we are all migrants**, and so we must assume it."

One of the basic characteristics of framing is that we do not have to say certain words explicitly to evoke them, this is what we see in the sentence above: mentioning chemotherapy is an evident allusion to cancer and all of its inherent aspects – healing process, hospital, medicine, etc. In this case it evokes a common conviction, namely, that the patient has to be willing to be cured and fight for recovery. Once again, we can observe the power of nominational strategies: by saying that "we are all migrants", any perceived gap between the two different groups of people – those in need and those that can help – is closed, and it is reaffirmed that the roles are interchangeable at any moment.

Returning to the devil metaphor and demonization more generally, we see that Beelzebub is not the only monster employed in the demonization of xenophobia:

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(7) ″**Ese par de leviatanes también están pudriendo el alma de Estados Unidos**, cuyas raíces históricas no se pueden explicar sin la inmigración (…)″

"**That pair of leviatans are also rotting the soul of the United States**, whose historical roots cannot be explained without immigration (…)"

The expression «pair of leviatans» is used to refer to racism and xenophobia in the article. A leviathan is best known as a mythical sea serpent but in Christian culture, the leviathan is also variously a creature of Satan, Satan himself, or specifically, the demon of envy. This is particularly interesting, as one of the prerequisites for xenophobia may be a feeling of inadequacy: either a lack of wealth and resources on a national level or a feeling on a personal level that immigrants are 'jumping the queue' – such feelings may easily be understood as envy.

In many texts there is a reference to the bad examples of other countries (*see: 4.3*), one of them is the United States. The personification of states or nations in migration discourse is quite common (Lakoff 2004: 10), and in our sentence we see that the USA has a soul weakened by the demons of envy.

A common tendency in most of the articles is the explicit reference to and dissaproval of anti-immigrant metaphors used in European public discourse about migration. Generally, the opposing view is expressed and in some cases, the *raison d'être* of the metaphor is denied, for example (8):

(8) ″Pero Castiblanco dice que a pesar de la llegada masiva **no se puede hablar de invasión porque esta palabra significa «sacar al otro»**, y eso es algo que no se ha dado en Ciudad Bolívar.″

"But Castiblanco says that despite the massive arrival **one cannot speak of an invasion because this word means «to take out the other»**, and that is something that has not happened in Ciudad Bolívar."

'Invasion' has become a recurrent metaphor in European migration debate and reporting, and in the Colombian press we can observe a determination to pre-empt its spread there. As we have seen before, one of the basic features of framing is its power to evoke complex phenomena by nominating only a few constitutive elements of the whole question on the surface (see *wording* in Lakoff). But, as we see here, it can also work in the opposite direction: if there is a single word capable of evoking a set of attached aspects, scripts etc., and we want to avoid the allusion to a frame, then that element must be named explicitly as one that should not be interpreted as accurate or relevant.

We may state that analysis of this frame category indicates a general resistance to what may be detected among the public as a refusal towards immigrants, and it is a proof of existence of a dialogue between the newspaper and its readers.

4.3 Negative examples of other countries

In five articles of *El Tiempo* (two of a neutral tone and three of a positive one) and one of *El Colombiano* (with a positive view on Venezuelan immigrants) we have identified negative framing regarding other countries and continents and specifically, the United States and Europe. When it comes to the 'old continent', the context in which its name appears is exclusively

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negative: «errores en la gestión de la crisis provocada por los flujos de emigrantes que Europa recibió desde Siria» («errors in the management of the crisis caused by the flood of emigrants in Europe received from Syria»); «la xenofobia y el racismo están desfigurando así mismo a Europa, que registra hoy uno de los mayores flujos migratorios desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial» («xenophobia and racism are also disfiguring Europe, which today has one of the largest migratory flows since World War II»). The last one is quite similar to example (7) – it personifies Europe, as somebody losing their empathy (a formerly empathic person disfigured by xenophobia and racism) unable to deal with a problem. Only one European country is mentioned specifically: Italy paid a high price for «allowing a xenophobic party to enter government».

In European migration discourse, the flood or wave metaphor is commonly used (D'Angelo & Kofman 2017: 186), mostly with a negative connotation. In our analysis of the Colombian texts, the flood/wave metaphor appeared more frequently in sentences dealing with the European phenomenon rather than in a national context, that is, Colombian journalists seem to have adopted the metaphor primarily as an illustration of the errors of other countries, and avoided using it in an autoreferential way. In the instances when the flood/wave metaphor was used autoreferentially, it rather appeared in positive and neutral contexts. In fact, figurative language regarding the arrival of migrants is relatively infrequent. Of those figurative phrases that are used, the most frequent are «llegada a gran escala» («large scale arrival»), and 'éxodo' ('exodus' – one of the keywords used in articles framing the phenomenon as a humanitarian crisis). Where we might otherwise expect to see figurative language employed, we instead see a simple description of the situation: «estamos viendo un aumento bastante significativo y progresivo de refugiados venezolanos» («we are seeing a fairly significant and progressive increase of Venezuelan refugees»).

The United States, similarly, is portrayed as an example that should not be followed. Apart from analytically-irrelevant sentences in which its name appears as part of statistical data, the United States appears as the subject of only one action verb, 'culpar' ('to blame'): «Estados Unidos comenzó a culpar a los extranjeros de sus problemas» («the United States began blaming foreigners for their problems»). President Trump and his government are the subject of two action verbs: 'deportar' ('to deport') and 'hablar' ('to talk'): «Trump deportó a 150 venezolanos en el año fiscal 2018» («Trump deported 150 Venezuelans in the fiscal year 2018»); «no es casual que el gobierno de Trump no quiera hablar de esto» («it is no accident that the Trump administration does not want to talk about this») – the latter reference is to the refusal of President Trump to comment on the deportation of Venezuelan Nationals. The Colombian journalists take an openly critical stance on this issue: while introducing the description of the American government's measure, they use the words 'vergonzosamente' ('shamefully'), and 'hipocresía' ('hypocrisy'), making clear the perspective they wish to transmit.

4.4 Immigration as a law-related and/or border security question

There are a total of seven articles dealing with the immigration phenomenon as a law-related or border security question. This is one of the two frame categories in our corpus that returned no clearly positive representation of immigrants. On the other hand, only two of the seven articles were found to portray migrants in a negative way according to the criteria defined by Mollard.

Once again, nominational strategies are particularly relevant: while in the rest of the corpus, the words 'migrante' ('migrant'), 'inmigrante' ('immigrant') and 'refugiado' ('refugee') are used in a more or less balanced way with equal frequency, here there is no use of the noun 'refugiado' and we find only 'inmigrante' and 'migrante'. Thus, there is no direct allusion to an increased need for empathy. Also, 'masiva' (massive) as a collocation of 'inmigración' ('immigration') appears much more frequently, emphasising the dramatic and challenging scale of immigration.

In respect of 'inmigración' (immigration), we also found the collocation 'irregular' (irregular). The collocation 'ilegal' (illegal) was not present. The 'irregularity' is in some cases mitigated or portrayed as a 'temporary status': «extranjeros venezolanos que están en situación de inmigración irregular» («Venezuelan foreigners who are in irregular immigration status»). The choice between the words 'irregular' and 'illegal' is crucial because they do not evoke the same frames. 'Irregular' refers simply to something that does not fit current norms, and suggests only an organisational challenge. By marked contrast, to frame something as 'illegal' is to relate it to criminality, evoking serious crimes such as drug dealing and homicide (Lakoff & Ferguson 2006b).

In one of the negatively framed articles there is a sentence containing 'migración ilegal', and it affirms this theory, via a list of nouns associated with crime and punishment:

(9) *"De la misma manera, orientará a los venezolanos que lleguen, controlará la prosti-*
tución, protegerá a los menores, impondrá sanciones a **la migración ilegal** y efectuará control al contrabando que hacen los migrantes. (…) «A cualquier persona que encontremos delinquiendo se le impondrán las sanciones penales y migratorias correspondientes. **No vamos a permitir que nadie venga a delinquir a Colombia»**, enfatizó el Presidente.*"*

"In the same way, it will guide the Venezuelans who arrive, control prostitution, protect minors, impose sanctions on **illegal migration** and control smuggling of migrants. (…) «Any person we find engaging in crime will be subject to the corresponding criminal and immigration sanctions. **We are not going to let anyone come to Colombia to commit crimes»** emphasized the President."

The last sentence is parallel to the framing of the immigration question as a self-defense issue in the European debate, but it is the only case in the whole corpus and therefore not relevant on a global scale.

In the articles considered as negatively framed, there is another detail that catches the eye: immigrants are no longer the suffering subject of the crisis, but active causes of it. We may observe this contrast in the two examples here: «(…) una serie de medidas para afrontar la crisis humanitaria que se vive en la frontera y en otras zonas del país **por cuenta de la inmigración de venezolanos»** («a series of measures to face the humanitarian crisis that exists in the border and in other areas of the country **on behalf of the immigration of Venezuelans»**; «¿Qué hacer frente a esta **crisis generada por inmigrantes venezolanos**?» («How to face this **crisis generated by Venezuelan immigrants**?»). In the first example, agency is expressed in a less direct way, while in the second one it is clear, and it is an important framing strategy: we are far more likely to feel pity when immigrants are presented as fleeing from a crisis; we are far less likely to feel pity when immigrants are presented as the cause of the crisis.

There is also a headline which can be seen as a reaction to the public opinion: *La migración venezolana no afecta la seguridad de Medellín* (*Venezuelan migration does not affect Medellín's security*), and it reaffirms the tendency in the Colombian press to counter perceived negative opinion among the host population towards immigration, such as that observed in 4.2: Risk of Xenophobia.

4.5 Immigration as opportunity

Immigration is presented as an opportunity for the host country in a quarter of the total number of articles (9 overall, with 4 framed in an undoubtedly positive way and 5 written in a neutral tone).

Immigration is presented as an opportunity for the host country from three points of view. Most of the texts mention the talent and the entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants, providing positive examples from other countries where immigrants contributed dynamically to economic growth. One of the most frequent collocations found for 'inmigrantes' (immigrants) and 'venezolanos' (Venezuelans) was a form of the adjective 'regular'. In fact, in the process of analyzing the articles, we identified an emerging topic which could not exactly be recognized as a frame, but was present in almost every article dealing with immigration as a law-related question and as an opportunity: this was the need for the regularization of Venezuelans.

As we have already mentioned, it is crucial to observe how irregular migrants are referred to by politicians and by the media, since it is a powerful framing tool. Pertinent to this is our preliminary conclusion that in the Colombian press there is little-to-no criminalization of immigrants. Colombia is portrayed as not ready for receiving a large amount of Venezuelans; however, the onus is not on those who are arriving, but on the host country itself. The expressed solution is to afford regular status to the highest possible number of immigrants, in order to rapidly integrate them into the labour market.

Moreover, all the action verbs found amongst the collocations of 'inmigración' ('immigration') or 'inmigrante' ('immigrant') had a positive meaning, for example: «la inmigración trae enormes cantidades de personas talentosas» («immigration brings huge numbers of talented people»); «el talento, la energía y el afán de superación de los inmigrantes dinamizan la economía y contribuyen a hacer la sociedad más incluyente y más receptiva a nuevas ideas» («immigrants' talent, energy and their desire to overcome energize the economy and contribute to making society more inclusive and more receptive to new ideas»).

Apart from the case of 'regular', another common adjective used in these texts with 'inmigración' ('immigration') was 'beneficiosa' ('benefitious'). In relation, there are also many references to Colombia's aging population and high emigration rates, with the need for immigrants to help balance the demographic curve.

As we have seen with the humanitarian crisis frame, we can also observe a strong sense of moral and ethical obligation for Colombians to receive Venezuelans with patience and acceptance. Example (10) sums it up perfectly:

(10) *"*Los migrantes son una oportunidad para Colombia, no solo por lo que pueden aportar al país sino también porque **acogerlos y no estigmatizarlos nos hace una sociedad mejor**.*"*

> "Migrants are an opportunity for Colombia, not only because of what they can contribute to the country but also because **welcoming them and not stigmatizing them makes us a better society**."

4.6 *Immigration as an economic burden*

Besides the category of immigration seen as a law-related or border security question, the phenomenon framed as an economic burden for the host country is the other class of articles which does not contain a positive portrayal of immigration. However, out of the 8 articles of this category only 2 can be classified as negative. As might be expected regarding its economic nature, *La República* accounted for half of the articles (four in total), while three of them were published in *El Tiempo* and only one in *El Colombiano*.

These texts differ from the others in an immediately-observable way: they present the most frequent use of numbers. Searching for the collocations of the first keyword which is not the name of an association, a person or a tax (the actual most common keywords), namely 'venezolano' ('Venezuelan') we can find almost solely numbers, followed by «llegada masiva de» («massive arrival of»), which presents a parallel to the border-security relatedness.

Other words found in the same sentences were 'atención' (attention) and 'atender' (to attend), and these are much more frequently used compared to other articles, even those with a humanitarian crisis framing. In this case, they are deployed to emphasise the ongoing sacrifices Colombia is making to manage the situation, and in this respect, 'costo' ('cost'), is used not only in an economic but also in a social way.

Examination of the context of 'inmigración' reveals similar findings, as we have 'aumento de' ('increase of') and 'la problemática de') ('the issue of'), the latter is characteristic only of this category, while others, including 'fenómeno' ('phenomenon') are more recurrent. Furthermore, while the flood metaphor is not significantly present in the corpus overall, it is in this theme category that it appears most frequently.

Although the Colombian journalists emphasize the enormous economic costs of immigration, they do not blame Venezuelans directly for aggravating the already-complicated situation of the labour market. Venezuelan immigrants are rather presented as the suffering subjects of a set of circumstances not of their own making.

(11) *"Según Castiblanco, la llegada de extranjeros a zonas periféricas con presencia de economías ilegales, hace que **estos no tengan otra opción que engrosar el fenómeno**."*

"According to Castiblanco, the arrival of foreigners in peripheral areas with the presence of illegal economies means that **they have no choice but to swell the phenomenon**."

Once again, immigrants are defended and framed as innocent, as an apparent reaction to latent negative public opinion towards people arriving and «taking away» job opportunities from Colombian citizens.

Although all the articles begin by articulating the immediate difficulties Colombia must face in order to keep its economy relatively balanced, many of the articles conclude that immigration, in the long run, is an opportunity to grow.

4.7 *Immigrants as victims in the host country*

One of the articles of *El Tiempo* can be categorized exclusively as framing immigrants as victims of the host country. Another one also presents this frame, but belongs more strictly to the xenophobia theme. Since this is a very narrow part of the total corpus, we have not subjected it to a detailed analysis, but it is worth mentioning briefly as an example of how verb agency can play a crucial role in framing. The major part of the verbs referring to Venezuelans found in these texts were in the passive voice, with examples like «han sido víctimas de» («have been victims of») or «están siendo atendidos» («are being attended»). Even when the verb structure was not exactly passive, immigrants were not presented as active participants of the actions: «han sufrido maltrato físico» («have suffered physical abuse»); «menores provenientes del vecino país pasaron por el proceso de restablecimiento de derechos» («minors from the neighboring country went through the process of restoration of rights»). As we have seen before, in other cases where immigrants were portrayed in a more negative light, for example, in relation to border security, active agency is much more frequently applied.

5 Conclusion

Having examined the 40 articles in a qualitative way, combined with some quantitative methods in order to identify keywords and relevant collocations, we have found many framing tools used by journalists in order to transmit their perspectives.

In the case of the humanitarian crisis frame, noun semantics played a crucial role in portraying migrants as victims of different kinds of tragedy.

The xenophobia frame demonstrated the power of figurative language – mostly the use of metaphors in our corpus; however, we also concluded that the notable absence of figurative language – in our articles, the one of the flood metaphor – may also be an indicator of framing.

According to our results, verb agency can be an efficient strategy when it comes to blame attribution or exemption.

Collocations are a relevant element of analysis, since they determine the context in which immigrants are mentioned, and only one word on the left or the right can evoke a frame in the reader's mind. Reference itself has an indicative nature, since 'immigrant', 'refugee', 'foreigner' etc. do not belong to the same mental representations of the phenomenon.

According to previous research, framing in newspapers can transmit a certain perspective, a particular point of view about an issue. Our micro-study of the Colombian press indicates that such framing is part of a dialogue: that public opinion also shapes the texts newspapers publish. Indeed, we may, in the case of Venezuelan immigration, observe newspapers engaging in dialogues with their readers and reacting to perceived assumptions, in an attempt to shape readers' points of view.

In contrast to our initial hypothesis, the framing of immigration was largely positive in *El Colombiano* and mostly neutral in *La República* and *El Tiempo*, although we must emphasize that the issue was afforded greater prominence in *El Tiempo*. Due to this fact, we had more texts from that paper, affecting statistical calculations. For further research, a more balanced number of articles would be preferable, while the prominence of immigration in a particular medium is also a relevant variable for future research.

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