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Anti-Immigration Rhetoric in Donald Trump's Presidential Speeches: A Corpus-Assisted Comparative Analysis of U.S. Presidential Discourse (1946–2021) Populist and Emotionally Charged Language versus Constructive, Policy-Oriented Framing

Abstract: The United States of America is often referred to as being a nation of immigrants. The latter have played an important role in its population growth and shaped its cultural identity. Immigration-related topics, therefore, have been integral part of the US political discourse and governmental communication, including in the US presidential speeches. However, no other president has faced as much criticism for raising issues related with immigration than Donald Trump, current president from Republican party. We apply a Corpus-based discourse analysis, to analyse large amounts of language data with the aim to identify and examine repetitive linguistic patterns of language uses in the context of immigration by all former US presidents in the years between 1946 and 2021, including, Trump (2017–2021).

After studying Trump's speeches via a Corpus-based discourse analysis (CDA) and comparing them with other presidential speeches, both quantitative and qualitative analysis showed that the use of lexical terms such as "immigra," "immigration" and "immigrants" by Donald Trump was overwhelmingly more frequent than in the case of any other US presidents. In addition, his speeches revealed more populist approach as well as negative connotation, while all the other 13 preceding US presidents used the semantic area for immigration very carefully and avoided engaging with negative connotations and narratives.

Key words: US, president, Trump's immigration, analysis, discourse, speeches, illegal

Introduction

For the United States, which admits more immigrants annually than any other country in the world (Budiman, 2020), immigration has remained a central issue in political discourse throughout its history. At present, 47.8 million residents in the United States were born abroad, underscoring the country's long-standing role as a primary destination for migrants (Budiman, 2020).

Since the end of World War II, U.S. immigration policy has often reflected broader economic and geopolitical considerations, transcending partisan divides. During the Reagan administration, for instance, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 granted amnesty to approximately three million unauthorized immigrants, resulting in a near doubling of annual admissions. Simultaneously, however, the administration narrowed the definition of asylum, treating those fleeing violence in Central America as "economic migrants" rather than eligible refugees (Gzesh, 2006).

Subsequent administrations continued to emphasize enforcement alongside reform. Republican presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush were as strict on illegal immigration as Democrats Bill Clinton and Barak Obama. President Obama, despite introducing protective measures such as DACA, oversaw historically high deportation rates and enhanced border security, underscoring the continuity of enforcement-driven policy approaches (Massey et al., 2012; Migration Policy Institute, 2013). Nevertheless, none of these administrations stirred as intense and sustained controversy over immigration as Donald Trump's. His presidency was distinguished by an overtly securitized and populist rhetorical framework, frequently portraying immigration as a threat to national stability and demanding urgent and aggressive interventions (Smith, 2023). This sustained and emotionally charged discourse reshaped the public and policy debates around immigration in ways not seen in previous decades.

Immigration – particularly undocumented migration and enforcement along the southern border – emerged as one of the defining issues of Trump's 2016 election campaign and subsequent presidency. He repeatedly framed immigrants, especially undocumented migrants, as a threat to national security and social stability (Amadeo, 2021). His administration subsequently implemented sweeping restrictions, including the so-called "Muslim travel ban" affecting nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries, and a "zero tolerance" policy criminalizing unauthorized border crossings (Amadeo, 2021). Procedural barriers were also expanded, as applicants for employment-based visas and some categories of permanent residency were required to undergo in-person interviews.

Trump's language about immigrants was not merely restrictive but often dehumanizing, combining populist appeals with emotionally charged rhetoric (Nacos et al., 2020). Media analyses have documented how his discourse normalized hostile framings, including metaphors of invasion and crime (Bennett, 2024). More broadly, scholars observe that Trump's rhetorical style has contributed to a sharp populist turn within U.S. political communication, redefining partisan boundaries around issues such as immigration (Lange, Oliphant, 2024).

The centrality of immigration to Trump's rhetoric illustrates a broader principle: political discourse cannot be understood without close attention to the language through which it is articulated. As Partington (2012) note, political speeches, media editorials, acts of parliament, press conferences, declarations of war and diplomatic negotiations are all prepared, framed, and enacted through language. Fairclough (2001) goes further, arguing that language is not merely a medium of politics but its very substance: "Politics partly consists in the disputes which occur in language and over language."

This paper contributes to this tradition of critical inquiry by examining Trump's immigration-related rhetoric in the broader context of U.S. presidential discourse since 1946. Specifically, it applies corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CDA)¹ to identify and scrutinize recurrent linguistic patterns in presidential speeches. Using computational tools to analyze large datasets, the study explores how U.S. presidents have historically

¹ The data for the paper were pulled out in 2021 during my MA studies at the University of Bologna, where I was given access by the Prof. Cinzia Bevitori to the "Wordsmith 6.0" software and dedicated file "The US Presidential discourse 1946–2021", which stored public speeches of all US presidents.

framed immigration, with particular attention to Trump's rhetorical strategies. The analysis seeks to uncover the implicit meanings and ideological functions of lexical choices and collocations, and to show how Trump's discourse departs from or intensifies patterns established by his predecessors, thereby amplifying perceptions of hostility and controversy in contemporary political debate.

Literature review

This study examines repetitive linguistic patterns in the context of immigration across all U.S. presidential speeches between 1946 and 2021, with a particular focus on Donald Trump's first presidency. To do so, it draws on both the methodological traditions of corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CDA) and the theoretical frameworks of presidential rhetoric and immigration studies.

In discourse studies, several powerful scholars have emphasized the centrality of language in shaping political reality. Fairclough (1989, 2001) underlined the constitutive role of language in politics, noting that political life is not only conducted through language but is "itself fundamentally constituted by language." According to him (1989), "It is not just conducted through language; much of politics is language. Politics partly consists in the disputes which occur in and over language."

Hunston (2002) and Baker (2006) advanced corpus-based approaches, demonstrating how large collections of texts can be systematically examined to uncover patterns of meaning and ideological positioning. Similarly, Bayley (2005) and Partington (2012) highlighted the inextricable link between politics and language, arguing that political speeches, declarations, and negotiations are always framed and mediated through discourse. As another scholar Partington references correctly, it is impossible to examine political discourse without acknowledging the profound influence of language. "Political speeches, newspaper editorials, press conferences, Acts of Parliament, declarations of war, and peace negotiations are all shaped and controlled by language" (Partington, 2012). According to him, all political actions are "prepared, accompanied, and controlled by language."

For Bailey (2005), the definition of political discourse is a crucial aspect. He views the activities of government, parties, and parliament as the essence of politics, a struggle for power among the members of these institutions through elections, parties, parliamentary procedures, and propaganda. Bailey (2005) also underscores the role of language in political action, "stating that it is difficult to imagine a political action that is not based on language or the result of linguistic disruption, and at the same time, the prerequisite for further linguistic action." Wodak (2009; Wodak, Forchtner, 2018) further developed the connection between language and politics by situating political speeches within broader genres of governance and media communication, while Mautner (2016) demonstrated the value of corpus linguistics in enriching critical discourse studies.

In addition to these methodological contributions, scholarship on presidential rhetoric provides a complementary perspective. Campbell and Jamieson (1990) established that presidential communication is shaped by recurrent rhetorical genres – such as inaugural addresses or State of the Union speeches – that both constrain and enable how

presidents can speak about contested issues like immigration. Medhurst (2006) argued that presidential rhetoric serves as a key arena for negotiating political legitimacy. Within this tradition, Trump's discourse has been recognized as uniquely disruptive. Mercieca (2020), for example, characterizes Trump's rhetorical style as "demagogic," relying on simplification, fear appeals, and repetition to mobilize support.

A substantial body of literature also addresses the specific intersection of immigration and political discourse. Hartelius (2015) highlighted how immigration debates construct competing identities of "self" and "other." Santa Ana (2002) traced the metaphors used to frame Latino immigrants, demonstrating how dehumanizing imagery permeates U.S. discourse. Similarly, Chavez (2008) analyzed how immigrants are often constructed as threats to the nation, reinforcing exclusionary narratives. Van Dijk (1997) has likewise demonstrated how elite political discourse – including presidential speeches – helps reproduce racist and anti-immigrant ideologies. These studies provide important context for understanding Trump's discourse, which, as Wodak (2015) notes, draws heavily on right-wing populist narratives that stigmatize immigrants while reinforcing nationalist identity.

Taken together, this scholarship provides the theoretical foundation for the present study. By combining the methodological insights of corpus-based discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Hunston, 2002; Mautner, 2016) with the rhetorical frameworks of presidential communication (Campbell, Jamieson, 1990; Stuckey, 2004; Mercieca, 2020) and the critical literature on immigration rhetoric (Santa Ana, 2002; Chavez, 2008; Wodak, 2015), the analysis situates Trump's anti-immigration discourse within both the diachronic tradition of U.S. presidential speech and the broader discursive construction of immigrants in American political life.

Methods and tools in detail: Corpus data

Corpus-based discourse analysis (CDA) was adopted as the primary research method for this study. Corpus analysis, originally developed within linguistics, enables the systematic examination of large bodies of spoken or written texts, known as corpora (Sinclair, 2004; Wynne, 2005). Specialized software packages such as *WordSmith Tools 6.0* are particularly useful for identifying recurring patterns of language use, including word frequency distributions and collocations – words that tend to appear together within texts (Willis, 2017).

For this study, *WordSmith Tools 6.0* was employed to construct and analyze two corpora. The first corpus (Corpus A) consists of eight presidential speeches delivered by Donald Trump during his presidency (2017–2021), focusing explicitly on immigration-related issues. The second corpus (Corpus B) comprises 124 speeches delivered by all other U.S. presidents from 1946 up to the end of Trump's term, thereby providing a comparative historical baseline. For each corpus, wordlists were generated, labeled "PD-Trump" and "PD-All Presidents_Trump," respectively.

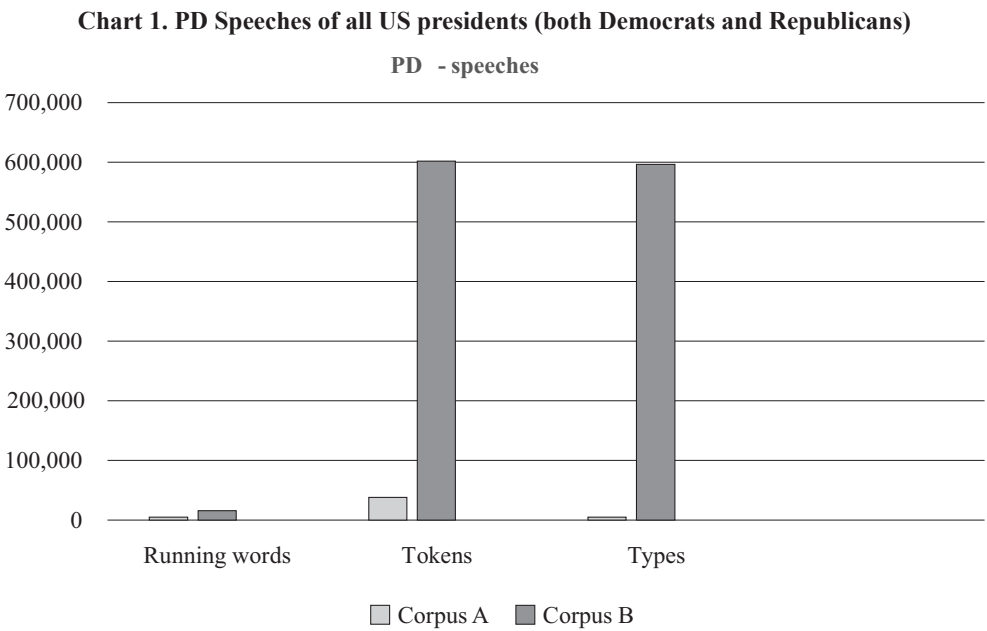
Through wildcard searches and semantic grouping, the program identified lexical items central to the discourse on immigration, including: *immigra* (immigration, immigrant, immigrants, immigrated), *illegal*, *illegally*, *alien(s)*, and *border(s)*. These

keywords served as nodes for further examination of their collocational patterns and semantic environments. The software’s tools provided detailed information on lexical frequencies, distributions, and irregularities, as well as insights into the rhetorical framing strategies employed by different presidents.

To illustrate these patterns, representative quotations were selected from the corpora. The selection was not arbitrary but guided by two criteria: (1) relevance to the identified lexical nodes, and (2) suitability for demonstrating broader rhetorical strategies in context. In this way, the quotations serve as qualitative exemplars of the quantitative corpus findings, allowing for a richer interpretation of how immigration has been framed linguistically across administrations.

The comparative analysis of Corpus A and Corpus B made it possible to trace continuities and departures in presidential discourse on immigration over time. By examining how specific lexical choices were repeated, intensified, or recontextualized in Trump’s rhetoric relative to his predecessors, the study aims to highlight both intertextual connections and the distinctive features of Trump’s discourse.

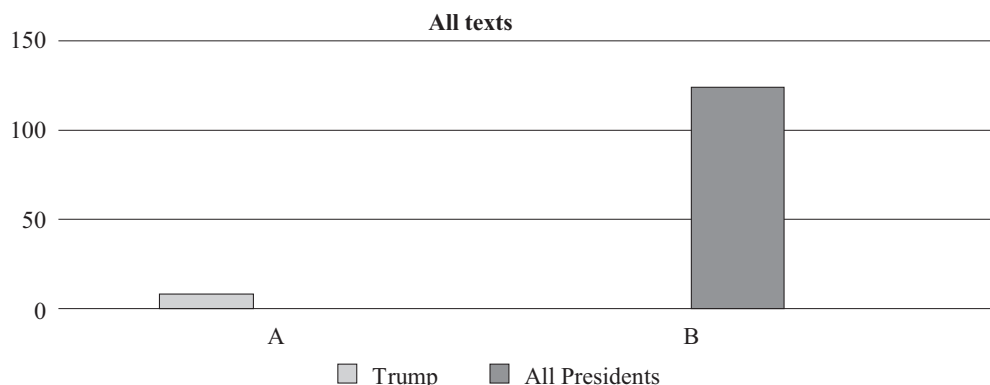
- CDA analysis of the US presidential discourse on immigration: 1946–2021:
1. *Corpus A*: PD Speeches Trump which consists of eight texts produced for and by Donald Trump, such as acceptance speeches, inaugural speeches, State of the Union addresses (SoU), farewell address (2017–2021). The total volume of these data is 4,652 running words, 37,951 tokens, and 4, 652 types.
 2. *Corpus B*: PD Speeches of all other US presidents (both Democrats and Republicans) which consists of 124 text files from 13 Presidents: Truman (1945–1953), Eisenhower (1953–1961), Kennedy (1961–1963), Johnson (1963–1969), Nixon (1969–1974), Ford (1974–1977), Carter (1977–1981), Reagan (1981–1989), Bush snr.



Source: Developed by author.

(1989–1993), Clinton (1993–2001), Bush jr. (2001–2009), Obama (2009–2017), Biden (2021–2024). Corpus B includes all speeches including acceptance, inaugural, SoU, address to congress, Nixon resignation, Ford pardon, Carter crisis of confidence and Bush jr speech to UN 2003, farewell address from 1946–2021. The dataset amounts to 16,011 running words, 601,826 tokens, and 596,426 types.

Chart 2. All US presidential speeches, including President Trump



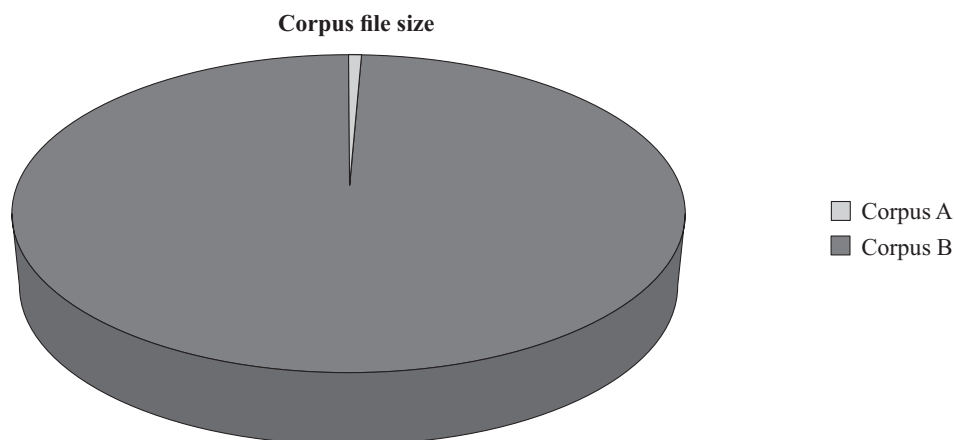
Source: Developed by author.

Corpus A was used for primary source compared with *Corpus B* being a secondary source to see whether Trump’s focus on the semantic area in question (immigra, immigration, immigrant, immigrants, immigrated, illegal, illegally, alien, aliens, border, borders and etc.) was different from that of his predecessors. After selecting the primary and secondary corpuses, “Wordsmith 6.0” software was used to see how selected semantic words featured in the speeches.

The software helped to identify the appropriate keywords, which then allowed conducting quantitative and qualitative analysis of the texts. The selection was made through bottom-up principle and related semantic area. For example, where wildcard was “immigra*” the semantic area of words was “immigration,” “immigrant(s),” “immigrated,” as well as “illegal,” “illegally,” “alien(s),” “border(s).” In addition, words frequently associated with immigration, such as “security,” “terrorism,” “criminal,” “violence,” “unemployment” were examined.

A wordlist was used for two corpuses: “PD-Trump” and “PD-All-presidents Trump,” which clearly showed the length of files, the number of words and tokens selected, including running words and types (distinct words). For visual illustration, see the accompanying tables. Chart 1 illustrates the distribution of presidential speeches across both Democratic and Republican administrations, while Chart 2 provides a comprehensive view including Trump’s contributions.

The corpus was analysed using some techniques: analysis of selected wordlist, study of keywords, study of semantic words and their comparison in primary and secondary corpora, concordance of some keywords, analysis of collocation, investigate resorting of words where and how they are clustered and analysis of distribution of semantic associations.

Chart 3. Corpus file size including both corpuses

Source: Developed by author.

Below is data and tables of search results:

Outcome: wordlist

- PD – speeches – Trump include acceptance, farewell address, inaugural, SoU.
- PD speeches All presidents (13) – minus Trump – include all acceptance, farewell address, inaugural, SoU, address to congress, in addition Nixon resignation, Ford pardon, Carter crisis of confidence and Bush jr speech to UN 2003.

Table 1

Both Corpuses data from research results

Corpus	Words (the, #, I,)	File size	Tokens (running words)	Types (distinct words)
Corpus A	4,652	22,013	37,951	4,652
Corpus B	16,011	3. 544.893	601,826	592,426

Source: Developed by author.

Table 2

A rough profile of immigra* in *Corpus A*
– Categorization looking at collocates:

Places of immigra*	Kinds of immigra*	Metaphorical of immigra*	Verbs related to immigra*	Duration of immigra*
Current Mass Our Pro-American	Dangerous Legal Illegal Outdated Positive	Dangerous Illegal	To stop To fix To suspend	Current

Source: Developed by author.

The analysis of Trump’s speeches (*corpus A*) illustrates how he used the topic of immigration to connect it with crime and social wellbeing. Trump attributed all acute social and economic problems faced by ordinary Americans (unemployment, lack of jobs, overcrowded schools and hospitals) to immigration/migration. He framed immigrants negatively when he connected those attempting to immigrate illegally to “crime” and linked it with “growth”.

Example 1: immigra in *Corpus A*

“Meanwhile, working-class Americans are left to pay the price for mass **illegal migration**: reduced jobs, lower wages, overburdened schools, hospitals that are so crowded you can’t get in, increased crime, and a depleted social safety net. Tolerance for **illegal immigration** is not compassionate; it is actually very cruel” (Trump SoU, 2019). This example underscores how Trump systematically links immigration with societal and economic problems, constructing a narrative of threat and urgency.

Table 3

A rough profile of immigra* in *Corpus B*
– Categorization looking at collocates:

Places of immigra*	Kinds of immigra*	Metaphorical of immigra*	Verbs related to immigra*	Duration of immigra*
existing Our upon	Broken Legal Illegal comprehensive regular stronger	broken Illegal stronger	To do (done) To be To say	Existing regular

Source: Developed by author.

By contrast, *Corpus B* reveals a more balanced approach to immigration. Table 3 shows the collocational profile, with terms such as “comprehensive,” “legal,” “regular,” and verbs like “to do” and “to strengthen.” In his 1955 SoU, President Eisenhower made a clear statement about improving immigration service and provided detailed information to the public. He avoided using negative connotations and clusters related to immigration that prevented the creation of adverse attitude towards the topic. President Eisenhower used carefully balanced rhetoric style language.

Example 2: immigra in – *Corpus B*

“...of Justice; the security activities of **the Immigration** and Naturalization Service have been revitalized; an improved and strengthened **security** system is in effect throughout the government; the Department of Justice and the FBI have been armed with effective new legal weapons forged by the 83rd Congress” (Eisenhower, SoU, 1955). Unlike Trump, Eisenhower emphasizes administrative improvements and public reassurance rather than associating immigration with social decay.

A preliminary overview of the corpora, summarized in Table 1 and visually illustrated in Chart 3, highlights the substantial difference in corpus size: Trump’s cor-

pus (Corpus A) contains 37,951 running words across 4,652 distinct types, whereas the broader set of presidential speeches (Corpus B) includes 601,826 running words across 592,426 distinct types. This quantitative foundation facilitated a detailed semantic analysis.

Analysis of collocates and semantic clusters revealed that Trump’s speeches frequently frame immigration in negative terms. Table 2 illustrates a rough profile of “immigra*” in Corpus A, highlighting frequent associations with descriptors such as “mass,” “dangerous,” “illegal,” and verbs such as “stop” and “abolish.”

Studying selected texts through “Concordance” tool of the given software provides information about lexical frequencies, distributions, regularities or irregularities in collocation patterns and thus patterns of meanings (Bayley, 2005). The tool highlighted Lexicogrammatical type of information as well as its intertextual dimension: “the way in which patterns are interconnected over time” (Bayley, 2005). For example, the data can be displayed in chronological order to identify a particular discourse feature. Furthermore, this tool gave possibility to see how the used terms were distributed and appeared in clusters or waves.

After making wordlist of each chosen corpus, keywords were used, followed by the selection of words for concordances, for example: “immigra.” “border,” “illegal,” “alien.” Default settings and selected words “compute” – “concordance” was used to see how chosen words were presented in the selected corpus.

Concordance analysis further clarifies these contrasts. Table 4 shows the relative frequency of “immigration” and its variants: Trump’s speeches (Corpus A) contained 52 entries, predominantly linked to illegal or mass migration, whereas the broader presidential corpus (Corpus B) had 110 entries, often framed around legal, regulated, or comprehensive immigration. Similarly, examination of related terms – “border” (Table 5), “illegal” (Table 6), and “alien” (Table 7) – reveals a pronounced difference in evaluative framing. Trump’s use of “illegal” and “alien” is overtly negative, whereas other presidents employ these terms descriptively or as part of policy discourse.

Immigra which includes “immigration,” “immigrant,” “immigrants,” “immigrated”.

Table 4

Relative frequency – immigra*

Corpus	Total entries	Immigration	Immigrant	Immigrants	Immigrated
Corpus A	52	35	6	10	1
Corpus B	110	50	14	46	0

Source: Developed by author.

Table 5

Relative frequency – border

Corpus	Total entries	Border	Borders
Corpus A	60	39	21
Corpus B	84	33	51

Source: Developed by author.

Table 6

Relative frequency – illegal

Corpus	Total entries	Illegal	Illegally
Corpus A	36	33	3
Corpus B	35	34	1

Source: Developed by author.

Donald Trump used the term “illegal” to describe immigration outright negatively, while all other presidents used the term “illegal” in connection with immigration to express the problem of illegal immigration and the general idea that illegal immigration is a complicated subject.

Table 7

Relative frequency – alien

Corpus	Total entries	Alien	Aliens
Corpus A	19	5	14
Corpus B	9	1	8

Source: Developed by author.

Immigration:

In *Corpus A*, there are 35 entries that Trump used with tokens concerning “current immigration,” “mass immigration,” “outdated immigration” and “dangerous immigration.”

In *Corpus B*, there are 50 entries concerning “illegal immigration,” “comprehensive immigration,” “legal immigration,” “our immigration,” “broken immigration.”

The software program has allowed to examine and group immigration-related language and datasets in both *Corpus A* and *Corpus B* in detail. It is obvious after analysing Trump’s speeches that most of the semantic words he used were related to illegal migration in expressly negative context.

Furthermore, this paper analysed how the words were sorted in different orders to make the patterns visible (by clicking “edit” + “resort”). By resorting the used terms, it has been possible to identify patterns and associations related to immigration. Observation on Corpus showed that in acceptance speech Trump referred to pro-American immigration. Extended cluster from left was – *reforming our system of legal immigration* (L1through L5) which in total was formed of six tokens and types, which he used in SoU. 2019. Other results according to the words to the left of the node were “abolish immigration” (L1), “current immigration” (L1), etc.

While on the right clusters of “immigration” in *Corpus A*, the picture looked like “immigration reform package” (R1 through R3) which in total was three tokens and types used by Trump in SoU in 2021; “immigration, to stop to gangs and” (R1 through R 4) which in total was six tokens and five types used by Donald Trump in accept. in 2021; another resorted cluster, “immigration, and mass lawlessness” (R1 through R4), in total four tokens and types, was used by Trump in acceptance speech in 2021.

In *Corpus B*, “immigration” was used with clusters such as “comprehensive immigration” (L1through L5) which in total was 5 tokens and types. Or “other pressing chal-

lenge is immigration” (L1 through L 5) (five tokens and types) used by Bush jr SoU in 2008. Other clusters were: “recommendations for revision of the immigration” which consisted of *six* tokens and types (Eisenhower, SoU 1956); “kind of abuse of our immigration” that was six tokens and five types (Clinton in SoU, 1995).

While on the right clusters of “immigration” of *Corpus B* – “PD-All Presidents_Trump”, the picture was “immigration over 32,000 victims of” (R1 through R 5) consists of five tokens and types used by Eisenhower in SoU 1961; “immigration lows of its neighbours” (R1 through R 5) consists of five tokens and types used by Carter in SoU 1981.

Cluster analysis illuminates further distinctions. In Trump’s 2021 acceptance speech, left clusters included “reforming our system of legal immigration” and “abolish immigration,” while right clusters featured “immigration reform package” and “immigration, and mass lawlessness,” highlighting the emotive and combative framing. By contrast, *Corpus B* exhibits clusters oriented toward systemic improvement, such as “comprehensive immigration” (Bush Jr., 2008) and “recommendations for revision of the immigration system” (Eisenhower, 1956), reflecting an emphasis on procedural or regulatory action.

Table 8

Semantic associations were also analysed in both *Corpus A* and *Corpus B*:

Corpus	Principal semantic associations	One new entry
Corpus A	Lawful immigration An immigration For immigration Illegal immigration Merit-based Immigration	Abolish immigration (accept., 2021) Pro-American immigration (accept., 2021) By immigration (SoU, 2021) Current immigration (SoU, 2021) Dangerous immigration (accept., 2021) Legal immigration (SoU, 2021) Mass immigration (accept., 2021) Of immigration (SoU, 2021) On immigration (innaug., 2017)
Corpus B	Broken immigration Comprehensive immigration Existing immigration Illegal immigration Legal immigration Our immigration An immigration The immigration	Stronger immigration (Bush jr, 2006) Upon immigration (Eisenhower SOU, 1961) Regular immigration (Carter SoU, 1981)

Source: Developed by author.

Distribution of semantic associations

The word “immigration” and its semantic associations in Trump’s speeches: in acceptance speech made in 2021, Trump blamed immigration for unemployment and low income. He stressed that a new immigration system was necessary as the existing one was not serving American people’s interests. Crucially, he underlined the importance of “great border” relating it to solving the country’s major problems such as crime, gangs or violence and drug exports.

“Decades of **record immigration** have produced lower wages and **higher unemployment** for our citizens, especially for African-American and Latino workers. We are going to have an **immigration system** that works, but one that works for the American people” ... “We are going to build a **great border** wall to **stop illegal immigration**, to stop the gangs and the violence, and to stop the drugs from pouring into our communities” ... (Trump accept., 2021). The word “immigration” and its semantic associations in “PD-All Presidents_Trump” speeches:

This example demonstrates the importance of the raised issue for other American presidents too. However, the framing and suggested solutions were different in their speeches. For instance, according to president Bush jr (2006), the existing immigration system requires updated system. For him, better protection of the borders will help decrease trafficking and criminal behaviour. He stresses that there is the need for “humane” and “rational” initiative to help those who seek employment in the US legally.

“Keeping America competitive requires an **immigration system** that upholds our laws, reflects our values, and serves the interests of our economy. Our Nation needs orderly and secure **borders**. To meet this goal, we must have **stronger immigration** enforcement and border protection. And we must have a rational, humane guest worker program that rejects amnesty, allows temporary jobs for people who seek them legally, and **reduces smuggling and crime** at the **border**”... (Bush jr, SoU, 2006).

Semantic associations also reveal divergent rhetorical strategies (Table 8). In Trump’s speeches, terms like “current immigration,” “dangerous immigration,” and “mass immigration” dominate, often paired with warnings or threats. Other presidents, however, consistently frame immigration in terms of legality, comprehensiveness, and social integration, linking terms like “stronger immigration” or “regular immigration” with policy-oriented solutions.

Analysis of the both corpora (A and B) illustrate how these authors (presidents) used the term and topic “immigration” in speeches. Trump (*Corpus A*) mostly choose inflammatory language and collocations using this term with clusters of destructive meaning that could fuel negative attitude towards immigrants (for instance, **mass illegal migration, higher unemployment**). In comparison, all other presidents (*Corpus B*) focused on practical issues and solutions such as improvement of immigration system, decrease in smuggling and crime (for example – **stronger immigration, reduces smuggling and crime**). Taken together, these analyses indicate that Trump’s discourse consistently foregrounds the dangers of immigration and employs emotionally charged language, whereas his predecessors largely adopt pragmatic, solution-focused rhetoric.

Key Findings

The analysis clearly demonstrates that Donald Trump’s rhetoric positions immigration as a central societal threat, linking it to crime, unemployment, and social instability. Semantic clustering and concordance patterns reveal that he frequently employs terms like “illegal,” “alien,” and “mass immigration” in conjunction with verbs implying action, such as “stop” or “abolish,” creating a narrative of urgency and moral evaluation.

By contrast, previous presidents frame immigration primarily as a regulatory and policy challenge, emphasizing legal pathways, systemic improvements, and humane enforcement. Their clusters and semantic associations illustrate attention to practical solutions rather than emotive framing, focusing on national competitiveness, border management, and orderly processes.

These differences underscore how presidential language can shape public perception. Trump's speeches amplify negative associations with immigration, whereas other presidents situate immigration within a problem-solving context, balancing societal concerns with legal and administrative frameworks. The lexical and collocational choices thus serve not only as stylistic markers but also as instruments for influencing public attitudes and policy discourse.

Conclusion

This study has shown that presidential rhetoric on immigration is not merely a supplement to policy but a constitutive force shaping public discourse, political priorities, and national identity. Using corpus-assisted discourse analysis, the research revealed systematic contrasts between Donald Trump's rhetoric and that of his predecessors. Whereas earlier presidents from both parties generally emphasized institutional enforcement, legal reform, and pragmatic management of migration, Trump consistently framed immigration as an existential crisis. His discourse foregrounded illegality, mass migration, and social disruption, deploying registers of fear and urgency that sharply diverged from the policy-oriented language of earlier administrations.

Corpus-based analysis – drawing on wordlists, concordances, cluster analysis, and semantic associations – demonstrates that these rhetorical choices were deliberate rather than incidental. Trump's framing redirected the immigration debate away from legislative and humanitarian considerations toward narratives of crisis, security, and identity. Through repetition, collocational clustering, and emotive framing, his discourse created a sense of urgency that mobilized political support, influenced policy debate, and shaped media narratives.

The implications extend beyond the Trump presidency. As Fairclough (2001) argues, politics is conducted through language, and discursive struggles often determine the boundaries of political possibility. Similarly, Wodak (2009) highlights how discourse both reflects and constructs power relations. Trump's case illustrates how populist rhetoric, rooted in the politics of fear, can reframe public debate, alter policy priorities, and deepen social divisions. More broadly, it underscores the capacity of presidential discourse to reshape democratic deliberation itself, transforming policy questions into existential struggles over belonging and legitimacy.

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**Retoryka antyimigracyjna w przemówieniach Donalda Trumpa:
korpusowa analiza porównawcza dyskursu prezydenckiego USA (1946–2021).
Język populistyczny i emocjonalny a konstruktywne, polityczne ramowanie przekazu**

Streszczenie

Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki (USA) często określane są jako naród imigrantów. Imigranci odegrali kluczową rolę w rozwoju demograficznym i kształtowaniu tożsamości kulturowej kraju. Kwestie związane z imigracją stanowiły zatem integralną część amerykańskiego dyskursu politycznego i komunikacji rządowej, w tym przemówień prezydenckich. Jednakże żaden inny prezydent nie spotkał się z tak znaczącą krytyką za sposób podejmowania tematyki migracyjnej jak Donald Trump prezydent Stanów Zjednoczonych. W niniejszym badaniu zastosowano analizę dyskursu opartą na korpusie w celu zbadania obszernego materiału językowego i identyfikacji powtarzających się wzorców komunikacyjnych dotyczących imigracji we wszystkich przemówieniach prezydenckich z lat 1946–2021, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem kadencji Donalda Trumpa (2017–2021). Po przeanalizowaniu przemówień Trumpa przy wykorzystaniu metodologii Krytycznej Analizy Dyskursu (KAD) oraz porównaniu ich z wystą-

pieniami pozostałych prezydentów, zarówno analiza ilościowa, jak i jakościowa wykazała, że częstotliwość użycia terminów leksykalnych takich jak „imigra”, „imigracja” i „imigranci” przez Donalda Trumpa była znacząco wyższa niż u któregośkolwiek z jego poprzedników. Ponadto, jego retoryka charakteryzowała się wyraźnie populistycznym podejściem oraz negatywnymi konotacjami, podczas gdy wszyscy trzynastu wcześniejszych prezydentów USA stosowali terminologię z obszaru semantycznego imigracji z większą ostrożnością, unikając negatywnych skojarzeń i narracji.

Słowa kluczowe: USA, prezydent, imigracja, Trump, analiza dyskursu, przemówienia prezydenckie, nielegalna imigracja

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