Studii de lingvistică 8, 2018, 191 - 210

Negotiating empathy in the French and Cypriot-Greek press: Christian values or social justice in migration discourse?

Fabienne H. Baider[1]
Maria Constantinou[2]

Abstract: Both news media and politicians, taking advantage of their cultural authority through spoken and written texts, contribute to forming public opinion, in particular with the use of discursive means, to shape the way people understand migration. Research has so far pointed to negative representations of the Other and argumentation against migrants and refugees revolves around the topoi of burden, illegality, insecurity, violence and threat, which are known to trigger emotions such as resentment, anger and fear. However, media coverage of refugees' arrivals can also contribute to a positive construction of migrants' identities: this is what has been called 'counter-narrative', i.e. a set of narratives aimed at changing the mainstream discourse, which is overwhelmingly negative. This study focuses on the thematic, lexical and syntactic choices in Greek Cypriot and French communist newspapers *(Haravgi* and *L'Humanité* respectively*)* and the choices used to construct an argumentation which fosters the inclusion of migrants. Focusing mainly on headlines, the study adopts critical discourse approaches (Wodak 2001, *inter alia*; van Dijk 2001, *inter alia*) and uses tools from corpus linguistics methodologies (Bednarek 2008; Baker *et al*. 2008; van Dijk 1995, *inter alia*) to extract and analyze salient lexical items. The results show similarities in the way stance is constructed, for instance an anti EU stance is common to both newspapers, however the Greek Cypriot newspaper appeals to Christian values to foster charity and empathy, and the French newspaper appeal to the legal rights of migrants and the French citizen's duty to foster solidarity.

Key words: migration, critical discourse analysis, empathy, solidarity communist French and Cypriot Greek newspapers, stance taking.

[1] University of Cyprus; fabienne@ucy.ac.cy.
[2] University of Cyprus; mariacon@ucy.ac.cy.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

1. Introduction[3]

It is well known that both the news media and politicians capitalize on their cultural authority to influence public opinion. Recently, we have seen how they employ both written and spoken words to shape the way that the public understands the migrant situation (Fowler 1991; van Dijk 1991, *inter alia*; Wodak 2015; Wodak *et al.* 2009, *inter alia*). Recognizing the critical importance of media coverage and its persuasive power in shaping, manipulating and constructing public opinion (Fowler 1991, Van Dijk 1991), over the last 20 years many studies in the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA) have investigated media discourse in relation to migration (starting with van Dijk 1995). Most studies have noted a prevalence of lexical and syntactical choices that serve to construct migrants in a negative light, using recurrent and pervasive negative stereotypes and representations (Crespo and Martínez Lirola 2012, Markovitz 2011, Musolff 2015).

Even as recently as 2016, a UN project report assessing media coverage in five European countries found the migration discourse negatively biased and lacking empathy (Berry *et al.* 2016)[4]; their recommendation was for a change of narrative. And although media coverage of refugee/migrant arrivals has the potential to contribute to a positive construction of migrant identities, such (positive) reporting is infrequent and at best tends to represent them as victims (Castello 2015). Recent research (Saridakis and Mouka 2017) has also investigated, from a diachronic perspective (as the migration crisis has escalated), how the representation of migrants in the mainstream Greek newspapers changed, both lexically and discursively, in terms of solidarity and racism. This study revealed that it was in a leftist newspaper that a more humanistic approach was privileged.

The present study focuses on the discursive and argumentative strategies used to construct a pro-migrant stance – or strategies that at least foster inclusion of migrants; these include the use of linguistic and discursive methods that trigger empathy and solidarity. Specifically, our focus is on the thematic, lexical and syntactic choices identified in comparable corpora collected from two communist newspapers, the Greek-Cypriot *Haravgi* and the French *L'Humanité*, over the period 2015-2016. The analysis, which adopts a critical discourse analytical approach and tools (Wodak 2002, Baker *et al.* 2008) and focuses exclusively on headlines (cf. section 2 for explanation),

[3] We thank the evaluators for their careful review of our paper and for the comments and suggestions that ensued.

[4] The UNHCR commissioned a report by the Cardiff School of Journalism to investigate media coverage in five different European countries: Spain, Italy, Germany, the UK and Sweden.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

aims to shed light on differences and similarities in the way the two newspapers have covered the migration crisis in terms of emotions, attitudes, solutions and identity construction of migrants. The study is structured as follows: it first delineates the theoretical framework, specifying the methodology, corpus and tools used to explore the data. It then analyzes and discusses representative examples from both newspapers. Finally, it draws conclusions about similarities and differences in the discursive strategies of the two "ideological cultures", which share a positive stance on migrants.

2. Theoretical framework: analyzing journalistic discourse

This section explains our theoretical objectives. Our main argument is the one that drives critical discourse analyses, i.e., that "language mediates ideology in a variety of social institutions" (Wodak 2002: 9). For our study we look at how language constructs migrant arrivals as "bad news", with the aim of outlining a possible counter-narrative.

2.1. Media, ideology-making and stance-taking

Indeed, if ideology is to be understood as "an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 88), it can also function as "as a body of ideas and beliefs which help legitimate the interest of a ruling group or class by distortion or dissimulation" (Eagleton 1991: 30). In addition to their legitimatizing function, ideologies are also considered to be "unifying, action-oriented, rationalizing, universalizing and naturalizing" (*ibid.*: 5).

The media, and in particular its coverage of migrants and refugees, is an obvious social site of "ideology making", one that contributes to reinforcing or even producing collective mentalities and representations – both positive and negative – for the Other. In this sense, and given the collective nature of ideologies, discourse has a pivotal role in (re)producing and (re)shaping them. McQuail (1987: 167) has described media bias as a "consistent deviation in a particular direction", and "a tendency to favor one side or the other systematically" (D'Alessio 2012: 10).

The selection of newsworthy topics, the thematic organization of newspapers, the choice and structure of their headlines and leads, style, etc., are indirectly controlled by the societal context of power relations (cf. van Dijk 1991: 41). At the same time, such choices are also determined by the ideological orientation of the newspaper and its target audience; for example, a newspaper must report in a way that allows it to maintain credibility and also fulfil format constraints

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

(Berkowitz 2009, Carlson 2009, Charaudeau 2010, McQuail 1987). Such constraints are then expected to influence the discourse on any topic presented, constructed and deconstructed, especially politically "hot" topics such as migration, which has been a central theme in recent presidential debates. A certain journalistic stance or positioning is expected by the respective audiences. Stance is defined here as:

> […] a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field (Du Bois 2007: 163).

The object of stance is *evaluated:* i.e., the stance-taker characterizes an object as "having some specific quality or value" (*ibid.*: 143), and as with ideological discourse, this evaluation is based on a system of beliefs and attitudes. In turn, such an evaluation has the power to influence politicians and the public, and therefore stance can also be approached as a "linguistically articulated form of social action" (Du Bois 2007: 139) that favors certain policies.

Therefore, in this study:

- following Jaffe's proposal we consider stance-taking equivalent to ideology since it indexes a certain ideological position; it then amounts to "instances of activating or actualizing particular aspects of ideology" (Jaffe 2009: 22);
- ideology is defined in its positive sense, for example, anti-racist stances, "systems that sustain and legitimatize opposition and resistance *against* domination and social inequality" (Van Dijk 2000: 8).

2.2. Stance and migration

The mainstream media has constructed migration as bad news, which means we can describe the general stance on migration as negative. In fact, even before the so-called 2015 migrant crisis, the mass media primarily portrayed migration as a controversial topic: here we recall the above-mentioned UNHCR report that showed how ideological orientation significantly influences discursive choices (with regard to EU newspapers). Therefore, most research to date has focused on both the rejection and the negative representation of the Other in the mainstream media (Baker *et al.* 2008; Musolff 2015, *inter alia*).

This and other studies have recorded a number of discursive strategies used for such purposes. The extant literature on migration reveals a focus on press articles or images of migrants that depict them

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

as violent, idle, queue jumpers (for housing), and describe them using animal conceptual metaphors (such as parasites, leeches, etc.). Such discursive strategies reinforce and perpetuate stereotypical topoi and metaphors conceptualizing the out-group as a burden and/or threat to society. In turn, these topoi are known to trigger emotions such as resentment, anger (BURDEN topos), or fear (THREAT topos) (Baider and Kopytowska 2017). Because emotions are key to social relationships between individuals and communities, topoi such as BURDEN and THREAT serve to support punitive policies and even violence against the depicted community, whose members are designated as criminals, predators, etc. Since we noted earlier that stance can be approached as a "linguistically articulated form of social action" (Du Bois 2007), a positive stance can then be articulated with the aim of sustaining and legitimatizing positive alignment with the Other and opposition and resistance against domination and social inequality (Van Dijk 2000). However, we reiterate that the anti-migrant stance has been extensively studied, while the construction of a pro-migrant stance has attracted much less scholarly interest – despite the fact that the need to build counter-narratives to anti-immigration rhetoric has been acknowledged (UNHCR 2015).

2.3. Discursive strategies constructing a positive or negative stance

Several tools have proved useful to evaluate a newspaper's stance: frequencies of salient lexical units (Giora 2003) and prosody (Bednarek 2008). In this study, our particular focus is the cognitive / affective stance, which is constructed via the observed linguistic choices.

In 2014, UNESCO, UNHCR and Amnesty International all used this same methodology to conduct a comparative analysis of the discourses on migration in the main press of five European nations (Italy, Sweden, Germany, UK, Spain). Data analysis revealed strategies that dehumanized migrants (referred to as numerals), demonized and amalgamated the Other (every Muslim is likely to become a jihadist), while they also pointed to the use of victimization of the Self (i.e., European citizens) as a rhetorical strategy. The repetitive use of the same lexical units – for example, *illegal migrants* – can signal a negative stance (Du Bois 2007, Engelbretson 2007) towards migration in the EU. A recent study has also noted this tendency (Baider and Kopytowska 2017).

Tables 1 and 2 below summarize the lexical choices and the key features identified for pro-migrant or anti-migrant narratives, while the strategies just below summarize the negative media representations of migrants:

(1) exclusion strategies, such as perpetuation of stereotypes, dehumanization, generalization, etc.;

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

(2) identity construction strategies: conceptualizing migrants as a threat and danger to the host societies, mainly through the use of conceptual metaphors such as MIGRANTS AS PARASITES, AS A BURDEN, AS QUEUE JUMPERS etc.;
(3) the prominence of the ILLEGALITY topos: the phrase *asylum seekers* is absent, while the word *refugee* is qualified with the adjectives *legal* and *genuine*, implying the existence of *illegal refugees*, which is legally impossible since they would then be migrants.

Such referential strategies confuse the readership. Indeed, the most frequent referential is the nominal group 'Adj. + *migrant*' with the adjectives *illegal* and *economic* being collocated. Such collocations are likely to create amalgams discouraging people from having positive feelings for migrants (empathy, compassion)[5]. The usage of the abstract noun *arrival* also emphasizes a dehumanizing stance. The last most frequent semantic field refers to the solution, which consists of forbidding or prohibiting migrants' entrance into the EU: *stop or turn back the boat, creating hotspots or camps, creating borders*. All these rhetorical constructions are known to reinforce an anti-migrant position, which is more expected of right-wing newspapers (Van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, Van Leeuwen 2008, Charaudeau 2010).

As shown in Table 1, the most prominent voices in the pro-migrant stance are the voices of refugees themselves, NGOs, foreign politicians, as well as local politicians who advocate accommodating immigration and asylum policies. Stories of successful refugees or migrants are important to elicit sympathy and counter the topos of BURDEN.

Positive stance	**Negative stance**
Migrants/ refugees/ asylum seekers Successful refugees UNHCR, NGOs Foreign politicians if conservative country Local politicians if advocating accommodating policy	Conservative foreign or local politicians Angry migrants Frightened citizens

Table 1: Voices heard in negative and positive migration stance

With regard to nominal constructions, we observe different referential strategies according to the stance adopted. In the positive stance, the most frequent references to migrants are made by means of *refugees* and *asylum seekers*; the humanization strategy foregrounds the presence of families and children. Humanization in

[5] This type of nominal group is typically found in the extreme-right discourse when referring to any person entering the national space (Baider and Constantinou 2017).

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

the pro-migrant stance is effected through the use of victimization strategies constructed through verbal or nominal configurations such as *suffering*, *risking their lives, catastrophe* or *smuggler* (see Table 2).

Most frequent words	
Positive	**Negative**
asylum seekers	illegal migrant
refugees	economic migrant
refugee convention	illegal entry / arrival
smuggler / smuggling	illegal immigration
suffering	genuine / legitimate refugee
risking lives, saving lives	camp
humanitarian / humanity / solidarity	buying their way
	boat arrival
catastrophe / tragedy	turn back / stop the boats
family / families	nation state
children	border
people	offshore processing / hotspot
	quoting numbers

Table 2: Most frequent words found in the migration discourse

Positive construction of migrant identities can thus be achieved through what has been labeled 'counter-narratives', i.e., a set of narratives aimed at changing the mainstream discourse/shifting the standpoint of the article, the narrators as well as the themes (refugees speaking, NGO, and stories of successful integration, etc.).

The point of this article is to evaluate the ideological positioning of left-leaning media regarding the issue of migration, bearing in mind that we expect to observe more inclusive discursive constructions and less negative stereotyping, which both encourage a discourse of solidarity. Our paper investigates the French and the Greek Cypriot communist newspapers to see whether this positioning is effectively present, how it is constructed and whether the two countries' discursive strategies differ[6].

3. Methodology and collection of data

Our data will be limited to headlines in order to identify the most frequent topics, topoi and micro-strategies used by each newspaper. With regard to methodology, the study will account for topoi such as ethical responsibility, threats and danger, as already discussed in the theoretical section.

[6] The two countries have been chosen because of the authors' mother tongues and cultures, which enable them to discern the macro and meso context of this media coverage and, therefore, more easily contextualize the results. Our research is ascribed in previous cross-national comparative studies of news media (Riboni 2015, Benson 2010, Benson and Hallin 2007, Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006, Saridakis and Mouka 2017).

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

3.1. Choice of headlines

Studies have confirmed the fundamental role of headlines in influencing the reader's understanding of a mediated event. In particular, headlines together with the article's lead paragraphs summarizing the news may also reflect the political and ideological stance of the medium (cf. van Dijk 1991, Abastado 1980, Develotte and Rechniewski 2001). To this, we add three other important arguments to justify our methodological choice of headlines. We find that headlines:

- *benefit from a great diffusion and impact*: they reach a wider audience or readership in relation to those who read the entire article (Develotte and Rechniewski 2001), owing to the use of linguistic features such as puns or emotive words aimed at attracting audience attention;
- *give the general perspective*: they not only summarize the content of the article but they also orient the understanding/ interpretation of that article (Abastado 1980) to a certain direction. In other words, they "encapsulate" the orientation and the political and ideological stance of the medium (Develotte and Rechniewski 2001, van Dijk 1991);
- *give access to cultural knowledge*: headlines stand alone and therefore must be understood and recognized by the readers (for example, the choice of wordplay, puns); they are important for understanding the salient cultural features of one's society or party, to grasp the political or ideological affiliation.

3.2. Collection of data

Our aim was to collect data via a methodological approach that would allow us to identify an adequate degree of comparability. Thus we adopted a criterion of comparability at four different levels (Chakrabarti *et al.* 1999, Goeuriot *et al.* 2009, Morin and Daille 2009), defined below[7]:

a) theme: migrants, refugee crisis;
b) time period: 2015-2016;
c) type of discourse: journalistic discourse;
d) ideological orientation: a corpus that could include comparable ideological and political positioning.

We collected data from the on-line editions of two newspapers with a similar ideological stance: the Greek-Cypriot press is represented by *Haravgi*, known as an openly left-wing newspaper and typically

[7] Initially we chose four newspapers with different orientations, a choice justified by:
- the political and ideological orientations of the newspapers under scrutiny;
- the easy and direct online accessibility to articles;
- the daily and nationwide circulation of the newspapers studied.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

described as being affiliated with AKEL, the main left-wing party in Cyprus; the French press is represented by *L'Humanité,* known to be linked to the Communist Party despite its alleged lack of any party affiliation (both the party and the newspaper seem to maintain the same ideological stance).

Our corpus was collected with the help of each medium's search engine, where possible by using the key terms: *μετανάστες / migrants* 'migrants', *πρόσφυγες / réfugiés* 'refugees'.

As already observed in previous studies, building comparable corpora from different languages and cultures is not an easy task (cf. Bayley and Williams 2012). In our research, there was a disparity not only in the number of articles but also in the article length, which posed methodological difficulties. Specifically, Cypriot articles tend to be fewer and shorter than the French ones. As our data reveal (see Table 3)[8], our corpus counts 164 articles for *L'Humanité* and 103 articles for *Haravgi*, while the average length of each article for *L'Humanité* is 628 words, and for *Haravgi* 476 words. It is also relevant to note that *L'Humanité* presents opinion articles or interviews, which are typically longer. Given the limited number of articles produced by the Greek-Cypriot newspaper, we decided to include what was available in *Harvagi* for the period January 2015-June 2016 and to restrict the French data to articles approximately half the length of the articles published by the Greek Cypriot newspaper. Table 3 indicates the period, the number of articles and the total amount of words for each sub-corpus.

Newspaper	**Number of articles**	**Words**	**Time period**
L'Humanité	164	103,000	02/06/2015-14/06/2016
Haravgi	103	48,900	05/01/2015-23/06/2016

Table 3: Data from the two newspapers

In the analysis below, we focus only on linguistic and discursive choices used to construct an argumentation fostering inclusion and not exclusion of migrants.

4. Analysis

Our analysis is divided into three sections: first, from a comparative perspective we present the salient themes identified for each set of data, and then for each sub-corpus we identify the affective cognitive and political stances constructed via the choices of lexical units and discursive strategies.

[8] We only present the communist / leftist newspapers here.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

4.1. Salient themes common to both newspapers

To detect and analyze the macro and micro linguistic features and rhetorical strategies used to construct a positive / negative stance, we borrow concepts and tools from earlier studies on media coverage and representations of migrants/migration (Khorsravinik *et al.* 2012, Reisigl and Wodak 2001, van Leeuwen 1996, van Dijk 1991).

Classification of the headline topics allows us to identify the most frequent topoi in the two newspapers in our study. By foregrounding the humanitarian dimension of the refugee crisis, while also criticizing Europe's inability to take sufficient measures in this regard, humanization strategies are brought into play to construct a positive migrant identity.

Both communist newspapers privilege victimization and re-humanization strategies to foster positive feelings and attitudes for migrants, while they also denounce / disparage EU policies for their failure to effectively address the refugee and migrant crisis (see Table 4 below).

Strategies	**Topoi**	***L'Humanité***	***Haravgi***
Dramatization/ victimization	Drama / tragedy (iterativity) insecurity	16	11
	Foregrounding hostilities against migrants/ refugees	4	6
	Rehumanisation strategies focusing on the human dimension (suffering)	16	16
Strategies of inclusion / of justification	Appeal to religious and/or human values to trigger empathy and build inclusion and hope	(Human only) 16	25
	Appeal to episteme / authority to foreground universal human values and dignity	14	-
	Appeal to communist stance	8	1
	Refugeehood is not a choice	-	3
Moralization denouncing social injustice and social-political actions	Denouncing social injustice and appeal to human rights, solidarity and inclusion	26	1
	Exorcising /focusing on the threat of fascism	6	6
	Denouncing the EU and other social or political actors Indifference/ hypocrisy	25	35
	Turkey and EU	15	6
	Denouncing neoliberal policies	3	-
Other disparaging strategies	Disparaging (hypocrisy of) local authorities	25	7

Table 4: Comparative study of strategies and topoi found in the two communist newspapers

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

As mentioned in section 1 of our study, a pro-migrant stance would be constructed in discourse with the use of specific lexical units. And, indeed, both newspapers use the word *refugee*. Moreover, they never use the adjectives *illegal* or *irregular*, and *Haravgi* rarely employs the word *migrants*.

4.2. Stance-taking in the Cypriot-Greek newspaper *Haravgi*

Although there has been no refugee crisis as such in Cyprus, like most European newspapers, Cypriot newspapers have been focusing on the crisis, especially because of the refugee situation in Greece.

4.2.1. The affective stance: identification to trigger empathy

The affective stance foregrounds the human dimension of the refugee crisis, and uses strategies that are relevant to the Cypriot social and historical context. *Haravgi* emphasizes the humanitarian dimension of the migrant/refugee crisis through its extensive focus on the humanization and victimization of refugees, and avoiding the use of the word *μετανάστες* 'migrants' (only two occurrences). In contrast, terms such as άνθρωποι 'human beings/people', *παιδιά* 'children', *ψυχές* 'souls' and *ανθρωπιά* 'humanism' are widely used, which serve to offer both a humane and a human dimension to the refugee crisis.

(1) Χημικά ενάντια στους ξεριζωμένους
'Chemical weapons against the displaced people'

(2) Όμηροι ρατσιστικών πολιτικών
'Hostages of racist policies'

(3) Πεταμένες ψυχές στην Ευρώπη
'Frightened souls dispersed throughout Europe'

(4) Πνίγονται δυο παιδιά κάθε μέρα
'Two children drown every day'

Additionally, emotionally charged and/or negatively laden lexical units such as *ξεριζωμένους* 'displaced/uprooted' and *όμηροι* 'hostages' are part of the newspaper's strategy to foreground refugees' victimhood and their desperate state. Moreover, both *ξεριζωμένους* 'uprooted' and *όμηροι* 'hostages' are suggestive of an external cause of their suffering, a discursive choice that emphasizes victimization, intensifies empathy for the victim, and also implicitly denounces the perpetrators and their indifference. This denunciation of politicians' indifferent and racist attitudes is also evident in other examples (see examples 11 and 12), which will be discussed below.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

The emphasis on the endless and recurrent tragedy of refugees foregrounds the state of emergency, deepens the feeling of empathy and endorses action. Iterativity is deployed through the use of lexical units and phrases in the present tense such as *δεν έχει τέλος* 'has no end', *Ίδια ιστορία* 'the same story', *καθημερινά* 'everyday'. Such choices lead to dramatization strategies that seem to trigger or even instrumentalise empathy:

(5) Η τραγωδία δεν ξέρει από γιορτές
'Tragedy doesn't take a holiday'

(6) Ίδια ιστορία καθημερινά
'The same story every day'

(7) Η τραγωδία δεν έχει τέλος
'Tragedy has no end'

(8) Και οι άνθρωποι συνεχίζουν να πεθαίνουν
'And people continue to die'

This construction of refugee identity is reinforced by reaffirming how the refugees' plight is not a choice, i.e., suggesting that they are being forced to flee their homelands This argument would likely strengthen the identification strategy, since so many Greek Cypriots were displaced in 1974 after Turkey's military operation and its subsequent occupation of the northern part of the island. It is also relevant to note here that the internally displaced Greek Cypriots are also called 'refugees', a lexical choice widely privileged in the headlines of the communist newspaper to designate displaced persons, primarily the Syrians:

(9) Πρόσφυγας από επιλογή ή από ανάγκη
'Refugee by choice or by necessity'

(10) Ο δρόμος της προσφυγιάς
'The road to exile/refugeehood'

4.2.2. Cognitive strategies: moralization and religion

Cognitive strategies based on appeals to religious morals, although unusual for a communist newspaper, have also been identified in *Haravgi*. They consist in underlining that there are no borders or boundaries among human beings, regardless of their geographical or religious background. Recalling Christ's suffering (example 12) through metonymical use of language serves to remind people of their Christian values (love, altruism) and religious duty towards the Other (incarnated in a contemporary Christ), thus relying on the argument of the *Sameness* of the Other. The sameness is defined in terms of human beings and not in terms of the cultural background of the refugees.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

(11) Τα σύνορα είναι στα μυαλά των μεγάλων
'Borders are mostly in the mind'

(12) Ο σύγχρονος Χριστός σταυρώνεται καθημερινά
'Modern-day Christs, crucified daily'

Moralization strategies, in combination with the topos of ethical responsibility (cf. our French data below), argue that closing the borders will not resolve the problem:

(13) Κλείστε τα σύνορα και κρύψτε το πρόβλημα
'Close borders and hide the problem'

And while this communist newspaper calls out for respect for Christian values, it nevertheless maintains a distance from the Church through its ironical comments on the Orthodox Church[9] and its followers (described as being racist towards migrants). It denounces Church hypocrisy, describing its attitudes as being incompatible with true Christian values (example 14):

(14) Πώς να συνυπάρξουν με τα καλά χριστιανόπουλα?
'How can they co-exist with us, good little Christians?'

(15) Στο δικό μας σουλτανάτο της Ορθοδοξίας
'In our Sultanate of the Orthodox Church'

Figures, numbers and terms such as *αφίξεις* 'arrivals', which objectify migrants, are extensively employed by other media, however they have not been identified in *Haravgi*'s headlines. On the contrary, a strong appeal to humanitarian aid and emergency as well as the need for support are foregrounded in this newspaper. *Haravgi* also employs disparagement strategies to accuse the European Union and other international actors of being indifferent, hypocritical and negligent in terms of taking action to address the problem:

(16) Ο τυχοδιωκτισμός της ΕΕ
'EU opportunism'

(17) Τόση υποκρισία δεν αντέχεται πια
'Such hypocrisy is no longer acceptable'

(18) Τα κροκοδείλια δάκρυά τους
'Their crocodile tears'

(19) Κροκοδείλια δάκρυα και ανεπαρκή μέτρα
'Crocodile tears and inadequate measures'

[9] The Orthodox Church is very important economically, socially, politically in Cyprus. It is associated with the right wing parties and, in some instances, with extreme-right parties.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

4.3. The French newspaper *L'Humanité*

In *L'Humanité*, the words found most frequently (*solidarité* 'solidarity', *droits* 'rights', *guerre* 'war' and *urgence* 'emergency') infer a pro-migrant/refugee stance; the words are similar to those identified in *Haravgi,* although *L'Humanité* uses different discursive strategies to construct a pro-migrant positioning. Indeed, what we argue is that the positive positioning is first built through an *epistemic* stance, which then leads to an *affective* stance.

France has been home to makeshift migrant camps and we found a number of references to the camps at Calais, the so-called "jungle", as well as to the camps at Grande-Synthe and la Chapelle[10].

4.3.1. The affective stance: looking for sympathy

The affective stance identified in the French newspaper focuses on the depiction of brutality and despair, hence we would argue that such choices aim at humanizing the crisis just like the Cypriot *Haravgi*. However, the more frequent use of metaphors (*hécatombe* 'hecatomb', *cimetière* 'cemetery', *Méditerranée* 'Mediterranean'), as we will see in the quotations below, may signal more cognitive distance than *Haravgi's* discourse, foregrounding the refugee drama, victimhood and individual tragedies. Indeed, *L'Humanité* does not use the word *tragédie* 'tragedy' in the headlines and the word *enfants* 'children' is only found three times:

(20) Réfugiés: l'hécatombe en Méditerranée continue
'Refugees: the hecatomb in the Mediterranean continues'

(21) Cimetière en Méditerranée pour 400 Somaliens
'A Mediterranean cemetery for 400 Somalis'

(22) 500 victimes dans un naufrage en Méditerranée selon le HCR
'500 victims shipwrecked in the Mediterranean according to the UNHCR'

(23) À Calais, l'expulsion brutale des migrants sème le désespoir
'Despair grows after the brutal expulsion of migrants in Calais'

If we interpret the use of metaphors to signal cognitive distance, we would then infer an emotional distance. However, it might also be argued that metaphors represent a more intellectual style of depicting the same event, a style of communication that is not appropriate in the Greek Cypriot socio-cultural milieu. We could also analyze

[10] Equal frequencies for *migrant* 'migrant' and *réfugié* 'refugee' are found in *L'Humanité*; however, the concordances reveal that *migrant* is used for Calais migrants, while the word *réfugié* is used for the crisis outside the French borders.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

this difference not in terms of "distance" as such, but as a different perspective on the same affective stance. This different perspective will then activate a different set of affects and attitudes. More precisely, it could be argued that the discursive strategies chosen by *L'Humanité* represent a call for sympathy, whilst those of *Haravgi* represent a call for *empathy*. *L'Humanité* elicits our *s*ympathy through the depiction of brutality and despair, strategies that mobilize humanization of the event.

Solidarity is the second pillar of this epistemic stance: the argument is that helping migrants is a *duty* – not a favor; it is a moral duty because migrants have the legal right to be rescued; it is an issue of social justice and human rights (see examples 26, 27, 28). Refugeehood is the outcome of the failure of political entities to come to terms with and manage the problem; the newspaper's denunciation strategies are linguistically achieved through the use of derogatory lexical units that blame the EU for human trafficking (*réfugiés, objets de tous les chantages* 'refugees, objects of blackmail'; *grand marchandage* 'bargaining'):

(24) UE. Les réfugiés, objets de tous les chantages
'EU. Refugees, objects of blackmail'

(25) UE. Grand marchandage avec la Turquie sur la peau des migrants
'EU. Bargaining with Turkey at the expense of the migrants'

(26) Respecter les droits fondamentaux des migrants
'Respect migrants' basic rights'

(27) Appel à la solidarité avec les réfugiés de Pajol
'Call for solidarity with the Pajol refugees'

(28) Arrêtons le cynisme, imposons le respect des droits humains pour tous les migrants!
'Let's end the cynicism, we must respect human rights for all migrants!'

4.3.2. The cognitive stance: moralizing a duty

Moreover, the argument for *solidarity* instead of *charity* concurs with the tradition of the French Communist Party and the *Secours Populaire*[11]. In the quotations below, the validity of legal distinctions between the appellations *migrants* 'migrants', *réfugiés de guerre* 'war refugees', *réfugiés politiques et économiques* 'political and economic refugees' is also being questioned, since the same human drama

[11] Cf. A. Brodiez-Dolino (2006). We thank Sophie Moirand for having pointed out the link between the *Secours populaire* and the Communist Party during the workshop "*Le discours politique identitaire face aux migrations*" (20-21 October 2017, Montpellier, France) where this work was first presented.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

seems to be experienced by migrants regardless of the way they are labeled and categorized.

(29) Migrants, réfugiés de guerre, politiques et économiques: ces mots sont-ils piégés?
'Migrants, war refugees, political and economic refugees: are these words a trap?'

While in *Haravgi* religious leaders are called out for their hypocritical and racist attitudes, in *L'Humanité* the Pope is quoted to justify solidarity:

(30) Pour le pape, « fermer les frontières ne résout rien »
'The Pope believes that "closing the borders does not resolve anything"'

This solidarity is promoted on the strong argument that saving migrants is a *duty* and not a favor. The issue is one of social justice and human rights, not of being charitable to a fellow human being. This epistemic stance is constructed through a moral argument according to which asylum seekers should not be seen as a concern but as a "humanitarian duty".

(31) Les demandeurs d'asiles ne sont pas une préoccupation mais un devoir humanitaire
'Asylum seekers are not a concern but a humanitarian duty'

Finally, the appeal to experts and authorities gives even more weight to the newspaper's pro-migrant stance: anthropologists and philosophers are quoted to enhance and justify sympathy and solidarity.

(32) Michel Agier : « Avoir peur de l'autre avant même de le connaître : c'est ça, l'encampement du monde »
'Michel Agier: "To fear the other without even knowing him: that is the encampment of the world"'

(33) Etienne Balibar : « Poser la question de l'Europe sociale, pour stopper la xénophobie »
'Etienne Balibar: "Raise the question of a social Europe to stop xenophobia"'

In these last examples, the argument takes a more intellectual dimension: there is a note about fear of the other before even knowing him, which is denounced as a worldwide identitarian closure (ex. 32); and a call out for adoption of another type of politics (for a social Europe) to respond to xenophobia and racism, hence framing the

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

issue of migration through a more social lens. This more intellectual type of appeal strengthens our hypothesis: there is a difference in style between the two newspapers, but the same aim; their writing strategies are appropriate to the respective community, with the French newspaper being more abstract (seen in the use of metaphors), and more legally than emotionally based.

5. Concluding remarks

Our findings reveal that the two communist newspapers advocate sameness but in a different way and that taking into account their socio-historical contexts can explain much of the difference, at least in their headlines[12]. The Cypriot newspaper *Haravgi* constructs a sameness strategy using words evoking *empathy* (evaluating *them* as *us),* calling on Christian values and constructing a self-identification with the refugees. The use of linguistic forms, which is aimed at dramatization and "oneness" strategies, builds an *affective* stance based on empathy, maybe because of the socio-historical context, i.e., Cypriots have also been refugees, and they have experienced a similar drama. In *L'Humanité* the sameness strategy is constructed through an *epistemic* stance (arguments of social justice, human rights), which leads to an *affective* stance (*sympathy*) and action (*solidarity*). Indeed, the call for sympathy is based more on cognition and less on emotion than in the Cypriot data. It is a call for *solidarity* on the basis of the *esprit de corps* 'community spirit' and not for reasons of charity. In the French data, pragmatism also prevails, i.e., practical solutions, such as organizing emergency plans, are also proposed.

However, a feature common to the two newspapers is *political framing*: both newspapers argue that the crisis is symptomatic of the failure of the large political entities (the EU, the USA), their respective governments and, in the Greek Cypriot case, their national enemy: *Haravgi* misses no opportunity to blame Turkey, the enemy of the Greek Cypriot state. In the Cypriot data more than half the occurrences foreground EU indifference and inaction, the negotiations with Turkey, the local government's stance towards the problem, etc. The disparagement of the European Union and other international actors is palpable: they are described as indifferent and hypocritical and not taking action to combat the problem, with phrases such as *Τόση υποκρισία δεν αντέχεται πια* 'such hypocrisy is no longer tolerated', or *Τα κροκοδείλια δάκρυά τους* 'their crocodile tears', or *Κροκοδείλια δάκρυα και ανεπαρκή μέτρα* 'crocodile tears and inadequate measures'. Similarly, in the French data, the focus on the migrant and refugee situation is also the opportunity to take a political stance against the

[12] We have to work on the articles themselves so as to investigate whether these findings are confirmed.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

EU and against the Eastern European countries closing their borders (*Hongrie: la politique du barbelé…* 'Hungary, a barbed-wire policy…'), and to urge the French state to act (*Hugo Touzet: « La situation des migrants est intenable, l'État doit agir »* 'Hugo Touzet: the migrant situation is untenable, the state must take action') denouncing the mismanagement of political entities, such as trafficked human beings (*réfugiés objets de tous les chantages, grand marchandage* 'the refugees are victims of blackmail and bargaining'). Maybe this political stance is used to gain empathy and solidarity. Indeed, in Cyprus, many Cypriots resented the EU memorandum that the island was forced to accept in light of the 2013 economic crisis and which led to bankruptcy of many small and middle-sized businesses. This could easily have led to a blanket anti-EU stance, and just as easily transferred into empathy towards the migrants. In France, a strong anti EU movement was known to prevail in 2016-2017[13], and such a stance would also rally support to yet 'other' victims of the EU system.

References

Abastado, C. (1980), *Messages des Media*, Cedi, Paris.

Baider, F., Constantinou, M. (2017), "At night we'll come and find you, traitors: Cybercommunication in the Greek-Cypriot ultra-nationalist space", in Hatzidaki, O., Goutsos, D. (eds), *Greece in Crisis: Combining Critical Discourse and Corpus Linguistics Perspectives*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, p. 413-454.

Baider, F., Kopytowska, M. (2017), "Conceptualising the Other: Online discourses on the current refugee crisis in Cyprus and in Poland", *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 13/2, p. 203-233.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., Khosravinik, M., Krzyzanowski, M., McEnery, T., Wodak, R. (2008), "A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press", *Discourse and Society*, 19, p. 273-306.

Bayley, P., Williams, G. (eds) (2012), *European Identity: What the Media Say*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bednarek, M. (2008), "Semantic preference and semantic prosody re-examined", *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, 4/2, p.119-139.

Benson, R. (2010), "What Makes for a Critical Press? A Case Study of French and U.S. Immigration News Coverage", *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 15/1, p. 3-24.

Benson, R., Hallin, D. C. (2007), "How states, markets and globalization shape the news: The French and US national press, 1965-97", *European Journal of Communication*, 22/1, p. 27-48.

Berkowitz, D. (2009), "Journalism in the broader cultural mediascape", *Journalism*, 10/3, p. 290-292.

[13] In the 2017 French presidential elections 9 out of 11 candidates adopted an anti EU stance.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I., Moore, K. (2016), *Press coverage of the refugee and migrant crisis in the EU: a content analysis of five European countries* [Project Report], United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva (available at: http://www.unhcr.org/56bb369c9.html).

Brodiez-Dolino, A. (2006), *Le Secours populaire français 1945-2000. Du communisme à l'humanitaire*, Presses de Sciences Po, Paris.

Carlson, M. (2009), "Dueling, dancing, or dominating? Journalists and their sources", *Sociology Compass*, 3/4, p. 526-542.

Castello, D. (2015), *Discursive Representations of Migrants as Victims and Perpetrators in the British Press: A corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis*, Dissertation submitted to The School of Humanities of the University of Birmingham for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics.

Chakrabarti S., van den Berg M., Dom B. (1999), "Focused crawling: a new approach to topic-specific Web resource discovery", *Computer Networks*, 31/11-16, p. 1623-1640.

Charaudeau, P. (2010), « Une éthique du discours médiatique est-elle possible ? », *Communication*, 27/2, p. 51-75.

Crespo, E., Martínez Lirola, M. (2012), "Lexical and visual choices in the representation of immigration in Spanish press", *Spanish in Context*, 9/1, p. 27-57.

D'Alessio, D. (2012), *Media Bias in Presidential Election Coverage, 1948-2008: Evaluation via Formal Measurement*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.

Develotte, C., Rechniewski, E. (2001), "Discourse Analysis of Newspaper Headlines: A methodological framework for research into national representations", *The Web Journal of French Media Studies* (available at: http://wjfms.ncl.ac.uk/titles.htm; accessed on 14 July 2016).

Du Bois, J. (2007), "The stance triangle", in Englebretson, R. (ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, p.139-182.

Eagleton, T. (1991), *Ideology*, Verson, London and New York.

Englebretson, R. (ed.) (2007), *Stance-taking in interaction: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction,* John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Fowler, R. (1991), *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the British press*, Routledgem London.

Giora, R. (2003), *On our mind: Salience, context and figurative language*, Oxford University Pressm New York.

Goeuriot, L., Morin, E., Daille, B. (2009), « Reconnaissance du type de discours dans des corpus comparables spécialisés », *CORIA* (http://asso-aria.org/coria/2009/33.pdf).

Jaffe, A. (ed.) (2009), *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

KhosraviNik, M., Krzyżanowski, M., Wodak, R. (2012), "Dynamics of Representation in Discourse: Immigrants in the British Press", in Messer, M., Schroeder, R., Wodak, R. (eds), *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Springer, p. 283-295.

Markovitz, J. (2011), *Racial spectacles. Explorations in media, race, and justice*, Routledge, London and New York.

McQuail, D. (1987), *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Sage, London.

Morin, E., Daille, B. (2009), « Reconnaissance du type de discours dans

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)

des corpus comparables spécialisés », *CORIA* (http://asso-aria.org/coria/2009/33.pdf).
Musolff, A. (2015), "Dehumanising metaphors in UK immigrant debates in press and online media", *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 3/1, p. 41-56.
Reisigl, M., Wodak, R. (2001), *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Semitism*, Routledge, London and New York.
Riboni, G. (2015), "What It Means to Be European: Alexis Tsipras's Victory in Blogs and Online Newspapers", *Lingue Culture Mediazioni*, 2, p. 43-63.
Saridakis, I. E., Mouka, E. (2017), "Representations of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in the Greek press (2010-2016): a critical corpus-driven study", in House, J., Kaniklidou, Th. (eds), *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference "Europe in Discourse: Identity, Diversity, Borders"*, p. 408-429.
Strömbäck, J., Dimitrova, D. V. (2006), "Political and Media Systems Matter: A Comparison of Election News Coverage in Sweden and the United States", *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11/4, p. 131-147.
van Dijk, T. A. (1991), *Racism and the Press*, Routledge, London.
van Dijk, T. A. (1995), "Discourse analysis as ideology analysis", in Schaffner, C., Anita, L. W (eds) *Language and peace*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, p. 17-36.
van Dijk, T. A. (2000), "Ideologies, racism, discourse: debates on immigration and ethnic issues", in ter Val, J., Verkuyten, M. (eds), *Comparative perspectives on racism*, Ashgate, UK, p. 91-116.
van Dijk, T. A. (2001), "Critical discourse analysis", in Taunem D, Schiffrin D., Hamilton H. (eds), *Handbook of Discourse*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. 352-371.
Van Leeuwen, T. (1996), "The representation of social actors", in Caldas Coulthard, C. R., Coulthard, M. (eds), *Texts and Practices*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 32-70.
Van Leeuwen, T. (2008), *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*, Oxford University Press, New York.
Van Leeuwen, T., Wodak, R. (1999), "Legitimizing immigration control: a discourse-historical analysis", *Discourse Studies*, 1/1, p. 83-118.
Wodak, R. (2001), "The discourse-historical approach", in Wodak, R., Meyer, M. (eds), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Sage, London, p. 63-94.
Wodak, R. (2002), "Aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis", *Zeitschrift für Angewandte Linguistik*, 36, p. 5-31.
Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., Liebhart, K. (2009), *The discursive construction of national identity*, EUP, Edinburgh.
Wodak, R. (2015), *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*, Sage, London.

BDD-A28588 © 2018 Facultatea de Litere din Oradea
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:01:54 UTC)