



A Critical Textual Analysis of Immigration Echoes in Moroccan Football Ultras Discourse

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Abstract

This study seeks to critically analyze the discursive construction of immigration issue within Moroccan football ultras discourse. Through a critical textual analysis as adopted by Norman Fairclough in his three-dimensional approach, the study analyses the seven chosen chants of Moroccan ultras by analyzing the two meta-functions which are posited by Halliday in his SFL which are integrated by Fairclough in the first stage of his model. This study adopts a qualitative approach, concentrating on the experiential, relational, and expressive values of the lexico-grammatical features present in ultras discourse related to immigration. The findings proved that Moroccan football ultras employ a diverse and ideologically charged lexicon. They employ linguistic techniques such as rewording, over-wording, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy to articulate immigration complexities. The use of euphemism, dysphemism, and varying formalities enhances emotional engagement. Their deliberate grammatical choices, following Halliday's transitivity system, convey agency and immigration experiences while avoiding nominalization and negative sentences. Instead, they use direct constructs and positive framing to highlight immigration drivers. Also, the ultras' discourse reflects multifaceted relational values and asserts their agency within power relations, aligning with Fairclough's notion of expressive values to engage emotionally and advocate for change in Morocco. The significance of this study resides in its potential to inform policymakers about the critical need to understand the concerns and preoccupations of Moroccan youth, particularly regarding immigration. Thus, policymakers can work more effectively to address and mitigate the underlying causes of this complex phenomenon.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of Moroccan football, the vibrant and dynamic culture of ultras groups stands as a powerful social and political force. These groups, known for their passionate support and intricate displays during matches, often use chants, slogans, and tifos to express their views on various societal issues. Among the myriad themes present in the discourse of Moroccan football ultras, the topic of immigration emerges as a significant and weighty subject. This study critically endeavours to delve into the linguistic dimension of this theme as articulated by the ultras.

Immigration has long been a contentious issue in Morocco, a country that serves as both a point of origin and transit for many migrants. Since the 1960s, Morocco has evolved into one of the world's leading emigration countries and in many ways migration has permeated Morocco's social, cultural and economic life (Berriane, De Haas, & Natter, 2015). The

complex socio-political landscape surrounding migration is intricately reflected in the chants and slogans of Moroccan football ultras, serving as a form of grassroots commentary on the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of migrants. Through these vocal expressions, the ultras channel the broader societal frustrations and hopes tied to migration, touching on themes like economic hardship, social marginalization, and the quest for a better future. Football stadiums, often regarded as spaces for more than just sports, become arenas where these socio-political issues are publicly aired and collectively engaged with. The recurrent references to migration in these chants underscore the depth of the issue within the Moroccan social narrative. Migration, as expressed in the discourse of the ultras, is not just about the act of moving from one place to another; it embodies the hopes for improved socio-economic conditions, job opportunities, and the desire for social mobility. This sentiment resonates deeply within a country where economic disparity and limited opportunities drive many to seek better lives abroad.

The prevalence of migration discourse in Moroccan ultras' slogans is further contextualized by the findings of the 2018-2019 National Survey on International Migration by the Haut-Commissariat au Plan (HCP). The survey reveals that migration is often driven by a range of socio-economic factors, including the pursuit of better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and enhanced living conditions. Social motivations like family reunification, marital changes, and the search for superior health care and education also play pivotal roles. These motivations, mirrored in the ultras' chants, illustrate the broader aspirations of Moroccan society and the tangible push factors compelling many to migrate. Moroccan football ultras integrate these themes into their slogans to reflect the everyday struggles and concerns of the public and to highlight the ongoing relevance of migration as both a personal and political issue. Their chants thus become a form of public discourse, engaging with the realities of migration in Morocco and offering critical insights into the societal forces at play.

Moroccan football ultras discourse is replete with instances of immigration issues, reflecting the harsh and challenging socioeconomic situation in Morocco and the uncertain future faced by its youth. Amidst economic instability and limited opportunities, many young Moroccans view emigration as a potential escape route toward a more promising future. The ultras, through their presence in stadia and neighboring areas, seize these public platforms to vocally express their frustrations and draw attention to the societal malaises afflicting Moroccan society. Their chants, slogans, and visual displays serve as a poignant commentary on the dire circumstances and bleak prospects, highlighting a collective discontent and yearning for change (Bourkia, 2018; Bennis, 2019). This discourse not only sheds light on the individual aspirations and grievances of the youth but also underscores broader systemic issues, painting a vivid picture of the social and economic challenges that drive the immigration narrative within the ultras' expressive practices.

To reveal the linguistic construction of immigration issues by Moroccan football ultras, this study employs Fairclough's (1989, 1995) three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis. However, the scope of analysis is confined to the initial stage of this framework, known as textual analysis or the description stage. This stage specifically addresses the lexico-grammatical features of the discourse, providing a detailed examination of the linguistic strategies utilized by the ultras to convey their perspectives on immigration.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Moroccan Football Ultras as New Agents

The emergence of Moroccan football ultras has been a subject of considerable debate, rendering it challenging to pinpoint their exact origin. Nonetheless, numerous scholars concur that the inception of the first ultra groups can be traced back to 2005, marked by the formation of the Winners ultras associated with Wydad de Casablanca and the Green Boys affiliated with Raja de Casablanca (Bourkia, 2018). Moroccan football ultras emerged as an imitation of other ultras in the neighboring countries namely in Italy as the cradle of ultras movement. Rharib

and Amara (2014) state that the development of ultras in Morocco, as elsewhere in the Arab world, has been influenced to an extent by ultras in other countries, particularly Italy. This influence affects how ultras express themselves, through slogans, songs and symbols, and how they organize themselves. Within the same vein, according to Alomari (2019), “it’s unknown where the culture was derived from due to lack of literature on this matter but speculated to be a mimicking of neighboring countries such as Spain and Tunisia where this phenomenon has been more prevalent” (p. 3).

Initially, Moroccan ultras, like their counterparts worldwide, emerged primarily to support their teams and express their loyalty through various carnivalesque displays. These manifestations of fandom included elaborate choreographies, vibrant tifos, and coordinated chants that created an electrifying atmosphere in the stadiums. The primary objective was to foster a sense of unity and unwavering support for their football clubs, showcasing their dedication in visually and audibly impactful ways. This phase of ultra culture was characterized by a celebratory and festive spirit, focusing predominantly on sportsmanship and team loyalty.

In recent years, however, Moroccan ultras have evolved into significant agents of social commentary and political activism within football stadiums and beyond. They have begun to voice the concerns of the oppressed, marginalized, and impoverished segments of Moroccan society, effectively becoming the mouthpieces for those relegated to the periphery of the social mainstream. Through their chants, banners, and other forms of expression, ultras address various societal and political issues, highlighting social malaises, grievances and calling for change. This transformation signifies a shift from mere supporters to active participants in the public discourse, utilizing their platforms to challenge injustices and advocate for the disenfranchised, thereby embedding themselves as influential actors within Moroccan public spaces.

The evolving role of Moroccan ultras in addressing various sociopolitical issues and adopting a rebellious stance can be primarily attributed to their socioeconomic origins. Predominantly emerging from impoverished and marginalized sectors of society, these individuals experience a profound sense of subordination, which propels them to advocate for themselves and oppose government authorities. Additionally, Moroccan ultras draw considerable inspiration from social movements and uprisings across the MENA region, particularly noting the pivotal involvement and activism of ultras in these contexts. This external influence has galvanized Moroccan ultras, motivating them to similarly confront and challenge the societal and political malaises within their own country.

The increasing prominence of stadia as venues for grassroots expression of social and political concerns can be largely attributed to the diminishing influence of traditional institutions such as political parties, civil associations, and labor unions (Bennis, 2019). Historically, these entities served as the primary representatives of grassroots communities, advocating for their interests before political institutions and policymakers. However, their effectiveness in fulfilling this role has waned, leading to a growing dissatisfaction with established channels of representation. As a result, individuals and communities have turned to alternative platforms for advocacy. Stadia, with their high visibility and symbolic significance, have emerged as powerful spaces for the direct expression of grassroots sentiments represented by ultras groups. This shift enables these Moroccan football ultras to articulate their concerns directly to political decision-makers, circumventing the now less effective traditional institutions and creating a new dynamic in public discourse and advocacy.

2.2. Critical Textual Analysis

Many critical linguistic analysts claimed that our language is not only a vehicle to communication but also a reflection of our beliefs and ideologies. Also, the choice and the way we put our words together to communicate a message are not random (Halliday, 1978; Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1988, 2008; Cameron, 1995; Kress & Leeuwen, 1996; Wodak, 1999; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). For these scholars, any communicative

event is structured linguistically to serve the interests of the speaker by disseminating his ideology and maintaining the existing power dynamics. Still, Richardson (2007) emphasized that texts are not neutral but are shaped by the intentions and perspectives of their creators. Thus, a detailed examination of textual features is necessary to uncover these underlying power relations and ideologies.

The scope of this study is confined to a critical textual analysis, as delineated by Fairclough in his three-dimensional framework (1989, 1995). According to Fairclough (1989), textual analysis is the stage which lays the groundwork for understanding how language operates within social contexts. By scrutinizing linguistic elements, Fairclough aims to reveal how discourse shapes and is shaped by societal structures uncover the interplay between language and power. What is more, Fairclough asserts that every text reflects and reinforces certain ideologies and power dynamics. To this end, the analysis involves a meticulous examination of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. This critical textual analysis helps the analysts to identify the subtle ways in which language perpetuates societal norms and power relations.

To develop this textual analysis, Fairclough integrated Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), pioneered by Halliday (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, as cited in Fairclough, 1992). SFL explains language use based on the form and function of interactions and posits that interactions can be understood ideationally, textually, and interpersonally (Rodgers et al., 2005).

At the ideational level, the focus is on the expression of meanings and the representation of experiences; at the textual level, the emphasis is on the organization and structure of language elements in a text; and at the interpersonal level, the attention is directed towards how language functions to enact social relationships and roles. The correlation between language meta-functions (ideational, textual, and interpersonal) and register variables is a key aspect within SFL. Registers refer to the language varieties used in different social activities, and their correlation with meta-functions highlights how language adapts to serve specific communicative purposes in diverse contexts.

To practically implement this textual analysis, Fairclough proposed ten guiding questions. These questions address the four primary components of textual analysis: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. However, as previously noted, this study will focus on the first two components (vocabulary and grammar) to demonstrate their practical analysis. The questions aim to investigate the experiential, relational, and expressive values inherent in vocabulary and grammatical features.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach to delve into the complexities of Moroccan football ultras' perspectives on immigration. By focusing on the subtleties inherent in their chants and slogans, the qualitative methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of the ultras' experiential, relational, and expressive worlds. Qualitative approaches have their roots in critical understandings of the social world and of the role of people in creating change (Gibbons & Sanderson, 2002). Furthermore, it "seeks depth of understanding" and "views social phenomena holistically" (Ulin et al., 2005, p. 6). Thus, this approach is particularly suited to capturing the rich, contextualized insights and subjective experiences that quantitative methods might overlook. So, through detailed textual analysis, the study aims to uncover the deeper meanings and socio-political implications embedded in the ultras' language. It provides a nuanced exploration of how immigration is constructed and communicated within this unique subculture, offering valuable contributions to the broader discourse on migration within Moroccan society.

3.2. Research Method

This study applies Norman Fairclough's three dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing on textual analysis to unravel the linguistic structures and features of these chants and slogans. The primary focus of Fairclough's three-dimensional model lies in analyzing the "Text" as the initial analytical aspect. According to Fairclough (1995), "text analysis includes the linguistic analysis that includes the analysis of the grammar, vocabulary, sound system, semantics and cohesion organization above the sentence level" (p. 57). Since the analysis of language is a complex task due to its extensive range of features, Fairclough (2001) has divided them into three main categories; vocabulary, grammar and textual structure. Following Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (1985), these categories are related to the social reality by means of three types of value. "Experiential value concerned with the text producer's experience of the natural and social world (contents, beliefs and knowledge). Relational value concerned with the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse. Expressive value concerned with the producer's evaluation of the reality (attitudes towards subjects and social identities)" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 93).

Fairclough's framework is particularly apt for this analysis as it allows for a detailed examination of the language used by the ultras, highlighting how specific lexical choices and grammatical constructions convey deeper meanings and reflect underlying power dynamics. Through this textual analysis, the study aims to uncover how the theme of immigration is constructed, represented, and contested within the discourse of Moroccan football ultras.

The seven chants selected for this study were gathered from various online sources, including official Facebook pages and YouTube channels of Moroccan ultras groups. These chants are: "This Is a Land of Humiliation" and "A Layman Is Singing" by Hercules ultras, "Oh! Mum! My Life Is Gloomy" by Brigade Oujda Ultras, "Sad Heart" by Winners Ultras, "Opium Off the People" by Helala Boys Ultras "The Story of the Wronged" by Rif Boys Ultras, and "The Story of the Wronged" by Fatal Tigers Ultras. These digital platforms serve as crucial spaces for the dissemination and perpetuation of ultras culture, making them rich repositories of authentic material for analysis. By focusing on textual elements, this study emphasizes the micro-level of discourse, where the intricacies of language use can reveal much about the social practices and ideologies of Moroccan football ultras.

3.3. Research Questions

In examining these texts, this study endeavors to address the following two key research questions: 1). How do the lexico-grammatical choices in Moroccan football ultras' discourse construct and convey their perspectives on immigration? 2). What linguistic strategies do Moroccan football ultras employ in their chants and slogans to express attitudes towards immigration, and how do these strategies reflect broader socio-political contexts and power relations? So, by addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between sports, language, and society in Morocco.

This study thus not only explores the textual dimensions of immigration-related discourse among Moroccan football ultras but also situates this analysis within the broader framework of CDA. In doing so, it highlights the role of football ultras as important social actors whose vocal expressions offer a window into the public consciousness and the ongoing dialogues surrounding migration in contemporary Moroccan society.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Vocabulary Level

4.1.1. Experiential Values of Vocabulary

Experiential values play a significant role within the realm of Moroccan football ultras, as they shape their worldview and guide their interactions within the social context. These values exert influence over their perceptions, beliefs and actions, serving as the means through which words

construct their comprehension of reality. Their ideology is coded in their lexical choice. Fairclough (1996) argues that “in order to deal with the experiential values of words, it is generally useful to alternate our focus between the text itself and the discourse type(s) it is drawing upon” (p. 114). For instance, the chants and slogans of Moroccan football ultras frequently incorporate succinct allusions to immigration which is a significant issue in Moroccan society among others.

Moroccan football ultras have not confined their expressions solely to matters of football. Instead, they have harnessed their powerful words to engage with the complex and pressing issue of immigration. Within this context, the employed lexicon manifests a remarkable diversity, drawing upon numerous classification schemes to articulate their perspectives on immigration. As we delve into their discourse, we will explore how these ultras use language as a tool to convey their thoughts, emotions, and social commentary on the ever-relevant category of immigration in Morocco. The first scheme depends on words that articulate a fervent desire for escape and relief from their current circumstances, conveying a profound yearning for relief from the challenging conditions in their homeland by using words such as “هجو” (immigrate), “الهجرة” (immigration), “خوات” (empty), “الفغرية” (estrangement), “قاطع لبحور” (crossing the seas), “نريسي” (to take risk), “الزودياك” (zodiac boat), “البور” (port), “حركات” (immigrated illegally), “هربات” (fled), “قطع لبحر” (crossed the sea), “راح فالبايور” (went in a boat), “نظم” (to go), “مشيت” (I went), “بابور سارينا” (O! boat take us), “من هاد البلاد هنيئا” (from this country rescue us), “ننسى الهم” (to forget the worry)...etc.

The second scheme draws upon words that involve sociopolitical critique, delving into the reasons behind youth immigration and attributing it to the harsh realities of life, aptly describing it as a “العيشة نيكرا” (black life), “أولعيشة فالماروك ماهي ساوية” (living in Morocco is worthless), “لا خدمة لا ردمة” (no job, no opportunities), “محكور مغبون” (oppressed and disadvantaged), “yazzo lho9o9” (looking for rights) ...etc. Another prominent scheme on which ultras’ words draw upon to legitimize their strong desire for immigration is their personal narrative imbued with faith and hope for a better future, capturing the ultras’ members aspiration to leave their present circumstances, seek solace, and potentially discover love in foreign lands as in the following examples “نديرو لافونير” (ensure the future), “نعيشوا بخير” (to live well), “مارياج إنشالله في أطلانطا” (if God willing, marriage in Atlanta), “كاورية نجيبها” (I will bring her European)...etc.

Furthermore, there is a noticeable presence of some lexical items that rely on the classification scheme of the perils and risks involved in the illegal immigration, including the treacherous sea crossings and the looming specter of perishing, underscoring the dangerous aspects inherent in immigration as with the use of the following words and phrases “نريسي” (take risk), “لي وصلو ولي مات” (some have arrived and some have died), “شي قطع لبحر شي مات” (some crossed the sea and some perished), “لي تحت لقبور” (some under graves), “Itghama dirabha” (take adventure in the sea)...etc. So, these used words serve as a stark reminder that individuals embarking on such journeys are often exposed to significant risks, and not all of them will reach their intended destination safely.

In summary, these classification schemes underscore the complex nature of Moroccan youth in general and football ultras in particular perspectives on immigration. While a desire for escape and better opportunities is evident, there is also a critical examination of sociopolitical issues, suggesting a desire for change. Simultaneously, personal aspirations and dreams play a significant role in shaping their views on immigration. These schemes reflect the diverse motivations and outlooks of Moroccan youth, who often grapple with complex decisions related to immigration.

In a similar vein, Moroccan football ultras employ certain words with contested ideological meanings to convey their experiences related to the issue of immigration. For instance, Hercules ultras use the term “black life” in their chant “هادي بلا الحكرة” (This Is a Land of Oppression) as in the lyrics “هاد العيشة نيكرا، هي سباب الهجرة” (this black life is the cause of immigration). In this context, the phrase “black life” is considered ideologically contested as it

holds symbolic significance and can be understood in various ways. It implies that life in Morocco is arduous and challenging, possibly due to social, economic, and political factors. The word “black” in this context conveys a sense of adversity and hardship, and its interpretation varies depending on one’s viewpoint. Similarly, Winners ultras incorporate the term “illegally” in their chant “قلب حزين” (Sad Heart), particularly in the lyrics “لاجونيس كاع” (all the youth migrated illegally, they fled from the country. All the youth migrated illegally; some crossed the sea and some perished). The use of “illegally” in the context of migration is also regarded as ideologically contested. It implies a legal framework and suggests that some individuals perceive immigration as an unlawful act, while others argue that it is a necessity driven by external circumstances. The word “illegally” carries both legal and moral connotations, rendering it subject to varying interpretations.

Furthermore, Moroccan football ultras use language strategically and creatively to address the complex immigration-related issues. They employ specific techniques, such as rewording and over-wording, to effectively communicate the depth of this issue. These linguistic strategies serve as powerful tools for communicating their messages with both subtlety and emotional impact. They reword phrases that indicate leaving the country and the desire for immigration such as “يا بابور سارينا” (Oh! boat, take us away), “من هذه البلاد هنيئا” (release us from this country), “نزطم وننسا الهم” (I will go and I will forget my sorrows), “هجرو منك لولاد” (the youth abandoned you), “ولادك فالغربة” (your youth are in exile), “خوات الكورفا” (the stands become empty), “لببلاد خوات” (the country has become empty)...etc. Equally, they use overwording as in the following examples; “هاد العيشة نيكرا، هي سباب الهجرة” (this black life is the cause of emigration) which over-words the concept of a difficult life leading to emigration. Also, “مبروك لببلاد خوات” (congratulations, the country has become empty) which over-words the idea of the country losing its population due to emigration.

Basically, the use of rewording and overwording by Moroccan football ultras represents a sophisticated and multifaceted strategy for tackling immigration-related concerns. These linguistic methods transcend superficial communication, serving as potent instruments to evoke empathy, scrutinize societal passivity, and galvanize both individuals and the broader community into actively confronting the intricate challenges posed by immigration. Through their skillful manipulation of language, Moroccan football ultras not only shed light on the hardships faced by migrants but also compel the Moroccan officials to take meaningful action, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding immigration and inspiring a collective effort toward constructive transformation.

What is more, Moroccan football ultras harness the power of language to shed light on the pressing issue of immigration by employing intricate linguistic techniques, including synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy to convey their messages with depth and impact. Through this linguistic prowess, they draw attention to the complexities and challenges associated with immigration, weaving a narrative that captures both hearts and minds. First, synonymy is used to serve various linguistic, communicative, and rhetorical purposes, allowing the ultras to address the topic more comprehensively and effectively. For example, instead of just saying “leave the country”, they say “يا بابور سارينا” (oh! boat, take us away), “هجرو” (migrated), “خوات” (emptied), “قاطع لبحور” (crossing seas), “حركات” (immigrated), “هربات” (fled), “راح فالبابور” (went in a boat), “مشيت” (left), “لهربة” (fleeing), “نزطم” (leave)...etc. In this context, ultras use different words to refer to “immigration” and make their claim more powerful and emotional.

Similarly, Moroccan football ultras use hyponymy to highlight the different aspects of immigration, making it a key topic in their discussions. The ideological weight of this strategy lies in the recognition of the ultras’ active engagement and their desire for social change and critical analysis beyond their passion for football. So, instead of just saying “immigration” in a general way, they talk about different specific things related to it. They use words such as “البور” (boat), “لاجونيس” (youth), “قاطع لبحور” (crossing the seas), “مات” (perished), “البور”

(harbor), “كأورية” (foreign woman) ...etc. Moreover, they employ the language strategy of antonymy to vividly depict the strong desire of Moroccan youths to emigrate and the negative consequences associated with illegal immigration. They do this by deliberately choosing words that represent opposites, creating a contrast to emphasize the complexities of the issue. For instance, they use words such as “وصول” (arrived) as opposed to the word “مات” (perished), “تريسي” (take risk) opposed to the word “تفرا” (to release), “تحت لقيور” (under graves) opposed to “راح فالبابور” (went in boat), “مشيت” (left) as opposed to “مانوليش” (will not return) ...etc.

4.1.2. Relational Values of Vocabulary

Moroccan football ultras have harnessed the power of language as a tool for protest and reflection. One striking aspect of their linguistic arsenal is the strategic use of euphemism and dysphemism, where they employ words and phrases that soften or intensify the impact of their messages. These linguistic strategies carry significant relational values that shape their message and impact when addressing the issue of immigration. In this exploration, we delve into the intriguing world of Moroccan football ultras and their deliberate use of euphemism to mitigate the emotional weight of words connected to the departure of Moroccan youth towards Europe, as well as their employment of dysphemism to underscore negative aspects and challenging conditions in other instances. This linguistic duality not only reflects their nuanced approach to sensitive topics but also illustrates how language can become a powerful instrument for conveying their perspectives and concerns within the realm of football and beyond.

To begin with, Hercules ultras in their chant “بلاد الكورة” (Land of Oppression) use euphemism to convey the idea of leaving the country more gently and less directly as in the following example “ويا بابور سارينا، أولي أولي راحنا كرهنا وملينا، أولي أولي من هاد البلاد هنيينا” (oh! boat, take us away. Oh boat, we are tired and fed up. Release us from this country). Also, “كلام الكورفا يمعني، أبار هاد الكورة...مبروك لبلاد خوات” (the words of the stands convey meanings, beyond football... Congratulations, the country has become empty) is a euphemism for discussing and describing the ultras’ departure from their country. Additionally, the lyric “وإذا خوات الكورفا، را ولادك فالغربة” (if the stands become empty, then your youth are in exile). The use of the word “الغربة” (exile) is a euphemism for their departure. Similarly, Brigade Oujda ultras in the lyric “ندور ونريسي من وسط البور ونوي الهجرة” (I wander and take risks in the harbor, intending to migrate) use euphemistic element “migrate” which is a more neutral term compared to “flee”.

Still, they use dysphemism as in the following examples “هاد العيشة نيكرا، هي سباب الهجرة” (this black life is the cause of emigration); “black life” is a dysphemistic phrase which carries connotations of darkness and hardship. This usage is intended to evoke strong emotions and draw attention to the difficulties that people face, potentially fueling their desire to emigrate in search of a better life. Likewise, Winners ultras in their chant “قلب حزين” namely in the lyric “لاجونيس كاع حركات، من لبلاد راها هريات” (all the youth migrated illegally, they fled from the country) use dysphemistic words such as “illegally” to emphasize the unlawful nature of the youth departure. Within the same vein, Helala Boys ultras in their chant “Opium off the People” especially in the lyric “لي تحت لقيور.. ولي فالكاج مقهور” (those under graves .. those oppressed in cages) use dysphemism. The phrase “under graves” is a dysphemism for people who have died, as it is a more direct and potentially emotionally charged way of expressing death. Equally, the phrase “Oppressed in cages” is a dysphemistic way to describe individuals who are suffering, suggesting a harsh and confined condition.

In brief, the euphemistic and dysphemistic language used by Moroccan football ultras reflects complex relational values. These values encompass attachment, criticism, empathy, and frustration towards their homeland and the challenges associated with immigration. Therefore, through their linguistic choices, the ultras convey a layered perspective on the issue, capturing the multifaceted nature of their relationship with Morocco and the experiences of those who seek to leave.

Moreover, the use of informal and formal styles by Moroccan football ultras in addressing immigration serves to establish a multifaceted and dynamic relationship with their

audience. It fosters emotional connection, authenticity, critical engagement, and empowerment, while also emphasizing the urgency and complexity of the issue. These relational values contribute to a rich and inclusive discourse surrounding immigration within the ultras' community and beyond. As a way of illustration, phrases like "oh! Boat, take us away" and "I am sorry, mother" employ an informal emotionally charged style that is designed to strengthen the sense of community and commonality among Moroccan ultras and their followers, emphasizing their shared concerns about immigration. Similarly, expressions such as "we are tired and fed up" and "no work, no occupation" utilize informal language to communicate a sense of desperation and urgency regarding the circumstances that drive youth to emigrate. This informal approach helps convey the emotional weight and immediacy of the issues at hand, encouraging the audience to empathize with the ultras' perspective.

In the same way, statements like "the words of the stands convey meanings, beyond football" and "this is a tribute to the people who sacrificed for their ideals" adopt a more formal style that is typically associated with raising awareness and engaging in critical discourse. Also, the formal language choice reflects an intention to elevate the discourse around immigration and emphasize its broader societal implications and consequences. Still, statements like "all the youth have left unlawfully" and "If the stands become empty, then your youth are in exile" employ a more formal tone to emphasize certain facts and realities surrounding immigration. This formal linguistic style reinforces Moroccan ultras' unwavering commitment to underscore the gravity of the situation and the far-reaching consequences of immigration.

4.1.3. Expressive Values of Vocabulary

The words used by Moroccan football ultras are not mere utterances but they are powerful instruments with expressive values used to convey profound meanings and ignite intense emotions. These linguistic choices are far from random; they are deliberate and calculated, reflecting their deeply held beliefs, convictions, and opinions when they speak about the issue of immigration. So, they wield their words with precision and intent, crafting a narrative that articulates their disapproval, anger, and frustration towards the conditions of life in their homeland. With each carefully chosen word, they paint a vivid and often blistering portrait of the challenges they perceive within their country. These linguistic expressions mirror their complex relationship with Morocco, a place they call home but one that they believe does not offer them the decent conditions they desire.

Moroccan football ultras employ potent and impassioned language when talking about immigration. These chosen words carry unique meanings and are infused with deep emotions. For example, instead of saying "the bad conditions in our country are behind our immigration", they say "العيشة نيكرا" (black life), "لا خدمة لا ردمة" (no job no opportunities), "محكور مغبون فهاد" (oppressed and wronged in this land), "ماقدرتش نعيش فهاد لبلاد" (I cannot live in this land), "أولعيشة فالماروك ماهي ساوية" (the living in Morocco is worthless) and so on and so forth. These carefully selected words and phrases are intentionally chosen to evoke intense emotions of anger, disdain, and disapproval. Furthermore, they utilize these specific expressions to underscore their sense of being compelled to leave their homeland and to elucidate the multitude of factors motivating this risky journey, which often leads to tragic outcomes such as perishing at sea.

4.2. Grammatical Features Level

4.2.1. Experiential Values of Grammatical Features

Moroccan football ultras' experiential values regarding immigration are expressed through their deliberate use of grammatical structures aligned with Halliday's transitivity system. These structures help convey agency, whether as actors taking action or as recipients experiencing the effects of immigration-related processes. Through these grammatical choices, Moroccan ultras communicate their perspectives and experiences related to immigration among Moroccan youth. They employ three sentence structures: SVO (Subject-Verb-Object), SV (Subject-Verb), and SVC (Subject-Verb-Complement) to emphasize the topic of immigration

among young Moroccans. These structures represent different kinds of processes, including actions, events, and attributes.

For instance, Winners ultras in their chant “قلب حزين” (Sad Heart) in the lyric “لاجونيس” (all the youth have left unlawfully) use SVO structures which involves a material process where “all the youth” (the actor) perform the action of leaving unlawfully, and “unlawfully” serves as a circumstance describing the manner or condition of their departure. Also, in the lyric “شي قطع لبحر شي مات” (some crossed the sea, and some perished) use SVO with two material processes “cross” and “perish” instigated by the actors “some” that refer to the Moroccan youth in certain circumstances (in the sea) which provide additional context for each action. Besides, Hercules ultras in their chant “بلاد الحكرة” (Land of oppression) in the lyric “هاد هي سباب الهجرة” (this black life is the cause of emigration) use SVC with a relational process (attribution process) where the subject “this black life” is attributed as the cause of emigration. The circumstances provide the broader context for this attribution as a reference to the Moroccan reality. Likewise, Hercules in the lyric “خوات الكورفا، را ولادك فالغربة” (the Curva is empty. Your youth are in exile) combine SVC and SVO structures with existential processes. The emptiness is attributed to the Curva and exile as a location. Similarly, Brigade Oujda ultras in the chant “حياتي ظلمت يا يمتا” (my life has become dark mother) in the lyric “ندور ونريسكي من” (I wander and take risks in the harbor, intending to migrate) combine two clauses, the first in the SVO structure with a material process, and the second in the SV structure with a mental process. The actor ‘I’ refers to the ultras member who performs the actions in the harbor as circumstances (location).

Equally, Rif Boys ultras in the chant “حكاية مظلوم” (The Story of The Wronged) namely in the lyric “لن أعود” (I will not return) use SV structure with a material process where the actor “I” in reference to the ultras member expresses the intent not to return, and “not” serves as a circumstance indicating the negation of this intent. Also, in the same chant, Rif Boys in “فهاد فيهاد ماقدرتش نعيش” (In this country, I could not live) use SVC structure which involves an attribution process where the actor attributes the state of not being able to live to himself. The circumstance “In this country” specifies the context of this attribution. Equally, Eagles ultras in the chant “عيبت ندور” (I Am Feed Up of Roaming) in the lyric “انشاء الله نزطم وننسا الهم كاورية” (I will go and I will forget my sorrows, and I will bring a foreign woman) combine three clauses with SVO and SV structures, each with its own process type and participant. The first and third clauses involve material processes with the actor “I”. The second clause involves a mental process, indicating the mental state of the same actor. The circumstantial information is not specified for any of the actions or mental states.

As far as the agency is concerned, it is present in various forms in the examples mentioned earlier, depending on whether it is attributed to Moroccan football ultras members and Moroccan youth in general, external factors, or circumstances. Some sentences emphasize those individuals’ agency, while others highlight the influence of external factors on actions related to immigration. The Moroccan football ultras member by using the pronoun “I” is considered as the main instigator of actions related to immigration. For instance, in many aforementioned instances, the agency lies with “the youth” who have made the conscious decision to leave unlawfully. They have exercised their agency by choosing to depart from their country in this manner. Also, they plan to go, forget their sorrows, and bring a foreign woman. These are active decisions and intentions made by the ultras members. In the same way, some sentences suggest that external factors or conditions, represented by “this black life” and “this country” are the driving force behind emigration. In this case, agency is attributed to the circumstances or conditions, rather than individual decision-makers. In some sentences, the agency is implied as someone or something has caused the youth to be in exile, possibly through policies, actions, and decisions made by those in power.

Based on this, Moroccan football ultras do not employ nominalization as a linguistic strategy to obscure agents and emphasize processes related to immigration. Instead, their discourse relies on direct linguistic constructs that highlight agency and responsibility. They

attribute actions to individuals, external factors, or circumstances without veiling the agents. This approach prioritizes clarity in communication about immigration issues in Morocco. Whether referencing individuals who are crossing the sea, youth who are leaving unlawfully, or external factors causing emigration, the ultras' language directly identifies agents or causes (agency and causality). This clear attribution of agency underscores their commitment to transparent discourse. Consequently, their linguistic strategy serves as a straightforward means of addressing the complexities surrounding immigration in Morocco, without obfuscating the responsible parties or processes involved.

Within the same vein, Moroccan football ultras express their experiences with the issue of immigration through another grammatical strategy which is manifested in the deliberate avoidance of negative sentences in their discourse. Instead of framing their message in negative terms, they opt for positive sentences that effectively illuminate the driving forces behind immigration and the entities responsible for compelling Moroccan youth to leave their homeland. This choice holds profound ideological significance as it serves multiple purposes in their messaging. Firstly, the use of positive sentences allows the ultras to emphasize the push factors driving Moroccan youth to emigrate. So, they frame their message in positive terms so as to bring attention to the factors motivating young Moroccans to seek better prospects abroad. Furthermore, this linguistic approach openly identifies the entities responsible for pushing the youth to leave their homeland. Whether it is economic hardships or social injustices, the ultras attribute these causes more directly by using positive sentence structures. The deliberate avoidance of negative sentences bolsters the rhetorical impact of their discourse. It enables the ultras to make a more compelling case for their cause, emphasizing the urgency of addressing the immigration issue and its consequences.

In a nutshell, the ultras' choice to eschew negative sentences in favor of positive ones is a strategic linguistic maneuver. It not only serves to shed light on the root causes of immigration but also underscores the responsibility of relevant entities. This linguistic choice amplifies the power of their message, drawing attention to the pressing issue while aligning with their ideological stance on immigration.

4.2.2. Relational Values of Grammatical Features

The discourse of Moroccan football ultras is a linguistic tapestry rich in relational values, particularly through the intricate use of grammatical features. Thus, a special emphasis is put on studying the subject position the ultras strive to structure for themselves which assigns them the position of power. They assume the role of agents who are determined to ensure their agency and efficiency within the spectrum of power relations. So, studying the modes of sentences will unveil the existing relationship between ultras and Moroccan officials and their country that have a direct responsibility for their immigration. Though in different degree, they combine three major modes; declarative, imperative and grammatical questions. These three modes position the ultras differently.

Declarative mode is predominantly used by ultras. In this mode, the ultras position themselves as providers of information, while those addressed, often Moroccan government officials held accountable for immigration, assume the role of recipients of this information. They employ assertive statements to articulate their perspectives and censure those they deem responsible for compelling immigration, portraying them as the culprits behind the existing issues. In simple terms, the declarative mode enables the ultras to establish their identity as proactive agents and advocates of transformation.

Besides, the imperative mode is almost absent in the ultras discourse about immigration except in few cases that come in the form of a command. For instance, Winners ultras in their chant "قلب حزين" (Sad Heart) use this command "فبييق يا المسؤول لاجونيس كاع حركات" (wake up responsible! all the youth have illegally-immigrated) to call the Moroccan policy-makers to deal with the dramatic escalation in the numbers of the illegally-immigrated youth to Europe. They issue command to assert authority and demand action from the Moroccan them. This positioning emphasizes the ultras' expectation that those in power take immediate measures to

address the immigration issue. Likewise, in their chant “بلاد الحكرة” (Land of Oppression) in the lyric “يا بابور ساريننا” (oh! boat, take us away) use a request to ask the boat to rescue them from this land by taking them away and flee the prevalent hardships in Morocco.

Within the same line, according to the data under study, Moroccan football ultras have not use grammatical questions except in one example by Hercules ultras in the same chant as in the lyric “بوركي يا هاد البلاد، هجرو منك لولاد؟” (why, oh this country, have the youth abandoned you?). This rhetorical question is a sort of conversation with their own country, Morocco. They are asking why young Moroccan people are leaving the country. Therefore, they are asking this question to situate themselves in a position of power within the conversation. Also, the question is meant to show that they are taking the initiative to question and critique the situation, suggesting that they have a voice and agency in addressing the convoluted issue of immigration.

4.2.3. Expressive Values of Grammatical Features

Norman Fairclough’s notion of expressive values in language aligns with the approach taken by Moroccan football ultras in addressing immigration issues. Their linguistic choices are not only about conveying information but also about expressing their deep emotions and values, seeking to engage their audience emotionally and advocate for change in the context of immigration challenges in Morocco. Their linguistic choices, such as the use of verb tenses, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, sentence mode and other grammatical features, are infused with their deep emotions and sentiments. For instance, they use the verb “to be” to assert their emotion of discontent and apprehension as in the examples “أولعيشة فالماروك ماهي ساوية” (living in Morocco is worthless) and “هاد العيشة نيكرا، هي سباب الهجرة” (this black living is the cause of immigration). Moreover, the adjectives “worthless” and “black” depict the conditions that coerce them to leave their country such as in “لعيشة فالماروك ماهي ساوية” (living in Morocco is worthless) and “هاد العيشة نيكرا” (this black living).

Furthermore, the ultras employ language as a means to articulate their feelings in connection to immigration, including sentiments like frustration, apprehension, and a pressing sense of urgency. For instance, when they present rhetorical inquiries such as “بوركي يا هاد البلاد، (هجرو منك لولاد؟) “why have the youth abandoned you?”, they effectively communicate their deep concern and empathy for the youth departing their homeland. Equally, the declarative mode allows Moroccan football ultras to assert their viewpoints with clarity and conviction, emphasizing their commitment to their cause. Also, the imperative mode, through commands and requests, empowers them to demand immediate action, express frustration, and mobilize support by creating a sense of urgency. Both modes play a crucial role in conveying the ultras’ emotional and persuasive message about immigration.

As a general practice, the ultras tactically utilize language to bring the immigration issue into focus, underscoring its emotional facets to generate understanding and garner support from their audience. In essence, their linguistic choices serve as a vehicle for expressing emotions, creating a compelling narrative around immigration that elicits empathy and solidarity among their followers.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to critically investigate how the issue of immigration is linguistically constructed and tackled by Moroccan football ultras. Taking the results of this study, the critical textual analysis revealed that Moroccan football ultras extend their discourse beyond football to address immigration issues, utilizing a diverse and ideologically charged lexicon. They strategically use linguistic techniques such as rewording, over-wording, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy to articulate the complexities of immigration. Their use of euphemism and dysphemism, along with informal and formal styles, enhances emotional connection and engagement with their audience. The ultras’ deliberate lexico-grammatical choices reflect their beliefs and emotions, using Halliday’s transitivity system to convey agency and experiences related to immigration. They avoid nominalization and negative sentences, preferring direct

constructs and positive framing to highlight the driving factors behind emigration. The relational values in their discourse are multifaceted, employing various grammatical modes to assert their agency and position within power relations. Fairclough's notion of expressive values aligns with the ultras' approach, as they aim to engage their audience emotionally and advocate for change regarding immigration in Morocco.

This study significantly contributes to research by expanding the scope of ultras studies to include social and political issues like immigration, demonstrating their potential as influential social actors. It advances Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by applying Fairclough's framework namely the first stage of analysis that tackles textual features of the discourse, providing a robust methodological approach for analyzing complex phenomena. The study offers insights into lexical strategies and ideological language use, highlighting how language constructs social narratives. It emphasizes agency, responsibility, and positive framing in discourse, informing research on framing effects, power dynamics, and emotional engagement. Overall, it enriches the understanding of the interplay between language, ideology, and social action, offering valuable theoretical and methodological insights for future research across disciplines.

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