

## Journalism, social actors and migration: intertextuality in journalistic discourses on migration

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**Abstract:** The objective of this paper is to analyze intertextuality in journalistic discourses regarding migration in transit through Mexican territory. Based on 131 informative texts published between 2012 and 2017 in newspaper “El Universal” and following a mixed methodology —descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis— we analyze how such newspaper refers to the voices of social actors in their texts on Central American clandestine transmigration, according to two contrasting practices: routine journalism and investigative journalism. Likewise, inferences are made about the power that different actors have over and in journalistic discourses, i.e. the access they have to these discourses and the control they exert over their features. The voices of the state actors were the most frequently mentioned and in a way that allows us to infer a considerable, but not absolute, power regarding journalistic discourses.

**Key words:** migration policy, migration in transit through Mexico, Central Americans, critical analysis of journalistic discourse, national press.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar la intertextualidad en los discursos periodísticos sobre migración en tránsito por el territorio mexicano. Con base en 131 textos informativos, publicados entre 2012 y 2017 en el periódico *El Universal* y siguiendo una metodología mixta –estadística descriptiva y análisis cualitativo–, se estudia cómo tal diario refiere las voces de los actores sociales en sus textos sobre la transmigración centroamericana clandestina, según dos prácticas contrastantes: el periodismo de rutina y el periodismo de investigación. Asimismo, se realizan inferencias sobre el poder que los diversos actores poseen *sobre y en* los discursos periodísticos; esto es, el acceso que tienen a estos discursos y el control que ejercen sobre sus características. Las voces de los actores estatales fueron las referidas con mayor frecuencia y de un modo que permite inferir un considerable, aunque limitado, poder respecto a los discursos periodísticos.

**Palabras clave:** política migratoria, poder, migración centroamericana en tránsito, prensa nacional mexicana.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

When covering information on international migration journals structure different discourses: a discourse (re)presenting immigrants, which characterizes who “they” are: immigrants, before who “we” are: citizens; discourses on irregular migration; discourses on how government policies and measures “should be” or “are” regarding migration and migrants, among others.

Access to journalistic discourse has been considered a resource of power (van Dijk, 1999). It is essential, then, to examine who are the actors with access to it and in what way they obtain such access. Although journalistic discourses are controlled by journalists, social actors gain access in one or another way. For instance, media spread discourses on migration expressed by governmental actors, discourses considered as hegemonic or dominant (Spener, 2008; Bruno, 2010).

We must bear in mind two essential features of journalism when considering how the voices of different social actors enter into the discourses: firstly, journalistic texts are to display the different viewpoints of the ones involved in the matter. In this sense, any journal which considers itself rigorous, must as a rule address all the people involved in an occurrence (Grijelmo, 2014). Secondly, social actors are generally the journalists’ sources of information, therefore, they are essential for reconstructing the events (Rodrigo-Alsina, 1989).

The way in which this sort of journalistic discourses and their contents are produced, among many other aspects, have been the object of numerous researches in different countries. Thus, the academic literature concerning this sort of discourses is especially prolix in Spain, mainly from a critical perspective, which reveals inconsistencies and bias in them (Retis, 2004; Nash, 2005; Casero-Ripollés, 2007). Conversely, such literature concerning migration of Mexicans to the United States is scarce in both countries, there are some exceptions, however (Spener, 2008).

Having said that, the main objective of this paper is to analyze how the discourses on migration of the national press are constructed with the voices of various social actors<sup>2</sup> according to the way in which journalism is carried

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<sup>1</sup> I want to express my gratitude to the Hemeroteca Nacional de México for all its labor in preserving as well as making available journalistic material, which helps to carry out academic research such as the present one.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the discourse on Central American migration in transit through Mexico the

out. Likewise, the access the press gives to the discourses of different social actors and the way in which it refers to them allows us to infer the power such actors exert in journalistic discourses.

This work is divided in four sections. Firstly, the theoretical perspective on intertextuality is presented and the way in which it enables us to draw inferences. Secondly, two types of journalism are examined: routine journalism and investigative journalism (following the typology of Caminos-Marcet, 1997); particularly, the implications such practices have concerning the use of sources of information and of resulting journalistic texts.

Thirdly, the *corpus* of news and the mixed methodology this paper follows is presented, in which the quantitative analysis of frequency data of certain features of informative texts is combined, some are chosen in order to analyze them in a quantitative descriptive sense. Fourthly, based on the 131 published news in the printed version of *El Universal*, the way in which the newspaper refers in its discourses on migration in transit to discourses of other social actors concerning the same subject is examined. Likewise, some inferences are drawn concerning the power social actors – migrants, governments, defenders of migrant rights, etc. – have in relation to journalistic discourses.

### **Intertextuality in the journalistic discourse and relationships of power**

Discursive intertextuality assumes that texts are to be understood according to the set of texts around them in certain historical time and social space.

According to Fairclough's proposal of intertextuality (1995), in a specific discourse the presence of elements from other discourses can be analyzed. He considers intertextuality as a creative discursive, the individuals' discourse is formed with fragments of others' discourses (Alonso and Callejo, 1999; Ruiz-Ruiz, 2009). "Intertextuality may be understood as an occasional instrument at the disposal of power cable of imposing others' discourses on the recipients" (Alonso and Callejo, 1999: 46-47) and "in interpreting discourses as symptoms of dominance: subjects are reduced to mere domineering discourses players" (Ruiz-Ruiz, 2009: 15).

social actors to be considered may be: 1) Central American migrants in illegal transit; 2) State actors from different origin countries (mainly Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador), transit country (Mexico) and destination country (the United States); 3) defenders of migrants (religious people, activists, shelters for migrants, organizations of civil society, institutions defenders of human rights, international organizations, etc.); 4) Mexican society; 5) the "coyotes"/"polleros"; 6) organized crime; and 7) the academy.

For his part, Genette (1989: 10) considers intertextuality as Kristeva defines it (1997) in order to define it restrictively “as a co-presence relationship among two or more texts, eidetically and frequently, as the effective presence of a text in another one”; and points out the following types of intertextuality: quotation, plagiarism, and allusion.

In this paper the restrictive notion of intertextuality by Genette (1989) is followed as well as the idea of power and dominance underlying Fairclough's proposal (1995). This is so for three reasons:

1) Requirements of gathering information are fewer than in other perspectives on intertextuality, which fits perfectly to an analysis exclusively based on a compilation of journalistic writings.

2) Despite being a narrow concept of intertextuality, based on journalistic writings some inferences can be drawn regarding: i) the relationships of power *over* the discourse, who is s/he who has access to it, i.e. “who oftentimes appears in media, and above all, who is credited with a sufficient credibility so as to have his/her statements immediately spread” (De la Fuente-García, 2017: 3) and ii) the relationships of power *in* the discourse, i.e. those referring to “the control exerted by the social actors who have access to the discourse, in its specific features such as topics widely spread or those who scarcely catch attention, to the vision offered by certain problems, to the ideological presuppositions which uphold the journalistic discourse, etc.” (De la Fuente-García, 2017: 3).

3) Not only does it allow giving an account of the fragments of others' discourses which are received in the journalistic discourse, but also to analyze the attitudes towards them. For example, reproducing the essential elements of other people's discourse it is not the same as choosing only less important fragments. In any case, it should be taken into account the fact that journalists have power over the journalistic discourse and that, despite being as objective as possible, the process of making references to the other people's discourse always implies manipulating the chosen discursive elements (Méndez-García de Paredes, 2000). In this sense, the scheme of intertextuality followed in this paper is complemented with the different forms in which journalism is practiced: investigative journalism and routine journalism.

### **Routine journalism before investigative journalism: social actors as sources of information and international migration**

Caminos-Marçet (1997) describes and analyzes what he calls routine journalism, a way to practice journalism which supposes a passive attitude

from journalists before certain sources of information to which they give the initiative, i.e. they remain silent until the institutions and official organizations provide them with information, and so set aside the possibility to search information by their own means. According to Caminos-Marcet, passivity leads to publish incompletely verified and corroborated texts.

Likewise, Caminos-Marcet (1997) underlines the reason why many journalists have such passive attitude: 1) virtually all organizations and institutions have means to control information produced and published by media; such organizations and institutions play an active role in giving great amounts of information, which is advantageous for them, to journalists. 2) the changes produced in journalistic practice due to the incorporation of new technologies have resulted in journalists spending more time in writing instead of going to the streets to gather information.

Chomsky and Herman's standpoint (2001) is similar, however, in order to understand the operation of media they make more explicit the means of power by which those in power have access to journalistic discourses and control them. Their aim is to reveal how government and private domineering agents manage to send to public opinion the messages which result more advantageous to them, through an advertising model, described by them as a set of filters. One of them is the way in which news are provided: "media depend on the news provided by government, enterprises and "experts", briefly, news financed and approved by those main providers and by other agents of power" (Chomsky and Herman, 2001: 22).<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, an essential mechanism of access of domineering groups, i.e. of controlling journalistic discourses, is through dependence. Such mechanism of control is, to a large extent, economical. According to Chomsky and Herman (2001), before the need massive media has of constant and reliable flows of unprocessed information –having limited resources to do so–, governmental and business sources offer them a great amount of information, which is not only free but it hardly produces any cost since it is presumed to be trustworthy compared with other sources which do not possess such reliability and are costly in terms of verification.

In this sense, Chomsky and Herman (2001) claim that the great bureaucracies of the powerful "subsidize" media and in return they obtain privileged access, becoming, thus, their "routine" sources. The power of these social actors in such situation is not limited to distribute the information media is interested in, however, but rather to "ban" other information

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3 For further information on those filters see Chomsky and Herman (2001: 22).

opposed to them since “it is quite hard to call liars the authorities in whose information they depend on, despite their huge lies” (Chomsky and Herman, 2001: 57).

Contrary to routine journalism, Caminos-Marcet (1997) calls investigative journalism the practice of journalism with the following features: 1) it seeks the hidden truth. That which private people or public institutions wish to keep hidden and which citizens have the right to know. 2) It does not rely on official sources of information and is suspicious of them, the investigative journalist is more interested in what such sources hide or do not mention. It is also capable of creating its own sources of information outside the routine courses. 3) It is eminently informative based on completely true facts, therefore, it relies on verified information, contrasted with other sources.

Although such kind of practice is associated with certain outcome, we do not consider routine journalism to be uninterested or as a synonym of bad quality, neither that all investigative journalism is necessarily interesting and of high quality. Both types of journalism are necessary and complement each other.

It is worth mentioning that Mexico is a dangerous country to practice journalism –in 2016, 11 journalists and workers of media were murdered (EFE, 2017)–, investigative journalism is probably the weakest organism in this “chain food.” Thus, in certain aspects of the migratory phenomenon practicing investigative journalism for journalists may imply putting their physical integrity at risk.

In the migration field, Spener (2008) underlines the governmental role media play in establishing a domineering discourse on “human smuggling.” He says that since the role the discourse of media plays in the knowledge of citizens, media highlight the opinions of government excluding the perspectives of other authors because: first of all, the opinions of the former are considered to be worthy of becoming news and because are linked with other public relationships. Secondly, only when journalists have time and resources to do deep investigative reportages the work of coyotes is made known. Spener’s findings and considerations agree Caminos-Marcet’s (1997) and Chomsky and Herman’s (2001).

According to what has been said thus far, the expected results in this analysis:

1. Due to the centrality in the scheme of routine journalism and the power of economical and generation of information they possess – usually exclusive owners of the information obtained through their

work on migration, gathered and collected in different ways–, it is expected that different state organizations and institutions have more power *over* and *in* journalistic discourses concerning Central American migration in transit through Mexico, i.e. being more present in informative journalism texts and having more control over the features of the discourse.

2. Also, that other actors which take part in routine journalism, experts and members of civil society organizations (e.g. directors of shelters for migrants, human rights activists) –with a partial or total independence of state organizations and institutions– may have a significantly minor presence as well as less power over how their discourse is registered, i.e. less power *over* and *in* the discourse.
3. That the voices of those who would not be part of routine journalism –migrants themselves, the “coyotes”, Mexican society, etc.,– may have their power *over* and *in* journalistic discourses reduced. Thus, their voices would be hardly captured and exclusively through investigative journalism. Due to their position as transmigrants, it would be hard for them to become “activists” or public figures, and to take part in routine journalism.

### ***News corpus and methodological matters***

The *corpus* for our analysis consists of 131 informative texts published in the Mexican national print version of *El Universal*,<sup>4</sup> available also online.<sup>5</sup> Through a detailed examination page by page of the “Nation” and “States” sections in the copies from January 2012 to July 2017 –of the odd months<sup>6</sup>–, all the informative texts (news, reportages, interviews, testimonies and

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<sup>4</sup> According to the ACGM (2017a), the number of copies *El Universal* sells from Tuesday to Saturday is 120 thousand and from Sunday to Monday 180 thousand, which places it as the most read newspaper of Mexico. The economical status of its readers widely exceeds the national measure of central tendency. While in Mexican society people with a PhD are not even 1%, the number of those with such education level among *El Universal* readers is 11% (ACGM, 2017b).

<sup>5</sup> The informative texts of the print version of the selected years can be found in the online version. Occasionally with slight differences. However, it should be mentioned that not all published texts in the online version are included in the print version. Therefore, the potential public of such news is the outcome of print version readers plus online readers

<sup>6</sup> January, March, May, July, September and November. Except those missing from the archive of the Hemeroteca Nacional.

reports) concerning Central American migration in transit through Mexico heading towards the United States were chosen (see table 1.)<sup>7</sup>

As seen in table 1, 2014 is a remarkable year due to the great number of news published (tripling the ones from 2016). The cause of this was the humanitarian crisis of the “migrant children and teenagers” (NNAM) in the United States had a wide media coverage. The “problem” was not only circumscribed to American territory, since it was underscore a phenomenon of illegal migration of many Central American children and teenagers in transit through Mexico heading towards such country –which is part of that wider phenomenon this paper focuses on (illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico). It was both their arrival to the United States and the fact that they went across Mexico which caught the attention of media, resulting in dozens of front pages and long news articles –the whole page– on such humanitarian crisis, as well as several reportages telling the stories of Central American migrants –including NNAM.

As for the mixed methodology followed in this paper, by using descriptive statistics, firstly, we made a quantitative analysis because it shows the frequency in which the voices of the different social actors were present in the informative texts, depending on the type of journalism –routine or investigative– and on the subject of the news. In order to accomplish this we focused our attention on quotes, the most evident type of intertextuality according to Genette (1989), in direct or indirect style (Reyes, 1995). In the same way, in this first phase a subset of similar informative texts was chosen according to the three categories of analysis (prominent social actor in the news, journalism practice and subject).

In the second phase, there is a qualitative description of the chosen texts, which allows us to better comprehend the way in which the discourses of the different social actors are referred to in the texts and are part of journalistic discourses; considering the fact that, ultimately, journalistic discourses are in the hands of journalists. In addition, both the qualitative and the quantitative phases enable us to draw inferences about the power social actors have *over* and *in* the journalistic discourse.

After a previous examination of the informative texts, it was considered that social actors, whose voices are displayed in them, can be classified according to the role they play in the phenomenon of migration in transit (see table 2). It should be noted that the analysis was carried out taking into account the social actor, whose voice stands out in each one of the chosen

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<sup>7</sup> All tables and the chart are attached in the appendix, below this paper (Editor's note).

informative texts (the one referred to in the headline appears firstly in the text and/or much space is given in it).

In order to classify the news according to the types of journalism which generated them –routine or investigative– certain features can be observed in the informative journalistic texts (see table 3).

Subjects were classified taking into account the main subject of the informative text (see table 4) which is generally the most relevant subject and appears in the first place, the one which occupies a great amount of content in the text and oftentimes is summarized in the headline. As Dijk notes (1990), a relevant feature of journalistic discourse is that its subjects can be expressed and pointed out in the headlines. Of course, several informative texts refer to more than one subject at the same time.

### **Intertextuality in journalistic texts on illegal Central American transmigration**

#### *Quantitative phase*

Chart 1 shows that the voice of at least one of the social actors is referred to in most of the informative texts (except 2.3%). In such chart what stands out is that the state national actors constitute the main reference more than 40% of the times. Followed by the voices of the defenders of migrants 26%, and of migrants themselves in the third place 13%. The voices of the academy and of the “coyotes” are scarcely present: each less than 4%. In the same way, the voices of Mexican citizens are totally remarkable due to their absence concerning illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico in the informative texts.

Table 5 allows us to delve into the way in which the voices of social actors are referred to depending on the type of journalism. First of all, it should be noted that one out of every five informative texts on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico belongs to investigative journalism. Such number, not insignificant at all, is for a great part the result of the scope the migration in transit phenomenon reached in specific moments (see the humanitarian crisis of NNAM), which meant that more resources would be provided to carry out more researches of this kind.

As table 5 shows, the different social actors tend to appear more in news generated by investigative journalism than by routine journalism, or viceversa. The voices of the academy, state national and international actors, and defenders are considered as those from prominent actors in the texts

generated by routine journalism. Conversely, the voices of migrants in transit and of the “coyotes” are mainly referred to as prominent actors by investigative journalism.

According to this, state national actors are the ones who would have more power *over* the discourses, since they have more presence in the informative texts generated by routine journalism, the one who leaves the initiative to the official sources of information. Secondly, in this type of journalism, the defenders of migrants are referred to as prominent too, they would be the second actors with more power. Thirdly, despite being present in more than 10% of the texts, the power of migrants *over* the discourse is pale since they are present only in the texts generated by investigative journalism, in which journalists are the ones who play a more active role and less neutral (interpretative) in constructing the discourse.

Table 6 shows that according to the subject the different social actors have a heterogeneous presence. State actors appear mainly in informative texts on “migration policy” and the implementation they make. State foreign actors are mainly referred to in texts on “migration policy” as well. The presence of the defenders of migrants is divided according to two subjects: “migration policy” and “crime and victimization”. As for migrants in transit, they are referred to in informative texts about “migrants and transit” –texts which tell migrants’ stories must recover the voices of migrants necessarily–.

Now, the three most frequent types of informative texts are analyzed qualitatively below, generated by routine journalism and refer to: 1) state actors in “migration policy”; 2) defenders of migrants in “politics” and “crime and victimization”, generated by investigative journalism and refer to 3) the migrants in transit in “migrants in transit”.

### *Qualitative phase*

Voices of state national actors displayed by routine journalism in “migration policy”

Three aspects are taken into account in this section:

One. Migration policy. The voices of state national actors are essential to understand migration policy since they define it through laws, norms and policies, and announce its future changes.

Thus, some headlines read: “Regulations of Migration Law published” (Morales, 2012), “INM promises no more queues” (Otero, 2013), “Coordination to control migration in Mexico’s Southern border” (García,

2014); “Mexico’s preparing to protect migrant children” (Gómez-Quintero, 2015).

Two. Implementation. Oftentimes informative texts present the voices of state national actors: 1) describing how they are implementing migration policy in concrete cases, and 2) their announcements and “promises” of how implementation will be in the future.

1) State national actors appear in informative texts which display particular implementation actions of migration policy, carried out by migration authorities and other state actors. Such texts explicitly or implicitly present the voices of state national actors expressed in press releases –transcriptions approximately faithful to the latter. Such texts are divided at least in two senses: firstly, only the actions more advantageous for the state national actors are the ones shown in order to “demonstrate” that they are obeying the law efficiently; and, secondly, the texts are written in order to approve such actions in a positive way reducing the possibilities to be rejected by readers.

Thus, informative texts highlight the “rescues” of migrants and their protection by the state national authorities, so it is confirmed the protection of migrants’ human rights of the Mexican migration policy which has been legally expressed in the Migration Law (Ley de Migración) of 2011 and its regulations of 2012. For instance, a news headline reads: “INM rescues 147 abandoned migrants in Veracruz” and its lead paragraph:

The National Institution of Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración) [INM] rescued 147 migrants native to Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, who were abandoned without water and food by presumed human traffickers in a zone near to Los Naranjos, in Ozuluama, Veracruz (Morales, 2017).

Besides underlining INM’s actions, the way the news is written is to generate a positive opinion about its behavior by defining the action as a –rescue–, and by including specific characteristics of the event which give a very positive image of such institution’s actions in favor of the protection of migrants:

Personnel of the Institution provided medical assistance and gave water and food to the group of 48 minors (14 unaccompanied) and 99 adults, who were native to Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua (Morales, 2017).

When referring to actions involving detention or deportation of migrants, i.e. the phase of implementing the policy of migration control, informative texts usually use euphemisms to “present as blameless” the conduct of migration authorities and tend to stress the fact that they are protecting the human rights legally expressed in the migration policy.

Therefore, we should wonder at what extent such kind of informative texts gather information of real journalistic interest, otherwise they are only texts at the service of governmental advertising. Whatever be the case, it seems inappropriate the way in which press releases are transcribed, following the logics of routine journalism. Since it is assumed that informative texts are objective, media must be especially careful in defining what deserves to be news and what does not.

2) The promises of state national actors regarding the future implementation of the policy are part of informative texts as well:

Mexico assured Central America that he will treat with dignity and with great respect the human rights of irregular migrants of that region who are transiting Mexican territory heading the United States (Meléndez, 2014).

As it can be observed, such promises may underline the human rights aspect of the migration policy avoiding references to the security and control aspect the same policy establishes, and which to a very large extent are the response to the request of other social actors –defenders of migrants and state foreign actors–.

Three. How migration policy should be and its implementation. The state national voices are referred to in the informative texts regarding how migration policy should be and its implementation. From a stance of state national actors some voices question the actions of government.

Thus far we conclude that informative texts do not always gather appropriately the voices of state actors because they reproduce their press releases and statements with little criticism, giving rise to texts that at their best are irrelevant and insignificant, and at worst their content could be considered as advertising. An example of such extent to which texts fall into bad quality journalism is the reproduction of phrases similar to slogans: “The [INM] clarified that ‘with these actions the compromise to protect the physical integrity and the human rights of migrants, regardless their nationality and their condition as migrants, is confirmed.’” (Notimex, 2013).

The voices of defenders of migrants displayed in routine journalism in “migration policy” and “crime and victimization”

The analyzed informative texts bring up the critical declarations of whom we have called defenders of migrants –priests, activists, among others–, concerning the Mexican migration policy and its implementation, reporting certain situations and demanding a better behavior towards Central American migrants in transit through Mexico. In the midst of the humanitarian crisis of the NNAM several news appeared from:

- International organizations. “UN urges to warrant migrants’ rights” (Notimex, 2014), whose lead paragraph mentions: “the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, urged origin, transit and destination countries to respect migrants’ rights, especially when it comes to minors travelling without an adult” (Notimex, 2014).
- The Catholic Church. “Legal and safe migration they demand” (Gómez and Reséndiz, 2014). In its body some declarations from Pope Francis are retaken, read by the Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin: “A change of attitude towards migrants is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization, all typical of a ‘throwaway culture’, towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter” (Gómez and Reséndiz, 2014).
- Non-governmental organizations. “Reports of raids in the train ‘El Diablo’ (Sánchez, 2014). In the second paragraph of the informative text is underlined that “the Coalition Defender of Migrants (Coalición Pro Defensa del Migrante) reported the detention of migrants in the thoroughfare as they were getting off the train, the only argument to act against them was that ‘reports of citizens were received for alleged disturbances’” (Sánchez, 2014).

Closely related to this, the voices of defenders are displayed in informative texts which report criminal actions whose victims are migrants. Events do not become news directly but rather through the reports of defenders of migrants.

A news headline reads: “New kidnappings of migrants reported” (Barboza, 2013) its lead and second paragraph note:

Kidnapped Central American migrants travelling in the Tenosique-Coatzacoalcos cargo train, a route controlled by the organized crime, were taken from May 14th to 17th and authorities did nothing to prevent it, said priest Tomás González del Castillo, director of the migrants’ house Hogar Refugio para Personas Migrantes La 72, located in Tenosique, he specified that such event was publicly known until last Sunday in order to protect the kidnapped victims and for whose rescue even 3 million dollars were paid (Barboza, 2013).

The defenders’ voice in both subjects “migration policy” and “crime and victimization” are mentioned in informative texts, which transform these social actors’ declarations and information into news, their reputation and credibility make it “unnecessary” to contrast such information according to the practice of routine journalism. In such texts defenders of migrants raise their voice in favor of the voiceless, migrants, or at least in favor of those who do not have access to the means they do.

## Migrants' voices displayed in investigative journalism in "migrants and transit"

Migrants' voices are present in investigative reportages where journalists show the reality of illegal Central American migration in transit through the stories of migrants and their experiences during transit. Although in such reportages the voices of various social actors appear, according to the maximum of investigative journalism of recovering what the involved people say, it is migrants and their stories what gains more prominence.

In "Migrants, in the way of hell" (*Migrantes, en la ruta del infierno*) (Cha'ca and Quadratín, 2015) the story of six Central American migrants heading towards the United States is told, they go through Chiapas and Oaxaca facing diverse dangers: "the uniformed ones" (agents of INM) and thieves. The six protagonists soon fall into a robber hands, armed with a shotgun, forces them to take off their clothes and steals all their belongings. With no backpacks and no money they end the day in a shelter. The news adds the information and reports of the defenders of migrants about danger zones for migrants and about the increase of crime and migrants' vulnerability.

In "El diablo', the new train of migrants" ('El diablo', nuevo tren de migrantes) (Sánchez, 2013) the story of a Guatemalan couple is told concerning their transit through Mexico through the so-called Pacífico route. During their journey they had to deal with various criminal groups and presumed state officers as well as with the hot climate as they traveled above cargo trains. Information is added about the religious and non-religious defenders of migrants, civil servants and international organizations when referring to the routes by which migrants and state officers transit through Mexico.

Since the journalist is the active agent of investigation, the declarations of migrants captured in interviews and displayed in informative texts are spontaneous and scarcely developed because they were gathered and shaped according to the journalist's discursive interests.

Such investigation reportages present migrants –as seen in the examples– as people in search of a better life, and underline, critically, how they are persecuted by the Mexican migration police and how they are victims of crime. These are informative texts in which journalists stand for migrants by creating similar discourses to those of the defenders, and which allow to make society conscious about the trials migrants in transit through Mexico face by telling their stories.

The qualitative analysis allows us to complement the inferences regarding power, explaining how routine and investigative journalism use in different ways the voices of social actors. In this sense, in the journalistic discourses of *El Universal* –on illegal Central American migration in transit– the power of state national social actors is greater than that of other social actors due to their constant presence in routine journalism as well as their ability to take advantage of its functioning in order to influence the features of informative texts: their subjects, language, aspects to be considered in news, etc. In other words, they show great power *over* and *in* journalistic discourse.

However, the power of state national actors is not absolute since –as shown in the analyzed informative texts– the defenders of migrants take part in routine journalism as well, having an important part *over* journalistic discourse. Likewise, in the informative texts of *El Universal* the anti-hegemonic discourses of such social actors who oppose to the discourses of the state national actors are displayed, therefore, they also exert considerable power *in* the discourse.

Little presence do the voices of the migrants in transit have in the informative texts on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico of *El Universal*. Nevertheless, this does not corresponds to an equal part of power *over* and *in* journalistic discourses on the migration phenomenon of which they are the protagonists. It is because their presence satisfies the informative interests and the initiative of journalists but not those of migrants themselves despite being texts with discourses seeking the good of migrants, since journalists construct similar discourses to the ones of the defenders of migrants.

Other social actors have less presence in informative texts. The voices of “state foreign actors” are part of routine journalism but are much less important than “state national actors.” The voices of “coyotes” are scarcely present and are mainly referred to by investigative journalism. In both cases with the implications the practiced journalism has, as seen before, in how place is given to other social actors. The great absent part is citizenry, whose discourses, attitudes and opinions do not appear in the analyzed *corpus*.

## Conclusions

The informative texts on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico of *El Universal* gather to a great extent the voices of various social actors, i.e. most of journalistic discourses are formed with extracts of other social actors’ discourses. However, not all actors are referred to in the same way nor with the same frequency.

As it was expected, state actors were referred to in more occasions and in a peculiar way by routine journalism which allows us to deduce that they were the ones who exerted more power *over* and *in* the journalistic discourses on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico. In second place there would be the defenders of migrants, who would have great access to the discourses of routine journalism as well. If we give an account on the content of the discourses of both types of actors, it could be seen that they are antagonistic discourses, therefore, *El Universal* would be providing in its pages elements to feed the necessary social debate on such phenomenon.

The voices of migrants themselves are incorporated in the newspaper through investigative journalism. Their presence and the way in which their voices are presented show the scarce power they have *over* and *in* the discourse. Nonetheless their presence was greater than expected and it is relevant in terms of making citizens aware about the “problem” of illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico.

The results obtained show that the analyzed informative texts correspond more to Caminos-Marcet's scheme of routine journalism (1997), rather than to the scheme of political advertising proposed by Chomsky and Herman (2001). Firstly, although routine journalism and its sources predominate, not all of them could be considered “routine sources” in the sense of Chomsky and Herman's idea (2001), as it is clearly seen when space is given to the defenders of migrants. Secondly, *El Universal* gives a significant place to critical discourses with the performances of government raised by defenders of migrants and other actors; voices manifestly antagonistic to the discourses of state national actors on the Mexican migration policy and its implementation regarding the phenomenon of illegal migration in transit through Mexico.

Even though routine journalism predominates concerning our main subject, *El Universal* boasts in its interest to complement it with informative texts generated as a result of investigative journalism –where it tends to advocate for the defense of migrants-. Whatever be the case, it seems praiseworthy that such newspaper increases investigative journalism in general and stresses more the state national actors in particular. As well as the fact that it takes a more active and critical role in how it presents the discourses of social actors in routine journalism, i.e. to select more carefully what is not news, ensure a clear and appropriate writing in journalistic texts, among many other possible improvements.

Future researches could investigate and analyze more directly and deeply the established relationships of power between different social actors

and journalists who cover everything related to migration, which have great relevance in determining the content of journalistic discourses; besides examining the mechanisms of power which generate them. Concerning such relationships, in this paper we have been only able to draw limited inferences.

In addition, another matter for future researches is to analyze with more detail the substantial content of journalistic discourses of the Mexican press, considering that they reflect the discourses of other social actors and that are key in how Mexican society understands the issues concerning migration.

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## Appendix

Table 1

**Number of news concerning illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico per year, 2012-2017\***

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Number of texts	20	25	45	18	15	8	131

Source: author's compilation based on the chosen texts of "*El Universal*".

\*Only the newspaper's copies of odd months were examined. Year 2017 covers only up to July.

Table 2

**Social actors referred to in the informative texts on illegal Central American migration in transit**

Actors	Description
Academy	Researchers and experts in the migration in transit phenomenon.
State national actors	Civil servants and agents from different institutions of Mexico: National Institute of Migration (INM), Secretary of Government, chancellery, representatives, senators, among more.
State foreign actors	Civil servants and agents from the different institutions from Central America and the United States (ambassadors, presidents, migration authorities, among others.)
Coyotes	They transport migrants through international borders and Mexican territory in exchange of certain amount of money.
Defenders	Defenders of migrants: religious people, civil society organizations, international organizations, National Human Rights Commission.
Transmigrants	Illegal Central American migrants in transit through Mexico.

Source: author's compilation.

Table 3

**Features of the informative texts according to the type of journalism**

Feature	Routine journalism	Investigative journalism
Main sources of information	Supremacy of official sources. The sources of other social actors are usually filtered by the official source itself.	Non-official sources. Usually diverse sources of information. Polyphony of voices.
Personal language or else's	The language used has more elements external to journalism practice; use of other people's lexicon stands out: technical terms and euphemisms.	Informative language has its own style, one of its main features is clarity (Martínez Albertos, 1974).
Field work	Abundant transcriptions of press releases from official sources or covering of press releases, yet they do not imply true field work.	By and large, they denote the development of field work. For example, they present extracts from interviews carried out by the journalist.
Contrasting information	Is not evident whether this process was made or not.	It may express directly that there was a process of contrasting information.
Type of informative text and length	Most commonly are news of short or mid length.	Large news, reports and reportages abound.

Source: author's compilation.

Table 4

**Typology of informative texts on illegal Central American migration in transit according to the different subjects addressed.**

Subjects	Description
“Coyoting”	With regards to the activity of “coyotes” and “polleros”.
Crime and victimization	They tell about the diverse types of crime and violence against migrants by various social actors (criminals, corrupt authorities) and/or show migrants as victims or potential victims of such crimes.
Scale of flows	Refer to the numbers of migration flows both in transit and deported –especially natives to Central America– and to the changes produced in them.
Migrants and transit	The stories of migrants are gathered during their transit through Mexico, and their vicissitudes during their journey.
Migration policy	The Mexican migration policy with regards to Central American migration in transit and the migrants in transit, and its implementation.
Other	Other subjects: shelter for migrants

Source: author's compilation.

Table 5

**Frequency of the presence of social actors' voices\* in texts on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico according to the type of journalism, 2012-2017\*\***

	Routine	Investigative	Total
Academy	5	0	5
State national actors	52	2	54
State foreign actors	12	1	13
Coyotes	0	4	4
Defenders	29	6	35
Transmigrants	4	13	17
None	2	1	3
Total	104	27	131
%	79.4	20.6	100.0

Source: author's compilation based on the chosen texts from "El Universal".

\*When the news makes reference to the voices of two or more social actors, only the most relevant is considered.

\*\*Only the newspaper's copies of odd months were examined. Year 2017 covers only up to July.

Table 6

**Frequency of the presence of social actors' voices\* in texts on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico according to the subjects addressed, 2012-2017\*\***

	Coyoting	Crime and victimization	Magnitude of numbers	Migrants and transit	Migration policy	Other
Academy	0	1	1	0	2	1
State national actors	1	6	7	3	35	2
State foreign actors	1	1	3	0	7	1
Coyotes	4	0	0	0	0	0
Defenders	2	12	2	0	14	5
Transmigrants	0	2	0	12	2	1
None	0	1	0	1	1	0
Total	8	23	13	16	61	10

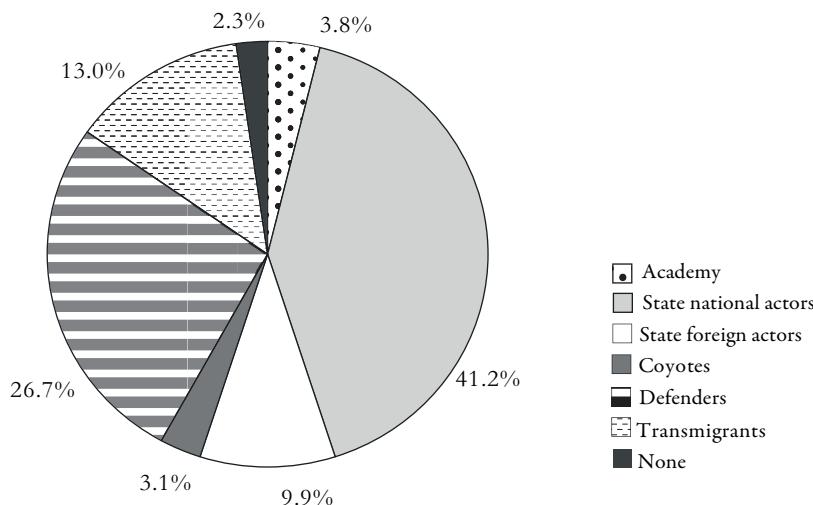
Source: author's compilation based on the chosen texts from "*El Universal*".

\* When the news makes reference to the voices of two or more social actors, only the most relevant is considered.

\*\* Only the newspaper's copies of odd months were examined. Year 2017 covers only up to July.

Chart 1

**Distribution in percentage of the presence of social actors\* in informative texts on illegal Central American migration in transit through Mexico, 2012-2017\*\***



Source: author's compilation based on the chosen texts from "El Universal".

\* When the news makes reference to the voices of two or more social actors, only the most relevant is considered.

\*\* Only the newspaper's copies of odd months were examined. Year 2017 covers only up to July.

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