

# Presidential Language Semantics

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## Introduction

In the political sphere, language plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy decisions related to politics. Leaders in this arena utilize language as an instrument to effectively communicate their ideas, establish their intellectual authority, and project a scholarly image to their peers and constituents. This essay will analyze the language used by former United States presidents, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, during their time in office from 2011 to 2019. Specifically, we will compare our findings from Voyant to propose interpretations substantiated by the data, focusing on the topic of immigration and analyzing the key terms and collocations associated with it in their tweets of Obama between 2011 to 2016 and of Trump between 2011 to 2019. As immigration is a contentious issue that has risen to the forefront of political discussions in the United States, it will be interesting to observe how these two leaders approached the issue of immigration through their language choices over time.

## Result

To begin with, using Voyant, we identified the most frequent keywords and collocates associated with immigration in Obama’s and Trump’s tweets. For Obama, the most frequent collocates were "reform", "fix", "fixing", "immigration", and "economy" (view in figure 1).

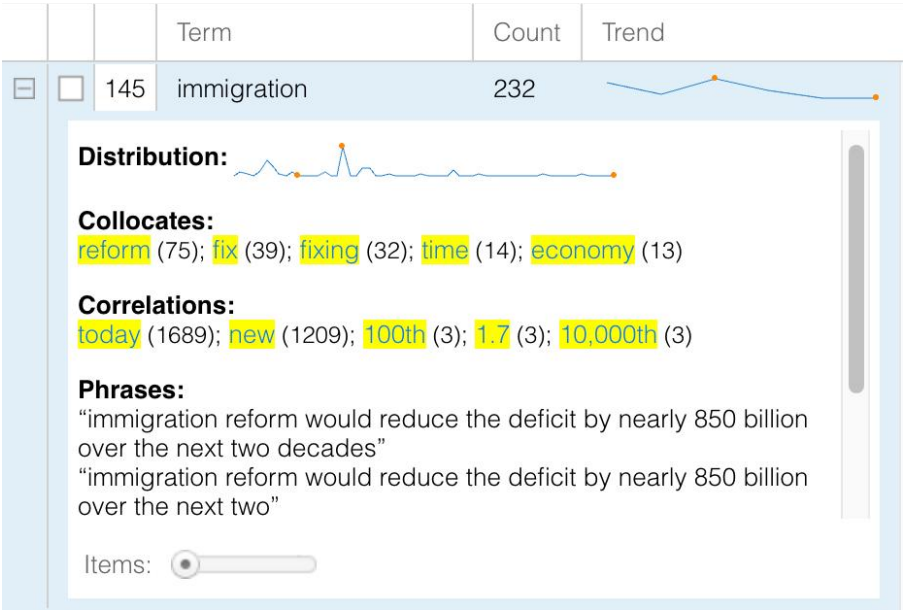


Figure 1. the Count, Trend, Distribution, Collocations, Correlations and Phrases of the term "immigration" in Obama's twitter corpus.

For Trump, the most frequent collocates were "laws", "weak", "border", "reform" and "stop"(view in figure 2).



Figure 2. the Count, Trend, Distribution, Collocations, Correlations and Phrases of the term "immigration" in Trump's twitter corpus.

Analyzing the distribution of these collocates over time, we found that Obama's language use was consistent throughout his presidency, with "immigration" peaking in 2013 when he proposed a comprehensive immigration reform bill that aimed to create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living in the United States (see in figure 3). "

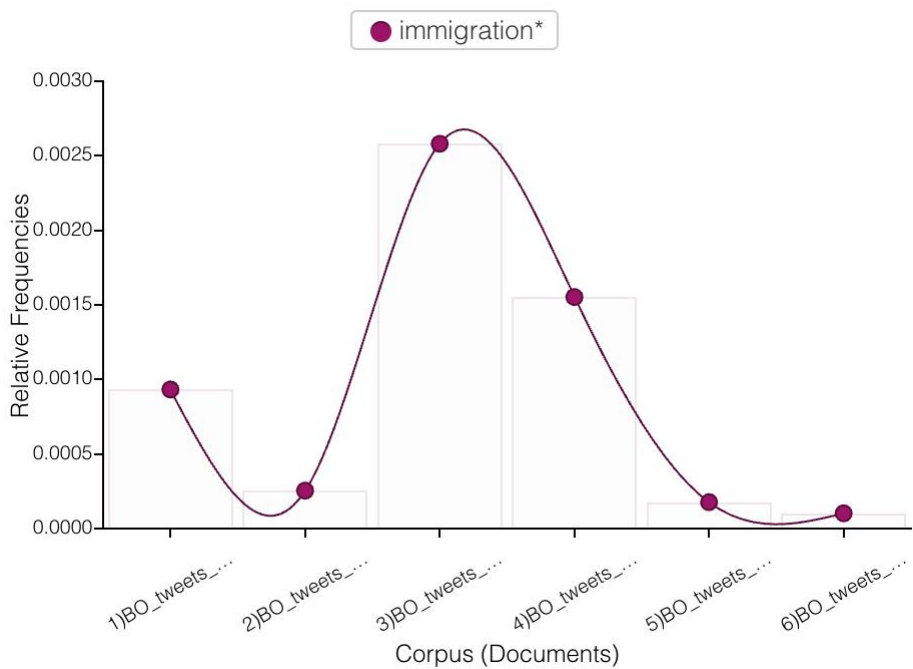


Figure 3. Trends in the use of the term "immigration" on Obama's Twitter from 2011 to 2016.

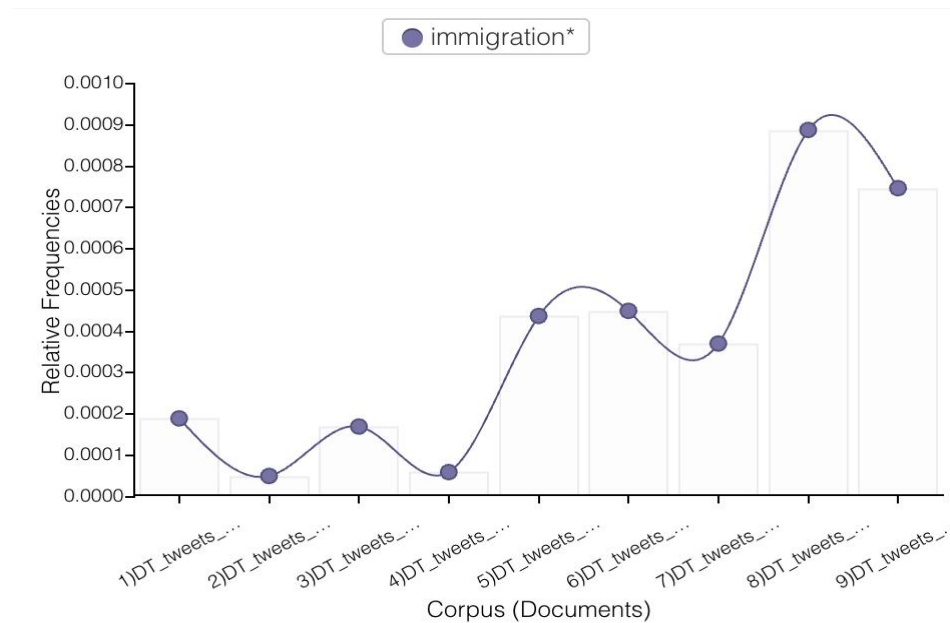


Figure 4. Trends in the use of the term "immigration" on Trump's Twitter from 2011 to 2019.

Trump's immigration tweets peaked in his Twitter corpus's trend in 2018. This could be the reason why the Trump administration implemented several contentious immigration policies. For example, the policy of family separation and the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). Furthermore, 2018 was an election year, with immigration playing a significant role in many congressional races. Trump's "immigration" tweets could have been an attempt to energize voters ahead of the midterm elections.

## Discussion

Upon analyzing the immigration policies of Trump and Obama, a clear contrast in their attitudes toward immigrants becomes apparent. While both presidents use distinct language to communicate their stance on the issue, it is evident that they differ significantly in terms of policy-making approach as well. While Trump's focus was on stricter enforcement of border controls and deportation policies, Obama advocated for comprehensive immigration reform that would provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. For example, in two tweets from 2013, Obama wrote, "It's long past time to reform an immigration system that right now doesn't serve America well as it should." "Let's fix our broken immigration system so we're welcoming more talented workers, entrepreneurs from around the world." These tweets reflect Obama's belief that immigrants have a positive impact on American society and highlight the need for comprehensive immigration reform to maximize these benefits. Trump's immigration policy focused on increasing border security measures and implementing harsher enforcement of existing immigration laws. The immigration border wall policy was a central pillar of his immigration policy, and he frequently used language emphasizing the need for stronger border

controls and more restrictive immigration policies. For instance, in a tweet posted in 2013, Trump wrote "We need to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it." "They are laughing at us, we must secure our borders now and stop the flow." "Drugs, crime and rapists are pouring in." This tweet is just one example of the many instances in which Trump has used inflammatory language to describe immigrants, often painting them with a broad brush as criminals and a threat to national security.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, It's also worth noting that both two former presidents Obama and Trump have used Twitter as a tool for communication and to express their opinions on immigration topic. Overall, based on our analysis, we propose that there are clear differences in the language and rhetoric used by Obama and Trump on immigration. The language used by Trump and Obama when discussing immigration policy shows a stark contrast in their attitudes toward immigrants and immigration reform. Obama's language was more constructive, suggesting a focus on creating a more inclusive and comprehensive policy that recognizes the humanity and dignity of undocumented immigrants. While Trump's language was more negative, suggesting a focus on punishment and exclusion, with a particular emphasis on physical barriers such as the border wall.