

# A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordanian Newspapers

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## Abstract

The present study employs corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to investigate the attitudes of Jordanian news towards the Syrian refugee crisis. The corpus of the research, which consists of 10140 articles (Word types: 103170 and Word tokens: 1956589), were taken from the Petra news agency between 2016 and 2018. Antconc Tools Version 3.4.4w was used to analyze the data. The study used corpus statistical tools of collocates and concordance. Collocates tool used to create a list of 200 collocates associated with the words: /lad3i?/ 'refugee', /lad3i?i:n/ 'refugees', /su:ri:/ 'Syrian', and /su:ryi:n/ 'Syrians'. These collocates were organized into two thematic categories: 'services and resources' and 'Jordanians and Syrians'. The study used a concordance tool to unveil the attitudes of newspapers towards the Syrian refugee crisis. The findings of the study showed that Jordanians see Syrians as "brothers" and "guests". However, Jordanian newspapers overstated the negative effect of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian economy, education, healthcare, etc. Jordanians were frustrated because Syrians compete with them on their resources and governmental services.

**Keywords:** corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, Syrian refugees, Antconc, newspapers

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

When the conflict started in Syria in 2011, Jordan has suffered from the negative impact of a massive influx of Syrian refugees. According to UNHCR, Jordan now hosts more than 1.6 million Syrians, of whom around 700,000 registered with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. More than eighty percent of these Syrians live in Jordanian cities and villages, especially in the northern district, as opposed to refugee camps. UNHCR reveals that 29% of registered Syrian refugees live in the capital Amman, 25% in Mafraq (a city in north Jordan), and 21% in Irbid (a city in North Jordan). Nowadays, Syrian refugees constitute more than 10 percent of Jordan's population, which has influenced the social, political, and economic situation in Jordan. It is not a secret that Syrian refugees compete with Jordanians for their employment opportunities, healthcare, shelter, education, and scarce resources.

### 1.2 A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis Approach

Corpus linguistics (CL) studies language based on samples of naturally occurring language (Hunston, 2002). It is worth noting that corpus-based studies became the new trend/method in contemporary linguistics. Corpus linguistics is used a lot by researchers to investigate different aspects of language, such as syntax, semantics, language teaching and learning, translation, discourse analysis, etc.

One of the exciting fields that may be studied by corpus linguistics is critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA has been examined mainly by three frameworks: Fairclough's (1995) social framework, Wodak's (2001) historical framework, and Van Dijk's (1998, 1997, 1996, 2001) cognitive framework. For Wodak (2001), CDA is interested in the ideologies and agendas implemented within discourses. For him, discourse is structured with historical factors and accumulative knowledge. For Van Dijk (2001), CDA is "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (p. 352). For Fairclough's (2001), CDA studies texts as forms of social practices. Thus, discourse is not merely a set of sentences; instead, it reflects ideological implications

and dominations.

The integration of CDA and CA resulted in the rise of corpus-assisted critical discourse studies (CACDAS) (Partington, 2004, 2006). According to Baker (2006), CACDA has gained growing attention from scholars. They were concerned with research that addresses immigrants, social inequalities marginalization of some minorities, and political conflicts.

The current study uses the CACDA to explore the attitudes of Jordanian newspapers towards Syrian refugees. It aims at answering the following questions:

- What do concordance analysis of the words “lad3i? ‘refugee’, lad3i?in ‘refugees’, suri: ‘Syrian’, and suryi:n ‘Syrians’ in the corpus reveal?
- What do the words “lad3i? ‘refugee’, lad3i?in ‘refugees’, suri: ‘Syrian’, and suryi:n ‘Syrians’ collocate with?
- What is the attitude of Jordanians towards the Syrian refugee crisis?

## 2. Literature Review

Kandil (2009) combined Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus linguistics to investigate how media discourse represents the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The study focuses on the use of the lexical item ‘terrorism’ in three corpora of news reports collected from BBC, Al-Jazeera, and CNN news networks. The analysis of the data showed each network adopted different attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. CNN supports the Western/Israeli position and Al-Jazeera refuses that position. The BBC was less engaged than the other networks.

Salama (2011) used the corpus method and critical discourse analysis to investigate how Wahhabi-Saudi Islam been ideologically recontextualized across post-9/11 opposing discourses via collocation. The study found out that that CDA corpus methods opened new horizons of the critical study of collocations at methodological and theoretical levels.

Su and Xiao (2015) used critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics and to explore the representation of the ‘Chinese dream’ among both Chinese citizens and officials based on a corpus collected from the Chinese press. The data revealed that the Chinese Dream had been successfully promoted as a slogan.

Aluthman (2018) used Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the depiction of immigration in the Brexit corpus. The corpus of the study consisted of 108,452,923 words collected from news, tweets, and blogs related to the Brexit context. The study used corpus-assisted statistical tools, such as collocation, keyword, and concordance, to analyze the data. The frequency findings revealed that immigration is one of the critical issues in the corpus. Concordance analysis of ‘immigration’ and ‘immigrants’ showed both negative and positive attitudes toward immigrants in the EU debate.

Tagnin and Teixeira (2012) used a corpus-based methodology to compile a bilingual, mono-directional English-Portuguese glossary of cooking terms. They gathered two sub-corpora: one in English and one in Brazilian Portuguese, consisting of cooking recipes collected from the Internet. After collecting the data, the researchers used WordSmith software to generate frequency and keyword lists.

Ensslin and Johnson (2006) investigated how newspapers represent themes relating to language and linguistics by using a corpus-based methodology. The corpus consisted of all articles from two British newspapers, The Guardian and The Times. The study employed the software program WordSmith Tools to identify those keywords that collocate with the words “language”, “languages”, “linguistic” and “linguistics”. The findings of the study showed exciting ways in which language-related issues are represented in Newspapers.

Baker et al. (2013) employed a corpus-based methodology to investigate the representation of Muslims in British newspapers. The corpus used in the study is a 143 million words collected from British newspaper articles (1998–2009). The researchers used the Sketch Engine tool to analyze the noun collocates of the word “Muslim”. The collocates were classified into different groups: conflict, characterizing/differentiating attributes, religion, culture, ethnic/national identity, and group/organizations. The findings of the study revealed that the ‘conflict’ category was lexically rich compared with other categories. The study also found out that the most frequent collocates with the word “Muslim” were “the Muslim world” and “the Muslim community”. The analysis of these two pairs showed that Muslims were viewed as easily offended, isolated, and in war with non-Muslims.

Kim (2014) used a quantitative, corpus-based approach to explore the discursive practices of North Korea in US news. The corpus consisted of all texts taken from The New York Times, Newsweek, and CNN published between 1998 and 2010. The corpus composed of 69,000,175 tokens and 173,444 types: NYT (10,116 articles; 7,363,431 tokens); CNN (9054 articles; 59,929,368 tokens); and Newsweek (906 articles; 1,707,376 tokens).

The results of the study suggested that US news divided the world into allies or enemies. The analysis also showed that US news viewed North Korea as a ‘rogue’ country and as a threat to world peace.

Concerning the Syrian refugee crisis, the researcher did not find many corpus-based studies that explore the attitudes towards Syrian refugees. For example, Ulum (2016) used Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the ideologies constructed in English, German, and Turkish news headlines. The study found that the western media (English and German) represented the arrival of the Syrian refugees to Europe as a threat or a risk; the Turkish media viewed the issue from a humanitarian perspective.

To the best knowledge of the author, no study tackled the attitudes towards Syrian refugees in Jordan by using Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA). Thus, this study attempts to bridge this gap by examining the attitudes of the Jordanian press towards the Syrian refugees using CACDA.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The corpus of the current study consists of 10140 articles (Word types: 103170 and Word tokens: 1956589) taken from the Petra news agency between 2016 and 2018.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

The study adopts the methodological synergy approach coined by Baker (2006). It makes use of discourse analysis methods and corpus-assisted statistical tools, including keyword, concordance analysis and collocation. Antconc Tools Version 3.4.4 was used to analyze the data. This software provides several functions by which the behavior of words can be studied, such as Wordlist, concordance, collocates, keywords and N-gram/cluster. This study uses collocates and Concordance function.

The researcher used the collocates tool to create a list of collocates associated with the words: *lad3i?* ‘refugee’, *lad3i?in* ‘refugees’, */su:ri:/* ‘Syrian’, and */su:ryi:n/* ‘Syrians’. However, before searching for these words and generating a list, it is essential to refine our search. The function words, including prepositions, articles, possessives, and conjunctions were removed from the list by using a stop list. It’s crucial to remove these words from the list since they are ranked high on the list, and they are irrelevant to our study.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Results of Collocates Tool

The researcher used the collocates tool to create a list of collocations associated with the words */lad3i?/* ‘refugee’, *lad3i?in* ‘refugees’, */su:ri:/* ‘Syrian’, and */su:ryi:n/* ‘Syrians’. The researcher then took the first 200 collates and organize them into two thematic categories, as is evident in Table 1. It is worth noting that the researcher classified 200 collocates into many categories. Still, the study is concerned with two groups: */xadamat wa mawarid/* ‘services and resources’ and */al?urdini:n wa alsuryi:n/* ‘Jordanians and Syrians’:

Table 1. Thematic categories

Thematic categories	collocates
Jordanians and Syrians	استضاف <i>istaḍaf</i> ‘hosted’
	استقبل <i>istaqbal</i> ‘welcomed/hosted’
	الأشقاء <i>al?iqa?</i> ‘brothers’
	إخواننا <i>?ixwanuna</i> ‘our brothers’
	الاخوة <i>Al?xwah</i> ‘brothers’
	أشقائنا <i>?iqa?na</i> ‘brothers’
services and resources	”صحة” <i>siḥah</i> ‘health’
	”تعليم” <i>ta?lim</i> ‘education’
	”وظائف” <i>wada?if</i> ‘jobs’
	”اقتصاد” <i>?iqtisad</i> ‘economy’
	”سكن” <i>sakan</i> ‘housing’
	”مياه” <i>miyah</i> ‘water’

#### 4.2 Results of Concordance Tool

After creating thematic categories, the researcher used concordance tool to investigate recurrent patterns and the use of these patterns in context. The thematic categories were discussed below.

## 4.2.1 Jordanians and Syrians

The first category is concerned with the type of relationship between Jordanians and Syrians. Using collocate tool reveal that Jordanians represent Syrians as *الأشقاء* /alʔʃiqaʔ ‘brothers’ (Freq: 132, Stat: 9.76023), *إخواننا* ʔixwanuna ‘our brothers’ (Freq: 53, Stat: 2.87043), *الأخوة* /ʔʌʔxwəh ‘brothers’ (Freq: 30, stat: 4.34912) and *أشقائنا* ʔʃiqaʔna ‘brothers’ (Freq: 21, Stat: 3.069341). Consider the following concordance line:

Hit	KWIC
1	(بترا) مش-- والنازحين اللاجئين السوريين الأشقاء انشؤها سابقا وبالتالي زيادة عدد المستفيدين من
2	وأثرت بشكل كبير على المملكة الى السوريين الأشقاء اعباء جسيمة بسبب لجوء مئات الاف من
3	جمعية الاماني الخيرية مع بالتعاون السوريين الأشقاء عجلون ٢٥ شباط (بترا) -وزعت الحملة السعودية لنصرة
4	من البرامج والمشاريع العديد تنفذ السوريين الأشقاء وقال السمعان ان الحملة الوطنية السعودية لنصرة
5	التخصصية في مخيم الزعتر عياداتها عبر السوريين الأشقاء تموز (بترا) -تعاملت الحملة الوطنية السعودية لنصرة
6	المقيلة. واعلنت هولندا الفترة في السوريين الأشقاء مجموع التعهدات ١٥٠ مليون دولار ستساهم في مساعدة
7	المدنية والسارية من خل الامراض من السوريين الأشقاء الصحي (شقيقة صحتك تهمني) الهادف الى تحسين
8	وزاد ذلك بالطلب على اللاجئين من السوريين الأشقاء محافظة المفرق كانت اولى المحافظات التي استقبلت
9	ان سفارة دولة الإمارات الى منوها، السوريين الأشقاء متطوعي الهلال الأحمر المقيمين في المخيم لمساعدة
10	أن الاردن قطع شوطا الى وأشار. السوريين الأشقاء التي حققها وعدم تأثرها سلبا بسبب استضافة
11	تعزيز السلوك والتواصل على والعمل السوريين الأشقاء لكل من يعيش على هذه الارض وبخاصة
12	عليما ان الدعم الذ الدكتور وبين. السوريين الأشقاء بلغ عدد مراجعي العيادات ٢٧٠٠٨ منهم ٩٢١٣ مراجعا من
13	في الحصول على ما ماناتهم وتخفيف السوريين الأشقاء لتتمكن من مساعدة اكبر عدد ممكن من
14	في مختلف المجال وتثقيفهم وتعليمهم السوريين الأشقاء وضمن رؤية واضحة الاهداف والوسائل تسعى لدعم
15	الرعاية الصحية الفضل ل لهم وتقدم السوريين الأشقاء الوزارة ومراكزها الصحية تستقبل اعدادا كبيرة من
16	كبيرة منهم الامر الذ اعداد ودخول السوريين الأشقاء الاردنية كانت دائما مفتوحة امام اللاجئين من
17	المدير الاقليمي لل وبين. السوريين اللاجئين الأشقاء الملابس تناسب مختلف الاعمار بواقع ٢٨٠٨ فردا من
18	وان ١٣٠ الف ل، السوريين والنازحين اللاجئين الأشقاء السبي الدائم من الحملة تلبية مختلف احتياجات

Figure 1. Collocates of Jordanians and Syrians

As it is clear from the concordance line above, the word “الأشقاء” alʔʃiqaʔ ‘brothers’ collocates with “السوريين” alsuryun ‘Syrians’ which suggests that despite the negative impact of Syrian refugee crisis on Jordan; Jordanians viewed Syrians as their brothers. Jordanian feel that they are obliged to stand with their “brothers” in their crisis. It is essential to understand that this response to Syrian refugees is not new to Jordanians since Jordan hosts many refugees through history and treat them as brothers.

Other words that collocate with “اللاجئين لسوريين” ‘Syrian refugees’ are “استضاف” istaḍaf ‘hosted’ (freq 100, stat: 9.53287) and “استقبل” istaqbal ‘welcomed/hosted’ (freq: 40, Stat: 6.19645). The use of استضاف istaḍaf ‘hosted’ is significant since it indicates that Jordanian treats Syrians as guests. Jordanians are known for their hospitality to their guest. Also, it is worth noting that the word “طرد” tard ‘expel’ came once with اللاجئين السوريين ‘Syrian refugees’ and it is not used within the Jordanian context.

A further examination of the word “استضاف” istaḍaf ‘hosted’ indicates that this word collocates with “أعباء” ʔaʕbaʔ ‘burdens’ (Freq: 20, Stat: 5.76091). Consider the concordance line below:

7	كما شارك جلالاته في. السوريين اللاجئين استضافة أعباء السورية، وسل دعم الأردن في تحمل	٧
8	(بترا) ار-- السوريين اللاجئين استضافة أعباء يتعلق بدعم جهود المملكة التنموية وإعاتها لتحمل	٨
9	مدركاً التحديات ا، السوريين اللاجئين استضافة أعباء الدائعاكي استعداد حكومة بلاده لدعم الأردن لتحمل	٩
10	وحضر المباحثات س. السوريين اللاجئين استضافة أعباء الكبيرة والمقدرة التي يبذلها الأردن في تحمل	١٠
11	(-- 4ر١ مليون لاجيء سوري يقارب ما استضافة أعباء جهود على الصعيد الوطني في تحمل	١١
12	(-- 4ر١ مليون لاجيء سوري يقارب ما استضافة أعباء جهود على الصعيد الوطني في تحمل	١٢

Figure 2. Collocates of /istaḍaf/

The use of “أعباء” /ʔaʕbaʔ/ ‘burdens’ suggests that the Syrian refugees became a burden on Jordan after four years of the Syrian crisis. Jordanians see the Syrian refugees as quests and brothers. After four years of war in Syria, Jordanians believe that Syrians affected the sources and economy of Jordan negatively.

#### 4.2.2 Services and Resources

This category includes the words that refer to the resources of Jordan and the services presented by the Jordanian government to the Syrian refugees. This category is further classified into subcategories, such as “صحة” /sihah/ ‘health’, “تعليم” /taʕlim/ ‘education’, “وظائف” /wadaʕif/ ‘jobs’, “اقتصاد” /ʔiqtiʕad/ ‘economy’, “سكن” /sakan/ ‘housing’, “مياه” /miyah/ ‘water’, etc. The study found out that the most frequent words were those which were used with the subcategories تعليم /taʕlim/ ‘education’ and صحة /sihah/ ‘health’.

#### 4.2.3 Education

Before the Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan's educational system is considered a well-developed one. However, the arrival of the Syrian refugees lead to shortened class times, overcrowded classrooms, and double-shifting. The study found that in services and resources category, words related to education are the most frequent collocates with “اللاجئين السوريين” ‘Syrian refugees’. This subcategory includes different terms, such as الطلبة /altalabah/ ‘students’, المدارس /almdaris/ ‘schools’ and تعليم /taʕlim/ ‘education’ as it is evident in the following table:

Table 2. Keywords related to education

Word	Freq.	Stat
الطلبة ‘students’	98	9.75362
المدارس ‘schools’	52	7.54362
تعليم ‘education’	31	6.73628

A concordance line of the word “الطلبة” ‘students’ is presented below:

Hit	KWIC
3	الملتحقين في المدارس الحكومية خلال الطلبة السوريين التربية والتعليم الدكتور محمد الذبيبات، ان عدد
4	في العام المقبل، لاسيما في ظل الطلبة السوريين تقديم الدعم المناسب لتمكين الوزارة من استيعاب
5	الأردنيين، واستيعابهم في السوريين بسوية مع الطلبة التربية والتعليم في توفير الخدمة التعليمية للطلبة
6	الملتحقين بالدراسة في الطلبة من اللاجئين السوريين السوري . وتشير الاحصاءات الرسمية الى ان عدد
7	الذين يتعرضون الى ظروف استثنائية الطلبة السوريين الثلاثاء الجامعات الماليزية الى الوقوف الى جانب
8	في المسيرة التعليمية، مؤكدة على ص الطلبة السوريين ومدراء على بذلهم الجهود لدعم استمرارية التزام
9	في مخيم الزعتري، والمجتمع المحلي الطلبة السوريين الوفاء عن تقديره لدور الجامعة في خدمة
10	من ذوي الاعاقة في مدارس الطلبة الاردنيين والسوريين مبرسي كور المرحلة الثانية من مشروع دمج
11	مشيرا الى تعاون ودعم المديرية لكل الطلبة السوريين أعداد الطلبة، اضافة الى الاعداد الاضافية من
12	حيث يشمل ٤٠ مدرسة اغلها في منطقة الطلبة السوريين على دعم وتنشيط وتحفيز المدارس التي تستقبل
13	نتيجة تدفق حركة اللجوء والتي افضت الطلبة السوريين في قصة اريد حيث انها مخصصة لاستقبال
14	ومد يد العون والتساعده التي السوريين خاصة الطلبة جهود الاردن في مواجهة ازدياد اعداد اللاجئين
15	ما شكل عبئا اضافيا على قطاع الطلبة السوريين قطاع التعليم في المحافظة نظرا لزيادة اعداد
16	اللاجئين فيها . وبين الخريشا ان ال الطلبة السوريين من المناطق التي تتميز بتواجد اعداد كبيرة
17	وبين الخريشا ان المديرية وتنسيقا، الطلبة السوريين الصغية اكتظاظا جزاء احتضانها لأعداد من
18	فيها اضافة الى اهية مشروع الصيانة الطلبة السوريين ضغطا كبيرا نتيجة تواجد اعداد كبيرة من
19	المعرفة العلمية والتربوية والحرية الطلبة السوريين تعزيز فرص العمل المستقبلية من خلال اكساب
20	على مقاعد الدراسة في المدارس الحكو الطلبة السوريين بالمائة من سكان المملكة، مبينا ان عدد 20
21	إضافة إلى تعيين وتدريب أعداد كبير، بين الطلبة السوري ٦٠٠ مليون دولار لتلبية حاجات ومتطلبات استيعاب
22	الذين لم يتمكنوا من الالتحاق بالطلبة السوريين تحويل ١٠٠ مدرسة أخرى على نظام الفترتين لاستيعاب
23	في المدارس، اضافة الى الأثر غير الطلبة السوريين توجهه الموارد المالية المخصصة لذلك الى استيعاب

Figure 3. Concordance line of /talabah/ “students”

The analysis of concordance line shows that 80 percent of the usage of “الطلبة” ‘students’ comes with a context in which it talks about the negative effect of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian educational system. The increased number of Syrian students increases the pressure on classroom size, which forces the government to open double shifted schools. The government also expresses its inability to accept additional students, especially with limited international aid. Besides, Jordanians overstated their frustration concerning the pressure on the education sector.

#### 4.2.4 Healthcare

The study found that “اللاجئين السوريين” ‘Syrian refugees’ collates with words related to healthcare, such as *صحية* /sihiyah/ ‘health’ *مستشفيات* *mustafayyat* ‘hospitals’, and *علاجية* /ilad3yah/ ‘medical’ Consider the following concordance line:

File	Hit	KWIC
ع_ص_ة	1	والتعليمية ومصادر الطاقة و السوريين الخدمات الصحية وأضاف ان المجتمع الاردني تقاسم مع اللاجئين .
ع_ص_ة	2	لهم، والعبء السوريين وتقديم العلاج والرعاية الصحية كبيرة ولاسيما في ظل استقبال الاردن للاشقاء
ع_ص_ة	3	الفضل لاقتا الى السوريين وتقدم لهم الرعاية الصحية ومراكزها الصحية تستقبل اعدادا كبيرة من الاشقاء
ع_ص_ة	4	والتي قدرت تكاليفه الصحية المتقدمة للاجئين السوريين خلال اجتماع اللجنة التوجيهية العليا واقع الرعاية
ع_ص_ة	5	في الحدلات والركبان والبست بين الصحية للاجئين السوريين الأردنية في المراكز الصحية التي تقدم الرعاية

Figure 4. Concordance line for “اللاجئين السوريين” ‘Syrian refugees’

As a result of the influx of Syrian refugees, the Jordanian medical system is under pressure, especially without international aid. Thus, Jordanians express their frustration because Syrian refugees made healthcare less accessible and more expensive for Jordanians.

#### 5. Conclusion

The current study adopted a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to investigate the attitudes towards Syrian refugees in Jordan after five years of war in Syria. The corpus used in the study consisted of 1956589-word tokens compiled from Jordanian newspaper articles published between 2016 and 2018. The findings of the study revealed that Jordanians look at Syrians as “brothers” and “guests”. However, Jordanian newspapers overstated the negative effect of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian economy, education, healthcare, etc. Jordanians frustrated because Syrians compete with them on their resources and governmental services. The study recommends conduction further research that investigates if there is a change in the attitudes of Jordanian newspapers towards Syrian refugees in 2020.

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