



Students' Discourse on Immigration Attitudes and Ideological Values: A Critical View

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Abstract

Following an approach based on *Critical Discourse Analysis* and *Discursive Psychology*, in this paper we study the academic discourse of a group of students who were asked to express their ideas on immigration. In particular, we explore the discourse on immigration of a group of students of English Philology at the University of Murcia during the academic year 2001-2002. It is our aim to examine how attitudes are constructed around the topic of immigration, how these attitudes are discursively expressed (that is, how attitudes are constructed through their discourse practices), and what effects this type of discourse has on the other-representation of immigrants. A significant finding of the article has been the unravelling of how ideas uncounsciously assumed to be "politically correct", in fact cover highly racist and xenophobic attitudes to the phenomenon of immigration. Our paper shows how xenophobic attitudes still have not been overcome but are more than ever present in the discourse of the students who took part in the research conducted.

KEYWORDS: discourse, attitudes, representation, power, ideology, critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology.

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I. INTRODUCTION

How does discourse serve to promote ideas, represent social movements and reinforce ideologies? How does language reveal the unconscious/conscious attitudes of speakers which are the outcome of a major socio-psychological phenomenon such as immigration? *Critical Discourse Analysis* and *Discursive Psychology* will help us to analyse and respond to these and other related aspects of the relationship attitudes-discourse-representation in connection with the phenomenon of immigration. In particular, this article presents an exploration into the attitudes conveyed through the discursal representation of immigration in the essays of a group of students who were asked to write on this issue.

Immigration, as a sociocultural phenomena, is a topic of importance in contemporary society. The so called first world countries are the chosen destination of many immigrants who want to escape poverty and achieve better living conditions. Europe is a dream destination. Indeed, immigration has become so widespread throughout Europe that it is now one of the main phenomena shared by most western countries.

Unfortunately immigration and xenophobic attitudes often go hand in hand. Phobias, as it is well known, are feelings of irrational fear and revulsion against something perceived as dangerous and threatening. The phenomenon of immigration is particularly prone to xenophobia, the fear of the unknown, since it entails the rejection of everything foreign or different to those surroundings we consider familiar. "Culture shock" is the term used by psychologists (Adler quoted by Brown, 1986) to refer to individuals' frightful encounters with foreign lifestyles. Frequently immigrants are received with distrust. In the words of one of our students "immigration and its continuous increase seems to be looming like an ever-expanding ivy over the first world". Through this ideologically-charged metaphor, the student has unconsciously characterized what seems to be a general feeling of threat towards traditional roles and values, posed by immigrants.

These xenophobic attitudes may be more or less overt. In fact, the policies of democratic countries proclaim tolerance and empathy among cultures and people. In this sense, xenophobic attitudes and, even more so explicit xenophobic behaviour and policies are viewed as "politically incorrect". In theory, there should be an increase in tolerance and acceptance at least by the "educated" segments of society. However in practice, xenophobic attitudes are not overcome but are more than ever present in various discourses. Analyses of sociocultural discourse, such as political speeches, radio debates or news reports have revealed that these discourses not only fail to disperse societies' feelings of threat but, rather they do just the opposite, they promote and increase feelings of xenophobia. The stress given to 'mass immigration' and cultural differences enhances the fear of "invading" foreigners who come to "take what is ours" -again in the words of one of our students.

In this paper, we show the findings of a study carried out on the academic discourse of a group of students who expressed their ideas on immigration. In particular, we explore the discourse on immigration of a group of students of English Philology at the University of Murcia

during the academic year 2001-2002. In particular, we are interested in examining the following: how attitudes are constructed around the topic of immigration, how these attitudes are discursively expressed (that is, how attitudes are constructed through their discourse practices), and what effects this type of discourse has on the other-representation of immigrants.

With this purpose in mind, we follow an interdisciplinary approach based on *Critical Discourse Analysis* and *Discursive Psychology*—two disciplines primarily concerned with the attitude-discourse-representation relationship. These two fields provide us with the main theoretical and methodological tenets for our analysis, since in our opinion both offer a particularly relevant approach for studying attitude within discourse analysis.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As mentioned above, this article is based on the approach to language study *Critical Linguistics* (CL) or, as it is better known nowadays, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA). Like most analysts within this field, we acknowledge the social character of all discourse and are interested in exploring the connection between language, power and ideology in texts.

This tradition of analytic enquiry can be traced back to the work on critical linguistics carried out during the 1970s by Roger Fowler and his associates at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. In particular, the term critical linguistics was first used in its currently accepted sense as the title of the concluding chapter of the book *Language and Control* (1979) written by Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress, and Tony Trew. Since the publication of this volume and *Language as Ideology*, the other book which is said to outline the critical linguistic 'manifesto' (Kress and Hodge, 1979), there has been a steady output of research within this field.

Nowadays, the terms CL and CDA are used interchangeably. According to R. Wodak, "in recent times it seems that the term CDA is preferred and is used to denote the theory formerly identified as CL" (Wodak, 2001:1). Hodge and Kress also stress that "critical linguistics has tended to merge with critical discourse analysis, which subsumes the account of linguistic forms of CL into a broader account of discursive processes" (Hodge and Kress, 1993:159).

A critical linguistic approach to language analysis means—in the words of R. Fowler—"an enquiry into the relations between signs, meanings and the social and historical conditions which govern the semiotic structure of discourse, using a particular kind of linguistic analysis" (Fowler, 1991b:5). In a similar vein, Hodge and Kress state: "Critical linguistics is a theory of language whose aim [is] to provide an illuminating account of verbal language as a social phenomenon, especially for the use of critical theorists ... who [want] to explore social and political forces and processes as they act through and on texts and forms of discourse" (Hodge and Kress, 1988: vii).

CL is "critical*" in the sense that it intends to be not just a method of applied language analysis but also: "a critique of the structures and goals of a society which has impregnated its

language with social meanings, many of which we regard as negative, dehumanising and restrictive in their effects" (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 196). It must be noted that the words "critical" and "critique" do not essentially carry the negative connotations of *carping* and complaint that seem to *inhabit* their popular usage. The adjective "critical" emphasises and directs our attention to the hermeneutic and political side of this type of analysis.

The primary aim of these linguists is to use linguistic analysis to *expose* misrepresentation and discrimination in a variety of modes of public discourse: critical readings of newspapers, political propaganda, official documents, regulations, formal genres such as the interview etc. Topics examined include sexism, racism, inequality in education, employment, the courts and so on.

Critical linguists reject the *mimetic* view of language as a value-free, transparent medium reflecting reality. All representation is mediated, moulded by the value-systems that are ingrained in the medium (language in this case) used for representation (Fowler, 1996: 4). Language as an integrated *form* of social behaviour will be inevitably and inextricably tied up with the sociopolitical context in which it functions. Language is not used in a contextless vacuum; rather, it is used in a host of discourse contexts, contexts which are impregnated with the ideology of social systems and institutions. Because language operates within this social dimension it must, of necessity reflect, and some would argue, construct ideology (Simpson 1993:6).

In addition it is to be noted that critical linguists see language as a form of social control. For critical linguists "language *serves* to confirm and consolidate the organisations which shape it, being used to manipulate people, to establish and maintain them in economically convenient roles and statuses, to maintain the power of state agencies, corporations and other institutions" (Fowler and Kress, 1979: 190). As Van Leeuwen points out CDA "is, or should be, concerned with ... discourse as the instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality" (Theo van Leeuwen, 1993:193).

An essential component of the critical linguistic creed is then the conviction that language reproduces ideology. It must be noted that by *ideology* critical linguists do not mean a set of ideas which are false, beliefs which betray a 'distorted consciousness' and are therefore politically undesirable. For critical linguists *ideology* has to do with "the ways in which what we say and *think* interacts with society. An ideology therefore derives from the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and value-systems which are shared collectively by social groups" (Simpson, 1993: 5). The prime focus of critical linguistics is therefore to explore these "value systems and sets of beliefs which reside in texts; to explore, in other words, ideology in language" (Simpson, 1993: 5).

Another issue arising from the critical linguistic rationale concerns the way in which dominant ideologies become ingrained in everyday discourse. They become rationalised as 'common-sense' assumptions about the way things are and the way things should be. A process of naturalization takes place, to the extent that people are *often* no longer aware of the

hierarchies and systems which shape their social interaction (Simpson, 1993:6).

Fairclough offers the following useful illustration of one type of *naturalisation*: the conventions for a traditional type of consultation between doctors and patients embody "common sense" assumptions which treat authority and hierarchy as natural —(the doctor knows about medicine and the patient doesn't; the doctor is in a position to determine how a health problem should be dealt with and the patient isn't; it is right (and "natural") that the doctor should make decisions and control the course of the consultation and of the treatment, and that the patient should comply and cooperate —and soon. (Fairclough, 1989: 2). Ideology, Fairclough goes on to argue, is embedded in the language used to structure this type of social encounter. By foregrounding the linguistic code employed in such contexts, analysts can 'demystify' and 'denaturalise' what normally passes us by as real-time participants in everyday interaction. Critical linguists believe that "using appropriate linguistic tools, and referring to relevant historical and social contexts, ideology, normally hidden through the habitualization of discourse, can be brought to the surface for inspection. In this way, critical linguistics can shed light on social and political processes" (Fowler, 1991b: 90)

One must realise too, that a too direct relationship between linguistic forms and ideology shouldn't be assumed. Earlier work in CL was criticised because of this. In recent times, a more complex view of ideological processes has been advocated. In the words of R. Fowler: "the theory of critical linguistics acknowledges that there is lack of invariance between linguistic structures and their significances. [...] Significance (ideology) cannot simply be read off the linguistic forms that description has identified in the text because the same form (nominalisation, for example) has different significances in different contexts (scientific writing versus regulations, for example). This is the whole point of our insistence on the dialectic inseparability of two concepts language and society that happen to be separately lexicalised in English (Kress, 1985b: 1) the reason for Halliday's use of portmanteau words such as 'sociosemantic'" (Fowler, 1996:9).

J. J. Weber summarises by saying that "critical stylisticians have learnt from past mistakes: they insist that the relationship between language and ideology is complex and indirect, that other (social, historical, cultural, intertextual) factors which determine the meanings of particular language items for the reader have to be taken into account, that ideologies should be associated with cultural schemata rather than with individual language items and, finally, that ideologies, which in earlier studies were often assumed to be simple, unitary and static, in fact tend to be far more complex, dynamic and full of internal contradictions" (Weber, 1996:4-5). As Ruth Wodak states CDA attempts to uncover contradictions and dilemmas, therefore the analysis must be self-reflective, interpretative, open, dynamic and subject to change.

For CL as well as CDA analysts, the instrumentality of the model is reformative. According to Van Dijk "their hope, if occasionally illusory, is change through critical understanding" (Van Dijk, 1993b:252). The goal of the analysis is admittedly and ultimately political: intended for social change. "Critical stylisticians ... see their own role as being

demystificatory: to unmask ideologies, to denaturalise common-sense assumptions and, ultimately, to enable and empower readers" (Weber, 1996: 4). Carmen Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard also emphasise the political side of the analysis. For them "CDA is essentially political in intent with its practitioners acting upon the world in order to transform it and thereby help create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age or social class" (Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996:xi).

According to Van Dijk, CDA is mainly concerned with power enactment by means of discourse production and its reception. So CDA distinguishes between two dimensions: the enactment, expression or legitimation of dominance in the production of various structures of discourse and the functions, consequences and results of such structures for the minds of the recipients. The discursive (re)production of power results *from* social cognitions of the powerful, whereas the situated discourse results *in* social cognitions. Understanding and explaining 'power-relevant' discourse structures involves the reconstruction of the social and cognitive processes of their production. Discursive selection will, therefore, not only transmit the speakers' identification with the dominant social group, but will construct an other-representation thus maintaining the speakers' power position. This is particularly relevant for our study, since our informants are members of the dominant ethnic group and we are going to examine if their discursive practices re-inforce their dominant social position.

We have also mentioned the study of the attitudes of our students through their discursive practices, as part of our aim. We do not consider attitude to be a description of a pre-existing mental state. For us attitude is viewed as a series of speech acts produced in a particular context for a particular purpose. We believe that attitudes should be analysed through talk (and not isolated utterances), because this offers a greater scope to perform different kinds of acts during speech. Our analysis of attitudes will then rely upon the point of view shown by the speakers' disposition towards the topic as it is constructed through their discursive practices.

This perspective links a discursive approach to discursive psychology. Derek Edwards takes the cognitivist construction of scripts and respecifies it in terms of practical, situated accomplishments in interaction, that is script formulations. Hence, the orderliness of action and interaction is accomplished both in interaction and for interaction. Rather than scripts existing in a cognitive mental space, they are viewed as inseparable part of the action.

This supports the view of method and theory as bound together. Cognitivism makes cognitive processes primary and that coupled with experimental methods leads them away from the kinds of practices people take part in. As an alternative, Edwards proposes discursive psychology as a principled, theoretically grounded reason for addressing topics by focusing on a c t i o n h o w cognitive notions are constructed, managed and oriented in action. The discursive psychologist asks: What does 'memory' do in some forms of interaction? How is a version of the past constructed to sustain some action?. How is an evaluation built up so as to assign blame to a minority group and how is an evaluation used to persuade someone to do something?. In discursive psychology, interaction becomes the fundamental site for studying cognition.

Whereas in traditional cognitivism there is a 'reality', stimulus conditions and cognitions —something computing inside the actors— in discursive psychology this is inverted, activity is treated as primary, reality and cognition secondary. The focus is on what people are doing and how in the course of their practices they produce versions of reality and cognition. Inversion is necessary when one studies activity instead of behaviour. Activity is inextricable from categories, formulations and orientations of the actors. This methodological inversion makes situated practices primary and enriches psychology because it introduces history, culture, a wide range of realities and a huge population of psychological entities and processes.

Discursive researchers (Billig; Van Dijk, Wetherell and Potter etc.) have investigated racist and sexist discourse. These studies are interested in ideology as it is instantiated in ordinary talk. It will be enough to point out that this type of discursive psychological approach serves as the theoretical framework for our objectives to analyse the students' discursive construction of their disposition towards immigration and to study some forms of discourse at work in a context where, eventually, the presentation of others' selves is vital to the crediting and discrediting of different ethnic groups in co-existence.

III. METHODOLOGY

The first part of our analysis is essentially quantitative. It consists in the identification of a number of "variables" which reflect the attitude of our students. These variables were identified in essays our students were asked to write. The arguments related to these attitudinal variables were subsequently gathered and quantified. This quantification process is of the utmost importance since it allows us to deduce what the dominant attitudes on the topic in question are.

The findings are also examined from a qualitative point of view. It is our aim to reveal the linguistic and stylistic strategies deployed in the discursive formulation of our informants' attitudes and their other-representation of immigrants. We pay particular attention to the *consideration* of linguistic features in connection with contextual social practices.

III.1. Informants

The informants who took part in our study were 140 English Philology students from the University of Murcia. 39 male and 101 female, aged between 19 and 22. This project and workshop was carried out during the academic year 2001-2002, as part of their classwork for the subject *Cultural Studies* —a compulsory third year subject.

It must be noticed that ours is a "convenience sample". As a convenience sample no statistical claims to generalization are made. The findings are therefore to be restricted to the population under investigation, i.e. the students in the research.

It must also be noted that, for the purpose of data collection, the students were divided into ten groups of 14 students each.

III.2. Procedure

Each group of informants was asked to carry out a brainstorming activity on the theme of immigration, followed later by a short debate on how to structure and organise the task of writing an essay on the topic.

They were then asked to write an extended essay, as a group activity. These essays provided us with the written data with which to analyse the discursive formulation of the attitudes previously expressed.

The main arguments mentioned by our students were subsequently gathered under the "attitudinal variables" that we are going to explore in the next section.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the brainstorming activity and the essays they wrote later the students basically considered immigration in connection to historical, economic, political, social and cultural dimensions. The findings are presented in the following three tables:

Table 1: attitudes justifying immigration

Inf	SV1	SV2	SV3	SV4	SV5	SV6
1			X			
2	X			X		X
3	X			X		
4			X	X		
5	X	X				
6			X	X	X	
7	X	X				
8	X	X	X	X		
9				X		
10		X	X	X		
11				X		X
12	X					
13			X	X	X	
14			X	X		

When we examine table 1 it is interesting to see that students justified the phenomenon of immigration considering:

Historical factors:

Spanish emigration SV1

Colonial exploitation SV2

Economic factors:

Desire to improve living conditions SV3

Needs due to poverty and corruption in home countries **SV4**

Political factors:

Question of human rights **SV5**

Criticism of capitalism **SV6**

A quantitative analysis of table 1 reveals that most groups, **10** out of **14**, justify immigration considering the immigrants' need to escape poverty and corruption in home countries **SV4**. A desire to improve living conditions **SV3** is mentioned by **7** groups. In contrast, criticism of capitalism **SV6** is only considered by two groups. Immigration as the result of colonial exploitation **SV2** is mentioned by **4** groups and immigration as a question of human rights **SV5** is only revindicated by **2** groups.

Less than half of the groups related the Spanish emigration **SV1** to European countries in search for better jobs with Spain being a target country of immigration nowadays.

Table 2: attitudes in favour of immigration (pros.)

Inf	SV 7	SV8	SV9	SV10	SV11	SV 12	SV 13
1		X		X			X
2	X				X		X
3		X				X	
4		X		X	X		
5		X		X	X		X
6						X	
7		X		X	X		
8		X					
9		X		X	X		X
10	X	X		X	X		
11		X					
12		X	X	X		X	
13							X
14		X		X	X		

Opinions in favour of iinmigration were related to:

The benefits obtained from economic factors:

Increase in birth-rate **SV7**

Economic benefits for host countries **SV8**

Opportunity to provide social aid **SV 9**

And the benefits obtained from a cultural dimension:

Benefits of multi-cultural society **SV 10**

Cultural integration **SV 11**

Increase in tolerance **SV 12**

Open mindedness **SV 13**

A quantitative examination of table 2. with the attitudes in favour of immigration, shows that the economic and (socio)cultural dimensions provide most of the arguments. It is interesting to see how the variable economic benefits for the host countries SV8 is the argument most frequently given, being mentioned by 11 groups out of 14.

The cultural dimension is also considered. Here 8 groups believed that a multicultural-society SV10 can be beneficial, just half of the groups considered that cultural integration can be positive SV11. Only 5 groups believed that immigration can contribute to "open mindedness" SV13 and just 3 groups thought that immigration can bring about an increase in tolerance SV12.

When we look at the discourse the students used, we can see how the second variable colonial exploitation SV2 is presented in the words of one of our students as the "source of the problem", therefore it appears lexicalised as such in the first paragraph of most essays. Immigration is conceptualised as a problem, a problem in need of solution. Students considered immigration as being the result of

"colonial policies that exploit unstable countries ... since they lack infrastructures"¹

In this case the nominalization "colonial policies" omits the agents in the process. The responsibility is placed on others —maybe an amorphous entity comprising politicians and multinational companies. Nothing can be done to help. It is the responsibility of those countries who "ruled their colonies as a master rules his slave" or "corrupt rulers" SV4. The blame is put on both home and host countries' policies. The students however provided no information about these policies. No details were given about historical, geographical facts etc.

Colonial exploitation SV2 is often presented in connection with the desire to improve living conditions SV3, which in turn is linked to immigration as a consequence of poverty and corruption SV4. One group of students wrote:

"natural resources are not profited by undemocratic countries, but their wealth distributed among multinational companies".

These three variables are used as a chain-argument: the home countries were exploited as colonies and nowadays corrupt leaders continue to aggravate the populations' poverty. It is interesting to see how corruption in home countries is considered a major cause for immigration, being one of the arguments most frequently mentioned. In this way, the blame is being put on the immigrants themselves. External exploitation is connected to their own internal failure as a society to manage their resources.

Though the immigrants' need to improve their standard of living and to escape from poverty SV3/SV4 are the arguments most frequently presented as a justification for the phenomenon of immigration, only in two essays is the suffering of immigrants mentioned. In

one essay. the students referred to immigrants as victims:

"victims of the unfair economic world system ... just poor desperate people looking for a better life ... what everybody looks for"

Words with powerful evocative connotations such as *victims*, *unfair*, *poor*, *desperate* are used, in this case, to highlight the suffering of immigrants as human beings. In the other essay referred to above. the students identified with the immigrants by saying that:

"we would also emigrate if we saw our children starving and desperation killed us slowly".

A note of sympathy and compassion can also be identified in connection with the variable Spanish emigration SV1. This historical variable is often used to justify the need for immigration in the introductory paragraph of the essays. A parallelism is sometimes established with political oppression in Spain during General Franco's regime and political oppression in immigrants' home countries. In an attempt to identify with immigrants, students wrote sentences like:

"how soon we have forgotten that... we were the ones..."

"we just do not remember that our own family was also immigrant some time".

Though quite similar. the first expression, with the emphasis on "how soon" seems to accuse people of how quickly they forget, whereas the second one sounds more like an excuse for the same fact.

It must be pointed out that the two essays mentioned above and the expressions related to Spanish emigration were the only attempts we found at identifying with the immigrants. Only on these occasions did the discourse of "them" become the discourse of "us". As we shall see later, this is just occasional. Generally the predominant discourse is the confrontational discourse of *them* vs *us*; the distance is kept and no attempt is made at seeing the phenomenon from "their" point of view.

Within the political dimension only one group of students considered immigration as a question of human rights SV5. Surprisingly this was mentioned only after dealing with immigrants being blamed on the increase in crime. The argument, in fact, goes like this:

"some immigrants commit crime, but that even though it is a question of human rights, every human being should have the right to live their life in the best possible conditions".

It almost sounds as if "human rights" was thus presented as an afterthought or as an

excuse for admitting the fact that immigrants are guilty of an increase in criminal offences.

Criticism of capitalism SV6 has also been scarcely dealt with. Only 2 groups point towards capitalism as one of the major causes for immigration:

“the world is run by, and solely for the benefit of rich western countries and giant multilateral corporations”
 (politicians) “see it as a slow but progressive undercapitalization of their own nations”.

In both essays it is argued that capitalism in Western society is not interested in an economic strengthening of underdeveloped countries, since that could lead to a loss of control and dominance. Later on, we will come back to the notion of “dominance” which seems to come up recurrently as a generalized conscious or unconscious fear.

Almost all essays refer to the economic benefits for host countries SV8 as the main argument in favour of immigration. It is significant how economic benefits are considered by an overwhelming majority as the main “positive” outcome of immigration. The emphasis on the economic benefits for the host countries is not only the most frequent but also the most developed argument. In this sense, immigration is viewed as “positive” mainly in connection with the economic benefits host countries can “obtain” from immigrants. Immigration is considered a business transaction, not a question of human rights and human beings. Indeed, economic benefits are to be expected as the result of this transaction.

Two groups referred to the benefits that could be obtained from the increase in birth-rate SV7. The students wrote:

“well-regulated immigration endorses an almost never-ending flow of cheap manpower ... linked to national wealth ... guarantees the continuity of social welfare (in countries) with ridiculous birth-rates”,
 “they engross the population rate ... and bring a lot of young people able to work”.

According to sentences like these, the immigrant must be young and fit to work. Immigration is good as long as the people entering the country are in good condition to work. They must be willing to do “donkey-work”. Immigrants must also be willing to accept hard agricultural jobs, i.e. “in the fields” This idea of immigrants providing “cheap manpower” is firmly established in most essays. In one of the sentences previously cited, we have seen how the student referred to immigration “as an almost never-ending flow of cheap manpower”. The use of the word “cheap” in this sentence is particularly preoccupying since it takes for granted that immigrants must be willing to accept worse working conditions than the native population. Economic exploitation is thus naturalized and taken for granted. What is particularly revealing

is the tacit acceptance of this and how this is presented as a justification for immigration.. Immigration is, thus, considered a "business" benefit —a benefit based on exploitation and humiliation. **An** apparently positive attitude—an argument—in favour of immigration—in fact hides a "naturalized" racist attitude.

On top of that, the economic benefits of immigration (for host countries) SV8 are welcome but almost always immediately criticised when considering the "dangers" of "mass immigration" and the illegal conditions of some immigrants. It is interesting how the students referred to "their" illegal conditions and "their lack of integration". These nominalizations, as in other cases before, put the blame on *them*. The responsibility is shifted on to *them*. They are responsible for *their* illegal conditions and *their* lack of integration.

The latent feeling of threat and menace posed by immigrants is reflected in the fact that students often relate "economic benefit" to fears of an "increase in unemployment":

"Immigrants carrying out the work in the fields. ...people speculate that immigrants increase Spanish unemployment".

An unspecific subject such as *people* is used with the verb speculate. The real agents in the process are thus obscured.

The social dimension SV9 was only considered from a positive point of view by one group of students. For this group, immigration meant an opportunity to develop social organisations that may help immigrants overcome their problems. This was good in itself. No other argument in favour of social contact could be found.

From the perspective of the cultural dimension SV10, the benefits of multi-culturalism were quite frequently mentioned, though in a very vague and abstract way. "Cultural merging" was positively assessed as it was thought to provide the opportunity to acquire important values such as "respect and tolerance". Multiculturalism was in most cases associated with liberal policies³ and youth subculture.

Cultural integration SV11 was only considered to be positive by half the groups. It appears in most essays in relation to the alternative of assimilation NSV2. In this sense, our society is seen as attempting to impose assimilation on immigrants. In many cases, the solution is thought to be the immigrants' voluntary integration. However, many groups considered that there were too many cultural differences that rendered the process impossible. Integration was generally seen as handicapped or just impossible because of the difficulties that cultural differences entail. It is worth mentioning how integration is considered a one way process. Instead of being a two-way process, it is seen as unilateral action on the part of the immigrant. Not only do they have to integrate, but they have to be "willing" to do so as well. The use of the word *voluntary* is significant. It has to be a *voluntary* integration. In addition, it is considered difficult or impossible. The nominalization "cultural differences" is the excuse given. Comments like these reveal an "unconscious" racist attitude on the part of the students. We shall deal with

this in more detail when we consider the negative views towards immigration.

The variables increase in tolerance SV12 and the notion of open-mindedness SV13 are mostly seen as potential positive outcomes of multiculturalism. In one case is tolerance envisioned as the key solution, or better still, the premise for a peaceful ethnic coexistence:

"Thank God a majority of people still believe in a world without "apartheid" where coexistence of different human beings is possible".

As if it could be anything else!! Here a difficult coexistence is taken for granted. As in previously mentioned cases, there is a naturalization process whereby it is assumed —without further questioning— that coexistence is by nature difficult. The danger with sentences like these resides in the presuppositions they imply. Such presuppositions convey a telling perspective on peaceful multiethnic coexistence. Why should the coexistence of human beings even be questioned?

So far we have analysed the arguments that the students gave to justify the phenomenon of immigration as well as the arguments they put forward in favour of immigration. In contrast with table 3, these are supposed to encompass the most positive attitudes —the most sympathetic and favourable viewpoints towards immigration. However, our comments have shown how they are not as positive as one may have expected from a social group that most certainly should not feel economically threatened or whose identity might be jeopardized by multicultural contact. Just the opposite has occurred. The arguments given in favour of immigration cover a naturalized and deep-rooted racist/problematic view of immigration. Rather than being positive they are covertly xenophobic. This is interesting since we know that the students thought their essays were "politically correct". Racist attitudes have been naturalized to the extent that the students were not aware of them.

Table 3 presents the "overtly" negative attitudes towards immigration. They are related to immigration "allegedly" "causing" cultural social, economic and political "problems":

Cultural problems:

- No integration NSV1
- Difficulties for the assimilation by host society NSV 2
- Ideological clash NSV3
- Religious threat NSV 4
- Differences due to cultural conflicts NSV 5
- Lack of tolerance NSV 6

Social problems:

- Increase in crime and violence NSV 7
- Increase in xenophobia NSV 8
- Problems inherent to low-class immigration NSV 9

- (Immigrants as the source of) social conflicts NSV 10
- Economic problems:
 - Unemployment NSV 11
 - Demographic problems NSV 12
 - Undercapitalization of Western countries NSV 13
 - Economic distribution NSV 14
- Political problems:
 - Illegality NSV 15; (Problems related to illegal immigration)
 - Rise in far-right policies NSV 16

Table 3: negative attitudes towards immigration (cons.)

Inf	NSV 1	NSV 2	NSV 3	NSV 4	NSV 5	NSV 6	NSV 7	NSV 8	NSV 9	NSV 10	NSV 11	NSV 12	NSV 13	NSV 14	NSV 15	NSV 16
1			X		X		X	X			X	X				X
2			X		X			X		X	X			X		
3	X			X			X			X	X	X			X	
4		X			X		X	X			X				X	
5	X		X					X		X	X	X				
6		X			X		X	X		X					X	
7	X	X	X				X				X	X				X
8			X	X				X		X	X				X	
9	X				X		X	X			X					
10	X			X		X			X		X		X			
11			X		X		X	X		X	X				X	
12	X	X			X		X	X			X	X			X	
13		X	X					X		X	X	X		X		
14	X			X			X	X		X	X	X				X

The overtly negative attitudes against immigration are overwhelmingly more numerous. The numbers are quite telling. The quantitative examination of the third table reveals that most groups (6) give at least 6 arguments for the problematic view of immigration, only one group offers 5, 5 groups list 7 opinions and 2 groups mention 8 negative aspects.

Most arguments (6) belong to the cultural dimension, among which the immigrants' lack of integration NSVI, the difficulties for assimilation by the host community NSV2, the ideological clash NSV3 and cultural conflicts NSV5 are the arguments most frequently chosen. The social and economic dimensions receive the same number of variables. The arguments that appear most often are the problem of unemployment in western countries NSV11 and the increase of xenophobia NSV8. Within the political dimension, the problem of immigrants' illegality NSVI5 is of greater concern than the rise of far-right political wings NSV16.

When we examine how the negative aspects of immigration are discursively formulated, we can see how within the category of cultural problems encountered, half the groups refer to problems related to integration: No integration NSVI. In most essays, this is related to the immigrants' unwillingness to integrate. Again, it is a problem caused by *them*. The students

wrote:

"they do not integrate, they do not want to because they create isolated groups",
 "they continue with their customs",
 "their maintenance of cultural differences lead to an ideological clash".

In these sentences we can see how the discourse of exclusion shapes all these expressions. The use of the pronoun *they* is ideologically charged, marking the difference between *them* and *us*, and in doing so identifying *them* as outsiders. Although no details are given in support of the claims being made, the students wrote "they do not integrate". This expression doesn't leave room for others trying. A dangerous discourse of generalization is exploited here. Modality is also prominent. The immigrants' unwillingness to integrate is presented as an accomplished fact, not questioned in any sense. The use of the verb "want" is very explicit in this case. Their "voluntary rejection" is related to their creation of "isolated" groups. The word "isolated" is also interesting in this context particularly for the negative connotations it conveys. The groups they intentionally "create" are depicted, as the word "isolated" means, as being set apart, cut off from society, separated. Impossibility of contact is, thus, implicitly assumed.

The difficulties for assimilation by host countries NSV2 are also mentioned. Assimilation is considered as the solution for their lack of integration. It is interesting how a dangerous equation, assimilation—integration, is established. In one essay, the students wrote: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do". In this case, the traditionally transmitted cultural knowledge and authority behind proverbs is adduced as justification for (racist) attitudes. This is more dangerous since the ideological power of proverbs often passes by unquestioned.

In other essays, as if immigration was a disease susceptible of being cured assimilation is viewed as the remedy for what they considered as NSV 3 an ideological clash, which in turn is seen as a major cause for xenophobia NSV 8:

"as far as ideology is concerned there is a lot of rejection, hatred ... xenophobia in one word.",
 "... an ideology so far-fetched from ours, even medieval in some aspects, that cannot be accepted in democratic societies and must lead to a clash of ideas and beliefs...".

It is interesting how metaphors of distance are used here. Ideology is "far"-(fetched). As on a road, it "leads" inevitably to confrontation and antagonism. Not only do pronouns emphasize the distance between *them* and *us*, but metaphors seem to impose "mental frontiers" that are not crossed. Modality, through the use of the verbs *can* and *must*, reinforces the process and points towards the inevitable nature of the process: the ideological clash. This war metaphor confirms

the antagonistic view that students have of immigrants. As in a battle, immigration provokes a "clash of ideas and beliefs ...". This discourse of confrontation is also reflected in the way immigrants are viewed as enemies, posing a threat, a menace to the general population. This antagonistic view is also reflected in immigration being perceived as a religious threat NSV 4.

One group warns about the difficulty of accepting other ideologies. According to the students, there are things that are easier said than done. Tolerance works in theory, but:

"none of these theoretical positions are easy to put into practice".

Through the the use of a scientific terminology, human beings are coldly related to theoretical parameters —as in an experiment racial relations are difficult to put into practice. To justify these difficulties, they give the example of how catholic religious processions in the city of Cartagena (Murcia, Spain) were once interrupted by Moroccans. Apparently the immigrants had "claimed" that the processions were "an offence to their religion". Here the blame is put on Moroccans in general. The group is not identified. They don't say if it was a minority, a particular group etc.. As seen before, the emphasis is placed on differences —in this case religious differences. They are different —at the same time an imbued artificial "sameness" is imposed on all of us.

Differences between cultures are also perceived as generating cultural conflicts NSV 5:

"cultural differences increase the feeling of xenophobia and violence",
"fights increase in the streets, everyday"

Cultural differences are perceived as being the cause of fights. An incident in El Ejido is mentioned in support of this claim. The incident in question was an episode of ethnic violence which took place in this village in Almeria (Southern Spain). As a result of this, there was a violent confrontation between the locals and the immigrants. Even though this was an isolated episode of racial violence, students had the impression that "fights increase every day". As we have seen, with the El Ejido and Cartagena incidents, the rhetorical strategy of exemplification is given in support of this fallacious reasoning. The adverb "everyday" is used to reinforce the message. This adverb of frequency seems to enhance, augment if possible, the value of the word increase. Fights are perceived to take place, not occasionally but everyday.

One group criticises our society for its lack of tolerance NSV 6. Lack of tolerance is frequently directly related to an increase in crime and violence NSV 7. Even though the intolerant attitude of our society is criticised it is immediately excused by the:

"fact that crime has increased",
"immigrants are widely rejected, a situation which is corroborated by the amount of immigrants arrested (49% in Murcia last year)",

"immigration = insecurity = delinquency".

This alleged increase in violence is also adduced to justify the increase in xenophobia NSV 8 in our society. It is seen as a negative consequence of immigration. An increase in immigration means an increase in crime which in turn entails an increase in xenophobia. However, the students wrote:

"people have reasons for their negative and rejecting point of view",

Here xenophobia is justified: There are "reasons" for it. There are "motives. causes, justifications". According to its dictionary definition, the word *reason* can be related to "sense, a sensible conduct, what is right or practicable". *Reason* also implies exercising our intellectual faculty. In this way, there seems to be not an "emotional" but an "intellectual" justification for certain xenophobic attitudes. In our opinion, the use of the word "reason" is ideologically charged, since it has the power of justifying and admitting as reasonable what cannot be justified at all.

Contrary to this "intellectual" side of xenophobia, it is interesting how there is an emotional side to it. The power of emotions is also resorted to since xenophobia is seen as "the result of a psychological fear". Immigration is seen as provoking "neurosis": a psychological fear. This image is very evocative as it appeals to emotions —emotions that are difficult to control:

"though we are narrow-minded and selfish, people fear that our society may lose control"

If there is something the students perceived as being in need of control that is immigration.

Within this context two other variables were mentioned. Immigration is said to cause demographic problems NSV 12 and the rise of far-right NSV 16 policies. Since it is argued that xenophobia is the consequence of a "mass invasion" by immigrants, it is also seen as leading to radical policies, to rejection and hatred among extreme conservative movements. This chain of criteria is grounded in sentences like (immigration being):

"a menace for the integrity of society"

"a threat for the host culture"

"concerns over immigration has contributed to the rise of the far-right, such as for example Le Pen in France"

In these sentences, the discourse of confrontation is more than ever present. Immigration is

portrayed as an *invasion*, a threat. a *menace*, something to be *feared*. It is because of this antagonistic view that what is perceived as "mass immigration" is a source of great concern. The more immigrants come, the worse the situation will get, and so they state that:

"the constant, increasing flow is a threat for the dominance of western societies"

Immigration is seen as an unstoppable river, a flow constantly increasing threatening to flood the surrounding areas with people. In one essay, the student referred to in particular:

"to the millions that fill western Europe"

Although the style is clumsy, the container metaphor serves its purpose perfectly. It is clear how the host countries are perceived as containers to the point of being filled by immigrants, almost overflowing with millions of them who are threatening to wash away our identity and social dominance. Through the container metaphor the immigrant is always *outside*, whereas the local population is inside. This is coherent with the discourse of exclusion and segregation that we have seen before, as was the case with the use of the pronouns *we* vs *they* etc.

It is also coherent with the expression *host countries*, which presents the immigrant as being a mere guest in the country he/she goes to. The locals are the landlords and the immigrants the *guests*. The implications are clear: the landlord has full right to the property, resources etc., while the immigrant is just 'invited to share a bit of this property'. The connotative implications of the word *host*, implying a courteous welcoming attitude almost seem ironic in this context.

These discursive practices are also consistent with other expressions where, as with the *landlord/guest* dualism, the local population is always put first, given priority whereas the immigrant is presented as a second-class citizen:

"conservatives want to grant the native population priority"

"others may say they are justified in preserving jobs for the locals"

According to the logic of the source domain, the landlord always has rights over wealth, possessions —jobs in this case. It is quite "logical" that jobs should be reserved for the proprietors, who should have first pick and only leave what they do not want to the invited guests.

Fears related to the problem of unemployment were often voiced in this context. In fact the "problem" of unemployment was the main and most explicit argument against immigration NSV 11:

"Due to unemployment, immigration becomes a threat"
the "economic problem of how to distribute jobs"

"there are not enough jobs"

"the lack of jobs implies a threat"

This taken for granted *threat* appears in most essays. However, on a minor scale it must be noted that students recognize that most problems are related to the difficulties inherent to low-class immigration NSV 9. Social conflicts are also acknowledged as being the result of immigrants' unprovided basic needs NSV 10.

In line with the antagonistic view of immigration, reflected in the metaphors IMMIGRATION IS AN ENEMY, IMMIGRATION IS A WAR, IMMIGRANTS ARE OUTSIDE, loss of dominance is a constant preoccupation. Immigration is viewed as a threat to dominance, in need of control:

"the constant, increasing flow is a threat for the dominance of western societies",

Out of this way of reasoning, the students are aware of their cultural dominance, of western societies' political dominance and they mirror the fear of a loss of identity and loss of superiority due "to the millions that fill western Europe". In this sense, immigration must be controlled. In their own words: control of immigration "could possibly have positive effects". Legal and controlled immigration is felt to be the only positive way of dealing with this phenomenon: "that controlled may be not so bad as it seems". Here the presupposition is clear: immigration is bad.

Among the economic problems, the "undercapitalization of Western countries" NSV 13 is hardly commented upon and the problems derived from "unfair" economic distribution NSV 14 are only mentioned twice. Both variables are again envisioned from the point of view of loss of dominance, since there is fear that providing economic aid to underdeveloped countries might imply an economic loss of power.

Loss of economic power —Loss of dominance/primacy: These are terrible fears for western societies, afraid of being ideologically, culturally and what seems worse, economically "swallowed" or "damaged" by the "mass of immigrants" entering the country: "it may lead to the breakdown of countries" —the students wrote. This *invasion* brings about political problems whereby the immigrants' illegal conditions NSV 15 only worsens the whole "*conflict*". This word is indicative of the students basic perception of what immigration involves. In all essays immigration is basically conceptualised as a *problem*. This is the most common view on immigration. In all essays, we find expressions like: "immigration is

a problem

a conflict

a task to solve

a nuisance

What is worrying is the taken for granted admittance that it is a problem. No one casts a doubt on the issue. There has been a naturalization process whereby immigration is simply viewed as a "problem", with no clear solution:

"a so controversial issue"

"it so polemic and complex that no one agrees what to do"

"no easy solution, both sides feel threatened"

"increasing difficulties without an obvious solution"

"help for those countries will be no easy solution"

"multiculturalism deserves an effort from all of us"

This last example is particularly meaningful. What at first sight could be considered as a good comment, in fact, hides a not so positive attitude. It is worth noticing that the student wrote "deserves an effort" and not "deserves applause", or "enthusiasm". Multiculturalism is naturally perceived as something which deserves strenuous physical or mental exertion: an effort. In this way multiculturalism is seen, in a negative light, as something inherently difficult and hard to achieve. This is related to the view of immigration as a problem.

V. CONCLUSION

The discussion of the data has shown how a naturalized problematic view of immigration prevails. In the essays of our students, immigration is conceptualized as a problem → a problem for the host society from political, economic, social and cultural dimensions.

We have also seen how immigration is basically considered in a negative light. Through metaphors, lexical choices, modality, pronouns and other linguistic features, a negative view is put forward. Of course there are contradictions, as ideology is not a single unitary phenomenon, but we can say that the dominant view is mainly negative, as we have seen in tables 1, 2, and 3. Negative attitudes outweigh the positive ones.

Immigration has also been found to be viewed in antagonistic terms. Along with the antagonistic view of immigration, reflected in the metaphors IMMIGRATION IS AN ENEMY, IMMIGRATION IS A WAR, IMMIGRANTS ARE OUTSIDE, loss of dominance has been a constant preoccupation in the essays of the students. Likewise, due to this antagonistic attitude, differences are perceived as unsurmountable, with very little attempt being made to perceive the issue from the others' point of view.

Our informants' arguments and discursive strategies must also be viewed in terms of other utterances, that is, to speeches, debate and conversations previously listened on by or taken part in by our informants. Their attitudes as well as their discourses do not stand alone and isolated, but are a response to other discourses. The discursive strategies and most significantly the

rhetoric features might be traced back to a general socio-political stress on immigration as a major problem.

The rhetorical analysis of argumentation can reveal what is being taken for granted as common-sense. This perspective will finally serve to explain the other-representation constructed. In short, immigrants are portrayed as: enemies; potential economic help and a threat. The vision of immigrants as a menace relies on two main factors: their mass arrival and their differences. Clearly, it is a discrediting image of immigrants.

A most significant finding is, therefore, the ethnocentric view, as immigration and immigrants are dealt with for what they are and for what they mean for our society. The informants' hardly ever consider the topic from the immigrants' point of view, but rather emphasize the implications that immigration has for our society. Hardly any importance is given to the problems encountered by the immigrants in the host community. The lack of solutions offered, openly hints towards a resigned attitude.

It seems that in our pre-dominantly pragmatic, progressive, productive and competitive society, immigration is positive as long as it implies economic benefits and is restricted to those areas where the host economy is in need of labour. In our students' essays, immigrants are perceived as a *threat*, as an *invasion* of "different" people, neither easy to control nor to understand.

These findings highlight the importance of raising the critical awareness of our students to social and political ideologies encoded in texts, since our students were convinced of having written essays that were politically correct. Our students were totally unaware of them having expressed xenophobic attitudes. Indeed, a critical reading of texts, a healthy procedure of vigilance, a responsive and responsible attitude should be encouraged and promoted. Teachers and educational institutions should raise the critical awareness of students, drawing their attention to the ideological implications of the discourse they use. Such critical awareness can ultimately lead to social change, since it opens up the possibility of alternative constructions of reality.

NOTES

Sentences or phrases marked with quotation marks were taken from our students' essays. It must be noticed that mistakes (grammar, vocabulary, style etc.) have been left uncorrected.

In one case the citizens' appreciation of immigrants providing cheap labour is treated with irony, in particular in connection to the increase-of-crime(SV7) variable: "have come to steal what is oursdo the jobs we all refuse. Is that stealing?". This is an interesting example of how ideology is complex and often contradictory, since in the same text we can find opposite views coexisting together.

³ Here it is interesting to point out that NSV 8, increase of xenophobia, is almost always related to conservative policies, described as being "rooted in society".

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