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Linguistic Construction of Migrant Identity in U.S. Crime Reports

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Abstract

This article explores the representation of Latino migrants in U.S. crime reports. Through multi-disciplinary linguistic analysis incorporating critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, the author demonstrates how migrant identity is constructed linguistically in media discourse using various linguistic strategies to reveal an underlying xeno-racist discourse that serves the dominant group's purpose of staying in power. The contribution of this paper lies in its systematic illustration of the covert nature in which this discourse is (re)produced in crime reports and the connections it can have to immigration policies and public attitudes. In addition, the aim of the paper is to serve as a springboard for social and political change through consciousness-raising and the ability to critically deconstruct texts to reveal underlying messages.

Key words: Crime reports; migrants; critical discourse analysis; cognitive linguistics

1. Introduction

“Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge... it must be rejected, altered, and exposed.” (Toni Morrison)¹

The United States is a country shaped by immigrants and their descendants. It has welcomed immigrants for generations, found them jobs, and successfully integrated them into its communities. One would not expect immigration to be a controversial issue in The United States. And yet, there are few issues today that are as complex or divisive. Although numbers of undocumented migrants in particular have dramatically decreased since 2007, anti-immigrant

¹ Toni Morrison: Nobel Lecture (7 December, 1993), accessed on 21 June, 2012 on http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html .

sentiment in American society today appears to be as strong as ever.² This is due in part to the negative representation of Latino migrants in everyday media discourse and the use of this issue by politicians to gain political support (and as a distraction from their own mistakes in governing). This politicization of immigration and unfavorable representation of Latino migrants has resulted in the proposal and enactment of recent laws and policies that are directed mainly at “illegal” immigration.³

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate linguistically how covert ideologies present in media discourse of Latino migrants, contribute to public perception and social cognitions of Latino migrants in general. The author begins by outlining the role of media discourse as it relates to immigration issues and then introduces the theoretical framework of the paper, which is rooted in the combination of cognitive linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. Next, the methodology is presented, followed by a critical analysis of 25 articles collected from online news sources from the years 2008-2012. The analysis examines the use of various linguistic strategies, such as use of metaphor and metonymy, deixis, transitivity, biased newsgathering, selected quoting of elites, over-completion, legitimization and image. Finally, the findings are summarized and benefits of such in-depth textual analysis are discussed.

2. Migrants and the media

In order to understand current anti-immigrant sentiment and its relation to anti-immigration policies, it is necessary to review the media’s role in constructing public discourse about immigration and immigrants. Ono and Sloop (primary reference), claim that “contemporary mainstream media...provide a specific locale, a space, where social issues collide, where political issues are struggled over and subject positions... are constituted.”⁴ Thus, “the public comes to understand and conceive of immigrants via mediated discussions.”⁵ Regional and mainstream media have been historically influential in shaping public opinion of immigrants and

² Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force on U.S. Immigration Policy: *U.S. Immigration Policy*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Inc., 2009, p.3.

³ Karen Brooks: Report: 40 states passed immigration legislation in 2011. In Reuters, 9 August, 2011, accessed on 21 June, 2012 on <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/09/us-immigration-states-idUSTRE7786GI20110809>.

⁴ Lisa A. Flores: Constructing rhetorical borders: Peons, illegal aliens, and competing narratives of immigration. In: *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20 (December 2003), p. 362-387, p. 365.

⁵ Flores, Constructing borders, p. 365.

immigration.⁶ Media representations have been shown to be powerful rhetorical forces that allow the public to participate in anti-immigrant practices.⁷ According to Gramsci, rhetorical arguments circulating in society serve as a support to the more explicit force of police and state institutions.⁸ Therefore, rhetoric and government forces are mutually dependent on each other.

Since the deportation drive of the 1930s, rhetoric has played an important role as a mobilizing factor in Mexican repatriation and government officials became aware that “it takes only an insinuation from a welfare official in the United States to create widespread fear among Mexican immigrants.”^{9,10} Since this time the narrative of the “Mexican body” has transitioned from that of the peon laborer and the ideal worker (uneducated and willing to work for little money, to be tapped in times of emergency) to occupying the space of the criminal and threatening the safety of Americans and thus “the emphasis on criminality and the criminalization of entry combined to provide a rhetorical space in which the Mexican body became a criminal body.” This redefinition of the Mexican migrant away from peon laborer to “illegal alien” served to reconfigure unemployment so as to present it as a result of immigration rather than an economic crisis due to internal factors.¹¹ In point of fact, it is common in the current anti-immigration rhetoric of conservative political parties (see ‘illegal immigrants taking our jobs’) to declare that “illegal immigrants” take jobs Americans could have (among other arguments), even though this has been proven to be false. Therefore, if an immigrant has come to the United States without the proper documents, labeling them as “illegal” makes it easier to discriminate against other members of this ethnic group under the guise of being “anti- crime” as opposed to “anti-Mexican” or “anti-Latino”. Additionally, this becomes a problem for Mexican Americans and

⁶ Richard Hofstetter & Brian Loveman: Media exposure and attitude consistency about immigration. In: *Journalism Quarterly* 59 (1982), p. 298-302; John J. Miller: Immigration, the press, and the new racism. In: *Media Studies Journal* 8 (1994), p. 19-28.

⁷ Hugh Mehan: The Discourse of the Illegal Immigration Debate: A Case Study in the Politics of Representation. In: *Discourse & Society* 8 (2 April 1997), p. 249-270. Cf. Flores, *Constructing Borders*.

⁸ Antonio Gramsci: *Selections from the prison notebooks*, trans. O. Hoare & G.N. Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971/1980.

⁹ Referring to the deportation drive and repatriation campaign that extended throughout the decade and occurred across the southwest as well as in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota. It marked the first time in history that the federal government sponsored and supported the mass expulsion of immigrants. Cf. Flores, *Constructing Borders*, p. 263.

¹⁰ Emory S. Bogardus: Mexican repatriates. In: *Sociology and Social Research* 17 (1933), p. 169-176, p. 174.

¹¹ Flores, *Constructing Borders*, p. 376.

others who share the term “Latino” with the stigmatized “other” (illegal Latino immigrants) thus making them vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination.¹²

3. Tools for Analysis

In order to see beneath the surface of what appears to be a transparent reporting of facts (such as in crime reports) it is necessary to employ a variety of analytic tools that allow us to access underlying ideologies. One such tool is critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is primarily concerned with revealing the role of discourse in the (re) production and challenge of dominance that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality.¹³ This is often accomplished by examining linguistic strategies of a text used by the authors to present groups negatively or positively to the reader. Moreover, CDA is especially useful in demonstrating how ideology is encoded in text.¹⁴ Some of the ways that this ideology is encoded include the use of lexicalization (using words to highlight a positive “us” or negative “them”), over-completion,¹⁵ (adding an ‘irrelevant’ detail that may be relevant within a more general negative portrayal of this group), selected quoting of elites, stereotyping, and mitigation of actions by groups in power through the use of the passive.¹⁶ The incorporation of analysis of certain elements of cognitive linguistics (CL) such as metaphor and metonymy can also aid in a deeper analysis of a text. Associated with scholars such as Lakoff, Langacker, Talmy, Taylor, Kóvecses, Fillmore and Fauconnier, CL is not a single discipline, but rather, it is a scholarly perspective on a range of linguistic phenomena.¹⁷ It is generally known as “an approach to the study of language, conceptual systems, human cognition and general meaning construction,”¹⁸ and is concerned with how we make meaning in our world and how we define our everyday

¹² Robert Short & Lisa Magaña: Political rhetoric, immigration attitudes, and contemporary prejudice; A Mexican American dilemma. In: *The Journal of Social Psychology* 142.6 (2002), p. 701-712, p. 702-703.

¹³ Teun van Dijk: *Elite Discourse and Racism*. London: SAGE Publications, 1993, p. 250.

¹⁴ Christopher Hart: *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 23.

¹⁵ This is also referred to as *irrelevance*. From Teun van Dijk: *Racism and the Press*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 185.

¹⁶ Theresa Catalano: *Xeno-Racism and Discursive Construction of “Us” vs. “Them”*: *Cosa Nostra, Wall Street and Immigrants*. In: Pro Quest, LLC. PhD. Dissertation. University of Arizona, 2011.

¹⁷ Christopher Hart: ‘Moving beyond Metaphor in the Cognitive Linguistic Approach to CDA: Construal Operations in Immigration Discourse.’ In: C. Hart (ed.): *Critical discourse studies in Context and Cognition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011, p. 71-92, p. 71.

¹⁸ Gilles Fauconnier & Mark Turner: *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

realities.¹⁹ This means that it can be a useful tool in uncovering conceptual processes that are important to the communication of ideologies, and thus it is particularly useful in narrative analysis. Two of those processes are metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor is one of the primary tools employed in reasoning about ourselves and our world, especially when encountering abstract or complex concepts,²⁰ and consists of a cross-domain mapping where the *source* domain (the more concrete and clearly organized domain) is used to talk about and understand another more abstract domain (known as the *target* domain).²¹ One example that illustrates how metaphor changes the way we think about things, events or people, is the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. In this conceptual metaphor, people might actually utter statements such as the following:

Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked* every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.²²

Imagine, however, how we might change our view of an “argument” if we framed the metaphor as ARGUMENT IS A DANCE. We might have a completely different viewpoint of what an argument was, and choose to express this in a completely different manner linguistically. Metonymy, on the other hand, is when one element in a frame stands for another element (in the same frame) that it is related to or closely associated with, in order to direct attention to it (or away from something else) in an indirect way.^{23, 24} One recent example of metonymy and how it is used for political purposes, is the phrase “job creator”. When lobbying for no tax increases for the wealthy, Republicans (and the wealthy in general) have chosen to refer to the rich as “job creators”. It is easy to see that in an economic downturn with high unemployment rates, adopting the term “job creator” allows the public to conceptualize the wealthy as necessary and beneficial

¹⁹ George Lakoff & Mark Johnson: *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1980, p. 3.

²⁰ Edward Slingerland: Conceptual Metaphor Theory as Methodology for Comparative Religion. In: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72.1 (2004), p. 1-31, p. 11.

²¹ Fauconnier & Turner, *The Way We Think*, p. 1.

²² Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors*, p. 4-5.

²³ “A frame is a structured mental representation of a conceptual category, and they are key to helping us understand the world around us.” From Zoltán Kövesces: *Language, Mind, and Culture: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 64.

²⁴ Kövesces, *Language, Mind and Culture*, p. 99.

to society, and highlights this one aspect of what wealthy people (sometimes) do. This conceptualization then influences voters as to whether or not to enact a law that might potentially harm this group's interests. Imagine for example, the results in this argument if we chose alternative metonymies such as "the wealthy" or "the rich" to argue the same point.

4. Method

For the purpose of this analysis, twenty-five articles were selected from online news sources between the years 2008-2012 (the period during which the analysis was conducted). Only those articles that qualified as a first time crime report (as opposed to an article discussing a previously reported crime) and in which the perpetrator is referred to specifically as having been born in Mexico or other Latin American countries were chosen. Articles were found by searching www.google.com for the words "migrant" "migrant worker" "immigrant" "illegal immigrant" "undocumented immigrant" and other terms used to identify migrants paired with names of common crimes such as "assault" "murder" "burglary" or terms such as "arrested" "accused" or "charged". After the articles were found they were converted to plain text format and entered into MaxQDA (qualitative data analysis software; 1989-2015) and a corpus analysis was conducted to systematically determine patterns, ranks and frequencies of lexical items. Frequent lexical items and their collocations were coded for emerging themes/patterns. Patterns were then examined in context and examples extracted for inclusion in the results section.

5. Analysis of the Data

This paper aims to illustrate in detail the linguistic process by which migrant identity is constructed in U.S. crime reports. Results from the analysis demonstrate a combination of many linguistic and non-linguistic strategies used to present Latino migrants to the public through the genre of crime reports. The following sections will present evidence of use of each of the strategies found and include examples from the text.

Metaphor

There were many metaphors found in the data, and the majority of them presented a negative view of Latino migrants. Here are a few of the most common conceptual metaphors/metonymies

found in the texts, followed by the examples of their linguistic realizations (shown in capital letters as per CL conventions):

IMMIGRANTS ARE CRIMINALS

Text 15: “It looks like there is a systemic problem, in the sense that people who are here **illegally**, and are being coddled by the legal system, are escalating their **illegal behavior**, and we’re seeing acts of violence.”²⁵

Text 15: Both men are **illegal immigrants** and both have driving records.²⁶

IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS

Text 6: He was found **crouched** behind a Dumpster at the rear of the shopping center.²⁷

IMMIGRANTS ARE NON-HUMAN

Text 6: He said the government has claimed there has been a slight increase in deportations over the past several years but he said those figures include **aliens** who are caught and voluntarily return.²⁸

While it may seem natural for CRIMINAL to be a theme since after all, these are crime reports being analyzed, there are two factors that make this argument invalid. First, one must note that it is not just that the accused individual in the article is seen as a criminal, but that the entire ethnic group (Latinos and Latino immigrants) is seen as criminal. Evidence for the metonymical relationship (one person committing a crime representing the entire ethnic group) lies in the use of phrases that index the ethnic group of the offender (see metonymies below, i.e. ‘Spanish-speaking’) and the assumption and “code” that the majority of undocumented migrants are Latinos, therefore, the mention of ‘illegal immigrants’ indirectly indexes Latinos. These lexical items then lead to the construction of social cognitions of the entire ethnic group and not just the reporting of an individual crime. The metaphors IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS and IMMIGRANTS ARE NON-HUMAN also work in subtle ways to portray this group negatively, thus justifying unjust behavior towards them.

²⁵ Karen Anderson: Brother of Milford Illegal Immigrant Accused of Stabbing Man. In: *WBZ-TV*, February 20, 2012, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://boston.cbslocal.com/2012/02/20/brother-of-milford-illegal-immigrant-accused-of-stabbing-man/>

²⁶ Anderson, Brother of Milford Illegal.

²⁷ Richard Gazarik: Mexican illegal arrested in Murrysville carjacking attempt fond of U.S. life. In: *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, April 10, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2012 on http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/westmoreland/s_675836.html

²⁸ Gazarik, Mexican Illegal Arrested.

Metonymies

Metonymy encompasses a wide variety of types, but we will focus on the categories revealed in the data presented below.²⁹

NON-HUMAN FOR HUMAN

Text 1: “This suspect **sexually assaulted a young innocent girl** and this is yet another example of a **violent crime** committed by an illegal **alien** in Maricopa County,” Sheriff Joe Arpaio said.³⁰

In text 1 we see an example of the de-humanization of a migrant suspect. Here Sheriff Arpaio takes the opportunity to use this supposedly simple report of the facts as a platform for the larger political agenda of anti-immigration policies. That is, under the guise of a police crime report, the dominant group expresses its ideology and essentially, propaganda. In fact, in this text of only 164 words (including the title), there are four metonyms referring to the legal status of the perpetrator, such as ‘illegal alien’ and ‘illegal immigrant’ seen above, which have nothing to do with the crime being reported but serve as part of the overall semantic strategy of the article: positive “Us” vs. negative “Them” representation. Here, the source domain of ‘alien’ attributes the characteristics of extra-terrestrials to the criminality frame. This form of over-completion (where apparently irrelevant information is given which is relevant to the overall narrative of the text) and violation of Grice’s maxim of quantity helps to reinforce the idea of group crime.³¹ That is, this crime is not covered as involving Latino immigrant individuals, but as a stereotype, for which the whole Latino/immigrant community tends to be blamed, and represents a prominent proposition in racist ideology.³² The rhetorical strategy of first presenting the crime and then highlighting the most negative parts (‘sexual/ly assault/ed’) is stated four times and

²⁹ See Kövesces: ‘Language Mind and Culture’; Lakoff & Johnson: ‘Metaphors’; Raymond Gibbs: ‘Metonymy in Language and Thought’. In: Klaus Uwe Panther & Günter Radden (eds.): *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999, p. 61-76.

³⁰ Illegal immigrant charged in rape of girl. In: *Phoenix News*, April 17, 2008, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.kpho.com/news/15915499/detail.html>.

³¹ “This refers to Grice’s Cooperative Principle and the idea of a maxim of quantity, which dictates that in a dialog we give as much information as is required, and no more than is required. Violations (flouting) of this maxim can serve the purposes of misleading or to provide a specific implicature - that is, implying something that is not expressed directly.” From Kenneth J. Lindblom: ‘Cooperative principle’. In: *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (Second Edition). S.I.: Elsevier, 2006, p. 176-183, p. 178.

³² van Dijk, *Racism and the Press*, p. 100.

‘rape’ is mentioned twice during the article as well as two references to the age and innocence of the victim. This is followed by the connection to the macro context and the larger issue as expressed by Sheriff Arpaio: “this is **yet another example of a violent crime committed by an illegal alien** in Maricopa County,” which works to serve the purpose of negatively representing “illegal” immigrants. Sheriff Joe Arpaio is a well-known conservative who actively advocates for anti-immigrant policies and who has been accused by the federal government of human rights violations against immigrants. Here he is quoted in order to give credibility to the investigation. Below are examples of other metonymies that represent Latino migrants negatively.

DEFINING CATEGORY FOR PROPERTY

Text 6: **Mexican illegal** arrested in Murrysville carjacking attempt fond of U.S. life.³³

Text 6: There are an estimated 140,000 **illegal aliens** working in Pennsylvania...³⁴

Text 10: The **Spanish-speaking** suspect refused to be interviewed.³⁵

Text 3: BCSO arrest **Illegals** for home burglaries.³⁶

Text 8: Record checks showed that the man, a **Honduran citizen**, had been convicted...³⁷

Text 5: The victim recently paid the **Mexican national** to string-up Christmas lights...³⁸

These nationyms (‘Mexican’, ‘Honduran’) and xenonyms (‘aliens’) serve again to de-spatialize the out-group from the in-group and define groups in terms of physical, geographical or metaphorical space showing the out-group to be from a different space or place than the in-group and therefore seen as “displaced”.³⁹ Furthermore, the use of “Mexican” (in text 6) is a genericization that places this story into a news frame in which Mexicans (in particular, those who are not legal immigrants) are a contemporary problem in the U.S. The use of such a generic

³³ Gazarik, Mexican Illegal Arrested.

³⁴ Gazarik, Mexican Illegal Arrested.

³⁵ Illegal alien accused of fondling UD student. In: *Newark Post Online*, April 13, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2012.

³⁶ BCSO arrests illegals for home burglaries. In: *Wjhg.com*, February 3, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.wjhg.com/home/headlines/83357332.html>

³⁷ Robert J. Lopez: Two deported sex offenders, one from L.A., arrested near Calexico. In *L.A. Times*, March 30, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2010/03/deported-sex-offenders-calexico.html>

³⁸ Dave Gibson: Illegal alien arrested for slashing throat of elderly woman. *Norfolk Crime Examiner*, December 20, 2009, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.examiner.com/article/illegal-alien-arrested-for-slashing-throat-of-elderly-woman>.

³⁹ Hart, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 57.

term serves to give a racist angle to the story.⁴⁰ In addition, text 10's highlighting of the language spoken by the suspect, serves to highlight which out-group is being featured. Here are a few more examples of metonymies in the texts:

SIMPLIFIED EVENT FOR COMPLEX SUB-EVENT

Text 6: By all accounts, Baltazar, who **speaks** no English, led a solitary existence.⁴¹

In text 6, the metonymy of SIMPLIFIED EVENT FOR COMPLEX SUB-EVENTS ('speaks' stands for all the skills involved in knowing the English language and communicating in it) is used effectively to highlight the ethnicity of the individual. READ: in case you didn't notice, this person is not an English speaker.

PART FOR WHOLE (Ruiz-Toledo), ACTION FOR RESULT (removal), INSTITUTION FOR PERSONS (ICE).⁴²

Text 3: After being found to be in the United States illegally, **Ruiz-Toledo** was **processed for removal** in September of 2009. **Comacho-Ruiz** and **Chirinos-Rivera** were found to be **illegal** in the United States, have had Holds for **ICE** placed on them, and are to be **processed for removal** by the Bay County Sheriff's Office 287g Task Force. (PART FOR WHOLE (Ruiz-Toledo, Comacho-Ruiz, Chirinos-River, processed).

In this example (above) metonymies (such as ACTION FOR RESULT with the use of 'processed for removal') again work to negatively represent Latino migrants by de-humanizing them and using vocabulary commonly associated with inanimate objects (such as documents or trash). Conversely this metonymy (which is used twice in the article) masks the actual events of the arrest which may include handcuffing, fingerprinting, searching, photographing and eventually filling out paperwork for deportation and perhaps other events such as manhandling or beating of the individual. Also, note that the last names are hyphenated and noticeably Latino surnames.

⁴⁰ Andrea Mayr & David Machin: *The language of crime and deviance: An introduction to critical linguistic analysis in media and popular culture*. N.Y. & London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012, p. 71.

⁴¹ Gazarik, Mexican Illegal Arrested.

⁴² VCSO Arrests Illegals for Home Burglaries.

Deixis

Another linguistic process occurring in the data is the use of deixis. Deixis is the use of words such as ‘that’, ‘this’, ‘them’, ‘us’, ‘them’, ‘here’, there used for purposes of positioning groups in a power structure.⁴³ In the case of the following examples, deixis is used effectively to put forward a nationalist narrative in the text in which words such as ‘our’ and ‘their’ combine with routine words that serve to remind readers of their national identity (referred to as ‘Banal Nationalism’ by Billig).⁴⁴ According to Billig, national identity is found and sustained “in the embodied habits of social life” and “banal words, jingling in the ears of the citizens, or passing before their eyes, are required” to remind nationals of their identity.⁴⁵ Here are a few examples of its use:

Text 14: This suggests to me that sadly, like **our** nation's borders, **our** most critical public utilities/installations are perhaps not nearly as safely guarded as they need to be."⁴⁶

Text 15: “It looks like there is a systemic problem, in the sense that people who are here illegally, and are being coddled by the legal system, are escalating **their** illegal behavior, and **we’re** seeing acts of violence.”⁴⁷

The fact that these deictics are incorporated into reports of crimes allegedly committed by “illegal immigrants” is significant, and works as a cohesive device to tie in the immigration issue with crime, and to play on the national pride of the readers by reminding readers of whose country it is, and who doesn’t belong there.

Transitivity

The corpus analysis revealed interesting patterns of transitivity, and processes of passivization/activization were found to occur systematically in the data. Transitivity (first put

⁴³ van Dijk, *Elite Discourse*, p. 264.

⁴⁴ Michael Billig: *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage, 1995, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Illegal immigrant working inside nuke plant arrested. In: *KVOA.com*, July 14, 2011 accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.kvoa.com/news/illegal-immigrant-working-inside-nuke-plant-arrested/>

⁴⁷ Anderson, Brother of Milford Illegal.

forward by Hopper & Thompson),⁴⁸ is “the system that is concerned with how entities and actions in a situation are coded in the language.”⁴⁹ Thus, whether a participant in a text chooses a more or less transitive representation of an event, can serve various stylistic functions such as marking point of view, distinguishing text genres and subgenres from each other, and representing characters as powerful and responsible, or the reverse.⁵⁰ Because of this last function, transitivity analysis is especially useful in critical discourse analyses such as pertaining to this paper. The following is an analysis calculated using corpus analysis results of police and Latino migrant actions reported in the texts.

Table 1.1 – Activization vs. Passivization of Negative Actions

Agent	Passive	Active
Latino migrants	7%	93%
Police	79%	21%

Here are some examples from the texts:

Text 25: The suspect Antonio Lopez-Bautista, 18, **was arrested** after a brief scuffle with officers.⁵¹

Text 9: The man **had** previously **been deported**, the department said. He is a Mexican citizen.⁵²

Text 1: "This **suspect** sexually **assaulted** a young innocent girl and this is yet another example of a violent crime **committed** by an illegal alien in Maricopa County," Sheriff Joe Arpaio said.⁵³

⁴⁸ Paul Hopper and Sandra Thompson: Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse. In: *Language*, Vol. 56.2 (1980), p. 251-299.

⁴⁹ Mary Ellen Ryder, M.E. (2006). ‘Transitivity: Stylistics Approaches’. In: *Encyclopaedia of Language & Linguistics* (Second Edition), 2006, p.40-46, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Ryder, ‘Transitivity’, p. 40.

⁵¹ Illegal immigrant accused of kidnapping and attempted rape. In: *WNYT*, May 22, 2012 accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://saratogaspings.wnyt.com/news/news/135390-illegal-immigrant-accused-kidnapping-and-attempted-rape>.

⁵² Robert J. Lopez: Deported sex offender arrested by border control in Riverside County. In: *L.A. Times*, April 29, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.latimes.com/search/dispatcher.front?Query=mexican+national+arrested&target=article&sortby=display+time+descending>.

⁵³ Illegal Immigrant Charged in Rape of Girl.

The above choices of passive vs. active give participants differing degrees of power depending on how event-like the process in which they are involved is.⁵⁴ Thus in the example (‘sexually assaulted’), the Agents (Latino migrants) are represented as extremely powerful, especially in relation to the Goal (‘the young innocent girl’).⁵⁵ This functions to foreground “their” negative actions.⁵⁶ At the same time, when the Agent is part of the in-group (in this case, law enforcement), the passive sentences (‘was arrested’, ‘had been deported’) gives the Agent extremely low power in this negative action. Thus by choosing a different type of process (passive vs. active), the author ‘downgrades’ the process and creates a more complex stylistic effect that legitimizes the actions involved in law enforcement. This is in turn a type of metaphorical encoding that recodes Goals (the accused Latino migrants in this case) as less affected participants and decreases the perceived power of the natural Agent.⁵⁷ According to Mayr & Machin, this subtle process occurs because the police have a central role as crime definers that is reinforced by their close symbiotic relationship with the media and a need to “create an image of themselves as an efficient and effective force, as this ensures public support”.⁵⁸ In their quest to make themselves look good and to advocate for their own personal and political issues (e.g., anti-immigration laws such as SB1070), pertinent information is deleted, left out, or downplayed. In the case of the above article, Sheriff Arpaio’s comment ignores the fact that the suspect has been CHARGED and not CONVICTED. In text 1 he is first called a ‘suspect’ by Sheriff Arpaio and then in the second clause he uses the verb ‘committed’ which then assumes that he has been judged guilty, when in fact, he has not. As a man who works for a law enforcement agency, Sheriff Arpaio knows the law and the concept of “innocent until proven guilty” but denies this right of due process to the offender and capitalizes on the fact that much of the public will not notice this distinction or will be in agreement with this framing. This pattern of “guilty unless proven innocent” occurs repeatedly in the Latino crime reports analyzed for this paper.

Biased news gathering/ Selected Quoting of Elites

⁵⁴ Ryder, ‘Transitivity’, p. 42.

⁵⁵ Hopper and Thompson, ‘Transitivity’, p. 251.

⁵⁶ Ryder, ‘Transitivity’, p. 44.

⁵⁷ Ryder, ‘Transitivity’, p. 45.

⁵⁸ Mayr & Machin, *The Language of Crime*, p. 138,168.

Text 14: **Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio's deputies** arrested an illegal immigrant **working** inside the Palo Verde Nuclear Plant, the nation's largest nuclear plant and one of the most closely monitored in the country. According to Sheriff Arpaio, Cruz tried to **gain access** to the Nuclear power plant on Monday but **was denied entrance** because his Mexican Driver's license was expired.⁵⁹

In this example, Sheriff Joe Arpaio is again quoted to lend credibility to the investigation, but there are no quotes from the perpetrator or the victim. In fact, in the 25 articles analyzed for this chapter, there were no examples found of quotes by the perpetrators or non-white victims. Additionally, the above example shows the technique of manipulation on the part of Sheriff Arpaio with the use of the phrase *gain access* in the text. In this article, Sheriff Arpaio is calling attention to the fact that the person arrested was trying to *gain access* to the nuclear facility. What he is attempting to downplay, however, is the fact that this man was *working* inside the plant in some type of maintenance capacity and had been doing so for some time (since the article mentions that he had been living in the U.S. for 15 years). The use of 'illegal immigrant' frames him as a criminal, and helps to push forward Arpaio's narrative of the threat that illegal immigrants pose to the United States. Also interesting is the metonymy 'Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio's deputies' (as opposed to just 'deputy Sheriffs'), which legitimizes the authorities and forefronts the law enforcement status (Sheriff) in opposition to the illegal status of the accused individual, and the use of 'Sheriff Joe Arpaio's' before 'deputies' in order to give elite status metonymically to the deputies because they work for him.

Over-Completion

Text 10: Castillo, **who is an illegal alien**, was taken into custody and arrested by UD Police. The **Spanish-speaking** suspect refused to be interviewed.⁶⁰

Text 6: By all accounts, Baltazar, **who speaks no English**, led a solitary existence.⁶¹

Text 23: The suspect is described as being a light skinned male, **Spanish speaking**, average build with facial hair.⁶²

⁵⁹ Illegal Immigrant Working Inside Nuke Plant.

⁶⁰ Illegal Alien Accused of Fondling.

⁶¹ Gazarik, Mexican Illegal Arrested.

The above comments are examples of xeno-racist discourse, in which over-completion aids in pointing out the ethnicity of the subjects of the reports, as well as referring to their legal status.⁶³

Legitimization:

Legitimization strategies are a type of representational strategy that gives reasons as to why text-consumers should accept the author's assertions.⁶⁴ In the case of the following examples, the author is attempting to legitimize the authority of the correctional officers at the detention center to determine the legal status of the migrants in question, a process that is normally delegated to ICE. The metonymies of 'specially trained correctional officers...' imply that this is not the responsibility of these officers but in order to justify their taking over of such a task, the 'specially trained' is inserted to show that, even though this isn't their job (and perhaps they are not technically authorized to do this job), they know what they are doing.

Text 18: Specially trained correctional officers at the Lexington County Detention Center, who enforce federal immigration laws under the supervision of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), determined that Mendez illegally entered the United States from Mexico, Metts said.⁶⁵

Text 20: Sheriff James Metts says Perez-Jeronimo is in the country illegally. Metts says specially trained corrections [sic]officers at the county detention center determined Perez-Jeronimo was born in Guatemala.⁶⁶

Image

The final type of strategy found in the data is the use of image. All of the images of the Latino migrants in the data were found to be "mug shots", in which it is clear that the subject of the

⁶² Tyler Slauson: Police still searching for Pasco robbery suspect. In: *KEPRTV*, March 8, 2012, accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.keprtv.com/news/Police-searching-for-Pasco-robbery-suspect-141774133.html>.

⁶³ The term "xeno-racist" denotes a new form of racism found in public discourse regarding migrant issues, which is xenophobic in form, but racist in substance. From Michal Krzyzanowski and Ruth Wodak: *The Politics of exclusion: Debating migration in Austria*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Hart, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 89.

⁶⁵ Shireese Bell: Illegal Immigrant Charged in Machete Assault Cases. In: *Lexington Patch*, March 8, 2012 accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://lexington-sc.patch.com/articles/police-illegal-immigrant-charged-in-machete-assault-cases>

⁶⁶ Katie Williams: Illegal immigrant charged with killing nephew. In: *Midlands Connect*, December 4, 2011 accessed on July 1, 2012 on <http://www.midlandsconnect.com/news/story.aspx?id=693621>.

image is there for the purposes of a crime investigation. This appears to be standard procedure in newspaper crime reports. However, when compared with crime reports of offenders of a different social status (such as CEOs), we can see a stark contrast. The following photos of Latino migrants are compared below with the photos of Bernard Madoff and Martha Stewart (CEOs convicted of crimes) in order to show the contrast between how dominant and non-dominant groups are shown visually in crime reports.⁶⁷



Text 25: Photo 1



Text 20: Photo 2

⁶⁷ Theresa Catalano & Linda Waugh: A Critical Analysis of Metonymy in Image and Text: The ideologies behind crime reports of Latinos and Wall Street/CEOs. In: *Critical discourse studies*/ Special Issue, Vol. 10.4 (November, 2013), p. 406-426.

Photo 3: Bernie Madoff



Photo 3: Bernie Madoff



Photo 4: Martha Stewart

As seen in the above photos, there is a stark contrast between the way the CEOs are portrayed (as outside of the criminal case and pictured with signs of wealth such as fur) and the way that Latino migrants are unfavorably depicted in mug shots and photos obviously taken after their arrest.

Conclusion

This paper has provided ample examples that illustrate the process of the linguistic construction of Latino migrant identity in U.S. crime reports. Examples from the texts demonstrate the subtle ways in which texts present covert ideologies present in public discourse. Some of the ways in

which these ideologies were produced included the use of metaphor and metonymy (IMMIGRANTS ARE CRIMINALS, ANIMALS, NON-HUMAN, ‘illegal aliens’, ‘illegal immigrants’, ‘crouched’, ‘processed for removal’); deixis (‘**our** nation’s border’, ‘**their** illegal activity’), transitivity (‘was arrested’ vs. ‘assaulted’), biased news gathering and the quoting of elite members of society (‘gained access’, ‘Sheriff Arpaio’), over-completion (‘Spanish-speaking’, ‘who is illegal’, ‘speaks no English’), legitimization (‘specially-trained correctional officers’), and the use of negative images. The above strategies result in an overall negative portrayal of Latino migrants in crime reports. The way these social actors are portrayed plays a large role in how we, the reader, perceive these groups as a whole, and the kinds of consequences Latinos receive for them (e.g. sentences they serve, policies that are or are not put in place). Thus, in the case of Latino crimes, the negative portrayal of Latinos in crime reports has been used as a rationale for unjust immigration laws and policies. It is not the intention of this paper to accuse journalists or their editors of being racist, but instead, to call attention to how ideologies from the larger society are reproduced in common news genres such as crime reports. Crime reports and other genres which have been attributed the job of reporting ‘facts’ are particularly dangerous, because people assume them to be transparent vehicles of the truth. For this reason, it is necessary to raise consciousness about how media discourse contains underlying ideologies and contributes to the public’s conceptualization of these migrant groups. Moreover, we must attend to how these judgmental perceptions affect public opinion that may in turn support the creation and/or maintenance of anti-immigrant policies and laws. Finally, we must never underestimate the importance of learning how to think (and teaching others to think) critically to help deconstruct and demystify these ideologies, which could be the first step in bringing about social change.