DISCOURSES ON IMMIGRATION IN A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

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Discourses on immigrants and minorities represent one of the most investigated topics in critically oriented discourse studies from the very beginning of Critical Discourse Analysis as an independent theoretical and methodological approach. Such attention is logical, given that it is an important social issue where asymmetric relations based on social power and dominance are created, maintained and reproduced. It is with respect to this long research tradition and its outcomes, that any new contribution will be considered and evaluated. It is also the case of the volume *Discourses on Immigration in Times of Economic Crisis: A Critical Perspective* which contains 11 studies edited by María Martínez Lirola (professor at the department of English studies at the University in Alicante in Spain). The book examines discourses on immigration and immigrants in a new setting, namely in the period of economic crisis of 2008 and afterwards. As the European economic crisis has had a huge impact on many people's lives and welfare, it constitutes a very suitable object of study of social change induced by socio-economic events and how it is semiotically construed and represented in various discourses (see Fairclough, 2012). The discourse(s) on immigration is one specific subdiscourse where effects of the economic crisis can be objectively observed and where various narratives on immigration emerge and are reproduced.

The book opens with an editor's foreword in which the scope of the book as well as the individual contributions are presented, followed by a prologue by Teun van Dijk, one of the key representatives of the CDA. Van Dijk devotes his prologue to accentuating several key assumptions continuously appearing in the literature, for example that "[r]acist ideology and attitudes are not innate but learned, and so are the social practices of discrimination based on them" (p. xvi). In this context, he focuses on the influence of the so-called symbolic elites (such as politicians, journalists and news editors) "who control these forms of public discourse [i.e., forms that are well suited to transmit ideologies; EL] are therefore the primary definers of ethnic or racial prejudices and ideologies and responsible for their reproduction in society" (p. xvii). He recognizes the main contribution of the volume to be the fact that by analyzing diverse discourses it systematically confirms the thesis about elites in the media enabling reproduction of racism by negatively portraying immigrants "as a threat and as scapegoats of the economic crisis" (p. xviii).

It follows from van Dijk's prologue that the studies presented in the volume survey the role of the media (more specifically the press) and its elites in the construction, stereotypization and recontextualization of dominant narratives in the discourse on immigration. That is the one feature which all 11 studies included in the volume

have in common. The scope of the book is reflected in Lirola's foreword to the volume where she puts emphasis on the fact that whilst the press can shape our attitudes and opinions, we have to be aware that "each image and each linguistic component used to transmit a message is not predetermined or chosen at random" (p. xi). Quite the opposite, she reveals that it is a complex decisive process where "the aims, purposes, and motivations of the encoders/journalists" (*ibid.*) are reflected and so they must be studied in great detail.

Another mutual aspect of the contributions is that they are mostly written by Spanish discourse analysts and deal with the immigration issues related to Spain or Spanish people.[1] In fact, this specific perspective is the most significant feature of the whole book as it provides us with a detailed description of how discourses on immigration in/to/from Spain emerge, are reproduced and maintained in the media, as well as presenting an outstanding overview of what has been done in Spanish CDA on immigration up to now.

Surprisingly, the second key concept of the book, namely that of the economic crisis, is not reflected in the book as such, but usually enters the particular analyses as a pre-constructed entity, and its nature is neither defined nor studied in depth in any contribution to the volume. And yet it would be very valuable to pay some attention to this concept and its semiotic representation in discourse as it may play an important role in the way immigration and immigrants are perceived. If, for instance, emphasis is put on the fact that economic crisis causes the increase of unemployment, then we may ask whether this perspective leads to considering immigration as a negative process. On the other hand, in case of accentuating other effects of economic crisis such as a lowering the birth rate, the immigration flow resulting in the growth of the population (and thus the productive power in a country) can induce opposite connotations. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that the construction of the crisis directly influences the construction of the immigration and hence it should not be taken as a transparent entity. To those particularly interested in the phenomenon of crisis I can recommend a collection of studies *Discourse and Crisis: Critical Perspectives* published in 2013 by John Benjamins[2] where instructive information and thorough discussion of the concept in current discourses are provided.

In order to describe the volume in more detail, it is possible to split the contributions into four thematic clusters of which the second is naturally the largest one: (i) papers investigating the overall approach to immigration in the media (Martínez et al., Lorite García), (ii) case studies on the representation of immigrants in the press (Lirola, Retis, Belmonte et al., Fernández, Chovanec), (iii) studies approaching particular aspects of immigration (such as health care

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1   There is but one paper in the volume that does not display this feature; written by Jan Cho-vanec from Masaryk University in Brno, the paper deals with the media representation of Romani and Vietnamese minorities in the Czech Republic (this will be elaborated on fur-ther).

2   De Rycker, Antoon — Zuraidah, Mohd Don (eds.) (2013): *Discourse and Crisis: Critical Per-spectives.* New York, NY — Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

or education: Hernández et al., Castaño et al.) and (iv) contributions focusing on political discourse on immigration (Olmos et al., Carbonero). With regard to the economic crisis, the papers treat this perspective differently: either as mere background information mentioned in an introductory section (and whose influence is either taken for granted or considered possible, but not studied) or as a specific situation that might have an impact on the object of study. Obviously, it is the latter case that matches the focus of the whole volume the best, thus I will pay most of my attention to the texts belonging into this group.

(I)

The paper by Antolín Granados Martínez, F. Javier García Castaño, Nina Kressova, Lucía Chovancova and José Fernández Echeverría *Participation of the media on combating racism and xenophobia* is of a more or less descriptive nature as it introduces several official documents concerning the proper and justified treatment of immigrants and immigration which are — or should be — binding for Spanish journalists, thus setting a contextual frame for the other papers in the volume. Hence it raises the question of why it is the tenth chapter of the book, not the first or perhaps the last, given its overall purpose and perspective. Nicolás Lorite García in his paper *How the media affect intercultural relationships in times of change* sets himself two goals: first, to point out various aspects that shape the way the Spanish media treat intercultural relationships, and second, to demonstrate an analytical method which combines quantitative analysis with qualitative case studies in order to reach valid and representative results. Alongside traditionally conceived qualitative analyses of particular cases (such as the reports on the coexistence of the traditional Catalan population with immigrants in the town of Salt, or the treatment of immigrants by political parties during the municipal elections in 2011), the author derives his claims mainly from quantitative data showing changes in demographic rates, the decrease of journalists and journal outlets in Spain due to the financial crisis, and mainly the frequencies of the presence of the topic of migration in the media (on the basis of TV broadcasts between 1996 and 2010). The latter set of data shows that mentions of migration in the Spanish media peaked in 2006 when they formed 10% of all broadcasts, dropping to 3–5% afterwards. It correlates with demographic waves, 1996–2006 being the period of vast migration into Spain.

(II)

The first contribution to the volume *Immigrants going back home: an analysis of the discursive representation of the return plan for immigrants in three Spanish newspapers*, written by the editor María Martínez Lirola, examines press reports on the governmental plan of 2012 to financially support the return of immigrants to their home countries. In this respect, two mainstream Spanish newspapers and a newspaper dedicated to the community of Latino immigrants in Spain are

compared. It is claimed that in the mainstream media, the Return Plan is positively represented as a win-win strategy and it is also supported by accompanying images which usually show a well-dressed politician giving a public or parliamentary speech in favour of the return law. The fact that Latino immigrants are never represented in images corresponds with the fact that they are only referred to in articles, never entering the discourse directly through direct speech introducing their point of view. On the other hand, the Latino newspaper highlights also the shortcomings of the Return Plan, based on the particular experiences of those who have already joined the plan, and which are directly attested in the newspaper's articles on the topic.

Jéssica Retis's paper *Immigrant Latina images in mainstream media: class, race and gender in public discourse of the United States and Spain* provides an overview of the existing research on the topic in Spain, so the contribution offers many references to particular studies, yet does not itself answer any specific research questions.

In chapter three of the book, *Ideological stances of internet users'* (*discursive construction of immigration, race and rasism: an online newspaper study* (by Isabel Alonso Belmonte, Daniel Chornet and Ann McCabe) is presented. The authors analyzed the reader positioning strategies of the online version of the Spanish journal *El País,* accessible through approximately 500 online comments of the article *No blacks allowed: we want to keep a Spanish thing going* that was published in February 2010 and reported a racist incident taking place in nightclubs in a Madrid suburb. The authors of the paper divided the comments into three classes on the basis of dominant ideological stances expressed in them: (a) comments that acknowledged the reported event as being racist, (b) comments that rejected this interpretation, (c) comments of an ambivalent nature. Further analysis revealed various rhetorical forms and functions that followed the particular ideological positions, such as rejecting the racism and offering an explanation of causes and consequences in the first case, or various explanations (e.g. law-based or scapegoating) attempting to prove the non-racist nature of the incident in the second case. According to the authors, the third case reveals a socio-cultural struggle "within which citizens have to cope with not only the transformations of their societies into 'global multicultural villages', but the concomitant realization of their own racial identities as white human beings" (p. 79). Developing this idea in the discussion and conclusion section, the authors argue that the economic crisis has not only hardened the attitudes towards immigrants, but has led to explicitly formed ideologic discursive formations of whiteness, as well as to a new form of racism called xeno-racism (del-Teso-Craviotto, 2009). It can be based on both physical racial traits and/or any other differences, such as economic inequalities. It is hence a powerful means of discrimination as "it never misses its task of otherizing" (p. 83).

Eliecer Crespo Fernández in his study *The treatment of immigrants in the current Spanish and Brisith right-wing press: a cross-linguistic study* compares how immigrants are described in Spanish and British right-wing newspapers. He focuses on various x-phemistic (euphemistic and dysphemistic) lexical means attributed to both regular and irregular ("illegal") immigrants in both countries. The analysis reveals that although in both countries the right-wing press treats immigrants mostly in a negative way, the number of euphemistic or neutral cases is significantly higher in Spain than in the United Kingdom. Immigrants are usually portrayed as a threat

(in British right-wing press, this is often supported by chiffres demonstrating level of immigration and costs that are needed to deal with it), whereas the more positive representation of immigrants as victims appears only in the Spanish press.

Jan Chovanec's (Masaryk University in Brno) contribution *How come you're not a criminal?: immigrant stereotyping and ethnic profiling in the press* has a special position in the volume — his paper focuses not on Spain, but uniquely on the Czech Republic,[3] and furthermore there is no direct link to the economic crisis. The paper brings a critical perspective on the journalistic representations of two events taking place in 2012 that involved individuals of different ethnic groups, Vietnamese and Roma, who form two dominant internal out-groups in the Czech Republic given its demographic profile. The two events contrast with each other not only with respect to the ethnicity of the individual involved, but also because in the first case, media reported the event of a car accident in which a Vietnamese woman was the victim, whereas in the latter case a Roma boy was believed to be an aggressor until his innocence was proven. The author shows that even if both ethnic groups are met with racist prejudices it is the Roma out-group that is depicted the most negatively of all, not only by direct social actors of the events, but also by journalists who reported them and interviewed witnesses.

(III)

The third cluster focusing on various aspects of immigration is well represented by the sixth chapter *Between enriching diversity and segregating difference: contradicting discourses on the presence of foreign students in the educational system* written by F. Javier García Castaño, Antonia Olmos Alcaraz and María Rubio Gómez. It tackles two ways of representing in the media foreign students in Spanish schools. Both representations are based on the concept of diversity that is reportedly on the rise with foreign students entering the Spanish educational system; the diversity is either characterized as a threatening problem that needs to be solved, or acclaimed as a culturally enriching situation. The authors show that despite differences in these two narratives, both conceptualize foreign students as different from the majority which inevitably leads to the uneven treatment of this group. The article also highlights the fact that visual stimuli accompanying reports on foreign students contribute to the representation of the group as different by accentuating mainly phenotypic differences.

(IV)

In the last group, Gema Rubio Carbonero studies *Spanish political discourse on immigration in time of crisis.* His goal is to analyze how Spanish politicians approach immigration, as this has a direct impact on how stereotypes of immigrants and

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3   In few other papers where other countries than Spain are studied, they are either mentioned as a means of comparison to the situation in Spain, or it is a country where a considerable community of Spanish native speakers lives, such as the United States.

immigration emerge. The author collected a corpus of parliamentary debates on immigration in 2010 and 2011, observing a two-third decrease of the number of debates in which immigration was a topic. It shows that in Spain in times of economic crisis, immigration is not one of the prominent topics of political discourse. In order to describe discursive strategies, the author analyzes the following categories in his data: roles and attributes associated with different social actors (see van Leeuwen, 1996), context-related pragmatic presuppositions and implications related to immigration, mutual social beliefs aka *topoi* (Reisigl — Wodak 2001) and argumentative fallacies. The results show that although the prominence of the topic of immigration has diminished when compared to times before the economic crisis, the features of its ideologically motivated discursive representation remain the same. The immigrants and immigration are unanimously construed negatively, mainly as a threat to Spanish society that politicians have to overcome. The topoi of immigrants being a burden appears frequently, as well as the rhetorical strategies of hyperbole and metaphor (immigrants depicted as a natural disaster) supporting it.

All in all, the volume provides an informative insight into the current discourses on immigration mostly related to Spain and investigated by Spanish researchers. The book can be recommended to all discourse analysts interested in discourses on immigration as well as to those interested in Spanish culture. However, it is a pity that the perspective of the economic crisis is not better theoretically supported and methodologically incorporated into more case studies in this volume, as it would lead to a better formulation of its particular perspective, which should be studied in detail both from the socio-cultural as well as discursive-analytical point of view. Only a thorough inspection of this newly arisen phenomenon can help us say which aspects of discursive construals change and which remain the same. Therefore, I hope that the authors who have contributed to this volume will pursue their topics in the future in order to fulfill this task.

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