

**“When you’re in America you need to speak  
English:” Critical discourse study on the  
immigrantization of Spanish speakers and implicit  
racism in the United States**

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Master’s Thesis

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This thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis to study whether Spanish speakers in the United States face immigrantization due to their language use. I also consider the role race/ethnicity plays in this process and analyze any implicit or embedded meanings that may appear in the material – for instance, expressions of implicit racism which linguistic discrimination may be used as a substitute for. An empirical, multidisciplinary approach is used in assessing these themes of language and race in connection, borrowing from fields such as raciolinguistics, and researchers such as Teun A. van Dijk. The material consists of videos appearing on the social media platform YouTube and has been selected using a qualitative method.

I find that the material used in this study portrays practices of immigrantization, othering and foreignization, while also showcasing implicit and explicit racism. These views follow from individuals’ Spanish use, which encourages immigrantization on part of the English-speaking persons. In other words, Spanish speakers are perceived as more prototypically immigrant due to their language use. They also face racism and linguistic discrimination.

Based on these findings, I recommend further research into multilingual contact situations where language and race intersect. As the nature of this thesis is empirical and we consider wider connections to subjects outside linguistics, a more theoretical approach to linguistic analysis may add variety for future research.

**Key words:** immigration, racialization, Critical Discourse Analysis, linguistic discrimination, Spanish, United States

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# 1 Introduction

“Language, even more than color, defines who you are to people.”

Trevor Noah. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*.

Language plays an enormous role in our daily lives. As the only species to have adopted written and spoken language as our main means of communication, we aspire to explain ourselves and to understand others through words. When this process is complicated through the intermixing of different languages and styles of language, the language of others may, in some cases, encourage practices of linguistic discrimination or the racialization of language. This is fruitful ground for the creation of in-groups and out-groups and further rituals of othering. Unfortunately, a language gap like this may also promote racism and discrimination beyond the linguistic scope – including racialization and immigrantization. As we will further discuss in the following chapters of this thesis, this racism and assigning of qualities can be exacerbated if the non-English speaking individual is also a person of color.

This study focuses on views and attitudes that label Spanish-speakers as immigrants or otherwise racialize them in the United States. In other words, I am studying the immigrantization of Spanish-speakers based on their language use. However, I am strongly of the opinion that this kind of language-based or language-inspired discrimination rarely occurs in a vacuum. Thus, we must consider wider themes around race and racism, as well as how linguistic and “traditional” racism intersect within this context. I am specifically interested in answering the following questions:

1. If immigrantization, racialization and/or discrimination are present in the material, how are they expressed? Are they direct or indirect?
2. How are these assumptions apparent in the language used by persons appearing in the material?
3. If the material displays implicit or embedded assumptions about immigrant status, language ability or race/ethnicity, how are those expressed?
4. Is linguistic discrimination used as a substitute for racism?

As U.S.-based comedian Trevor Noah (2016, 56) suggests in their autobiographical piece, language and thus views of the speakers of any given language thoroughly affect our

perceptions of one another. That is to say, the language we use alters the way in which other people view us (Finegan and Rickford 2004, 480). However, it seems reasonable to claim that this also works conversely; the way a person looks also affects the way in which the language they use (or what they say, in general) is received by others. Scholars argue that while overt racism is growing more unacceptable in modern societies (e.g. Boromisza-Habashi 2015, 2), expressions of racism have shifted from biology to language (Alim et al. 2016; Urciuoli 2001; Zentella 1997). Indeed, numerous studies on topics such as linguistic profiling (e.g. Baugh 2015) suggest that language is often used as a substitute for race at a time when overt expressions of racial bigotry are not socially acceptable. Preston (2004, 481) asserts that “It is likely that language is only a carrier of the attitudes we have toward the speakers of different varieties,” suggesting that reactions to a person speaking (in our case) Spanish are based on our underlying and preexisting attitudes towards people(s) who just happen to speak Spanish. This use of language as a substitute for race, then, offers bigoted individuals a gateway to express implicit racism under the guise of language.

Language has long been considered a natural extension of one’s (ethnic) identity (Urciuoli 1995; Lippi-Green 2004) and thus the expression of a person’s cultural and national heritage. Lippi-Green (ibid., 298) describes this:

When speakers are confronted with a new person they want to talk to or must talk to, they make a quick series of social evaluations based on many external cues, one of them being the other person’s language and accent. Those sociolinguistic cues are directly linked to homeland, the race and ethnicity and other factors – the entirety of the social self [...].

It is fair to say, then, that language and race/ethnicity are strongly interlinked and inexplicably influence each other. I argue that disregarding the role of race in this context would not only misrepresent the findings, but also be wholly irresponsible and ethically unsustainable. As Alim et al. (2020) point out, the two are often separated in a way that leads to unsatisfactory analyses in academia, disregarding the role of race in linguistics, and skewing the achieved findings in a way that highlights a white-normative experience.

Alim et al. (2016, 3) argue that we are living in a ‘hyperracial’ society, as opposed to a post-racial one, and as racial–ethnic tensions continue to dominate much of U.S. politics and public dialogue in the aftermath of events such as the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 – which

instituted sweeping demonstrations around the country and indeed all over the world – as well as the seeming rise of white nationalism and neo-Nazi movements in the United States and elsewhere, I view this a timely and relevant research subject that continues to have real-world effects on millions of people in the United States, but also more widely in the global world. We are also witnessing a potential second term under former-President Donald Trump, and a similar continuum of racist, anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant discourse. These events disproportionately affect all people of color, regardless of factors such as immigration status or country of origin, by enforcing stereotypes and negative beliefs about “the foreign other.” I suspect that these sentiments may influence how the videos discuss Spanish speakers and what kinds of views are considered socially acceptable in a conservative climate.

In addition to considering this a timely topic in a larger society-wide context, I also believe that race and the interplay of race and language should be more widely considered in academia, which often avoids the concept of race as “difficult” or “insensitive.” Thankfully this has been a growing focus point in recent years, and more studies on language and race/ethnicity are being produced at a fast pace. Language and race in confluence should also be considered an ever-changing and constantly developing research subject because “rather than fixed and predetermined, racial and ethnic identities are (re)created through continuous and repeated language use” (Alim et al. 2016, 6).

This study aims to critically inspect the rhetoric used about Spanish and speakers of Spanish in a majority English-speaking context and consider the implications of such instances on the everyday lived realities of non-English speakers. This requires consideration of pre-existing power hierarchies and white-normative practices that enable structural and institutionalized racism in the United States. It is relevant to contemplate the wider sociopolitical context as well as historical continuums that still currently shape language and race in contact. These issues will be at the forefront of my analysis throughout this paper. To achieve this goal, this study borrows from raciolinguistics and sociolinguistics in assessing the larger themes surrounding language and race. By raciolinguistics I mean the study of language and race in conjunction, or how “*raciolinguistic ideologies* produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects” (Flores and Rosa 2015, 150). Furthermore, Alim et al. (2016, 3) describe raciolinguistics as “dedicated to bringing to bear the diverse methods of linguistic analysis to ask and answer critical questions about the relations between language, race, and power across diverse ethn racial contexts and societies.” This



study consciously adopts an interdisciplinary approach to a topic that is highly nuanced and requires critical analysis from multiple points of view.

The primary, audiovisual material has been extracted from the video sharing platform YouTube, depicting interactions between Spanish and English speakers in the United States. The hypothesis is that the attitudes present in the primary material will depict negative views toward those speaking Spanish in the United States. This expectation is based on both the fact that this type of content appears to be more common or “viral” on YouTube than more positively perceived interactions, as well as the reputation of the United States as a de facto English-speaking nation where attitudes toward foreign language speakers or even accented speakers of English are often disfavoring. In addition, public rhetoric in recent years has demonized Latinx (often Spanish-speaking) immigrants, referring to this group in a negative and bigoted manner. This is especially true before, during and following the Trump administration’s time in power (2017–2021). Acknowledging these points, it seems likely that this racist and bigoted discourse would also have found room in social media platforms.

In my analysis on the immigrantization and racialization of Spanish-speakers portrayed in the material, I will be utilizing a framework known as Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis traditionally considers themes such as identity and power relations, being the perfect tool for analyzing this type of data. CDA also allows for a more detailed and qualitative assessment of the material and enables discussion around sociopolitical factors that may be relevant for our analysis. CDA also supports the kind of empirical and multidisciplinary approach that I deem important for a topic of this nature.

In the following section, chapter 2 (Background) I will consider the sociolinguistic and sociopolitical context that may play a role with regards to our material. This includes inspecting the timeframe of when the collected material was published (i.e. the “Trump era”), as well as considering the history of Spanish (as well as English) in the United States. I will also discuss related phenomena, such as the so-called English Only Movement, and consider the legal role of language in the United States. All this will serve our understanding of the portrayed practice of immigrantization and linguistic discrimination while also informing our Critical Discourse Analysis. Attitudes are closely tied to the time–space in which they are expressed, and this background is relevant for understanding the social context in which those are voiced.

In the Material section (chapter 3), I will introduce the material used in this study. Relevant justifications for the use of this type of material will be offered and certain criticisms addressed. The primary material is available as separate transcribed appendices at the end of

this paper. I wish to point out that the purpose of this study is not to make moral, or any other types of judgements about the persons depicted in the material, even as we are discussing racism and other kinds of discrimination. For this reason, I have anonymized the individuals appearing in the primary material (in part, by using the pronouns they/them as opposed to she/he when discussing the material), although links to the original video material will be provided for transparency, and first names appear in the transcripts in some instances.

Following this section, I will introduce the methodology in chapter 4. The chosen research approach (Critical Discourse Analysis) will be introduced in further detail and its academic importance described. I will justify why I consider CDA to be the best approach for this type of data and introduce scholars whose research in the field of critical discourse studies have especially influenced the analysis of our material.

Chapter 5, in turn, will consist of my analysis of the material, and form the bulk of this paper. For convenience and ease, each piece of primary material has been discussed separately, followed by a more comparative analysis in chapter 6: Discussion, where these pieces of material are discussed in relation to each other, for purposes of identifying potential shared features and patterns that we will then situate in the corresponding sociopolitical context. The discussion section will also bring forth further comments about the findings and relate them to their respective temporal environment. Finally, chapter 7 will function as a recap section for my findings and conclude this paper by suggesting final thoughts and summarizing our core findings. We will consider implications for future research on the subject and contemplate themes that require further academic focus based on the findings in this paper.

Finally, a few words about why I chose to research this topic. The concept of race and language in contact is what has inspired the focus of this study, and while the wider attitudes toward foreign language speakers and/or racialized groups in the United States is a topic beyond the scope of this paper, the aim is to focus on individual contact situations where these themes are present and qualitatively analyze the interactions in their given context. The subject further stems from a personal interest in the intricacies of language, race, and linguistic/racial discrimination and how these intersect in various ways, particularly in the context of the United States. How speakers of different languages are received by others has concrete ramifications for the individual in working and social life, education, and personal/home life. This practical aspect is of particular interest to me – and this practicality has also influenced the nature of this paper somewhat. A look into the tangible consequences of discrimination also offers us a glimpse of understanding into the everyday realities of marginalized groups, and how

perceptions of these groups are created and re-created in public speech, defining how they are met and treated in day-to-day interactions with members of the (white) majority. Navigating a world that is opinionated about one's language use affects millions of people every day. It is no small matter whether the attitudes concerned with language and its corresponding speaker groups are positive or negative, accepting or discriminatory. This is especially true when we expand our attention from the individual Spanish-speaker to the entire affected group – in this case, the entire BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community in the United States.

I take a purposefully interdisciplinary approach in this thesis because the topic requires multi-faceted focus, but also as homage to my own university education, which has included studies in English linguistics, North American Studies, and Multicultural Studies. While I have been influenced by all three of these fields, the John Morton Center for North American Studies (where I also had the pleasure of interning) especially encouraged multidisciplinary and critical thinking – values that I already shared naturally. This personal background will be reflected in the thesis, not only through the way I approach the material, but through the very choice and context of this topic. My deepest thanks to the staff at JMC, who kindly offered me feedback on this paper at its rudimentary stage.

## 2 Background

This chapter will begin with a section on terminology, where I will introduce any concepts relevant for this study, as well as explain specific terms that I have adopted. Against this research topic, it is also relevant to study the history and status of both Spanish and English in the United States. I have done this with a focus on historical continuums and a consideration for any language hierarchies and power dynamics arising from this background, providing a brief take on of both English and Spanish in the U.S. (2.2-2.4). Some related phenomena will also be discussed in these two chapters (such as the English-Only Movement).

Additionally, the relevant sociopolitical context to the material will be introduced, namely the Trump era in the United States (chapter 2.5). I will discuss themes such as the role of race and (perceived/assigned) immigration status/foreignness, linguistic discrimination, and practices of othering, as well as how these factors may reflect on or through the language we use. Finally, I will review the general (political) polarization of our society in relation to these themes, as well as the rise of right-wing nationalism and anti-immigration stances during these times.

### 2.1 Terminology

#### 2.1.1 Immigrantization

The term and concept of *immigrantization* is fairly recent and thus far seldom used in linguistic research. Han (2014) uses the term in their work on title level, not further elaborating on the definition per se. They study a similar language phenomenon in the Chinese–Canadian context, however, arguing that “language and race intersect in complicated ways to racialize [i]mmigrants and their children differently, and [that] linguistic nationalism as a form of structural racism permeates everyday interactions” (Han 2014, 54). This sentiment is echoed in this study as well.

In the field of psychology, Reese et al. (2023, 4) use the term ‘de-immigrantization’ in a sense of someone being “perceived as less prototypically immigrant.” Modifying from Reese et al., I will use the term ‘immigrantization’ in this thesis to indicate the opposite: someone being perceived as *more* prototypically immigrant. In this study, it is predicted that the Spanish-speaking individuals appearing in our material are perceived as more prototypically immigrant due to their language use. Furthermore, this language-based immigrantization and racialization of the language (and thus the individual) may occur in relation to the speaker’s other qualities

or attributes such as skin tone, which is an example of implicit racism – where instead of expressing overt racism, racism is expressed under the guise of opposition to the language used. In other words, especially BIPOC Spanish-speakers are more likely to face immigrantization. These themes will be analyzed in further detail in the following chapters of this thesis.

Since existing research on immigrantization in the linguistics context is somewhat lacking, it is necessary to create a more concrete definition for what constitutes this practice. Thus far, I have defined immigrantization as perceiving someone as more prototypically immigrant. I argue that this is indeed a *practice*, whether intentional or unintentional. I use the word practice to express how those victimized experience effects of discriminatory behaviors, and how they systematically and primarily affect marginalized people. I further claim that perceiving someone as more prototypically anything must inevitably be based on stereotypes. The practice of immigrantization, then, is based on stereotypes about who are commonly considered immigrants in the United States context, as well as who are prototypically not.

It becomes evident in the following sections that the United States operates off white-normative values and expectations. These white-normative views include notions of: “real Americans” are white; speak English; and were born in the United States. This effectively rules out all others – non-white, non-English speaking, and foreign-born individuals – as potential immigrants, and thus potential targets of immigrantization. Additionally, I highlight that (especially BIPOC) Spanish-speakers in our current sociopolitical environment are somewhat automatically labeled as foreign or other, which offers a natural (no matter how unjustified) pathway to assuming immigrant status. Therefore, one may speculate that instances where speakers in the data express attitudes toward Spanish-speakers highlighting aspects of race, nationality, language use or indeed immigration status may be linked to the practice of immigrantization. However, it is relevant to note that negative reactions toward Spanish speakers may indeed arise from aversion to the language itself, as opposed to race or ethnicity – especially in the United States where monolingualism is widely considered to be the default.

This priming leads me to form the following definition of immigrantization: Immigrantization is the practice of perceiving an individual as more prototypically immigrant due to nationality, race or ethnicity, and/or language ability in a given context, regardless of de facto immigrant status. This often includes themes of superiority/inferiority and may additionally consider factors such as class, gender, or economic status. In other words, the concept of intersectionality can be weaponized to view some groups in an unfavorable light in comparison to the majority population because of certain attributes they have or are assumed to have, or to exclude certain

groups. In the current United States sociopolitical context, rhetoric around immigration has demonized immigrants of Latin American heritage and consciously created a Latinx, Spanish-speaking outgroup who, consequently, are perceived as more prototypically immigrant due to these elite-generated assigned labels.

Similarly to other forms of racial profiling and top-to-bottom assigned stereotypes, I consider the practice of immigrantization a form of (racial) discrimination (and in our context, also linguistic discrimination), operating in the same space with “traditional” definitions of racism and racial prejudice. While being an immigrant should not automatically prompt racialization or discrimination of any kind (and this thesis certainly does not suggest it), immigrants and, consequently, perceived/assumed immigrants (especially people of color) often face racism and other forms of discrimination which comes to label them as inferior to the majority population. VanNatta (2019, 111) argues that “[t]he wording employed by US Citizenship and Immigration Services creates an image of a vulnerable US public in need of protection from invaders, painting immigrants as inherently criminal and dangerous.” This sentiment has been widely echoed in former President Trump’s rhetoric which, as I discuss below, has played a role in further demonizing immigrants, especially those of Latinx heritage, in the United States. In other words, while immigration should not be considered a primarily racial issue or encourage negative stereotyping, this is often the case in the United States and indeed in other countries as well. Being an immigrant, then, is often seen as a negative attribute and can function as a hindrance to the individual immigrating. For these reasons we consider the practice of immigrantization to be harmful and discriminatory in a similar manner to other forms of racial discrimination.

Additionally, the way I have chosen to use the term “immigrantization” in this study also expands to consider the stereotypical perceptions and assigned qualities that follow from this labeling and are often attached to immigrants and immigration (especially in recent public and private discourse). These subsequent stereotypes about and actions toward a victim of immigrantization may include othering, exclusion, perceived lower status and inferiority, racialization, various forms of violence or threat of violence, stigmatization, being treated as “foreign,” and/or even notions of illegality (which is further exacerbated by the sociopolitical environment and public discourse around Latinx immigrants during the period this study focuses on). These practices can result regardless of the person’s de-facto immigration status or lack thereof, impacting all people of color in white-normative spaces. These are lasting

effects of institutional and structural racism that are upheld and enforced even on the highest levels of government and policymaking.

### 2.1.2 Othering and foreignization

Other commonly used terms in this thesis are *the other* and *othering*. In the context of this study, I use the term “other” to refer to *minority others*, who are considered out-group(s) in their respective communities and societies, often through the lens of race. Outgroups viewed as other because of race or ethnicity can also be referred to as “non-white others.” Feagin (2014) states that in the United States whiteness is often considered superior to other ethnic groups and non-white others viewed as inferior due to “a white racial frame.” This imagined hierarchy further enforces a white-normative social order and targets people of color as the other, affecting their chances of achievement to similar levels of their white counterparts. Indeed, Canizales and Agius Vallejo (2021, 157) argue that “U.S.-born Latinos’ social integration is limited by boundaries of racial otherness.” On a similar note, Dervin (2016, 46) argues that when someone is displaying othering, notions of “superiority and inferiority between “us” and “them”” are present, and the other is perceived as lesser or inferior to the in-group – in the U.S. context, as we established, often white-normative, but also English-speaking. In this thesis, the term “othering” is often used in connection with the practice of immigrantization of Spanish speakers in an English-speaking context, which is further creating a sense of the other or of foreignness.

*Foreignness* or *foreignization*, in this study, refer to a similar practice of othering, but specifically through perceiving the other as a *foreign* other, or a foreigner (in our material, often specifically as “Mexican”). This practice shares many of the reasonings and consequences of othering introduced above and is similarly linked to the concept of immigrantization. Foreignization talk in the period I am contemplating also includes views of immigrants’ illegality or unlawful entry into the United States. These views were highlighted in various forms of rhetoric concerning immigrants, particularly those of Latinx background, and encouraged by then-President Trump’s xenophobic commentary about Mexicans. This enforces the “Latino threat narrative” (Canizales and Agius Vallejo 2021, 152) that portrays Latinx men as illegal or criminal and instills fear in white demographics, “producing racialized illegality [and] racialized citizenship” (ibid., 156). Canizales and Agius Vallejo (2021) argue that Trump ascended into power partly due to them taking advantage of this narrative and weaponizing it through public anti-immigration and anti-Latinx rhetoric to gain support from these demographics.

### 2.1.3 Racialization and assigning race

Yet another similar term that requires introduction is *racialization* (also “assigning race” or “imposing race”). One definition of racialization describes it as “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group” (Omi and Winant 2015, 111). This refers to the practice of imposing an ethnic/racial identity on an individual, commonly without the input of the one being subjected to this racialization. In other words, this type of labeling is often performed without the individual’s consent or approval, which may negatively impact the individual or portray them in a light that does not reflect their genuine heritage. Racialization of an individual or group can attach entirely false assumptions to them, such as presumptions of ethnicity or nationality, which can have concrete effects on matters such as immigration policy or, for instance, data collected in the U.S. Census.

Gans (2017, 342) defines racialization as “a process, which generally begins with the arrival of new immigrants, voluntary or involuntary, who are perceived as different and undeserving.” In a white-normative space such as the United States, racialization almost exclusively affects people of color, as opposed to traditionally “Caucasian-looking” individuals. Since there is a perpetual false assumption that people of color are more likely to be immigrants than white people, racialization disadvantages all people of color, whether they are (U.S.-born) citizens or immigrants. Canizales and Agius Vallejo (2021, 158) state that racialization “casts Latinos as the other and reinforces racial boundaries and unequal power dynamics that have consequences in everyday life and across generations,” reflecting this harmful practice’s effects on entire populations.

### 2.1.4 Linguistic discrimination and implicit racism

*Linguistic discrimination* (or linguistic bias), simply, means discrimination on the basis of language. Alim et al. (2016, 26) refer to this as “language-based racism and discrimination.” Indeed, linguistic discrimination is also sometimes referred to as *linguistic racism*. Kroskrity (2020, 68) describes linguistic racism as “racist and racializing acts and/or projects that use linguistic resources as a means of discrimination and subordination.” The study of linguistic racism, on the other hand, seeks to “analytically disclose and explicate both overt and covert forms of linguistic racism” (ibid.) The concept of linguistic discrimination is relevant to this study in that we observe how racial discrimination or racism may have been replaced with the more implicit practice of discriminating based on language as opposed to race. Linguistic discrimination can occur based on various linguistic characteristics, such as the use of a foreign



language; a regional dialect or so-called vernacular language variety; a (foreign) accent; the size of one's vocabulary et cetera. Linguistic discrimination can also be used as a substitute for racial discrimination when trying to avoid the shame of the widely socially unacceptable practice of displaying overt racism. In other words, social norms prevent individuals from expressing prejudice openly, so a substitute is used. Lippi-Green (2012, 67) states that even as anti-discrimination legislation has been established in the U.S., it has "driven those who wish to discriminate underground, where alternate, more subtle approaches to exclusion have been crafted," one of these approaches being linguistic discrimination. In this study, I focus on linguistic discrimination through its meaning as linguistic racism and its significance as an excluding practice.

The practice of replacing racial discrimination with a language-based substitute exhibits *implicit* or *covert racism*. Implicit racism or *implicit bias* is often an automatic, unconscious reaction. Often considered an individual trait, Galvan and Payne (2024) refer to this as "a cognitive manifestation of systemic racism," suggesting that implicit bias is a consequence of structural, systematic racism that is embedded in society, and refers to "policies, practices, and societal structures that disadvantage some racial groups compared with others" (ibid., 108). This meaning of the word, in their definition, does not refer to *interpersonal racism* (often more overt). While this type of definition is noble and forgiving on the individual, this thesis considers language-based implicit racism both as a manifestation of structural racism, as well as interpersonal racism. Therefore, I lean on the "traditional" understanding of implicit bias as an individual trait, but as I consider the findings in relation to the relevant sociopolitical environment, I will also take into account this wider societal/structural level.

### 2.1.5 Linguistic nationalism

This study will also address themes of linguistic nationalism. Linguistic nationalism refers to the idea of seeing language as a crucial component of one's national identity and as a marker for nation-formation. Pujolar (2016, 305) describes linguistic nationalism as "nation-state linguistic ideologies" which become visible through "social practices" (ibid.) Conversely, those who do not share these context-dependent linguistic ideologies may be perceived as "the others," giving room to the practice of immigrantization. Therefore, linguistic nationalism and the practice of immigrantization are linked. Indeed, Han (2014, 66) says:

[...] linguistic nationalism as an ideology and discourse constitutes an important form of structural/institutional racism, which informs and shapes everyday language practices and explicit and implicit language policies at institutional and interpersonal levels, in turn further perpetuating the ideology and reproducing unequal socioeconomic relations. In other words, by shaping individual judgments, linguistic nationalism has ramifications and consequences for Immigrants and the larger society.

Linguistic nationalism offers an avenue for further characterizations of immigrants as Han (ibid., 67) further states: “[...]the leap from judgment of language to judgment of individual characters and capability, such as "carelessness, idleness, or incompetence,” comprises the essence of prejudice and discrimination based on language use.” I argue that judgments concerning immigrant status or race/ethnicity through the lens of linguistic nationalism similarly function in a discriminatory and prejudiced manner. Assessing whether linguistic nationalism is present in the contact situations described will help distinguish instances of language-based discrimination, as well as any practices of immigrantization.

## **2.2 English in the United States and the English-Only Movement**

Firstly, it should be noted that the English language only arrived on the North American continent through English settlement in the 1600s. Keeping this in mind, it is perhaps noteworthy that the modern United States does not have an official and/or national language, even if English is the de facto language of communication and government, as well as the most widely spoken language in the country (United States Census Bureau 2019). While individual states have some rulings regarding language use and status, federal legislation on national language/language of government does not currently exist. (This will become an interesting fact to keep in mind as we compare it to the rhetoric used in the research material.) Others argue that English was always intended as the official language of the nation – this was done through such simple acts as by choosing English as the language of the Constitution (Hernández-Chávez 1994, 141).

There have been numerous attempts to make English the national language, however, and the so-called *English-Only Movement* first started to gain influence in the nation as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1919, Roosevelt said: “We have room but for one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house [...]” (Bushnell Hart and Ferleger 1941, 243). More recently, concrete attempts have been made to establish English as a national language:

resolutions in both the Senate and House of Representatives have been introduced systematically since the 1980s. In 1999 the *Bill Emerson English Language Empowerment Act* (United States Congress. House. *H.R. Res. 123*) passed in the House of Representatives. The bill attempted to amend federal legislation in order to appoint English as the official language of governance in the United States. While it was never written into law, the bill was followed by many similar propositions, including the *English Language Unity Act* in 2005 (United States Congress. House. *H.R. Res. 997*) – with further versions of it reintroduced nearly a dozen times since, including in 2019, 2021 and 2023. While none of these bills have previously passed in Congress, they serve as evidence that there remains a continuous and active attempt to introduce such legislation in the United States. Furthermore, attempts to establish such legislation shows that perhaps the role of English is deemed to be under threat from other large language groups in the country, such as Spanish.

### **2.3 Spanish in the United States**

As suggested in 2.2, it is crucial to underline that Spanish outdates English in the modern United States, having a “[...] history that extends over centuries and that originated not in ethnic immigrant enclaves but in preestablished settlements” (Lozano 2018, 3). This is largely the outcome of Spaniards having beat the English in the race to the “New World” in the early 1500s (Silva-Corvalán 2004: 207, Potowski 2010, 67). Even after the first permanent English settlement had been established in 1607 and a journey toward the foundation of the United States had begun, land purchases and wars, especially the Mexican–American War (1846–1848), significantly increased the Spanish-speaking population of the young nation-to-be (Potowski 2010, 67). Thus, Proximity to Spanish-speaking Mexico and other Central and South American nations also explains the continuing presence of Spanish in the United States. Historically, workforce from Mexico has also been important to the U.S. and its (economic) growth.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), Spanish is the most common non-English language spoken at home today, at 62% in 2019. This equates to nearly 42 million speakers of Spanish (ibid.) This means that after English, Spanish is the second-most used language in the United States, with a significant number of speakers. These numbers may be currently underreported, however, due to the claimed undercount of Latinx residents in the 2020 U.S. Census (Epstein and Medina 2021). Additionally, the elite status of English may encourage

non-English speakers to report English as their home language over others. Despite being the second-most spoken language in the U.S., Spanish is still often seen as inferior to English.

#### **2.4 The Trump administration's anti-immigration, anti-Latinx rhetoric**

Donald J. Trump became President of the United States in 2016. The Trump administration as well as Trump himself faced widescale criticism over the rhetoric used about immigrants, especially those of Mexican nationality and generally of Latinx heritage, both during their campaign as well as after the nomination. Some of Trump's most infamous comments about Mexicans include statements such as "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. [...] They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." (announcement speech in June 2015) and "[...] we have some bad hombres here, and we're going to get them out." (third presidential debate in October 2016) (Ross 2016). Throughout their presidency, Trump also highlighted desires to erect an "impenetrable" wall on the U.S.–Mexico border (Egan 2019), which became one of their main campaign discussion points, and further demonized Mexican and other Central/South American immigrant groups. This type of racist anti-immigration and anti-Latinx rhetoric on the former president's account has been plentiful before, during, and after their presidency – including during campaign speeches leading up to the upcoming 2024 election. I argue that this xenophobic rhetoric altered views of and encouraged immigrantization of Spanish speakers among the general public.

Flores (2018) has studied the effects of the specific statements Trump made in the 2015 announcement speech about Mexicans and found that elite discourses can affect public attitudes toward groups that the elite characters (such as politicians) demonize – in this case, former-President Trump negatively discussing Mexican immigrants. This was especially true among conservative, non-Hispanic white and lower educated questionnaire respondents, who were significantly more likely than other groups to view questions of immigration negatively when exposed to the negative statements uttered about immigration (Flores 2018, 1672-1675). Additionally, Feinberg et al. (2019) found that U.S. counties that hosted a Trump rally during the 2016 presidential campaign experienced a 226% increase in hate crimes, suggesting that the contents of Trump's speeches at these rallies may have exacerbated existing levels of hate crimes. These trends suggest that Spanish speakers may have faced increased immigrantization and racism as a consequence of elite discourses and the prevailing anti-immigration stances authority figures held during this time.

However, Flores (2018, 1678) also states that the author of such commentary is perhaps not as significant for these results as hypothesized, and further notes that these effects may be fleeting: that after the time–space-dependent “social permission” for increased anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric has worn off “there would be a return to the status quo, in which such views may still be somewhat controversial.” In other words, views that I argue contain elements of explicit and implicit racism, may become less socially acceptable after the sociopolitical environment has shifted back to a less polarizing normality.

Canizales and Agius Vallejo (2021, 151) argue that while the Trump administration was not directly responsible for the demonization of and the racism experienced by Latinx people, Trump’s ascent to the presidency was advanced by racist rhetoric and “Latino racialization.” They also contend that Trump took advantage of voters’ fears of demographic shifts and immigration and used these themes to bolster their campaign, whilst simultaneously strengthening the voters’ xenophobic and racist views (ibid.) While generally avoiding making direct comments about such themes themselves, Trump has also been known to share online content originating from white nationalist and segregation-supporting groups and individuals; echo their sentiments in his speeches; and refuse to condemn known white supremacists, extremists or neo-Nazis (Parker and Olorunnipa 2020; Mahler 2016; Pace 2017). Leading up to the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection in 2021, Trump encouraged a white nationalist group Proud Boys to “stand back and stand by” (Kristof 2020; Washington Post 2020; Ax 2020), which many argue was an ambiguous call to action and encouraged an extremist group to prevent a peaceful transfer of power after President Biden had won the presidential election in 2020 (Pilkington 2021; Davis 2021; Morgan 2022). This type of flirting with racist and anti-immigrant groups suggests that portraying BIPOC and immigrants as the other or as a threat to American citizens was beneficial for Trump, while creating a xenophobic and hostile environment demonizing Spanish speakers, among others.

Anti-immigration and racist sentiments are reflected in the Trump administration’s policies as well: in 2017, then-President Trump’s executive order (Executive Order no. 13769) – commonly labeled the ‘Muslim Ban’ – went into effect and restricted travel into the U.S. from mostly majority-Muslim countries. The Trump administration’s handling of the U.S.–Mexico border has also been heavily criticized, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, which was used as a justification for various immigration rulings. These include acts such as closing the Southwest border entirely; separating migrant children from their families (Hirschfeld Davis and Shear 2018) followed by challenging family reunification measures (United States

Government Accountability Office 2019); and prosecuting any persons crossing the border unlawfully.

The results of Flores' research, as well as the Trump administration's rhetoric and policymaking illustrate that views toward immigrants, especially of Mexican background, were widely influenced in a negative manner during this period, at least among a certain demographic. Additionally, as I have discussed earlier in this thesis, people have a tendency to assign qualities like ethnicity on 'others,' which causes Spanish-speakers to be in an especially vulnerable position. This is also visible in the material, as Spanish-speakers are (often incorrectly) labeled as Mexicans, simply based on the language they use. This approach also does not recognize the fact that while majority-white U.S. residents may more readily label people of Latinx heritage as immigrants, nearly two thirds of Latinos in the U.S. are native-born (Krogstad and Lopez 2014). This background is essential for our understanding of the sociopolitical climate affecting views and rhetoric expressed in the material. The language of elites, as I have described, influences the attitudes of the general public, impacting greatly how marginalized people and minority groups are met in everyday life. This background is also imperative for considering how a potential second term under Donald Trump might further exacerbate racial relations and patterns of discrimination in the United States. Continuing the use of similar rhetoric may further worsen social conditions for Spanish speakers and those who are perceived as Mexican or Latinx. The way language about others is used, truly matters.

### **3 Material**

This section describes the material used in this study, including the selection criteria and justifications for seeking out this type of material. Additionally, limitations and other criticisms, as well as ethical issues with this type of material will be discussed. The transcribed material has been added as a separate appendix (Appendix 1) at the end of this paper. The contents of these transcripts will be more thoroughly introduced in the beginning of chapter 5: Analysis.

#### **3.1 Collection of primary material**

The data used for this study consists of audiovisual material retrieved from the popular video sharing platform YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). The objective was to find videos portraying interactions between Spanish and English-speakers in the United States and to study ways in which everyday encounters with speakers of Spanish may encourage immigrantization and/or racialization of Spanish-speakers and labeling them as ‘foreign’ or ‘the other.’ As noted previously, the practice of immigrantization in a linguistic context can be considered “racialization of language” since it often manifests itself in the form of implicit racism. For this reason, the role of race/ethnicity is incredibly relevant for this study, and indeed the analysis of our material would not be possible without considering this central theme and the implications of language and race in contact.

While the hypothesis is that the search results will primarily depict interactions that might be called negative in tone (due to a wide variety of reasons that we will elaborate on in chapter 3.2), there was no emphasis on finding a particular type of video, or a particular type of interaction. Rather, the objective was to find depictions of everyday encounters in which these two speaker groups come across each other and to observe the nature of these meetings. Certain parameters were set in order to draw out material that would best suit the purposes of this study, however.

Firstly, the collected material has been extracted from the online service YouTube using a set of search words to narrow down the potentially appropriate videos for this study. The terms used to perform these searches are introduced in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** Search words used in the collection of material from YouTube.

Search word
Spanish
speaker
English
United States
interaction
language

The search terms have been applied in various combinations (see Table 2 below) in order to enhance our chances of locating the most relevant type of data. Some of the search combinations produced roughly the same initially appearing results as others. Acquired results through the YouTube search were further qualitatively narrowed down and chosen to depict interactions that were found suited for this study, meeting the criteria introduced below.

**Table 2** Search word combinations used in the collection of material from YouTube.

Search word combinations
Spanish English speaker interaction United States
Spanish English language United States
interaction Spanish English United States
Spanish speaker United States interaction

As I was considering the type of material I wanted to use in this study, I noticed that many of the videos resulting from my search were of a specific type, even genre – a type of amateur vlog (video blog) or documentary of an everyday altercation spotted at random. This is the kind of video we have seen used with the purpose of documenting an event, so that it could later be used as ‘evidence’ of the event and actions that took place – unfortunately, usually depicting tragic or questionable actions, such as police violence or street harassment. This seemed like the kind of genre I wanted to utilize in my research, as it met the criteria laid out for this study.

These criteria are as follow: The videos in question must depict speakers of both Spanish and English, and how this difference in language use affects their shared interactions. I wanted to incorporate videos that seemed to be genuine and legitimate interactions that took place between two or more individuals. While there are certain elements that I have tried to consider



in doing this (such as the speakers' tones of voice, background visible in the video, who is recording, other people appearing in the recording etc.) this is entirely subjective to my own discretion, as confirming the accuracy of such an assumption is next to impossible when discussing Internet sources. However, where possible, I attempted to select videos that had been published by a somewhat reputable source, such as a news channel. I think that this adds a layer of objectivity, as other sets of eyes have deemed the material genuine before myself.

Additionally, search results depicting interactions outside public spaces were excluded. This was both an ethical as well as a practical decision, since there are certain issues pertaining to personal privacy with using videos recorded in private spaces (such as an individual's home). Not only would this make using that material ethically dubious, but it would also complicate the process of determining whether the interaction is genuine or, conversely, purposefully manufactured. Furthermore, it may be more difficult to ascertain whether the video is intended as humor or entertainment, for instance, as opposed to being a realistic recording of an actual, spontaneous event that took place. For these reasons, the locations depicted in the material have been limited to public spaces, such as restaurants or airports.

Since the publication date of all our chosen pieces of material falls between the years 2017 and 2020, an additional research lens was added: I decided to discuss the material in its sociopolitical context – more specifically, within the Trump administration's time in power (2016-2020) in the United States. I deemed this important for added context and in order to better understand the ramifications on minority groups and individuals that may follow from shifts in political and public discourse. This context and relevant themes have been discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 above and will be referenced in our analysis of the material when applicable.

While I have no formal training in transcribing texts, I have created working transcripts (Appendix 1) based on the videos chosen as material. The transcripts describe everything that is being said on video, but do not distinguish or elaborate on matters such as dialogue overlap, pauses et cetera. Similarly, any paralinguistic or extralinguistic factors have been excluded from analysis, as it is not relevant for this study to hypothesize about such matters. The transcripts are not made for the purposes of Conversation Analysis, and thus they do not follow more formal transcribing directives. I have used square brackets in the transcripts to indicate matters such as unintelligibility (speech on video is not heard) or to insert my best estimation of the had dialogue based on context and partly audible phrases. The transcripts will henceforth be referred to as TR1 through TR6.

Table 3 below describes the videos' publication date, length and word count transferred onto transcripts, as well as where and by whom they were filmed on a generic level. Additionally, Table 3 will describe the quality of the videos, in terms of whether any parts are inaudible (or unintelligible, as described in the transcripts). The reason for inaudibility is indicated in parentheses. By the term "overlap" in Table 1 I mean instances where two or more speakers are talking at the same time and the full phrases cannot be distinguished clearly. It should also be noted that persons appearing in the transcripts have been described as Person 1, Person 2 et cetera, with each transcript having their own set of persons.

**Table 3.** Description of videos.

Video	Published	Length (min)	Word count	Location	Filmed by	Quality
TR1	5/17/2018	0:58	123	café	bystander	inaudible at times (muted)
TR2	7/15/2020	0:57	175	street	Person 1	-
TR3	2/20/2019	2:19	337	restaurant	bystander	inaudible at times (overlap)
TR4	10/17/ 2017	1:01	48	classroom	student	inaudible at times (overlap)
TR5	7/13/2019	3:00	407	restaurant	bystander	inaudible at times
TR6	5/20/2017	8:04	1,149	airport	Person 1	inaudible at times (overlap)

Before beginning my in-depth analysis, I can identify some obvious higher-level themes and hypothesize about the potential findings upon further evaluation: Firstly, each of the interactions in the chosen material seem to showcase negatively charged discussions or altercations between two or more individuals, and these interactions seem to have been commenced as a result of one or more individual's use of the Spanish language. Based on this, as well as the kind of rhetoric that is often seen used in this 'genre' of video, I hypothesize that I will find elements of foreignizing/othering, immigrantization and ethnicization/racialization in the material. Similarly, I expect to see signs of (linguistic) discrimination and the racialization of language. The occurrence or absence of these themes will be further considered in chapter 5: Analysis.

### 3.2 Limitations and criticisms

Using this type of publicly available and unregulated content as material brings with it some limitations, as well as leaves room for criticism. One major source of criticism is the very legitimacy of the material. We have no real way of knowing whether the videos are genuine as opposed to purposefully staged or otherwise fabricated. It also cannot be definitively confirmed what kind of role of (post-)editing does or does not play regarding these videos. The nature of the service YouTube is such that by sharing interesting or otherwise captivating content, one earns more views, likes, shares etc. This, in turn, may affect the monetization aspect of the content. More interactions with the content roughly translate to more financial or other types of gain for the publisher of the video. This is especially true for the news agencies whose videos I have chosen for this study for other legitimacy purposes. But it is important to note that these actors intend to draw profits from their content, and that may encourage the publication of certain types of material even if their genuineness is questionable. And since we know that polarizing and sensationalistic material generally receives more interaction, there may be a fiscal motive for sharing this type of material.

Another dilemma arising from the sensational nature of this material is what I call the “virality factor.” Most online platforms utilize algorithms, which affect the type of content that is more likely to be featured to the service user. Because – similarly to the individual service user – the platform’s end goal is to generate revenue, the algorithms the service uses are programmed to display content that will draw the viewer’s interest with more likelihood. This might explain why polarizing content or content that encourages strong feelings (such as anger) are some of the first pieces of content one sees when performing a search. This might also explain why this type of content seems to be more prevalent on the platform overall, since uploading content that fulfills this expectation of sensationalistic or otherwise appealing material is more likely to become popular, and thus profitable to the publisher. In other words, using algorithms may skew the search results to appear more negative or aggressive than is the true average.

The use of algorithms also poses another issue. It should be noted that algorithms also play a role in the results any individual user, including the author of this thesis, sees when performing a search. Thus, the acquired results may have been of a certain nature due to the use of this technology. To best avoid any influence from algorithms, however, the search has been carried out while signed out of any personal accounts, and after clearing the browser history and cookies from the device to minimize influence from previous searches and topics of interest. Yet, it is not known to what extent algorithms and recommendations of popular content

based on other users' activity et cetera may have influenced the acquired results. However, since I combined this method with a qualitative selection process in addition to simply selecting the first results acquired, this does not have such a significant impact on the type of material I am using in this study. It is still something to be aware of whenever using this type of Internet data.

This leads us to our next, somewhat interlinked point of criticism, which is that performing a search on an online platform is a rather arbitrary way of collecting data. It cannot be confirmed with certainty to be a reliable source of information, neither as an individual piece of material, nor as a description of a societal issue. Thus, despite the set parameters, the results of this study absolutely cannot be considered representative of any larger entity or group of people, or even to suggest that such interactions are a wider phenomenon in the United States. The findings of this study, therefore, can only be strictly considered representative of this very small sample of material. This material cannot be considered an objective take on an issue, since we have not conducted research that confirms these to be commonly appearing interactions in the first place.

Another point of contention is the fact that none of the videos display the Spanish-speakers in question legitimately speaking Spanish. It is simply implied in the video that the individual(s) were speaking Spanish before the interaction. And since the English-speaking individual(s) initiate contact in English, the Spanish speaker has switched to the use of English as well. Therefore, the assumption of the depicted persons' language use has been made based on the reference to it being used prior to when filming began. For the purposes of this study, this has been considered sufficient evidence of such language use having occurred during the interaction in its entirety, when not shown in the material.

The duration of these interactions should also be considered, as making comparisons between pieces of material of such varying lengths is not entirely fair. The length of the transcripts varies from 48 words to 1,149 words, and while length is not significant per se, it should be noted that more content equates more material for analysis, and thus the longer interactions may have been analyzed in more length.

Additionally, research ethics should be more thoroughly considered. I have anonymized the data used in this study due to the nature of the material I am using (publicly available recordings), as well as the sensitive topic at hand (themes of discrimination, harassment et cetera). However, the videos have been transcribed at the end of this paper and links to the original videos are also offered for transparency. This compromises the speakers' anonymity.

However, since the material is indeed attainable through public social media platforms, I have decided to include them despite this ethical dilemma. While this thesis is looking to be openly antiracist, I did not want to start evaluating any persons' characters or morals which would be ethically dubious. This has been a personal point of contention, as it is also not purposeful to signify that the actions and views described in the material are not condemnable. I have opted to discuss themes of discrimination and racism on a more general level, without making many direct remarks about individuals' behavior in the material.

## 4 Methodology

This chapter will describe the research methodology utilized in this thesis, as well as consider various related criticisms and points of contention.

### 4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method commonly used in linguistics. Having developed as a continuation of Halliday's *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) premise (e.g. Halliday 2004) CDA operates in the field of linguistic pragmatics. CDA studies language as a social practice, and scholars highlight themes of ideology, power, and identity at the center of analysis (e.g. van Dijk 1999; Flowerdew and Richardson 2018, Fairclough 1989). Thus, it functions as a means of studying how language perpetuates and enforces power relations and hierarchies in written or spoken discourses. Indeed, Kress (1993, 169) states that CDA "in its very aims seeks to reveal the structures, locations and effects of power." In the data, I am interested in the power relations between English and Spanish-speakers, as well as how other social factors play into this language-based relationship. In other words, I am looking at the discourse, but also ponder the effects of and influence on those discourses. I am also looking to study instances where implied or implicit meanings pertaining to power are embedded in the interactions in our data.

This study is inspired, in particular, by van Dijk's research on discourse and race. Van Dijk has extensively studied identity, ideology, and power relations (among other themes) and how those influence discourse in various contexts from interpersonal discourse to mass media discourses. As they suggest, race is a commonly overlooked research subject in CDA studies due to elitism in academia and the reputation of racism as a controversial topic (van Dijk 1999, 147) – although this has become a significantly more popular subject matter in recent years. This study considers the role of race/ethnicity a crucial element in the authentic and ethically sound analysis of our material, which cannot be divorced from the portrayed linguistic discrimination. As I have established, these often go hand in hand or are used as substitutes for each other (especially in expressing implicit discrimination over explicit discrimination under the guise of language). Additionally, Van Dijk (1997, 2-3) highlights the role of language users in social interactions not only as members of any given community or culture, but also as a product of their contemporary cultural and social context. In this thesis, I will consider this in connection to the Donald Trump presidency and how this sociopolitical context may play a role in the discourses.

I will also consider Fairclough's (1992) interpretation of discourse studies through their *Three-dimensional Framework of Discourse*, which categorizes discourse into three components: discourse as text, discourse as discursive practice, and discourse as social practice. While Fairclough (ibid., 71) states that these components closely complement each other, the third dimension of discourse as social practice is of most interest to me for the purposes of this paper. Fairclough (1989, 24) suggests that this level considers how an individual's personal background is reflected in discourse, and how they interpret and produce discourse in addition to grammatical use of language in interactions. In other words, Fairclough's model considers the intertextuality of broader societal influences on the individual and how those reflect in the discourse, similarly to van Dijk's interpretations of CDA. This concept of discourse as social practice, in the context of this thesis, could consider factors such as who filmed the videos used as material; who are participating in the interactions; how terms are used; and what their meanings suggest in each given exchange. Additionally, this dimension views discourse from the perspective of ideology and power relations that may be present in social interactions (Fairclough 1992, 86), also in accordance with van Dijk's research.

I am also interested in reviewing what Verschueren (2015, 3) calls "implicit meaning" and "the meaning-generating interplay between implicit and explicit levels of meaning." Especially the study of implicit racism requires analyzing the text with this approach in mind to reveal the underlying meanings and attitudes. Verschueren argues that the study of implicit meaning has been "developed most systematically" in the field of linguistic pragmatics (ibid.), thus operating in a shared space with the other pragmatics-inspired approaches listed here. Similarly to other scholars referenced in this paper, Verschueren (ibid., 6-7) suggests that explicit racism is often replaced with more implicit forms of discrimination, such as "cultural other[ing]," making the denial of racism possible. They further suggest that the implicit and explicit levels of communication may contrast each other, leading to phrasing such as "I am not a racist, but..." while also highlighting that all discourse contains implicit meanings (ibid., 2). In order to identify practices of immigrantization (othering and the practice of assigning race/ethnicity being some means to achieve this), I must closely study these hidden, implicit meanings embedded in the analyzed discourses. This is best done by highlighting the intricate details appearing in the data and expanding from there so that analysis covers the entirety of material (a single transcript). Once this has been done, it is easier to find patterns between individual transcripts and draw any higher-level conclusions.

CDA is not a “specific theory or methodology” (Verschuereen 2015, 3) that can be concretely applied to every piece of discourse in a similar manner. Rather, it “welcomes a diversity of approaches,” (ibid.) and can be understood more as a set of ideas or theoretical tools that vary from context to context. However, there are three categorizations commonly attributed to CDA (as reflected by Fairclough’s three-dimensional model): The study of social practices; the study of discursive practices; and the study of texts. The study of social practices can be understood as the “wider social context” that the discourse stems from or reacts to (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018, 514). The next, interlinked category of CDA as the study of discursive practices draws from pre-existing discourses, creating a type of dialogue with existing cultural and historical discourses (ibid., 513). Finally, the study of texts from a CDA point of view refers not only to grammatical analysis of a text, but aims to study the “ideological role of language as a social product.” (ibid.) While all three dimensions will be reflected in this thesis on some level, I will primarily focus on discursive and social practices which, I argue, are indeed fundamentally interlinked.

Finally, it should be highlighted that CDA is a notably interdisciplinary method (as opposed to a clearly defined, one-size-fits-all theory) and is not limited to linguistic analysis alone, nor indeed the field of language study. Due to the nuanced nature of the topic, I did not want to limit the methods of analysis too much, which a more rigid, theory-driven framework might have interfered with. Using this approach, therefore, offers relative freedom in considering the data from multiple points of view. This supports a multidisciplinary approach to the material (I borrow from fields such as social anthropology). Furthermore, CDA enables, if not encourages, an empirical approach to a topic of this nature, which is a strategy I am looking to adopt in this study. By this I mean a reliance on strongly observation-driven analysis that utilizes a multidisciplinary take on the study of (implicit) meaning in a critical manner. The strategy is to take a qualitative approach while also considering wider societal implications through themes arising from the material. Critical Discourse Analysis also supports the antiracist premise this thesis is looking to operate on.

## **4.2 Criticisms of CDA**

What can widely be considered one of the strengths of CDA, is often a source of criticism as well: The lack of concrete methodology can raise concerns over the approaches used in CDA. Van Dijk (1984, 2) says that “[b]oth prejudice and talk are social phenomena that require analysis within an interdisciplinary framework. A full-fledged theory of prejudiced discourse,



therefore, would be a highly complex undertaking.” It is this complexity that is often subject to scrutiny, not only in the sense of it is complex to define a specific theoretical description of CDA, but also in that the topics it deals with can be equally complicated to define in clear terms. This almost adds a layer of “double ambiguity” that can result in mixed definitions and approaches.

Additionally, the high levels of freedom an author has over interpretations of the analyzed discourses due to this lack of concrete framework has faced criticism, as findings between individual researchers can vary greatly based on how the material was interpreted. Acquired results, therefore, can be highly subjective. However, van Dijk (2008, 6) also notes that no research or researcher is neutral. Following this interpretation, potentially increased methodological liberties pose no greater risk of ethical dilemmas than the use of any other method. The lack of a strictly defined methodology, as intended, may thus open avenues for increased attention to detail and a tailored approach to any given data. In addition, van Dijk (*ibid.*) highlights that CDA scholars must “recognize and reflect about their own research commitments and position in society,” hinting that the focus of CDA studies should also extend to cover the role of the researcher themselves. Researchers should then be advocating for social justice as part of an ongoing “practice what you preach” approach in critical linguistics research. This attention to highlighting social justice is something that I, as the author of this study, intend to reflect in my work, even at the risk of the kind of ethical ambiguity described above.

Finally, I wish to consider my role as researcher. While this study focuses on the experiences of marginalized people (especially BIPOC), they are by no means my personal experiences as someone benefitting immensely from white privilege and as a speaker of a mainstream language. It is crucial to note that while I have actively sought to create an antiracist, anti-discriminatory basis for this thesis, as well as reflect the realities of others adequately, I may have unwillingly misrepresented the experiences of minority groups and individuals. I accept any and all related criticisms directed at themes I may have failed to express in this paper. Furthermore, some topics (such as the complexities of race vs. ethnicity) have been excluded due to capacity limitations.

## 5 Analysis

In this section, I will analyze the material in accordance with the methodology laid out earlier (5.2–), also keeping in mind relevant background. I will begin with a brief description of the contents of the videos in 5.1. As a reminder, all the video material has been accessed via YouTube and transcripts of those videos have been included as an appendix at the end of this thesis (transcribed by the author).

### 5.1 Description of video material

#### 5.1.1 Transcript 1 (TR1)

The first piece of material portrays an interaction between customers at a coffee shop. One customer (Person 1 in the transcript) describes other people at the coffee shop speaking Spanish by speculating that they are undocumented immigrants and are living on welfare that Person 1, as a taxpayer, is enabling for them. They say that they will call Immigrations and Customs Enforcement so that the Spanish-speakers can be “kicked out of the country.” Additionally, they argue that the least these Spanish-speakers they view as immigrants could do, is to speak English. Another customer (Person 2) gets aggravated by Person 1’s comments and begins defending the Spanish speakers (it is unclear whether Person 2 is one of the Spanish speakers addressed or not), but Person 1 makes a comment suggesting that Person 2 eats too much, at which point Person 2 yells that Person 1 “should get hit by a car, you piece of shit.”

#### 5.1.2 Transcript 2 (TR2)

While the discussion is about Spanish speakers present on location, Person 1 is sharing this interaction with Person 2, who is a bystander from a restaurant across the street and confronts Person 1 over their yelling at said Spanish speakers. Person 1 speculates that the Spanish-speaking workers they are seeing on the street are illegal immigrants and urges them to speak English. Person 2 is asking why Person 1 is harassing the workers, and Person 1 repeats several times that since they are in the United States (or “America,” as they phrase it), the workers should speak English. Person 1 repeats the question of “[a]re they illegal aliens?” and Person 2 starts to defend the Spanish speakers, repeating that Person 1 is harassing them. Person 1 denies that they have been yelling at the Spanish speakers and turns the conversation away from them, asking why Person 2 is wearing a face mask. Person 2 replies that “there’s a global pandemic” after which Person 1 changes the topic again, saying that Person 2 wanted to be a “social justice

warrior” and that they, as a Black person, are trying to protect “the brown man” from Person 1, who self-identifies as white.

### 5.1.3 Transcript 3 (TR3)

Transcript 3 describes a video of a customer (Person 1) verbally attacking a restaurant owner who speaks Spanish. Person 1 claims that the owner (Person 2) needs to speak English because it is “our” first language. They say that Person 2 needs to “get the fuck out of my country” to which the owner replies that they are a U.S. citizen. Person 1 denies this, at which point the owner argues that Person 1 has a problem with how the owner looks. Person 1 repeatedly denies this and repeats that “when you’re in America, you need to speak English.” Person 3 interjects that if Person 1 is going to be racist, they must leave the restaurant. Person 1 denies being racist and reiterates their earlier point about having lived in California for 20 years, seemingly as a justification for their opinions. The owner then offers not to charge Person 1 and their companion for the food if they depart the restaurant. At this point, Person 1 yells that they “got raped by illegal aliens,” which Person 2 considers confirming that Person 1 was indeed being racist.

### 5.1.4 Transcript 4 (TR4)

This video has been filmed in a classroom where Person 1, seemingly the teacher, is telling the class that military service members “are not fighting for your right to speak Spanish” but their “right to speak English.” The discourse is difficult to hear at times over the following chatter, but one can hear a student say, “be respectful” and the teacher saying “...not racist...” as if to deny that their comment was racist. A student also appears to say that they have the right to speak Spanish even if they know how to speak English. At this point, one student leaves the classroom and the teacher ironically yells “goodbye” to them.

### 5.1.5 Transcript 5 (TR5)

Transcript 5 also describes events at a restaurant, where two customers (Persons 1 and 2) are telling the owner of the restaurant (Person 3) to “go back to Mexico” if they want to speak Spanish. The owner denies being Mexican but says that the customers are being “very prejudiced,” asking them to leave the restaurant. Person 1 implies that they will leave after they have finished their meal, to which the owner replies that they will contact the police to have the customers removed, saying they are being “ignorant and disrespectful.” A conversation follows

where Persons 1 and 2 deny that the owner is indeed the owner of the restaurant and that they are being ignorant. The owner states that the owner of the franchise is Mexican, to which Person 1 replies that they always speak English at the restaurant in question regardless of this. The owner denies the claim and continues to describe the two customers' behavior as "inconsiderate" and "rude," further urging them to depart the establishment. Person 1 replies that they will, while Person 2 says that the owner does not "know how to act [...] around people." The owner explains that the customers told the owner not to speak in their native language, but the customer says they only meant it "around here." After further dialogue of similar nature, Persons 1 and 2 leave and the owner – clearly upset over the events – exchanges further thoughts with remaining, apologetic customers, who witnessed and filmed the interaction.

#### 5.1.6 Transcript 6 (TR6)

Transcript 6 portrays an interaction taking place at an airport, beginning with Person 1 describing how Person 2 had allegedly commented on Person 1's use of Spanish when they were on the phone with their Spanish-speaking parent. Person 2 is very aggravated from the beginning, using various expletives and repeatedly telling Person 1 to "shut up." Eventually Person 2 uses a discriminatory term to refer to Person 1. Despite this, Person 1 is trying to reason with Person 2, drawing on their shared history of having military members in their families, to which Person 2 responds with "[l]earn how to fucking speak English." Person 2 claims that Person 1 has assaulted them and states that they are being filmed by Person 1. The heated conversation continues in a similar manner until Person 2's family begins to apologize for their relative's behavior. This further angers Person 2, who forbids Person 1 from "talking to my family." Bystanders plead with Person 1 to end the discussion, as Person 2 continues to get more and more enraged. There are further accusations from Person 2 that Person 1 has attacked them and that they want to be left alone. Person 1 demands an apology, which is met with more expletives. Eventually the police appear and Person 1 stops filming after an officer request to talk to them.

## 5.2 Analysis

Now that we have an understanding of the events that are described in the transcripts, I may begin analyzing the material. This will be done one transcript at a time, after which I will consider some connecting factors and frequently appearing themes in chapter 6, Discussion. As

mentioned, I will utilize CDA and consider the discourses from various perspectives, focusing on whether the speakers face immigrantization due to their language use. In addition, I will consider the role race/ethnicity might play in these interactions and contemplate whether any embedded or implied meanings are present in the way Spanish speakers are addressed and described. When discussing specific parts of the transcripts, they have been marked in bold and/or italics for clarity. Line numbers have been retained for the extracts in order to ease referencing the transcripts.

### 5.2.1 TR1

- (1) 02 PERSON 1: **Every person** I listen to. He spoke it, he spoke it,  
03 she's speaking it. **It's America.**
- (2) 09 I pay for their ability to be here. **The least they could do,**  
10 the least they could do, is speak English.

While the transcript is short, TR1 portrays views toward Spanish speakers in several ways. Firstly, Person 1 begins by making a generalization (example 1): they say that “every person” in the café is speaking “it.” Not only does this comment overemphasize the number of Spanish speakers in the United States, but it also hints that there is something to be discouraged about the use of Spanish, and further suggests that people in “America” should automatically default to the use of English regardless of their native language. This is a very white-normative expectation, as well as disregards the fact that “monolingualism [as] the human norm is a myth.” (Thomason 2001, 31) This is where it proves interesting to keep in mind that the U.S. does not have an official language. These examples also showcase how English is the de facto language of communication in the United States regardless of the lack of any policy explicitly declaring so. The assumption of learning English being the “least” the Spanish speakers could do also creates an embedded hierarchy according to which Spanish speakers are inferior to English speakers, and suggests that they should aspire to learn English as the very least thing they could do in order to “fit in.” This demand reflects an attitude that does not appreciate the complexity of language-learning, nor in fact the complex nuances of language, nationality and ethnicity intersecting.

The assumption that the Spanish speakers cannot speak English in addition to Spanish is also made. It may be an implied attempt to foreignize the Spanish speakers, as well as to minimize their language abilities to portray them as inferior to English speakers. Indeed, Person

1 seems to suggest that the inability to speak English would make the Spanish speakers more inferior to those who can, which may motivate these minimizing claims. An implicit interpretation of this would be that Person 1 is deliberately attempting to paint a view of Spanish speakers as inferior using language as a substitute for what is in fact racial discrimination. However, it should also be considered that the U.S. is a largely monolingual country, which might affect why speaking only one language is seen as the default.

It should be noted that the word “Spanish” is not explicitly mentioned in the transcript, but one may assume that people speaking “it” refers to Spanish from context: Person 1 refers to the Spanish speakers as “undocumented” (example 3) and threatens to call ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, example 4), which are terms and concepts stereotypically attached to Mexican and other Latin American immigrants in the U.S. (who commonly speak Spanish). Person 1 also suggests that the individuals they are referring to live on welfare (example 3), which is another negative stereotype about Latinx immigrants, in particular.

(3) 05 PERSON 1: My guess is, **they're undocumented**, so **my next call is**  
 06 **to ICE** [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] to have each one  
 07 of them **kicked out of my country**. If they have the balls to  
 08 come here and **live off of my money... I pay for their welfare;**  
 09 **I pay for their ability to be here.**

(4) 13 PERSON 1: Honey, **I'm calling ICE!**

Additionally, it is worth noting that Person 1 uses the term “*my country*” in discussing who they consider to be immigrants. This statement alone reflects a xenophobic attitude after highlighting English use as the norm, while also adding further implied notions of whiteness as superior. In saying this, Person 1 is also displaying ideas of who should be included or excluded from being a U.S. citizen (or “an American”), or what are attributes “real Americans” should have.

In addition, Person 1 disapproves of the idea that tax funds they contributed to may or may not have been used to cover the costs of social welfare services targeted at immigrants (example 3), illustrating how they do not consider those funds adequate to be spent on the well-being of “non-Americans.”

The sentiments expressed in TR1 include many implicit views about Spanish speakers. For one, the immigrantization bias is heavily present. Person 1 does not have a personal relationship with the individuals they are referring to, and any speculations about their nationality or

citizenship status are based on their use of Spanish. It can be hypothesized whether Person 1 is also making assumptions based on the race or ethnicity of the speakers and using language as a substitute for race to implicitly discriminate against the Spanish speakers, since racial discrimination is widely considered politically and socially incorrect. In either case, the assumption of immigrant status is made and the practice of immigrantization takes place which, as I have stated earlier, is a discriminatory practice with negative effects to the victim. While the assumption that the Spanish speakers are immigrants has been expressed explicitly (showcasing overt immigrantization) through comments such as “they’re undocumented,” the assumption itself has been reached through a series of implicit assumptions about what are prototypical characteristics of immigrants. This act of immigrantization contains the implicit claim that only immigrants speak Spanish, and therefore that all Spanish speakers must be immigrants. However, one may speculate that race/ethnicity is involved in reaching this conclusion, since Person 1 would be unlikely to make this assumption if the Spanish speaker had the physical characteristics of a stereotypical white American. Indeed, van Dijk (2005, 2) suggests that “implicitly – and though often denied – appearance often remains part of the criteria by which the Others are defined as being ‘different’ from ‘us’.” This would suggest that the interaction is not simply about the language being used but reflects (implicit) underlying biases against those who prototypically speak Spanish. Yet, we should note that in a climate that encourages monolingualism, foreign language use in and of itself may cause negative reactions. Additionally, this effect may be strengthened by any assumptions the English speakers may make about the Spanish speakers’ outward appearance – in other words, whether the Spanish speakers appear Latinx to the English speaker.

Assuming immigrant status alone is not the full extent of Person 1’s implicit suggestions or biases; they are also assuming that because the Spanish speakers are (allegedly) immigrants, they must also be undocumented – in other words, “illegal” immigrants. This maintains the narrative of criminalizing Latinx immigrants (and all people of color, regardless of immigrant status), as well as posing them as a threat to U.S. citizens and their economic well-being. This fear of economic decline and implicitly expressed unfairness, in particular, is explicit:

- (5) 07 If they have the balls to  
 08 come here and **live off of my money... I pay for their welfare;**  
 09 **I pay for their ability to be here.**

In conclusion, the practice of immigrantization is clearly present in this piece of material, both explicitly and implicitly. There are instances of explicitly calling the Spanish speakers immigrants as well as attaching negative stereotypes about immigrants to them. They are perceived as more prototypically immigrant due to their use of the Spanish language. It can also be argued that this practice is based not only on the individuals' language use, but on their assumed or assigned racial/ethnic identity as well, therefore using language as a substitute for race to allow for a more "socially acceptable" form of discrimination. This further suggests that Person 1 is displaying implicit racism. Implicit negative views about Spanish speakers and immigrants are also expressed. For instance, it is assumed that not only are the Spanish speakers immigrants, but that they are undocumented as well.

### 5.2.2 TR2

TR2 also portrays various explicit and implicit attitudes and expectations towards Spanish speakers:

- (6) 01 PERSON 1: Are these guys illegal? Look at this, **it's America,**  
02 **speak English. Speak English.**
- (7) 05 PERSON 1: **Are they in America?**  
06 PERSON 2: Yes.  
07 PERSON 1: Ok, **they should be speaking English.**  
08 PERSON 2: Why? What law...  
09 PERSON 1: **They should be speaking English.**  
10 PERSON 2: Because what...  
11 PERSON 1: **They should be speaking English.** Are they illegal  
12 aliens? **They don't speak the language.**

In examples (6) and (7) above Person 1 emphasizes the need for the Spanish speakers to speak English because "it's America," repeated several times. Person 1 is highlighting English as the only appropriate language to be used while, as I have established, U.S. law does not mention any national language. Even if one existed, it would only apply to official communications, not interpersonal language use in daily communications (as it would clearly violate the First Amendment to the Constitution and its promise to freedom of speech). Indeed, it seems that Person 1 closely links English use and nationalism (displaying linguistic nationalism), suggesting that those who do not speak English as the norm cannot be considered true



Americans. This perversion of patriotism, then, will exclude and other any individuals (immigrant or not) whose native or first language is not English.

Additionally, one can notice the assumption that because the individuals discussed are speaking Spanish, they cannot speak English in addition. This assumption is also present in TR1 and supports the American ideal of monolingualism as the (only) norm and functions as Person 1's excuse to racialize and foreignize the Spanish speakers on the basis of language by denying their potential extended language abilities.

(8) 01 PERSON 1: **Are these guys illegal?**

(9) 11 PERSON 1: They should be speaking English. **Are they illegal**  
12 **aliens?** They don't speak the language.

(10) 21 PERSON 1: **Are they illegal...**

Person 1 uses explicit immigrantization to discriminate against the Spanish speakers, while also using the "illegal immigrant" stereotype (examples 8-10). Because the Spanish speakers' immigrant status is not known to begin with, this assumption about undocumented access to the United States is used with malicious intent to foreignize and criminalize the individuals, posing them as a threat. This suggests that there is an attempt to racialize the Spanish speakers and to express implicit racism, using language as a jumping-off point for discrimination. Therefore, I have reason to speculate that the Spanish speakers' ethnicity is the real motivation for the seemingly language-based discrimination.

(11) 26 PERSON 1: Really? Ok. Ok. So this guy decided that he's gonna  
27 come over here and be **a social justice warrior. He's a Black**  
28 **man, and he's gonna protect the brown man, from this white**  
29 **woman.**

There is further evidence of racism in the sarcastic comment Person 1 makes towards the end of the transcript (example 11). They argue that the bystander defending the Spanish speakers is a "social justice warrior," while distinguishing both Person 2 and the Spanish speakers' racial/ethnic background, as well as their own. This creates an implied hierarchy where the self-identified white person (Person 1) is above the Black and "brown man." It also implies that Person 1 has an understanding of the current sociopolitical climate where BIPOC individuals are often targets of white individuals' bigotry and hate, as well as contemporary terminology

(such as “social justice warrior”) used in connection to such phenomena. Making this connection to their own circumstance suggests that they see the encounter as a conscious attempt to racialize and discriminate against the Spanish speakers. While this thesis does not study lexicology, one might also note that terms such as “social justice warrior” are often used by the political right in an attempt to ridicule and label those more towards the political center or left. This may give additional information about what ideologies may lie in the background for Person 1, particularly in Trump-era United States.

### 5.2.3 TR3

(12) 01 PERSON 1: I’ve lived in California for 20 years, **English is our**  
02 **first language so you need to speak English.**

(13) 24 PERSON 1: **When you’re in America, you need to speak English.**

(14) 45 **Who can’t speak English.**

TR3 repeats similar discourses to TR1 and TR2. Here, also, the expectation of monolingual English use is present, using the argument of “[w]hen you’re in America, you need to speak English” (example 13). Person 1 also creates implied in-groups (English speakers) and out-groups (Spanish speakers) by saying “English is *our* first language” (example 12) foreignizing the Spanish speakers. This also reflects embedded power relations where the in-group is demanding the othered out-group to submit to the in-group’s language norms. Person 1 also seems to use their long background in California (a state with a notable number of Spanish speakers) (example 12) to justify why Person 2 should default to English use, implying that because they have lived in California (for longer), the assumed immigrant should adopt their ways and language as opposed to their own. This, too, reflects the embedded power dynamics of this encounter. There is also a claim of Person 2 not being able to speak English (example 14), even though the conversation is had fully in English.

Furthermore, as the discourse below shows, this “us and them” organization encourages Person 1 to urge Person 2 to “get the fuck out of *my* country” (example 15), as if to suggest that they are in a position of power in relation to the alleged immigrant to be able to demand such action. When Person 2 replies by saying “I am a U.S. citizen,” Person 1 further foreignizes them by denying the claim. We should also consider the roles Persons 1 and 2 have in this encounter as customer and restaurant owner: the customer (Person 1) enters a restaurant owned by Person 2 and begins to berate the owner. The owner then needs to offer to pay for Person 1’s meal and

defend themselves from racist abuse, simply to have Person 1 depart from their establishment. This speaks of the white privilege and English-centric thinking Person 1 possesses.

- (15) 06 PERSON 1: **Get the fuck out of my country.**  
 07 PERSON 2: **[I am] a U.S. citizen.**  
 08 PERSON 1: **No, I don't think you are.**  
 09 PERSON 2: **So now, [you speak of] how I look.** So, that's the  
 10 problem.  
 11 PERSON 1: **No, I don't have any problem with the way you look.**  
 12 [unintelligible]  
 13 PERSON 1: **I don't have any problem with the way you look. I**  
 14 **don't have any problem with the way you look.**  
 15 PERSON 2: **I'm a U.S. citizen, what is your problem?**  
 16 PERSON 1: **I don't have any problem...**  
 17 PERSON 2: What is your problem?  
 18 PERSON 1: Will you shut up?  
 19 PERSON 2: I don't have any... So you can tell, you can tell  
 20 how, I'm sorry about you...  
 21 PERSON 1: **I don't, I don't have any problem with the way you**  
 22 **look.**

Person 2 responds to the exchange over their ability to speak English by concluding that Person 1 must have “a problem” with their appearance – in other words, their racial/ethnic heritage (example 15). Person 1 repeatedly denies this, perhaps out of fear of being labeled racist, which is perceived as objectionable in most modern societies. Person 3 does indeed accuse Person 1 of being racist (example 16), which they continue to deny. As van Dijk (2005, 3) states, “denial and negation are at the heart of racism as soon as the official norm no longer tolerates overt forms of discrimination.” In this example, Person 1 is using denial of racism to portray themselves in a more flattering light. Therefore, discriminating on the basis of language enables the one being discriminating to deny their racist acts and attitudes on account of a less contentious topic.

- (16) 27 PERSON 3: **If you're racist here, you're gonna leave.**  
 28 PERSON 1: **I'm not racist.**  
 29 PERSON 3: **No, that's racist.** This man takes care of me, you're  
 30 gonna get out if you're ... **don't talk to him like that, don't do**  
 31 **that here.**

The encounter escalates to a point where Person 1 is accusing the Spanish speakers or “illegal aliens” of rape (example 17), which Person 2 responds to with “[d]o you see?” seemingly referencing their earlier comment about Person 1 taking issue with their appearance (example 15), and to confirm that their comments were indeed motivated by racist beliefs. The allegation of sexual abuse is reflective of Donald Trump’s rhetoric, implying that the comments Person 1 makes during the encounter are deliberate attempts at distinguishing Person 2 as an immigrant and posing them in negative light. It may also hint at Person 1’s political views, and thus other values they might hold.

(17) 43 PERSON 1: So I got raped, **I got raped by illegal aliens. I got**  
 44 **raped by illegal aliens?**  
 45 Who can’t speak English. You want me to be nice to you?  
 46 PERSON 2: **Do you see?**

It is easy to see that Person 1 is using immigrantization in addressing the Spanish speaker, calling Person 2 an “illegal alien;” denying their claims of citizenship; and insisting that Person 2 leave “their” country. Many negative stereotypes about Spanish speakers and Latinx people in general can be seen, ranging from accusations about being in the country illegally to them being rapists. These points suggest that Person 1 was criticizing the use of Spanish simply as a cover for their racist beliefs about people of Latinx heritage. There are also several embedded or implied attempts to other and foreignize the Spanish speaker, such as the attempt to establish unequal, white-normative power hierarchies.

#### 5.2.4 TR4

TR4 describes a classroom, and who seems to be the teacher say:

(18) 01 PERSON 1: **Military men and women who are fighting are not**  
 02 **fighting for your right to speak Spanish, they’re fighting for**  
 03 **your right to speak American.**

Once again, one can see the argument that in the United States, one should (only) speak English. Person 1 is also attaching a patriotic sentiment to their message, saying that military personnel “are not fighting for your right to speak Spanish” but “American.” This is an implicit attempt to foreignize Spanish speakers, and a more explicit one to imply that the U.S. military is not

protecting them as “foreign” or “the other” similarly to English speakers. Additionally, it suggests that English is a strictly “American” language (although the comment can also be understood to refer to American English).

This comment by Person 1 is met with accusations of racism, which Person 1 seemingly denies:

(19) 07 PERSON 1?: ...**not racist**...  
08 SOMEONE IN CROWD: **No, you're being racist.**

A student raises a point that I have also touched on in this paper: a person can speak Spanish even if they know how to speak English (example 20). Attempts at forbidding the use of Spanish are reflective of a desire to remove diversity and create a homogenous group of English speakers who adhere to white-normative views and ideals considered traditionally and stereotypically “American.”

(20) 09 SOMEONE IN CROWD: ... **to speak Spanish even though I know how to**  
10 **speak English** ...

While this transcript (potentially, in part, due to its brevity) does not portray explicit or implicit immigrantization, it does highlight a negative view toward Spanish speakers, as well as added attempts of foreignization and othering. These are elements that can be closely linked to immigrantization (being a form of discrimination), but distinct immigrantization is not present in this exchange. A type of linguistic nationalism is visible in this transcript when Person 1 suggests that military personnel is not defending the right to speak Spanish in the U.S., but English. This further highlights the implicit creation of in-groups and out-groups, establishing a language hierarchy that those in the out-group should acknowledge and strive for.

The denial of racism reflects an unwillingness to be seen as racist, but Person 1 seemingly considers linguistic discrimination to be more acceptable. Like with the other transcripts where othering, foreignization and notions of superiority and inferiority are present, also in the case of TR4 we may ponder whether this opposition to Spanish is linked to the Spanish speakers' perceived racial/ethnic background, as opposed to being about the language alone. Implicit racism can be purposefully ambiguous, which is indeed why the language-based approach allows the one being racist to deny their racism.

### 5.2.5 TR5

- (21) 01 PERSON 1 or 2: **If you're in America. You should speak American**  
 02 **English.**
- (22) 05 PERSON 1: **Go back to Mexico if you want to keep speaking**  
 06 **Spanish. Go back to your Mexican country.**  
 07 PERSON 3: Guess what ma'am? **I'm not Mexican. I'm not Mexican**  
 08 but you're being very prejudiced, and I want you out of my  
 09 restaurant right now.
- (23) 34 PERSON 3: Excuse me, **you're telling me not to speak my native**  
 35 **language?**  
 [...]
   
 39 PERSON 2: **I didn't tell you, I said you should speak it around**  
 40 **here.**

TR5 begins with yet another request to speak English if one is “in America.” This is followed by a demand by Person 1 to Person 3 to “go back to Mexico if you want to keep speaking Spanish” and to “[g]o back to your Mexican country.” Person 3 denies being Mexican. This is a very apparent example of immigrantization: Person 1 is explicitly stating that Person 3 is Mexican and should go “back to” Mexico, which clearly includes the assumption that they must be an immigrant. The notion of Person 3 as an immigrant is based on their use of Spanish and the assumption is made that speaking Spanish means the person must be not only an immigrant, but specifically a Mexican immigrant. As I have argued in connection to the other analyzed discussions, these assumptions are potentially connected to the Spanish speaker’s racial/ethnic heritage as opposed to merely language use – with language used as a justification for what is de facto racial discrimination. This is visible through making assumptions about Person 3’s nationality and, in effect, assigning ethnicity.

When Person 3 repeats what Person 2 said (that they should not speak Spanish), Person 2 denies this and justifies their argument by claiming that they only meant it “around here,” presumably in the restaurant they are at. Similarly, when Person 3 mentions that the owner of the franchise is Mexican (below), Person 1 argues that “they always speak English here” as if to justify why the owner should not speak Spanish either. This reflects an English-centric and white-normative view about what language(s) are appropriate to use in a business setting. There is an implicit attempt to persuade the Spanish speaker to adopt the English-speaking in-group’s “superior” customs and abandon the use of Spanish.

(24) 25 PERSON 3: **The owner of**  
 26 **this franchise is Mexican.**  
 27 PERSON 1: Well, but **they always speak English here.**  
 28 PERSON 3: **No, they don't. He does not.**

One can also see Person 2 denying Person 3's claims of them being the owner of the restaurant (below), which highlights the power dynamics at play. It could be argued that the customer is basing this claim on the owner's use of Spanish, and the assumed immigrant status that follows from this observation. Denying ownership of the establishment is indicative of Person 2's belief that it is not possible for an immigrant to be the owner of a business, reducing their abilities in a racist manner. This implicit belief presents as racist behavior, while language is used as a front and a justification for discrimination.

(25) 19 PERSON 2: **This isn't your restaurant!**  
 20 PERSON 3: **Yes, it is, ma'am.**  
 21 PERSON 2: **It is not.**  
 22 PERSON 3: **It, it is, actually, as a matter of fact.**  
 23 PERSON 2: **No.**

## 5.2.6 TR6

(26) 05 PERSON 1: **But I'm speaking to my mother in Spanish because**  
 06 **that's her language.**  
 07 PERSON 2: I don't give a shit, shut up.  
 08 PERSON 1: And out of nowhere you just come out..  
 09 PERSON 2: Shut up!  
 10 PERSON 1: ...and say something like that.  
 11 PERSON 2: Shut up!

Person 2 is being antagonistic and enraged throughout this interaction, even resulting to the use of racialized insults. They refer to Person 1 using an abusive term and telling them to "learn how to [...] speak English. Again, one may note that this conversation is had in English, which clearly suggests that Person 1 is capable of conversing in English. Urging Person 1 to learn English can be seen as an attempt to minimize their abilities and to establish an implicit out-group where Person 1 represents the foreignized other.

(27) 21 PERSON 2: **You're just a fucking spic** and can kiss my ass.

22 PERSON 1: And the thing.. I'm a spic. That's incredible.

(28) 28 PERSON 2: **Learn how to fucking speak English.**

29 PERSON 1: Unbelievable.

30 PERSON 2: **We live in America.**

Below, we see another negative stereotype attached to immigrants: that they are somehow “criminal,” even if the “crime” is speaking Spanish. This supports socio-politically timely rhetoric about Latinx people, where they are criminalized and demonized, posing them as a threat to U.S. citizens. One should keep in mind, though, that there are no explicit claims of Person 1’s potential immigrant status in this transcript. However, similar elements in describing Person 1 can be seen, as how immigrants were often described during this time. Interestingly, the use of this type of rhetoric almost seems to label Person 1 as an immigrant without explicitly stating so.

(29) 36 PERSON 2: ...can kiss my motherfucking ass.

37 PERSON 1: Yeah, because **I did the crime of talking to my mother**  
38 **in Spanish because that's the language she speaks.**

39 PERSON 2: **It is a crime.**

40 PERSON 1: **Can I ask you who you voted for?**

41 PERSON 2: It's none of your goddamn fucking business, asshole.

(30) 50 PERSON 1: **What did I do to you outside of speak to my mother in**  
51 **her language?** So, tell me right now.

(31) 63 PERSON 1: Mike, what did I do to you Mike? **I spoke to my mot...**

64 PERSON 2: [unintelligible] ... fucking shit like you are.

65 PERSON 1: **I spoke to my mother in a language.**

Person 1 requires about who Person 2 voted for in the election, which makes a connection to the Trump administration’s perceived role in how people of Latinx heritage are perceived in the country at this time. This seems to confirm the belief that public rhetoric does indeed influence how the general public views certain groups of people.

(32) 71 PERSON 2: Fuck off. I'll keep talking shit just like you are..

72 You're a piece of fucking shit, **you fucking spic.**

73 PERSON 1: Mmm. Mike right now **you're making me feel really**

74 **proud to be that spic.** Really proud..



One can see that the use of discriminating terminology continues throughout much of this exchange (above and below). These statements serve as explicit instances of Person 2's racism. Their actions are likely to be racially motivated and consciously discriminating against a person they perceive to be from a different ethnic background. Thus, this discourse offers a distinct example of racializing an individual's language use, using it as a justification for de facto racial discrimination.

- (33) 82 PERSON 1: Say one more time.  
 83 PERSON 2: You're a piece of shit you **fucking spic**.  
 84 PERSON 1: And explain what I did to you one more time.  
 85 PERSON 2: **Talking that fucking stupid Spanish 'round here when**  
 86 **everybody else...**  
 87 PERSON 1: **Speaking Spanish.**  
 88 PERSON 2: **...is a fucking English-speaking American.**  
 89 PERSON 1: Alright. Incredible.

The use of English is highlighted as a marker of being American, which includes the implicit claim that speakers of other languages cannot be considered American. This English-centrism, then, describes the white-normative values the United States collectively holds and those who do not meet the hidden criteria are considered as an out-group or foreign.

- (34) 196 PERSON 2: There will never be an apology because **you're a**  
 197 **fucking spic that talks shit in America, where I fought and**  
 198 **almost died for it, so fuck you!**

TR6 also attaches patriotic sentiments to being American, excluding speakers of other languages as "less American" and, incidentally, as "more immigrant." Person 2 highlights their military service and how they "almost died" for it. They seem to consider Person 1 as some type of threat to their sacrifice, strengthening the narrative about immigrants as a threat to U.S. citizens.

To conclude, TR6 manages to reflect implicit practices of immigrantization, without ever explicitly calling Spanish-speaking Person 1 an immigrant. Furthermore, there are clear examples of racism in the discourse, confirming our speculation of this seemingly language-based discrimination as racist, thus using language as a justification for the discrimination.

## 6 Discussion

In the following section (6.1), I will draw some conclusions based on the previous Analysis chapter, as well as consider any re-emerging themes in the material in a comparative manner. Similarly, I will pay attention to any potential major differences appearing between the pieces of material. The main findings have been categorized under subcategories. Any implicit or embedded meanings will be discussed under their respective categories, as well as any further discussion around the material, findings, and links to wider phenomena.

### 6.1 English-centrism and linguistic nationalism

Some topics repeat themselves in all or most of the discourses I analyzed. One such example is the demand to speak English because “it’s America.” This or similarly intended arguments are used in all six transcripts (see Table 3), highlighting the norm of English as the de facto national language, despite lacking legislation on the matter. This is further justified in TR3 with the argument of the speaker having lived in the area for “20 years” (example 12). Lippi-Green (2012, 264) offers a similar example, sharing how during a class they taught, a student shared a remark regarding English-Only practices in California, to which a white student replied with “WE settled California” (emphasis in original). Lippi-Green (*ibid.*, 265) states that this was an example of “performing whiteness:” a practice that is present in the examples used in this thesis as well. In TR4 one can also see a reference to the U.S. military, and how they are fighting for the use of English as opposed to Spanish (example 18). These are used as methods for othering and foreignizing, as well as creating a non-English speaking out-group that is also non-white. This highlights how language and race are interlinked in fundamental ways and allows for discrimination based on either race/ethnicity or language. This creates a type of nationalistic or patriotic approach to language use (linguistic nationalism), where some (in-)groups have more power in determining which language(s) are more appropriate than others, and persons perceived as members of an out-group of one kind or another simply must adhere to the rules set by the English-speaking majority.

Additionally, the United States is explicitly presented as an English-speaking country and all other languages and language users discounted as “un-American.” Not only do I see demands to use English instead of Spanish, but I can also identify instances of direct denials to using Spanish. Whether this is done through sentiments such as “[you’re] talking that [...] stupid Spanish” (example 33) or “go back to Mexico if you want to keep speaking Spanish” (example 22), the underlying effort is to disapprove of Spanish use, and to

pressure the Spanish speaker – or the “other” – to the in-group majority’s English-normative customs. Instances where Spanish speakers are encouraged (or told) to speak English in the material, as well as examples of linguistic nationalism have been itemized in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Use of English and linguistic nationalism in the material.

TR	Example
TR1	“It’s America. [...] The least they could do [...] is speak English.”
	“[...]they’re undocumented so my next call is to ICE to have each one of them kicked out of my country.”
TR2	“[...] it’s America, speak English. Speak English. They should be speaking English.”
	“Are they in America? [...] they should be speaking English.”
TR3	“[...] English is our first language so you need to speak English. When you’re in America, you need to speak English.”
	“I’ve lived in California for 20 years, English is our first language so you need to speak English. Get [...] out of my country.”
TR4	“Military men and women [...] are not fighting for your right to speak Spanish, they’re fighting for your right to speak American.”
	“Military men and women [...] are not fighting for your right to speak Spanish, they’re fighting for your right to speak American.”
TR5	“If you’re in America. You should speak American English.”
	“Go back to Mexico if you want to keep speaking Spanish.”
TR6	“Learn how to [...] speak English.”
	“We live in America. [...] everybody else [...] is a [...] English-speaking American. [...] in America, where I fought and almost died for it [...]”

A related repeating subject matter is the claim that persons speaking Spanish cannot also speak English, despite several occasions where we are indeed witnessing the Spanish speaker taking part in the conversation in English. The attempt to label Spanish speakers as monolingual speakers of that language alone is perhaps an attempt to deny their full participation in the

conversation, as well as foreignizing and othering them while justifying these actions with the othered speakers' language use. It also gives the anti-Spanish individuals a mental advantage on the imagined hierarchy scale, allowing them to further highlight their own white-normative experiences as superior to those of others.

## **6.2 Immigrantization and racism/denial of racism**

Another recurring theme is voicing (negative) stereotypes about Spanish speakers. The most common stereotype in the material is perceiving Spanish speakers as immigrants (Table 4). This confirms my initial hypothesis that Spanish speakers in the United States indeed face immigrantization, and that this practice is largely justified through the individuals' use of Spanish. I argue that this perception of Spanish speakers as immigrants is also based on the speakers' race/ethnicity, and that language is used as a substitute for race, enabling a form of discrimination that is not as socially condemned as remarks of so-called traditional racism.

Another interlinked stereotype apparent in the material is that of the Spanish speakers as undocumented or "illegal" immigrants. This is also used in a manner that criminalizes Spanish speakers and poses them as a threat to U.S. citizens and their (economic) well-being. (For instance, TR1 shows Spanish speakers being described as living on welfare.) It can be argued that these notions of "illegality" as a negative stereotype confirm links to race-based discrimination as opposed to simply linguistic discrimination. Examples of these different types of immigrantization are presented in Table 5 below.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to definitively prove whether the anti-Spanish individuals in the material were also displaying racial discrimination, one may argue that the Spanish speakers' (perceived) race or ethnicity was at least in part encouraging discriminatory behavior, while language use was used as a justification for more socially acceptable forms of discrimination – that is, to cover the use of explicit racism. We can make the conclusion about racism being present based on the comments made about the Spanish speakers' language use, national origin and immigrant status. Their nationality and economic status are discussed in ways that support racist views.

**Table 5.** Immigrantization in the material.

TR	Example
TR1	“My guess is, they’re undocumented, so my next call is to ICE to have each one of them kicked out of my country. If they have the balls to come here and lice off of my money... I pay for their welfare; I pay for their ability to be here.”
TR2	“Are these guys illegal?  Are they illegal aliens?”
TR3	“Get [...] out of my country.  No, I don’t think you are [a U.S. citizen].  I got raped by illegal aliens.”
TR4	-
TR5	“Go back to Mexico if you want to keep speaking Spanish. Go back to your Mexican country.”
TR6	-

The denial of racism is also a commonly occurring theme in the material (see Table 6 below for examples). I argue that claiming not to be racist in and of itself reflects embedded notions of discrimination, as one with genuine concern over behavior that is seen as racist would be likely to hear out the criticism and adjust their behavior accordingly. Additionally, these utterances denying racist behavior are followed by racist acts in each transcript, suggesting that there were indeed discriminatory views about the Spanish speakers that were based on more than language use. In most of these instances of denying racism, the denial is explicit. However, in TR2 denial is displayed through counter-questioning and ironic commentary on how the Spanish speaker needs protection from Person 1 because they are harassing them. This may be an implicit attempt to showcase that because presumably there was no initial racist commentary, there is no need to deny said racism.

Lippi-Green (2004, 298) states that a “great deal of misinformation and commonsense argumentation centers on communication, and this is also where most persons who discriminate

on the basis of language will focus their rationalizations.” They offer an example reminiscent of Person 1 in TR3 claiming that they have “no problem with the way [Person 2] look[s]:” “I’ve got nothing against [Taiwanese, Appalachians, Blacks], [...] I just can’t understand them.” (ibid.)

**Table 6.** Denial of racism in the material.

TR	Example
TR1	-
TR2	“How am I harassing them?  He’s a Black man, and he’s gonna protect the brown man, from this white woman.”
TR3	“No, I don’t have any problem with the way you look.”
TR4	“...not racist...”
TR5	“We aren’t ignorant!”
TR6	-

As I laid out the topic for this thesis, I had the expectation that more explicit references to Spanish speakers as specifically Mexican immigrants would be made in the material, but this type of discourse only occurs in TR5. The lack of such claims leads us to conclude that either the individuals opposing Spanish do not have an interest in the specific nationality of the Spanish speakers, or that they hold the assumption about Spanish speakers as Mexican so self-evident that it did not require explicit mentioning. In either case, it could be argued that the absence of referring to Spanish speakers by any specific nationality is an attempt to mask racism, as various ethnic minorities in the United States are referred to with a prefix concerning nationality (e.g. African Americans, Chinese Americans etc.) and using this type of terminology might be more easily identified as racist.

Indeed, what comes to explicit expressions of racism, those are infrequent in the material. The only explicitly racist derogatory term used appears in TR6 (see Table 7), although with much repetition. This seems to support my theory that explicitly racist acts are seen as

inappropriate in the current climate, and thus individuals opt for more implicit ways to discriminate. This, as well, was an unexpected result. However, I have included some other examples in Table 7 that could be understood as explicit expressions of racism in their given contexts.

**Table 7.** Explicit racism in the material.

TR	Example
TR1	-
TR2	-
TR3	“I got raped by illegal aliens.”
TR4	-
TR5	“Go back to your Mexican country.”
TR6	“You’re just a fucking spic [...]”

### 6.3 Power relations

Power relations and hierarchies are also expressed in implicit and explicit ways in the material. Oftentimes the English speaker aims to assert their superiority through various acts, such as belittling and minimizing (such as Person 1 in TR3 claiming that Person 2 does not know how to speak English), denying the Spanish speakers’ claims or positions (e.g. in TR5 where Person 2 claims that the Spanish speaker cannot be the owner of the restaurant (example 25); in TR3 where Person 1 denies the citizenship of a Spanish speaker (example 15) et cetera), by making remarks about the U.S. being “my country” (examples 3 and 15) rather than Spanish speakers’; or even by resulting to the use of derogatory terms (examples 27, 32, 33, 34) There is an attempt to create a hierarchical understanding of whose language, racial/ethnic background etc. are more “correct” and in-keeping with the in-group’s values and traditions, and thus seen as more desirable and superior. This again, reflects issues of racism, where the norms and in-group characteristics are white-normative and English-centric, leaving out those who are not perceived as white and English-speaking.

#### 6.4 References to the Trump administration’s rhetoric

I see connections to the sociopolitical climate that these videos were filmed in – during the Trump administration’s years in power while xenophobic, anti-immigrant attitudes were commonly voiced in elite and public discourses. Opinions in the material occasionally reflect Donald Trump’s rhetoric and the wider conservative stances of government: such as referring to Mexicans as rapists in example 17; using terminology weaponized by those on the political right (such as the term “social justice warrior,” example 11); and suggesting that anti-Spanish views correspond with one’s voting patterns (example 29). Hence, it seems reasonable to claim that elements of elite-established rhetoric and attitudes are reflected in the material, supporting our initial hypothesis that views of Spanish speakers follow elite discourses to some degree and that the Trump presidency has played a role in instilling these views further in certain demographics (as also evidenced by Flores’s research that I introduced in chapter 2). This intertextuality is reflective of Fairclough’s (1992) Three-dimensional model, according to which individuals are influenced by wider societal and cultural phenomena, functioning in tandem with pre-existing texts. Examples of such instances are provided in Table 8.

**Table 8.** References to contemporary phenomena in the material.

TR	Example
TR1	“[...]my next call is to ICE to have each one of them kicked out of my country.”
TR2	“Are these guys illegal?  So this guy decided that he’s gonna come over here and be a social justice warrior.  Why are you wearing a mask?”
TR3	“So I got raped, I got raped by illegal aliens.”
TR4	-
TR5	“Go back to Mexico [...]”
TR6	“Can I ask who you voted for?”



## 6.5 Differences

While the transcripts share unexpectedly many similarities, as I have discussed above, it is worthwhile to consider the arising differences as well. One difference becomes apparent in considering the individualistic level: all analyzed interactions deal with a different set of speakers. All persons described are, therefore, either victims of immigrantization or other types of discrimination, or attackers. While It seems highly likely that interactions such as the ones analyzed in this thesis are multiplied in lived realities of marginalized people. Considered from this perspective, one may better understand the harmful effects of discrimination on a wider scale. For this reason, I do not want to normalize the expressions of racism and other types of prejudice brought forth in this thesis. We should not consider individual instances of discrimination insignificant but rather, attempt to limit expressions of racism, as they are frequent and plentiful, affecting countless numbers of people on a daily basis.

The discursive practices also vary: some speakers are more confrontational than others – for instance, Person 2 in TR6, using racial slurs and raising their voice. Some are being more implicit and careful in their approaches, not wanting to be seen as racist. Another example of varying approaches by those practicing immigrantization or being otherwise discriminating is visible in TR2 where Person 1 is attacking Spanish-speaking workers on the street. Person 1 appears more self-aware of their actions than others, almost as if the conversation that would ensue as a result of their comments was premeditated. The instant responses are indicative of a rehearsed reply, as well as the use of politically colored terminology such as “social justice warrior” (example 11). It is likely that Person 1 encountered similar conversations on social media, and perhaps used those as “learning opportunities” on how to disguise their racism, as seen in the exchange. Indeed, Alim et al. (2020, 3) argue that “forms of linguistic racism [...] are usually thought of as the favored practices of white racist conservatives.”

## 7 Conclusion

In the beginning of this paper, I described how language and race/ethnicity are fundamentally connected. The language one uses influences how they are perceived as someone from their ethnic background and one's ethnicity affects how their language is received by others. I set out to study practices of immigrantization, racialization and foreignization of Spanish speakers in the United States, as well as any implicit or embedded meanings appearing in the material. This thesis inspected such instances from a critical, qualitative perspective, focusing on individual contact situations that give us an understanding of what Spanish speakers may face in their everyday lives. This was achieved using Critical Discourse Analysis, influenced especially by van Dijk's research in the field. CDA allowed me to consider these complex and nuanced topics with relative freedom in the absence of a clearly defined theoretical framework.

To sum up my findings to the research questions laid out in chapter 1: immigration, racialization and discrimination were all themes that I was able to identify in the material. Except for TR4, immigrantization is visible in all transcripts, which leads me to conclude that within the small sample size of material chosen for this study, Spanish speakers are indeed perceived as more prototypically immigrant based on their language use. English speakers in the material express English-centric views based on white-normative ideas about what ideal language use is (allegedly being a monolingual speaker of American English). Spanish speakers are told to speak English instead of their own language, while linguistic nationalism is openly displayed in some of the transcripts. Echoing sentiments such as "if you don't speak English, go back to where you came from" create not only language-based hierarchies, but also racialized hierarchies based on the Spanish speakers' ethnic background.

These views are expressed both directly and indirectly, intersecting with other practices such as othering, foreignization and criminalizing Spanish speakers. These assumptions were reflected in the English speakers' language use, ranging from overtly racist to less confrontational discussion styles. The material portrays a vast range of implicit assumptions about Spanish speakers, showcasing views concerning immigration, language use, race, national origin and economic status. I argue that in many instances linguistic discrimination is utilized in place of overt racism or is at least in part influencing speakers' views about the Spanish speakers. In other words, language-based discrimination is, in some instances, used symbiotically with racism in order to avoid the stigma of being seen as racist.

I found that my hypotheses regarding negative views toward Spanish speakers and practices of immigrantization were confirmed. Other expectations were not fulfilled, such as the prevalence of openly racist rhetoric in the material. Instead, a more implicit approach was often adopted, using linguistic discrimination as a substitute and justification for what could be seen as de facto racial discrimination. Through my analysis, themes such as power relations and language hierarchies; practices of othering; and connections to wider societal phenomena (such as prevailing xenophobic views toward Spanish speakers and those of Latinx heritage) became apparent. These findings are predicative of potential wider phenomena in the U.S. during the Trump presidency. However, as I have highlighted throughout this study, the sample size for in this thesis is too limited to make generalizations on a wider scale.

Because the practice of immigrantization is linked to many different factors – ranging from country of origin to gender – and is a highly nuanced, intersectional and interdisciplinary phenomenon, I did not want to limit myself to analyzing the grammatical aspects of immigrantization only. I consider the social context and contemporary phenomena absolutely essential in assessing this subject, and this study was intended as a macro-level, empirical take on how immigrantization is present in everyday encounters in the Spanish-speaking, U.S.-based context. However, while discrimination and racism are heavy subjects to study, I purport that there should be more research into what I call “linguistic immigrantization.” Grammatical and lexicographical research into the subject could further benefit our understanding of immigrantization and discrimination as we aspire to create more antiracist spaces in academia and wider society. Racism and language-based discrimination are comprehensive, systemic issues that affect people’s everyday lives and I believe further studies on immigration and language continue to be necessary for unlearning white-normative and majority-appointed practices. I also encourage similar research in the Finnish context.

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## Appendix 1 (transcripts)

### TRANSCRIPT 1 (TR1)

CBS News. 2018. "Man threatens to call ICE on NYC workers for speaking Spanish." YouTube, 0:58. Accessed Jan 31, 2024. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y\\_6hC8BoDh4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_6hC8BoDh4).

01 [unintelligible]  
02 PERSON 1: Every person I listen to. He spoke it, he spoke it,  
03 she's speaking it. It's America.  
04 [video muted]  
05 PERSON 1: My guess is, they're undocumented, so my next call is  
06 to ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] to have each one of  
07 them kicked out of my country. If they have the balls to come here  
08 and live off of my money... I pay for their welfare; I pay for their  
09 ability to be here. The least they could do, the least they could do,  
10 is speak English.  
11 [video muted]  
12 PERSON 2: ... our nation ...  
13 PERSON 1: Honey, I'm calling ICE!  
14 PERSON 2: Call ICE?! So that they can ...  
15 PERSON 1: Maybe you shouldn't eat that sandwich today. Take a  
16 break from the food.  
17 PERSON 2: Maybe you should get hit by a car, you piece of shit!

### TRANSCRIPT 2 (TR2)

CGTN America. 2020. "'It's America, speak English.' - Radio host fired after yelling at Hispanic workers." YouTube, 0:57. Accessed Jan 31, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CQcJcgQUIY>.

01 PERSON 1: Are these guys illegal? Look at this, it's America,  
02 speak English. Speak English. [to approaching person] What's your  
03 problem?  
04 PERSON 2: Why are you harassing [them]?  
05 PERSON 1: Are they in America?  
06 PERSON 2: Yes.  
07 PERSON 1: Ok, they should be speaking English.



08 PERSON 2: Why? What law...  
09 PERSON 1: They should be speaking English.  
10 PERSON 2: Because what...  
11 PERSON 1: They should be speaking English. Are they illegal  
12 aliens? They don't speak the language. Ok, why do you care?  
13 PERSON 2: Because you ... you're harassing them.  
14 PERSON 1: I wasn't talking to you. I have a right.  
15 PERSON 2: To harass people?  
16 PERSON 1: How am I, how am I harassing them?  
17 PERSON 2: You're yelling at them...  
18 PERSON 1: I'm not yelling. Am I yelling?  
19 PERSON 2: Yes, you are. I can hear from you from across the  
20 street, I'm trying to enjoy my lunch.  
21 PERSON 1: Are they illegal... So? So go and enjoy your lunch.  
22 Why are you wearing a mask?  
23 PERSON 2: Why am I wearing a mask?  
24 PERSON 1: Yeah.  
25 PERSON 2: There's a global pandemic...  
26 PERSON 1: Really? Ok. Ok. So this guy decided that he's gonna  
27 come over here and be a social justice warrior. He's a Black man,  
28 and he's gonna protect the brown man, from this white woman.

### TRANSCRIPT 3 (TR3)

NBC News. 2019. "White Customer To Spanish-Speaking Manager: Get Out Of My Country | NBC News." YouTube, 2:19. Accessed Jan 31, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCsFyWxip38>.

01 PERSON 1: I've lived in California for 20 years, English is our  
02 first language so you need to speak English.  
03 PERSON 2: I'm sorry if [unintelligible]  
04 PERSON 1: Well I'm sorry about you, too.  
05 PERSON 2: Why, I mean I...  
06 PERSON 1: Get the fuck out of my country.  
07 PERSON 2: [I am] a U.S. citizen.  
08 PERSON 1: No, I don't think you are.  
09 PERSON 2: So now, [you speak of] how I look. So, that's the  
10 problem.  
11 PERSON 1: No, I don't have any problem with the way you look.

12 [unintelligible]  
13 PERSON 1: I don't have any problem with the way you look. I  
14 don't have any problem with the way you look.  
15 PERSON 2: I'm a U.S. citizen, what is your problem?  
16 PERSON 1: I don't have any problem...  
17 PERSON 2: What is your problem?  
18 PERSON 1: Will you shut up?  
19 PERSON 2: I don't have any... So you can tell, you can tell  
20 how, I'm sorry about you...  
21 PERSON 1: I don't, I don't have any problem with the way you  
22 look.  
23 PERSON 2: You know, I'm sorry.  
24 PERSON 1: When you're in America, you need to speak English.  
25 PERSON 2: What I'm doing...  
26 [unintelligible]  
27 PERSON 3: If you're racist here, you're gonna leave.  
28 PERSON 1: I'm not racist.  
29 PERSON 3: No, that's racist. This man takes care of me, you're  
30 gonna get out if you're ... don't talk to him like that, don't do  
31 that here.  
32 PERSON 1: I live in California for 20 years... Shut up.  
33 PERSON 3: Don't talk to these people, these are good people.  
34 Don't do that. You can leave.  
35 PERSON 1: I live in California for 20 years, I have ...  
36 PERSON 3: Not here you don't. These people take care of me.  
37 PERSON 2: Ok, let me, let me do this, so, can you, can you  
38 please, I'm gonna pay for what you got, ok? So can you please exit  
39 the restaurant, please? So I'm gonna pay, I'll take care of that.  
40 I'll take care of everything you got, ok. Please, if you can, you  
41 guys can, uh, can do that. ...  
42 PERSON 1: Oh, so I got... You can feel in a better place...  
43 PERSON 1: So I got raped, I got raped by illegal aliens. I got  
44 raped by illegal aliens?  
45 Who can't speak English. You want me to be nice to you?  
46 PERSON 2: Do you see?

#### **TRANSCRIPT 4 (TR4)**

NBC News. 2017. "Teacher Tells Students To 'Speak American' | NBC News." YouTube, 1:01. Accessed Jan 31, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHZBnUJ9kdE>.

01 PERSON 1: Military men and women who are fighting are not  
02 fighting for your right to speak Spanish, they're fighting for  
03 your right to speak American.  
04 SOMEONE IN CROWD: ... be respectful, be respectful ...  
05 [unintelligible]  
06 PERSON 1?: ...not racist...  
07 SOMEONE IN CROWD: No, you're being racist.  
08 SOMEONE IN CROWD: ... to speak Spanish even though I know how to  
09 speak English ...  
10 PERSON 1: Goodbye, goodbye, bye!

### **TRANSCRIPT 5 (TR5)**

NowThis Impact. 2019. "Burger King Manager Defends Staff From Customers' Racist Comments | NowThis." YouTube, 3:00. Accessed Jan 31, 2024. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr\\_-xnWnEbk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr_-xnWnEbk).

01 PERSON 1 or 2: If you're in America. You should speak American  
02 English.  
03 PERSON 3: No ma'am, I don't.  
04 PERSON 1 or 2: Yeah, yeah.  
05 PERSON 1: Go back to Mexico if you want to keep speaking  
06 Spanish. Go back to your Mexican country.  
07 PERSON 3: Guess what ma'am? I'm not Mexican. I'm not Mexican  
08 but you're being very prejudiced, and I want you out of my  
09 restaurant right now.  
10 PERSON 1: I'll finish my meal and then I'll go.  
11 PERSON 3: You know what? I will, I'll go do it for you ma'am.  
12 I'll call the cops and have you, have you trespassing. It'll be  
13 easier for me; it'll be easier to have people like you, so ignorant  
14 and disrespectful...  
15 PERSON 2: We aren't ignorant!  
16 PERSON 3: You're very ignorant and disrespectful. Have a great  
17 day and get out of my restaurant.  
18 PERSON 1: Don't worry, we're going.  
19 PERSON 2: This isn't your restaurant!  
20 PERSON 3: Yes, it is, ma'am.  
21 PERSON 2: It is not.

22 PERSON 3: It, it is, actually, as a matter of fact.  
23 PERSON 2: No.  
24 PERSON 4: Wow.  
25 PERSON 3: It is what it is. And you know what? The owner of  
26 this franchise is Mexican.  
27 PERSON 1: Well, but they always speak English here.  
28 PERSON 3: No, they don't. He does not. You're very  
29 inconsiderate, and you're very  
30 rude. So, you know, get your business somewhere else...  
31 PERSON 1: Don't worry, we will!  
32 PERSON 2: You don't have to... You don't know how to act  
33 [unintelligible] around people.  
34 PERSON 3: Excuse me, you're telling me not to speak my native  
35 language?  
36 PERSON 2: I...  
37 PERSON 3: You're being really prejudiced, ma'am. You're being  
38 really prejudiced.  
39 PERSON 2: I didn't tell you, I said you should speak it around  
40 here.  
41 PERSON 3: You know what? I have nothing to say to you ma'am.  
42 Just have, have a nice day, and don't come back.  
43 PERSON 1 OR 2: Don't worry, we won't.  
44 PERSON 3: I'm glad you won't.  
45 PERSON 1 OR 2: Thank you. You won't ever see us again.  
46 PERSON 3: No, we won't.  
47 PERSON 1 OR 2: Thanks to your manager.  
48 PERSON 4: Wow [says something in Spanish]  
49 PERSON 1 OR 2: He threatened to call the police on us.  
50 [unintelligible and people speaking in Spanish]  
51 PERSON 3: You know what she told me? She said, "you gotta speak  
52 English in here."  
53 PERSON 5: What?!  
54 PERSON 3: Yeah, being prejudiced. Bye ma'am, have a great day.  
55 Don't come back. 'Cause I promise you, I will have you transferred.  
56 [unintelligible]  
57 PERSON 4: I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.  
58 PERSON 3: [in Spanish:] Listen, that was incredible!  
59 PERSON 4: [in Spanish:] It's incredible!  
60 PERSON 3: ... you speak English, we heard it all.  
61 PERSON 6: We heard it all.  
62 PERSON 4: We heard it all! I have a recording... this whole

63 thing. You wanna... I'll send it to you.  
64 PERSON 3: Please do.  
65 PERSON 4: I will, yeah! This is... wow! I can't believe this!  
66 Well, I can believe it, actually.  
67 PERSON 3: But no, they're not being prejudiced. "You're in  
68 America, go back to Mexico!" Freedom of speech, right?  
69 [unintelligible]

## TRANSCRIPT 6 (TR6)

Random Chaos. 2017. "Guy goes off on man who spoke spanish to his mom." YouTube, 8:04. Accessed Jan 31, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTmptMxy6bE>.

01 PERSON 1: And you know what, and I respect that.  
02 PERSON 2: No, you don't.  
03 PERSON 1: Of course I respect that.  
04 PERSON 3: [unintelligible]  
05 PERSON 1: But I'm speaking to my mother in Spanish because  
06 that's her language.  
07 PERSON 2: I don't give a shit, shut up.  
08 PERSON 1: And out of nowhere you just come out...  
09 PERSON 2: Shut up!  
10 PERSON 1: ...and say something like that.  
11 PERSON 2: Shut up!  
12 PERSON 1: Wow, unbelievable.  
13 PERSON 3: Mike...  
14 PERSON 4: Michael...  
15 PERSON 1: Mike, that is sad. That is sad.  
16 PERSON 2: Fuck you.  
17 PERSON 3: Michael... stop.  
18 PERSON 1: For no reason.  
19 PERSON 2: Shut up with the fucking Michael.  
20 PERSON 1: Wow, Michael. That's it.  
21 PERSON 2: You're just a fucking spic and can kiss my ass.  
22 PERSON 1: And the thing... I'm a spic. That's incredible.  
23 PERSON 2: I'm glad you're having a good time.  
24 PERSON 1: So, so my family that's also all military..  
25 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck. I don't give a fuck  
26 [unintelligible].

27 PERSON 1: ...fought just like you did, right? Lost the limbs.  
28 PERSON 2: Learn how to fucking speak English.  
29 PERSON 1: Unbelievable.  
30 PERSON 2: We live in America.  
31 PERSON 1: I feel sadness for you. I feel real, real freaking  
32 sadness...  
33 PERSON 2: I'm glad you do, 'cause I feel fucking... really  
34 fucking piece of shit like you.  
35 PERSON 1: ...wow.  
36 PERSON 2: ...can kiss my motherfucking ass.  
37 PERSON 1: Yeah, because I did the crime of talking to my mother  
38 in Spanish because that's the language she speaks.  
39 PERSON 2: It is a crime.  
40 PERSON 1: Can I ask you who you voted for?  
41 PERSON 2: It's none of your goddamn fucking business, asshole.  
42 PERSON 1: Because... No, I'm just interested. I'm just asking.  
43 I'm as... hey! Now you're gonna...  
44 PERSON 3 AND 4: [unintelligible] Michael...  
45 PERSON 2: No, he's fucking recording me! That's bullshit.  
46 PERSON 1: Of course, 'cause... You just assaulted me.  
47 PERSON 2: I just assaulted you.  
48 PERSON 1: Yeah. You just assaulted me.  
49 PERSON 2: You are a fucking piece of fucking shit!  
50 PERSON 1: What did I do to you outside of speak to my mother in  
51 her language? So, tell me right now.  
52 PERSON 2: Fuck off.  
53 PERSON 1: Tell me right now. See, if I was a piece of shit...  
54 PERSON 2: Kiss my ass motherfucker!  
55 PERSON 1: If I were a...  
56 PERSON 2: Kiss my ass!  
57 PERSON 1: If I were...  
58 PERSON 3: [unintelligible]  
59 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck! Fucking spic can kiss my ass.  
60 PERSON 1: Unbelievable.  
61 PERSON 2: Not unbelievable when you're the fucking piece of  
62 shit.  
63 PERSON 1: Mike, what did I do to you Mike? I spoke to my mot...  
64 PERSON 2: [unintelligible] ... fucking shit like you are.  
65 PERSON 1: I spoke to my mother in a language.  
66 PERSON 2: Leave me the fuck alone. This guy won't leave me  
67 alone.

68 PERSON 1: Mike... Unbelievable.  
69 PERSON 2: ...talking shit...  
70 PERSON 1: That is sad. That's sad.  
71 PERSON 2: Fuck off. I'll keep talking shit just like you are...  
72 You're a piece of fucking shit, you fucking spic.  
73 PERSON 1: Mmm. Mike right now you're making me feel really  
74 proud to be that spic. Really proud..  
75 PERSON 2: Oh really?  
76 PERSON 1: ...because you know what? I want to [cheat] you like  
77 that.  
78 PERSON 2: Fuck you. You're a piece of shit.  
79 PERSON 1: Incredible.  
80 PERSON 1: Say one more time... just... just for...  
81 PERSON 2: Hmm?  
82 PERSON 1: Say one more time.  
83 PERSON 2: You're a piece of shit you fucking spic.  
84 PERSON 1: And explain what I did to you one more time.  
85 PERSON 2: Talking that fucking stupid Spanish 'round here when  
86 everybody else...  
87 PERSON 1: Speaking Spanish.  
88 PERSON 2: ...is a fucking English-speaking American.  
89 PERSON 1: Alright. Incredible.  
90 PERSON 2: Yeah.  
91 PERSON 5: Hey settle... settle down.  
92 PERSON 1: Okay, now...  
93 PERSON 2: Fuck you, too!  
94 PERSON 3: Mike!  
95 PERSON 5: You're saying... you're saying...  
96 PERSON 2: Fuck you, too!  
97 PERSON 3 and 4: Michael! Mike!  
98 PERSON 5: [unintelligible]  
99 PERSON 2: Fuck you too!  
100 PERSON 3: Michael! Stop it!  
101 PERSON 2: Shut up!  
102 PERSON 3 or 4: Stop it! That is...  
103 PERSON 1: Mike, Mike...  
104 PERSON 2: You stay here, I'm fucking going... fucking spic.  
105 PERSON 1: Mike.  
106 PERSON 3 and/or 4: [unintelligible]  
107 PERSON 1: I really have no ill feelings towards Mike. I  
108 really would... I wish I could talk him out of their hatred, that's...

109 PERSON 4: I'm so sorry.  
110 PERSON 1: It's alright.  
111 PERSON 4: I'm so sorry.  
112 PERSON 1: No, no, no, it's alright. Hey, he's obviously paid a  
113 really bad price and I feel bad, I do. I literally feel bad but  
114 there's hatred..  
115 PERSON 2: Don't be talking to my family!  
116 PERSON 3: Just..  
117 PERSON 2: Don't be talking to my wife. Shut up!  
118 PERSON 1: Mike, I feel bad for you!  
119 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck, dude! Shut up!  
120 PERSON 1: You don't care that I feel bad..  
121 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck about you, shut up to my wife!  
122 PERSON 3 and 4: [unintelligible]  
123 PERSON 1: I..  
124 PERSON 2: I don't care. Huh?  
125 PERSON 1: Hey, can you believe me? Oh boy. Mm-mm-mm.  
126 PERSON 2 TO PERSON 6: [unintelligible] ...shut up, he keeps  
127 talking shit..  
128 PERSON 1: Mike, Mike, Mike, Mike, Mike. Mm-mm-mm.  
129 [background noise]  
130 PERSON 6: Does somebody have a radio?  
131 PERSON 2: Don't talk to me, asshole. [unintelligible]  
132 PERSON 1: Dude, I won't, but I'm feeling.. I feel sorry for you.  
133 I do, alright? And I really.. I mean it. I..  
134 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck, quit talking to me!  
135 PERSON 1: I.. I wish you knew I feel real..  
136 PERSON 2: Quit talking to me!  
137 PERSON 4: [unintelligible]  
138 PERSON 1: Mike, calm down.  
139 PERSON 2: You shut up and I will!  
140 PERSON 1: Can we be civil?  
141 PERSON 2: Shut up and I will.  
142 PERSON 1: Can... can you..  
143 PERSON 2: And he still won't shut up!  
144 PERSON 1: Because, Mike..  
145 PERSON 3: That's... that's enough. Just stop [unintelligible].  
146 PERSON 1: Alright, alright. So let's, let's..  
147 PERSON 2: Don't talk to my fucking wife.  
148 PERSON 3: Would you just stop talking to him?  
149 PERSON 1: Let's agree..



150 PERSON 2: Shut up and I will fucking stop. You can't shut up!  
151 PERSON 2: 'Cause I don't... hey, you know what, I'm just as  
152 American as you are, and I don't...  
153 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck what you are!  
154 PERSON 1: And I don't have...  
155 PERSON 2: Leave me alone!  
156 PERSON 1: ...Dude, I don't have to put up with this. That's the  
157 bottom line.  
158 PERSON 2: Leave me alone! Somebody help me.  
159 PERSON 1: Help you?  
160 PERSON 2: This guy is fucking attacking me.  
161 PERSON 1: I'm attacking you. I'm attacking you.  
162 PERSON 2: Fuck you, you fucking [punk].  
163 PERSON 2: I'd like to kick your motherfucking ass right here.  
164 PERSON 1: [sighs]  
165 PERSON 2: You are a piece of fucking shit.  
166 PERSON 3: [unintelligible] The cops... the cops are coming.  
167 PERSON 2: I don't give a fuck. This guy is fucking bugging  
168 me. He won't leave me alone.  
169 PERSON 1: Unfortunately, I talked to people that...  
170 PERSON 2: I don't care! Shut up!  
171 PERSON 3 or 4: Just stop. Just stop talking to him.  
172 PERSON 2: You fucking piece of shit! Shut up!  
173 PERSON 4: Mike...  
174 PERSON 1: I need an apology.  
175 PERSON 2: Shut up!  
176 PERSON 1: I will as soon as you apologize.  
177 PERSON 2: Shut up!  
178 PERSON 1: Apologize.  
179 PERSON 2: Sut up you fucking piece of shit! Shut up!  
180 PERSON 1: Apologize.  
181 PERSON 2: Fuck you.  
182 PERSON 1: Apologize.  
183 PERSON 4: Mike, stop.  
184 PERSON 2: Fuck you, you apologize to me.  
185 PERSON 1: As soon... As soon as...  
186 PERSON 2: You apologize to me you fucking freak!  
187 PERSON 1: You insulted my mother, you're gonna apologize.  
188 PERSON 2: I didn't assault nobody. You're fucking attacking *me*.  
189 PERSON 1: I attacked you.  
190 [background noise]

191 PERSON 2: fucking.. [unintelligible]  
192 [background noise]  
193 PERSON 2: You could be a YouTube professional now with the  
194 tape.  
195 PERSON 1: I'm waiting for an apology, and it gets erased.  
196 PERSON 2: There will never be an apology because you're a  
197 fucking spic that talks shit in America, where I fought and  
198 almost died for it, so fuck you!  
199 PERSON 7 [POLICE]: What, wow, wow, what's going on?  
200 PERSON 2: This guy's harassing me.  
201 PERSON 7 [POLICE]: [unintelligible] the only one yelling is  
202 you.  
203 PERSON 2: 'Cause he won't leave me alone. I'm telling him:  
204 Leave me alone. He won't leave me alone. I don't mean any trouble.  
205 Look, he's recording me and laughing at me, because.. I don't know  
206 what the hell has been a problem. He just won't leave me alone and  
207 keeps talking shit to me. I just..  
208 PERSON 7 [POLICE]: Can I talk to you over here?  
209 PERSON 1: Absolutely, officer. Absolutely. Yeah.  
210 PERSON 2: Yeah, you can kiss my ass, too.  
211 PERSON 1: No, no, no.  
212 PERSON 5: This guy's been out of control for a while.  
213 PERSON 8: I can't believe it took so long for security to get  
214 here.  
215 PERSON 1: Guys, one second. I'm about to turn this off, I want  
216 you to see good people, thank you.

## Appendix 2 (Finnish summary)

Tutkielmani käsittelee espanjaa puhuvien henkilöiden asemaa Yhdysvalloissa, erityisesti maahanmuuttajaolettamien (immigrantization) kautta. Toisin sanoen, tutkin espanjaa puhuvien henkilöiden kokemaa maahanmuuttajaksi olettamista heidän käyttämänsä kielen perusteella. Lisäksi pohdin ns. rotuun tai etniseen taustaan liittyviä olettamia ja sitä miten ne ilmenevät maahanmuuttajaksi olettamisen ja siihen sidonnaisen kielenkäytön rinnalla, potentiaalisesti ilmentäen piilorasismia (implicit racism), sekä analysoin mahdollisia aineistossa ilmeneviä piilomerkityksiä sekä epäsuoria olettamuksia liittyen rotuun ja rodullistamiseen, espanjan kieleen ja maahanmuutto-olettamaan.

Tämä tutkielma haluaa vastata seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin:

1. Minkälaisia maahanmuuttajaolettamia ja/tai esimerkkejä rodullistamisesta ja/tai syrjinnästä materiaalissa esiintyy? Ilmaistaanko olettamat suorasti vai epäsuorasti?
2. Miten nämä olettamat ilmenevät materiaalissa esiintyvien henkilöiden käyttämän kielen kautta?
3. Esiintyykö materiaalissa piilorasistisia tai muita epäsuoria olettamuksia siinä esiintyvien espanjaa puhuvien henkilöiden maahanmuuttotilasta ja/tai rodusta ja miten ne ilmenevät kuvatuissa kanssakäymisissä?
4. Käytetäänkö kieleen perustuvaa syrjintää korvikkeena rasismille?

Ennakoin aineistossa esiintyvien maahanmuuttajaolettamien olevan pääasiassa negatiivisia, rodullistavia ja stereotyyppisiä vahvistavia sekä ilmenevän aggressiivisesti ja avoimen rasistisena kielenkäyttönä. Oletan aineistossa esiintyvän myös piilorasistisia sekä muita epäsuoria olettamia espanjaa puhuvista henkilöistä. Odotan aineistossa ilmenevän myös kansallisuuteen sekä kansalaisuuteen viittaavaa puhetta.

Aineistoksi valikoitui videopalvelu YouTubessa jaettuja vlogityyppisiä videoita, jotka kuvaavat arkipäiväisiä kohtaamisia espanjaa ja englantia puhuvien henkilöiden välillä Yhdysvalloissa. Videot on valittu tiettyjen hakusanojen (English, Spanish, interaction, United States, speaker, language) ja niiden yhdistelmien pohjalta ja niiden tuli kuvata aitoja kohtaamisia englantia ja espanjaa puhuvien henkilöiden välillä. Lisäksi videoiden tuli olla kuvattu julkisessa tilassa (sekä käytännön että eettisistä syistä). Materiaalia arvioidessa tulee huomioda, että Internet-pohjaisten, yksityisten henkilöiden jakamien videoiden

todenmukaisuutta tai luotettavuutta ei voida tyydyttävästi varmistaa. Ei esimerkiksi voida tietää, ovatko videoiden tilanteet lavastettuja tai editoituja. Tutkielmaan sisällytetyt videot on kuitenkin pääasiassa valittu uutissivustojen ylläpitämiltä tileiltä paremman luotettavuuden takaamiseksi. Videoiden autenttisuuden lisäksi on huomioitava erilaisten teknologioiden, kuten algoritmien, vaikutus materiaalien keräämiseen. On myös huomattava, että sosiaalisen median palvelut suosivat yleisöä tavalla tai toisella kiinnostavaa sisältöä myös taloudellisen voiton saavuttamiseksi. Tästä syystä tietyntyyppiset videot (kuten konflikteja kuvaavat vlogit) saattavat olla yllä mainittuja YouTuben hakutuloksissa.

Videoiden valikoitumisen jälkeen huomasin niiden kaikkien olevan kuvattu vuosina 2017-2020, mikä inspiroi uuden tutkimusnäkökulman: Donald Trumpin presidenttiyden ja julkisen retoriikan vaikutuksen espanjaa puhuvien kohteluun Yhdysvalloissa. Näin ollen pohdin myös tämän sosiopoliittisen kontekstin vaikutusta aineistossa siihen potentiaalisesti viittaavan puheen analysoinnin yhteydessä.

Tutkielman taustoittamisessa keskityn terminologiaan sekä aiheelle oleellisten ilmiöiden esittelyyn. Usein käytettyjä termejä ovat esimerkiksi maahanmuuttajaolettama, jolla tarkoitan henkilön kohtelua prototyyppisempänä maahanmuuttajana kansallisuuden, rodun/etnisen taustan ja/tai kielenkäytön perusteella, riippumatta henkilön todellisesta maahanmuuttajastatuksesta. Tähän käytäntöön liittyy usein rodullistamista, alisteisen aseman olettamista sekä olettamuksia henkilön sosiaalisesta/taloudellisesta tms. taustasta ja asemasta. Tässä tutkielmassa määrittelen maahanmuuttajaolettamien tekemisen rasismiin verrannaisena syrjinnän muotona, jolla on negatiivisia vaikutuksia käytänteen uhreiksi joutuneille henkilöille. On kuitenkin syytä korostaa, että en näe maahanmuuttoa tai maahanmuuttajastatusta millään tavalla negatiivisina asioina. Maahanmuuttajaolettamien liittäminen etenkin BIPOC-ihmisiin (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) kuitenkin vahvistaa rasistisia stereotyyppioita sekä eri liitännäisilmiöitä kuten olettamuksia kielitaidosta, taloudellisesta asemasta jne.

Muita tutkielmassa usein käytettyjä termejä ovat mm. ulkomaalaistaminen (foreignization), rodullistaminen (racialization), kielellinen syrjintä (linguistic discrimination) sekä toiseuttaminen (othering). Aiheeseen liittyvistä teemoista nostan esiin esimerkiksi ns. English-Only -ilmiön, englannin ja espanjan aseman ja historian Yhdysvalloissa sekä Trumpin hallinnon käyttämän rasistisen retoriikan sekä muukalaisvihamielisen politiikan harjoittamisen. Analysoin videoiden pohjalta tehtyjä transkriptioita kriittisen diskurssianalyysin kautta, keskittyen yllä mainittuihin teemoihin. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi pohjautuu Hallidayn

systemisfunktionaaliseen lingvistiikkaan (*Systemic Functional Linguistics*). Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi tutkii kieltä sosiaalisena käytänteenä ja käsittelee usein teemoja kuten ideologiat, valtasuhteet tai identiteetti. Erityisesti lainaan van Dijkin tutkimuksista, jotka käsittelevät yllä mainittujen teemojen lisäksi myös esimerkiksi rasismia sekä rodun merkitystä erilaisissa kanssakäymistilanteissa. Lisäksi esiteltynä ovat Verschueren ja Fairclough teorioineen. Verschueren tässä tutkielmassa lainaamassani tutkimuksessa keskittyy etenkin piilomerkitysten ja epäsuorien olettamuksien arvioimiseen, kun Fairclough taas jakaa samankaltaisia kriittisen diskurssianalyysin tutkimusmenetelmiä kuin van Dijk, korostaen etenkin puhujan henkilökohtaisen taustan sekä tekstienvälisen laajempien ilmiöiden merkitystä yksilön asenteisiin. Tutkielman lähestymistapa on empiirinen ja aineistolähtöinen keskittyen yksityiskohtaiseen, laadulliseen diskurssianalyysiin ja mahdollisten piilomerkitysten analysointiin, mutta myös laajemman sosiopoliittisen kontekstin huomiointiin (kuten Trumpin presidenttikausi), huomioiden yllä esiteltujen tutkijoiden lähestymistavat tämän tutkielman yhteydessä.

Kuvaan myös kriittisen diskurssianalyysin puutteita sekä sitä kohtaan esitettyä kritiikkiä. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi ei ole yksi konkreettinen teoria vaan laajempi kehys, jonka sisällä kriittistä analyysiä voidaan harjoittaa monin eri tavoin. Tämä koetaan usein kriittisen diskurssianalyysin vahvuudeksi, mutta voidaan nähdä myös puutteena tarkkarajaisen teorian puuttuessa. Lisäksi kriittinen diskurssianalyysi keskittyy perinteisesti moniulotteisiin aihepiireihin kuten rasismiin tai identiteettiin, joita on kompleksisuutensa puolesta jo lähtökohtaisesti vaikeampi käsitellä vakiintuneena teoriana tai neutraalilla otteella. Näin ollen tulee myös huomioida, että yksittäisellä tutkijalla on huomattava vapaus materiaalin tulkinnassa, mikä saattaa vaikuttaa siihen, millä tavalla tutkielman päätelmät on tehty.

Analyysiosiossa keskityn aineiston purkuun sekä tutkimuskysymysten huomiointiin ja pohdin maahanmuuttajaolettamien sekä siihen ja rotuun/etnisyyteen liittyvien epäsuorien olettamuksien ja stereotyyppien esiintymistä aineistossa. Analysoin jokaisen kielenkäyttötilanteen kriittisesti erikseen omana kokonaisuutenaan ja lopulta pohdin yhteneväisyyksiä ja eroja niiden välillä, huomioiden minkälaisia suuntauksia ja pienen mittakaavan ilmiöitä aineistossa esiintyy. On kuitenkin huomattava, että aineiston suppeuden vuoksi on mahdotonta muodostaa käsitystä siitä, minkälaisia laajempia ilmiöitä tai ”trendejä” se saattaisi kuvata laajemmassa Yhdysvaltain kontekstissa. Aineistossa kuvattujen keskustelujen välillä on kuitenkin huomattavia yhtäläisyyksiä, jotka kuvastavat tässä yhteydessä esiintyviä mikroilmiöitä.

Tutkielman löydökset vahvistavat hypoteesin siitä, että espanjaa puhuvat tulevat Yhdysvalloissa kohdelluiksi maahanmuuttajina prototyypisemmin espanjan kielen käytön takia. Lisäksi tulokset kuvaavat (piilo)rasistisia käsityksiä espanjaa puhuvista sekä laajemmin (oletetuista) meksikolaisista sekä eteläamerikkalaisista henkilöistä sekä heidän (oletetusta) kansallisuudestaan ja maahanmuuttajastatuksestaan. Materiaalissa esiintyvät espanjan käyttöä vastustavat henkilöt välittävät englantikeskeisiä asenteita sekä ilmaisevat kielellistä nationalismia (*linguistic nationalism*). Tämä käy ilmi etenkin korostamalla Yhdysvaltoja englanninkielisenä maana sekä kehottamalla espanjaa puhuvia puhumaan englantia espanjan sijaan. Espanjan käyttöä vastustavat henkilöt myös korostavat Yhdysvaltoja omana maanaan ulkomaalaistaen espanjaa puhuvia. Lisäksi aineistossa tehdään viittauksia Yhdysvaltain puolustusvoimiin ja miten niiden tarkoituksena on puolustaa englannin käyttöä Yhdysvalloissa. Nämä viittaukset ilmentävät erityisen kansallismielistä kielellistä nationalismia. Yhdysvallat vaikutetaan myös käsitettävän laajasti monolingvistiseksi maaksi. Tämä käsitys saattaa vaikuttaa myös siihen, että espanjaa puhuvien ajatellaan automaattisesti osaavan vain espanjaa, eikä englantia espanjan rinnalla – tätä kuvataan kommentein kuten ”opettele puhumaan englantia”, vaikka käynnissä oleva keskustelu käydään englanniksi.

Espanjan käyttöä vastustavat henkilöt myös jaottelevat espanjaa puhuvat epäsuorien olettamuksien kautta ”toisiksi” ja ulkomaalaisiksi, rodullistaen espanjaa puhuvia syrjivällä tavalla. Esimerkkejä tällaisesta retoriikasta on esitetty useissa tutkielman taulukoissa. Samoin olettamuksia tehdään espanjaa puhuvien taloudellisesta asemasta sekä asemasta ”laittomina” maahanmuuttajina, kriminalisoiden maahanmuuttajia ja luoden kuvaa Yhdysvaltain kansalaisia riistävästä sosiaaliuilla elävästä ihmisjoukosta. Lisäksi aineistoesimerkit tuovat esiin erilaisia valtasuhteisiin liittyviä esimerkkejä. Englantia puhuvat henkilöt ilmaisevat paremmuuttaan ja ylivoimaisuuttaan suhteessa espanjaa puhuviin henkilöihin esimerkiksi kielen, taloudellisen aseman tai kansallisuuden perusteella. Englantia puhuvat henkilöt korostavat valkoisen normatiivin mukaisia arvoja, alentavat espanjaa puhuvia eri keinoin ja käskevät espanjaa puhuvia ”painumaan takaisin sinne mistä tulivat”. Tällainen lähestyminen ei luo ainoastaan kieleen vaan myös rotuun ja/tai etniseen taustaan pohjautuvia rodullistettuja hierarkioita.

Tuon esiin myös rodun/etnisyyden vaikutuksen aineistossa kuvatuissa keskusteluissa. Vaikka tämän tutkielman puitteissa ei voi eksplisiittisesti vahvistaa henkilöiden harjoittamaa tai toisaalta kohtaamaa rasismia, väitän, että viitteitä myös rodullisesta syrjinnästä on materiaalissa läsnä. Toisin kuin tutkimusta aloittaessa oletin, materiaalissa esiintyvä rasismi on lähinnä piilorasismia. Ainoastaan yhdessä transkriptiossa käytetään avoimen rasistista kieltä

(rodullistettuja haukkumasanvoja), joskin myös muunlaiset aineistossa esiintyvät ilmaukset voidaan luokitella rasistisiksi. Johtopäätös rasismien ilmenemisestä voidaan vetää sen perusteella, että kieleen, kansallisuuteen ja maahanmuuttajuuteen viittaavia kommentteja käytetään piilorasismia tukevalla tavalla. Espanjaa puhuvien oletetaan olevan meksikolais- tai eteläamerikkalaistaustaisia, heitä kehoitetaan käyttämään englantia ja omaksumaan muita valkoisen normatiivien mukaisia käytänteitä. Heidän kansallisuutensa ja ekonominen statuksesta ovat usein spekuloinnin kohteina tavalla, joka tukee rasistisia käsityksiä. Puhujat myös usein kieltävät olevansa rasistisia, jonka jälkeen he kuitenkin usein ilmaisevat rasistisia mielipiteitä. Tämä rasismien kieltäminen vahvistaa tutkielmassa esittämäni väitteen siitä, että rasistisia mielipiteitä omaavat henkilöt eivät pääsääntöisesti tahdo tulla nähdyksi rasisteina sen sosiaalisen ja poliittisen epäkorrektuuden vuoksi – minkä vuoksi piilorasismia ja kieleen kohdistuvaa syrjintää käytetään korvaajina ”perinteiselle” rasismille.

Aineistossa ilmenee myös viittauksia Trumpin hallinnon käyttämään muukalaisvihamieliseen ja alentavaan retoriikkaan sekä yleisemmin sosiopoliittiseen kontekstiin liittyviä käsityksiä ja sanontoja maahanmuuttajista (kuten viittaus Trumpin toisintamasta argumentista meksikolaisista raiskaajina tai oikeiston suosiman termin ”social justice warrior” käyttö). Eräs materiaalissa esiintyvä espanjaa puhuva henkilö myös kysyy häntä häiriköivältä henkilöltä, ketä hän äänesti vaaleissa, ilmentäen laajempaa ymmärrystä siitä, että tietyn puolueen tai kandidaatin äänestäjät omaavat muukalaisvihamielisiä ajatuksia.

Nämä löydökset tukevat tutkielman alussa esiin tuotuja hypoteeseja espanjan kielen käyttämisen sekä rodun/etnisyyden välillä, vahvistaen oletuksen siitä, että espanjaa puhuvat koetaan herkemmin maahanmuuttajiksi Yhdysvaltain kontekstissa. Aineistossa esiintyvät maahanmuuttajaolettamat ovat stereotyyppisiä ja rasistisia mielikuvia kannattavia ja ylläpitäviä, vahvistaen hypoteesin videoiden negatiivisesta lähestymisestä maahanmuuttoon ja espanjan kieleen. Lisäksi analyysi vahvistaa rodun ja kielen välisen yhteyden sekä alttiuden käyttää kieleen perustuvaa syrjintää ja maahanmuuttajaolettamien ilmaisemista rasismien substituutioina: aineistossa esiintyy myös piilorasistisia sekä muita epäsuoria viittauksia rotuun/etnisyyteen sekä maahanmuuttajaolettamaan ja espanjan kieleen liittyen. Nämä viittaukset ilmenevät erilaisina espanjan kieltä ja maahanmuuttajia alentavina olettamuksina ja kommentteina rodullistaen ja syrjien maahanmuuttajaolettamien kohteeksi joutuneita henkilöitä. Näin ollen saamme vastauksen myös viimeiseen tutkimuskysymykseen aineistossa esiintyvistä piilomerkityksistä.

Vaikka rasismien ja ns. rotuun tai etniseen taustaan liittyvät aihepiirit koetaan tiedeyhteisössä usein raskaina ja epäkorrekteinä tutkimuskohteina (joskin tähän liittyvää merkittävää kehitystä on tapahtunut viimeisten vuosien aikana), kannustan laajempaa tutkimusta aiheen parissa. Rasismi ja kieleen kohdistuva syrjintä ovat laajoja, systemaattisia ongelmakohtia ja koen, että tällaista maahanmuuttoa ja kieltä käsittelevää tutkimusta voitaisiin toteuttaa myös suomalaisessa kontekstissa.