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“Keep Them Out to Save Our Inside:” Discourses on immigration by the Spanish Far Right

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Abstract

Vox is a far-right, Spanish political party that has steadily grown to become the third main party in the national congress. Immigration is a major presence in Vox's political agenda. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we analyze the party's public speeches and Twitter communications on immigration in the last 3 years, from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 to the Ukraine-Russia war in 2022. These contexts have provided a fertile ground for Vox's concerns with the protection of national borders, the criminalization of African and irregular immigrants, and the Spanish Government's ineffectiveness to protect the Spaniards' homes. Vox's main discursive strategies entail constructions of migrants and migration based on dichotomous binaries, culture clash, exclusionary discourses of domopolitics, and fears of imminent social and cultural changes. These constructions are based on the unproblematized belief on essential and unchangeable values that forge the identity of the homeland, which is implicitly threatened by immigrants. Against the migratory invasion, Vox constitutes itself as the ethical protector of the Spanish society and nation, "out of care for the insiders and *not* out of hatred for outsiders."

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, xenophobia, immigration, Spain, Vox, domopolitics, far right, racism, social media, mediatization.

“Keep Them Out to Save Our Inside:” Discourses on Immigration by the Spanish Far Right

Introduction

The last political elections in Spain resulted in the sharp increase of votes directed at extremist anti-establishment parties^{1 2} at both extremes of the Parliament (Barreda, 2021). Even if extremizations may play a heuristic function by simplifying political views (Brussino et al., 2011), they also threaten the idea and practice of politics as based on dialogue. By sharply positioning social actors and stakeholders as either at the “left” (generally seen as socially innovative and attentive to equality and the underprivileged) or at the “right” (generally seen as focused on maintaining order, stability, differences, and defending the status quo) (Jost et al., 2009), social polarizations and bellicose constructions of the Other as an enemy to defeat, have become common modes of discourse and representation in the current political climate of Spain (Rama Caamaño & Casal Bértoa, 2020; Somer & McCoy, 2019; Van Dijk, 2006).

In this study, we focus on recent discourses and tweets on immigration by Vox, the main far-right party in the Spanish parliament, which has steadily grown at local and national elections for the last 10 years. Identity concerns are a typical feature of extreme-right discourses (Ezekiel, 2002; Jost et al., 2009) and, as we will show in this manuscript, Vox has been no exception to this general trend. Identity politics, especially if based on supremacy and Othering (Hall, 1996), tend to polarize narratives and to construct a climate of symbolic and cultural violence that favors discourses of hate and abuse (Morán, 2017). It is then important to study the contents and modes of these discourses on immigration, to better understand how to recognize and mitigate them, but also to understand their authors’ games of truth, ethics of care, and problematizations (Gemignani & Hernandez-Albujar, 2015).

Social and Cultural Context

Migration to Europe during the Covid Pandemic

Europe and Spain have become main recipients of migrants in the last two decades (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2019): 6.8 million foreigners (13% of the population) reside in Spain with a proper authorization (IOM, 2022b). Preliminary reports on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on migratory movements to Europe underscore a 27% decrease during the pandemic (IOM, 2022a). While the pandemic made it difficult to successfully carry out forced and voluntary returns (European Commission, 2021), it also made more evident the extent in which Western capitalist societies rely on immigrants to perform DDD (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) tasks.

Anti-Immigrant Parties and Movements in Europe and Spain

Conservative anti-immigrant political parties and movements are expanding globally, with features of authoritarianism, nationalism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and contempt for pluralism (Traverso, 2019). In several European countries, such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, and Italy, xenophobic groups have taken advantage of the social anxiety and sense of precariousness related to the COVID-19 pandemic to promote nationalist

¹ The expression “anti-establishment parties” refers to a form of political populism whose discursive and stylistic repertoire speaks in the name of “the people” and against the “elites.” (Brubaker, 2017)

² Whereas it is customary to consider the extreme-right positions as closer to anti-governmental positions, this is also the case for the Spanish independentist movements in Catalonia and the Basque Countries, which tend to be stronger within the extreme-left (Rama Caamaño & Casal Bértoa, 2020)

and anti-immigrant agendas (Mulhall & Khan-Ruf, 2021). Europe's ethnonationalist and right-wing parties have continued to use the pandemic to frame migration from the South in xenophobic terms, as an inherent public health hazard (Reynolds, 2020). The Ukraine-Russia war has furthered this trend by sharpening the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable migrants (De Coninck, 2022)

Vox

Vox was founded in 2013 by some of the most conservative members of the Popular Party (PP), the second main national party, who left the PP because its president was considered too moderate in his defense of traditional values, national unity, and economic freedom (Ferreira, 2019). Specifically, Vox referred to PP as "the coward right." The first Vox manifesto stated that its objectives were "to unite the Nation, achieve the efficiency of the State, improve the quality of the institutions, guarantee the honesty of public officials and promote economic growth for the benefit of all citizens" (Vox, 2014). Vox's current president and historical leader is Santiago Abascal.

For the last three years, Vox has heavily capitalized on the COVID-19 pandemic and its management by the government, which has been criticized for the sharp restrictions of movement and freedom (Mulhall & Khan-Ruf, 2021); for overpaying medical equipment bought during the emergency; for its slow response to the crisis; and for taking decisions that were not based on scientific evidence (Vox, 2020, Oct 21). In addition, a major criticism concerned the use of national resources to care for migrants instead of helping Spaniards.

Theoretical Framework

Epistemological Positioning

Our interpretations of Vox's constructions of migration aim at promoting a reflexive analysis of the linguistic and relational practices which constitute Vox as a discursive phenomenon (Gergen, 2009; Van Dijk, 2010). Foucault's concepts of "problematization" and "game of truth" are central in our analysis as they shed some light on the ways in which Vox understands and represents itself. Problematizations entail the ontological process and "conditions through which human beings 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live" (Foucault, 1984, p. 10). As such, problematizations are inseparable from the subjects' self-interpretations and subjectivations ("what they are"), practices ("what they do"), and materializations of the world. In other words, "problematizations should be understood as the 'field', inside which acceptable propositions can be formed" (Han, 2002, p. 171).

Problematizations occur through "games of truth", which are sets of rules by which phenomena are produced along lines of truth and falsehood (Foucault, 1984; Han, 2002). For a specific discourse, games of truth represent a sort of disciplinary paradigm which imposes an episteme on the possibility of considering and knowing a reality. As such, through implicit views on true or false, they constitute the object of concern (i.e., the problem) and the practices to deal with it. Problematizations and games of truth carry consequential actions and "ethical" practices of care based on the valid knowledges they have produced on "truth."

Epistemologically, then, our main interest is not on the truthfulness of Vox's representations of reality, but on the discursive constitution of a reality through games of truths, problematizations, practices of care for the self, and subjectivation processes (Burke & Demasi, 2019). In other words, Vox's narratives and discourses are not merely about something (e.g.,

migration as a social issue) but are constructive practices of both this something and of Vox itself. Consistent with a constructionist epistemology (Gergen, 2009), discourses become practices and performativities that create truths, ethical concerns, positions, and subjectivities for their authors (Gemignani & Hernandez-Albujar, 2015, 2019).

Reflexivity

As observers and interpreters, we are active contributors to the inquiry. Even if neither author aligns with Vox's positions on migration, our purpose is not to criticize the party's arguments. Neither do we aim at countering the accuracy of its information. Yet, in the process of creating some knowledge about Vox's representation of migrants, we enter in a dialogue and, at times, a confrontation with political ideas that are far from ours. In other words, our positioning inevitably sets the ground for our selection, analysis and telling of the data (Gemignani, 2011).

We position ourselves as advocates for immigrant's rights. We are concerned about the social tension that is embedded in political discourses that are structured through logics of contrast and blame. Instead, dialogue and collaboration should be the grounds on which politics rest. For this reason and despite our positioning, our goal is to better understand Vox's ethics and politics on immigration.

Method

Methodological Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary and socio-politically committed approach to the study of discursive manifestations and representations. Its goal is to visualize and problematize how specific language-uses draw maps of a phenomenon, which then translate into specific practices and social relationships based on power/knowledge positions and dynamics.

Despite this common background, applications of CDA vary sharply from one discipline to the other. In this inquiry, we adopt Foucault's ([Foucault & Young, 1981](#)) and Ian Parker's (2015) approach to CDA, through which we aim at identifying implicit truths, problematizations, and games of power. In this version of CDA, discursive practices are both epistemological and ontological, as they shape the nature of the phenomenon and the possibilities and limits of its knowing. They also shape the social constructions and becomings of the various agents that are seen or problematized as taking part in the issue, from the authors of narratives and discourses to their targets and audiences.

Through the analysis of the reciprocal constitutions of power and knowledge that are embedded in discourse, we focus on the implications that language uses may have for the political construction of truth and ethics of care and for specific social practices (Gee, 2011). In other words, we critically analyze the specific re-presentations of truth and problematizations that the power/knowledge relations produce and reproduce, and how these constructions are discursively and relationally achieved. Through our interpretation of CDA, we also underscore that these representations carry specific socio-political consequences for those who adopt these discourses and for those who are subjected to them. As van Dijk writes, "critical discourse analysis is problem oriented. It does not primarily focus on discourse and its properties, but on social issues and problems, such as racism and sexism or other forms of domination and power abuse, and then examines whether and how text and talk are involved in its reproduction" (2009, p. 111).

Social networks and media as data source

Day after day, social networks and media take increasing prominence in people's lives. In research, platforms such as Twitter and YouTube allow collecting information that authors create and disseminate directly and ecologically, without the intermediation of the researchers or other communication media. When a certain generalization is made through a hashtag³ in a network of users, research can analyze the social norms, problematizations, and dynamics of that network (Marwick, 2014). Researchers should, however, be careful about considering online and social mediatizations as 'neutral' and as if developing 'spontaneously' from the ground up, or giving voice to the people. But in reality it involves some very specific top-down communication strategies on the part of parties and party leaders" (Krzyzanowski, Triandafyllidou & Wodak, 2018, p. 6).

We started with the four most watched Santiago Abascal's speeches on migration on the Vox YouTube channel. We then filtered all tweets from March 2020 to March 2022 that contained the keywords (in Spanish, in their singular and plural forms) used in the selected YouTube speeches: immigrant, dinghy, boat, illegal, invasion, call effect, unaccompanied migrant minors. It should be noted that Twitter suspended Vox's account on several occasions for incitement to hatred. Yet, past tweets were still available in Twitter's search engine.

Data set

In the 2020-2022 timeframe, we collected the following data:

YouTube channel	Reference
Vox España	Vox España, 2020a Vox España, 2020b Vox España, 2021 Vox España, 2022
Twitter account	Number of tweets
@Vox_cv	6
@AndaluciaVox	13
@VoxBaleares	8
@Murcia_Vox	3
@Madrid_Vox	10
@Vox_es	31
@Santi_Abasal	31

³ These are words, characters or phrases preceded by a hash sign (#), which allows us to identify or label a message on Twitter (Parker, 2011)

Contextualization of the data

As Van Dijk (2010) suggests, a CDA should start with a contextualization of discourse: who delivers it, where, when, to whom, and for what purpose. The first and second of Santiago Abascal's speeches took place in Gran Canaria, one of the main gateways of immigration in Spain. According to the Spanish Ministry of Interior Affairs (2021), in 2020, 23,023 immigrants arrived in the Canary Islands with no authorization, 756.8% more than in 2019. The December 4 one was at a public, political meeting. The Dec. 5 interview was televised on Channel 4 Tenerife.

The video of January 20, 2021, is a YouTube interview organized by the European Conservatives and Reformists Party⁴ under the slogan "The future of patriotism." Vox leaders participated in the debate together with representatives of international parties with a similar ideology. Finally, in his intervention in the Spanish parliament, on March 3, 2022, Santiago Abascal talks about Russia's military invasion of Ukraine and compares it with other conflicts in the Mediterranean borders (Vox España, 2022, Mar. 3).

All these interventions shared a major concern on immigration and its negative consequences.

Methodological strategy

Within the verbal and non-verbal sources of data that we chose for this study, we identified the main units of significance and concern for the authors and for the theoretical framework of the research. This initial Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) allowed us to organize the data according to main themes, which we analyzed both by themselves (i.e., as self-standing elements of concern within the context of the study) and in relation to other themes, in a thematic map (Fig. 1). We then critically analyzed which possibilities and becomings these constructions allowed for within the cultural, political, and social context of their discursive production (Conde Gutiérrez del Álamo, 2010). Guiding our organizing and interpreting of the themes was the purpose to understand how the author of discourses or communications interprets and represents the contexts, truths, problematizations, and practices of care regarding immigration to Spain (Burke & Demasi, 2019).

Main themes

⁴It is a political group of the European Parliament created in 2009 that defines itself as Eurosceptic, anti-federalist and right-wing (McDonnell & Werner, 2018). Its main objective is opposition to European integration and the evolution of the European Union (EU) towards a federal European superstate, as well as defending free market policies and stricter immigration controls (Whitaker & Lynch, 2014).

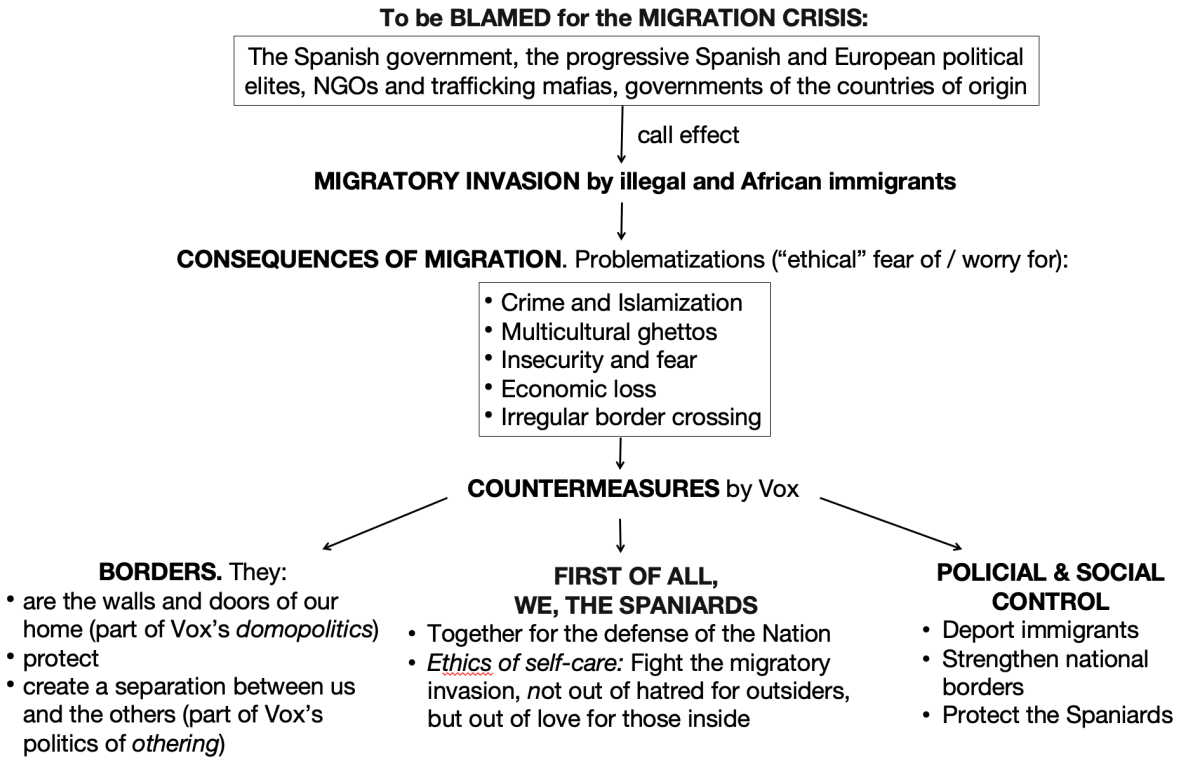


Figure 1: Main themes in Vox’s discourses on migration and migrants.

Figure 1 summarizes Vox’s main discursive constructions of immigration. After presenting these problematizations, we critically analyze them by pointing out the ways they renew and participate in Vox’s discursive positionings and ethics, which we further analyze in the Discussion and Conclusions section.

Migratory invasion

Irregular immigration is one of the biggest problems in Spain. Vox often refers to it as a "migratory invasion" in reference to the number of immigrants. Its main target are irregular migrants from Africa, especially from Morocco and Algeria, who are blamed to threaten the health, security, and peaceful life of Spanish society. Migrants from Latin America and East Europe are also targeted, especially if unauthorized, even if usually with milder expressions.

Consequences of the migratory invasion

This invasion has increased crime, insecurity, Islamization, multicultural ghettos, the paralysis of tourism in the Canary Islands, discrimination against Spaniards, attacks on civilians and state bodies, spread of the COVID- 19 virus, the violation of Spanish borders and, in general, an increase in violence. Thus, they have destroyed the freedom, security, and prosperity of many Spanish neighborhoods.

“A country with 3 million unemployed, Temporary Employment Regulation Files [*ERTE*, in Spanish], numerous families in soup kitchens, and lack of job stability cannot afford to continue importing thousands of illegal immigrants each year. Our Welfare State cannot resist this invasion for a moment longer” (Santiago Abascal, 2021b, Nov. 19).

Culprits of the migratory invasion

Vox argues that the immigration positions and policies of mafias, NGOs, political oligarchies and elites, liberal politicians, and the Spanish government have created the "call effect" that caused the current immigrants' invasion. These culprits offer migrants the Promised Land, although the everyday reality is quite different. Countries of origin, such as Morocco or Algeria, are also to be blamed because they do not facilitate the return of their nationals as remittances are great sources of GDP for these countries, which purposefully send migrants to Spain.

Instead of stopping immigration, the Spanish government just gives money to NGOs – which are branded as “mafias”–, taking resources away from the Spaniards. In addition, it used the illegal stay-in-shelter confinement at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to punish and lock up those Spaniards who did not abide, whereas illegal immigrants and criminals could roam the country with impunity.

Situation of Spain

The country is dealing with a major migration crisis. Security forces are unable to defend the national borders and themselves against the massive arrival of illegal immigrants. The government does not provide solutions or countermeasures. As a result, various neighborhoods of the country, such as El Raval in Barcelona, are no longer safe to enter. In addition, insecurity and crime heighten, especially in neighborhoods where centers for unaccompanied migrant minors are located.

The Canary Islands have been particularly affected by the migratory invasion. The tourism sector, once one of the region's main economic sources, falls because, by lodging immigrants in luxury hotels, no tourist wants to go there now. Thus, the Canary Islands are close to becoming “the new Lampedusa” (VOX España, 2020a, Dec. 4, 1m 42s).

Characteristics of immigrants

Illegal immigrants and unaccompanied migrant minors coming from Africa are “wild” savages. It is untrue, Vox argues, that they pay for the Spaniards' pensions and that they flee from wars. Rather, they come for easy money and to live off Spain's welfare. Some of them are jihadists and intend to introduce a culture that is incompatible with the Spanish way of life. They are violent criminals and many are infected with Coronavirus. For example, Vox Madrid (2022, Feb. 7) states that, “This is a quiet neighborhood, but violent people come from outside, from other countries. The pull effect of politicians is turning our neighborhoods into hell. [...] #BarriosSeguros”

We, the Spaniards

Vox claims that all Spaniards are potential Vox voters. Its supporters are more and better than the current government's followers. Vox is with the good people, who do not incite hatred or phobia against immigrants, but rather defend their nation's borders and values. They are tired of poor government management and they want to build a secure future for their children. Spaniards are unprotected and discriminated against, since illegal immigrants are given privileges, aid, and money that the Spanish self-employed citizens, retirees, or families do not receive.

Borders

In recent years, the borders have been discredited, despite being the walls of our house, of Spain and of the Spanish. Because borders defend our prosperity, culture, national identity, tranquility, and freedom, it is essential to protect them with all possible means to prevent illegal immigrants from crossing over.

“A nation without borders is not a nation, just as a home without walls is not a house. [...] It is the obligation of a State to defend its borders. #StopInvasion” (Grupo Parlamentario de Vox en el Congreso, 2021b, May 27).

Vox’s self-perception and role

Vox is the alternative voice for people of common sense, who defend the real interests of Spaniards. Vox’s audience is all people who want to live safely in their homeland and with their family. For this reason, Vox proposes the immediate expulsion of immigrants who commit crimes, the closure of fundamentalist mosques, the expulsion of those who spread fundamentalism, and the shut-down of government-funded centers for unaccompanied minors. From the party, these policies are not of hatred for outsiders, but of love and care for those inside. Thus, immigration must be regulated according to the interests of Spain and not of the countries of origin.

“We have been warning of this reality [migratory invasion] for years, and the other parties, all of them, have been encouraging the call effect for years. They called ‘xenophobes’ those of us who have intended to defend the Spanish. Fools” (Santiago Abascal, 2021a, Jan. 11).

Problematizations and Games of Truth in Vox’s Discourses

Any political narrative claims its truths and aims at persuading its audience of its rightness. It is then important to analyze Vox’s and its leader’s rhetorical and discursive strategies to gain persuasive power about their representations of immigration (van Dijk, 1999). These strategies develop along problematizations that are based on specific assumptions and games of truth, which give semantic coherence to narratives and culminate in a general superstructure. This is a discourse schema “that globally organizes discourse across sentence boundaries” (Van Dijk, 1985). Superstructures are what people may remember after having been in contact with this particular discourse (Rubio-Carbonero, 2020).

We first focus on Vox’s main games of truth and problematizations about immigration in order to analyze their content and the ways in which problematizations embedded in Vox’s language-uses construct specific re-presentations not just of immigration, but also of Vox’s subjectivity, roles, targets, and potential supporters. We then present and discuss the main superstructure of Vox’s discourses.

Migration as danger to society

Abascal starts his four speeches by pointing out the distress that immigration causes to the local people. For example, immigration makes “the Canary Islands bleed to death”, affecting “ordinary people”. Vox characterizes reproduced in either/or statements, which behave as games of truth. For instance,

Refugees are our brothers from Latin America, from Venezuela, who are fleeing Maduro's tyranny. [...] These are refugees, but those who come here in vessels, most of them young men of military age and in much better physical condition than many of us, these are not refugees. [...] We are dealing with something else; we are dealing with a mass immigration promoted by the powers of the Spanish and European political elites and oligarchies. (Vox España, 2020b, Dec. 5, 5m 43s)

Such communications create a sharp distinction between migrants who should receive asylum and those who do not deserve it. It also presents the “truth” that a manipulative schema is behind irregular immigration to Spain and Europe.

For the sympathetic audience, these games of truth provide local interpretations and semantic representations of migration and migrants (Van Dijk, 2010). These representations appear to be coherent as they are based on functional or conditional relationships between the

propositions and the facts mentioned. For instance, the above excerpt implies that refugees from Africa who flee to the Canary Islands should not be welcomed because their massive arrival is not based on legitimate reasons, but on the political will of the establishment.

Care and concern for the audience / problem resolution: “we are here to fix issues.”

Abascal’s speeches contain frequent messages of care and concern for his audience, whom he identifies as being both Vox followers and the overall Spanish population. In this way, his discourse is not conveyed as sectarian, but as genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of the whole nation: “We defend these policies not out of hatred for those outside, but out of love for those inside and also out of respect for all those people [Spaniards] who we believe should [safely] live their lives in their homeland and with their families.” (Vox España, 2021, Jan. 20, 4m00s).

As in Abascal’s political discourses, in Twitter as well the superstructure combines a problem statement, a solution by a specific solver (i.e., Vox), and a message of empathy for the afflicted (i.e., the Spaniards): “Unaccompanied migrant minors, Latino gangs and settling the score: the spiral of street violence that our neighborhoods endure. Only Vox demands the expulsion of all illegal immigrants, but also those who, while authorized, have committed serious crimes” (Vox, 2020, Jun. 29). In Twitter, the message is more concise and direct, but the superstructure develops according to the same logic of opposition and revelation about the truth of what’s really happening, which implies distrusting the official, institutional message. Similarly, Abascal states that, “We do not criminalize immigrants, what we criminalize is the progressive politicians who produce the ‘call effect’ and who make them risk their lives at sea and who bring problems of coexistence, insecurity, and prosperity here” (Vox España, 2020a, Dec. 4, 5m 50s).

Oppositional logic / Culture clash

Oppositional logic is a major semantic dimension in Vox’s narratives. It fosters othering, dichotomous thinking, and exclusionary politics and representations (Van Dijk, 2010). For example, Vox Baleares (2021, Jan. 27) tweets that, “Islamization of Catalonia. What does Vox want? Immediate expulsion of immigrants who commit crimes. Close fundamentalist mosques and expel imams who spread fundamentalism. Close unaccompanied migrant minors’ centers. #StopIslamización”. Vox first links a religious site (mosques) with an ideology (fundamentalism) which is popularly considered dangerous. Then, it others Muslims by saying that they are immigrants, implying that they are other than us. This distancing is further heightened by assuming that some Muslim practitioners commit crimes and, therefore, should be forcefully expelled from Spain. Last, the final reference to the Twitter thread on “StopIslamization” frames Islam according to logics of culture-clash and invasion.

The broad use of oppositional categories is also present in this example from Twitter, which is coherent with the games of truth on the social dangers posed by migrants. This game of truth heightens the rejection of migrants, as the general society should be worried about the “truth” of upcoming, tragic, and unresolvable social changes. The general logic here is that of rejection of the Other, whose culture will inevitably clash with ours. For instance, “All our support for the police officer brutally beaten in a cell by an illegal immigrant in Valencia. These savages must be detained and expelled [...]” (Grupo Parlamentario de Vox en el Congreso, 2021a, Apr. 19). First, the homogenizing (Rubio-Carbonero, 2020) from an “immigrant” to “the savages” is enacted. Then, irregular immigrants are branded as savages, a colonial word that assumes the inferiority of the indigenous people and the need to control them. Yet, whereas public discourses of colonial imperialism underscored the “mission civilisatrice” of the colonizer

(Said, 1994), Vox's oppositional discourse aims at merely expelling and punishing the inferior other.

Superstructure

Superstructures organize and canonically shape discourse. The simple fact that some information is transmitted at the beginning of the speech or at its conclusion assigns to that information a more notable position in the representation of the event, making it better memorized and, possibly, more persuasive (Van Dijk, 2009). The initial order of the narration also sets the path and pace of the following argumentations.

The typical beginning of a Vox's intervention tends to reproduce the above-mentioned problematizations and games of truth, which are then repeated several times during the speech or interview. Superstructured in Vox's discourses are the assertions that these issues are widespread among immigrants and that all Spaniards face them. The superstructure, then, reproduces the main messages of commonality and empathy towards the struggles of living in a society that is under-threat. In addition, the ethical need to act based on these problematizations, the sharp construction of the migrant other as different from us, and the ineffective politics of the government are common at the beginning and at the end of Vox's discursive productions. For instance, "Dear friends, we are with you, not with the communist 'neets' (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) sent by the government to bust up this event. We are with the Spaniards who suffer [...]. We are with the Canarians who today feel discriminated against, in their own land" (Vox España, 2020b, Dec. 5, 0m01s). Vox's discourses typically end with a patriotic message to protect the nation which is under attack by immigrants and that is left alone by the useless current government.

Discussion & Conclusions

Both implicitly and explicitly, fear dominates Vox's immigration discourses. This fear concerns the anticipation that the traditional Spanish society and culture will change. However, Vox carefully avoids any definitions of what the Spanish culture is and whether this supposed Spanish cultural unity really exists. When a major threat to what we may intuitively call "home" and "us" is at our doorsteps, any quarrel and reflection on national identity fades. The construction of an enemy is therefore useful to strengthen the idea of the Spanish society as a whole. As any outside needs an inside, the construction of the Other is a key rhetorical and semantic strategy to sharpen the construction of Spain as home, whose walls, boundaries, insides, and cultures need to be safeguarded. This domopolitics is central to Vox's problematization of immigration, as

"the government of the state (but also of other political spaces) as a home implies a reconfiguration of the relations between citizenship, state and territory [...] Domopolitics rationalizes various security measures under a particular conception of the home, understood as the place where some of us naturally belong whereas others do not" (Walters, 2004, p. 241).

Immigrants, especially if from Africa or irregular, are represented as threats to the idea and experience of home as the safe place in which traditions can be maintained. Embedded in Vox's mission is its role as defender of the nation and the right to live safely at home. All Spaniards, according to Vox, should unite against this common threat.

In its discourses on immigration reproduce, Vox's main games of truth and subjective positions concern politics of national identity (based on the defense of values and traditions that are seen as unmistakably Spanish and on oppositional logics toward the cultural clashes and social changes that immigrants will bring), domopolitics, and the inability of the Spanish

government to control immigration. As Vox anticipates that irregular immigration will negatively impact this social order, the national borders should be strengthened, and Spain should not welcome immigrants. Instead, according to Vox, the corrupt establishment –namely, the Spanish government and NGOs– encourages immigrants to arrive in Spain and to become socioeconomic parasites that feed on the Spanish welfare system.

Vox's discourses weave two typical rhetorical strategies on immigration (Gemignani & Hernandez-Albujar, 2015). First, practices of othering are used to strengthen the national, cultural, and religious identities of Spain in opposition to those who are different from us. In this way, othering reaffirms the sense of belonging, allegiance, attachment, and solidarity, because the perception of specific groups and phenomena as threats accentuates the internal characteristics of a society which are deemed distinctive of the ingroup and absent in the outgroup (Ezekiel, 2002). The second discursive strategy entails presenting as an incontestable "truth" that irregular or undesired immigration jeopardizes this national and cultural identity. Vox presents itself as the best solution to this threat. In other words, the construction of the "dangerous other" is functional to construct oneself in opposition to this other and to perceive oneself as the savior of the endangered society. To be effective, constructions of one's identity need to create an "other" who is different from "us" (Hall, 1996) and from our "home".

These problematizations and games of truth contribute to Vox's ethics of concerns and practices of self, which find in migration a major target and tool to construct subjective positions based on fear, security, and apocalyptic scenarios from which Vox can save us (Darling, 2014). Vox's ethics are reiterated in its defense against accusations of xenophobia. By saying, "We are not racist; we just love our kind!", Vox positions itself as the party that cares for those inside, instead of simply hating those outside. Domopolitics become then a central argument in Vox discourses, in which the ethics of self-care entail discriminating against those who do not respect or care for our home, which is understood according to narrow preconceptions and which is where Spaniards as assumed to naturally belong.

At the core of racist ideologies lies the inference of superiority toward an Other who is racialized through the ascription of characteristics that are deemed different, negative, unchangeable, and endemic to the "othered" group. These "othering" discourses both serve the function and carry the consequences of constituting, framing, and justifying negative attitudes and significations toward immigrants in Spain (Van Dijk, 2010). To further this othering, citizens' perceptions of immigration should be rendered even more negative through narratives of othering and hate (Calderón et al., 2020). As a result, anti-immigration narratives are on the rise in Spain, pushing discrimination and hate crimes toward immigrants (Müller & Schwarz, 2021).

Vox's dialogical ethics develops in opposition and in reaction, creating therefore an ethical space of problematization and practice: "As a species, for its survival, humans need to identify important issues and goals and then assess where they stand relative to them. Humanity exists inescapably in a space of ethical questions" (Christians, 2010, p. 254). Vox's ethics of identity, here, are based on the superstructured themes of care for the Spanish society, as opposed to the danger posed by the current migratory invasion. They are, in other words, a response and a way to cope with the fear of being unable to anticipate and accept the possible changes that immigration might generate in the Spanish society. Through these ethics, Vox relates to and constitutes itself not only as a political party but also as an ethical agent, which is willing and able to counter the catastrophic anticipations of what will happen if immigration is not stopped.

From Vox's perspective, anti-immigration positions are the ethical choice to avoid an ominous destiny. The simple binary oppositions "we vs. the Others", which Vox so easily assumes and reproduces, needs to be understood in the context of its enacting. This dichotomy is not just about the immigrant Other, but also about the concerned "us" who is afraid to lose its identity and its ability to know, understand, and anticipate the evolving culture of the Spanish society. Discourses on security and defense against immigration allows Vox to develop its anti-immigrant subjectivity as a form of care of both the self and Spain, which is the home that the unreliable government (according to Vox's perspective) has abandoned.

At the root of all forms of contemporary racism lays the "attempt to fix human social groups in terms of natural properties of belonging within particular political and geographical contexts" to create the idea of an unchangeable culture and identity, for both insiders and outsiders (Back & Solomos, 2000, p. 23). Yet, it is only by avoiding epistemic violence in terms of dichotomous thinking, telling, and othering that a social dialogue based on difference and respect can nourish democratic forms of politics.

Discourses re/produce realities and problematizations based on power/knowledge dynamics which are never simply dichotomous. As we showed in this article, Vox's embracing and reproduction of oppositional logics of othering toward irregularized immigrants both feeds xenophobic positions and responds to the party's ethical concerns over the changing society and the feeling of responsibility toward saving their views of their "home." Understanding the reason for these racist messages and what meaning they have for those who adopt them can help to observe underlying dynamics such as fear of the unknown or loss, and to properly address their concerns, while also avoiding the same dichotomous logic to interpret and, possibly, blame Vox.

Future research on the discourses of extreme right parties may consider the ways in which their ethical positionings and problematizations on specific issues and solutions shift over time. Especially in those countries in which extreme-right parties are or will be part of the government, Critical Discourse Analysis may be useful to understand the ways in which these parties adopt and negotiate the shifting relationship between power and responsibility. Reproduced in dominant discourses, this relationship plays a major role to construct realities, protagonists, authors, and actors, including the political boundaries of what is deemed to be existing, acceptable, normal, and desirable in a society.

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