

Words matter: Representation of Mexican immigrants in newspapers from Mexico and the United States

Las palabras importan: Representación de inmigrantes mexicanos en periódicos de Estados Unidos y México

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze how, in news articles published in online versions of print newspapers from both the United States and Mexico, media represent Mexican immigrants based on the wording they use in articles about immigration issues. The study was done by analyzing, counting and comparing the words used by newspapers. Using critical discourse analysis as methodology, this study aims to contribute to a growing body of literature on the language used by the media and its influence on media consumers.

Keywords: 1. immigrants, 2. representation, 3. newspapers, 4. United States, 5. Mexico.

RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio es analizar la forma en que las noticias que se publican en las versiones en línea de periódicos impresos en Estados Unidos y México. Los medios presentan una imagen de los inmigrantes mexicanos que se forma a partir del lenguaje que se utiliza en los artículos sobre temas de inmigración. El estudio se realizó con el análisis, contabilización y comparación de las palabras utilizadas en los periódicos, a través de la metodología de análisis crítico del discurso. El estudio tiene por objetivo contribuir a un conjunto de publicaciones creciente sobre el lenguaje utilizado por los medios y su influencia en el lector.

Palabras clave: 1. inmigrantes, 2. representación, 3. periódicos, 4. Estados Unidos, 5. México.

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INTRODUCTION

Immigration is a persevering topic worldwide. Millions of people move from their place of origin to another location in the world looking for, what they hope, is a better life. This constant worldwide migration has been part of humanity since its inception. Today people have many reasons to emigrate and these can go from economic reasons and reunification with family members, to perspectives of better job opportunities or running away from violence.

With the arrival of people to a new nation something else emerges: the representation and perception of immigrants by the media. If we reexamine the United States history we will find many examples of how the representation of foreigners by the media had contributed by ultimately fed people's stereotypes about the newcomers. The Irish, Jews, Japanese, and Mexicans are just some of the groups of immigrants that have face negative representation in media through United States history.

Mexicans more than any other immigrants face very particular experiences for reasons such as geographical proximity of both nations or the common history and territory they once shared that makes the relationship between Mexico and the United States still pretty much dynamic (Delgado & Márquez, 2007). However, the relationship between the two nations has never been completely beneficial for the immigrants who, for more than a century, have crossed the border to the north and had all sorts of nasty experiences fueled in part on how they are perceived. One of the main representations of the Mexican immigrant is based on the perception of their illegality. The idea that all Mexicans are illegals and therefore criminals is a discourse still used in our days by politicians as recently as during the 2016 presidential campaign. For DeGenova (2013) all the major changes on immigration law made by the United States since 1965 had contributed to restrict the legal migration of Mexicans and to the rationalization of Mexicans as invaders who violate the law of the land. The imagery and representation of Mexicans has not changed, and the way in which Mexican immigrants are represented by the media contributes much to the construction of stereotypes about them. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the media, both in Mexico and in the United States, represent immigrants from Mexico, and how their word choices potentially can help reinforce stereotypes about them. In the following pages,

I analyzed the resulting data in order to obtain a better perspective on how immigrants are represented in the media through the type of words and their constant use in news articles, both in English and Spanish, as well as the context they were used and presented to the reader.

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Language is powerful and, depending on how it is used, its meaning can have a good or bad effect. For Fairclough (1995) language use is related with people social identities, their social relations and their system of knowledge and beliefs. This last aspect of language use is influenced by the media, and can be correlated with what people know through the media and how that knowledge interacts with their beliefs.

When the message in the media is transmitted, not only is important to analyze the text, but also how the text can influence the reader to believe in something that transcends the meaning of words. Van Dijk (2007) articulates that almost all levels of contexts, including both written and verbal communication, can be controlled by powerful speakers who, in many cases, abuse their power without caring about the consequences. In this sense, the media is undoubtedly one of the most important channels used to control people's thoughts. Hanson (2008) explains that media has an attitudinal effect over people that can create ideas or feelings about products or individuals based on media content. Media plays an important role in the development of ideas, trends, and beliefs; and has the potential to influence the development of stereotypical ideas about non-dominant ethnic groups. According to Rodríguez & Mena (2008) Media is in a privileged position, since the way in which their members frame information can provoke a distorted and stereotypical outlook. For Davis (1985) news discourse is pre-structured by the news selection processes and the agenda behind those in charge of the selection of what is going to be published or not. Even with the proliferation of the Internet as a mass distributor of media content in later decades, as Metzger (2009) states not everything has change about media effects over the audience. What the author explains is that many of the content distributed through the Internet continues to be mostly based on traditional sources such as online versions of traditional newspapers. Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005) explain that in the last three decades re-

search suggest that the effects of mass media depends on various factors and conditions such as the audience level of education and both socio cultural and socioeconomic status. According to Hanson (2008) it's very difficult to distinguish what information is informative and which one is persuasive. Research on the effect of media over audiences have been evolving alongside media, however, it's still difficult for many stipulate clearly quantify the influence of media in public opinion.

Van Dijk (2007) explains that typically immigrants and minorities are viewed as *the other* and that immigrant's representation is often limited "to three categories: *they* are different, *they* are perverse, and *they* are a threat" (p.11). For Galán (2006), immigrants commonly appear in the media in a context of aberration or illegality, and other situations unfavorable to their image. All of these circumstances have the potential to influence people's perceptions of reality. The way that mass media inform the community about issues related to immigration can influence public opinion and the way people think about immigrants and issues related to immigration (Cheng et al., 2009). For Fairclough (1995), media discourse influences how people use language, providing models similar to real-life situations and, at the same time, reshaping them. Discourse, and specifically critical discourse analysis, is related to language and is defined by van Dijk (2003) as "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, an inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (p. 352). Richardson (2007) explains that critical discourse analysis aims to investigate the relation between "the text, and its social conditions, ideologies, and power-relations" (p.27).

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework of the present paper has been based on Fairclough (2009) dialectical-relational version of critical discourse analysis and describes the four steps necessary to achieve a critical discourse analysis: (1) Focus upon a social wrong in its semiotic aspect; for this research the social wrong is the SB1070; (2) Identify obstacles in order to address the social wrong. For this research, I identified the language/words used before and after the SB1070 was authorized and enacted in 2010; (3) Considers whether the social or-

der “needs” the social wrong. For this research, I analyzed how many times the words were used in each newspaper. (4) Identify ways to surmount the obstacles. This perspective of critical discourse analysis is more closely related to the relationship between language and society. I also included as part of the theoretical framework the concept of critical discourse analysis as proposed by van Dijk (1993) “the relationship between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture” (p.253), is important. Based on van Dijk’s (1993) concept of critical discourse analysis, I examined how text in the media is presented in both Mexico and the United States. More specifically, I researched the common use of language in reference to immigrants within four newspapers; the power of negative discourse used in newspapers; how newspapers from Mexico and the United States perceive immigrants, judged according to the type of news articles analyzed; how such language reflects the culture of immigration in both countries; and how Mexican immigrants to the United States are seen in both nations.

NEWSPAPERS ONLINE VERSIONS

This research focuses on news articles about immigration issues published in online versions of printed newspapers in Mexico and the United States, as well as the most used words employed. For the purpose of this research, news articles included publications online that inform the public of an event, but not analysis of the event (e.g., editorials, columns, or reviews). Thus, once the analysis of words had been conducted, the raw information was cleansed of numbers, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns in order to concentrate on those words used to represent immigrants.

This research analyzes the online version of El *Diario NTR*, one of the most important newspapers in Zacatecas, Mexico, the state from which in 2010 most immigrants from Mexico immigrate to the United States. Tuirán (2002) specifies that Zacatecas produced the most Mexicans immigrants to the United States. The author asserts that “one in three people born in Zacatecas live in the neighboring country to the north” (p. 80). Between 2008 and 2013 Zacatecas was the state that lost more population to migration to the United States, based on numbers provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) (Ollaquindia, 2015). By 2015 Zacatecas was displaced to a second place by

Michoacán as the state with more migration to the United States. According to INEGI's press bulletin #41 115.8 people out of 10,000 habitants from Zacatecas migrated to the United States, meanwhile from Michoacán the numbers were 136.1 out of 10,000 (INEGI, 2017).

In order to gain the regional perspective of the United States, I have also used the *Los Angeles Times*, one of the most important newspapers in Los Angeles, California, a city with the largest number of Mexican immigrants from Zacatecas. Los Angeles is home to 3,510,677 Mexicans (US Census Bureau, 2010), the second-largest Mexican population in the world after that of Mexico City.

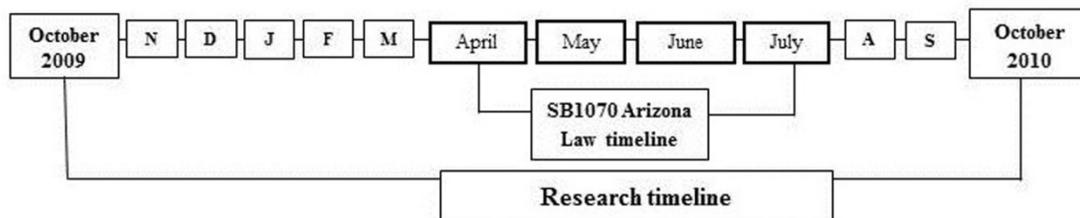
During the selection of newspapers, the primary aspect taken into consideration was their presence in their respective markets. The newspapers were selected according to page views, circulations, and ranges. The political inclination of the newspapers was not considered, since that aspect was not part of the research conducted. However, is pertinent to disclosure that at least *Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times* are considered liberal media for some and more liberal centrist for others. Although, for many *Los Angeles Times* lean also more towards the conservative side. As mentioned by van Dijk (1991) "what for one reader or journalist is a conservative newspaper may be more or less liberal paper to another reader, or in another country, or vice versa" (p.9).

The purpose of choosing *El Diario NTR*, and the *Los Angeles Times* was to analyze media perspectives in the state from which the majority of Mexicans emigrated in 2010 as well as in the city many of these immigrants called home.

To obtain the perspective of the national media regarding immigration issues, the online versions of newspapers based in Mexico City and New York City were selected. *El Universal* was selected as Mexico's national newspaper. For the United States, *The New York Times* was selected as the source of news articles about immigration issues from a national perspective. After *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*, the paper is the third largest in circulation nationwide. *The New York Times* was founded on September 18, 1851, and in 2012 had a daily circulation of 916,911 copies (New York Times, 2011). In order to perform the necessary search for articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, *El Universal*, and *The New York Time* online editions, I needed to use a word that formed the core of this

research. That word was *immigrants* in the two English language newspapers, and *inmigrantes* in the two Spanish language newspapers. The timeline selected for the search was from October 13, 2009, to October 12, 2010. This timeline was selected based on the Arizona's law SB1070, a piece of legislation surrounded by controversy. According to Diaz (2011) SB1070 makes it a state crime to be an undocumented person living in Arizona. In order to obtain a more in-depth perspective about the negative media discourse about immigrants, specifically Mexican immigrants, the timeline (see Figure 1) ranges from six months before the bill passed in the Arizona House of Representatives (April 13, 2010) to three months and 14 days after the date on which the law was supposed to be enforced (July 29, 2010).

Figure 1. Timeline in which the research was based



Source: Compiled by author based on field research.

According to Fairclough (2009), the first stage of a critical discourse analysis should focus on what he defines as a social wrong. For the author, social wrongs are “aspects of social systems, forms or orders which are detrimental to human well-being” (p.167). A law such as SB 1070 can be considered a social system that is prejudicial to the well-being of immigrants, specifically those from Mexico.

DATA

The preliminary online search resulted in 1,718 articles from *The New York Times*, 195 from *The Los Angeles Times*, 186 from *El Universal*, and 415 from *El Diario NTR* the data was cleansed from any type of articles (e.g., books, films, and food) that included the author's opinion. After this process, the final number of articles from each online newspaper was as follows: 173 from *The New York Times*, 20 from the *Los Angeles Times*, 174 from

El Universal, and 415 from *El Diario NTR*. The number of articles from *El Diario NTR* did not change, because the search for articles in the online newspaper was made article by article. The data cleaning process took a great deal of time because of the large number of articles. For the purpose of this research, all articles not related to Mexican immigration were disregarded.

The final numbers of articles about immigration issues in each one of the four online newspapers are given in Table 1. Once the articles were organized, it was easier to observe any visual pattern between the quantity of news published on a monthly basis and the events related to the Arizona SB1070 law's enactment and planned implementation.

Table 1. Number of articles about immigration found on each of the newspapers re-searched

Month	El Diario NTR	El Universal	The New York Times	Los Angeles Times
October 2009	0	0	6	3
November 2009	26	3	9	0
December 2009	51	18	10	0
January 2009	19	5	6	2
February 2010	22	1	8	3
March 2010	18	6	9	1
April 2010	47	21	25	3
May 2010	49	14	22	4
June 2010	32	8	21	3
July 2010	71	32	28	0
August 2010	43	24	11	0
September 2010	27	31	13	1
October 2010	10	11	5	0
Total	415	174	173	20

Source: Compiled by author based on field research.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In October 2009, *El Diario NTR* and *El Universal* did not publish any news articles about immigration issues. The same was true of the *Los Angeles Times* for five months (November 2009, December 2009, July 2010, August 2010, and October 2010).

As expected, all of the newspapers show an increase in news articles related to immigration issues during the most critical months (from April to July 2010) of the Arizona

SB1070 law (see Table 1). In April 2010, when the SB1070 was passed by the Arizona House of Representatives (April 13, 2010) and enacted (April 23, 2010), *El Diario NTR* had 47 news articles; *El Universal*, 21; *The New York Times*, 25; and the *Los Angeles Times*, 3. These numbers tell us how important the issue was for each community. In the case of Zacatecas the state economy can be affected by a law such as the SB1070 because many of its migrants will not be able to work and, as a consequence, the remittances the state receives potentially can decrease.

In the case of *El Diario NTR*, in December 2009, the newspaper published 51 articles. It is possible that this high quantity of news articles occurred because during the holidays Mexican immigrants, or *paisanos*, return to their communities and governmental programs are implemented to welcome those who live in the United States.

In July 2010, the month the SB1070 was set to be enforced (July 29, 2010), a federal district court judge stopped the enforcement of the law's most controversial sections (July 28, 2010). It was also the month when three of the newspapers published the highest number of articles about immigration issues: *El Diario NTR* published 71 news articles; *El Universal*, 32; and *The New York Times*, 28.

The only newspaper that did not reflect the same pattern was the *Los Angeles Times*. The month that showed more news articles related to Mexican immigration issues was May 2010, when four articles were published.

El Diario NTR

From October 2009 to October 2010, the analysis of word frequency resulted in 12 words being the highest number of repeated words. Among this group were: *indocumentados* (undocumented), *Mexicano* (Mexican), *migración* (migration), *migrante* (migrant), and *paisanos*.

This first group of words reveals, as mentioned before, that the issue of immigration is of high importance to the state of Zacatecas. These findings correlate with Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak (2011) notion of critical discourse analysis: the most important part to analyze is the relation between language and society. In this case, the language used to define those who leave Zacatecas to immigrate to the United States is not

derogatory and denotes a familiarity (*paisanos*, *Mexican*), recognizing their status in the United States as undocumented without using the word *ilegal* (illegal). Paisano is a term adopted for more than 20 years by the Mexican government after launching the program called Paisano (Programa Paisano), created to eliminate the abuse and corruption against Mexicans when they return to Mexico from the United States (Instituto Nacional de Migración [INM], 2012). The term is commonly used to refer to any Mexican national who is living in the United States. As an example of how the word *paisanos* was used here is a sentence published on December 12, 2009: “Para el inicio de estas vacaciones decembrinas, la Delegación de Tránsito en Fresnillo estableció operativos de atención a paisanos y feligreses, precisó el titular de la corporación, Antonio Arellano Chávez” (For the beginning of this holiday season, the Transit Delegation in Fresnillo established operations to attend *paisanos* and parishioners, said the head of the delegation Antonio Arellano Chávez) (Torres, 2009) . In this sentence *paisanos* is used as a term to refer those migrants who are returning home for the holidays. As previously mentioned the term is not derogatory and is more a familiarity term, a way to consider those returning as part of the group, not strangers. Something similar happens with the word *migrante* (migrant). It’s used to denote a person status as someone who is from Zacatecas but lives and works in the United States. Here is an example published on August 15, 2010 on the newspaper where the word *migrates* was used: “Además de favorecer a sus comunidades a través de las remesas, los migrantes podrían contribuir más al desarrollo de sus países movilizándolo sus activos hacia carteras de inversión” (In addition to favoring their communities through remittances, migrants could contribute more to the development of their countries of origin by mobilizing their assets towards investment portfolios) (Garduño, 2010). This sentence denotes the important economical role migrants have in their communities by sending their remittances which are used to benefit the community as a whole.

The words repeated 11 times through the timeline are: *Arizona*, *braceros*, *California*, *connacionales* (nationals), *crisis*, *inmigración* (immigration), and *inmigrantes* (immigrants). This group of words is more closely related to the issue of SB1070 in Arizona, to the state where most Mexicans live (California), and to the economic crisis that the world has experienced in recent years, which is mentioned in several news articles as one of the

reasons migrants from Mexico are sending fewer remittances to their home communities. The rest of the words, *connacionales* (nationals), *inmigrantes* (immigrants), and *bracero*, are ways to refer to immigrants. *Connacionales* (nationals), as was the case within the first group of words, is a way to refer to immigrants with more familiarity, counting them as part of the nation. *Braceros* are immigrants who came to the United States between the 1940s and 1960s, primarily to work in agricultural jobs. These workers were fighting in 2010 for payments US companies still own them for their work decades ago. And finally, *inmigración* (immigration) is related to people's actions of moving from one country to another.

Two words are used ten times in the timeline: *ilegal* (illegal) and *victimias* (victims). Both words are related to what Santa Ana (2002) presents as Teun Van Dijk's main point of critical discourse analysis: the role discourse plays in reproducing social dominance. These two words are powerful words that, when included as part of news articles related to Mexican immigration, give us an idea of the difficulties many immigrants experience (victims), and how a word (illegal) can contribute to the framing of immigrants as criminals.

In conclusion, the preliminary findings indicate that *El Diario NTR* presents a more familiar perspective of immigrants. Some of the most commonly used words are ways of indicating that Mexican immigrants are part of their community, family, and their nation. Nevertheless, the two final words ("victims" and "illegal") connect more directly with the realities many face once they are in the United States, where immigrants are singled out by their immigration status and categorized as criminals.

El Universal

A total of 23,205 words were originally found, and through the word frequency analysis it has been established that the Mexico City newspaper had the following most commonly used words: *migrantes* (migrants), *connacionales* (nationals), *derechos* (rights), *frontera* (border), *gobierno* (government), and *indocumentados* (undocumented). With the exception of *migrantes* (migrants), which was used 12 times, the rest of the words were used 11 times between October 2009 and October 2010. Again, these five words represent issues connected with society, as Fairclough (2009) define on their perspective of critical dis-

course analysis. *Migrantes* (migrants), *connacionales* (nationals), and *indocumentados* (undocumented) are different ways of referring to Mexican immigrants living in the United States in a familiar tone. For example, on an article published on April 22, 2010 a sentence where the word *migrantes* (migrants) was used states that “Es importante que en este país, ya sea en el contexto de una contienda política electoral o fuera de una contienda político electoral, se entienda que los migrantes mexicano no son una amenaza a la seguridad nacional de Estados Unidos” (It is important that in this country, whether in the context of an electoral political contest or outside a political electoral contest, it is understood that Mexican migrants are not a threat to the national security of the United States) (Sarukhán, 2010). Here *migrantes* is used in a context where is important for people to understand that they are not a threat to the United States as they are commonly represented by politicians and media.

The other four words are related to the experiences lived by Mexican immigrants. The immigrants’ *derechos* (rights) are not respected in many situations they encounter and *la frontera* (the border) is a place where many Mexican immigrants lose their lives on their way into the United States. These are issues the government (*gobierno*) is called on by the media to take charge of and fix. The media may also try to persuade the United States federal and/or state governments to either do nothing to fix immigration or create laws, such as the SB1070, that make anybody who does not seem to be a part of the dominant society into a suspected foreigner.

Arizona, *migratoria* (migratory), and *víctimas* (victims), were used 10 times during the same timeframe, and this reflects how the discourse around the SB1070 law became an issue during the months researched. Arizona is the state where the SB1070 law was born, and *migratoria* (migratory) may be more closely related to possible immigration reform (called in Spanish *reforma migratoria*), for which there were rallies with thousands of people around the time that SB1070 was debated in Arizona. One example of how the word *Arizona* was used is news article published on April 25, 2010 is: “El activista indicó que aun cuando la ley está prevista para entrar en vigor dentro de tres meses, ya ha generado un clima de violencia y abusos contra la comunidad latina y no sólo a los indocumentados, por lo que Arizona se convirtió en un lugar peligroso para cualquier persona con

rasgos latinos” (The activist said that even though the law is expected to be implemented within three months, it has already generated a climate of violence and abuse against the Latino community and not just the undocumented, making Arizona a dangerous place for anyone with Latinos characteristics) (Ley Arizona, 2010). Here Arizona is used in a context that it in 2010 was a dangerous place to anyone who looked Latino giving the reader a sense of the experiences migrants live in such communities.

In conclusion, during the timeline in *El Universal*, the most frequently used words paint a similar picture as *El Diario*: they are familiar terms used to refer to Mexican immigrants and do not deny their experiences in immigrating to the United States and with laws such as SB1070.

The New York Times

Once the results from the newspapers in the United States were obtained, the difference in discourse was perceived. The following most frequently used words during the timeline were used 13 times: *American, border, California, criminal, enforcement, health, homeland, illegal, immigrant, Mexican, and security*. These words give a sense of distancing from the Other (*Mexican immigrant*), and this is also the case with *American, border, and homeland*. An example of the use of the words *illegal* and *immigrant* is the sentence published on news article on February 10, 2010 stating that “The number of illegal immigrants in the United States declined to 10.8 million in January 2009, a drop of one million since a peak in 2007, according to an estimate Tuesday by the Department of Homeland Security” (Preston, 2010). These words reinforce the idea of belonging to a country (the United States) and the vision of the *border* from the United States’ perspective. Reed-Danahay and Brettell (2008) describe belonging as a fluid process between the social practices of immigrants and the historical structures and cultural conditions they live in. For both authors, the discourses on race, “even when hidden in the ‘new’ racism that does not explicitly use a racial vocabulary, are an integral part of discourses of belonging” (p. 19). The stereotypical idea of the *border* is of a vulnerable place constantly violated by *illegal immigrants (criminals)* that can bring diseases (*health*) or compromise the *security* of the coun-

try. Once again, the relation between language and society (Fairclough et al., 2011) is present, but so is van Dijk's perspective about discourse that influences the reproduction of social dominance (Santa Ana, 2002).

The second group of words is used 12 times each: *violence*, *America*, *Arizona*, *arrested*, *deportation*, *Hispanic*, *drug*, and *illegally*. The same type of discourse found in the previous group is found in the second. Connotations of criminality are present in such words as *drug*, *illegally*, *arrested*, and *violence*.

The way immigrants are referred to changes from *Mexican* to *Hispanic*, a term not accepted by many people who feel it is an imposition from the United States government because it was the term used in the census in the 1970s. *America* is a term used to refer to the United States, and Arizona was the epicenter of the SB1070 discourse. *Deportation* is related to the sense of not being welcome and not belonging, being unwanted, and not being welcome within the United States.

In conclusion, the words most used by *The New York Times* in articles related to Mexican immigration issues during the timeline of the research offer a different type of discourse than the ones found in *El Diario NTR* and *El Universal*. In the case of *The New York Times*, the words most frequently used reflect a perception of threat and perversity in immigrants, as explained by Van Dijk (2007).

Los Angeles Times

The words used most during the research timeframe by the newspaper based in California were each used seven times: *government*, *immigrant*, and *immigrants*. This first group does not present very powerful or negative words.

The second group of words was used six times each, and this group begins to change the perspective: *enforcement*, *immigration*, and *Mexican*. *Enforcement* is the strongest word of the group and conveys the idea that something has to be applied.

The third group of words, with a frequency of five times, includes *citizens*, *illegal*, and *legal*. Again, the discourse moves toward an idea of being part of something or belonging (citizenship), criminality, and what is *legal*—such as the SB1070 law, which is related to the sense of legality and what is supposed to be right.

The last group of words occurred four times each: *border*, *law*, *nation*, *undocumented*, and *violent*. All of these words are related with the other groups of the most-used words in the *Los Angeles Times*. *Border* and *nation* are related to the sense of belonging; the border is what divides two countries—in this case Mexico and the United States—and what marks the differences between the nations; and *undocumented* pertains to the sense of legality given by having, or not having, immigration documentation to determine whether a person belongs to the nation. Lastly, *violent* is connected with the idea of criminal immigrants that is denoted by the *illegal* terminology and by the stereotype that immigrants bring crime to the United States.

In conclusion, the *Los Angeles Times* seemed not to present a negative discourse as *The New York Times*, but the words it used most approached the ones presented by the newspaper based in New York City. The United States newspapers use more negative and aggressive words compared with newspapers in Mexico.

Before and after SB1070, in both *El Diario NTR* and *El Universal*, references to immigrants varied from *migrantes* (migrants) to *paisanos* and *indocumentados* (undocumented).

The majority of news articles in *El Diario NTR* were about the insecurity in Mexico; the number of children returning from the United States who were entering the school system in Mexico; the possibility of an immigration reform; the marches Latinos participated in; the needs, benefits, and local contributions of remittances; the government programs aimed at benefitting immigrants in the U.S. who traveled to be with their families or return home; and the support that immigrants living in the United States gave to their communities. There were also stories about successful immigrants, as well as local reactions to Arizona's SB1070 law.

In *El Universal*, the news articles concentrated on the insecurity in Mexico and its effects on immigrants, how much the remittances had decreased, and government programs more generally. In addition, there were stories of immigrants' experiences and national reactions to SB1070.

In both *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, immigrants were often called *Hispanics*, *immigrants*, *illegal*, and *Latino*.

In *The New York Times*, articles concerned immigration reform rallies; how insecurity in Mexico affected immigrants; the possibility of an immigration reform; cost in health care as related to undocumented immigrants; and attacks against immigrants in the New York region.

In the *Los Angeles Times*, most of the articles were about how immigrants were not checked for health problems on borders; the working conditions of immigrants; how immigrants were crossing by sea from Mexico; how Zacatecan food was still better in Mexico; and how immigration issues hurt Obama.

In *El Diario NTR*, immigrants are presented as part of the community. Meanwhile, in *El Universal*, immigrant issues are not presented in a familiar manner as they were in the newspaper based in Zacatecas. This difference is understandable, since *El Universal* is a national newspaper based in Mexico City, unconnected with the experiences of migrant communities, such as those from Zacatecas.

Related to negative discourse in the U.S. newspapers, the word that continually occurred was *illegal*, with *immigrant* and *alien* constituting a close second and third.

In the case of the newspapers from Mexico, the use of the words *illegal*, *illegals*, and *illegally* was present, but only a few times. During the analysis, those words were never within the list of most-used words, compared with the U.S. newspapers, in which *illegal* was among the words used the most over several months and, during the SB1070 debate, used 672 times.

CONCLUSION

It has been said many times before that if people hear a lie a thousand times, they will ultimately believe it's the truth. This occurs with the language the media uses in news stories related to immigrants or immigration issues. If audiences constantly hear that immigrants are *illegal*, that they are *criminals*, that they are *unhealthy*, or that they are *lazy*, these words can potentially have the effect of reinforcing stereotypes passed down through generations. After all, as Stangor and Schaller (1996) stated, the media is the prime transmitter of stereotypes. As a part of the media, the Internet has become the main distributor of news content in the last three decades. This is the reason I was interested in researching how

many times certain words have been used in newspapers, both in Mexico and the United States, focusing on articles about immigration issues. As mentioned in this paper, there are many studies on how the media represents immigrants. More than any other researcher, van Dijk (2007) approached the issue clearly when he argued that immigrants are presented in the media as falling under three categories: “three categories: *they* are different, *they* are perverse, and *they* are a threat” (p. 11). This research showed that the words used most often in articles on immigration in *The New York Times* were *criminal*, *enforcement*, *health*, *illegal*, *security*, *violence*, *arrested*, *deportation*, *drug*, and *illegally*. In articles on the same subject in *The Los Angeles Times*, the most used words were *enforcement*, *illegal*, and *violent*. All these words can potentially have negative connotations when they are constantly used in articles about immigration issues. The constant use of words depicting migrants as invaders, criminals, or the *other* could be seen in most of the newspapers analyzed, including those from Mexico. This finding tells us how common such terms have become in the media and how probably people probably don’t realize the extent to which their use can damage the image of immigrants in general. In some of the news articles analyzed, the context reinforced the stereotype of immigrants as being dependent on government resources. This sentiment is clearly depicted in the media in relation to Latino immigrants, especially during controversial events (such as the proposition, signing, and implementation of SB1070 in Arizona). From April to July 2010 (the most critical months for SB1070), all four newspapers researched published an increasing number of articles related to Mexican-immigration issues.

Additionally, one of the findings of this research was that Mexican newspapers also used the term *illegal* sporadically. This finding suggests the extent to which this term, which is recognized by many in the United States as being derogatory, has been adopted commonly in a country, which, until recently, provided the highest number of immigrants to the United States.

It is important for the media to be aware of how minorities perceive the words that are used to represent their cultures to others to the world. Now, with the growth of social media as a distributor of information and news, it’s critical to understand the power of the words the media uses. Sadly, the representation of *the other* in the United States hasn’t

changed much in centuries, and this is why it is so important to continue conducting research that shows the role the media has in shaping people's perceptions of those who look or sound different to them.

In recent years, campaigns have challenged the language used to represent immigrants in the media, and these campaigns have demanded that media companies change their choice of words. In April and May 2013, both *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* decided not to use the word *illegal* when referring to immigrants in the stories they published. Nevertheless, many media outlets have not changed their policies concerning the language they use when referring to immigrants.

During the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States, politicians such as Donald Trump defined Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists during his campaign launch speech in New York City. This suggests that there is an urgent need for more research about the implications of media language use and its relationship to the reinforcing of stereotypes about Latino immigrants in general and Mexicans in particular.

This type of research is important because the language used by the media in articles about immigration shapes the messages society receives and greatly influences people's perceptions of those who decide to move from one country to another. As is often said, words matter, language is power, and this power is constantly used and abused by the media.

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