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Αστική Πολυγλωσσία: Ξαναπροσεγγίζοντας τη Σχέση Γλωσσικής και Κοινωνικής Ποικιλότητας στον Ελλαδικό Χώρο

National discourses, fragments of otherness, and the denial of gaze

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National discourses, fragments of otherness, and the denial of gaze: Representational minimization and simplification of the Other in pro-migrant media texts

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Abstract

This paper investigates the social representation of migrants in western/European discourses. Our main claim is that the video texts under study, although explicitly pro-migrant, do not affirm the realities of migrants, but rather seem to draw more on national and western-oriented discourses, thus providing a calculated projection of visibility to migrants. That is, the video texts overrepresent a "tolerable", "simplified" migrant who is socioculturally and linguistically familiar with the European/western audience. This familiar and thus tolerable migrant seems to be in contrast with some distant, vague and threatening "intolerable" Others, who remain largely minimized, delegitimized, and denied a gaze in advance. The racist background of this process is deconstructed on the basis of two theoretical premises: a) that the stereotypical representation of the "Other as threat" often continues to underpin pro-migrant discourses when they are articulated in terms of tolerance; and b) that such discursive scaffolding is more implicit, pushed to the margins of the representations that sustain these discourses and involves a more or less fragmented representation of otherness. The language and the degree of explicitness and marginality of such representations will be explored in our data through a discursive analysis based on the categories of highlighting and minimization respectively, which will be conceptualized drawing upon van Leeuwen's (2008) framework.

1. Introduction

This study attempts to trace the current ambiguities and contradictions with which national (Greek, and more broadly, European) discourses strive to achieve a balance, as well as the various transformations to which these discourses often resort. Despite the broad and extensive multicultural and multilingual encounters in European social spaces over the last decades, western values of monoculturalism and monolingualism persist and still prevail to a large extent (see Archakis 2014, 2016, 2022a, 2022b; Archakis & Tsakona 2022; Moschonas 2005). In this context,

racist and xenophobic policies are deployed in various ways. Continuous efforts are made to: a) either directly undermine and interrupt migration mobilities, by violently and lethally excluding migrants across the European borders, or b) assimilate them to European/western norms and expectations, i.e. a less physically violent, but still racist practice normalized in –and further normalizing– the national prerogatives of the European majorities (see Archakis 2014; 2016; 2022a; Archakis & Tsakona 2022; Balibar 1991, 2017; Lentin 2004; Papataxiarchis 2014). On the other hand, in western liberal democracies, there are on-going attempts towards the legal and ethical entrenchment of "human rights". In this context, blatant racist discourses are largely denounced, while tolerance towards the "Other" prevails almost as an imperative (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998: 11; see also van Dijk 1992: 95-96).

As a result of such contradictions, European national/racist discourses are often transformed –rather than suspended– and circulate in more flexible and less visible ways. They become more "inclusive" (Balibar 1991: 39) in an effort to minimize or even participate in the construction of antiracist reflexes (see Balibar 2005, 2009, 2017; Barker 1979, 1981; Lentin 2004; van Dijk 1992). This persistence of racism has largely been attributed to the fact that it is not easily detected or recorded. According to Bonilla-Silva (2006), although the language *of* racism (i.e. racist language) is in constant flux, language *about* racism (i.e. the language used to describe or report racism) remains fairly stable and, therefore, insufficient to delineate how racism works and what underpins it (see also Barker 1979, 1981). Weaver (2016) uses the term "liquid racism" to outline how racism can coexist with non-racism and how the normalization of racism can derive from, or aim at, the production of ambivalences that render static readings and analyses of racism inefficient. In Weaver's (2016: 63-64) words, liquid racism "does not produce a monolithic reading of racism", but rather "is constructed with far more potential for ambivalence"; therefore, it "should not", and could not, "be seen as a weakened or challenged residue of racism but rather as an ambiguous form" of it "that is encouraged nowadays and [...] weakens various defences against claims of racism".

In this context, the present article investigates whether pro-migrant discourses can still resort to assimilationist[2] assumptions and rely on further sustain, and normalize national/racist prerogatives, persisting in the stereotypical representation of the "Other as a threat". More specifically, in section 2 we briefly outline the national/racist premises that underpin such a representation, while in section 3 we focus on how these premises may still be a (less explicit) part of tolerance discourses. Based on that, in section 4 we will further elaborate on the discursive representation of tolerance and its marginal significations, devising a conceptual framework for its analysis. The language used and the degree of explicitness and marginality of this representation will be investigated in terms of the discourse-analytic categories of *highlighting* and *minimization*, respectively. These categories will be conceptualized on the basis of the proposed theoretical framework, drawing on van Leeuwen's (2008) approach. Our research data consists of 6 videos posted on the Internet by the NGO Metadrasi, with the aim of informing and raising awareness

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[2] We use the term *assimilation* to underline that the normative model of migrant integration into European societies still seems to insist on more or less assimilationist discourses, despite the on-going turn to more inclusive and ostensibly less conditional and oppressive political attitudes towards migrants.

among members of the Greek and European public on migration issues. Our main conclusion is that these videos move towards a fragmentary representation and toleration of otherness. That is, they provide a calculated and minimal visibility of migrants, aiming at representational minimization and simplification of migrants into a "familiar" and "fitting Other", while bypassing and programmatically denying gaze to any "unfamiliar" or "undesirable otherness" (see also Lymperi & Archakis 2024).

2. The use of national discourses in shaping the "migrant Other"

The various mobilities of populations in Greece, and indeed throughout Europe, have largely been confronted with national and closed-border policies (among other measures), strict boundaries, and excessive marginalization. Such policies are widely embedded in the western ideal of unified, cohesive, and solid nation states that remain relatively invariant in time and space. This ideal, in turn, is largely produced in and through discourses that represent and constrain the nation state as a "pure" and "safe" space that does "not let outsiders […] in" and raises "defensive" reflexes against any otherness (Ahmed 2000: 25, 27). Following Ahmed (2000: 5), the "sense of community" in this purified space "arises from" the "fact of shared residence" where "exclusion of difference" is a way of "living together". The "community spirit" then takes the form of a shared belief in "tackling problems" and "feeling secure" against any "unlike and undesirable" Others (Ahmed 2000: 27-28) who endanger national "normalities" and the "evolutionary" courses of western societies (see Foucault 2002), and who are largely perceived as "disturbing" by European populations (Fassin 2001: 6). In this context, western national discourses on migrants, often framed in terms of a "migrant/refugee crisis" or "flux", can be seen at the same time as:

- *segregating* discourses that invent and implement "internal boundaries dividing" the communities living in Europe and mainly targeting the migrants who are "not identified as European" (see Fassin 2001: 6);
- *purifying* discourses that embed –and are embedded in– an ideal of a homogeneous and "lean" western community, which is further normalized precisely through this language of crisis and flux (see Ahmed 2000: 26; Foucault 2002);
- *defensive* discourses that justify the European/western populations as the ones who "must be protected" against the unstable and unpredictable factor of migrants that "puts in danger" European societies from within (see Ahmed 2000; Foucault 2002);
- *displacing* discourses, which variously portray (especially non-European) migrants as "out of place in this place" (see Ahmed 2000: 29), already here, but also "too close"; i.e. as being here but not belonging.

The considerations above help us theorize "the maintenance of social privilege" that certain groups within a nation state share –while others are deprived of– and "how the defence of social boundaries against unwelcome intrusions and intruders produces certain categories of strangers –those who do not belong" (Ahmed 2000: 27). This means that anyone can be a "stranger" if they cross the social boundaries of

the "normal", ending up in the category of the "Other" (see Ahmed 2000; Foucault 2002, 2006).

In this vein, we approach the "migrant Other" as an "open political category" (see Gilroy 1987: 38-39), largely embedded in western/national discourses (framed above as segregating, purifying, defensive, and displacing), which are variously expressed and legitimated in –and as– discourses of fear (see Ahmed 2000, 2003; Altheide 2006; Gale 2004; Poulakidakos 2018). More specifically, the sense of community shared by those who "belong" to a nation state is understood as contextualized and normalized within discourses of fear towards those who "do not belong", those who have already crossed the social boundaries that entrench the nation state and any "normalities" within it. Following Ahmed (2000: 29), "making […] community" involves "making the *common*" (i.e. what "we" share), as well as looking out for "the *threat* to the common, posed by those who are uncommon, or those who are out of place in this place", namely the Others (Ahmed 2000: 29, our emphasis). The "formation of […] community" is then related to "the detection of" threats and produces the figure of the Other as "a *visible danger* to the "we" of the community" (Ahmed 2000: 32, emphasis in the original). This "knowing" of the Other as a "danger" is in turn the "means by which the "we" of the community is established, enforced and legitimated" (Ahmed 2000: 37).

In the context of western national discourses, migrants, especially those of non-western backgrounds, figure as "the ultimate […] strangers", an absolute Other, an excessive threat "coming from outside of the protective walls of the […] nation state" (Ahmed 2000: 36; see also Fassin 2001; Mbembe 2001; Said 1978). "Cultural difference becomes the text upon which the fear" of the migrant Other "is written" (Ahmed 2000: 36). Multiculturalism and multilingualism are treated as dangers rather than as linguistic or sociocultural resources (see Archakis 2014; 2016; 2022a), and this "projection of danger onto" migrants also "allows violence to take place" against them (Ahmed 2000: 37). The "fear […] embedded" in this projection "becomes a mechanism for the enforcement of boundary lines" (Ahmed 2000: 36-37), which:

- represent migrants as nothing more than "a figure of danger" that comes "too close", nothing more than a threat, often portrayed as an "it", that has to be addressed or even eliminated (Ahmed 2000: 36-37; see also Ahmed 2003; Alteide 2006; Butler 2004a; Chouliaraki & Stolic 2017; Foucault 2002, 2006; Gale 2004; Mbembe 2003; Poulakidakos 2018; Yancy and Butler 2015);
- and, furthermore, licenses and legitimizes western "awareness" against any –physical or metaphorical– boundary crossings, and "justifies" as "defensive" (see above) any violence used to re-enforce those boundaries (see Ahmed 2000).

Such border lines then often become "border lines between those who must live and those who must die", or better still, those who "can be left to die" (see Foucault 2002: 313-314). This is made possible and acceptable in the liberal western states through racist discourses that variously produce relationships between our "life and the death of the Other" (Foucault 2002: 314), guaranteeing the loss and "death […] of the Other" as "our […] enhancement" (Foucault 2002: 318), as a means to make

our societies more "safe […] pure and healthy" (Foucault 2002: 315; see also above). Mbembe (2003), drawing on Foucault and elaborating on the concept of "necropolitics", notes that racism regulates "the distribution of death" and makes "possible the murderous functions" of western states (Mbembe 2003: 17), attributing "rational objectives to the very act of killing" (Mbembe 2003: 23) and justifying "the material destruction" of certain "bodies and populations" (Mbembe 2003: 14).

This complicated network, which invariably connects the politics of race in the west with the politics of death, enables and results in a fragmented and "shattering experience of otherness" (Mbembe 2003: 17) and entails the figure of the "shadow", i.e. the "phantom-like" or the "death-in-life" state that the Other is most likely to represent in European political imaginaries and practices (Mbembe 2003: 21-22). In such contexts, migrants are reduced to a quasi-inhuman status (see Ahmed 2000; Athanasiou 2007; Butler 2004a; Mbembe 2003) and fail to be recognized as complete human beings (Chouliaraki & Stolic 2017). They are "stripped of any political stakes" recognized in the remains of a "nameless […], dispensable and destroyable" otherness (see Athanasiou 2007: 15). Thus, the "abdication" and the renunciation "of any social and political responsibility of the violence that takes place" against them is allowed (Ahmed 2000: 37), embedded in a "refusal to recognise how violence is structured by, and through, the formation of" the European communities "as such" (Ahmed 2000: 36). Violence against migrants is therefore more likely to be accepted, placed "outside the law" (see Mbembe 2003: 23) and exported into a "state of exception" (see Agamben 2004), than to be recognized as the mainspring of the western political imaginary as such.

Contextualized in such discourses, immigrant precarity is normalized. They are largely reduced to "collateral damage" (Bauman 2011), which is not only portrayed as possible and reasonable but also as necessary (see Ahmed 2000; Foucault 2002), as well as trivial and "unremarkable" (see Athanasiou 2007; Butler 2004a). Such losses may involve, as Foucault (2002: 315-316) explains, "not only direct murder but also […] the exposure […] to political death" through, for example, "exclusion, rejection" and marginalization.

We can therefore speak of a humanism, produced in and through western national discourses that creates a "human we", conceptualized and experienced in European nation states as the "common", by *distancing* and *protecting* it from an unspecified "inhuman it", which in turn is considered and experienced in a fragmentary way as the "uncommon", the Other (Ahmed 2000; see also Foucault 2002). Such a humanism thus values "certain lives […] over other lives" (Ahmed 2000: 29), normalizing the losses of the latter as that which would mean more "safety" for the former (Ahmed 2000; see also Athanasiou 2007; Butler 2004a; Foucault 2002; Mbembe 2003).

3. Tolerance as/in national discourse

The extended coexistence and contact between local populations and migrants in European spaces, as well as the political claims of migrants, who have given their bodies as the ultimate boundary on which western power and violence is to be exercised (see also Fassin 2001), have forced European states, including Greece, to start including at least some migrants within the boundaries of "human" life that

"must be protected" (cf. Foucault 2002). In this context, a European discourse of tolerance towards the "suffering migrant" is formed (in opposition to blatantly racist discourses), which largely projects onto the suffering migrant what the European populations expect of him/her and are prepared to tolerate. According to Brown (2006, 2008), although this tolerance is widely presented as an "unqualified achievement" of the "civilized west" and "an alternative to" fear and "violence", it can also be seen as a more subtle rejection of what is already identified as "otherness". The "explicit acceptance" (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998: 15) that prevails in discourses of tolerance towards migrants is then considered as:

- conditional as well as grounded on "implicit doubts" (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998: 15); embedded in –and embedding– the national fear of a "migrant Other", who is still visible as such, already identified as somehow "deviant" or "unwanted" (see Brown 2006, 2008; Brown & Forst 2014; Haynes 2013);
- a "regulating mechanism" (Haynes 2013: 31); a discourse that articulates *how much* of the migrant Other will (not) be accepted, in terms of *how much* of him/her would not disrupt the established European norms (see Brown 2006: 27, 29; Haynes 2013: 37).

In this light, it could be suggested that European discourses of tolerance, on the one hand, displace "the right to life […] from the political to the humanitarian arena" (see Fassin 2001: 4), largely depoliticising it (see Mavelli 2017: 814). This right then gains its legitimacy from and is regulated by "shared moral principles" (see Fassin 2001: 5), which are largely drawn from the European/western stock of values. This means that the migrant Other, framed in this humanitarian context, is exhausted in what fits into and can be coordinated with this European stock. On the other hand, such discourses of tolerance may be considered as operating within a broader framework of what Fassin (2001) calls the "biopolitics of otherness". According to Fassin (2001), migrants who fall within the "human" in European contexts are exposed to –and their existence depends on– a set of powers that intervene in the regulatory management of their lives (see also Foucault 1982: 21; Foucault 2002; Athanasiou 2007). Based on this, western discourses of tolerance can be seen as part of such biopolitics, in the sense that these discourses "conditionally allow" (see Brown 2006, 2008) and thus regulate (see Haynes 2013: 31) and "produce" the bodies "that are meaningful and consistent" (see Athanasiou 2007: 30-31) in –and for– the west, i.e. the ones "that matter" (see Butler 1993), the ones that migrants have to perform in order to fit in, and then to be tolerated.

Tolerance, seen as a biopolitics of otherness, as the production of the tolerable migrant body, also presupposes the cutting off and loss of that part of the migrant body that does not conform to western values and would not function properly within them and thus poses a threat to them. This cutting off and loss (which includes and further normalizes the fragmentary perception of otherness and its national/racist displacement; see section 2) usually concerns those aspects of migrant lives that are generally considered unmanageable and not liable to change, i.e. those that remain "intolerable" and are largely dismissed even in contexts of

tolerance (Brown 2006: 6, 29; Haynes 2013: 32, 35-36, 40-41; this is examined in more detail in section 4).

In this light, discourses of tolerance are addressed not as a withdrawal from national evaluations of migrants as a danger (see section 2), but rather as a way of "moving through" that "danger" (cf. Ahmed 2000: 33), a way of turning that danger from something to be eliminated into something that could –and should– be regulated. Such discourses seem to be "aware of the danger" that migrants represent in Europe, a danger that they do not treat as destroyable, but rather as manageable. Discourses of tolerance can then be seen more as a calculated weighting and management of any "contingency" and unpredictability (cf. Foucault 2002: 302) associated with migrants. Therefore, they can still be seen as part of the purifying national discourses that defend against and intend to displace any otherness (see section 2). The migrant Other, still visible as Other and overwhelmed by all those national assumptions that see him/her as a danger, is shaped in discourses of tolerance not so much as someone who must or could be left to die, but above all as someone who could and should be regulated.

Hence, discourses of tolerance do not suspend, nor are they devoid of, racist assumptions, but rather enable and recycle them (see also Brown 2006, 2008; Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Haynes 2013). That is, they embody and absorb them, partially re-elaborate and modify them, and, above all, they are able to operate precisely because they are structured on the basis of these racist assumptions. The exhortations to "let them die", which are embedded in the closed-border politics of death, variously deployed by western states (see section 2), are metaphorically echoed here in what non-western migrants could and should leave behind in order to be "let live" in Europe without unsettling the European normalities. This "letting them live" then finds migrants –more or less– in the fragments and remnants of a "tolerable" and "convenient" otherness (in a way that both places and displaces them).

In what follows, we elaborate on the discursive representation of tolerance, that is, how tolerance acquires linguistic form and explicitly shapes western discourses, even though it is based on what is left out of these discourses, ending up in a fragmentary representation of otherness.

4. Discursive representation of (in)tolerance, marginal significations and fragments of otherness: Theorizing absences

The main questions that we aim to address in this section are the following: a) How does tolerance assume linguistic shape and become *explicit*, and what *marginal* (i.e. less explicit) significations can the representation of the "tolerable" entail? b) Based on this, how might we address discourses of tolerance as part of a biopolitics of otherness?

As the above discussion has already shown, western national discourses on migrants provide –and are entrenched in– collective definitions of what is "safe" and what is "dangerous", that is, "techniques of knowledge that allow" the European populations to "maintain a safe distance between themselves and" the "dangerous" Others, those who are somehow recognized as "out of place" (see Ahmed 2000: 34; see also section 2). This distance is often articulated and based on a commonsensical (i.e. largely naturalized and slightly tangible, but usually not consistent or clear)

perception of the Other as any unspecified deviation from what is –already established as– common and normal (Ahmed 2000: 29). This vague and often fragmented and shattered knowledge of the Other (see also section 2) is, in turn, largely embedded in and produced by the representations of migrants put forward by European discourses (see Barker & Jane 2016; Hall 1997b). The political category of the migrant Other as "a figure that has linguistic and bodily integrity" (Ahmed 2000: 30) can then be seen as largely shaped in and through western-oriented representations that sustain –and derive from– "binary" and "violent" us/them distinctions and hierarchies (see Derrida 1981; Hall 1997b) seeking to delegitimize the presence of migrants in western states, by more or less explicitly framing them as "dangerous" and "threatening" (see also sections 2 and 3).

In this context, we will elaborate on how this vague knowledge and recognition of the "Other as threat" seems to underpin discourses of tolerance. This vague knowledge is not made explicit but rather pushed to the *margins* of these discourses; itis primarily based on what is silenced and dismissed from the representations that sustain these discourses.

To begin with, representations of migrants are not addressed here as "a mirror or a distortion" of a real image of migrants (Barker & Jane 2016: 334; Hall 1997b, 1997c); rather, they are considered to "enact" this image (Anderson & Harrison 2010: 14) and produce the relevant knowledge about them (Foucault 1972, 1980; Hall 1997c; van Leeuwen 2008). Thus, western-oriented migrant representations are seen to "exercise symbolic violence" over them, that is, the very "power to represent", to "assign and classify", to stereotypically "exaggerate" or "simplify" them (Hall 1997b: 258-259; see also Said 1978), by establishing what Butler (2004a, 2004b) calls "norms of recognition" (see also Lymperi & Archakis 2024).

These norms of recognition, on the one hand, indicate what will be recognized and how, by rendering certain parts of reality visible, i.e. "legible" and "eligible" (Butler 2004b: 2-4, 31-35, 106, 109; see also Butler 1997: 4-5, 32-33, 40; Butler 2004a). Such norms more or less establish "what we should take for granted", what we should "already know", which is then "sensed" as real and, furthermore, as normal (Ahmed 2000: 29). In this light, western representations of migrants, which produce and reinforce the norms of their recognition, bind them into a more or less fixed image, prescribing the socially and culturally conceivable migrant bodies in the west, and hence regulating how migrants could and should organize and perform themselves in order to gain social visibility and recognition (see Athanasiou 2007; Barker & Jane 2016; Butler 1993, 1997, 2004a, 2004b; Hall 1997b, 1997c). Conceptualized in these terms, the visibility of migrants is seen to rely on norms that precede and exceed this visibility, produced in language, discourses, and representations, and largely drawn from a western "common sense" of the Other.

On the other hand, the internal "unity", integrity and cohesion, of such norms of recognition is considered to arise only through "exclusion" (Butler 2004b: 206), through "symbolically" producing "boundaries" (Hall 1997b: 258) which in turn foreclose that which "does not fit the norm" at hand (Butler 2004b: 206; see also Hall 1997a: 10). Recognition is then seen as "a site of power" through which knowledge is "differentially produced", bound to "schemes" that either confer it or withhold it (Butler 2004b: 2). Thus, what is consistently left out of the representations of migrants in western discourses is also considered to be

"foreclosed from" or, rather, to remain at the margins of the visibility and "recognizability" provided by these discourses (cf. Butler 2004b: 13-14, 31, 106). Following Ahmed (2000: 29), "the very failure" of a discourse "to provide us with" some definite and clear norm of recognition:

- "is itself a technique of knowledge", which, although not explicit, is inferred from the "commonsensical" constitution of the "normal" (Ahmed 2000: 29);
- and derives from and sustains the vague recognition of any unspecified deviation from this normal (Ahmed 2000: 29).

In other words, our main premise is that what is consistently silenced and dismissed out of the representations of migrants put forward by western discourses (although foreclosed from the norms of recognition provided by these discourses) does not simply remain empty of content and completely invisible. Following Ahmed's (2000) analysis, we suggest that such foreclosures do not just result from –and in– a complete "failure of recognition" (see Ahmed 2000: 24), but rather constitute a kind of "misrecognition", i.e. a kind of response to something that has somehow been "already recognized" (see Ahmed 2000: 21). What is then consistently dismissed out of such representations is considered here to be marginally recognized and given a certain collateral visibility. We argue, therefore, that such foreclosures are neither neutral nor random, but rather constitute a –political– denial of the gaze, which in turn signifies a vague, rather than empty, content of otherness.

This content of otherness, further contextualized here in terms of "abjection" (Kristeva 1982; see also Butler 1993), is considered to be implicitly delegitimized, shaped as something "foreign" and "unwelcome", as an inherently "intolerable threat" (see also Ahmed 2000; Brown 2006; Haynes 2013; Hook 2006), which is *therefore* dismissed (out of the discourse at hand) and denied a gaze in advance. We argue that such delegitimization, which relies on some vague intolerance and aversion, also underpins discourses of tolerance: a) by displacing in advance any undesirable and unfitting otherness (see also section 3), b) without, nevertheless, assuming clear and explicit linguistic shape. Rather, it is pushed to the margins of these discourses and remains more implicit. Following Hook (2006), such designations of meaning are largely produced "at pre-discursive levels". They do not represent the "visible danger" of the Other (see section 2), but rather a repressed sense of that danger, which is taken for granted rather than directly stigmatized. In these cases, then, we can speak of a marginal signification of an unspecified (but somehow detected and already recognized) threat that remains implicit and gets some collateral rather than full visibility. According to Ahmed (2000: 29), it is the "failure to name those who inhabit" the category of this threatening Other that "produces the figure of" an "unspecified" danger. And this unspecified danger is constituted "precisely by being cut off from" the "histories of" its "determination" (see Ahmed 2000: 31).

Such designations are considered here to fall within the larger context of the western national fear of any otherness (see section 2). Our main premise, however, is that the fear in this case exceeds the linguistic dimension of the representations of the Other, although it underpins it. It lacks explicitness and thus becomes more elusive and latent. This fear is conceptualized here in Bauman's (2006) terms as

"liquid", that is, a non-apparent fear that seems to have no clear reference or rather is detached from and exceeds its putative source. It is not produced in "explicit discourse" but rather lies in "the silences" and absences through which a given discourse proceeds (cf. Butler 2004a: 35-36). Contextualized in these terms, the threat underpinning that fear is understood here as liquid.

Based on the above, we argue that western-oriented representations of the migrant Other, even in contexts of tolerance, involve and are largely responsible for a fragmented, shattered and cracked, perception and experience of otherness. That is, such representations not only bind the norms through which some migrant bodies are made visible and recognizable, but also provide the context in which some *other* migrant bodies are already detached from, already deprived of, any assignable tolerance, delegitimized and denied gaze in advance. This fragmentary and discursively produced assignable tolerance can hence be seen as part of a biopolitics of otherness (see also section 3), i.e. as a regulatory arrangement and management of the migrant body:

- it produces the norms by which migrants could and should be recognized, that is, the norms by which migrants are tolerated in order to fall within the humanitarian scope of the bodies that are legitimated to be "let live" (see Butler 2004b: 3) in Europe (see also section 3);
- it implicitly designates which parts of the migrant Other could and should be foreclosed from this assignable tolerance, as well as cut off from the visible and tolerable migrant body, reducing them to a –vague and liquid– threatening status, and yet delegitimizing them as "out of place" in this place (see also section 2);
- while also maintaining a certain distance from the aforementioned foreclosure, displacement, and loss that emerge as "normal". Such loss is discursively registered as "unremarkable" (see Butler 2004a) or "collateral damage" (see Bauman 2011; see also section 2), precisely because it is produced in silences, pushed into the gaps, and takes place at the margins of such discourses rather than through "explicit discourse" (see Butler 2004a: 35-36).

Table 1 summarizes the main theoretical concepts through which the discursive representation of (in)tolerance has been addressed above.

Discursive representation of (in)tolerance and fragments of otherness	Tolerable otherness (Explicitness)	Intolerable otherness Marginality)
Tolerance and/as recognition	-Norms of recognition -Visibility	-Marginal recognition -Collateral visibility -Denial of gaze

Tolerance and/as (de)legitimation	-Legitimation	-Delegitimization -Displacement -Normalized loss(es) -Liquid fear, liquid threat(eningness)

Table 1: Discursive representation of (in)tolerance and marginal significations: a conceptual network for the analysis of the fragmentary representation of otherness

In the following section, we will examine whether the above theoretical framework can be systematized via and applied to specific categories of critical discourse analysis. That is, in order to investigate the language of the fragmentary representation of otherness in discourses of tolerance, we will develop the analytical categories of *highlighting* and *minimization*, which will be further informed by van Leeuwen's (2008) framework and used to analytically approach the linguistic realization of: a) "tolerable otherness", which tends to be more explicit, and b) "intolerable otherness", which remains more marginal.

5. Representation and critical discourse analysis: Highlighting and minimization strategies

Our analysis falls within the framework of critical discourse analysis, which investigates how linguistic practices reproduce social discrimination (Fairclough 1995). In particular, we will draw on the linguistic tools of analysis proposed by van Leeuwen (2008),[3] and focus on the ways in which these tools might operate within the broader theoretical framework of the discursive representation of (in)tolerance, presented in section 4.

To begin with, according to van Leeuwen (2008: 33), representations can assign either "active" or "passive roles" to social actors. "Activation" represents the social actors as the "dynamic forces in an activity", while "passivation" represents them as "undergoing" an activity or as "being at the receiving end of it" (van Leeuwen 2008: 33). According to van Leeuwen (2008: 60), it is crucial to consider not only which social actors are activated, but also in what kind of actions they are activated, namely whether their actions are:

- "transactive", i.e. actions that "involve two participants", the one who acts and the "goal" of the action (van Leeuwen 2008: 60). Van Leeuwen (200: 60) distinguishes between two subcategories: a) the "interactive transactions", i.e. "transactions with people", and b) the "instrumental transactions", i.e. "transactions with things";
- or "non-transactive", i.e. actions which "involve only one participant, the actor" (van Leeuwen 2008: 60).

Following van Leeuwen (2008: 60), "the ability to transact requires" and implies "a certain power, and the greater that power, the greater the range of goals that may be affected by an actor's actions"; while it is also of critical relevance which actions

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[3] We focus on the linguistic/textual tools proposed by van Leeuwen (2008). This is because we do not proceed with visual/multimodal analysis, as we will explain when we refer to the limitations of the present study (see section 9).

"affect people" and which actions "affect other kinds of things" (van Leeuwen 2008: 60).

Moreover, social actors can be represented either as individuals ("individualization") or as groups ("assimilation") (van Leeuwen 2008: 37). "Elite" social actors tend to be individualized (according to the purposes of the texts), while "ordinary people" tend to be assimilated, referred to as larger "homogeneous, consensual groups" (van Leeuwen 2008: 37-38). A main type of assimilation is "aggregation", which "quantifies groups, treating them as statistics" or numbers (van Leeuwen 2008: 37).

In addition, social actors can either be "nominated" or not (van Leeuwen 2008: 40). Again, it is "of interest to investigate which social actors are nominated" and which remain "nameless, fulfilling only passing roles" (van Leeuwen 2008: 40).

Following van Leeuwen (2008: 53-54), some of these strategies emphasize the individuals/groups they represent, framing them as significant and remarkable, relevant or of interest to the audience, while others de-emphasize the individuals/groups they represent, framing them as less significant, unremarkable and irrelevant or of little interest to the audience (see also Lymperi & Archakis 2024). Based on this, we believe that the representational strategies described above could be classified into a spectrum of highlighting-to-minimization strategies, on the basis of two semantic axes, the attribution/deprivation of *agency* and *face/name*, as follows (see also Table 2):

- attribution/deprivation of agency: activation in interactive transactions > activation in instrumental transactions > activation in non-transactive actions > passivation
- attribution/deprivation of face/name: nomination > individualization > non-nomination, assimilation > aggregation

(scaled)	**Highlighting strategies**		**Minimization strategies**	
Agency	Activation in interactive transactions	Activation in instrumental transactions	Activation in non-transactive actions	Passivation
Face/name	Nomination	Individualization	Non-nomination Assimilation	Aggregation

Table 2: Highlighting-to-minimization strategies

Drawing on the aforementioned discourse-analytic categories and combining them with the theoretical framework of the discursive representation of (in)tolerance (presented in section 4), we suggest that:

- the representation of the "tolerable", which has been argued to get more explicitness and ample visibility (see section 4), relies more on the use of highlighting strategies;
- while the representation of the "intolerable", which has been argued to remain marginal, lacking in explicitness and denied gaze in advance (see section 4), relies more on the use of minimization strategies.

6. Research data

Our data consists of 6 videos (see Table 3), posted on YouTube by the NGO Metadrasi[4] between December 2017 and January 2024. Metadrasi claims to organize "actions for" the "protection and support" of migrants, with the aim to "fill long-standing gaps in" their "integration […] in Greece" (Metadrasi n.d.). It provides "legal aid" to migrants, organizes housing programs and offers language courses to migrants (Metadrasi n.d.). Through the videos examined here, Metadrasi publicizes its actions, in order to inform and raise awareness of migration issues among Greek and European audiences. Therefore, we deem that these videos deal with the phenomenon of migration from a positive and humanitarian point of view.

The data selection was based on three criteria: a) the time period, which was selected in order to cover the so-called "refugee crisis", from 2015 onwards, b) the open access quality of the texts, and c) their ideological/political pro-migrant attitudes (see also Lymperi & Archakis 2024).

Videos	Title	Link	Date	Duration
1 (Metadrasi 2017)	METAdrasi – Action on Migration and Development	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YjNffdfOCo	15/12/2017	2:05 mins
2 (Metadrasi 2018a)	Foster care of unaccompanied minors from METAdrasi	https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=w1504d-T66Y	8/1/2018	1:53 mins
3 (Metadrasi 2018b)	Step to School: summer courses from METAdrasi: Euronews Report	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqUBo6UPB9s	13/6/2018	1:34 mins
4 (Metadrasi 2019)	Education for refugee and migrant children	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vtL0vEpeRQ	18/1/2019	1:08 mins
5 (Metadrasi 2023)	METAdrasi's School: refugees and migrants study Greek to pave the way for a new beginning	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf_yirg82gl	13/10/2023	5:59 mins
6 (Metadrasi 2024)	Academic Orientation Program from METAdrasi	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azbQfAxW3ak	18/1/2024	1:14 mins

Table 3: Research data

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[4] The data examined in this article is part of a broader study presented in Lymperi & Archakis (2024).

7. Data analysis: The language of A narrow representation of otherness

The data analysis aims to register the linguistic resources and means that sustain a narrow and more or less stable and unified representational context in which the texts under study portray migrants. In section 7.1, we explore how the inclusive language used in the texts can represent migrants as a "collective Other" and take on the metaphorical border work of maintaining a clear and safe distance between "us" and "them". We then investigate how, contrary to their agenda claims, the texts place a paradoxical emphasis on "us" and "our" supportive and humanitarian roles, while minimizing the representation of migrants (see section 7.2), unless migrants are required to provide guarantees for their assimilation into the sociocultural and linguistic norms of the national majority (see section 7.3).

Building on this analysis, in section 8 we will further elaborate on how this narrow representational context seems to be embedded in and further legitimizes the fragmented perception of the "migrant Other" that underpins western national discourses, even when it is articulated in terms of tolerance, denying the gaze to and bypassing in advance any "inconvenient" and "intolerable otherness".

7.1 "Us/them" distinctions: Linguistic border work and an "internal Other"

In this section, we investigate the main groups represented in the texts examined. Focusing on the patterns in the linguistic realizations of these group representations, we observe that the social actors represented in the data are repeatedly portrayed as two distinct groups, "us" vs. "them", as illustrated by the indicative excerpts (1-3):[5]

1) Every day, hundreds of people arrive in Greece, in search of safety. Most of *them* are unable to express *their* needs. *They* do not speak *our* language. How can *we* help *them*? […] Among those who ask for help, there are extremely vulnerable people […] Some of *them* have suffered torture in *their* countries of origin (video 1, Metadrasi 2017, 0:00-0:13, 0:36-0:40, 0:47-0:50).

2) *They* (i.e. refugee/migrant children) welcome with great joy whatever *we* offer *them* […] *We* will have two more *children* to take care of here (video 2, Metadrasi 2018a, 0:28-0:30, 0:55-0:58).

3) Every day, *we* stand by *refugee and migrant children* […] Let *us all* support *their* inclusion in Greek society (video 4, Metadrasi 2019, 0:35-0:39, 0:53-0:58).

The social actors in the above excerpts are represented, in van Leeuwen's (2008) terms, through assimilations, i.e. as separate groups. One group is linguistically realized largely through the third person plural, explicitly referred to in the texts and identified with migrants; the other is linguistically realized largely through the first person plural. It the members of the majority, that is, either the members of the NGO Metadrasi or, more broadly, the members of the Greek –and European– communities and audiences.

We can see, then, that in these texts a majority "we" frequently appears, which is repeatedly opposed to –rather than mixed with– another "them", namely

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[5] The excerpts analyzed here have been translated from Greek by the authors. Group representations commented upon here are marked in italics.

the migrants. This migrant "them", represented in the texts as more or less solid and internally homogeneous, is still recognized as the external, the "Other", against which and by virtue of which the majority "we" is linguistically introduced and constituted in the texts (and vice versa). This linguistic representation is seen to lie in the narrow national/racist differentiating understanding of migrants, which falls under the "defensive" reflexes of European communities to maintain a normalized "safe distance" between "us" and "them", in an effort to keep us "clean" and "pure" from them (see section 2).

In this light, such representations could be seen as a more latent form of exclusion and border work produced in an inclusive and pro-migrant context. That is, while migrants are not directly and physically excluded *out* of the European/Greek geographical borders, they remain Others *within* them, consistently not belonging to "us". The argument here is that it is precisely the language of "*their* inclusion" that articulates the distinction between some who "already belong" and others who "are to be included". It thus produces the symbolic boundaries beyond which the migrant is placed and recognized as a collective "Other", and behind which the national majority is entrenched as a collective "we" (c.f. Agamben 2005; Ahmed 2000; Athanasiou 2007; see also section 2). Therefore, this language of "*their* inclusion" is understood here as deriving from a visible otherness of migrants, while sustaining and further normalizing it. It constitutes some "internal Others" (Lentin 2004; see also Balibar 2017) who seem to be included precisely –and only– by virtue of their exclusion from that collective "we" (see Agamben 2005; Athanasiou 2007; Balibar 2017), still somehow recognized as "out of place" in this place (see also section 2).

7.2 Representational minimization of migrants: Limited representation of otherness and a paradoxical emphasis on "us"

In this section, we examine how the groups attested in the above analysis are further represented in our data, focusing on the distribution of highlighting and minimization strategies among them.

To begin with, highlighting strategies (i.e. activation in transactions, nomination and individualizations) are mainly used in our data to represent members of the national majority. In particular, agency is largely attributed to these members. They are highly activated in transactions, and most often in interactive transactions, i.e. as acting upon others and mainly upon migrants (see indicative excerpts 4-7):[6]

4) Metadrasi has **created** a bridge to **ensure** the communication between those who ask for help and those who can **provide** it *to them* […] It **offers** *them* the family warmth they lack (video 1, Metadrasi 2017, 0:14-0:23, 1:22-1:24).

5) I **considered** it necessary. For me personally. To **help** *these children* (i.e. refugee/migrant children) in any way I can. To **show** *them* a way. Because they feel uncertain about their future. To **make** *them* feel safe (video 3, Metadrasi 2018b, 0:19-0:37).

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[6] The transactions of the national majority (both interactive and instrumental) are marked in bold in the excerpts. The passivated recipients/beneficiaries of the interactive transactions (i.e. migrants) are marked in italics.

6) ((subtitle)) Since its establishment in 2010, the Organization has been **providing** Greek courses *to refugees and migrants* (video 5, Metadrasi 2023, 2:01-2:05).
7) ((subtitle)) METAdrasi is **implementing** the Academic Orientation Program from January 2023. It is **addressed** *to refugees and migrants* aged 18-25 […] The METAdrasi's academic advisor and teacher **support** the *students* throughout their studies (video 6, Metadrasi 2024, 0:24-0:29, 0:36-0:39).

Moreover, most of the times in our data the members of the Greek national majority are attributed face, through individualizations, while there are many cases where they are also attributed names, through nominations (see indicative excerpts 8-9):[7]

8) ((subtitle)) *Eleftheria Stroubouli*, Teacher (video 5, Metadrasi 2023, 2:23-2:29).
9) ((subtitle)) *Nikoleta Dimitrouka*, Head of Education Department (video 5, Metadrasi 2023, 4:00-4:05).

The attribution of face and names to the members of the national majority, in addition to the attribution of agency to them (through their high activation in instrumental and even more so in interactive transactions; see above), contributes to their overall highlighting in the texts examined here (see also Table 4). That is, they are presented to the audience as significant agentive actors (see also van Leeuwen 2008).

On the other hand, migrants are regularly minimized in our data. They are largely deprived of agency. They are usually passivated as recipients or beneficiaries of the actions of majority members (see indicative excerpts 4-7 above), while they are rarely activated, and when they are, their activation is rarely portrayed as affecting others (i.e. interactive transactions). Rather, their actions are usually portrayed as mere behaviours (i.e. non-transactive actions) that do not affect the surrounding world or others (see indicative excerpts 10-11). Furthermore, the migrants in our data are largely deprived of faces and names. They are rarely nominated. They are mostly assimilated, i.e. represented as a homogeneous group (see also section 7.1), whose particularities seem to be indifferent and irrelevant to the audience (see indicative excerpts 10-11). In addition, there are several cases where migrants are aggregated, i.e. represented by numbers or statistical entities (see indicative excerpts 11-12):[8]

10) The love you receive from the eyes of *these children* (i.e. refugee/migrant children), I think can erase any difficulty that may be troubling you. *They* welcome with incredible joy whatever we offer *them*. And *they* **feel gratitude** for everything. *They* may thank you twenty-five times, let's say, for a plate of food you offered *them* (video 2, Metadrasi 2018a, 0:19-0:38).
11) Every day, *hundreds of people* **arrive** in Greece, looking for safety. *Most of them* are unable to express their needs […] *Many of them* **lack** basic necessities […] *Thousands of unaccompanied children* **are alone** in Greece.

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[7] Individualizations and nominations are marked in italics.
[8] The assimilations and aggregations of migrants are marked in italics, while the non-transactive actions in which they are activated are marked in bold.

> Metadrasi makes sure that *unaccompanied minors* are transferred with safety from detention centres and precarious conditions to suitable accommodation facilities […] So that *they* don't **spend** a single day in detention conditions (video 1, Metadrasi 2017, 0:00-0:09, 0:55-0:57, 0:59-1:10, 1:11-1:14).

12) ((subtitle)) *40% of refugees* are children. In 2018, *1250 children* attended supplementary courses (video 4, Metadrasi 2019, 0:09-0:29).

Assimilations, non-nominations and even more aggregations of migrants contribute to their representation as distant, as well as insignificant and unremarkable, faceless and nameless groups, rather than as individuals, accessible and of interest to the audience (see also van Leeuwen 2008). This deprivation of migrants' faces and names, in addition to the deprivation of their agency (through their passivation and/or activation in non-transactive actions), contributes to their significant minimization in the texts examined here (see also Table 5) (see also Lymperi & Archakis 2024). Tables 4 and 5 display the distribution of minimization and highlighting strategies among the represented migrants and the members of the national majority, in the dataset.

(scaled from low to high)	Activated in instrumental transactions	Individualized	Nominated	Activated in interactive transactions	Total
Highlighted migrants	87	41	17	10	155
Highlighted majority	37	61	42	99	239

Table 4: Distribution of highlighting strategies in the dataset

(scaled from low to high)	Non-nominated Assimilated	Activated in non-transactive actions	Aggregated	Passivated	Total
Minimized migrants	98	58	18	64	238
Minimized majority	28	10	4	3	45

Table 5: Distribution of minimization strategies in the dataset

We observe that the most unbalanced distribution of these strategies in our data concerns: a) the strategies that rank at the top of the highlighting scale (i.e. the activations in interactive transactions and the nominations), which are much more widely used to represent the national majority (see Table 4), b) as well as all minimization strategies, which seem to be largely reserved for the representation of migrants (see Table 5). We suggest that these representational choices sustain a framing device that –more or less– foregrounds the national majority and its actions, while saving the background space for migrants, echoing the "irony" of western spectatorship of the suffering Other that Chouliaraki (2013) notes in detail; an irony largely marginalizing the voices of distant Others "rendering the West both the actor

and the spectator of its own performances", i.e. of its own humanitarian aid and support actions (Chouliaraki 2013: 18). In these terms, we would speak of a humanitarian discourse that, in our data, is raised by and –to a large extent– for the sake of its humanitarian agents, paradoxically "inviting" their "capacity of self-reflection" (see Chouliaraki 2013: 20) and reducing the Other to a peripheral spectacle only necessary to frame the highlighted/foregrounded humanitarian actions.

7.3 Conditional highlighting of migrants: Resorting to a narrow and "familiar otherness"

The analysis presented in the previous section identified some highlighting strategies used in the data to represent migrants (see Table 4). In this section, we focus further on these representations and explore the distribution of highlighting strategies used among the migrants represented in the texts. That is, we examine the conditions (if any) under which migrants are selected to be highlighted and emphasized in the data.

As shown in Table 4, the highlighting strategies used in the data for the representation of some of the migrants are: mainly individualizations and activations in instrumental transactions (i.e. the strategies ranked at the bottom of the highlighting scale), and less often nominations and activations in interactive transactions (i.e. the strategies ranked at the top of the highlighting scale). The migrants represented in this way are the ones who prevail and stand out in the data. They are brought to the fore and portrayed as more significant and interesting for the intended audience of the texts (at least compared to the majority of the others, who remain more or less minimized in the background; see section 7.2, Table 5), as we can see in indicative excerpts 13-14:[9]

13) ((subtitle)) *Mona Toba* is a migrant from Egypt […] Every day *she* is the first "student" who **comes** to the education centre. […] *Mona* **started taking lessons** with us and soon *she* **accomplished** a lot […] *Marina* is *Mona*'s daughter. *She* is also a student at METAdrasi […] *Marina* **attends** classes for minors […] To date, more than 21,000 students **have joined** the educational programmes of METAdrasi (video 5, Metadrasi 2023, 0:19-0:28, 0:42-0:45, 1:11-1:16, 1:28-1:32, 2:12-2:16).

14) ((subtitle: *Arzoo*, Student, EPA.S Web Design)) Hello. *My* name is *Arzoo*. *I*'m from Pakistan. *I*'m twenty-one years old. *I* **graduated** from Greek high school. And *I* didn't know what to **do** after that. Then *I* **came** to Metadrasi […] And they sent *me* to EPA.S. And *I* **started studying** as a graphic designer there. And now *I* feel better and confident (video 6, Metadrasi 2024, 0:00-0:11, 0:15-0:23).

Moving on to the conditions under which migrants are highlighted in the data, we observe that highlighted migrants, that is, those who are represented as remarkable and important to the audience (attributed some agency, faces and names), are almost always (see Table 6) those who have managed or are explicitly willing to

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[9] Individualized and nominated migrants are marked in italics, while the interactive and instrumental transactions in which they are activated are marked in bold.

assimilate to the linguistic and sociocultural norms of the national majority or engage in assimilation practices[10] (as we can see in indicative excerpts 13-14: *comes to the education centre*, *started taking lessons with us*, *attends classes*, *have joined the educational programmes*, *graduated from Greek high school*, *started studying*). The assimilation practices found in our data concern studying Greek, engaging with majoritarian sociocultural norms, and participating in national school courses. Table 6 presents the imbalanced distribution of the highlighting strategies used in the dataset for the representation of migrants in relation to the condition of their sociocultural assimilation; an imbalance that is not observed when we examine the corresponding distribution of minimization strategies (see Table 7). We would therefore argue that while minimization strategies are used in a more or less unsystematic way in the data, i.e. regardless of the condition of migrant assimilation, when it comes to highlighting strategies, we observe a systematic pattern in their use, i.e. highlighting strategies seem to be selected "properly", and almost exclusively, to represent socioculturally and linguistically assimilated migrants.

(scaled from low to high)	Activated in instrumental transactions	Individualized	Nominated	Activated in interactive transactions	Total
Regardless of sociocultural assimilation	5	2	2	2	11
On the condition of sociocultural assimilation	82	39	15	8	144

Table 6: Distribution of highlighting strategies in the representation of migrants in relation to the condition of migrant assimilation

(scaled from low to high)	Non-nominated Assimilated	Activated in non-transactive actions	Aggregated	Passivated	Total
Regardless of sociocultural assimilation	50	30	15	35	130
On the condition of sociocultural assimilation	48	28	3	29	108

Table 7: Distribution of minimization strategies in the representation of migrants in relation to the condition of migrant assimilation

Based on the above, we would argue that the texts under study do not bring to the fore migrants in general, as they claim to do (see section 6). Rather, this

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[10] The linguistic and sociocultural practices of assimilation here should not be confused with the representational strategy of assimilation (i.e. the representation of certain social actors as groups).

foregrounding (represented in the texts through highlighting strategies) seems to be conditional and relatively narrow. It is only a "familiar" migrant who prevails and stands out in the texts examined here: s/he is emphasized, attributed agency, face and name (see Table 6), and is also expected –and intended– to have some impact on the audience. What is highlighted then in our data is not the migrant as such, but rather his/her familiarity and assimilability to the national/majority norms, while any "unfamiliar" migrant otherness is only represented in the texts as minimized: migrants are largely deprived of agency, face and name (see section 7.2, Table 5), unless they provide guarantees of their assimilation.

8. Discussion: Fragments of otherness and the denial of gaze

The overrepresentation of familiarity as the only possible recognizable and performable dimension of migrants (through highlighting strategies) is seen here as a technique for differentiating between two categories of migrants in our data, marking some migrants as "more Other" than other migrants, albeit in a more peripheral way. This technique could be said to sustain in the texts the linguistic boundaries of what is here seen as a representational *fragmentation* of otherness, i.e. the linguistic boundaries between a more familiar, assimilable, and therefore more tangible otherness, close to the national audience, in contrast to a more distant, unfamiliar, unassimilable and untouchable otherness (see also Ahmed 2000: 44; Fassin 2001):

- the former is overrepresented in the data and is specified in more detail. This happens to such an extent (see Table 6) that we would argue that the "familiar" migrant (see section 7.3) yet visible as "Other" (see section 7.1) is introduced in the texts as the prevailing norm through which migrants are tolerated in order to be recognized. In other words, we would argue that this narrow and familiar otherness is shaped as the legitimate and visible, legible and eligible migrant status (on the basis of these texts);
- the latter, i.e. the unfamiliar otherness, is underrepresented in the data; it is only made visible as minimized and remains misrecognized and largely unspecified. Given the consistency of this minimization (see section 7.2, Table 5), we would say that this "unfamiliar" otherness is only marginally recognized in these texts and designated as intolerable, and is *therefore* largely rejected, delegitimized and denied gaze in advance.

We would hence argue that the texts examined here seem to represent those migrants whom the national audience would be tolerant of recognizing, while minimizing those who are expected to be perceived –even vaguely and slightly– as intolerable. Such intolerance, although not explicit, is seen here as underpinning the pattern of fragmentation between *visible* otherness and otherness *denied gaze*. And it is precisely the need for such a distinction that is suggested here to indicate a more peripheral and paradoxical operation of the racist stereotype of the "Other as threat".

The threat of the "unfamiliar Other" is not explicitly portrayed in our data. It remains liquid, only marginally signified. It takes place in the silences and gaps, or rather at the limits, of what is represented and tolerated to become visible in the

texts under study (i.e. the "familiar Other"). The liquid threatening status of the unfamiliar migrant gains only some collateral visibility and is recognized in the fragments, in the remnants, of the explicitly portrayed "tolerable otherness". Therefore, we argue that it sustains and promotes a more liquid fear, which takes on a more taken-for-granted status, emerging more as a default response to the Other. This latent fear is seen here to coexist with, and indeed to operate through, the foregrounded tolerance of the overrepresented familiar migrant. Rather than directly pointing out and stigmatizing a specific threat, it minimizes and unspecifies the representation of that threat, denying it gaze and making it vague (yet still present).

What remains unspecified is not only the unfamiliar linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds of migrants, which are largely underrepresented and minimized in our data, but also the very hint of their threatening status, which remains liquid and misrecognized in the fragments of the visible and tolerable "familiar otherness". On top of that, what remains unspecified is the vague and inconsistent intolerance and fear that underpins this minimization and denial of gaze in the first place. In this light, the discussion of migrant visibility in the texts under investigation might take the form of what is at stake in migrant visibility (see also Lymperi & Archakis 2024). That is:

- any alternative and unfamiliar migrant linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, which are largely minimized, delegitimized, and denied gaze in advance and thus fail to be recognized as part of migrant realities, promptly cut off and detached from the conceivable and performable migrant body (as it is designated in the texts);
- the very fact of the loss of these backgrounds (involved in the process of such minimization), which is also misrecognized and emerges as "normal" (see also section 4). This loss is introduced into such texts as a "default" and "integral" part of the recognition and representation of migrants. What is then lost in such representations of migrants (i.e. their linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds) could, in Bauman's (2011) terms, be reduced to "collateral damage", i.e. it is implied as inevitable, unremarkable (see also Butler 2004a) or even worth wasting in the process of rendering migrants visible.

In the light of the above, we would say that the representation and recognition of migrants in our data is regulated more with a (privileged) view to not threatening any national/majority normalities. The argument here is that it is precisely the proximity and suitability of the familiar migrant to national norms that sustains and allows the recognition, visibility, and toleration of migrants in our data. And it is precisely the lack of such proximity to these national norms that is the criterion by which the minimization and subsequent loss of any unfamiliar migrant status is reduced to unremarkable, negligible, and trivial processes (see also Ahmed 2000; Butler 2004a: 38). We would then argue that the fragmentation of "migrant otherness" noted in our data has passed linguistically through a narrow representational context, that is, through representational filtering and *simplification*, which introduces migrants into the texts:

- as one-dimensional and manageable entities, reduced to a recognizable and precarious social status;
- largely stripped of any complexity and variability and detached from any "otherness" that might unsettle the national and European majorities and challenge them to rethink their cultural bases and social realities (see also Butler 2004a: 38).

9. Concluding remarks

This paper falls within the broader study of social representations of migrants in western/European discourses. Our approach is based on two theoretical premises: a) that the very category of the migrant Other, largely drawn from and often exhausted in some western/national "commonsensical" recognition of the "Other as a threat" (rather than a resource), usually underpins even pro-migrant discourses when they are articulated in terms of tolerance; b) that such discursive scaffolding, although overwhelmed by all these national/racist assumptions, lacks explicitness and is pushed to the margins of the representations that sustain these discourses, resulting in a fragmentary representation of otherness.

We attempted to investigate the language and the degree of explicitness and marginality of such representations in our data through a linguistic analysis based on the categories of highlighting and minimization, conceptualized here drawing upon van Leeuwen (2008). Our main conclusion was that the video texts under study, while explicitly pro-migrant, seem to raise a conditional tolerance towards migrants, by portraying them in a more or less narrow representational context. They engage in a calculated projection of visibility onto migrants, rather than starting from their linguistic and sociocultural realities. The paper argues that this projection takes place and goes through a representational fragmentation of "migrant otherness" – evident linguistically in the representational minimization and simplification of migrants in our data – that fails to recognize, or rather bypasses, them beyond their adaptation and dependence on national/western standards, beyond their assimilability and "fitting in" to norms and patterns shaped *by* and *for* national/western majorities. This narrow representational context, which is largely drawn from and persists in the stereotype of the "Other as threat", is seen here:

- as embodying the national fear of the Other. Migrants are introduced into such texts in a more orderly, cautious, and circumspect manner (as fairly fixed, plain, and kept to a minimum). Their representation seems to be more reluctant and avoiding reference to any "migrant otherness";
- and as a way of *moving through* this fear. The representation of migrants in such texts, addressed more as a calculated and fragmented projection of visibility onto them, is also seen here as part of a western biopolitics of otherness. It regulates how much of the migrant Other can and should be tolerated (by rendering it visible and legitimizing it) and how much is justifiably dismissed and lost (by depriving it of visibility and delegitimizing it in advance); and, thus, it further normalizes (national/racist) prerogatives to do so, rather than suspending them.

Conceptualized in these terms, the representational fragmentation of otherness, i.e. the minimization and simplification of migrants observed in our data, is understood as implicitly deriving from –and further normalizing–western "commonsensical" and "default" perceptions of migrants as "out of place" in this place. Migrants are introduced into such texts and discourses as an internal Other that needs "to be legitimized. Their social presence is not addressed as justified, but rather as delegitimized *by default*, somehow *pending* to be contextualized and guaranteed as assimilable and non-threatening. That is, any legitimation of migrants in such texts and discourses is seen here only as *a posteriori* and conditional, *minimalist* and diluted, partial and selective, bound (as the analysis shows) to migrant assimilability and suitability to the European/western sociocultural and linguistic norms.

In conclusion, it is important to note that this article is subject to several limitations. First, due to the small data sample, it is impossible to claim the generalizability of our findings beyond our dataset. Thus, further and in-depth studies of pro-migrant discourses are needed in order to fully understand the phenomena under investigation. Moreover, a multimodal analysis would shed more light on the various semiotic ways (e.g. visual, auditory, etc.) that the texts under study use to represent migrants.

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