

# Xenophobic Hate Speech in Malta

*A Critical Discourse Analytic Perspective of Times of Malta  
Comments*

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*For the ones who remind us:*

*May Malimi*

*Ifeanyi Nwokoye*

*Mamdou Kamara*

*Abdulrahman Abdullah Hamza*

*The El Hiblu 3: Amara, Kader & Abdalla*

*Suleiman Ismail Abubaker & Kaba Konate*

*Abdulhamid Saied & Abduwili Ahmed Ali*

*Lassana Cisse, Ibrahim Bah & Mohammed Jallow*

*... and to Gabe*

*Cause he's my shining star*



*"Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated"*

*Coretta Scott King*

*"Instead of hate, celebrate"*

*Prince*



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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to uncover the ideologies and values imbued within the language used to describe migrants in below-the-line newspaper comment data in Malta. More precisely, it seeks to understand how the representation of social actors involved in discourse about migration reveals axiological information and stance pertaining to migrants. The complexity of this research goal necessitates an interdisciplinary methodological approach within which to frame the analysis. Hence, the research of this thesis is embedded within Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies. A number of corpora were constructed using data from the Times of Malta online newspaper forum to investigate the linguistic constructions of the social actors represented in the data, and the way that those constructions reveal ideologies and values therewith. Specifically, topic modelling was used to extract a subset of the Times of Malta comment data directly pertaining to migration, while multiple annotators were used to additionally formulate a sub-corpus of xenophobic hate speech therein. Subsequently, the data were analysed within the scope of van Leeuwen's (2008) semantic representation of social actors, and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) system of transitivity. Further, following the analysis of the annotated hate speech data, broader generalisations were made using corpus methods in an attempt to extrapolate the findings to the full Times of Malta dataset.

Through the analysis, this thesis shows that the Maltese are represented as the undisputed in-group – they are patriots and protectors, while a specific group of migrants are the definite out-group, who are not welcome on the island. The language used to describe this latter group consistently represents them in a position of subordination through which they are described as unwelcome guests who should return from whence they came. The Maltese, on the other hand, are consistently represented as the dominant group whose resources are being depleted by these undesirable people. In this respect, the discourse examined offers valuable insight into real-world treatment of the out-group whereby they are excluded from housing and other resources, in addition to facing discrimination daily.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>AD</b> Alternattiva Demokratika . . . . .	233
<b>AFM</b> Armed Forces Malta . . . . .	171
<b>API</b> Application Programming Interface . . . . .	86
<b>BNC</b> British National Corpus . . . . .	75
<b>CADS</b> Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies . . . . .	71
<b>CDA</b> Critical Discourse Analysis . . . . .	15
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<b>enTenTen</b> Corpus of the English Web . . . . .	75
<b>EU</b> European Union . . . . .	12
<b>GB</b> GigaByte	
<b>HS</b> Hate Speech . . . . .	76
<b>JRS</b> Jesuit Refugee Service . . . . .	176
<b>KWIC</b> KeyWord In Context	
<b>LDA</b> Latent Dirichlet Allocation . . . . .	96
<b>LGBTIQ+</b> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and Others . . . . .	7
<b>LSM</b> Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija	
<b>MalTE</b> Maltese English . . . . .	87
<b>MRU</b> Maltese Military Rescue Unit . . . . .	13

<b>MaNeCo</b> Maltese Newspaper Comments . . . . .	xiv
<b>MB</b> MegaByte	
<b>MGA</b> Malta Gaming Authority . . . . .	211
<b>MI</b> Mutual Information . . . . .	78
<b>MIPEX</b> Migrant Integration Policy Index . . . . .	228
<b>MLRS</b> Maltese Language Resource Server . . . . .	75
<b>MS</b> Microsoft . . . . .	104
<b>MWE</b> multi-word expression . . . . .	163
<b>NAPRAX</b> National Action Plan Against Racism and Xenophobia . . . . .	262
<b>NATO</b> North Atlantic Treaty Organization	
<b>NGO</b> Non-Governmental Organisation . . . . .	2
<b>NLP</b> Natural Language Processing	
<b>PD</b> Partit Demokratiku . . . . .	233
<b>SAR</b> Search and Rescue Missions . . . . .	13
<b>SFG</b> Systemic Functional Grammar . . . . .	17
<b>SPSS</b> Statistical Package for the Social Sciences . . . . .	120
<b>SQL</b> Structured Query Language . . . . .	104
<b>THP</b> Temporary Humanitarian Protection . . . . .	213
<b>TNC</b> Third Country National . . . . .	152
<b>ToM</b> <i>Times of Malta</i> . . . . .	xvi
<b>TVM</b> Televixin Malta . . . . .	227
<b>UN</b> United Nations . . . . .	1
<b>UNHCR</b> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees . . . . .	176
<b>URL</b> Uniform Resource Locator	
<b>USA</b> United States of America . . . . .	191
<b>XML</b> Extensible Markup Language . . . . .	88





# Introduction

Hate speech and discrimination have become pressing issues in societies worldwide, necessitating a deeper understanding of their underlying mechanisms and implications. In fact, in recognition of the “alarming trend of rising hate speech”(United Nations, 2019), the United Nations (UN) launched the ‘United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech’ in 2019. Further, zeroing in closer to home, “[a]ccording to a 2020 study conducted for the European Parliament and a 2021 study supporting the European Commission’s initiative to counter hate speech and hate crime, the incidence of these phenomena has steadily increased across the EU in recent years” (Bąkowski, 2022).

Indeed, hate speech can have a significantly negative impact on society. In the context of racist discourse, Matsuda (1989) asserts that the “presence and the active dissemination of racist propaganda means that citizens are denied personal security and liberty as they go about their daily lives” (p. 2321). Further, Gelber and McNamara (2015) note that beyond the consequences of hate speech on an individual’s mental and physical health, it can additionally cause harm by:

persuading hearers to believe negative stereotypes that lead them to engage in other harmful conduct; shaping the preferences of hearers so that they come to be persuaded of negative stereotypes; conditioning the environment so that expressing negative stereotypes and carrying out further discrimination become (often unconsciously) normalized; and causing hearers to imitate the behaviour (Gelber & McNamara, 2015, p. 2)

In view of the above, this thesis seeks to address issues of hate speech in Malta by focusing particularly on the way that xenophobic sentiment discursively manifests in racism and discrimination faced by migrants. While there has been some previous research on hate speech in Malta, much of it tends to be quite broad, thus failing to really

capture the essential mechanics of hate speech (see: Assimakopoulos, Baider, and Millar 2017; Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat 2017a), or is conducted by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and therefore, may lack the academic rigour necessitated by scholarly inquiry (People for Change Foundation, 2016; SOS Malta, 2016). This thesis differs from previous local works by focusing on a very specific type of hate speech - hate speech against migrants - and conducting an in-depth analysis with the view of understanding how the representation of the social actors embedded in the discourse contribute to the dissemination of discrimination and hate.

Such a focused analysis is particularly relevant in view of the fact that hate speech tends to be notoriously difficult to decipher, and therefore, accurate identification becomes problematic. The illusory nature of hate speech ultimately has negative consequences on research in the area, since the identification and annotation of hate speech proves very challenging (Bretschneider & Peters, 2017; de Gibert, Perez, García-Pablos, & Cuadros, 2018; Nobata, Tetreault, Thomas, Mehdad, & Chang, 2016; Ross et al., 2017; Tulkens, Hilde, Lodewyckx, Verhoeven, & Daelemans, 2016). In addition, the elusive qualities of hate speech naturally also negatively impact issues of policy and law, since it is difficult to control a phenomenon that is not adequately understood. To this end, this thesis seeks to provide a deep understanding of the linguistic construction of xenophobic hate speech in Malta and how those constructions relate to the broader social structures and power dynamics on the island.

Even at face value, the very term *hate speech* itself offers a superficial indication as to the complexity that research dealing with it entails; a study of hate speech should, by definition, be two-pronged, since it does not only necessitate a linguistic analysis of the relevant speech, but should also include an examination of the sorts of ideas and beliefs that might give rise to (discriminatory) hatred against some particular group in society. And while this may be a very simplified view of the task at hand, it does underline the fact that an investigation of hate speech requires a deep understanding of politics, society, and history, over and above a close examination of linguistic form and function per se. Naturally though, the first task at hand for such research would be to (at least try and) define *hate speech*, which as the discussion below shows, is not as simple as one might hope.

## 1.1 | Defining *hate speech*

The main difficulty in pinpointing a universally accepted scholarly definition of hate speech is that different researchers have slightly varying views on the matter. Indeed,

Sellars (2016) is highly critical of the fact that “[f]or the great depth of discussion about the harms of it, how it is spread, the appropriate public and private responses to it, and how it should be reconciled with theories of free expression, surprisingly little work appears to have been done to define the term ‘hate speech’ itself” (p. 4). Moreover, when legal interpretations of hate speech and discrimination laws are considered, the conversation takes yet another turn. Thus, the best that any researcher can do is to come up with a solid working definition, and establish consistent terminology. To this end, in this section, I will first illustrate some of the legal definitions of hate speech from around the world in order to establish a basic working legal definition, but then move on to some of the more nuanced meanings included in the works of researchers of hate and discrimination from a social scientific perspective in order to finally establish the working definition and terminology to be used in this thesis.

### 1.1.1 | Hate speech as a legal concept

In law, there appears to be a scale by which some countries have no constitutional protection against hate speech on the grounds of freedom of expression<sup>1</sup>, while others have laws whereby particular types of speech are completely outlawed. Examples of the two ends of this scale are the United States on the one hand and Germany and Austria on the other. The First Amendment of the United States reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances (Walenta, 1995-2010)

The First Amendment quoted above is the source of much debate in the U.S. and globally as a justification for the lack of American legislation against hate speech, with some scholars often recognising the need to re-evaluate the Amendment (see Barnes 1995; Demaske 2019; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw 2018; Shiffrin 2016). At the other end of the scale there are countries such as Germany and Austria, which do not only outlaw speech that incites violence toward specific targeted groups on the basis of protected characteristics (such as gender, race, and sexual orientation), but go as far as banning particular topics, as is the case of the well-known *Volksverhetzung* law in Germany, which outright bans Holocaust denial:

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<sup>1</sup>Consideration of the intersection between hate speech and free speech is outside the scope of this present study. For a more thorough discussion, see El Sherief, Kulkarni, Nguyen, Wang, and Belding 2018; Lillian 2005; Lillian 2007; Reddy 2002; Pohjonen and Udupa 2017.

whoever publicly or in a meeting approves of, denies or renders harmless an act committed under the rule of National Socialism of the type indicated in Section 220a subsection (1), in a manner capable of disturbing the public piece [sic] shall be punished with imprisonment for not more than five years or a fine. (Dannemann, 2015)

In between these two extremes, there are varying degrees and types of legislation, which safeguard minorities against hate speech on the basis of protected characteristics, “where the term ‘protected characteristics’ denotes membership to some specific social group that could, on its own, trigger discrimination” (Baider, Assimakopoulos, & Millar, 2017b, p. 3). In Malta, for example, the 2014 amendment to the Constitution and the Criminal Code was enacted to offer protection to vulnerable groups on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity in addition to race, colour, language, ethnic origin, religion or belief or political or other opinion. Thus, according to the Maltese Criminal Code, Article 82:

(1) Whosoever uses any *threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour*, or displays any *written or printed* material which is threatening, abusive or insulting, or otherwise conducts himself in such a manner, with *intent* thereby to *stir up violence or racial hatred against* another person or group on the grounds of *gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, ethnic origin, religion or belief or political or other opinion* or whereby such violence or racial hatred is likely, having regard to all the circumstances, to be stirred up shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term from six to eighteen months.

(2) For the purposes of the foregoing subarticle “*violence or racial hatred*” means violence or racial hatred against a person or against a group of persons in Malta defined by reference to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, religion or belief or political or other opinion (Government of Malta, 2016, emphasis added)

The excerpt above demonstrates a number of pertinent issues with regard to hate speech and Maltese law. Firstly, although the legislation does criminalise “abusive or insulting words” (ibid.), the parameters of such words are left vague and are thus very much left up to individual interpretation - the classic *reasonable person* standard (McGinley, 2012; Moran, 1996). This is particularly problematic in this context since, as Donovan and Wildman (1981) argue, the notion of the reasonable person tends to render

minorities invisible within the legal system. Moreover, the Criminal Code specifies that such language or behaviour should be done “with intent thereby to stir up *violence* or racial hatred” (Government of Malta 2016, emphasis added), ergo emphasising *violence* almost to the exclusion of discourse and behaviour that may be discriminatory, but not violent. Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and South Africa, like Malta, have provisions against hate speech targeted at a significant number of different minority groups, yet they go even further through the omission of mention of violence. In Canada, for example, one is guilty of hate speech “by communicating statements in any public place, [or if one] incites hatred against any identifiable group” (Government of Canada, 2017), while in Iceland:

[a]nyone who *publicly mocks, defames, denigrates or threatens* a person or group of persons by *comments or expressions* of another nature, for example by means of *pictures or symbols*, for their *nationality, colour, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity*, or *disseminates such materials*, shall be fined or imprisoned for up to 2 years (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004–2018, emphasis added)

This omission of violence means that even language that does not incite violence, but that is nonetheless disparaging toward minorities, is prohibited. Such legislations acknowledge the inevitable link between the language used in society and concerns of freedom and liberty as well as the possible need for such policy to forge a more inclusive society.

All in all, as Alkiviadou (2017) points out, “[t]hese varying understandings of hate speech also mean that, regardless of the Framework Decision at the EU level, there is little coherence amongst EU member states on the definition of hate speech” (p. 7). Despite this lack of coherence, it is clear from these few examples that a number of countries do have legislation against the sort of discourse that constitutes the subject-matter of this thesis.

Interestingly enough, however, the phrase *hate speech* itself does not appear to be a quintessentially legal term; indeed, criminal codes rarely use the term *hate speech* in legal documents (Muscat, 2021).<sup>2</sup> Similar observations have also been made by Alkiviadou (2017), who examined the relevant legislation of ten European countries.<sup>3</sup> Hence, even

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<sup>2</sup>One exception to this is the legislation of South Africa of which chapter 2 of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000 is called ‘Prevention, Prohibition and Elimination of Unfair Discrimination, *Hate Speech* and Harassment’ (Office of the Presidency, 2000, emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup>Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

though legislation does not typically make use of the term *hate speech*, it “is often incorporated, at least as a notion, into legal and policy documents” (Baider et al., 2017b, p. 3). This poses the first major problem in the examination of hate speech; the implication is that, from a legal standpoint, there is no consensus as to what constitutes hate speech and what sort of language falls within the parameters of such legislation.<sup>4</sup>

For this reason, a legal analysis alone is insufficient for a proper understanding of the meaning of the term *hate speech*. Hence, it is necessary to turn to other scholarly inquiry in section 1.1.2 in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under question. Although legislation often attempts to define hate speech in a narrow sense in order to protect minorities while also safeguarding freedom of expression, academics and scholars tend to acknowledge the need for a broader interpretation to account for the behaviour underlying it, and thus extend the discussion to other more specific phenomena such as racism, sexism, homophobia and so on.

### 1.1.2 | Hate speech in scholarly discussions

In a similar vein to some of the legislation described above, Erjavec and Kovačič (2012) define hate speech as:

an expression that is *abusive, insulting, intimidating, harassing, and/or incites to violence, hatred, or discrimination*. It is directed against people on the basis of their *race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, physical condition, disability, sexual orientation, political conviction, and so forth* (Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012, p. 900, emphasis added)

Although Erjavec and Kovačič (2012) claim that this definition encompasses the common elements of the various scholarly definitions of hate speech, it is in fact somewhat of a narrow description, since it specifies that the rhetoric must *abuse, intimidate, harass* and/or *incite violence*. In fact, only the word *insult* does not connote violence in some way. Though they do use the ‘*and/or*’ caveat, the mention of violence precludes the possibility of non-violent hate speech. However, violence as a prerequisite of hate speech can be problematic. To illustrate why this is, it is beneficial to use an example from the Creating an On-line Network, monitoring Team and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics (C.O.N.T.A.C.T.) project (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017), which investigated online homophobic and xenophobic discourse in Malta and which served as a pilot study for this thesis. For that research, two datasets of online newspaper comments

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<sup>4</sup>Although the legal ramifications of legislation are outside the scope of this thesis, one can never entirely forget the impact that such research can have on policy and social institutions.

were created: a dataset of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and Others (LGBTIQ+)-related discourse and a dataset of migrant-related discourse. Within the set of homophobic comments identified within the Maltese dataset, the following comment can be found:

*“people marry because they fall in love, and although it’s a choice, it was meant to be like that even in the animal kingdom, for example swans mate for life, male and female, not male and male.”* (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017b, p. 45)

Using Erjavec and Kovačič’s (2012) definition above as a benchmark, a comment like this would have to be excluded from a discussion of hate speech from the outset. As we point out in our analysis (ibid. p. 45), however, although this comment might not seem to outright discriminate, the allusions beneath the literal interpretation paint a different picture. For example, resorting to the Gricean notion of conventional implicature, it is possible to show that the use of ‘*although*’, which is typically used to communicate contrasting ideas, implies that “even though marriage is a choice for people who fall in love, it is also a choice that comes with restrictions” (ibid., p. 45). Moreover, by using the comparison with the animal kingdom, the person writing the comment is implying that deviations from heterosexuality are deviations from the norm and, therefore, unnatural. Hence, while the above assertion may in fact not be deemed hate speech from a legal standpoint, due to the ideological representation of gay people as unnatural and different from the norm, one would not want to outright exclude it from a dataset of discriminatory discourse entirely.

While keeping with the notion of violence, in her discussion of hate speech, Whillock (1995) begins to make strides towards including such concepts as *ideology* and *shared values*:

[r]ather than seeking to win adherence through superior reasoning, hate speech seeks to move an audience by creating a symbolic code for violence. Its goals are to inflame the emotions of followers, denigrate the designated out-class, inflict permanent and irreparable harm to the opposition, and ultimately conquer (Whillock, 1995, p. 32)

Here, rather than violence per se, Whillock (1995) describes hate speech as a *symbolic code for violence*. Therefore, while hate speech might not necessarily have to engage with or incite violence, it is violent by its very nature. Moreover, she acknowledges its role in further excluding the *out-class* of society, a theme that, as will become clear, is central to the subject matter of this thesis. Along similar lines, in his research on homophobic

hate speech, Reddy (2002) explains that “hate speech could be transformed as a form of hate crime against homosexuals” (p. 202), hence demonstrating the impact that hate speech and hate crime can have not only on the psychological well-being, but also the physical well-being of minority group members, as well as further exhibiting the fine line between hate as a symbolic code of violence that serves to exclude the out-class and hate as a manifestation of physical violence.

Taking somewhat of a bottom-up approach to the definition of hate speech, Pohjonen and Udupa (2017) identify the common elements of several scholarly working definitions and state that the literature agrees that hate speech involves the denigration of a person or group of people on the basis of their collective identification with a particular group. Based on the original treatise by Waldron (2012), they note that this sort of discourse has two key characteristics: “the first is to dehumanize members who belong to another group, and the second is to reinforce the boundaries of the in-group against the out-group by attacking the members from the other group” (Pohjonen & Udupa, 2017, p. 1175).<sup>5</sup> Here, it is already evident that the discussion is moving away from the necessity of violence as dictated by Maltese legislation and Erjavec and Kovačič (2012) to a more nuanced one heading in the direction of *power structures* within society and *groupness*.

Indeed, as Teo (2000) asserts in a study dealing with racist discourse in newspapers, such discourse is typically “embedded in a much larger, but less transparent structure of power discourse that disguises dominance in naturalized discourse” (p. 8), and should thus be studied as a function of it. In a similar vein, in his discussion of the representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers, KhosraviNik (2010) places more of an emphasis on the way that discourses “involve theoretical and conceptual notions of prejudice, ideology, power and various sources of legitimation” (p. 2). He uses the work of Stuart Hall (1989) to demonstrate the use of discrimination in keeping the status quo that exists between different sections of society. In this view, discriminatory discourse “serves to establish social, political and economic practices that preclude certain groups from material and symbolic resources” (KhosraviNik, 2010, p. 3). Like Pohjonen and Udupa (2017), KhosraviNik’s analysis makes no mention of violence. Moreover, it offers greater specificity in the realm of social theory by mentioning the theoretical and conceptual notions of *symbolic resources* and *groupness*, thus marking a shift in the relatively rudimentary definitions of hate speech from a legal perspective to a broader conversation of *discriminatory discourse*.

As the discussion above should make clear, no universally accepted definition of

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<sup>5</sup>Indeed, the phenomenon known as ‘othering’ is central to the claims made in this thesis and, to this end, is explored in greater detail in section 6.1.

hate speech exists. Additionally, beyond that lack of convergence between definitions, the frequent misinterpretation (or slight change in interpretation) of the work of several scholars is cause for further disconnectedness in the various definitions. A good illustration of such reinterpretations is the definition of hate speech provided by Warner and Hirschberg for which they turn to the The Encyclopaedia of the American Constitution and use the work of Nockleby (2000) to define it as “*any* communication that disparages a person or a group on the basis of some characteristic such as race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristic” (Warner & Hirschberg, 2012, p. 19, emphasis added). While this is indeed close to what Nockleby (2000) expresses, it does change his original meaning slightly. Rather than using the word *any*, Nockleby (2000) actually explains that hate speech “is usually thought to *include* communications of animosity or disparagement. . .” (p. 1277).<sup>6</sup> Although the difference in wording between ‘*any*’ vs ‘*include*’ may appear to be shallow and insignificant, it does serve to offer a very good representation of a major issue involved in hate speech detection (and annotation).<sup>7</sup> The term *hate speech* is generally used to refer to a specialised legal concept of speech that somehow breaks the law in the national context in which it is spoken - and the law, in principle, should not in any way be open to interpretation in the context of prosecution, even if, as mentioned, it is not a term generally used in legislation. In view of this, as will continue to be made clear, hate speech is not *any* language that disparages a minority; for language to be considered hate speech, it needs to disparage as well as meet other criteria (such as the intent to stir up racial hatred) and, thus, *include* is far more accurate a term. With this in mind, this discussion should not serve as a criticism of the various definitions used to give meaning to the term *hate speech*, but to draw attention to the sort of reinterpretation and misinterpretation in hate speech literature that often creates major problems for the establishment of a solid working definition that stands up to the scrutiny of scholars from different fields (e.g. linguistics, sociology, and law).

### 1.1.3 | Towards a working definition of hate speech

The discussion above motivates the need for a clear and precise definition for hate speech. Furthermore, thus far both the terms *discrimination* and *hate speech* have been used. Though they have not been used interchangeably, the distinction between them

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<sup>6</sup>Elsewhere in the Encyclopedia of the American Constitution the relationship between hate speech and the First Amendment is discussed, however this is outside the scope of this present argument, which is embedded in Maltese society and legislation.

<sup>7</sup>Indeed, the lack of universal clarity poses significant difficulty for the identification and annotation of hate speech data as will be explored in greater detail in chapter 4.

remains somewhat ambiguous. One way of addressing this issue is by resorting to Cortese's (2006) four-stage model of hate speech to devise the solid working definition to adopt for the remainder of this thesis. The model firstly distinguishes between intentional and unintentional discrimination/hate. In addition, this framework acknowledges that discrimination can vary in severity. With this in mind, discrimination and hate can fall in any one of the four stages of the "stage-development model of hate speech severity" (Cortese, 2006, p. 7), as follows:

#### Stage 1: Unintentional discrimination

Negative and discriminatory discourse directed at members of (or a member of) a protected group due to their identification (or perceived identification) with that protected group. Unintentional discrimination escapes the conscious awareness of the speaker and is usually done without malicious intent.

#### Stage 2: Conscious discrimination

Consists of discourse that fits the description above, but also includes the added layer of intent. This is conscious and deliberate, and it may cause emotional distress to those targeted.

#### Stage 3: Inciting discriminatory hatred

Discriminatory hatred comprises all the above, but is more severe and includes generating feelings of hatred toward minorities. It is at this stage that discrimination becomes hate speech in the view of the more general definitions that exclude *violence* from its classification.

#### Stage 4: Inciting discriminatory violence

This stage includes all of the above with the addition of a threat or a call to violence against protected minorities. This is, by far, the most extreme form of hate speech.

Within this scope, the first two stages of Cortese's model constitute *discrimination*, while it is the second two, in the context of the discussion thus far, that many would consider hate speech. However, it is only at stage 4, with the inclusion of *violence*, that hate speech, according to this model, becomes unambiguously illegal under Maltese

law.<sup>8</sup> In any case, the difference between discrimination and hate speech according to this scale may be delicate, but it is critical, since the dichotomy may mean the difference between prosecution and not. Thus it should become clear that while *discrimination* is more broadly discourse that may preclude certain groups or generally denigrate minority groups (in other words - any communication that disparages a person or a group on the basis of some characteristic such as race), *hate speech* goes a step further by inciting hatred *and/or* violence toward a particular group (Cortese, 2006) and is often prosecutable by law. Thus, it is this definition of hate speech that is adopted by this research; any speech that is equivalent to the stage 3 and 4 of Cortese's model is taken to constitute hate speech.

## 1.2 | Scope of this thesis

A number of pertinent generalisations can be borne out of the discussion so far. Like Pohjonen and Udupa's (2017) summary, which offers a sound and succinct exploration of the common elements in hate speech research across the board, Cortese (2006) and KhosraviNik (2010) also show that violence (symbolic or actual) is not crucial to a discussion of hate and discrimination. Thus, in the realm of theoretical and empirical inquiry, the legal notion of hate speech does not go very far. With this in mind, this research seeks to investigate the complexity of ideologies associated with hate as evidenced through language use. Hence, a distinction is necessary between *hate speech* in the legal sense that can be prosecuted under the law, in particular under Maltese legislation (and is in line with stages 3 and 4 of Cortese's (2006) model) on the one hand, and *discriminatory discourse* on the other, in the sense of rhetoric that exhibits underlying inferences of discrimination by means of shared ideologies, beliefs, and values, which essentially "'manufactures' assumptions, legitimises dominance and naturalises inequality" (Baider et al., 2017b, p. 5).

At the same time, an examination of relevant scholarly work clearly shows that hate speech consists of a complex system of beliefs and practices. In an analysis of racist discourse, for example, Josey (2010) asserts that "racist speech is not merely referential in nature. Rather, it represents a complex set of indexical practices, which dispel many of the myths about the simplistic strategies of racists and racist speech" (p. 28).<sup>9</sup> Hence,

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<sup>8</sup>Due to the somewhat vague phrasing of the law as "intent thereby to stir up violence or racial hatred", its understanding can be arguably open to interpretation.

<sup>9</sup>The principle of *indexicality* refers to "ways in which the meaning of cultural forms, including language, is a function of how members engage these forms in the course of their social conduct" (Ochs, 1996, p. 410). Within this scope, for example, indexicality essentially forms the foundation of Labov's (2006)

it is necessary to look beyond the referential surface of the discourse under investigation in order to gain a full grasp of the nature of hate speech and the mechanics at work in the formulation of the ideologies, values and beliefs that are indexed below the surface of the language.

Against this backdrop, this research seeks to investigate the complexity of ideologies associated with hate as evidenced through language use within the sociopolitical context of Malta. In a way, it is an offshoot of the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project<sup>10</sup>, which served as a pilot for this thesis. Essentially, the project sought to address issues of discrimination and hate speech as part of a European Union (EU) priority by gaining a deeper understanding of online hate speech in several countries across the continent (Baider et al., 2017b). Within the remit of the project, therefore, each participating country (Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom) had a team of researchers working with local data.

The Malta strand of the project made several important observations (see Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat 2017c, 2017a, 2018), most notably that xenophobia appears to be a much greater cause for concern than homophobia locally. According to the findings of the project “homophobia has become less of an issue locally in recent years, while xenophobia is steadily following the opposite trend” (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017a, p. 183). Indeed, the results of the polarity analysis in which we analysed the stance conveyed in the discourse under investigation showed that 24.2% of the LGBTIQ+ data revealed a positive stance towards the minority group in question, in contrast to 18.7% being negatively charged, with the corresponding figures in relation to migration discourse standing at 16.3% positive and 32.3% negative stance (ibid.). Thus, not only was there more negative than positive discourse pertaining to migrants, but there was more negative data related to migrants than there is to the LGBTIQ+ community overall. Hence, the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project informed the present research by paving the way for the decision to focus solely on xenophobic discourse, as a necessary step for a thorough and multi-layered analysis of the data under scrutiny in the space of a single dissertation.

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seminal work in which he shows that certain variations in speech (such as the choice between [t] and [θ]) index specific social identities (e.g. masculinity, working class, solidarity). Furthermore, indexicals do not only mark social group membership, but can also reflect “language’s capacity to index speakers’ attitudes and feelings towards what is spoken about” (Lucy, 1996, p. 64).

<sup>10</sup>See Assimakopoulos et al., 2017 for a full description of the project and its findings.

### 1.2.1 | The Maltese context

To fully understand the relationship of discrimination with different groups of migrants, it is necessary to briefly consider migration in Malta. The aforementioned rise in xenophobic hate speech identified by the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project can be seen to correlate strongly with a steep rise in migration. With this in mind, the Mediterranean migration crisis, which unfolded in the 2010s, has had a significant impact on Malta, both sociopolitically and economically. In close proximity to North Africa and as one of the entry points into Europe, Malta became part of the periphery of the EU with its accession in 2004, thus leading to new intakes of migration (Mainwaring, 2014). Essentially, with its accession, Malta was mandated to abide by EU duties and policies and, therefore, the “Maltese Military Rescue Unit (MRU) became part of Search and Rescue Missions (SAR) at sea, Malta’s government had to accept the Dublin Regulation, and refugees’ fingerprints were saved in the EURODAC system” (Nimführ, Otto, & Samateh, 2020, p. 162).

According to the UNHCR (2001-2023c), in 2008, a significant surge in migrant arrivals in Malta peaked with 2,775 individuals arriving to seek asylum. Although these figures sharply declined in 2010 due to an Italian government policy of migrant push-back, they subsequently started to increase consistently. This upward trend led to another zenith in 2019, with 3,406 people being rescued at sea and transported to Malta (UNHCR, 2001-2023b). At the same time, Malta has seen an equal increase in migration from Europe. In 2020, the population of Malta was 514,564 (European Union, 1995-2023e). Of this, 102,910 were not Maltese citizens, divided almost evenly between EU citizens (52,761) and Third Country Nationals (50,419). Further, “the number of EU nationals working in Malta [rose] from 2,270 in 2005 to 31,551 in December 2018” (D. Debono, 2022, p. 393).

Against this backdrop, there have been a number of important policy developments in recent years; specifically, D. Debono (2022) highlights four. These include:

1. the facilitation of migrant employment, including recruitment directly from third countries to address shortages in the labor market (such as in the gaming industry, elder-care, health, and hospitality);
2. the citizenship-by-investment programme, which presents high-income and ultra-high-net-worth individuals and their families with the chance to secure Maltese citizenship through investments;
3. the significant reduction in the duration of detention of asylum seekers and irregular immigrants;

#### 4. the migrant integration policy published in 2018.

Despite the aforementioned policy shifts, however, “[m]igrants in Malta today face several key challenges in relation to their status as non-citizens in Maltese society and their ethnicity” (ibid., p. 402). Indeed, Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2018) posit that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East face widespread discrimination. Further, D. Debono (2022) notes that although the number of migrants arriving by irregular means are statistically insignificant compared to those who use more regular channels,

the social and political impact is great. The politicisation of this form of migration is only partly due to the irregular nature of the flows; one also needs to note other legal, socio-economic and cultural factors that contribute to the perception of migrants as undesirable. For example, there are clearly class and race issues: this form of boat migration tends to be used by poor, underprivileged migrants and/or refugees coming from different Arab, Asian and Sub-Saharan regions to seek sanctuary (D. Debono, 2022, p. 391-392)

The observations made by D. Debono corroborate the discussion of Pisani (2022) in light of the racially-motivated murder of Lassana Cisse in which she posits that the ‘brutal murder’ serves as a tangible manifestation of policies that have shown minimal concern for the dignity or lives of black refugees and migrants arriving by boat, and underscores institutional racism and the systemic shortcomings of key institutions. Consequently, the intake of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa as well as the sociopolitical dynamics of the region have contributed to the emergence of hate speech and discriminatory practices targeting migrants in Maltese society. Indeed, Vaughan-Williams and Pisani (2020) note that although migrants are the key social actor in discourse pertaining to the so-called ‘migration crisis,’ their voices are often noticeably absent. Furthermore, as Mainwaring (2019) points out, “[i]gnorance and misinformation encourage the perception of being invaded by migrants, leading to xenophobia and racism” (p.116). And, as noted by the research conducted for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, these sociopolitical realities surrounding the migration crisis in Europe have played an important role in shaping the discourse of migration in Malta.

With this in mind, this thesis seeks to make observations pertaining to the linguistic make-up of racism and xenophobia, as well as related ideologies imbued within the language. To this end, it seeks to accomplish this by examining the representation of the main players involved in the discussion of migration in Malta by ascertaining who

they are, how they are linguistically constructed, and finally, how those constructions convey axiological information and ideological stance.

## 1.3 | Thesis overview

This thesis seeks to identify the ideologies imbued in migration discourse by analysing the linguistic representations and patterns in hate speech against migrants. This includes understanding how social actors are portrayed in the discourse, exploring additional identities conveyed through language, and analysing discourse patterns within hate speech. Furthermore, the scope of the research extends to explaining the frequency of discourse patterns identified, the relationship between hate speech and other ideologies, and identifying ideological patterns in hate speech against migrants. Finally, this research evaluates how the representation of social actors aligns with current power structures and investigates the use of language as a tool to maintain power in the context of migration in Malta. Within this scope, the specific research questions will be outlined in section 2.2.1 when Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is explored and a more thorough framework is developed.

In view of the above, the discussion thus far should make evident the complexity involved in research involving an axiological investigation of linguistic representations. Because of this, Wodak (2009) puts forth a logical eight-stage procedure that a solid discourse analytic project can follow (reproduced below verbatim):

1. Activation and consultation of prior theoretical knowledge (i.e., reading and discussing existing research);
2. Triangulation: Systematic collection of data as well as contextual information from multiple genres (newspaper reporting, parliamentary debates, TV discussions; public spheres such as media, schools, and semi-private conversations in focus groups);
3. Selection/preparation of data for the specific analyses (selection of relevant foci, downsizing huge corpora in relationship to important events, transcribing tape recordings, etc.);
4. Specification of the research questions, formulation of assumptions and/or hypotheses (on the basis of a literature review and first data analyses, initial assumptions can be formulated);

5. Qualitative pilot analysis (systematic pilot study of at least two and at most four posters allows testing categories and first assumptions);
6. Detailed case studies (after the pilot analysis has been conducted, the whole range of data can be systematically analyzed while applying the tools and categories tested in the pilot analysis);
7. Formulation of critique (the three levels of critique should be applied explicitly, interpreting the results, testing possible readings while including context information, etc.);
8. Application of analytical results (if possible, the results might be proposed for application; for example, the images of foreigners could be changed in school books, guidelines for non-discriminatory language use could be proposed, etc.).

(Wodak, 2009, p. 324)

These stages are useful and adaptable to any approach (or collection of approaches) adopted by researchers seeking to investigate evaluation through language, though Wodak herself states that it may not always be possible to follow each stage given the often limited time-frames and resources available to scholars. In view of this, the researcher may have to select just a few of the stages in order to do any one justice.

For the most part, this thesis addresses all eight stages. Firstly, as already mentioned, the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project served as a pilot for this thesis, and through that, much was gained in relation to where to focus investigation, as well as the sort of data to work with and what to avoid when handling it. Against this backdrop, this thesis seeks to make observations pertaining to the linguistic make-up of xenophobic hate speech in Malta, by zooming in on the ideological underpinnings imbued within discourse. Specifically, the data collected for this thesis reflect the period 2008-2017, and although the socio-political landscape has changed since then, the ensuing discussion and analysis is embedded within scholarly work contemporary to that time. Further, any social changes are duly considered in section 8.6 of the concluding chapter with a consideration of how these changes may impact future research in the area.

Naturally, this inevitably requires a complex methodological standpoint. One such method is known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which offers a powerful framework for exploring the “connections between language, power and ideology” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 23). Chapter 2 outlines this principle theoretical framework within which the present research is embedded and outlines the research questions that this thesis seeks to answer therewith. With this in mind, chapter 2 starts off with an overview

of the intricate relationship between language and ideology, before turning to elucidate the principles of CDA and some of the tools it provides for analysing the relationship between language, power, and social structures, making it particularly suitable for examining discriminatory discourse (Fairclough, 2010), and thus, by extension, hate speech too. Subsequently, chapter 3 outlines the theoretical background behind the adoption of corpus assisted methodologies for data organisation and analysis. To this end, it substantiates the need to employ computational methods in contemporary critical discourse analytic research and motivates the highly eclectic approach that this thesis takes with the view of making claims pertaining to xenophobia and racism.

Following this, chapter 4 outlines the qualitative and quantitative methodological frameworks employed by this research. In the first instance, it describes the process of data selection and the construction of the corpora used in this research. Here, topic modelling is proposed as an alternative to search terms for the selection of data to populate a hate speech corpus. Hence, chapter 4 outlines the various data sets (corpora) developed for this thesis and the procedures for annotation, mark-up, and down-sampling adopted. This research employs corpus linguistics methods, which involve the analysis of large collections of texts (corpora) to identify patterns of linguistic and axiological features (Baker, 2012; Baker et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2005). Thus, a hate speech corpus was constructed and analysed to examine the linguistic constructions and patterns of discriminatory discourse. Additionally, a larger corpus of newspaper comments was analysed to expand the scope of the investigation and assess the prevalence and patterns of hate speech and discriminatory discourse within the broader sociocultural context. Within this scope, one of the principle aims of this thesis is to explore the extent to which the findings of a small (hate speech) corpus can be extrapolated to provide insights into the broader discourse embedded in Maltese society. Finally, discussion in this chapter explores the qualitative frameworks through which the data collected for this thesis is analysed. To begin, Halliday's framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) offers a comprehensive perspective on language and its functions in social contexts (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). It permits the examination of the relationship between language, power, and ideology, which is pertinent to understanding the construction of hate speech and discriminatory discourse. Moreover, van Leeuwen's (2005; 2008; 2018) sociosemantic approach provides a systematic procedure for assessing the representations of social actors in discourse. By integrating these frameworks, this research aims to offer a holistic understanding of the complex interplay between language, power, and discrimination.

The linguistic constructions uncovered within the data is examined in chapter 5, which explores the lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical devices employed to con-

vey hate against migrants. Through detailed linguistic analysis informed by Halliday's SFG and van Leeuwen's sociosemantic framework, chapter 5 aims to uncover the linguistic strategies utilised in the construction of discriminatory narratives. Consequently, chapter 6 builds upon the analysis of the linguistic constructions identified in chapter 5, by exploring the function of the discriminatory discourse within the Maltese sociopolitical context. By examining the discourse patterns and their sociocultural and political implications, chapter 6 aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how discriminatory practices are perpetuated and reinforced. Finally, chapter 7 contextualises the hate speech and discriminatory discourse examined within the sociopolitical landscape of Malta. It sheds light on the sociopolitical context, facilitating a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics that contribute to hate speech and discrimination. In addition, chapter 7 evaluates the findings from the hate speech corpus and seeks to extrapolate them to the broader discourse within Maltese society. By analysing a larger corpus comprising all newspaper comments collected for this thesis, chapter 7 aims to assess the generalisability of the findings and their implications for understanding societal attitudes towards migrants in Malta.

Finally, chapter 8 summarises the main findings of the thesis and discusses the limitations encountered during the research process. Moreover, it offers insight into the potential for future research and concludes by emphasising the importance of combating hate speech and discrimination against migrants, particularly within the specific context of Malta.

Through the various discussions in the chapters presented here, this thesis makes significant contributions to research by shedding light on the discursive mechanisms of hate and discrimination in Malta. The research shows that migrants are commonly delegitimised and problematised within the discourse of the corpora constructed for this thesis. Furthermore, there exists demonstrable evidence of such discrimination within society, manifested through discriminatory policies and the exclusion of migrants from essential resources. It achieves this through the creation of three meticulously curated corpora. Additionally, this thesis presents a novel approach to CDA by introducing automated methods for down-sampling, particularly through topic modelling techniques. In this respect, this research demonstrates a proof of concept whereby findings from a small dataset closely analysed qualitatively can be effectively extrapolated to larger datasets using corpus techniques, thereby facilitating robust generalisations at a larger scale. These contributions do not only enhance the understanding of hate and discrimination dynamics, but also offer methodological advancements for future research in the field.

## The critical investigation of hate speech: theoretical background

Historically, theoretical linguists have sought to investigate phenomena such as ambiguity, language acquisition, and knowledge. As such, the study of language has often been notoriously “isolated from its social environment” (Halliday, 2003, p. 86). However, there has also been numerous researchers interested in observing language in its natural environment, thus paving the way for the strand of linguistics known as sociolinguistics (ibid.). This thesis is firmly rooted within the overlapping fields of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics. While sociolinguistics primarily examines the relationship between language and society by investigating how language varies and changes in different social contexts - i.e. how social factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, and social class influence language use, and how linguistic variations are perceived by speakers and listeners, anthropological linguistics takes a broader cultural perspective by exploring how language is intertwined with cultural practices, identity, and social norms.

At the same time, as Ochs (1996) explains, “typically, information about social identities, actions, stances and the like is not made explicit” (p. 409). This gives sociolinguists and anthropological linguistics pause to investigate the ways in which identities and evaluations can be implicitly communicated in language. Within this purview, since ideologically-affected evaluations might not be made explicitly by speakers, a rigorous examination of the language used to construct a discourse is bound to reveal axiological information imbued beneath the surface structure of the linguistic constructions.

In this vein, Hunston and Thompson (1999) argue that “there are three functions that evaluation is used to perform, and each one of these make it an object of interest to the linguist” (p. 6). Specifically, evaluations:

- i convey the viewpoint of the speaker or author, thereby mirroring the individual's and their community's system of values;
- ii formulate and uphold connections between the speaker or writer and the listener or reader;
- iii structure the communication.

Against this backdrop, and given that sociolinguists seek to investigate “the way people use language in different social settings” (Chambers, 2015, p. 4601), adopting a joint sociolinguistic and anthropological perspective, involves, as Ervin-Tripp (1969) notes, making systematic observations pertaining to the relationship between linguistic forms and social meaning. In other words, it is concerned with the way in which “these forms are designed to serve human affairs” (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1). This is of particular importance in the context of hate speech since, as Volkova, Silvestri, and Lopez (2014) acknowledge, “not all people are able to defend themselves from becoming conditioned to conceptualize the world around them in linguistic images which violate the principles of liberty, equality, solidarity and human dignity” (p. 2). In the context of this research, therefore, the way that language is used to serve the social realities pertaining to migration in Malta is the primary focus of investigation, with a view to uncovering the mechanisms involved in the spreading and perpetuation of negative views of migrant minorities.

## 2.1 | Critical discourse analysis

Within this broader outlook for the study of language, CDA has its roots in discourse analysis and critical linguistics. Discourse analysis is a strand of linguistics that seeks to examine language in use. Fundamentally, it takes a descriptive approach, by viewing language with respect to its purpose and function, and thus attempts to describe linguistic forms in relation to the environments in which they occur (Brown & Yule, 1983). On the other hand, critical linguistics was later designed to take descriptive linguistics further and allow researchers to additionally build commentary upon the hidden ideology imbued in language. According to Fowler (1991), critical linguistics:

seeks, by studying the minute details of linguistic structure in the light of the social and historical situation of the text, to display the consciousness of belief and value which are encoded in the language - and which are below

the threshold of notice for anyone who accepts the discourse as ‘natural’ (Fowler, 1991, p. 67)

Through the work of Norman Fairclough, who is a prominent figure in the original development of CDA, four basic themes emerge (Fairclough, 1995, p. ix):

- the relationship between language, ideology and power
- the relationship between discourse and sociocultural change
- the centrality of textual analysis to social research
- the principles and practice of critical language awareness

In view of these four themes, the question as to how these relationships can be analysed emerges.

A natural starting point for an elucidation of CDA is an attempt to first define the concept of discourse itself. According to Reisigl and Wodak (2001):

‘discourse’ can be understood as a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts that manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as ‘texts’, that belong to specific semiotic types, i.e. genres (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 36)

This definition of discourse already gives much food for thought. It makes clear that discourse is made up of more than just language;<sup>1</sup> rather, it lies at the intersection of language and axiological semiosis. This connects well with Fairclough’s (1989) characterisation of discourse as dynamic, in the sense that language may play a central role in discourse, but it is the discourse as a whole that plays the most important role in the formation of social relationships and in the shaping of ideology. In this regard, discourse can be seen as action and would thereby require an analytical framework that matches the sophistication with which speakers manipulate and use language to convey deep-rooted ideologies and engage in the struggle for power (ibid.).

Before moving on to a discussion of the application of CDA to the analysis of xenophobia and hate speech, it is necessary to first clarify the notions of *ideology* and *power*,

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<sup>1</sup>Naturally, beyond the investigation of the linguistic manifestation of prejudice and discrimination, it is also possible to investigate other semiotic media, such as gestures, pictures, sculptures etc. (see van Leeuwen, 2005, 2021).

which are central to any approach to CDA. Within the framework of the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), which will be returned to shortly, Reisigl and Wodak (2017) explain *ideology* as "an (often) one-sided perspective or world view composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes and evaluations, which is shared by members of a specific social group" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, p. 88). From this perspective:

Ideologies serve as an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse: for example, by establishing hegemonic identity narratives, or by controlling the access to specific discourses or public spheres ('gate-keeping'). In addition, ideologies also function as a means of transforming power relations more or less radically. Thus, we take a particular interest in the ways in which linguistic and other semiotic practices mediate and reproduce ideology in a variety of social institutions. One of the aims of the DHA is to 'demystify' the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that establish, perpetuate or fight dominance (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, *ibid.*)

This definition and the ensuing discussion place particular importance on hegemonic identities and gate-keeping. *Hegemony*, a term originally brought to popular use by Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci (Buttigieg, 1992; Hoare & Smith, 1971), refers to ways in which the ruling class is able to dominate a culturally diverse society. More specifically, hegemony can be viewed as "the ideal representation of the interests of the privileged groups as universal interests, which are then accepted by the masses as the natural political, and social order" (Orlowski, 2011, p. 2). Thus, the perpetuation of hegemonic identities is achieved largely by the engagement of the media and other social institutions with the dissemination of natural, normative, and ordinary ways of living and being (Donaldson, 1993) - for example by predominantly foregrounding the interests of dominant social groups such as white, straight, and male. Within this scope, CDA theorists have paid much attention to ways in which such hegemonic identities are linguistically manifested. For example, Kiesling (2006) shows that stories that men tell depicting the sexual relationship between men and women often reinforce ideas of hegemonic heterosexuality embedded in a broader discourse of hegemonic masculinity by portraying women as objects and men as 'hunters for sex'.

Gate-keeping on the other hand relates more to the notion of power. Although the concept of social power can have numerous overlapping and often disputed definitions, for the purpose of this thesis, power is taken to refer to "the potential influence that an

agent can exert on another person" (Tedeschi, 1974, p. 3). More specifically, and consolidating the work of various theorists, power is here defined as "control over resources that may be used to gain influence over the decisions of others ... [and] interpersonal and intergroup influence directed toward change and involving manipulatory and contested modes of influence" (ibid., p.3). Along these lines, in their seminal work, Erickson and Schultz (1982) describe gate-keeping as the authority of one person to affect the future of another person. Their description reveals the idea of asymmetry in the various social roles of individuals and the ability of some to assert authority and even obligation over others. In this sense, an employer might prevent an employee from obtaining a promotion, or a male-dominated society might prevent a woman from entering politics or the clergy. Similarly, in culturally diverse societies, minority groups can be prevented from obtaining housing and other social services. With this in mind, CDA has the potential to investigate the various dimensions involved in an exchange between a speaker and addressee, including the dimension of power, which can expose the perception of speakers and hearers as equal to, subordinate to, or superior to one another (Hudson, 2001).

A more concise explanation of the notion of ideology is offered by van Dijk (2000). For him, the true concept of ideology is difficult to pin down in a single sentence, but a good approximation of a succinct description might be "something to do with systems of ideas, and especially with the social, political or religious ideas shared by a social group or movement" (ibid., p. 5). Even more basic than that, Eagleton (1991) characterises ideology as "the study or knowledge of ideas" (p. 1). Ideas, therefore, appear to be central to the notion of ideology, although, the term *idea* itself is not sufficient in providing a clarification of what *ideology* means within the realm of CDA. Thus, for a more in-depth view of ideology, the introductory chapter by Eagleton (1991) establishes six core definitions that seek to encompass the notion in its entirety:

1. Following the work of Karl Marx (Marx & Engels, 1998) ideology can be viewed as the "general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life. Such a definition is both politically and epistemologically neutral, and is close to the broader meaning of the term 'culture'" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 28). Hence, it embodies the multitude of "signifying practices and symbolic processes" in any given society.
2. Ideology can also be viewed as life experience of particular socially significant groups of society as symbolised through a set of ideas and beliefs, whether true or false.

3. Ideology can also be defined as the “promotion and legitimation of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests” (ibid., p.29).
4. Then, it can also be approached as the promotion and legitimation of the interests of a dominant class, thus ensuring that the interests of the powerful elite are served and the complacency of subordinating groups is warranted.
5. Similarly, ideology can be seen to comprise “ideas and beliefs which help to legitimize the interests of a ruling group or class” (ibid., p. 30).
6. Finally, ideology has also been described as a system of false beliefs arising from the material structure of society.

The list above does little in the way of offering a concrete definition of the notion of ideology. What it does do, however, is demonstrate the essence of ideology as a system of beliefs and ideas (whether true or false) within a given society, which interact with the groups and structure of that society and, in the context of the discussion above, serves to establish and maintain unequal power relations and cultural hegemony. In turn, when ideologies are reproduced through discourse, that discourse functions in a way that establishes and reasserts unequal power relations, cultural hegemony, and ultimately, gate-keeps. Within this scope, the critical discourse analyst seeks to understand how this hegemony and unequal power is reflected within and perpetuated through discourse.

Not all researchers follow the same trajectory, but there are a number of core elements that any solid CDA study should include. According to Fairclough (1995), a complete CDA analysis should comprise three key components. For him, a CDA study should first attempt to provide a “*linguistic description* of the text” (ibid., p. 97, emphasis in original). Thus, the researcher’s first task is to describe what linguistic patterns feature in the data. Secondly, the research should offer an “*interpretation* of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text” (ibid., p. 97, emphasis on original), thereby considering how one might understand the said patterns as contributing towards discourses. Finally, a CDA analysis should give an “*explanation* of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes” (ibid., p. 97, emphasis in original). This final explanation stage should attempt to illustrate why these patterns, and this discourse overall, are being used in this way in relation to the historical, social and political context. In sum then, at its most basic, CDA seeks to describe linguistic patterns, interpret them in relation to discourse, and finally explain them in view of a broader context, and although not always explicitly stated

in research dealing with discrimination from a CDA perspective, these three stages are commonly adhered to by most researchers.

A good demonstration of how the three-dimensional approach can be executed is van Dijk's (1992) discussion of the structural nature of racism for which he uses story structure to expose patterns in everyday talk about ethnic affairs. The data that van Dijk analyses comprises discourse from 180 interviews with white people from various neighbourhoods in Amsterdam and San Diego; specifically, he uses 144 stories from the Dutch interviews. He bases his research on the hypothesis of Labov and Waletzky (1997) that oral versions of personal experience typically follow a fundamental narrative structure made up of the following stages:

- i *orientation*: orient the listener/reader to the specific person(s), place(s), time(s), and behavioural situation(s) that are being discussed in narrative. The orientation section is not always necessarily included in a narrative;
- ii *complication*: the complication section is the main body of the narrative and it usually comprises a series of complicating events and actions;
- iii *evaluation*: a break between the complication and the resolution in which emphasis is placed on the point at which the complication reaches a peak;
- iv *resolution*: the section of a narrative following the evaluation stage in which the results of the narrative are put forward;
- v *coda*: although not included in all narratives, the coda is a function device used for returning to the present moment. It may be used to provide a final thought and tie up loose ends.

While the conventional narrative schema comprises the aforementioned structural components in this order, van Dijk's (1992) analysis of the interviews is often lacking a resolution category. In the stories that form part of the data set, the complication stage usually describes some negative event involving an ethnic minority in which the complication is never fully resolved. van Dijk (1992) illustrates this using a story told to him about a Surinamese woman who became the neighbour of the interviewee and who takes advantage of the Dutch social services by claiming welfare but then purchasing an expensive bed and redecorating her apartment (orientation). Subsequently, the negative complication stage narrates that, unsatisfied, the Surinamese woman wanted more and, therefore, cheated the welfare system. The story then ends with a general negative conclusion (coda) that 'they' come to the Netherlands to profit off the Dutch. The lack

of resolution to such negative complications result in general negative conclusions being made about the story (and, in this case, the minority group being described). van Dijk (1992) explains this as a way of enabling speakers to make generalisations about the negative properties of the out-group, since the lack of a resolution category allows speakers to end their narrative at the complication stage of a story, making it possible for a single ethnic event to be seen as a characteristic of the entire ethnic situation. This inevitably leads to the construction of a problematic 'them' versus 'us' as victims.

Similarly, in another study, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak (1999) build a corpus comprising: (i) politicians' speeches at commemorative events (most notably in relation to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Austrian Republic); (ii) newspaper articles published prior to the referendum of EU membership in 1994 - specifically focusing on Austrian neutrality and European security policies; (iii) advertisements and slogans circulated in the lead up to the referendum; (iv) focus group discussions; and (v) qualitative interviews that focused primarily on national identity. The principle goal of their research was to uncover discursive strategies of dissimulation and assimilation in the construction of national identities. Similar to the conclusions drawn by van Dijk (1992) above in relation to the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', de Cillia et al. (1999) find that 'we' can be used toponymically as an adverbial qualification of 'in Austria'. This can be seen as a clear attempt to identify a national Austrian 'we', and reveals a speaker's presumption to speak for all Austrians as a homogeneous group. In their evaluation, the researchers demonstrate that the use of such a toponymical 'we' functions in a way that indicates that Austrians are the 'we' group who share similar characteristics (in this case, the traits of being hard-working and sociable). This example also serves to further demonstrate the three stages of CDA suggested above, since the researchers first *describe* the linguistic formulation 'we' before interpreting it as an adverb of qualification, and subsequently offering *explanation*.

Indeed, Lillian (2007) suggests that the most elementary dichotomy pertinent to CDA of discrimination is that of the 'self' versus 'other', 'we' versus 'them'. Through the work of Riggins (1997), she notes that the external other can be an individual or a collective group assumed to share similar traits. Moreover, Lillian (2007) proceeds to use the writings of van Dijk to explain that identifying a person "or some group as 'other' is not inherently discriminatory against the one(s) so identified, but in practice, when powerful speakers/writers categorize someone(s) in that way, they utilize a strategy which van Dijk (1997) characterizes as positive self-presentation, negative other presentation" (p. 727).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The elementary role of the Us/Them dichotomy is further reinforced by the work of Wodak (2009) de-

Within this view, simply singling an individual out is not inherently discriminatory, but becomes so, when that same action is performed by a member of a dominant social group to a member of a minority group in a way that reinforces the cultural hegemony and ideologies of dominance of the given culture. In other words, according to this view, discrimination is relative to one's position in society. For example, in segregation-era United States, banning black people from the use of public premises such as movie theatres, public pools, and public transport is, today, considered discriminatory, while in the same era, a bar for only black people would not be considered discriminatory towards white people since 'whiteness' formed/forms part of the dominant hegemony of society and, therefore, visibly caucasian people had relatively easy access to all other public spaces and resources.<sup>3</sup>

In any case, it can be argued however, that the structural blueprints laid out above, although useful, are incomplete when it comes to the discussion of discriminatory discourse. van Dijk (1992) argues that "stories convey powerful moral *evaluations* about the behaviour of the out-group" (p. 220, emphasis added). If such evaluations are commonplace in discourse pertaining to minorities, then they are vital to investigate in a thorough CDA analysis of discriminatory discourse, which in fact, does seem to be the case. For example, in his study on homophobic hate speech in Africa, Reddy (2002) shows that the language and imagery used in the data indicate an opposition to and devaluation of gay people. Similar observations have been made by Josey (2010) through an analysis of the discourse of The Terrible Tommy Show, a radio programme broadcast on the allegedly racist Insurgent Radio station ([www.resist.com](http://www.resist.com)). At the time of Josey's research, Insurgent Radio was run by Tom Metzger who also directed the group known as 'White Aryan Resistance'. Metzger hosted the The Terrible Tommy Show - a call-in radio show that used pre-recorded listener calls, but to which Metzger responded live on air. Josey's (2010) analysis of 20 hours of data found that "Tommy adeptly employs shifts in register to index three distinct identities: the good ol' boy, the expert and the insulter" (p. 32). In the role of insulter, Josey argues that Tommy "asserts himself as owner of the only true form of the Aryan Movement, but also discredits those who, in his view, are riding the coat tails of other more authentic groups" (*ibid.*, p. 36), thus evaluating other groups as less authentic.

In view of the above, this thesis posits that a solid CDA investigation, and especially

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scribed in section 2.1.1 in which she uses phenomena such as topoi and argumentation to investigate manifestations of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. Indeed, this sort of 'us'/'them' dichotomy plays a significant role in the construction of the discourse analysed for this thesis (see section 6.1 for a more thorough discussion of its theoretical perspective and relevance to this research).

<sup>3</sup>Conversely, a bar for only black people can be construed as a safe space for minorities to congregate without fear of harassment.

one focusing on hate speech, should also include an *evaluation* stage over and above description, interpretation, and explanation discussed above since, as noted in chapter 1 the investigation of hate speech consists largely of uncovering evaluations, stances, and ideologies imbued within the language.<sup>4</sup> In this vein, the evaluation stage is involved more deeply in the observation of power and ideologies discussed above with the view of identifying the values that drive the linguistic constructions used in discourse and answering questions such as who in society benefits from the said linguistic patterns. To summarise, in the view of this research, a thorough critical discourse analytic framework should comprise the following four stages:<sup>5</sup>

1. Description: what linguistic patterns feature in the data?
2. Interpretation: how can the said patterns be understood as contributing towards discourses?
3. Explanation: why are these patterns, and the discourse overall, being used in this way in relation to the historical, social and political context?
4. Evaluation: who in society benefits from the said linguistic patterns?

Adding evaluation to Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model fits in well with much of the research that has been conducted on hate speech and discrimination. As mentioned, in the study referred to above, Josey (2010) shows that Tommy employs register shifts (description) in order to index distinct identities (interpretation), which Tommy uses to assume a certain level of solidarity (explanation). Indexing these three identities allows Tommy to create a general sense of whiteness as well as "what he considers to be a more holistic notion of 'good' white identity" (ibid., p. 32). By doing so, Tommy presupposes that everybody listening to the show shares a similar worldview on racial issues, which further "serves to position Tommy and his group in sharp contrast to folk beliefs or rhetoric that all too often marginalizes more overt racialised speech out of scholarly discourse" (ibid., p. 36) (evaluation).

It is evident then that CDA requires a multi-layered approach, which has the mechanisms to both describe language with regard to its form and content as well as evaluate

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<sup>4</sup>Along similar lines, in their edited volume dealing with the synthesis of corpus linguistic methodology with CDA, Baker and McEnery (2015) acknowledge the fact that, while the analyses in all of the chapters engage "with description and interpretation stages, some move into explanation and critical evaluation too" (Baker & McEnery, 2015, p. 3).

<sup>5</sup>It is worth noting that, although the four-stage model of discourse analysis provides a neat and methodical way of analysing data, in practice, it is difficult to keep them absolutely separate since the investigation of one stage will naturally inform the investigation of the other three.

it with respect to the underlying ideologies that are not immediately visible, and that lie beneath the surface of the linguistic elements identified. In this respect, one of the most important similarities of most formulations of CDA is their *interdisciplinary nature*. Any thorough study that adopts CDA as a framework should be, by definition, interdisciplinary since researchers require both linguistic tools and categories as well as social theory.

This much has been underlined by numerous researchers; so much so, that one chapter by van Dijk is entitled “Multidisciplinary CDA: a *plea* for diversity” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 95, emphasis added). In this chapter, van Dijk (2001) argues that “CDA should be essentially diverse” (p. 96), and that researchers should not fall into the danger of following, what he calls “one great master” (p. 95), but rather integrate the best works and theories of various scholars. Similarly, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) claim that the interdisciplinarity and multi-methodological procedures of the DHA enable researchers to reduce the risk of critically biasing the data and help to avoid “simply politicising, instead of accurately analysing” (p. 35). Along similar lines, Fairclough goes even further by stating that he has reservations in referring to CDA as a method at all, since the term ‘method’ is so often taken to refer to some sort of “‘transferable skill’ . . . within a box of tools” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 121). Rather, Fairclough (2001) views CDA as a theory, as much as he does a method and states that:

it is a theory or method which is in a dialogical relationship with other social theories and methods, which should engage with them in a ‘transdisciplinary’ rather than just an interdisciplinary way, meaning that the particular co-engagements on particular aspects of the social process may give rise to developments of theory and method which shift the boundaries between different theories and method (Fairclough, 2001, p. 121)

In a similar way, van Leeuwen (1993) proposes forgoing the idea of CDA as a method all together in favour of highlighting the duality of discourse. For him, the relationship between language and social practice is twofold, “there is discourse as itself (part of) social practice, discourse as a form of action . . . [and] discourse as a way of representing social practice(s), as a form of knowledge, as the thing people say about social practice(s)” (van Leeuwen, 1993, p. 193), and therefore, any attempt at uncovering the mechanics of those relationships has to be equally complex. With this in mind, it is now possible to consider three mainstream CDA approaches that have been most widely applied to research pertaining specifically to discrimination and ideology construction.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>While Norman Fairclough is a central figure in CDA, he is not included in the discussion of approaches

### 2.1.1 | The discourse historical approach

Starting off with the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to CDA, discourse is defined as:

- a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action
- socially constituted and socially constitutive
- related to a macro-topic
- linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view

(Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, p. 89)

This definition encompasses the various dimensions of the approach and, therefore, informs each subsequent methodological decision therein. Within this context, the DHA enables researchers to show how utterances, texts, genres, and discourses as well as sociological variables (such as gender and nationality) might be intertextually or interdiscursively connected and, therefore, that discourse and texts can change apropos socio-political change (ibid.). An obvious example of this is the lexical changes that often accompany social development such as the shifts in use of 'nigger' to 'coloured' to 'black person'; of 'queer' to 'gay'; of 'gay' to 'happy'; and of 'retard' to 'person with an intellectual disability'.

As elucidated in section 2.1, the distinction between ideology and power is central to the DHA, since Reisigl and Wodak (2017) claim that language does not have power on its own. Rather, it is a tool used by powerful people to gain and maintain power, whereby:

'Power' relates to an asymmetric relationship among social actors who assume different social positions or belong to different social groups. Following Weber (1980: 28), we regard 'power' as the possibility of having one's own will within a social relationship against the will or interests of others. Some of the ways in which power is implemented are 'actional

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that form the foundation of this thesis. The reason for this is simple; Fairclough focuses much of his work on the relationship between language, power, and ideology paying specific attention to global politics, democratisation, and education (see, for example, Fairclough, 1993, 1995, 2010). On the other hand, the three approaches cited here have been broadly applied to the analysis of discrimination, and therefore, offer significant insight for this thesis.

power' (physical force and violence), the control of people through threats or promises, an attachment to authority (the exertion of authority and submission to authority) and technical control through objects, such as means of production, means of transportation, weapons, and so on (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, p. 88-89)

Herein lies one of the main questions for CDA: how is language used as a tool for maintaining social power? Moreover, as is indicated in the definition above, power can be "signaled, for example, by grammatical forms within a text or a text's genre" (Wodak, 2009, p. 312), such as the higher representation of interviews and quotes of certain groups in the media.<sup>7</sup>

The DHA, as formulated by Wodak and her colleagues, is three-dimensional, whereby first, the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse are established (e.g. racist, homophobic, nationalistic discourse, etc.). Subsequent to this, discursive (and argumentation) strategies can be examined before finally identifying the linguistic means (types) and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realisations (tokens) of (discriminatory) stereotypes (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). For example, through their discussion of the DHA in relation to research on anti-Semitic discourse in Austria, Reisigl and Wodak (ibid.) show that the discursive strategy of "'hasty generalisation' [is] linguistically often realised with the help of generalising or particularising synecdoches, or in implicit forms, linguistically often conveyed via stories that contain fallacious examples and allusions" (ibid., p 105). The writers illustrate this by means of an example from an interview with Holocaust survivor, Moses Gereck, in which he relates his experience of crime reporting. Gereck asserts that "[i]f Mister Mueller is a criminal, they say, Mister Mueller is a criminal. But if Moses Gercek is a criminal, one says: 'The Jews are criminals' " (Heenen-Wolff, 1994 in Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 64).

Within the framework of the DHA and in relation to the first stage of CDA posited in section 2.1 above (*description*) Reisigl and Wodak (2017) put forth five questions that a researcher can ask with respect to the linguistic construction of a discourse in order to uncover the discursive strategies used by the language user. These are:

1. How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?

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<sup>7</sup>It is worth noting that although Reisigl and Wodak (2017) mention *mental representations* in their definition of ideology discussed in the previous section, their research is not concerned with such representation. Rather, as described above, they focus more on the way that language can mediate and reproduce ideology. As will be discussed in the following section, on the other hand, van Dijk (1993) is largely concerned with such mental representations.

2. What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?
3. What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?
4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated?

(Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, p. 93-94)

In this setting, Reisigl and Wodak (2017) define *strategy* as "a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal" (p. 94). However, such a definition may pose a number of problems. As will be discussed in further detail in the next section, in van Dijk's view, many of these strategies form part of various mental models and, therefore, there may be some sort of rule-based structure that allows attitude to transform into language and communication in an unconscious and not controllable way (van Dijk, 1980).

Emily Martin's study (1991) of the depiction of the sperm and the egg in medical text books (described in greater detail later in this chapter) nicely demonstrates the way that linguistic manifestation of the descriptions reflect dominant ideology and cultural hegemony pertaining to sexual intercourse. Despite these observations, E. Martin (1991) does not argue that such language is selected purposely. On the contrary, she contends that the language construction in medical textbooks is bound by culture rather than conscious decision-making. Similarly, when discussing the frequent grammatical subordination of women, Cameron and Kulick (2003) suggest that:

[s]peakers, writers and singers are not necessarily aware of any consistent logic underlying their decisions about the most 'natural' or 'appropriate' grammatical form for sentences like these. But in making the choices they do, whether consciously or not, they reproduce the underlying logic of men's agency and women's passivity, and recirculate it to the recipients of their discourse (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 30-31)

Turning back to the DHA, and making no assumption about the conscious nature of such discourse strategies, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) claim that there are five discursive strategies that specifically contribute to the construction of positive self- and negative other-presentation. These are:

- i. *referential (or nomination) strategies*: strategies used to represent social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions. They contribute to the construction of ingroups and outgroups e.g. 'Neger' and 'Nigger' (p. 45);
- ii. *predicational strategies*: discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions. Often used to depict social actors as positive or negative e.g. 'Jews are social parasites' (p. 56);
- iii. *argumentation strategies*: strategies by which the positive and negative depictions are justified e.g. 'The voters perfectly know that we, the Austrian Freedom Party, are the real victims of the policy of exclusion' (p. 72)
- iv. *perspectivisation, framing, or discourse strategies*: strategies used by speakers to express their involvement and perspective in the discourse e.g. frames of deception, playing, joking, dreaming, frames of contest and fight, frames of celebration (p. 82);
- v. *intensifying and mitigation strategies*: strategies used to qualify and adjust the level of certainty associated with a statement by either intensifying or mitigating the force behind racist, anti-Semitic, nationalist, or ethnic-related utterances e.g. the use of 'we' instead of 'I' - 'We have to consider recent developments in...' (p. 84).

In addition, Reisigl and Wodak (2017) further identify linguistic devices used in the construction of the discursive strategies. For example, *referential strategies* can be realised linguistically through deictics such as *I, we, and, you*; proper names such as *Friedrich Hayek*; and ideological anthroponyms such as *environmentalists, old Marxists, and protectionists of all kinds*. Similarly, *predicational strategies* are frequently linguistically realised through the use of evaluative attributions (by means of, for example, adjectives or appositions) such as *foreigners as different, uncivilised, and primitive*. These examples demonstrate the various layers of linguistic analysis used in the investigation of axiological information and ideology by means of the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to CDA.

Against this backdrop, analysis can be very deep as well as very broad. For this reason, it is recommended to focus on one or two of the above strategies, unless as part of a large-scale prolonged research project. Hence, Wodak focuses much of her own analysis on argumentation strategies (Reisigl and Wodak 2017; Wodak 2001; Wodak and Meyer 2009), which enables the illustrations that "different forms of social exclusion and discrimination can be discussed inter alia by means of topoi, both arguing for and against racism, ethnicism and nationalism" (Wodak, 2001, p. 73).

Within the scope of argumentation theory, *topoi* are central to Wodak's claims about discrimination, racism, and nationalism in texts. An analysis of argumentation structure shows that any one argumentation scheme can be plausible (or reasonable) or fallacious. Within this scope, *topoi* are the "parts of argumentation which belong to the required premises; they are the formal or content-related warrants or 'conclusion rules' which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, p. 103). *Topoi* can be expressed either explicitly or implicitly through inferable premises, which "can always be made explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases such as 'if x, then y' or 'y, because x'" (ibid., p. 102). Hence, argumentation and *topoi* facilitate the investigation of elements of persuasive rhetoric, such as legitimation and justification strategies that allow positive self and negative other presentation (Wodak, 2009). Within this context, Wodak (2001, p. 74) provides the following list of *topoi*:

- |                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Usefulness, advantage           | 9. Finances       |
| 2. Uselessness, disadvantage       | 10. Reality       |
| 3. Definition, name-interpretation | 11. Numbers       |
| 4. Danger and threat               | 12. Law and right |
| 5. Humanitarianism                 | 13. History       |
| 6. Justice                         | 14. Culture       |
| 7. Responsibility                  | 15. Abuse         |
| 8. Burdening, weighting            |                   |

Indeed, applied to research of hate speech and discrimination, Stoegner and Wodak (2016), for example, show that the *topos of danger* and *topos of threat* played a role in the anti-Semitic sentiment present in Britain at the time of the 2015 election. Stoegner and Wodak (ibid.) describe that, in an article in the *Daily Mail*, the then leader of the Labour Party, Ed Miliband, was portrayed in the image of the 'Jewish Bolshevik' and the related stereotypes of the 'anti-national' and 'intellectual Jew' through the use of amongst other things: the names of notable Marxists in Britain who were also Jewish, and reference to an international network of Marxists that Miliband was thought to form part of. These allusions to Marxist sentiment and Jewish-Bolshevism, Stoegner and Wodak (2016) argue, employ the *topos of danger* to the British way of life, and its national unity.

The real-life manifestations of this sort of analysis can have clear and serious repercussions. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) explain that:

The *topos of danger* or *topos of threat* is based on the following conditionals: if a political action or decision bears specific dangerous, threatening consequences, one should not perform or do it. Or formulated differently: if there are specific dangers and threats, one should do something against them. There are many subtypes of this argument scheme. Here we mention only one of them, namely the '*topos of threat of racism*', which goes as follows: if too many immigrants or refugees enter the country, the native population will not be able to cope with the situation and will become hostile to foreigners... (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 78)

Despite the usefulness of the five discursive strategies put forth by the DHA, criticism has been received for the somewhat arbitrary conclusions drawn by means of argumentation strategies and topoi. Although Reisigl and Wodak (2001) admit that the list of topoi is "incomplete and not always disjunctive" (p. 75), Žagar (2010) criticises the approach for a number of reasons, including for the lack of definition of the term topoi, and the arbitrary compilation of the list. More specifically, Žagar (2010) maintains that although Wodak gives a cursory definition of topoi, she never really goes into depth about what they are and what they mean within the context of the DHA. Moreover, Žagar (2010) argues that in order for an argument to transition to a conclusion, there should be more than just a generalised idea; there needs to be an instruction rule, a structure, or mechanism and this such rule is missing from Wodak's work.

Žagar's (2010) second bone of contention with the list of topoi is that Wodak herself is not consistent in her various publications with regard to the topoi that she includes in any one list. Moreover, he points out that there seems to be no methodological criteria as to how any particular topos can be added or removed from the list, thus researchers seeking to adopt the framework of the DHA are left to simply follow the lists blindly. Finally, Žagar (2010) argues, that in all her work, Wodak never once actually demonstrates her workings from argument to conclusion. Rather, Wodak's work often displays a quoted example and a definition of the topos, but no connection between the argument, conclusion, and topos.

In view of the above, although the DHA provides important principles with regard to the mapping of ideology onto language, and triangulation, it is less useful in relation to practical tools for analysing data. Be that as it may, Wodak's discussion of topoi has been crucial in informing the analysis of data for this research.

Finally, the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) appears to corroborate the aforementioned proposal to add the fourth stage of evaluation to CDA, as it is

based on a concept of ‘context’ which takes into account four levels. The first one is descriptive, while the other three levels are part of . . . theories on context . . .:

- the immediate, language or text internal co-text;
- the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- the extralinguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of a specific ‘context of situation’ (middle range theories);
- the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to (‘grand’ theories).

(Wodak, 2001, p. 67)

The four levels posited by the DHA form a neat fit with the four stages of CDA proposed above. While the first level involves the *description* of linguistic data, the second level pertains to the *interpretation* of those linguistic findings within the discursive context. Then, the third level is associated with the *explanation* of the previous analyses as a function of their sociological and contextual features, and the fourth and final level of the DHA involves the *evaluation* of the social, political, and historical context in which the discourse is embedded.

### 2.1.2 | The sociocognitive approach

Turning to van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach to CDA, it is clear that critical theory plays a key role there too. In fact, van Dijk prefers the term Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), since this implies “that such a critical approach not only involves critical *analysis*, but also critical *theory*, as well as critical *applications*. The designation CDS may also avoid the widespread misconception that a critical approach is a method of discourse analysis” (van Dijk, 2014, p. 389, emphasis in original).<sup>8</sup> Here, van Dijk repeats his caution to researchers that CDA should be approached eclectically.

As with the description of the DHA, a good starting point is to understand how this approach defines *discourse*. Here, discourse can be defined as “a communicative event,

<sup>8</sup>While there is certainly truth in van Dijk’s suggestion, for the purposes of this thesis, the term CDA is used simply to remain consistent with the approaches being adopted here.

and occurring in a social situation, featuring a setting, participants in different roles, actions, and so on" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 116). van Dijk (1997c) distinguishes between the 'common sense' notion of discourse in the sense of a spoken language, a way of speaking, language use, public speaking as well as domain-specific discourses such as discourse of racism, discourse of far-right extremism, and the more discourse analytic oriented concept of language use that includes notions of space, time, and reason (how, why, when?). Subsequently, against the backdrop of the notions of *society*, *discourse*, and *cognition*, van Dijk (1997c) suggests that it is possible to uncover three dimensions of discourse, namely, "(a) *language use*, (b) the *communication of belief* (cognition), and (c) *interaction* in social situations" (p. 2, emphasis in original).

These three dimensions, as van Dijk (1997c) explains, are indicative of a number of key concepts to the study of discourse. Speakers use language as part of complex social events for the communication of ideas and emotions. Here, verbal interaction goes beyond simply *speaking*, since participants are also *doing* by engaging in communication.<sup>9</sup> In view of this, van Dijk posits that the task of critical discourse analysts is:

[t]o provide *integrated* descriptions of these three main dimensions of discourse: how does language use influence beliefs and interaction, or vice versa, how do aspects of interaction influence how people speak, or how do beliefs control language use and interaction? Moreover, besides giving systematic descriptions, we may expect discourse studies to formulate *theories that explain* such relationships between language use, beliefs and interaction (van Dijk, 1997c, p. 2, emphasis in original)

This three dimensional analysis lies at the heart of the sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2001), whereby one of the main tasks of the researcher is to ascertain what is being said by any particular formulation as a reflection of social, political, and historical contexts, beliefs, and ideologies. To this extent, it shares its basic underpinnings with the DHA. However, the motivation of the sociocognitive approach differs from that of the DHA and, as a result, their endpoints and conclusions are different. While the DHA seeks to understand why discourses are different and how they relate to power relations in society, the sociocognitive approach seeks to take this analysis further, by also making claims about how the storage and usage of such discourse interact with our belief systems and cognitive structures. In this respect, the sociocognitive approach differs from other approaches to CDA by adding a fifth dimension to the four stages

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<sup>9</sup>Indeed, as elaborated further in section 2.1.2.1, the act of 'doing' through speech can be construed as a *speech act*, which is arguably one of the basic elements of human communication.

of CDA proposed in section 2.1. Thus, as with the DHA, the sociocognitive approach seeks to investigate spoken prejudice by first observing and analysing discrimination in discourse (description and interpretation) and then attempts to not only contextualise it within the socio-political context in which it is embedded (explanation and evaluation), but also explain the presence and prevalence of discrimination in society and discourse through the exploration of mental models in which such information may be cognitively stored.

Much like van Dijk takes issue with the term ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ because of its ‘reductionist nature’, one of his key motivations for including consideration of cognitive structures in the investigation of discrimination is that terms such as ‘racism’ can also be reductive if racism is taken to refer only to visible sorts of racism (van Dijk, 1997c). In this view:

[t]he point of the analysis of discourse structures ... is not only to examine the detailed features of one type of discriminatory social practice, but especially also to gain deeper insight in the way discourses express and manage our minds. It is especially this discourse–cognition interface that explains how ethnic prejudices and ideologies are expressed, conveyed, shared, and reproduced in society (van Dijk, 1997c, p. 148)

Hence, the sociocognitive approach uses, for example, the language of racism, discrimination, and prejudice as a window into the minds of speakers to ascertain how it is that whole societies are able to produce, reproduce, and share such prejudiced discourse and beliefs. Cognition, therefore, is a central part of van Dijk’s three-phase approach illustrated in fig. 2.1.

van Dijk (1984)’s interest in the cognitive nature of prejudice and discourse follows from the US-based tradition of viewing prejudice as a form of “social information processing” (p. 3). In fact, van Dijk argues that other approaches to CDA are “not cognitive enough” (ibid., p. 3) such that in order to make use of terms such as ‘schema’, ‘script’, ‘categorisation’ etc., it is necessary to first offer a sound account of what such cognitive representations of social phenomena refer to, how they work, and how they are applied to research. In this respect, van Dijk’s (2000) three-tiered investigation seeks to examine:

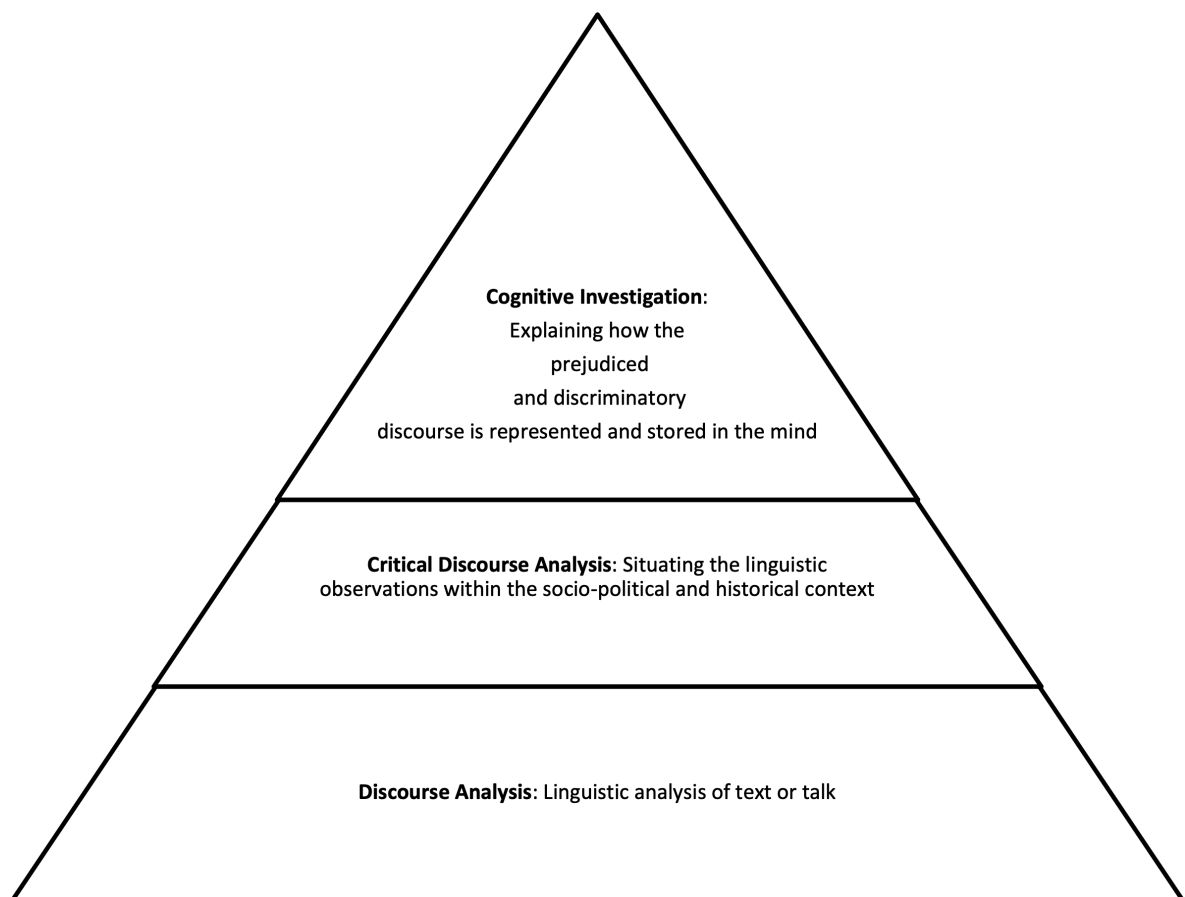


Figure 2.1: The three dimensions of the sociocognitive approach

- ideology as social cognition, considering the structures of ideology, mental models, context models, and how these models interact with ideology and discourse;
- ideologies in society and the nature of racism;
- the ideological structures of discourse, including aspects such as meaning, propositional structure, formal syntax, discourse forms, argumentation, rhetoric, and action and interaction.

The following sections deconstruct the three dimensions - discourse, society, and cognition - to assess their relevance to an examination of xenophobic discourse in Maltese society. To this end, van Dijk's understanding of society is first examined in order to situate the subsequent consideration of discourse within an ideological and social context. Finally, the cognitive tier is considered insofar as it can potentially provide a useful way for explaining the reproduction and perpetuation of negative values.

### 2.1.2.1 | Society

In order to critically evaluate a given discourse (e.g. racist, nationalist, homophobic), it is necessary to ascertain the role that such discourse plays within the socio-political, cultural, and historical context in which it is embedded since an understanding of those contexts enables the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies that underlie the language to be uncovered. This seems like an obvious point, since any sort of discrimination or prejudice is rooted in social practice (Alessio, 2011; Parrillo, 2008; Thio & Taylor, 2012). Indeed, numerous researchers have observed racism as a "a complex societal system of inequality in which ... ethnic-racial minorities ... systematically have less access to, or control over, society's power resources such as adequate conditions of residence, housing, employment..." (van Dijk, 1997b, p. 32).

For a consideration of the role that discrimination has in society from the perspective of the sociocognitive approach, it is useful to turn to van Dijk's elucidation of discourse as a 'communicative event' since

we also need to take into account, for example, the overall social domains in which [dominant discourses] are used (politics, media, education); the global social actions being accomplished by [dominant discourses] (legislation, education); the local actions [dominant discourses] enact; the current setting of time, place, and circumstances; the participants involved, as well as their many social and communicative roles and (e.g., ethnic) group mem-

bership; and not least the beliefs and goals of these participants (van Dijk, 2002, p. 149)

With this in mind, the characteristics of text and talk are largely determined by the aforementioned features of a communicative event such that variations within a discourse can be examined by means of these properties. Within the realm of discrimination, therefore, the formulations of prejudiced views may vary according to various domains, actions, and roles. Consequently, a difference can be observed in the discourse of left-leaning and right-leaning news; tabloid and broadsheet; NGOs and government. “In other words, the large variety of racist discourses in society does not only reflect variable underlying social representations, but especially also adapts to different contexts of production: who says what, where, when, and with what goals” (van Dijk, 2002, p. 149). Against this backdrop, the research for this thesis is mainly concerned with the ‘who’ and the ‘what’ in the sense that it seeks to understand *who* is involved in discourse pertaining to migration in Malta and *what* ideologies and values are imbued in the language therewith.

At the heart of the societal dimension of the sociocognitive approach (and of any CDA study for that matter) is the notion of ideology, as was defined in section 2.1, since “ideologies are obviously not only cognitive but also social, political, cultural and historical” (van Dijk, 1998, p. vii). As van Dijk further elaborates,

besides the fundamental interface of personal mental models that account for *specific* discourses, a cognitive approach also needs to account for *social cognition*, that is, the beliefs or *social representations* they share with others of their group or community. Knowledge, attitudes, values, norms and ideologies are different types of social representations (van Dijk, 2014, p. 396, emphasis in original)

In order to understand how discourse may be a representation of ideology, belief, and axiology within a given society, researchers must first understand the structures of dominance and power as well as the relevant social actors, actions, and situations within that society. To this end, van Dijk (1997b, 2001, 2002) distinguishes between the micro- and macro-level of society and, indeed, visible manifestations of racism can be found in social practices of prejudice and discrimination at both levels. The micro-dimension of society relates to locally produced structures (and inequality) in terms of everyday practices, actions, and interactions. These locally produced structures, in turn, contribute to the macro-dimension of society, which relates more to shared representation of knowledge and ideology, and includes group inequality, the reproduction of racism, and the

relationships of power abuse by dominant organisations, groups, and institutions. For van Dijk (2014), CDA is principally (though not exclusively) concerned with investigating the former, since it is through everyday text and talk that it becomes most possible to observe the production and reproduction of everyday experiences of power, inequality, and prejudice. To this end, within the micro-dimension of society, the sociocognitive approach is concerned mainly with four core elements and the interaction that they have with discourse, ideology, and belief, namely: social situations, action, actors, and societal structure (van Dijk, 2001).

Within this context, the *societal situations* referred to pertain to the social context and social practices in which text and talk is embedded, and its consideration is pertinent to an investigation of discriminatory discourse in order to make claims about the interaction between social structures and discourse structures (van Dijk, 2014). By way of illustration, van Dijk explains that minority group members, such as women and foreigners are often represented in stereotypical roles and from the perspective of the dominant members of society (van Dijk, 1987a). In view of this, it becomes apparent that an understanding of the power structure of society can help to contextualise discourse and view it as representative of a given social situation/structure. This is why, for example, various parts of this thesis (e.g. chapters 1 and 4) provide a description of the sociocultural and political environment in Malta, since it is necessary to consider the analysis of this research against the real-world context in which it is embedded.

Further, when considering *action* in relation to CDA, it is important to distinguish between speech acts in the technical linguistic sense and action as pertains to social practice. In classic linguistic theorising, speech acts are believed to be the “minimal unit of human communication [in the sense of]... the performance of certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, giving orders, describing, explaining, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, etc.” (Searle, Kiefer, & Bierwisch, 1980, p. vii). In CDA, however, action is seen much more broadly as “interactions and social practices that are accomplished by discourse, or that form conditions or consequences of text and talk” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 116).<sup>10</sup> Hence, van Dijk (2000) asserts that CDA goes beyond the idea of discourse acts in the manner of thanking and describing toward the notion of discourse as a means of enacting derogation, marginalisation, and ideological stances, i.e. the way that one takes up “a position with respect to the form or the content of one’s utterance” (Jaffe, 2009, p. 3).

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<sup>10</sup>That being said, in recent work, Assimakopoulos (2020) has proposed using speech act theory as a way of explaining hate speech. Similarly, important work has been done by Chilton (2003) in the context of political discourse, which shows that through speech acts, social actors not only convey meaning, but also perform actions that influence the audience’s perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

Finally, it is necessary to consider *social actors*, since it is ultimately people who express ideologies (van Dijk, 1998), and it is through the mental representations belonging to social actors and their discourse that discrimination and prejudice manifest and are perpetuated:

[p]ersonal cognition accounts for the ways individual language users, as members of linguistic, epistemic and social communities, subjectively produce and understand text and talk. Although such an account is framed in terms of the mental and neurological structures and processes of individual language users, it must be based on socially shared representations of individual social actors as members of various social collectivities (van Dijk, 2014, p. 3)

In this view, a consideration of the discourse of a social actor situated in a given societal situation and performing a particular action enables researchers to investigate the relationship between discourse and social structure. Therefore, since CDA is concerned with describing and explaining “how structures of power and power abuse are discursively enacted and reproduced” (van Dijk, 2014, p. 1), the necessity of fully understanding the characteristics of societal structures and their implications seems obvious. Here, the interface between the micro and macro structures of society and discourse becomes relevant. It is the societal structures that allow the observation that phenomena such as “[r]acism or sexism are . . . not merely abstract systems of social inequality and dominance, but actually ‘reach’ down in the forms of everyday life, namely through the beliefs, actions and discourses of group members” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 117).

### 2.1.2.2 | Discourse

Having outlined the social dimension of the sociocognitive approach, which provides the necessary socio-political context against which to frame analysis, it is possible to examine the most basic dimension of the approach - language. As with all forms of CDA, the sociocognitive approach uses a number of linguistic tools, devices and strategies to observe the representation of ideology and social values embedded in discourse. The ensuing discussion, therefore, considers some of the tools that are applied by the sociocognitive approach in research on racism and prejudice in discourse because of its view that the nature of discourse is fundamentally verbal, and thus “explicit CDA also needs a solid ‘linguistic’ basis, where ‘linguistic’ is understood in a broad ‘structural-functional’ sense” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 97).

Within the discourse dimension of the sociocognitive approach, van Dijk (2002, p. 147) makes the point that there are a myriad of levels, moves, strategies, dimensions, devices, structures and types of acts that researchers may choose as units of investigation. Some of the linguistic units that the sociocognitive approach uses for investigation include:

Nonverbal structures	A racist picture; a derogatory gesture; a headline size or page layout that emphasizes negative meanings about "Them".
Sounds	An insolent intonation; speaking (too) loudly.
Syntax	(De-)emphasizing responsibility for action, for instance by active vs. passive sentences.
Lexicon	Selection of words that may be more or less negative about Them, or positive about Us (e.g., "terrorist" vs. "freedom fighter").
Local (sentence) meaning	for instance, being vague or indirect about Our racism, and detailed and precise about Their crimes or misbehavior.
Global discourse meaning (topics)	selecting or emphasizing positive topics (like aid and tolerance) for Us, and negative ones (such as crime, deviance, or violence) for Them.
Schemata (conventional forms of global discourse organization)	presence or absence of standard schematic categories — such as a resolution in a narrative schema, or a conclusion in an argument schema — in order to emphasize Our Good things and Their Bad things.
Rhetorical devices	metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, euphemism, irony, etc. — again to focus attention on positive/negative information about Us/Them.
Speech acts	e.g., accusations to derogate Them, or defenses to legitimate Our discrimination.
Interaction	turns of Others, closing meetings before Others can speak, disagreeing with Others, or nonresponding to questions, among many other forms of direct interactional discrimination.

Table 2.1: Examples of linguistic units used in the sociocognitive approach - extracted from van Dijk (2002, p. 147)

Much like the DHA, which as described above, focuses a large part of analysis on argumentation structure and topoi, the sociocognitive approach investigates: topics (semantic macrostructures), story structure, local meaning (including argumentation, style and rhetorical operations), as well as pragmatic and conversational strategies. The starting point for the linguistic analysis conducted within the sociocognitive approach is often the investigation of the "global meaning of the discourse" (van Dijk, 1987a, p. 48). The semantic macrostructures represent the general gist of any given text and, essen-

tially, what the text is about. Global themes and topics, or macropropositions (van Dijk, 1984), play a crucial role in interaction since they “embody [the] most important information of a discourse, and explain overall coherence of text and talk” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 102). These macropropositions are established recursively through a sequence of local propositions and macro rules, such as generalisation, deletion, and construction, as well as world knowledge (van Dijk, 1984, 1987a). Thus, a speaker/listener might be able to derive the topic of illness if they were to hear words such as ‘doctor’, ‘waiting room’, and ‘cough’, since “topics are represented as propositions and not, for instance, as isolated concepts” (van Dijk, 1987a, p. 48). In this view, the topic of illness in this example would, therefore, form part of a thematic proposition ‘X went to the doctor’ or ‘X had a cold’.

Topics are negotiated, introduced, challenged, and changed by listeners/speakers in a conversation and are, thus, interactional as much as they are cognitive and semantic (van Dijk, 1984). Moreover, different levels of abstraction can be made upon a single conversation and the exact topic for each conversational participant is not necessarily precisely the same. For example, in a conversation about abortion (which, alongside the migration crisis, is presently another hot topic in the Maltese society), one speech participant might relate the conversation more to a topic of women’s rights, while another participant might relate it more to a topic of protection of the embryo. In the context of this research, therefore, it is possible to construct a dataset of discourse comprising the overall topic of *migration*, but also still investigate more micro units of meaning therein, relating analysis to more specific units of meaning.

Along these lines, using data from the 180 interviews with residents of Amsterdam and San Diego discussed in section 2.1, van Dijk (1987a) conducted a topic analysis in order to ascertain the main themes expressed through everyday conversation about ethnic minorities. He found that within his interview data with speakers from various Amsterdam neighbourhoods, a number of topics could be “further categorized in various fields of experiences, opinions, or attitude dimensions” (p. 51). Furthermore, although the topics identified might not be inherently prejudiced, negative and neutral evaluations commonly arose when the subject of ‘foreigners’ was discussed. Topics identified include: contacts and information, national policies, social problems, work and (un)employment, rights and duties, norms and cultural difference, and education. On the surface, these appear to be relatively neutral topics, however, “[m]any of these topics may be qualified as “prejudiced,” in the sense that they are based on negative ethnic group attitudes or negative generalized models” (ibid., p. 56). To illustrate by way of example, below are some categorisations found within the topic of ‘norms and

values' (van Dijk, 1987a, p. 54):<sup>11</sup>

- They have to adapt to our norms and rules (17)
- They have different life-styles/habits/traditions (12)
- You have good and bad ones among them (9)
- Other people do not like them (8)
- They treat their women differently (worse) (8)
- They have (too) many children (6)

It is evident that the overarching theme of cultural difference dominates the examples above. Moreover, the general conclusion is that *they* should adapt to *our* norms and values. Finally, with the exception of the second example, most of these categories seem to have a rather apparent negative undertone.

Although topics are helpful for understanding the main themes that a given discourse is concerned with, there are several other meaningful units that can equally provide a window into the ideologies and values imbued in the language of a discourse. In this way, since “[s]imilar meanings may . . . be variably expressed in different words, depending on the position, role, goals, point of view or opinion of the speaker, that is, as a function of context features” (van Dijk, 2000, p. 77), the examination of lexical choice becomes a pertinent endeavour to researchers who seek to investigate the underlying beliefs, values, and concepts that characterise various lexical choices. In the analysis of a speech delivered by Conservative representative, Marcus Fox, at the parliamentary debate held at the British House of Commons in April 1985,<sup>12</sup> for example, van Dijk (1993) shows that Mr Fox’s lexical style was not only typical of parliamentary speeches with words such as ‘adjournment debate’ and ‘detractors’, but the inclusion of words such as ‘race relations bullies’ and ‘mob’ used to refer to his political opponents also serves to reinforce “his power, his political and moral position, as well as his persuasive strategies in influencing his (secondary) audience, namely the British public” (ibid., p. 277).

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<sup>11</sup>The number in brackets represents the number of occurrences within the dataset.

<sup>12</sup>The speech that Fox delivered was in relation to the Honeyford affair involving the headmaster of a school in Bradford, UK who faced suspension, then later reinstatement, and eventually termination (with compensation). This scandal centred around what were perceived as racially biased writings by Honeyford published in sources like the right-wing *Salisbury Review* and the *Times Literary Supplement* in which he criticised multicultural education as a whole.

Similarly, lexicalisation plays a role in *positive self-representation* and *negative other-presentation* when it comes to hate speech and discriminatory discourse. Of course, the concept of *presentation* here makes reference to the work of the well-known sociologist Erving Goffman (1955; 1959), whose research and theories have proven to be highly applicable to sociolinguistic theorisation. As Tannen (2009) explains, Goffman's notions of face and framing elicit "the observation that expressions of self can be given off, that is, inadvertently communicated while an interactant is focusing on information intentionally given" (Tannen, 2009, p. 300). In view of this, one endeavour of the sociocognitive approach is to examine the role of language in the presentation of self and other. Within this framework, van Dijk demonstrates that lexical choices made by speakers often contribute to the negative presentation of the 'other' group, as is the case, for example, when refugees are defined as economic and illegal, and hence, ungentle within a discourse about migration (van Dijk, 1997b).

Beyond lexis, *rhetorical operations* can also be analysed in the investigation of racism and prejudice in discourse, since "[t]he expression of ethnic opinions in everyday talk is part of persuasive communicative interaction" (van Dijk, 1987a, p. 105). As such, semantic operations such as irony, hyperbole, contrast, comparison, and metaphor have been observed to contribute to the communication of ideology and the construction of *us* versus *them* in discourse. Moreover, rhetorical structures have been found to function in discourse as a "means to emphasize or de-emphasize meanings as a function of ideological opinions" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 208). *Comparison*, for example, has been found to function in the formulation of a discourse that contends foreigners (as the *other*) should adapt to *our* norms, values, habit, and practices (van Dijk, 1984). van Dijk gives some examples from his interviews with residents of the Netherlands that demonstrate such comparisons, as in "a foreigner is like a guest in our house, who also must adapt to the rules of the house" (ibid., p. 141). Similarly, in the same study, van Dijk (ibid.) also observes irony (e.g. "our famous overseas citizens"); metonymy (e.g. "monkeying with the doorknob"); and generalisation (e.g. "All foreigners carry a knife").

### 2.1.2.3 | Cognition

Having explored the two base levels of the sociocognitive approach, it is worth considering the crown of the approach - the cognitive tier - which makes this approach quite unique among the various approaches to CDA. van Dijk is resolute in his account that ideological beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge are not organised arbitrarily, but rather systematically and logically, although also in a somewhat general and abstract manner in order to be applied effectively and efficiently to a multiplicity of everyday interac-

tions and situations. Within this cognitive dimension, he believes that cognition “involves both personal as well as social cognition, beliefs and goals as well as evaluations and emotions, and any other ‘mental’ or ‘memory’ structures, representations or processes involved in discourse and interaction” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 98). Therefore, the sociocognitive approach attempts to uncover the structures involved in the organisation and processing of such cognitive information with regards to discourse, in particular, discriminatory discourse pertaining to minority groups.

In this setting, beliefs related to the representation of minorities and in/out-groupness are organised within social and episodic memory, which are mentally located in the long-term memory stores. In many publications, van Dijk often uses the terms social memory and semantic memory interchangeably (e.g. van Dijk 1997a, 2010), although elsewhere the latter refers specifically to the “abstract storage of conceptual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, etc.: knowledge about the world, rules, grammar, and so on” (van Dijk, 1980, p. 206) and the former refers specifically to “the collection of information represented in this semantic memory store” (van Dijk, 1987a, p. 183). On the other hand, episodic memory “stores actually processed incoming information, together with kinds of contextual data (time, place, circumstance of processing)” (ibid., p. 183) and, therefore, is involved in daily experiences that we participate in, read and hear about, and witness.

Against this backdrop, social cognition and beliefs in relation to the representation of minorities and in/out-groupness are organised around four categories (van Dijk, 2000), namely:

1. **Knowledge:** What we think is true. Other people may view what we think we know as mere belief. Knowledge may change through space and time, e.g. the round-earth theory was once belief, but is now knowledge. Can be associated with episodic memory and social memory;
2. **Attitudes:** Beliefs that can be considered controversial as they are not certain and universally accepted. Attitudes may be personal opinions or socially shared. These are the types of beliefs that usually need to be uttered, defended, and contended and are associated with social memory;
3. **Ideology:** Beliefs that are specific to groups and social movements and form the basis of social representations. Ideologies are shared by groups as a basic system of beliefs and include norms and values. Usually associated with social memory;
4. **Socio-cultural knowledge (common ground):** Shared general beliefs, e.g. about others and members of the same group, without which we would not be able to

interact and communicate effectively. Includes principles of integration, objects, various discourses, social memory. Since knowledge and beliefs may vary across cultures and ages, common ground includes the undisputed body of knowledge that people never need to express.

For van Dijk (1984), ethnic prejudice is a distinct type of attitude, which is organised through a group *schema* on the basis of a set of beliefs and opinions about minorities. The term *schema* may refer to “theories we have about categories, and they function as frameworks for understanding what we see and hear” (D. Schneider, 2004, p. 120). Hence, schemas represent the prior-knowledge used to interpret communication events as well as the world around us and it is through these group schemas that stereotypes<sup>13</sup> are represented and thus help to explain why the same act when committed by a member of a minority group or a member of the majority group is viewed differently. Thus, such a group schema “is the cognitive basis of all our information processing about members of such groups” (van Dijk, 1984, p. 23). Within this configuration of attitudes and schemas, therefore, the sociocognitive approach seeks to understand what these group schemas look like, how and in which situations they are used, and how they are acquired or changed.

The omnipresence of this information in our episodic and social memory stores leads van Dijk (1984) into the exploration of *mental models*, which he views as representations of “concrete situations [that] may be generalized if they appear to be relevant on several occasions” (p. 26), and that offer the explanatory power to account for such phenomena as *overgeneralization* whereby a “prejudice in our framework involves the use of particular situation models as general group schemata. In more mundane terms: a single experience is taken as a social truth” (ibid., p. 26). Moreover, since it is still possible to process information via episodic memory given the abstract and incomplete nature of schemas, van Dijk (2000) asserts that “(w)e may thus have models of events, actions, situations, as well as of their participants, of which the autobiographical models of the events we participate in ourselves are a specific case” (p. 21). Thus, in van Dijk (2002)’s account of racism, such “biased models of ethnic events and interactions” (p. 146) can be explained through the exploration of various different types of mental models.

According to such a cognitive view of information processing, speakers make use of a number of strategies that enable them to cope with the incomplete nature of discourse and information, and to subsequently form hypotheses about the incoming data,

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<sup>13</sup>The term ‘stereotype’ was popularised by Walter Lippman to refer to the internal mental representations pertaining to various social groups, thus building the “pictures in our heads” (Lippmann, 1991, p. 3) as distinguishable from “the world outside” (ibid., p. 3). Thus, stereotypes embody our expectation, knowledge, and beliefs of social groups (Banaji, 2001).

thus selecting the most relevant information out of the given context, situation, and event. Hence, within the framework of information processing, mental models constitute “what people ‘have in mind’ when they observe, participate in, or hear or read about such a situation” (van Dijk, 1987a, p. 161), thus consolidating the personal and accumulated knowledge that speakers have of any given situation, which can then be extended and updated accordingly.

Thus, prejudices can develop as a result of both personal experience as well as prevalent schemata about social stereotypes of ethnic groups. In this way, all that speakers learn and experience, both through their personal experience and through their exposure to society (through everyday conversation) help to construct the contents of *event*, *context*, and *discourse* models as well as *knowledge*, *attitudes*, and *beliefs* that they have about ethnic minorities, thus, establishing “models of “ethnic reality” or ... strategies of interpretation, planning, or decision making in ethnically relevant action and interaction” (van Dijk, 1997b, p. 41). An example will help to illustrate how these mental models are formed and how they are involved in ethnic prejudice. van Dijk (1984) uses the example of sheep slaughtering by Turkish people in the Netherlands, a story that features frequently in his data of interviews with residents in high-contact (with minorities) and low-contact (with minorities) neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. van Dijk (1984) explains that when a speaker hears a story about Turkish people slaughtering sheep in their bathrooms, that speaker will form a representation of the text, actions, and event, thus establishing a (negative) model of that situation (Turkish people as sheep slaughterers, barbaric, cruel, pariah). The model will continue to be used with and added to other similar experiences as well as previous and subsequent experiences. Consequently, even when presented with incomplete information about a comparable situation in the future, the speaker will fill in the blanks with the information that is stored in this mental model. Similarly, later experiences will mainly serve to solidify such a negatively biased mental model.

In several of van Dijk’s works, he goes into great detail in describing the nature of different models (e.g. context, situation, discourse, event) - see, for example, van Dijk (1980, 1987b, 1990, 1995, 1997a, 2007-2018). But this is where the efficacy of the sociocognitive approach loses relevance for this research. While it provides a very nice account of the cognitive processing that underlies the spread of prejudice, it goes beyond the scope of this thesis, which is to examine the source of the prejudice. Indeed, the cognitive consideration of prejudiced discourse goes beyond the scope of many approaches to CDA. This is possibly why the cognitive dimension of the sociocognitive approach is quite unique. Firstly, as section 2.1 shows, the task of the critical discourse analyst is to make observations pertaining to the way that language contributes to the produc-

tion and reproduction of ideologies, values, and beliefs. As such, the primary focus should be on the way that the construction of language embedded within a given social context contributes to the transmission and perpetuation of those ideologies. This said, the cognitive tier of this approach provides a solid foundation for subsequent studies that apply the findings of CDA research in an attempt to understand the role of social cognition in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. In addition, given that this phase requires more than linguistic and sociological theory, it highlights the need for collaborative research, in this case for example, between linguists and cognitive scientists.

That being said, it is important not to throw the baby out with the bath water. Subsequent to the two base dimensions (society and discourse), mental models can explain how prejudice and discrimination are organised and stored in the mind and how they can impact discourse. These models can also explain how positive actions by minorities often go amiss in the processing and storage of information; how common stereotypes seem to persist over time; the way people store and process in-group and out-group information; as well as common notions of overgeneralisation and attribution. Hence, the relevance of such mental models in the investigation of discriminatory discourse and hate speech stems from the curiosity about the subsystems that control negative perceptions. This approach views racist practice as rooted in social practice, on the one hand, and in biased mental and cognitive models of ethnic situations and events on the other (van Dijk, 2002). Hence, in contrast to Reisigl and Wodak's (2017) assertion in section 2.1.1, "this does not mean that discriminatory practices are always intentional, but only that they presuppose socially shared and negatively oriented mental representations of Us about Them" (van Dijk, 2002, p. 146). Therefore, although mental models are not considered in the investigation of prejudice and discrimination in this thesis, they should not be discarded altogether.

### 2.1.3 | The sociosemantic approach

The third and final approach to CDA being considered here is van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic approach. In keeping with the general objectives of CDA, for van Leeuwen (2018) CDA "is based on the idea that text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice and oppression in society" (p. 277). With this in mind, the central component of this approach is the notion of *social practice*, which van Leeuwen (2008) understands as "socially regulated ways of doing things" (p. 6). Therefore, within this approach, discourse is viewed as the recontextualisation of social practice in text and talk. From this perspective, the assumption that social practice is recontextualised through discourse, ultimately enables sociolinguists and linguistic

anthropologists to make observations about social practice through an analysis of “actors and their roles and identities, actions and their performance styles, settings, and timings” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. vii).

In the development of the socio-semantic approach, van Leeuwen (2005) draws heavily on the work of Michel Foucault by defining *discourses* (rather than discourse) as “socially constructed knowledge of some aspect of reality” (p. 94) with the view that “knowledges have been developed in specific social contexts, and in ways which are appropriate to the interests of social actors in these contexts, whether they are large contexts – multinational corporations – or small ones – a particular family...” (ibid., p. 94). In this view, while discourses do not necessarily determine what *can* be said about an aspect of reality, they can be adopted to represent a *particular view* of reality that becomes evident through an investigation of text and talk. The overlap with van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach is obvious; the difference between the two approaches, however, is that van Leeuwen does not attempt to explain how these knowledges are cognitively developed and stored. Rather, the focus is on the way that text and talk represents social practice with the view of discourse as a *verb* so to speak, in the sense that van Leeuwen (2008) insists on the distinction between “doing it” and “talking about it” (p. 6). In view of this discussion, therefore, there are three main tenets that are central to the socio-semantic approach (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 95):

- discourses are resources for representation, knowledges about some aspect of reality;
- discourses are plural (there can be different ways of representing the same reality);
- evidence for the existence of a given discourse comes from texts.

In view of this plurality of discourses, an analysis of the way that text and talk is constructed can provide powerful insight into the ways that the entities being represented are ideologically framed. Hence, the principle aim of the sociosemantic approach is to discern how texts and talk “draw on, and transform social practices” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 5). With this in mind, in his seminal work in which, for the first time, he brings together all the various components of the socio-semantic approach, van Leeuwen (2008) proposes a model of analysis that includes tools for the investigation of 10 core elements of social practice in discourse. These are:

1. Participants
2. Actions
3. Performance modes
4. Eligibility conditions (participants)

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 5. Presentation styles | 8. Eligibility conditions (locations)  |
| 6. Times               | 9. Resources: tools and materials      |
| 7. Locations           | 10. Eligibility conditions (resources) |

Although the first chapter of van Leeuwen's volume proposes the ten levels of inquiry listed above, beyond a short definition, he does not elaborate on *resources* and how that can be used in analysis. Thus, similar to the approach of van Dijk (2002), the list above can neatly fall into four categories of analysis (with the exclusion of resources - 9 and 10): participant (1, 4, and 5), action (2 and 3), time (6), and location (7 and 8) - the analysis of which ultimately answer the questions - who does what to whom? where? when? (and with what?).

The focus on the *social actor* (or participant) is rooted in *social actor theory* whereby, unlike the two aforementioned approaches, the starting point of the socio-semantic approach is not "specific grammatical processes such as 'passive agent deletion' and 'nominalization,' but from broader discourse-semantic issues such as 'exclusion' — the exclusion of social actors from the representation of actions and events in which they in fact took part" (van Leeuwen, 2018, p. 281). The primacy of social actors in discourse should be obvious since, as van Leeuwen (2008) points out, social practice firstly requires participants. For example, a graduation speech minimally requires a graduand (who delivers/speaks/talks) and an audience (who listens/receives/is bored).

To this end, the unique way that van Leeuwen develops for analysing the way that social actors are represented in discourse is formulated on the basis of the belief that the relationship between language and social realities is not bi-unique. What this means is that sociological concepts such as *agency*, for instance, do not necessarily translate to the grammatical role of *agent* in language, as in the example "our intake of migrants" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 23). In this example, the sociological agent (the actor performing the action) is marked by the possessive pronouns 'our' rather than represented in the grammatical role of agent (as in - 'we take in migrants'). Because the relationship between language and social realities is opaque, van Leeuwen (2008) attempts to provide transparency through the sociosemantic inventory, which provides a way of assessing how social actors can be represented in discourse.

Further, the way that social actors are recontextualised in discourse presents a unique opportunity for making observations related to the ideologies and values pertaining to the actors represented in a given text. For instance, van Leeuwen (2008) shows that the sentence "Non-European migrants make up 6.5 percent of the population" (p. 36) *genericises* 'non-European migrants'. The use of genericisation in this sentence is gram-

matically realised by means of a plural with no article. From a axiological perspective, the *generic* reference of social actors represents them as “*classes* of people rather than as specific, identifiable individuals [which ...] plays a large role in establishing ‘us’ and ‘them’ groups, for instance ‘us, Europeans,’ and ‘them, non-European immigrants’” (van Leeuwen, 2018, p. 282). This example also illustrates that, similar to the observations made by van Dijk (1992) and de Cillia et al. (1999) outlined in section 2.1, the us/them dichotomy is a key component of discrimination according to analysis conducted within the scope of the sociosemantic approach.

Further to the representation of social actors, the sociosemantic approach seeks to uncover the way that the *actions* in which social actors are involved additionally contribute to the dissemination of ideologies and values. The main motivation for analysing the way social action is represented is that “different ways of representing social action encode different interpretations of, and different attitudes to, the social actions represented” (van Leeuwen, 1995, p. 81). With this in mind, similar to the analysis of social actors, van Leeuwen (2008) develops a “descriptive framework for critically analyzing modes of representing social action, using critical, sociosemantic categories such as ‘objectivation,’ ‘naturalization,’ etc., but relating them to the specific grammatical and rhetorical realizations which can help to identify them in texts” (p. 56). In the context of CDA, van Leeuwen calls this a “sociological grammar” (ibid., p. 56). Within the scope of this approach, van Leeuwen (2008) analyses a text published in May 1990 in a Saturday supplement of the *Sydney Morning Herald* - an Australian conservative broadsheet newspaper. Through his examination of the language within the text, he is able to show that racists in countries outside Australia (such as France, Peru, and Canada) are represented as partaking in interactive actions such as “attack”, “deny entry”, and “insult”, while Australians are generally represented as “more abstract and rarely interactive” (ibid. p. 63).

Finally, within the framework of the sociosemantic approach, *time* and *location* may also offer a window into a particular worldview. To begin, van Leeuwen (2008) notes that there is a relationship between “the timing of fundamental social activities, on the one hand, and the way people think and talk about time or enact it in symbolic forms, on the other” (p. 75-76). In this way, elements of text and talk can be analysed in relation to, for example, the need to adhere to certain time constraints. Similarly, the representation of space in discourse betrays a particular way of viewing the world, especially since the understanding of space largely derives from social action. Thus, within this framework, “[p]ositions provide an explicit representation of the spatial arrangements for a social practice...” (ibid., p. 91). For instance, using the same example of a graduation speech, the general expectation is that the *speaker* stands up, likely at some sort of podium,

while the *audience* are expected to be seated in an auditorium; any diversion from this is marked.

## 2.2 | Anchoring the present research

Having presented the three main approaches by which the research of this thesis has been informed, it is now possible to turn to see in more detail how they relate to the present study. As already mentioned, the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and the sociocognitive approach are among the most widely used for research on discriminatory discourse and hate speech, while van Leeuwen's approach to discourse as re-contextualised social practice offers very powerful tools for examining the role of social actors and action in the formulation of discriminatory attitudes. Although language and ideology form the foundation of these three approaches, they arrive at their conclusions via different routes.

A good starting point to a multi-layered approach of CDA is language through the exploration of linguistic devices that can and have been shown to convey axiological information, ideologies, and values. Although axiological information can be communicated explicitly, CDA is concerned mainly with the investigation of the types of devices that enable speakers to transmit axiological information implicitly. According to P. Brown and Levinson (1979):

an attractively simple model of how this information is communicated would be this: linguistic variables are sometimes correlated with social variables, each such correlation being a *marker* in the sense of this volume, so that in interaction such linguistic variables act as direct signals of the correlated social variable (P. Brown & Levinson, 1979, p. 292, emphasis in original)

P. Brown and Levinson (1979) are accurate on two counts: this is a very superficial, but succinct description of how language can reflect ideologies and, though attractive, it is often not as simple as this. However, the simplicity of their elucidation moves toward inaccuracy with their second premise, which asserts that "linguistic variables act as direct signals" (ibid., p. 292), since, as van Dijk (2001) points out, the relationship between forms and various underlying meanings and beliefs is often not direct.

Incidentally, such implicit *markers* need not necessarily communicate axiological or ideological information at all. As various researchers have shown, linguistic variables can mark class, age, and gender among a number of other identities (see Eckert, 1996; Hall & Bucholtz, 1995; Labov, 2006). For example, for his seminal work on language

variation, Labov (2006) investigated the relationship between the phonetic realisation of /r/ and social class in New York. For the study, Labov spent a day and a half recording speakers in three New York department stores - top, middle, and bottom priced. Through the analysis of the data, Labov concluded that the realisation of the final and pre-consonantal /r/ as either [r] or as a glide can vary as a function of social class, age, and gender thereby confirming his hypothesis that “sales people in the highest ranked store will have the highest values of (r); those in the middle ranked store will have intermediate values of (r); and those in the lowest ranked store will show the lowest values” (Labov, 2006, p. 42, emphasis in original).

However, beyond these sorts of immutable identities, linguistic markers can also convey implicit axiological and ideological information, and it is such implicit information that this thesis seeks to explore. For example, one device that has been found to be used in discriminatory discourse is *over-lexicalisation* or *over-completeness*, a phenomenon whereby there is an excessive use of repetition and near-synonyms. Teo (2000) notes that the use of “a surfeit of repetitions, quasi-synonymous terms woven into the fabric of news discourse” (p. 20) is typical of discourse about powerless people or groups so that a term like ‘female lawyer’ is marked. Similarly, ‘male nurse’, which still carries a certain amount of stigma and markedness is also over-complete, often with a pejorative undertone. Teo’s (2000) study in which he explores racism in Australian newspapers illustrates this nicely. Teo analyses news articles from *The Sydney Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph* from May to October 1995 in order to compare the discourse before and after the murder of Tri Minh Tran - the leader of 5T, a gang of young Vietnamese drug dealers operating in Sydney. Within the scope of his research, Teo (2000) finds that the 5T are overlexicalised through the repetition youthful descriptors. Thus, the implicit conclusion, Teo (2000) argues “is not so much that ‘They are young, fallible and susceptible to bad influence, so please excuse them’, but rather ‘Look they are so young and are already ‘brazenly’ and ‘openly’ committing such heinous crimes, what more will they be capable of when they become adults!’” (p. 21).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>An important side discussion is necessary here over the use of the term *over-lexicalisation*. Although Teo describes *over-lexicalisation* as ‘the repetition of quasi-synonymous terms’, Fowler defines it as “the availability of many words for one concept, ... [which] indicates the prominence of the concept in a community’s beliefs and intellectual interests” (Fowler, 1991, p. 69), such as the multitude of words available to refer to the entity of god: Lord, Jesus, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, King of Kings, Allah etc. Over-lexicalisation in this sense is more synonymous with Fairclough’s concept of *over-wording*, which he uses to refer to “an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms, showing preoccupation with some aspect of reality - which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 115). Hence, Teo’s (2000) use of the term over-lexicalisation is closer to van Dijk’s notion of *over-completeness*, which “often takes the form of functional irrelevance. That is, a description may add an ‘irrelevant’ detail, but this detail is relevant within a more general negative portrayal of a person or group” (1991, p. 185). Here we see a more accurate account of the above phenomenon whereby the

Similarly, in her study of feminist stylistics, Mills (1995) succinctly illustrates the types of linguistic analyses that facilitate research into underlying ideologies. She asserts that stylistic analysis of feminist discourse seeks “not only to describe sexism in a text, but also to analyse the way that point of view, agency, metaphor, or transitivity are unexpectedly closely related to matters of gender” (Mills, 1995, p.1). Another good illustration of linguistic analyses being used to uncover ideologies is through the study carried out by anthropologist Emily Martin as described in her paper, ‘The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles’ (E. Martin, 1991). E. Martin (1991) shows that the language used in undergraduate medical textbooks consistently denies women’s bodies a positive image. Moreover, she shows that the egg appears to behave remarkably femininely, while the sperm behaves with striking masculinity. Words associated with menstruation include *debris*, *dying*, *losing*, and *expelling*, all contributing to a wasteful image. Moreover, words used for the egg include *transport*, *drift*, and *vestment* - passive actions associated with a sacred entity. The sperm, on the other hand, is associated with words such as *streamlined*, *velocity*, *burrow*, and *penetrate*, and is thus represented as a strong, fast, efficient penetrator of the egg.

For most approaches to CDA, language is the starting point of analysis. It would be unfair, however, to say that all approaches of CDA for discrimination and hate have their starting point in language, since van Leeuwen (1996) does not start by examining linguistic operation or categories, but rather, he seeks to first establish an inventory of how social actors can be represented and subsequently “to establish the sociological and critical relevance of [the] ...categories before...[turning] to the question of how they are realised linguistically” (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 32). Hence, this approach seeks to investigate the way that social actors are represented, and subsequently, examine how they are realised linguistically and the roles that they have within a grammatical sentence.<sup>15</sup> Further, within the scope of this thesis, which seeks to examine the way that hate speech and discrimination against migrants is constructed, it is necessary to focus on social actors as much as it is on language. Hence, as will be described in more detail in due course, van Leeuwen’s (1996) sociosemantic approach is adopted as one of the principle analytic frameworks through which data is analysed here.

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description of a *male nurse* has a certain degree of negative markedness. Thus, within the scope of this thesis, the term *over-lexicalisation* is used to refer to the latter type.

<sup>15</sup>van Leeuwen (2021) also examines other modes of communication such as images (van Leeuwen, 2005, 2021).

### 2.2.1 | Formulation of research questions

Having explored the application of CDA to the investigation of discrimination and hate in discourse, the direction that will be taken henceforth should be clearer. Firstly, this research seeks to gain insight into hate speech against migrants within Malta's sociopolitical context against the backdrop of the three aforementioned approaches to CDA. To this end, the analysis for this thesis follows the advice of Reisigl and Wodak (2017) to limit the scope of investigation by focusing mainly on the exploration of ideologies and values pertaining to the social actors involved in discourse about migration. This decision was taken under the assumption that an investigation of the way that the various actors in society are represented will give a strong indication of the way that minorities specifically are ideologically constructed. Thus, in line with van Dijk (1992) and van Leeuwen (2008) as outlined in sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, this thesis seeks to mainly address the 'who?' and the 'what?' of hate speech pertaining to migration. Hence, while notions such as lexicalisation and rhetorical operations are useful, they do not form part of the cornerstone of this research. As such, the present study will seek to explore the dominant topics, axiological themes, and linguistic units insofar as they expose the ideological patterns imbued in the representation of social actors.

With this in mind, and against the backdrop of the discussion in this chapter, a number of research questions have been formulated, keeping in mind the proposed four-stage model. In essence, therefore, this thesis seeks to address the following questions:

#### ■ Stage 1: Description

1. Who are the main social actors involved in discourse about migration?
2. How are the social actors linguistically manifested?
3. What linguistic patterns are evident in the representation of social actors in hate speech against migrants?

#### ■ Stage 2: Interpretation

4. How are the various social actors represented in discourse?
5. What other identities are indexed through the language patterns in the discourse?
6. What discourse patterns are evident in hate speech against migrants?

#### ■ Stage 3: Explanation

7. How can the frequency of the said discourse patterns be explained?

8. In what way is hate related to other ideologies?
9. What ideological patterns are evident in hate speech against migrants?

■ Stage 4: Evaluation

10. How does the representation of social actors correlate with the current power structures in Maltese (and global) society?
11. How is language used as a tool to maintain power in the context of migration in Malta?

In an attempt to address the research questions above, this study is poised to delve into the dynamics of hate speech targeting migrants within Malta's sociocultural and political landscape, incorporating insights from various CDA approaches. Drawing from the guidance from the three approaches outlined in this chapter the scope of this research has been refined to focus primarily on the exploration of ideologies and values pertaining to the representation of social actors in discourse about migration. This strategic decision rests on the assumption that analysing the representation of various societal actors will provide valuable insights into how minorities are ideologically framed. Thus, by addressing these research questions, this study aims to shed light on the intricate relationship between language, power, and discrimination, contributing to a deeper understanding of the ideological constructs within migration discourse in Malta. In view of this, chapter 5 addresses the questions within the description stage. Subsequently, chapter 6 seeks to interpret and explain the linguistic patterns identified, and finally, chapter 7 evaluates the discussion of chapters 5 and 6 within the Maltese socio-political and cultural context.

## 2.3 | Acknowledging the elephant in the room

While a literature review typically concludes with the research questions that are to be addressed in a study, there is a matter that still remains to be discussed on this specific occasion. That is because no discussion of CDA would be complete without a consideration of two of the strongest criticisms that it typically receives – the so-to-speak 'elephant in the room' - *subjectivity* and *researcher bias*.

### 2.3.1 | Subjectivity

CDA has long since been criticised for using highly subjective interpretations and superimposing those interpretations onto fragments of naturally occurring language data.

In a criticism of the work of Norman Fairclough, Widdowson argues that CDA involves mere interpretation and, moreover, that “[t]here is rarely suggestion that alternative interpretations are possible” (Widdowson, 1995, p. 169).

On the other side of the fence lie researchers such as van Dijk (2001) and Renton (1999) who acknowledge the subjective interpretations that can be involved in CDA research and embrace them, or rather, argue in favour of their necessity. In referring to the role of historians researching fascism, for example, Renton asserts: “how can a historian, in all conscience, approach the study of fascism with neutrality? ... One cannot be balanced when writing about fascism, there is nothing positive to be said of it” (Renton, 1999, p. 18 in Wodak & Richardson, 2013, p. 6). Similarly, van Dijk states:

CDA is a - critical - perspective on doing scholarship: it is, so to speak, discourse analysis *‘with an attitude’*. It focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination. Wherever possible, it does so *from a perspective that is consistent with the best interests of dominated groups*. It takes the experiences and opinions of members of such groups seriously, and supports their struggle against inequality. That is, CDA research combines what perhaps somewhat pompously used to be called *‘solidarity with the oppressed’* with an attitude of *opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power*. Unlike much other scholarship, *CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position*. That is, CDA is biased - and proud of it (van Dijk, 2001, p. 96, emphasis added).

Certainly, this issue is still very much a source of ongoing debate and controversy. William Labov expresses the concern that “[t]hrough many linguists have shown a strong concern for social issues, there is an apparent contradiction between the principles of objectivity needed for scientific work and commitment to social action” (Labov, 1982, p.165). However, similar to van Dijk (1993), who argues that “[a]lthough not in each stage of theory formation and analysis, [critical discourse analysts] work is admittedly and ultimately political” (p. 252), this research takes the view that both schools of thought have a place in critical research, but at different stages of investigation.

Indeed, Labov’s concern as well as van Dijk’s and Renton’s assertions have different places in the four stages of CDA research outlined above (description, interpretation, explanation, evaluation). While the former two stages – description and interpretation – should comprise objective linguistic observation and investigation, subjective interpre-

tation may seep into the third stage (explanation), while the final evaluation stage undeniably includes subjective interpretation of the objective observations made in the former stages of investigation. What this means is that the linguistic part of CDA research, i.e. the investigation of social actor, topic, lexicalisation etc. should remain at all times objective by means of transparent and methodic analytic frameworks. Moreover, the interpretation of linguistic observations as contributing to discourse should also remain objective and consist of mere observation. Once these observations are made, critical discourse analysts begin to situate the observed discourse within the social structures in which it is embedded. This stage can and should remain objective by making use of sociological, anthropological, historical, and political theories and facts. It can be argued that these disciplines themselves include elements of subjectivity within their scholarship, hence the well-known saying ‘history is written by the victors’. Be that as it may, critical discourse analysts nevertheless have at their disposal a great body of research in which to situate their observations.

Finally, researchers need to evaluate their findings in view of current socio-political affairs and thus, “critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit socio-political stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). By virtue of their work, therefore, van Dijk argues that critical discourse scholars, beyond being critical linguists, are also “social and political scientists, as well as social critics and activists” (ibid., p. 252).

Despite the subjectivity that permeates the latter stages of CDA research, there are steps that researchers can take to ensure a high degree of objectivity at the first stages of investigation. In the first instance, as suggested in sections 2.1 to 2.1.3, researchers must make principled methodological decisions on the basis of the data with which they are working, rather than on the basis of personal preference. For this reason, as with most areas of scientific research and in line with Wodak’s (2009) suggestion outlined in chapter 1, an in-depth literature review should always precede a critical discourse study in order to ascertain which of various methodologies are best applied to different data sets.

### 2.3.2 | Researcher bias

Further, another strong criticism that critical discourse analysts often receive is that there is a tendency to make large claims on the basis of a small dataset. In addition to this, they are frequently accused of *cherry-picking* data that is most likely to confirm their initial hypothesis as well as imposing subjective interpretation therein (Al Fajri, 2017; Baker,

2012). Indeed, CDA often deals with data that need to be objectively and unbiasedly reduced (or down-sampled) in order for full analysis to be conducted since in-depth CDA is a laborious and time-consuming task. Widdowson (2004) is very strong in his criticism that critical discourse analysts “appear to think of linguistics as a branch of political sociology and to pay similarly selective attention to those aspects of language that suit their particular line of enquiry” (p. 158).

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that, within the context of the sort of research that many analysts embark on, data can be very difficult to obtain and they, therefore, may need to resort to publicly available data such as newspapers and blogposts. Hence, what might be interpreted as cherry-picking by some, is actually the product of necessity for the researcher conducting the study. In addition, Burr (1995) echoes Renton’s (1999) and van Dijk’s (2001) position that objectivity is, to some extent, impossible since we all have our own view of the world. Rather, she argues that “researchers need to acknowledge their own involvement in their research and reflect on the role it plays in the results that are produced” (Burr in Baker 2006, p. 10).<sup>16</sup>

As noted, this thesis seeks to establish who the main actors involved in discourse about migration are and to understand how the linguistic construction of those social actors contribute to the axiological perspectives observed through the analysis of the data as well as through knowledge of the sociocultural and political context in which the discourse is embedded (Malta). That said, according to António Guterres, the current Secretary-General of the UN, “[h]ate speech is an alarm bell - the louder it rings, the greater the threat of genocide. It precedes and promotes violence” (United Nations, 2023). Thus, while this research does, in principle, take the perspective of migrants as an oppressed social group, any bias is in line with the principles of the EU, which is “founded on values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights [and] ... [a]ll forms of hatred and intolerance are incompatible with these fundamental rights and values” (European Union, 1995-2023c).

## 2.4 | Final thoughts

As explored in the discussion above, the research for this thesis seeks to investigate the ideologies and values underlying discourse about migrants within newspaper com-

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<sup>16</sup>For example, in Cameron and Kulick (2003), both writers begin their book on language and sexuality by informing their readers that they identify as a lesbian and gay man respectively. Although this level of acknowledgement and promulgation is unnecessary, it does serve as a good example of the extent to which researchers may expose their involvement and possible causes of bias in their research.

ments of Maltese online newspapers. The critical discourse analytic framework outlined allows researchers to closely investigate language with the view of uncovering such axiological information. Further, although CDA has been criticised as being somewhat unstructured, the truth is that through the use of defined frameworks, CDA offers several transparent techniques for analysing language within the socio-political context in which it is embedded. To this end, the breadth of possibility available to the critical discourse analyst makes it necessary to make careful decisions as to which structures merit closer analysis in the context of the data in question as well as the social, political, and historical contexts and issues in which the discourse is rooted. Of course, such decisions should be made on the basis of methodological principles as well as an understanding of the impacts that these choices can have; that is, the data should drive the methodology, not the other way around. For example, van Dijk (2001) explains that stress and intonation might be of little use to the analyst seeking to investigate the properties of language that can “vary as a function of social power” (p. 99). It would be far more useful to turn to the aspects of language and meaning that have been shown to be more obviously linked with beliefs, ideologies, and attitudes, like “interaction control on the one hand and . . . analysis of ‘content’, such as choice of topics, propositions and lexical items, on the other hand” (ibid., p. 99).

Against this backdrop, the three approaches explored provide a number of useful and important theoretical assertions and tools. Although they differ from each other in some respects, it is their overlap that provides the greatest tools for this research. Most notably, interdisciplinarity is at the heart of the three approaches. Wodak, van Dijk, and van Leeuwen all emphasise the need for an interdisciplinary orientation that considers a multitude of tools, techniques, and methodologies. Consequently, there is a strong need for more rigorous methodologies that firstly allow the computation of large amounts of data by using algorithmic methods to home in on areas of the data that, so to speak, ‘have something to say’ as well as address the aforementioned concerns about subjectivity and cherry-picking in CDA research. Hence, while this chapter laid the groundwork for the primary theoretical background against which this thesis is framed, the next chapter rather puts forward the key principles and justifications for the inclusion of corpus methodologies in the organisation and analysis of the data.



## Corpus assisted discourse studies

In view of the criticisms discussed towards the end of the previous chapter, and within the scope of the DHA, Reisigl and Wodak (2017) argue that a critical stance requires the researcher to:

- i. gain distance from the data;
- ii. embed the data within the social context;
- iii. clarify the political positioning of the discourse participants;
- iv. continuously self-reflect while undertaking research.

With this in mind, it is not difficult to ascertain why the principle of *triangulation* is fundamental to CDA as a way of minimising the risk of critically biasing one's findings. Indeed, triangulation is so central to the DHA that its importance is emphasised in much of its literature (see for example, Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2016; Wodak, 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Essentially, triangulation "implies taking a whole range of empirical observations, theories and methods as well as background information into account ... The specific choices depend on the specific problem" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017, p. 89). What this means in practice is that it is important for critical discourse analysts to let the data drive the research rather than the other way around.

At the same time, while van Dijk and van Leeuwen do not make explicit reference to the principle of triangulation, its essence is often implied in their discussion. For one, the principle mirrors van Leeuwen's (2005) perspective that social semiotics is not a pure, self-contained theory, but "only comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems" (p. 1), a view also shared by van Dijk (2001) who expounds that the choice of discourse structures to be studied is:

twice context-bound: firstly by our own (scholarly) aims, our research problems, the expectations of our readers, as well as the social relevance of our research project and secondly, by the relevance of specific discourse structures studied in their own context, such as the aims and beliefs of the speaker or the recipients, the social roles, positions, and relations of participants, institutional constraints, and so on (van Dijk, 2001, p. 106)

*Triangulation* has been described as “a mix of procedures to grasp complex phenomena” (Hansen, 2010, p. 207). It got its start in engineering where it was used for locating an unknown fixed point by relying on the location of two known fixed points (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). Indeed, “[t]he idea underlying triangulation is that a researcher observing an object from two different perspectives will obtain a three dimensional representation of this object by combining the two complementary two dimensional images” (Erzberger & Prein, 1997, p. 146).

Thus, within the scope of the interpretation of data in relation to ideologies and axiological information, the findings of the various methods can either confirm or refute each other, and results of the different methods can either diverge or contradict one another. This, in turn, helps to avoid any sort of (subconscious) confirmation bias; it works against the grain of the corroboration drive, however slight, since the principle motivation behind triangulation is accountability on the part of the researcher. Hence, against this backdrop, “triangulation is a rich means of completing the analysis because it tends to provide complementary findings which broaden our picture of the data” (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018, p. 10).

Further, triangulation reduces the possibility that a researcher’s vision is obscured by what they expect to find in the data, since the use of multiple methodologies mitigates the risk of such *blind spots*, particularly within the framework of CDA, since it requires a close reading to selected parts of a dataset (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018). Blind spots are elements of the data that remain underanalysed, or worse, undetected because they are not apparent through one specific methodology. However, by triangulating the data by means of multiple tools, what one methodology misses, another might catch (*ibid.*).

Thus, triangulation plays a pivotal role in CDA, serving as a means to mitigate the potential for introducing critical bias into research findings since, as mentioned, it advocates for allowing the data to steer the research, rather than imposing preconceived notions and interpretations. In order to address the criticisms that have been directed at CDA, this data-driven approach stands at the cornerstone of the research undertaken in this thesis. To this end, considerable effort has been invested in drawing on the data

for direction by taking advantage of a methodological synthesis, which, apart from the theoretical concepts traditionally used in CDA, additionally relies on computer-based examination using techniques from the domain of corpus linguistics.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.1 | Motivating corpus-assisted discourse studies

Against the backdrop of the discussion above, researchers in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) have often sought to complement their qualitative analysis with quantitative measures employed in corpus linguistics. Such a multi-methodological approach can be useful in addressing the criticism of both subjectivity and cherry-picking (discussed in section 2.3). As shown in chapter 1, sociolinguists are primarily concerned with making observations and claims about language embedded within its natural environment. Naturally, the more data available to a researcher, the broader the generalisations can be. Within this scope, it is no wonder why linguists in various fields have embraced the use of corpora to assist and/or drive their work, for “[c]orpora are generally large (consisting of thousands or even millions of words), representative samples of a particular type of naturally occurring language, so they can therefore be used as a standard reference with which claims about language can be measured” (Baker, 2006, p. 2).

Within the purview of this discussion, it should become clear that the use of corpora to triangulate data analysis and interpretation can prove invaluable to the critical discourse analyst since it:

facilitates validity checks of hypotheses, it anchors findings in more robust interpretations and explanations, and it allows researchers to respond flexibly to unforeseen problems and aspects of their research. Even when discourse analysts do not want to have to go to the trouble of building a corpus from scratch, they could still gainfully use corpora as a reference, to back up or expand on their findings derived from smaller-scale analyses of single texts (Baker, 2006, p. 16)

With this in mind, the adoption of corpora to CDA enables researchers to extend both the breadth and depth of the data and analysis beyond what could ever be possible without these relatively new computational techniques, since they permit complex

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<sup>1</sup>Despite this discussion, a word of caution is necessary. Although triangulation does indeed mitigate the tendency for bias, it is not an ultimate solution to researcher infallibility. Marchi and Taylor (2009) warn “that the implementation of triangulation within a research study in no way guarantees greater validity, nor can it be used to make claims for ‘scientific’ neutrality” (p. 18). Hence, while triangulation facilitates the objectivity, validity, and generalisability of research results, it might not entirely eliminate the subjective effects of researcher interpretation.

calculations to be computed on large bodies of texts (Baker, 2006). This is particularly powerful in the context of CDA, which as noted in chapter 2, has long been criticised for making broad generalisations on small amounts of data, since the “manual analyses demand the use of a small-scale corpus and are required because of the special nature of evaluation [and ideologies]” (Bednarek, 2006, p. 8). Indeed, it has been posited that:

[t]he hidden power of media discourse and the capacity of the capitalist class and other power-holders to exercise this power depend on systematic tendencies in news reporting and other media activities. A single text on its own is quite insignificant: the effects of media power are *cumulative*, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader, and so forth (Fairclough, 1989, p. 54, emphasis added)

From this perspective, the assertion of Fairclough (1989) points to the fact that in order to make broader and sounder generalisations, critical discourse analysts need to work with big data. This finds resonance in corpus linguistics, which gives the critical discourse analyst the possibility to do just this. By means of computer algorithms, corpora allow researchers to ascertain which words, word forms, and structures are particularly frequent or infrequent in any given body of texts (a corpus) versus another. In other words, what is *key* in one corpus over another. Further, corpora can show researchers what items appear to be statistically significant in any given corpus, and therefore, give indications of dominant themes and topics. Manually calculating frequency and keyness would be near impossible on a multi-million-word corpus and thus, the “automated side helps to direct the human researcher to aspects of the corpus that he or she may not have thought interesting to look at” (Baker & Egbert, 2016, p. 2). In other words, as mentioned, corpora can point the research to the areas of the corpus that ‘have something to say’.

With this in mind, corpora better equip researchers to observe “the incremental effect of discourse” (Baker, 2006, p. 13) and the way that discourse contributes to ideologies, power structure, and dominance relating to social groups. Similar to Fairclough’s (1989) claim related to the cumulative effect of power, Stubbs (2002) argues that it is not just by singular lexical items that evaluative meaning is transmitted, “but also by longer phrases and syntactic structures, and by co-occurring node and collocates” (p. 215). Thus, using corpus tools to observe repeated patterns in large collections of texts, enables more “objective, empirical evidence for evaluative meanings” (ibid., p. 215), which in view of the discussion in section 2.3, is of primary importance. Hence, as

Hardt-Mautner (1995) points out, corpora permit researchers to go beyond the classic introspective methods traditionally used in CDA to more empirical techniques and findings, allowing them to rely more heavily on “scientific, empirical notions of sampling, balance and representativeness in corpus construction” (Baker & Egbert, 2016, p. 3).

As a result, and given the availability and development of technology, corpus-based discourse analysis (McEnery & Hardie, 2012) is increasingly being employed in CDA studies to fully exploit the data that is analysed and to address the aforementioned concerns of subjectivity and cherry-picking. In this regard, critical discourse analysts who apply corpus-based methodologies to CDA (e.g. Baker et al., 2008; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008) typically make use of corpus linguistic methodologies to triangulate their findings of CDA. Within this context:

a key advantage of *corpus linguistics* over other forms of analysis is that the computational procedures are thought to remove human cognitive, social, or political biases which may skew analysis in certain directions or even lead to faulty conclusions. Unlike humans, computers do not care about what they study, so there is no chance that their findings are misguided by conviction ('I know it's true; it must be true!'). Nor do computers make errors due to fatigue or boredom (Baker & Egbert, 2016, p. 2, emphasis added)

Corpus linguistic methods offer researchers “a reasonably high degree of objectivity; that is, they enable the researcher to approach the texts (or text surface) (relatively) free from any preconceived or existing notions regarding their linguistic or semantic/pragmatic content” (Baker et al., 2008, p. 277). This is why recent CDA studies have embraced this new technological way of doing CDA, and now a great body of research draws on corpus linguistic tools in combination with CDA methodologies, thus ensuring a greater degree of objectivity in the collection, down-sampling, observation, and analysis of data.

This research adopts a number of computational procedures to mitigate the extent of researcher bias in such an ideologically charged field. With this in mind, while the use of corpora may not entirely remove researcher bias, it does, in fact, mitigate the extent to which one's research might be affected by such bias. As Baker and Egbert's (2016) elucidation above makes clear, computers do not have the same cognitive and political bias that humans have and thus, analysis is less likely to lead to false assumptions and faulty logic. Further, as outlined in section 2.1.2.2, the full analysis of the various layers of language that can manifest hate and prejudice may seem overwhelming. Indeed, it makes

the full analysis of even a short text tedious and difficult, much less a lengthy corpus of data. In this respect, modern technology and the development of corpus linguistics has also helped to address this issue.

## 3.2 | Theoretical framing

In view of the foregoing, corpus linguistics and CDA are used together in an interplay whereby researchers can zoom in and out of specific data points to both interpret and quantify interesting areas of analysis. It is thus worth considering briefly the theoretical framing of this kind of research. As with many areas of research, a number of terms have been proposed and are widely used to describe the combination of corpus linguistics and CDA, all with some sort of ideological baggage. Two of the most common labels for this type of research are: *corpus-driven critical discourse analysis* and *corpus-based critical discourse analysis*. The difference between the two is subtle, but still ideologically important. The former uses automation to guide the human researcher to areas of the corpus that may appear interesting (statistically that is) - areas that the researcher may not have necessarily considered, or overlooked prior to corpus analysis (Baker & Egbert, 2016). *Corpus-based analysis*, on the other hand, uses automation to confirm or refute the researcher's prior assumptions and hypotheses, whereby the computational calculations are carried out on specific areas of the corpus in order to confirm whether or not the researcher's original 'hunch' has any evidence to support it (ibid.). In other words, the researcher already has a somewhat clear idea of what they are looking for in the corpus.

Neither of these terms, however, accurately describes the method of research being followed in this thesis. Rather than being *driven by* or *based on* corpus linguistics, the research for this thesis is better viewed in terms of Kenny's metaphor of the kaleidoscope since the aim is to let "textual patterns come into focus and recede again as others take their place" (Kenny, 2001 in Baker, 2006, p. 7). Rather than corpus analysis driving the critical discourse analysis or vice versa, both methods inform the analysis in a sort of tennis match between the two. Within this scope, both CDA and corpus linguistics are used simultaneously to zoom in and out of areas of the data that offer insight into to ideologies and linguistic patterns associated with discriminatory attitudes and hate speech in Malta. In other words, the research for this thesis is intrinsically interdisciplinary in nature and it combines a series of methods rather than using any one as a driving force. In this regard, this thesis is very typical of most CDA research, which as shown, is definitively interdisciplinary.

For these reasons, the term *Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies* (CADS; Ancarno 2018) better describes this research since, as discussed, corpora are being used to both *drive* as well as *inform* the research. Although the acronym does not include the word *critical*, it is the closest existing term that can accurately describe the methodologies being adopted here. Given the scope of this research, the critical part of the analysis can be taken for granted; critical analysis in any research relating to ideologies and values is a foregone conclusion. Hence, in order to avoid reinventing the wheel by creating another cumbersome acronym (possibly CACDA), *Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies* (CADS) has been adopted in a deliberate decision, since it captures both aspects of corpus driven and corpus-based analysis in addition to being an umbrella term for all types of work on discourse, including CDA, as well as encompassing a “triangulation of disciplines [... thus] contributing to the increasing diversification of corpus linguistic/CADS research” (Ancarno, 2018, p. 134).

### 3.3 | Combining corpus methods and critical discourse analysis

The need for corpora in various fields of linguistics has long been recognised, but it was only in the 1960s that they started to be explored and, indeed, it was not until the 1990s that corpora began to be variously adapted to diverse areas of linguistics (McEnery & Hardie, 2012), since which time technology has made extraordinary advancements. Reflecting on her research related to EC/EU discourse in the British press, Hardt-Mautner (1995) asserts that “the mainly qualitative methodology used in CDA proved ill-suited to handling the sizeable corpus that formed the basis of the study” (p. 1). As a result, Hardt-Mautner turned to corpus linguistics to bridge the gap between CDA as her chosen framework on the one hand, and her voluminous dataset on the other. Indeed, there appears to be a growing trend of scholars adapting corpus methodologies to the study of discourse, ideologies, politics, power, and dominance (Baker, 2006).

Sinclair (2004) asserts that traditional CDA methods are somewhat outdated given the possibilities that technology now permits and, therefore, he declares that CDA and corpus linguistics are “the twin pillars of language research” (p. 10). Indeed, he argues that:

- both promote the creation of highly innovative hypotheses;
- both deal with larger pattern dimensions than linguistics is accustomed to handling, necessitating the utilisation of modern computers to manage the evidence

and uncover relevant information.

C. Taylor and Marchi (2018) further note that the two form a “natural synergy” (p. 1) since they can both drive and complement each other. Certainly, as Al Fajri (2017) claims, corpus linguistics has much to lend CDA as evidenced by a growing body of work (see for example: Baker et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2005; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Orpin, 2005; Salama, 2011; Wang, 2015). To illustrate, by way of example, how the two disciplines can enrich each other, Salama (2011) demonstrates an effective synergy of CDA and corpus linguistics in her work on ideologies and collocations realised in discourse pertaining to Wahhabi-Saudi Islam post 9/11. Salama (2011) investigates the way that “potential collocates of the node words WAHHABI, WAHHAB’S and SAUDI contribute towards different ideologies across clashing texts and opposing discourses about Wahhabi-Saudi Islam post-9/11” (p. 319). For the purposes of the research, Salama (2011) built a corpus of around 250,000 words using the text of two books focused on Wahhabi Islam.<sup>2</sup> Salama (2011) notes that collocations such as *regime*, *infiltration*, *extremism*, and *terror* contribute to an “overwhelmingly negative discourse prosody that is typical of ... WAHHABI and its collocates” (p. 330). What Salama means by *discourse prosody* here is that the use of habitual collocates with a given lexical item can colour its meaning so that it is difficult to conceive of the lexical item in isolation from the meaning of its collocates - its semantic prosody (Louw, 1993).<sup>3</sup> Thus, Salama’s example is testament to the fact that the two fields contribute to the strength of each other by generating a framework that applies mathematical computation to the observation of ideologies and value. To this end, the combination of both methodological frameworks “includes *quantitative* calculations of the distribution of evaluations, and *qualitative* comments on their discourse functions, and involves both manual and automatic analyses” (Bednarek, 2006, p. 8, emphasis in original).

In essence therefore, as mentioned, corpora allow researchers to look at a multitude of texts, thus putting them in a much better position to observe the cumulative patterns of power and dominance across a comparatively substantial dataset. Moreover, by adopting a blend of both automated techniques and algorithms, as well as human observation, researchers are better able to identify linguistic patterns, and consequently, also better “able to make fairly confident generalisations about the varieties of language

<sup>2</sup>With corpora today reaching as much as 17 billion (Davies, n.d.), the corpus used by Salama (2011) is relatively small.

<sup>3</sup>Although Louw’s description actually refers to what he coined as *semantic prosody*, Stubbs (2002) suggests that “[p]ragmatic prosodies might be a better term since this would maintain a standard distinction between aspects of meaning which are independent of speakers (semantics) and aspects which concern speaker attitude (pragmatics)” (p. 66).

they are examining” (Baker & Egbert, 2016, p. 2) as well as any observations pertaining to implicit ideologies.

### 3.4 | Quantitative vs qualitative analysis

One of the most common perceptions of the synergy of the two disciplines is that quantitative analysis lies exclusively in the domain of corpus linguistics, while qualitative discussion falls within the realm of CDA. Moreover, C. Taylor and Marchi (2018) point out that critical discourse analysts often receive criticism from corpus linguists for rarely using “quantitative tools to describe the extent to which their findings are generalizable” (p. 4). Conversely, corpus linguists receive criticism for “mainly focusing on individual words and lacking insight into the various dimensions of discourse structure and into the extralinguistic knowledge needed to get to the ‘hidden story’ of meaning” (ibid., p. 4) - in other words, for concentrating on purely quantitative measures and disregarding the qualitative analysis necessary to theorise about ideologies in language.

The reality though is that this dichotomy is largely a misconception, and indeed, corpus linguistics includes elements of interpretation, and CDA includes elements of quantification (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018). That said, the two disciplines do have much to lend each other, since “[a]ll methods of research have associated problems which need to be addressed and are also limited in terms of what they can and cannot achieve” (Baker, 2006, p. 7). With this in mind, corpus linguistic methods help critical discourse analysts to achieve a greater degree of precision and accuracy by permitting “qualitative analysis of quantifiable patterns” (Marchi, 2019, p. 5). Indeed, within CADS, several tools have been adopted by various researchers; most commonly, keyword, frequency and collocation analysis (see Baker et al., 2008; Haarman & Lombardo, 2009; Krishnamurthy, 1996; C. Taylor, 2016; Wang, 2015).

The task of a critical discourse analyst is to classify language features that appear to be particularly usual or unusual within a given corpus and, subsequently, to interpret them in order to make assumptions about the meaning underlying the language, against the socio-political context in which it is spoken (or written). Within this scope, “it is easy to see that discourse analysis inherently has quantitative potential. No pattern can be identified unless its components are quantifiable” (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018, p. 2). Thus, while a critical discourse analyst might observe a particular metaphor in a collection of texts by means of a deep reading of those texts (e.g. migration as invaders as noted in Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017a), a corpus linguist is able to quantify the extent to which that metaphor is represented in the discourse if the data has been

thoroughly and accurately annotated. By means of various algorithms and calculations, corpus-based methods can give insight into precisely how much any one structure features in a corpus. On the other hand, without the interpretation of a human researcher, corpus data is little more than abstract numbers. Biber, Conrad, and Reppen explain that “[a]ssociation patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However, functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis” (1998, p. 4). Hence, the two disciplines not only complement each other, but enrich each other, forming a “useful methodological synergy” (Baker et al., 2008, p. 273) and making both the depth and breadth of possible analysis much more extensive.

The benefits of adopting a blend of the two disciplines are perfectly summed up in the metaphor of corpus linguistics as a kaleidoscope. The combination of corpus linguistics with CDA enables researchers to zoom in and out in a constant back and forth between quantitative and qualitative analysis, both of which have the ability to offer powerful insight into ideology and discourse. It is this back and forth interplay that plays a primary role in triangulation, which unifies the various methodologies that make up the interdisciplinary approach to research that this thesis embodies.

Conversely, since corpus studies are often carried out on large amounts of data, there is a tendency to uncover what Baker and McEnery (2015) call ‘*so what*’ findings. Such findings constitute what could be deemed obvious or highly expected, such as high amounts of Islamophobic discourse in conservative and tabloid press in the UK (ibid.). However, ‘*so what*’ findings can be valuable, since they can make the interpretation of qualitative findings more credible and valid in view of the fact that investigation consists of triangulating analyses with tools from both corpus linguistics and, more intricate CDA.

### 3.5 | Corpus tools and quantitative measures

Having assessed the interplay between CDA and corpus linguistics, which together, form the CADS approach to investigation that this thesis adopts, it is necessary to define exactly what a *corpus* is. Further, upon embarking on a corpus assisted discourse analytic study, it is necessary to carefully consider the methodological decisions that might be taken, since the decisions taken at the outset of research, such as the “(automatic or manual) handling of the data, or the choice of tools and metrics have an impact on the steps that follow, and this effect needs to be acknowledged and accounted for” (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018, p. 11).

Thus far, a *corpus* has been referred to as a ‘*body of texts*’, but this is a very simplistic characterisation. Indeed, corpora are typically large bodies of electronically encoded texts, often consisting of millions of words, which are “designed or required for a particular ‘representative’ function” (Leech, 2013, p. 11). The British National Corpus (BNC), one of the first corpora created for general English in the 1980s and ‘90s, for example, contains 100 million words (Davies, 2004a); the Maltese Language Resource Server (MLRS) contains 250 million words (MLRS, 2016); and, more recently, the Corpus of the English Web (enTenTen) contains 52 billion words (Lexical Computing, 2017a). Against this backdrop, there are two main types of corpora: *general corpora*, which like the BNC, contain moderately random collections of language specimens, often comprised of data from several sources (Baker, 2006), and *specialised corpora*, which Baker (ibid.) claims are the most important kind for discourse analysis, since they are *domain-specific* (Leech, 2013). What this means is that specialised corpora are used to investigate specific varieties of language and types of discourse, and hence, data collection is conducted on the basis of specifically designed criteria.

Naturally, as this thesis seeks to investigate a very particular type of discourse with the view of uncovering ideologies, values and axiological information, a specialised corpus is necessary to best interrogate the research questions and hypotheses formulated in chapter 2. Against the backdrop of hate speech and discrimination, this research necessitates a corpus populated with language conducive to the investigation of the target discourse. Indeed, in order to be able to observe repeated instances of both overt and implicit xenophobic discourse, it is necessary to limit the contents of the specialised corpus to relevant documents. Gabrielatos warns that “for the term ‘relevant document’ to have any meaning, the compilers of a specialised corpus need to define what the corpus would ideally contain, and then ‘adjust [their] parameters’ according to what is feasible under the particular circumstances” (Sinclair, 2004, in Gabrielatos, 2007, p. 6). To this end, as will be elaborated further in chapter 4, a specialised sub-corpus<sup>4</sup> comprising relevant newspaper comments was constructed with the view of making observations pertaining to xenophobic representations of migrants in Malta.

In the construction of specialised corpora, it is important for corpus builders to ensure that their dataset is *representative* of the discourse being investigated. Baker (2006) points out that a corpus containing only data extracted from a single text (say a politician’s speech on migration) is not representative of the broad discourse of migrants

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<sup>4</sup>A sub-corpus is a smaller, selected portion of a larger corpus that is created to examine specific linguistic phenomena or research questions within a restricted context (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Sub-corpora allow for more targeted investigations and facilitate the exploration of patterns and features within a delimited subset of data (Baker, 2006). These smaller corpora provide a means to conduct more nuanced analyses and gain insights into specific linguistic phenomena within a narrower context (McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

and migration. For this reason, corpora must necessarily include texts from multiple sources. In the context of this thesis, which as mentioned, uses newspaper comments for the analysis of ideologies, a single source comprises all the comments associated with single article. Using the same logic, in the same way that a single speech is not representative of an entire discourse, the comments from just one article fail to provide a full picture of discourse pertaining to migrants in Malta.

Additionally, once the corpus has been built (in this case a specialised corpus), there are several quantitative tools available to explore the data within the corpus. The most frequently used corpus tools in the study of ideology and language are *concordances* and *collocation* (Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012). As demonstrated in fig. 3.1, concordance lines allow researchers to organise each instance of a given query term (e.g. *illegal*) in its context (displaying the text to the immediate left and to the right) and therefore, provides the possibility of viewing words within their linguistic environment, thereby assisting in the identification of initial lexical and grammatical patterns. In addition to concordance lines, the computational nature of a corpus allows researchers to statistically compute significant collocates. Collocates are words or phrases that tend to appear frequently in close proximity to a target word (illustrated in fig. 3.2), indicating a potential association or collocational relationship (Sinclair, 1991). Within the context of CADS, the analysis of collocates may provide insights into the discursive patterns and lexical choices that contribute to the construction of meaning, power relations, and ideological positioning within texts.

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#2	members with the charge of aiding and abetting	<b>illegal</b>	entry into a sovereign territory!!!</s><s>I agree v	📄
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#6	ts and religious fanaticism.</s><s>Taking these	<b>illegal</b>	immigrants to Italy, France or wherever it is men	📄
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#7	y saboteurs.</s><s>If any of them tries to bring	<b>illegal</b>	immigrats to Malta they must be imprisoned, the	📄
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#7	ust be imprisoned, the key thrown away and the	<b>illegal</b>	immigrats expelled.</s><s>Mr.Boffa , Don'y you	📄
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#9	<s>Since when is NATO expected to provide an	<b>illegal</b>	immigrant ferry service?</s><s>And to what des	📄
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#10	l and dry.</s><s>Compared to the thousands of	<b>illegal</b>	immigrants roaming the streets of our towns and	📄
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#12	epatriations.</s><s>Very recently two groups of	<b>illegal</b>	immigrants managed to reach our shores withou	📄
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#12	eing detected.</s><s>I wonder how many more	<b>illegal</b>	immigrants reached our shores undetected?</s>	📄
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#12	especially Libya.</s><s>It will discourage these	<b>illegal</b>	immigrants from paying human traffickers all tha	📄
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	🕒 doc#14	rd of any employer being fined for employing an	<b>illegal</b>	economic African immigrant ? Just make up you	📄

Figure 3.1: Sketch Engine: examples of the top 10 concordance lines of *illegal* in the HS sub-corpus<sup>5</sup>

Beyond concordances and collocations, corpora also allow the possibility to measure *keyness*. According to Scott (2015), a word is key when it appears in a text “at

<sup>5</sup>see chapter 4 for a full illustration and discussion of the Hate Speech (HS) sub-corpus.

least as many times as the user has specified as a Minimum Frequency” (p. 236) and its frequency in one corpus is statistically significantly higher than its frequency in another *reference* corpus. Ascertaining which words are key within a given corpus allows researchers to gain an understanding of the overall nature of the discourse contained within a corpus. Equally useful are tools such as frequency lists, clusters, and dispersion plots (Baker, 2006).

It is worth noting here that some of the aforementioned tools can be computed in different ways. The decision as to which algorithms to use should be made by the researcher at the outset, on the basis of the research goals as well as limitations in relation to the availability of software, since these decisions can have an impact of the analysis and the conclusions drawn therewith. It will be beneficial to illustrate by way of example. As mentioned, the term *collocation* refers to the relationship between multiple words that tend to co-occur within a few spaces left or right of each other (Stubbs, 2002). What this means in a computational sense is that a collocation is a word association pattern by

	Word	Grammatical relation	Count	Score ↓
1	<b>immigrant</b> illegal immigrants	nouns modified by "illegal"	23	12.6 ...
2	<b>immigration</b> illegal immigration	nouns modified by "illegal"	7	11.9 ...
3	<b>migrant</b> illegal migrants	nouns modified by "illegal"	7	11.7 ...
4	<b>immigrat</b> illegal immigrats	nouns modified by "illegal"	2	10.3 ...
5	<b>issue</b> illegal immigration issue	nouns modified by "illegal"	2	10.1 ...
6	<b>mean</b> Illegal means	nouns modified by "illegal"	1	9.3 ...
7	<b>fullstop</b> ILLEGAL , fullstop	nouns modified by "illegal"	1	9.3 ...
8	<b>boatpeople</b> illegal boatpeople	nouns modified by "illegal"	1	9.3 ...
9	<b>whole</b> whole illegal	"illegal" and/or ...	1	9.3 ...
10	<b>entry</b> illegal entry	nouns modified by "illegal"	1	9.3 ...

Figure 3.2: Sketch Engine: Examples of the top 10 collocates of *illegal* in the HS sub-corpus

which the frequent co-occurrence of two or more words is the result of more than just chance. One way of measuring the degree of the relationship between multiple words is by using the statistical algorithm for Mutual Information (MI) (Sinclair, 2004). MI compares the probability of observing two words together (e.g. *immigrant* and *illegal*) with the probability of observing either independently. The greater above 0 the score, the more genuine the association between multiple words; if the relationship between the two words is not strong, the MI score will be less than or equal to 0 (Church & Hanks, 1990). To put it more concretely, the MI score computed below illustrates the relationship between *immigrant* and *illegal* in the overall corpus used in this thesis by means of the algorithm suggested by Davies (2004b), where  $x$  is the frequency of *illegal* (28,429);  $y$  is the frequency of *immigrant* (50,322);  $xy$  is the number of times the two words co-occur in the corpus (12,578); the *size* of the corpus refers to the number of words in the corpus (110,808,668); and *span* refers to the space between a node and its collocate (in this case 5 words to the left and 5 to the right):

$$MI(x, y) = \log \frac{\frac{xy \times \text{corpus size}}{x \times y \times \text{span}}}{\log(2)}$$

$$MI(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) = \log \frac{\frac{12578 \times 110808668}{28429 \times 50322 \times 10}}{\log(2)}$$

$$MI(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) = \frac{1.98866584972}{0.6931}$$

$$MI(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) = 0.99$$

According to this calculation of the relationship between *illegal* and *immigrant*, the two words are very closely related. While this is informative, one problem with MI as a measure for computing the relationship between two words is that it relies strongly and the corpus size and on “frequency, [thus] low-frequency words tend to reach a high MI score which may be misleading” (Lexical Computing, 2017b). On the other hand, *logDice* differs from MI because, while it measures exclusivity, it does not account for rare combinations, and therefore, it is frequently adopted as an alternative of MI (Gablasova, Brezina, & McEnery, 2017, p. 164). *LogDice* essentially computes “two

proportions that express the tendency of two words to co-occur relative to the frequency of these words in the corpus" (ibid.). The algorithm that Rychlý (2008) uses computes a score from 0 to 14 where 14 indicates that two words are inseparable, and 0 suggests a mutually exclusive relationship:

$$\begin{aligned} \logDice(x, y) &= 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{2f_{xy}}{f_x + f_y} \right) \\ \logDice(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) &= 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{2f_{\text{immigrant}*\text{illegal}}}{f_{\text{immigrant}} + f_{\text{illegal}}} \right) \\ \logDice(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) &= 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{2(12578)}{28429 + 50322} \right) \\ \logDice(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) &= 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{25156}{78751} \right) \\ \logDice(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) &= 14 + \log_2(0.319) \\ \logDice(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) &= 14 + (-1.648) \\ \logDice(\text{illegal}, \text{immigrant}) &= 12.352 \end{aligned}$$

Although, in this case, both algorithms illustrated above indicate a strong (much higher than chance) relationship between the words *illegal* and *immigrant* in the corpus used in this thesis, it is dangerous to adopt statistical measures blindly, since they can ultimately have a major impact on observations and conclusions possible from an axiological perspective.

Beyond the individual formulae for the various statistical measures used, it is also necessary to make decisions pertaining to corpus software on the basis of the data, research questions, availability, and budget. In the early days of corpus linguistics, researchers were limited with what was available. Today, however, there are multiple tools, each with their own benefits and limitations, including: Sketch Engine, Ant Cont, and #LancsBox, among others. For the present study, and after having explored the different corpus tools available, Sketch Engine was selected for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it appears to be a very intuitive and user friendly platform. Secondly, it has numerous benefits pertaining to data storage and hardware requirements, since it works via an online server rather than through a computer hard-drive. This means that it does not require vast amounts of storage and processing power to work efficiently, and it is not affected by limitations of operating systems, allowing it to be used easily on Windows, Mac, and Linux, all of which needed to be used at different stages in the data processing for this thesis. In addition, the algorithms that Sketch Engine uses are in line with the aims of this research. Indeed, the “way in which keywords are computed in Sketch Engine is especially useful for comparing multiple data sets because it does not rely on significance testing, which in turn depends on sample size” (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018, p. 115), thus offering a powerful tool for comparing the various corpora being utilised for this research. Finally, and most importantly, Sketch Engine appears to have absolutely no trouble dealing with the large amounts of data, while #Lancsbox at times seems to have difficulty loading large files.<sup>6</sup>

This discussion should illustrate the importance of selecting quantitative measures on the basis of principled decisions informed by the goals of the research, though it is important to bear in mind that “[e]ach technique gives some sort of trade-off between frequency and salience, so another option could be to consider the results from more than one algorithm” (Baker, 2006, p. 102). Moreover, keeping in mind that “the wide variety of alternative statistical techniques available to the corpus user might mean that data can be subtly ‘massaged’ in order to reveal results that are interesting, controversial or simply confirm our suspicions” (Baker, 2006, p. 179), the algorithms selected should be chosen on the basis of an understanding of the practical application of the calculations as well as the types observations one hopes to make. In addition, Baker (*ibid.*) further explains that, in view of this, researchers should attempt to select their techniques at the outset and be consistent with their use throughout, since failing to do so makes the change seem less partial and suspicious (or ‘massaged’). Hence, researchers should be able to justify their decision very early on, though as mentioned, there is no reason that a combination of multiple techniques cannot be combined to enrich analysis and further triangulate results.

In sum, the discussion in this chapter draws on existing research to assess the efficacy of adopting corpora as a methodological framework in critical discourse analytic research. To this end, there are several fundamental benefits of using corpus-based methodologies to assist CDA since, as stated, they form a natural synergy. Most notably, the combination provides critical discourse analysts with the opportunity to:

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<sup>6</sup>While Sketch Engine is the only platform of the aforementioned ones that requires a (sizeable) membership fee, those fees are covered by the University of Malta through an institutional subscription.

- limit subjectivity and cherry-picking by using computational formulae to identify data for analysis;
- conduct more rigorous quantitative analysis;
- form a more complete picture of the data by means of triangulation via numerous tools, techniques, and methodologies.

As noted, the tools and techniques deriving from corpus linguistics enable researchers to get an overall view of large data, and applying them allows rigorous analysis to be conducted on an entire corpus of data. The algorithms borrowed from computational traditions may firstly guide researchers to areas of the corpus that may be interesting; by indicating which items are key or most frequent, corpora give discourse analysts objective reason to closely investigate particular items within the corpus. To this end, corpora can draw attention to interesting items within the corpus, as well as items that appear to be absent from the corpus, both of which can provide powerful insight into the kind of discourse contained within the dataset (C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018). Finally, corpus linguistic tools can additionally enable broad generalisations to be made by means of extrapolating qualitative observations derived from a small subset of data to larger datasets.



## The Corpora

Against the backdrop of the discussion in chapters 2 and 3, the obvious next step becomes the construction of a corpus of hate speech data embedded within the Maltese context. This corpus is needed to conduct the analysis and to attempt to make observations therein pertaining to hate speech and discrimination of migrants in Maltese society. Within the purview of hate speech, however, collecting samples of spontaneous utterances by means of ethnographic fieldwork may prove very challenging since, socially silenced topics such as racism “can drive a topic underground, making it resilient and resistant to exposure and difficult for fieldworkers to observe as a phenomenon” (Sue & Robertson, 2019, p. 71). The point here is that, to some extent and as a consequence of the research objectives, critical discourse analysts are limited with respect to data collection and must often rely on bodies of data that closely assimilate the discourse they are actually looking for. Hence, although spontaneously spoken data is considered the gold standard of linguistic data, it is very hard to come by in relation to negative ideologies and values, and therefore, researchers must find alternative means of studying the phenomenon.

Following this rationale, and with the goal of learning more pertaining to the form and function of discriminatory discourse in Europe, the inspiration for the dataset used here was drawn from the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, which, as noted in chapter 1, served as a pilot for this thesis. While the scope of the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project was much broader than this thesis, since it looked at both homophobic and xenophobic discourse in Malta, it still offered useful methodological insight into the collection and handling of data notwithstanding the differences in theoretical background in which this thesis is ultimately embedded. The data of the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project was harvested from “user-generated content as found in what is known in media circles as ‘below the line’ comment fields on newspaper websites” (Graham and Wright 2015 in Millar, Baider, and

Assimakopoulos 2017, p. 17). The decision to analyse specifically below-the-line comments (rather than, for example, newspaper articles) was taken due to the substantial work already in existence in relation to minority representations in mainstream media.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in the context of this thesis, arguably and for obvious reasons, it was difficult to obtain completely naturally spoken data on the topic of migration that includes instances of discrimination and hate speech within it. That is why a corresponding decision was made to opt for one of the closest approximation of natural conversational data, i.e. what Schandorf (2013) describes as '*computer mediated communication*' (CMC), which lies at the interface between spoken and written language in which "text-based exchanges...emulate face-to-face conversations...[in] a creative blend of spoken, written and CMC conventions" (Quan-Haase in Schandorf, 2013, p. 320). At the same time, as numerous researchers have pointed out (see Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012; Josey, 2010), hate speech tends to abound on the internet likely due to the fact that it is one of the few spaces where it is possible to air diverse and unpopular opinions with relative anonymity. In view of this, newspaper comments present a unique opportunity to observe somewhat naturally occurring discourse related to migrants and migration and a significant chance of identifying hate speech and discrimination therewith. Hence, a corpus of data comprising newspaper comment data from Malta-based newspapers was constructed for this thesis.

Although the essential spontaneity of newspaper comments is inarguable, there is scope to argue that there is some complicity between the online comments and the articles themselves, since the comments are ultimately a response to the article. Thus, it could be argued that there is some sort of "priming" involved in the response to the articles and that, more importantly, the subject matter represented in the comment data may in some way be patterned by the stories that are picked up by journalists. Further, it is important to acknowledge the potential for echo chambers within online communities, where like-minded individuals reinforce each other's perspectives, possibly amplifying certain viewpoints (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016; Susan Jacobson & Johnson, 2016). At the same time, however, it is also unlikely that people "seek to completely exclude other perspectives from their political universe" (Garrett, 2009, p. 279). With this in mind, there is no denying that newspaper comment data ultimately present a unique

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<sup>1</sup>In addition to this, however, Bednarek (2006) notes that "news writers express their opinions about the events, people, and situations they report on" (p. 3). Further, by now it is widely accepted that the evaluations and opinions embedded in the news are largely reflective of the values of the powerful elite since; as posited in the seminal work of Herman and Chomsky (1988), "the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them" (p. xi). Thus, beyond the extensive research that has already been done, the goals of this thesis do not align with the investigation of the linguistic construction of news articles, since it seeks to ascertain the ways that broader society construct their views of minorities (in this case, migrants).

window into the dominant discourse of a given society (or part thereof) in relation to a particular topic. A further important caveat here is that, naturally, the comment data of a given newspaper will be mostly representative of the views of its particular readership, but again, it is crucial to recognise that online comment sections may attract a diverse range of voices beyond the core readership. At that, there is little evidence to support the assumption that individuals “will use the Internet to create echo chambers, devoid of other viewpoints, no matter how much control over their political information environment they are given” (Garrett, 2009, p. 279), thus highlighting the fact that newspaper comments can provide useful insights into the dominant discourse of a society, albeit with the caveat that they may not fully represent the views of the population as a whole.

So, like the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, this thesis uses online newspaper comments to make observations about the language and ideologies pertaining to migrants in Malta. However, the methods used to collect and organise the data are very different. As discussed in Millar et al. (2017), the data for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project was initially mined by means of Newsbrief<sup>2</sup>, an online tool developed by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre for monitoring online news reporting. Newsbrief allows researchers to search for specific words and phrases within the news reported. In addition, it allows searches to be limited by specific criteria, such as date, newspaper, language, and location. Accordingly, a number of search terms were used to gather newspaper articles from two specific time periods (March 2015 to June 2015 and December 2015 to February 2016) to avoid dates during the peak of the migration crisis, which could skew the data.<sup>3</sup> Therein, the articles with accompanying user comments were selected and two corpora subsequently constructed (a corpus of newspaper article text and a corpus of user comments). Each corpus comprised a representative sample of 5000-6000 words of text for each search term over the six-month period. In order to down-sample effectively, only data from the week in each month that provided most articles were used. Further, if still too much article data was retrieved, shorter articles were removed. In addition, when too much comment data was gathered, only the first three to five hundred words of comments from selected articles were taken, while ensuring that comment threads were not broken.

While the use of search terms in the context of the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. worked well for those purposes, the research for this thesis seeks to adopt a more objective method for harvesting comment data that is more data driven and includes fewer instances of researcher intervention and without relying on third-party applications (such as News-

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<sup>2</sup><https://emm.newsbrief.eu/NewsBrief/clusteredition/en/latest.html>

<sup>3</sup>Search terms included: *homosexual(s)*, *immigrant(s)*, *lesbian(s)*, *LGBT*, *Muslim(s)* and *refugee(s)*.

brief). In addition, while the multi-team cohort necessitated a somewhat simplistic procedure for down-sampling, the limitations placed on word count led to incomplete datasets since not all the comments of a given article were extracted to the corpus. This thesis, on the other hand, seeks to create a corpus containing all the comments from selected articles in order to be able to make observations pertaining to the construction of the overall discourse. For these reasons, various other online tools were explored.

Firstly, the idea of scraping the web for newspaper comments was considered. For this reason, Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) such as Kimono (SEOMoz, Inc., 2021 - 2023) and ParseHub (ParseHub, 2023) were evaluated. However, at the time that these tools were being reviewed, it was decided that they lacked the level of accuracy and sophistication that was necessitated by this thesis. In addition, and more importantly, scraping tools such as these are only able to extract data that is already on the web. This means that any comment that newspapers deem unfit to appear on their online forum cannot be collected. Comments can be deleted by newspapers for various reasons, including, but not limited to: the use of a fake name; being offensive; being off-topic; and, of particular relevance to this research, for using “abusive or defamatory phrases especially those attached to religious, sexual, racial, gender or ethnic contexts or offensive to minority group” (Times of Malta, 2023).

Although there was no guarantee that newspapers would be willing to share such data in the first place, approaching them was still definitely worth considering, since deleted comments may contribute invaluablely to the observation of axiological information pertaining to migrants in Malta and may potentially offer insight into discourse that is deemed by newspapers as too offensive to appear in a public space in Malta. Against this backdrop, and being fully aware that this was a big ask, a number of Maltese newspapers were contacted and asked whether or not they would be willing to share the comment (and meta) data stored on their servers. In other words, with the assurance of complete anonymisation of the data, newspapers were asked for the comments along with other pertinent accompanying information such as date, time, deletion status, placement within a thread, and article affiliation. Within this scope, the *Times of Malta* (ToM) agreed to contribute all their online comments from the beginning of their online platform in 2008 up until the date of communication in January 2017, including all their deleted comments, which were crucial since their inclusion removed any concern that the data had been moderated by external reviewers. Unfortunately, no other newspaper approached responded positively to the appeal. Moreover, obtaining the comment data directly from the staff at the ToM itself offered an additional legal benefit, since any legal concerns of intellectual property and copyright were bypassed; in addition, written permission to share data with other researchers on condition of anonymity

was also received.<sup>4</sup>

## 4.1 | The MaNeCo corpus

Before discussing the principles of extraction and organisation of data from the ToM, it is important to provide a bit of background about Malta's linguistic landscape. Malta is a small island in the centre of the Mediterranean. With a long history of occupation, Malta gained independence from the British in 1964 (Pace & Borg, 2017). Its history of occupation has naturally left a lasting impact on the linguistic and sociolinguistic environment on the island and, as Borg (2009) notes, "[o]ne of the remnants of British colonialism in Malta is bilingualism" (p. 22). Against this backdrop, Malta has three official languages: Maltese, English, and Maltese Sign Language (*Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija* - LSM).<sup>5</sup> Although they are all official languages of the state, Maltese is the sole national language and is spoken most frequently by a large majority of Maltese (A. Vella, 2013).

Maltese is a Semitic language that has clear elements of Romance languages as well as, more recently, English (Mifsud, 1995); it is also the only Semitic language that uses a Latin writing system. The English spoken in Malta, on the other hand, has widely been acknowledged as a relatively new variety - Maltese English (MalTE) - having developed in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see: S. Grech, 2015; S. Grech & Vella, 2018; A. Vella, 2013). Further, as the Maltese are truly a bilingual people, a high degree of code-switching between the two languages is characteristic of the island's unique linguistic context (Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti, 2019) since both languages are spoken by most Maltese. Though this is true, any discussion of the linguistic landscape of Malta would not be complete without a consideration of the different domains in which each language (Maltese and English) is used. A unique phenomenon that occurs in many bilingual communities is known as *diglossia*, which "occurs when a community uses two languages for different purposes: the high language (arcolect) is for formal communication . . . , while the low language (basilect) is informal" (Brincat, 2021, p. xxxvii). Although the arcolets and basilects used in Malta have changed over time as a product of the evolving political landscape, today, while standard Maltese and English share status as high languages, dialectal and non-standard Maltese alone are considered the low-languages (ibid.).

According to Borg (2009), the bilingualism that typifies Malta's linguistic landscape is also reflected in print media, which is divided equally between Maltese-language

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<sup>4</sup>Later attempts of communication with ToM were made to procure and update the dataset, but to no avail.

<sup>5</sup>see Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti (2019).

newspapers and English-language newspapers, including: *Times of Malta* (ToM), the *Malta Independent*, and *Malta Today* newspapers in English, and *L-Orizzont* and *It-Torċa* newspapers in Maltese. Despite this parity in the number of publications, however, A. Vella (2013) notes that English tends to dominate print media; this is likely because the *Times of Malta* and the *Sunday Times (of Malta)* dominate the print news market (Borg, 2009). Naturally, readership is highly dependent on socio-economic factors and English-language newspapers tend to be favoured by readers in the AB socio-economic group (ibid.)<sup>6</sup>, which is not surprising in the context of the discussion above, which identifies English as a high language. Thus, while the comments of the ToM are reflective of a rather broad readership base, they are likely to be indicative of the views of middle- and upper-class Maltese, as well as non-Maltese speaking foreigners living in Malta. In addition, of course, even though the comment section of the ToM platform is primarily written in English, it still unsurprisingly contains a moderate amount of code-switching.

On the basis of the comments received from the *Times of Malta* (ToM), the construction of the Maltese Newspaper Comments (MaNeCo) corpus was undertaken (Assimakopoulos, Vella Muskat, van der Plas, & Gatt, 2020). The architecture of the MaNeCo corpus adopts the principles of a *monitor corpus* as defined by McEnery and Hardie (2012) since the intention is to “continually [expand it] to include more and more texts over time” (p. 6). The idea is that, in future, the corpus can be expanded to include continuously updated comments in addition to comments from newspapers that were not included in the initial compilation. At this stage, however, the ToM comments were deemed sufficient for this thesis, specifically because the ToM has the highest readership of any newspaper in Malta in addition to the fact the newspaper alone provided a substantial 110,808,668 word corpus. Although, no information exists in relation to the number of readers that actually comment under online news articles, according to a 2023 survey, 55.3% of respondents claim that `timesofmalta.com` is their preferred online local news portal (The Broadcasting Authority Malta, 2023).

### 4.1.1 | Formatting and preprocessing

The initial stages of processing the data given by ToM proved somewhat challenging. The raw data was initially given in a zip file containing a large Extensible Markup Language (XML) file of 2.05GB.<sup>7</sup> The mere size of the file posed the first major challenge

<sup>6</sup>According to the British Office for National Statistics, AB socio-economic grade comprises “[h]igher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations” (Office for National Statistics, 2017)

<sup>7</sup>Although standard NLP research does not usually delve into great detail about the preprocessing of data, the depth of discussion in this chapter is deliberate since, the computational procedures are one of

as it was too large to open efficiently. With the help of colleagues and my supervisors, I thus began to experiment with different methods. Unfortunately, this stage of the research took much longer than planned, since I lacked the skill set necessary to edit the format of the large file and, as a result, this process comprised largely of trial and error.

To summarise briefly, a first attempt was made to divide the XML file into numerous smaller Excel files. Although this made viewing the data possible, these excel files were not conducive to the automated corpus analyses that was intended.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, a similar principle was applied whereby, having established that the first few thousand lines of the data file consisted of information pertaining to the ToM articles and the latter part contained the actual comments and their metadata, a script as written on R<sup>9</sup> that created two .txt documents: one containing just the comments and metadata attached to them, and the other containing only the information related to the articles from which the comments came.<sup>10</sup> Although these files were ultimately unusable since, in the process, some data was lost, they gave the first real indication of the structure of the data and, therefore, a clear idea of how to proceed.

In concrete terms, the structure of the first part of the data file in which all the information related to the articles is stored is represented in table 4.1, while the structure of the latter part of the data where all the comments and their accompanying metadata is contained is shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.1 is more or less self explanatory. The data file contains all the article URLs as well as the name of each article, the date of the article, the article deletion status (whether or not the article had been deleted by the time of procurement), and, most

ThreadID	Title	Date	Link	Deleted
1774228592	Foreign Ministry engages PR company	2002-06-06	<a href="http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20020606/local/foreign-ministry-engages-pr-company.174004">http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20020606/local/foreign-ministry-engages-pr-company.174004</a>	F

Table 4.1: Structure of information pertaining to news articles in the ToM data file

the most valuable contributions that this research makes to the field of sociolinguistics. As a non-expert, the learning curve relating to these methods was quite steep and it is my hope that the discussion in this thesis may be helpful to other linguists (in particular sociolinguists and anthropological linguists) in their future work.

<sup>8</sup>Ms Daphne Cutajar helped at this stage and was able to divide the XML file into tens of Excel files. Still, though, the organisation of the data within them was not suitable for any corpus tools.

<sup>9</sup>“R is an integrated suite of software facilities for data manipulation, calculation and graphical display” (The R Foundation, n.d.).

<sup>10</sup>The script and the division of data was done by Prof Holger Mitterer at the University of Malta.

post_id	id	message	createdAt	isDeleted	isSpam
3126132114		CDATA[<p>They have apostasised./<p>]	2017-01-29T09:03:40Z	FALSE	FALSE
author	emailuser	name_user	isAnonymous	username	
	15508@urzqufrx.com	21957	FALSE	username_21218	
author	ipAddress	thread_id	parent		
	23.252.76.91	5502956683	3126110096		

Table 4.2: Structure of comments and associated information in the ToM data file

importantly, a unique numeric identifier called the *'thread id'*. Evident in table 4.2 is the same sort of *thread id*, which provides a link between each comment and its associated article from the ToM, allowing researchers to contextualise individual comments within the real-life events against which they were written. Also evident in table 4.2 is that all users were anonymised prior to procurement of the data. This means that there is and can be only little risk of any researcher working with the data being able to trace the identities of users commenting on the ToM online forum by means of the data file; instead of names, each user has been assigned a unique identifier code by means of the *'name\_user'* and the *'username'* codes, which are kept consistent throughout the data.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the *name* and *username* codes, and the *thread id*, each comment (*'message'* in table 4.2) is also given its own unique identifier - the *'post\_id'*. The *post\_id* serves firstly as a way to easily define and retrieve the comment data, but more importantly, together with the *'parent'* code, it allows the organisation of the comment data into sequences of strings of discourse. In other words, if for example, *comment 987* is a response to *comment 123*, the *parent* code of *comment 987* is *'123'*. Hence, any given *post\_id* can also serve as the *parent* code for comments that are written in its response. Finally, as men-

<sup>11</sup>This is useful as it makes it possible to observe patterns of language and ideology across the discourse of specific users.

tioned, the data obtained from ToM include the deleted comments, thus any comment for which *'isDeleted'* is marked as *'TRUE'* has been deleted from the online comment board. Further, other useful information includes the time and date on which the comment was created, and whether or not the comment has been classified as spam.

Consequently, having a more thorough understanding of the structure of the data file given by ToM, an extraction of the comments and their relevant metadata was achieved. Naturally, not all the information in table 4.2 is relevant for a corpus made up of newspaper comments. Moreover, some of the information in table 4.1 could be helpful for conducting analyses. Hence, using Linux terminal, a new .txt was eventually created, including information pertaining to both the comment and its associated article, as follows:

- Comment ID (post\_id)
- Date and time (the date was broken down into month, day, and year)
- Deletion status
- Spam status
- Article ID (thread\_id)
- Parent ID
- Article Link (URL)
- Article Title
- Article Date
- is closed (whether the comment board is closed on the ToM online forum)
- Article\_Is deleted (whether or not the article has been deleted from the ToM online repository)
- User (username e.g. username\_21218)
- Comment

Subsequent to this extraction, the .txt file was cleaned to remove unnecessary characters that could potentially distort the results of the quantitative tools. These include, for example, <b> indicating a paragraph break and <p> marking the beginning and end

of comments. Thus, with this, the creation of the first version of the Maltese Newspaper Comments (MaNeCo) corpus was complete comprising 110,808,668 words of comment data taken from 134,619 ToM articles. In total, at this stage, the MaNeCo contains 2,583,196 comments. However, as should be clear from the discussions in chapter 2 and chapter 3, since the research for this thesis is concerned specifically with discourse pertaining to migrants and migration and, therefore, the full MaNeCo corpus was deemed too broad to perform adequate qualitative analysis. Moreover, it is futile to run quantitative algorithms on such a generic dataset, since any discourse related to migration would be clouded by everything else. In view of this, a new specialised sub-corpus, along the lines of what Brezina (2018, p. 80) calls a “corpus of interest” and Kilgarriff (2012, p. 5) calls a “focus corpus” that is populated with relevant data pertaining specifically to the target language (or in this case rather, the target group) was necessary.

## 4.2 | The Xeno sub-corpus and the Reference corpus

The Maneco corpus is a relatively large corpus in the context in which it has been created. The only other comparable Malta-based corpus in terms of size is the Korpus Malti 3.0 (MLRS, 2016), which contains 249,256,855 words. However, as it should be clear by now, this research seeks to investigate the ways in which migrants and migration are discussed in Malta and to make observations about hate speech. Hence, a focus corpus that is *specialised* was needed using extractions from the sections of the MaNeCo corpus that contain discourse relating directly to migration. As expounded in section 3.5, *specialised corpora* are often made up of a specific text type and/or topic and “used to investigate a particular type of language. Researchers often collect their own specialised corpora to reflect the kind of language they want to investigate” (Hunston, 2002, p. 14). Moreover, a specialised corpus populated with migrant-related discourse alone is insufficient for running quantitative algorithms for analyses such as keyness. For these types of measurements to be possible, it is necessary to have a body of similar texts (a newspaper comment corpus) for comparison containing discourse that is not specialised (in this case, discourse that is not specifically related to migration). This is known as a *reference corpus* and it essentially allows the “statistical comparison of a ‘target’ corpus with another, larger corpus” (Evison, 2010, p. 127). Within the scope of this thesis, therefore, both the *specialised corpus* and a *reference corpus* needed to be created from extractions of the full MaNeCo corpus.

### 4.2.1 | Focus corpus: the Xeno sub-corpus

In consideration of the foregoing discussion, the next obvious step was to extract discourse related to migrants and migrations from the MaNeCo corpus and use that to populate a new specialised focus corpus - the 'Xeno sub-corpus'.<sup>12</sup> Although there are relatively straightforward ways of extracting data from a corpus to create a sub-corpus, the goal of this research was to create a Xeno sub-corpus using methods that are tenable and as objective as possible with little interference from human bias.

Previous chapters have extensively discussed the criticism drawn by CDA in relation to the means and methods used for data collection and analysis, and for '*cherry-picking*' data that befits the researcher's agenda. To some extent, there is little one can do to avoid this. If one is attempting to analyse representations of gender roles in sex education literature, for example, it would seem futile to build a corpus populated with Jane Austen novels. Despite this and as a result of such criticism, there was a strong motivation to address bias and pursue a more objective method of assembling the data that would eventually populate the Xeno sub-corpus.

Historically, many corpus studies of this type begin with a predetermined list of search terms (see Assimakopoulos et al., 2017; Gabrielatos, 2007; Krishnamurthy, 1996). These are usually established by the researchers on the basis of the specific topic under examination together with their knowledge of the socio-political context in which they are basing their research. The selected search terms are subsequently used to extract relevant data with which to build a focus corpus. Along these lines, Al Fajri (2017) attempts to limit researcher bias by adopting corpus methodologies for his study on discourse pertaining to immigrants. He uses the ukWac corpus to employ statistical methods such as collocation and keyword to observe the discourse related to immigrants in the corpus. Despite the endeavour to remain objective, Al Fajri nonetheless uses the predetermined search terms 'immigrant', which was ultimately (and inevitably) subjectively determined to select the data and complete the analysis. Similarly, in a study about feminism in British and German newspapers, Jaworska and Krishnamurthy (2012) build two corpora made up of newspaper articles dating from 1990 to 2009 using the word 'feminism' as a seed word to retrieve the articles that would populate the two corpora. On the other hand, Warner and Hirschberg (2012) manage to avoid inserting their own bias into the start of their research on detecting hate speech on the internet by using data

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<sup>12</sup>The choice of the term 'Xeno' was selected to deliberately capture the idea that the discourse contained in the sub-corpus relates to ethnic, religious, and racial minorities without calling to mind axiological assumptions that the addition of the affix 'philia' or 'phobia' would. It is important that the construction of the sub-corpus is done so from an ideologically unbiased standpoint and does not innately presuppose the existence of Xenophobic (or -philic) speech.

provided to them by Yahoo! and the American Jewish Congress that had already been deemed by the respective organisations as offensive. Subsequently, they used mathematical models to build a classifier for detecting hate speech with reference to well-known stereotypes. However, although the data provided to the researchers was free from their own subjective interpretations, no objective standard was used to determine what should be construed as offensive and, therefore, might be inherently subjective anyway.

Although these studies all succeed in limiting the extent of researcher bias by means of corpus-based methods, they make evident the limited awareness of the fact that the methods used for corpus selection can be an important source of bias in the data and, therefore, no matter how objective the subsequent analyses and methods might be, a biased corpus will inevitably lead to biases in the patterns found. In other words, although the above studies all adopt computational methodologies in CDA research in an effort to limit bias, their approaches might not fully address subjectivity from the onset. That said, it is not inherently wrong to have biases in a dataset; it can be argued that all data have some form of bias. This thesis, for example, is using discourse taken from user comments - arguably a less conventional form of speech. What is more important is to be aware of any bias a dataset may contain and to critically evaluate whether or not such bias is problematic for the research. The MaNeCo corpus being made up of ToM user comments, for example, is not problematic for this research, as its limitations are that firstly the generalisations made are only indicative of the ToM readership more broadly, and that secondly, since the data is more representative of computer mediated communication (CMC), it contains fewer features of conventional spoken language. Handpicking examples of hate speech, on the other hand, would pose a major threat to the credibility of the claims made and conclusions drawn.

With this in mind, decisions were made under the assumption that the less human intervention was involved in the building of the sub-corpus, the more objective the analytical starting point would be. Firstly, human intervention may lead to incompleteness, and thus, using computer-based methods works to alleviate this. In addition, while computer algorithms do not necessarily completely remove the risk of bias, since ultimately the researcher must variously give their input at some point (such as in deciding what data is relevant), the minimisation of cherry-picking makes any findings and conclusions far more robust. Hence, computer-assisted methods of data selection and organisation were used to satisfy these motivations and to make the corpus building more data-driven rather than handpicked.

### 4.2.1.1 | Topic Modelling for corpus construction

In view of the discussion above and the strong desire to limit human intervention as much as possible in the selection of data for the Xeno sub-corpus, topic modelling was used for the construction of the sub-corpus needed for this thesis. At its core, topic modelling makes sense of unstructured data by coming up with a structure on the basis of probabilistic themes. Essentially, the model uses a complex set of algorithms to determine which words are thematically related in a given corpus by computing the frequencies and co-occurrences of words within and across the multiple documents that make up an entire corpus. What this means is that topic modelling uses a set of algorithms to identify words that co-occur frequently in order to establish topics that map onto “real world concepts” (Thomas, Adams, Hassan, & Blostein, 2014, p. 457). Since the algorithms work by finding underlying structure in unstructured data fed to the model, no annotation (and, hence, no human interpretation) is needed, resulting in lists of words that statistically – and, thus, objectively – reveal thematic topics within a given dataset. In the context of this thesis, therefore, topic modelling was used to highlight the areas of the MaNeCo corpus that contain discourse specifically relating to migrants and migration, which could subsequently be extracted to populate the Xeno sub-corpus without being compromised by the human researcher.

This is not the first time that topic modelling has been used in conjunction with CDA. Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) use topic modelling in their study of the representation of Muslims in social media discourse to ascertain the topics related to Muslims in their corpus. The difference between their study and this one, however, is that they performed topic modelling on a corpus already made-up of discourse pertaining to Muslims, having constructed a corpus using data extracted from an online web forum using the search terms “muslim” and/or “islam”. In other words, while Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) used topic modelling for analysis, this thesis uses it for the construction of a specialised corpus (the Xeno sub-corpus). Thus, while this method did allow the researchers to “investigate different topics that relate to Muslims and Islam without the limitations of any predefined hypotheses” (ibid., p. 134), it is also reminiscent of aforementioned studies of Al Fajri (2017), Krishnamurthy (1996), and Warner and Hirschberg (2012) in the way that, although it uses computational methods to limit bias, the starting point of the research is already inherently coloured by human hands.

Of course, this does not mean that the use of topic modelling to construct the sub-corpus will entirely eliminate all elements of researcher bias, since, as Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) assert, analysis can never be completely free from “the authors’ biases and unconscious preconception” (p. 134). However, I would argue that heavily limiting

the amount of human influence that goes into the construction of the sub-corpus in the first place by using topic modelling significantly reduces the risk of cherry-picking data that would likely confirm the initial hypothesis (as outlined in chapter 2), and therefore, allows the research to start out from a perspective that is as objective as possible.<sup>13</sup>

There are a number of ways that topics can be computed. The most common of these, and the method used for this thesis, is Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), which works under the assumption that all documents in a corpus express numerous topics to varying degrees (Blei, 2012). The basic idea of LDA is that “documents are represented as random mixtures over latent topics, where each topic is characterized by a distribution over words” (Blei, Ng, & Jordan, 2003, p. 996). What this means is that, if topic modelling were to be done manually, any given document would be analysed by hand to find multiple combinations of words, all of which indicate a different topic. Blei (2012) explains that LDA attempts to simulate this human intuition by means of generative probabilistic modelling, thus automatically assembling the lists of words in a given corpus that compose various latent topics by ascertaining which words have the highest probability of appearing together in a given document. Subsequently, the output of LDA is twofold. Firstly, as exemplified in table 4.3, the model returns a document containing lists (of words), each of which forms the latent topics that is represented in the corpus (the words in each list are ordered by their salience as members of each given topic). In addition, a second document indicates the proportion with which each document in the corpus expresses the different underlying topics, as illustrated in table 4.4.

As mentioned, a topic model runs an algorithm on the multiple documents within a corpus. Therefore, since the comment data given by the ToM were all saved in a single file, for topic modelling to work on the data within the MaNeCo corpus, it first needed to be divided into multiple documents. In the context of this research, a single document

TOPIC	W0	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9
0	know	just	think	way	comment	thing	need	use	try	fact
1	ghax	mhux	qed	min	biex	kien	dan	fuq	jekk	minn
2	driver	drive	driving	accident	mobile	vehicle	licence	taxi	test	phone
3	http	nofollow	noopener	link	video	website	information	site	photo	youtube
4	church	catholic	priest	bishop	abuse	christ	archbishop	religion	teaching	jesus
5	bird	hunter	hunting	hunt	spring	shoot	fknk	season	birdlife	kill
6	bus	arriva	route	transport	service	driver	old	stop	bendy	passenger
7	speed	accident	camera	limit	safety	happen	drive	incident	cause	crash
8	immigrant	illegal	migrant	refugee	europe	immigration	boat	asylum	african	africa

Table 4.3: Top 8 topics in the MaNeCo Corpus

<sup>13</sup>The only real human influence that went into the building of the Xeno sub-corpus was indirect in the determination of the various parameters to use for the topic model algorithm; it is the human researcher that determines the number of topics that the model should record in addition to the number of words that should be listed in each topic. In so doing, this thesis is eliminating human intervention to an extent that has not yet been achieved in CDA.

should contain all and only the comments from an individual article of the ToM since, after all, comments compose a conversation, the topic of which is largely determined by the subject content of the article that it follows. With this in mind, using the *thread id* shown in table 4.1 and table 4.2, the Linux command line was used to create several documents each containing all and only the comments that matched a given thread id. This process led to the creation of 134,619 files, which were subsequently fed through the topic model.<sup>14</sup>

In view of the above, using the model on the 134,619 documents, a number of different parameters were tested to the extent that it was finally decided that the most fruitful specifications were 100 words in 100 topics on the basis of an analysis of the first 250,000 words of the MaNeCo corpus. The resulting output, as expected, consisted of a document containing 100 lists of 100 words i.e. 100 topics of 100 words each (exemplified in table 4.3), and another document listing the proportional representation of each topic per document (exemplified in table 4.4). With these lists in hand, it was necessary to assess each topic to determine which one/s pertain most directly to the target discourse i.e. migration, and ethnic, racial, national and religious minorities. This could only be done manually, so it was necessary to read through each list of words to identify which topics relate most strongly to the target discourse.

This process comprised firstly of shortlisting the topics that were perceived to be marginally to strongly related to the target discourse. Three colours were used on the excel document output: orange to indicate '*could be relevant*'; yellow to indicate '*sort of relevant*'; and green to indicate '*relevant*'. A full list of the shortlisted topics can be found in appendix A. Topics 28, 31 and 69 are clearly related to international unrest, particularly in the Middle East in the case of topics 31 and 69, and in ex-Soviet countries in the case of topic 28, but they had little to do with minorities in Malta and the representation of minorities in general; they seemed to be more related to international warfare and politics than anything else. Similarly, although discussion of foreigners and countries outside Malta come up in topic 91, this related more to the international economy than the migration of people. On the other hand, the words that made up topics 9, 29, 37, and

Document	Topic0	Topic1	Topic2	Topic3	Topic4	Topic5	Topic6	Topic7	Topic8
4481550944.txt	0.00351879	0.00074316	0.01567495	0	0	0	0	0.00275086	0
1776060300.txt	0.00857268	0.0034748	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0091194
1775916537.txt	0.011739	0.00880812	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0013022
2237627884.txt	0.00334461	0	0	0	0.00076764	0	0	0.01616253	0
1774362149.txt	0.00261302	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2600967488.txt	0.00329282	0.00790215	0	0	0.00045942	0	0.00380936	0.00252924	0

Table 4.4: Proportion of first 8 topics in first 5 documents

<sup>14</sup>The topic model was written in Python script by Prof Albert Gatt at the University of Malta.

54 moved much closer to Malta and the Maltese context, but not necessarily migration specifically. Topic 9 appears to be more directly related to tourism in Malta, while topic 37 might be more related to Maltese citizenship in general in particular relation to the Government's citizenship-by-investment programme.<sup>15</sup> Topic 54 centres mainly around European internal politics, with discussions of Brexit, migration, and refugees appearing as minor parts of the topic. In contrast, topics 8 and 39 directly reflected minority groups; topic 8 clearly encompasses migration and asylum seeking in Malta, while topic 39 has a clear focus on religious minorities, specifically it seems, Islam.

With this in mind, there was no doubt that one or both of these topics should form part of the Xeno sub-corpus. However, since the focus of this thesis is specific to the representation of migrants in discourse, upon further reflection, it was decided that including topic 39 in the Xeno sub-corpus at this time, may skew the results of the analysis by giving religion a disproportionate representation in the Xeno sub-corpus, thus possibly resulting in religion appearing to be a much more dominant part of the discourse on migration than it actually is. Topic 8, on the other hand, clearly relates specifically to the migration in Malta.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>In July 2020, the Maltese Citizenship Act was amended to make provisions for the Government of Malta to grant citizenship for exceptional services to Malta (Henley & Partners Holdings Ltd, 2023). This essentially made Maltese citizenship available for purchase at a cost of €600,000.

<sup>16</sup>This does not mean to say that the representation of religious minorities is not relevant or important. Indeed, a further study that uses topic 39 specifically to assess how religious minorities are represented in this discourse will be a rich endeavour. However, at this time, it is outside the scope of this present study, which seeks to investigate the way that migrants are represented in the MaNeCo corpus.

Topic 8							
1	immigrant	26	racist	51	status	76	dublin
2	illegal	27	border	52	number	77	somalia
3	migrant	28	illegally	53	accept	78	deport
4	refugee	29	integrate	54	racism	79	leave
5	europe	30	solution	55	share	80	save
6	immigration	31	integration	56	solve	81	stay
7	boat	32	influx	57	lampedusa	82	cross
8	asylum	33	repatriate	58	malta	83	repatriation
9	african	34	frontex	59	germany	84	sweden
10	africa	35	italian	60	issue	85	flee
11	problem	36	trafficker	61	somali	86	louise
12	send	37	shore	62	legal	87	humanitarian
13	italy	38	libya	63	malmstrom	88	international
14	detention	39	sea	64	push	89	encourage
15	help	40	thousand	65	situation	90	open
16	unhcr	41	arrive	66	invasion	91	safe
17	ngo	42	centre	67	nation	92	convention
18	burden	43	irregular	68	need	93	start
19	european	44	economic	69	home	94	resource
20	want	45	illegals	70	solidarity	95	patrol
21	human	46	sharing	71	population	96	action
22	migration	47	enter	72	escape	97	culture
23	rescue	48	land	73	continent	98	force
24	seeker	49	kurt	74	afm	99	multiculturalism
25	stop	50	policy	75	risk	100	social

Table 4.5: The 100 words that comprise topic 8

Against this setting, topic 8 forms the basis of the Xeno sub-corpus; the full list of words composing topic 8 are listed in table 4.5. The words included throughout the list clearly relate specifically to migration in Malta; from *immigrant*, *illegal*, *migrant*, and *refugee* at the top of the list to *action*, *culture*, *force*, *multiculturalism*, and *social* at the bottom of the list; topic 8 evidently constitutes a topic focused on migration.

#### 4.2.1.2 | Evaluating topic modelling

With this in mind, it is worth diverting slightly here to assess the efficacy of topic modelling over the more classic use of search terms for building a specialised corpus as discussed in section 4.2.1 above. To begin, as the discussion above makes clear, although the decision to use topic 8 is ultimately subjective and made by the researcher, the choice

was made subsequent to a thorough consideration of the topics returned by the topic modelling algorithm. Further, as part of a thought experiment, two lists were created: the first list comprised a list of search terms drawn up on the basis of my own socio-political knowledge of the issue of migration in Malta (see table 4.6), the second was formulated on the basis of an expansive literature review (see table 4.7).<sup>17</sup>

To begin with, a comparison of the two lists firstly indicates that the literature review provides a much more thorough list of search terms; clearly, resorting to other scholarly works assists in creating a sub-corpus that is broader in scope and less subjective. However, it is still limited in a number of ways. Firstly, table 4.7 includes words that are quite general, such as *groups* and *fanatic*, the use of which would inevitably lead to the inclusion of unrelated discourse in the sub-corpus. Moreover, the inclusion and exclusion of individual words from the final version of table 4.7 still required some degree of subjectivity and hand-picking of other researchers' work, thus paralleling the aforementioned criticism of cherry-picking that this thesis attempts to avert. Lastly, an elementary comparison with table 4.5 attests to the fact that more nuanced data might be ignored if either table 4.6 or table 4.7 alone were to be used to construct the Xeno sub-corpus. For example, '*democracy*', '*persecution*', '*afm*', and '*unhcr*' do not feature in either table 4.6 or table 4.7, all of which may add valuable data for analyses.

One way of using the words listed in table 4.5 to construct the Xeno sub-corpus is to simply adopt them as search terms and essentially use them to perform searches on the full MaNeCo corpus and extract any comment that uses those terms (or some variation thereof). However, this may lead to a number of problems. Firstly, while some words would undoubtedly lead to relevant data e.g. *immigrant*, *illegal*, and *muslim*, others are more general and can easily provide irrelevant data in the corpus e.g. *force*, *start*, and *north*. Moreover, if because of this, some combination of those words were used instead, this would again lead to the problem of subjectivity and researcher intervention that

Refugee   s	Muslim   s
Asylum   seeker	Black   s
Immigrant   s	Foreign   er   s
Immigration	Race
Migrant   s	Arab   s
Africa	Easter European   s
African   s	

Table 4.6: Search terms compiled on the basis of researcher knowledge and intuition

<sup>17</sup>The literature used to compile table 4.7 includes: Baker (2012); Baker et al. (2008); Baker and McEnery (2005); Gabrielatos (2007); Gabrielatos and Baker (2006); Krishnamurthy (1996); Waseem and Hovy (2016).

ethnic	migrant   s
tribe   al	refugee   s
racial	illegal alien
ethnic	nigger
groups	Islam terrorism
minority   ies	Arab terror
violence	race card
discrimination	mohammed
equality	isis
Islam	jews
Muslim   s	prophet
fanatic	#islam
extremist	Christians
militant	terrorists
Fundamentalist	nonmuslims
separatist	quran
radical	slave
hardliner	slavery
Klandestin	hamas
asylum seeker   s	murder
immigrant   s	

Table 4.7: Search terms compiled on the basis of literature review

is being avoided in the first place, since now, human decisions are required to apply limitations on an otherwise purely statistical output. Hence, the discussion now circles back to the proportional representation of the topics in each document showcased in table 4.4. Because the output of the topic model includes the proportional representations, it is possible to select the documents that are more highly representative of topic 8 for inclusion in the Xeno sub-corpus.

Hence, the proportion scores were ordered by each document's representation of topic 8 (the top 10 of which are exemplified in table 4.8). With this done, it became apparent that 29,987 documents contain at least a small representation of topic 8. The inclusion of *all* these documents in the Xeno sub-corpus would, however, be problematic. Firstly, the documents at the bottom of the list contain such little representation of topic 8 that it is hardly fair to say they are representative of migration at all. Thus the inclusion of several documents with such little representation of migration defeats the purpose of building a focused sub-corpus, since the idea is to have a sub-corpus populated with discourse specifically pertaining to migration.

Thus, it was first necessary to establish at which point the documents listed under topic 8 stop being directly related to migration. In addition, subsequent to that, a cutoff

Document	Topic8
1991836896	0.07475507155
3680319696	0.07428628432
1776603102	0.06833748157
1776602691	0.06805295913
2699141919	0.06652465192
1776412798	0.06537208982
3679788422	0.0638047019
3770516467	0.06356239202
2956733998	0.06354850435
3020232110	0.06268403918

Table 4.8: Top 10 documents representative of topic 8

point needed to be determined in order to ascertain when to stop including documents from topic 8 into the Xeno sub-corpus. To address the first issue, every 1,000<sup>th</sup> article was examined (keeping in mind that each document contains all the comments of a given article). It was subsequently established that the articles start to become less directly related to the target discourse at around 7,000 down the list - when they begin to score 0.005 for topic 8.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the decision was made to populate the Xeno sub-corpus with the top 200 documents since, with the data from those documents, a substantially sized corpus related to migration could be created.

## 4.2.2 | The Reference corpus

As mentioned, it is necessary in corpus linguistics to have a *reference corpus* with which to complement the focus corpus. In order to be able to compute what is key and unique to the discourse of one corpus, it is necessary to compute the significance of each word against their significance in a completely different, but comparable, corpus. After all, as has already been noted the “keywords approach is a method to compare two word frequency lists using statistical metrics in order to highlight interesting items whose frequency differs significantly between one corpus that is being analyzed and a much larger reference corpus” (Rayson, 2015, p. 41). Indeed, the topic modelling described above, already ensured that the data in the Xeno sub-corpus is relevant to the target discourse; however, at some stage, it would be necessary to ascertain what language is key within it.

In view of this, the MaNeCo corpus and the Xeno sub-corpus were not deemed

<sup>18</sup>Obviously, the higher up the list a document appears, the more strongly representative of topic 8 it would be.

sufficient enough for computing such sophisticated metrics. Naturally, the best sort of data to compare a corpus with, would be another similar corpus. Put simply, it makes sense to compare like with like; it seems unreasonable to compare a corpus of bilingual Maltese-English newspaper comments to a corpus of English web data like enTenTen20<sup>19</sup>, since any word specific to the Maltese context would appear as key (e.g. *ghax*, *qed*, *fejn*- all Maltese function words). On the other hand, in the context of this research, it would be futile to use the full MaNeCo corpus as a reference corpus, since it contains within it all the data of the Xeno sub-corpus and, therefore, the statistical algorithms would not work effectively. For this reason, a new sub-corpus was needed; one that contains a large subset of data from the MaNeCo corpus, but that does not include the same data that is contained in the Xeno sub-corpus. Hence, in an exact reverse of the steps taken to construct the Xeno sub-corpus, a reference corpus was built using all the documents that scored 0 for topic 8, thus leading to a substantive reference corpus of 76,143,993 words.

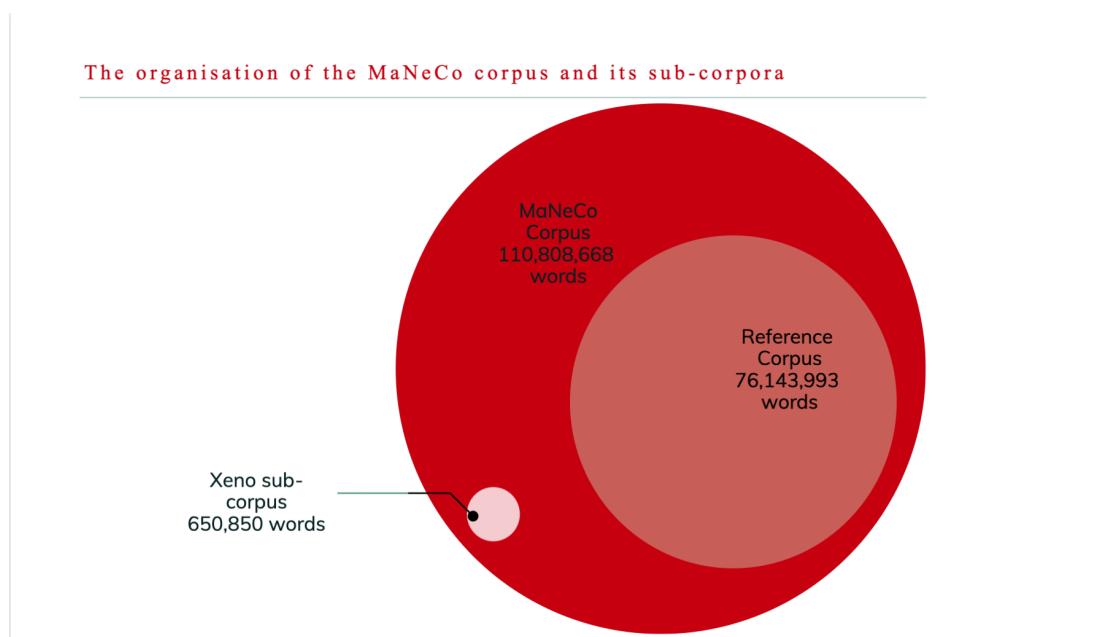


Figure 4.1: Infographic summary of the three corpora

In sum, fig. 4.1 presents a visualisation of the corpus construction discussed in this chapter thus far. The MaNeCo corpus comprises all the comments of the ToM from 2008 up until 2017 (including the deleted comments). The Xeno sub-corpus is a small subset of the MaNeCo corpus and it is the main focus of this thesis; it contains 650,000

<sup>19</sup>“The English Web Corpus (enTenTen) is an English corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet. The corpus belongs to the TenTen corpus family” (Lexical Computing, 2017a)

words of discourse related to migration in Malta - essentially all the comments from the 200 articles that most strongly represent migrants and migration (topic 8). Finally, the reference corpus is a relatively large subset of the full MaNeCo corpus populated with all the comments from the articles that have little or nothing to do with migration as defined by topic 8.

#### 4.2.2.1 | Data normalisation and preliminary tests

As already mentioned in chapter 3, Sketch Engine was used for the quantitative analyses of the corpora. However, given all the processing performed on the corpus documents described in the sections above, the files comprising the corpora were incompatible with Sketch Engine. The main problem at this stage was that the format of the corpus files as they were meant that Sketch Engine was unable to recognise the comments as main data and all additional information (such as date, time, and deletion) as metadata. This would make it impossible to, for example, cross reference dates and users to look for dominant trends. In addition, it would seriously impede quantitative analyses pertaining to keywords and frequencies. Hence, the data files needed to be formatted accordingly and converted to XML for Sketch Engine to be able to read and process them. This was no easy feat for the amateur computer geek. Firstly, Sketch Engine is unable to cope with files that are greater than 400MB, so the original files were broken down into smaller more manageable files using the Linux command line. Subsequently, the first attempt at formatting was through the *developer tool* on Microsoft (MS) Excel using a Windows machine. However, given Excel's limitation on line numbers per sheet, even breaking down the data files into even smaller ones would have made the task unrealistically tedious. Subsequently, another attempt at formatting was made using an Structured Query Language (SQL) manager tool, however even the 400MB files were proving difficult to manage in some of the steps.<sup>20</sup> Finally, going back to MS Excel on Windows, a code was written that was able to take the original files (Maneco, Xeno, and Reference) as input, then convert the data into a format that would allow Sketch Engine to tell the main data and meta data apart, and finally give formatted XML files as output, all the while breaking down the output into multiple files of  $\leq 400\text{MB}$ .<sup>21</sup>

Subsequently, with the corpora complete and running on Sketch Engine, some preliminary tests were necessary to ensure that the three corpora were functioning as intended in the sense that Sketch Engine would be able to compute the text within the corpora and differentiate it from other meta-data such as date, time, and userID so that

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<sup>20</sup>Mr Alessio Laterza helped with the navigation of the SQL manager tool.

<sup>21</sup>This code was written by a developer known as PAK.

the output of the quantitative analysis would be accurate. The first and most basic test was a search for keywords in the Xeno sub-corpus and, naturally, the Reference corpus was used for comparison. As explained in section 3.5, the way this is calculated in Sketch Engine is especially useful since it does not depend on sample size. Essentially, it compares the frequency of a given word per million words in a focus corpus with its frequency per million words in a reference corpus by means of the following formula where “ $n$  is the simple Maths (smoothing) parameter ( $n = 1$  is the default value)” (Lexical Computing, 2015, p. 3).

$$\frac{f_{\text{pmfocus}} + n}{f_{\text{pmref}} + n}$$

With this in mind, the keywords listed in table 4.9 are indicative that the corpora work well, since they are clearly characteristic of discourse pertaining to migration. At this stage, frequency lists as well as collocations of some of the strongest keywords were also assessed.

Item	Keyword
1	immigrant
2	migrant
3	unhcr
4	malmstrom
5	detention
6	asylum
7	frontex
8	pushback
9	cecilia
10	refugee

Table 4.9: List of top Keywords in the Xeno sub-corpus

Of course, it was necessary to investigate all this much deeper later on in chapter 5 and chapter 7 of this thesis, but at this stage, the purpose of running these tests was to ascertain whether or not the corpora were working well. Indeed, they were; however, the issue of spelling variation arose at this stage. Naturally, some variations in spelling is to be expected since the corpora are made up of user generated comments; given the nature of the data, some text may contain errors, while other text may include idiosyncratic spellings of some of the users. Moreover, also not surprising given the discussion in chapter 1 and section 4.1 pertaining to code-switching is the fact that, to some extent, the MaNeCo corpus contains bilingual data. Having uncovered some of these variations, it became necessary to assess whether or not these spelling variations have

a significant impact on the statistics generated by the corpus software (Sketch Engine) and whether or not these differences paint a different picture of the discourse prosody associated with the relevant minority groups.

The most obvious way to test this was to assess collocations using some of the strongest keywords as a starting point. The analysis of collocations retrieves the words that are statistically most closely associated with a given search term in a corpus, and therefore, they offer the best indication of the discourse prosody within a corpus. By computing the collocation of some of the strongest keywords through Sketch Engine and comparing them with a recalibration that accounts for orthographic and language variations, it would be possible to assess whether the recalibration has any impact on the strength of the collocations. Needless to say, a significant difference in the collocation scores would have serious repercussions on the validity of the data, since discourse prosody is a key indicator of ideology. In other words, if there is not a tremendous difference between the original collocation statistics and the recalibration, then it could be assumed with confidence that language variations and code-switching do not have a significant effect on the quantitative tests being used for this thesis.

Taking this into account, and with the top keywords in hand (table 4.9), it became necessary to devise a list of the spelling variations of the top 10 keywords as well as the words that they collocate most strongly with. It is easier to explain in concrete terms how this was done, by means of an example. For the word '*immigrant*', concordance lines for the search [*\*grant\**], [*\*grent\**], and [*\*imm\**] in the full MaNeCo corpus were put in alphabetical order (by clicking KWIC in Sketch Engine).<sup>22</sup> These lists were subsequently examined manually for spelling variations of *immigrant*. Indeed, a number of orthographic variations in both English and Maltese were found (see table 4.10).<sup>23</sup> [*\*grant\**] was expected to return orthographically different forms of *immigrant*, with variations in the first and second syllable spelled, for example, with one or multiple 'm's or without the 'i' that follows the 'mm' in standard orthography. [*\*imm\**] was used in a very similar way, but to capture possible orthographic variations in the second and third syllable. Finally, [*\*grent\**] was used to account for spelling variations that may result from possible inter-language interference whereby some Maltese English speakers neutralise the contrast between /e/ and /æ/ in such a way that they are both realised with a more 'e'-like pronunciation, possibly also impacting on the spelling (see A. Vella and Grech (in press) for a full discussion on Maltese English (MalTE) vowel neutralisa-

<sup>22</sup>In Sketch Engine, and in corpus linguistics more generally, [*\**] is used as a sort of wild card to denote 0 or more unknown characters (Brezina, McEnery, & Weill-Tessier, 2021; Jakubíček, Kilgarrieff, McCarthy, & Rychlý, 2010).

<sup>23</sup>The decision to use the three aforementioned search terms was based on knowledge of language in Malta as well as competence with the corpus tools being used.

tion).

immigrant	imigrant
	immgrant
	immigrant
	immigranta
	immigrante
	l-immigrant
	immig
	immirgant
	immigrant
	immigrant

Table 4.10: Spelling variations of ‘*immigrant*’

The first attempt at recalibration was done manually. This involved counting the number of occurrences of each of the variations of the top keywords of the Xeno sub-corpus (e.g. *immigrant*) and their collocates (e.g. *illegal*) and, using Sketch Engine’s collocation algorithm, to manually compute the association score between the (new) full number of occurrences of two words. The computation of collocations was conducted on association scores, since raw frequencies can only go so far in offering an indication of the strength of the relationship between two words. As indicated in section 3.5, the statistical measurement that Sketch Engine uses to calculate association scores (collocations) is *logDice* as explored by Rychlý (2008):

$$\logDice = 14 + \log_2 D = 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{2f_{xy}}{f_x + f_y} \right)$$

As explained in section 3.5, using *logDice* to calculate word association score offers a way of measuring the relationship between two words whereby the “[t]heoretical maximum is 14, in case[s] when all occurrences of X co-occur with Y and all occurrences of Y co-occur with X” (Rychlý, 2008, p. 9). It is evident from the equation that calculating this manually for several collocations can be very labour intensive as it involves trudging through mathematical equations. Without accounting for spelling variations, the association score between *immigrant* and *illegal* computed by Sketch Engine is 13.2. The following example demonstrates the manual computation of the association score between *immigrant* and *illegal* in the Xeno sub-corpus accounting for the various spelling variations:

If:

- $f_x$  (no. of times a variation of *immigrant* occurs in the Xeno sub-corpus) = 4029

■  $f_y$  (no. of times a variation of *illegal* occurs in the Xeno sub-corpus) = 4268

■  $f_{xy}$  (no. of times *illegal* co-occurs with *immigrant*) = 3354

Therefore:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{2f_{xy}}{f_x + f_y} \right) \\
 & 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{2(3354)}{4029 + 4268} \right) \\
 & 14 + \log_2 \left( \frac{6708}{8297} \right) \\
 & 14 + \log_2(0.80848499457) \\
 & 14 + (-0.3067) \\
 & \logDice = 13.7
 \end{aligned}$$

Table 4.11: Manual calculation of the association score between *immigrant* and *illegal* in the Xeno sub-corpus

Although this method for re-calibrating the collocation scores in an attempt to test whether or not the spelling variations in the data have an impact on the validity of the results is logical and consistent, for obvious reasons, it proved to get very complicated and unnecessarily laborious. Moreover, given the complexity of this method and since it involved manual calculation, it seemed somewhat susceptible to human error. For these reasons, it became clear that a much neater method for re-calibrating the collocations of some of the top keywords was needed.

Consequently, it was decided that the most efficient way to do this would be to get Sketch Engine to perform the maths. To be able to do this, it was therefore necessary to create three new versions of corpora in which the spelling variations of the top keywords and their collocates are normalised to their standard form. The rationale behind this was that, as mentioned, a substantial difference in the strongest collocates found by Sketch Engine for the normalised corpora and for the original corpora would be indicative that the variations are effecting the data quite significantly. If, on the other hand,

not much difference is found, then the original (unnormalised) documents can safely be used for the rest of the research, which is ultimately the desired outcome, since variations in spelling can provide relevant sociolinguistic insight, such as whether or not there is a relationship between stance and language use.

Three normalised versions of the corpora (MaNeCo, Xeno sub-corpus, and Reference) were subsequently created using regular expressions by means of the Linux command line and a file listing all the replacements that needed to be made (i.e. all of the orthographic and language variations of the top keywords and their collocates). The three files also needed to be calibrated for case and, therefore, the entire dataset was converted to lower case for the purposes of this normalisation exercise. These were then converted to XML using the same method described in section 4.1.1 above on Microsoft Excel and uploaded to Sketch Engine.

With the three *normalised* and *original* versions of the corpora loaded onto Sketch Engine, it was possible to run a number of tests. The first of these tests was to run a keyword analysis on both the normalised and original versions of the Xeno sub-corpus, and no significant difference was found in the output. Moreover, a comparison of the collocations scores of several of the top keywords was made between the original and the normalised versions of the Xeno sub-corpus. Table 4.12 displays an example of what this looks like for the collocations of the word *illegal*.

As can be seen in table 4.12, the top 8 collocates of *illegal* in both the normalised and the original Xeno sub-corpus are in exactly the same rank order and the association scores are very similar. Moreover, moving further down, the differences in the two lists are insignificant. '*African*', for instance, is the 9<sup>th</sup> strongest collocate in the original Xeno sub-corpus, but 12<sup>th</sup> in the normalised version - the associations scores, however, are not very different (7.48 and 7.06 respectively). Indeed, almost all the words in the top 20 collocation lists appear in both. Thus, disparities between the two lists are really only differences in rank and this can clearly be explained by the normalisation of the misspelling '*imigrant*'. Such minor differences are not surprising in view of the normalisation exercise, but overall, the results of these tests are positive since they indicate that indeed the orthographic and language variations in the corpus do not greatly affect the results of the quantitative tools and methods, and therefore, they only serve to aid in the analysis, since researchers using this data may additionally make observations pertaining to patterns of variation in orthography and language use. In view of this, the decision was made to use the original data files provided by the ToM.

Original				Normalised			
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	immigrant	2105	13.2	1	immigrant	2160	13.1
2	immigration	356	11.3	2	immigration	362	11.3
3	migrant	325	10.9	3	migrant	331	10.8
4	economic	75	9.24	4	economic	80	9.24
5	migration	62	9.01	5	migration	62	8.91
6	many	40	8.15	6	many	43	8.17
7	problem	40	7.99	7	problem	41	7.95
8	invasion	27	7.85	8	invasion	27	7.75
9	African	22	7.48	9	emigrant	21	7.42
10	entry	18	7.29	10	entry	18	7.19
11	activity	17	7.23	11	activity	17	7.12
12	emigrant	17	7.22	12	African	17	7.06
13	imigrant	15	7.05	13	issue	16	6.87
14	legal	15	6.97	14	legal	15	6.87
15	issue	16	6.96	15	trafficker	14	6.73
16	trafficker	13	6.73	16	landing	13	6.73
17	trafficking	12	6.7	17	trafficking	12	6.6
18	dangerous	12	6.7	18	dangerous	12	6.6
19	not	37	6.51	19	be	103	6.53
20	be	100	6.51	20	not	37	6.47

Table 4.12: Comparison of the top 20 collocates of “illegal” in the normalised and original versions of the Xeno sub-corpus

### 4.3 | Hate Speech sub-corpus

Thus far, much of the discussion has focused on the formatting of the MaNeCo corpus, and the creation of the Xeno and the Reference sub-corpora therewith. However, it is now necessary to circle back to the stated aim of this thesis, which is ultimately to make observations pertaining to hate speech targeted at racial, ethnic, national and religious minorities by looking at discourse related to migrants and migration. Of course, the Xeno sub-corpus provides a natural starting point since, as the topic modelling ensures, the discourse contained within it is all related to migrants and migration. However, as the discussion in section 4.2.1 makes clear, the efforts to construct the Xeno sub-corpus from an ideologically neutral standpoint were made so that the discourse within it may contain instances of hate speech, as well as defense of migrants and indifference toward them. Hence, it was now necessary to extract a subset of data from the Xeno sub-corpus that constitutes hate speech according to stages 3 and 4 of Cortese’s (2006) model as defined in chapter 1.

Beyond the quantitative tools described so far, corpora can also provide a springboard for carrying out qualitative analysis, of the kind that CDA requires. However, in her discussion of the use of corpora to investigate stance, Hunston (2007) elucidates that “stance represents an area of difficulty for corpus linguistics, because stance is a meaning, a type of meaning, or several types of meaning, rather than a form” (p. 27), thus highlighting the need to construct the data in way that permits the qualitative observations of stance to be made. With the data files that comprise a corpus complete and formatted (such as a file or files of Maltese newspaper comments), it is possible to systematically add information to the texts through automated or manual annotation means according to the needs of the researcher. According to Bird, Klein, and Loper (2009), this process of *annotation* can involve labeling or tagging various linguistic elements such as part-of-speech, syntactic structure, named entities, semantic roles, or discourse information. Annotated data, therefore, offers further opportunity for triangulation, since annotations enrich a corpus by providing researchers and language processing algorithms the ability to access and utilise the annotated data for various analyses and applications.

Within the scope of this thesis, central importance has been given to the creation of the Xeno sub-corpus with as much objectivity as possible. As this is true for the Xeno sub-corpus, so too should it be for the subset of hate speech data that would eventually be analysed. Although some work has been done on the automatic detection of hate speech, none of these studies have found a completely accurate way of doing so (see Fortuna & Nunes, 2019; Schmidt & Wiegand, 2017) – something especially true in such a niche context as the Maltese one. Therefore, the only way that hate speech can really be identified is by means of manual extraction and annotation.

To this end, a subset of the Xeno sub-corpus was annotated by 6 annotators and inter-annotator agreement was assessed with the view to creating a hate speech sub-corpus from the data within the Xeno sub-corpus.<sup>24</sup> The subset of the Xeno sub-corpus selected for annotation comprised firstly the comments from the top 50 articles representative of topic 8. The motivation behind this choice was to create the hate speech subset using the strongest possible representation of migration. Later, due to additional budget and the possibility to annotate more data, this was extended to include more data from the top 200 articles used to create the Xeno sub-corpus.

The data files that were prepared for the annotators comprised rows of comments from the beginning of the top 50 file (and then top 200) and worked its way down.

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<sup>24</sup>The 6 annotators were funded by the Internal Research Grants Programme 2020. The Internal Research Grants Programme supports academics at the University of Malta in carrying out their research (L.-Università ta’ Malta, n.d.).

In other words, since the comment data was grouped by article and then ordered by date, the earliest of the most relevant comments were selected and progressed in time. Data was selected this way primarily to ensure that threads within a comment section (a conversation so to speak) were not broken (something that, as described in chapter 1, the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project failed to do). While the intention behind extracting data in this way was to minimise cherry-picking as much as possible, it inadvertently resulted in a constraint on the data analysed. This constraint was a consequence of space and budget limitations, as well as the decision to extract the earliest comments from the complete file. Consequently, the comments included in the final HS sub-corpus were exclusively written in the year 2012.

### 4.3.1 | First stage annotation and downsampling

The most simple and obvious method for annotation is to give annotators a sample of data and have them tick the individual comments that they consider hate speech (possibly according to some standard provided to them). However, agreement among annotators of hate speech is notoriously low (see Bretschneider & Peters, 2017; de Gibert et al., 2018; Nobata et al., 2016; Ross et al., 2017; Schmidt & Wiegand, 2017; Tulkens et al., 2016; Warner & Hirschberg, 2012; Waseem & Hovy, 2016). One possible explanation for this that Ross et al. (2017) postulate is that there tends to be “considerable ambiguity in existing definitions” (p. 6). As highlighted in chapter 1, the concept of hate speech lacks a universally accepted definition, thus making the entire concept rather difficult to discern. Consequently, the creation of a universally applicable gold standard corpus of hate speech data becomes almost impossible, causing a cascading impact on annotators, automatic detection, policy-making, and subsequent research. This, in turn, leads to highly unreliable binary classification.

In view of the above, a more detailed annotation scheme should enable annotators to unambiguously identify instances of hate speech (to the exclusion of discrimination). But, as any courtroom proceeding will show, completely unambiguous interpretations of the law are very rare. Given this reality, in Assimakopoulos et al. (2020), we developed an innovative method of annotation that is less open to interpretation and includes questions that are not so difficult to discern, on the basis of Cortese’s (2006) four-stage model of hate speech described in section 1.1.3.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>To recap, according to Cortese (2006), as with many concepts in the social sciences, discrimination falls on a cline from unconscious (and somewhat mild) discrimination to extreme forms of discriminatory violence and hate speech. The four stages make clear the idea that discrimination is not always direct and overt. Indeed, discriminatory opinions can be masked, and such implicit ideologies can be relatively difficult to identify; certainly more difficult than direct calls to violence. With this in mind, the first two

In view of the above, the annotation scheme developed in Assimakopoulos et al. (2020) is complex and more hierarchical in nature; it does not simply require annotators to impressionistically decide whether a given comment comprises hate speech or not, but rather, it asks annotators a series of questions, which when aggregated, indicate whether a given comment constitutes hate speech as defined by stage 3 and stage 4 of Cortese's model. The main lines of questioning are the following:

- Does the post communicate a positive, negative or neutral attitude? [**Positive / Negative / Neutral**]
- If negative, who does this attitude target? [**Individual / Group**]
  - If it targets an individual, does it do so because of the individual's affiliation to a group? [**Yes / No**]
    - \* If yes, **name the group**:
  - If it targets a group, **name the group**:
- How is the attitude expressed in relation to the target group? Select all that apply. [**Derogatory term / Generalisation / Insult / Sarcasm (including jokes and trolling) / Stereotyping / Suggestion / Threat**]
- If the post involves suggestion, is it a suggestion that calls for violence against the target group? [**Yes / No**]

According to this annotation scheme, comments that are negative toward a particular minority group (or individual on the basis of their group affiliation - in the case of this thesis, specifically migrants) *and* make a suggestion *and/or* threat constitute *stage 3 hate speech* in Cortese's (2006) scale. If the comment additionally includes a call to violence, it is equivalent to *stage 4 hate speech*. On the other hand, comments that are negative toward a particular minority group (or individual on the basis of their group affiliation), but do not make a suggestion *nor* threat *nor* call to violence comprise *discrimination*. All the rest of the comments are neither discrimination nor hate speech. Hence, the annotation scheme first establishes whether or not a given comment is discriminatory by means of whether or not it is negative and targeted at a minority group. Later, the scheme determines whether or not any of those discriminatory comments additionally contain hate speech by indicating the inclusion (or exclusion) of threat, suggestion, or

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stages, while harmful to minorities, do not constitute hate speech and are not prosecutable according to Maltese legislation since the law states that the threat, abuse or insult must be said "with intent thereby to stir up violence or racial or religious hatred..." (Government of Malta, 2016).

violence. Thus, the design of this annotation makes it possible to not only determine the extent to which hate speech exists within a given dataset, but also to observe the qualitative and quantitative differences between discrimination and hate speech. A central reason for which the decision was made to make use of this annotation scheme for the purposes of the present thesis is that, in the context of law, as discussed in chapter 1, legislation can vary from country to country. Thus, one key advantage of this scheme is that it is independent of any legislation or future changes thereof.

The selected annotation scheme had already been tested on the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. data, with inter-annotator agreement measurements showing that indeed the multi-layered annotation is more accurate than a simple binary hate speech/not hate speech classification (Assimakopoulos et al., 2020). However, for the purposes of this thesis, further steps were taken to gain additional assurance, since those tests were conducted on an entirely different dataset, which in terms of sheer size, was much smaller than the corpora being used here. In view of this, two groups of three annotators were trained to annotate data using the scheme developed in Assimakopoulos et al. (2020). This ensured that inter-annotator agreement could be established while also controlling for a number of possible variables.

In order to achieve gold standard hate speech data on which to conduct comprehensive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), at the most basic, it was important to assess whether annotators achieve higher agreement when using the complex scheme than when using a simple binary classification on the data of the MaNeCo corpus. In addition, however, in a context in which annotators are being paid for their time, and in consideration of the fact that the complex annotation takes considerably more time, it was useful to determine the trade off between quality and time. In other words, with the understanding that the more time annotators have, the more data can be annotated for analysis, does the additional time needed for the complex annotation indeed produce higher quality data?

As mentioned, one of the key motivators for using two groups of annotators was to control for variables. One problem with starting the process of annotation using the two schemes is that there is no obvious sequence of tasks. In other words, there is no intuitive reason for starting with either the binary classification on the one hand or the complex scheme on the other. Moreover, this reflection opens a can of worms so to speak because it naturally leads to the question as to whether any given sequence may have an effect on the results of the annotation thereby effecting the inter-annotator agreement. For this reason, the decision was made to divide the six annotators into two groups of three so that any differences resulting from the sequence variation could be controlled

for.<sup>26</sup>

Within this framework, annotation was divided into two stages. During the first stage of the process, the members of group 1 were given a set of data on which to use the complex annotation scheme developed in Assimakopoulos et al. 2020, while the members of group 2 were given the exact same data on which to conduct binary classification (using the Maltese Criminal Code as a baseline definition of hate speech) and inter-annotator agreement was subsequently computed therein. In the second stage of annotation this was reversed; group 1 were given a set of data for binary classification, while group 2 were given the same set of data on which to use the complex annotation scheme. At each stage, groups were first given instructions on their method of annotation as well as a small sample of training data.<sup>27</sup> Subsequent to the completion of the training data, we met with each group to adjudicate inconsistencies in the annotations, and annotators were then given the full set of data for annotation. Finally, once both of the first two stages were complete, and with the remaining budget allocated to each annotator<sup>28</sup>, a third stage was added in which each annotator was given additional data to annotate. It may help to clarify this visually as presented in fig. 4.2.

As discussed, conducting the annotation in this way allowed the effects of the sequence variation to be controlled for. In addition to this, it also allowed outliers amongst the annotators to be controlled for and ultimately enabled the selection of hate speech data that has been verified by multiple annotators to constitute hate speech. Hence, once inter-annotator agreement was established, it would be possible to build a sub-corpus of gold standard hate speech data that had been verified by multiple annotators who agree on the classification of the comments at hand.

### 4.3.2 | Problems with annotation

The description in section 4.3.1 tells a good story; it describes a process that took a lot of thought and intense discernment, and one in which the story plot should, in principle,

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<sup>26</sup>Due to the sort of qualitative annotation required, there were a number of considerations to be made before selecting annotators. Firstly, it was necessary that all annotator were proficient in Maltese due to the nature of the bilingual data. Moreover, it was necessary for them to be somewhat sensitive to the Maltese context and have knowledge of the socio-political environment in which the data they are analysing is embedded. Finally, in order to be able to eliminate variations in education as a possible reason for any disagreement, it was necessary for the annotators to have a similar educational background. Hence, all annotators selected were either undergraduate or graduate students of a similar age. In future, it would be interesting to broaden this scope and include annotators with varied national and educational backgrounds to ascertain whether social and educational experience have an effect on the interpretation of hate and discrimination. At the present time, however, this remains outside the scope of this study.

<sup>27</sup>See appendix C for the annotation instructions given for the binary classification of hate speech, and appendix D for the instructions on the complex scheme.

<sup>28</sup>See section 4.3.2 for a detailed description of how funds were distributed.

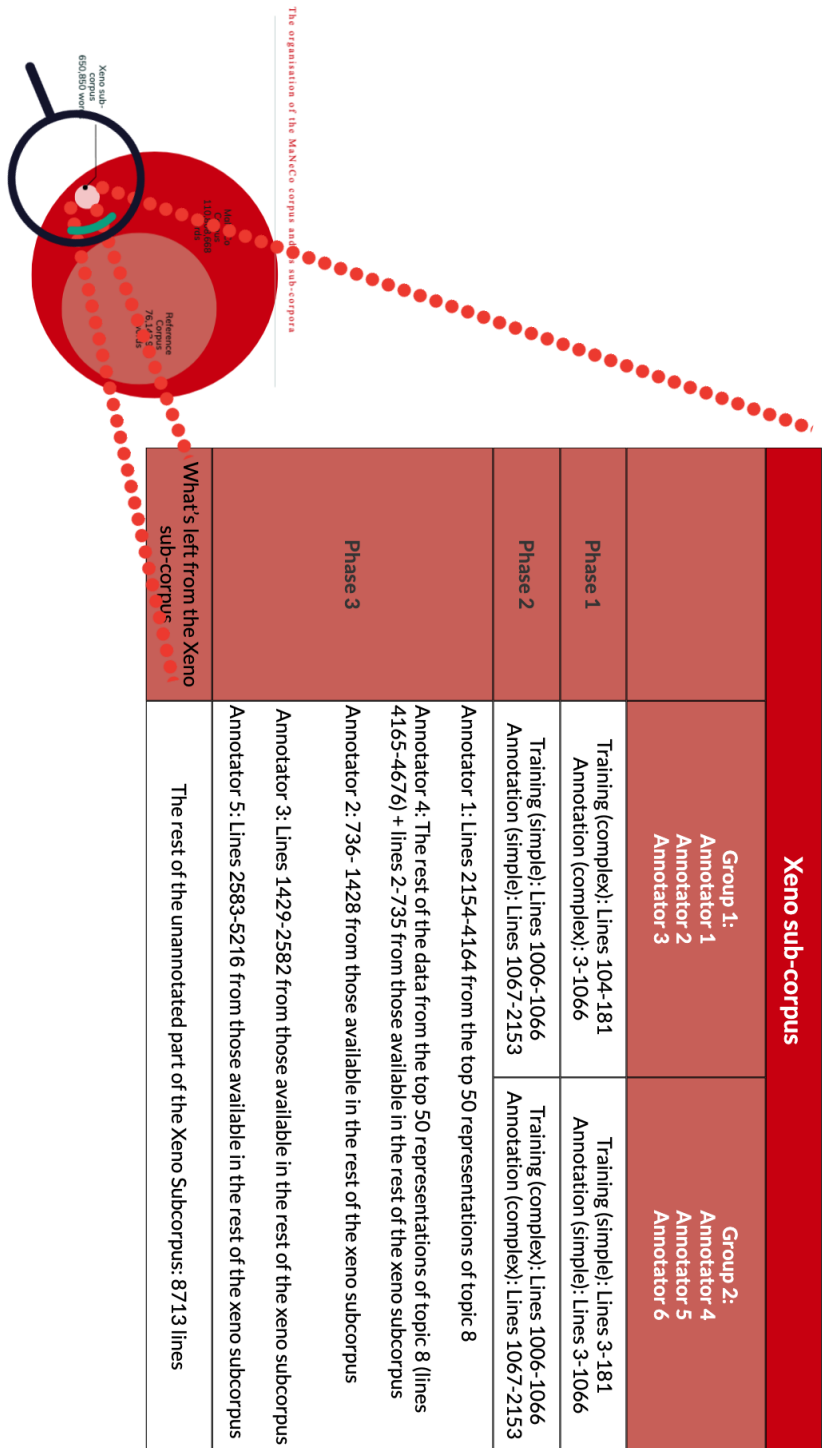


Figure 4.2: Data annotation infographic

develop smoothly. This was, however, unfortunately far from the reality, and I soon learnt the hard lesson that I suppose every researcher learns sooner or later - that once other people are involved in a research project, variables outside the researcher's control are added in the mix. The entire process described above (the three stages of annotation) should not have taken more than 6 months to complete. However, due to a number of setbacks from annotators, it took over a year and half.

Annotators were hired on the basis of the number of hours that they could commit to the research per week. Accordingly, based on the weekly number of hours that each annotator agreed to, funds were distributed on the basis of the hourly rate, and a total number of hours was calculated for each annotator to be used over the various stages of annotation. Table 4.13 summarises the total number of hours distributed to each annotator.

<b>Annotator</b>	<b>No. of hours</b>
Annotator 1	80
Annotator 2	50
Annotator 3	60
Annotator 4	70
Annotator 5	70
Annotator 6	32

Table 4.13: Number of hours distributed to annotators

The main difficulties with annotation stemmed mainly from problems with annotator 5 and annotator 6. From the start, annotator 6 was upfront and committed the fewest number of hours (2 hours per week) knowing that their schedule would not allow more than that each week. Annotator 5 on the other hand committed double that (4 hours per week). Stage 1 of the annotations proceeded without any interruption; the main difficulties came later during stages 2 and 3. The simplest problem was with annotator 5, who kept delaying the completion of stage 3. In any case, since the problems with annotator 6 were more serious, the delay of annotator 5 resolved itself since it was impossible to move on until the problems with annotator 6 were resolved.

The completion of stage 1 annotation together with stage 2 needed an average of 36 hours (accounting for variations above and below this). What table 4.13 makes clear is that annotator 6 had already used up all their time before the completion of stage 2. The obvious solution was both clear and feasible; more funds were available to offer annotator 6 additional hours to finish the work. However, annotator 6 rejected the offer of additional funds because they felt that they had had enough of this type of work and that the nature of the data was weighing heavily on their psychological well being. Indeed, vi-

carious trauma is a well documented and very real risk for some researchers (see British Medical Association, 2022; Cummings, Singer, Hisaka, & Benuto, 2021; Nikischer, 2019; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Williamson et al., 2020). Essentially, vicarious trauma (or secondary trauma) refers to “the impact of indirect exposure to traumatic experiences” (Williamson et al., 2020, p. 1). What this means is that researchers looking at trauma such as rape, natural disaster, or even hate may experience the negative effects of that trauma vicariously through the subjects or data they are analysing. With this in mind, there would have been severe ethical implications for trying to persuade annotator 6 to continue doing the work in a way that would put any sort of pressure on them.

Thus, with annotator 6 unable to complete stage 2 of the annotation, it was necessary to recruit a new annotator to complete both stage 1 and stage 2 so that inter-annotator agreement could still be computed using the two-stage model. In other words, the decision was made to replace annotator 6 completely. However, looking for another annotator proved very complicated since a number of potential recruits dropped out at different times. The first person recruited dropped out after a month, stating that they did not have enough time to complete the work within the given time-frame. Another recruit did the training session and withdrew forthwith, foreseeing that the subject content had the potential to cause trauma, and indeed a third recruit also did the training, but dropped the work after a few weeks for reasons that were unclear. As a result, a year after the annotation should have been complete still no third annotator had been found for group 2. In the meantime, annotator 6 had time to get some distance from data and was willing to work on more data. This took the annotation problem full circle as annotator 6 was now finally able to complete the work. With this done, all the comments listed in fig. 4.2 were annotated and inter-annotator agreement could be calculated to establish firstly whether the complex scheme is more effective than binary classification, and secondly, whether the sequence of tasks has an impact on the agreement between annotators.

### 4.3.3 | Inter-annotator agreement and final mark-up

It should be clear by now that inter-annotator agreement was a central component of this research. As described earlier in this chapter, one of the main goals of this thesis is to keep the data selection as objective as possible throughout the process, to an extent that has never been achieved in CDA - hence the use of topic modelling to select data for the Xeno sub-corpus. In addition to this and in order to avoid cherry picking the data that I deemed interesting for this research, annotators were used to identify the subset of hate speech comments to be analysed more qualitatively. Naturally, annotation of this

type of data can be prone to errors and bias and, therefore, inter-annotator agreement was crucial.

The rationale for measuring inter-annotator agreement is outlined very simply by Artstein (2017), who shows that agreement amongst annotators demonstrates a reliable process, which is necessary, but not sufficient for correct annotation. Moreover, the reliability of this process indicates consistency across annotators and within the work of a single annotator, which ultimately “increases the usefulness of a corpus for training or testing automatic methods, and for linguistic investigations” (Brants, 2000, p. 333).

Generally, simple percentage agreement calculations are inadequate for inter-annotator agreement since they fail to “account [for] the possibility of the agreement occurring by chance” (Bruijn, 2020). Thus, one common statistical measure for calculating inter-annotator agreement is Cohen’s kappa coefficient, which is useful for assessing the reliability of categorical items (in this case hate speech/not hate speech) between two annotators, but it is insufficient for measuring reliability between more than two annotators as required by this research. Fleiss’ kappa, on the other hand, allows the reliability of categorical items to be measured between any number of raters. In essence, Fleiss’ kappa was selected for measuring inter-annotator agreement because the hate speech data and the annotation process met most of its basic requirements and assumptions, thereby supporting the rationale of the measurement. These are:

- the **response variable** that is being assessed by the two or more raters is a **categorical variable**;
- the **two or more categories** of the response variable that are being assessed by the raters must be **mutually exclusive**;
- the **response variable** that is being assessed must have the **same number of categories for each rater**;
- the **two or more raters** are **non-unique**<sup>29</sup> (this is only partially being met, since the annotators within each group are working with the same data);
- the **two or more raters** are **independent**, which means that one rater’s judgement does not affect another rater’s judgement;
- the targets being **rated** (in this case the comments from the Xeno sub-corpus ) are **randomly selected** from the **population** of interest rather than being specifically

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<sup>29</sup>This means that the annotators rating a particular dataset are not assumed to be the same annotators ratings another dataset

chosen. In this case, comments were selected blindly on the basis of their representation of topic 8. (Laerd Statistics, 2019)

The results of Fleiss's kappa can range from -1 to +1 whereby a negative value indicates that the agreement between annotators is less than what might be expected by chance. On this scale therefore, -1 indicates no agreement at all, 0 indicates that agreement is no better than by chance and +1 is perfect agreement (ibid.). Thus, the higher above 0 the number is, the stronger the agreement between annotators. There is no established procedure for interpreting the results of Fleiss's kappa, but since it is built on Cohen's kappa, the same scale can be used (see table 4.14).

<0.20	Poor
.21 – .40	Fair
.41 – .60	Moderate
.61 – .80	Good
.81 – 1	Very Good

Table 4.14: Interpretation of Cohen's kappa (Laerd Statistics, 2019)

Fleiss' kappa can be easily computed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), therefore, the categorical data from the annotation process needed to be input into the programme. For this to happen, however, it was first necessary to additionally convert the data of the complex annotation scheme into categorical form, since the hierarchical method is not categorically readable in its raw form (unlike the binary classification, which is by virtue categorical - hate speech/not hate speech or for the purposes of SPSS 1/0).

The conversion was relatively simple since the annotation scheme itself was created with reference to Cortese's (2006) four stages with the view of creating a transparent and straightforward method of identifying a given piece of text as hate speech or not. Thus, first all the comments that were annotated as 'not negative' as well as negative comments targeted at a group other than migrants were removed. Next, a 'hate speech' column was added to the data file of each annotator and, for each row (comment), a formula was used to insert 1 if either '*suggestion*' or '*threat*' or '*violence*' were marked as 'true' (i.e. hate speech - in line with stages 3 and 4 of Cortese's model) and 0 if all three were marked as 'false' (i.e. discrimination - stages 1 and 2 of Cortese's model). Subsequently, SPSS could be used to compute Fleiss's kappa for each group at each stage of the annotation. The results of this computation are listed in table 4.15.

Computing the data in this way made it possible to compare the inter-annotator agreement of both hate speech and discrimination, and to make observations therewith

of any differences in the efficacy of the scheme for discerning hate speech vs discrimination. The outcomes of the annotation process indicated in table 4.15 show that, despite the lengths taken to use an annotation scheme for identifying hate speech that allows individuals to classify hate speech by means of a hierarchical procedure that should return results that are both robust and indisputable, the task still remains difficult and problematic - at least as far as the data of the Xeno sub-corpus is concerned. With that said, however, although the results of the hate speech annotation appear to be somewhat erratic and almost unexplainable, close observation of the above statistics reveals some possible patterns, and consequently, the selection of data for a hate speech sub-corpus required some thoughtful consideration on the sole basis of an analysis of the outcomes of the inter-annotator agreement without looking at the comment data itself.

First and most distinct is the fact that discrimination remains easier to annotate overall than hate speech. Although far more pronounced for group 2, table 4.15 shows that both group 1 and group 2 achieved higher agreement in deciding what to consider discrimination than hate speech. Indeed, regardless of the direction of task, both groups achieved moderate agreement for the annotation of discrimination. Relating back the the discussion of ambiguity in the legal interpretation of hate speech as well as the various scholarly definitions outlined in chapter 1, the vague global understanding of the notion of hate speech appears to have had an effect on the present annotation too. It is not clear why, but it is evident here that hate speech is particularly difficult to decipher, even within the scope of a more layered analysis, which the complex scheme attempts to achieve, and although it is outside the scope of this present research, it should be

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Group 1: Complex annotation</b>		<b>Group 2: Binary classification</b>	
	<i>Hate speech</i>	<i>Discrimination</i>	<i>Hate speech</i>	
<i>Fleiss' kappa</i>	0.406	0.416	0.347	
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Group 1: Binary classification</b>		<b>Group 2: Complex annotation</b>	
	<i>Hate speech</i>		<i>Hate speech</i>	<i>Discrimination</i>
<i>Fleiss' kappa</i>	0.113		0.200	0.430

<b>Difference in hate speech score</b>	<b>Difference in hate speech score</b>
0.293	0.147

<i>Average difference in hate speech scores</i>
0.22

Table 4.15: Inter-annotator agreement of the two groups at each stage of annotation for both *discrimination* and *hate speech*

interesting to investigate why the complex scheme failed to achieve better agreement for hate speech annotation as it was expected to do. In general, it is clear thus far that people seem better adept at identifying hostility, and that specifying hate speech in text and talk is still difficult for annotators, possibly due to the nuances that are involved in the layered analysis and the identification of suggestion and threat.

Further, both group 1 and group 2 scored lower agreement for hate speech in stage 2. Hence, the directionality of the tasks seems to have had little effect on the quality of the annotation. However, there does appear to be a negative effect on the quality of the hate speech annotation from the first stage to the second. Indeed, group 1 score 0.293 less for hate speech in the second stage and group 2 score 0.147 less in the second stage (an average of 0.22). It is thus important to also consider here the possible effect of fatigue on the annotators. The comments themselves are not always easy to read, some communicating views and ideologies that can be quite extreme. Moreover, the task itself can be quite tedious and, in the context of this research, it continued for some months. In reality, the results of group 1 are somewhat expected - the hypothesis was that annotators would perform better when using the complex annotation scheme. The results of group 2, though, throw a curve ball to this hypothesis; yet, the drop in agreement between stage 1 and stage 2 was less severe, suggesting that, in spite of the possible fatigue experienced, the complex scheme did indeed have a positive influence on the annotation.

At the same time, within the context of these statistical results, an added benefit of using these measures is that they allow the possibility to compute agreement between two annotators, which could show whether or not there is an outlier in either group. Hence, it was possible to detect whether some of the inconsistencies discussed above were due to one annotator agreeing less than the others and, in the context of this thesis, to subsequently use the most agreed on data for inclusion in the final hate speech data set. In view of this, inter-annotator agreement was subsequently computed using Fleiss's kappa to test agreement between each annotator within each group at every stage (see table 4.16 and table 4.17).

Tables 4.16 and 4.17 indicate that there is no real outlier in either group in the annotation they did pertaining to hate speech. It could possibly be argued that, in group 1, A3 brings down agreement slightly for the complex annotation, but then for the binary classification it seems to be A2 that brings agreement down. The same can be said for the agreement amongst the annotators of group 2 with regard to the annotation of hate speech. For the annotation of discrimination, on the other hand, there appears to be moderate to strong agreement between A1 and A2 as well as A5 and A6. The analysis of the agreement between pairs of annotators, however, does not offer a clear indication

of how to use the annotated data to populate a hate speech sub-corpus; there is no single annotator that stands out particularly strongly.

In view of the above, one fair and legitimate way forward would be to use the comments marked at *discriminatory* by means of the complex annotation scheme, since both groups achieved moderate agreement for those. However, though that may be tempting, the ultimate goal of this thesis is to make observations about how *hate speech* against migrants is used. Hence, the decision was made to take a ‘majority vote’ approach whereby the comments that two of more annotators marked as hate speech would be extracted to a HS sub-corpus for qualitative mark-up and analysis. As a consequence of this, the comments annotated in stage 3 were eliminated from the outset. Moreover, with the view of creating a gold standard hate speech corpus it was also decided to use only the comments of group 1 because the agreement for hate speech amongst the annotators of group 2 was considered too low to credibly be included in the HS sub-corpus.

Thus, the final HS sub-corpus comprised 116 comments of hate speech that were annotated as such by at least 2 annotators from group 1 by means of the complex annotation scheme and on which deep qualitative analysis would subsequently be conducted using Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) and van Leeuwen’s (2008) frameworks within the scope of CADS (or CDA more specifically), as we will now turn to see.

Stage 1: Complex (group 1)	Fleiss’ Kappa	Stage 1: Simple (group 2)	Fleiss’ Kappa
A1-A2	0.492	A4-A5	0.362
A2-A3	0.378	A5-A6	0.292
A3-A1	0.298	A6-A4	0.394
Stage 2: Simple (group 1)	Fleiss’ Kappa	Stage 2: Complex (group 2)	Fleiss’ Kappa
A1-A2	0.086	A4-A5	0.269
A2-A3	0.137	A5-A6	0.235
A3-A1	0.120	A6-A4	0.279

Table 4.16: Pairwise inter-annotator agreement for *hate speech*

Stage 1: Complex (group 1)	Fleiss’ Kappa	Binary classification does not account for discrimination	
A1-A2	0.543		
A2-A3	0.374		
A3-A1	0.318		
Binary classification does not account for discrimination		Stage 2: Complex (group 2)	Fleiss’ Kappa
		A4-A5	0.295
		A5-A6	0.539
		A6-A4	0.404

Table 4.17: Pairwise inter-annotator agreement for *discrimination*

## 4.4 | Method for qualitative analysis: investigating the social actor

Further to using the annotation input as a means for constructing a specialised corpus, the text within this corpus was additionally annotated on the basis of qualitative criteria used for the analysis of ideologies and values. This further annotation allowed for a layer of analysis that enabled me to conduct more advanced and specific investigations into language patterns, ideology, and other phenomena (Ide & Suderman, 2012, 2014).

As McEnery and Hardie (2012) explain, there are three levels of annotation that corpus data may include. On the first level, *metadata* provide information about the actual text/s such as the language, producer/s, and setting. Another layer of annotation, *textual markup*, may include any information about the formatting of the text, such as where **bold** and *italics* start and finish. The third and final level of annotation that McEnery and Hardie (2012) describe is *linguistic annotation*, which is arguably the most useful layer within the scope of CADS. At this level, the texts within a corpus can be encoded with multiple layers of linguistic information such as (and most commonly) part-of-speech tags, as well as tense and agreement. More importantly though, linguistic annotation allows the tagging of more abstract notions such as metaphor, irony, and stance – all central to analysis within CADS research. Of course, the drawback of such intricate fine-grained annotation is that it can be very laborious and time-consuming (Gabrielatos, 2007), further highlighting the centrality of automated methods for down-sampling the data.

Despite the difficulty in annotating data in this way, such annotations typify Marchi's (2019) aforementioned claim pertaining to the quantification of qualitative observations, since they allow complex calculations to be made on qualitative components of the data so that researchers can ask questions such as 'what proportion of the text contains sarcasm?' Within the context of this thesis, it is exactly such abstract phenomena that are under investigation with the view of observing how they might contribute to the dissemination and perpetuation of discriminatory ideologies and hate toward migrants. With this in mind and in view of the discussion in chapter 2 outlining the importance of selecting units of analysis on the basis of the research questions, the nature of the data, and familiarity with relevant scholarly work, it was thus necessary to formulate a framework combining several transparent techniques within which the qualitative analysis would be embedded.

For this, it is necessary to recall some important details from chapters 1 and 2. Firstly, the central aim of this thesis is to make observations pertaining to discrimination and

hate speech towards migrants in Malta. To be more precise, in light of Wodak's (2009) warning in chapter 1 that researchers may need to limit the scope of their research due to limitations on space and time, the primary goal of this research is to focus on the representation of social actors within the relevant discourse and how those representations convey axiological information.

Taking on board van Dijk's (2014) advice outlined in section 2.1.2 that the approach to data within the scope of CDA (in this case CADS) should be eclectic by adopting tools from a variety of theoretical backgrounds, the DHA, the sociocognitive, and the socio-semantic approach provide a useful springboard for understanding how CDA can be applied to the investigation of hate speech and what qualitative components should be adopted for annotation, since they share a common foundation; they all seek to investigate language use as a function of the dissemination of broader ideological and axiological values by situating discourse within a given socio-political and historical context. Further, in order to keep social practice as the primary focus of investigation, the research for this thesis uses two principal frameworks that enable the analysis of the way that social actors are represented in discourse and the ideologies that those representations convey, namely: Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), and van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor network. Together, they provide a methodical approach to making observations pertaining to the ways in which social actors are semantically constructed, as well as the way that they contribute to the action within the discourse.

As discussed in section 2.1.3, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) provide a useful method for the analysis of the role that social actors play in the action of a discourse, while van Leeuwen's (2008) system network provides a rich framework for analysing power dynamics and expectations in discourses through the development of socio-semantic inventories, thus making it possible to observe the way that social actors are represented in discourse. This does not mean to say that these approaches are either the only ones or the best for conducting deep linguistic analysis with a socio-political dimension, only that they are the most conducive to answering the present research questions outlined in section 2.2.1. The following sections, therefore, take each one in turn since it was necessary to have a thorough understanding of each framework in order to be able to use them for the annotation of the data and apply them to analysis therewith.

### 4.4.1 | Process types

The work of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) offers an excellent framework for viewing the way that social actors are involved in the actions represented within discourse through Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). To begin with, SFG's foundational view of *text* as something that listeners and readers engage with and interpret and as "language functioning in context" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 3) aligns with the basic underpinnings of the three approaches to CDA outlined in chapter 2, as it recognises the primacy of language as a social construct by emphasising a text's functional composition. With this in mind, the SFG approach to linguistic research takes a functional approach to analysis by seeking to answer questions pertaining to:

what language can do, or rather what the speaker, child or adult, can do with it; and ... [to] try to explain the nature of language, its internal organization and patterning, in terms of the functions that it has evolved to serve (Halliday, 1978, p. 16)

Within this view, language serves two primary functions. Essentially, it "[makes] sense of our experience, and [acts] out our social relationships" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30). What this means is that language is viewed as a series of lexicogrammatical choices that are available to speakers and that the choices made therewith are largely a function of the intended meaning within a given social context (Caffarel, 2006). Thus, in the same way that Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explain that the English language makes it possible to construe human experience as *marching, walking, pacing* or *strolling*, or as *marching toward, on, under* or *around*, it is also possible to experience migrants as *immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers* or *illegals*, and the choice of words is a reflection of the way that speakers experiences their version of reality.

Within the framework of SFG, *the system of transitivity* offers a unique way of assessing the role of social actors in a discourse by using the *clause* as the base unit of analysis. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) "the clause is also a mode of reflection, of imposing order on the endless variation and flow of events" (p. 170). Within this scope, the construction of a given clause may *impose* some interpretation of the social practice being represented in the discourse. The way that the system of transitivity uncovers what interpretation of reality is being constructed is by construing "the world of experience into a manageable set of **PROCESS TYPES**" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 213, emphasis in original). These processes essentially constitute a sociosemantic inventory of universal verb-types within which all verbs can be categorised (as illustrated in table 4.18), thus allowing observations to be made pertaining to the discourse partici-

pants' choices in relation to the representation of the actions ascribed to various social actors within it.

Against the backdrop of the descriptions in table 4.18, “[t]ransitivity is really the cornerstone of the semantic organization of experience” (Halliday, 2002, p. 85). Naturally, each process-type listed in table 4.18 is associated with specific types of participants since, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), every clause comprises:

- a process unfolding through time
- the participants involved in the process
- circumstances associated with the process

(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 220)

Seeing how linguistics “is mainly interested in persons and personalities as active participators in the creation and maintenance of cultural values, among which languages are its main concern” (Firth 1950 in Halliday, 2003, p. 51), within the scope of this thesis, it is mainly the representation of social actors within the processes that is of interest. With this in mind, the various roles that social actors can partake in within a given clause can offer significant insight into the way that the users of discourse construe the ideological position of the social actors in question. To this end, table 4.19 reproduces a summary of the meanings and characteristic participant of each process-type as posited by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), and illustrates the fact that, within the framework of the system of transitivity, any action (process) can have participants who are directly involved in the action and participants who are less directly or obliquely involved in the action.

To explain by way of example, as indicated in the categories listed in table 4.19, a *material process* can comprise an action such as ‘*direct*’, which is done by an *actor* to a *goal*, e.g. ‘*Florinda directed the class.*’ Moreover, a material process can also less directly include a *recipient* - a participant who is given goods (a direct object), e.g. ‘*Laura gave the gun to Máire.*’, or a *client* - a participant for whom a service is done (the person affected by the action) e.g. ‘*Kathleen made breakfast for her favourite daughter-in-law.*’ In addition, the *scope* of a material process is not impacted by the action, but either “(i) construes the domain over which the process takes place ... or (ii) construes the process itself” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 239) e.g. ‘*Jure danced in the club.*’ Alternatively, a *mental process* involves cognitive activities such as *seeing*, *thinking*, and *perceiving*. A mental clause includes a *senser* - the participant who senses or experiences, and a *phenomenon* - that which is sensed or experienced e.g. ‘*Alexandrita feels cold.*’

Process-type	Description	Example
Material	Material clauses are a type of clause that express actions and events. These clauses represent a change in the sequence of events occurring.	Rachael <i>played</i> Fields of Athenry.
Behavioural	Behavioral clauses encompass physiological and psychological behaviors, typically exhibited by humans, such as breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming, and staring. These clauses stand out as the least distinct among the six process types due to their lack of clearly defined characteristics. Instead, they exhibit a combination of features that resemble both material clauses and mental clauses.	The dancers <i>cried</i> at the end of the show.
Mental	Mental clauses focus on our subjective experience and perception of the world, whereas material clauses pertain to our experience of the physical world. They constitute clauses of sensing and represent a change in the sequence of events within our consciousness. These clauses capture the shifts and fluctuations occurring in our subjective awareness.	Jacob <i>thought</i> too hard.
Relational	Relational clauses are used to characterise and to identify. These types of clauses are used to describe the attributes, qualities, or relationships of entities or to identify specific entities. They serve to establish connections and provide information about the nature of things or the associations between them.	Zoe <i>is</i> short.
Verbal	These clauses belong to the category of expressing speech. They hold significant value in diverse forms of discourse, as they contribute to the development of narratives by facilitating the inclusion of dialogues and conversations.	Martina and Anna <i>said</i> they are going to bed.
Existential	These clauses indicate the existence or occurrence of something. Although existential clauses are not prevalent in discourse, accounting for approximately 3 to 4 percent of all clauses, they nonetheless make a significant and specialised contribution to various types of texts.	there <i>was</i> a storm.

Table 4.18: Description of Halliday's process-types (Halliday &amp; Matthiessen, 2014)

Process Type	Category meaning	Participants, directly involved	Participants, obliquely involved
Material: action event	'doing'  'doing' 'happening'	Actor, Goal	Recipient, Client; Scope; Initiator; Attribute
Behavioural	'behaving'	Behaver	Behaviour
Mental: perception cognition desideration emotion	'sensing' 'seeing' 'thinking' 'wanting' 'feeling'	Senser, Phenomenon	Inducer
Verbal	'saying'	Sayer, Target	Receiver; Verbiage
Relational: attribution identification	'being' 'attributing' 'identifying'	Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier; To- ken, Value	Attributor; Beneficiary Assigner
Existential	'existing'	Existent	

Table 4.19: Process types, their meanings and characteristic participants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 311)

Indeed, this framework has been variously adapted in critical discourse analytic research. For example, using SFG, one study that looked at the gender ideologies in the fairytale 'Little Red Riding Hood' found that the distribution of participant roles contributes to the representation of the male wolf as dominant over the subordinate young girl (Levorato, 2003). Similarly, Lillian (2005) shows that neoconservative writer William D. Gairdner undermines the role of women by rarely including them as agents (actor) in material processes. Further, she also notes that Gairdner's writings tend to attribute gay people with material processes that are often associated with violent or aggressive undertones (e.g. "use", "whips", "tie up", "beat", "punish", "use", "are publicly beaten and 'sold'", "hurt", "scratched") effectively portraying homosexuality as an "imminent, physical threat" (ibid., p. 130). In sum, the *system of transitivity* provides a straightforward method for assessing the role that participants play in discourse.

#### 4.4.2 | Social actor network

Beyond the system of transitivity, the sociosemantic approach puts forward a transparent method with which to draw conclusions about the representation of social actors in discourse. As noted in chapter 2, unlike other approaches to CDA, this approach begins by assessing the way that entities (e.g. social actors and action) are semantically

represented in discourse and, therein, investigates how those representations are linguistically manifested and how they contribute to ideologies and values imbued in the discourse. Within the context of this thesis, therefore, this framework offers the possibility of making observations pertaining to the social actors involved in discourse related to migration in Malta, and to make claims about power and dominance therein. Similar to some parts of the sociocognitive approach, van Leeuwen (2008) frames his model within the idea of *social practice* in recognition of the fact that, in essence, discourses are *social cognitions* that are “used as resources for representing social practices in text” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 6). Further, as shown in section 2.1.3, through the analyses of social actors, their actions, their performance styles, settings, and timings it is possible to gain insight into social practice. With this in mind, van Leeuwen (2008) formulates various blueprints for analysing the different dimensions of language and practice. In the context of this thesis, however, it is his *sociosemantic inventory for the representation of social actors* that is pertinent.

Before looking deeper into the inventory, it is worth briefly considering its theoretical background, and the rationale behind the proposal made by van Leeuwen (2008). After all, as it has been argued, decisions in CDA research should be made on the basis of a deep knowledge of other scholarly works as well as the data being analysed. By extension, the theoretical underpinnings of the approaches being adopted become the same for the current research.

The sociosemantic approach is heavily influenced by SFG by taking *grammar* to refer to ‘meaning potential’ - “(‘what can be said’) rather than a set of rules (‘what must be said’)” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 23). With this in mind, as described in section 2.1.3, the plurality of discourse is a key component of this approach since it recognises that the different ways of making sense of the same reality may be a function of power, dominance, and other sociological factors. Within this scope, the different categories proposed by van Leeuwen (2008) in the sociosemantic inventory of the representation of social actors provide a strong template for assessing the role that social actors play in discourse, which can then be interpreted against the backdrop of broader observations of ideologies and values.

In order to best make use of the sociosemantic inventory for the qualitative annotation of data within a corpus, it is necessary to have a complete understanding of each of the categories illustrated within it. In his monograph, van Leeuwen (2008) brings together his research of several years to dedicate individual chapters to each dimension of the sociosemantic approach (social actor, social action, time, and space). Indeed, he uses the space of an entire chapter to explain each category in the sociosemantic inventory through the analysis of a feature article from an Australian newspaper - ‘Race

Odyssey'. To this end, fig. 4.3 reproduces the sociosemantic inventory for the representation of social actors in discourse as published in van Leeuwen (2008) and van Leeuwen (1996). Figure 4.3 makes evident the extensive nature of van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory for the representation of social actors. Although there is evidence of several categories in the data analysed for this thesis, for the purposes of clarity and concision, discussion here focuses on just four of the more common ones to demonstrate how the inventory works. Beyond this, a description of the less frequent categories is included as footnotes in chapters 5 to 7, while appendix B provides a full outline of the inventory and the meaning of each category.<sup>30</sup>

To begin, social actors can be *excluded* or *included* in a given discourse. Further, *excluded* social actors can be *suppressed*, whereby there is no mention of them in a text at all, or they can be *backgrounded* - which is a milder form of exclusion since, although the social actor is not acknowledged in relation to a particular activity, their participation can be deduced from their inclusion in other parts of the text. To this end, the recognition of suppressed social actors requires a deep understanding of the sociopolitical context in which a text is embedded since there is no way of knowing that a social actor has been suppressed on the basis of a single text alone. To demonstrate by way of example, van Leeuwen (2008) shows that in the sentence "[i]n Japan similar concerns are being expressed about a mere trickle of Third World immigrants" (ibid., p. 29, emphasis added), taken from the 'Race Odyssey' text, there is no evidence of the social actor(s) doing the *expressing* anywhere in the text. On the other hand, in "[t]hey felt 'besieged' by immigration" (ibid., p. 33, emphasis added), the actor(s) doing the immigrating can be deduced from the lexical meaning of *immigration* itself, as well as from other parts of the text.

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<sup>30</sup>Note that the descriptions of the categories has been placed in an appendix not because it is supplementary, but to ease reading since it is a nine-page table.

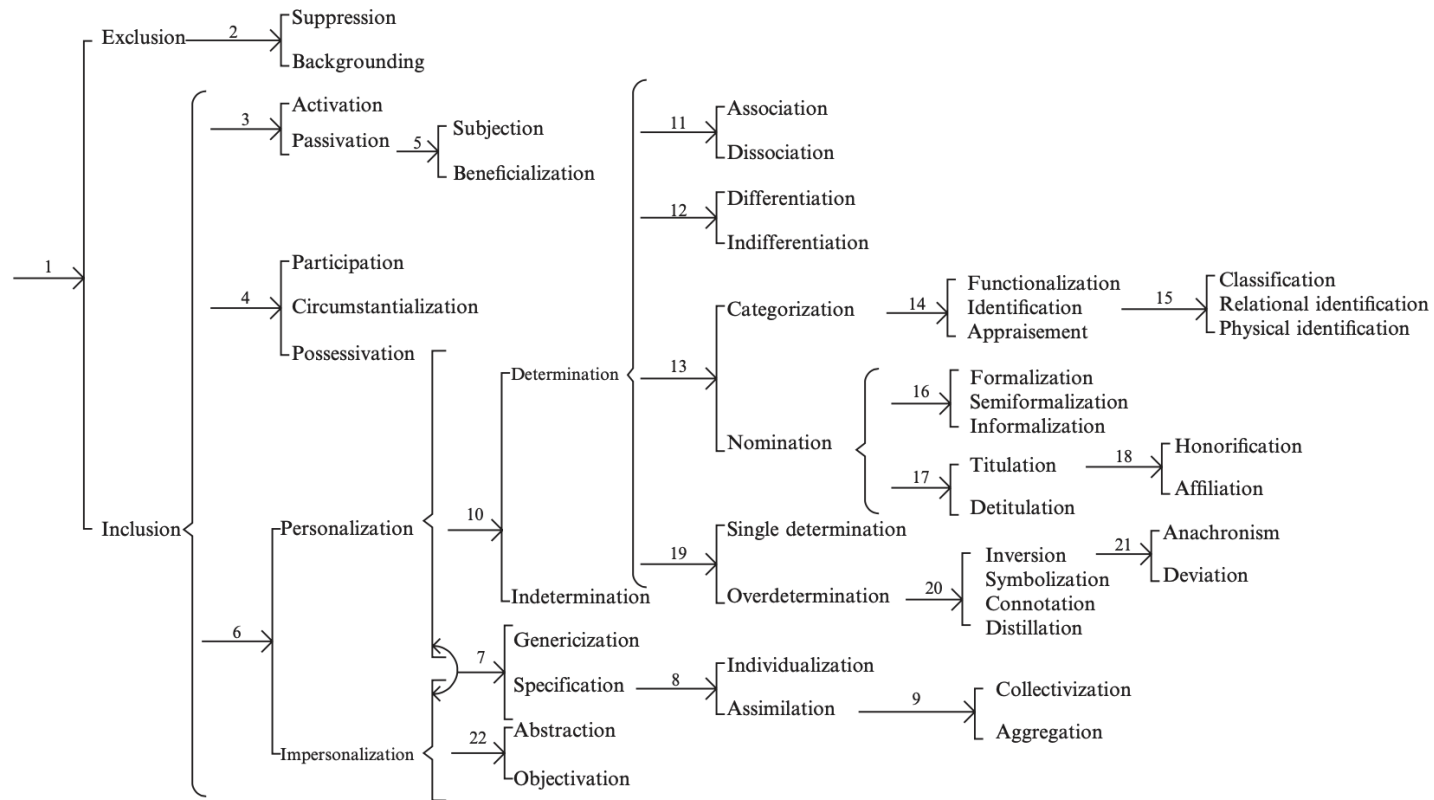


Figure 4.3: van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory for the representation of social actors in discourse

Unlike excluded social actors, there are several ways that included actors can partake in a discourse. Notably, social actors can be *activated* or *passivated*. *Activation* occurs when the social actors are represented as an active or dynamic force in a given clause, while *passivation* happens when social actors are represented as undergoing an action (van Leeuwen, 2008). For example, in the same example given above, 'immigrants', though backgrounded, are activated in relation to 'besieging', while in the sentence "Australia was bringing in about 70,000 migrants a year" (ibid., p. 34, emphasis added), 70,000 migrants are passivated in relation to *bringing in*.

The system network described here enables the analysis of any social actor represented in a given discourse. What makes this approach unique is that the inventory provides an instrument for mapping linguistic realisations onto sociological and critically relevant categories by using those categories as a starting point and, subsequently, identifying the linguistic units used to express them. To illustrate by way of example, in the sentence "Australians tend to be sceptical about admitting 'Muslims'", van Leeuwen (2008, p. 37, emphasis added) argues that both "Australians" and "Muslims" are assimilated by means of linguistic plurality. Further he notes that in the text more broadly:

'We', the people of Australia, are of course mostly collectivised, not only through the first person plural, but also through terms like 'Australia', 'this nation', 'the community', etc. The government, on the other hand, is mostly individualised—the leader as a strong individual, the people as a homogeneous, consensual group (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 38)

Given that individuality is highly valued in some spheres of society, while conformity is valued in other circumstances, the analysis of social actors within a given discourse in this way can offer great insight into the norms, values and ideologies of the society/discourse group in which that language is embedded. Hence, by means of the sociosemantic inventory, it is possible to make observations, not just about the social actors that are mentioned in the discourse, but also those that are *excluded*. Indeed, as already mentioned, this framework allows a differentiation to be made between social actors, who are *suppressed* entirely from a text, and other *backgrounded* social actors.

Although, as mentioned, van Leeuwen (2008) also provides a useful inventory for analysing the actions in which social actors are participants, those categories move beyond the scope of observations pertaining to social actors; similar to what he does for social actors, van Leeuwen (2008) provides a *social action network*. However, the aim of the network is to provide a framework for viewing the ways in which social action can be represented. Hence, the focus is on the way that actions are represented in the

way that, for example, the verb-like meaning associated with *immigration* in *they felt besieged by immigration* is “objectivated, [and] represented as a generalized and intangible ‘phenomenon’ rather than as an action by specific social actors” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 55). So, even though the representation of social action within the framework of the sociosemantic approach can indeed offer insight into the ideologies and values imbued within text and talk, it can be argued that the system of transitivity offers a more straightforward way of doing so in relation to social actors specifically. For this reason, compounded by limitations of space in this thesis, the actions of social actors are viewed through the framework of Halliday’s SFG, which, as already stated, heavily influenced the sociosemantic approach.

Together, van Leeuwen’s (2008) sociosemantic inventory, which allows the observation of the way in which social actors are represented in discourse, and the system of transitivity, which permits observations of the role that those social actors play in the constructions of specific discourses/social realities, provide a transparent annotation system with which to make qualitative observations pertaining to the representation of social actors within the corpus of newspaper comments being used for this research.

Against this backdrop, the final step in preparing the data for analysis, and at the same time the first step of the analysis itself, was to annotate the HS sub-corpus according to van Leeuwen’s and Halliday and Matthiessen’s categories. This was done using NVivo, a leading software for qualitative data analysis (Lumivvero, 2023), which enables unstructured data to be organised and tagged according to the criterion required by the researcher.<sup>31</sup> In the context of this research, NVivo made it possible to annotate each clause in the HS sub-corpus according to: the social actors involved in the clause and the role of they play within it; the types of processes represented in each clause and the relationship of social actors with the process, and any additional categories and observations that arise through insights gained during investigation.

## 4.5 | Summary

This chapter elucidates the various corpora that form the basis of this research, namely the MaNeCo corpus, and within it, the Xeno and the HS sub-corpora, as well as the eventual method that was used for qualitative annotation. The initial MaNeCo corpus was built using data that was given by the ToM. Subsequently, topic modelling was used to extract data from the MaNeCo corpus that relates specifically to migration in

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<sup>31</sup>In addition to organising and tagging data, NVivo offers powerful tools for visualising and cataloguing data in a way that allows researchers to observe patterns and gain insight into the various aspects of the data.

order to construct a sub-corpus of data that is relevant to the target discourse. Within this scope, topic modelling was used in order to avoid using search terms or seed words as many previous studies have done with the aim of limiting human intervention in the development of the data-set. Similarly, a Reference corpus was also constructed using comments that, to a great extent, are not related to migration. Finally, parts of the Xeno sub-corpus were given to annotators in order to ascertain which parts of the sub-corpus constitute hate speech. Inter-annotator agreement was established therewith and hate speech data was extracted to construct the HS sub-corpus, which was subsequently tagged in NVivo according to the qualitative frameworks adopted by this research.

As explored in chapters 5 to 7 below, the HS sub-corpus is used to both qualitatively and quantitatively investigate the social actors that are involved in the reproduction of negative ideologies toward migrants in relation to their linguistic realisations as well as the way that their representations are connected with broader ideologies and values. Further, having constructed several closely related corpora (MaNeCo, Xeno, Reference, HS), it should be feasible to explore the extent to which it is possible to extrapolate those initial observations to make broader generalisations related to the discourse of the MaNeCo corpus overall by means of the corpus linguistic tools outlined in chapter 3. With this in mind, we can now move on to investigate the ideological and axiological representations of the social actors comprising discourse related to migration in Malta.



## Locating the social actors

Chapter 2 outlined the purpose of CDA to go beyond surface-level analysis of language, exploring the underlying social, cultural, and political implications of discourse by investigating how language is used to exert control; shape identities; and maintain dominance, as well as how it can be used to reproduce power dynamics, ideologies, and social inequalities (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this vein, this thesis seeks to address these phenomena by analysing language pertaining to migrants in Malta. To do this, as described in chapter 4, a number of corpora were constructed. Specifically, the Xeno sub-corpus permits quantitative measures such as keyword and collocation analyses to be computed in the interest of providing useful indications of the overall discourse prosody related to migrants. In addition, in order to make qualitative observations pertaining to language use and ideologies related to migrants in Malta, a corpus of hate speech data - the HS sub-corpus - was created following the annotation of parts of the Xeno sub-corpora on the basis of the categories embedded within the frameworks presented in chapters 2 and 3. Further, as explicated in section 2.1.3, the decision was made to focus analysis solely on the representation of social actors within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus since they provide a unique opportunity for observing axiological evidence related to the representation of the minorities under investigation.

As posited in chapter 2 there are four core stages necessitated by a strong discourse analytic framework: description (of the linguistic patterns within the data), interpretation (of the discursive processes and how the linguistic patterns contribute to the discourse), explanation (of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes), and evaluation (of the values that drive the linguistic constructions used in discourse) and, although CDA should consist of all four, in practice, it is difficult to keep them completely separate since there exists significant overlap between them.

Naturally, the first step in this sort of endeavour is a thorough examination of the language structures contained within the discourse. Thus, this chapter identifies who the main social actors involved in discourse of the HS sub-corpus are and what identities are associated with them through a consideration of their linguistic constructions as evidenced by van Leeuwen's *networks of social actors* (van Leeuwen, 2008) and Halliday and Matthiessen's *Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)*, specifically the *characteristic participants* of the various *process types* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), which were outlined in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 respectively.

Thus, this chapter attempts to address the first stage of CDA by defining the social actors evident in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus and describing how their linguistic constructions contribute to the formation of several identities. Inevitably then, the discussion in this chapter slips into the interpretation stage (stage 2) of the four-stage model by unpacking some of the identities indexed through the language. Chapter 6 subsequently fully addresses stage 2 as well as stage 3 (explanation) by interpreting how various linguistic construction contribute to the identities uncovered in this chapter and explaining their role in the dissemination of hate and discrimination. Finally, chapter 7 focuses more broadly on the use of the language, identities, and ideologies identified as a function of power, dominance, and control (stage 4) and attempts to extrapolate the findings of the HS sub-corpus to the larger Xeno sub-corpus as well as the full MaNeCo corpus. In essence, therefore, this chapter seeks to answer a number of research questions previously outlined, specifically pertaining to the form and function of the elements of discourse contained in the HS sub-corpus that reveal axiological information connected with migrants. It may be useful to reiterate the relevant research questions here:

#### Stage 1: description

- i. Who are the main social actors involved in discourse about migration (specifically in the HS sub-corpus)?
- ii. How are the social actors linguistically manifested in the HS sub-corpus?
- iii. What linguistic patterns are evident in the representation of social actors (in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus)?

Before the ensuing discussion, it may be beneficial to specify a number of conventions that are followed in chapters 5 to 7 for ease of understanding and fluidity. Naturally, this chapter includes several examples that illustrate the numerous representations

identified. All comment examples that are not included in a table are in both *italics and underlined*. This allows the inclusion of comment data within the text without the risk of confusion with other general emphasis, since *italics* on its own is used for technical terms and emphasis in general, and therefore, emphasis within comments is further marked by **bold text**. Examples are reproduced verbatim from the HS sub-corpus, and thus, any spelling or grammatical variation has been reproduced too. Finally, no original user names are given here. All names have been replaced with the corresponding user ID number from the MaNeCo corpus (e.g. user\_1234).

## 5.1 | Identifying the social actors in the HS sub-corpus

A number of social actors surfaced by means of the qualitative analysis and coding done in NVIVO. Figure 5.1 displays the proportional representation of the key social actors in the HS sub-corpus as evidenced by the close reading of the data.

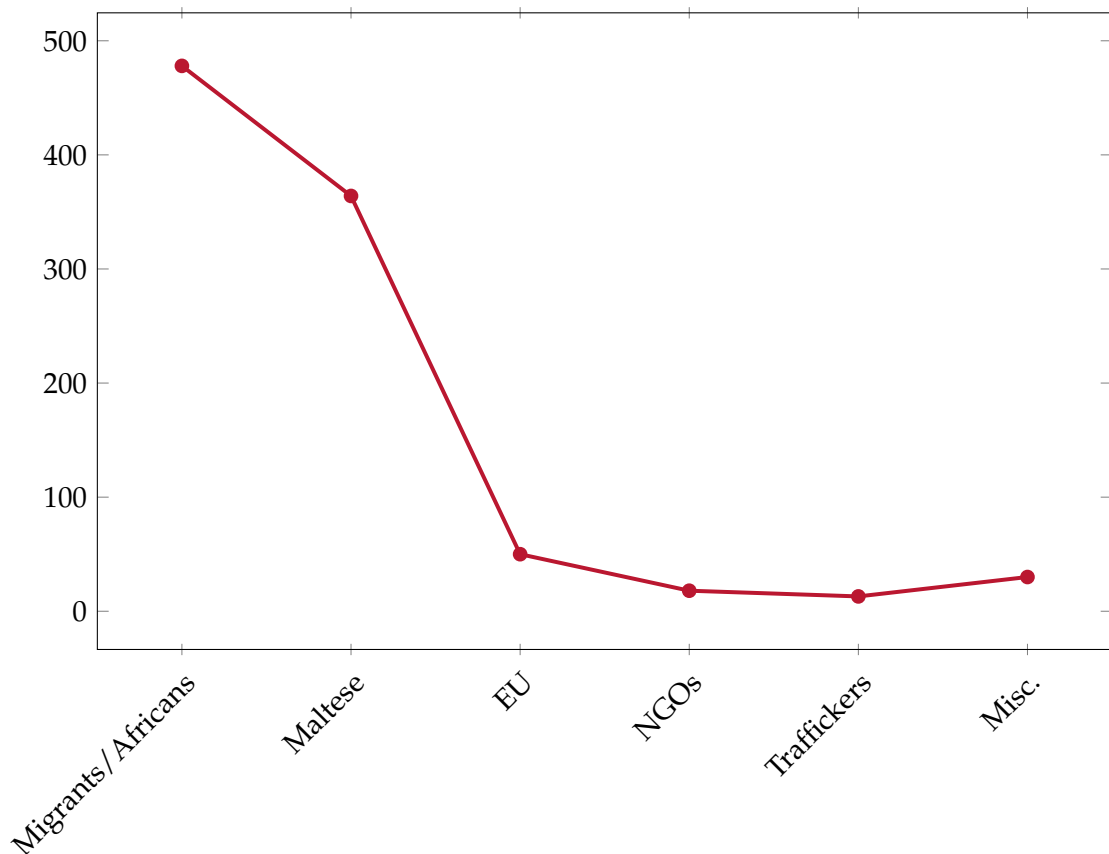


Figure 5.1: Proportional representation of key social actors within the HS sub-corpus

Unsurprisingly, by far the most frequently discussed social actors in the HS sub-corpus are *migrants*, and *Maltese people*. *NGOs*, the *European Union*, and *human traffickers* also have a role in the discourse, although not as significant as migrants and Malta.

It is worth noting that quantitative measures alone fail to offer a complete picture of the discourse contained in the sub-corpus. Table 5.1, for example, shows the raw frequencies in Sketch Engine of the lexemes that reference migrants.<sup>1</sup> However, these words do not capture other ways in which migrants are referred to in the data. For instance, the qualitative analysis shows that there are over 150 instances of migrants being referred to as *they* or *them*. This sort of information would not be possible by running a simple frequency search alone since a search of '*them*' would also catch instances of its use when it is not being used with reference to migrants. Indeed, *they* and *them* have a combined frequency of 228 in Sketch Engine, however, in examples like ... *Thats What The European Countries Did To Us When We Where Not In The E.U. They Deported Us Back To Malta And All We Where Seeking Was A Better Future Right...* '*they*' is clearly being used to refer to European countries. Observations like these strengthen the argument made in chapter 3, which is put forward by researchers such as Baker and Egbert (2016), Sinclair (2004), and C. Taylor and Marchi (2018), who contend that corpus linguistics and CDA form a 'natural synergy' (under the umbrella of CADS), and enable deeper analysis and more confident generalisations.

Word	Sketch Engine Frequency
immigrant(s)	68
migrant(s)	20
refugee(s)	13
asylum seeker(s)	2
Total	103

Table 5.1: Frequency of lexemes related to migrants in Sketch Engine: HS sub-corpus

Given the centrality of CADS in this sort of research therefore, table 5.2 illustrates the words within the top 200 most frequent terms in the HS and Xeno sub-corpora that pertain specifically to people and places. The list from the HS sub-corpus evidences the fact the migrants and the Maltese do indeed dominate the hate speech discourse, with Libya and the European Union falling not too far behind. Other places and people such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Africa play a much lesser role in this discourse, at least as far as these quantitative observations allow us to see. In addition, table 5.2 il-

<sup>1</sup>The term *migrant* will be used to refer specifically to the migrants that are the main topic of the discourse contained in the HS sub-corpus because it is one of the more ideologically neutral terms in this context.

illuminates a number of interesting lines of enquiry. Firstly, it is curious that *Libya* is more frequent than say *Africa* and that *Australia* features in a discussion of migration in Malta at all. Further, there are evidently a number of different nouns and descriptions used to refer to migrants including *immigrants*, *illegal*, *migrants*, *illegals*, *refugee*, and *immigrant* and it would be interesting to examine the different contexts in which these terms are used and whether or not there is a qualitative and meaningful difference between them. Finally, given what has been said about, for example, the over 150 instances of *they* being used to refer to migrants, an in-depth analysis of the use of the top four most frequent words *they*, *them*, *we*, and *their* should definitely be explored. Similarly, an analysis of other key pronouns such as *our*, *us* etc. may also be merited. This contrasts starkly from regular corpus linguistic research, which usually eliminates the most frequent words from analysis on the assumption that they rarely provide information that is any use to the researcher (Davies, 2015). Within the framework of CDA, however, which, as shown in chapter 2, seeks to uncover power dynamics in discourse by analysing the linguistic representations of social actors, they may provide some valuable insight, much like in the case of El Sherief et al. (2018) who show that the ‘us vs. them’ dichotomy is largely constructed by “emphasizing the usage of third person plural pronouns” (p.47). Indeed, as the work of de Cillia et al. (1999) and van Dijk (1992) described in section 2.1 shows, the construction of the us/them dichotomy plays a key role in the dissemination of negative ideologies. Hence, these questions can and will all be explored through the qualitative analysis presented in this chapter.

HS sub-corpus			Xeno sub-corpus		
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
11	they	131	11	they	7244
15	them	97	12	you	6453
17	we	89	16	we	5476
20	their	70	18	i	4855
23	malta	65	19	malta	4736
25	immigrants	61	22	them	4250
26	i	60	23	their	4082
29	you	55	28	illegal	3680
31	country	53	29	immigrants	3569
34	people	52	32	eu	3066
36	these	51	33	our	3010
37	illegal	50	34	people	2935
41	our	44	37	these	2770

45	countries	36	42	who	2533
49	maltese	34	47	maltese	2185
50	us	34	48	country	2062
54	eu	31	49	your	2030
56	there	30	51	us	1994
61	those	27	52	there	1984
69	libya	23	55	migrants	1921
73	here	23	58	europe	1646
77	migrants	19	59	countries	1624
96	my	15	74	he	1277
98	your	15	79	here	1236
107	island	13	83	where	1153
108	uk	13	91	government	999
112	italy	12	98	human	908
124	europe	11	99	own	905
133	government	10	104	european	869
145	unhcr	9	107	my	837
147	illegals	9	115	his	764
151	african	9	119	italy	710
155	australia	9	128	africa	654
161	refugee	8	136	she	611
164	human	8	137	libya	602
168	mr	8	149	asylum	545
179	somalia	7	159	me	496
182	home	7	165	refugees	467
184	immigrant	7	171	island	459
186	someone	7	176	uk	444
189	africa	7	181	her	429
			190	african	397
			191	kurt	393
			192	germany	393
			195	mr	387
			195	mr	387

Table 5.2: *People and places* within the top 200 most frequent words in Sketch Engine: HS sub-corpus and Xeno sub-corpus

Having located the principle social actors in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, it is necessary to investigate how each of them is linguistically constructed. In particular, as fig. 5.1 illustrates, *migrant* and *the Maltese* merit a notable focus. For this reason, the following sections first outline the various identities of *migrants* represented by their linguistic construction. Subsequently *the Maltese* as well as other *secondary social actors* are investigated, both of whom contribute to the ideologies and values related to the perception of migrants. Finally, a short consideration of the miscellaneous social actors is necessary, not because they necessarily contribute to the representation of the main social actors, but because they offer a comprehensive view of the discourse in the HS sub-corpus.

## 5.2 | Migrants

Considering the topic modelling and the corpus construction described in chapter 4, *migrants* are naturally the principle social actor represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus in addition to being the principle focus of investigation of this thesis. Similar to the approaches taken by Wodak and van Dijk outlined in chapter 2, it may be useful to comment on some of the more discernible language used to reference migrants as a springboard to this discussion. To begin with, the most obvious referent terms for *migrants* are those listed in table 5.1 (*immigrant*, *migrant*, *asylum seeker*, and *refugee*). A simple search for their frequency shows that *immigrant* is the most popular term. Before making observations about differences in context, discourse, and usage, an obvious starting point is to ascertain whether or not there is a meaningful difference in the dictionary definitions of the four lexical item. Within this scope, table 5.3 compares the definitions of the four words across the Cambridge English Dictionary (2022a), the Collins English Dictionary (2022a), and the Oxford English Online Dictionary (2022a). In each definition, the information in italics represents emphasis added.

There is significant overlap in the definitions across the three dictionaries. *Immigrant* seems to refer to a person who moves or settles in another country for reasons that the definition of the word leaves unknown, while *migrant* more specifically refers to a person who moves for employment purposes. The meaning of *refugee* and *asylum seeker* also overlap considerably; they both refer to a very specific kind of movement of people for reasons of protection from war, persecution, and/or natural disaster. On the basis of the definitions alone, it can be understood that, while *immigrant* and *migrant* can be used interchangeably, and *refugee* and *asylum seeker* can too, the former two cannot be used interchangeably with the latter two. Bearing this in mind as well as the fact that migrants

<b>immigrant</b>	
Cambridge English Dictionary	a person who has come to a different country in order to live there <i>permanently</i>
Collins English Dictionary Online	An immigrant is a person who has <i>come to live</i> in a country from some other country. Compare emigrant
Oxford English Dictionary Online	One who or that which immigrates; a person who migrates into a country as a <i>settler</i>
<b>migrant</b>	
Cambridge English Dictionary	a person that travels to a different country or place, often in order to <i>find work</i>
Collins English Dictionary	A migrant is a person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to <i>find work</i>
Oxford English Dictionary Online	A person who moves <i>permanently to live</i> in a new country, town, etc., esp. to b, etc.; an immigrant
<b>refugee</b>	
Cambridge English Dictionary	a person who has <i>escaped</i> from their own country for <i>political, religious, or economic reasons or because of a war</i>
Collins English Dictionary	Refugees are people who have been <i>forced to leave</i> their homes or their country, either because there is a <i>war there or because of their political or religious beliefs</i> .
Oxford English Dictionary	A person who has been <i>forced to leave</i> his or her home and seek refuge elsewhere, esp. in a foreign country, from <i>war, religious persecution, political troubles, the effects of a natural disaster, etc.</i> ; a displaced person. Also figurative and in extended use
<b>asylum seeker</b>	
Cambridge English Dictionary Online	someone who <i>leaves</i> their own country, often for <i>political reasons or because of war</i> , and who travels to another country hoping that the government will <i>protect</i> them and allow them to live there
Collins English Dictionary Online	An asylum seeker is a person who is trying to <i>get asylum</i> in a foreign country.
Oxford English Dictionary Online	a person <i>seeking refuge</i> , esp. political asylum, in a nation other than his or her own.

Table 5.3: Dictionary definitions of 'migrant' words

are clearly the most represented social actor in this data, the following sections focus on the ways that they are linguistically constructed in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus in order to ascertain firstly, what type of migrants are being discussed, and further, what ideologies and values are linked to them more broadly.

First though, without making any presumptions about the migrants and the identities and ideologies that are associated with them, it is clear from the outset which na-

tionalities are most definitely not associated with the migrants who are the main topic of the discourse under investigation. European migrants are only mentioned three times in the entire HS sub-corpus and each time, they are specified as such, as in examples 5.1 to 5.3.

- 5.1 *I guess they are saying that we need to be vigilant as to who is entering our country. So why don't we also detain all tourists and **European immigrants** on arrival?*
- 5.2 *Who did the Maltese people elect democratically? Surely not the UNHCR and the bunch of NGOs receiving grants. So, yes, it is the government that we blame. It's first loyalty should be to the citizens of Malta and it is betraying them big time. The UK government is drawing up contingency plans to stop an expected influx of **immigrants from Greece, Spain and other EU countries** in financial trouble. And these are EU citizens who have every right to resettle anywhere in the EU. It is just that the Maltese government is spineless and controlled by the Vatican and Brussels. If these illegal immigrants put themselves in danger because they know that we will go and save them, well call their bluff, push them back and in the long run save lives. And before some bleeding heart pipes up with "You cannot do that." Well the Americans dropped 2 nuclear bombs and killed a few hundred thousand people to "shorten the war and save lives". Nobody accuses them of any crime.*
- 5.3 *Ms user\_23650 In my City, the Poles did indeed come over ( in their tens of thousands ) with good intentions and took up the menial jobs that no one else wanted. BUT it was not long before they learned how to use the Benefit System, and the good intentions soon vanished. People would be amazed at how many Poles ( and various other former Eastern Europeans ) are claiming / receiving numerous Benefits in the UK and are better off not working. . **Immigrants from the EU**, who become unemployed in the UK, and are receiving Benefits, should return to their Country of origin, and receive Benefits there. There should be NO asylum seekers allowed entry into the UK. Why ? Because wherever the alleged asylum seekers originally come from, there are many, many Friendly Countries that are much closer to their Country than the UK is, so they could / should request asylum at those Countries, not the UK !*

### 5.2.1 | National identity: African

Having eliminated a major demographic in the discussion above, the migrants comprising the discourse of the HS corpus appear to be represented as a more or less homogeneous group and, therefore, it becomes necessary to work at deducing *who* indeed the groups of migrants being discussed in the HS sub-corpus are. An obvious starting

point to uncovering the characteristics of the migrants represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is the most immutable part of their identity - their national identity. As is evident from table 5.2 above, *Africa*<sup>2</sup> is one of the less frequent of the top people or places named in the HS sub-corpus (it ranks 189 of the top 200 most frequent terms), thus undermining any assumption that it is a key component in this analysis. However, while *Africa* is not frequently referred to in the HS sub-corpus by name, the qualitative analysis shows that, when the country (or continent) of origin of migrants is specified, it is predominantly in reference to Africa or somewhere within it. This is not terribly surprising in light of the fact that the topic modelling used to construct the HS sub-corpus homogenised migrants from Africa within topic 8 (see table 4.5). However, the goal at this stage is to uncover the linguistic evidence of the African identity of migrants with the view of understanding how those constructions contribute to the dissemination of ideologies and values related to them. Having eliminated a major demographic in the discussion above, the migrants comprising the discourse of the HS corpus appear to be represented as a more or less homogeneous group and, therefore, it becomes necessary to work at deducing *who* indeed the groups of migrants being discussed in the HS sub-corpus are. An obvious starting point to uncovering the characteristics of the migrants represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is the most immutable part of their identity - their national identity. As is evident from table 5.2 above, *Africa*<sup>3</sup> is one of the less frequent of the top people or places named in the HS sub-corpus (it ranks 189 of the top 200 most frequent terms), thus undermining any assumption that it is a key component in this analysis. However, while *Africa* is not frequently referred to in the HS sub-corpus by name, the qualitative analysis shows that, when the country (or continent) of origin of migrants is specified, it is predominantly in reference to Africa or somewhere within it. This is not terribly surprising in light of the fact that the topic modelling used to construct the HS sub-corpus homogenised migrants from Africa within topic 8 (see table 4.5). However, the goal at this stage is to uncover the linguistic evidence of the African identity of migrants with the view of understanding how those constructions contribute to the dissemination of ideologies and values related to migrants.

Most obvious, of course, are other places on the continent that are mentioned by name and not necessarily included in the top most frequent terms list. These include: *Eritrea*, *Asmara*, and, *Somalia*. Beyond the obvious, however, table 5.4 exemplifies the different ways that *Africa* is represented in the HS sub-corpus according to van Leeuwen's

<sup>2</sup>The term *Africa* is used to denote the continent along with its constituent countries. Similarly, *Europe* is also used to denote the continent along with its constituent countries unless otherwise specified.

<sup>3</sup>The term *Africa* is used to denote the continent along with its constituent countries. Similarly, *Europe* is also used to denote the continent along with its constituent countries unless otherwise specified.

sociosemantic inventory with the bold text in each example illustrating the part of the comment that embodies the particular representational category.<sup>4</sup>

<i>Exclusion</i>	
Backgrounding	I agree with you that not enough is being done for these people by EU and USA. But I also believe that not enough is being done by rich arab/african countries either. <b>But my main point is that problems can only be solved at source.</b> If your roof is leaking, it doesn't help much in moving the furniture and carpets around. One has to repair the roof. I am certain that there are a number of genuine refugees, but I also believe that the bulk of those crossing the Med are economic migrants. People's emotions are being played on intentionally, by those that mix up the two types of immigrants.
<i>Inclusion</i>	
Association <sup>5</sup>	user_32591 <b>to Libya from where they came or back to their own countries.</b> They should solve their own countries problems and not run away and put their burden on us. Anywhere as long as they are expelled from Malta
Functionalisation <sup>6</sup>	Libya is getting rid of them and dumping them on us, return to <b>sender</b> please
Nomination <sup>7</sup>	fair enough, but is the whole of <b>Africa</b> that is fighting? can't these people move to a place in <b>Africa</b> , where there is no fighting?

<sup>4</sup>As noted in section 4.4.2, a full list of the categories and their descriptions can be found in appendix B, however, the ones relevant to the present discussion are described in footnotes.

<sup>5</sup>Used to refer to groups formed by social actors, but which are never actually labelled in a given text, although the social actors that make up the association are named (van Leeuwen, 2008).

<sup>6</sup>This happens when social actors are represented in relation to an activity - something they do (van Leeuwen, 2008).

<sup>7</sup>*Nominated* social actors represented in relation to their unique identity (ibid.).

Genericisation <sup>8</sup>	Arrest the crew and impound the vessel in favour of the government because everything is fishy. <b>All the Somalis should be sent back to Somalia</b> as they are n no danger, so much so that <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9744000/9744757.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9744000/9744757.stm</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19252806">http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19252806</a> Somalia prepares for presidential elections
Categorisation <sup>9</sup>	I believe all illegal immigrants should be sent back because keeping them here is only providing others to follow suit. When <b>African rich states</b> , and there are many, help each other, then and only then should European states help out.
Abstraction <sup>10</sup>	Compared to the thousands of illegal immigrants roaming the streets of our towns and villages - Bugibba, St Paul's Bay, Birzebbuga, Balzan, Marsa - this is too few. CMB must put the pressure on Frontex, the police force and <b>the countries of origin</b> and send back at least 11 a day
Objectivation <sup>11</sup>	Africa is huge continent with vast natural resources. <b>There is plenty of space</b> for Africans to relocate and get on with their lives. Malta is too small, crowded and its resources extremely limited. These people must learn to face problems and not dump them on us. If not they will forever be the world's beggars. And we don't want that do we? Do you, Ms user_23650?

<sup>8</sup>Generalised social actors are represented as classes (rather than a specific identifiable individuals - *specification*; van Leeuwen 2008).

<sup>9</sup>Social actors represented in relation to functions and identities that they share with others (ibid.).

<sup>10</sup>"[O]ccurs when social actors are represented by means of a quality assigned to them by and in the representation" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46), such as the way in which "immigrants are referred to by means of the term 'problems'" (ibid., p. 46).

<sup>11</sup>This happens when social actors are represented in terms of a place or object closely associated with them (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Possessivation <sup>12</sup>	Yes six months detention if they are co-operative and immediately they are certified as not eligible for refugee status the are repatriated immediately. All of them come from Libya and not directly from <b>their place of birth</b> so they only come here as economic migrants. If they had to find work legally here with the same conditions as locals then I assure you most of them end up unemployed and thus turn on the only alternative of income mainly crime
Individualisation <sup>13</sup>	Since the immigrants most probably started out from Libya we should send them back. Libya is now a free country or so we're told and Libya owes us big time for the help we gave to liberate it. Or so they told us. Now let's see if anything has changed in the Libyan attitude towards us or if it was all hot air

Table 5.4: Examples of 'Africa' through van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory

These examples, most notably make evident that Africa and countries within it are involved in the discourse more often than a simple concordance view would lead one to believe. Firstly, there are instances when the continent or one of its constituent countries is *backgrounded* entirely and is, therefore, only evident through a close reading of the text. The *source* in the example of *backgrounding*, for instance, is clearly referring to a place (specifically it is an anaphoric reference of *rich arab/african countries*).

Thus, having accepted that beyond nomination, there are numerous other ways that *Africa* is represented in the discourse, it becomes possible to turn to other tools to ascertain the strength of the relationship between the migrants featured in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus and Africa. Indeed, the qualitative analysis makes evident the fact that one way that migrants are frequently referred to is by way of *objectivation* in relation to *their country* as in examples 5.4 and 5.5.<sup>14</sup>

5.4 No they are not genuine refugees. They can go back overland to **their own countries or to another African country**. That's how they got to Libya isn't it? So they can go back the same way.

<sup>12</sup> "[T]he use of a possessive pronoun to activate (e.g. "our intake") or passivate (e.g. "my teacher") a social actor" (ibid., p.33).

<sup>13</sup> Social actors referred to as individuals (ibid.).

<sup>14</sup> Note, in these two examples migrants are being *objectivated* in relation to *their country*, not *possessivated*. The *country* in the same phrase is being *possessivated* by them.

5.5 user\_21226 we have our own to look after. They should go back to **their own countries** and fight for their rights like the Maltese people did for theirs. We cannot allow the destruction of Maltese society and Malta just to satisfy the JRS, UNHCR and those on their bandwagon.

Moreover, a subsequent collocation analysis of the lexical item *country* in the HS sub-corpus (table 5.5) reveals some important patterns in the use of the word and offers evidence to support the claim that the migrants referred to come from Africa. Indeed, it confirms the observations made through the qualitative reading. *African* is a strong collocate of *country*, and perhaps more importantly, so is *their*. Moreover, another strong collocate of *country* is *our*, thus creating a clear linguistic difference between *our country* as distinct from *their country*, which against the backdrop of this discussion, can safely be assumed to be in Africa, hence reinforcing the claim that *Africa* comprises an important part of the identity of the migrants discussed in the HS sub-corpus.

HS sub-corpus		
Collocate	Freq	Score
their	23	12.2
own	11	11.7
our	9	11.1
origin	5	10.8
other	6	10.7
African	4	10.4
enter	3	10
free	3	10
your	3	9.9
EU	3	9.69
do	4	9.53
home	2	9.46
many	2	9.31
work	2	9.31
get	2	9.26
Libya	2	9.19
go	2	8.97
be	7	8.63
respective	1	8.52
popular	1	8.52

Table 5.5: Collocates of *country* in the HS sub-corpus

Returning to the list of most frequent people and places in the HS and Xeno sub-corpora (table 5.2), the difference in rank of *Libya* across the frequency lists of the two

sub-corpora also offers some indication of the specific type of negative discourse contained in the HS data-set. While in the Xeno sub-corpus, *Libya* occurs more frequently than *Africa*, in the HS sub-corpus the opposite appears to be true. To establish why this is, it is necessary to look more closely at the way *Libya* is used in the HS sub-corpus.

Firstly, the discourse in the HS sub-corpus often takes for granted that the migrants being referenced come from Africa (specifically sub-Saharan Africa) by means of several indirect representational categories as indicated in table 5.4. Further, although Libya is geographically in the North of Africa, it is clear from the way that both *Africa* and *Libya* are used that the latter is not included in the representation of the former. While *Africa* is used to denote the place from which migrants come (their place of birth/nationality), *Libya* is used to express the place from where migrants travel, as in examples 5.6 to 5.9. In other words, the migrants represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus are presumed to have travelled overland to Libya and then crossed the sea by boat to Europe and, in this discourse, the journey from Libya is foregrounded (the relevance of this foregrounding is further examined in section 5.2.2 when the representation of migrants as *boat people* is explored).

- 5.6 What a load of rubbish you are speaking! Firstly, most of the stories of war and what not that the illegal immigrants and the NGO's are always talking about are NOT true. Secondly, there are PLENTY of African countries which are not at war and which could offer oportunities. They can go there. Thirdly, we owe them NOTHING! Malta & the Maltese should come first, second and third before anyone and anything
- 5.7 Yes six months detention if they are co-operative and immediately they are certified as not eligible for refugee status the are repatriated immediately. All of them come from Libya and not directly from their place of birth so they only come here as economic migrants. If they had to find work legally here with the same conditions as locals then I assure you most of them end up unemployed and thus turn on the only alternative of income mainly crime.
- 5.8 Very recently two groups of illegal immigrants managed to reach our shores without being detected. I wonder how many more illegal immigrants reached our shores undetected? If so where are they? I think these Frontex flights should be carried out all over Europe and publized in African countries especially Libya. It will discourage these illegal immi-grants from paying human traffickers all that money. No refunds here. And contrary to what the editor of this paper thinks, I say " Return them back to where they came from

5.9 No they are not genuine refugees. They can go back overland to their own countries or to another African country. That's how they got to Libya isn't it? So they can go back the same way

In sum, whether outright nominated as *Africa* or a backgrounded as in '*problems can only be solved at source*' (table 5.4), the migrants who are the main topic of the discourse in the HS sub-corpus are beyond a reasonable doubt originally from sub-Saharan Africa, having travelled to Malta via Libya. Further, it is clear from the discussion in this section that, while Malta may have migrants from other parts of the world, those represented in the HS sub-corpus are Third Country Nationals (TNCs), specifically from sub-Saharan Africa coming through Libya, and, in the sociopolitical and geographic context of Malta, are most likely, therefore, seeking asylum. This additionally begs the question as to why, as noted, *immigrant* is the most frequent of the four terms in both the HS and the Xeno sub-corpora - a question that will be returned to in section 7.1. Further, having established their African identity, it is now possible to make observations pertaining to the way that African migrants who come to Malta to seek asylum are represented therein.

### 5.2.2 | Representation of migrants as boat people and seafarers

As shown in the discussion above, one of the core components of the identity of the migrants in the HS sub-corpus is their African identity; specifically, when this is tied to sub-Saharan African countries. Moreover, as mentioned, Libya also plays a crucial role in the geographical representation of migrants as the departure point from which migrants leave to make their way to Europe. This much should already be clear in light of the foregoing discussion; the examples in section 5.2.1 evidence the distinction between Libya as a departure country on the one hand (e.g. association and individualisation in table 5.4), and countries in Western, Central, and Eastern Africa from which migrants originally come on the other (e.g. backgrounding, nomination, and genericisation in table 5.4). This is essentially because, as the discourse makes evident, the narrative is that migrants start with an overland journey by crossing parts of the continent to reach Libya, which at its nearest point, is only 183 nautical miles from Malta and, from there, make the sea crossing to Europe (and hence, often reach Malta). Therefore, another central and related element of migrants' identity within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is the perception that they arrive in Malta by boat to the extent that the vessel becomes a fundamental part of their identity.

In view of this, it is worth exploring the various linguistic devices that contribute to the construction of the *boat people* narrative. Firstly, on a purely lexical level, there are a number of *nominations* that directly reference a type of sea vessel in the HS sub-corpus. These include:

- vessels
- a ramshackle boat
- cruise liner
- a cruise
- the boats
- patrol boat
- spare dinghy
- smaller craft
- ferry service
- fuel tank

No other vehicle or vessel is described in the HS sub-corpus to this extent. Only *plane* is used twice in a single comment, and this is done specifically in the context of flying migrants specifically to Libya (example 5.10).

5.10 *It is pretty obvious that you cannot put these persons on a **plane** and send them to Libya if there is no proof that they left that country. They would be sent back on the first **plane** back to Malta. So difficult to understand?*

Beyond the use of the nouns listed above, within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, there are numerous other instances in which the narrative of *boat people* emerges. Table 5.6 shows the various categories within van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory that contribute to the narrative.

<i>Inclusion</i>	
Classification <sup>15</sup>	France , Italy, and other EU Countries, ignore EU rules when they want to, so why not Malta ? Just give the illegal <b>boatpeople</b> some food, water, fuel, and then turn them around and wave them Goodbye.

<sup>15</sup>A form of *identification* whereby social actors are classified according to major categories, such a sex, gender, age, religion, and ethnicity (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Objectivation	Eureka! Eureka! The Swede Cecilia Malmström has discovered that burden-sharing does not work. First, nobody likes to carry a burden. Second, with unemployment in the EU over 10% who wants to import immigrants to add to the unemployed? The Swede Cecilia Malmström (who must be a closet member of UNHCR) must now discover another truth - that the best way to carry a burden is to avoid the burden. In other words there is no point in letting illegal immigrants enter Malta and the rest of the EU. The only solution is to prevent them coming in, except for those we actually need, like engineers, qualified nurses and so on. But we should choose them; they should not impose themselves on us as has been happening with the <b>boatfuls</b> we have been receiving.
Functionalisation	Since when is NATO expected to provide an <b>illegal immigrant ferry service</b> ? And to what destination? No country in Europe wants these problems and rather than risk their lives crossing the Med, these people have to learn that Europe is no El Dorado and Africa is far bigger and richer with better prospects than the ols continent. The blame is on certain politicians (like Dutch Socialist MP Tineke Strik) who eye immigrants as potential voters to bolster their misguided and sick social policies. It will of course backfire as we have seen just recently in Bradford where a 'safe' Labour seat went to Respect and George Galloway. He pandered to the Muslim majority and got 55% of the vote. Labour, who allowed uncontrolled immigration in the past in the hope that immigrants will always vote labour, were left high and dry
Genericisation	The reason their boat was in distress is obvious <b>these boats</b> are used for just a one way trip. They have no intention to return; otherwise they would have come on a cruise liner. These trips are planed both by people from the point of departure and contacts in Malta. These people should be processed with a priority to establish their validity and if found that they do not qualify for refugee status should be send back to either the country from which they embarked or their home country
Possessivation	I think the Malta navy should hand over water and humanitarain supplies to the illegals on <b>their boats</b> and not permit them to land except when there is a clear medical emergency. The illegals boats would than continue northward

Table 5.6: Examples of *Boat people* through van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory

The evidence presented in table 5.6 shows that there are instances in which migrants are outright *classified as boat people*. Here, any other identity of the migrants arriving in Malta by boat is completely erased as they are represented entirely by the vehicle with which they reach Europe. Hence, the term *boat people* comes to mean much more than just ‘those that travel by boat’ in the same way that *village people* means much more than ‘those that come from a village’. Very similar to *classification* are instances in which migrants are *objectified*, where they are represented as an embodiment of the vehicle, as in *boatfuls*. Here again, it is difficult to picture the people that fill the boat as anything else but sitting in a loaded boat. Much like the classic ‘don’t think of a blue elephant’ brings to mind precisely a blue elephant, the *classification* and *objectivation* described here, immediately build the sort of picture reproduced in fig. 5.2. Moreover, in addition to *categorisation* and *objectivation*, the discourse in the HS sub-corpus also contains numerous cases of *possessivation*, where the boats are represented as belonging to the migrants by means of the possessive pronoun *their*. In fact *their* has a collocation score of 10.5 with *boat* in the HS sub-corpus offering further evidence of the strength of the relationship between the vessels and *them* (migrants).

Examples such as these contribute to a discourse in which *migrants* become almost synonymous with *sea travel*, which is reinforced by a narrative that represents migrants as *seafarers*. This becomes very apparent amidst a consideration of the actions in which



Figure 5.2: Picture of a boat full of migrants taken from a 2011 *Times of Malta* article (Times of Malta, 2011)

migrants and boats partake. Within the framework of Halliday's representation of participant roles, *boats* are often the *goal* on which a *person* (usually migrants or the Maltese) performs an action as in examples 5.11 and 5.12.

- 5.11 As soon as they are seen approaching Malta, **top-up their fuel tank** and turn their boat 180 degrees. That is the simplest and cheapest solution. Cos there would be no need for, paper work, hospitalizing, taming and at the end of the day NO cross breeding. The EU feels sorry for us but that is all, they don't want any of them in their own country.
- 5.12 The reason their boat was in distress is obvious **these boats are used for just a one way trip**. They have no intention to return; otherwise they would have come on a cruise liner. These trips are planed both by people from the point of departure and contacts in Malta. These people should be processed with a priority to establish their validity and if found that they do not qualify for refugee status should be send back to either the country from which they embarked or their home country.

More convincing though are the clauses in which migrants are the social actor - and more specifically, the type of actions that migrants are purported to partake in. Examples include:

- continue northwards;
- the bulk of those **crossing the Med** are economic migrants;
- risk their lives crossing the Med;
- Repatriate these illegal migrants as soon as they **enter matlese waters**

The examples above illustrate a discourse that is highly specific to *seafarers* and *boat people*. Moreover, the discourse of the HS sub-corpus appears to acknowledge the peril that the boat journey entails through patterns that regularly represent boats as the *carrier* in a *relational clause* or the *scope* in a *material clause*, whereby the boat is described as unsafe and dangerous (see examples 5.13 and 5.14).

- 5.13 @ user\_8772. If you seek danger and peril it is your fault. These people are being used for money. They pay high sums that they can hardly afford for someone to **give them a ramshackle boat**. (see photos). These people then arrive in Europe to do the meanest of jobs and eventually in frustration start to cause trouble like is happening constantly in UK. In my opinion, these people would be better to ensure that their country becomes democratic, ignore tribal feuds and religious fanaticism.

5.14 In that eventuality, Malta should take the country's interest first and foremost. Since the immigrants will be boarded on **other vessels deem sea safe**, we should not allow access to our ports, since there will be no distress situation. Also if the captain will try to bring the immigrants on maltese shores with the excuse of someone in need of medical assistance, the authorities should arrest and arraign the flotilla members with the charge of aiding and abetting illegal entry into a sovereign territory!!!

Finally, against the backdrop of the discussion pertaining to the dangers that migrants face on their journey, any mention of a *cruise* or *ferry service* in the HS sub-corpus is done with sarcastic or ironic intentions. Overall, there are 2 instances of the word *cruise* and one instance of *ferry* (examples 5.15 to 5.17). Indeed, irony has been well documented as a tactic for expressing negative evaluations (see for example Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 1984, 1992) and it seems to be performing the same function here.

5.15 The reason their boat was in distress is obvious these boats are used for just a one way trip. They have no intention to return; otherwise they would have come on a **cruise liner**. These trips are planned both by people from the point of departure and contacts in Malta. These people should be processed with a priority to establish their validity and if found that they do not qualify for refugee status should be send back to either the country from which they embarked or their home country.

5.16 If racism is your problem, well then you should acknowledge that in all your comments you have voiced nothing else than this - but towards the maltese people. We lived here, we grew here, we built this country and now sorry but we want to protect it. Whoever forces himself on us, whoever comes here illegally should just be thrown out immediately. These journeys are not a necessity but a simple trend as if they are going on a **cruise**

5.17 Since when is NATO expected to provide an **illegal immigrant ferry service**? And to what destination? No country in Europe wants these problems and rather than risk their lives crossing the Med, these people have to learn that Europe is no El Dorado and Africa is far bigger and richer with better prospects than the ols continent. The blame is on certain politicians (like Dutch Socialist MP Tineke Strik) who eye immigrants as potential voters to bolster their misguided and sick social policies. It will of course backfire as we have seen just recently in Bradford where a 'safe' Labour seat went to Respect and George Galloway. He pandered to the Muslim majority and got 55% of the vote. Labour, who allowed uncontrolled immigration in the past in the hope that immigrants will always vote labour, were left high and dry

Examples 5.15 and 5.16 both employ an ironic use of the word *cruise* by subverting its conventional meaning associated with leisurely travel. In addition, in example 5.17, the phrase *ferry service* is used sarcastically to refer to what can only be assumed to be some sort of relief effort by NATO. The sarcasm hinges on the typical association of the word *ferry* with a transportation service, often used for leisure, work or planned travel. By using the term *ferry*, the commenter sarcastically implies that NATO's involvement is being ironically framed as if they were profiting by providing a ticketed transport service rather than engaging in a relief effort.

### 5.2.3 | Representation of migrants as *illegals*

Beyond the representation of migrants as *boat people* in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, there appears to be a great preoccupation with the status of sub-Saharan African migrants who arrive in Malta by boat. Overall, there are a number of ways that the status of migrants as *refugees* and *asylum seekers* is *backgrounded* or entirely *suppressed*, with a general acceptance that they are in some way *illegal*. It is thus necessary to examine this representation of *status* from different angles in order understand how this maps on to real-world experiences.

The idea that migrants are *illegal* is evident in a number of different ways. The first and most obvious manifestation of this representation is by means of *categorisation* as defined in van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory. This is most frequently realised by the premodification of the noun *immigrant* with the adjective *illegal*. Table 5.7 shows the results of a concordance search of the number of times that *illegal* and *immigrant* appear in the HS sub-corpus as well as the number of times they appear together as *illegal immigrant*. On the basis of these numbers, table 5.7 also presents the collocation score that Sketch Engine computes for the relationship between the two words and the percentage of times that *immigrant* co-occurs with *illegal* and vice versa.

<i>HS sub-corpus</i>			
	<i>immigrant</i>	<i>Illegal</i>	<i>illegal immigrant</i>
No. of hits in corpus	68	59	23
% of times immigrant occurs with illegal			33.82%
% of times illegal occurs with immigrant			38.98%
Collocation score			12.6

Table 5.7: Number of times that *immigrant*, *illegal*, and *illegal immigrant* appear in the HS sub-corpus

What becomes immediately apparent is the strength of the relationship between the two words. Keeping in mind that, as explained in section 4.2.2.1, the strongest possible collocate score using the measure adopted by Sketch Engine is 14, the relationship between the two words is close to the maximum. Not only is *immigrant* the top collocate of *illegal*, but over a third of all the times that *immigrant* is used in the HS sub-corpus, it is used with *illegal*. Moreover, a further view of the top 20 collocates of *illegal* in the HS sub-corpus as shown in table 5.8 offers further evidence of the strength of the relationship between migrants and their *illegal* status. Firstly, many of the collocates, such as *boatpeople*, *African*, and *migrants*, are words that have been discussed extensively in section 5.2.1 and section 5.2.2 as being closely associated with migrants. In addition, as the list proceeds down from top to bottom, the score almost never decreases by a full integer, thus offering further evidence that the relationship is critical.<sup>16</sup> Hence, it would appear that other words that have already been shown to be synonymous with migrants also have a strong relationship with the term *illegal*.

HS		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>
immigrant	23	12.6
immigration	7	11.9
migrant	7	11.7
immigrat	2	10.3
issue	2	10.1
fullstop	1	9.33
boatpeople	1	9.33
mean	1	9.33
entry	1	9.3
whole	1	9.3
service	1	9.27
uncontrolled	1	9.27
about	1	9.22
economic	1	9.19
African	1	9.14
many	1	8.98
be	2	6.93

Table 5.8: Collocates of *illegal* in the HS sub-corpus

<sup>16</sup>It is important to keep in mind here that although there is only, for example, one instance of *boatpeople* as well as *economic* occurring with *illegal*, the collocation scores vary slightly. This is because, as shown in section 3.5, *logDice* is unaffected by corpus size and frequencies in the way that say MI is. Therefore, as argued in section 4.2, the collocation scores in table 5.8 still give a good indication of the relationship between multiple words in the way that the raw frequencies cannot.

Another way that *migrants* are categorised as *illegal* is by way of *nominalisation* whereby they are referenced as wholly and completely illegal; any other part of their identity is completely erased, as in examples 5.18 to 5.20.

5.18 I think the Malta navy should hand over water and humanitarian supplies to the **illegals** on their boats and not permit them to land except when there is a clear medical emergency. The **illegals** boats would than continue northwards.

5.19 One option I suggest for **illegals** is not to permit them to land as they have no documents (give them water etc and medical help offshore) and then send them on - if this becomes a policy they will stop heading for Malta and push on. Obviously if they are in real and present danger they can be taken to hospital, then when they are well the will be repatriated.

5.20 this will cost more manpower x money ;malta has already got 6,billion in debts ;**illegals** are **illegals** x should be taken back where they come from full stop

The examples above present a view of reality in which migrants are by virtue of themselves *illegal entities*; their very existence is illegal. This version of reality is made even more clear in the tautology illustrated in example 5.20 where the user emphasises the *illegal* nature of the migrants being discussed. Further, another approach to the representation of migrants as *illegal* is their portrayal as the *carrier* in a *relational clause* within Halliday's framework as in the examples 5.19 (as they have no documents) and 5.20 (illegals are illegals) above.

Indeed, *carrier* plays an important role in the deliberation of the status of the migrants being discussed in the HS sub-corpus. Together with van Leeuwen's *appraisal*<sup>17</sup> and *categorisation*, there are numerous instances in which migrants are described in ways that diminish their legitimacy, their plight for safety, and their right to protection. Firstly, as can be seen in examples 5.21 and 5.22, there appears to be a distinction being made between 'genuine' refugees and what can only be assumed to be 'non-genuine' refugees. Another distinction is with *economic migrants* (example 5.24), which gives some indication as to what is meant by *genuine refugees*. This takes the discussion back to the definitions outlined in section 5.2. There appears to be a widespread idea that the majority of migrants who arrive in Malta from sub-Saharan Africa by boat are not 'genuine' *asylum seekers* and *refugees* as defined in the dictionary or by the Convention of the Status of Refugees for that matter, which states that a refugee "is someone who

<sup>17</sup>Social actors referred to in terms that evaluate (appraise) them, such as good, bad, loved, hated, and fake (van Leeuwen, 2008).

is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2001-2023a, p. 3). Rather, the migrants represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus are described as coming to Malta in search of work merely to benefit from the perceived economic strength of Europe.

- 5.21 I agree with you that not enough is being done for these people by EU and USA. But I also believe that not enough is being done by rich arab/african countries either. But my main point is that problems can only be solved at source. If your roof is leaking, it doesn't help much in moving the furniture and carpets around. One has to repair the roof. I am certain that **there are a number of genuine refugees**, but I also believe that the bulk of those crossing the Med are economic migrants. People's emotions are being played on intentionally, by those that mix up the two types of immigrants.
- 5.22 No **they are not genuine refugees**. They can go back overland to their own countries or to another African country. That's how they got to Libya isn't it? So they can go back the same way.
- 5.23 The boats should be given provisions, turned back and escorted to just outside Libyan territorial waters. The immigrants should then be advised to contact the Maltese embassy, if they want to claim asylum.**96% of all our arrivals are not refugees anyway**. Every patrol boat should carry a spare dinghy, to use should the original one not be seaworthy. If the sea conditions are too rough, they should be transferred to a patrol boat capable of housing them. They should not be brought over to Malta but kept there until sea conditions are suitable to be returned back. Medical facilities should be made available on the patrol boat. Only then will we be able to solve this problem. Unfortunately there is no political willpower to carry it out. Pity we cannot tempt some Australian politicians to come to Malta . Legally of course
- 5.24 Yes six months detention if they are co-operative and immediately they are certified as not eligible for refugee status the are repatriated immediately. All of them come from Libya and not directly from their place of birth **so they only come here as economic migrants**. If they had to find work legally here with the same conditions as locals then I assure you most of them end up unemployed and thus turn on the only alternative of income mainly crime.

Similar to the work of van Dijk (1997b) described in section 2.1.2.2 in which he examines the way that lexical choices made by speakers undermine the refugee status of migrants, both the terms *genuine* and *economic* are used similar to the way that *illegal* is used in the HS sub-corpus; they are generally premodifiers, put before a noun that

references (and specifies a type of) *migrants*. In fact, a look at the top collocates of *immigrant* offers additional insight into the use of premodification to *categorise* migrants according to their status (table 5.9). Indeed, a number of collocates of *immigrant* in the HS sub-corpus are premodifiers of *migrants* e.g. *economic*, *illegal*, and *irregular*.

HS		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>
illegal	23	12.6
economic	3	10.4
send	3	9.86
influx	2	9.81
number	2	9.81
reach	2	9.79
enter	2	9.77
arrive	2	9.75
detain	2	9.71
Italy	2	9.68
more	2	9.66
many	2	9.62
wannabe	1	8.89
Mediterranean	1	8.89
single	1	8.89
would-be	1	8.89
irregular	1	8.89
site	1	8.89
eye	1	8.89
deter	1	8.89

Table 5.9: Collocates of *immigrant* in the HS sub-corpus

Finally, the strength of this argument not only lies in the language patterns identified above, but is reinforced by statements made outright by users themselves as in examples 5.25 to 5.27 below, which illustrate explicitly the view that African migrants who come to Malta by boat from Libya are not refugees as defined by the UN:

- 5.25 Yes six months detention if they are co-operative and immediately they are certified as not eligible for refugee status the are repatriated immediately. All of them come from Libya and not directly from their place of birth so they only come here as economic migrants. If they had to find work legally here with the same conditions as locals then I assure you most of them end up unemployed and thus turn on the only alternative of income mainly crime.

- 5.26 *It certainly needs to be revamped, in favour of indefinite detention, the elimination of the 'subsidiary protection' category, and the abandonment of the whole 'burden sharing' chimera, which is attracting far more immigrants than it is actually removing from the island. This would reduce the number of irregular immigrants being given free run of the islands strictly to those 5% or so who are refugees as defined by the Geneva Convention. It would also remove most of the incentives for those who don't qualify to come here in the first place. In other words, it would leave us with the few hundred genuine refugees that really need help and that we can actually handle.*
- 5.27 *What a load of rubbish you are speaking! Firstly, most of the stories of war and what not that the illegal immigrants and the NGO's are always talking about are NOT true. Secondly, there are PLENTY of African countries which are not at war and which could offer opportunities. They can go there. Thirdly, we owe them NOTHING! Malta & the Maltese should come first, second and third before anyone and anything.*

In example 5.25, the user is making the distinction outright between migrants who are *eligible for refugee status* and migrants who move to Malta for economic purposes and claims that *all* migrants who enter Malta through Libya are the latter kind. The implication here is that all migrants who apply for asylum are doing so fraudulently. Further, example 5.26 states plainly that only a very small percentage of migrants in Malta constitute refugees as defined by the refugee convention, while example 5.27 goes as far as to say that the recounts of danger are blatant lies.

In sum, within the scope of this discussion, it is clear from the evidence presented by means of Halliday's and van Leeuwen's classifications, as well as collocation analysis, that the status of migrants who are the main topic of the discourse in the HS sub-corpus is consistently put into question. They are largely characterised as being *illegal* and when they are not, their status is still being debated (as is the case with the phrase *economic migrant*, for example).

#### 5.2.4 | 'Go back to your country'

The representation of migrants as *illegal boat people* contributes to a common attitude underlying the discourse of the HS sub-corpus - that the migrants who arrive in Malta should '*go back to their country*'. This perspective is evident in a number of ways, most notably through the examination of N-grams in the HS sub-corpus. A search for N-grams in Sketch Engine reveals the most frequent multi-word expressions (MWEs), also known as lexical bundles, in a given corpus. In this case, the top lexical bundles from the HS sub-corpus (table 5.10) reveal a stance whereby migrants *should be sent back*. The

HS sub-corpus			
<i>Item</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
back to their*	8	as they are	4
be sent back*	8	need to be	4
them back to*	7	EU and the	3
their own countries*	7	they can be	3
they want to	6	the rest of	3
back to Libya*	5	country of origin*	3
send them back*	5	the EU and	3
these illegal immigrants	5	that they are	3
to their own*	5	if they are	3
to their own countries*	5	sent back to*	3
that it is	4	them to the	3
to send them*	4	fight for their	3
has to be	4	They came here	3
do not want	4	have to be	3
of illegal immigrants	4	I do n't	3
there is no	4	should be sent back*	3
to their country*	4	in their own	3
the Maltese people	4	back to their country*	3
in the UK	4	is too small	3
them all back*	4	nothing to do	3
of the Maltese	4	nothing to do with	3
be able to	4	of the world	3
the illegal immigrants	4	going to happen	3
to do with	4	on a cruise	3
are going to	4	the end of	3

Table 5.10: Top 50 N-grams in the HS sub-corpus

phrases marked by [\*], even if decontextualised, are clearly indicative of a discourse suggesting that migrants are not welcome in Malta and should return to wherever it is that they came from. Further, other phrases might be slightly more difficult to discern without the broader context of the full comment, however, MWEs such as *have to be* and *in their own* are also reminiscent of a broader rhetoric suggesting that migrants *have to be sent back to their own country*. Moreover, expressions like *these illegal immigrants* and *of illegal immigrants* reinforce the argument made in section 5.2.3 that the status of migrants as asylum seekers is frequently called into question.

Outside of the N-grams, another noteworthy illustration of the *go back to your country* narrative is through the use of *suggestion*. Although, the suggestions of the HS sub-corpus fall into 8 categories of suggestion-type outlined and exemplified in table 5.11,

"Send them back"	Give them food, give them water and <b>send them all back</b> Mr Prime Minister.
"Don't let them in"	The army should be surveilling the Maltese waters. <b>No illegal immigrants should be allowed in FULL STOP.</b> As to the ones that are already in Malta, they need to be shipped back to their countries (not to Europe) and be handed a bill for food, lodging, damages and services received. The Church and NGOs might want to support them financially in this.
Punishment	They are human traffickers and country saboteurs. If any of them tries to bring illegal immigrants to Malta <b>they must be imprisoned</b> , the key thrown away and the illegal immigrants <b>expelled</b> .
Suggestion for migrants	I agree with Ms user_9144, they should be given water, food and fuel and they should send back with immediate effect. These people are using their women, children and newborns to draw attention on them. If they want to be free <b>they should fight a war and free themselves in their own country</b> as we Maltese did in past years. They are a big burden on our country and EU is doing nothing to help us
Hostile action	I fully agree with you user_23017. <b>A raid in many areas will work wonders</b> on thousands staying illegally. But there has to be a will to do it right and not only doing simple token repatriations
Miscellaneous	<b>Malta should treat migrants who claim to be under age 18 as children until proven otherwise and never detain them,</b> " said Ms Farmer. Do you want a twenty year old to be in a class of fourteen/ fifteen year olds? It has happened in the UK. It will happen here. <b>Check first, verify, then proceed to treat him/ her as a juvenile</b>
Suggestion for the Maltese	They protest for their rights, <b>so why doesn't the Maltese public protest on this matter</b> , or don't we have a say in what goes on in OUR country we are all talk and no ACTION and for those of you who are going to comment that i am racist you are terribly mistaken it is just that this is now getting out of hand it is impossible for Malta to keep these many illegal immigrants, Malta is too small
Violence	How wonderful the patrol boats are. yet last year, having paid my taxes, paid my boat registration and having a patrol boat sitting at anchor only about one hundred meters away (as it had been all day) i radiodded them to tell them my battery was flat. The first thing i was told was " there will be a charge for this service" <b>Perhaps we should scuttle the lot</b> , = more dive sites, less immigrants and about the same service too the deserved.

Table 5.11: Types of suggestion in the HS sub-corpus

by far the most widespread is “*send them back.*” Indeed, out of over 100 suggestions in the HS sub-corpus, more than half imply that migrants should be ‘*sent back*’, with the rest spread amongst the other types of suggestions listed. Certainly therefore, while, *suggestion* plays a significant role in the reproduction of hate speech and discriminatory values in the HS sub-corpus, there is a particularly strong representation of the sentiment that migrants should return from whence they came. In other words “*go back to your country*” is a repetitive component in the transmission of a negative stance toward migrants in the HS sub-corpus.

That being said, this type of *suggestion* is not the only evidence of this sentiment in the sub-corpus. Firstly, within the parameters of van Leeuwen’s framework, the representation of both *Africans* and *Africa* offers evidence to support the suggestion that migrants should return specifically to ‘*their country*’. Looking back at table 5.4, the representation of *Africa* and *Africans* provides useful insight into the edict that they should return from whence they came. In the first instance, *Africa* is frequently *backgrounded* in phrases like *send them back* and *repatriate them*. Within the context discussed in section 5.2.1, the backgrounded place to which it can be inferred that migrants should be sent back to is, naturally, *Africa*. Phrases such as these offer further evidence to support the argument that, in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, it is taken for granted that migrants arriving in Malta come from Africa and they further explain the low ranking of *Africa* in the frequency list in table 5.2; it is essentially shared common knowledge, so much to that it is not even necessary to specify as much. In fact, a frequency search of the term *back* reveals that it appears 54 times in the HS sub-corpus (compared with 7 instances of *Africa*), each time in a clause stating or implying that migrants should return (or be returned) *back*.

Again, while backgrounding is the most common representation of *Africa* (or lack thereof - e.g. *...But my main point is that problems can only be solved at source...*), other realisations serve to further support the notion that migrants should be returned. The *functionalised ‘sender’*, for example, in “*return to sender*” is obviously using a popular turn of phrase to ironically reference the place from where migrants come. Further, the example of *association* in table 5.4 (*Libya from where they came or back to their own countries...*) evidences that, in the view of the users who construct the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, migrants come from somewhere in Africa and it does not matter where on the continent they are returned to, as long as they are taken to somewhere on the African continent.

Beyond the scope of van Leeuwen’s representation of social actors, Halliday’s classification of process types also offers further support to evidence the dominant stance that migrants should return to somewhere within Africa. The proposal that migrants should

be returned to their home country is evident in clauses in which migrants are the *actor* of a *material clause* as in example 5.28, but even more so in clauses in which migrants are the *goal* of a *material clause* in which they are portrayed as being *sent back* by some outside entity (examples 5.29 and 5.30). Moreover, examples 5.28 to 5.30 additionally demonstrate the frequent representation of *Africa* as the *recipient* in a *material clause* and, therefore, they indicate that when migrants are told to go back 'to their country', it is Africa that should receive them.

5.28 *There should be no applications. Africa is a vast country where they can go*

5.29 *Yes I have an easy'rand cheaper OPTION for all the illegal immigrants that arrive in our small Island Malta is to send them back pronto from were they came from Simple*

5.30 *Arrest the crew and impound the vessel in favour of the government because everything is fishy. All the Somalis should be sent back to Somalia as they are n no danger, so much so that...*

Finally, in addition to being assigned a more passive role in such clauses, it is also pertinent to mention here that migrants appear as a *goal* far more frequently than they do an *actor*, again further reinforcing the idea that they are being *sent back* by some more dominant social actor and that the said dominant actor can and should control where migrants can go, what they can eat, what they can do.

### 5.3 | The Maltese

The second most widespread social actor who features in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is, unsurprisingly, Malta (the country/nation/place) and the Maltese people.<sup>18</sup> Looking back at table 5.2, a simple search of the concordance frequency reveals that *Malta* and the *Maltese* have a very similar proportional representation as migrants. Moreover, the proportional representation of the social actors evidenced by the qualitative reading of the hate speech data (fig. 5.1) further supports the perception that the migrants and the Maltese largely shape the overall discourse of the HS sub-corpus.

Naturally, the way that Malta and the Maltese manifest in the language of the HS sub-corpus is very different from the way that migrants are represented. Further, although they are being discussed in the same section because, of course, the two are by their very nature strongly entwined, there are differences in the way that Malta and the

<sup>18</sup>In this section the term *Malta* is used to refer to Malta as a cultural, political, and geographical entity (a country and a place) and *the Maltese* is used to refer to the people of Malta.

Maltese are linguistically constructed. Despite the difference in linguistic composition of the two, however, the representations that they build overlap considerably as they both contribute to the construction of a similar stance in the discourse of the HS-sub-corpus.

Turning back to the discussion in chapter 1 in which it was posited that a major component of hate speech is the construction of *groupness* in a way that formulates *the other* as the *out-group* in contrast to the more dominant *in-group*, the section above presents evidence of the representation of migrants as the out-group. This section, on the other hand, asserts that the undisputed in-group in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is the Maltese as is evidenced primarily by their representation as *repatriators of migrants*.

### 5.3.1 | Repatriators

The discussion in section 5.2.4 above detailing the stance that migrants should ‘*go back to their country*’ or ‘*we should send them back*’ presupposes the existence of someone somewhere who is doing the *sending*. Previous sections showed that, within the scope of Halliday’s framework, in many of the clauses in which migrants are told to *go back to their country*, they are passivated (most commonly, they are the goal in a material clause) and, hence, represented as undergoing an action. As a result, the doer of the action, the person *doing* the sending or *telling* migrants to go back is often backgrounded. In this section, I postulate that indeed there is strong linguistic evidence to suggest that it is *Malta* and *the Maltese* that are represented as doing the sending. In essence, therefore, this section completes the picture that was presented in section 5.2.4; it is, so to speak, the flip side of the coin.

Beyond the numerous clauses presented in section 5.2.4, examples 5.31 to 5.33 below further exemplify the suggestion by a backgrounded social actor that migrants be repatriated (by some unspecified social actor). In the context of the discussion in section 5.1, it can be assumed that the unidentified in-group, the persons making the request, form part of the Maltese demography. Further, there appears to be the expectation that migrants are sent back by some form of Maltese government or authority. Evidence of the request of Maltese people to have migrants removed by the authorities comes from an analysis of their participant role within Halliday’s framework, in particular through their role as *sayer* in *verbal clauses*. Examples 5.34 and 5.35 offer concrete illustrations of users making the request (*saying*) that migrants be removed (by someone else) from Malta. Naturally, the inference here is that the request is being made to somebody that has the kind of authority and resources necessary to carry out such an operation and, although comments like those in examples 5.31 and 5.32 do not make direct reference to

any form of authority, the implicit nature of the appeal is clear.

- 5.31 Six month is an insult to the Maltese population, there should only be one out come. **repatriation!**
- 5.32 user\_1507 As user\_6138 said we do not care a hoot about conventions and such other rubbish when our country is being invaded and our security under threat. Unusual situations require unusual remedies and the remedy is to **send them all back to Libya or to their own countries**
- 5.33 @user\_8772, Governments should **set a precedent and repatriate** non refugee claimants ASAP. That way the africans who illegally want to force themselves on us will get the message that it is futile coming here as you will be sent back. This is the only way lives are going to be saved and human traffickers will have very little business in creating misery for profit.
- 5.34 User\_14341, the empty appartments are not to house illegal migrants. They were built by private monies. Anyone who even attempts to touch those empty apartments will do so much damage to democratic malta taht no one will ever want to invest in Malta again. **I suggest that the illegal migrants be sent** to northern europe where these people really want to go. Malta is too small even for someone like you.
- 5.35 user\_3137 it is my freedom half that is speaking. Since when do you defend foreign countries instead of your own country? **Send them back** to stop this invasion as Dr Gonzi himself had called it.

On the other hand, example 5.33 makes explicit the view that the request is being made to the Maltese Government to carry out the task of repatriating migrants. Indeed, the appeal to the Maltese Government and authorities in the HS sub-corpus is not just inferential in nature; there is concrete linguistic evidence to suggest that it is the expectation of the Maltese people that the government should curb migration by repatriating migrants back to their home country. The first indication of this becomes apparent within the sphere of van Leeuwen's network. In the first instance, there are several comments in which Malta is *functionalised* with reference to various governing and institutional bodies, and therefore, directly represented with regard to its institutional role. The discourse thereby bestows Malta with the (at least perceived) power to *send them back* as in examples 5.36 to 5.39 below, which exhibit a number of lexical items relating specifically to various Maltese institutional and governing bodies. Lexical items such as the *authorities*, *the two political parties*, and, *the government* all indicate to participants and observers of the discourse that the Maltese governing authorities have (or at

least should have) an active role to play in the deportation of migrants. Moreover, one cannot help but wonder whether the inclusion of the AFM (Armed Forces Malta - example 5.36) and *the Malta navy* (example 5.37) in the discourse related to *sending migrants back* does not in some way suggest an indirect call to violent repatriation, especially in light of the discussions in section 5.2.2 where it is shown that the discourse of the HS sub-corpus acknowledges that the sea journey migrants undertake is seriously dangerous. If nothing else, any suggestion to undermine that peril is insulting and deeply cruel.

- 5.36 *There is only one solution. **The two political parties** should stop arguing about votes of confidence to this and that minister and find a way to permanently stop all illegal's from entering Maltese territory without the proper visas and documentation. This would raise some legal issues with treaties and agreements that Malta is signatory to. It goes to reason that Malta have never expected to be under so much pressure from such a number of people. The time has come for this drastic action to be taken to safeguard to integrity of **Malta's sovereignty** from the uncontrolled influx of people whose very small over populated Island with limited resources that are already stretched to the limit. **The AFM orders** should be to assist with the maximum safety to the people on the boats either reach their destination or be escorted back to the territorial waters of the country they set sail from. This sort of action has created friction between Malta and Italy before but so be it. Mr Belusconi declared that Lampedusa was closed. Why not Malta?? For the parliament to take action on this vital problem requires the intention of the Maltese people by phoning their members of parliament and by partisan peaceful march demanding action on their behalf. The moderator please try to see my last paragraph as an integral part of the above on behalf of my large extended family that makes part of the Maltese heritage to which I have always loved valued and respected*
- 5.37 *I think **the Malta navy** should hand over water and humanitarain supplies to the illegals on their boats and not permit them to land except when there is a clear medical emergency. The illegals boats would than continue northward*
- 5.38 ***If the Autorities** are not going to send all these ILLIGAL EMIGRANTS back from where they come yes it looks that we are set for in for a rough Summer ..... Plus we will continue to have less space for us on our own Island while our paying taxes will be spend on to keeps them and not for our people needs. .... "THE ONLY WAY IS RETURN TO SENDER"*
- 5.39 *Who did the Maltese people **elect democratically**? Surely not the UNHCR and the bunch of NGOs receiving grants. So, yes, it is **the government that we blame**. It's first*

loyalty should be to the citizens of Malta and it is betraying them big time. The UK government is drawing up contingency plans to stop an expected influx of immigrants from Greece, Spain and other EU countries in financial trouble. And these are EU citizens who have every right to resettle anywhere in the EU. It is just that the Maltese government is spineless and controlled by the Vatican and Brussels. If these illegal immigrants put themselves in danger because they know that we will go and save them, well call their bluff, push them back and in the long run save lives. And before some bleeding heart pipes up with "You cannot do that." Well the Americans dropped 2 nuclear bombs and killed a few hundred thousand people to "shorten the war and save lives". Nobody accuses them of any crime.

Consequently, instances of *functionalisation* like those discussed above, colour the interpretation of the discourse overall and make instances of backgrounding easy to decipher. Indeed, the most frequent representational category of Malta in the HS sub-corpus is by way of *backgrounding*. Several examples illustrated thus far that suggest migrants be deported from Malta, background the entity or person required to do the repatriation (e.g. 5.31, 5.32, 5.34, and 5.35) and, in light of this discussion, that backgrounded entity can safely be inferred as the Maltese government, authority, Armed Forces Malta (AFM), etc. Moreover, there is a parallel trend in clauses in which a Maltese authority is a participant whereby the Maltese people place blame on the Maltese government for not doing enough to fulfil the expectations that restriction are placed on migration as evidenced in examples 5.38 and 5.39.

Finally, by far the most frequent participant role that Malta fulfills is as the *actor* of a *material clause*. This, compounded by the discussion in section 5.2.4 pertaining to the representation of migrants as the *goal* of action, helps to highlight the fact that, in the vast majority of clauses, Malta can be seen to be performing some sort of action on or toward migrants. Moreover, most often, the action involves sending migrants away from Malta by means of repatriation. Several examples already given in this chapter exemplify this, but examples 5.40 to 5.42 help to further illustrate the role that the *backgrounded* authority has in the active deportation of migrants; they make clear the stance that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are not welcome in Malta and should be expelled. In addition, like the N-grams presented in table 5.10 offer evidence of the ideology that migrants should be *sent back*, these examples also attest to the realisation that it is the Maltese authorities that should be *doing* the sending.

5.40 One option would be to **send them all back** and stop accepting any more

- 5.41 instead of detention **they should deport them** as is usually done in any country where people turn up at the borders without identification .....that would solve everybody's problems..
- 5.42 ENOUGH is ENOUGH. Time for those who pretend that it is their duty to protect us, to get off their soft bottoms and stop this madness. **Send them onwards** to Italy or France or Germany or back to their country.

The discussion in this section should bring to a close one that was started in section 5.2.4 above. The discussion pertaining migrants being *sent back* involves essentially three participants: migrants themselves; Maltese people; and the Government of Malta. The language used in the HS sub-corpus makes clear an explicit view that migrants should be deported and transported back to their country of origin together with the implicit suggestion by Maltese people that this task should be carried out by Malta's governing bodies. Despite this, the evidence presented in this section suggests that, from an axiological perspective, the values of Malta and the Maltese align substantially. For this reason, henceforth, *the Maltese* is used to refer to the combination of 'the Maltese people' and 'Malta' as a social, cultural, and political entity unless otherwise specified.

## 5.4 | Secondary social actors

As described in section 4.2.1.1, the discourse within the Xeno sub-corpus relates specifically to the topic of migration. Further, the HS sub-corpus contains a small subset of that data that has been verified by multiple annotators to, at the very least, reflect a significantly negative stance toward migrants that is highly discriminatory in nature. It should be clear by now that the two primary social actors involved in the discourse are migrants themselves, and the Maltese. Beyond the scope of migrants and the Maltese, however, there is evidence of several other minor social actors involved in the discourse. Some are incidental one-time mentions, while others play a role in the discourse albeit to a much lesser extent than the two main social actors. This section outlines some of the more minor social actors in order to ascertain what, if any, interaction they have with the dominant stance propagated through the discourse of the the HS sub-corpus.

### 5.4.1 | Europe

Not surprisingly, *Europe* is one of the more noteworthy of the minor social actors in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, notwithstanding that concordance analysis evidences the fact that Europe is much less widespread in the discourse than both the Maltese and

migrants, with the *EU* and Europe appearing 31 and 11 times respectively. While this is true, however, what is really interesting about its representation is that, unlike Africa which has a close association with one of the two major social actors (migrants), Europe is categorically unrelated to either. On the contrary, the language used to represent Europe firmly creates a differentiation between Malta and the rest of Europe.

To begin with, it is useful to identify the ways in which Europe is constructed within the scope of van Leeuwen's category network. Europe is rarely backgrounded in the HS sub-corpus. In fact, the most frequently used representational category for Europe is *nomination*. Names by which Europe is nominated include: *EU*, *E.U.*, *EU member*, and *Europe*.

More telling though are the next two most common categories by which Europe is represented: *association* and *collectivisation*<sup>19</sup>. Firstly, European countries are often represented as collectively responsible for a single action. This sort of collectivisation is usually realised by means of the collective pronoun *they* or alternatively by a plural noun (e.g. *European Countries*). In addition, to being represented collectively, there are two common types of association related to Europe (and its constituent countries):

■ Institutional association

- ... the UNHCR, the EU and the UN and the NGO's...
- ... the U.N. or the E.U...

■ European countries

- ... in Spain or Greece...
- ... France , Italy, and other EU Countries...
- ... from Greece, Spain and other EU countries...

These examples indicate that European countries are often aggregated together, but unlike African countries discussed in section 5.2.1 above, European countries are often given the benefit of direct reference by name (e.g. Spain, Greece etc.). In addition, it is also evident from the list above that, to some extent, it is necessary to differentiate between the continent Europe and the political institution of the European Union. Although there is significant overlap in relation to the sorts of actions they are both involved in (as examples 5.43 and 5.47 evidence) the list above illustrates that they are different in relation to other entities that they associate with.

<sup>19</sup>A form of *assimilation* that represents social actors as as a group (van Leeuwen, 2008) e.g. *the Maltese*.

Two more minor types of association involving Europe exist in the data of the HS sub-corpus. Firstly, there is its rare association with non-European countries (e.g. ... When the police have a name and location of a person, they will issue an international arrest warrant, alert Interpol, and circulate the warrant on **the media in Europe and North Africa**... and ... I agree with you that not enough is being done for these people **by EU and USA**...). Secondly, there is the even rarer association of Europe with Malta (e.g. ... In other words there is no point in letting illegal immigrants enter **Malta and the rest of the EU**...).

The marked absence of the latter sort of association reveals an ideology that sets Malta apart from the rest of Europe. This may seem somewhat odd at first, but becomes coherent when the actions in which Europe is participant are examined. Within the framework of Halliday's system of transitivity, Europe often plays the role of *actor* (examples 5.43 to 5.46), or *recipient* (example 5.47), and, to a lesser extent, the *scope* (examples 5.45 and 5.46) in a *material clause*. In other words, Europe is usually either performing an action as the *actor* (or as will be seen, markedly *not* performing an action), or it is represented in a more idle role as the recipient or the scope of an action.

- 5.43 I agree with Ms D Borg, they should be given water, food and fuel and they should send back with immediate effect. These people are using their women, children and new borns to draw attention on them. If they want to be free they should fight a war and free themselves in their own country as we Maltese did in past years. They are a big burden on our country and **EU is doing nothing to help us**.
- 5.44 NO Kidding. So what is the sense of us adhering to the Dublin convention if **our EU brothers and sisters do not want to participate in the burden sharing process**. Repatriate these illegal migrants as soon as they enter matlese waters. A country cannot take more people than it can afford.
- 5.45 Unfortunately for us, **its cheaper for the EU to allow Malta to become a big detention center** rather than seal a deal with Libya so that they will be able to monitor, the nation's endless borders. The EU will of course throw pocket money to us to keep the government and the NGOs happy and **make them look like there doing something about this issue but that will be all**. That's why we need to show some teeth regarding the issue. Its time for Malta to pull the plug from the Dublin 2 treaty. Malta should **REFUSE** to collect fingerprints **from immigrants and accept immigrants who once resided here and had been caught in one of the various EU countries**. If that means the end of Malta as an EU member then so be it. As a catholic nation, Malta should refuse to become some sort of prison to immigrants.

- 5.46 *France , Italy, and other EU Countries, ignore EU rules when they want to, so why not Malta ? Just give the illegal boatpeople some food, water, fuel, and then turn them around and wave them Goodbye*
- 5.47 *ENOUGH is ENOUGH. Time for those who pretend that it is their duty to protect us, to get off their soft bottoms and stop this madness. Send them onwards to Italy or France or Germany or back to their country.*

The realisation of Europe as an *actor*, *scope*, and *recipient* all serve to construct a reality in which Europe should be actively helping Malta to cope with migrants, but they are not. In the clauses illustrated in examples 5.43 to 5.47 above, Europe is represented as lacking in the fulfillment of their duty by breaking *EU rules* and as saboteurs of Malta who show very little regard for the island and the well-being of its people by *doing nothing to help us*.

### 5.4.2 | NGOs

Like the discussion of Europe above, an examination of the representation of NGOs in the data offers further insight into the way that migrants are viewed by the users who contribute to the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, although to a much lesser extent (concordance lines show only 7 instances of *NGO* in the sub-corpus). Despite the low inclusion of NGOs in the discourse of the sub-corpus, they still merit a short discussion because an examination of their representation does indeed present powerful insight into the stance toward migrants imbued in the discourse. In addition, many of the mentions of NGOs appear on the comment board of a single article entitled “*NGOs hoping to form flotilla to help migrants at sea*” and, therefore, form a key part of that particular discussion.

Due to the fact NGOs are not a prominent social actor in the discourse, the linguistic realisation of their inclusion by means of to van Leeuwen’s network is erratic and scattered; there are no particularly strong patterns. Essentially, NGOs can be represented by:

- Single Determination:

*... Assist them all **you** like: take out food, water and fuel to them as long as you help them back to their port of origin...;*

- Indetermination<sup>20</sup>:  
 ... People's emotions are being played on intentionally, by those that mix up the two types of immigrants...;
- Backgrounding:  
 ... Otherwise, please stay away: do not make the present situation worse...;
- Genericisation:  
 ... If any of them tries to bring illegal immigrants to Malta they must be imprisoned...;
- Association:  
 ... The Church and NGOs might want to support them financially in this

Although the representations above do not give much axiological information about the ideologies imbued in the language, a consideration of *association* along with an analysis of social action does indicate that NGOs are usually associated with other less savory social actors - unsavory in the context of a discourse that is discriminatory towards migrants (such as the Church, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)). In the broader context of society, social actors such as the Church, UNHCR, and JRS would not be immediately associated with objectionable ethics. However, an analysis of the actions in which NGOs are involved (and by extension the other social actors that NGOs are associated with) shows that they are represented as antagonists in the discourse. As with the discussion pertaining to Europe above, the actions say much more about the stance related to NGOs and migrants than their lexical realisations. NGOs are essentially involved in three main types of action. They are the *actor* or the *goal* of a *material clause* or they are the *sayer* of a *verbal clause* and their inclusion in all three clause-types constructs an identity of greed, deception, and criminality.

Most commonly, NGOs participate in *material clauses*. In the role of *actor*, they are portrayed as either going rogue in their pursuit to help migrants against the will of the people living in the host countries (examples 5.48 and 5.49) or worse, as examples 5.50 and 5.52 show, they are deceptive liars who ultimately aid and abet criminal activity. Their role in criminal activity is further emphasised in the grammatical role of *goal*. Examples 5.50 and 5.52 highlight the suggestion that NGOs should be arrested and treated as criminals, while in example 5.51, it is implied that NGOs are receiving and misusing public funds, another serious accusation. Finally, the deception that NGOs are responsible for also becomes evident in their role as *sayer* as in example 5.53, which additionally

<sup>20</sup> “[O]ccurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, ‘anonymous’ individuals or groups” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 39).

implies that, to some extent, NGOs are taking away the voice of the (Maltese) people to force their own agenda on society (as in example 5.54).

- 5.48 What a load of rubbish you are speaking! Firstly, most of the stories of war and what not that the illegal immigrants and the NGO's are always talking about are NOT true. Secondly, there are PLENTY of African countries which are not at war and which could offer opportunities. They can go there. Thirdly, we owe them NOTHING! Malta & the Maltese should come first, second and third before anyone and anything.
- 5.49 Taking these illegal immigrants to Italy, France or wherever it is mentioned is still in Europe. Assist them all you like: take out food, water and fuel to them as long as you help them back to their port of origin. Otherwise, please stay away: do not make the present situation worse
- 5.50 In that eventuality, Malta should take the country's interest first and foremost. **Since the immigrants will be boarded on other vessels deem sea safe**, we should not allow access to our ports, since there will be no distress situation. Also if the captain will try to bring the immigrants on maltese shores with the excuse of someone in need of medical assistace, **the authorities should arrest and arraign the flottila members with the charge of aiding and abetting illegal entry into a sovereign territory!!!**
- 5.51 Who did the Maltese people elect democratically? **Surely not the UNHCR and the bunch of NGOs receiving grants.** So, yes, it is the government that we blame. It's first loyalty should be to the citizens of Malta and it is betraying them big time. The UK government is drawing up contingency plans to stop an expected influx of immigrants from Greece, Spain and other EU countries in financial trouble. And these are EU citizens who have every right to resettle anywhere in the EU. It is just that the Maltese government is spineless and controlled by the Vatican and Brussels. If these illegal immigrants put themselves in danger because they know that we will go and save them, well call their bluff, push them back and in the long run save lives. And before some bleeding heart pipes up with "You cannot do that." Well the Americans dropped 2 nuclear bombs and killed a few hundred thousand people to "shorten the war and save lives". Nobody accuses them of any crime.
- 5.52 They are human traffickers and country saboteurs. If any of them tries to bring illegal immigrants to Malta **they must be imprisoned**, the key thrown away and the illegal immigrants expelled.
- 5.53 The citizens of Malta are still very much focused on the two main parties which are the PL and the PN. I don't agree with long periods of detention either, what I agree on is a swift

*decision on cases which the Maltese authorities have no idea where to start. For a case to be decided it should not take longer than six months, if the case is found to be a fairy tale which most cases are then there should be a system in place to deport these illegals. Malta will be emptied of illegals if this were to happen. It is a myth to say (not you) that Eritrea is not safe when Asmara is advertised with Travel Agencies as a safe and popular tourist destination country. This is all to do with the wrongdoing of the UNHCR. Mr Callus that is the very same reason why I admire my beloved Ratko Mladic and I call him a decent man because he stood up to the EU and the UNHCR and did not let anyone dictate to him. Same goes to Mr Berlusconi when he formed the pact with Gaddafi to push back the illegal immigrants. **Whatever you say, the UNHCR, the EU and the UN and the NGO's about illegal immigration the fact remains that 95% of the citizens reject and denounce their crazy ideas.** We do NOT want illegal immigration and we have now made it clear here in Malta (and other countries too) that we do not want illegals on our island whether white or black. We want a strong pair of hands to deal with the issue yesterday instead of tomorrow. The current strong pair of hands failed us miserably.*

- 5.54 *IN teh US, illegal migrants are detained and deported. I don't know why this whole issue has become a maltese problem. The only good thing about this is that the vast majority of the Maltese are still united against illegal migrants coming to our small island. Migration should be legal. Also, we talk and talk, but I have heard one too many stories of what goes on in the detention center that are not pretty and how our detention officers are at times taunted. These are the facts and the maltese all know it. Time has come to get serious. this week I was looking a BBC story and they showed a port in Somalia thriving with business and how they were saying that many part of Somalia are doing good. So why are we accepting the bulk of the people coming from 'somalia. I am a firm believer that the people of a nation must fight for their freedom and work to make it better. These are not overpopulated lands. We the maltese cannot be responsible for everyone illegal migrant coming to Malta. And where is the voice of the Maltese people. **We only hear what the NGOs or the migrants have to say. Is this democracy.** No it's not.*

### 5.4.3 | Human traffickers

As with the discussion of Europe and NGOs above, the low inclusion of *human traffickers*<sup>21</sup> in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus results in little possibility to determine the

<sup>21</sup>It is worth noting that while the discourse within the HS sub-corpus frequently refers to 'traffickers,' a more precise term in line with the definition provided by the Palermo Protocol would be 'smuggler' (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2000). This distinction is useful as it accurately reflects the nature of the actions depicted, which primarily involve the transportation of individuals across the

different ways that they can be referred to lexically (within the scope of van Leeuwen's network). Hence, it is more the type of actions that traffickers are involved in that reveals axiological information pertaining to the traffickers themselves as well as to migrants.

Broadly, human traffickers are, more often than not, either *collectivised* in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus or *functionalised* since the term *human trafficker* immediately identifies the function of the person fulfilling the role. Other less significant representational categories include *indetermination* (a person) and *single determination* (this person). However, as mentioned, an analysis of the actions in which traffickers are involved shows that they are represented largely as villains in the discourse. They are represented as *creating misery, using people*, and they need to be *discouraged*, and *brought to justice*, as in examples 5.55 to 5.58 below.

- 5.55 @user\_8772 Governments should set a precedent and repatriate non refugee claimants ASAP. That way the africans who illegally want to force themselves on us will get the message that it is futile coming here as you will be sent back. This is the only way lives are going to be saved and human traffickers will have very little business **in creating misery for profit.**
- 5.56 @ user\_8772. If you seek danger and peril it is your fault. **These people are being used for money.** They pay high sums that they can hardly afford for someone to give them a ramshackle boat. (see photos). These people then arrive in Europe to do the meanest of jobs and eventually in frustration start to cause trouble like is happening constantly in UK. In my opinion, these people would be better to ensure that their country becomes democratic, ignore tribal feuds and religious fanaticism
- 5.57 I wish to repeat a previous comment I had made because I believe it is very valid and It is easy to do if the will is there. Have the police **obtain from all recent would be refugee arrivals the name, description and location of the human traffickers and bring them to Malta to face justice.** Other countries do this." How is this to be done? It's very easy. **When the police have a name and location of a person, they will issue an international arrest warrant, alert Interpol, and circulate the warrant on the media in Europe and North Africa. All of this can be done without the police having to leave the comfort of their desktop computers. It's all done on the internet these days. If the description and details of the same person keep cropping up, a reward is offered to capture and bring this person to Malta. That is all it takes. So simple.! Other governments do it.**

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border rather than their exploitation and the coercion of individuals for purposes such as forced labour or sexual exploitation (Rossoni, Gauci, & Cassar, n.d.).

The next important step is to apply the policy of dissuasion. Have an immediate return of those still in detention to their country of origin. Arrange this through the U.N. or the E.U. Otherwise we should do it on our own. We need to be tough, which is more difficult than being generous. Finally, give these so-called refugees that have a temporary residence a permit to be able to leave Malta so that the Maltese working poor can have back the jobs they lost to these non-Maltese. I wish to add a concluding comment I had also made before. I know of a situation where a refugee family from Libya went to Canada illegally, was refused refugee status, went back to Libya, and came to Malta to be granted refugee status. Need I say more?

- 5.58 Very recently two groups of illegal immigrants managed to reach our shores without being detected. I wonder how many more illegal immigrants reached our shores undetected? If so where are they? I think these Frontex flights should be carried out all over Europe and publized in African countries especially Libya. **It will discourage these illegal immigrants from paying human traffickers all that money.** No refunds here. And contrary to what the editor of this paper thinks, I say " Return them back to where they came from".

Most frequently realised as the *actor* or the *goal* of a *material clause*, *human traffickers* are represented as criminals who put people's lives in danger, creating misery and taking money from desperate people. In the scope of the actions in which they partake within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, they should be arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned (see examples 5.55 to 5.58 above). Moreover, traffickers also fill the role of *carrier* (example 5.57) in which the same narrative is emphasised; they are hardened criminals who need to be caught and punished.

## 5.5 | Miscellaneous

Beyond the social actors discussed above, all of whom play a somewhat significant role in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus despite their limited presence in it, there are several other people, entities, and nominals that are mentioned only in passing or at the very most play only a substantially minor role in the discourse of the sub-corpus. These minor characters broadly fall into three main categories: worldwide countries (countries outside both Europe and Africa); people (individual people such as *Cecilia Malmström* or groups of people such as the *elite*); and political parties, public entities and international laws & agreements.

The social actors included in table 5.12 contribute to the discourse to varying degrees and if given the space, might be worth exploring further. However, in the context of this

Political parties / Public Entities/ International Laws & agreements	People
BBC	Alice Farmer
Dublin Convention	Berlusconi
Democracy	Captain
Frontex	Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici (CMB)
Human rights charter	Cecilia Malmström
Immigrant Policy	Activists
Labour (UK)	Elite
NATO	Employers
PL Malta (inc. Joseph Muscat)	Fourteen/fifteen year olds
PN (Nationalist Party Malta)	Gaddafi
Police Force	George Galloway
Refugee Commissioner Malta	Lawrence Gonzi (also PN)
the Church	Medical Staff
Geneva Convention	Muslims
UN	(Joseph Muscat - see PL)
UNHCR	Poles
<b>Countries worldwide</b>	Ratko Mladic
Australia	the editor of this paper
Canada	those who voted for the European Union
Israel	Tourists
Other parts of the World	European migrants
USA	

Table 5.12: Miscellaneous social actors that appear in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus

thesis, which focuses specifically on the axiological information imbued in the representation of migrants in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, it was decided to not explore such minor actors. Suffice it to say here that they appear to have a very minor role in the discussion of migrants in this data although they may help to contextualise the sociopolitical backdrop in which the discourse is embedded. In saying this, although they are outside the scope of this research, it may be useful to return to them in future research.

## 5.6 | Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, it is worth reiterating that CDA is largely concerned with “analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018, p. 12). In particular, this research seeks to understand the mechanisms involved in the dissemination and perpetuation of hate toward migrants in Malta. As the discussion thus far makes clear, the research of this thesis seeks to uncover ideologies pertaining to migrants through an examination of the social actors involved in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus. To do this, as posited in section 2.1, the first step is to identify the linguistic patterns that feature in the data as well as how they can be understood to contribute to the overall discourse. Specifically, this chapter has sought to address the research ques-

tions pertaining to who the main social actors involved in discourse about migration are, how they are linguistically manifested, and what linguistic patterns are evident in the representation of social actors in the data.

To this end, through the analysis of the discourse within the HS sub-corpus, which specifically pertains to migration, various social actors emerge with distinct linguistic manifestations and patterns. Firstly, migrants from Africa are portrayed through different lenses such as their African identity, and conceived of as boat people or as “illegals”. This portrayal is evident through linguistic strategies such as backgrounding, nomination, and abstraction. Additionally, the Maltese population is depicted as advocates for repatriation, demonstrated through backgrounding and verbal clauses, as in “there should only be one outcome: repatriation!” The European Union, on the other hand, is linguistically represented as neglectful and antagonistic towards Malta, showing little regard for the island’s well-being, while NGOs are depicted as deceptive, silencing the voice of the Maltese people to push their own agenda. Human traffickers, or more accurately termed ‘smugglers,’ are portrayed as criminals endangering lives and profiting from desperate individuals; a portrayal is evidenced through linguistic roles as actors and goals in material clauses, emphasising the need for their arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment. All in all, the discussion of these linguistic strategies and patterns elucidates how each social actor is constructed and represented within the discourse, which, in turn, can provide insight into the dynamics of migration discourse in the HS sub-corpus.

## Uncovering ideologies

Within the scope of the present thesis, subsequent to the identification of the social actors and their associated identities in chapter 5, it is now possible to assess the way that their linguistic constructions are used as a function of power, dominance, and control. To this end, chapter 5 outlined the key social actors represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus and the various ways that they are linguistically realised therewith through the lens of van Leeuwen's (2008) sociosemantic inventory for the representation of social actors and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) categorisation of process types, while this chapter seeks to explain the significance of those constructions by uncovering the axiological information that permeates the discourse.

To a small extent, this has already been done in relation to the examination of the secondary actors discussed in section 5.4, where it is shown that the negative representation of Europe, NGOs, and human traffickers contribute to a world view in which migrants are discriminated against and the struggles of the Maltese are undermined. However, this chapter presents a more systematic interpretation and explanation of the linguistic constructions with respect to the two main social actors identified. With this in mind, beyond van Leeuwen's (2008) and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) approaches to linguistic exploration, the discussion in this chapter further adopts a number of frameworks within which to position the linguistic observations, namely: the scholarly taxonomy of discriminatory discourse strategies collated by KhosraviNik (2010), conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), and Simone de Beauvoir's (1953) notion of *othering*. Hence, this chapter seeks to identify the patterns of language use in the construction of social actors and to explain their relevance within the sociocultural and political context in which they are embedded. As such, keeping in mind the aforementioned difficulty in keeping all four stages of CDA completely separate, this chapter explores the research questions encompassing stages 2 and 3 of the four stage

model of CDA posited in section 2.2.1:

Stage 2: interpretation

- i. How are the various social actors represented in discourse?
- ii. What other identities are indexed through the language patterns in the discourse?
- iii. What discourse patterns are evident in hate speech against migrants?

Stage 3: explanation

- i. How can the frequency of the linguistic patterns be explained?
- ii. In what way is hate related to other ideologies?
- iii. What ideological patterns are evident in hate speech against migrants?

## 6.1 | Othering

Many of the invocations of hate that are examined here are more implicit in nature. This is not surprising in view of the fact that it has been well documented that “[m]ost contemporary societies do disapprove of racially offensive language, and it is now less common to hear public, verbal invocations of racism” (Leets, 2003, p.146) and, therefore, “some scholars argue that overt prejudicial bias has been transformed into subtle and increasingly covert expressions” (ibid.). Indeed, van Dijk (1992) posits that such implicitness likely stems from the need to use face-saving strategies in order not to overtly convey explicitly negative ideologies pertaining to minorities, and the data of the HS sub-corpus seems to be no different in this regard.

With this in mind, one thing that becomes immediately apparent through the analysis of the representation of the *Maltese* in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is that it gives insight into how migrants are discriminated against not only by virtue of their identities outlined in section 5.2, but also by means of the clear dichotomy of *Us* versus *Them*, which, as seen in section 2.1, also lies at the foundation of CDA. Similar to the works of researchers such as de Cillia et al. (1999) and van Dijk (1992) discussed there, this dichotomy serves to establish a divide between *Us* (or *We* – the Maltese) and *Them* (or *They* – migrants)<sup>1</sup>, which, as aptly put by KhosraviNik (2010 - outlined in chapter 1),

<sup>1</sup>For stylistic purposes *Us*, *We*, and *Them*, *They* are capitalised in this section and elsewhere when referring to the *Us* as Maltese and *Them* as migrants within this research.

is ultimately used to justify the exclusion of migrants from symbolic and real resources. In fact, Adjai and Lazaridis (2013) note that, in South Africa, the “racialization of African migrants- the other- and xenophobic sentiment are about the politics of access; a struggle for political and socio-economic resources” (p. 192). Thus, depicting migrants in the HS sub-corpus as ‘the other’ or ‘them’ fundamentally “legitimises discrimination and unequal treatment on the basis of nationality/citizenship: foreigners do not belong to Our society” (Triandafyllidou, 2000, p. 387).

Undeniably, the sociological process of *othering* has been widely studied as part of the mechanics of discrimination. The term *othering* was propagated by Simone de Beauvoir (1953) in relation to women’s position in society. In her monograph, she posits that *women* are defined in terms of their positioning to *men*; “[s]he is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential” (de Beauvoir, 1953, p.16). Since de Beauvoir’s work in the 1950s, the term has been widely applied in research pertaining to minority perceptions and hate speech, and the concept of *othering language* has gained traction in linguistic studies that seek to show how language can be used to construct the identity of an in-group *Us* and an out-group *Them* in which *Our* characteristics are described “as superior to ‘Theirs,’ which are inferior, undeserving, and incompatible” (Fortuna & Nunes, 2019, p. 21). Against this backdrop, the language used to describe both migrants and the Maltese in the HS sub-corpus serves to construct a worldview in which the Maltese are the in-group - *Us* - and migrants are the out-group - *Them* - and as such, the Maltese are entitled to full rights over the land, its resources, and its economy, and migrants are entitled to none of this; they are scroungers that come *here* (as opposed to stay *there*) and plunder *Our resources*.

In view of the above, the perception of social actors in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus and the representation of migrants as *Them* and the Maltese as *Us* provides a very good real-life example of what van Dijk calls the “ideological square” (2005, p. 734), which characterises the various strategies of discrimination described in this section. These comprise:

- emphasising **Our** good things
- emphasising **Their** bad things
- de-emphasising **Our** bad things
- de-emphasising **Their** good things

The linguistic evidence of the *Us* vs *Them* distinction runs throughout the discourse of the HS sub-corpus. To begin, the contrast first becomes discernible within the context of van Leeuwen's framework for the representation of social actors. In clauses in which Malta is *included*, its most frequent representational category is by way of *nomination* in phrases such as ...In that eventuality, **Malta** should take the country's interest first and foremost... and ...As to the ones that are already in **Malta**... The frequent nomination of Malta, unlike the discourse pertaining to Africa, allows little room for ambiguity. Further, the discussion in section 5.2.1 shows that, while exact countries in Africa are often unnamed (...They can go back overland to their country or to another **African country**...) and in many clauses excluded entirely (...we should send them back...), in the case of Malta, there is little doubt that the discourse in the HS sub-corpus is embedded within Maltese society. Indeed, the frequency list (table 5.2) shows that Malta is mentioned around 65 times in the HS sub-corpus, while Africa appears no more than 7 times despite being a central part of the identity of the migrants represented in the HS sub-corpus.

6.1 AGREE WITH YOU, WE NEED TO WAKE UP TO WHAT IS HAPPENING TO **OUR TINY ISLAND**

6.2 Yes I have an easy'rand cheaper **OPTION** for all the illegal immigrants that arrive in **our small Island Malta** is to send them back pronto from were they came from Simple

The idea that Malta (*here*) is the default location (and therefore society) in which the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is embedded is reinforced by the representation of Malta by means of *objectivation*, specifically *spatialisation*<sup>2</sup> by way of the adverb *here* (e.g. ...**illegal immigrants** should be sent back because keeping them **here** is only providing others to follow suit...). Again, another look at table 5.2 shows that the words *here* as well as *there* form part of the top 200 most frequent terms in the HS sub-corpus. Indeed, there are 23 instances of *here* in the HS sub-corpus and all except one are being used in reference to Malta. Moreover, in the one case in which *here* does not refer to Malta, it is not being used in reference to a place at all, but rather as a complement (...The **maltese** should be deciding what is right **here**...).

Conversely, while the word *here* evidences where *We* come from in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, *there* offers no such insight pertaining to *Them*. Although *there* is oft thought of as an antonym of *here*, it is generally not used as an adverb in the HS sub-corpus. Of the 30 instances of *there* in the HS sub corpus, only 4 are not used as expletives (e.g. ...It is pretty obvious that you cannot put these persons on a plane and send

<sup>2</sup>A specific type of *objectivation* whereby social actors are represented by means of a place (van Leeuwen, 2008).

*they to Libya if there is no proof that they left that country...*). In fact, only two instances of *there* in the HS sub-corpus reference a place and in both those examples *there* is being used with reference to a location associated with migrants (e.g. *... Secondly, there are PLENTY of African countries which are not at war and which could offer opportunities. They can go there...*). Hence, while *here* reinforces the argument that the in-group (*We*) is the Maltese, *there* only offers minimal evidence pertaining to the in-group and out-group of the discourse.

Moreover, the trends in the representation of *migrants* and *Africa* in relation to Halliday's participant roles compared with that of *Malta* and *the Maltese* as well as with *Europe*, offers further evidence that migrants and Africa are frequently represented as the out-group, subject to external evaluation and actions of others. Figure 6.1 compares the number of times that migrants, the Maltese, Africa, Malta, and Europe are represented in the HS sub-corpus in various participant roles within the Hallidayan framework. At the outset, the proportional difference in representation shows that Malta plays a much larger part in the discourse in general than both Africa and Europe. To some extent, this is expected since, as shown in section 5.2.1, *African* is often the unspoken, assumed national identity of migrants.

More pertinent for this present discussion, however, is that Malta and the Maltese fall in the role of *actor* far more than they do any other participant role, thus offering insight by way of comparison with migrants and Africa since it makes clear that *the Maltese* are represented as a driving force of action by the majority of users, while migrants are more of an entity that the users themselves can lay judgement on. When Africa forms part of the discourse, it most frequently fills passive roles such as *goal*, *recipient*, and *carrier*. As the *recipient*, Africa is frequently represented as receiving migrants *back* as in example 6.3. Similarly, as the *goal*, it is often portrayed as the receiver of migrants (example 6.5), or the receiver of Western aid (example 6.4). Finally, in the role of *carrier*, Africa tends to be represented as the object of another social actor's description as in example 6.6.

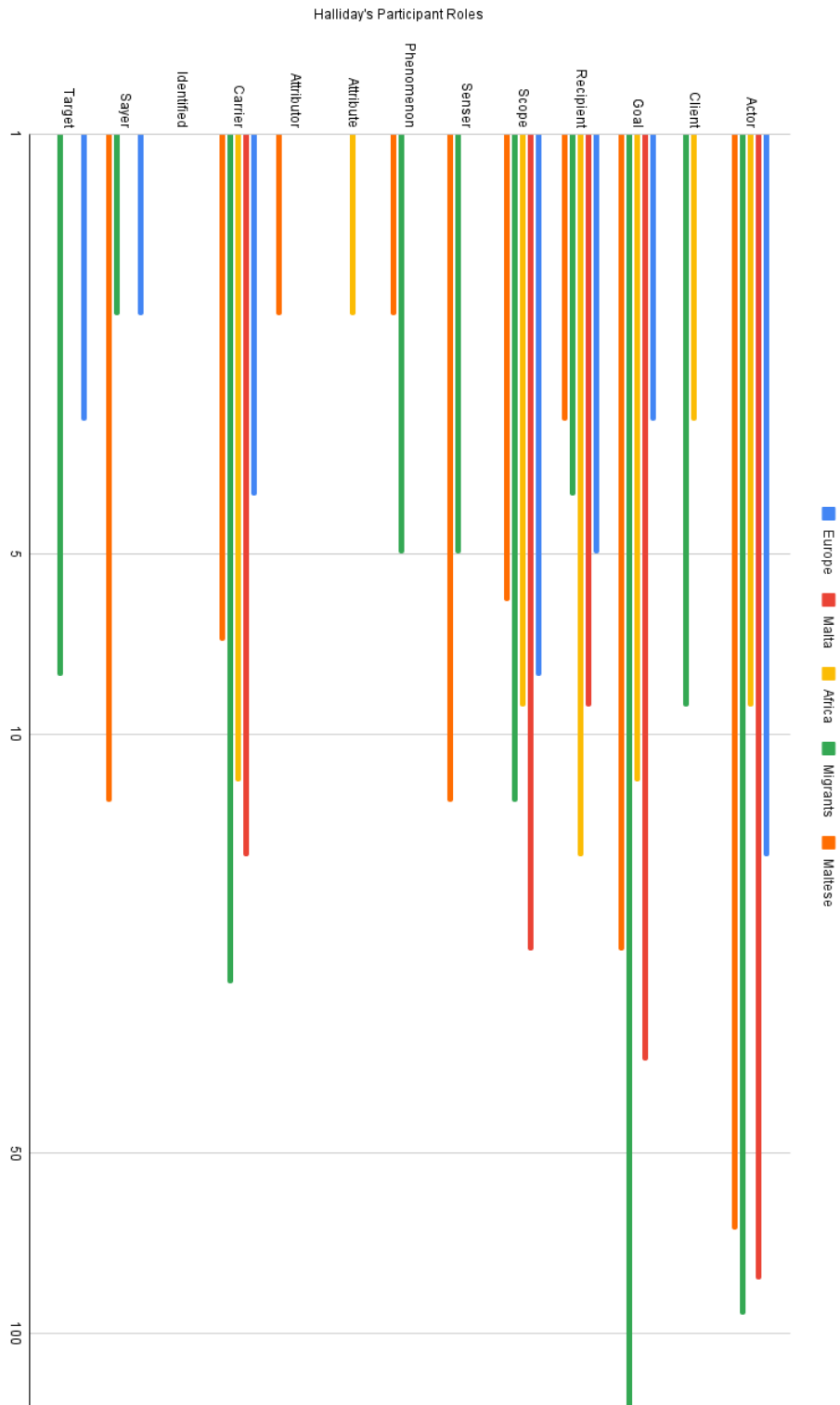


Figure 6.1: Europe, Malta, Africa, Migrants, and Maltese Participant Roles: Halliday's Framework

- 6.3 user\_1507 As user\_6138 said we do not care a hoot about conventions and such other rubbish when our country is being invaded and our security under threat. Unusual situations require unusual remedies and the remedy is to **send them all back to Libya or to their own countries**
- 6.4 If these people are engineers and nurses, they should stay in Somalia to help rebuild their country as other people are doing in the middle east. It looks to me that these people want free money **not to help their country get back on it's feet**
- 6.5 ...Everybody knows that Malta is a very small over populated Island with limited resources that are already stretched to the limit. The AFM orders should be to assist with the maximum safety to the people on the boats either **reach their destination** or be escorted back to the territorial waters of the country they set sail from. This sort of action has created friction between Malta and Italy before but so be it. Mr Berlusconi declared that Lampedusa was closed. Why not Malta?? ...
- 6.6 Perfect!! We send 10 immigrants back to their country and a couple of days later another hundred will arrive. We need to take action, this is our country not theirs. They've got a country, if there are problems in their countries they should unite and fight for their rights like we did. **These countries have got oil and a lot of raw material** which can make the country very rich, **ONLY** if they know how to use these resources. Please lets take action

As these examples evidence, in the role of *carrier* and *goal*, Africa is frequently represented as taking migrants *back* (i.e. back from where they originally left). Conversely, Malta is often represented in the role of actor *sending* migrants back from where they came (Africa) as in ... Yes there is another option to consider. **Send them back to where they came from.** ... On the other hand, on the rare occasion when Africa is in the role of actor, it is usually being problematised in some way as in examples 6.7 to 6.10.

- 6.7 fair enough, but **is the whole of Africa that is fighting?** can't these people move to a place in Africa, where there is no fighting?
- 6.8 I believe all illegal immigrants should be sent back because keeping them here is only providing others to follow suit. When **African rich states**, and there are many, **help each other**, then and only then should European states help out.
- 6.9 **Libya is getting rid of them and dumping them on us**, return to sender please
- 6.10 Since the immigrants most probably started out from Libya we should send them back. **Libya is now a free country** or so we're told and **Libya owes us big time** for the help we

*gave to liberate it. Or so they told us. Now let's see if anything has changed in the Libyan attitude towards us or if it was all hot air.*

On the basis of this alone, there is strong evidence for the assertion that the in-group (*we/us/our*) is the Maltese, but there is more evidence still that further strengthens this claim. Beyond the scope of the representation of Malta and Africa in the HS sub-corpus as geographic entities (*here* and *there*), a view of the way that *the Maltese* are represented also offers significant insight into the dichotomy of *Us* and *Them*. For a start, the most frequently used representational category for *the Maltese* in the HS sub-corpus is *collectivisation*. Indeed, there are around 100 instances in which the Maltese are collectivised in the HS sub-corpus. This is around half of all the clauses in which they are participants, indicating that the Maltese are predominantly characterised as a single homogeneous group. Furthermore, a great majority of the instances of collectivisation are realised by means of the pronouns *we*, *our*, and *us* such as in examples 6.11 to 6.13 below. Moreover, looking back at the representation of migrants in section 5.2, *collectivisation* is also one of the most widespread representational categories, with over 150 instances in the HS sub-corpus. In a converse trend, however, the collectivisation of migrants is almost always linguistically realised with the pronouns *they*, *them* and *themselves* as in examples 6.11 to 6.13.

- 6.11 *user\_34011 Can ypu get it that **they** are not wanted in Mal;ta? **We** do not want **them** to work or remain **here** because **they** are destroying Maltese workers who are losing their jobs to **them**. Send **them** all back and you can accompany **them**.*
- 6.12 *Maybe stop offering shelter and repatriate **them** once **they** have been saved Mr user\_12352? Other countries are doing so and **we** do need to stop advertising **ourselves** as a suitable destination. A recent statistical report stated that **we** accept migrants at double the percentage other countries do*
- 6.13 *Give **them** what **they** need and send **them** back to Libya. Is'nt the govt realising, like the rest of **us**, that **we** are being flooded with these illegal immigrants? Wake up before it's too late*

In addition, a close look at concordance lines also supports the findings of the qualitative analysis presented here. Out of the 89 instances of *We* in the HS sub-corpus, all without exception reference *the Maltese* or acts as a stand in for some sort of Maltese Government authority or Malta as a whole, as in examples 6.14 and 6.15. Further, an analysis of *Us* confirms the same observations. Of the 34 instances in the HS sub-corpus, only 2 are not in direct reference to the Maltese. The first is part of the phrase *... not just*

*beat about the bush with both of us (Poles and Maltese) trying to play the holier-than-thou! . . .* in which it is still being used in reference to the Maltese, but includes Polish people too, and the second only got caught in the net of the concordance as it is actually being used in reference to the United States of America (USA).

6.14 *Give them what they need and send them back to Libya. Is'nt the govt realising, like the rest of us, that we are being flooded with these illegal immigrants? Wake up before it's too late.*

6.15 *Perfect!! We send 10 immigrants back to their country and a couple of days later another hundred will arrive. We need to take action, this is our country not theirs. They've got a country, if there are problems in their countries they should unite and fight for their rights like we did. These countries have got oil and a lot of raw material which can make the country very rich, ONLY if they know how to use these resources. Please lets take action.*

In sum, in the HS sub-coprus, there appears to be a clear distinction between an in-group *Us* and an out-group *Them*. The implications of this will be discussed in the next chapter, for now though, suffice it to say that the language discussed in this section makes evident that the in-group is beyond a reasonable doubt the people of Malta, while the out-group is migrants, who are ultimately identified by the numerous identities discussed in section 5.2 above (e.g. illegal, boatpeople, and African).

## 6.2 | Delegitimisation & problematisation

Having established that the migrants represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus come from Africa by boat and that they are clearly represented as the out-group who are subject to the power and control of others, further analysis of their linguistic construction in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus indicates that they are consistently *delegitimised* and *problematised*. Essentially, delegitimisation is “*the categorization of a group, or groups, into extremely negative social categories that exclude it, or them, from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values and therefore deserving maltreatment*” (Bartal & Hammack, 2012, p.30, emphasis in original). Indeed, the examination of several mainstream media outlets in the United States and the EU reveals that delegitimisation serves as a primary method of framing migration (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018).

To begin, in the context of this thesis it is useful to circle back to the analysis of *Africa* in section 5.2.1 to make observations pertaining to its ideological representation and how that impacts the representation of migrants in the HS sub-corpus since, as

shown in chapter 5, the migrants represented in this discourse are closely tied with their African identity. Indeed, *Africa* is represented as highly problematic. Example 6.8, presented in the previous section for instance, shows countries within the continent being categorised as *rich arab/african countries*; thus, in a context in which people are fleeing the continent by boat to claim asylum, such categorisation delegitimises any claims by implying that the countries from which migrants are leaving are wealthy and should not be experiencing instability.

This problematic representation of Africa gives some idea of the way that the continent and its inhabitants are portrayed in the discourse and the troubles that African migrants are purported to bring with them, but still, the problematic representation of migrants really becomes clear by means of the scholarly taxonomy of discriminatory discourse compiled by KhosraviNik (2010). The taxonomy is essentially a consolidation of the work of several scholars working in the area of discrimination and language as it provides a list of eight discriminatory discourse strategies that are commonly used by speaker/writers (KhosraviNik, 2010). Relevant to this section are the following six:

- scare tactic
- categorical generalisation
- problematisation
- blaming the victim
- delegitimation – outcasting
- abnormalisation and criminalisation of the others

Before exploring the representational categories imbued in the language, it is worth first assessing the efficacy of the taxonomy in this context. Indeed, as with the frameworks of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and van Leeuwen (2008), the scholarly taxonomy proved to be very useful during the qualitative phase of this research. However, a number of issues emerged. Firstly, there is substantial overlap between some of the classifications since there may not always be a clean real-world distinction between one category and another. For example, if a given comment serves to represent a particular social group as a problem (*problematisation*) does it not also act to *delegitimise* the group to some extent? In ... *these people cheated our state...*, for instance, the *people* are being represented as a problem, as *cheaters*; but this also acts to delegitimise them and, to a certain extent, represent them as criminals who '*cheat*' the system. In other words, is a criminal not a problem? Taking this into account, it is vital to approach the taxonomy

as more of an approximate classification rather than an absolute one, as textual extractions may float between categories, although in essence they are all really saying the same thing: the minority group being portrayed is not legitimate, thus offering further real-world manifestations of the *othering* described in van Dijk's aforementioned ideological square (2005). In addition to the overlap in the categories listed above, it also became apparent through the analysis of the data that the category of *problematisation* can be further broken down into specific forms of problematisations. Specifically, the following classes arose: *deception*, *scrounge/impose*, *coward/deserter*, *unwanted*. Hence, an exhaustive taxonomy of the discriminatory discourse strategies in the HS sub-corpus includes those listed above as well as these four sub-types of problematisation.

At the surface level, the most obvious linguistic evidence of the taxonomy is the configuration of *lexical fields*. Each category within the taxonomy comprises a "group of lexemes which belong to [its] particular activity or area" (Saeed, 2016, p. 60) and therefore, each group of lexemes (lexical field) gives a good indication of the layers of meaning imbued within each of the classifications. Table 6.1 illustrates the lexical items that make up each category in the taxonomy and, as expected, some lexical items overlap across multiple categories.

With the lexical sets as a starting point, it is possible to further explore the taxonomic categories. To begin with, beyond the problematisation of *Africa*, which forms part of the core identity of the migrants represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, migrants are greatly *delegitimised* in the discourse in other ways. As the lexical items listed in table 6.1 suggest, migrants are *uncontrolled*, *undocumented*, *devious*, *religious fanatics*; they are *destroying* Us, *outnumbering* Us, *abusing* Us, *ruining* Us and they belong in *offshore detention centres*. Further, reminiscent of the discussion in section 5.2.3 that illustrates the use of premodification in the representation of migrants as illegal, one clear structure that becomes apparent through the language in table 6.1 is the number of premodifiers that can be used to qualify the migrants in the discourse in some way. There are several structures, such as *illegal migrant*, *alleged migrants*, *economic migrants*, *irregular migrants*, *uncontrolled migration*, *undocumented migrants*, *genuine refugees* that diminish the status of migrants as asylum seekers and, as a result, delegitimise their claim for protection.

Unlike the discussions in chapter 5 pertaining to migrants as *African* and migrants as *boat people*, the evidence of the categories within the taxonomy lies more at the level of contextualised lexical meaning than the functional level. To this end, the modification of *migrant* with qualifiers such as *genuine* and *undocumented* indicates that migrants are frequently delegitimised by calling into question their status as asylum seekers, or the description of their plight as a *fairy tale* or a *bluff* calls into question their need for safety.

<b>Delegitimisation</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Criminalisation</b>
abuse	bulk	alleged
alleged	burden	cheated
bluff	culturally	criminalising
boat people	financially	detained
burden	impose	devious
claimant	problem	illegally
claiming	religious fanaticism	imprisoned
cross-breeding	roaming	imprisonment
deported	space	prison
destroying	tribal feud	roaming
detained	trouble	trouble
devious	uncontrolled	use
document		
documentation	<b>Unwanted</b>	<b>Deceptive</b>
economic	deport	alleged asylum seekers
eilgible	dumping	claiming
fairytale	expel	devious
genuine	force	excuse
impose	invasion	genuine
imprisoned	no application	non-refugee claimants
irregular	not wanted	not refugees
not refugee	own (countries)	passing (themselves) off
offshore detention centers	uninvited	war not true
outnumber	unwanted	
permit		
qualify	<b>Blaming the victim</b>	<b>Deserter/Coward</b>
religious fanaticism	bluff	freedom
roaming	can't afford	(should) fight
ruining	crossing the Med	go back
taming	(putting themselves in) danger	help
taunt	distress	help (their country)
tribal feud	risk lives	problems in their countries
trouble	save	rebuild
uncontrolled		rights
undocumented		run away
use		unite
(valid) visa		war
work legally		

Table 6.1: Lexical sets that make up the categories in the taxonomy of discriminatory discourse strategies

That said, the role of migrants within van Leeuwen's and Halliday's frameworks is useful in as much as they reveal the nature of the relationship between migrants and the lexical items listed in table 6.1. Within this scope then, while migrants are far less frequently the *social actor* in a *material clause* (the driver of action) than they are the *goal* (the object of action), when they are the actor, it is usually in fulfilment of one of the categories within the taxonomy as in examples 6.16 to 6.22 below.

- 6.16 I agree with Ms user\_9144, they should be given water, food and fuel and they should send back with immediate effect. **These people are using their women, children and new borns to draw attention** on them. If they want to be free **they should fight a war and free themselves** in their own country as we Maltese did in past years. They are a big burden on our country and EU is doing nothing to help us.
- 6.17 Illegal means exactly what it says. They are ILLEGAL because: A: **They came here without a Visa** [Go try go to their or any other non E.U country without a Visa] B: **They came here without any documents** [Go try going to anywhere in the world, even E.U with no docs] C: **They came here uninvited & unwanted The government needs to wake up!** If need be REMOVE Malta from the useless and outdated Human Rights Charter (or whatever it is called).
- 6.18 If these people are engineers and nurses, **they should stay in Somalia to help rebuild their country** as other people are doing in the middle east. It looks to me that **these people want free money not to help their country get back on it's feet.**
- 6.19 we should make a mass protest !!! we cannot accept more of these people, **they are ruining are country and culture** day after day, and **they keep coming**, because here they find heaven, we give them money,food,were to sleep, etc etc as long as we keep giving them things " from OUR taxes " they keep on coming!!! this is not fair!!!!
- 6.20 Perfect!! We send 10 immigrants back to their country and a couple of days later another hundred will arrive. We need to take action, this is our country not theirs. They've got a country, if there are problems in their countries **they should unite and fight for their rights** like we did. These countries have got oil and a lot of raw material which can make the country very rich, ONLY if they know how to use these resources. Please lets take action.
- 6.21 Ms user\_23650 In my City, the Poles did indeed come over ( in their tens of thousands ) with good intentions and took up the menial jobs that no one else wanted. BUT it was not long before they learned how to use the Benefit System, and the good intentions soon vanished. People would be amazed at how many **Poles ( and various other former Eastern**

Europeans ) are claiming / receiving numerous Benefits in the UK and are better off not working. . Immigrants from the EU, who become unemployed in the UK, and are receiving Benefits, should return to their Country of origin, and receive Benefits there. There should be NO asylum seekers allowed entry into the UK. Why ? Because **wherever the alleged asylum seekers originally come from**, there are many, many Friendly Countries that are much closer to their Country than the UK is, so they could / should request asylum at those Countries, not the UK !

6.22 Compared to the **thousands of illegal immigrants roaming the streets of our towns and villages** - Bugibba, St Paul's Bay, Birzebbuga, Balzan, Marsa - this is too few. CMB must put the pressure on Frontex, the police force and the countries of origin and send back at least 11 a day

The examples above not only demonstrate migrants in the position of social actor negatively represented by means of the actions in which they are purported to partake, but they also evidence the role of meaning in the construction of the categories that make up the taxonomy. In example 6.22, for instance, the use of the word *roaming* clearly connotes the idea of *criminalisation*. With a word associated strongly with the idea of *criminals roaming the streets*, the clause builds a picture of criminal migrants precariously *roaming* the streets where *we* live. Not all references to crime are so implicit in nature, however. In ... If they had to **find work legally** here with the same conditions as locals then I assure you most of them end up unemployed and **thus turn on the only alternative of income mainly crime**... , the reference to crime is literal and, consequently, implicit allusions like the one in example 6.22 become easily recognisable.

To this end, a related taxonomic category is *scare tactic* and it is not difficult to understand why. The characterisation of migrants by means of this category has serious real-life consequences since it engenders fear amongst the participants of the conversation. Migrants are said to *roam* the streets, *flood* the country, and *steal* jobs, all of which manufacture an impression of a dangerous invasion, thereby justifying any ill treatment of migrants. Further, the examples above illustrate additional ways that migrants are problematised (and by extension delegitimised). In 6.16, 6.18, and 6.20, for instance, there is a clear rhetoric relating migrants to *deserters*; they are cowards who desert their country when they should remain and rebuild the "broken system" there. This is reinforced by a reanalysis of some of the MWEs illustrated in table 5.10 in the previous chapter, which offer further evidence of the representation of migrants as *deserters*. *Fight for their*, for example, alludes to a person deserting their duty and who should stay and fight for their country. In addition, in example 6.21, migrants are portrayed as deceptive;

people who lie and cheat the system, and in examples 6.17 and 6.18 they are portrayed as unwanted and as scroungers respectively.

Moreover, the aforementioned overlap between the taxonomy categories is also clearly evident in these examples. In example 6.17, migrants are *problematised* as *unwanted* and *uninvited*, which to some extent also serves to *delegitimise* their claim to refugee status according to the Dublin II Regulation, which states that “[w]here the asylum seeker has irregularly crossed the border into a Member State, that Member State will be responsible for examining the asylum application” (European Union, 1998-2023). Similarly, while example 6.22 quite clearly represents migrants as *criminals*, example 6.21 rather *delegitimises* them by means of the verb *claim* (the definition of which suggests that the thing being ‘*claimed*’ may be true or untrue), thus implying some degree of *deception*, but also, to some extent (perhaps less clearly), *criminalisation* as, given the severity of conditions some asylum seekers are escaping, it would seem highly unethical to unjustifiably apply for asylum. Of course then, the same can be said for several seemingly less harmful characterisations; if a person is not a *genuine* refugee, by implication, they must be lying by dishonestly applying for asylum. To this end, the representation of migrants as *illegal*, as outlined in chapter 5, has far reaching consequences since, ultimately, it undermines migrants’ claim for protection.

Another significant component of the taxonomy not yet discussed is *victim blaming*. Beyond the scope of *delegitimisation* and *problematisation*, migrants are portrayed as bringing struggles on themselves. In comments such as ... *If you seek danger and peril it is your fault*... and ... *If these illegal immigrants put themselves in danger because they know that we will go and save them*... it is implied that migrants’ suffering and deaths are a consequence of poorly choosing to risk their lives, thus further delegitimising their claims for rescue and asylum. In addition, in section 5.2.2, it was argued that the boat journey is obviously a dangerous one, and that there appears to be conscious knowledge of this amongst users (see example 6.23 below). Against the backdrop of the *send them back* narrative, acknowledgements such as these indicate certain callousness by users to suggest migrants suffer further danger and indignation.

6.23 *We must keep them till they recover well, but then they must be sent back from were they came ... This will help them to learn not to never try again to take this Dangerous Chance*

6.24 *As soon as they are seen approaching Malta, top-up their fuel tank and turn their boat 180 degrees. That is the simplest and cheapest solution. Cos there would be no need for, paper work, hospitalizing, taming and at the end of the day NO cross breeding. The EU feels sorry for us but that is all, they don't want any of them in their own country.*

6.25 I agree with Ms user\_9144, they should be given water, food and fuel and they should send back with immediate effect. **These people are using their women, children and new borns to draw attention on them.** If they want to be free they should fight a war and free themselves in their own country as we Maltese did in past years. They are a big burden on our country and EU is doing nothing to help us.

Further, beyond the more subtle forms of *problematisation* and *delegitimisation* illustrated above, there are a number of obvious and overt uses of *insult* as a discourse strategy in the HS sub-corpus through which migrants are represented as sub-human ingrates. These more explicit forms of insult demonstrate the reason that *insult* goes beyond sheer *delegitimisation* to *dehumanisation* at the level of *verbal abuse*. Thus, within the scope of this discussion, the term *breeding* used in example 6.24 is synonymous with animal husbandry and usually used in the context of the types of selective breeding done to create optimal (or desired) offspring; a similar perspective can be identified in the use of the word *taming* too. In this sense, example 6.24 likens migrants to animals that need to be tamed and set apart from the ‘purebreds’. In addition, in example 6.25, migrants are represented as what society views as one of the lowest forms of human - those who use women and children for their own selfish gain. Again, this is almost reminiscent of the scene in *Titanic* when Caledon Hockley deceptively descends onto a lifeboat with a child he finds crying on deck. These sorts of insulting allusions contribute to a discourse in which migrants’ struggles are completely devalued and migrants themselves are represented as villainous con artists.

6.26 How wonderful the patrol boats are. yet last year, having paid my taxes, paid my boat registration and having a patrol boat sitting at anchor only about one hundred meters away (as it had been all day) i radioded them to tell them my battery was flat. The first thing i was told was " there will be a charge for this service" **Perhaps we should scuttle the lot,** = more dive sites, less immigrants and about the same service too the deserved.

Finally, as already mentioned, there is a general understanding in society that explicit and extreme forms of hate are not acceptable (Leets, 2003). It is not surprising, therefore, that unequivocal forms of violence and cruelty are largely absent from the data of the HS sub-corpus despite the strong *problematisation* of migrants. In fact, there is really only one comment in the entire HS sub-corpus that can be truly characterised as violent, and even then, the violence is communicated by implication. The lexical choice made in example 6.26 implies submerging boats and, indeed, while the word *scuttle* refers to the deliberate sinking of a ship, normally the ship in question has either

become disused or is being sunk for some militaristic, navigational, or environmental reason. Moreover, this single instance of violence contains an obvious example of referential ambiguity, which is essentially “a specific problem with referential interpretation that arises whenever language users are unable to select a unique referent for an anaphor from multiple candidates” (Nieuwland & van Berkum, 2008, p. 606). With this in mind, it is difficult to say for certain who the violence is directed at since it is not clear whether the verb *scuttle* is being used in reference to patrol boats or migrant vessels. Up until the point of the comment that asserts *... perhaps we should scuttle the lot...*, the interpretation of *the lot* can unambiguously be interpreted as making reference to patrol boats. However, with the addition of the next clause *... more dive sites, less immigrants and about the same service too the deserved...*, readers are led to understand that perhaps it is the migrant boats that should be scuttled. In essence, therefore, the phrase *the lot* is a major cause of this ambiguity as it is unclear whether the use of the phrase is referring to ‘the lot of patrol boats’ or ‘the lot of migrant boats’. In any case, a scuttled ship is generally abandoned first and then holes inserted into the bottom so that it can sink to the sea bed, however, example 6.26 makes no mention of disembarking the passengers from the boats (whether migrants or military personnel), and if indeed the commenter is referring to migrant vessels, they seem to be implying that ships filled with migrants should be sunk. Under this interpretation, a comment like this could be tantamount to nothing less than mass murder, making one wonder why the comment was not deleted from the comment board by the newspaper in the first place.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, following the suggestion that migrant boats be scuttled, the user implies that the sunken ship may provide a source of entertainment as a dive sight, further insulting the migrants/military personnel being referred to.

## 6.3 | Migrant invasion

In addition to being delegitimised and problematised in the ways described above, it is also important to briefly comment on the aforementioned conceptualisation of ‘migrants invading Malta’ too. The representation of migrants as an *invasion* and as a *natural disaster* is widespread and has been well documented (see for example: Baker et al., 2008; Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Clyne, 2005; Flowerdew, Li, & Tran, 2002; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; KhosraviNik, 2009, 2010; Pietikäinen, 2003; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Santa Ana, 1999 to name a few). These representations, more broadly, constitute

<sup>3</sup>This brings to light the need for further research that specifically considers the deleted comments in the MaNeCo, Xeno, and HS corpora to assess patterns therewith. Although such an endeavor would be highly informative, it is outside the scope of this research.

what Lakoff and Johnson (2003) call conceptual metaphors. Within the framework of *conceptual metaphor theory*, metaphors are not merely literary devices, but fundamental cognitive mechanisms through which it is possible to understand abstract concepts in terms of more concrete experiences. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) posit that “[w]e understand experience metaphorically when we use a gestalt from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain” (p. 230). What this means essentially is that metaphors permit one domain of experience (in this case *migration*) to be understood in terms of another (in this case an *invasion* and a *natural disaster*), and hence, metaphorical mappings, such as “love is a journey”, “time is money”, or “migration as invasion” structure our conceptual system and shape our thinking and language (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Evidence of such metaphorical mapping had previously been found in Maltese comment data (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017a, 2018). The research done for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, which, as outlined in chapter 1 served as a pilot for this thesis, looked at more contemporary comments across three major newspapers<sup>4</sup> and found that, within discriminatory comments, lexical items such as *take over*, *over run*, *explode in numbers*, and *protect ours* contribute to an implicit negative stance toward migrants by means of the metaphor *migrants as invaders*; a metaphor that was identified as the most pervasive among many in the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. dataset (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, the data analysed for this thesis confirms these findings, and also finds additional evidence to further support the relevant metaphorical conceptualisation. To start with, a number of lexical items in the HS sub-corpus help to build a discourse reminiscent of war and borders:

- invasion
- army should be surveilling
- more and more will come
- invaded
- security under threat
- impose
- force
- keep coming
- outnumbered
- entering Malta
- close to borders
- free run on the island
- Malta navy
- migrants at double the percentage
- security of our country
- protect Maltese citizens

<sup>4</sup>Malta Today, the Malta Independent, and Times of Malta (ToM).

The lexical items listed above, allow inferences to be made on the basis of the conceptualisation of a country at war with a (real or perceived) enemy who keeps coming and outnumbers us, from whom *the borders need to be protected by the army and the navy*.

In addition, there is another set of lexical items that correspondingly derive meaning from the conceptualisation of a *natural disaster*, as they are suggestive of a great flood that destroys all flora and fauna in its path; a disaster that can have absolutely devastating effects and against which protection is again needed:

- flood
- (uncontrolled) influx
- swamped
- floodgates

Within the scope of conceptual metaphor theory:

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 3)

Thus, against this backdrop, the lexical items listed above contribute to a world view that makes it difficult to conceive of migrants in any positive way; after all, they are metaphorically represented as invaders and/or a natural disaster. Further, within the remit of considering the effects of hate speech, the lexical patterns identified do not only provide insight into the way that migrants are conceptualised, but also help explain the everyday discriminatory realities experienced by migrants.

## 6.4 | Protector, exaggerated victimhood, & altruism

Beyond the linguistic evidence extracted from the construction of migrants, an examination of the clauses in which the Maltese are participants can also reveal important ideologies pertaining to migrants as the out-group. Most notably, the qualitative analysis reveals a number of narratives (what Wodak, 2009 might call *topoi*) that help to construct

an impression of Malta as the *victim* of wrongdoing and a place on which *pity* should be bestowed. Moreover, aside from this sort of *exaggerated victimhood* or *self-victimisation*, the linguistic construction of the Maltese portrays them as an *altruistic* people who ultimately seek to help others, while any poor qualities are simply due to their fundamental need to protect their own. These narratives become evident through an examination of the role that the Maltese play in the discourse within the scope of Halliday's framework.

To begin with, in the HS sub-corpus there appears to be a tendency for users to portray the Maltese as victims. Even considering section 6.3, which outlined a metaphor of *migrants as invaders*, it now becomes clear that the Maltese are represented as falling victim to this invasion; not to mention the deceptive deeds of migrants that ultimately lead to a series of negative consequences experienced by the Maltese and their island as evidenced in section 6.2. This is most apparent in clauses in which Malta or the Maltese are represented either as *carriers* in a *relational* clause or as *goals* in a *material* clause. In example 6.27, *We* (the Maltese) are represented as the carrier described in relation to numerous negative outcomes of migration including the fact that the Maltese population are *in for a rough summer* as well as the fact that they will *have less space*. In a similar fashion, both example 6.28 and example 6.29 represent the Maltese as the goal of a negative action: *destroy* and *deport*, hence perpetuating the self-victimisation of the Maltese.<sup>5</sup>

Parallel to this kind of self-victimisation, there is also a tendency in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus for users to draw pity for the Maltese as evidenced by examples 6.30 and 6.31 below. In these examples, readers are made to feel some sense of pity on the Maltese as they are victims of unfairly having to host migrants and of having little money respectively. In addition, the assertion in example 6.29 that Maltese were deported from other European Countries prior to joining the EU also appeals to readers to feel pity for the Maltese, who are represented as consistently and constantly being victim of unjustified wrongdoing and unfair policies.

6.27 *If the Authorities are not going to send all these ILLIGAL EMIGRANTS back from where they come yes it looks that we are set for in for a rough Summer ..... Plus we will continue to have less space for us on our own Island while our paying taxes will be spend on to keeps them and not for our people needs. .... "THE ONLY WAY IS RETURN TO SENDER"*

<sup>5</sup>Further, the representation of Europe, NGOs, and human traffickers described in section 5.4 additionally contributes to this sort of self-victimisation since, as noted, they are all represented as somehow doing wrong to the Maltese - their inadvertent victims.

- 6.28 user\_21226 we have our own to look after. They should go back to their own countries and fight for their rights like the Maltese people did for theirs. We cannot allow **the destruction of Maltese society** and Malta just to satisfy the JRS, UNHCR and those on their bandwagon.
- 6.29 Thats What **The European Countries Did To Us** When We Where Not In The E.U. **They Deported Us Back To Malta And All We Where Seeking Was A Better Future** Right ? What Goes Around Comes Around > They Should ALL Be Deported Back To The Oil Rich Libya Where They Came From And If Need Be The U.N. Provides A Safe Heaven In Libya Until They Find Work Which Libya Will Have Plenty Of Jobs To Offer In The Very Near Future
- 6.30 we should make a mass protest !!! we cannot accept more of these people, **they are ruining are country** and culture day after day, and they keep coming, because here they find heaven, we give them money,food,were to sleep, etc etc as long as we keep giving them things " from OUR taxes " they keep on coming!!! **this is not fair!!!!**
- 6.31 NO Kidding. So what is the sense of us adhering to the Dublin convention if our EU brothers and sisters do not want to participate in the burden sharing process. Repatriate these illegal migrants as soon as they enter matlese waters. **A country cannot take more people than it can afford.**

Further, part of the pity that the participants of the discourse are led to engage with stems from the representation of the Maltese as altruistic individuals who are simply seeking to protect themselves. This is mainly evident in *material clauses* in which the Maltese fill the role of *actor* carrying out some sort of altruistic behaviour, but also, to a lesser extent, in the role of *carrier* in a *relational clause* in which they are described in relation to some kind of selfless or generous property. In examples 6.32 and 6.33 below, for example, Malta is presented as providing basic necessities to migrants, despite, as discussed, being victims of an invasion, and in 6.34, the reason for this kindness is attributed to the fact that Malta is a Catholic country that practices Christian values of kindness, generosity and, charity.

- 6.32 **Save the migrants as is our duty**, but return them back to Libya. Libya today is a free country. Europe does not want them as they do not want participate in burden sharing. What is our prime minister and leader of opposition waiting for. Not a word at all this year from either of them on this whole illegal migration issue. Who is paying whom. And how about going after human traffickers. This is pure human trafficking and it goes against EU directives 2 and 3. Look at Autralia. They are enacting laws to place all illegal migrants

in offshore detention centers. Maybe we can outsource some detention centers in Spain or Greece as they need the money.

- 6.33 I agree with Ms user\_9144, **they should be given water, food and fuel** and they should send back with immediate effect. These people are using their women, children and new borns to draw attention on them. If they want to be free they should fight a war and free themselves in their own country as we Maltese did in past years. They are a big burden on our country and EU is doing nothing to help us.
- 6.34 Unfortunately for us, its cheaper for the EU to allow Malta to become a big detention center rather than seal a deal with Libya so that they will be able to monitor, the nation's endless borders. The EU will of course throw pocket money to us to keep the government and the NGOs happy and make them look like there doing something about this issue but that will be all. That's why we need to show some teeth regarding the issue. Its time for Malta to pull the plug from the Dublin 2 treaty. Malta should REFUSE to collect fingerprints from immigrants and accept immigrants who once resided here and had been caught in one of the various EU countries. If that means the end of Malta as an EU member then so be it. **As a catholic nation, Malta should refuse to become some sort of prison to immigrants.**
- 6.35 Re criminalizing Illegal immigration and re - activating our reservations for the 1951 UN Convention would, sure enough, arrest the flow of sub saharans. Isreal has just enacted a law whereby the aliens are handed a 3 year prison term whilst anyone caught giving them work is liable for up to 15 years imprisonment. **As the old maxim goes one has to be cruel to be kind (to ourselves).**
- 6.36 This has nothing to do with racism **but with the security of our our country.** Yes I do not see why we should not integrate some immigrants but it should not be more than a 100 a year. The rest we should either return to sender or even better send them to mainland Europe. They would surely accept them with open arms for they speak of integration on a daily basis. The problem is that when it's their turn to integrate they seem to become invisible. Mr user\_14341 in an ideal world we would all live happily together but just in case you have not noticed the world is not ideal by far. **The main aim of Malta must be to protect Maltese citizens.** Integration is ok when it is maybe 100 a year but thousands have no space in our small country both financially and culturally. As for your empty apartments that's laughable to say the least. Those apartments are privately owned and so their owners need to be compensated at their current market value. The cost is mind boggling.

Finally, in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, the Maltese are also represented as protectors of their own. Indeed, as examples 6.35 and 6.36 above show, the idea of Malta as *protector* is frequently represented by means of a *material clause* (both in the role of an actor and goal), whereby the Maltese act to protect the interests and safety of the Maltese.

Thus, similar to the way that the representation of the Maltese as repatriators offers a more complete view of the ‘send them back’ narrative discussed in chapter 5, the representation of the Maltese as protectors can be seen as a natural response to the ‘migrants as invaders’ metaphor. In this way, the discussion in this section should offer a more holistic view of the discourse of the HS sub-corpus. Earlier sections of this chapter present a number of ways in which migrants are represented in the discourse and give insight into some of the mechanisms of hate. In this one, the metaphorical flip side of the coin was outlined, showing that part of the way that users justify the discriminatory stances that they espouse is by drawing on feelings of sympathy and pity, and by highlighting their need to protect and be protected.

## 6.5 | Conclusion

This chapter has explored the way that the linguistic patterns identified in chapter 5 can be explained within the discourse in which it is embedded; in other words, it has addressed research questions 5-9. All in all, in examining the discourse surrounding migration, several identities linked to migrants and the Maltese are discernible through the language patterns explored. Among these, migrants are portrayed as “invaders,” evoking a sense of threat, while the Maltese adopt the role of “protector,” often accompanied by an exaggerated sense of victimhood and altruism. Further, the hate speech against migrants contained within the HS sub-corpus reveals distinct discourse patterns such as suggestion, metaphor, irony, and insult, indicating the complexity and depth of prejudice. The frequency of these patterns can be attributed to underlying fears of job loss and cultural change, leading individuals to hateful rhetoric. Finally, hate speech intersects with other ideologies, notably patriotism (or nationalism) and Euroscepticism, thereby reflecting broader political sentiments, while, within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, ideological patterns characterised by the delegitimisation and problematisation of migrants emerge, thus perpetuating harmful stereotypes and biases.



## Maintaining power

Chapters 5 and 6 outlined all the social actors that are to a greater or lesser extent represented in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus. Moreover, the way that the key social actors are linguistically constructed was analysed and interpreted in relation to the way that those linguistic constructions contribute to the overall representation of the social actors, and the ideologies associated with them. In this chapter, an attempt is made to assess whether or not those findings can be expanded to make generalisations about the representation of social actors in the ToM comment data overall. The success of this attempt may have a significantly positive impact on the state of CADS as a field of inquiry since it would permit qualitative observations made on a small subset of data to be generalised to much larger data, which, within the scope of CDA, can be beneficial for the out-group being studied, for, as explained in chapter 2, CDA adopts the perspective of marginalised communities, and ultimately, the broader the dataset utilised for drawing conclusions, the greater the resilience of the outcomes. This is done by employing corpus tools to investigate the extent to which the findings of the HS sub-corpus outlined in chapters 5 and 6 can be extrapolated by identifying how those ideologies relate to the broader discourse and the representation of social actors within the Xeno sub-corpus and the full MaNeCo corpus.

Moreover, concurrent to the extrapolation of those generalisations, the ideologies identified are evaluated with the view of revealing axiological information and uncovering the significance of the ideologies against the backdrop of the sociocultural and political context of Malta. Hence, while chapters 5 and 6 outlined the first three stages of the four step model of CDA, this chapter attempts to address the final stage by evaluating the impact that the linguistic and ideological constructions outlined earlier have in the real world of the social actors involved in the discourse. Against this backdrop, the research questions addressed here are:

#### Stage 4: Evaluation

- i. How does the representation of social actors correlate with the current power structures in Maltese (and global) society?
- ii. How is language used as a tool to maintain power in the context of migration in Malta?

## 7.1 | The migrant dilemma

As noted in section 5.2.1, the migrants represented in the HS sub-corpus are very closely associated with their African identity. This section, therefore, explores the relevance of this African identity within Maltese society and seeks to understand the axiological realities of this framing. In light of this, it should be useful to begin this section by providing some context on the Maltese islands and its national demographics therewith. Malta has high amounts of migration from all over the world, with many people coming from other countries to work on the island (Jobsplus, 2022). In fact, with a 20% non-national resident population, Malta has the second highest rate in all of Europe following only Luxembourg (European Union, 1995-2023f). As noted in chapter 1, as of 2020, that 20% was divided almost equally between EU and non-EU citizens (see section 8.6 for a discussion of how this has changed since then).

Despite the similar demographic proportionality of EU to non-EU residents, the language used in the HS sub-corpus is clearly indicative of the fact that the migrants being discussed therein are of African origin. Further, this is not only true of the discourse within the HS sub-corpus. Additional analyses of the data within the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus suggest that this is also characteristic of the migrants represented in the ToM data more broadly. Table 7.1, for instance, offers a more complete picture of table 5.5 by comparing the 20 strongest collocates of *country* across the HS sub-corpus, the Xeno sub-corpus, and the MaNeCo corpus. Naturally, there is little difference between the HS sub-corpus and the Xeno sub-corpus since the HS sub-corpus is a small subset of the already relatively small Xeno sub-corpus. Despite this, the comparison provides a good indication that the migrants discussed in the Xeno sub-corpus are also defined by their African identity and that, to some extent, so are the migrants in the broader MaNeCo corpus, since *African* is a strong collocate of *country* in all three corpora. On the other hand, *their* (as in *their country*) collocates slightly more strongly when the discourse specifically pertains to migrants in the Xeno and HS sub-corpora than it

HS sub-corpus		Xeno sub-corpus		MaNeCo corpus	
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Score</i>
their	12.2	other	11.1	other	10.7
own	11.7	their	11.1	our	9.96
our	11.1	own	10.7	European	9.5
origin	10.8	our	10.4	EU	9.4
other	10.7	European	10.2	their	9.2
African	10.4	EU	9.94	own	9.03
enter	10	your	9.84	run	8.48
free	10	African	9.6	many	8.34
your	9.9	origin	9.4	democratic	8.23
EU	9.69	enter	9.36	your	8.13
do	9.53	his	8.82	live	8.13
home	9.46	go	8.56	third	7.95
many	9.31	safe	8.55	world	7.83
work	9.31	leave	8.5	most	7.77
get	9.26	small	8.41	African	7.72
Libya	9.19	home	8.41	small	7.66
go	8.97	many	8.37	his	7.61
be	8.63	rich	8.36	world	7.56
respective	8.52	my	8.36	foreign	7.5
popular	8.52	big	8.27	Muslim	7.49

Table 7.1: Collocates of *country* in the HS sub-corpus, the Xeno sub-corpus, and the MaNeCo corpus

does in the more general MaNeCo corpus. Moreover, it collocates - even if slightly - more with *country* in the HS sub-corpus than it does in the (presumably) more ideologically neutral Xeno sub-corpus, further highlighting the distinction between *us* and *them* in the context of a negative stance.

Looking also at the collocations of *immigrant* as well as of *migrant* in table 7.2 provides even stronger evidence to suggest that the representation of migrants as African is true not just of the data in the HS sub-corpus, but also of the MaNeCo corpus (and, therefore, the ToM data) more broadly. Indeed, one of the top collocates of the two words in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus is *African* and, more importantly, no other location qualifies for either list. Under the assumption that, as shown in previous chapters, a significant amount of African migrants come to Malta to seek asylum, this therefore further begs the question as to why the foreigners represented in the corpora are so often referred to by the term *immigrant* rather than *asylum seeker* or *refugee* as defined in section 5.2. Indeed, similar mischaracterisations have also been observed in other national contexts and cause an “overlap or inaccurate usage [of] refugees

Top 20 collocates of 'immigrant'								
HS			Xeno			MaNeCo		
Collocate	Freq	Score	Collocate	Freq	Score	Collocate	Freq	Score
illegal	23	12.6	illegal	2105	13.2	illegal	12578	12.4
economic	3	10.4	more	92	9.21	irregular	584	9.29
send	3	9.86	take	110	9.19	influx	368	8.62
influx	2	9.81	irregular	72	9.17	African	313	8.25
number	2	9.81	economic	72	9.11	thousand	423	8.16
reach	2	9.79	influx	68	9.08	economic	319	7.96
enter	2	9.77	send	72	8.94	number	433	7.6
arrive	2	9.75	number	62	8.85	refugee	233	7.57
detain	2	9.71	many	60	8.67	send	346	7.53
Italy	2	9.68	thousand	50	8.58	arrive	203	7.39
more	2	9.66	want	60	8.44	repatriate	123	7.08
many	2	9.62	be	371	8.39	legal	209	7.01
wannabe	1	8.89	come	56	8.3	accept	236	6.99
Mediterranean	1	8.89	accept	37	8.11	flow	105	6.77
single	1	8.89	keep	38	8.05	encourage	120	6.67
would-be	1	8.89	African	32	7.94	invade	100	6.67
irregular	1	8.89	allow	31	7.89	come	524	6.49
site	1	8.89	have	75	7.75	more	478	6.46
eye	1	8.89	help	31	7.68	enter	112	6.45
deter	1	8.89	arrive	25	7.61	many	459	6.42

Top 20 collocates of 'migrant'								
HS			Xeno			Maneco		
Collocate	Freq	Score	Collocate	Freq	Score	Collocate	Freq	Score
illegal	7	11.7	economic	158	11.1	economic	1356	10.5
treat	2	11.5	illegal	325	10.9	illegal	2026	9.98
claim	2	11.4	rescue	53	9.55	irregular	330	9.13
economic	2	11.3	irregular	46	9.43	refugee	323	8.52
US	1	10.6	number	46	9.24	thousand	372	8.37
place	1	10.6	help	56	9.23	influx	188	8.32
rescue	1	10.6	more	55	9.14	rescue	176	8.23
house	1	10.6	seeker	35	9	seeker	179	8.23
US	1	10.6	thousand	36	8.96	African	179	8.04
everyone	1	10.5	many	36	8.66	en-masse	91	7.44
Med	1	10.5	come	44	8.53	integrate	110	7.38
unite	1	10.5	take	44	8.4	return	143	7.35
ten	1	10.5	African	18	7.97	integration	105	7.33
save	1	10.4	influx	17	7.97	help	252	6.98
center	1	10.4	accept	18	7.89	arrive	107	6.96
accept	1	10.3	send	19	7.74	number	217	6.85
repatriate	1	10.3	legal	14	7.68	flow	67	6.77
Ngo	1	10.2	have	59	7.67	unfortunate	67	6.72
come	2	10.1	arrive	14	7.66	accept	155	6.69
detain	1	10.1	arrive	14	7.66	local	69	6.67

Table 7.2: Collocates of *migrant* and *immigrant* in the HS and Xeno sub-corpora, and the MaNeCo corpus

and asylum seekers being constructed as hyponyms of *immigrants*” (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008, p. 27, emphasis in original).

In view of the above, the African identity of the migrants being discussed in the ToM discourse is an important part of their representation for several reasons not least of which is the fact that it offers the first real window into the ideologies imbued in the language. To begin, as already discussed, Malta has migrants from all over the world. In particular, in recent years, Malta has witnessed the exponential growth of the iGaming industry, which has resulted in several migrants from other European countries settling in Malta (Jobsplus, 2022), a phenomenon that is partly the result of Malta’s accession to the European Union. In 2004, as a new member of the EU, Malta also became the first country in the European Union to “enact comprehensive legislation on remote gaming, and industry stakeholders consider Malta as one of the foremost tried and tested jurisdictions in the world” (Malta Gaming Authority, 2023). Since then, iGaming has grown into one of Malta’s largest industries and comprises around 10% of the island’s GDP (KPMG, 2021). Against this backdrop, the Malta Gaming Authority (MGA) boasts of thousands of international business people and asserts that its growing expatriate community “can rest assured that [... they...] will settle in seamlessly” (Malta Gaming Authority, 2023). Given this reality, the preoccupation of the users contributing to the ToM discourse with migrants from Africa seems somehow skewed since the reality is that Malta hosts a multitude of migrants from all over the globe.

Despite this, as illustrated in section 5.2, European migrants make up only a minute part of the discourse on migration in the HS sub-corpus. Moreover, the representation of the migrants of the HS sub-corpus draws a stark contrast from the category of migrants who are welcomed by the MGA. Hence, the representation of migrants as Africans serves to distinguish them from other *white European* migrants usually referred to as *expatriates* who come to Malta to work in white-collar employment, particularly in the iGaming industry. This distinction is vital because “expatriates may be different from other immigrants such as economic migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, especially as this would influence their acculturation process” (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015, p. 323). Indeed, this distinction between *migrants* (or rather, asylum seekers - people who come to Malta from Africa to seek refuge for reasons of war, political instability, poverty, and natural disaster) and *expatriates* (all other migrants in Malta) is a well established reality in Malta. This can be observed plainly in an interview broadcast on *Malta Today* by Saviour Balzan, a veteran journalist, who interviews Ahmed Bugre, a human rights lawyer and Director of the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants (FSM), Francis Debono, the Mayor of Marsa, and Henry Battistino, leader of the far-right Moviment Patrijotti Maltin (Costa, 2018). Balzan opens by asking Bugre:

“what is the situation just now when you look at Malta, the Maltese, and the debate, the discussion on immigrants... and here, I would like to emphasise, immigrants that arrive from Africa. Because, this seems to be the issue. Although there are other migrants. There are other migrants from other parts of the world. I mean Africa, Middle East, but there are other migrants from other parts of the world. What’s the situation in your view?”

This question by Balzan makes explicit the knowledge that *migrants* come to Malta from Africa (and to some extent the Middle East) and they are a cause of major concern to Malta and the Maltese. This is not surprising since the connection between migrants and Africa has been variously noted by scholars. In her discussion of *borderscapes*, for example, Brambilla (2015) speaks plainly about the ‘Euro/African Border and Migration Nexus’. Similarly, Pisani (2022) claims that “[c]ontemporary research on race relations in Malta has tended to be framed within the topic of irregular migration to Malta, in particular, the arrival of asylum seekers from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa” (p. 135). Furthermore, Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2018), Blommaert (2001), Gabrielatos and Baker (2008), and van Leeuwen (2008) all note a connection between the migrants that they are making observations about and an African identity.

Hence, now the delegitimisation and problematisation of migrants discussed in section 6.2 becomes relevant in the context of the power structures of Maltese society. The lexical sets exhibited in table 6.1 are indicative of the fact that delegitimisation is the most general of all the negative categories presented in section 6.2. With this in mind, migrants are, so to speak, represented as the proverbial problem child from a problem parent and, therefore, the problematisation of Africa (and by extension Africans) serves to delegitimise migrants from the outset. What this means in the broad sense is that migrants are frequently categorised in ways that make it easy to persecute and discriminate against them; since they are portrayed, by their very nature, as problematic Africans, it becomes reasonable to exclude them from real and perceived resources, such as safety, shelter, and space. Clearly, this parallels observations made globally in relation to the exclusion of migrants in society (see Knappert, Kornau, & Figengül, 2018; Lago, 2009; J. Taylor, 2004).

Further, the representation of migrants as *Africans* also perpetuates a major mischaracterisation of African countries, which in turn has a significantly negative impact on the rights and privileges of migrants in Malta. In another interview with Dr Ahmed Bugre on *Malta Today* (Vassallo, 2016), Bugre explains that there is a tendency for the problems in some African countries, such as Somalia, to be viewed as temporary and as such, several migrants who land in Malta are repeatedly given very limited rights through the

remit of Temporary Humanitarian Protection (THP) under the assumption that once stability is brought to their country, they will be able to return. This has left some migrants in what Bugre terms a “legal limbo” for up to 12 years (ibid.). The same sort of reality does not befall non-African third country nationals (e.g. Americans, Brazilians, Australians etc.). Rather, migrants from such countries who come to Malta in search for work, like migrants from the EU, go through the state’s expatriate unit, which “is involved in the *legal* migration process and caters for the processing and issuing of residence documentation” (Identity Malta Agency, 2022, emphasis added).

This disparity in the way that Third Country Nationals (TNCs) from other parts of the world are treated is likely due to the racial similarity of migrants from countries like Russia and Serbia, and the Maltese, and hence, discrimination against migrants journeys into racism, thereby contributing to the “demonisation and dehumanisation of black migrants in both political rhetoric and policy [which] have been relentless” (Pisani, 2022, p. 14). As Bugre argues (Vassallo, 2016), the dominant focus on African migrants is largely due to race issues; while Malta has migration from other parts of the world, including other non-EU countries, discourse pertaining to migration centres largely on the migration of black African people. The spotlight on African migration is not just an impressionistic view evident in remarks such as those made by Bugre here, since the findings of this research as expounded in section 5.2 above confirm this in no uncertain terms. Furthermore, Pisani (2022) notes that the recent tragic events in Ukraine in 2022 highlight, or rather reaffirm, the prejudiced attitude toward black African migrants, since Ukrainian asylum seekers are often seen as vulnerable and deserving of support and safeguarding, whilst “Africans are located beyond the moral obligation of the State, neither worthy or deserving of care or protection” (p. 149).

The result of this sort of discourse leads to the exclusion of Africans from real and perceived resources; as Bugre states “if there is no space, who is there no space for? a black man?” (Vassallo, 2016). Thus, turning back to the discussion of *power* in chapter 2, migrants have little control over resources. Rather, they are at the mercy of society’s gatekeepers (the Maltese) who exert power over them in relation to access to real and symbolic resources.

Further, in view of this discussion, the concept of *integration* becomes redundant, since it appears that what is required by the Maltese population is *assimilation*. While integration “comprises acquiring identification with the host culture while maintaining identification with the home culture” (Sheikh & Anderson, 2018, p. 23), assimilation implies that any dissimilarity between migrants and the host culture become completely erased (J. Schneider & Crul, 2010). To use the same analogy of Schuck and Münz (1998), what this means is that the expectation is that Malta is a melting pot rather than a salad

bowl - 'as long as migrants look like *us* and have similar values and cultural practices as *us*, then *they* may form part of *our* society. But if *they* look different and have different cultural practices, then *they* may not'. This is not surprising given that, to begin with, Malta's accession to the EU meant that "refugees were integrated into a bureaucratic system; [although] social integration... , was not promoted" (Nimführ et al., 2020, p. 162). Furthermore, the subsequent development of integration policy has been very slow, drawing parallels with what is known as (dis)integration, which "highlights the expectation of refugees to integrate while denying them access to mechanisms that lead to integration" (Nimführ et al., 2020 cited in Debono, 2022 p. 398). After all, it was only in 2018 (a year after data collection for this thesis was completed) that the Maltese government adopted its first integration policy.

Naturally, the narrative that portrays migrants as *boatpeople* and *seafarers* (evidenced in section 5.2.2) serves to reinforce the African identity of migrants, as European migrants would have no need to travel to Malta by boat (at least not by necessity). Indeed, in 2011, the African countries with the highest number of residents in Malta were Somalia (1041 people) and Eritrea (548 people - National Statistics Office, 2014). The majority of people entering Malta from those countries do so by boat. Essentially, migrants travel overland to Libya in North Africa and from there use a boat to make the crossing to Europe. In fact, between 2002 and 2012, 16,617 sub-Saharan African individuals arrived in Malta by boat from North Africa (UNHCR, 2001-2023d). Hence, as suggested in section 5.2.2, the term *boat person* becomes synonymous with *African*, which in turn forms part of the core identity of *migrants*.

In view of the foregoing, there is evidence to suggest that the boat narrative is strongly linked with the identity of migrants in the ToM discourse in general. Table 7.3 compares the top 20 collocates of *boat* across the HS and Xeno sub-corpora, as well as the full MaNeCo corpus. In addition to affirming the observations above pertaining to the representation of migrants as *boat people* in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus (evidenced by collocates such as *their* and *people*), the comparison also offers other pertinent information relevant to the *boat people narrative* more broadly. Firstly, similar to the observations made in section 5.2.2, the term *boat* also appears to be frequently *possessivated* in the Xeno sub-corpus evidenced by the fact that *their* is one of three words to occur most frequently with *boat*. Moreover, there are a number of collocates in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the full MaNeCo corpus that illustrate the link between migrants and the sea (e.g. *unseaworthy*, *people*, *migrant*, and *overload*).

Further, the collocate *patrol* serves as yet another strong indication of the narrative; since Malta is an island, it requires little inferential effort to deduce that any *patrolling* will, of course, be done at sea. In addition, although the *AFM* is not a collocate of *boat*

in the HS sub-corpus, it is in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus. The Armed Forces Malta (AFM) is responsible for maintaining Malta's defense on land, air, and sea. Specifically, the remit of the Maritime Operations includes, but is not limited to:

- Surveillance and protection of Malta's *maritime borders*
- Suppression of *illegal activities* at sea such as smuggling and trafficking
- General *maritime law enforcement*
- Maritime Safety missions including *Search and Rescue (SAR)*, general boating safety and provision of safety and security information to commercial shipping
- *Port security* and protection of sensitive vessels and infrastructure  
(Armed Forces of Malta, 2020b)

HS sub-corpus			Xeno sub-corpus			MaNeCo corpus		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>
patrol	5	12.7	patrol	44	10.8	patrol	435	9.96
ramshackle	1	10.8	rickety	27	10.2	rock	301	9.51
registration	1	10.8	unseaworthy	14	9.3	house	656	9.35
sit	1	10.8	intercept	13	9.15	fishing	188	8.63
capable	1	10.8	trip	12	8.96	rickety	156	8.62
available	1	10.8	sink	11	8.89	sink	116	7.92
transfer	1	10.8	distress	11	8.83	trip	138	7.87
their	4	10.5	migrant	10	8.66	owner	209	7.76
turn	1	10.4	AFM	10	8.63	load	107	7.52
illegal	1	10.2	people	45	8.63	migrant	67	7.3
use	1	10.2	turn	11	8.58	ferry	85	7.22
illegal	1	10.2	use	14	8.57	small	195	7.13
people <sup>1</sup>	2	9.85	carry	10	8.56	tug	54	7.09
people <sup>2</sup>	1	8.85	load	8	8.44	miss	115	7.06
have	1	8.17	their	40	8.1	board	62	7.05
be	4	8.01	small	9	8.07	sink	51	6.74
			arrive	8	8.06	overload	42	6.69
			sink	6	8.02	speed	78	6.68
			push	7	7.92	unseaworthy	39	6.64
			un-seaworthy	5	7.84	AFM	47	6.63

Table 7.3: Collocates of *boat* in the HS sub-corpus, the Xeno sub-corpus, and the MaNeCo corpus

<sup>1</sup> noun modified by 'boat' - boat people

<sup>2</sup> noun: people on boats - on boats

Beyond the scope of the maritime operations, the top two tasks of the Air Operations are “maritime surveillance” and “search and rescue at sea” (Armed Forces of Malta, 2020a). Thus, within the scope of their maritime responsibilities, since it is largely the responsibility of AFM to *patrol*, a consideration of these duties quickly makes the association between migrants and the sea even clearer.

Hence, the presence of some of the collocates of *boat* discussed in this section (listed in table 7.3) in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus suggests that, across the board, in the comment discourse of the ToM (at least as far as is representative of discourse up to 2017), there is a strong link between migrants and the sea, indicative of the lengthy and perilous journeys taken by migrants, and the growing trend of heightened militarisation and externalisation of EU borders (Mainwaring & Debono, 2021). In other words, the evidence presented in this section suggests that discussion of migration in the ToM comment board is more broadly related to migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who come to Malta by boat through Libya. This is not to say that discussion of migration in the ToM relates solely to migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, only that *boat people* take up a large part of the migration discourse. This representation is significant since, as previously noted, other language related to the *boat* narrative in the HS sub-corpus serves to further *delegitimise* and *dehumanise* migrants in phrases such as *return to sender* and *they should be shipped back*, in which they are referred to with language analogous of property and cargo.

Moreover, as Taylor and Marchi (2018) demonstrate, the absence of language in corpus research can also be meaningful. With this in mind, the absence of *AFM* as a collocate of *boat* in the HS sub-corpus may indicate that their role in surveillance and protection diminishes (along with the chance of migrants being rescued) when the discourse is particularly negative towards migrants. Indeed, the boat narrative appears to be indicative of the particularly negative stance presented in the HS sub-corpus since the representation of migrants as *seafarers* additionally contributes to the discourse that represents migrants as putting themselves in danger by crossing the sea from Libya, thereby undermining any merit they have to be rescued, as illustrated, for example, in the sarcastic use of the terms *cruise* and *ferry service* described in section 5.2.2, or in instances of *delegitimation* typified by comments discussed in section 6.2, in which it is implied that migrants’ suffering and deaths are a consequence of their own poor decision to cross the sea by boat (e.g. ... *If you seek danger and peril it is **your fault**...* and ... *If these illegal immigrants **put themselves in danger** because they know that we will go and save them...*).

In contrast, the Xeno sub-corpus contains a number of other transport terms such as *bus*, *car*, and *train*, which are absent from the HS sub-corpus, suggesting that al-

though migrants are still largely represented as *boat people*, alternative (and arguably safer) means of transport are available. This is particularly telling within the setting of the aforementioned absence of *AFM* as a collocates of *boat* in the HS sub-corpus, as well as the presence of other collocates in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the full MaNeCo corpus. The collocates of *boat* in the latter two corpora strongly indicate a wide acknowledgment of the danger and peril that the sea journey necessarily entails. Terms like *rickety*, *unseaworthy*, *sink*, and *overload* all allude to the recognition of an unsafe venture. This is further reinforced by the qualitative analysis, which uncovered a pattern that sees boats regularly represented as unsafe and dangerous in the HS sub-corpus (as in examples 5.13 and 5.14 described in chapter 5). Despite the extensively asserted danger that the sea journey poses, however, the possibility of search and rescue at sea becomes backgrounded in hate speech. Thus, it is possible to conclude that, while the *AFM* play a central role in the construction of the *migrants as boat people* narrative (particularly telling in the context of the aforementioned increased militarisation of the EU borders), it plays a smaller role in the formation of a negative stance towards migrants, since the absence of *AFM* erases the possibility of national search and rescue efforts.

As mentioned, the ironic reference to both *cruise* and *ferry service* illustrated in section 5.2.2 additionally serves to delegitimise (and minimise) the perilous journey taken by migrants. Indeed, *irony* has been widely shown to “manage the interplay between positive and negative evaluation” (van Dijk, 1992, p. 230) and has previously been observed as a tactic of discrimination in Malta (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017b). With this in mind, a concordance search of the words *cruise* and *ferry* in the Xeno sub-corpus gives a very good indication that although the HS sub-corpus contains comments that have been annotated as, at the very least, highly discriminatory, migrants are broadly viewed with a negative stance. The concordance search in the Xeno sub-corpus returns 77 hits for *ferry* and 28 hits for *cruise*, most of which are used with ironic undertones, thus indicating that discourse about migrants generally contains a fair degree of irony and sarcasm. A possible explanation for this is that, although not all the relevant discourse constitutes hate speech, indeed, a substantial amount of the discourse pertaining to migrants communicates a negative stance and, to some degree, discriminates. In other words, using the analytical framework developed by Cortese (2006) described in section 1.1.3, while examples of stage 3 (*inciting discriminatory hatred*) and stage 4 (*inciting discriminatory violence*) are limited, much of the discourse pertaining to migration more broadly contains elements of *unintentional discrimination* and *conscious discrimination* (stages 1 and 2 in Cortese’s model).<sup>1</sup> This is not surprising at all since, as

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<sup>1</sup>It would be interesting to assess the interaction, if any, that there is between the discussion here and

stated, overt prejudicial bias is generally viewed as unacceptable in society.

Be that as it may, the real life consequences of the *boat* narrative have seriously negative effects on the perception of migrants. Firstly, while travel into ports such as airports and seaports is generally regularised by border security, migrants - who are essentially smuggled into Malta by human traffickers - arrive in Malta via irregular channels. This has led to the broad conceptualisation that migrants are *illegal* by their very nature and, because they gain irregular or illegal entry into the country by boat, their entire identity becomes consumed by this one fact. This is then compounded by the fact that many migrants find themselves having to seek employment in the informal sector for lack of proper paperwork since, as Ahmed Bugre correspondingly points out, attaining a work permit proves very difficult for them (Costa, 2018).

As a result of the above, as shown in section 5.2.3, the term *illegals* as a collective noun is sometimes used on its own to refer to *migrants* and the term *illegal immigrant* is the most widespread term within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus to refer to migrants and comes to mean: 'person who migrates from sub-Saharan Africa by boat through Libya to seek asylum and is unwanted in their destination country'. Indeed, the strength of the relationship between *illegal* and *immigrant* within the HS sub-corpus was established in section 5.2.3, however, there is strong evidence to suggest that this relationship also runs throughout the discourse of the Xeno sub-corpus as well as the MaNeCo corpus. Table 7.4 reproduces table 5.7 with the addition of data from the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus to compare the number of times that *illegal* and *immigrant* appear in all three corpora as well as the number of times they appear together as *illegal immigrant*.

Again, it is immediately apparent that the strength of the relationship between the two words in all three corpora is powerful. Table 7.4 makes evident the fact that the classification of migrants as *illegal* does not appear to be characteristic of hate speech specifically; rather, the discourse pertaining to migrants, independent of ideology, seems to generally accept their *illegal* identity as fact in the ToM data across the board. The percentage scores indicate that while the two words are mutually linked in both the HS and the Xeno sub-corpus, there is some discordance in the full MaNeCo corpus. This discord gives a numeric depiction of the mechanisms involved in the construction of the identity of migrants as illegal. Within the MaNeCo corpus, while almost half the references to migrants are associated with their *illegal* status, the corpus also contains a lot of discourse involving *illegality* that is unrelated to migration. In other words, while, in the broad discourse, migrants are inextricably linked with *illegality*, *illegality* is not

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the inclusion of *suggestion* in the HS sub-corpus, but this is outside the scope of this present research.

<i>HS sub-corpus</i>			
	<i>immigrant</i>	<i>Illegal</i>	<i>illegal immigrant</i>
No. of hits in corpus	68	59	23
% of times immigrant occurs with illegal			33.82%
% of times illegal occurs with immigrant			38.98%
Collocation score			12.6

<i>Xeno sub-corpus</i>			
	<i>immigrant</i>	<i>Illegal</i>	<i>illegal immigrant</i>
No. of hits in corpus	3905	3877	2184
% of times immigrant occurs with illegal			55.93%
% of times illegal occurs with immigrant			56.33%
Collocation score			13.2

<i>MaNeCo corpus</i>			
	<i>immigrant</i>	<i>Illegal</i>	<i>illegal immigrant</i>
No. of hits in corpus	28429	50322	13172
% of times illegal occurs with immigrant			26.18%
% of times immigrant occurs with illegal			46.33%
Collocation score			12.4

Table 7.4: Number of times that *immigrant*, *illegal*, and *illegal immigrant* appear in the HS sub-corpus, Xeno sub-corpus, and the MaNeCo corpus

only associated with migrants. However, when the discourse is specific to the topic of migration, as it is in both sub-corpora, the two words form a mutual relationship. This follows a similar pattern to other national contexts within which overlapping observations about the *illegal* representation of *migrants* have been made (see Baker & McEnery, 2005; Gabrielatos, 2007; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; KhosraviNik, 2010; van Leeuwen, 1996; Wodak, 2015).

Further evidence of the illegal representation of migrants in the ToM data is discernible through a collocation analysis of *illegal* in the three corpora. Table 7.5 shows that a majority of the collocations of *illegal* in the Xeno sub-corpus and many in the full MaNeCo corpus are words related to migration. Thus, the collocations offer further evidence that migrants are not only characterised as *illegal* in the context of strong discrimination or hate speech, but they are represented as such in discourse involving migration more broadly in the ToM comment data.

In addition to the above, expanding the analysis of the top collocates of *immigrant* in the HS sub-corpus presented on page 162 to include data from both the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus further evidences the use of premodifiers to categorise

HS			Xeno			MaNeCo		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>
immigrant	23	12.6	immigrant	2105	13.2	immigrant	12578	12.4
immigration	7	11.9	immigration	356	11.3	immigration	3114	10.8
migrant	7	11.7	migrant	325	10.9	migrant	2026	9.98
immigrat	2	10.3	economic	75	9.24	hunting	2106	9.69
issue	2	10.1	migration	62	9.01	activity	604	8.39
fullstop	1	9.33	many	40	8.15	migration	491	8.24
boatpeople	1	9.33	problem	40	7.99	structure	368	7.78
mean	1	9.33	invasion	27	7.85	building	417	7.57
entry	1	9.3	African	22	7.48	legal	426	7.57
whole	1	9.3	entry	18	7.29	economic	361	7.57
service	1	9.27	activity	17	7.23	boathouse	282	7.52
uncontrolled	1	9.27	emigrant	17	7.22	act	347	7.39
about	1	9.22	imigrant	15	7.05	parking	295	7.2
economic	1	9.19	legal	15	6.97	shooting	201	6.98
African	1	9.14	issue	16	6.96	development	231	6.97
many	1	8.98	trafficker	13	6.73	invasion	185	6.87
be	2	6.93	trafficking	12	6.7	emigrant	176	6.86
			dangerous	12	6.7	occupation	175	6.84
			not	37	6.51	hunter	294	6.82
			be	100	6.51	drug	225	6.7

Table 7.5: Collocates of *illegal* in the HS sub-corpus, the Xeno sub-corpus, and the MaNeCo corpus

migrants by their status (see table 7.6). Indeed, the same pattern can be found in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus both of which contain premodifiers of *immigrant* including *illegal*, *irregular*, *African*, and *economic*, again indicating that the concern for status and the curtailing of the right to protection is generally true of discourse about migration in ToM comment data and not specific to hate speech. Additionally, the broad premodification (and therefore specification) of migrants is indicative of the fact that the *illegal* status of migrants is taken as a matter of fact and not used to represent particularly negative ideologies.

Moreover, evidence to support the claim that the refugee status of migrants is often questioned is supported by evidence that goes beyond the linguistic elements pertaining to the premodification of the word *immigrant* and the description of migrants by means of the *carrier* position of a clause as discussed in chapter 5. In fact, a look at the top collocates the words *asylum seeker*, *refugee*, and *genuine* all corroborate this observation (table 7.7). The terms *status* and *genuine* are the top two collocates of *refugee* in all three corpora. Moreover, *genuine* is also the strongest collocate of *asylum seeker* in both

HS			Xeno			MaNeCo		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>
illegal	23	12.6	illegal	2105	13.2	illegal	12578	12.4
economic	3	10.4	more	92	9.21	irregular	584	9.29
send	3	9.86	take	110	9.19	influx	368	8.62
influx	2	9.81	irregular	72	9.17	African	313	8.25
number	2	9.81	economic	72	9.11	thousand	423	8.16
reach	2	9.79	influx	68	9.08	economic	319	7.96
enter	2	9.77	send	72	8.94	number	433	7.6
arrive	2	9.75	number	62	8.85	refugee	233	7.57
detain	2	9.71	many	60	8.67	send	346	7.53
Italy	2	9.68	thousand	50	8.58	arrive	203	7.39
more	2	9.66	want	60	8.44	repatriate	123	7.08
many	2	9.62	be	371	8.39	legal	209	7.01
wannabe	1	8.89	come	56	8.3	accept	236	6.99
Mediterranean	1	8.89	accept	37	8.11	flow	105	6.77
single	1	8.89	keep	38	8.05	encourage	120	6.67
would-be	1	8.89	African	32	7.94	invade	100	6.67
irregular	1	8.89	allow	31	7.89	come	524	6.49
site	1	8.89	have	75	7.75	more	478	6.46
eye	1	8.89	help	31	7.68	enter	112	6.45
deter	1	8.89	arrive	25	7.61	many	459	6.42

Table 7.6: Collocates of *immigrant* in the HS sub-corpus, the Xeno sub-corpus, and the MaNeCo corpus

the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus, while its top collocate in the HS sub-corpus is *alleged* (with a score of 13.4). Hence, while the status of migrants as refugees is inherently questioned in the ToM data in general, when the discourse is exceptionally negative, the denial of *asylum seeker* status is almost absolute. In addition, the top collocates of *genuine* in all three corpora include terms that reference *asylum seekers* and *refugees*, thus reinforcing the link between refugee status and the lack of authenticity. With this in mind, the assertion of the expatriate unit cited on page 213 (...involved in the *legal* migration process...) that includes the over-lexicalised phrase *legal migration* presupposes the existence of *illegal migration* (much like a *male nurse* presupposes the existence of a *female nurse*). Indeed, as discussed in section 2.2, *over-lexicalisation* has been extensively recognised as a marker of discrimination. Therefore, although not stated outright, the implication here is a clear acknowledgment, on a policy level, of the notion of *illegal immigration*.

<b>Top 20 collocates of Asylum Seeker</b>								
<i>HS</i>			<i>Xeno</i>			<i>MaNeCo</i>		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>
alleged	1	13.4	genuine	19	10.7	genuine	144	9.23
allow	1	11.4	migrant	35	9	migrant	179	8.23
come	1	9.64	refugee	13	8.74	refugee	128	8.21
be	1	6.06	illegitimate	3	8.61	failed	36	8.15
			refer	4	8.57	detain	19	7.58
			Eritrean	3	8.55	redistribute	10	7.03
			fail	4	8.25	bogus	9	6.76
			threat	3	8.19	fide	9	6.73
			cross	4	8.05	bona	9	6.72
			dehumanise	2	8.04	ratio	11	6.65
			redistribute	2	8.01	relocate	11	6.64
			guise	2	8	reject	18	6.6
			arrive	4	7.97	influx	13	6.51
			flow	2	7.94	illegitimate	7	6.33
			resettlement	2	7.94	legitimate	14	6.32
			relationship	2	7.92	flow	10	6.22
			hold	3	7.9	fail	59	6.09
			failed	2	7.89	immigrant	64	6.09
			inhabitant	2	7.87	would-be	6	6.08
			excellent	2	7.82	Syrian	8	5.87
<b>Top 20 collocates of Refugee</b>								
<i>HS</i>			<i>Xeno</i>			<i>MaNeCo</i>		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Score</i>
status	4	12.9	status	84	11.6	status	904	10.7
genuine	3	12.5	genuine	44	10.7	genuine	319	9.25
so-called	1	11.2	convention	37	10.4	Syrian	227	9.07
ASAP	1	11.2	Commissioner	19	9.48	camp	241	8.98
family	1	11	camp	14	9.13	convention	172	8.73
arrival	1	10.8	Service	13	9.12	migrant	323	8.52
arrival	1	10.8	seeker	13	8.74	seeker	129	8.22
person	1	10.6	real	10	8.34	Commissioner	158	8.16
give	1	9.87	status	9	8.34	Service	110	8.03
be	4	8.03	Syrian	7	8.22	flee	110	7.94

			call	11	8.15	crisis	119	7.69
			economic	9	8.03	immigrant	233	7.57
			rescue	7	7.75	thousand	126	7.03
			accept	8	7.73	economic	95	6.95
			number	8	7.72	influx	53	6.95
			true	6	7.67	escape	53	6.75
			migrant	16	7.58	rescue	45	6.72
			status	5	7.5	status	53	6.65
			fide	4	7.44	Syria	55	6.64
			Hoisaeter	4	7.42	million	90	6.62
Top 20 collocates of <i>Genuine</i>								
HS			Xeno			MaNeCo		
Collocate	Freq.	Score	Collocate	Freq.	Score	Collocate	Freq.	Score
refugie	1	12.7	seeker	22	10.9	Labourite	173	9.37
refugee	3	12.5	refugee	44	10.7	seeker	156	9.34
not	1	8.05	asylum-seeker	6	10.5	refugee	319	9.25
			qualify	2	8.52	asylum-seeker	86	8.94
			initiative	2	8.42	concern	113	7.92
			need	3	8.2	mistake	172	7.82
			concern	2	8.14	nationalist	74	7.49
			newborn	1	8.11	supporter	69	6.71
			faithful	1	8.11	effort	40	6.5
			recreational	1	8.11	desire	20	6.5
			a-plenty	1	8.09	affective	15	6.49
			refugie	1	8.09	sincere	20	6.48
			escapee	1	8.09	honest	46	6.46
			Citizens	1	8.05	Catholics	26	6.37
			case	4	8.04	intention	29	6.29
			intent	1	8.02	error	22	6.23
			noble	1	8	case	234	6.2
			humanitarian	2	7.98	love	36	6.13
			Ukraine	1	7.94	smile	15	6.05
			indeed	2	7.92	interest	73	5.96

Table 7.7: Top 20 collocates of *Asylum Seeker*, *Refugee*, & *Genuine*

Thus, the depiction of *illegal immigrants* firstly acts to delegitimise migrants, but it

can be further argued that the use of the modifier *illegal* also works to represent migrants criminally as *illegal people* and, in the view of this research, the repeated referencing of migrants as *illegal* further reinforces this, thereby creating a dominant discourse in which it is difficult to view migrants as anything else but common criminals. What this means is that this discourse becomes so much a part of everyday rhetoric that it can easily be naturalised and become the only 'common sense' way of viewing the world (see de Cillia et al., 1999; Lillian, 2007; Teo, 2000).

All in all, the discussion in this section can be aptly captured in a comment made by Henry Battistino in the aforementioned *Malta Today* interview (Costa, 2018). In response to a remark made by Ahmed Bugre about the iGaming industry, Battistino sarcastically responds that *illegals* do not work in gaming and any suggestion that they do is absolutely ridiculous. This perfectly sums up the view of *migrants* described in this section; while white Europeans are welcome to come and settle in Malta to engage with the economy and society, *black African illegals* are a problem and face harsh discrimination.

## 7.2 | Hate concealed as patriotism

The discussion in chapters 5 and 6 should make clear that, although the discourse contained in the HS sub-corpus wholly focuses on migration (specifically the movement of migrants from countries in sub-Saharan Africa to Malta), there are a number of different themes throughout the discourse that contribute to the dissemination of ideologies pertaining to migrants. One of the dominant themes represents the Maltese as well-intentioned patriots who only want the best for their people; as protectors of their own and victims of unfair international laws. In this section, this narrative is explored and viewed within the perspective of what Baider, Assimakopoulos, and Millar (2017a) identify as the tendency to conceal hate under the guise of patriotism.

The sort of patriotism identified here surfaces first and foremost through the sort of *othering* described in section 6.1. Undeniably, as with the evidence presented above, which shows that the problematic representation of migrants runs throughout the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus alike, so too does the dichotomy of *Us* and *Them*. Evidence of this distinction appears to be consistent with the discussion about migrants in general as evidenced by the discourse of the two larger corpora. To begin, the concordance lines of both *Us* and *We* were analysed in the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus. A sample of the first 5 of every 100 lines for each word up until 5,000 were assessed manually (a total of 250 lines for each word in each corpus). In the Xeno sub-corpus, out of the 250 instances of *We*, only 1 did not reference the Maltese in any way.

Moreover, that one example is a quotation and, therefore, not even the words of a user themselves (*...Dr. Subhi Al-Yaziji, Dean of Koranic Studies at the Islamic University of Gaza: We Hope to Conquer Andalusia and the Vatican...*). Moreover, the same analysis of the MaNeCo corpus shows that 97 of the 250 instances analysed manifestly refer to the Maltese (as in *... We should let our Prime minister know that we support his decisions ...*), with another 74 referring to a more ambiguous in-group who, given the discussion thus far, can easily be argued to be the Maltese (e.g. *...Till now we cannot understand what went wrong*). Furthermore, the concordance lines of *Us* only strengthens these observations. In the MaNeCo corpus 69 instances are unequivocally the Maltese, while 83 again reference a more ambiguous in-group. The Xeno sub-corpus contains fewer instances of *Us* overall and, therefore, a total of 100 lines were analysed. As expected, the analysis revealed a very similar trend whereby only 9 are not directly related to Malta and, similar to the examples of *Us* in the HS sub-corpus described in section 6.1, there is one instance of Malta listed with other countries (*...rubbing their hands in glee to see us the victim Nations, Malta, Italy, Greece etc. getting at each other's throats...*), and another 8 are actually a reference to the United States of America (USA).

Further, an analysis of both *Here* and *There* in the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus continues to support the conclusions that have been drawn in relation to the representation of migrants in the HS sub-corpus. In the MaNeCo corpus, out of 250 instances of *Here* analysed, 88 are a clear reference to Malta, while 154 are not a place at all, as in the example *...I can smell a political motive here...* A proportional equivalent of 65 lines were analysed in the Xeno sub-corpus and only one is in reference to a place other than Malta, specifically *London (...I was talking to a cultured English woman this pm, here in London...)* and 13 are in reference to the comment board (e.g. *...Do you people read what is being posted here?...*). The rest, a substantial majority, are all used to reference *Malta*. Similarly, comparable samples of *There* were analysed in both corpora and, similar to the observations made in the HS sub-corpus, the vast majority of these were used as expletives and, therefore, do not provide substantive evidence either way.

The analysis presented here offers strong evidence of the fact that, within the ToM discourse, which is embedded in Maltese society, the Maltese are represented as the dominant in-group with some sort of ownership on the here and now. Hence, this representation contributes to the idea that the Maltese have the right above others to not only space and other resources, but also participation in the democratic process and a say in the running of the country. This is particularly glaring against the backdrop of the concept that Billig (1995) calls *banal nationalism*, which he defines as the “ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced” (p. 6). In his treatise, Billig posits that everyday, often unconscious and ‘banal,’ semiotic resources

serve to reproduce a nationalistic sentiment. More specifically, he claims that everyday deixis such as the use of 'I,' 'you,' 'we,' 'here,' and 'now' point to and reinforce the "the continuing presence of the homeland, and the ease with which it can be taken for granted" (ibid., p. 144). This perspective becomes central to the discussion of discourse in this thesis, since it has been argued that "employing a *normalized* language of affective nationalism cultivates the acceptance of hate speech" (Okten, 2022, p. 15, emphasis in original). Thus, while the sort of nationalistic sentiment reproduced through the use of otherwise innocuous deictic terms might not constitute hate speech in itself, it contributes to an environment in which hate and discrimination thrive.

Beyond the sort of *banal nationalism* evoked in this way, as already seen in fig. 6.1, *migrants* appear as the *goal* far more often than they do as the *actor* in *material clauses*. Similarly, as illustrated by, for instance, examples 5.29 and 5.30 in chapter 5, migrants (and Africa) are frequently assigned a passive role within a clause, thus reinforcing the idea that *They* are being sent back *There* by some more dominant social actor - *Us* - and that the said dominant actor can and should control where migrants can go and what they can do.

The *othering* brought about by the representation of the social actors in this way has real-life consequences on the access of migrants to goods and services. Firstly, it is reflective of a reality in which migrants are precluded from basic rights by being inhumanely detained in custody awaiting their asylum applications. Malta has indeed, on numerous occasions, been found to be in violation of international law by detaining migrants unlawfully (see, for example, Mahamed Jama v. Malta, 2015; Suso Musa v. Malta, 2013; Aden Ahmed v. Malta, 2013 – in the last case, Ahmed, having become severely depressed, miscarried while she was in detention). In addition, this sort of exclusion from space and resources is not just limited to adult migrants, as there have been cases in which even children are unlawfully detained (see, for example, Abdullahi Elmi and Aweys Abubakar v. Malta, 2017). Furthermore, even though there has been a recent shortening of the length of detention of asylum seekers, the new policy development also makes provisions for migrants to be detained on health grounds to supposedly stop the spread of disease as well as the immediate detention of vulnerable persons (D. Debono, 2022). However, the policy does not elaborate or define what is meant by 'health grounds,' or how long migrants can be detained under such provisions, only that the "Director General Health may require medical screening for applicants on public health grounds" (Office of the State Advocate, n.d., p. 4595). Such ambiguity leaves the implementation of such measures up to interpretation and abuse.

Moreover, this sort of exclusion from resources extends beyond institutional forms such as those described above, since they are also exacted by the Maltese public out-

side of detention centers. In one report published on behalf of Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem, it is noted that migrants face substantial discrimination in the housing market and that there appears to be great resistance from landlords to rent to migrants (Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem, n.d.). In turn, this is leading to some migrants sharing rental accommodation between several people and living in squalid conditions; one group of migrants was even found to be living in privately owned horse stables “with filthy mattresses, mouldy walls and clothes hanging off nails” (I. Martin, 2019). Moreover, the widespread exclusion of migrants from the housing market has additionally led to the perception that *ghettos* are forming, particularly in the areas in and around Marsa. Xuereb (2015) notes that State officials publicly refer to Marsa as a *ghetto* and a ‘no go’ area and that the mayor has described the town as being *invaded* by migrants who bring their own “cultures and practices that are very different to *our own*” (Colin & Squires in Xuereb, 2015, p. 6, emphasis added). Even the leader of the Opposition party, Adrian Delia<sup>2</sup>, has suggested that the Maltese are living in fear because villages are being overrun by ghettos (Arena, 2020). Thus, as the argument made by Pohjonen and Udupa (2017) illustrated on page 8 of chapter 1 posits, the construction of the *Us/Them* dichotomy serves to *reinforce the boundaries of the out-group* (both physical and symbolic).

Beyond the exclusion of migrants from shelter, as well as the squalid conditions they live in as a result, real-life consequences of the hate underlying the exclusion described here and reflected in the linguistic *Us/Them* dichotomy is further evident in the maltreatment of migrants in relation to, for example, the “[h]eavy-handed raid on migrants in Marsa intended to intimidate” (Zammit, 2022) in which police raided various homes and businesses in Marsa and Hamrun looking to arrest migrants who are in Malta illegally without the official paperwork. Raids such as these are a reaction to the aforementioned perceived ‘ghettoisation’ of Marsa, which is so widespread that the *Times of Malta* (ToM) even reported that, at one stage, Marsa’s Wikipedia page described it as ‘Africa in Malta’ (Times of Malta, 2019)<sup>3</sup>. According to a Televixin Malta (TVM) article<sup>4</sup>, the above mentioned raids were carried out “as part of an operation against drugs and organised crime and by a number of Police officers with the help of the Detention Service” (TVM News, 2022); yet, in the same article it is also reported that the “Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Byron Camilleri said that these raids are part of a plan by the authorities to tackle illegal immigration and those living here illegally” (ibid.). Moreover, *Malta Today* claims that the “raids are believed to have targeted visa

<sup>2</sup>With the Partit Laburista (Labour Party) as the ruling party from 2013 up to the present day in November 2023 (successfully winning 3 general elections), Adrian Delia was the leader of the Partit Nazzjonalista (Nationalist Party), the main opposition party in Malta’s bipartisan system, from 2017 to 2020.

<sup>3</sup>This has since been rectified.

<sup>4</sup>TVM is a government-funded news broadcaster.

overstayers, that is, asylum seekers who obtained international protection in another EU country” (Meilak, 2022). In any case, it is clear that the association of the illegal status of migrants discussed above is significantly conflated with illegal behaviour in general, thus leading to the sort of institutional oppression staged by these raids.

Overall, the *othering* and the distinction between *Us* and *Them* manifest in the discourse are compounded by the message of *patriotism*, which ultimately represents the Maltese as superior to the out-group, who should be looked down on with disdain and excluded from access to food, shelter, and other services. In this vein, as Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2017a) have argued that, amongst residents of Malta, there exists the general perception that it “may be less acceptable to directly attack a person on the basis of a minority identity, but when one does this trying to defend and protect one’s culture or even personal prosperity, it is more acceptable to use such rhetoric” (p. 185). As shown in sections 5.3.1, 6.3 and 6.4 above, the language used to describe the Maltese in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus suggests that the Maltese are victims of an *invasion of migrants* and unfair international laws which limit the rights and freedoms of the Maltese and their autonomy. Related to this self-victimisation is the idea that the Maltese should be patriotic and defend their own, and anyone who does not fall in line in this regard is a traitor. Again, this reinforces the distinction between *Us* and *Them*, further highlighting Baider et al.’s (2017a) assertion that hate is often cloaked by patriotism. With this in mind, the representation of the social actors that comprise the discourse in this way could possibly be a reaction to the perceived ‘*invasion of migrants*’ uncovered through the qualitative analysis of the HS sub-corpus in section 6.3, and, therefore, serves to justify in some sense the stance that migrants should be deported and sent back to the places from where they came.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the distinction between *Us* and *Them* and the effects of such strong patriotism are ultimately perpetuated as a result of Malta’s widely acknowledged lack of integration policy (see Costa 2018; European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2013). Indeed, according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which measures integration policies in countries across the globe, Malta scores 4 on a scale of 10 (1 being the most favourable policies and 10 being the most unfavourable). The MIPEX measures integration policies globally on the basis of three dimensions: basic rights, equal opportunities, and secure future. Thus, according to this measure, Malta does “the minimum in all three dimensions as [...] polices go only halfway towards providing immigrants with equal rights, opportunities and a secure future” (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). In recent years, there has been increased effort to introduce poli-

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<sup>5</sup>In fact, example 6.36 makes explicit the need of users to state plainly that their unwillingness to integrate with migrants has nothing to do with racism, but is simply due to concern about their own security.

cies that combat discrimination and encourage integration. In 2021, for example, the Anti-Racism Strategy (2021–2023) was launched to “[c]onfront and eliminate racism in all its forms, individual, systemic and societal” (Government of Malta, 2021, p. 5). In addition, at the end of 2020, Malta adopted its first integration strategy, but despite this, MIPEX continues to claim that since Malta only recently began to address integration, “its integration policies still create as many obstacles as opportunities for integration” (European Union, 1995-2023d).

The lack of migrant integration is not evident only through the language of the HS sub-corpus and the aforementioned raids that took place in 2022, but also in other research, such as Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2017a) and Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2018). Essentially, the research done for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, which looked at data ranging from 2015 to 2017, found that a similar type of *patriotism* and *othering* existed within that time span, thus highlighting the fact that the poor integration policy and the kind of implicit hate conveyed through patriotism is a breeding ground for maintaining a negative stance toward migrants and, as a result, the continued exclusion of migrants from key resources.

### 7.3 | Fear-fueled hate

The section above makes reference to the perceived victimhood that the Maltese experience as a result of the *invasion of migrants*. This ties in with a fear that the Maltese experience in relation to the effect (or perceived effect) that migrants may have on their cultural practices and economic opportunities. Indeed, as the research of this thesis affirms, much of the negative ideologies, values, and evaluations infused in discourse related to migration stems from fears and insecurity pertaining to cultural dissimilarity and job loss (Huysmans, 2006). These fears, in turn, fuel racism and xenophobia.

The evidence of fear within the discourse of the HS sub-corpus is not surprising; after all, fear is one of the psychological elements that Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, and Blackburn (2015) note can be strongly evidenced through language choice. In addition, it has been shown that fear and discrimination are inextricably linked. Ultimately, fear is one of the core primal emotions, and expressions of fear may be “aimed at instilling (existential) fear of another group, rather than ‘hate speech’-aimed at engendering hatred” (Buyse, 2014, p. 785). Here, Wodak’s (2001) notion of *topoi* described in section 2.1.1 becomes useful because the language analysis in section 5.2 calls attention to a number of specific fears that the Maltese have and that stem from the presence of migrants on the island. Most notably, the Maltese appear to be afraid that:

- a rise in migrants will lead to a rise in **crime** (e.g. examples 5.6 and 5.13)
- migrants will take **jobs** that otherwise can and should go to Maltese citizens (e.g. examples 6.11 and 5.57)
- migrants will bring their **culture** (and religion), impose it on the Maltese, and **change** the Maltese culture irreparably (e.g. example 6.19)
- migrants will take the **resources** to which the Maltese are entitled and leave the Maltese **without** said resources (e.g. example 6.21)

The fears outlined above seem to be closely related to the use of the *invasion* and the *flood* metaphors presented in section 6.3. There appears to be a fear that migrants will ultimately invade Malta and obtain work at the expense of the Maltese, who will end up unemployed and destitute. Indeed, the perception of migrants invading Malta appears to dominate discourse about migrants in general since the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus also demonstrate evidence of the metaphor in the language contained within them. Specifically, the search for the terms *inva\**, *infl\**, and *flood* was expanded to include both the larger corpora in order to investigate the veracity of the metaphors in the ToM discourse overall.

	HS	Xeno	Manceo
<i>inva*</i>	3	339	10,415
<i>infl*</i>	5	270	9818
<i>flood</i>	1	48	2816

Table 7.8: Frequency of lexemes related to *invasion* and *disaster* in the HS and Xeno sub-corpora, and the MaNeCo corpus

Table 7.8 compares the frequency of the aforementioned search terms across the HS and Xeno sub-corpora as well as the MaNeCo corpus. Indeed, within the Xeno sub-corpus, these frequencies as well as the collocation scores of *illegal* (which includes: *many, invasion*) and *immigrant* (which includes: *influx, many, thousand*) shown in table 7.5 and table 7.6 respectively suggest that these metaphors form a significant part of the broad representation of migrants and migration. However, while this discussion makes evident the existence of a link between the *invasion* and the *natural disaster* metaphors and the representation of migrants, further evidence is required from the collocation scores of words related to the metaphors to examine the extent of the relationship. Thus, having established that the two metaphors are strongly related to migration, it is necessary to turn to the collocations on *invasion*, *influx*, and *flood* within the MaNeCo corpus

to establish the directionality of the relationship. In other words, having established that discourse about migration is specifically associated with the *invasion* and the *natural disaster* metaphors, it can be useful to ascertain whether the two metaphors are uniquely associated with migration or if they also map onto other conceptual domains.

Table 7.9 shows the top 35 collocates of *invasion*, *invade*, *influx*, and *flood* within the full MaNeCo corpus. Firstly, it appears that both *influx* and *flood* (words related to *natural disaster*) collocate to a greater degree with lexical items related to migration (e.g. *immigrant*, *migrant*, *refugee*, *illegal*, *Africa*) than the collocates of *invasion* and *invade* (words related to the *invasion* metaphor). Moreover, as well as collocating strongly with items related to migration, *influx* and *flood* also collocate highly with words related to physical flooding (e.g. *seawater*, *drainage*, *Msida*, *rain*). It would seem, therefore, that the conceptualisation of this particular natural disaster (the flood) is related specifically to two domains: *migration* and *excess seawater*. The discussion surrounding *the flood* in the literal sense pertains to an ongoing problem that Malta has with rain water drainage in particular areas of the island, but still, in its metaphorical sense, the *natural disaster* of flooding is related almost exclusively to migration.

On the other hand, *invasion* is linked to several topics other than migration. As was discussed in section 6.3, conceptual metaphors essentially map information from a conceptual or source domain onto a target domain. For this reason, the other domains that collocates of *invasion* and *invade* map onto can offer some insight into the way migrants are viewed against the backdrop of the metaphor. The collocates of *invasion* and *invade* listed in table 7.9 mostly fall into six main categories: *country/nationality* (e.g. Iraq, Russian), *place/border* (e.g. axis, homeland), *religion* (Islamic, Muslim), *villain* (e.g. Hitler, Nazi), *migration* (e.g. illegal, alien), and *military/war/violence* (e.g. stealth, war). Hence, the lexical patterns and collocation analysis offer evidence of the fact that the conceptual mapping of migrants as an invasion is akin to other, more literal invasions, such as the invasion of Iraq or Poland, thus offering further support to the argument that migrants engender fear amongst the Maltese (at least as far as the ToM commenters are concerned). By evaluating the ways in which the idea of *invasion* is conceptualised in general, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the conceptual link between migrants and the invasion metaphor. In this sense, the analysis of these conceptual metaphors provides some explanation for the aforementioned inclusion of *AFM* in the discourse and therefore, the ideology that migrants require some sort of militaristic response, since the nature of the metaphors and their linguistic makeup contribute a discourse reflective of a problem that puts security, borders, and lives at risk and hence requires a drastic, militaristic solution.

Against the backdrop of the conceptual metaphors, and in view of the use of fear as

Invasion			Invade			Influx			Flood		
<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Score</i>
privacy	155	9.87	Iraq	132	9.01	steady	37	8.68	market	56	6.97
Iraq	113	8.88	privacy	81	8.8	immigrant	368	8.62	seawater	4	6.32
silent	42	7.7	Poland	47	8.25	cope	57	8.59	Msida	7	5.93
Russian	50	7.65	Crimea	46	8.24	migrant	188	8.32	Europe	80	5.88
massive	55	7.51	Afghanistan	42	8	uncontrolled	30	8.28	europe	7	5.55
mass	34	7.43	bomb	43	7.92	sudden	36	7.96	drainage	3	5.37
Islamic	36	7.36	Ukraine	61	7.87	massive	62	7.82	blog	9	5.36
bombing	22	7.26	shore	37	7.33	mass	30	7.46	river	3	5.3
Iraq	35	7.18	Russia	77	7.31	huge	92	7.36	valley	4	5.25
axis	15	7.13	Hitler	25	7.04	migrant	15	7.15	shore	6	5.19
Turkish	17	6.96	Russians	24	7.02	continuous	16	7.03	Msida	4	5.12
illegal	185	6.87	annex	15	6.95	refugee	53	6.95	businessman	4	5.01
Afghanistan	17	6.85	Kuwait	15	6.93	large	79	6.79	Road	5	5
alien	14	6.75	occupy	27	6.8	handle	30	6.78	immigrant	29	4.99
Kuwait	11	6.69	immigrant	100	6.67	foreigner	66	6.78	street	24	4.95
Muslim	29	6.65	territory	18	6.59	seeker	14	6.62	continent	4	4.95
Europe	135	6.59	Europe	136	6.58	unending	7	6.6	immigrant	28	4.94
stealth	9	6.37	African	20	6.53	constant	15	6.5	Qormi	3	4.89
Ottoman	8	6.33	Georgia	11	6.5	newcomer	7	6.47	Qormi	3	4.89
planned	10	6.33	troop	13	6.35	illegal	10	6.43	India	5	4.85
Iraqi	9	6.32	Sicilian	10	6.29	overwhelm	7	6.42	winter	4	4.74
immigrant	73	6.24	African	17	6.29	overwhelm	7	6.42	area	34	4.72
war	57	6.23	Palestine	11	6.18	encourage	31	6.34	road	61	4.69
occupation	10	6.21	country	407	6.13	sustain	12	6.31	literally	4	4.68
uncontrolled	9	6.18	illegal	11	6.1	never-end	6	6.3	Road	4	4.68
Poland	10	6.18	horde	8	5.99	immigration	26	6.19	rain	4	4.62
justify	30	6.08	illegally	20	5.98	tourist	45	6.08	Britain	7	4.47
attempted	9	6.06	Cyprus	15	5.97	curb	7	6.07	Africa	7	4.32
rival	7	6.04	Sicilian	8	5.97	Libyans	10	6.05	winter	3	4.32
Nazi	8	6.04	Syria	19	5.96	continued	6	6.03	heavily	3	4.3
rival	7	6.04	USSR	8	5.9	arrival	9	5.96	Marsa	4	4.28
homeland	9	6.04	Putin	15	5.9	control	23	5.85	west	3	4.26
immigration	25	6.02	Estonia	7	5.83	imminent	5	5.83	island	20	4.26
immigrant	62	6.01	Muslims	15	5.82	Romanian	5	5.81	rain	3	4.2
Crimea	8	5.88	horde	7	5.8	migratory	5	5.77	garage	3	4.17

Table 7.9: Collocates of *invasion*, *invade*, *influx*, and *flood* in the MatNeCo corpus

a function of discrimination, as expected, the sorts of fears listed above have been well documented in research pertaining to discrimination against migrants in other contexts too (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 1984). Specifically, it has been noted that “internal socio-economic challenges heighten the perception that migrants place an immense burden on already scarce resources” (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013, p. 198) and fear of job loss is a natural byproduct of this. Moreover, as described in chapter 1, as part of the research for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, focus group interviews were conducted to ascertain the perceptions and attitudes of society toward homophobic and xenophobic hate speech in Malta and, according to the interview participants, “the fear of migrants partly stems from a fear that migrants will take the jobs that the Maltese are vying for and there would, therefore, be a shortage of jobs on the market, thus leaving many Maltese unemployed” (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017c, p. 70). Although this appears to be a widespread belief, the reality is very different, since it has been variously noted that, in fact, Malta has been suffering from labour shortages to the extent that “[l]abour became so scarce that the public sector was accused of ‘draining human resources from the private sector’” (M. Debono, 2021, p.275). This creates an interesting juxtaposition with a comment made by Henry Battistino in the previously quoted interview with Saviour Balzan (Costa, 2018). In the interview, Balzan posits the question to Battistino as to whether or not he knows any Maltese people personally who have been turned away from work, especially in the case that a migrant had been selected instead. In response, Battistino explains that, in Malta, there are jobs in excess; the problem is not one of finding work. The problem is that migrants accept low wages (lower than the European average) and as a result, he blames them for keeping salaries low in Malta across the board. According to Battistino, the Maltese are put in a position in which they cannot demand higher salaries as long as migrants are allowed to work in Malta.

In a position that engenders hate, Battistino seems to place the blame of low salaries on migrants in the workforce rather than on unethical employers. In actual fact of course, the low salaries have little to do with migrants. Indeed, it has been reported that, on an institutional level, as late as 2023, Malta had the third lowest increase in statutory minimum wage in all of the EU (J. Debono, 2023), and this a year after Carmel Cacopardo, the leader of the Green Party<sup>6</sup>, asserted that there is a strong need to revise the minimum wage because “at 2020 prices, [minimum wage] is 40% below the minimum threshold of a decent wage. Those earning a minimum wage are clearly the

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<sup>6</sup>Alternattiva Demokratika (AD) (the Democratic Alternative Party), also known as the Green Party, was the main green party in Malta from 1989 until its merge with Partit Demokratiku (PD) (the Democratic Party) in 2020 forming ADPD. Cacopardo served as chairperson of AD from 2017 to 2020 and then of ADPD until May 2023.

working poor. The minimum wage is not a living wage” (Times of Malta, 2022). Whatever the case, in the decades since the so-called migration crisis started, no significant change has been made to the minimum wage in Malta, yet there appears to be a tendency to fear the effect that migrants may have on the employment market, and this fear is reflected in the linguistic constructions of the discourse.

Moving on, fear of crime is also somewhat obvious. There appears to be fear amongst commenters that migrants are responsible for a rise in crime and that their identity as migrants is heavily responsible for their supposed criminal behaviour. This can be stated implicitly as in example 5.8 (in which *illegal immigrants* are represented as colluding with *traffickers* and crossing borders *undetected*) or more explicitly as in example 5.13 (in which *these people* cause *trouble* out of *frustration*). Moreover, the widespread reference to migrants as *illegal immigrants* serves to exacerbate their association with crime and further delegitimise them by criminalising their entire identity (Al Fajri, 2017). In turn, this further legitimises the fears of the Maltese, making it easier to exclude migrants from the real and perceived resources as discussed in section 7.2 above, leading to extreme forms of discrimination such as the raids described in the previous section; after all, nobody wants to live next door to a suspected criminal.

The fear of the loss of culture is particularly interesting in the analysis of the HS sub-corpus. Firstly, as example 6.19 shows (*...they are ruining are country and culture ...*), the discourse of the HS sub-corpus contains direct reference to fear of culture loss. Moreover, in the aforementioned interview, Ahmed Bugre elucidates that discrimination against Africans stems very much from fear of culture loss and that “[t]he problem always comes to the Africans because people are afraid that they will change their culture, that they will marry in Malta, that they will bring Islam” (Costa, 2018). The discussion, therefore, circles back to the problematisation of migrants and Africa discussed in section 7.1 above since it contributes to the overall fearmongering and subsequently further legitimises the fears and exclusions discussed here.

Along the same lines, looking back at table 7.9, the idea of religion also surfaces through the collocations in the MaNeCo corpus. No mention of religion emerged through the qualitative analysis in the HS sub-corpus. However, *Muslim* and *Islam* appear to collocate with both *invasion* and *invade* in the MaNeCo corpus in phrases like *Islamic invasion of Europe* and *a Muslim invasion*. The inference, therefore, is that there seems to be, among the users commenting in the ToM, a fear of Muslims and of Muslims ‘taking over Europe’. In the HS sub-corpus, however, there is virtually no evidence of this, while in the Xeno sub-corpus there is some evidence. *Islam\** appears 78 times in the Xeno sub-corpus and not at all in the HS sub-corpus, while *musli\** has a frequency of 101 in the Xeno sub-corpus and appears once in the HS sub-corpus. Surprisingly, the data seem to

point to the conclusion that the fear of migrants does not necessarily correlate with a fear of Islam although both do exist; if the two are related, it is not necessarily evident here. However, the Xeno sub-corpus does contain instances of both *Islam* and *Muslim*, which suggests that there is some correlation between mention of religion and the severity of discrimination. In other words, the annotations evidence that the inclusion of religion in the discourse does not necessarily equate to hate speech.

What is interesting here is that, although there is explicit mention of the fear that the Maltese have of the effects that migrants may have on their culture, there is a marked absence of religion in the HS sub-corpus, in particular Islam, contrary to what Bugre's statement would suggest. This is surprising for a number of reasons. Firstly, anti-Islamic sentiment has been found to be a widespread reality and it is often tied with anti-migration ideologies (see de Cillia et al., 1999; Richardson, 2009; van Leeuwen, 2008). In addition, Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2017a) show that, in Malta specifically, the default assumption is that migrants are Muslim leading to what they call a "conflation of a person's identity on grounds of religion, skin colour and ethnicity, whereby one might be a black Ethiopian Christian, but by virtue of being black and African they can easily be categorised as Muslims" (p. 184). Moreover, in the same interview, when asked whether race ('colour') plays a role in discrimination in Malta, Bugre categorically states that religion, specifically Islam, plays a much larger role in the fear against migrants (Costa, 2018):

"Yes. It is a question of colour, but not only of colour, but of religion. I think that in Malta, colour is not so much of a problem than Islam. Colour is a problem, because people are very shocked when they see a person of African origin, but religion, people are afraid that Islam will come and invade Europe"

In the same interview, Henry Battistino claims that "everywhere where it's entered Europe, there are major problems" (Costa, 2018). Yet, despite the external evidence that fear of Islam and discrimination against migrants are closely related both in Malta and abroad, there seems to be a lack of such evidence specifically in the HS sub-corpus. Given the breadth of evidence discussed above, there are three possible explanations for this. Firstly, the lack of mention of Islam in the HS sub-corpus may simply be due to the size of the HS sub-corpus subset relative to both the Xeno sub-corpus and the full MaNeCo corpus. Indeed, while a concordance search for the terms *Muslim* and *Islam* in the HS sub-corpus returns 1 and 0 results respectively, they are more strongly represented in the Xeno sub-corpus (86 and 24 hits) and the full MaNeCo corpus (16,785 and

8,420 hits). This may be purely incidental and simply a result of the decision that was taken to extract the earliest comments from the top most relevant articles for annotation and the eventual inclusion into the HS sub-corpus. Yet, there is also another possible reason for the absence of Islam in the HS sub-corpus, which is that it may be reflective of a reality in which the annotators do not consider negative comments against Islam to constitute hate speech.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the lack of mention of Islam and Muslims in the HS sub-corpus could also be related to the observations made by Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2017a) above pertaining to the conflation of identities; it could be that the identity of migrants as Muslim is so much taken for granted, it is not even necessary to state it in concrete terms. Whatever the reason for the absence of Islam in the data of the HS sub-corpus, the omission is noticeable against the backdrop of several scholarly works that identify the conflation of fear of migration with the fear of Muslims (see, for example, Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017a; Buhagiar, Mifsud, Brockdorff, & Sammut, 2020; Pisani, 2017; Pisani, 2018; Sammut, Buhagiar, Mifsud, De Giovanni, & Brockdorff, 2022;), and while it is difficult at this stage to formulate a comprehensive explanation for this, it is possible to speculate on conceivable reasons that are worth exploring in future research.

A final note worth making here circles back to the decision to not include topic 39 with the data of the HS sub-corpus, since this present discussion offers evidence that the right decision was made therein. In chapter 4, it was posited that including topic 39 may result in religion having a more weighty representation in the HS sub-corpus overall, which could result in observations that are not quite in line with the actual representation of migrants in the data. In any case, even with the absence of Islam in the HS sub-corpus, as shown above, there is other evidence of the fear of culture change as a result of migrants on the island.

Together with the patriotism discussed in section 7.2, these findings give new relevance to the argument made by Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2017a) that:

multiculturalism might not be negative by virtue of what it stands for, but becomes undesirable when it seemingly pushes the Maltese culture, as the dominant and most visible culture of the country, to the side, effectively becoming a threat in the conscience of the general population. (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017a, p. 185)

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<sup>7</sup>At this point, this is only speculative. In reality, to be able to confirm this, more data is needed, but as a preliminary assessment, there are 8 occurrences of *Muslim* and 0 of *Islam* in the comments that the majority of group 1 agreed are not hate speech. From the perspective of the author, 6 of those comments are negative and 5 arguably contain a suggestion.

Hence, the representations of the fears discussed in this section stem not from a dislike of migrants and multiculturalism itself, but from a fear of change, crime, and financial repercussions. Fear tends to trigger the fight or flight response, and the Maltese appear to respond to migrants with the fight response. When Maltese people say that they “are not racist but...” or that they do not have a problem with migrants, it appears that they may be telling the truth, in the sense that they truly do not believe their ideologies are discriminatory. The negative ideologies toward migrants appear to be borne firstly out of a sense of superiority and patriotism, and secondly through a fear of a perceived enemy. Even so, the fight response triggered by this fear is worrying since, “[t]he instigation of fear among one’s own group, rather than hatred against the other, has been found to be a key mechanism in such processes leading to violence” (Buyse, 2014, p. 785).

In conclusion, it is worth noting that, in light of the lack of real-life evidence supporting the fears discussed here, a more accurate term to use is ‘*phobia*’. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) a phobia is the “marked and persistent fear that is *excessive or unreasonable*, cued by the presence or anticipation of a specific object or situation” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016, emphasis added). In light of this definition, as well the lack of evidence of, for example, migrants being preferred over Maltese in the work place, the fear of migrants can be viewed as part of the mechanisms of xenophobia in Malta. Hence, the fear (or phobia) perpetuated by the discourse can have significantly negative effects, not only on the institutional and private access to resources by migrants as discussed in section 7.2 above, but also their physical, psychological, and emotional safety in light of a growing rate of hate crimes (aditus, 2022). Therefore, any solution to the discrimination and hate that exists in Malta should account for these fears and attempt to address them.

## 7.4 | Violence by inaction

Much debate and speculation has centred around the extent to which hate speech can act as an observable precursor to hate crime, in particular *violent* hate crime (see Ahmad, 2012; Dharmapala & McAdams, 2005; Reddy, 2002; Ross et al., 2017; Whillock, 1995). The discussion in this section does not directly enter into this debate, but rather seeks to explore the extent to which the language in the HS sub-corpus and the discourse pertaining to migrants more broadly is representative of violence in itself; in other words, to what extent can the language used to discuss migrants be characterised

as stage 4 of Cortese's model: *inciting discriminatory violence* (i.e. encouraging violence against minorities)? According to Cortese (2006), language that incites discriminatory violence essentially "incites *imminent* criminal behaviour" (Cortese, 2006, p. 9, emphasis added). With this in mind, even the comments of the HS sub-corpus that arguably construe violence, do not pose a realistic *imminent* threat. Indeed, the only comment in the HS sub-corpus that contains a direct expression of violence is example 6.26, in which the user suggests that boats (most likely migrant boats) should be *scuttled*. As described in section 6.2, while the scuttling of ships is usually done on vessels that are out of use, here the user makes no mention of disembarking the passengers (assumed to be migrants) before deliberately sinking their boat. Considering that the boats used can carry sometimes as many as 80 people (Arena, 2022), as previously argued, such a suggestion is tantamount to violence on a large scale. Yet, even in this one example of violence, the allusion is made indirectly by means of the word *scuttle* and the *suppression* of the migrants that can be assumed to be boarded on the sea vessel, both of which act as a sort of hedge to the violent suggestion, not to mention the ambiguity described in section 6.1, since it is difficult to say for certain whether the commenter is implying that patrol boats or migrant vessels should be scuttled.

It is clear, therefore, that overt calls for violence are very rare in the data of the HS sub-corpus. Again, this is not terribly surprising given the discussion in section 7.2 above pertaining to the understanding that extreme forms of hate reflect poorly on the speaker. However, this does not mean that the discussion of violence ends here, for there are a number of related issues that merit consideration.

Firstly, it is necessary to assess the interface between cruelty and violence. Although some of the suggestions made in the HS sub-corpus do not include concrete calls to violence, some can be argued to consist of cruel intentions. One such example relates to the *send them back* narrative explored in section 5.2.4. At this stage, it becomes necessary to reassess the narrative against the backdrop of the dreadful journey migrants have had to take in order to reach Malta (or any part of Europe for that matter) as well as the state of affairs and relative safety in their home country. Indeed, some of the comments in the HS sub-corpus as discussed in section 5.2, display a clear acknowledgement that the boats used by migrants to reach Malta are unsafe and not seaworthy. In addition to this, there also appears to be acknowledgement that the sea journey is treacherous and laden with danger. In view of this, and if indeed '*repatriating*' migrants means certain harm will come to them, it can be argued that violence, or rather cruelty, is more widespread than initially thought since any suggestion to *send them back* to terrible conditions is arguably cruel. Moreover, given that migrants were lucky to survive their initial journey in the first place, the mere suggestion that they return can be construed as

violent. Hence, although the suggestion that they should be sent back does not overtly suggest violence, it is definitely cruel to the extent that, if taken on board, it may cost the lives of thousands of people, in particular if they face danger upon their return.

Indeed, beyond the disregard of the dangerous journey that migrants have been fortunate enough to survive, those who are denied protection and are deported may face torture and even death. In 2002, a group of 220 Eritrean migrants who failed to secure protection in Malta were forcibly deported back to Eritrea. Many of those 220 were tortured and imprisoned, with some managing to escape, eventually reaching Sudan and gaining protection there. According to one survivor:

Three women [deported from Malta in advanced pregnancy] gave birth at Adi Abeto prison but they were not even given blankets. They were not held there for long but we don't know what happened to them. The rest of us all had interrogations and beatings and torture. We were asked why we had left Eritrea, why we had spoken against the government, and we were beaten with leather and rubber whips if we denied their accusations. (Amnesty International, 2004, p. 30)

In a similar event in 2004, a number of migrants deported to Libya were beaten and tortured by the authorities there (Times of Malta, 2013). In fact, two Somali migrants who were eventually rescued by nomads were able to make their way back to Malta through Tripoli in 2006. Once in Malta, they were able to take their case to the Constitutional Court, which found that their rights had been violated. The relevance of cases such as these becomes crucial when assessing the cruelty and violence imbued within the language. While there may not be overt calls to violence in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, the mere suggestion that migrants *be sent back* implicitly advocates a level of cruelty that could be taken to equate to violence.

Further evidence of the dominant belief that migrants should be *sent back* is clear in both the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus as well. The top 20 N-grams of the Xeno sub-corpus include *be sent back* (table 7.10). The MaNeCo corpus, on the other hand, requires some more specific corpus queries. Since the size of the corpus is quite substantial and it includes several topics that are not related to migration, a search of N-grams does not provide particularly useful information. Further, it is not possible to search for the collocations of say *their* or *your* since Sketch Engine is unable to compute collocations of certain parts of speech (typically, only nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs are supported). One work-around then, was to search for N-grams containing specific search criteria. Against this backdrop, a search for N-grams in the MaNeCo

HS		Xeno		Maneco	
Item	Freq.	Item	Freq.	Item	Freq.
back to their	8	the illegal immigrants	409	their own country	1553
be sent back	8	of illegal immigrants	257	their way to	1135
them back to	7	of the EU	247	their own countries	841
their own countries	7	these illegal immigrants	196	their children to	804
they want to	6	the rest of	187	their best to	753
back to Libya	5	do not want	166	their right to	727
send them back	5	I do n't	163	their country and	498
these illegal immigrants	5	do n't want	151	their country of	484
to their own	5	there is no	150	their own people	477
to their own countries	5	the Maltese people	149	their lives and	462
that it is	4	of the Maltese	148	their utmost to	437
to send them	4	in the EU	134	their way of	402
has to be	4	to do with	133	their families and	402
do not want	4	that they are	131	their country of origin	385
of illegal immigrants	4	they do n't	131	their own personal	352
there is no	4	they want to	127	their lives to	351
to their country	4	the EU and	126	their job and	337
the Maltese people	4	be sent back	125	their own hands	333
in the UK	4	is going to	122	their own pockets	332
them all back	4	they are not	122	their lives in	318

Table 7.10: Top 20 N-grams in the HS and Xeno sub-corpa, and the Maneco corpus

corpus that begin with the word *their* is highly indicative of an overarching narrative asserting that migrants should *go back to their country*, with the phrases *their own country*; *their own countries*; *their country and*; *their country of*; *their own people*; and *their country of origin* all included in the top 20 N-grams. To this end, table 7.10 compares the top 20 N-grams of the HS and the Xeno sub-corpora with the top 20 N-grams beginning with *their* in the MaNeCo corpus.

Finally, although there is no conclusive evidence of a direct relationship between hate speech on the one hand and hate crime on the other, it is broadly assumed that the proliferation of hate speech does impact levels of discriminatory violence. Indeed, it has been postulated that hate speech can shape attitudes and beliefs by promoting prejudice, stereotypes, and the dehumanisation of certain groups, which in turn, can contribute to a climate of hostility and intolerance, and thus increases the likelihood of hate-motivated actions (Katz, Blumer, & Wright, 2020). In addition, hate speech can normalise or legitimise violence against targeted groups, thereby desensitising individuals to the harm caused. Subsequently, this normalisation may contribute to an increased risk of hate crime incidents (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2010). Moreover, one of the goals of hate speech can be said to “inflame the emotions of followers, denigrate the designated out-class, inflict permanent irreparable harm to the opposition, and ultimately conquer” (Whillock, 1995, p. 32). With this in mind, there are two phenomena

that are important to consider.

In the first instance, the time span between the dates of the comments included in the HS sub-corpus and the time of writing offers a useful gap to observe whether or not any of the violent or cruel suggestions made in the data have had any real-life manifestation. Indeed, some of the comments made pertaining to preventing migrants from disembarking their vessels (e.g. examples 5.18, 5.19, 5.23, and 6.16) came to some sort of fruition during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. With the fear of migrants compounded by the fear of the pandemic, over 400 asylum seekers were kept on boats described as 'floating prisons' outside Maltese territorial waters for a period of weeks (see aditus, 2023; Agius, 2021; Al Jazeera Media Network, 2023; Brincat, 2021; Council of Europe, 2020; Deutsche Welle, 2020; Sansone, 2020; Schembri Orlando, 2021). It seems, therefore, that when push comes to shove and fears escalate, migrants may be treated inhumanely, along the lines of some of the suggestions made in the years earlier.

In addition, there also appears to be a trend of increasing levels of violence toward migrants both at an institutional level and by individuals in society. The aditus foundation (aditus, 2022) collated a list of violent incidents perpetrated against migrants since 2002 (table 7.11). The incidents can broadly be categorised in three types:

- i. **institutional violence:** characterised by institutional neglect as well as the flouting of human rights laws, particularly in relation to the illegal detainment of migrants
- ii. **individuals going rogue:** individuals within their institutional capacity, essentially going rogue, usually by means of excessive force
- iii. **individual violence/abuse:** individuals, whether they form part of an institution or not, within their personal capacity, committing a crime against migrants

The incidents presented in table 7.11 indicate that, firstly, violent displays really proliferated around the time of the data contained in the HS sub-corpus (2011-2012), which is when the topic of migration (topic 8 in the output of the topic modelling process - see section 4.2.1.1) really started to be represented in the MaNeCo corpus (the ToM data). While before 2011, there was not even 1 violent event a year, since then there have been several each year. In addition, it appears that it is only in later years that violence began to be perpetrated by individual vigilantes. Although it is difficult to explain why this is on the basis of this analysis alone, it would make for interesting future research to ascertain whether or not there is a correlation in the local context between increasing levels of violence in hate speech and the increasing violence observed in society.

On the basis of the evidence presented here, while it is impossible, at this stage, to say whether the relationship between the language used to describe migrants and

Year	Type	Event
2002	Institutional	220 Eritrean refugees forcibly returned & faced immediate arrest and brutal torture
2004	Institutional	Forced Return of 6 Somali migrants to Libya, 4 dead
2005	Institutional	26 hospitalised due to excessive force used by AFM during peaceful protest at Safi Detention Centre
2008	Institutional	Excessive force used against migrants in Safi Detention Centre
2008	Rogue	Police use excessive force against black migrants in Paceville
2007-2009	Institutional	18 months and 9 days of immigration detention deemed to breach right to liberty
2011	Rogue	Sexual abuse by detention officer at Lyster Detention Centre
2011	Institutional	Rubber bullets, tear gas, batons and shield used to quell protests at Safi Detention Centre
2011	Rogue	Ifeanyi Nwokoye died of heart attack after beating in Hal Far Detention Centre
2012	Rogue	Mamadou Kamara beaten to death by Detention Services and AFM Personnel
2011-2012	Institutional	14 and a half months found to amount to inhuman & degrading treatment and breach the right to liberty
2011-2013	Institutional	546 days of detention in an immigration context deemed illegal by Strasbourg courts
2013	Institutional	5 day detention period following the granting of subsidiary protection illegal
2012-2013	Institutional	2 minors detained for a period of around 8 months
2012-2013	Institutional	Vulnerable woman kept in detention for over 16 months
2016-2017	Institutional	33 Malian migrants living in Malta for a number of years detained illegally
2018	Individual violence/abuse*	Social Worker 61, sexually abused 4 girls in AWAS care home for unaccompanied minors
2019	Individual violence/abuse	17 year old run down by two off-duty AFM officers
2019	Individual violence/abuse	Two migrants shot and injured by two off-duty officers
2019	Individual violence/abuse	Lassana Cisse shot dead by two off-duty AFM officers
2019	Institutional	Inhuman treatment of 107 migrants at Corradino Correctional Facility
2019	Institutional	6 migrants being illegally detained on "health grounds" released
2020	Institutional	Over 400 rescued migrants kept on the highseas for months on chartered ferry boats
2019-2020	Institutional	Held alone in a container for 75 days, 40 of which not allowed to exercise
2020	Rogue	Unlicensed Private Security Guard shot migrant with unlicensed firearm at Safi Detention Centre
2020	Institutional	17-year old dies at Lyster Detention Centre
2020	Institutional	Man illegally detained for 144 days, Court concerned that people were being detained without a legal basis
2021	Institutional	6 asylum seekers continued to be held in detention for months after being greenlighted for release
2021	Institutional	Migrant woman turned away with Panadol prescription, dies in her sleep
2022	Institutional	Immigration Police enter care home and arrest two migrant children
2022	Institutional	Indiscriminate Marsa Raids
2022	Individual violence/abuse*	3 on-duty Police Officers abducted & assaulted black migrants
2022	Institutional	2 Pakistanis illegally detained for over 40 days

Table 7.11: Violent incidents perpetrated against migrants between 2002 and 2022

\* Event can be interpreted as an example of a person within the institution going rogue, but in reality, the crime is related to the perpetrators' own criminal actions outside their identity of the institution

violence toward them is one of causation, there is a clear correlation between the two. In addition, while there are practically no overt calls to violence within the language of the HS sub-corpus, there are several other ways that violence is latently implied. Needless to say, this can have serious effects, not only on the safety of migrants in relation to their physical, psychological, and mental health, but also on policies of the Maltese government that put migrants at risk.

## 7.5 | Blame shifting and villain manufacturing

The final discourse necessary to consider relates not to the power dynamics between the Maltese (the in-group) and migrants (the out-group), but to the relationship between Malta and the broader European community. The discussion thus far has revealed a clear disdain for African migrants and the view that they enter Malta and exploit its resources at the expense of the Maltese. This representation consequently makes it easier to preclude migrants from all kinds of resources and services (such as the housing market). Although the analysis in section 5.4.1 indicates that Europe is represented less as part of the out-group than Africa in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, the disdain toward migrants juxtaposed with the element of superiority to Africa, puts Europe in a sort of in-between position in which it, in part, associates with Malta as morally elevated from Africa, but, in part, is detached from Malta through its imposition of unfair standards and practices as well as its perceived hypocrisy. Within this perspective, there appears to be a tendency in the discourse to put the blame for Malta's predicament on Europe and NGOs; there is, so to speak, an imagined villain constructed via the representation of Europe and NGOs in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus.

Due to the low representation of the secondary social actors identified in the HS sub-corpus, quantitative measures are of no use for their analysis, unlike the evidence presented in previous sections. Hence, observations must rely solely on the qualitative deep reading of the data within the HS sub-corpus. Moreover, the extrapolation of generalisations by means of corpus tools is also impractical since there is much discourse pertaining to say Europe and NGOs in the ToM discourse that is not related to migrants at all.

In view of the above, the qualitative observations provide evidence that the construction of the imagined villain relates to the perception of the Maltese as victims of unfairly having to support migrants at their own expense. According to the representations described in section 5.4.1, NGOs and the European Union (EU) receive much of the blame for imposing migrants on Malta. Indeed, in view of the representation of

Europe in examples 5.43 to 5.47 that portrays Europe as a saboteur, it is unsurprising that the users participating in the discourse differentiate Malta from the rest of Europe, since it, in some sense, diminishes Malta's sovereignty and its ability to determine its own home affairs. This sort of rhetoric ultimately forms part of a much broader discourse of Euroscepticism, the same sort that eventually led to Brexit. Indeed, Wodak and Boukala (2015) show that there has been marked rise in Euroscepticism, which has been accompanied by, firstly, a rise in ultra-national, far-right political parties, such as Golden Dawn in Greece; Front National in France; the UK Independence Party in England; and, naturally, Moviment Patrijotti Maltin in Malta (headed by Henry Battistino), as well as several austerity measures and restrictions on migration. As a result, "[t]he rhetoric of exclusion has thus become part and parcel of a discourse about Europe and European identities, and much more generally, of a global discourse about migration and global economy" (ibid., p. 89).

This relationship between anti-migration sentiment and Euroscepticism has been observed in numerous countries, from the UK to Hungary to Poland (see Canveren & Akgül Durakçay, 2017; Csehi & Zgut, 2021; Güler, 2019; Pirro, Taggart, & van Kessel, 2018) and in light of the discussion in this section, despite its unique circumstances, Malta appears to be no different. Malta stands out due to the fact that, beyond its economic policies, its political landscape sets it apart from other recent EU member states, as both major political parties (Labour and Nationalist) now endorse pro-European stances (Cachia, 2023). Nevertheless, this does not imply that Malta has been immune to challenges or that Euroscepticism is non-existent; in fact, Eurosceptic ideas are often closely associated with concerns surrounding irregular migration (ibid.), and ultimately, when it comes to migration, migrants are portrayed as adversaries, and Europe is depicted as an aggressor, exerting dominance through forceful actions.

Against this backdrop, it is widely thought that the sort of discourse described thus far in this thesis is largely responsible for Brexit, a political issue that many agree had strong xenophobic undertones (see Botterill, McCollum, & Tyrrell, n.d.; Durrheim et al., 2018; Goodman, 2021; Rzepnikowska, 2019; Tudor, 2022). Specifically, Cap (2017) explains that immigration is:

a theme that has been salient in public discourse of the modern UK, especially the 'Brexit' rhetoric, where it encroached on issues of *national sovereignty, democracy and economic prosperity*. [...] the British immigration discourse is to a large extent a discourse of *uncertainty and ever-growing anxiety*, as well as *xenophobia and hatred*, involving a strong *Self-Other distinction* and *organized ways of othering* (Cap, 2017, p. 67, emphasis added)

The parallels with Malta are stark. As discussed in this section and the ones above, much of the anti-migration sentiment stems from a fear of migrants *invading* the island and *draining* Malta of its *resources* that should be designated solely for the Maltese (jobs, houses, welfare etc.), as well as the fear of *crime* and *culture change*. Placing the blame for the problems related to migration on Europe helps to deflect the negative backlash that comes with such extreme views. In section 6.4, the Maltese were described in relation to their representation as altruistic victims; they are portrayed as ultimately good people who would help if they could, but cannot for lack of space and resources. This is bolstered by Battistino's remarks in the *Malta Today* interview (Costa, 2018) in which he describes himself as a Christian for whom everyone is a sibling regardless of race. His problem is rather what he terms '*illegal immigration*'. This also affirms observations made by M. G. Vella and Mintoff, who state that although, "small island state of Malta prides itself on its resilience and altruism, within a context of exceptional economic growth and notable employment rates, it fails to realise even its basic international obligations" (M. G. Vella & Mintoff, 2024, p.41). Hence, the representation of the Maltese as good Christian altruistic people, together with the villainisation of Europe places the responsibility of the implicit violence described in the previous section away from the Maltese and onto the broader global and European community.

Moreover, looking back at examples 5.43 to 5.47 as well as the different ways that Europe and the EU associate with different entities described on page 173, it becomes clear that, although there is a referential difference between Europe and the EU, the actions that they both partake in reflect little difference in their representation; whether discussing the EU as an institution or the continent of Europe, the message is that they have abandoned Malta and their duty. Moreover, in view of this discussion, it should be clear that, although Europe is not a major player in the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, its representation does offer useful insight into the stances related to migrants therein. Indeed, the portrayal of the interaction between Malta and Europe offers further evidence of the negative stance toward migrants imbued in the language of the sub-corpus since the inaction of Europe places Malta in a precarious and unwanted position of having to host '*uninvited migrants*' (example 6.17).

In addition, the representation of NGOs and human traffickers (explored in sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 respectively) also serves to contribute to the construction of the same ideology. NGOs are represented as dubious and forceful social actors. This alone evidences a particularly negative stance that the discourse in the HS sub-corpus exhibits toward the organisations. However, in the context of the assessment of hate speech, as this thesis seeks to do, this discourse also exposes negative ideologies related to migrants. Since the discourse discussed here embodies a particularly negative stance to-

ward NGOs in relation to the work that they do with migrants (in particular trying to save migrants in danger of dying and assisting them in achieving a better life), the implication is that migrants are not welcome *here* and that they should rather be left to fend for themselves even if that means certain death. Moreover, the representation of traffickers as hardened criminals foreshows a number of interesting conclusions as well as seeming anomalies. Firstly, in light of this discussion, the accusation in example 5.52 that NGOs are nothing more than human traffickers is a very serious allegation and essentially amounts to a gross insult in the context of the work that they do to repair some of the devastation caused by traffickers. Hence, the comparison of NGOs with human traffickers serves to emphasise the disdain that the users feel toward NGOs. Secondly, and quite curiously, there is the accusation that traffickers put lives in danger by taking money from unsuspecting migrants and boarding them onto unsafe vessels. In the context of the discussion in section 5.2, which identifies a discourse in which migrants categorically should not be welcomed in Malta, no matter the risk that *pushing them back* might pose to their safety, there appears to be a disjuncture between the accusations made about human traffickers and the stance toward migrants taken by most users. However, in light of the position espoused by the representation of the Maltese as victims and as good Christians, this perplexity can be attributed to the deflection of blame onto traffickers.

## 7.6 | Conclusion

This chapter marks the end of the data analysis carried out for this thesis. More specifically, this chapter sought to evaluate how the identities and discourse patterns discussed in chapters 5 and 6 function within Maltese society more broadly (at least as far as the ToM readership are concerned) by addressing research questions 10 and 11. Against this backdrop, it is noted that the representation of social actors in the discourse surrounding migration in the Xeno sub-corpus and the full MaNeCo corpus reflects and reinforces existing power structures both within Maltese society and on a global scale. The migrant dilemma often highlights the struggles and challenges faced by migrants (or rather asylum seekers), juxtaposed with the perceived impact they have on local communities. Migrants, often seen as outsiders, face real-life consequences such as discrimination in housing and detention policies. This portrayal does not only perpetuate stereotypes, but also underscores power differentials, where migrants are positioned as the marginalised *'other'* within the broader social hierarchy. Within this frame, language emerges as a potent tool in maintaining power dynamics within the context of

migration in Malta. Fear-fuelled hate rhetoric, characterised by the shifting of blame onto the broader European community, as well as the manufacturing of villains (NGOs and smugglers), serves to vilify migrants and divert attention from systemic issues and discrimination. By framing migrants as threats or scapegoats, discriminatory discourse is given the space to flourish, thereby reinforcing existing power structures and social inequalities.



## Conclusion

The preceding chapters lay a strong foundation for the discussion of xenophobia in Malta, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of xenophobic hate speech on the island. The focus on social actors and their representations provides a nuanced understanding of this complex issue. Through a detailed analysis of the engagement of different social actors, a window is opened into the intricate mechanisms that underlie hate speech targeting migrants in Malta. To this end, this research also contributes significant insights into the fundamental components of xenophobic hate speech, shedding light on the groups that are particularly vulnerable to its impact. Moreover, this examination underscores the challenges inherent to studying hate speech, notably the difficulty in identifying hate speech, which is highlighted by the issue of low inter-annotator agreement.

Having conducted an analysis of the various representations of the social actors involved in the discussion about migration in the discourse of the ToM comments (the full MaNeCo corpus), one thing that becomes immediately obvious is that it was a wise decision to limit investigation to only xenophobia. Chapter 1 introduced the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, which served as a pilot to this research and which made observations pertaining to both homophobia and xenophobia. In that same discussion (section 1.2), the decision to focus solely on xenophobia was elucidated due to the depth of analysis required by the approaches adopted by this research. Indeed, attempting to research both homophobia and xenophobia would not only have presented a quantity of data unmanageable within the time frame, but it would also have broken coherence by requiring multiple (possibly unrelated) discussions.

Another crucial confirmation that the analysis of this thesis corroborates is the difficulty in keeping the four proposed stages of CDA completely separate (description, interpretation, explanation, and evaluation). Although as posited in chapter 2, the four-

stage model undeniably provides a structured and systematic way of analysing language with the view of uncovering ideology, in practice, much of the analyses of the four stages overlap considerably. For example, when *describing* the use of the pronoun 'they' to describe migrants, a separate discussion relating to its *interpretation* as a means of creating distance from another group 'we' creates a cumbersome analytical framework leading to unnecessary micro-divisions in the discussion.

Despite this, the four stages and the 11 research questions organised around them provided a useful guide for directing the research and a clear road-map for conducting analyses. With this in mind, it is possible to summarise the outcomes of this thesis in relation to the research questions first posited on page 58, which I repeat here for convenience:

■ Stage 1: Description

1. Who are the main social actors involved in discourse about migration?
2. How are the social actors linguistically manifested?
3. What linguistic patterns are evident in the representation of social actors in hate speech against migrants?

■ Stage 2: Interpretation

4. How are the various social actors represented in discourse?
5. What other identities are indexed through the language patterns in the discourse?
6. What discourse patterns are evident in hate speech against migrants?

■ Stage 3: Explanation

7. How can the frequency of the said discourse patterns be explained?
8. In what way is hate related to other ideologies?
9. What ideological patterns are evident in hate speech against migrants?

■ Stage 4: Evaluation

10. How does the representation of social actors correlate with the current power structures in Maltese (and global) society?
11. How is language used as a tool to maintain power in the context of migration in Malta?

Essentially, the discourse surrounding migration is multifaceted, and involves a complex interplay of various social actors, most notably migrants and the Maltese populace (RQ1). These actors are not merely passive participants, but are dynamically manifested through several linguistic mechanisms, ranging from subtle backgrounding to overt classification and objectivation (RQ2). Migrants, often portrayed in a negative light, become subjects of abstraction, stripped of individuality, and reduced to mere vessels or objects of classification like “illegal boatpeople.” Conversely, the Maltese are linguistically positioned as proponents of repatriation, wielding suggestions and verbal clauses to assert control over the narrative (RQ4).

In view of this, the discourse reflects a pervasive pattern of Othering, thus accentuating the negative attributes of migrants, while downplaying their positive qualities. This representation stands in stark contrast to the idealised virtues of the Maltese (RQ6). More specifically, the language employed in the discourse of all three corpora, but especially of the hate speech corpus, serves as a conduit for indexing broader social identities, perpetuating narratives of invaders versus protectors and fostering an environment of exaggerated victimhood and altruism, thus shaping perceptions and attitudes towards migration (RQ5). Further, within the discourse examined, language patterns such as suggestion, metaphor, irony, and insult serve to dehumanise and vilify (RQ3).

These linguistic strategies are often underpinned by deep-seated fears of economic displacement and cultural upheaval (RQ7), intertwined with ideologies of patriotism and Euroscepticism (RQ8), which ultimately serve to delegitimise and problematise the out-group (RQ9). Moreover, the frequency and intensity of such discourse patterns are linked to power dynamics, both locally in Maltese society and globally. The representation of social actors not only reflects, but also reinforces, existing power structures, perpetuating narratives that exacerbate the migrant dilemma and fuel real-life consequences such as violence and discriminatory policies (RQ10). In this context, language emerges not merely as a tool of communication, but as a potent instrument of power, perpetuating fear, shifting blame, and manufacturing scapegoats to maintain hegemonic control over the discourse surrounding migration in Malta (RQ11).

Finally, this thesis significantly contributes to research by elucidating the mechanisms underlying hate and discrimination in Malta through the comprehensive analysis of discourse pertaining to migration. The findings demonstrate a prevailing tendency to discredit and cast migrants in a negative light within the discourse analysed for this thesis. Moreover, tangible evidence underscores the existence of discriminatory practices in society, evidenced by the existence of discriminatory policies and the systemic exclusion of migrants from vital resources. It accomplishes this through the meticulous assembly of multiple corpora, detailed in chapter 4, and by introducing innovative

automated down-sampling methods for CDA, as outlined in the same chapter. Furthermore, it introduces an original concept whereby insights gained from in-depth qualitative analysis of a small corpus can be effectively extrapolated to larger datasets using corpus techniques, as demonstrated in chapter 7. These contributions not only deepen our comprehension of hate and discrimination dynamics, but also introduce methodological innovations with implications for future research in the field.

## 8.1 | Key findings

At its most moderate, the sort of discourse discussed in this thesis creates an environment of discrimination and tensions between the in-group (the Maltese) and the out-group (migrants). At its more extreme, however, the sort of discourse and ideologies outlined in chapter 7 sets the tone for policies of institutional discrimination and out-casting as well as violence and hate. Thus, the negative attitudes that some users convey of migrants are perpetuated through the discourse and ultimately have real-life consequences through, for example, violent crime, preclusion from housing, detention policies and the push back movement.

Given the depth of analysis pertaining to the identities connected with the social actors represented in the Xeno and HS sub-corpora, it is clear that the migrants represented in the relevant discourse are for the most part *asylum seekers* from sub-Saharan Africa. Without entering into a debate as to the veracity of the asylum claims and whether or not refugee status should be granted, the analyses in chapters 5 to 7 make clear that the migrants who are the topic of discussion in the two sub-corpora come to Malta from sub-Saharan Africa by boat to apply for asylum. Against this backdrop, the term *asylum seeker(s)* much more accurately describes the migrants who are the main topic of this thesis. To this end, I was tempted after chapter 5 to shift the terminology used for discussion to better reflect the findings of the analysis, but decided against it in favour of maintaining continuity and coherence. However, there is little doubt that future work on discrimination against migrants in Malta can and should safely use the term *asylum seeker* without the risk of ideologically biasing the investigation. This is crucial since the term *migrant* used to refer to *asylum seekers* erases a fundamental component of their identity as persons with the right to “seek asylum from persecution in other countries” (UNHCR, 2001-2023a, p. 10).

In view of the foregoing, the analyses presented in this thesis highlight the prevailing trends of negative discourse surrounding asylum seekers. Not only does the discourse within the HS sub-corpus depict asylum seekers with a predominantly nega-

tive stance, but this representation extends beyond to encompass the broader discourse within the Xeno sub-corpus and the complete MaNeCo corpus. In essence, the public discourse within the ToM comments seldom includes positive evaluations of asylum seekers. Moreover, these unfavorable judgments often coincide with, and may even be driven by, the propagation of misinformation such as the misconception that asylum seekers negatively impact the job market. Such misinformation only serves to amplify animosity and prejudice as well as contributes to other related phenomena such as 'othering' wherein specific social groups are depicted as fundamentally different and inferior, and 'delegitimisation', which involves undermining the credibility and legitimacy of asylum seekers. In view of this, the constructions of asylum seekers as *Them* and the Maltese as *Us* contributes to a negative axiological perspective of migration and the view of the Maltese as patriots responsible for safeguarding their own interests against the perceived threats from asylum seekers.

To this end, the language used to discuss migration is employed as a tool to maintain these power relations in several ways. For a start, the representation of asylum seekers as African draws a strong contrast with other middle class white migrants, particularly migrants who come to Malta to work (expatriates). This contrast, in the first instance, serves to create a clear distinction between black Africans and white Europeans. It puts asylum seekers in an impossible situation since, while white people of any faith or nationality blend in to Maltese society, making it easier for them to assimilate, there is no escaping one's race (unlike, for example, sexual orientation, which can be concealed if need be), and therefore, black Africans have little chance to integrate with the Maltese for lack of physical assimilation. Furthermore, the real-world manifestation of the distinction between the two types of migrants is not only evident in day-to-day life (in the way that, for example, Bradford and Clark (2014) note that asylum seekers inhabit separate material and social space), but also on a policy level, whereby asylum seekers are immediately detained upon their arrival in Malta, while expatriates who work (in iGaming, for instance) are assured by the relevant government bodies that they will settle in seamlessly. Indeed, the analysis in chapter 7 suggests that expatriates do not engender the same level of discussion, as is evidenced by the collocation analysis of *immigrant* and *migrant* (table 7.2). Moreover, as the representation of Africa is itself highly problematised, asylum seekers are bestowed with an additional layer of discrimination and delegitimisation. From the word go, asylum seekers have little chance of redemption since they are represented as coming from problematic countries and bringing their problems and "strange" practices with them.

Further, the collocation analysis and other quantitative tools show that the conclusions drawn are also true of the discourse about migration more broadly, not just the

hate speech contained in the HS sub-corpus. Hence, reference to Africans in the ToM comments in general serves to delegitimise asylum seekers, thereby making it easier to treat them poorly and exclude them from resources, which is easy given the conspicuity of their race. Further, the representation of asylum seekers as *boat people* travelling from *Libya* reinforces their African identity as well as draws attention to their illegal (or more aptly irregular) entry into Malta. Subsequently, the representation of asylum seekers as *illegals*, in turn, further delegitimises them by diminishing their claim to asylum and undermining the plight of their escape.

In essence, the evidence presented here should make clear that the representation of social actors within the ToM comments discourse highlights the Maltese as the in-group in society who have the authority (or at least believe they should) to dictate how local resources should be used and distributed. The government of Malta should (and often is) the decision maker that determines how asylum seekers should be treated and dealt with. Asylum seekers, on the other hand, are the definite out-group, who face discrimination in several settings, including in detention, in employment, and in housing, to name a few.

Furthermore, in a trend that has also been observed elsewhere, the negative ideologies and the hate directed at asylum seekers is frequently masked by patriotism. There appears to be a tendency in which the users contributing to the comments of the HS sub-corpus represent themselves as patriots who have their country's best interest at heart. To this end, the analysis exposes the hate implied through patriotism as a result of (unreasonable) fears/phobias (fear of job loss, low wages, culture loss, crime etc). In addition, the representation of asylum seekers as *the Other (Them)* and *Us (the Maltese)* as victims and patriots further serves to block asylum seekers from access to resources such as housing and legal representation, while also preventing them from integrating into Maltese society thereby proliferating racism and, potentially, as least on the basis on previous research Islamophobia to.

Moreover, the discourse tends to emphasise an 'exaggerated victimhood', portraying the Maltese as disproportionately afflicted by the presence of asylum seekers, thereby evoking empathy and solidarity amongst the users commenting on the ToM comment board. Simultaneously, the notion of 'altruism' is also interwoven, thus potentially presenting the Maltese as benevolent actors in the discourse; they are portrayed as good Christians who would like to help people in need were it not for their lack of resources, and they are victims of arbitrary international laws. These representations highlight a sense of nationalistic sentiment that can sometimes be driven by fear (but that most definitely manifests as racism and xenophobia), reflecting concerns about cultural dilution or economic strain attributed to asylum seekers. Further these fears may be driven by

the aforementioned misinformation that proliferates in society.

In a parallel discourse to the representation of the Maltese as patriotic and altruistic victims, external entities such as Europe and NGOs are constructed as enemies of the in-group. This sort of construction allows the users contributing to the discourse of the HS sub-corpus to form a kind of detachment from the negative ideologies portrayed and, therefore, some distance from the unsavory sentiments implied. In addition to this, the creation of a common enemy makes it easier for other users and readers to relate to the comments being made since, as Aristotle pointed out over 2000 years ago, “a common danger unites even the bitterest enemies” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 2071).

Further, although largely absent from the discourse of the HS sub-corpus, the issue of violence is nonetheless important to consider. This is because, despite the noticeable absence of direct calls to violence, there is strong cause to suggest that the advocacy for inaction by the Maltese in the way of allowing asylum seekers to drift through the seas unrescued or for them to be returned to places where they will face sure and certain violence is an act of violence in itself. The willingness to sit back and do nothing while desperate people risk their lives to escape violence, poverty, and persecution is perhaps the strongest example of an implicit ideology of violence that the discourse of the HS sub-corpus exemplifies. Therefore, it would be unfair to characterise the discourse of the HS sub-corpus as non-violent, as the kind of violent hate implied should be addressed at policy level as well as societal levels through educational and integration projects.

Finally, in view of the above and the real-life manifestations of hate and discrimination, it can be concluded that a connection exists between the discriminatory attitudes and hate expressed in newspaper comments, and the discriminatory experiences faced by asylum seekers in the wider society. While the analysis of this thesis does not conclusively establish whether this relationship constitutes a causal link or simply a correlation, it is undeniable that a relationship between the two exists.

## 8.2 | Main contributions

Further to the key findings noted above, this thesis makes a number of contributions to both the current understanding of discrimination and hate in Malta as well as to the fields of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics more generally. To begin, the discussion above underscores the mechanics of hate speech in Malta as an offshoot of fear and the shaping of national identity. In addition, the analyses in the previous chapters uncover the implicit expectation that asylum seekers assimilate with the Maltese, leaving little opportunity for them to integrate - in particular due to the racial disparity

between sub-Saharan asylum seekers and the Maltese.

Beyond the scope of the analyses, the work done for this thesis contributes two very carefully assembled corpora that can be used to investigate any number of linguistic features and phenomena. While the MaNeCo corpus was constructed by a team of researchers (Assimakopoulos et al., 2020), the Xeno and HS sub-corpora were built specifically for this thesis. All three corpora provide a unique opportunity for examining not only features of language such as computer mediated communication (CMC), Maltese English (MalTE), and code-switching, but also broader discourse structures such as news values and ideology. To this end, the corpora constructed for this thesis make a valuable addition to the growing body of corpus linguistic resources available to researchers in the field.

Furthermore, as noted in chapter 4, while topic modelling has been variously applied to the study of discourse (Brookes & McEnery, 2019; Jacobs & Tschötschel, 2019; Murakami, Thompson, Hunston, & Vajn, 2017), this thesis is unique in using it to construct the specialised corpora used for qualitative investigation. To this end, this thesis serves as a compelling illustration that more data-driven methods for data compilation are available and can be useful in mitigating inherent bias in the data, which is particularly important in the context of CDA. Rather than relying on the more conventional search terms, as much research has done before (Gabrielatos, 2007; Krishnamurthy, 1996; Millar et al., 2017), the use of topic modelling significantly minimises the level of human intervention required for preparing the dataset that will eventually be qualitatively (and arguably subjectively) analysed.

In addition, the research undertaken for this thesis directly addresses the criticism identified by C. Taylor and Marchi (2018) as discussed in section 3.5 that critical discourse analysts rarely use quantitative measures to generalise key findings. To this end, this research presents strong evidence that the extrapolation of findings from a small corpus that has been qualitatively analysed in great detail to larger datasets using corpus techniques can be an efficient and effective way of making robust generalisations about a much larger corpus. While the discussion in chapter 5 presents a very detailed account of the linguistic make-up of the discourse contained within the HS sub-corpus as well as the ideologies and values embedded therewith, the generalisations made are subsequently applied to the broader discourse of the Xeno sub-corpus and the MaNeCo corpus in chapter 7. This underscores the efficacy of employing such extrapolation techniques in attaining a deeper understanding of qualitative phenomena such as stance, evaluation, and ideology within very large datasets. This is arguably the greatest contribution to research that this thesis makes since it opens doors to conducting rigorous analyses on large data, which as the discussion in chapter 3 elucidates, has historically

been a great challenge for critical discourse analysts.

### 8.3 | Limitations

Naturally, within the scope of a study of this magnitude, certain limitations arise, and among these, a prominent one pertains to the temporal scope of the data. As outlined in chapter 4, the data for the Xeno sub-corpus was selected on the basis of the results of the topic modelling. The topic modelling algorithm was run on the data file of the full MaNeCo corpus and, on the basis of the output, the comments from the top 200 hundred comment boards most representative of topic 8 were selected for the extraction of data that would populate the Xeno sub-corpus. Therein, a sample of the Xeno sub-corpus was selected for annotation. To ensure that the HS sub-corpus contained the entire set of comments from designated articles, the data within the Xeno sub-corpus was organised chronologically (the oldest comments at the top moving downwards to the most recent up until 2017). Subsequently, comments from the top of the Xeno sub-corpus data file were extracted as far as the available budget would allow for annotation. This extraction procedure, designed to curtail human intervention, inadvertently resulted in the concentration of data within the HS sub-corpus from the year 2012. Against this backdrop, it could be argued that the data analysed for this thesis is somewhat outdated. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that, primarily, this research seeks to identify the underlying mechanisms of xenophobic hate speech within the context of Malta as well as to explore the associated identities — an objective that it effectively fulfills. In this regard, the findings of this study are in line with later investigations, as evidenced by Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2017a) and Assimakopoulos and Vella Muskat (2018).

In addition to the date of the data, the fact that it all comes from a single newspaper (the *Times of Malta*) somewhat limits the generalisations that can be made to a single readership base. While this may be true, as shown in chapter 4, the ToM have the higher readership of any print media in Malta, and therefore, can be argued to be representative of a substantial proportion of the Maltese population. Moreover, the ToM data alone provided a considerable dataset comparative only to the largest Malta-based corpus (MLRS, 2016). Therefore, to the extent that the principal contribution of this thesis to sociolinguistic scholarship is a methodological one, the size of the MaNeCo corpus is more than suitable for providing substantial observations pertaining to data extraction and topic modelling in the context of CADS.

Beyond the scope of the actual data compilation, another seemingly apparent draw-

back is the lack of inter-annotator agreement. The lack of agreement led to the decision to include only a limited amount of data in the HS sub-corpus. Although this decision ultimately led to better quality data, it was unfortunate that a large portion of the annotated data did not serve an analytical purpose within the purview of an investigation of hate speech. Despite this, it may well serve as a powerful comparative sample in future research. As discussed in chapter 4, it is not quite clear why this happened, but one possible reason may be due to fatigue since the annotation task was arduous and quite intense.

Another significant drawback stems from the flawed assumption that any negative comment containing a *suggestion* would constitute hate speech. The analysis conducted for this thesis, specifically that discussed in section 5.2.4, uncovered the inaccuracy of the assumption made at the outset of this research. As with the metaphors explored in section 6.3, *suggestion* was identified as a strategy of discrimination in the research done for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project (Assimakopoulos & Vella Muskat, 2017a). Therefore, as outlined in chapter 4, the expectation from the beginning was that any negative comment containing a *suggestion* must constitute hate speech and thus, as discussed in section 4.3.1, one of the criteria for a comment's inclusion into the HS sub-corpus was that it had to be annotated as negative *and* include a suggestion. However, a deeper look at the comments in the HS sub-corpus through the qualitative analysis reveals that the issue of *suggestion* is far more complex.

Firstly, as illustrated in table 5.11, not all negative comments containing a suggestion are necessarily hate speech as defined by stage 3 (inciting discriminatory hatred) and stage 4 (inciting discriminatory violence) of Cortese's (2006) model, as in the comments *Everytime there is an article on migrants tens of comments are posted. Unless we take to the streets like the people of Lampedusa did, nothing will change* and its response *AGREE WITH YOU, WE NEED TO WAKE UP TO WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR TINY ISLAND.* The first comment is implying that Maltese people should protest against migration for fear of being further overwhelmed with migrants as Lampedusa is perceived to be. The second comment is agreeing with this by *suggesting* that the Maltese 'wake up' to this reality. Both comments contain a suggestion of sorts and both clearly contain a negative stance toward asylum seekers. However, while they both definitively discriminate against asylum seekers, they do not necessarily "stir up violence or racial or religious hatred" (Government of Malta, 2016, p. 52). Consequently, while *suggestion* may indeed indicate that a given comment contains *conscious discrimination* that is characteristic of stage 2 of Cortese's model, it does not necessarily embody prosecutable hate speech. In other words, *suggestion* it seems, contrary to prior assumption, does not necessarily constitute hate speech at the level of stages 3 or 4.

Thus, although the sort of mild suggestions exemplified above only constitute a small minority of the suggestions in the HS sub-corpus (only 2 in fact), it would still be more accurate to describe the HS sub-corpus as containing acutely harsh discrimination, but not necessarily prosecutable hate speech. In addition, a consideration of cruelty sheds further light on this. I would argue that, in view of the cruelty implied in discourse pertaining to the deportation of asylum seekers discussed in section 7.4, any suggestion of this nature constitutes, at the very least, stage 3, thus further reinforcing the need to revise the interpretation of the annotation scheme to reflect a new understanding of the different types (or levels) of suggestion.

An additional constraint inherent to the research undertaken for this thesis is borne out of the nature of CDA itself. Despite the conscientious efforts to limit researcher bias to an extent that arguably has not yet been achieved by limiting human intervention from the very beginning of data selection, it is necessary to acknowledge that, as discussed in section 2.3, there is no denying that parts of CDA necessitate some elements of subjective interpretation. To this end, the insults illustrated in examples 6.24 and 6.25 (*NO cross breeding* and *These people are using their women, children and new borns*) underscore the nuance involved in interpretation. Notably, while these comments may be unequivocally deemed as insults from one perspective, it is necessary to recognise that this evaluation is not impervious to discussion. This highlights the dilemma within CDA that sometimes no conclusive interpretation exists and that some analyses ultimately hinge upon the researcher's personal interpretation. Further, this discussion also accentuates the intricate interplay between subjectivity and objectivity within the purview of CDA, which has played a pivotal role in this thesis. Indeed, triangulation was adopted specifically to mitigate the effects of any potential researcher bias.

## 8.4 | Future research

In view of the limitations listed above, there are a number of obvious projects that can address some of them in the future. To begin with, it would be interesting to further investigate reasons why hate speech is so difficult to annotate. Despite the effort taken to formulate an annotation scheme that is structured and robust, inter-annotator agreement was still low. To this end, it may be useful to firstly revise the annotation scheme to better reflect the findings pertaining to suggestion as discussed above. In addition, it may help to break annotation down into smaller tasks and possibly include more groups of annotators in order to mitigate the possibility of fatigue, which seems to negatively effect the quality of the annotation.

In addition to a broader consideration of the nature of hate speech, the various corpora used for this research make it possible to conduct different types of analyses that were outside the scope of this thesis. For example, the discussion in section 6.2 pertaining to example 6.26 (the suggestion that asylum seeker boats be scuttled) underscores the need to specifically investigate deleted comments to gain a better understanding of what is broadly thought to be permissible as public discourse and where newspaper moderators draw a line. Further, it would also be interesting to investigate patterns that exist across the discourse of specific users as well as patterns of interaction within the discourse. Moreover, with some further attention and annotation, it is also possible to investigate any potential correlation between language choice (English vs Maltese) or even language skills (e.g. spelling and grammar) and levels of discrimination.

Furthermore, in view of the aforementioned drawback in relation to the temporal scope of the discourse within the HS sub-corpus, it could be useful to repeat analyses on later data for a number of reasons. Firstly, a reanalysis on slightly different data will substantiate the repeatability of this research, thus enhancing the value of its findings. More importantly though, a diachronic comparison can be very valuable for assessing potential shifts in evaluation and axiological perspectives over time. In addition, in 2017, Malta adopted its first integration strategy (European Union, 1995-2023d). While initial indications suggest an ostensibly favorable response to the policy (Falzon, 2023), as discussed in chapter 7, MIPEX still find that “integration policies create as many obstacles as opportunities for integration” (ibid., p. 5). Within this contextual framework, it would be interesting to assess whether this policy has had any discernible impact on the relevant public discourse. Such an investigation could provide valuable insights into the interplay between policy implementation and the evolving discursive landscape within society. Notably, this sort of study would have to open up the data set to other newspaper comments since, in 2016, the ToM made the decision to close the comment section on all articles about migration because they “had reached a stage where a good 90 per cent of all comments were outright racist (i.e – illegal) or at best xenophobic” (H. Grech, 2016).

Finally, chapter 4 outlines how topic modelling was executed as well as the assessment of the topics, which culminated in topic 8 being selected for inclusion in the Xeno sub-corpus. Moreover, it was also suggested that other topics such as topic 39, 29, and 37 comprise significant overlap in relation to the themes that they represent. To this end, it may be beneficial to conduct similar analyses on data constructed by means of other related topics in order to ascertain firstly whether the analyses showcased in this thesis are complete in the sense that they have comprehensively identified the ideologies and values related to migration in Malta. Secondly, an expansion of the analyses would help

to make broader generalisations and to compare these findings with the ways that other migrants (such as expatriates) are represented in the MaNeCo corpus.

## 8.5 | Way forward

The research undertaken for this thesis has yielded a multitude of noteworthy and significant insights into the prevailing ideologies and values associated with asylum seekers in Malta, shedding light on the challenges they encounter in the face of hate and discrimination. In order to mitigate the physical and psychological risks posed to asylum seekers, two important related issues should be addressed. In the first instance, the relationship between Malta and the broader European community warrants attention, as much of the blame pertaining to the so-called 'migration problem' is attributed to them. This strategic shifting of blame affords the opportunity to deflect culpability for the maltreatment of asylum seekers onto an unwitting external entity. At its extreme, this sort of Eurosceptic discourse can culminate in policy outcomes reminiscent of Brexit, which, as detailed in section 7.5, many agree had xenophobic underpinnings.

Much more importantly however, in light of these findings, the discussion presented in this thesis not only holds relevance for other researchers, but also carries practical implications for philanthropists and policymakers alike. In response to the pertinent MIPEX findings that highlight the inadequacy of integration policies concerning asylum seekers, the outcomes of this research underscore the primary need to address the unfounded fears surrounding asylum seekers. These fears are predominantly rooted in the dissemination of misinformation concerning potential job loss and cultural take over and this is a major source of hate. Thus, effecting change in the realm of discrimination would be an exercise in futility without first tackling these deep-seated fears, given that fear, as previously discussed, is an inherently primal responses regardless of its factual basis.

## 8.6 | Epilogue

In view of the speed at which changes can occur in any society, it is worth closing with a brief consideration of the changes that have developed in the Maltese context since the collection of data was concluded. It has been variously noted throughout this thesis that the data of the HS sub-corpus is temporally located in 2012 and, therefore, the claims made by means of the qualitative analysis are reflective of society as it was then. Furthermore, the broader quantitative analysis conducted on the Xeno sub-corpus and

the MaNeCo corpus, which were carefully considered in chapters 6 and 7, is embedded in the time-period 2008 to 2017. Since then, the Maltese society has witnessed a number of important changes, potentially influencing some of the findings in a way that could be indicative of these shifts. Needless to say, it is worth considering these changes, even if briefly, in the interest of providing valuable insight for future research that seeks to account for these developments.

Broadly, there are two significant changes that have occurred in Maltese society. The first pertains to policy development, while the second concerns shifts in migrant demographics. To begin, as noted in section 7.1, the first integration policy was only effected in 2018, establishing several objectives regarding integration governance, equality, anti-discrimination, and mainstreaming, setting out a number of integration measures (European Union, 1995-2023d). Even so, it is unclear what effect this policy has had, since, as the European Commission posits “[n]o national evaluation of the Maltese integration policies or migrants’ outcomes has yet been conducted” (ibid.). In addition to the integration policy, as shown in section 7.2, the Government of Malta launched an Anti-Racism Strategy in 2018 with the aim of confronting and eliminating all forms of racism (Government of Malta, 2021). Additionally, as Pisani (2022) notes, a National Action Plan Against Racism and Xenophobia (NAPRAX) as well as an Anti-racism Platform established to monitor and contribute to the implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy, were also instituted in recent years. Since all these policies and initiatives were set up subsequent to the data analysed in this thesis, it should be interesting to see what effect they may have had on the discourse patterns observed.

Secondly, there has been a significant shift in the demographics of Malta, in particular, in so far as migration is concerned. In 2017 (the year marking the end of the collected data within the MaNeCo corpus), Malta was host to more migrants from the EU than it was to non-EU migrants (30,248 to 24,073 respectively out of a total population of 460,297 - European Union, 1995-2023f). In addition, at the peak of the so-called migrant crisis in 2015, Malta received 1,695 asylum applications (European Union, 1995-2023b). This number fluctuated somewhat, but remained more or less consistent until the last peak in 2019 with 4,015 applications. Since then, the number of asylum claims has consistently dropped each year. Even so, non-EU resident permits started to rise exponentially. The number of non-EU residents receiving valid working permits rose from 18,678 in 2015 to 26,695 in 2017, reaching 89,000 in 2022. This growth is steep even when accounting for the 10,449 British people that would not have been included in this category in 2020, prior to the UK exit from the EU (European Union, 1995-2023a). As M. Debono (2021) notes, this underscores the significant labour shortages across various sectors in the Maltese economy, including aviation, online gaming, construction,

and tourism. Within this frame, as also highlighted in section 1.2.1, government policies aimed at attracting workers to address these labour market gaps can provide additional insight into this phenomenon. The top 10 nationalities from outside of Europe that the Maltese Government issued work permits to in 2022 were India, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Nepal, Serbia, Albania, China, Turkey, Colombia, and Pakistan (European Union, 1995-2023a). So, within the context of such a phenotypically diverse population, the linguistics patterns identified in this thesis and perhaps even the groups vulnerable to hate and discrimination may have shifted, and future work should take this into consideration.



## Topics in the MaNeCo corpus that could be relevant for this thesis

265

Could be relevant    Kind of relevant    Relevant

Key to table

TOPIC	8	9	28	29	31	37	39	54	69	91
W0	immigrant	malta	russia	libya	israel	maltese	muslim	country	war	china
W1	illegal	island	russian	libyan	palestinian	foreigner	religion	europa	isi	india
W2	migrant	air	ukraine	gaddafi	israeli	citizenship	christian	european	syria	chinese
W3	refugee	british	putin	nato	hamas	citizen	islam	germany	usa	world
W4	europa	small	ukrainian	oil	gaza	british	islamic	britain	american	usa
W5	immigration	thank	crimea	tripoli	palestine	passport	religious	world	terrorist	economy
W6	boat	foreign	nato	rebel	iran	foreign	allah	want	world	indian
W7	asylum	visit	kiev	regime	peace	flag	catholic	live	kill	global
W8	african	welcome	sanction	dictator	land	proud	sharia	africa	iraq	trade
W9	africa	italy	usa	democracy	arab	national	kill	france	turkey	billion
W10	problem	live	west	arab	nuclear	island	quran	african	syrian	economic
W11	send	international	military	west	rocket	live	imam	nation	british	nation
W12	italy	national	western	benghazi	jewish	abroad	terrorist	state	west	big

TOPIC	8	9	28	29	31	37	39	54	69	91
W13	detention	big	gas	civilian	jew	local	freedom	leave	assad	japan
W14	help	happen	eastern	help	state	nationality	culture	citizen	attack	usd
W15	unhcr	join	soviet	ghaddafi	zionist	culture	belief	problem	bomb	russia
W16	ngo	high	missile	egypt	civilian	australia	mosque	refugee	europa	sell
W17	burden	local	invade	country	settlement	italian	christianity	economic	fight	product
W18	european	london	europa	military	netanyahu	scheme	faith	rich	nato	investment
W19	want	sell	troop	democratic	attack	cross	world	german	military	million
W20	human	place	rebel	ntc	terrorist	gozitans	western	member	weapon	communist
W21	migration	economy	support	western	east	racist	extremist	italy	iran	sai
W22	rescue	tourism	plane	situation	weapon	malta	koran	migrant	arm	gdp
W23	seeker	compare	washington	international	jerusalem	australian	peace	passport	saudi	nuclear
W24	stop	best	propaganda	uprising	egypt	history	arab	economy	america	link
W25	racist	cyprus	moscow	tyrant	usa	majority	west	free	rebel	export
W26	border	lot	territory	foreign	occupation	sell	europa	british	force	british
W27	illegally	bring	democratically	force	resolution	living	attack	australia	innocent	deal
W28	integrate	abroad	east	tribe	world	identity	prophet	brexit	army	market
W29	solution	tiny	medium	send	kill	bear	isi	big	obama	africa
W30	integration	state	border	gadaffi	middle	comment	saudi	join	nation	visit
W31	influx	nation	vladimir	iraq	international	german	atheist	need	gun	korea
W32	repatriate	population	syria	boat	occupied	george	egypt	culture	western	buy
W33	frontex	thanks	referendum	revolution	missile	nation	community	brussels	regime	bridge
W34	italian	need	elected	leader	territory	population	jew	spain	east	technology
W35	trafficker	foreigner	hitler	tunisia	war	racism	islamist	rule	civilian	business
W36	shore	heritage	coup	freedom	occupy	card	violence	benefit	middle	military
W37	libya	neutrality	supply	african	region	discrimination	democracy	england	french	consulate
W38	sea	far	state	kadhafi	nation	gozitan	murder	trade	ally	america
W39	thousand	size	war	italy	holocaust	buy	infidel	border	refugee	growth
W40	arrive	taghna	democratic	embassy	terrorism	european	roman	travel	nuclear	trillion
W41	centre	long	assad	support	west	visa	moderate	population	terrorism	population
W42	irregular	happy	annex	kmb	abbas	integration	terrorism	foreign	islamic	poverty
W43	economic	industry	poland	colonel	border	visit	arabia	home	soldier	asia
W44	illegals	passport	crimean	faction	support	travel	convert	cameron	create	invest
W45	sharing	number	georgia	ruthless	illegal	deport	pray	schengen	state	brics
W46	enter	financial	want	free	live	resident	speech	run	afghanistan	western
W47	land	mediterranean	ussr	fighter	innocent	iip	live	stay	german	cheap
W48	kurt	large	international	power	iranian	integrate	offend	foreigner	britain	today
W49	policy	standard	kgb	arm	military	french	condemn	merkel	france	import
W50	status	transport	nazi	peace	obama	reside	group	east	iraqi	south
W51	number	hawn	separatist	neutrality	stop	russian	wear	way	peace	satish
W52	accept	brussels	region	unhcr	soldier	fellow	mohammed	safe	destroy	poor
W53	racism	ambassador	european	business	history	treat	tolerance	small	million	rise
W54	share	ship	poroshenko	safe	conflict	surname	death	continent	history	west

TOPIC	8	9	28	29	31	37	39	54	69	91
W55	solve	italian	obama	resolution	recognize	non	society	politician	terror	build
W56	lampedusa	return	ukranian	agreement	sanction	marry	secular	north	arabia	rich
W57	malta	sicily	invasion	fight	egyptian	malti	value	migration	germany	century
W58	germany	wonder	shoot	misurata	talk	welcome	minority	national	security	north
W59	issue	soon	billion	human	steal	india	believe	far	support	diplomat
W60	somali	university	nuclear	syria	condemn	fare	hate	united	flag	agreement
W61	legal	investment	economy	conflict	blockade	war	worship	future	murder	nearly
W62	malmstrom	send	junta	kill	continue	brit	jesus	send	russia	produce
W63	push	spain	join	africa	want	represent	terror	america	bombing	foreign
W64	situation	north	democracy	militia	bomb	maybe	jihad	treaty	isil	interested
W65	invasion	history	world	return	child	thank	hatred	poor	trump	dollar
W66	nation	independence	conflict	visa	destroy	residency	persecution	resource	troop	industry
W67	need	import	force	italian	isreal	true	prayer	deport	leader	ppp
W68	home	european	stalin	tribal	murder	yes	practice	western	erdogan	kong
W69	solidarity	support	regime	ambassador	united	maltin	jewish	arab	death	brazil
W70	population	republic	evidence	dictatorship	arafat	speak	majority	host	help	hong
W71	escape	shall	cold	muammar	shield	london	muhammad	compare	united	canada
W72	continent	holiday	puppet	stop	destruction	american	fundamentalist	rest	fighter	fast
W73	afm	little	agreement	government	tunnel	residence	integrate	enter	border	tibet
W74	risk	future	satellite	sarkozy	defend	overseas	multiculturalism	eastern	thousand	pakistan
W75	dublin	maybe	fascist	army	settler	register	east	citizenship	saddam	grow
W76	somalia	really	elect	mercenary	nuke	colour	leader	visa	arab	democracy
W77	depart	member	aircraft	intervention	jordan	medal	middle	flee	stop	relation
W78	leave	nice	kosovo	rid	agreement	pride	racist	leader	oil	american
W79	save	membership	ally	rescue	wipe	embassy	radical	allow	die	human
W80	stay	yes	leader	gaddafi	camp	sale	atrocitiy	immigration	group	massive
W81	cross	excellent	citizen	risk	crime	talent	moslem	asylum	enemy	manufacturing
W82	repatriation	visa	yanukovich	leave	exist	tradition	fear	democracy	egypt	iran
W83	sweden	attract	start	tobruk	retaliate	community	respect	brit	turkish	trading
W84	flee	knight	population	war	solution	heritage	allow	sweden	kurd	long
W85	louise	scheme	foreign	bomb	izrael	free	century	canada	conflict	decline
W86	humanitarian	proud	threat	coast	launch	respect	sunni	living	qaeda	firm
W87	international	commission	kremlin	relation	leader	emigrate	believer	scotland	threat	high
W88	encourage	wish	baltic	france	recognise	canada	fight	let	protect	competition
W89	open	viva	economic	sharia	regime	different	pakistan	policy	end	partner
W90	safe	england	economic	north	negotiation	sicilian	non	democratic	want	japanese
W91	convention	remain	sovereign	haftar	peaceful	wonder	impose	control	nazi	aid
W92	start	stay	crisis	humanitarian	use	family	book	ireland	power	embassy
W93	resource	just	ethnic	neighbour	humanity	language	peaceful	long	use	mizzi
W94	patrol	consider	aggression	control	massacre	arabic	burn	french	north	follow
W95	action	huge	saw	country	shore	knight	holy	international	shoot	australia
W96	culture	invest	peace	saif	lebanon	race	different	northern	control	large

TOPIC	8	9	28	29	31	37	39	54	69	91
W97	force	war	civilian	nation	thousand	calleja	tradition	bad	destruction	tea
W98	multiculturalism	bad	army	security	army	shame	persecute	union	plane	production
W99	social	world	topple	lockergie	zionism	apply	ideology	crisis	invasion	ambassador

Table A.1: Topics in the MaNeCo corpus that could be relevant for this thesis

## Description of the categories within the sociosemantic inventory

Category	Description
Exclusion	Certain <i>exclusions</i> do not leave any visible evidence in the portrayal, omitting both the individuals involved and their actions. This complete exclusion may be relevant when critically examining various depictions of a specific social phenomenon, but it does not contribute to analyzing a single text because it does not leave any discernible indicators.
Suppression	In situations of <i>suppression</i> , the text deliberately avoids any mention or identification of the specific social actor(s) involved. van Leeuwen (2008) demonstrates by means of the example that the readers of the 'Race Odyssey' text get to know that public opinions were surveyed by an unidentified entity, but are left without knowledge of the individual, company, or institution responsible. This omission restricts the ability to challenge the survey results by removing a potential avenue of inquiry.
Backgrounding	<i>Backgrounding</i> involves a milder form of exclusion where social actors are not directly acknowledged in relation to a particular activity. However, their presence can still be deduced from mentions elsewhere in the text, providing a reasonable but not definitive understanding of their identities.

Category	Description
Inclusion	<i>Inclusion</i> refers to the various ways in which social actors are incorporated or represented within a discourse. It encompasses the strategies and mechanisms used to integrate social actors into the narrative, discussion, or communication.
Activation	<i>Activation</i> takes place when social actors are portrayed as the active and dynamic agents within an activity, driving its progress and exerting influence.
Participation	The active role of the social actor under consideration is prominently emphasised or foregrounded
Circumstantialisation	<i>Circumstantialisation</i> occurs when social actors are represented through prepositional circumstantials, particularly with the use of “by” or “from” For example, the phrase “from neighbors and co-workers” indicates the source or origin of the social actors.
Possessivation	In contrast to <i>participation</i> , this process of backgrounding agency shifts its prominence and transforms it into a “possession” of a process that is itself transformed into an abstract entity or “thing”.
Passivation	<i>Passivation</i> occurs when social actors are depicted as “undergoing”p or being passive recipients of the activity, rather than actively engaging in it or exerting influence. They are positioned as being on the receiving end of the action rather than actively participating in it.
Subjection	Subjected social actors are portrayed as objects within the representation, often treated as commodities or objects of exchange.
Beneficialisation	Beneficialised social actors constitute a third party that gains positive or negative advantages from the activity. They are positioned in a way that allows them to derive benefits, whether favorable or unfavorable, from the situation.

Category	Description
Genericisation	Generalized essences and classes form the underlying reality within which specific participants are seen as representatives or "specimens" of those broader categories. In this perspective, individuals are viewed as exemplifying or embodying the characteristics and qualities associated with their respective classes or categories.
Specification	<i>Specification</i> , on the other hand, represents a specific, tangible world filled with concrete individuals, locations, objects, and actions.
Individualisation	When social actors are referred to as individuals, it signifies a focus on <i>individualisation</i> . The concept of <i>individualisation</i> acknowledges the specific qualities and identities of social actors as separate individuals within a larger social context.
Assimilation	Alternatively, when social actors are referred to as groups, it pertains to the concept of <i>assimilation</i> . In this context, the emphasis is on viewing social actors as part of larger collective entities or categories.
Aggregation	<i>Aggregation</i> involves quantifying groups of participants and treating them as statistical units.
Collectivisation	<i>Collectivisation</i> does not involve quantification or statistical treatment of groups. Instead, it emphasises the collective identity, experiences, and dynamics of the group
Association	Another way of representing social actors as groups is through the notion of <i>association</i> , which refers to the formation of groups by social actors or groups of social actors, without explicitly labeling the groups in the text.
Dissociation	The disbanding of associations.
Indetermination	<i>Indetermination</i> arises when social actors are portrayed as unspecified or "anonymous" individuals or groups within the representation. Their identities or specific characteristics are not provided or made explicit, leaving them unidentified or unattributed. <i>Indetermination</i> reflects a lack of clarity or specificity regarding the social actors involved, creating an element of ambiguity or uncertainty in the representation.

Category	Description
Determination	<i>Determination</i> occurs when the identity of social actors is explicitly specified or clarified in some manner within the representation. This involves providing specific information or details that establish the identities of the individuals or groups involved.
Differentiation	<i>Differentiation</i> involves explicitly distinguishing an individual social actor or group of social actors from another similar actor or group. This process creates a distinction between the “self” and the “other” or between “us” and “them”.
Indifferentiation	van Leeuwen (2008) does not define <i>indifferentiation</i> , but it can be assumed that it refers to the lack of differentiation or distinction between social actors within a discourse or representation.
Categorisation	Social actors can also be represented by emphasising their shared identities and functions through <i>categorisation</i> . This involves grouping social actors based on common characteristics, roles, or attributes they share with others.
Nomination	Social actors can be represented by emphasising their unique identities through nomination or explicit naming. This involves assigning specific names or labels to individual social actors, highlighting their distinctiveness and individuality within the context of the representation.
Formalisation	Formal nomination often involves the use of surnames only, sometimes with honorifics.
Semformalisation	Semi-formal nomination includes both the given name and surname, as exemplified by ‘Dwight Harris’
Informalisation	Informal nomination relies solely on the given name, as in ‘Beverley’.
Titulation	<i>Titulation</i> involves the addition of specific titles or prefixes to a person’s name, such as “Dr” “Mr” “Mrs” “Sir” or “Madam”. See honorfication and affiliation.
Honorfication	Nominations can take the form of titulation, which involves the addition of honorifics, standard titles, ranks, and so on, as in “Dr”.

Category	Description
Affiliation	Nominations can also include affiliations by incorporating personal or kinship relation terms, such as “Auntie Barbara”.
Detitulation	van Leeuwen (2008) does not define <i>detitulation</i> , but it can be assumed to refer to the act of removing or disregarding titles or honorifics when addressing or referring to individuals.
Functionalisation	<i>Functionalisation</i> occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of their activities or roles, such as their occupations or specific functions they perform. This emphasises the actions or tasks associated with social actors, highlighting their involvement in specific activities or the roles they fulfill within a particular context.
Identification	<i>Identification</i> occurs when social actors are defined based on their inherent characteristics, rather than their actions or roles. In this case, social actors are described in terms of their enduring or unavoidable attributes, which define their identity. <i>Identification</i> focuses on the essential qualities or traits that distinguish social actors, rather than their specific actions or roles.
Classification	<i>Classification</i> occurs when social actors are referred to using major categories that a society or institution uses to differentiate between different groups of people. These categories encompass various aspects such as age, gender, origin, socioeconomic status, wealth, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and more.
Relational identification	<i>Relational identification</i> represents social actors based on their personal, kinship, or work relationships with one another. It is achieved through a defined set of nouns that denote these relations, such as “friend” “aunt” “colleague”, and so on. <i>Relational identification</i> focuses on capturing and expressing the connections and associations between social actors by highlighting specific relational terms that describe their interpersonal or professional connections.

Category	Description
Physical identification	<i>Physical identification</i> represents social actors based on their distinctive physical characteristics that uniquely identify them within a particular context. This emphasises the physical attributes or traits of social actors that set them apart and make them recognisable in a specific setting. <i>Physical identification</i> focuses on the visual or observable aspects of individuals, highlighting how their unique physical features contribute to their identification and differentiation in a given context.
Appraisalment	Social actors can also be referred to in interpersonal terms, where their evaluation or appraisal is emphasised. When social actors are appraised, they are referred to in terms that assess or evaluate them, such as being characterised as good or bad, loved or hated, admired, or pitied.
Personalisation	Representational choices that personalise social actors portray them as human beings. These choices of representation emphasise the human aspect of social actors in the way that, for example, the term “maternal care”, carries a meaning that inherently relates to human characteristics.
Impersonalisation	Social actors can also be impersonalised in their representation through alternative means. This can be achieved by using abstract nouns or concrete nouns that do not inherently include the semantic feature of ‘human’.
Abstraction	<i>Abstraction</i> takes place when social actors are represented by assigning them a quality or attribute within the representation. Rather than focusing on specific individuals or concrete manifestations, this emphasises abstract qualities or characteristics that are associated with the social actors. The representation highlights these assigned qualities as defining features of the social actors, providing a conceptual understanding of their identity or role. An example of abstraction from the ‘Race Odyssey’ is the representation of migrants as “problems”.

Category	Description
Objectivation	<i>Objectivation</i> is the representation of social actors by referencing a place or object closely associated with their identity or the activity they are involved in. This form of representation is achieved through metonymical reference. Common types of objectivation include <i>spatialisation</i> , <i>utterance autonomisation</i> , <i>instrumentalisation</i> , and <i>somatisation</i>
Spatialisation	<i>Spatialisation</i> is a type of objectivation that represents social actors by referencing a place that is closely linked to them within a given context.
Utterance automisation	<i>Utterance autonomisation</i> is a type of objectivation that represents social actors by referencing their utterances or speech acts. Their utterances are treated as separate entities, detached from the social actors themselves. <i>Utterance autonomisation</i> focuses on highlighting the significance and impact of social actors' speech as a distinct and meaningful aspect of their representation.
Instrumentalisation	<i>Instrumentalisation</i> is a type of objectivation where social actors are represented by referencing the instrument or tool they use to carry out the activity they are depicted as engaged in. By associating social actors with the instrument they use, <i>instrumentalisation</i> objectifies them by emphasising their role as operators or users of the tool.
Somatisation	<i>Somatisation</i> is a type of objectivation where social actors are represented by referencing a specific part of their body. In this form of representation, emphasis is placed on the physical or somatic attributes of social actors. <i>Somatisation</i> underscores the embodiment and physicality of social actors within the representation.
Single determination	van Leeuwen (2008) does not define single determination, but by comparison with the definition of overdetermination, it can be assumed that it refers to a concept or principle where a particular event, outcome, or phenomenon is explained or attributed to a single cause or factor.

Category	Description
Overdetermination	<i>Overdetermination</i> takes place when social actors are represented as simultaneously participating in multiple social practices.
Inversion	<i>Inversion</i> is a form of <i>overdetermination</i> that occurs when social actors are associated with two practices that are, in a sense, opposites of each other. An example of this can be observed in “The Flintstones”; despite engaging in activities characteristic of a modern family, they are visually portrayed and identified as prehistoric cave dwellers, creating a juxtaposition between their actions and their outward appearance.
Symbolisation	<i>Symbolisation</i> , as used here, refers to the representation of a “fictional” social actor or group of social actors that symbolically represents real actors or groups within non-fictional social practices.
Connotation	<i>Connotation</i> occurs when a specific determination, such as a nomination or physical identification, is used to represent a broader <i>classification</i> or <i>functionalisation</i> .
Distillation	<i>Distillation</i> achieves <i>overdetermination</i> by combining the processes of <i>generalisation</i> and <i>abstraction</i> . In this context, <i>distillation</i> involves extracting the essential aspects or core elements from multiple sources or practices, resulting in a condensed representation. Through <i>generalisation</i> , specific details are abstracted to form broader patterns or general concepts, allowing for an overarching understanding that transcends individual instances. By combining <i>generalisation</i> and <i>abstraction</i> , <i>distillation</i> captures the complexity and richness of multiple practices or sources, resulting in an overdetermined representation that encompasses essential elements through a more generalised and abstracted lens.

Category	Description
Anachronism	<i>Anachronism</i> is frequently employed as a means to express ideas that cannot be directly communicated due to official or commercial censorship, or to normalise ideological discourses. It serves as a tool for conveying social and political criticism in situations where such expressions are restricted or prohibited. By employing <i>anachronism</i> , individuals can convey their messages indirectly, using historical or contextual references to discuss sensitive or controversial topics, providing a layer of protection or plausible deniability in the face of censorship or ideological constraints.
Deviation	<i>Deviation</i> occurs when social actors participating in specific activities are represented by referencing social actors who would not typically be expected or eligible to engage in those activities. This representation involves depicting individuals or groups in unconventional or unexpected roles, deviating from societal norms or expectations.

Table B.1: Description of the categories within the sociosemantic inventory of the representation of social actors - van Leeuwen (2008)



# Binary annotation guidelines for hate speech identification on the MaNeCo corpus

**Disclaimer:** The data you will be provided for this annotation task has been anonymised by the Times of Malta and therefore, all the original usernames have been removed from the corresponding comments. Since this has been done automatically, there is still a chance that some information pointing towards individual commenters may have been overseen, so your discretion is required. By taking part in this task, you agree to not speak to anybody about the data or divulge any information that could lead to the identification of a particular commenter by any third party!

## **Binary annotation guidelines for hate speech identification on the MaNeCo corpus**

Stavros Assimakopoulos, Rebecca Vella Muskat, Lonneke van der Plas

Thank you for your interest in taking part in the annotation of the Maltese Newspaper Comments (MaNeCo) corpus for Hate Speech identification. Here, you'll find detailed definitions and examples to guide your decision as to whether a given comment in your assigned dataset comprises hate speech or not. If you spot errors or if something remains unclear after reading the guidelines, please contact us and we'll do our best to correct the problems.

In this annotation task, we aim at identifying Hate Speech in newspaper comments from the Times of Malta which make up part of the MaNeCo corpus. Your task for this part of the project is to classify comments as comprising hate speech (by selecting 'Hate

Speech' in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet) or non comprising hate speech (by selecting 'Not Hate Speech' respectively).

In view of this, the key term to clarify for this annotation task is the concept of *hate speech*. Although, in common usage, the term can have different meanings and applications, for the purpose of this study, we are dealing with its definition according to Maltese legislation. In this regard, the Maltese Criminal Code states that:

- (1) Whosoever uses any **threatening, abusive or insulting words** or behaviour, or **displays any written or printed material** which is **threatening, abusive or insulting**, or otherwise conducts himself in such a manner, with **intent thereby to stir up violence or racial hatred** against another person or group on the **grounds of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, ethnic origin, religion or belief or political or other opinion** or whereby such violence or racial hatred is likely, having regard to all the circumstances, to be stirred up shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term from six to eighteen months.

It is necessary to break down the above legislation in order to thoroughly clarify what is meant by *hate speech* in Maltese law as well as for this project. Hate speech can be spoken or written and, therefore, can be articulated by an individual (public or private), a group or institution, or printed in any sort of public or private forum. In the case of the MaNeCo corpus, we are looking at newspaper comments (i.e. the comments that follow online newspaper articles in comment section forums). For language to be considered hate speech, it must threaten, abuse, or insult an individual or a group of people with the aim of causing or encouraging violence, and/or causing or encouraging hatred against that individual or group because of their identity on the grounds of one (or multiple) of the following shared characteristics:

- gender
- gender identity
- sexual orientation
- race
- colour
- language

- ethnic origin
- religion
- belief
- political or other opinion

Against this backdrop, the following examples show how some comments in the corpus can be classified under 'Hate Speech' or 'Not Hate Speech' respectively.

- *"They could use a woman to execute them [muslims] because they believe that if they are killed by a woman they will not go to heaven to enjoy their 77 virgins."*

HATE SPEECH (because it includes direct reference to violence through the use of the term "execute")

- *"these lowest from of life [migrants who have gained illegal entry to Europe] the morons are already here roaming the streets even in Malta and most of all over the low countries.- Thats France Belgium and Holland. If we had our way we would send them to Paradise much sooner then they expected., with the heads and balls between their legs, and the only way to flash them out to first sought out their families, they will come out like flies around a honey pot."*

HATE SPEECH (again there is direct reference to violence through the use of the term "send them to Paradise")

- *"You are in Malta. The land which favours the offender. Talk about winning the lottery. Failed asylum seeker, driving with a false licence and in possession of cannabis. He gets a suspended sentence and no mention of deportation."*

NOT HATE SPEECH (even though the comment includes direct reference to deportation, it does not single out the targeted individual due to his ethnic origin)

- *"These are all crocodile tears from a bunch of politicians who not so long ago advocated and even tried to push-back weary and tired boat people seeking refugee status.As long as they can make a PR stunt these populists are ready to act according to the people's mood.Hypocrites!"*

NOT HATE SPEECH (because it is not offensive to an individual or a group because of their political opinions, but rather targets politicians directly through the use of 'hypocrites')

In addition to the above, any agreement with a negative comment (e.g. *'I agree, you're right'*) should NOT be marked as Hate Speech.

# Annotation guidelines for attitude evaluation in the MaNeCo corpus

**Disclaimer:** The data you will be provided for this annotation task has been anonymised by the Times of Malta and therefore, all the original usernames have been removed from the corresponding comments. Since this has been done automatically, there is still a chance that some information pointing towards individual commenters may have been overseen, so your discretion is required. By taking part in this task, you agree to not speak to anybody about the data or divulge any information that could lead to the identification of a particular commenter by any third party!

## **Annotation guidelines for attitude evaluation in the MaNeCo corpus**

Stavros Assimakopoulos, Rebecca Vella Muskat, Lonneke van der Plas

Thank you for your interest in taking part in the annotation of the Maltese Newspaper Comments (MaNeCo) corpus for Attitude Evaluation. Here, you'll find detailed definitions and examples to guide your decision as to how to classify a given comment in your assigned dataset following a multi-layered annotation schema. If you spot errors or if something remains unclear after reading the guidelines, please contact us and we'll do our best to correct the problems. This data has been anonymised by the Times of Malta and therefore, all the original usernames have been removed from the corresponding comments. However, in the event that something has been overseen, your discretion is required and you should not speak anybody about the data.

In this annotation task, we aim at identifying the general attitudes expressed towards individuals or groups of people in newspaper comments from the Times of Malta

which make up part of the MaNeCo corpus, with a particular focus on how negative attitudes towards social groups are communicated. Your task for this part of the project is to evaluate the attitudes expressed towards various actors in a number of comments that have been posted in reaction to news articles on the Times of Malta website. This annotation schema deals with the recognition of negative attitudes towards individuals or groups and involves a number of steps that you will need to take in each case. More specifically, you are requested to answer the following questions in turn:

1. Does the post communicate a negative attitude towards an individual or a group?  
[Here you need to select 'Yes' or 'No' in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet column]

A	B	C	D	E
Article identifier	Comment	Response to previous comment		Does the post communicate a negative attitude towards an individual or a group?
1776412798	I Same words, same source. Which Maltese NGO is at the origin of this report? There will be no prize for guessing! So let's repeat (as they repeat) that Malta's mandatory detention policy for illegal immigrants has the support of both political parties (= 100% of MPs) and if put to a referendum will have the support of the vast majority of the common people of Malta. The report is "The result of an ICJ study mission in September 2011", it says. Which Maltese NGOs did the mission meet? The international jurists have forgotten many truths, the first one being that laws are made for men, not men for the laws. And no law can make Maltese men, and women, receive an infinite number of illegal, unwanted and unneeded immigrants. II The ICJ may be "composed of leading international judges and lawyers", as this report says, but none of them is mentioned by name as being responsible or being part of the said mission last September. A very pertinent question to these eminent jurists is: Does Malta have only obligations? Does Malta not have any rights, such as the right to live in peace without being overburdened with uninvited illegal immigrants, the right to enjoy security in its small land area, the right not to be responsible for the board and lodging of an unending influx of foreigners? III Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed?			
1776412798	"Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed? Well Said - Even if mainland EU countries feel they do have an obligation maybe because of their colonial past , we certainly have no such obligations. So before we accept anything in this report a MANDATORY resettlement programme into the rest of the EU in a short span of time MUST be introduced.	yes		YES NO

2. If you selected 'Yes' in the previous step, specify who this attitude targets. If you selected 'No', move on to the next comment. The purpose of this question is to identify if the negative attitude is targeted towards an individual or a group of people. [Here you need to select 'Individual' or 'Group' in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet column]

Appendix D. Annotation guidelines for attitude evaluation in the MaNeCo corpus

A	B	C	D	E	F
Article identifier	Comment	Response to previous comment	Does the post communicate a negative attitude towards an individual or a group?	If 'YES', does the negative attitude target an individual or a group?	
1776412798	I Same words, same source. Which Maltese NGO is at the origin of this report? There will be no prize for guessing! So let's repeat (as they repeat) that Malta's mandatory detention policy for illegal immigrants has the support of both political parties (= 100% of MPs) and if put to a referendum will have the support of the vast majority of the common people of Malta. The report is "The result of an ICJ study mission in September 2011", it says. Which Maltese NGOs did the mission meet? The international jurists have forgotten many truths, the first one being that laws are made for men, not men for the laws. And no law can make Maltese men, and women, receive an infinite number of illegal, unwanted and unneeded immigrants. II The ICJ may be "composed of leading international judges and lawyers", as this report says, but none of them is mentioned by name as being responsible or being part of the said mission last September. A very pertinent question to these eminent jurists is: Does Malta have only obligations? Does Malta not have any rights, such as the right to live in peace without being overburdened with uninvited illegal immigrants, the right to enjoy security in its small land area, the right not to be responsible for the board and lodging of an unending influx of foreigners? III Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed?			YES	
1776412798	"Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed? Well Said - Even if mainland EU countries feel they do have an obligation maybe because of their colonial past , we certainly have no such obligations. So before we accept anything in this report a MANDATORY resettlement programme into the rest of the EU in a short span of time MUST be introduced.	yes			Individual Group
1776412798	I agree 100% the report is by unnamed people and represents only part of the story and so it's conclusions are based	yes			

- If you selected 'Individual' in the previous step, specify whether the negative attitude is expressed because of the individual's affiliation to a particular social group? [Here you need to select 'Yes' or 'No' in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet column]
- If you selected 'Yes' in the previous step or 'Group' in the step before, you are requested to name the relevant social group in the relevant column (if the relevant social group is not clear, tick the box on the righthand side of the column). If you selected 'No', move on to the next comment.

NB. For both (3) and (4), it is of utmost importance to be consistent in the naming of groups (e.g. if the target is, for example, a political group, use the same name to refer to this political group throughout your allocated dataset. Similarly, if the target is a minority group, like migrants or refugees, use consistent labels that will help us group together the relevant groups in this case).

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Article identifier	Comment	Response to previous comment	Does the post communicate a negative attitude towards an individual or a group?	If 'YES', does the negative attitude target an individual or a group?	If it targets an individual, does it target them due to their affiliation to a social group?		In both cases where a group is involved, name the group column (if the referent is obvious, please tick the next column)
1776412798	I Same words, same source. Which Maltese NGO is at the origin of this report? There will be no prize for guessing! So let's repeat (as they repeat) that Malta's mandatory detention policy for illegal immigrants has the support of both political parties (= 100% of MPs) and if put to a referendum will have the support of the vast majority of the common people of Malta. The report is "The result of an ICJ study mission in September 2011", it says. Which Maltese NGOs did the mission meet? The international jurists have forgotten many truths, the first one being that laws are made for men, not men for the laws. And no law can make Maltese men, and women, receive an infinite number of illegal, unwanted and unneeded immigrants. II The ICJ may be "composed of leading international judges and lawyers", as this report says, but none of them is mentioned by name as being responsible or being part of the said mission last September. A very pertinent question to these eminent jurists is: Does Malta have only obligations? Does Malta not have any rights, such as the right to live in peace without being overburdened with uninvited illegal immigrants, the right to enjoy security in its small land area, the right not to be responsible for the board and lodging of an unending influx of foreigners? III Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed?			YES	Group		migrants
	"Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed? Well Said - Even if mainland EU countries						

- If you have named a group in the previous step, in the next part of the annotation process you are requested to specify how the attitude is expressed in relation to

this target group.

- 5a. Does this comment express a negative attitude because it agrees with a previous negative comment? [Here you need to select ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet column]
- 5b. Does this comment express a negative attitude because it disagrees with a previous positive comment? [Here you need to select ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet column]
- 5c. Here you are expected to tick all options that apply out of the following categories: Negative categorisation (including generalisation and stereotype) / Insult (including derogatory term) / Sarcasm (including jokes) / Suggestion / Threat.

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
2	Article identifier	Comment	Response to previous comment	Does the post communicate a negative attitude towards an individual or a group?	If YES, does the negative attitude target an individual or a group?	If it targets an individual, does it target them due to their affiliation to a social group?	If it targets a group, in both cases where a group is involved, name the group in the next column	Does this comment express a negative attitude because it agrees with a previous negative comment?	Does this comment express a negative attitude because it disagrees with a previous positive comment?	Specify how the attitude is expressed in relation to this target group. Tick ALL categories that apply.	Negative categorisation (including generalisation and stereotype)	Insult (including derogatory term)	Sarcasm (including jokes)	Suggestion	Threat	If you identified 'insult', does the comment contain a derogatory term?	If you identified 'suggestion', does the comment contain a violence against the target group?	
3	177642378	I same words, same source. Which Maltese NGO is at the origin of this report? There will be no prize for guessing! So let's repeat (as they repeat) that Malta's mandatory detention policy for illegal immigrants has the support of both political parties (= 100% of MPs) and if put to a referendum will have the support of the vast majority of the common people of Malta. The report is "The result of an ICJ study mission in September 2011", it says, Which Maltese NGOs did the mission meet? The international jurists have forgotten many truths, the first one being that laws are made for men, not men for the laws. And no law can make Maltese men, and women, receive an infinite number of illegal, unwanted and unneeded immigrants. In the ICJ may be "composed of leading international judges and lawyers", as this report says, but none of them is mentioned by name as being responsible or being part of the said mission last September. A very pertinent question to these eminent jurists is: Does Malta have only obligations? Does Malta not have any rights, such as the right to live in peace without being overburdened with unwanted illegal immigrants, the right to enjoy security in its small land area, the right not to be responsible for the board and lodging of an unending influx of foreigners? If Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed?	yes	YES	Group	migrants	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	177642378	"Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed? Well Said - Even if mainland EU countries feel they do have an obligation maybe because of their colonial past, we certainly have no such obligations. So before we accept anything in this report a MANDATORY resettlement programme into the rest of the EU in a short span of time MUST be introduced.	yes					<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 6. If you identified insult in the step above, specify whether the comment includes a derogatory term (e.g. faggot, sodomite, nigger, bible basher, bitch) by selecting ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ in the drop-down menu.
- 7. If you ticked ‘Suggestion’ above, specify whether the said suggestion calls for any act of violence against the target group, by selecting ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ in the drop-down menu of the relevant Google sheet column.

1	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
2	Comment	Response to previous comment	Does the post communicate a negative attitude towards an individual or a group?	If YES, does the negative attitude target an individual or a group?	If it targets an individual, does it target them due to their affiliation to a social group?	If it targets a group, in both cases where a group is involved, name the group in the next column	Does this comment express a negative attitude because it agrees with a previous negative comment?	Does this comment express a negative attitude because it disagrees with a previous positive comment?	Specify how the attitude is expressed in relation to this target group. Tick ALL categories that apply.	Negative categorisation (including generalisation and stereotype)	Insult (including derogatory term)	Sarcasm (including jokes)	Suggestion	Threat	If you identified 'insult', does the comment contain a derogatory term?	If you identified 'suggestion', does the comment contain a violence against the target group?	
3	177642378	I same words, same source. Which Maltese NGO is at the origin of this report? There will be no prize for guessing! So let's repeat (as they repeat) that Malta's mandatory detention policy for illegal immigrants has the support of both political parties (= 100% of MPs) and if put to a referendum will have the support of the vast majority of the common people of Malta. The report is "The result of an ICJ study mission in September 2011", it says, Which Maltese NGOs did the mission meet? The international jurists have forgotten many truths, the first one being that laws are made for men, not men for the laws. And no law can make Maltese men, and women, receive an infinite number of illegal, unwanted and unneeded immigrants. In the ICJ may be "composed of leading international judges and lawyers", as this report says, but none of them is mentioned by name as being responsible or being part of the said mission last September. A very pertinent question to these eminent jurists is: Does Malta have only obligations? Does Malta not have any rights, such as the right to live in peace without being overburdened with unwanted illegal immigrants, the right to enjoy security in its small land area, the right not to be responsible for the board and lodging of an unending influx of foreigners? If Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed?	yes	YES	Group	migrants	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	No
4	177642378	"Europe has obligations to accept an influx of illegal immigrants? Why? Europe has unemployment of more than 10%. Does Europe have an obligation to add the immigrants to its unemployed? Well Said - Even if mainland EU countries feel they do have an obligation maybe because of their colonial past, we certainly have no such obligations. So before we accept anything in this report a MANDATORY resettlement programme into the rest of the EU in a short span of time MUST be introduced.	yes				<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 8. Finally, if there is more than one individual/group that is the target of a negative attitude, repeat steps 1 to 7 for each group mentioned. You can repeat the process in the sections separated by a thick black line.

*Glossary*

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition and example</i>
<b>Discrimination</b>	Discrimination is the act of making unjustified distinctions between human beings based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they are perceived to belong. People may be discriminated on the basis of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, religion or belief, or political or other opinion, as well as other categories. Discrimination especially occurs when individuals or groups are unfairly treated in a way which is worse than other people are treated, on the basis of their actual or perceived membership in certain groups or social categories. It involves restricting members of one group from opportunities or privileges that are available to members of another group.
<b>Insult</b>	<p>an expression or statement (or sometimes behaviour) which is disrespectful or scornful. Insults may be intentional or accidental.[1] An insult may be factual, but at the same time pejorative, such as the word "inbred"</p> <p><i>That's because we're not simply importing destitute people. We're importing a <b>discredited, disheveled and destructive</b> culture.</i></p> <p><i>If he is so impatient and the department does not cater and meet his needs immediately send <b>this Libyan ingrate</b> back to Libya where he can be served on the spot.</i></p>
<b>Derogatory term</b>	A word or grammatical form expressing a negative connotation, a low opinion, or a lack of respect toward someone or something. It is also used to express criticism, hostility, or disregard. Derogatory terms are pejorative in both their meaning and their usage. Examples of derogatory terms include: faggot, sodomite, nigger, and bible basher

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition and example</b>
	<p><i>Too late buddy boy, these lowest from of life the <b>morons</b> are already here roaming the streets even in Malta and most of all over the low countries.-Thats France Belgium and Holland. If we had our way we would send them to Paradise much sooner then they expected., with the heads and balls between their legs, and the only way to flash them out to first sought out their families, they ill come out like flies around a honey pot.</i></p>
<b>Negative categorisation</b>	<p>The grouping, in a negative way, of members of social groups, such as ethnic minorities, homosexuals, or overweight women.</p> <p><i>...The international jurists have forgotten many truths, the first one being that laws are made for men, not men for the laws. And no law can make Maltese men, and women, receive an infinite number of <b>illegal, unwanted and unneeded</b> immigrants...</i></p>
<b>Generalisation</b>	<p>A written or spoken statement in which you say or write that something is true all of the time when it is only true some of the time</p> <p><i>Yes they [migrants] come to take everything they can get and give nothing apart from grief. Do you house any of them and feed them and look after them? No I thought so so you are the same as me, in fact I have probably done more for them as I have lived among them in <b>THERE</b> countries who h is more than you probably have.</i></p>
<b>Stereotyping</b>	<p>A stereotype is a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing.</p> <p><i>They come here and they take our jobs.</i></p>
<b>Sarcasm</b>	<p>Speech or writing that actually means the opposite of what it seems to say. Sarcasm is usually intended to mock or insult someone.</p>

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition and example</b>
	<p><i>Now boys don't forget that diversity makes us stronger and more cultured.</i></p> <p><i>Kevin, you must take in as many illegals as your home will accommodate.</i></p>
<b>Joke</b>	<p>A joke is something that is said or done to make you laugh, for example a funny story.</p>
<b>Suggestion</b>	<p>If you make a suggestion, you put forward an idea or plan for someone to think about.</p> <p><i>How can this lady expect to seek refugee status when her country is not at war and when Nigeria happens to be one on the advancing economies in the region?</i></p> <p><i>Nigeria is a democratic country and rich in resources!</i></p> <p><b><i>She should go back to her own country and 'fight' to make it a better place for her and her family!</i></b></p> <p><i>If she, as a Nigerian, is not prepared to make her own country a better place, then who can?</i></p> <p><b><i>Germans should start defending their homeland. if the police are prevented from doing it because of political correctness the citizens should step in and get their country back.</i></b></p>
<b>Threat</b>	<p>A communicated intent to inflict harm or loss on another person.</p> <p><i>When we get in power all these gay people will have to hide</i></p>
<b>Violence</b>	<p>Behaviour (or language) which is intended to hurt, injure, or kill people. If you do or say something with violence, you use a lot of force and energy in doing or saying it, often because you are angry.</p> <p><i>Use a woman to kill them</i></p> <p><i>She should be shot</i></p>



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