

# Language ideologies among Spanish-speaking migrants in Germany

## Insights from language conflict narratives

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### Abstract

When migrants move to a new country, they often encounter challenges in understanding and being understood. Narratives serve as a way for individuals to make sense of these experiences, reflecting on their own and other people's actions, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions while weaving them into coherent stories. This study examines narratives of problematic language incidents among Latin American migrants living in Germany within a language ideologies framework, using narrative analysis and positioning theory. Special emphasis is placed on how the narrators position themselves and other characters relative to widely shared language ideologies. Within the narratives, three pivotal language ideologies emerge: 1. The one-nation-one-language ideology, 2. The native standard ideology, and 3. The ideology of global English. Through their positioning acts, the narrators make moral claims and either affirm or challenge prevailing language ideologies, along with the embedded moral values. While the participants resist marginalization based on exclusionary ideologies of linguistic nationalism and native speakerism, they nevertheless uphold the ideals of a linguistically homogeneous nation-state and the native speaker model. Moreover, they support the use of English as a global language to bridge linguistic inequalities, but tend to overlook its exclusionary potential.

**Keywords:** Language ideologies, Migration, Narrative analysis, Positioning theory, Language conflict.

### Resumen

Cuando emigramos a otro país, frecuentemente enfrentamos desafíos para comunicarnos. Contar historias es una forma de asimilar estas experiencias, reflexionando sobre acciones, creencias, actitudes e intenciones propias y ajenas, e integrándolas en una historia coherente. A través del análisis narrativo y la teoría del posicionamiento bajo el enfoque de las ideologías lingüísticas, este estudio examina narrativas de migrantes latinoamericanos en Alemania sobre incidentes problemáticos relacionados con el idioma. Se enfatiza cómo los y las narradores/as se posicionan a sí mismos/as y a otros personajes respecto a ideologías lingüísticas. Surgen tres ideologías fundamentales: 1. la ideología de “una lengua, una nación”, 2. la ideología de la lengua estándar y el hablante nativo y 3. la ideología del inglés como lengua global. Al posicionarse, los y las narradores/as afirman o cuestionan, según el caso, las ideologías lingüísticas predominantes y los respectivos valores morales asociados a estas. Aun-

que se oponen a la marginación inscrita en ideologías como el nacionalismo lingüístico y el “native speakerism”, sostienen el ideal de un estado-nación lingüísticamente homogéneo y del hablante nativo como hablante modelo. Además, abogan por el uso del inglés como lengua global y medio para superar las desigualdades lingüísticas, obviando su potencial excluyente.

**Palabras clave:** Ideologías lingüísticas, Migración, Análisis narrativo, Teoría del posicionamiento, Conflicto lingüístico.

## 1 Introduction

Linguistic difference presents one of the most fundamental challenges for many migrants as they move to a new country. Simultaneously, public debates on immigration in receiving countries often center around the “language problem”, emphasizing the importance and potential difficulties of immigrants adopting the host country’s language. Obviously, the perceptions and handling of linguistic differences by various social actors in the context of migration are fundamentally influenced by language ideologies.

In the case of Germany, the impact of language ideologies, particularly the perception of linguistic difference as a problem against the backdrop of the ideal of a homogeneous nation-state, has been extensively studied, especially in relation to public discourses on migration in the German media or the marginalization of migrants in the German educational sector. However, there is a notable lack of research addressing how these ideologies pervade and shape migrants’ daily experiences.

The aim of the present study is to reduce this gap by focusing on so-called “language conflict narratives”, i.e. stories of problematic language experiences shared by Latin American migrants living in Germany. Through an analytical framework that integrates research on language ideologies with narrative analysis and positioning theory, we aim to explore the role played by language ideologies in shaping migrants’ perceptions of the linguistic dimension of their migration experiences, along with its entanglements with the constructions of and challenges to moral orders and group memberships.

The paper is structured as follows: In section 2, we introduce our data and analytic framework. This section comprises an overview of Latin American migration to Germany (section 2.1.), an exposition of essential theoretical concepts and approaches such as language ideologies (section 2.1.), narrative analysis (section 2.2.), and positioning theory (2.3.), along with a description of our corpus (section 2.4.). Moving to section 3, we delve into three prominent language ideologies that emerged as pivotal from our data: the one-nation-one-language ideology (section 3.1.), the native standard ideology (section 3.2.), and the ideology of global English (section 3.3). Finally, in section 4, we summarize our findings and present overarching conclusions derived from the study.

## 2 Data and analysis

### 2.1 Latin American migration to Germany

The focus of this study is on Spanish-speaking migrants from Latin America who reside in Germany. Latin Americans represent one of the smaller migrant groups in Germany, accounting for approximately 1.5% of the entire immigrant population (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019: 205; Geis-Thöne 2023: 17). This could elucidate why this particular migrant group remains under-researched, especially from a sociolinguistic standpoint. Notably, studies exploring linguistic ideologies among Latin American migrants have predominantly centered on the US and Spain, the two countries that have received the largest numbers of Latin American immigrants worldwide (cf. for example de Fina 2003, 2015; De Fina and King 2011; Re-laño Pastor 2014; Patiño Santos 2018, 2020, to mention just a few). Against this backdrop, this study presents an opportunity to investigate language ideologies and positioning within a relatively understudied setting.

An overall picture regarding the influx and settlement patterns of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Germany is still lacking. This is partly due to the ambiguity of the label “Latin American”, which functions as an umbrella term based on perceived similarities in geographical origin, language, and cultural traits, yet its interpretation can significantly differ across contexts (cf. also Leeman 2023; Newman and Corona 2023: 104; Bürki 2023). In the limited existing literature, the “Latin American” category may encompass Brazil as well (Geis-Thönes 2023) or even extend to the Caribbean (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019), leading to challenges in obtaining precise population figures relevant to our study. According to Geis-Thönes, an estimated number of around 117,000 migrants from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America currently reside in Germany. In comparison to other European nations such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal, which have attracted the largest numbers of Latin American immigrants in Europe (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019; Manjón-Cabeza Cruz 2023: 74), this figure is notably smaller.

Historically, countries like Spain, Italy, and Portugal have drawn Latin American migrants due to shared historical, cultural, and linguistic ties. In contrast, Germany has emerged as an appealing destination more recently, chiefly due to its robust economy and the high-quality education it offers (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019: 203). Consequently, the socio-economic profile of Latin American immigrants in Germany differs from other European countries: unlike in Spain, Italy or Portugal, where many undertake low-skilled jobs in sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, tourism, or construction, a considerable number of migrants arriving in Germany are skilled laborers with higher educational backgrounds seeking better employment opportunities (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019: 201, 212; Geis-Thönes 2023). Moreover, the quality and internationalization of German higher education, which is tuition-free, attract students from Latin America (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019: 201), contributing to the younger demographic profile of Latin American immigrants (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies: 205, 208). Additionally, there is a higher proportion of females within this population compared to males (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Avila Tàpies 2019: 205; Geis-Thönes 2023: 20). Geographically, the largest portion of the Latin American population in Germany resides in the economically dominant southern region (Geis-Thönes 2023: 22).

## 2.2 Language ideologies

In the broadest sense, “ideologies of language are morally and politically loaded representations of the nature, structure, and use of languages in a social world” (Woolard 2021: 1; cf. Kroskrity 2000: 5). Importantly, language ideologies are not about language alone, as they fundamentally concern social relations, the construction and evaluation of social groups, as well as moral orders (Woolard 1998: 3; 2021: 2). Among various social practices, discourse, in its broadest sense, is a significant site where language ideologies become apparent. In this study, we specifically concentrate on narratives as a distinct genre of discourse.

## 2.3 Narrative Analysis

Narrative “is one of the privileged forms used by humans to elaborate experience” (de Fina 2003: 6). In the domain of narrative analysis and migration studies, narratives emerging from migration contexts have increasingly gained importance as a basis for exploring how migrants construct their identities. In these narratives, the experience of language difference, often implying language difficulty and conflict, is a central topic (Patiño Santos 2020; de Fina and Tseng 2017).

According to the classical structural approach by Labov and Waletzky (1967), narratives consist of a series of events or experiences presented in a sequential temporal order, to which the narrator takes an evaluative stance. They typically revolve around some kind of unexpected or even dramatic occurrence, which disrupts the ordinary state of affairs, making the event “tellable”. Prototypically, a narrative contains an orientation with indications about the setting and the main characters, a complicating action, its resolution, and a coda that closes the story and bridges the gap with the present (cf. Labov and Waletzky 1967; cf. also de Fina 2003: 12; de Fina and Tseng 2017: 381; Patiño Santos 2020:11). In addition to the presentation of the sequential order of events, evaluative information can be found throughout the narrative in which the narrator offers subjective interpretations, assessments, or judgments.

As the narratives analyzed here are accounts of problematic communication experiences, the complicating action typically involves a statement uttered by a character within the story world or a verbal exchange between the protagonist and the antagonist. In most cases, narrators present character’s words in direct speech. Following Relaño Pastor (2014: 77), we refer to these narrative quotations as *constructed dialogue*, acknowledging that they represent a creative performance of what the narrator considers to be the essence of a character’s utterance or even the entire encounter, rather than an exact reproduction of the words spoken in the factual situation.

While each story is unique, reflecting the narrator’s individual experiences and subjective interpretations, narratives also possess a collective dimension. During storytelling, the narrators react to culturally available discourses and ideologies, also called “master narratives” (Talbot and Bibace and Bokhour and Bamberg 1996: 225), positioning themselves in relation to socially shared norms and expectations (de Fina 2003: 7; Cederberg 2014). These often take the form of socially recognizable or even stereotypical identities, referred to as “enregistered identities” by de Fina (2015). Thus, beyond reporting and evaluating events, narrative is also about producing social identities and making moral claims.

## 2.4 Positioning theory

Positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove 1999; Talbot and Bibace and Bokhour and Bamberg 1996; Bamberg 1997) allows for analyzing how individuals discursively perform self-chosen identities in social interactions and relationships, by establishing and maintaining their position with regard to other individuals, and resisting undesirable identity positioning by others. In narratives, three different positioning levels can be distinguished (Bamberg 1997: 337):

1. The positioning between characters within the story world;
2. the positioning of the speaker relative to the audience;
3. the positioning of the speaker relative to existing moral orders and ideologies.

Analyzing positioning within language conflict narratives provides valuable insights not only into the prevalent language ideologies circulating within Latin American migration spaces in Germany but also into how these ideologies act as master narratives, shaping how migrants perceive and make sense of their language experiences (cf. also Patiño-Santos 2018: 66). While the overarching purpose of the stories often involves the narrators positioning themselves relative to these ideologies, conveying a sense of personhood and identity, this achievement is realized through various acts of positioning on lower levels (cf. also Talbot and Bibace and Bokhour and Bamberg 1996: 247). In our analysis, it will become apparent that language ideologies are inherently interconnected with moral and social orders and play a significant role in the negotiation of group boundaries and membership, operating across all three positioning levels.

## 2.5 The corpus

This study utilizes narratives as data that were collected within a research project on verbal violence against migrants, conducted at FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg from 2018 to 2021 (Jansen and Romero 2021). The corpus comprises 53 semi-conducted interviews, each lasting between approximately 30 and 90 minutes, involving Spanish-speaking migrants residing in Germany. While one participant is from Spain and another from the USA, the majority migrated from 11 different countries in Latin America, with Colombia, México and Venezuela being most strongly represented. This roughly reflects the overall distribution of Latin American national groups in Germany, where Colombians and Mexicans constitute the largest groups, followed by Peruvians, Chileans, and Venezuelans, although the latter are at a somewhat greater distance (Geis-Thöne 2023).

The participants' ages range from 19 to 62 years, with the majority falling within their (late) 20s. At the time of the interviews, most of the participants were either enrolled in BA, MA or PhD programs at German universities, or employed by international companies, fitting into the category commonly referred to as "skilled migrants" (Lising 2017). These profiles could be interpreted as roughly mirroring the general socio-economic characteristics of the Latin American migrant population in Germany (cf. section 2.1). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the interviews were carried out by students enrolled in the MA program "Las Américas / The Americas" at FAU, many of whom were Latin American migrants themselves. Since participants were primarily recruited through the interviewer's personal contacts and, later, via a snowball sampling method, there might exist a potential bias towards this particular participant profile.

The participants exhibit a diversified linguistic repertoire, including varying levels of proficiency in English and German alongside Spanish. This sets our study apart from previous research on narratives about language experiences of Spanish-speaking migrants, which has primarily focused on more marginalized Hispanic populations in the USA (Relaño Pastor 2014; De Fina & King 2011; De Fina 2015).

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, using a semi-structured questionnaire based on the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan 1954). Participants were asked to recount events or situations from their migration experience in which they felt negatively impacted (e.g., offended, hurt, intimidated, threatened, annoyed, etc.) by the verbal behavior of their interlocutors, in response to a narrative stimulus. This approach elicited brief narratives, typically embedded within broader sequences where participants discussed diverse aspects of their migration experiences.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to coding. During the coding process, a total of 192 self-contained narrative units were identified within the broader interview data.

Linguistic difference stood out as a significant topic in these narratives. Notably, in 74 out of 192 critical incidents, the complicating event is related to language issues. These include 13 narratives of verbal assaults directed at participants who used Spanish in public settings, rather than German, 33 narratives of unfair treatment (e.g. being ignored, ridiculed, harassed, etc.) for not using a “legitimate” (i.e. flawlessly “native-like”) version of German, and 28 narratives that revolve around communication barriers or breakdowns, where participants experienced a sense of neglect, exclusion, rejection, or other kinds of frustrating limitations in their ability to act and to advocate for their interests due to their inability to effectively communicate in German.

Most of these stories can thus be categorized as what De Fina and King (2011: 167-168; cf. Relaño Pastor 2014: 37) call “language conflict narratives”, in contrast to “language difficulty narratives”. Language difficulty narratives capture the practical challenges faced by migrants due to developing skills in the host society’s language, for example in amusing anecdotes about misunderstandings. On the other hand, language conflict narratives portray conflictive situations where the protagonists confront antagonistic forces, often attributing aggressive and offensive intentions to the antagonists (De Fina and King 2011: 181). These narratives are typically framed as group conflicts between migrants and members of the host society.

Further, the Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) was employed to discern content categories that naturally emerged from the entire corpus. Through this approach, three prominent language ideologies emerged from our data: the one-nation-one-language ideology, the native standard ideology, and the ideology of English as a global language. These ideologies appear to be widely shared among the participants and play a central role as master narratives in their language conflict stories. To support this assertion, the following sections will delve into three exemplary narratives, each representing one of the identified ideologies.

### 3 Language ideologies in language conflict stories

In this section, we will analyze three exemplary language conflict stories to illustrate how the core language ideologies derived from our corpus operate within narrative positioning. In each subsection, we will begin by providing a brief overview of the language ideology under examination, followed by a narrative analysis of the respective story.

#### 3.1 The one-nation-one-language ideology

Perhaps the most deeply ingrained language ideology in modern nation-states, the one-nation-one-language ideology, is prominently evident in our corpus. Overall, it encompasses the idea that national states consist of culturally homogeneous groups of people who share common origins, history, traditions, territory and, notably, language (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998; Berthele 2008; Woolard 2021: 13). It assumes that linguistic and territorial boundaries separate insiders from outsiders of the nation, reinforcing the idea of a monolithic and cohesive national identity. However, in context of increasing mobility and the diversification of modern societies, this “dogma of homogeneity” (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998: 194-195) is challenged, leading to the perception of immigrant languages’ presence and visibility as a threat. As languages are seen as the expression of social allegiances, choosing not to learn the host country’s language may be interpreted as rejecting the social identity attached to it (Lippi Green 1997: 63; Lønsmann 2014: 110-111).

Since the early 2000s, when Germany began recognizing its status as an immigration country, the topic of integration (often understood in terms of cultural assimilation) became a crucial issue in immigration debates. As a result, a morally charged distinction arose between “good” and “bad” migrants. These “enregistered identities” (de Fina 2015) continue to shape relations between migrants and non-migrants in German society:

they are either “good” migrants who assimilate, thus attesting to the superiority of supposedly German values, or “bad” migrants who serve as the Other and who still affirm the boundaries and existence of the norm. (Roca Lizazaru 2020: 3)

The possession of German language skills plays a pivotal role in the stereotype of the “good migrant”, while the inability or unwillingness to learn the language characterizes the “bad” migrant. This puts pressure on immigrants to position themselves as “good” and “well integrated” individuals who make a genuine effort to learn the language of their host country (Roca Lizazaru 2020; Cederberg 2014; Henry 2015).

The tensions between homogenizing nationalist language ideologies and the actual linguistic diversity in German society are evident in 13 language conflict narratives found in our corpus that revolve around situations where immigrants experience aggressions for using a “foreign” language in public spaces. These incidents occur in a diverse range of locations, including a McDonald’s restaurant, a bus stop, a bus, a supermarket, a ticket counter, a hospital, the town hall, the immigration office, and different university offices. The following case example was provided by a 27-year-old female university student with a Mexican and US-American background, who had been living in Germany for two and a half years at the time of the interview. Set in a supermarket, it illustrates the shared construction of Germany as a monolingual German-speaking space by both the protagonist and the antagonist within the story world. Additionally, it highlights the intertwining between the linguistic and the moral order through the enregistered identity of the “good migrant”:

1 yo llegué en julio / en diciembre / fuimos a comprar un té una amiga y yo en [NAME OF  
 2 THE SUPERMARKET] / y sin querer eh: agarramos un té / que costaba como diez euros /  
 3 cuando queríamos otro de cuatro euros / entonces claro cuando yo pagué / yo no entendí bien  
 4 la cifra entonces / ya cuando recibí el cambio miré el tique ah no era ese / entonces yo le dije  
 5 “Entschuldigung zurück bitte” porque / era mi alemán / entonces ella se me quedó viendo y  
 6 me dijo “Nein” / entonces mi amiga y yo es que no no nos está entendiendo / entonces  
 7 empezamos a explicarle / y como que pensamos que no nos está entendiendo fuimos a buscar  
 8 otra persona un muchacho / y le preguntamos que si hablaba alemán / y digo y si hablaba  
 9 inglés / y dijo pues poquito y dije bueno nos puedes ayudar / y él sí sí no te preocupes  
 10 podemos cambiar el té / cuando llegó con la cajera le explicó la situación / y la cajera dijo sí  
 11 entiendo / pero no se los voy a cambiar / entonces yo así como mi cerebro estaba trabajando  
 12 para poder entender / entonces le dijo él ¿warum? / y le dijo porque si estás en Alemania  
 13 hablas alemán / y claro ahí en este momento yo (-) era (-) o sea / era la primera vez que no  
 14 me atendían por no hablar el idioma / ni en Estados Unidos me ha pasado algo así / era una  
 15 mujer / era una mujer sí era una cajera / y exploté exploté exploté exploté / porque incluso  
 16 la persona al lado le dijo ¿oye pero qué te pasa? / si quieren cambiarlo o sea como no pasa  
 17 nada / por eso se puede hacer en cualquier lugar / [...] / entonces claro yo exploté / y ya le  
 18 dije un montón de cosas / y: y estaba muy enojada / y le dije qué te pasa le dije eres una  
 19 racista de mierda / por qué no nos quieres cambiar esto / no te estamos pidiendo nada del  
 20 otro mundo / estamos aprendiendo alemán / acabamos de llegar a Alemania o sea como / por  
 21 qué nos haces todo esto y “nein” empecé a gritarle entonces / le dije dile a ella / que cuando  
 22 vaya a mi país / nadie le va a tratar así / porque bla bla bla y el muchacho estaba super rojo  
 23 / super apenado [...] / [yo] estaba gritando estaba super enojada / y mi amiga estaba como  
 24 que llorando / es que fue muy fuerte para las dos / entonces yo estaba gritando / y el  
 25 muchacho estaba super apenado / super rojo super / me dijo no perdón en serio yo sé que /  
 26 perdón perdón / yo lo sentía yo lo sentía y le dije no te preocupes / yo sé que no es nada en  
 27 contra ti / pero ella tiene que aprender

The story begins as a language difficulty narrative, and turns into a language conflict narrative at a later point. In the orientation, the narrator situates herself as a newly arrived immigrant, and alludes to the presence of a Latin American friend, implying that she was speaking Spanish to her. In line with Grice’s maxim of quantity, the inclusion of seemingly insignificant details serves to direct the hearer’s focus towards specific aspects of the experience which are crucial to understand the point of the story (de Fina 2003: 147). Consequently, the orientation already frames the narrative as a story about integration and language difference.

The first refusal of the cashier to change the tea constitutes the first complicating event of the story. Inferring that the refusal is due to communication barriers, the protagonist uses strategies typically employed to address language difficulty situations, e.g. explaining oneself better, and seeking assistance from a bilingual person. As no solution can be achieved despite these efforts, tension and suspense rise, propelling the narrative towards its climax. When the translator (casted here as the protagonist’s ally) asks *warum?* ‘why’, the cashier declares: “Si estás en Alemania, hablas alemán” ‘If you are in Germany you speak German’. As this utterance brings an end to the protagonist’s struggle in comprehending the situation, providing an explanation for the cashier’s perplexing behavior, it can be considered as the resolution of the language difficulty part of the narrative. At the same time, it generates a new source of tension that releases the language conflict part of the story.

The utterance “Si estás en Alemania, hablas alemán” constitutes the complicating event of the language conflict part of the story. As it is typical of constructed dialogue (cf. Relaño Pastor 2014: 79), it has a strong dramatizing effect. On the content level, it captures the essence of the one-state-one-language ideology, which asserts that language should align strictly with na-



tional boundaries. Within the story world, it positions the cashier as a proponent of linguistic nationalism. The formulation of the ideology as a zero conditional highlights the categorical character of the statement, which is presented as a universal truth. The present tense indicative form *hablas* ‘you speak’ in the apodosis has a strong deontic (i.e. ought-to-be) reading, which carries significant normative consequences by asserting that speaking the national language is a moral obligation. This distinction implies a moral hierarchy, suggesting that those who do not adhere to the language norm are somehow morally deficient or inferior, so that their linguistic behavior must be controlled and corrected. Thus, within the story world, the antagonist positions the protagonist as the cultural ‘other’, and as a person who is not able or not willing to adopt the host countries’ cultural and linguistic norms – in other words, a “bad” immigrant. At the same time, she positions herself as a defender of the national linguistic order, and thus morally superior.

The protagonist’s intense emotional reaction (line 14), reflected in the repetition of the verb form *exploté* ‘I exploded’, is an expression of strong moral indignation and thus constructs a moral stance that serves to represent the listener’s alignment in the interactional world (cf. Relaño Pastor and de Fina 2014: 47 on emotional language as a means of positioning). In lines 16 to 20, the narrator uses constructed dialogue to challenge and even to reverse the moral hierarchy established by the antagonist, repositioning the protagonist in a way that aligns with her own social identity as a “good” migrant. Although, like the language conflict narratives analyzed by Relaño Pastor and de Fina (2014: 47), the actual conflict remains unresolved, however, we can still consider this act of repositioning as the resolution of the story, because it allows the protagonist to restore her social image as a “good” migrant and person (both within the story world and the interactional world).

By labeling the cashier as “una racista de mierda” ‘a fucking racist’ (lines 18 to 19), she again uses emotional language to position the antagonist as morally deficient, reversing the moral order previously established by the antagonist. The comparison with her own country (lines 22) reinforces the contrast between Germany and the protagonist’s country, presenting the protagonist’s in-group as morally superior. This is underscored by the notion that the cashier, as a foreigner in the protagonist’s country, can expect better treatment in Mexico than the protagonist is currently receiving in Germany. Additionally, drawing a parallel with the USA, a country notorious for its harsh treatment of (especially Latin American) migrants (lines 14), positions the cashier (and Germany as a country) at the lowest end of the international moral spectrum. Thus, the narrator deems the antagonist’s behavior as unacceptable according to universally recognized, cross-cultural ethical standards. Overall, the (re)positioning acts in the complicating action and the resolution illustrate that the narrative is not (only) about language, but also group conflicts in relation to what is morally right or wrong.

In this context, the role of the translator is important. His apology for a fellow German’s behavior positions him as someone who identifies with the German group, thus reinforcing the group opposition within the story world. Simultaneously, he is depicted as a helpful and supportive individual who sides with the migrants in the conflict. While this helps alleviate the group conflict within the story world, and also supports the narrator’s claims to the universality of her moral convictions, we can argue that this character also aids the narrator in positioning herself as a nuanced, non-racist person within the interactional world, as she explicitly does not claim that all Germans are nationalist or even racist.

However, the arguments presented by the protagonist in the constructed dialogue (lines 16 to 20) indicate that she ultimately reaffirms, rather than challenges, the nation-state ideology and the normative concept of the “good” migrant. First, she emphasizes the trivial nature of the favor (“no te estamos pidiendo nada del otro mundo” ‘we’re not asking you for anything out of this world’, line 19).

Second, she counters the cashier’s allegation by highlighting that she and her friend are actually learning German and that their limited proficiency is due to their recent arrival in the country (lines 19 to 20). In this way, her response signals her alignment with the ideal of linguistic integration. The use of code-switching to German is a strategy employed in the interactional world to position herself as someone making an effort to communicate in the national language, again positioning herself as a “good migrant”. The possessive construction “mi alemán” ‘my German’ (lines 5) further asserts her claim to the language and to use it in her own way, while also acknowledging its distinction from the German spoken by “natives”. (cf. section 4.2.) Through these linguistic choices, she accepts moral responsibility for learning German but emphasizes her recent immigrant status, establishing her own lack of culpability.

Overall, the narrator aligns with the notion of Germany as a space where German should be spoken, as well as the normative idea of integration. The assumption of the monolingual nation-state, to which migrants are expected to conform, is not explicitly challenged. Instead, the narrator questions the applicability of the enregistered identity of the “bad” migrant to her own situation. This reflects a broader trend observed in the corpus: Most participants firmly believe that immigrants should learn German if they plan to live permanently in Germany. Those who are unwilling or unable to do so often feel the need to justify themselves. For instance, they might claim that they do not intend to stay in Germany long-term, or they emphasize the difficulty of learning German. Additionally, some participants criticize other migrants who remain isolated in a “Latin American bubble” (“la burbuja latina”), reinforcing the normative ideal of “good migrants” who learn the language as an expression of their willingness to integrate.

### 3.2 The ideology of the native standard language

The ideology of the native standard language proposes the existence of a single correct form of a national language, which is deemed suitable in all social settings. Since the standard variety is typically associated with a dominant social, political, or economic group in a given society, its use is equated to a form of social and economic capital (Kroskrity 2000: 28; Lippi-Green 1997: 64).

The so-called “native speakers”, who acquired a language during early childhood as their first language, are normally seen as the most skilled and “true” representatives of the standard language. Consequently, individuals who learn the language later in life are relegated to an inferior status and face discrimination, even if they are highly proficient in the language (Lippi-Green 1997; Khakpour 2016: 214-15). Kinship metaphors such as *native language* or *mother tongue* suggest that membership in a linguistic community is acquired by birth (Bonfiglio 2013; Knapik 2016: 230-31, 234; Khakpour 2016: 214, 217). Indeed, the notion that migrants are inherently incapable of speaking the language of the host country correctly has evolved into a powerful language ideology, probably reflecting anxieties of cultural identity projected upon language (Khakpour 2016: 210-11; Bonfiglio 2013: 30). These ideologies, which Bonfiglio (ibid.) captures with the concept of *native language nationality*, draw a sharp line between speakers with different origins and language biographies, portraying migrants as eternal ‘others’. However, sociolinguistic research has shown that the classification of individuals as “native” or

“foreign” speakers is primarily influenced by social and ethnic boundaries rather than language proficiency and effective communication (Lippi-Green 1997: 17, 69-70; Khakpour 2016: 211; Thoma 2016: 224).

Exclusionary ideologies and practices based on the perceived linguistic authority of “native” speakers have been termed “native speakerism”. This mindset creates a division between “an imagined, problematic generalized Other [and] the unproblematic Self of the ‘native speaker’” (Halliday 2006: 386). This situation puts pressure on migrants not only to learn the language of their host country but also to acquire it in its “correct” standard form (Blommaert 2013: 195). The dominance of the standard language and the devaluation of non-standard forms are frequently rationalized under the pretext of communicative effectiveness, putting the full burden of efficient communication on the learner (Lippi-Green 1997: 69). Against this backdrop, the ideology of nativeness leads to negative self-conceptions and linguistic insecurity among migrants. This demonstrates that even those who are marginalized by the native standard ideology tend to internalize and comply with it, as is typical of hegemonic ideologies (Lippi-Green 1997: 66; Kroskrity 2000: 28).

While extensively debated in the English-speaking academic realm, particularly in the context of ESLT (English as a Second Language Teaching), the presence and impact of native speakerism have also been observed in migration-related contexts in German-speaking countries (Knappik 2016; Khakpour 2016; Thoma 2016). In our corpus, the ideology of the native standard language becomes evident in language conflict narratives depicting situations where migrants face marginalization, ridicule, criticism, or verbal aggression for not speaking German in a “correct” manner. The incidents typically unfold in institutional settings and workplaces. The following example showcases the negotiation of legitimate speakerhood between a 23-year-old Colombian university student working as a waitress in a restaurant, and a German customer. At the time of the interview, she had been living in Germany for four years.

- 1 Participant: bueno en realidad yo trabajo de mesera en un restaurante / y sí me ha pasado que  
 2 he tenido clientes que son más difíciles / porque al ser mesera pues tienes que atender al  
 3 cliente y no siempre van a ser buenas personas / no van a ser atentos / y sí me ha tocado una  
 4 situación como en la que me han tratado mal / por yo no saberme expresar en alemán / o  
 5 porque ellos no me han entendido / entonces sí hubo una vez que un señor / yo le iba a tomar  
 6 el pedido / y el señor me empezó a decir como / ay pero tú si no hablas alemán / ¿cómo me  
 7 vas a entender bien? / como que simplemente por yo no estaba hablando perfectamente /  
 8 pues ya él me empezó a decir en vez de ayudarme / me empezó a ponerme más nerviosa /  
 9 diciéndome que si si es que iba a poder / o que yo no sé hablar / o que mejor me hablaba en  
 10 otro idioma y así / entonces esas cosas sí me pasó / me ha pasado / y lo encuentro  
 11 desmotivador la verdad
- 12 Interviewer: ehm ¿en qué idioma se comunicaron?
- 13 Participant: alemán / y él trató de hablarme en inglés luego / yo decidí seguir hablando  
 14 alemán / porque en realidad es un idioma que sí sé / sólo que obviamente tengo mis fallas  
 15 pero / me siento cómoda hablándolo
- 16 [...]
- 17 Interviewer: ehm bueno la conversación como se desarrolló / o sea fue inmediato el?
- 18 Participant: claro yo me le acerqué y le pregunté que que / quería si tomar algo / o que si  
 19 podía tomar su orden / y él a partir de ahí no me entendió al parecer lo que yo le traté de  
 20 decir / y me empezó a mirar feo / y me dijo como pero tú si (no) sabes hablar alemán /  
 21 ¿segura que quieres hablar en alemán? / y me dijo como que me intentó hablar en inglés /  
 22 igual su inglés tampoco es que era el mejor / entonces yo le seguía hablando en alemán /  
 23 porque le decía que sí / que yo sí sé hablar en alemán / y que podría muy bien tomar su orden  
 24 en alemán / y él se hacía como que si no me entendía / como que simplemente se rehusaba a  
 25 entenderme / porque para una persona que es su idioma materno / no no creo que es tan  
 26 difícil entender a alguien que trata de hablar tu idioma / entonces él se rehusaba a entenderme
- 27 Interviewer: y cuando te habló en alemán o en inglés ¿notaste que él intentaba hablarte más  
 28 despacio  
 29 o algo así particular?
- 30 Participant: como si yo no supiera / como si yo no escuchara bien / siento que sí me trato /  
 31 sí yo me sentí menos en ese momento
- 32 [...]
- 33 Interviewer: eh / ¿y a ti qué impresión te ha causado el contacto con esa persona / o sea qué  
 34 sensación te dejó?
- 35 Participant: emm, me dejó / sentí inseguridad / me sentí menos segura de mí / y me hizo  
 36 hasta cuestionarme si en realidad yo sí puedo hablar alemán o no / entonces sí / sí inseguridad  
 37 es lo que me provocó

In the orientation lines, the narrator identifies herself as a waitress. In lines 3 to 4, she sets the focus of the story on problematic experiences with customers who she characterizes as “not good people”, who treated her badly due to a language problem. The use of the expression *tratar mal* ‘to treat badly’ indicates a negative moral judgement, which frames the story as a language conflict narrative. Initially, she attributes the source of the conflict to herself, citing a lack of proficiency in German (line 4). However, she quickly corrects herself and shifts the blame to the customers, suggesting that they were unable to understand her (line 4-5).

The actual story begins at line 5, with the Spanish formulaic expression *hubo una vez* ‘once upon a time’, conventionally used as an introductory phrase in storytelling. Notably, the incident is narrated in a circular manner. A first version of the narrative is presented as a self-contained unit in lines 5 to 10. Upon the interviewer’s requests (line 11 and 16), the narrator provides more evaluative information (lines 12 to 14) as well as a second and more detailed account of the complicating action (lines 17 to 25).

The first version of the complicating event starts with an utterance in constructed dialogue in which the client asks how the waitress is supposed to understand him if she does not speak German (lines 6 to 7). By introducing his turn with the interjection *ay pero* ‘oh, but’, the antagonist displays negative surprise at the waitress’s inability to speak German, positioning the protagonist in the story world as someone who does not meet his expectations regarding language use. The emphatic pronoun *tú* ‘you’ sets the addressee as the pragmatically salient topic of the following utterance, highlighting her responsibility in the interaction. As a rhetorical question, the purpose of the sentences “Si no hablas alemán, ¿cómo me vas a entender bien?” ‘If you don’t speak German, how are you going to understand me well?’ (line 6 to 7) is to make a point (in this case, highlighting a communication problem due to the waitress’s inability to speak German), rather than to elicit a direct answer. The use of the conditional clause in the question reinforces the antagonist’s straightforward claim about the protagonist’s language deficit with a sense of certainty and authority, because in non-hypothetical contexts, “[the] antecedent proposition represents known information to both the speaker and the audience, while the consequent also presents secure and determinate knowledge of the speaker” (Kitis 2004: 31). Thus, the antagonist highlights the shared awareness of the communication difficulty while simultaneously attributing responsibility to the waitress and attesting to her a lack of realistic self-assessment. The notion that the antagonist believes the protagonist is overestimating her proficiency in German becomes even more pronounced in the second version of the complicating action, where the query “¿segura que quieres hablar en alemán?” ‘Are you sure that you want to speak German?’ (lines 19 to 20) carries a profound sense of doubt or disbelief regarding the waitress’s German abilities.

Overall, the complicating action revolves around the antagonist assigning to the protagonist a stereotyped identity as a non-speaker of German within the story world, attributing blame to her for the communication breakdown anticipated by him. All of this aligns with the key notions of the native standard ideology mentioned earlier. In accordance with the ideology of native speakerism, the antagonist portrays the protagonist as the “problematic” participant in the conversation, while depicting himself as the “unproblematic” one.

However, this positioning does not remain unchallenged. The narrator’s evaluative statement “como que simplemente por[que] yo no estaba hablando perfectamente” ‘it’s like just because I wasn’t speaking perfectly’ (line 7) questions the dichotomous distinction between native speakers and non-speakers, as she positions herself as a kind of German speaker. While admitting that she speaks in a “deficient” way, the protagonist emphasizes that her proficiency is sufficient to handle the situation (“podría tomar muy bien su orden en alemán”, ‘I could take his order in German very well’, line 22), thereby prioritizing communicative effectiveness over native-like correctness (and challenging common rationalizations of native speakerism). These positioning acts occur on the interactional level, as they belong to the evaluative segments of the narrative and aim to elicit understanding and support from the hearer.

Within the story world, the narrator decidedly positions herself as a German speaker at two specific points in the interview (lines 12 to 14; 20 to 22). When the antagonist addresses the protagonist in English, language choice becomes a crucial tool for negotiating social positions. As English is considered as the global lingua franca (explained in the next section), addressing the waitress in this language positions her as someone who does not speak German, and, therefore, as an outsider from the perspective of native language nationality (line 12, 20). In response, the protagonist firmly sticks to German in a demonstrative act of counter-positioning in the story world. She also explicitly contradicts the antagonist in saying (repeatedly, as the Spanish imperfect *le decía* ‘I said’ indicates, line 21) that she does actually speak German. On

the level of the interactional world, she expresses her comfort in speaking German (lines 13 to 14), underscoring her positive identification with the German language, and indicating that she finds it acceptable not to use it according to native speaker norms.

All in all, she resists the antagonist's attempts to other and to problematize her, emphasizing her membership in the group of German speakers. Although this challenges the ideology of native language nationality, her reference to linguistic perfection (line 7) and acknowledgement of errors (line 13) still reveal her overall alignment with the superiority of the model native speaker.

Considering the moral order negotiated in the narrative, the sentence “pues ya él me empezó a decir en vez de ayudarme” ‘he started to make accusations instead of helping me’ (lines 7 to 8) indicates that the customer's behavior violates expectations for respectful interaction, which typically include assisting a person who is struggling with a foreign language. Thus, the narrator declines the responsibility of bearing the entire burden of communication, positioning the antagonist in the interactional world as the one with moral shortcomings. The narrator's negative assessment of the customer's English skills (line 20-21) positions him, again in the interactional world, as someone who falls short of meeting his own language standards, thereby raising questions about his authority in language matters. Moreover, the narrator accuses the antagonist of hypocrisy in the interactional world, further positioning him as morally questionable, as she suggests that he is merely pretending not to understand her, or outright refusing to comprehend what she is saying (line 23), unfairly trying to evade his responsibility in the act of communication. The rationale behind her inference (German is his “mother tongue”, so he should be able to understand other people trying to speak “his” language, lines 24- to 25), yet constitutes another alignment with the native standard ideology, assuming that as a native speaker, the client possesses a “perfect” command of the language. Overall, just as we have seen in the previous example, the narrator resists the moral order and hierarchy that the antagonist tries to impose. Notably, however, this resistance is expressed only within the interactional world of the interview, with no moral accusations or resolution achieved in the story world (Relaño Pastor and de Fina 2014: 47). Clearly, this situation is influenced by role expectations and power hierarchies: while the practical question of the language to use for taking the order can be openly discussed, it is not within the expected role of a restaurant waitress to pass moral judgement on a customer's behavior.

In the coda of the first version of the narrative and in further evaluative sections, the narrator expresses feelings of frustration, negative self-perception, and linguistic insecurity (lines 33 to 35), as a typical reaction to native speakerism.

In summary, the incident portrays a conflict related to language norms, legitimate possession of the German language, and, ultimately, social group membership and hierarchies. These themes are frequently addressed in stories that depict negative experiences arising from not being able to meet the native standard norm. As a general trend, participants condemn unfair treatment due to not possessing the native standard variety and reject being labeled as the “other” based on the concept of native language nationality. Nevertheless, they still align with the native standard ideology by acknowledging the superiority of “native” German compared to their own, leading them to feel insecure and inferior about their perceived deficient way of speaking the language.

### 3.3 The ideology of English as a global language

In essence, the ideology of English as a global language is the belief that English is widely, if not universally, used and understood across the world, allowing speakers and learners to connect with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Due to its perceived universality, English is seen as a key factor in promoting social and economic development, enhancing job opportunities, and fostering engagement in the global community (Pennycook 2007: 101ff, Watts 2011; Lønsmann 2014; Canagarajah 2013; Bürki 2023). This ideology is closely linked to global capitalism and neoliberalism, as English is associated with mobility, cosmopolitanism and competitiveness (Heller and Duchêne 2012; Bürki 2023).

Further, English is often perceived as a ‘neutral’ and straightforward tool for transmitting information, being regarded as a mere “technical skill, decoupled from authenticity” (Heller and Duchêne 2012: 10; Canagarajah 2013: 19). However, it can also serve a way of “doing being international” (Haberland and Preisler 2015: 20), i.e. performing the “enregistered identity” of the cosmopolitan global citizen (Lilley and Barker and Harris 2017). In line with neoliberal ideals, international contexts where English is used as a lingua franca “emphasize scripted communication in a uniform language for efficiency” (Canagarajah 2013: 1).

However, the widespread belief in the universal usability and global coverage of English, as well as its perceived culturally “neutral” status, are ideological constructs that do not align with the complex linguistic realities in countries like Germany and other European states (cf. Watts 2011: 281-282; Lønsmann 2014; Woolard 2021: 12-13). In reality, the situation could be better described as “incomplete vernacularisation” (Haberland and Preisler 2015: 17), i.e. English is used by the population with varying degrees of frequency and proficiency.

Particularly in contexts where English is expected to function as the primary language, the ideology of English as a universal language erases the existence of “English-have-nots” (individuals with limited or no English proficiency, Lønsmann 2014: 100), and disregards the use of complex linguistic practices that extend beyond “English only” (Lønsmann 2014: 102-103; Canagarajah 2013). This widespread belief that English is a language everyone can speak results in the social exclusion of individuals who do not have English as a linguistic resource (Lønsmann 2014). In this context, ideologies of the neutrality and global validity of English have been criticized for depoliticizing the language and erasing social and economic inequalities related to the possession (or lack) of English (Pennycook 2007: 109).

The internationalization of higher education and the adoption of English as the corporate language in multinational companies are significant factors driving the widespread acceptance of the ideology of English as a global lingua franca (Lønsmann 2014: 95; Lising 2017: 299, 304; Canagarajah 2013). It comes as no surprise, then, that our participants, most of whom are international students or employees in international companies, frequently reference this ideology in their narratives.

The extract we analyze in this section stands out from the other language conflict stories in our corpus since it does not involve aggressive behavior towards the protagonist based on language. Instead, it portrays an argument between the protagonist and a university employee concerning whether not using English with international students can be considered as racist behavior. Despite the difference in the nature of the conflict, this narrative sheds significant light

on how ideologies of English as a global language function as a reference point for constructing migrants' language experience in Germany. The story was provided by the same participant as the story analyzed in section 3.1.

1 entonces yo fui a las oficinas internaciones / y la persona me preguntó si ya había extendido  
 2 el semestre [...] es una persona alemana que está encargada de esas cosas / sí / yo estaba  
 3 hablando en alemán y estábamos hablando en inglés / entonces cuando me preguntó si había  
 4 ido a extender mi maestría le dije que no / pero que iba a ir la próxima semana / entonces él  
 5 me dijo ¿hablas alemán? / y le dije no no hablo alemán hablo muy poquito alemán / me dijo  
 6 bueno es que la persona / que está encargada de recibir este tipo de documentos / eh no habla  
 7 inglés / entonces yo le dije “yes i know him he’s racist” / y me dijo “what? No, he is not  
 8 racist!” como “don't say that” / y yo le dije pero es que ya varios compañeros han tenido  
 9 trabajo / ah perdón han tenido problemas con él / él trabaja en las oficinas de extranjería / él  
 10 es encargado de las maestrías de [NAME OF AN INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
 11 PROGRAM] / y no habla inglés / y se rehúsa a resolver problemas / al contrario es un  
 12 problema más / y si tú no hablas alemán él no te atiende / le dije “I'm sorry but he’s racist.”  
 13 / me dijo no no simplemente no sabe / y se puso muy muy muy al tiro / muy al querer  
 14 pelearme a la ofensiva / entonces le dije mira / tú o sea tu primer idioma no es el inglés /  
 15 tampoco el mío / sin embargo estamos resolviendo el problema / tú me estás ayudando / él  
 16 no quiere hacer eso / pero no le digas eso en su cara / y yo o sea tampoco le voy a decir  
 17 “¡hola racista, ayúdame!” / claro que no o sea no se trata de eso / pero me di cuenta como  
 18 que también la universidad / no se da cuenta que tiene muchos trabajadores que son racistas  
 19 / porque si la persona no te quiere ayudar a resolver el problema / puede que no sepa inglés  
 20 / está bien pero no te está ayudando.

In the orientation section (lines 1 to 3), the narrator sets the scene of the experience to be described – an administrative interaction with an employee of the university's international office. The employee is positioned as a German responsible for assisting international students (line 2), implying that he is a German speaker. The narrator, who identifies as Mexican at the beginning of the interview, positions herself as a German speaker as well (lines 2 to 3). Both characters are also positioned within the story world as English speakers (line 3), highlighting their diverse linguistic resources that may not align with their national origins. The themes of nationality, job responsibilities and multilingualism are crucial to understanding the upcoming interaction's point.

The complicating action begins when the antagonist asks the protagonist if she speaks German (line 3), bringing up language competence as a topic. Upon her negative response, the antagonist informs her that the person she needs to see to extend the duration of her program does not speak English, suggesting potential communication difficulties. This notification triggers the central complicating event: The protagonist says that she knows this person, characterizing him as racist. This positioning carries a strong negative moral judgement, since racism is considered one of the most reprehensible attitudes and behaviors, making accusations of racism significantly censored in Germany. This is particularly true for state institutions, where racist structures are subjected to a taboo which Karabulut (2022) terms the *Artikulationstabu* ('the taboo of articulation'). Thus, the protagonist positions the employee at the lowest level of the prevailing moral order, while simultaneously challenging the prevalent moral order that tries to cover up racism in German institutions.

The antagonist's exclamation “what?” (line 7) conveys a strong reaction of disapproval towards the protagonist's statement. His emphatic denial (“No, he's not racist!”, lines 7 to 8) can be seen as an act of resistance against what he perceives as an unjust positioning imposed on



his colleague. The narrator interprets this objection as an indirect directive speech act (paraphrased by the utterance “don’t say that”, line 8), which aims to impose the “taboo of articulation” on her, portraying the protagonist’s behavior as socially unacceptable and positioning her as the one in the wrong.

In the following lines of constructed dialogue (8 to 12), the protagonist firmly defends her viewpoint by presenting evidence drawn from her fellow students’ experiences, which she interprets as indicative of racism. Through the contrast she constructs between the employee’s official responsibilities as a member of the international office and his actual behavior, such as refusing to speak English, neglecting non-German speakers, and displaying a general lack of willingness to help international students, she establishes a distinct linguistic and moral order. Within this order, English is set as the natural and obvious language for communication within the university, particularly in service facilities and programs that cater to an international audience. On the moral level, the use of English is associated with values of openness, collaboration and support, signifying an inclusive and welcoming environment. Conversely, the insistence on using German is ideologically linked to discrimination and racism, indicating a potential exclusionary stance that (as she mentions at a later point in the interview) contradicts the university’s purported commitment to internationalization and diversity.

The sentences “I’m sorry but he’s a racist” (line 12) serves as a recapitulation of the argument presented earlier, a reaffirmation of the protagonist’s initial claim, and a rejection of the taboo of articulation. Notably, the narrator makes the core statements of the exchange (“he’s racist – he’s not racist – he’s a racist”) stand out against the rest of the complicating event by switching to English. This code-switching not only highlights the central conflict of the narrative but can also be seen as an enactment and demonstration of the use of English as a global language in university settings, thereby reinforcing the narrator’s point.

The expression “I’m sorry, but”, which is commonly used in English to introduce strong but honest opinions, indicates that she is aware of the prevalent moral order which censors open reference to racism, but also that she recognizes the potentially controversial nature of her statement. It may be read as a self-positioning act, both within the story world and the interactional world, enabling her to depict herself as someone who typically avoids holding extreme or excessive opinions, with the current situation being an exception.

Indeed, the antagonist contradicts the protagonist’s interpretation, by asserting that his colleague simply does not know English (line 13). This challenges the notion of English as a universal and self-evident communication tool in the international office, as it acknowledges the presence of English-not-haves within the institution. Along with his strong negative reaction to the protagonist’s viewpoint (described in lines 13 to 14), this represents a counter-positioning to the moral order that the protagonist has established.

The constructed dialogue from line 14 marks the beginning of the resolution section. Notably, the protagonist does not respond to the antagonist’s argument that the employee simply does not speak English.<sup>1</sup> However, she adopts a more conciliatory tone and fosters solidarity by drawing attention to the fact that they are jointly dealing with an administrative issue despite both being non-native English speakers (lines 14-15). In line with neoliberal views on English as a global language, this challenges ideologies of native speakerism, as it prioritizes the instrumental function of language over nativeness and recognizes the competence of non-native English speakers in effectively managing complex tasks. Additionally, the protagonist highlights the antagonist’s willingness and effectiveness in providing assistance, positioning him as a “good” employee within the linguistic and moral order she has established earlier for the

university as an international and cosmopolitan space. On the contrary, the antagonist's colleague is once again depicted as someone who actively opposes this moral order ("él no quiere hacer eso", 'he's not willing to do this', line 15-16), making him appear to be a "bad" kind of employee.

The final resolution is achieved in line 16. Starting his response with the adversative conjunction *pero* 'but', the antagonist suggests that he agrees with what has been said before, ultimately aligning with the moral and linguistic order the protagonist defends. Her ironic reply to his request not to repeat her accusations of racism directly in the employee's face (line 17) indicates that she finds such a behavior absurd, thus aligning with the antagonist's moral values (particularly, the "taboo of articulation"). With both characters now sharing a common understanding of the linguistic and moral order in place, the conflict is resolved.

In the coda (lines 17 to 20), the narrator makes a broader statement about what she perceives as the central problem discussed in the story: the presence of a significant number of non-English-speaking, hence "racist", employees at the university, which she believes is being overlooked or ignored. While she acknowledges that some employees may not be able to speak English, thus showing some awareness of the existence of English-not-haves, she still expresses dissatisfaction with the situation. The coda serves as a conclusive reaffirmation of the story's main point. The narrator reiterates her alignment with the moral and linguistic order established by the protagonist within the story world and carries it into the real-world context of the interaction.

In summary, this narrative revolves around tensions arising from idealized perceptions of English as a global language and the university as an international and cosmopolitan space, contrasted with the realities experienced within German institutions. Amid the expectation that everyone should be proficient in English, university members who only rely on the local language when attending students face moral devaluation, as they appear to reject the positive values associated with global English, such as diversity and cosmopolitanism. This creates new divisions between "(problematic) locals" and "(good) cosmopolitans" or "(good) global citizens", based on if they have English in their repertoire or not. This resonates with the dichotomy between "(good) native" and "(bad) foreign" speakers inherent in the native standard ideology, exposing the exclusionary potential of the ideology of English as a global language, despite its purported inclusivity.

The notion of English as a global language is a prominent and widely endorsed ideology among the participants in our study. Many of the participants report using English regularly in their workplaces, university classes, and interactions with other migrants. They strongly advocate for the use of English as a global language, perceiving it as a more inclusive and egalitarian option compared to the prevalent local language practices, especially German monolingualism. In numerous interviews, they express their dissatisfaction with the often limited English proficiency of staff working in public institutions such as universities, city halls, job centers, or immigration authorities. The participants view the inability of German institutions to function effectively in English as a sign of being backward and provincial. Also, the participant we focused on in this section is not the only one in considering it to be a form of racism. This perspective aligns with a cosmopolitan orientation expressed by many of them throughout various sections of the interviews.

## 4 Conclusion

In this study, we focused on language ideologies that circulate within migration spaces among Latin Americans living in Germany. Applying narrative analysis and positioning theory to language conflict narratives from the VIOLIN corpus, we sought to explore how these ideologies shape migrants' constructions of their language experience. In this framework, three principal language ideologies stand out: the one-nation-one-language ideology, the native standard ideology, and the ideology of global English.

Utilizing narrative as a means of self-presentation, narrators challenge various aspects of these ideologies, along with the moral orders embedded within them. These challenges extend to notions such as the exclusive use of German in Germany, or the belief that language ownership essentially depends on native status and “perfect” command. In positioning themselves, narrators also respond to “enregistered identities” that are highly significant in the context of globalization and mobility, such as the concepts of the “good/bad migrant” and the “global citizen”.

Yet, it is important to note that these ideologies often undergo recontextualization rather than fundamental contestation. While the participants resist marginalization linked to exclusionary ideologies of linguistic nationalism and native speakerism, they still uphold the “dogma of homogeneity”, whether through the lens of the native model speaker, the recognition of national language primacy, or the universality of global English. The significance of the latter is particularly notable among our participants, many of whom are international students or skilled laborers, and strongly align themselves with cosmopolitan ideals.

Given that these ideologies exhibit a transnational character (cf. Blommaert and Verschueren 1998 on nation-state and native speaker ideologies, and Canagarajah 2013 on the ideology of global English), and similar ideologies have been identified in other studies on social contexts characterized by migration and linguistic diversity (such as Watts 2011; Lønsmann 2014; Cederberg 2014; Patiño-Santos 2018; Bürki 2020, 2023), it is reasonable to infer that they serve as widely accepted beliefs that permeate metalinguistic thinking and linguistic practices in contemporary societies beyond Germany. They can be connected to broader social processes and ideologies on a global scale, particularly those associated with late capitalism (Heller and Duchêne 2012; Bürki 2020, 2023). Contemporary societies find themselves torn between the spheres of the national and the transnational, simultaneously identifying with the homogeneous national state while embracing the use of English in a globally interconnected world.

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## Notes

1. At a later point in the interview, the participant asserts that the employee indeed knows English, evident from his understanding when international students speak English. She does not consider the possibility that he still might experience production problems or linguistic insecurity in expressing himself in English.