

## HATE SPEECH AS A DISCURSIVE PRACTICE IN EMC

### ABSTRACT

The online discourse has undergone profound changes due to the emergence of different technological advances, which make online communication resemble face-to-face interaction. Unlike in traditional face-to-face interaction, where non-verbal cues are readily apparent, electronically-mediated communication still presents challenges in effectively conveying such non-verbal cues through text, complicating the interpretation process, especially in the context of hate speech. The non-verbal means are partially substituted by emoticons, GIFs, and vowel repetition. Hate speech has become an indivisible part of online discourse due to the anonymity and time distance factors. Interlocutors are more prone to use hate speech in online discourse with impunity violating all the rules of the netiquette.

The article studies the linguistic and nonverbal means used to express hatred, emphasizing the challenges posed by electronically mediated communication (EMC). Through the analysis of real-life examples, such as [specific examples of hate speech in online interactions], the work

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elucidates how hate speech manifests in online interactions, underscoring the role of language and visual elements in perpetuating discriminatory attitudes and harmful stereotypes. The Critical Discourse Analysis has been employed to highlight the expression of hate speech in online communication.

**Keywords:** electronically mediated communication, synchronous, asynchronous, hate speech, cyberstalking, cyberbullying, bullying

## ԱՍՓՈՓՈՒՄ

**ԱՏԵԼՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԽՈՍՔԸ ՈՐՊԵՍ ԴԻՍԿՈՒՐՍԻՎ ՄԱՐՏԱՎԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԱՌՅԱՆՑ ՀԱԴՐՄԱԿՑՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՈՒՄ**  
Ատելության խոսքը, լինելով առցանց տիրույթի անբաժանելի մաս, դարձել է հզոր գործիք խտրական վերաբերմունք, մոտեցումներ ձևավորելու համատեքստում: Համացանցում անանունությունը և կեղծ օգտատիրոջ անունով հանդես գալը այն խթանող հանգամանքներն են, որ մարդկանց դարձնում են «համարձակ» իրենց բացասական վերաբերմունքը արտահայտելու համար: Սույն հետազոտության արդյունքները փաստում են, որ ատելության խոսքը թիրախավորում է էթնիկ փոքրամասնություններին (տարածելով խալամաֆորիա), կանանց և ներգաղթյալներին, որոնք արդեն իսկ համարվում են խոցելի խումբ: Դիսկուրսի քննադատական մեթոդի կիրառմամբ բացահայտվում են այն լեզվական միավորները, որոնք ստեղծում են խտրականություն հրահրող գաղափարախոսություն և լայն տարածում են զտնում սոցիալական մեղիայում: Սույն գաղափարախոսության երկարաժամկետ հետևանքները դրսորվում են հայրիշխանություն, այլամերժություն և հակամիզրացիոն կարծիքներ ձևավորելու ժամանակ: Փոխաբերությունները, բացականչական նշանները, հուզանշանները արդյունավետ միջոցներ են ատելության խոսք տարածելու համար: **Բանալի բառեր՝** առցանց հաղորդակցություն, սինխրոն, ասինխրոն, ատելության խոսք, կիբեռիկտապնորս, կիբեռիարձակում

## РЕЗЮМЕ

ЯЗЫК ВРАЖДЫ КАК ДИСКУРСИВНАЯ ПРАКТИКА В ЭЛЕКТРОННО-ОПОСРЕДОВАННОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ

Онлайн-дискурс претерпел глубокие изменения в связи с появлением различных технологических достижений, которые делают онлайн-общение похожим на общение <<лицом к лицу>>. В отличие от традиционного общения <<лицом к лицу>> где невербальные сигналы очевидны, электронно-опосредованная коммуникация по-прежнему создает трудности в эффективной передаче таких невербальных сигналов посредством текста, чем затрудняет процесс интерпретации, особенно в контексте языка вражды. Невербальные средства частично заменяются смайликами, GIF-изображениями и повторением гласных. Язык вражды стал неотъемлемой частью онлайн-дискурса благодаря факторам анонимности и дистанции. Собеседники более склонны использовать язык вражды в онлайн-дискурсе, безнаказанно нарушая все правила сетевого этикета. В статье рассматриваются языковые и невербальные средства, используемые для выражения ненависти, и подчеркиваются проблемы, связанные с электронно-опосредованной коммуникацией (ЭОК). Анализируя примеры из реальной жизни, такие как конкретные примеры языка вражды в онлайн-взаимодействиях, статья объясняет, как язык вражды проявляется в онлайн-взаимодействиях, подчёркивая роль языка и визуальных элементов в сохранении дискриминационных установок и вредоносных стереотипов. Для выявления проявлений языка вражды в онлайн-коммуникации был использован метод критического дискурс-анализа.

**Ключевые слова:** онлайн-коммуникация, синхронная коммуникация, асинхронная коммуникация, язык вражды, киберпреследование, кибератака.

### **Introduction**

The Internet is changing the face of communication and culture. The Internet has drastically altered how we get our news, talk to our friends and generally live our lives. Over the past twenty years, the Internet has radically transformed the way people communicate, both locally and globally. The arrival and unexpected rise of information technologies have led many social media users to consider using the opportunity to publicly

voice their opinions, preferences and assessments. This is not only deemed a curse, but also a sudden gift for expressing their dispositions, prejudices and criticism in public however harsh, unreasonable and unfair these might be. Online hate speech is a type of speech that takes place online with the purpose of attacking a person or a group based on their race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, and/or gender. In this work we study the language of online discourse, the phenomenon of hate speech in electronic discourse, examining its characteristics, motivations, and potential consequences.

### **Methodology**

Adhering to Fairclough's view that language can shape a prevalent narrative and ideologies, the article intends to elucidate the specifics of hate speech as a discursive practice (Fairclough, 1993). Namely, within the scope of the given article, Fairclough's three-dimensional model will be implemented, where instances of hate speech will be analyzed on text (micro) level, discursive (meso) level, and social practice. On the first micro level, i.e., linguistic intra-text features will be identified. On the meso level, how texts are conveyed and the social implications of the latter will be studied. The choice of the CDA as the main method of analysis is conditioned by the fact that it's the given approach to language as a means of creating narratives and ideologies is pertinent, since via such an analysis, the social function of language as such becomes more apparent. Moreover, hate speech is a widespread evil on social media, and the study of it through

the lens of CDA will shed light on how people become marginalized and how language is used to trigger social inequality, ostracization of certain groups of people, where individuals are utterly dehumanized and are merely perceived as online targets with a lot of potential for racial, sexual and ethnic slurs and its implications in terms pf shaping ideologies and narratives.

### **Types of online discourse and their characteristic features**

The main characteristic features of online discourse will be described in this part. Online discourse is the exchange of ideas, opinions, and information that takes place on digital platforms facilitated by the Internet. It encompasses a wide range of communication activities, including discussions, debates, sharing of news and articles, and interaction through various forms of media such as text, images, videos, and memes. The Internet serves as a vast and accessible medium for individuals. The Internet has become an integral part of modern life, fundamentally transforming how we communicate, access information, conduct business, and interact with the world around us. Its importance lies in its ability to connect people globally, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas, empower individuals and communities, and drive innovation across various domains.

In the digital age, communication has evolved significantly with the advent of electronically mediated communication (EMC), which encompasses both synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction.

Synchronous communication involves real-time exchanges where participants engage simultaneously, while asynchronous communication allows for interactions to occur at different times without the need for immediate responses. Both forms of communication play essential roles in facilitating connections, collaboration, and information exchange within the realm of computer-based communication (Herring, 2002).

One of the most significant findings from research conducted over the past twenty-five years on the Internet is that electronically-mediated communication differs depending on the technology it is built on and the contexts in which it is used. Due in part to temporal constraints on message production and processing, synchronous EMC (such as real-time chat) differs systematically from asynchronous EMC (such as e-mail, in which sender and recipient need not be logged on at the same time) in message length, complexity, formality, and interactivity. While asynchronous messages tend to be longer, more edited, more multifunctional, and more linguistically complex, synchronous messages are typically shorter, less syntactically complex, more sociable, and contain more phatic social communication. Synchronous (real-time) EMC stimulates significantly different communication behaviors from asynchronous EMC. According to these distinctions which result from the two EMC types' different temporal limitations on message production synchronous EMC seems to be more appropriate for social engagement and asynchronous EMC for more in-depth conversation and issue solving (Herring, 2002).

The granularity of message transmission (message-by-message as opposed to character-by-character), buffer size, the availability of several channels of communication, and default settings for the quoting of previous messages are further system aspects that impact communication. In fact, the most common uses of synchronous and asynchronous EMC on the Internet represent these associated advantages. However, it is unclear how all this difference represents information richness. Information richness theory seems to imply that synchronous EMC is "richer" and has stronger social presence than asynchronous EMC because it is better suited for relational communication, based on the impacts that have been observed. However, the argument that increased social presence facilitates more complicated interactions is inconsistent with this categorization because synchronous EMC facilitates fewer complex interactions than asynchronous EMC. In other words, synchronous EMC is very relational and straightforward. Contrary to the assertion made by information richness theory, the synchronicity distinction thus demonstrates that task complexity and the richness/social presence of a medium are not always connected. All things considered, the information richness and social presence models at least in their initial interactions seem to have predicted Internet communication more incorrectly than correctly.

Contextual elements related to the usage scenario, however, might lead to the breakdown of system-based generalizations. Even among users of the same EMC system, variations in user demographics, such as age, gender, color, and degree of education, can lead to variations in

communication methods and content. These variations could overcome technology barriers; one example would be gender variations in verbal violence, which are traits of both synchronous and asynchronous EMC. Additional contextual factors that have been seen to impact virtual communication include the composition of the group (e.g., the quantity of members involved) and the privacy or openness of the conversation.

The study of electronically-mediated communication (EMC) reveals the nuanced dynamics between synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction. These modes, each with its own set of characteristics and applications, play pivotal roles in shaping how individuals connect, collaborate, and exchange information in the digital age.

Research conducted over the past decades underscores the distinct differences between synchronous and asynchronous EMC, influenced by factors such as temporal constraints, message length, complexity, formality, and interactivity. While synchronous communication, such as real-time chat, fosters immediate engagement and sociability, asynchronous communication, exemplified by email, allows for more in-depth conversations and multitasking.

### **Linguistic expression of hate speech in asynchronous communication**

In recent years, hate speech on social media has grown to be a major concern, bringing up issues with freedom of speech, platform operators' obligations, and the effects on people in general. The prevalence

of cyberbullying has increased at an alarming rate, largely due to the widespread use of technology and electronic devices. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is a relatively new form of harassment that occurs online, through emails, text messages, social media platforms, chat rooms, and other digital platforms. Although less common than traditional bullying, the frequency of cyberbullying continues to grow alongside the advancements in new technologies, affecting people of all ages, particularly children and teenagers. The effects of cyberbullying can be devastating, causing emotional distress, depression, anxiety, and in extreme cases, even suicide.

Over the past few decades, the prevalence and intensity of bullying have risen across different settings including schools, homes, workplaces, nursing homes, and prisons. Boarding schools, in particular, have been identified as a hotbed for bullying. Some argue that bullying serves an evolutionary purpose by ensuring the survival of the fittest. Bullying is marked by two key features: an imbalance of power between the aggressor and victim, often due to differences in physical strength or job hierarchy, and it is carried out repeatedly over time.

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that occurs in digital settings. Although it has some parallels to traditional bullying, there are significant variances between the two. The introduction of cyberspace as a new social context for bullying has resulted in a variety of electronic communication channels, such as texting, posting, chatting, and social media, which are continually expanding. This has made it more easier for cyberbullies to

engage in abusive behavior, and victims to face the repercussions. One of the primary factors that contributes to the issue of cyberbullying is anonymity. Online interactions allow individuals to remain virtually anonymous, using pseudonyms or fake profiles that make it difficult to identify their true identity (Hinduja, 2018)..

This anonymity enables aggressors to express harmful sentiments behind a screen, utilizing the internet as a tool for harassment.

Cyberbullying can take many forms, including making disparaging remarks on public forums, propagating false rumors, hacking accounts, and sending anonymous communications to threaten or harass others. There are eleven types of cyberbullying: outing, masquerading, flaming, denigration, exclusion, cyberstalking, impersonation, deceit, happy slapping, and sexting. Each group has distinct qualities that can have a negative impact on the victim's mental and emotional (Hinduja, 2018).

Cyberstalking is a dangerous and criminal behavior in which someone uses technology to intimidate, harass, or frighten another person. It is vital to understand that threatening bodily harm through electronic communication is against the law. Similarly, it is illegal to continually contact someone with the goal to abuse, harass, embarrass, or frighten them, regardless of whether a communication occurs. Furthermore, cyberstalking occurs when someone knowingly makes false comments about the person's death, injury, illness, disfigurement, indecent behavior, or criminal activity. It is critical to understand the significant legal

ramifications of cyberstalking and to always treat individuals with dignity and kindness online.

Bullying is more than just aggression because of its repetition and the power imbalance between the abuser and the victim. It typically occurs in the social setting of interactions between peer groups. Previous research has found a link between traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Livingstone, 2011), as well as a substantial correlation between online and offline misbehaving inclinations (Selwyn, 2007).

Although many characteristics of bullying and cyberbullying are similar, there are some fundamental differences (Dooley et al., 2009). The effects of online bullying are typically more severe and cyberbullying has a clear link with poor health (Läftman et al., 2013). One important distinction is that power imbalances might show differently online than they do in real life (Vandebosch, 2008). This is because, in cyberspace, the bully-victim connection is not always one-sided; victims can react and become bullies themselves, and spectators can easily engage in the bullying.

The study of hate speech posts or comments on the public pages of people from different nations like Instagram, Tik Tok and Facebook users showed cases where the public figures themselves initiated the hateful posts targeting certain groups. At the same time, there were also cases where the celebrities themselves became the recipient of hateful comments due to their adherence to a certain group or for advocating the rights of people representing a certain group.

CDA was useful to identify the linguistic choices of the hate speech makers; the vocabulary and the structures they tend to use when building their comments or posts; the tone of speech they use when targeting their message; and the impact of the presence of non-verbal communication cues in the message.

We have analyzed the language markers inherent in the hate speech samples written by Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok users worldwide. Furthermore, the given approach revealed the existing strategies for shaping biased narratives, where the severity of hate speech and its implications are seen on the micro and macro levels.

Online hate speech is different from offline hate speech, as it unfolds in an entirely different medium, does not necessarily have to be synchronous timewise, and very often takes place between people who barely know each other or are complete strangers.

Research suggests that people are more inclined to use criticism when they are deprived of the opportunity to keep their antisocial behaviour and follow the social cues of their interlocutor. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that users frequently resort to adopting fake identities, and in this way seek detachment by establishing a kind of distance between themselves, the hate speaker and the recipient of the hateful message.

In psychology, this is known as the disinhibition effect: dissociative anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, solipsistic projection, dissociative imagination, and minimization of authority. Personality variables also will influence the extent of this disinhibition, a term proposed

by psychologist John Suler. Suler explains that people do not do or say things in cyberspace that they would actually do in real-time communication (Suler, 2004). They tend to openly express their personal problems, fears and secrets, and at the same time are not afraid of sharing their open criticism, anger or even hatred.

The first example "Too spiritual ... this is beyond the physical ... they're revealing who they are ... comprises a hate comment retrieved from a Kim Kardashian's Instagram page.

This comment was made under a post of Kim Kardashian wearing an outfit resembling a snake. The outfit itself, inspired by an animal often associated with symbolism such as transformation, crafty, or even wickedness, sets the stage for interpretation.

On the microlevel, entailing textual analysis of the comment, it becomes apparent that the commenter uses a subtle but mocking tone, criticizing Kim Kardashian in a way that sounds spiritual but with an undertone of contempt. The phrase "too spiritual" seems sarcastic, mocking any deeper or symbolic reasoning behind her outfit choice. It undermines any attempt to interpret the outfit as meaningful, dismissing it as overly pretentious. The use of the snake emoji is significant here, as it is likely tied to the outfit's resemblance to a snake. In this context, the snake becomes more than just a reference to the outfit; it carries an implied insult. In popular culture, a snake often symbolizes deceit, treachery, or danger. By pairing this with "revealing who they are," the commenter implies that the

outfit reflects Kardashian's true nature, aligning her with the negative qualities traditionally associated with snakes..

Additionally, the phrase "this is beyond the physical" makes the female celebrity a target of ridicule, suggesting that the commenter finds the outfit either too gaudy and ostentatious. The implied meaning of the phrase "revealing who [she is]" hints at vulgarity and judgment, depicting Kardashian as a fame-starved celebrity willing to go to any extremes through exaggerated symbolism. As far as grammar is concerned, ellipsis is used not only for the sake of language economy, but also for evoking some negative feeling where the harshness of the comment isn't fully expressed but is insinuated instead.

On the meso-level, including the production and dissemination of information, Kim Kardashian is portrayed as a symbol of anti-spirituality who is often accused of cultural appropriation and shaping fake celebrity idols. Instagram is the most widespread platform where trolling, cyberbullying are rampant. The given hate message will likely be found in various forums targeting "fake" celebrities and chastising celebrity-obsessed Instagrammers.

On the final macro-level, the social aspect of the comment is highlighted, where via cyberbullying the Instagrammer wants to shape negative emotions over the celebrity trendsetters. Moreover, a misogynistic attitude is also obvious as female celebrities (in this case, Kim Kardashian) are critiqued far more frequently than their male counterparts.

The tone of voice, marked by sarcasm and the symbolic use of the snake emoji, is critical in understanding this as a form of targeted commentary.

The next comment is taken from the Facebook social site which contains clear hate speech, targeting Muslims by dehumanizing them and spreading harmful stereotypes. "I hope all the women are safe from these so-called Muslim jihad animals".

The phrase "so-called Muslim jihad animals" is especially incendiary, which overtly expresses the person's prejudiced attitude towards Muslims in general.

On the micro-level, hate speech is expressed by the phrase the so-called Muslims 'animals,' strips them of their humanity and introduces a stereotyped perception of Muslims who are devoid of humanity and humaneness in general. It comes as no surprise since such derogatory language is a widespread element of hate speech. The overgeneralization is a strategy aimed at legitimizing discrimination, since according to the latter, Muslims are identified with terrorism, misogyny and violence.

Such an attitude is both narrow-minded and derogatory, which excludes the possibility that not all Muslims are jihadists or that Islam doesn't preach violence. This is an inappropriate and typecasting representation that paves the way for Islamophobic ideology. In Islamic teaching, "jihad" usually refers to personal effort or striving for good, not violence.

The statement "I hope all the women are safe" is a vivid strategy of manipulation as, via fake concern, the author of the comment promotes an ideology that frames Muslims as a universal danger to women, implying that all women are jeopardized by Muslims and they should beware of them. It also vilifies Muslims, promoting a negative image of them as women-haters and oppressors.

On the meso-level, the comment is likely to be disseminated on social sites that have an anti-Muslim agenda and forums where radicalized anti-Islamic ideology is prevalent.

On the macro-level, it promotes discriminatory attitudes towards all Muslims without any exception, urging the Christian population to be wary of them. It also hinges upon the ideology of "us" (Christians) vs "them", exacerbating the Islamic alienation in the Western world.

The comment "First of all, is this your passport lady? Is this passport valid in the first place! If u can betray one country, you can betray another!" is an attack on the woman's character and loyalty, using accusations and assumptions to discredit her. On the micro-level "Is this your passport, lady?" immediately questions her identity, suggesting she is not who she claims to be or does not have a rightful place in the country. By asking if the passport is "valid in the first place," the commenter implies she is unworthy of citizenship or legal recognition, which can be dehumanizing and insulting. The interrogative structure also expresses some accusatory nuances, whereas the exclamatory mark strengthens the propositional content of the message.

The utterance "If you can betray one country, you can betray another" accuses the woman of betrayal, without any reliable evidence. This is a grave accusation, as it depicts her as someone who cannot be trusted and whose loyalty is under question. Such lexical units are meant to cast doubt on her character and make others see her as a traitor or a menace. These accusations often come with harsh judgment and rejection, implying that she is an outsider and cannot be integrated into the community.

The use of the word "lady" may initially sound polite, but not in this communicative setting, it is patronizing and disdainful. It evokes a sense of dominance, as though the commenter despises her. The overall tone of the comment is aggressive and accusatory. The comment intends to demean and provoke the woman, rather than address any real issue or concern.

On the meso-level such comments are likely to be prevalent in anti-migratory debates, xenophobic discourses where antimigratory policies are greatly favored.

On the macro-level, such a comment shapes an ideology of "us" vs "others". By focusing on betrayal and questioning her identity, the commenter uses national loyalty as a weapon. This kind of language is often used to target people who are seen as outsiders who don't conform to certain expectations of patriotism. It fuels distrust and division, encouraging others to view the woman as a threat or as someone who should be excluded from society.

This type of comment is harmful because it not only attacks the individual but also promotes an environment where people feel entitled to judge others based on assumptions. It reinforces negative attitudes, such as nationalism or xenophobia, where belonging is questioned, and those perceived as different are marginalized. By labeling someone as a " betrayer" with no evidence, the commenter spreads hostility and creates fear, which can contribute to broader discrimination and alienation.

## **Conclusion**

Having studied hate speech in asynchronous communication we can conclude that some forms of hate speech simply do not seem to be recognized by most users. However, targeted users may especially notice and be affected by it. Hate speech in online discourse exhibits distinct characteristics shaped by the nature of digital communication. The asynchronous and anonymous nature of online platforms facilitates the spread of hate speech, making it pervasive and it is difficult to control bullying and cyberbullying, emphasizing their relationship to hate speech.

Hate speeches, offensive language or insults and angry speeches are often used as interactional tools in social media. Through a detailed analysis, we identified specific features of online comments, such as anonymity, lack of accountability, and the ease of mass communication. We studied various examples, common patterns emerge: personal attacks, dehumanizing language, gendered criticism, and the amplification of stereotypes. We found out that these comments are not just expressions of disagreement but

often deliberate attempts to humiliate, shame, and degrade individuals, particularly public figures and women. CDA analysis performed on the same posts by Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook users shows that on the micro-level, metaphors of animality, patronizing, and sarcastic ways of addressing people are used to either dehumanize the targets of hate speech or demean, especially women. As for the meso-level, hate speech elicits the systematic discrimination that various target groups face based on their religion or gender. Such prevalence of hate speech in social media roots some biased attitudes among users of Facebook, Instagram, etc., which eventually will result in the justification of radical ideologies on religion (anti-Muslim sentiments), gender (women are more harshly judged), and nationality (us vs others). As CDA has revealed, the use of hate speech is aimed at reinforcing even greater inequality and prejudice, unfair treatment of groups that have already acquired the status of the marginalized.

## ԳՐԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

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## SOURCES OF LANGUAGE DATA

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