HATE SPEECH: DEFINITION? SOLUTION/S ? (EU STANCE AND SPACE)

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Sociolinguistics Symposium 22

OBJECTIVES

This presentation aims:

➢To examine how 'hate speech' has been defined, stressing the commonalities and the differences among definitions.

➢To consider various issues related to these definitions, and the problematic distinction between overt and covert hate speech.

➢To show examples of both types (covert and overt) to reveal the difficulties in legislating hate speech.

DATA AND RESEARCH: C.O.N.T.A.C.T. PROJECT

- C.O.N.T.A.C.T. -- Creating an Online Network, monitoring Team, and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics -- is a DG Justice Action project (2015-2017) that aims to address hate crime with particular focus on hate speech (http://reportinghate.eu)

- University and NGO partners:

- **Cyprus** (University of Cyprus; Aequitas) – Coordinator

- **Denmark** (University of Southern Denmark)

- **Greece** (Hellenic League for Human Rights)

- **Italy** (Centro Studi Formazione Orientamento Cesfor)

- **Lithuania** (European Humanities University)

- **Malta** (University of Malta; the People for Change Foundation)

- **Poland** (University of Lodz)

- **Romania** (Institutul European pentru Democratie Participativa QVORUM)

- **Spain** (Llere Asociación Socioeducativa)

- **UK** (UK Race and Europe Network UKREN)

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C.O.N.T.A.C.T. GOALS

- To develop reporting mechanisms (website, phone app)

- To conduct training and awareness-raising seminars

- To undertake research

  * Terrain mapping

  * **Analysis of online data**

  * Perceptual study

  * **Recommendations**

<—This talk

ONLINE COMMUNICATION, ABUSIVE TROLLING AND HATE SPEECH

- Since the mid-2000s, the rise of the Internet has provided a powerful platform for the mobilization and growth of far-right, extremist movements (Mátay and Kaposi 2008; Brown 2009; Adams and Roscigno 2005).

➤ online press and comments characterized by their incivility (cf. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2017; Perry and Olsson 2009), bullying, racist and sexist insults in such 'faceless' exchanges.

"racist insults have become increasingly common and xenophobic hate speech has reached unprecedented levels" (ECRI 2017: 9) (Shadow Report by the European Network Against Racism or ENAR 2016) .

➤perceived lack of support from law enforcement institutions with regard to reporting (ECRI 2017).

THE CONTEXT OF HATE SPEECH IN THE EU

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MILESTONES LEADING TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN MAY 2016

- 1993 : The Council of Europe established the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), an independent human rights monitoring body dealing with issues related to racism and intolerance, including hate speech.

- 2008: The Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA was taken; it contains the legal definition of hate speech within the the EU, as follows:
  - **"all conduct publicly inciting to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin" (Council of the European Union 2008).**

- 2016: The major social media giants (Facebook, Twitter , YouTube) agreed and signed a **Code of Conduct** aimed to combat violent online discrimination, in accordance with the above-mentioned 2008 Framework decision.

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CONCERNS WITH THE EU DEFINITION OF HATE SPEECH

- The EU definition does not address characteristics such as sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Nevertheless, European states have the authority to add these categories to their state's legal definition of crime/speech.

- Yet research shows that, in fact, gender/sexual identity are characteristics that are very often the target of hate speech (Alden and Parker 2005; ILGA-Europe report 2017; Wagener 2017; Baider 2018).

- Online abuse and offline attacks against the LGBT community are on the rise: e.g., in the last four years the UK has seen an **almost 80% increase in such assaults (*The Independent* 2017).**

- Our CONTACT project conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires in 10 European countries to reveal: Gender and sexual orientation –almost as much as race and ethnicity-- are targeted by hate speech.

FIRST RECOMMENDATION

Changing the EU definition of hate speech

CHANGING THE DEFINITION

· Our data and research have produced the following working definition of hate speech:

· "abusive speech, calling for violence (or not) or hatred, against specific groups of people because of their origins, religion, gender, sex or sexual orientation".

SECOND RECOMMENDATION

Semantics and pragmatics: Lost in the EU definition …. Need to be found

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GOING BACK TO THE BASICS:
WHAT IS HATE ? WHAT IS SPEECH? WHAT IS HATE SPEECH?

Hate speech is a contested term :

- Should not be considered as a compositional term (Hate + speech) (Brown 2015)

- Is Researched as a phrase (i.e., EU definition) : a call for violence or murder against an individual because of certain (protected) characteristics

- Researched as a compositional term, i.e., as speech (but then it should include visuals, songs) + hatred (what is hatred? Baider 2013; Perry 2001)

PRAGMATICS: LOST IN THE EU DEFINITION? IS HATE SPEECH WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT WANTS TO DO OR WHAT IT DOES?

Definition focused on the *locutionary* dimension (what is said), while also –somehow-- on the *illocutionary* (*intention* to harm)

➤ How do you know this intention?

➤ The perlocutionary dimension is NOT addressed … (covert hate speech?)

➤ Different linguacultures use different illocutionary force:

- slang is perceived as more aggressive by communities that do not use slang routinely, as their everyday language,

- Polish online comments are considerably more violent than British online comments

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IMPROVING DEFINITION

➢Examine the EU's restrictive definition, which may serve to falsely reduce the extent of hate speech, or vice versa, falsely increase it by deeming as hate speech what is merely banter in a specific community.

➢Define hate speech according to data from studies carried out in the **specific sociocultural context to appreciate the illocutionary and the perlocutionary dimensions**. Use discourse analysis focused on specific and high frequency stereotypical words for specific groups, as hate speech is not one common abusive language shared by all groups (Experimental linguistics).

THIRD RECOMMENDATION

Thinking of hate speech as a process

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LEGAL VERSUS ILLEGAL HATE SPEECH: ARE CONSEQUENCES THE SAME? (PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECT - LONG TERM)

- 1. **Changing the *Perception* of an individual**

- 2. Constructing this difference **as being negative**

- 3. **Dehumanizing** the Other

- 4. **Reducing the other to a Danger,** a threat posed by the individual to the endo-group

- Specialists in genocide propaganda (e.g.,Waller 2002; Adelman 2008)

CONSTRUCTING A DIFFERENCE

· **Changing the *Perception* of an individual:**

➢ Emphasis on differences while simultaneously erasing similarities to create an exogroup / endogroup polarity.

➢ Progressively divergent categorization, leading to a distinction between two groups, one group that belongs to society (ingroup) and another that does not (outgroup). For example, social practices such as ghettos, and **language that induces such polarized thinking.**

➢ Language that always notes that the person is a foreigner; nationality is mentioned only for crimes committed by non-natives, etc.

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UNDERMINING, INFERIORIZING

• **Constructing this difference as being negative:**

➢ The individual is assigned a lower (inferior) value than those in the ingroup, on the basis of trivial and arbitrary differentiations (Adelman 2005: 9).

➢ The process of creating inferiority makes it possible to see the Other as *intrinsically* inferior, thereby concretizing aversion and arousing mistrust.

➢ This evaluation process favors the ingroup, affirming its cohesion or allegiance.

➢ Ex.: Non-heterosexuals are abnormal, against nature and disturbing the social order

DEHUMANIZING

- **Dehumanizing the Other:**

➤ with the interpretation of this inferiority as **a non-belonging to the human group:**

➤ 'Dehumanization' is a psychological process in which a group is regarded as *Untermensch*, literally in a category below the ontological one of 'human being', psychologically remote, which can be discarded, and therefore this group/category does not enjoy basic human rights or moral consideration (Opotow 1995: 347).

➤**Metaphors come into play here:** parasite, rats, vermin, etc. justify **extermination** or acts of violence (Boeyhaems et al. 2017).

REDUCING ONE INDIVIDUAL TO A THREAT

Reducing the Other to a danger or a threat to the endo-group because of imagined attributes.

➢ Rats carry disease, parasites extract the vital sources of the body in which it is lodged, etc. (entailments of the metaphor).

➢ These characteristics relegate the victims to a domain that Helen Fein (1993) called "outside the universe of any moral obligation".

➢ The Others are condemned to 'social death' (Patterson 1982).

➢ This social death can be translated into acts of violence, which become morally desirable and even obligatory. Those who do not support these acts are also victims of that social death.

COVERT HATE SPEECH

- *Legal* hate speech may precede, accompany or provide the context for illegal hate speech and hate crimes.

- Legal hate speech is often covert hate speech: There is a need to take into account *implicatures*, i.e., the implicit expression of dehumanizing metaphors or sarcasm.

- These *implicatures* are a factor in escalating violence.

FOURTH RECOMMENDATION

Understanding hate speech in order to counter the phenomenon

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FOCUS ON HATE SPEECH OR ON COUNTER NARRATIVES?

➢ The need for automatic detection of *illegal* hate speech has been answered by big data projects with hate maps.

➢ However, hate maps are not contextualized to the specific culture (going back to recommendation one), social context

➢ They focus on lexicon (easiest) and do not take into account on implicatures

COUNTER-NARRATIVE

- The word *counter-narrative* refers to any narrative that helps to answer the discursive means deployed by malicious groups /individuals against other groups/individuals (Gemmerli 2016; Warrington 2017).

➢ A direct counter-narrative confronts the ideology and lifestyle of the abuser.

➢ It can be based on empathy, focusing on the victims of hate speech.

➢ It can back up the positive alternatives present in the discussion.

➢ It can aim to initiate a critical analysis of hate speech.

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EFFICIENT COUNTER-NARRATIVES

➢ The most effective messages do not lecture the audience; they offer something to think about and reflect on.

➢They aim at eliciting a *reaction* from the readers, they want to engage readers.

➢ They are contextualized, relevant to the sociocultural environment and indirect-- to avoid confronting haters on their own ground, i.e., their ideology.

➢ They focus on *what motivates such hateful messages,* and on understanding *how* the development of escalation works.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

- Focus on automatic production of counter-narrative in parallel to automatic detection:

➢ Examine and qualitatively analyse online comments and offline interviews to understand the resentment, the need to spread hateful messages or hurtful stereotypes.

➢ We believe that drawing insights from interdisciplinary data analysis as well as micro-discourse analysis will enhance such understanding.

Thank you for your attention!

Merci pour votre attention!

Ευχαριστούμε για την προσοχή σας!