

Vocabulary of Hatred in Social Media: the Example of Italian Language

Anna Dyda, Alicja Paleta

Jagiellonian University

Hate speech seems to appear increasingly at the centre of the debates on communication in new social media. The latter allow a rapid dissemination of individual opinions and, unfortunately, also of incorrect verbal behaviour towards others.

This contribution proposal has been developed from a broader research within the studies on hate speech and of the ALIHAS project (A Linguistic Investigation of Hate Speech: How to identify it and how to avoid it) - UNA Europa.

The study focuses on Facebook, one of the most popular social networking site in our time, given its position in the digital world and the importance of the verbal component in it (compared to, for example, TikTok). The main objective of the entire research is to highlight the mechanisms of hate speech on Facebook and to provide a first classificatory and functional description of the linguistic forms that are adopted to express hatred from the lexical and grammatical point of view.

In order to create the corpus, some extra-linguistic and linguistic criteria have been adopted. The extra-linguistic criterion served to limit the search to posts published in two Facebook groups: "Italiani in Polonia" [Italians in Poland] and "Italiani a Cracovia" [Italians in Cracow] with the consequent analysis of the comments of Italians who live or intend to live in Poland, on the one hand, and, on the other, of Poles who know Italian language and/or for various reasons are linked to Italy or to Italians. The linguistic criterion limited the search to the Italian language and its written transmitted variant.

The objective of the present contribution proposal is to investigate some lexical components (in particular, adjectives and adverbs) which, based on the context, can express a negative evaluation of the other. The group of adjectives has been based on slurs, "quelle espressioni (come "negro" o "frocio") che comunicano disprezzo, odio o derisione verso individui e categorie di individui in virtù della sola appartenenza a quella categoria, identificata di volta in volta sulla base di etnia, nazionalità, religione, genere, orientamento sessuale" (Bianchi 2015: 115), including, for example: mongolo, zingaro, albanese, terrone, barbaro, ritardato, cretino. On the other hand, the analysis of adverbs focuses mainly on those that can connote exclusion (sempre, mai, solo, etc.) and negative evaluation (fortunatamente/per fortuna, sfortunatamente, etc.).

The presence of the selected words is verified through automatic search with the tools available on Facebook. In the first place, an attempt was made to proceed with a classification of the identified results which could possibly serve, in future, as a basis for contrastive works with other languages. Some possible extensions of the research will also be defined.

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