

The Legitimation of Antisemitic Content through Authoritative Discourse: a corpus-analysis of French Facebook comments

Laura Ascone

Universität Berlin

Since their emergence on the web, social networks have elicited diverging reactions and opinions. If they are appreciated for helping create new forms of social relations, they are also criticised for facilitating both the emergence and circulation of hate speech (Monnier and Seoane, 2019). In other terms, hate speech, which is socially unaccepted in offline contexts, seems to have found a more fertile soil online. Yet, when spreading hate speech, Internet users are aware of the fact that their discourse contrasts the mainstream opinion. This contribution investigates the discursive strategies Facebook users resort to in order to legitimise their antisemitic comments. By focusing on the last escalation phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we examined, for instance, how users present their antisemitic discourse as verified information in order to make their point of view incontestable (Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1988). A qualitative discourse analysis was conducted on 1,500 comments posted in reaction to 15 different articles published by 7 French mainstream media outlets in their official Facebook pages. The annotation conducted with the software MAXQDA shed light on the argumentative strategies adopted in the antisemitic comments under investigation. Particular attention was paid to the creation and expression of an authoritative ethos (Amossy, 2010), as well as to the different forms of authority users refer to in order to legitimise their discourse.

References

Amossy, R. (2010 [2000]). *L'argumentation dans le discours*. Paris : Armand Colin.

Monnier, A. & Seoane, A. (2019). *Discours de haine sur internet*. Publictionnaire. Dictionnaire encyclopédique et critique des publics.

Perelman, C. & Olbrecht-Tyteca, L. (1988). *Traité de l'Argumentation*. Bruxelles : Edition de l'Université libre de Bruxelles.