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Identity politics in Indonesia: A computer-mediated discourse analysis of hate speech in a virtual environment

Politik identitas di Indonesia: Analisis wacana mediasi-komputer terhadap ujaran kebencian dalam lingkungan virtual

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Abstract
The study aims to analyze the computer-mediated hate speech discourse in a virtual environment. Social media and digital network connectivity allow for almost constant interaction and communication. Technological developments, accompanied by socio-political transformations, have become a widespread area of study for the production of hate speech. As far as this type of hate speech is concerned, it is the subject of much academic research; however, a gap remains in the qualitative space that focuses on the form and function of the speech act. The study employs three distinct yet complementary traditions of discourse analysis to investigate hate speech, aiming to understand how social media users achieve the intended purpose of this type of speech. By examining the use of identity, impropriety, and intertextuality in examples of hate speech, this analysis identifies specific repetitive discursive techniques employed by speakers to achieve their goals. The study argues that to understand the features and styles of online communication, hate speech can be identified as a distinct genre of speech. However, this genre does not operate unchallenged: the data also reveals emergent counter-discourses in which other users engage in resisting hate speech through discursive reframing, sarcastic rebuttals, and appeals to civility norms, thereby shaping a contested digital space.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis wacana ujaran kebencian yang dimediasi oleh komputer di lingkungan virtual. Media sosial dan konektivitas jaringan digital memungkinkan terjadinya interaksi dan komunikasi yang hampir konstan. Perkembangan teknologi yang diiringi dengan transformasi sosial-politik telah menjadi studi yang meluas tentang produksi ujaran kebencian. Meskipun ujaran kebencian jenis ini telah menjadi fokus dari banyak penelitian, masih terdapat kesenjangan dalam ruang kualitatif yang berfokus pada bentuk dan fungsi dari tindak ujaran tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan tiga tradisi analisis wacana yang berbeda dan saling melengkapi dalam menganalisis ujaran kebencian untuk memahami bagaimana pengguna media sosial mencapai tujuan dari jenis ujaran tersebut. Dengan melihat penggunaan identitas, ketidakpantasan, dan intertekstualitas dalam contoh-contoh ujaran kebencian, analisis ini menemukan teknik-teknik diskursif berulang yang spesifik yang digunakan oleh para pembicara untuk mencapai tujuan mereka. Penelitian ini menekankan bahwa dalam memahami fitur dan gaya, ujaran kebencian dapat diidentifikasi sebagai sebuah genre ujaran di dalamnya. Penutur menggunakan genre ini secara daring dan memanipulasinya melalui manipulasi identitas, kesopanan, dan ketidakkekalan untuk mencapai tujuan komunikatif mereka.

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A. Introduction

By its very nature, language became a tool and a means of communication; however, its functions did not stop there. The development of more modern linguistic studies is almost directly proportional to the development of technology (Herring, 2019; Kelly-Holmes, 2019; Zhu et al., 2019), economic development (Mufwene, 2022), constellations and political dynamics (Canagarajah & Dovchin, 2019; Zeller, 2022), medical complexity (Nasrullah et al., 2019, 2021), and socio-cultural dynamics (Hoed, 2015; Ma, 2017; Wang et al., 2017). It has extensively encouraged the interdisciplinary study of linguistics. Linguists began to examine the function of language as a shaper of reality. It can even be said that language forms beyond the limits of reality, known as hyperreality (Franke, 2012). Language has a protective function (Zuanetti et al., 2021), serving as a tool (McNeil, 2017; Mdzanga & Moeng, 2020; Obianika, 2020). With subsequent developments, language can change and construct reality (Claramonte, 2019).

Furthermore, special studies on the language are closely related to the development of internet technology and the widespread communication of users in the virtual space (Huda et al., 2025; Nurjaya & Yasa, 2022; Salsabila et al., 2023). Hoed (2015) stated that the process involves a democratization that can encourage structural changes from a top-down to a dialogical mentality. At the same time, Porlezza (2019) refers to it as a phenomenon of democratization and an increase in participatory culture.

As virtual communities become increasingly prevalent, the perversions of social interactions that accompany them are becoming increasingly difficult to control. Following popular developments worldwide, including in Indonesia, it is not enough to have aspects of technology and its proliferation; it is also necessary to follow the development of social and political polarization, which exists as a co-accidental phenomenon. The real impact of these online irregularities has been regarded as a significant and urgent issue that requires immediate attention. The issue requires further investigation and understanding to ensure user safety and its immediate impact on the broader issue.

Online deviance has become an increasingly common problem in society (Lee, 2018; Palmieri et al., 2021; Quayle, 2020; Turel, 2017; Udris, 2017). The emergence of more complex socio-political developments and their dynamics has legitimized different groups expressing the marginalization of others and hate speech in various forms and manifestations.

The combination of the apparent socio-political dynamics of legitimized intolerance practices and the features available on the internet has become a free space for hate speech practices (Kopytowska & Baider, 2017; Paz et al., 2020). The rapid proliferation and normalization of long-distance communication through social media have strengthened the reach and volume of hate speech practices. The structure and system that foster a fertile climate for hate speech require investigation.

By taking the discourse of identity politics as the primary basis of inquiry, this study examines the impact of informal social control on combating hate speech. To this extent, studies of hate speech and its counters have occupied a strategic position in the interdisciplinary framework over the past few decades (Almatarneh et al., 2019; Culpeper, 2021; Fuchs & Schäfer, 2021; Malmasi & Zampieri, 2018; Poletto et al., 2021). Such forms of discourse are becoming increasingly relevant for qualitative analysis, particularly in the context of online iterations. Due to its relatively high scope and volume, many studies analyzing hate speech in virtual environments focus on quantitative research. The studies sought to identify and track hate speech using automated techniques and algorithms. In contrast, the count of hate speech has not been the subject of many studies. However, the counter to hate speech is often seen as a practical and universally applicable approach to combat hate speech.

This study aims to contribute to the qualitative investigation of hate speech within computer-mediated discourse (Herring, 2019), focusing on how users construct and circulate hate speech on social media platforms. Moreover, it explores how other users respond to such messages, including various forms of counter-speech such as rejection, reframing, sarcasm, or silence. By analyzing

these opposing discourses, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dialogic tension in virtual hate speech environments. It offers practical implications for the development of effective counter-speech strategies (Williams, 2019).

B. Method

The studies conducted in this study can be broadly categorized as those employing a Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) approach (Herring, 2019). Leaning on the idea of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 2018; Denzin, 2017; Stryker, 2017), this study adopts three different traditions of discourse analysis: a) Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine turn-taking, repair, and sequencing in digital interactions; b) Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) to interpret indexicality, contextualization cues, and identity performance; and c) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate power asymmetries, ideology, and the reproduction of hate in discourse. The study employed a thorough methodological approach, selecting from various complementary forms in the discourse analysis tradition to analyze the collected datasets. Herring (2019) suggests that Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis is essential, "the most worthy approach to consideration, rather than a single "theory" or "method." CMDA at least provides "a methodological and theoretical device that can be used to perform analysis and interpret the results of analysis empirically." Methodologically, this study uses descriptive qualitative methods.

The data were collected from Twitter using the trending hashtag #PolitikIdentitas (#IdentityPolitics) over two months. Using Keyhole analytics, we identified and selected a combination of tweets with both high and low engagement rates to capture a more nuanced and diverse spectrum of discursive practices, rather than focusing solely on popular tweets. High-engagement tweets (measured primarily by retweets) tend to reflect dominant or mainstream expressions. In contrast, low-engagement tweets often offer marginal, oppositional, or underrepresented discourses. By analyzing both, this study provides a richer insight into the linguistic strategies employed in hate speech and counter-hate speech.

While political hate speech is not the only form of hate speech found online, the choice to focus on this form of hate speech is pragmatic and methodological. This form of hate speech is the most prominent historically in its emergence and academic investigations.

The analysis process is carried out in several stages, following the procedures and techniques suggested by the Grounded Theory text analysis method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990): the open coding stage, the axial coding stage, and the selective coding stage. At the open coding stage, the verbal elements of each Tweet and response are described and searched for meaning, using verbatim and sentence-by-sentence analysis to identify the keywords that form the proposition, which is the smallest unit of meaning and is considered firm (simple) in discourse analysis. The results of this open coding can be used as a foundation for the axial coding analysis. At this stage, an analysis of the similarities and differences between the Tweet proposition and the responder's proposition is performed to determine the extent to which the meaning placed on the utterance is reflected in the indicator in the form of signs and verbal language. Furthermore, once encoding is chosen, the categorization of interactive discourse is based on the verbal signs contained in Tweets and responses.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Hate Speech

This section presents an analysis of Twitter's social media data that contains statements identifiable as part of the linguistic genre of hate speech. After exploring the definition and workings of speech that falls into the category of hate speech, and how speakers agree to shape the

genre, the variety and form of hate speech can be demonstrated. This occurs "naturally" in a virtual environment and can also be explained by the operational ways in which linguistic techniques are used to manipulate what Briggs and Bauman (1992) call the "intertextual gap" (Yang, 2020). Briggs and Bauman state that because the "congruence between a particular text and its generic model is never perfect," the production of speech or text and its categorization into one or more genres generally requires a certain amount of "intertextual gap." Not only can several gaps between text and genres exist, but the speaker can also manipulate those gaps to make the genre of speech appear more or less clear. By widening the intertextual gap between statements in the virtual space and the genre of hate speech, speakers can try to reduce their attribution as hateful in the eyes of speech partners.

As hate speech is broadly defined, speakers of hate speech in virtual spaces are seen using different speech strategies beyond the existing definition to sustain the achievement of the communicative goals of the genre. Through strategies of manipulating the intertextual gap between what is expected as hate speech, speakers can keep a distance from their speech and achieve their communicative goals creatively and uniquely. The three specific linguistic strategies analyzed in this section — legitimacy, reasoning, and projection — are grounded in multiple complementary theoretical frameworks. The concept of legitimacy draws from Beetham's (2012) theory of legitimacy in discourse and power. The notion of reasoning is reflected in the work of Herman (1951) and Han et al. (2024) on justification and excuse theory in linguistic behavior. Projection, in turn, is informed by theories of directive speech acts (Ruytenbeek et al., 2017) and idealized cognitive models as proposed by Lakoff (see Beguš, 2022), which help explain the transfer of agency in speech. Each strategy employs a distinct method, in which speakers have adapted to the conventions of the speech genres they identified, modifying their speech to ensure it could be understood while still achieving their goals. Although repetitive in its use of hate speech, all three strategies aim to avoid being classified as hate speech in a general sense.

2. Legitimation

The legitimacy in this section is analyzed in terms of the "steps" or linguistic strategies used in the genre of hate speech, or alternatively, as a manipulation of the intertextual gap that exists around the genre. In this section, an analysis is conducted to examine how identity is legitimized. In turn, it can give speakers authority to protect themselves from possible backlash through aggressive and hateful speech.

Identity is a significant component in the discussion of hate speech; a weak identity can be the primary driver and the most fundamental thing in the practice of hate speech. In this section, the data demonstrate how the legitimacy of identity and discourse is exercised to create an intertextual gap between speakers and the hate speech they use (Berson et al., 2019; Kjelsvik, 2022).

Data 1

P1: Apakah orang2 berjubah itu bisa #mikir? #politikidentitas
P1: Pertanyaan ini sah aja. Toh, kenyataannya memang demikian kan?
P2: rasis ya rasis. Disampaikan melalui pertanyaan sama aja. Duh, negeri ini kok jadi ribut terus begini ya. Efek cebong kadrun…
P1: Saya tidak mengatakan kadrun bodoh loh ya... Kamu kan yang berasumsi begitu?
P2: Gak, tweetmu itu loh, menyiratkan ejekan…

P1: Can those people in robes think? Identity politics
P1: This question is just legitimated. After all, the reality is indeed the case, right?
P2: Racist. Conveyed through any question remains the same. Duh, this country is so noisy, right? The effect of *cebong* (tadpole) and *kadrun* (desert lizard)...
P1: I'm not saying *Kadrun* is stupid... You're the one who assumes that?
P2: No, your tweet was implying ridicule...

In the example above, the legitimacy strategy is carried out by hate speech speakers. The utterance *"Apakah orang-orang berjubah itu bisa mikir?"* ("Can those people in robes think?") represents a form of coded religious hate speech, targeting a group symbolized by Islamic attire without explicit mention. The follow-up *"Saya tidak mengatakan kadrun bodoh loh ya…"* functions as preemptive legitimation, allowing the speaker to appear neutral while implying insult. This reflects how hate speech is framed as opinion through symbolic reference, mockery, and denial of responsibility—a strategy aligned with Beetham's (1991) concept of symbolic legitimacy.

Speakers use linguistic features like this to make their speech reasonably acceptable. P1's initial utterances were a rhetorical response to the main topic of Islamophobia versus radicalism and spirituality, as conveyed through the Twitter account of the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law, and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia. Hate speech speakers specifically refer to opposition political groups that are often opposed to the government's policies in general. As identified by P2, the rhetorical questions spoken by P1 possess the illocutionary power of mocking the group that P1 refers to as "white-robed people." The rhetorical question serves as a "dog whistle" (Albertson, 2015; Haney-López, 2014) or an implicitly coded message that can only be understood or read by those it addresses. In this context, the audience in question is those who will seek to delegitimize public sentiment related to the alleged existence of Islamophobia and with the expansion of the delegitimization of values in the community. The initial tweet (P1 utterance) textually identified the group under discussion as "white-robed people," semiotically referring to a religious-opposition group that was later often referred to as "kadrun" (desert lizard). The term *"kadrun"* (short for *"kadal gurun"* or desert lizard) serves as a symbolic label that delegitimizes opposition groups by linking them to extremism and Arabization. Drawing on van Leeuwen's (2007) framework, such labelling serves as a legitimation strategy through classification—it frames the target as deviant by invoking shared cultural stereotypes. This aligns with Beetham's (1991) notion that legitimacy can be constructed symbolically to justify power, while also exploiting the intertextual gap (Briggs & Bauman, 1992) to mask hate speech as a form of rhetorical critique.

The follow-up tweet (P2 utterance) explains the assumption that some people may have read the previous statement as hate speech in the form of a solicitation. This is additional information to emphasize that speakers of hate speech (whether intentional or not) essentially understand that their speech can be read and interpreted by the public as implying that the group whose intelligence is questioned (stupid, unintelligent, etc.) is a group that often wears a "white robe." A group that, perhaps, is seen by speakers of hate speech has been blunt and angry with what the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia calls "no islamophobia in Indonesia."

Legitimize the question, even in a literal way, like "This question is just legitimate. After all, the reality is that this is the case, right?", trying to eliminate the space for criticism and interpretation instead of reframing the previous statement as a speech of neutral dimensions and without a plan. Beetham (1991a, 1991b) noted in his study of "The legitimacy of Power" that to obtain communicative purposes, one must have what is called "freedom from control, obstruction, or obedience to the goals of others."

In legitimizing an utterance and increasing the intertextual gap between what is said and the genre that the audience desires for that utterance, efforts are made to gain freedom from the observance of the goals of others. That is, they seek to escape the responsibility of complying with implied or stated social rules (prohibition of ridicule, racism, or hate speech). The speaker explicitly affirms the legitimacy of his initial utterances and asserts this legitimacy by rejecting any criticism that arises. Through this legitimacy strategy, P1 ensures that they are free from "scrutiny" or "obstruction" to engage in what they say is a value-free and neutral discussion. The speech achieved the communicative results typical of the hate speech genre, positioning itself within the intertextual gap of a particular language related to that genre. To legitimize their speech, they manipulate the intertextual gap to proactively protect themselves from the existence of direct and explicit associations with socially stigmatized genres of hate speech.

The same can be seen in the following linguistic data.

Data 2

P1: mulai saat ini para pemuja kotoran onta tidak akan bisa hidup tenang di NKRI. Kalo mau bikin rusuh, pindah sana ke Arab! Usir aja lah… Gk layak tinggal di negeri ini. #politikidentitas
P2: woy, meski gue pendukung capres nomor 1, Tweet lo itu gk baik banget loh. Udah masuk rasis itu…

P1: From now on, the devotees of camel dirt will not be able to live quietly in the Republic of Indonesia. If you want to riot, move to Arabia! Just drive away... You are not worthy of living in this land. Identity politics
P2: *Woy*, although I am a supporter of presidential candidate number 1, this Tweet of yours is not worth teaching. Already in the racist category...

Data 2 shows racist hate speech categorized as one of the potential legal speeches. The illocutionary phrase "Just drive away" implies a confrontation, eliciting a physical response opposite to that intended for the chosen target group. Furthermore, the mention of "you are not worthy of living in this country" reinforces a stigmatizing tone specific to a group that is entirely based on racial characteristics. The identification of particular groups through the phrase "the devotees of camel dung" is also in line with the dehumanization efforts at the heart of the terminology of hate speech, applying depictions attributed to animals. As in the previous example, a speaker's identification of speech as racist aligns with MacAvaney et al.'s (2019) statement on genre classification. Speakers are engaged with the generic form, language, and structure of hate speech. Even various linguistic modifications of its speech are made to legitimize its position, and the classification of such genres is constructed in conjunction with the text, the social context, and the audience's reception.

Data 2 illustrates the application of linguistic strategies in alternative legitimacy, used to manipulate the intertextual gap, so that what can be read as hate speech can be reframed and maintained as free speech. Hate speech speakers demean "other groups" who oppose political choices through words statistically related to physical confrontation ("Expel"). Notably, P2's response—*"Tweet lo itu gak baik banget loh. Udah masuk rasis itu…"*—functions as a form of counter-speech that challenges the hate utterance directly. This kind of response reflects moral objection and norm-based resistance, where users explicitly reject hate speech by invoking shared standards of civility. It illustrates that hate speech in digital spaces does not operate unopposed. That legitimacy can be contested discursively through public disapproval.

Data 3

P1: jika kalian mengaku rakyat Indonesia & siap berada di belakang presiden Jokowi, boikot praktek politik identitas yang dilakukan wan abud gabener dan gerombolannya… Bikin negeri ini kacau aja. #politikidentitas
P2: Dasar cebong, sok paling NKRI
P3: Nih, nongol orangnya

P1: if you claim to be the Indonesian people and are ready to be behind president Jokowi, the boycott of the practice of identity politics by Wan Abud and his mob... They made this country chaotic. Identity politics
P2: You *cebong* (tadpole), the most republican pretentious
P3: This is the person in question

In Data 3, the hate speech strategy involves legitimation through patriotic framing. P1 uses the phrase *"jika kalian mengaku rakyat Indonesia..."* (*"if you claim to be Indonesian people..."*) to establish a binary opposition between "true citizens" and the political group being attacked. This statement invokes national identity as moral superiority, legitimizing the hate speech that follows: *"boikot… wan abud gabener dan gerombolannya"*.

The term *"wan abud"* is a derogatory nickname, semiotically referring to a political opponent with ethno-religious connotations, and *"gerombolannya"* (his gang) amplifies the dehumanization. The imperative form *"boikot"* functions as directive speech aligned with a projection strategy, transferring agency to the audience.

P2's response, *"Dasar cebong, sok paling NKRI"*, illustrates counter-hate speech via insult-reversal, mocking the perceived moral high ground of P1. While it does not offer a rational rebuttal, it signals a contested space where ideological claims are actively challenged. P3's sarcastic remark, *"Nih, nongol orangnya"*, further destabilizes P1's position using exposure as ridicule, a common form of discursive delegitimation in online interaction.

3. Reason

The reasoning is another form of alibi (justification) used by speakers of hate speech. Reason can be understood as a person's explanation for admitting that their actions were unkind, wrong, or inappropriate. The justification explains why the offender is taking responsibility for his actions. Still, it denies that the act has a negative value linked to others (Tiryaki, 2017).

The terminology of "justification" initially resembles what is referred to in the previous section as "legitimacy." Justification is used as a general term of linguistic techniques that explain the occurrence of an action, both verbal and physical, through legitimacy or reason. Speakers (and their speech) and speech genres have created a situation in which a false or unkind utterance is perceived as a natural one. Mehlman and Snyder (1985) identified at least three rules that allow reason-makers to avoid engaging in such "bad and unnatural behavior." Generally, reasoning can reflect efforts to improve consensus and specific information and lower the consistency of information relevant to an event that can potentially threaten the ego.

In each of the examples of reasoning analyzed in this section, the "embodiment" that is perceived as bad behavior or unnatural behavior constitutes the socially acceptable production of speech. The fallacy of unnatural acts or behaviors carried out by speakers is to convey a speech that is valuably contrary to or deviates from the norms adopted by the public, in this case, political hate speech. When a speaker reveals the genre of their language, the presence of their speech motives becomes a sign that they have unnaturally violated social norms. Under such conditions, speakers organize their utterances to bridge the intertextual gap between themselves, their utterances, and their chosen genre.

Data 4

P1: maaf ya, bukannya apa2, bukan rasis atau apa… Pokoknya yang tidak ngeluh atas kenaikan BBM dianggap BuzzerRP dan tidak pro rakyat. Mereka gerombolan londo ireng, PKI, Antek china, kafir, murtad, opo maneh yo.....??

P2: musnahkan china kafir di endonesa maka negara ini akan makmur sejahtera. jika tidak ama akan bangkrut total.

P3: Kutipanmu soal ujaran kebencian itu menunjukkan cermin kualitas pemikiranmu yg dangkal, katanya paling agamis..malu sama jubah lo Drun 😅

P1: sorry, it's nothing. It's not racist or anything... Anyway, those who do not complain about the increase in fuel are considered BuzzerRP and are not pro-people. They are hordes of *londo ireng* (black Dutch descendants), PKI, China's minions, infidels, apostates, what else is it.....??

P2: destroy the infidel China in Indonesia, and then this country will prosper. Otherwise, it will be completely bankrupt.

P3: Your quote about hate speech mirrors the superficial quality of your thinking. It says it's the most religious... shame on your robe, *Drun* 😄

This example in data 4 uses a linguistic feature that Briggs and Bauman (1992) refer to as "a common framing feature" in the use of the phrase "... it's nothing. It's not racist or anything...".

Despite the speaker's attention, this phrase appears to attempt to "let go of the speaker's relationship with various possibilities regarding the form and content of the narrative" through the associations it contains. It harkens back to the main idea of intertextuality, in which allusions or references to particular topics related to the genre can be understood through the involvement of the previous person with the text and discourse. In the decision to embrace or negotiate allusions to the genre, one can manipulate the intertextual gap between the produced utterances and the genre of speech used.

The P1 utterance in data 4 also confirms Iqbal and Bilali (2018) "denial of responsibility" attempts to manipulate why they made such racist statements. Speakers make this suggestion not because of their racist tendencies but because of the forces influencing their judgment outside their control. That power, in turn, can be the indisputable fact that "The BuzzerRP and all parties deemed unprofessional to be parties worthy of being marginalized."

Interestingly, P3's response—*"kutipanmu soal ujaran kebencian itu menunjukkan cermin kualitas pemikiranmu yg dangkal…"*—demonstrates a form of counter-speech that also uses reasoning. Instead of replying with a direct insult, P3 frames their rejection through evaluative reasoning, attributing P1's hate speech to shallow thinking and a failure to uphold moral values (*"katanya paling agamis... malu sama jubah lo…"*). This strategy counters hate by appealing to shared ethical standards and religious consistency, reflecting reason-based delegitimation. It shows that reasoning is not exclusive to justifying hate—it can also be a powerful tool in morally rejecting it.

Consider the other example in the following five data points.

Data 5

P1: gue gak suka kalo liat polisi memukuli orang jujur. Kenapa sih malah brig J yang jadi korban? Coba tuh polisi tindak tegas para pengusung agama kayak si Rijiek. Kalo perlu usir aja lah dari Indonesia…
P2: enak aja lu bong, dasar si paling NKRI. Noh liat junjungan lo banyak yg korupsi… Lu diem aja…

P1: I wouldn't say I like seeing the police beating honest people. Why was it even Brigadier J who was the victim? Police strictly try to act on religious promoters like Rijiek (Riziq Shihab). If necessary, drive them out of Indonesia...
P2: it's just delicious, you, *bong*. You people who always claim to be the most Republicans. Just look at your lords, who engage in numerous corrupt practices... You just shut up...

4. Projection

Projection is another linguistic technique used by hate speech speakers to manipulate the intertextual gap between the speech and the genre it produces. "Projections" can functionally diminish responsibility for the hate speech content by positioning the responsibility or agency of the content precisely with the audience through questions posed to the audience or by uttering certain utterances for the audience to approve of. Through several different linguistic techniques, speakers can change their hateful orientation into a collaboration built together with parties (in this case, the public) who are perceived as reading the speech. This strategy primarily addresses two specific linguistic theories: directive speech and idealized cognitive model.

Ruytenbeek et al. (2017) have discussed the illocutionary force of directive speech. Ruytenbeek et al. begin their discussion using the "illocutionary scenario" proposed by Panther and Thornburg (Athanasiadou, 2017). The illocutionary scenario is functionally used as a "generic type of knowledge organizational structure." When an illocutionary scenario is produced, it can suppose the felicity condition—the capacity and willingness of the recipient to engage with and complete that illocutionary scenario. For example, "get you on a television" presupposes the presence of a person, the television, the ability to turn on the television, and the utterance of the request or directive utterance requires the existence of a common structure and feature of the illocution that it embodies.

In directive speech, utterances are intended as requests that the receiver has the freedom to accept or reject. They suggest that "the speaker minimizes his interests, at the same time he maximizes the interests of the recipient, thereby increasing the level of positive politeness of his actions." Such positive politeness can reduce the possibility of potential rejection and a shift in interests from speaker to receiver. This condition indicates the manipulation of intertextual gaps. The focus in this kind of directive speech places the rhetorical responsibility in the utterance with the respondent, not on the person who asked the question. In this sense, a controversial question is just a question, and the answer to that question is the moral focus.

The principle of civility can be extended with the idea of an "ideal cognitive model" (ICM). This concept was adopted from the work of Lakoff (Beguš, 2021; Beknazarova et al., 2021), which involves taking information presented and building a coherent cognitive model from it. Hernández and Mendoza suggest that, based on the information presented, polite speech acts can compel the interlocutor to perform actions that benefit the speaker.

In the directive speech, threats are often made when resistance to a request (or "rejection") is anticipated. Indirect directive utterances are used instead of sequences when the hierarchy of power does not exist or is not easy to identify. Threats can be used explicitly to express the noncompliance that would be implied when receiving a request from a superior. In increasingly anonymous social media interactions, that power structure is often unclear, so explicit statements can increase persuasion. The implicit potential to accept hate speech is the possibility of public embarrassment. Still, the explicit power generated by indirect threats may seem more significant. The power generated by the threat may be more persuasive because it is presented as an unavoidable alternative compared to implicit power.

Moreover, speakers reorient those threats as social benefits by framing explicit threats as threats to communities, not just individuals. It is not an individual-centered threat, but a socially beneficial threat; it can protect one's argument from being rejected. The security of individual speakers is not at stake, so there is no visible bias behind the threat.

The following examples illustrate "projection" speech, in which hate speech speakers exploit the intertextual gap between speech and genres by applying directive speech strategies to transfer agency to their audiences.

Data 6

P1: Aku gk mau rasis ya, tapi kalo dipikir semua hal harus dikaitkan sama etnis dan ras, mending kamu keluar aja dari Indonesia. dasar cebong otak seuprit. Efek sering bergaul ama china kafir sih lo…
P2: Wah, kayak lo pinter aja, padahal kan otakmu kebalik. Ini sih si goblok akut,, gak heran gw,, dasar kampret
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P1: I don't want to be racist, yes, but if all things have to be related to ethnicity and race, you better just get out of Indonesia. You *cebong* (tadpole), your brain is minimalist. The effects of often associating with infidel China...
P2: Wow, are you thinking, even though your brain is upside down? This situation is an acute blockade anyway, and I'm not surprised. You bat!

Data 6 shows projections of racist speech, calling for stereotypes of rights and exceptions and placing agencies to confirm those stereotypes in audiences. After forgiving their following remarks by saying they are "not racist," P1 projected the audience to believe they were entitled to everything, including identifying a particular race and ethnicity, namely China (infidels). The person who responded also committed "denial of the victim" (James & Merken, 2020; Sykes & Matza, 1950), identifying them as entitled and worthy of retaliation rather than victims of racist stereotypes.

This comment is not explicitly framed as a question, but rather as an ultimatum, requiring acceptance or rejection from the audience. The framing of this ultimatum effectively turns the discourse on racial rights and equality into options worth considering. The implied threat further reinforced this condition that opposing the P1 suggestion would result in expulsion from

"Indonesia." In projecting this speech, the speaker uses the phrase "if you think about it." In this case, P1 manipulates the intertextual gap between them and the use of hate speech genres. Although speakers identified upfront that their message could be read as a racial practice, they relayed this as a request to the audience to confirm that rights based on racial identity were incompatible with the ideals of the Indonesian state and were not a racial attack.

P2's reply—"*wah, kayak lo pinter aja… otakmu kebalik…*"—may also reflect a counter-projection, where the speaker redirects the rhetorical framing back to P1 through sarcastic inversion. By using evaluative exaggeration ("*kayak lo pinter*") and metaphor ("*otak kebalik*"), P2 subtly positions the absurdity of the original hate speech as self-evident to the audience. This strategy, while emotionally charged, invites the audience to reinterpret the legitimacy of P1's stance, thus projecting the judgment back to public evaluation. It reflects a counter-discursive projection that exposes hate speech by making its logic appear inherently flawed.

Data 7

P1: aku nih bisa aja dengan bangga mengatakan sebagai #PembasmiKadrun. Sehat selalu pak presidenku, jangan dengerin ocehan para pengasong agama itu…

P2: aku jg bisa aja dengan bangga mengatakan sebagai #PembasmiKebodohan kayak elu bong… orang2 kaya lu ni emg layak dibasmi dari muka bumi ini…

P1: I can proudly say as the Exterminator of *Kadrun* (desert lizard). Stay healthy, my president, don't listen to the babblings of those religious exiles...

P2: I could also have proudly said as a Foolish Exterminator like you, bong... These people like you are worthy of being eradicated from the face of this earth...

In Data 7, projection is used by both parties to assert ideological dominance. P1 employs a declarative stance—*"aku nih bisa aja dengan bangga mengatakan sebagai #PembasmiKadrun"*—as a self-legitimizing identity move. By invoking a moral cause (*exterminating "Kadrun"*) and directly addressing the president, P1 projects a sense of righteous alignment with authority. This identity claim masks aggression under patriotism, turning hate speech into a performative badge.

P2 responds using counter-projection, mirroring the structure (*"aku jg bisa aja…"*) and tone of P1's claim, but turning it against the speaker. The phrase *"#PembasmiKebodohan kayak elu bong…"* subverts P1's legitimacy through sarcastic identity reframing, projecting irrationality and extremism back onto P1. Both parties use pronominal marking, hashtags, and exaggerated modifiers (*"layak dibasmi dari muka bumi ini"*) to construct exclusionary discourses. This data exemplifies a clash of projections, where hate speech and its rebuttal employ similar forms to assert discursive superiority.

5. Discussion

The theory of Symbolic Interactionism, as first conceived by George Herbert Mead (1934) and further developed by Herbert Blumer (1969) (Ali et al., 2022; Francis & Adams, 2019), posits that identity is not something a person possesses. A person's identity will be achieved, maintained, and undermined through interaction. Identity is constructed through the utterances of "illocutionary," that is, utterances with the dimensions of action, not signifying or symbolizing it. When an identity, or a category of identity, is explored online, it encourages an illocutionary function that creates and maintains that identity. In Goffmanian terms, the appearance of this online identity, through language and text, can create and maintain an identity that is accepted, interpreted by, and constructed in collaboration with other potential social media users. Due to the constraints of contextual and non-verbal cues often present alongside textual elements of discourse in offline interactions, online interactions, or "Computer-Mediated Communication" (CMC), provide a suitable match for the application of ethnomethodological tools for their analysis.

a. Declarative Identity

The first identity construct often used in hate speech on social media is an identity created by itself through declarative language. That is to say, when an individual explicitly offers an identity to themselves through a declaration in their speech. Sifianou & Bella (2019) stated that most social media platforms require posts to be as short as possible for their users' posts (Twitter has a word limit, Facebook enlarges the text and offers colored backgrounds for short posts, and YouTube collapses longer posts). This situation can certainly limit the form in which the user speaks, emphasizing conciseness to construct an effective identity in navigating that limited space. Therefore, any stand-alone statement of identity must be strong and easily identifiable by many people who may see it, leading individuals to apply what Sacks (1995) calls "inference-rich" (Ablitt & James Smith, 2019). During interactions with strangers, opening questions such as "Where did you come from?" and "What are you doing?" are explicitly used to elicit "inference-rich" categories, such as residence and occupation, because they contain a lot of the information assumed to be present in them.

Focusing on P1 in data 7 above, the phrase "Pembasmi Kadrun" (desert lizard exterminator) suggests an inference about the categories of political support orientations in Indonesia, identifying them in a political context. It also gives them what is meant by the "authority" to talk about support for the Indonesian president. van Leeuwen (2007) calls this process "authorization" and suggests that it provides a linguistic strategy for speakers to give "legitimacy concerning the authority of traditions, customs, and laws – including politics" in their speech. The opening clause "I can't just proudly say as a #PembasmiKadrun (desert lizard exterminator)" is a protection tool to identify speakers as members of the community who will be judged in the rest of their speech. The adverb "proud" also serves as a descriptive modifier for identity as "Desert Lizard Exterminator," rebranding the archetype of the "proud desert lizard exterminator" and the assumption of 'Privilege as a Desert Lizard Exterminator' attached to the image. Van Leeuwen most closely identifies this kind of authorization as "The Authority of Tradition" (2007), a form of authority that is commanded not because it is an obligation, but because this is what they have always done.

Membership as the "proud desert lizard exterminator " places the constructed identity within two different and powerful hierarchies in the recipient's understanding. The exception of "Kadrun" (associated with the opposition group) in the national hierarchy and the "Pembasmi Kadrun" (associated with the support group of the governing coalition), which is "proud" in the internal hierarchy of the "Indonesian state."

Although the identity statement is declarative, "I..." is perhaps not the most common form of identity construct found in online discussions. It becomes clear that a meaningful and impactful identity can be constructed with just two words rich in inferential meaning. Upon further examination of the two words analyzed above, individuals have (or at least intend to) identify themselves as important and heroic in the world of Indonesian politics. This condition explains their confidence in using more proclamative phrases, such as "I could...", as an opening to their utterances and the harsh and inflammatory language that followed.

As seen in data 7 above, declarative identity features establish identity in a one-way manner. It unequivocally states an identity without requiring confirmation from the party in question in the utterance—one striking difference between the analysis of online identity interactions and the more traditional face-to-face interactions. Online social media interactions occur asynchronously and often without considering the audience or recipients. Depending on the platform, the audience can range from verified friends and family to strangers who follow it. However, there are still opportunities and assumptions of responses that distinguish it from other public discourses, such as advertising. Social media discourse is often treated as a one-way public discourse, which then assumes the features of face-to-face interpersonal interaction. Fairclough's (2003) study of "conversations of public discourse and consumer authority" seems relevant. If converted into social media discourse, it becomes clear that public discourse can now be achieved through the practice of daily conversation. Conversely, what was previously considered a discourse of daily

conversation is, in some ways, treated as public discourse and presented in the style of a proclamation, taking into account a broad audience and the need for anonymity.

b. Opposition Identity: Embodying identity and authority through the delegitimization of others

Building identity through opposition is a linguistic feature often seen in online discussions. Every search for identity includes self-distinction from what is different. Identity politics is always the politics of creating difference. Identity transforms differences into others to secure its certainty when discussing identity and its existence as a relational concept. This suggests that not only is identity defined by what is not, but there is a need to define an external identity as the "other party" to confirm their community. This situation highlights why, in almost every sports team or national team of a country, there is a tendency to vilify and demean others who are perceived to have a different identity from their own. His identity and opposition became aggressive as a self-raising and self-assertive performance.

The creation of this opposition identity is evident repeatedly in the data presented above, where hate speech speakers often identify their speech partners by labelling negative traits that seem to be associated with "parties with different political directions." In some of the examples above, hate speech speakers create a racial identity not by declaring themselves members of one group but by distinguishing themselves as parties not part of a group they consider worthy of attack. They do not give themselves an identity, but they occupy a privileged position as a standard category, not a category of "opposition" that they consider "low," "hooligan," and "worthy of being marginalized."

In response to the identity-degrading strategies outlined above, this study also identified the presence of counter-hate speech strategies, which are discursive tactics that challenge or neutralize hate speech claims. These include mirroring projections (e.g., parodying hashtags such as *#PembasmiKebodohan*), reversing inferential identity categories, and using sarcasm to delegitimize hate-based assertions. These features align with what Benesch (2023) termed "dangerous speech counters," where users engage in reframing, ridicule, or re-appropriation of toxic language to weaken its performative impact. Similarly, Zhang (2025) found that counter-narratives in online debates often leverage irony and rational appeals to reestablish normative discourse. Such counter-speech functions not only as linguistic pushback but also as a means of identity negotiation and resistance to dominant ideological framing. The presence of these discursive markers in the dataset reflects the dynamic interactional nature of hate and resistance on digital platforms, where identity construction is always contested and dialogic.

D. Conclusion

This study finds that hate speech in online spaces does not operate in isolation, but within an evolving dialogic interaction where counter-hate speech also emerges in response. While hate speakers use strategies of legitimacy (e.g., coded language, appeals to authority), reasoning (e.g., rationalizing hate as fact), and projection (e.g., transferring blame to targeted groups), counter speakers strategically respond by mocking those appeals, exposing flawed reasoning, and reversing projections to highlight contradictions. These counter-discursive strategies challenge the legitimacy of hate narratives and reclaim interpretive authority, suggesting that the dynamics of hate speech online involve not only production, but also resistance.

For education, these findings can inform digital literacy programs by integrating critical discourse awareness into curricula, equipping students with the tools to identify and counter hate speech in a socially responsible manner. For policymakers, the study emphasizes the importance of supporting community-based moderation and counter-speech frameworks, rather than relying solely on algorithmic content removal. Recognizing and amplifying strategic counter speech can

serve as an ethical and participatory model for mitigating hate discourse while protecting freedom of expression.

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