Hate Speech in New Media

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Abstract

Hate speech, which is conceptually a contemporary phenomenon, have existed in traditional media texts for a long time and yet can easily be produced and circulated in the new media, which has a rather recent history. Hate speech being discussed within the context of hate crime and legal adjustments being performed pertaining to this subject, on the other hand, is pretty recent. Hate speech, which can be described as racist, religiously discriminative, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, heterosexist, ethnic nationalist, social status consciousness, economic status consciousness, and discriminating according to their disabilities, health problems, dressing styles, and sporting teams they support, is the discourse of the dominant ideology, sometimes in an overt and sometimes in a covert manner. In this study, we will study how hate speech finds a place in the new media and how this discourse is put into circulation as a result of the features of the new media. While observing how the dominant ideology is produced in the new media, we will be touching upon discourse and ideology as well as the definition of hate speech and the legal regulations pertaining to such. Displaying the relationship between hate speech and the mechanisms of power and the media as a result of the structure of language and ideology and to indicate that the new media is a facilitating ground for the spreading of this discourse are among the purposes of this text.

Keywords: *New media, Discourse, Hate speech*

1. Introduction

Regardless of how large the scope of the freedom of expression is, some restrictions to the exercise of this right may in some circumstances be necessary. Unlike the right to freedom of thought, the right to freedom of expression is not an absolute right. The exercise of this freedom carries with it certain duties and responsibilities and is subjected to certain restrictions as set out in Article 10(2) of the European Convention of Human Rights, in particular those that concern the protection of the rights of others.

Several rights, equally protected by the Convention, can compete in this regard. The right to freedom of expression can thus be limited by the right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion. (Weber 2009:1 - 2)

There are various studies related to the hate speech created in the traditional media. On the other hand, the hate speech created and circulated in new media is time to time more effective than the traditional media. The main reason of this is the capability of the new media to make user-derived content production with its characteristic such as digitality, interactivity, hyper textuality, multimedia morphology, virtuality and expansion. (Lister *New Media* 2003:13 cited by Binark 2010:26)

2. Discourse and Ideology

We find it beneficial to briefly emphasise the discourse and ideology concepts which we will frequently refer in this study.

2.1 Discourse

Human culture is the consequence and proof of the increasing dominance of human on the nature and its potential to internally change it in line with its own use. This is a sort of human information through the social labour which constitutes the basis of each new step of the human in the productive and historical life. This information transforms into material in production, materialises in social organization, improves with the enhancement of technique as well as the practise and is primarily hidden in and transmitted by *language.* (Hall 1990:204)

We can express the word "Discourse" as follows: "

- In linguistic, it is an organized utilization of the language over the sentences,
- It is a cultural code which uniformly controls the schemes of perception, language and information in any culture. According to Michael Foucault, discourse is something that is beyond a series of phrases. It has a communal materialism and ideological freedom and is always overlaps with the power.(Foucault The Archeology of Knowledge 1972 cited by Mutlu 1998:310)
- According to John Fiske, discourse is supporting the interest of a subject area, a social environment and a specific social cluster.(Fiske Television Culture 1987 cited by Mutlu 1998:310)
- Discourse, according to Ben Agger is everything that is in written and verbal form and which invites to dialogue and engagement. (Agger. The Decline of Discourse 1990 cited by Mutlu 1998:310)

Again according to Teun Van Dijk who is recognized as an important theorist in this area, discourse is an action or practise that takes part in our daily lives, just like the power. Keeping the actions of other people also means keeping their discourses under control. Therefore a way for controlling the power in the society is keeping under control not only any type of discourse or action, but also the specific discourse practises which we call text or speech. The importance of the relation between the discourse and power emerges at this point. Controlling the discourse is not only an attempt for controlling any kinds of human actions, but actually an activity that influences and grabs the minds of other people. Controlling the information, ideology and attitude is a guaranteed way for controlling the people's minds rather than their actions. (Van Dijk 2010:12-13)

Again according to another theorist, Foucault, discourse is not a way of simply defining he world, but the principal phenomenon. For example the conceptualization and social handling of sexuality and insanity as the result of medical and scientific discourses is widely different from the former unscientific approach before the 20.th century. Social phenomenon, is at least partially, established within a discourse and there is no phenomenon other than the discourses. Foucault sees the culture as a social patterns of the positions of the power, rather than analysing it through semiotic "indication systems"; therefore he grounds discourse in power relations, especially in the ones that materialise in organized and institutionalized languages.

Discourses may close the probabilities. There are some things that cannot be disclosed or thought within potency. The discourses have similar effects as the ideology. Discourses may eliminate alternative way of thinking as an existing way of thinking-seeing, and therefore support a particular distribution of power.

According to Althusser, discourse differentiates the theoretical discourse and the ideological discourse: a scientific discourse must form a series of "hypothetical" concepts that give the necessary information result and are philosophically cleaned according to their subjects. The ideological discourse on the other hand functions in an "enclosed knowing space" and generates subjects suitable for justifying the existing concepts (Althusser&Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 1970 cited by Mutlu 1998)

2.2 Ideology

Terry Eagleton has listed numerous definitions of ideology which are valid currently (*Ideology: an Introduction*, 1991 cited by Mutlu 1998):

- The process of producing the meanings, indicators and values in the social life;
- Ideas that help for legitimizing a dominant political power;
- Communication that is called systematically ;
- A thing that suggests a location for a subject;
- The ways of thinking stimulated by the social interests;
- Thinking the identity;
- Socially imperative illusion;
- Combination of discourse and power;
- Action-driven sets of beliefs ;
- Intermingling of lingual and phenomenological reality ;
- The process of transforming the social life into a natural reality

The subject of ideology has been handled in the most detailed way. The Marxist ideology discussion is mainly based on the theorem of the Marx and Engels in "*The German Ideology*" (1965 cited by Mutlu 1998) asserting that the ruler ideas in any society are the ideas of the classes that own the means of production in the society. Concepts such as the "dominant ideology", "false consciousness" were developed from this theorem.

According to Althusser, ideology incorporates into all shapes of the social existence and penetrates into the most basic and ordinary institution, entities and social relations. Thus the ideology becomes de facto synonym of the experience lived. The relationship had with the world is actually a process in which the individual is the subject. This happens by referring to or calling various terms which give a social identity when each of the individuals, the social practices are considered. If the individual accepts (is established) its subject role (social identity) where it is called, it perceives the perspectives of the ideology as self-proving realities and experiences a world where the ideology is continuously affirmed and confirmed. Interpellation happens in reality by means of the ideological instruments of the state such as the church, family, education system, unions, communication tools and etc.

Paul Hirst (*On Law and Ideology* 1979 cited by Mutlu 1998:163) , despite of all polemic against the false consciousness ideology notion, criticizes the ideological conceptualisation of Althusser by indicating that he does not apart from that notion. According to Hirst, the representatives of the ideology are the false ones which blur and make the capitalist exploitation reality unnoticed in its roots. The more destructive criticism of Hirst aims the interpellation concept. If ideology sets the individuals as subject with interpellation, which contains false-acceptance on the individual's side, then it can only achieve this with the prior existence of a subject that is capable of recognizing itself as false.

What is important in terms of communication is that, Althusser calls the institutions such as school, church, which explain the world and society but spread the oppression, as the ideological instruments of the stat and his "interpellation" concept. The texts full of ideology invite the readers "to accept seeing the world in specific ways". The reader, answering this call, accepts the reality version of the text and the ideological study therefore becomes the temporary "subject" of the text which discharged effectively. There is no doubt the reader, who has already focused on the ideology, could reject this call. However, the prerequisite (popularity) for a popular text is that, it takes positive response from the majority of those who are called. (cited by Mutlu 1998:161-163)

2.3 Ideology according to Gramsci

There is no systematic ideology theory in the Antonio Gramsci's piece of work. (Hall & Lumley & McLennan 1985:1) According to Gramsci, the political order has its own laws and "incandescent environment" (Gramsci 1971:139) different from the economical level and the ideology is comprehended by means of examining the political level.

Ideologies are not classified according to the authenticity and falseness criteria but according to their functions and degree of efficiency in connecting the classes and class section to each other. Ideology serves as the "bonding and combining" the social block (Gramsci 1971:328). According to Gramsci, the "reality" of an ideology lies on its power to mobilize politically and as the result, its realizations historically. (Gramsci 1971:376).

The dominant ideology is absolutely systemized and serves itself universally but not sourced from the ruler class in the essence; generally it is the consequence of the power relations between the sections of the ruler block. (Gramsci 1971:83)

Gramsci, therefore grasps the differentiating acquisition of the dominant ideas within both the ruling block and the ruled class. The first one has its grounds on the fragmentation of the ruler block and largely in the division of labour between the intellectual functions and the second one is based on the processes of complex assimilation, transformation of the dominant ideas and objection raised against them by the oppressed classes. (Stuart Hall 1985)

Because of this, the ideological level of the hegemony must be brought together with the clarity which it contains but cannot be reduced to this level. Ideological sovereignty and subjugation are not understood within a conceptualization but, together with the fact that it has a vital importance, always as an overview of the economic and political as well as the ideological/cultural relations at all levels of the classes and class sectors. [The hegemony concept was introduced by Gramsci for examining these relations within and between the classes.] It contains the organization of the "self-induced" consent; this consent, for example, (which was mentioned as unitary and cooperative consciousness by Gramsci) can be obtained by economic compromising "not effecting the subjective interests" by the ruler block, together with the other measures which encourages the ways of consciousness accepting the submission position. (Gramsci 1971:161)

This concept, while retaining the distinction between the levels of the social formation, allows an analysis that ensures keeping the together; therefore Gramsci uses the "political hegemony" concept for pointing the principal instance of the hegemony. Gramsci, while making a room for a more complex and articulated notion of the hegemony, did not theorize the more specific use of such concept.

The ideology theory of Gramsci is neither the ideology theory imposed by the ruler class, nor self-induced and not based on being everywhere just like the Lukacs's. Gramsci combines the elements in both, but makes it by studying in a paradox different from the basic holism. While most of the ideology theorists consider it as the systematic thought or

endeavour for systemizing it in order to reveal the unity of the various patterns, Gramsci is aware of the fact that the ideology must be understood as a "relation that is experienced".

In this case, there is a direct continuity between the critical meaning of the "ideology" as used by the conservative thinkers in the beginning of the 19.th century and the critical meaning which Marx and Engel popularized in the The German Ideology (1845:7) and afterwards. (Williams 2007:185)

Marx and Engels focused on the abstraction of the ideological history from the real historical processes, in their criticism addressed to the ideas of the German radicals who were their contemporaries. As they mentioned about the dominant notions of the era, notions "are nothing but more than the ideational expression of the dominant material relations, which are grasped as the notions". Failing to recognize this creates the ideology, which is the reversed reality.

Alternatively as expressed by Engels later: Each ideology develops in connection with the given concept material once it emerges and develops this material; otherwise the ideology, which develops independently and limited with its rules, gets out of being the independent entities.

Ideology is an abstract and false notion within this context. This is a meaning that is directly connected to the initial conservative use but its alternative is asserted differently- by determining the real material conditions and the relations. Marx and Engels used this notion in critical format during their period. The "thinkers of the dominant class were the efficient conceptual ideologists put polishing the self-illusion of that class, at the first place in their means of living". (Williams 2007:185)

Lastly, we can express two definitions of the ideology contained in the Collin's Dictionary of Sociology briefly as follows:

- Any system of ideas underlying and informing social and political action.
- More particularly, any system of ideas which justifies or legitimates the subordination of one group by another.

3. The aspects that separate the new media from the traditional media

The technological developments which have started from the last quarter of the 20.th century, about 1970's, enabled the emergence of the new media. The borders between the communication systems, which were clear cut separated from each other, have started to lose their validity upon common utilization of the electronic communication technologies and computers during this period. (Uğur 2002: 95-107)

Numerous scientists have tried to define the new media by using different criteria. While some scientists focus on the technological characteristics of the new media, some of the associate the new media with the traditional one.

Most probably, the most important characteristic of the new media is the fact of digitalization which allows the transfer, storage, collection and processing of sound, data, text and image over a single infrastructure. (Mcquail 2005:137)

One of the most important characteristics that separate the new media from the traditional one is its capability to allow mutual interaction in the communication process. Interaction must be considered as the main character of the new media. New media has the tendency to make the user an active consumer of information rather than a passive one.

Another important difference between new media and the traditional one arises within the context of creating and presenting the media content.

The digital media of the twenty first century, which achieved to improve the communication facilities between the producer and consumers, has replaced the old media. (Laughey 2010:157)

On the other hand, new media re-defines the source of the media content concept. In the traditional media environment, commercial publishers have the tendency to dominate the process of media content creation. However, in the new media environment, most of the content is created by the users. In online environment, everyone is both the content provider and user of the new media. (Oblak 2005:87-106) Choice and control have been pointed out as features of new media. (Pavlik 1998:200)

For example; due to the non-centralized structure of the internet, a user may be a media content generator by forming his/her web site. The new media, by providing the opportunity of being a content generator to millions of individuals, reduces the homogenous media content threat. (Chaffee & Metzger 2001:365-379)

As the American media theorists, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin stated in their book Remedation (2000), the new media has cured the old one. In other words, new media has occupied the technic, format and social importance of the "old media" and proceeded to compete or re-shape them. (cited by Laughey 2010:160)

New media, unlike the traditional one, has the facility to rapidly present actual media content to its users. For example; among the traditional media tools, daily press loses its actuality as radio and television have the facility to make

more updated broadcast. (Carlson 2005:68-71)

New media gives more control to its users in terms of both content creation and selection when compared to the traditional one.

4. Hate speech in new media

The characteristics of the new media lead the hate speech to be more natural, common, available, easier to be created and consequently more ordinary. (Binark 2010:26)

4.1 The concept of "hate speech";

No universally accepted definition of the term "hate speech" exists, despite its frequent usage. Though most States have adopted legislation banning expressions amounting to "hate speech", definitions differ slightly when determining what is being banned. Only the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers" Recommendation 97(20) on "hate speech" defined it as follows: "the term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin." In this sense, "hate speech" covers comments which are necessarily directed against a person or a particular group of persons. (Weber 2009:2)

The comments made to the news shares in the micro blog application, Twitter, used by millions of people today, Facebook and similar social sharing networks or on YouTube, at digital gaming, online new sites, hate sites, the hate speech in new media such as IRC's are the event that have to be examined punctiliously and deliberated in terms of the hate crime. The users of Facebook, Twitter, digital games, have become partners of the hate discourse made by their friends, seen them natural and taken for granted. The hate discourse taken from granted may organize the hate crimes. (Binark & Çomu 2011)

We can describe the hate crime as ; "Any crime, including the crimes committed against the people or property, in which the victim, property or the target of crime committed is selected due to the actual or perceived relation, loyalty, sense of belonging, support or membership to a group that has similar characteristics in terms of the actual or felt race, nationality or ethnical origin, language, colour, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or other factors".(Binark 2010:13)

The hate crime was used for the first time in 1986 for identifying the attack made by a group of white students to an Afro-American person in New York (Alğan ve Şensever, 2010:9 cited by Binark 2010:13)

The main communication network internet has already gained a political importance and the increasing number of citizens use internet for leaning the government policies and actions, mutually discussing the issues, contacting to certain officials and obtaining the voter registry materials and other information which may facilitate more active participation to the politics. Internet dramatically expands the opportunities to reach the political related information and provides new facilities to the citizens related to political learning and action. However a new question has arisen; will the changes brought by the increasing internet use be able to create a qualitatively different political system in the future ?. (Bimber 2002:166)

Although the new media environment has some positive characteristics such as being a platform of opposition where there social change is mobilised and organized, Douglas Kellner and Richard Kahn point out the possible threat that may emerge if the new media is used by the extremist right ideologies and discourses. According to researches, it is likely that the kids and young people especially in the Western Countries to meet in the racist websites containing the hate discourse. On the other hand the number of the racist web sites has been increasing in Europe and USA after the spread of internet. (Binark 2010:32-37)

When we look at Turkey, the contents containing racist and hate discourse are frequently seen in the reader comments in the websites and news sites. The language which is carried from the news to the reader comments, plays an important role which works up, even organizes the hate discourse. (Dirini 2010:91)

We can see the same table in groups and pages in Facebook. There are many groups which contain obvious hatred to the Kurds, Armenians, Alewi and Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Travesties and Transsexuals. The forums other than Facebook have a very important function in spreading the similar hate discourse. We may face with the hate discourse in the characters created in digital games (by working up the sexual perceptions) and as user comments in video sharing networks such as YouTube.

Binark suggests that the hate discourse addressing the minorities, LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans), different ethnical and social groups in Turkey are contained in the traditional media frequently, that the same situation is sustained by the content s created by the user in the new media and that the new media spreads more quickly due to the characteristics mentioned above. Binark and Çomu indicate that the hate discourse in new media must be followed closely and some structures that intervene the hate discourse must be established as well as it is compulsory to promote a language of peace in media.

After the entry of the force of the Law on the Regulation of the Publications Made in Internet Environment and Fighting with the Crimes Committed Through These Publications (the law with the number 5651) in 2007, the restrictions on the websites have become widespread in Turkey. However, these restrictions, which can be interpreted as censor, has not been addressed to the websites (the pages contained in these sites) containing the hate discourse. (Kaymak 2010:277-282)

The Campaign on the Law Against the Discrimination and Hate Crimes, on which the NGO's has been studying for a long time, will be an important step for defining these crimes and preventing this discourse in the new media environment.

It is revealed by various academic researches and some studies carried out by the non-governmental organizations called International Hrant Dink Foundation, Kaos GL, Human Right Agenda Foundation and Social Change Foundation that, hate speeches addressing different ethnical groups or different sexual orientations are created in all areas in the daily life in Turkey, that these discourses created are re-created and put into circulation by means of the traditional media.

5. Conclusion

Social media creates interactive public spheres and therefore provides an environment which is very suitable for the hate speech to live and to be re-generated. Hate speeches are faces in all areas of our lives. These discourses have ideological functions to the extent that their real meanings are not recognized and keep us from finding democratic solutions by covering the material reasons of the social confrontations.

Heterosexist, xenophobic, racist, ethnical nationalist and separatist hate speech, spreads and enters circulation after being ordinary easier in the new media when compared to the traditional media due to its characteristics. Thus, any types of discriminatory and exclusionist discourses are taken for granted and transform into destructive actions, in other words the crimes in time by factionalizing different identities and existence practises within the society. (Binark 2010:11)

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