
Research Article

A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of hate speech in German and Polish social media posts

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Abstract: The present paper investigates linguistic data that include hate speech motivated by the alleged or real ethnic or national identity of its addressee in German and Polish Internet-based communication. Focusing on hate speech on Facebook, this paper contributes to the studies of hate speech (e.g. Meibauer, 2013; Meibauer, 2021) in online communication (e.g. Baider & Constantinou, 2020; He et al., 2021; Founta & Specia, 2021) and, in a more general sense, to the vast area of research on the use of aggressive language. Based on a representative corpus, the predominant categories of user-generated hateful statements are teased out relative to their form and stance by means of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics tools. In the analytical part, we discuss the discursive practices used in the posts, together with the meanings they communicate, followed by a comparative analysis of their frequencies in comparable corpora. Our findings confirm that hate speech is linguistically conditioned by its socio-cultural context. For instance, our contrastive analysis of German and Polish online data indicates that the two nationalities use different discursive practices to express their aversion to the Other, and that Polish comments are more overtly insulting than German comments.

Keywords: hate speech in German, hate speech in Polish, social media posts, corpus analysis of hate speech, hateful discursive practices

1 Introduction¹

Research on hate speech (henceforth HS) has been conducted from many perspectives: (1) legal aspects, including the penalisation of HS (see the international perspective among others in Rosenfeld, 2012; Bleich, 2013; Ghanea, 2013; that of the European Union in Weber, 2009 and Quintel & Ulrich, 2018; the Polish perspective in Wieruszewski, et al. 2010; Radziejewski, 2012; Malczyńska-Biały, 2016 and Guzik, 2021; the German perspective in Brugger, 2003; Echikson & Knodt, 2018); (2) media studies (among others Slayden & Whillock, 1995; Bulandra et al., 2015; Eickelmann, 2018 and Brown & Sinclair, 2019); (3) social psychology (among others Mullen & Smyth, 2004; Bilewicz et al., 2014; Winiewski et al., 2017; Pettersson, 2019 and Obrębska, 2020); and (4) sociology (among others Kowalski & Tulli, 2003; Mondal et al., 2017). However, in our view, it is highly relevant to investigate HS from a linguistic standpoint, as the frequency of crimes involving physical attacks accompanied by verbal abuse in the form of HS has increased in recent years, and racist and xenophobic

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discourse is rampant on the Internet. This rationale is further strengthened by the fact that hateful language is often the first step in a person's path towards radicalisation, which may lead to unwelcome consequences.

In recent years, linguistic studies of HS have been gaining momentum. Usually, they concentrate on investigating how HS is conveyed by means of the verbal, non-verbal and graphic resources available in a particular language or beyond, e.g. Klinker et al. (2018); Baider and Kopytowska (2018); Alorainy et al. (2019); Basile et al. (2019); McClure (2020); Jaszczyk-Grzyb and Szczepaniak-Kozak (2020); Strani (2021); Baider (2022) and Szczepaniak-Kozak (2023). Other studies focus on virtual communities where HS is prevalent, e.g. Fuchs (2010); Erjavec and Poler Kovačič (2012); Fuchs (2017); Terkourafi et al. (2018); ElSherief et al. (2018); Perry and Olsson (2009) and Baider and Constantinou (2020). Of particular interest are Strani and Szczepaniak-Kozak's studies (2018, 2022), in which they investigate differences in the language (strategies, categorisation) used by Polish and British online posters in their reactions to two different events (the increase in migration to the UK and from Poland, and the killing of a Pole in Harlow, UK).

By focusing on HS present on Facebook, this paper contributes to the body of research on online communication and, in a more general sense, to the vast area of research on the use of aggressive language. However, what is unique to this study is that it examines HS in social media using a cross-linguistic approach, focusing on the languages of German and Polish, which is not present in the above-mentioned research. Based on a representative corpus, the predominant categories of user-generated, hateful statements in German and Polish are teased out relative to their form and stance by means of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) and corpus linguistics (henceforth CL) tools. The discursive practices used in the posts, together with the meanings they communicate, are analysed.

In detail, the main aim of the study is to investigate corpus data containing ethnically and nationally motivated HS in German and Polish, among others, in a qualitative and quantitative manner in order to extrapolate the discursive practices that are present (the names of the discursive practices are after van Leeuwen 1993, 1996; Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Reisigl 2010; Adameczak-Krysztofowicz & Szczepaniak-Kozak 2017 and Strani & Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018, 2022), and then to juxtapose them cross-linguistically. The overarching analysis category is discursive practice. Discursive practices² are, according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 40), text phenomena that “play a decisive role in the genesis and production of certain social conditions”, e.g., “races”, nations or ethnicities, and which can also be “instrumental in perpetuating, reproducing, transforming or dismantling the status quo”. Discursive practices are operationalised for our research needs as typical patterns in constructing and reconstructing the image of the Other, which also tend to recontextualise social practice. This way, the study contributes to the development of a research tool and, to the best of our knowledge, the gathering of the first corpora (comparable³, in the two languages) of ethnically and nationally

2 The term comes from Michel Foucault: “French historian Michel Foucault’s term for the system of rules governing the production of statements in a particular society at a certain moment in history. These rules are anonymous, unintended and objective; they are not simply the laws or social regulations either. They are rather the rules for the production of statements, determining not merely what can and cannot be said at one moment, but also – and more importantly – what it is possible to say” (Buchanan, 2010, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001/acref-9780199532919-e-196> [access 18/04/2023]).

3 We relied on the classification of corpora by Sinclair (1996), cited by Waliński (2005). Following Waliński (2005, p. 32), there is a clear distinction between parallel and comparable corpora: “A parallel corpus includes texts written in the source language as well as their translations in the target language. A comparable corpus, on

motivated HS in German and Polish Internet-based communication, comprising texts uploaded to social media.

Our research endeavour intends to test the following hypothesis:

H: Discursive practices in posts referring to particular ethnic and national minority groups are similar in German and Polish.

This initial assumption draws on a pilot study conducted by the first of the authors, which found that expletives (usually vulgarisms) and negative labels (mainly reifications⁴ and somatonyms⁵) are the dominant discursive practices in posts about Muslims. As far as Ukrainians are concerned, pilot data in Polish revealed that this minority was often referred to by means of militarionyms (such as “bander-”⁶ as well as “bandery” in the deprecatory form of a masculine-personal noun in the nominative plural). Based on the above, this study sets out to answer the following research questions (henceforth RQ):

RQ_A: What hateful discursive practices are observed in German and Polish online communication on the social network Facebook when it pertains to a given ethnic or national minority group?

RQ_B: How often do the discursive practices and their types appear in a particular subcorpus?

To present the full picture of our research project and its findings, this paper is divided into nine sections. Following this introduction, we begin by proposing an operational definition of ethnically and nationally motivated HS expressed online and extrapolating its narrower and broader sense. In this section, we also briefly elaborate on the term discursive practice. The next two sections “Methodology” and “Design of the study” review corpus analysis techniques which can be applied in critical discourse studies and provide insight into the data collection method and analysis we implemented. This is followed by a brief description of the compiled corpus, the examination of the dominant discursive practices and the presentation of the findings of our quantitative analyses. The article finishes with a discussion of the research findings, enabling verification of the hypothesis and answering the research questions. We conclude our paper with a section on research limitations and ways in which our studies can be continued.

The research material consists of comments/posts from the social networking site Facebook which are publicly available. Detailed information on the datasets is presented in Section 4 and 5. The research ethics are compliant with Paragraph 1 of Article 89 of the 2016/679 Regulation of the European Parliament and Council from the 27th April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, titled safeguards and derogations relating to processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes. Public comments were stored after they were anonymised, also in accordance with the postulate of ethical

the other hand, does not contain translations of texts but relevant texts written in two or more languages, selected using strictly defined criteria (including, for example, style, date of composition or subject matter)” (authors’ own translation).

4 Referring to persons by means of a characteristic object or as if they were objects.

5 Reference to the colour of the skin or to dirt.

6 “banderowiec” in Polish is a historical term which was coined to refer to semi-legal partisans active on the territory of Ukraine during WW2.

anonymisation in the paradigm of CL (Baker et al., 2006, p. 13). The corpora and subcorpora have not been stored or made available publicly.

2 Operational definition of online hate speech and discursive practices used to convey it

On the basis of the available body of literature (among others Gagliardone et al., 2015; Bulandra, Kościółek & Zimnoch, 2015; Adameczak-Krysztofowicz & Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2017⁷ and the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech 2019), we propose an operational definition of ethnically and nationally motivated HS for the purpose of the current study. The potential addressees of HS have been identified as a person or a group of persons of an alleged or real ethnic or national identity against which the person communicating HS is prejudiced. In order to identify a text sample as an example of ethnically or nationally motivated HS, it has to comply with the following criteria:

- a) it uses a primary characteristic feature that is an element of somebody's ethnic/national identity, or it attributes such a feature to somebody,
- b) it stigmatises a community or a person (as a representative of a particular ethnic or national community),
- c) it is verbalised in a pejorative way: a) in a narrower sense, it constitutes an incitement to act (i.e. it calls for illegal deeds against a specific minority group, or fuels hostility towards such persons), b) in a broader sense, it insults minorities based on their pejorative nomination.

The hate discourse, which is the topic of our study, concerns four selected nationalities or ethnic groups which in Poland and Germany are the most frequent targets of HS. The groups were chosen, among others, on the basis of the sociological research conducted by Bilewicz et al. (2014) and repeated in 2017 (Winiewski et al., 2017), as well as on the basis of studies by Felling et al. (2019):

- the Muslim minority,
- the Roma minority,
- the Ukrainian minority,
- the Jewish minority.

The list includes the Muslim minority, despite its being a group whose common feature is not ethnicity or nationality (i.e. the components defined in the operational definition of HS for the following research), but religion. This is because anti-Muslim statements are directed at different ethnic and national groups, regardless of their religion. People who are (alleged) to be Arabic in descent are often equated with being Muslim and referred to by this religionym. This is observed in different countries and languages (see the RADAR project final publication Dossou & Klein, 2016; Strani & Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2022).

The discursive practices presented in Table 1 below provide a theoretical framework for the subsequent study (not an exhaustive list) (adapted from the original categorisation by Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

⁷ See also Nijakowski (2008); Weber (2009); Meibauer (2013) and Stefanowitsch (2015).

Table 1

Discursive practices with types and functions they serve (original categorisation in Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

Discursive practices	Type and function served
Mentioning of irrelevant information	evoking distaste; exaggeration/sensationalisation;
False pretences	legitimation and supporting ethnic/national/“racial” separatism or white supremacy by social problematisation; legitimation of ethnic/national/racist views by means of an appeal to God’s will or force majeure; criminalisation – reference to acts or customs expressing an abuse of rights;
Negative labels	somatonyms – reference to the colour of the skin; somatonyms – reference to dirt; animalisation – suggesting that people are not humans but animals, including referring to them by means of animal names; religionyms – identification by means of the assumed religious denomination a person belongs to; false origionyms – labels implying commonality on false grounds, e.g. that people belong to a group spanning over nations, countries, etc.; relationyms – referring to people by means of names of abusive actions or habits; criminonyms ⁸ – unjustified referring to people by means of activities or customs expressing the abuse of rights or illegal deeds. Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 52) list the following examples of this category: “criminals, illegals, dealers, mafiosi, delinquents, gang members, murderer [relationym], ‘Schubhäftling’ (‘awaiting deportation prisoner/detainee’), ‘Schübling’ (pejorative for ‘awaiting deportation prisoner/detainee’), bogus refugee (‘Scheinasyllant’), perpetrator, culprit, victimiser, SchwarzarbeiterIn (a person doing illicit work)”; politonyms – referring to people by ascribing political status, e.g. refugees, or negative ideologies, e.g. radical; xenonyms – referring to people by means of explicit dissimulation, e.g. stranger; anthroponyms – referring to people by means of bodily activities, e.g. newcomers; also referring to people in terms of their sexual habits or sexual orientation, many of which presuppose particular norms, such as heterosexuality, tabooing incest, etc., thus introducing the presupposition that any otherness is a deviation from the norm; militarionyms – presenting people as having a hostile attitude to a given nation/ethnic group; e.g., according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 51), “warrior, soldier, army, troupe, enemy [relationym], SA (Ger.: Sturmabteilung, Eng.: storm troop), SS (Ger.: Schutzstaffel, Eng. riot squadron), Wehrmacht (Eng. German Nazi armed forces)”; economyms – associating people with socio-economic problems by implying, e.g., they pose a threat to the job market; patronising terms – implying that people have a lower status, including social status, or that they are at a lower level of civilisational/educational development; reifications – referring to people by means of a characteristic object or as if they were objects;
Tropes	metonymies, including in particular synecdoche, quantitative hyperbole;
Vulgar words, e.g. expletives	expletives – using swear words or expressions in a syntactically free position to add emphasis to the utterance, e.g. Eng. “fuck”, Ger. “Scheiß”, Pl. “kurwa”.

⁸ A distinction should be made between a criminonym, that is a name for the group, and criminalisation that means rendering a particular activity illegal and consequently turning a person performing such an activity into a criminal.

At this point, a few remarks on our understanding of the terms used in the table above are due. First of all, we decided to rename one type of discursive practice. What Reisigl and Wodak (2001) call ‘primitivisation’ we dub ‘animalisation’. This is because usually the practice in our data is to refer to the minorities by means of animal metaphors, and not a lower civilisation status. Secondly, we include metonymies, especially synecdoches, among the rhetorical tropes used in the hateful discourse under investigation. A synecdoche is a type of metonymy (see also Doroszewski, 1997) and consists in “replacing the name of a whole or a set of objects with the name of a part or one object, e.g. a roof for a house, or a payot for an Orthodox Jew”. Reisigl (2010, p. 42) notes that:

synecdochic-metaphorical insults are often based on names of more or less tabooed body parts and bodily activities (e.g. sexual behaviour), for example ‘asshole’, ‘cunt’, ‘motherfucker’ or ‘whore’. They reduce persons to body parts or bodily activities that are socially taboo. In many (though not all) contexts, they become manifestations of discriminatory naming [authors’ own translation].

To illustrate this, insulting names of alleged “races”, according to Reisigl (2010, p. 45), “are often based on colour metaphors or selected bodily meronyms, e.g. black, ‘negros’ (Ger. Neger), ‘bush negros’ (Ger. ‘Buschneger’), ‘dark-skinned’ (Ger. ‘Dunkelhäutige’), ‘red-skinned’ (Ger. ‘Rothäute’), ‘slant-eyed’/‘Chinks’ (Ger. ‘Schlitzaugen’), coloured, white, ‘pale-skinned’ (Ger. ‘Hellhäutige’), ‘pale face’ (Ger. ‘Bleichgesicht’)”. For the Polish language, Szczepaniak-Kozak (2023) gives the example of “banderowiec”. It is the name for a militant faction on the territory of Ukraine but it is often used to refer to the entire nation. Another rhetorical item added to the list originally put forward by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) is the quantitative hyperbole, i.e. presenting a group against which one is prejudiced as existing or coming in large numbers. This trope is an exaggerated statement whose aim is to evoke the fear of a place or group being dominated by the other. Following Ohia (2013, p. 97), we see it as “one type of overt semantic mechanism” manifested in Polish, for example, in the form of such expressions as: *murzyńska hołota*, *czarna hołota*, *murzyński tłum*, *czarna fala/czarny przyływ*, *afrykański busz* (Eng. ‘negro mob’, ‘black riff-raff’, ‘negro crowd’, ‘black wave/black tide’, ‘African bush’).

For vulgarisms in German, in the analytical part of the paper, the authors refer to *Das große Schimpfwörterbuch* (Eng. The big dictionary of vulgarisms) by Herbert Pfeiffer (1999). The theoretical basis for classifying words as vulgarisms in Polish is the findings of Grochowski (2003, p. 19), the author of *Słownik polskich przekleństw i wulgaryzmów* (Eng. Dictionary of Polish swear words and vulgarisms), who defines a vulgarism as “a lexical unit by means of which a speaker reveals their emotions towards something or someone, breaking a linguistic taboo”, i.e. a socially sanctioned ban on uttering certain words (see Walczak 1988, p. 54). Vulgarisms in Polish are divided, according to Grochowski (2003, p. 20), into those that are:

- a. referential-objective, rendering a lexical feature taboo because of its semantic features and the scope of its reference,
- b. systemic (proper), which are taboo solely because of their expressive (formal) features; in other words, independent of their semantic properties and the type of their contextualised use.

It also needs underscoring that discursive practices and their types can overlap or merge with one another, examples being: in Polish *kozojebca* (Eng. “goat-fucker”), simultaneously an anthroponym, animalisation, synecdoche, as well as a vulgarism, and *banderśmiec* (Eng. “bander-trash”), which is a combination of a militarionym and reification.

3 Methodology: Corpus analysis techniques in Critical discourse analysis

In line with van Dijk (1995), it is argued in this paper that hateful messages may have implications for social actions on both an individual and collective level. In van Dijk's (1995, p. 3) original words:

[S]uch linguistic performance is not simply an innocent form of language use or a marginal type of verbal social interaction. Rather, it has a fundamental impact on the social cognitions of dominant group members, on the acquisition, confirmation, and uses of opinions, attitudes, and ideologies underlying social perceptions, actions, and structures.

Hence, hate driven by its addressee's assumed or real ethnic or national origin can be socially learned, and language is essential to the process of its ideological production and reproduction. Such a stance has been reflected in CDA's view of discourse as a form of social practice. The relation between discourse and social reality is, on the one hand, socially constituted and, on the other hand, socially constitutive.

The methodology applied in our research project combines the assumptions of CDA and CL following the proposal presented by Baker et al. (2008) on fusing CL with CDA. The analysis which follows is intended to be a contribution to the recently emerging methodological framework of research in media discourse, which combines a critical look at the compiled data accompanied by a corpus-assisted study – termed corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) (e.g. Wang, 2018; Bączkowska, 2019). The corpus methodology, when applied in CDA, primarily allows for a significant increase in the amount of data analysed, thus rejecting one of the arguments raised by CDA critics, regarding the lack of representativeness of the analysed texts (see among others Stubbs, 1997, p. 7; Orpin, 2005, p. 38; Pawlikowska, 2012, pp. 111–112; Cheng, 2013, p. 1 and Kopytowska et al., 2017, p. 71). Advantages of using corpus linguistics techniques in CDA also include limiting researcher subjectivity and selectivity as regards the analysed material, thanks to the use of transparent criteria for corpus selection (see Baker, 2006, p. 12; Breeze, 2011; Kamasa, 2014, p. 110).

The following techniques offered by CL were applied in our research: analyses of frequency lists, keyword lists, collocations and concordances. To generate these linguistic data sets, Sketch Engine⁹ software was used (Kilgarriff et al., 2014).

Our research project followed an established schedule. First, relevant documents and research reports were studied, then suitable data were searched for on the Internet and comparable corpora were compiled (in German and Polish). The datasets comprise posts uploaded to Facebook between January 2018 to January 2020. These phases were followed by qualitative (focusing on discursive practices) and quantitative (focusing on CL categories) analyses, after which the research questions were answered, the hypothesis verified and conclusions drawn. Each research task described was carried out sequentially: 1. Corpus project and empirical data collection; 2. Qualitative analysis; 3. Quantitative analysis; 4. Analysis of results and verification of the hypothesis.

⁹ Access to Sketch Engine was funded by the EU through the ELEXIS infrastructure project between 2018 and 2022. Access was provided at no cost to the institutions on the premise of non-commercial use only.

4 Design of the study: Corpus project and empirical data collection

Guided by previously established criteria for the selection of empirical data, theoretical and methodological assumptions, as well as the results of the pilot study (see Jaszczyk-Grzyb, 2021, pp. 193–194), in the first stage, comparable corpora in German and Polish were designed. For the minority groups mentioned above, the following keywords were defined together with their inflectional forms¹⁰:

Table 2

Data cataloguing scheme.

Corpus	Subcorpus	Keywords
DE	J/Jewish	jude, juden, jüdin, juedin, jüdinnen, juedinnen, jüdisch, juedisch, jüdische, juedische, jüdischem, juedischem, jüdischen, juedischen, jüdischer, juedischer, jüdisches, juedisches
	M/Muslim	moslem, moslemanischem, moslemanischen, moslemanischer, moslemanisches, moslemin, mosleminisch, moslemisch, moslemischem, moslemischen, moslemischer, mosleminnen, moslemisches, moslems, muselmanin, muselmaninnen, muslim, muslima, muslimas, muslime, muslimen, muslimin, musliminnen, muslimisch, muslimischem, muslimischen, muslimischer, muslimisches, muslims
	R/Roma	rom, roma, romanisch, romanischem, romanischen, romanischer, romanisches, romas, zigeuner, zigeunerin, zigeunerinnen, zigeunerisch, zigeunerische, zigeunerischem, zigeunerischen, zigeunerischer, zigeunerisches, zigeunern, zigeuners
	U/ Ukrainian	ukrainern, ukrainers, ukrainisch, ukrainer, ukrainerin, ukrainerinnen, ukrainisches, ukrainischer, ukrainischen, ukrainischem
PL	M/Muslim	muzułmanach, muzulmanach, muzułmanami, muzulmanami, muzułmaninem, muzulmaninem, muzułmankach, muzulmankach, muzułmankami, muzulmankami, muzułmankom, muzulmankom, muzułmanek, muzulmanek, muzułmanami, muzulmanami, muzułmance, muzulmance, muzułmanie, muzulmanie, muzułmanin, muzulmanin, muzułmanina, muzulmanina, muzułmaninem, muzulmaninem, muzułmaninie, muzulmaninie, muzułmaninowi, muzulmaninowi, muzułmanka, muzulmanka, muzułmanką, muzulmankę, muzulmanke, muzułmanki, muzulmanki, muzułmanko, muzulmanko, muzułmanom, muzulmanom, muzułmanów, muzulmanow, muzułmańscy, muzulmańscy, muzułmańska, muzulmańska, muzułmański, muzulmański, muzułmańskich, muzulmańskich, muzułmańskie, muzulmańskie, muzułmańskiego, muzulmańskiego, muzułmańskiemu, muzulmańskiemu, muzułmańskim, muzulmańskim, muzułmańskimi, muzulmańskimi

¹⁰ The inflectional forms are listed in alphabetical order. The generation of flexemes can also be carried out using a program for NLP; the results should then be verified. The selected items include also forms frequently misspelt in online communication.

R/Roma	cygan, cygana, cyganach, cyganami, cygance, cyganek, cyganem, cyganie, cyganka, cygankach, cygankami, cyganką, cyganke, cyganki, cyganko, cygankom, cyganom, cyganowi, cyganów, cygańscy, cyganscy, cygańską, cyganska, cygański, cyganski, cygańskich, cyganskich, cygańskiego, cyganskiego, cygańskiej, cyganskiej, cygańskiemu, cyganskiemu, cygańskim, cyganskim, rom, roma, romach, romami, romce, romem, romie, romka, romkach, romkami, romką, romkę, romke, romki, romko, romkom, romom, romowi, romowie, romów, romow, romscy, romska, romską, romski, romskich, romskie, romskiego, romskiej, romskiemu, romskim, romskimi
U/ Ukrainian	ukraińcy, ukraincy, ukraińca, ukrainca, ukraińcem, ukraincem, ukraińcu, ukraincu, ukraińcowi, ukraincowi, ukraińców, ukraincow, ukraińcom, ukraincom, ukraińcami, ukraincami, ukraińcach, ukraincach, ukraińskiego, ukraińskiego, ukraińskiemu, ukraińskiemu, ukraiński, ukraiński, ukraińskim, ukraińskim, ukraińskiej, ukraińskiej, ukraińską, ukraińskie, ukraińskie, ukraińskim, ukraińskim, ukraińskich, ukraińskich, ukraińscy, ukraińscy, ukraińskimi, ukraińskimi, ukrainiec, ukrainka, ukrainki, ukraince, ukrainką, ukrainkę, ukrainko, ukrainek, ukrainkom, ukrainkami, ukrainkach
Ż/Jewish	żyd, zyd, żyda, zyda, żydach, zydach, żydami, zydami, żydem, zydem, żydom, zydom, żydowi, zydowi, żydowscy, zydowscy, żydowska, zydowska, żydowską, żydowski, zydowski, żydowskich, zydowskich, żydowskie, zydowskie, żydowskiego, zydowskiego, żydowskiej, zydowskiej, żydowskiemu, zydowskiemu, żydowskim, zydowskim, żydowskimi, zydowskimi, żydów, zydow, żydówce, zydowce, żydówek, zydówek, żydówka, zydowka, żydówkach, zydowkach, żydówkami, zydowkami, żydówką, żydówkę, zydowke, żydówki, zydowki, żydówko, zydowko, żydówkom, zydowkom, żydzi, zydzi, żydzie, zydzie

The keywords are ethnonyms for the four groups in focus. They are supposed to be official, conventionalised and neutral. The inflectional forms of the ethnonyms were checked for their correctness in Polish and German dictionaries, e.g., for Polish, *Wielki słownik ortograficzno-fleksyjny* [Eng. The Grand Dictionary of Orthography and Inflection] (2001), edited by Jerzy Podracki (see Janik-Płocińska et al., 2001), and, for German, the *Morphological Dictionary of the German Language*, available on CanooNet.eu. *The Grand Dictionary of Orthography and Inflection* (see Janik-Płocińska et al., 2001) states that the word ‘Muslim’ (a person belonging to an ethnic group in Bosnia) is written with a capital letter, while ‘muslim’ (a follower of Islam) is written with a small letter.

Each word was additionally keyed into the Facebook search engine without diacritical marks, in order to get more findings whose content was related to a particular ethnic or national group. For example, upon entering the Polish word ‘muzułmanie’, only posts containing the words ‘muzułmanie’ or ‘Muzułmanie’ are displayed; posts containing the word ‘Muzulmanie’ or ‘muzulmanie’ (without the letter typical of Polish – ł) are omitted. For keywords in German containing diacritical marks in the letters a, o, u (ä, ö, ü), an additional letter ‘e’ was introduced to generate more results. To illustrate, keywords derived from the word ‘jüdisch’ in German are: ‘judisch’, ‘juedisch’.

After entering a keyword selected from the list presented in Table 2 above and specifying a category for the search results, the specific content on the website was displayed, sorted according to the type of post in question (‘public’, ‘all’, ‘any group’), the location of its publication (‘any’), as well as the date of its publication (2018, 2019 or January 2020 respectively). The raw datasets were downloaded as two comparable corpora each comprising several thousand comments. All the material was then screened to extract posts which could be relevant to the purpose of this study. This initial analysis produced a total of 1,185 posts. They constitute the core corpus, which is subjected to detailed analysis in the sections which follow.

5 General character of the corpus

The largest number of posts extracted from Facebook concerned the Muslim minority in Polish (1,503), then the Jewish minority in Polish (323), followed by the Ukrainian minority (211) and the Muslim minority in German (164). In terms of corpus size, the subcorpus concerning the Muslim minority in Polish is the biggest and contains 57,099 words in total and the second place is occupied by the PL_Z subcorpus (data about Jews in Polish) with 17,377 words. In the PL_M subcorpus, 62 comments were classified as examples of HS with the aspect of calling for action. In general, out of the four minority groups under investigation (Muslim, Roma, Ukrainian and Jewish), it is the Muslim minority that is the most frequent target and topic of hateful discourse in the social media platform studied, including HS calling for illegal deeds.

From the original corpus of 1,185 posts, 58 posts were qualified as ethnically and nationally motivated HS calling for illegal deeds, according to our operational definition of HS. The largest share of such posts was found in the subcorpora PL_M (the Muslim minority – in Polish), PL_Z (the Jewish minority – in Polish) and DE_M (the Muslim minority – in German).

Apart from the tailor-made datasets discussed above, we have also, in our analyses, used two corpora which are representative of the contemporary German and Polish internet communication. For German, we selected German Web 2018 (downloaded by SpiderLing in December 2018 and January 2019). Its size is 5.3 billion words. This corpus is available via the Sketch Engine program. The source of the texts is the German domain “.de”. For Polish, we selected Polish Web 2019. Its size is 4.2 billion words. The corpus is also available via the Sketch Engine program and was downloaded by SpiderLing in December 2019. The corpus was tagged by RFTagger with the Polish NKJP POS tagset (tagset listed for the National Corpus of Polish). The source of the texts is the Polish domain “.pl”. Both corpora were cleaned and deduplicated.

6 Findings of the qualitative analysis: Discursive practices

Comments classified as HS (according to the operational definition provided in Section 2) were next subjected to a qualitative analysis of discursive practices and their types and/or functions listed in Table 2 (Section 2), relying, among others, on the terms offered by van Leeuwen (1993, 1996), Reisigl and Wodak (2001), Reisigl (2010), Adamczak-Krysztofowicz and Szczepaniak-Kozak (2017). The classification was conducted by the present authors, who are trained linguists, and the findings were cross-examined. It is also important to mention that the discursive practices identified by us can overlap, i.e. one post may contain more than one discursive practice. The practices were assigned to each comment after a careful analysis of: a) its narrower context (within a particular comment) and b) its broader context (within the post and other comments to which a particular comment constitutes a reply). The identification of the contextual clues was done in a systematic manner throughout all the examples provided.

The qualitative analysis identified the following hateful discursive practices (in answer to RQ_A) for a specific minority group in both languages – see their examples in Table 3 below. Fragments constituting a particular discursive practice are underlined.

Table 3

Examples of the discursive practices found in the datasets for the subcorpora DE_M and PL_M.

Group	Language	Discursive practice	Examples
Muslim	German	Mentioning of irrelevant information, e.g. an ethnonym, in a particular post: exaggeration	„Wenn man das schon liest. Warum können die Muslime nicht in den nächsten Sonderzug nach Hause die <u>machen uns hier alles kaputt</u> was Deutschland mal ausgemacht hat” (Eng. “If you are reading this already. Why can’t the Muslims take the next special train home <u>they are spoiling everything</u> that is Germany for us”)
		False pretences: legitimisation and supporting ethnic/national/ “racial” separatism by social problematisation of the national/ethnic group	„Sie fliehen angeblich vor <u>dem Krieg</u> und genau <u>diesen spielen sie hier</u> . Anscheinend haben sie Sehnsucht nach Krieg, also haut ab und verteidigt euer Land selbst ihr Penner” (Eng. “Allegedly they are fleeing <u>the war</u> but this is <u>what they are playing here</u> . Apparently they miss the war, so go away and defend your country yourself, you bums“)
		False pretences: legitimisation of nationalistic/xenophobic/racist views by means of an appeal to God’s will or force majeure	„Moslems raus aus unser Land. <u>Gott mit uns</u> ” (Eng. “Muslims out of our country. <u>God with us</u> ”)
		False pretences: (unjustified) criminalisation	„hier in Essen das selbe bild..... <u>eine schneise der verwüstung</u> von eben diesen ‘menschen’ <u>wurde verursacht</u>es ist einfach unglaublichfragt mal was in HAGEN (liegt neben Dortmund) so abgegangen ist..... ABSCHEBUNG ...mir so scheiss EGAL wohin !!” (Eng. “Here in Essen the same picture..... the <u>traces of destruction were caused</u> by these ‘people’ it’s incomprehensible... ask what happened in HAGEN (located close to Dortmund) DEPORTATION...I don’t give a shit where to!!!”)
		Negative labels: somatonyms (reference to dirt)	„Scheiss Moslems weiber <u>ihr stinkt alle</u> , alle Moslems weiber geht euch vergraben” (Eng. “Shit/Fucking Muslim babes <u>you all stink</u> , all Muslim babes go bury yourselves”)
		Negative labels: animalisations	„Dann wird <u>eine Jagd</u> beginnen... Selbst schuld!” (Eng. “Then <u>the hunt</u> will begin... They should blame themselves!”)
		Negative labels: relationyms	Ich hatte den Berricht im Fernsehen gesehen, mit <u>den "Lagern"</u> . Ich fands richtig . :-)” (Eng. “I watched a report on television, about ‘ <u>the camps</u> ’. I believe this to be correct. :-)”)
		Negative labels: criminonyms or criminalisation	Criminalisation: Es wird Zeit dass wir uns endlich wehren gegen dieses Regierungspach und diese muslimische Brut. Wie lange wollen wir uns <u>diesen Terror</u> noch gefallen lassen ???!!!!!!” (Eng. “The time has come for us to finally fight back against this government hoax and this Muslim hatchet job. How much longer will we put up with <u>this terror</u> ??!!!!!!”)

False pretences: criminalisation	„Mamy ich tu w niemczech pełno, tak ich chcieli lewackie idioci, a teraz dupa <u>gwałty, mordy i rozboje</u> . Debile pobudka „nie wolno mieszać RAS Wszyscy von” (Eng. “We have plenty of them here in Germany, just as the leftist idiots wanted them, and now it sucks <u>rapes, murders and robberies</u> . Morons, wake up, don’t mix RACES Everybody out”)
Negative labels: somatonym (reference to the colour of the skin)	„Nie pozwalają są w Polsce gdzie jest chrześcijaństwo jak się nie podoba spierdalać <u>ciapaki</u> ” (Eng. “Don’t let them they are in Poland where Christianity is if you don’t like it, fuck off, you <u>chapatis</u> ¹¹ ”)
Negative labels: somatonyms (reference to dirt)	„A jebac tych <u>brudasow!</u> !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” (Eng. “Fuck those filthy bastards! !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”)
Negative labels: animalisations	„brawo ratownik ! zero tolerancji dla tego <u>byd...a !</u> ” (Eng. “bravo lifeguard ! zero tolerance for this <u>catt...e</u> ” [cattle implied])
Negative labels: relationyms	„Jebac te jebane kurwy brudne <u>ruchaczy kóz</u> ” (Eng. “Fuck these fucking whore dirty <u>goat fuckers</u> ”)
Negative labels: xenonyms	„bardzo dobrze zajebać na miejscu <u>kozojebców z islamu i innych brudasów</u> ” (Eng. “very well let Islamic goat fuckers and <u>other filth</u> be fucked up on the spot”)
Negative labels: anthroponyms	„Pierdol się <u>kozojebco</u> że swoim prawem i allahem we własnym kraju” (Eng. “Fuck you <u>goatfucker</u> with your law and allah in your own country”)
Negative labels: patronizing terms	„ <u>Pastuchy</u> woon do siebie <u>z powrotem</u> <u>pasać kozy</u> jak się nie podoba!” (Eng. “ <u>Shepherds</u> ooout to your own <u>place back to grazing goats</u> if you don’t like it here!”)
Negative labels: reifications	„DLATEGO TRZEBA ZDELEGALIZOWAĆ <u>DZIADOSTWO ZWANE ISLAMEM !</u> ” (Eng. “THAT’S WHY THE <u>CRAP</u> CALLED ISLAM MUST BE OUTLAWED !”)
Tropes: synecdoches	„Niech wypierdalają do siebie <u>w tych workach</u> ” (Eng. “Let them fuck away to their own place <u>in those sacks</u> ”)
Vulgar words	„bardzo dobrze <u>zajebać na miejscu kozojebców z islamu i innych brudasów</u> ” (Eng. “very well <u>fuck</u> these Islamic <u>goatfuckers</u> and other filth right away”)

11 In Polish, ‘ciapaki’ (Eng. chapati) is an offensive reference term for people whose skin colour is light brown (unjustified reference to the colour of the chapati bread).

Table 4

Examples of the discursive practices found in the datasets for the subcorpora PL_R, DE_U, PL_U and PL_ž.

Roma	Polish	Negative labels: somatonyms (reference to dirt)	„A Rumuni to kto <u>brudasy</u> i bo cygany” (Eng. “And Romanians who are they – they are <u>dirty</u> because they are gypsies”)
		Negative labels: animalisations	„Oni wszedzie się tak zachowują..... Wynoszą się ponad Polaków... Sa butni arogancy i wyniosli... nie orza nie sieją tylko zbierają.. To podobne <u>robactwo</u> do żydów..” (Eng. “They behave like this everywhere..... They elevate themselves above the Polish people... They are boastful arrogant and haughty.... They do not sow but reap... They are <u>vermin</u> similar to Jews...”)
Ukrainian	German	Negative labels: reifications	„Wir brauchen niemanden <u>aus den Löchern!</u> Abhauen!” (Eng. “We don't need anyone <u>from the holes!</u> Get out!”)
Ukrainian	Polish	Negative labels: animalisations	„ <u>Zwierzęce</u> ścierwa, pełno tego wyjechało na ziemie odzyskane. Dlatego tak ciężko żyje się w zachodniej Polsce” (Eng. “ <u>Animal</u> scum, many of them left for the regained territories. That's why it's so difficult to live in western Poland „ <u>Psy</u> ukraińskie” (Eng. “Ukrainian <u>dogs</u> ”)
		Negative labels: militarionyms	„Ładna pralnia mózgu u <u>banderowców</u> . Ruskie będą musieli uruchomić nową linię na Syberię” (Eng. “Nice brainwashing at the <u>banders</u> '. The Russkies will have to run a new line to Siberia”) „Głupota jakas....Niech <u>bandery</u> robią wypad z naszego kraju i tyle. Niech sobie radzą sami albo niech ich Putin bierze....z nimi wieczne problemy. Osobiście mnie zaczyna wkurzać że w koło słyszę ich język w moim kraju!” (Eng. “Utmost stupidity....Let the <u>banders</u> make their way out of our country and that's it. Let them manage on their own or let Putin take them.... eternal problems with them. Personally it's starting to piss me off that I can hear their language all over the place in my country!!!”)
		Negative labels: xenonyms	„Won z Polski... <u>wrogow</u> wyrzucac...!!!” (Eng. “Get out of Poland....the <u>enemies</u> get kicked out...!!!”)
		Negative labels: reifications	„Won z Polski banderowskie <u>znajdy</u> ” (Eng. “Get out of Poland, you Bandera-bashing <u>scoundrels</u> [<u>finding</u>]”)
		Vulgar words	„ <u>Wyjebac</u> banderowcow” (Eng. “ <u>Fuck off</u> Get rid of the banders”)
Jewish	Polish	False pretences: legitimisation of ethnic/national/ racist views by means of an appeal to God's will or force majeure	„Najlepiej na Madagaskar. <u>Panie</u> od głodu moru wojny i pasożydów <u>uchroń nas</u> ” (Eng. “Preferably to Madagascar. <u>Lord, save us from</u> hunger, plague, war and parasites”)
		Negative labels: reifications	„Pejsate <u>lachy</u> ale w dupie z nimi te psy i te psy niech sie tepia <u>lajzy</u> ” (Eng. “Whipsy <u>scumbags</u> but don't give a shit about them and those dogs; let the <u>scumbags</u> blunder”)

Negative labels: eponyms	„Najlepiej na Madagaskar. Panie od głodu moru wojny i <u>paszyrdów</u> uchroni nas” (Eng. “Preferably to Madagascar. Lord, save us from hunger, plague, war and <u>benefit parasites</u> ”)
Expletives: vulgar words	„Dla tego <u>jebac</u> Żydów” (Eng. “For that <u>fuck</u> Jews”) „ <u>Jebać</u> te żydowskie zakłamanie <u>kurwy</u>” (Eng. “ <u>Fuck</u> those Jewish hypocritical <u>whores</u>”)
Tropes: synecdoches	„I znowu <u>Kudłacze</u> . Polskę <u>Kudłaczom</u> należy obrzydzić” (Eng. “And here are the <u>Shaggys</u> again. We need to disgust the <u>Shaggys</u> with Poland”)

Also, collocational analysis indicates negative sentiment to the minorities which are the focus of our study. The following pie chart shows the collocational network for the lemma ‘muzułmanin’ (Eng. Muslim) in the reference corpus Polish Web 2019, as retrieved from Sketch Engine (based on LogDice scores¹²). It shows that the lemma ‘muzułmanin’ is an object of the verb lemmas ‘mordować’ (Eng. to murder), ‘zaatakować’ (Eng. to attack) and ‘podpalić’ (Eng. to set on fire) (see words circled in red in Figure 1).

¹² Collocations are displayed with relevant co-textual lexemes. These word patterns are designated by means of the common statistical measures of collocability strength, such as LogDice association measure. For more information on logDice, see: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/wp-content/uploads/ske-statistics.pdf> (access 09/03/2023) and Rychlý (2008).

scale of typological overlap, albeit not a quantitative one. As Figure 3 and 4 indicate, similar types of discursive practices were identified but their percentage share in the subcorpora is rarely of the same size.

Figure 3

Hateful discursive practices in posts about the Muslim minority in the Polish subcorpus (PL_M) with their percentage share.

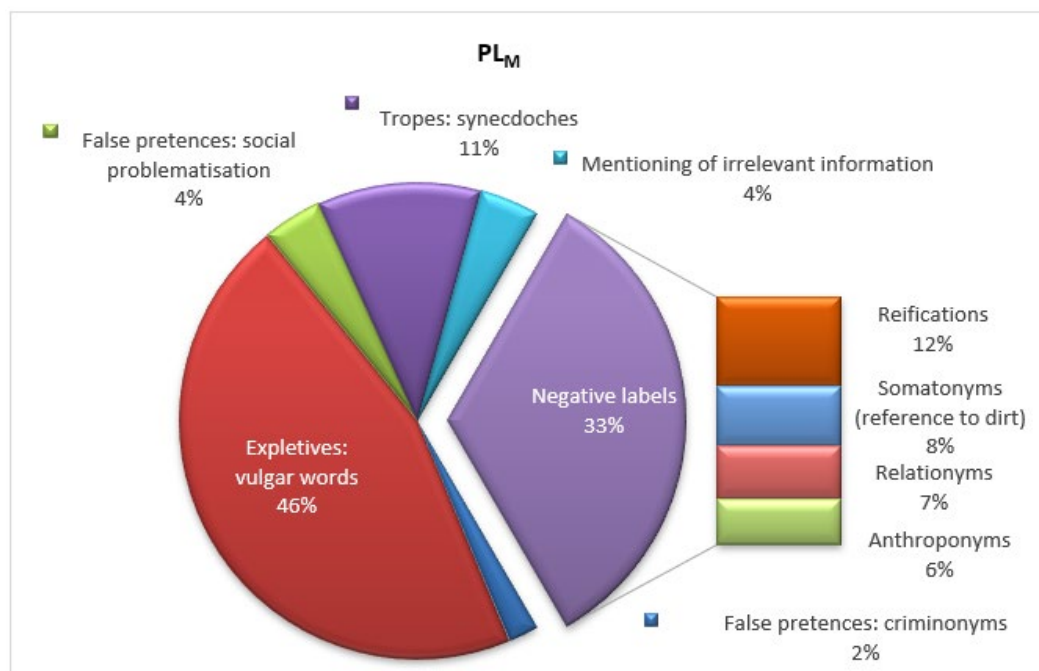
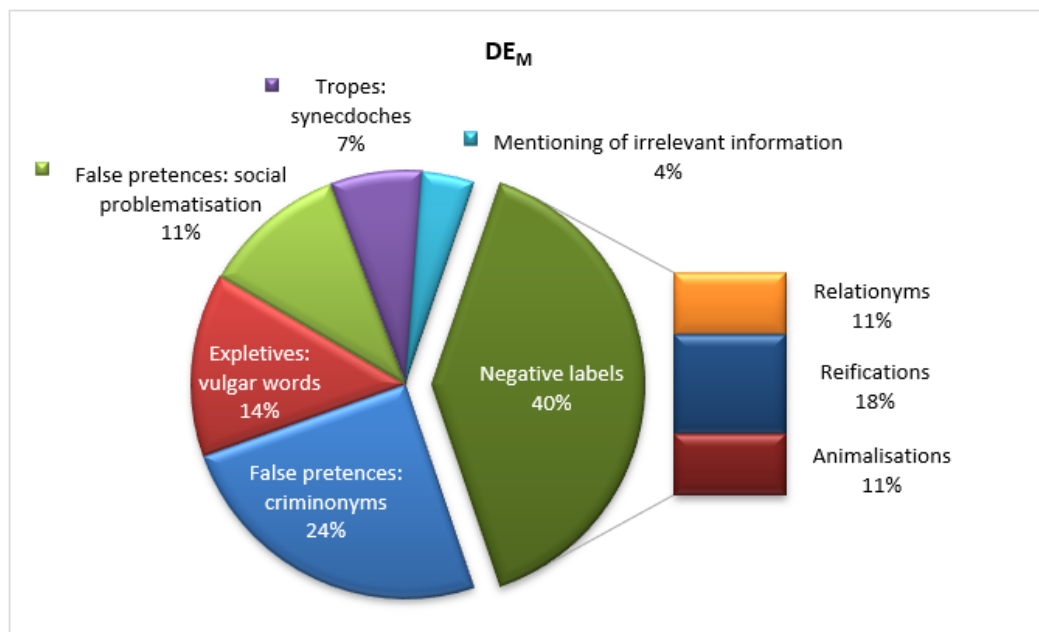


Figure 4

Hateful discursive practices in posts about Muslim minority in the German subcorpus (DE_M) with their percentage share.



The lack of commonality between hateful posts targeting Ukrainians in the Polish and German subcorpora is visualized in Figure 5 and Figure 6. While expletives (8 = 50%) and different types of negative labels, especially militarionyms (5 = 31%), dominate in the Polish discourse (see Figure 5), the practices found in the German dataset are mostly synecdoches (1) and reifications (1) (see Figure 6).

Figure 5

Hateful discursive practices in posts about the Ukrainian minority in the Polish subcorpus (PL_U) with their percentage share.

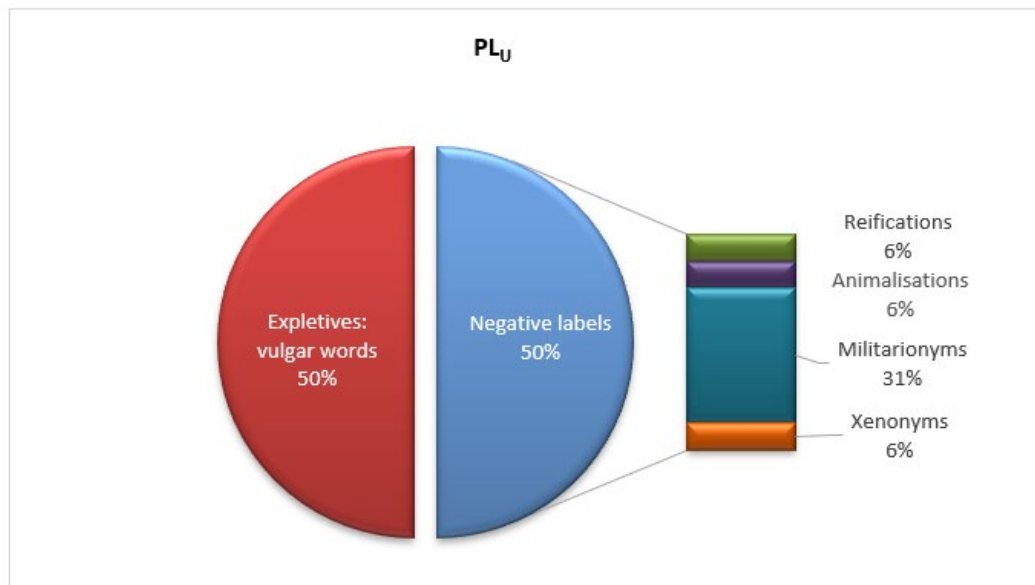
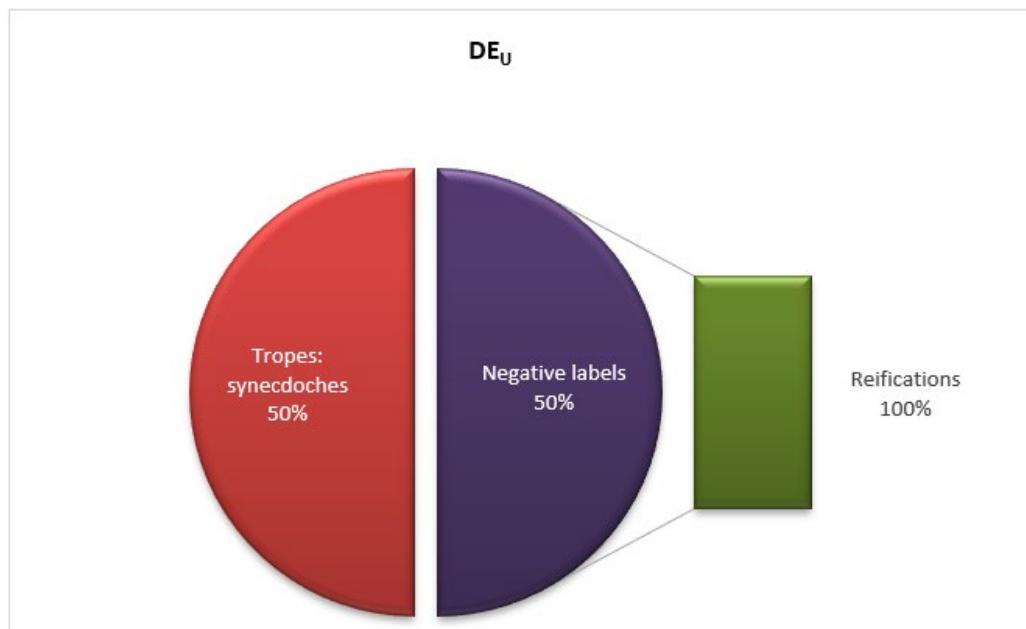


Figure 6

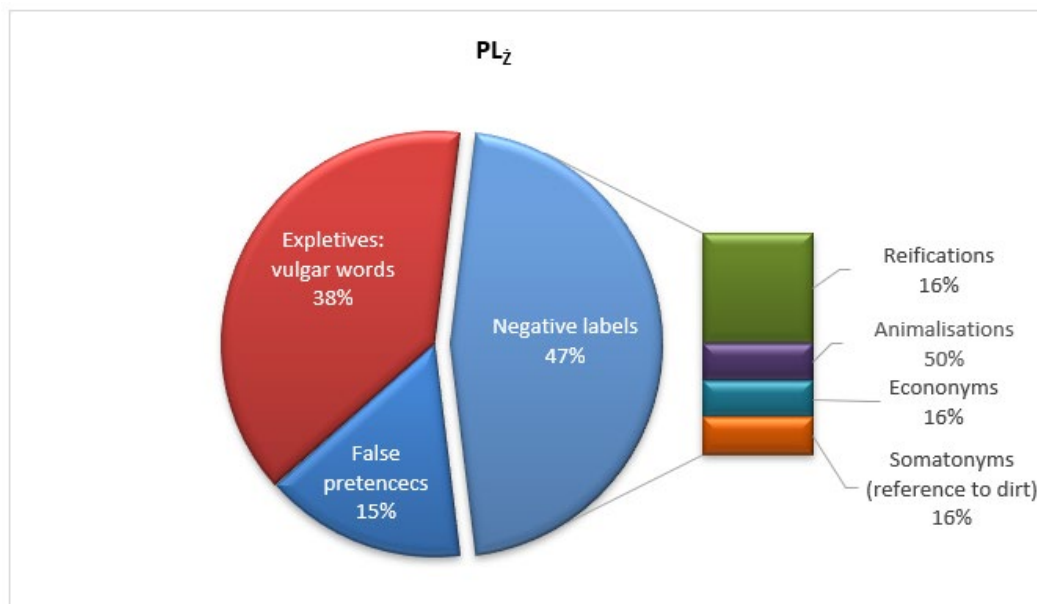
Hateful discursive practices in posts about the Ukrainian minority in the German subcorpus (DE_U) with their percentage share.



There is hardly any overlap when it comes to the hateful discourse targeting Jews in Polish and German. The analysed Polish dataset includes a substantial share of animalisations and expletives (see Figure 7), while no discursive practices were found in DE_J. Finally, for the subcorpus PL_R, there was only one discursive practice identified (negative labels: false originonyms) and for the subcorpus DE_R none.

Figure 7

Hateful discursive practices in posts about the Jewish minority in the Polish subcorpus (PL_Z) with their percentage share.



To sum up, quantitatively, there is a slight overlap in discursive practices, but only with regard to the Muslim minority. For the other minorities investigated, we did not find common patterns in the German and Polish datasets. There exists a variety of discursive practices that are the same in both languages, as the qualitative findings indicate, but they are used to a different extent and are applied to different target groups.

8 Discussion of the findings and verification of the hypothesis

The German and Polish subcorpora display a considerable share of similarity only when it comes to the Muslim minority. In this sense, our hypothesis needs to be rejected. In other words, with reference to the discursive practices found in the data subsets, the results are only slightly comparable. In detail, participants in the Polish hateful discourse use negative labels for the Muslim minority, including most often (RQ_B) reifications, somatonyms (especially to establish links between being a Muslim and “dirt”) and relationyms (establishing a link between Muslims and illicit sexual habits). Other tropes are also frequent, including metonymies. In the German hateful discourse, negative labels are as frequent as false pretences. This stands in contrast to our research findings about the Polish dataset. In the PL_M subcorpus, the Muslim minority is

usually criminalised, i.e. the posters usually suggest a link between violent actions and the Muslim minority. All of these practices can lead to provoking negative associations and even prejudices among those who read the posts under scrutiny. For those who are already prejudiced, it may lead to the reinforcement of their negative attitudes and behaviour.

In explicit HS posted on social media, we have observed a considerable share of expletives. Interestingly, authors of hateful comments in Polish use vulgar words more frequently than posters in German. In the PL_M subcorpus, vulgar words appeared as many as 45 times (46% as relative frequency for a common base), whereas in the DE_M subcorpus only four (14%) times.

Moreover, it was confirmed that those posts which were classified as incorporating a call for violent or illegal actions are often accompanied by the proximation of potential threats and the legitimisation of activities aimed at the elimination of these threats. Such posts usually call for the exclusion of particular minority groups. This discursive practice was noticeable both in German and Polish:

- “We have plenty of them here in Germany, that’s how the leftist idiots wanted them, and now it sucks rapes, murders and robberies. Morons wake up do not mix RACES All out”
- “and it goes on and on with our ‘muslim friends’: not a day goes by without another atrocious act following almost seamlessly. when will we finally get a political alternative, no: not the AfD, that helps us to finally deal differently with this pack.”

Finally, militarionyms were found only in the comments written in Polish, in the subcorpus concerning the Ukrainian minority.

All in all, the hypothesis put forward in the introduction cannot be confirmed due to the fact that in German, we can observe a significant criminalisation of the Muslim minority by means of false pretences, i.e. suggesting a link between violent actions and the Muslim minority. In the Polish language, on the other hand, it is mainly negative labels and expletives that appear. Therefore, it cannot be declared that categories of discursive practices found in hateful posts targeting the same minority overlap in the two languages. In other words, the subcorpora in both languages referring to the same minority group feature different categories of discursive practices. Quantitatively and qualitatively, and taking into account the criterion of representativeness, there is a slight overlap in discursive practices, only with regard to the Muslim minority. For the other minorities investigated, we did not find common patterns in the German and Polish datasets.

9 Applications and limitations of the study; recommendations for further research

The presented work offers empirical and applicative conclusions, together with a proactive value with regard to the prevention of social unrest and radicalisation. In empirical terms, it combines qualitative and quantitative research methods and relies on relatively large datasets which were purposefully selected. Therefore, it enables insight into the use of HS in Internet communication, filling to some extent a gap in the existing body of research, which lacks, among other things, consistency regarding the assumptions qualifying a given message as hateful in the pragmatic sense. Furthermore, our research on HS in German and Polish contributes to the existing body of comparative research, which is still limited. To the best of our knowledge, our analysis is the first which in a consistent manner uses corpora to compare national/ethnic slurs in Polish and German. Furthermore, it enabled drawing conclusions about

tendencies in discursive practices characteristic of hateful discourse targeting the minorities in focus.

In applicative terms, some of our conclusions concerning discursive practices provide useful evidence for linguists delving into discourse use in forensic and judicial procedures (e.g. the investigation and prosecution of crimes involving HS). The findings may also contribute to a better understanding of hateful discourse in Internet communication, including HS itself, so as to create better instruments to counteract it, for example in the area of machine learning and artificial intelligence for Internet monitoring. Our research findings may also have implications for HS regulation and legislature in general, including ‘Community Standards’ drafted for social networking sites such as Facebook. Additionally, some of our conclusions can assist specialists in text-based algorithms for HS detection and mapping¹³. The paper itself has already served as a starting point for further research in a pilot study funded by the British Academy in February 2022, a grant application in Horizon Europe, both concentrating on AI-supported identification of victimhood narratives in extremist discourses and activities. The same analysis paradigm was applied in a grant “Reconstructing online discourse about Ukrainians in Polish before and after Russia’s invasion in Ukraine. A contrastive analysis from the perspective of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA)” funded by the Centre for Migration Studies in Poznań (Jaszczyk-Grzyb, 2023).

The limitations of the methodology used in the present study are primarily related to the multimodal nature of the texts studied. Some comments contain graphic elements, such as emoticons, images or gifs, added within a given comment, which constitute semiotic and multimodal carriers of meaning. These graphic elements should be analysed by means of other methodologies. There is already a very promising body of research on Internet memes (see e.g. Dynel, 2021), and on Internet hateful memes in particular e.g. Kirk et al. (2021). Furthermore, it would be very insightful to conduct a similar study on data compiled from other popular social networks, such as Twitter, Reddit or YouTube. Recent research on HS also reveals new thematic fields. For example, the spread of COVID-19 has sparked hate on social media targeted towards Asian communities (see, among others, Alshalan, et al., 2020; Lu & Sheng, 2020; Vishwamitra, et al., 2020; Al-Jarf, 2021; He et al., 2021 and Tahmasbi et al., 2021) or the anti-vaxxer community.

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¹³ For an illustrative example of an AI/machine learning model detecting counterspeech on YouTube, readers may consult Mathew et al. (2019, pp. 375–378).

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