

## **Hate Speech in Online Polylogues (using examples of LGBT issues in Georgian computer-mediated discourse)**

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**Abstract**

*This research is the first attempt in Georgia to analyse hate speech emerging in Computer-Meditated Communication. Particular attention is paid to the polylogal, asynchronous remarks made by members of the public reacting to online newspaper articles or press releases concerning the LGPT pride event planned for 18 - 23 June 2019, in Tbilisi, Georgia.*

*The methodology is based on combining methods utilized in CDA and Genre Approach to (im)politeness which is in accord with the general approach to CMDA .*

*At the first stage of the analysis, the examples of hate-speech acts were analysed according to the following criteria: identification of linguistic means and strategies employed while expressing impoliteness and specificity of identity construction (self-asserted versus others - asserted, positive versus negative, roles of participants and strategies of conflict generation or management). Next, linguistic peculiarities of hate speech (for instance, linguistic triggers [threats, insults, sarcasm incitements], wordplay, taboo, swear and derogatory words, metaphors, allusions and similes) were identified and analysed.*

*Quantitative methodology was employed while stating the number of proponents and opponents of the event as well as statistical data referring to the number of linguistic and politeness strategies employed while expressing an opinion.*

*This research shows particular tendencies of how impoliteness can be realised and how social identities can be construed using the example of hate discourse concerning LGBT pride in Georgia. However, to fully explore the genre properties of hate discourse in Georgia further research based on examples of hate-discourse strategies applied when discussing ethnic minorities and gender roles, is needed.*

## Introduction

Hate speech is broadly defined as 'public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation' (*Cambridge University Press*, 1995). More specifically, individuals or groups are generally insulted by authors of hate speech based on race, religion, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1999).

Hate speech may lead to negative consequences. Recently published research based on the materials of the German Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) Party webpage has uncovered parallels between hate-fuelled Facebook posts and an increase in racially motivated attacks on refugees in Germany (Leng, 2018). Also, Fulper et al. (2014) described the correlation between the number of rapes and that of misogynistic tweets in the USA, which suggests that social media can be used as a social sensor of violence.

These circumstances have led authorities in the EU to contemplate the reasons, aims and sequences of hate speech and address the possible solutions by taking some tentative steps. In May 2016, the EU initiated a 'code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online', signed by Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Also, the Euro Commission allotted certain funds for civil society projects aimed at countering violent and dehumanising speech on the internet (Leng, 2018).

Realising the significance of hate-speech consequences, Georgia encourages projects for the exploration and solution of the potential problems connected with hate-speech discourse. For instance, the project 'Fighting Discrimination, Hate Crime and Hate Speech in Georgia' aims to provide expertise, build competencies and advocate and raise awareness amongst policy makers, legal professionals, law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations to enable them to fully align with national legislation and bylaws on hate crimes and relevant monitoring mechanisms that would meet the Council of Europe's standards and ensure their effective implementation (Fighting Discrimination, Hate Crime and Hate Speech in Georgia, n.d.). Such actions turn out to be particularly significant as 'the population of Georgia is not well-aware of the rights of the minority groups, for example, of LGBT groups' (Hate Crime, Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgia, 2018). The data also suggest that Georgians are generally opposed to politicians and the media disseminating hate speech. However, opinions are more divided over whether there should be criminal penalties for hate crime or hate speech for regular citizens (Fight Against Discrimination, 2018).

Overall, Georgia realises the importance of the consequences following the utilisation of hate discourse in society, which leads to the necessity of active measures being taken to reduce its effects. On the other hand, while working on hate speech, the issue of restricting freedom of expression should also be taken into consideration.

Against this background, this research is the first attempt to analyse hate discourse emerging in computer-mediated communication (CMC) in Georgian reality. Particular attention is paid to the polylogal, asynchronous remarks made by members of the public as a reaction to online press releases and videos concerning LGBT Pride, an event that had been planned for 18–23 June 2019 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Despite some recent progressive changes, Georgian society still remains largely male-dominated with prejudiced gender roles and responsibilities. LGBT people are considered to be some of the most discriminated-against groups in Georgia. For instance, in 2018, a poll by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) revealed that only 23% of the Georgian population believed that the protection of LGBT rights was important, while 44% thought the protection of LGBT rights was unimportant and 26% had a neutral attitude (Reiter, 2019).

The Orthodox Christian Church remains powerful in Georgia and, in many cases, determines the public attitude towards certain issues. This is held true concerning the events connected both to LGBT Pride and the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) celebration

activities when, on 17 May 2013, a handful of LGBT activists were physically assaulted by a large group of anti-LGBT protesters and representatives of clergy. In subsequent years, due to physical threats from ultra-nationalist groups in Georgia, IDAHO Day was either not marked at all or celebrated by brief and low-key manifestations. Although these events were performed under the instruction and watch of the police, as claimed by the press, neither free access nor movement of LGBT people were secured.

Protesting discrimination and violation of their rights, the LGBT community initially planned the Pride March for 22nd June 2019. However, this event was postponed due to anti-Russian political protests in the capital. Later, after threats against LGBT marchers, it was decided to cancel the parade altogether. However, as mentioned by one of the LGBT leaders on Twitter, 'We were not allowed to go out today for the Pride March, so we flew the rainbow flag over homophobic protest in Tbilisi' (Small LGBT Pride rally held in Tbilisi, 2019).

## **Theorising Hate-Speech Acts, Computer Meditated Communication Discourse, Impoliteness and Identity Theory**

Hate discourse has been studied from several perspectives: for example, Justo et al. (2014) and Nobata et al. (2016) explore it from the angle of sarcasm and connect the process of inference of irony with world knowledge. Frenda et al. (2018) combine emotional modes and stylistic information with specific lexicons involving aspects of misogyny online. Focussing on short texts such as tweets, posts or comments, and exploring informal language, Frenda (2018) approaches hate speech through the figurative dimensions of abusive language in the multilingual context based on computer technologies.

Hate discourse has been included as one of the possible issues to investigate in the inventory of impoliteness research in computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA). More specifically, Kienpointner focusses on social, cultural and political reasons for the dramatic increase in hate-speech acts in online interactions (Kienpointner, 2018). Bou-Franch & Blitvich. (2014) concentrate on conflict management in massive polylogues posted on YouTube, whereas Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011) explore online polylogues and impoliteness using the example of the response posts concerning the Obama Reggaeton YouTube video. Emotional talk in online communication is also discussed by Zummo (2018).

CMDA is frequently cited as a prime example of social constructivism in action and, at its core, is the analysis of online verbal behaviour grounded in empirical and textual observations and suggests a methodological toolkit for the interpretation of empirical data (Herring, 2010).

New media platforms, including online polylogues, are considered to be the area where new dimensions in communication, namely language and communicative rules, are renegotiated and emerging (Zummo, 2018). Some factors through which this process may be expressed are an asynchronous character and new rules of politeness applied in certain communities of practice (Stommel & Lamerichs, 2014). It is also rightly suggested that online communication combines the methods and ways of both synchronous and asynchronous discourse, specifically those of context-dependent interactions based on oral, synchronous communication and properties of written discourse (planning, editing, asynchronicity, sequencing, disruptive adjacency, etc.) (Herring, 2013).

In Georgia, impoliteness was explored, using the example of (im)politeness strategies employed by female political leaders in the pre-election period (Rusieshvili-Cartledge, 2017; Rusieshvili-Cartledge & Totibadze, 2018). The relationship between cultural norms and (im)politeness strategies employed by political leaders was also investigated (Rusieshvili & Dolidze, 2015). However, linguistic manifestations of hate-speech acts occurring in hate discourse have not yet been studied in Georgian reality. Therefore, this research is innovative in that it aims at exploring hate speech in CMDA within the theoretical framework of the following theories: theory of (im)politeness, social identity construction and CMDA. The main research questions can be formulated as follows: 1) What linguistic means and strategies are

utilised by Georgian users when construing hate speech acts online? 2) How do participants of such acts construe their identities? 3) Can aggressiveness and rudeness be considered a constituent of the genre of polylogal computer-mediated communication?

As is known, in the social-constructivist approach (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; De Fina, 2010, etc.), the identity of a speaker is considered to be a socially constructed product based on linguistic and semiotic means and born in a certain domain of discursive work (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Moreover, the social identity of a participant in a communicative act is referred to as 'the social positioning of the self and other' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). Bucholtz also maintains that negative identity is expressed through 'linguistic indexes that individuals employ to distance themselves from a rejected identity' (1999, p. 211). Also, negative-identity practices clearly define what their users oppose 'and hence emphasise identity as an intergroup phenomenon' (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 211).

On the other hand, impoliteness as a negative-identity practice is frequently used by some discourse participants to position themselves with respect to others, in most cases their peers (Rusieshvili & Totbadze, 2018). As claimed by Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 'impoliteness may ensue when the identities and positioning that speakers are trying to construct are not verified by their interlocutors' (2010, p. 543). Moreover, relational work is envisaged as part of identity construction, and face<sup>1</sup> is embedded in identity. This leads to the building of the identities of the participants (and by the participants) of the communicative act through linguistic means depending on the public and social relationships they maintain with each other. Specifically, while constructing identities, by employing certain linguistic and paralinguistic means, participants of the communicative act resist or verify each other's claimed identities within particular contexts (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

While defining the process of exercising power, Bousfield also refers to 'in-group' power and identity when discussing the potential of linguistic impoliteness as (an attempt) 'to exercise power over one's interlocutors whilst simultaneously ensuring that one's interlocutors are (overtly) offended in the process' (2008, p. 141).

In this respect, Anton and Peterson (2003) distinguish between two types of subject positions: (i) a self-asserted position, which individuals claim for themselves, and (ii) an other-asserted position, which is ascribed to them by other participants of the act.

The methodology employed throughout the article is based on the combination of the methods employed in CDA, identity construction and theory of (im)politeness, which is in accord with the general genre approach to CMDA: 1) recurrent patterns are evident in discourse, 2) discourse involves speaker choices that include linguistic, cognitive and social components and 3) 'discourse may be shaped by the technological features of the computer-mediated communication systems' (Herring, 2004, p. 343).

## Methods

The data for this article consist of polylogues, asynchronous posts containing hate speech acts taken from the discourse concerning LGBT Pride, which was planned to be held in Tbilisi (18–23 June 2019): 180 comments (approximately 5,435 words analysed in this research were posted as responses to four videos about LGBT Pride on YouTube) and press releases (13 items) concerning the issue published by several agencies or newspapers (for instance, by Radiotavisupleba, Tabula, Itv.ge/news, etc.). The time lag between the messages varied from several minutes to several days. The online discussion concerning the videos and press releases was conducted by participants of the communicative acts in a regime of

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of 'face' in the study of linguistic interaction derives from the work of Goffman (1967), who considered that face was connected to the 'positive social value' that participants of the communicative act aspire to maintain in social interactions. (Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 5-46).

asynchronous, polylogous posts. The responses either confirmed and further developed the original approach to the issue or they contradicted or refuted it<sup>2</sup>.

More specifically, the four videos (and their responses) studied in this research were as follows: one video depicted the demonstration of the LGBT community and the response by the counter-action organised by a local businessman and 'local anti-LGBT firebrand'. (<https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3751670>); the second video depicted an attitude of young people to the LGBT community (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLhqt2jyb6w>).

The remaining two videos were recorded versions of the meetings of the businessman and the ultra-national organisation members against LGBT Pride.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg6zptJI9g> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YUXfYaTtt8>)

The other set of material included 13 online press releases about LGBT Pride and the responses evoked by them<sup>3</sup>. More specifically, five articles were taken from Radiotavisupleba, one from the English version of Radiotavisupleba (Radio Liberty), two articles from Tabula, two from 1tv.ge/news, one from worldnews, one from pressa.ge and one from Liberali.

At the first stage of the analysis, employing qualitative content analysis, the main body of comments was grouped according to the semantically connected turns initiated by the participants and the number of participants in each thread of response. At this stage, micro-themes that specified the reasons why a particular person or group was for or against Pride were singled out. Next, the examples of hate-speech acts were analysed according to the following criteria: identification of linguistic means and strategies employed while expressing impoliteness and specificity of identity construction (self-asserted versus others-asserted, positive versus negative, roles of the participants and strategies of conflict generation or management). After this, at the second stage of the research, linguistic peculiarities of hate speech (for instance, linguistic triggers (threats, insults, sarcasm incitements), wordplay, taboo words, swear and derogatory words, metaphors, allusions and similes) were identified and analysed.

Comments on the videos and press releases were first grouped based on the positivity/negativity of attitude towards LGBT Pride, and sequences were studied according to their semantic and functional relatedness. In this research, 180 comments making up the body of the data evoked by four videos and 12 press releases fell into 10 threads of discussion with 75 participants overall.

Content analysis of each thread revealed the attitude of the post's author towards the event. The linguistic means through which politeness strategies were employed while expressing an opinion as well as while construing the identities of the participants of the threads were identified and studied qualitatively. The quantitative method was utilised while stating the number of proponents and opponents of the event as well as the statistical data referring to the number of linguistic and politeness strategies employed while expressing the opinion.

## Results and Discussion

All 13 press releases described the above-discussed events. Semantically, turns were divided into the following groups: a) The author of the post expressed a negative attitude towards the LGBT event discussed by the video or press release or the initiator of the turn; b) The author of the post expressed a positive attitude towards the LGTB event described by the video or press release and c) The author of the post revealed a conciliatory, centrist or neutral approach to the issue. Seven semantic threads initiated various reasons for positive or

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<sup>2</sup> The authors of the article do not identify themselves with the opinions discussed; rather, they describe the events within the frames of the indicated methodology.

<sup>3</sup> The webpages were accessed in June–August 2019.

negative evaluations of the event. Three semantic threads against the event included the following reasons: 1) The LGBT community is against the Georgian mentality; 2) The LGBT community is against Orthodox Christian dogma and 3) The LGBT community is lecherous and will corrupt the younger generation.

Two semantic threads that opted for holding the events included the following reasons: a) LGBT people are equal members of our society and b) Christian morality implies love, forgiveness and tolerance.

Two semantic threads that can be labelled 'centrist' believed that a) LGBT people are not right in what they are doing, but they should not be treated badly or bullied; b) The LGBT community should be treated properly because this is needed for the development of democracy in Georgia and c) LGBT people are not physically or psychologically healthy and 'they cannot help living the way they do'.

This classification based on the overall content and attitude to Pride echoes the results of one of the surveys conducted by students of a small private university after the events of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013.<sup>4</sup> This survey revealed three distinct approaches to LGBT people in Georgia: a) LGBT people are equal members of society; b) LGBT people are dangerous and go against society and c) LGBT people are equal, but homosexuality is a disease (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xDvCQvrph0>).

The announcement of the intention to hold LGBT Pride was followed by acute protests and counter-demonstrations organised by a local businessman and ultra-national organisation members. In the speeches delivered at these events, LGBT community members were presented as enemies to the Georgian mentality, history and traditional values and posed threats to the development and purity of relationships in Georgian society.

### Extracts from Speeches Against the LGBT Community Delivered at an Anti-LGBT Pride Event Organised in June 2019

**Extract 1** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq6zptlJI9q>)

**We** stand here with bare hands to go against the Pride of lewdness [and] lechery and, if they still try, let them blame themselves for the consequences.

**We** are sons and daughters of Kartlis Deda<sup>5</sup>! **We** are civilised people and love guests. **We** are hospitable, but we are against those stupid ambassadors who make the life of our church people hard! **We** will fasten the hands of the ambassadors and take them back to their embassies, without hurting **them**, without even a hair falling down from their head.

This extract reveals the open contradiction against the LGBT community expressed in a number of ways. First, the binary opposition **Us Versus Them** emerges in the very first line. The speaker constructs the shared social identity together with the participants of the manifestation by using the inclusive 'we' extensively. This strategy also helps him to construe negative identity and makes it obvious that people behind the speaker, identifying themselves

<sup>4</sup> An anti-homophobic rally was held in Tbilisi on May 17, 2013, the International Day Against Homophobia. The LGBT activists holding the rally were met by local protesters opposing homosexuality, who broke through a police cordon and violently pursued, beat and threw stones at them. 2013 Tbilisi anti-homophobia rally protests (n.d) retrieved December 16, 2020 from Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013\\_Tbilisi\\_anti-homophobia\\_rally\\_protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Tbilisi_anti-homophobia_rally_protests)

<sup>5</sup> Kartlis Deda (Mother of Georgia) is a statue erected in 1958, which was the year Tbilisi celebrated its 1500th anniversary. Prominent Georgian sculptor Elguja Amashukeli designed the twenty-metre aluminium figure of a woman in Georgian national dress. She symbolises the Georgian national character: in her left hand she holds a bowl of wine to greet those who come as friends, and in her right hand is a sword for those who come as enemies. Kartlis Deda (n.d) retrieved December 15, 2020 from Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kartlis\\_Deda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kartlis_Deda)

with his point of view, constitute an in-group and, by doing so, verify the claims of the speaker. Also, the speaker implies that his words are in line with and follow the traditional lifestyle accepted by Georgian society. The phrase 'with bare hands' emphasises a peaceful character of the anti-LGBT demonstration. The address of the speaker to the 'sons and daughters of Kartlis Deda (Mother of Georgia)' is also effective as Kartlis Deda is an extremely popular symbol of traditional values Georgians are proud of (hospitability, Christianity). Also, in certain groups of the population, this narrative may revive associations with Soviet times, when 'all was nice and quiet'.

On the other hand, LGBT people are characterised by negatively coloured lexical items (lewdness, lechery). Interestingly, although in the beginning of the extract the speaker emphasises the peacefulness of the demonstration, later he openly goes against the 'stupid' ambassadors who, as claimed by him, side with LGBT people. This open contradiction against foreign diplomats was later used by the political opposition to accuse the speaker and people associated with him as a 'Russian project'.

However, having said this, the speaker is aware of the performative character of his speech, and to avoid detrimental effects against the diplomats, he adds that the ambassadors will not be bullied or physically assaulted but 'taken back to their embassies' without 'a single hair falling from their heads'. Impoliteness strategies in this extract are seen through the usage of derogatory words which by all means attack the opponents' positive face and add to the general effect of the demonising them.

Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2010) considers face as either individual or social, dynamically negotiated between individuals or groups in interaction. The rich linguistic arsenal employed by the speaker makes it possible to successfully construct the opposing identities of the two sides through rejecting the identities of the opposing group, demonising them while at the same time creating specific social groups with their audience. (Im)politeness in this case promotes the sense of belonging to the participants of this in-group.

**Extract 2** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg6zptJJ19q>)

What would have happened if Marie Magdalena had not repented her sins? Would Jesus have thrown her out of the Cathedral or not? There is no connection whatsoever between this hell happening now and being generally kind. **We** are not oppressors. On the contrary, **we** are being oppressed and bullied. It is **them** who bully us. This epoch, this era of our contradiction with the outer forces, should end. **We** do not want to be opponents of the West, America. I love America, I was educated there, but I don't like the Europe and the USA which impose on **us** what **we** are against! **We** are accused of being agents of the Kremlin. I have not heard of a more cynical accusation than this!

**Extract 3** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg6zptJJ19q>)

**We** see a great resistance in the Orthodox community because there are often cases where LGBT groups openly oppress the majority on all front lines. There are open attacks against Orthodoxy and the Church and the Patriarch by these groups.

These extracts also reveal to what extent cultural and religious stereotypes are used when putting the minds of the speaker's listeners against Pride. Firstly, the repetitive strategy based on the binary opposition **Us Versus Them** is frequently used. Further, it is made more impressive by the speech act of accusation embedded in it. Linguistically, this is expressed through syntactic and stylistic means: repetitions and contrasts expressed by the opposition of our values versus certain European and American values. A dangerous anti-Western tendency emerges again in the face of accusing both LGBT people and the countries they are from. The speaker is obviously trying to make a negative impact on the collective mind of the listeners. Therefore, our experience agrees with Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011, p. 2581) in that,



in this context, face threats are not addressed directly to the participants themselves but to the group/s in relation to which the participants' social identities are constructed.

**Extract 4** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg6zptJJ19g>)

**We** will not allow anybody to deploy a cordon! It does not matter where **you** might be hiding...in the theatre, in the square or in the forest, **we** will find **you** everywhere. **We** will go through all the cordons and sweep you away! How will **we** do this? **We** will make a decision tomorrow! When the State refuses to carry out their functions, the people who do not want to be slaves take up the responsibility for the order in their hands!<sup>6</sup>

In this extract, based on the traditional repetitive opposition **Us Versus Them**, the speaker directly appeals for physical resistance against the opponents. Stylistic repetitions add to the effect of the general threat that the extract expresses. The phrase 'sweep away' creates an effect of finality and the severity of punishment. The opposition **Us Versus Them** which, in extracts 1–2, implied the anti-LGBT community versus the LGBT community, is modified here into **Anti-LGBT Community Versus the State**. Specifically, actions against the State are presented as lawful and just behaviours aimed at 'taking responsibility' in the hands of people who have been disregarded and who 'do not want to be slaves'.

Extract 5 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg6zptJJ19g>)

**We** appeal to you, people, come and stand beside us. No one is forbidden to come, but there is a job only **for men** here. So, I ask the ladies and kids to stay home. I call on men, Georgians, Azeris, Ossetians, Abkhazians, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Kurds, Yazidis – all of us living together in our homeland. Brothers and sisters, this is our homeland. It is based on respect for our and your cultures. [LGBT community members] are trying to break this foundation. Let's not let this happen.

Besides presenting LGBT people again as the enemies of traditional values accepted and practised in multiethnic and multicultural Georgia, this extract is projected on another problematic stereotype in Georgia – the gender stereotype and, along with this, identifying anti-LGBT people with the traditional, caring male psychology. On the other hand, this appeal, which aims at physical oppression, may have an alarming effect on the target group.

## Online Polylogues Posted as Responses to the Video Uploaded by the LGBT Community

The video 'Hear Our Voices' was uploaded onto YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9h8PUtIFbo>) and contains the appeal of LGBT people to the citizens of Georgia to understand how the members of the community felt about their situation and to give them equal chances in society.

The responses to this video, from the semantic point of view, can be divided into three groups: 1) Positive, 2) Negative and 3) Centrist.

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<sup>6</sup> The key terms have been bolded for emphasis

**Extract 1** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9h8PUtIFbo>)<sup>7</sup>

Mankind must develop. **We** hope and aspire for [a] better future and spiritual peace. Hatred, cruelty, oppression, judgement, humiliation, physical attacks and other aggressive or emotional expressions of the state of mind are not the right way to achieve this. It would be better if **you** all started reasoning, looking into your hearts and asking yourself: do you treat others as you want to be treated yourself? Nature, God, the universe, the future, all is based on love. Love is not the law written by a human being and there is no rule about how to or express it. Open your hearts and minds. The future is **ours** and do not allow aggression to destroy it.

In this extract, the author of the post is trying to persuade followers that love can be expressed in many ways. Further, she connects the idea of equality and empathy to development and a better future and spiritual peace. The author uses a rhetorical question that contains a semantic allusion to Luke 6:31 ('Do unto others as you would have them do to unto you') to support her point of view. This can be deemed to be an effective strategy as anti-LGBT Pride groups used Orthodox Christian values as arguments against the 'sinners'. The post finishes with an appeal to all readers to open their minds and hearts and not to destroy their shared future. Although the post starts with the opposition **Us Versus Them**, in the last line the pronoun **ours** signals the appeal for the inclusion of **them** in the in-group or, in other words, the desire for turning the negative identity into a positive social identity.

**Extract 2** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9h8PUtIFbo>)

Who is persecuting you? May you die in your Sodom and Gomorrah! But do not promote yourselves and do not dream about corrupting our kids, you despicable people, or Hell will seem as a health resort to you! Remember that!

Through this response, the author tries to protest against the pathos of the video by implicating that LGBT people may continue living as they do now. On the other hand, he expresses his negative attitude to the issue by metaphorically alluding to two cities mentioned in the book of Genesis as embodiments of divine punishment for the sin of homosexuality. However, this attitude becomes more belligerent in the next sentence, which cites the performative statement of the organisers of the anti-Pride demonstrations: LGBT people corrupt children.

**Extract 3** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9h8PUtIFbo>)

I don't support LGBT, but it is a fact that such people are much better than most of you in that they are kind. You are good for nothing but at swearing and using bad words.

Once again, the opposition **Us Versus Them** is presented from the point of view of the third party, which evaluates the anti-LGBT community for using hate discourse.

Besides the linguistic means discussed above, the authors of the polylogues employ the following linguistic means to express their opinions and, by doing so, construe their identities online.

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<sup>7</sup> The polylogues analysed in this part of the article were taken from the comments posted in response to this video.

- 1) Maxims from the Bible:
  - a) Those who have not sinned shall cast the first stone;<sup>8</sup>
- 2) Insults, bad language, swearing and taboo words:
  - a) Georgia is technically a second-world country.
 

(Reply 1) Hey stupid man. Georgia will never allow such actions. [Gay people] are not normal.

(Reply 2) To our level of humanity you have a long road...we are Georgians, people with dignity.

(Reply 3) For me it's a country that deserves respect for fighting against abnormality...
  - b) F\*\*k those who side with bullying and beating LGBTs without any reason. Nobody has any right to beat or bully such people. Who are you to tell them how to live? Who are you to interfere? It is you who deserve to be beaten. F\*\*k you all! Did you not grow up in a normal family? Where does all this aggression come from?
  - c) What? LGBT Pride? I cannot believe this crap! Georgian people will f\*\*k you all! You will see that, pederasts!
- 3) Imperatives and insulting rhetorical questions
  - a) No to homophobia! No to ignorance! (Reply) What does that mean? LGBT are uneducated and others are [educated] ? Do you talk this crap to the members of your families? You will not prosper in Georgia!
4. Wordplay
  - a) Pride is of lions and not of people.
5. Racist comments
  - a) Is this negrito also Georgian?
  - b) Who the hell was that black man?

## Conclusions and Directions for Further Research

This research confirmed Gordon's conclusions (1992) that hate discourse addresses a certain group or segment of society and demonises them by creating enemies out of them. Further, the impoliteness (attacks on positive and negative group faces) emerging in the data of hate discourse occurred together with the specific constructions of identities and were sanctioned by the participants of the discourse. Interestingly, both opponents and proponents of LGBT Pride employed swear and taboo words while discussing the possible event and the LGBT community. Therefore, employment of impoliteness strategies can be considered systemic due to their frequent recurrence in hate-discourse discussions regarding LGBT issues. Also, their employment is strategic, as these strategies are used to attack both the individual and social face of the authors of the posts as well as the LGBT community. At the same time, the social standing and positions of the opponents are belittled and delegitimised.

More specifically, the analysed examples of the data with the hate discourse confirmed that the linguistic items and strategies discussed earlier, utilised by the participants, were used

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<sup>8</sup> Gospel of John, 8:7

strategically to further escalate the situation. In the majority of cases, the opponents directly held the LGBT community responsible for the events following their initiative. This is in line with Culpeper (2011, p. 223), who maintains that affective impoliteness involves 'the targeted display of heightened emotion, typically anger, with the implication that the target is to blame for producing that negative emotional state'.

According to Culpeper (2011), confrontation and impoliteness arise (1) when certain asserted subject positions chosen to be followed by participants are questioned and opposed by other participants; and (2) As direct responses to the triggering publications, communicative acts. The initiators of the performative hate acts repeatedly introduced the measures they thought were 'deserved' by the LGBT community, which endowed the performative acts with certain citationality. This, according to Derrida (1988, pp. 6–18), also leads to the construction of certain social realities. In this particular case, performatives concerning physical punishment of the members of Pride were 'wrapped' in the cultural stereotypes accepted and practised in Georgian society. Due to this, the image and social standing of the LGBT community were built up based on presenting them as enemies of the culture and traditional national values. Aggressiveness and taboo words were also employed by both parties (opponents and proponents) as an emotional discursive (responsive) strategy to construct and position the speaker's self in relation to others and also varied from assertiveness to utter rudeness expressed by taboo words and swearing formulae.

As maintained by Herring (1996), CMDA applies to four domains or levels of language: 1) structure, 2) meaning, 3) interaction and 4) social behaviour. Structural phenomena describe topographical, morphological and syntactic structures, whereas the meaning level explores the semantics of words, utterances (e.g., speech acts) and larger functional units (e.g., 'macrosegments', Herring, 1996). In this theory, the interactional level includes turn-taking, topic development and other means of negotiating interactive exchanges. The social level includes linguistic expressions of play, conflict, power and group membership over multiple exchanges. Also, participation patterns (as measured by frequency and length of messages posted and responses received) in threads or other extended-discourse samples constitute the fifth domain of CMDA analysis. (Herring, 1996). The data of this research applied all the levels of the CMDA. However, the material of the first and second levels (as indicated by Herring) was used to analyse interactional and participation patterns of the data.

Based on our data, the online polylogues initiated as responses to the Georgian reality can also be considered the genre of discourse that includes both contradiction and entertainment and sanction a certain degree of systemic impoliteness accepted by the culture. Hate speech goes beyond the norms of impoliteness accepted in Georgia; therefore, it should be contradicted as a means of unleashing hostile and homophobic feelings in any society. Further, online communication allows for hidden identities. For instance, the authors of the posts did not usually use their real names. According to our data, many posts were also authored by hidden identities; for instance, Shota Murderface, Gio from Munich, Georgian, Grand Master, Holden Caufield, Pluginbabe, etc. Because of this, the authors feel even more unrestricted than they would be in face-to-face communication.

This research has shown particular tendencies of how impoliteness can be realised and how social identities can be construed using the example of hate discourse concerning LGBT pride in Georgia. However, to fully explore the genre properties of hate discourse in Georgia, more research, based, for instance, on the examples of hate-discourse strategies applied when discussing ethnic minorities and gender roles, is needed.

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