



Hate speech or healthy speech, user friendly or user anxiety: An analysis of cyber world speech discourse.

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Abstract

This study explores the extent to which particular cyber forums enable and provoke either hatred or healthy speech regarding social and political issues from 2013 to 2014 and then the public's response(s) to such discussions in Pakistan. The article originates from a study conducted on 'hate speech', a study of Pakistan's cyberspace 2014, by bytesforall.pk, a social forum developing professional and healthy activities among users. The assessment of the democratic and autocratic potential of cyber world media helps to understand cyber world as public sphere. By analyzing the extent to which specific forums within the internet sphere play a pivotal role in facilitating emotions, developing anxiety and creating hatred will help to propose regulations for cyber world. The paper also discusses the impact of individual narrative and personal perspective and its role in developing negative and positive space. It is an attempt to present a holistic account of how we might envision playing a beneficial role among cyber world users.

Key words: *Cyber world; hate speech; Technologies of freedom; pseudonymity; cyber-mobs*

Introduction:

Internet and social media has empowered people by bringing change and introducing a World Wide Web zone for free speech and communication. It has also provided space globally and tools to communicate and debate their ideas and share experiences. People exercise their freedom of speech on blogs, face book, and twitter. While using such free zones for speech, people intentionally and unintentionally trigger threatening, unwarranted abuse, harassment

and lies. Besides these hate speeches, there is other content and public pages which build and develop human capacity, confidence, humor, love and care and healthy activities. There are organizations like CiviliNation, who educate, and develop research skills among users to engage in cyberspace in a more meaningful and responsible manner (Leeke, 2013).

(Habermas, 2006) commented on internet as a tool providing opportunities for communication and producing fragments of discourses. Sunstein (2007) describes the internet discourse as grassroots of an autonomous public writers and readers. However, computer-mediated communication on the web can claim unequivocal democratic merits only for a special context. It can undermine the censorship of authoritarian regimes that try to control and repress public opinion. In the context of liberal regimes, the rise of millions of fragmented chat rooms across the world tend to lead fragmentation of large but politically focused mass audiences into a huge number of isolated publics. In this context, hate and healthy speech discourse go parallel as the users use blogs, social networking sites and other message sites, these are solely tools for discourse. Most of the social norms or terms of services govern behavior on variety of networking sites. Deliberation includes and excludes forms of speech and communication that the internet is facilitating, such as poetry, humor and satire. According to Habermas (2006) such modes of communication and speeches are meaningful to the users' democratic culture. Public sphere model focuses on communication networks and names it 'the public sphere' as a network for communicating information and points of

view (i.e. opinion expressing affirmative or negative attitudes).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) serve as the basic modes of free speech increasingly developing positive and negative use of free speech domains. Besides negativity on cyberspace, one cannot deny its positive role especially in our Pakistani context where educational standards are quite low but the internet users are blessed with professional growth, professional networking, political activism and educational purposes. These free speech zones have engaged public users into meaningful activities and have also allowed anonymity and pseudonymity which has fueled cyber-mobs and raised voice to discriminatory and threatening speech.

Cyberspace has provided opportunity for many groups to socialize, share ideas, views and opinions. It has also bridged up public users to cross spatial and temporal boundaries through anonymity and pseudonymity, facilitating membership of the reclusive and shy.

Freedom of speech is a global right that allows people to express their views through spoken, written words and symbols. This study explores the cyber content produced by its users within Pakistani social context. The nature of free speech dilemma in Pakistani context involves the use of speech attacking one's belief, feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, cyberspace was identified universally creating an impact upon societies and life of the users positively and negatively. The internet has affected worldwide scenario accidentally or deliberately, by design or by logic

of technological development (Choucri, Madnick & Ferwerda, 2014). Cyberspace has created rapid diffusion through technology which has never been exhibited before. It has expanded rapidly creating a major difference in infrastructure, skills, literacy and capabilities.

Cyberspace problems and benefits are highlighted below to further the debate in Pakistani scenario.

Internet as a democratizing force:

The Internet is a relatively uncontrolled space, contributing positively in creating information society. Internet is a relatively free liberty zone where anyone can publish any type of writing material without government's interference. Freedom of hate speech, written slogans against religions, race, culture and creed has highlighted much hatred among users. Saudi Arabia requires a license to post content on YouTube. According to a scholar, we are living in a phase of "Cyberrealism" where discussion of the internet as a democratizing force is emerging. The internet has become a participatory agent to increase possibilities for democracy. The next generation of internet users is the semantic web, (Feigenbaum, Ivan, Tonya, Eric, & Susie, 2007)

Technologies of freedom

Benkler (2006) correctly commented that the internet is a democratizing force with the low cost entry and the decentralized architecture. It invites mass participation at every level, it further finds support from seminal work of Pool (1983) 'Technologies of freedom', in which author argues ICTs as networks of 'fostering' freedom.

Conversational speech users

Human speech is a complex source of information that signals levels or layers of extended information, which can be best described in terms of three basic components: linguistic, paralinguistic, and extra linguistic (Campbell, 2005). Conversation is by definition a two-way process, it may happen in an interaction on cyberspace to transfer information and/or concerns. Control of the discourse builds relationship between two users on a cyberspace world. To determine speech users, as for healthy interaction or creating an anxiety, depends upon the users, as how it is perceived in the cyber context.

Cyber space speech

Computer generated speech or speech carried out on cyber space forum can be well tuned for linguistic content, and the expression of syntactic relations, but the extra-linguistic or paralinguistic information is not yet well modeled. Speech recognition may be helpful to determine anxiety or fear created by the users. Though there are no specific control measures to recognize the content infuriating the users and readers. Research has focused on content rather than style of language, which can prove to be a rich source of information about how content can be interpreted or situated in a given context of cyber space.

Cyber space emotional drive

Construction of emotions is a process open to constant change and redefinition (Butler, 1997). In this vein, the “natural” evolution of emotion and language has ultimately led to appearance of techno

science. New ways of naming emotions have emerged from a techno science perspective (Belli, Harré, & Íniguez-Rueda, 2010). Information and communication technologies (ICT) have resulted in new emotional aspects which philosophers, psychologists, and epistemologists have targeted in their common interests, for instance, ICTs as affective machines (Brown, 2005; Brown & Stenner, 2001) the notions of cyborg and techno-disembodiment (Gibbs, 2006; Haraway, 1989; Hollinger, 2000; James & Carkeek, 1997) or the notion of “disclosure”, a fuzzy phenomenon meaning the expression of emotions through a screen. These technologies leave significant impact upon user’s emotional life and language use in daily life. The term “emotion” as spontaneity arises out of people’s narratives and positions

Butler (1990) explores how narrative creates need for particular emotions through acts, gestures, enactments, as performative in the essence or identity which may express fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporal signs and other discursive means. In this way, emotions do not exist prior to being performed but are performed naturally, seen as normal and natural, taken as a set of multiple daily social interactions.

Written text speech:

Text is a productive and an output medium of speech between the two users. Text can be read, converted into speech, a speech can be transcribed and converted into text. The influence of social media through twitter, instant messaging, texting, face book etc. is shaping the young generation as both reader and writers and creator of those texts. Our Pakistani internet users, with low educational

standards take it as blessing for reading and writing. This is the only medium our users are exposed to for variety of readings and may develop a sense of written text abilities by free speech zone. Authors such as Todd Strasser, Alex Bradley, Adele Griffin, Ken Baker and Mari Mancusi, use email, blogs, twitter and instant messaging (IM) to explain events, conflicts and push characters to action. Such genres of communication require readers to be aware of reading and writing style and reveal the same in their own writings and user generated content.

Web 2.0 collaborative platform

The social media is termed an array of new Web 2.0 platforms. This platform works as a guide and allows users to bypass formal intermediaries and gatekeepers; users act with guidance and rely on peers, web tools and knowledge generated by such collaborative platforms (Tim, 2005).

Analysis of Facebook and twitter usage

Over the past two years, Facebook, twitter and other online networks have boominglly affected the internet users in Pakistan. Telecommunication companies, capturing business, have provided free net hours on a simple phone conversation at the cheapest rate. This has resulted users to be benefitted by the cheap network and internet services in every nook and corner of Pakistan. All four provinces, Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and KPK, have easy and accessible networks' service in rural and urban areas. According to the facts and figures provided by Express Tribune, there are 30million internet users in Pakistan, half on mobile. 33% access Facebook via their smart phone, 30% of online population use

Facebook, 70-30 split between men/women among Facebook users. The two thirds of the country's Facebook users are below the age of 35. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/567649/30m-internet-users-in-pakistan-half-on-mobile-report/>. Provided figures clearly indicate that how young generation is more engaged with internet interactivity.

Written text promoting 'Patriotism'



Figure: 1

A picture labeled as 'Heroes of Pakistan' is currently used on cyberspace speech community to highlight the defense day. It depicts a message and impacts a common user to be brave and recognized by creating an exemplary performance for the homeland. Though, the written text is very precise but it went viral and users of social media liked such pages. This content creates harmony, equality and brotherhood among nation and saves any further divide and hate mongering elements.



Figure: 2

Sports: Cricket Lovers

Sports activities without cricket in Pakistani social media are like missing salt in the food. Despite horror and terror, there is much praise and likes for the cricketers. A great number of communities and clubs on cyberspace share public views and interest about their cricket heroes. The Facebook community has 1,635,994 members to like and share views on cricket.



Figure: 3

Poor conditions in Pakistan: Critical Discourse:

The above message on Facebook was shared for fun and criticism but it carries well the linguistic variety of style, exaggeration and irony of characters.

The results of a survey conducted by the bytesforall.pk on hate speech signify that conflict and propaganda is largely done by fundamentalist religious bigots. The main targets are Sunnis, Shias, Ahmadis, Atheist, Kafirs, and Jews. The responses recorded for a question that, 'if you have come across online hate speech, who/what was the hate speech targeting?' In the light of the responses it is concluded that religious beliefs are usually targeted. The percentages indicate that religion/belief becomes a matter of hate speech and Shia beliefs at the top with 70%.

Forty pages of Facebook are explored during a survey of

Facebook groups and communities pages on religious beliefs and fundamental ideology. It is found that some users are secular who make efforts to end hate speech contents to make public pacify with Quranic justifications.

SyedAsimSajjad

Yesterday at 10:59am · Edited

no hate speech no attack just to probe if Sunni, shia, salfi, all the sects of muslim believe that Qadiyanis are deviants what do Qadiyani think about muslims let see from their book.

"God has revealed it to me that the person who did not believe in me after having heard about me is not a Muslim."

(Al-Fazl, Qadian, Jan 15, 1935 - Al-Hukum, 4:24, MirzaGhulamQadiani)

"He (MirzaGhulamQadiani) has regarded

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/cfsdp/>

Twitter Message on Girls Education



Pakistan has about 35.7% youth under the age of 25. Majority of girls in Pakistan lack basic educational rights. Malala, recognized world over as a revolutionary character, has encouraged more girls to join schools. Such messages on social media are inspiring mind set and psyche of youth in Pakistan. Destruction and demolition of schools is being publically condemned which is indirectly highlighting the importance of education for girls.

قونصلخانچونوڌيڪ خبرون



يو ايس ايڊ، اينگرو ڪارپوريشن ۽ تعليم کاتي سنڌ ۾ تعليم جي بهتر لاءِ ياداشتنامي تي صحيح ڪيون

سنڌ ۾ تعليم جي بهتري لاءِ يو ايس ايڊ پاڪستان جي سربراھ جون ڪورڪ، سنڌ جي تعليم کاتي جي صوبائي سيڪريٽري ڊاڪٽر فضل الله پيڇوھو ۽ اينگرو جي سينئر نائب صدر روحيل محمد هڪ گڏيل ياداشتنامي تي صحيح ڪيون.

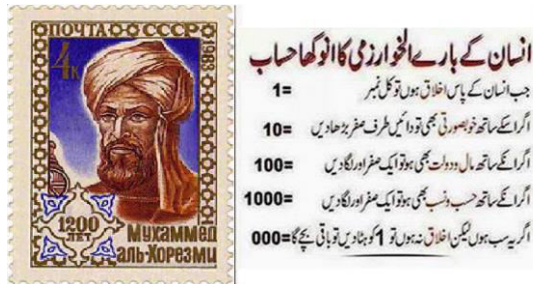
<http://sindhi.karachi.usconsulate.gov/>

Language, Culture, History and Diversity



<https://www.facebook.com/Sindh.Culture?fref=ts>

With the co-operation of USA consulate general, culture and language identity is focused more through Facebook communities and healthy activities are being promoted. Special preferences are given to local people to promote culture, language and valued history. For the same purpose, specific language blogs and program highlights are preferred in the regional language to show love and care for the cyberspace users in Pakistan.



Messages or information carrying content that helps the users to peep in history and philosophy. Based on morality and ethics, the above content makes the users to learn and practice values which are now disappearing from society, making people merely work like a machine. Such great examples are found on multiple pages of social media, which has introduced a number of great personalities and their works. The credit goes to social media making them alive; revive what was practiced earlier and what is needed in a civilized society.



<http://www.iamkarachi.org/tag/i-am-karachi-youth-festival-2/>

Communities and cyber groups are incorporating young generation into meaningful activities using Facebook, twitter etc. With color and care, meaning is created for the youth as part of the city, to make them responsible citizens of Pakistan. Such messages develop civic sense among youth through social media forum which was lacking before. This idea is wonderfully engaging and educating younger generation to do wonders, to diminish hatred and to promote healthy activities.

Conclusion:

Freedom of speech should have some rules to ensure democratic ways of dealing public, procedurally fair and accountable for public interest. There must be some restrictions based on

- Law enforcement
- Safeguarding private and public interest
- Secure public interest
- Excessive exposure to healthy activities among groups /communities

The code of conduct which constitutes specific obligations, regulates religious and political speech and promptly removes contents that infuriate or disrupt social stability be practiced strictly from school education.

Freedom of expression and real time interaction on cyberspace is a legal right. To restrict hate speech element, there is a need to develop catching or hunting sites which could report immediately for hate based content. Training and proper education of youth to combat emotional outburst is the need of the day. This could be possible through teaching and training, but isolating public from cyberspace world is not a solution. Modern psychology research presents the idea that our brains heavily rely on connections and associations with others as we want to feel happy and relaxed. Cyberspace communication makes it possible by creating a free speech zone when people may know about capital structure of production and the distribution of goods, information on culture and language with specific social and global context. Living in a

trade and business zone globally, it also matters when communication finds its way to exchange views and prices on consumer goods, expenses and market economy. It is noteworthy while looking at the survey results, that Pakistanis hate speech content is more on religious beliefs and ideology rather than other fundamental social issues. This could be lessened on cyberspace with healthier and fruitful activities among groups /communities by introducing leadership programs.

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