COMBATTING HATE SPEECH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE
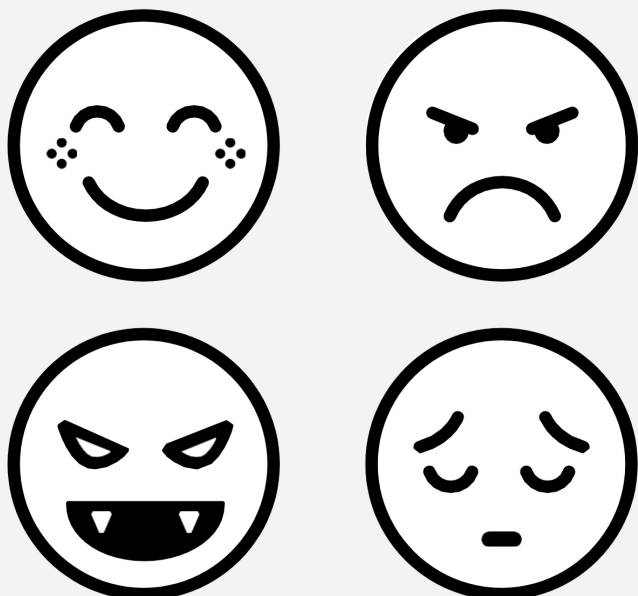## REMINDER FOR CREATING A PATHWAY

A LIST OF POTENTIALLY CRITICAL SITUATIONS AND HOW TO CONTROL THEM

- ☐ **GROUP LEADER'S**
- ☐ **REDUCE DISCOMFORT**
- ☐ **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**
- ☐ **THE WEIGHT OF WORDS**
- ☐ **CHOICE OF MATERIALS**

THE COMMENTERS

AN ACTIVITY IN FIVE PHASES.

1
Presentation of the Lithuanian video *Experiment – Translation.* What do I do when I encounter hate speech online?

2
Students are asked to define the meaning of the emoticons and then to use them to categorise the comments.

3
Students are given a selection of the 100,000 comments published online and they are asked to divide them according to the criteria represented and defined by the emoticons.

4
Thinking about language: qualitative considerations: which words are used most frequently?

5
Choose a comment as a group and analyse it in depth; how could the comment be rewritten to avoiding inciting hatred?

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Given the sensitive nature of the topics being addressed, dynamics may arise within the group that are unpredictable and hard to manage. The group leader can mitigate this by implementing appropriate intervention strategies: below is **a list of potentially critical situations and how to control them**.

☐ GROUP LEADER'S POINT OF VIEW CALLED INTO QUESTION AND GROUP DYNAMICS

Group leaders must be prepared for the fact that they may have to deal with situations in which their own point of view is questioned, and that the discussions could provoke very intense and even painful emotions/reactions among the participants. In these situations, it is essential to remain calm and respect everyone's point of view while firmly stating your own, backing it up with textual references and documentation. It is strongly recommended that you fill in the activity analysis and monitoring form at the end of each session: this allows you to oversee the process and direct the subsequent sessions, identifying behaviours, dynamics, resources and critical issues within the group.

☐ REDUCE DISCOMFORT

Tackling the theme of hate speech is a challenge for both the group leader and the participants, who will be taking part in a process that questions their values and thus inevitably provokes strong emotional reactions: this may be a powerful experience and could cause discomfort.

How can this be reduced?

- **By adopting a non-judgemental attitude**;

- **By ensuring that information discussed during the sessions remains confidential**;

- **By steering the group towards participation and involvement** so that each participant feels welcomed, protected and supported by his or her peers;

- **By anchoring discussions to the available sources insofar as this is possible**, allowing students to confirm or deny certain statements and encouraging them to do necessary and crucial work with source materials.

☐ CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The group leader may be faced with a conflict between participants. Should this happen, he or she can implement strategies to defuse the situation and ease the tension. Ignoring a hostile statement or question is generally not advisable; a good tactic can be to involve the entire group in searching for a solution together (only if the leader feels that the group is able to cope with this without the situation spiralling out of control). Alternatively, hostility can be embraced and bounced back to the group as an opportunity to question false beliefs and clichés, for example by consulting official sources (please find attached the guidelines for managing conflict in multi-ethnic groups in schools).

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THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

Language is a powerful tool: words are important and can be used to marginalise, hurt, label and discriminate against groups of people and individuals. The meaning of words can change depending on the context and the speaker. It is therefore a good idea to spend some time working on terms used to stigmatise others and the concept of "hate speech". Indeed, some statements can function as incitements to hatred despite not containing any vulgar or explicitly offensive words. We do not recommend providing participants with a list of inappropriate words at the beginning of the course, but as the course progresses, it might be useful to indicate the types of words that could be perceived as offensive by certain sections of society. To take this type of analysis further, consult the *Carta di Roma* (Charter of Rome). This is a code of conduct for journalists regarding asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants, created in 2008 by the **Italian Order of Journalists** and the **FNSI (Italian National Press Foundation)** (www.cartadiroma.org/cosa-e-la-carta-di-roma/glossario).

The most common definition of hate speech is the one put forward by Recommendation (97) 20 of the CoE:

> "The term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin."

www.coe.int/it/web/freedom-expression

CHOICE OF MATERIALS

When choosing texts, newspaper articles and videos to analyse in class, we recommend that you follow three criteria:

1. **Always choose topical subjects**: it is important that the school create a constant dialogue with current events, in part because this gives students an opportunity to share questions on the meaning of the times we are living in and on the controversial and complex issues currently affecting humankind.

2. **Choose content in line with the experiences and habits of young people**: video games, posts on social networks, songs … all material which adolescents deal with and which often goes unnoticed by adults, but which can provide very productive stimuli and opportunities for educational work.

3. **Choose content related to the syllabus**: it is essential that students experience how academic disciplines can be tools that help us interpret and understand the world, not simply subjects disconnected from reality that must be learnt by rote. History, literature, mathematics and statistics become the backdrop and the tools that allow students to understand the world in a more mature way.

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EXERCISE

ANALYSING HATE SPEECH IN MEDIA COMMUNICATION

OVERVIEW

In this unit, we aim to track hate speech on the web using videos and Facebook messages. The emoticons used were proposed by the University of Florence as part of a research project on online hate speech. We use same emoticons with students, who are asked to catalogue them. A specific case study has been chosen but keep in mind that the most important thing is for the material to be topical. In this case, the debate caused by the creation and publication of a specific poster (more than 100,000 comments) made it possible to track many points of view and to work on some questions that remain topical today (for example, discussions on presumed diversity). The analysis of the debate was the tool used to collect data and information.

OBJECTIVES

1. To recognise hate speech.
2. To tackle the issue of "what to do?".
3. To encourage the students to participate.

INSTRUCTIONS

INTRODUCTION
This module starts with a video produced by the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights. In a waiting room, we see a succession of people invited to a casting call for an advert. In the same room, waiting, we see a black man asking others to help him translate some posts published on his Facebook page. The video is paused frequently to allow students to understand the content and the situation and also to express the emotions they are feeling. Speaking up amid the silence of emotions allowed the classes that trialled the module to watch the video with a strong sense of involvement. At the end of the video, a single question is asked: what would you have done? In pairs, the students discuss this question and write their answers on a sticky note. They then stick the notes onto the sheets of paper hanging on the walls, reading them aloud as they do so.
4 students will attempt to summarise the reactions of their classmates, giving the class a "map" of the various behaviours described.
Following this, the emoticons used by the University of Florence for a national research project on online hate speech are presented to the class (available at **www.bricks- project.eu/wp/wp-content/ uploads/2016/03/ relazione_bricks_bassa.pdf**):

1. Do-gooding
2. Angry
3. Aggressive
4. Resigned

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Students are asked to give a definition of these four macro-categories:

1. According to them, what are do-gooding comments and what do they look like?
2. What are the differences between angry comments and aggressive comments?
3. What are resigned comments like?

In a group, using the brainstorming method, the aim is to flesh out these definitions, always using the students' experiences and thoughts as a starting point.

THE MAIN ACTIVITY

At this point, the students are shown the poster that was the subject of our case study. It was published on Facebook, where it attracted more than 100,000 comments. 4 posters representing the 4 emoticons are stuck up on the walls.
The students are given a selection of published comments and asked to subdivide them by sticking them on the various posters according to the categories suggested by the emoticons (they can also suggest their own – in some cases, the students suggested new emoticons while working on the definitions). After dividing them among the various posters, these are taken down from the walls. 4 groups are formed, and each group is given a poster. The assignment is to find the 5 words that are repeated most frequently. In this way, the students must reflect on the things written by others online. They must adopt the attitude of a researcher working on sources, cataloguing material and offering an overview.
All the posters/emoticons are then discussed as a group in order to share the final conclusions resulting from a specific case study. The students also analyse the words that they believe were used most often: what are the words? What do they mean?

TO FINISH

Ask the class to rewrite a comment that they believe contributes to hate speech, modifying it in terms of the language used.
The task is for the students to maintain the same point of view (for example, the view of someone opposed to migration) while also rewriting his or her arguments in order to avoid hate speech. This activity is carried out collectively, with the teacher supporting the linguistic analysis. The goal is to make the class aware that a wide spectrum of points of view is acceptable, regardless of their personal opinions, but also that it is possible to express these views without inciting hatred.

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TIME   120 mins

EQUIPMENT   PC, video projector, A3 sheets or Bristol boards, markers, printed comments to hand out, printed emoticons for the posters.

METHODOLOGIES   The methodologies used concentrate on analysing media content at a linguistic level to ensure that the students remain focused on the discourse, paying attention to the words used and the construction of the arguments (or lack thereof). In this case, the debate is not based around what they think: instead, what they think is called into question by the act of cataloguing the thoughts of others. The analysis is based on a cooperative approach and aims to make the students feel that they are playing a crucial role, as if they were researchers who needed to catalogue and order their material. Asking them to pick out the most-used words allows them to immediately focus on the words that are most easily used to incite hatred.

STRATEGIES TO INVOLVE THE STUDENTS   Stimulate their desire to research a topic together, use participatory activities and encourage them to interact with social networks in a less superficial way.

The activity is complex and is **divided into five phases**.
It can also be carried out across more than one session.

1

Presentation of the Lithuanian video *Experiment - Translation* and first activity with sticky notes, which gets students thinking about real-life behaviour. What do I do when I encounter hate speech online? The story presented in the video asks a question: what would you have done?

2

Presentation of the working tool for the analysis of hate speech: the emoticons used by the University of Florence to catalogue hate speech messages are shown, and students are asked to define the meaning of the emoticons and then to use them to categorise the comments handed out to them.

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3

The case study on which the class will work together is presented: a poster published on Facebook that was the subject of much debate. Students are given a selection of the 100,000 comments published online (about thirty, to ensure they see a wide range of responses), and they are asked to divide them according to the criteria represented and defined by the emoticons. This task allows students to think about how to classify these individual comments – what framework and rules should they put in place to decide which poster to stick each one to?

4

Once the comments have been categorised and the posters filled up, the class is divided into 4 groups, with each one working on a different poster. The class carries out a quantitative analysis that leads in turn to some qualitative considerations: which words are used most frequently? The list of the 5 most-used words in the 4 emoticon columns allows the teacher to guide the class in thinking about language, reasoning and conversational strategies.

5

The last activity is to choose a comment as a group and analyse it in depth: which words and arguments are put forward to support the viewpoint expressed; if necessary, how could the comment be rewritten to avoiding inciting hatred?

The goal of this unit is to learn to recognise hate comments, even if this is limited to working on a single case study. In order for students to develop a more well-rounded ability to recognise hate speech online, the activity could also be carried out with other situations and different media content. In this unit, the question of "what to do" also arises; here too, reinforcement activitiesare needed. Other ideas are suggested in the "Going further" section.

Sources

Lithuanian video *Experiment - Translation*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNX1256eVw8

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WHO ARE THE COMMENTERS?

DO-GOODING

ANGRY / CONFRONTATIONAL

AGGRESSIVE

RESIGNED

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GOING FURTHER

- To further showcase the work done by the students with the comments published on Facebook, a maths or technology teacher can be called on to translate the information into infographics. Reporting the results of a research project using graphs is also a way to summarise the most salient information and communicate with the wider world: they can be shared by the students themselves on social media, they can be used by other classes, etc.

- Another activity that can reinforce the students' learning pathway relates to freedom of expression: reading the comments posted under the poster opens up a debate on the fine line between hate speech and freedom of expression. What limits on freedom of expression do the students feel are "fair", "necessary" and "appropriate"? We suggest a selection of articles that focus on Facebook. Using these practical case studies, the class can have a more general debate on the limits between online hate speech and freedom of expression. How do you "regulate" this freedom? Based on the students' experience and knowledge, what are the practical possibilities when tackling hate speech encountered online?

- A further activity is linked to the theme of "what to do", referring back to the video *Experiment - Translation*. This theme is developed by the Media Smarts Centre (Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy - http://mediasmarts.ca), which offers a Hate 2.0 Quiz that could be a source of inspiration for the teacher or educator. In the form of multiple-choice quiz questions, students find themselves faced with potential situations that might be encountered online, and they must choose the best reaction. Each multiple choice can lead to different considerations, and the students must therefore open their minds to new possibilities with respect to "how to react" and "useful responses".
  The PDF of the lesson can be downloaded here: **mediasmarts. ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/ lesson-plan/Lesson_ Hate2.pdf**

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ARTICLES

- *Hate speech: we reported 100 comments that incite hatred to Facebook, and 91 are still online*
  www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/hate-speech

- *Messages of hate not allowed: the VoxNews Facebook page is closed down*
  www.cartadiroma.org/news/cronache-ordi- nario-razzismo-chiusa-la-pagina-facebook-voxnews

- *#nohatespeech. Facebook: unrestricted thinking for an unrestricted business?*
  www.cartadiroma.org/news/discorsi-dodio-e-business-virale

- *Facebook hides a hate page*
  www.quotidiano.net/minacce-su-facebook-musulmani-ditalia-1.2038281

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Zaffiria
LABORATORI ALLESTIMENTI MOSTRE

Resource adapted and experimented in BRICkS project with Cospe

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ONLUS
TOGETHER FOR CHANGE