

**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HATE COMMENTS ON  
JAMES CHARLES'S TIKTOK CONTENT**

**THESIS**

By:

**Putri Sakhia Shahara**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM**

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Presented to:

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in Partial Fulfilment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S)

By:

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**MALANG**

**2026**

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I state that thesis entitled "*A Critical Discourse Analysis Of Hate Comments On James Charles's Tiktok Content*" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026

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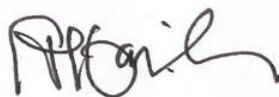
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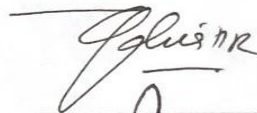
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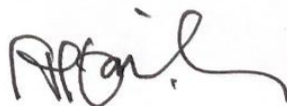
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## **MOTTO**

“Develop the winning edge. Small differences in your performance can lead to large differences in your results.”

(Brian Tracy)

“If you can dream it you can do it.”

(Walt Disney)

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved family, especially my mother and siblings. Thank you for your unwavering support, sacrifices, guidance, encouragement, and sincere prayers, which have enabled me to reach this stage.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M.Pd., M.Ed., who has guided me as my academic and research advisor throughout this process

Last but not least, I dedicate this thesis to myself for the relentless effort, perseverance, and determination that enabled me to successfully complete it.

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The research was completed as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining a *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) degree in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, the researcher realizes that it would not have been accomplished without the valuable support, guidance, and encouragement from various parties. Therefore, the researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to:

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Malang, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026

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## ABSTRACT

**Shahara, Putri Sakhia (2026).** A Critical Discourse Analysis of Hate comments on James Charles's TikTok Content. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University. Advisor Dr. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M.Pd., M.Ed.

*Key word: Critical Discourse Analysis, Hate Comments, TikTok*

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This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the linguistic construction of the hateful comments in James Charles' TikTok content. This study employs Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level Critical Discourse Analysis framework and the discourse strategies of Reisigl and Wodak (2001) to analyze 25 purposively selected comments from five TikTok videos uploaded between March 2024 and June 2025. The findings point to four recurrent linguistic mechanisms: dehumanization through pronominal substitution, persistent negative predication, schadenfreude with inverted positive lexical constructions, and implicit argumentation through presuppositions. This analysis further shows that the non-confrontational character of the video material consistently acts as a discursive trigger for hostile comment reactions. These results contribute to the usage of CDA in digital discourse and show the systematicity of hateful comments on social media platforms that are creator centric.

## ABSTRAK

**Shahara, Putri Sakhia (2026).** Analisis Wacana Kritis terhadap Komentar Kebencian pada Konten TikTok James Charles. Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim. Pembimbing: Dr. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M.Pd., M.Ed.

*Kata kunci: Analisis Wacana Kritis, Komentar Kebencian, TikTok*

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Penelitian ini menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis untuk mengkaji konstruksi linguistik komentar kebencian pada konten TikTok James Charles. Penelitian ini menerapkan kerangka kerja Analisis Wacana Kritis tingkat mikro Van Dijk (2015) dan strategi wacana Reisigl dan Wodak (2001) untuk menganalisis 25 komentar yang dipilih secara purposif dari lima video TikTok yang diunggah antara Maret 2024 dan Juni 2025. Temuan menunjukkan empat mekanisme linguistik yang berulang: dehumanisasi melalui penggantian pronomina, prediksi negatif yang terus-menerus, schadenfreude dengan konstruksi leksikal positif terbalik, dan argumen implisit melalui prasangka. Analisis ini lebih lanjut menunjukkan bahwa karakter non-konfrontatif dari materi video secara konsisten bertindak sebagai pemicu diskursif bagi reaksi komentar yang bermusuhan. Hasil ini berkontribusi pada penggunaan CDA dalam wacana digital dan menunjukkan sistematisitas komentar kebencian di platform media sosial yang berpusat pada pembuat konten.

## مستخلص البث

فترى ساخيا ساهارا (2026). تحليل خطابي نقدي للتعليقات التي تعرض على الكراهية على محتوى جيمس تشارلز على تيك توك. أطروحة بكالوريوس. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية. المشرفة: الدكتورة غالوه نور روهمة، ماجستير في التربية، ماجستير في التربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، تعليق كراهية، تيك توك

تستخدم هذه الدراسة «تحليل الخطاب النقدي» لدراسة البناء اللغوي للتعليقات التي تنطوي على الكراهية في محتوى جيمس تشارلز على منصة تيك توك. وتستعين هذه الدراسة بإطار «تحليل الخطاب النقدي» على المستوى الجزئي الذي وضعه فان ديك (2015)، واستراتيجيات الخطاب التي وضعها ريزيجل ووداك (2001)، لتحليل 25 تعليقاً تم اختيارها بشكل هادف من خمسة مقاطع فيديو على تيك توك تم تحميلها في الفترة ما بين مارس 2024 ويونيو 2025. تشير النتائج إلى أربع آليات لغوية متكررة: نزاع الصفة الإنسانية من خلال الاستبدال الضميري، والتعبير السلبي المستمر، والشعور بالشماتة مع التراكيب المعجمية الإيجابية المقلوبة، والحجة الضمنية من خلال الافتراضات المسبقة. يُظهر هذا التحليل أيضاً أن الطابع غير التصادمي لمواد الفيديو يعمل باستمرار كمحفز خطابي لردود فعل تعليقات عدائية. تساهم هذه النتائج في استخدام تحليل الخطاب النقدي في الخطاب الرقمي وتُظهر الطابع المنهجي للتعليقات التي تعرض على الكراهية على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي التي تركز على المبدعين.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Social media platforms have grown so rapidly that they have completely transformed the way people communicate, interact, and share their thoughts with the world. TikTok is one of the most popular short-form video platforms in the world, with over one billion active users as of 2023. Its algorithmic design, which prioritizes content that gets a lot of comments and allows for quick commenting, has made it easier for hate speech to spread (González Esteban et al., 2024). TikTok is different from traditional media because it doesn't have strict editorial controls. This means that people can leave comments without much supervision, which often leads to comments that are rude, hostile, and discriminatory. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has stated that platforms like TikTok lack sufficient measures to stop content containing hate comments, which is why people often use abusive language online.

In this context, content creators who attract public attention through controversy are the primary targets of hate comments. James Charles, an influencer with over 40 million followers on TikTok, is one of the most prominent examples of the relentless online hostility directed at a creator. His controversial public image, shaped by a series of major scandals including a widely publicised dispute with fellow content creator Tati Westbrook in 2019, as well as repeated allegations of inappropriate behaviour has sparked a relentless hate campaign across various

social media platforms. Numerous TikTok accounts dedicated to criticising and mocking James Charles have emerged, amassing millions of views, which demonstrates the scale of the organised hatred directed at him. Reaction and commentary content creators have documented and amplified the hate discourse surrounding him, showing that the hostility towards James Charles extends far beyond the comments section of his own account.

The fact that people are directing hate comments at James Charles has broader social implications. His public image, tarnished by scandals and controversies, has made him a constant target of organised online hate comment. Media outlets such as The Guardian, BuzzFeed News and Insider have reported how the hate campaign against him has intensified during periods of heightened public conflict. This is consistent with patterns identified in research on political and social hate comments. The ‘Dramageddon’ scandal in 2019 caused James Charles to lose around three million followers in just one week. This is a clear sign of just how many people were angry with him. These events demonstrate that the hatred directed at content creators is not merely a personal choice, but a coordinated social phenomenon that requires systematic linguistic analysis.

Although this hostility is clearly evident, James Charles’s own TikTok account has a complex dynamic: his comments section is monitored through automated and manual content moderation, which filters out the most aggressive comments. However, this moderation does not eliminate hate comments entirely instead, it shapes the form they take. As Recuero (2024) notes, platform

infrastructures enable violent discourse to adapt and spread in subtler forms. In a linguistic context, this means that hate comments in James Charles's comment sections tend to employ adapt to circumvent platform restrictions by employing veiled language, implicit insults, and indirect expressions rather than overt aggression. This aligns with the findings of Mayagoitia-Soria et al. (2024), who found that hate speech on TikTok makes greater use of veiled language than overtly aggressive language. In order to analyse hate comments in this context, researcher need a framework that can identify both overt and covert forms of hostility.

This study utilizes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its principal analytical framework to examine the linguistic construction of hate comments within the context of James Charles' TikTok content. Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level CDA framework offers instruments for analyzing the specific linguistic characteristics that facilitate hate comments, encompassing lexical choice, syntactic patterns, semantic structure, and rhetorical strategies. These micro-level traits are not just stylistic choices; they are strategic tools used to build and strengthen negative representations over time (Van Dijk, 2015). Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach suggests four ways to analyze the effects of hate comments on how later commenters respond on TikTok: nomination, predication, argumentation, and perspectivization.

Various previous studies have laid the theoretical and empirical foundations for this research whilst also highlighting its main limitations. Van Dijk (2008) and Fairclough (2003) developed the foundational Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

framework for examining the reproduction of power and ideology through language, whilst Reisigl and Wodak (2001) operationalised specific strategies within discriminatory discourse. However, these three experts focused more on institutional media or print media, rather than on user-generated digital content. Vidgen and Yasseri (2020) and Salminen et al. (2020) investigated online hate speech on a large scale, employing superficial or computational methodologies that neglect micro-linguistic analysis.

Building on these foundations, recent studies have brought the analysis of hate speech closer to the context of this research, yet there remain some gaps. González Esteban et al. (2024), Büyük (2024), and Mayagoitia-Soria et al. (2024) conducted analyses of hate speech on TikTok; however, none focused on hate speech directed at specific content creators. Määttä and Vernet (2023) and Guillén-Nieto (2023) expand our understanding of linguistic evasion strategies and multi-level critical discourse analysis; however, none of them focus on TikTok comment discourse directed at content creators. Overall, these studies highlight a significant gap: the lack of systematic research investigating the micro-level linguistic constructions of hate comments directed at individual content creators on TikTok, as well as the way in which such discourse reflects commentators' subsequent reactions.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the linguistic features that represent hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content?

2. How do discursive strategies operate in hate comments across James Charles's TikTok Content?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

This study has two aims. First, it seeks to identify and analyze the linguistic characteristics that signify hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content, utilizing Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how particular lexical patterns, syntactic patterns, semantic structure, and rhetorical strategies systematically create negative portrayals within TikTok comment discourse. Second, it seeks to examine how the discursive strategies operates in hate comments across James Charles' TikTok content, utilizing Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) discursive strategies nomination, predication, argumentation, and perspectivization to investigate the linguistic patterns through which commentators construct and express their responses.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study enhances the theoretical application of Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level critical discourse analysis and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) discourse strategies to hate comments directed at creators on TikTok. This is an area that has received little research attention to date. In practice, these findings could inform content moderation policies, digital literacy programmes and platform governance strategies by identifying the linguistic mechanisms that facilitate the circulation of hate comments on creator-centric social media platforms.

## 1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study examines English-language comments from James Charles's TikTok account between March 2024 and June 2025, utilizing a purposive sample of 25 comments extracted from five chosen videos. The analysis is limited to the text of the comments and does not take into account visual or multimodal components, which Machin and Mayr (2012) identify as equally significant resources for meaning-making in discourse. The findings pertain exclusively to this study and may not be applicable to other creators or platforms.

## 1.6 Definions of Key Terms

**Hate comments** refer to written expressions posted in the comment section of James Charles's TikTok content that contain hostility, dehumanization, or implicit and explicit negativity directed specifically at James Charles as an individual content creator.

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** is a analytical framework employed to examine how specific linguistic choices in hate comments construct negative representations of James Charles, utilizing Van Dijk (2015) micro level analysis of lexical, syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical, and Reisiql and Wodak's (2001) discursive strategies of nomination, predication, argumentation and perspectivization.

**TikTok content** means the five short-form videos uploaded by James Charles on his personal TikTok account between March 2024 and June 2025, which serve as the contextual basis that triggers the hate comments analyzed in this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Understanding Hate Comments: Definitional and Conceptual Foundations**

Hate comments are a subject of great public controversy in modern society. Anderson and Barnes (2022) provide an overview of the complexities involved in defining exactly what constitutes hate speech, explaining that it refers to any statement or view that expresses hatred towards an individual or group because of some inherently fixed characteristic of the target. Castaño-Pulgarín et al. (2021) Similarly, defines cyberhate as aggressive or offensive language directed at a specific group through digital media and often motivated by ideology and power differential. The EU has defined hate speech as the promotion of violence and/or hatred toward a protected class of individuals, but the application of that definition continues to be challenged in practice by people communicating online in informal ways where intent and scope are not clearly defined (Guillén-Nieto, 2023). This study of such discourse requires analytical frameworks capable of examining how language constructs power and ideology, an area comprehensively addressed in the methods outlined by Wodak and Meyer (2009).

Hate comments can have many different meanings or purposes based on how people have historically defined its use; therefore, hate comments serves many different functions in today's society as a part of language, communication, thought and social action. That diversity is essential for understanding how hate comments operate with linguistic features indicate conflict, cognitive processes interpret

meaning within specific frameworks, and social practices generate and reinforce ideological hierarchies.

## **2.2 Linguistic and Discursive Features of Hate Comments**

Määttä and Vernet's (2023) found that there were complex uses of vocabulary in hate speech, including the use of impersonal, essential pronouns; the use of sarcasm; and the use of emotionally charged language in the expression of, or apparent validation of, hatred. Määttä (2023) also notes that hate speech often functions through implicit mechanisms that dehumanize certain groups, while deflecting the discursive responsibility of the author. The seven lexical toxicity dimensions (identity attack, insults, profanity) described by Pascual Ferrá et al. (2021) are utilized through coordinated vocabulary choices such as "disgusting creator" or "pathetic influencer" as a way to create hostility against other users through the combined use of derogatory vocabulary in a systematic manner that can be done without being moderated. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) also found four main discursive strategies, namely, labeling strategies that involve categorizing social actors by degrading or insulting them.

Predication strategies have the function of giving a negative perspective on the targeted group through broad quantifiers and generalizations. The argument strategy presents justifications in the opposing section using repetitive argument patterns (meaning of danger, meaning of burden, meaning of usefulness). The perspectivization strategy establishes a point of view that makes certain interpretations understandable by ruling out alternatives.

## **2.3 Van Dijk's Micro Level Analysis: Linguistic Features and Discursive Strategies**

Van Dijk (2015) states that micro-level discourse analysis focuses on the specific linguistic features of the text (or text types) including vocabulary, grammar, semantic structure, and rhetorical patterns that build meaning and present individuals. These linguistic features strategically shape how social actors are positioned and evaluated. Van Dijk's framework provides analytical tools for identifying the linguistic mechanisms through which hate comments encode negative characterizations of target such as James Charles.

### **2.3.1 Micro Level Analysis of Linguistic Features**

According to Van Dijk (2015) there are four key dimensions of language at the micro level that make up the meaning of discourse and encode ideologies. Lexical choice is how someone chooses the words that refer specifically to people and actions, and hate comments use derogatory words, negative labels and evaluative language to systematically construct those targeted by the hate comments in a derogatory way. Syntactic patterning is the rules that define how we arrange our words together grammatically, using passive voice to obscure agents; using active voice to draw attention to faults in someone; and using nominalization to create a permanent attribute from an action. The choice of syntax creates a negative impression of the target(s) and detracts from the full context of how the audience will interpret the target's identity and action.

Lastly, semantic structure is the ways in which sentences and the meanings of words relate to each other through propositions, implications, presuppositions, and patterns of coherence, and can be manipulated by using hate comments in order to produce an intended response in an audience by creating a negative stereotype of the target(s). Stylistic elements are rhetorical and expressive choices characteristic of the discourse, such as hyperbole to exaggerate negativity, irony, to mock the target and metaphors that describe the target through negative conceptual mapping. Among these four dimensions, lexical choice functions as the fundamental mechanism through which hate comments constructs identity, as the specific word selection in discourse systematically encodes stigmatizing representations that active and reinforce the audience's perceptions of targets, James Charles.

### **2.3.2 Discursive Strategies as Linguistic Patterns**

Van Dijk (2015) shows how different discourse structures can systematically instil ideas into people's heads. Hate comments utilise linguistic patterns to achieve this by using strategic Selection and Highlighting of Information such as continually emphasising negative information about the target and systematically omitting positive information, Focusing on certain incidents or statements from the target's past without giving consideration to counter evidence or context,

Creating a focus on negative characterisations of the target by placing them in headlines, at the top of articles, or with a high level of discourse prominence, thus making them more likely to be remembered by the audience. E.g., If James

Charles said something ambiguous, hate comments would focus on the least favourable interpretation of his words rather than explore the other interpretations.

Examples of False Causal Attribution are using casual connectors and syntactic structures that attribute negative outcomes directly to the target's actions. Assembling a false chain of causation placing the target in a negative light as an agent of malice and wrongdoing, i.e. he caused it. Using implicit / logical reasoning ("If 'he' did 'X' then it must be true 'Y'") through explicit causal linking in sentence structure. Example within context "The reason why he got 'canceled is because of his fundamental flaws" vs. "The reason that he had criticism about specific comments."

Examples of Language Manipulation (Abstraction Levels) like using quick and sarcastic, non specific, and abstract expressions on the target's perspective. Using concrete, vivid, and emotionally charged expressions to describe the target. Using metaphorical representations uses negatively charged words in the description. Example from context "He destroyed the self esteem of his followers" vs. "He made a number of comments that could be interpreted as problematic." Quest for Universal Quantification Generalization: Using language to suggest that negative characteristics are immutable/permanent and universal. Using predications employing "is" (state) rather than "does" (action, behaviour, change). Using generic statements to treat specific events as representative of a lasting characteristic of a person. Example from context "He is a really bad person" vs. "He made a terrible comment." In the context of this study, these discursive strategies are applied to

examine how they operate in hate comments across James Charles's TikTok content, thereby directly addressing the second research question of this study.

Both Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level CDA and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach are embedded within the larger tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis that assumes in its core that language is a space in which ideology is constructed and society is reproduced. Van Dijk's micro level framework is the main analytical lens of this study to identify the specific linguistic features that make up hate comments (RQ1), and Reisigl and Wodak's discursive strategies is used as an operational instrument to investigate how discursive strategies operate in hate comments across James Charles's TikTok content (RQ2). This two-framework integration is thus a methodological complement: the micro-level features identified through Van Dijk provide the linguistic evidence, and the discursive strategies identified through Reisigl and Wodak provide the interpretive framework for understanding what those features do discursively.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research employs a qualitative research design, with a descriptive explorative approach, to examine the linguistic construction of hate comments on James Charles's TikTok content (Ary et al., 2010). Qualitative research, as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2018), is an interpretive approach that situates the researcher within the world through a set of material practices including observation, documentation, and reflection that transform real-world phenomena into meaningful representations.

The study is based on the assumption that language is not a neutral medium but a domain where power relations and ideologies are reproduced and reinforced (Van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 2003), and thus it draws on the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis . Within this study, hate comments is conceptualized as a discursive form of social power, i.e. the power exerted by anonymous users to delegitimize, dehumanize and ideologically position James Charles as a socially unworthy subject, and not simply as an act of hostility expressed through language.

Lastly, this research was descriptive and exploratory in nature, aiming to describe and analyze linguistic features and discursive strategies through which hate comments targeting James Charles is constructed, rather than testing predetermined hypotheses. The descriptive dimension systematically identifies and describes the linguistic features present in the data, while the explorative dimension

investigates a phenomenon creator targeted hate comments on TikTok that remains underexplored in micro level CDA scholarship.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

### **3.2.1 Data Source and Context**

To answer the questions posed by this research, the data are collected via viewers' comments on TikTok that were posted about James Charles. James Charles is an established content creator or influencer with over 40 million followers on TikTok, who gets constant high levels of positive and negative interaction through his comments. The data collected come from 5 TikTok videos posted by James Charles that fall within the March 2024 to June 2025 time period. The videos have been purposefully selected, based on the following criteria: 1) the videos must fall within the time frame indicated above; 2) the videos must have a high number of comments and a large percentage of those comments indicated as hate based on the definition provided earlier in Section 3.2.2; and 3) the videos must vary across content types to get a true randomness to the data. Specifically, the selected five videos for analysis were selected because they capture James Charles performing daily activities like travel, personal celebrations, festival attendance, and food reviews that introduce content on everyday lifestyle themes. They therefore provide a suitable context for examining the linguistic patterns of hostile comments constructed in response to creator-focused content on TikTok. Each selected video provides a total of 5 comments (based on the section 3.2.2 inclusion criteria) for a grand total of 25 comments for use as the primary data.

### **3.2.2 Sample Selection and Characteristics**

Sampling Strategy Made: This research deploys a purposive sampling where a systematic selection of comments based on predetermined criteria that are relevant to the research questions instead of randomly selected or convenience sampling. The use of purposive sampling enables identification of data that is rich in information regarding the phenomenon at hand.

The Selection Criteria includes: Explicit expression of hate comments; i.e., use of degrading language, derogatory terms, dehumanising language, etc. Directed towards James Charles: Comments addressing or mentioning James Charles. Substantive length: Comments containing enough material to be included for a meaningful analysis (the bare minimum is a complete sentence that enables discursive strategy identification). Visibility and accessibility: Comments that are visible and accessible for researchers to observe on the platform during data collection. Language: Comments only written in English, this ensures that the researchers understand the linguistic context of the comment and its full meaning.

Exclusionary Criteria such as Comments that are excluded in the analysis that meet the following criteria: Comments consisting solely of emojis, links, or abbreviated expression without any linguistic substance Comments that are mainly self promotional or not in the same context of the situation. Comments that are inaccessible to the researchers during the time of analysis.

### **3.2.3 Data Collection Procedures**

Manual Collection Method: to follow TikTok's terms of service, by restricting the use of automated data collection, this research manually collects and

document comments by the researchers. This manual collection involves: Systematic Browsing of James Charles' TikTok uploads within the specified timeframe of March 2024 to June 2025, Making sure the comments meet the selection criteria, Screenshotting or creating direct transcriptions of comments, including the comment's metadata (Date, Comment position, likes), Documentation of context by giving a brief description of the video context to connect it with the comments of contextual meaning.

Documentation of Metadata for each collected comment, the following data on the comment are noted down: Transcription, Associated video title and upload date, Comment position, Comment reply and like count.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The data in this study were analyzed through a systematic multi-stage process. Thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytical technique to identify and group recurring linguistic patterns across the 25 collected comments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These patterns were then interpreted through two theoretical frameworks: Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level Critical Discourse Analysis, which serves as the main theory for examining linguistic features in relation to RQ 1, and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach, which guided the analysis of how discursive strategies operate in hate comments in relation to RQ 2.

Building upon the theoretical framework described above, the following outlines the multi-stage analytical procedures applied in this study.

### **3.3.1 Analytical Framework: Van Dijk's (2015) Critical Discourse Analysis**

Data analysis is based on Van Dijk's (2015) Critical Discourse Analysis framework with explicit emphasis on micro level linguistic analysis. This micro level analysis focuses on the observable linguistic features lexical choice, syntactical patterns, semantic structure, and rhetorical strategies that systematically construct representation within hate comments discourse. The analytical framework examines how specific language choices encode particular meanings and position social actors through discursive strategies. In addition, the discursive strategies proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) namely, nomination, predication, argumentation and perspectivization were applied to examine how these strategies operate in hate comments across James Charles's TikTok content, thereby directly addressing the second research question of this study.

### **3.3.2 Analytical Procedures: Multi-Stage Process**

#### **Stage 1: Involves Initial Reading and Familiarization**

This research has collected various data by comments made by viewers in the comment sections of James Charles on TikTok with the objective of developing intimate familiarity with the data and not preliminary patterns, recurring themes and notable features. The further analysis of these comments is also used to exemplify discursive characteristics with reason to develop initial analytical impressions through prior systematic coding. This stage of the research gives the research immersion on what the data is without putting on predetermined categories which allows emergent patterns to become more visible.

## Stage 2: Focuses on Micro Level Linguistic Analysis

This stage of the analysis focuses on 4 main linguistic analysis that occur in the patterns that represent itself in the Critical Discourse Analysis. These 4 linguistic analyses are Lexical, Syntactic, Rhetorical and Stylistic, and Semantic Analysis. Lexical Analysis emphasizes breaking down texts and turning them into meaningful tokens with connection to the original context. Syntactic Analysis focuses on breaking down sentences to understand their grammatical structure. Rhetorical and Stylistic Features shift towards how language choices create and evoke emotions towards how the sentence is perceived. Finally, Semantic Analysis focuses on words and phrases that create meaning in linguistics.

## Stage 3: Analyzes Micro Level Discursive Strategies

This stage analyzes how linguistic features are systematically applied through discursive strategies to construct negative representations. Based on the framework of Reisigl and Wodak (2001), which expands on Van Dijk's micro analysis, this stage identifies four main discursive strategies: The Naming Strategy analyzes how targets are linguistically designated and categorized through specific lexical choice, labels and descriptors provided in the discourse.

The Predication Strategy looks at what attributes, qualities or characteristics are linguistically attributed to an identified target through adjectives, predicates, and evaluative language, with particular emphasis on the use of negative predication patterns or universal expressions. The Argumentation Strategy analyzes how the language structures a topic create opposing viewpoints based on cause and

effect, evidence, and the logic behind them according to the way words are combined with one another in sentences. The Perspectivization Strategy analyzes how the viewpoint is shown in the language through modalities, deictic markers, quoting and other features of language. Furthermore, this stage specifically examines how these discursive strategies manifest in commentators' responses, by investigating whether and how patterns of hate comments in James Charles's content reflect the commentators' subsequent linguistic choices.

Additional analytical dimensions include Information Selection and Emphasis, which analyzes which information is highlighted or ignored through linguistic devices such as topicalization, clause position, and emphasis markers; Abstract Level Manipulation, which analyzes shifts between concrete and abstract language through nominalization, metaphor, and varying levels of descriptive specificity; Patterns of Quantification and Generalization, identifying the use of universal quantifiers ("always," "never," 'all'), totalization expressions, and linguistic structures of generalization that transform specific examples into universal claims; and Causal Attribution Structures, analyzing how syntactic patterns and causal connectors ("because," "therefore," "since") construct attribution of agency and responsibility.

#### Stage 4: Integrates Analysis and Pattern Identification

In the final stage of this research, a systematic examination of the comments was conducted with the aim of identifying linguistic patterns that corresponded to the research questions. These patterns included: Recurring Discursive Patterns,

which identified consistent linguistic strategies across the comments; Variations in Strategy, which analyzed how different linguistic approaches constructed similar negative representations; Accumulative Linguistic Patterns, which analyze how the repeated use of similar language structures creates a reinforcing discursive effect; and Contextual Linguistic Manifestations, which document how linguistic strategies adapt to different video contexts.

### **3.4 Validity and Trustworthiness**

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative Validity Standards**

This research pursues trustworthiness through several validity and credibility factors in order to represent the phenomenon accurately. Credibility (internal validity) is the confidence of this research to present this social and linguistic phenomenon as accurate. The strategies used to claim the credibility of the data is prolonged engagement, persistent observation of the comments, triangulations to integrate multiple analytical perspectives using Van Dijk's framework, peer debriefing to discuss analytical findings with fellow researchers, and reflexive analysis to keep the attention on theoretical framework and potential biases. Transferability (External Validity) refers to the possibility that the findings made in this research may have relevance beyond the specified case studies.

The strategies used to achieve are thick descriptions of the comments with rich and detailed descriptions of analytical procedures, clear theoretical grounding to keep the research connected with the basic theory of said research, and contextual documentation of the comments in order to have the sample comments having

relevancy to the topic and research at hand. Confirmability (Objectivity) of this research gives assurance that the findings made in this research reflects data and theoretical framework instead of including researcher's bias to the findings.

### **3.4.2 Discourse Analytical Quality Standards.**

In this specific research, discourse analysis is required to further complete this research due to the general qualitative standard being insufficient. The Discourse Analytical Quality Standard is based on 4 points of analysis that consist of Systematic and fine grained analysis to have a detailed examination of linguistic features. Contextualization of the issue that contributes towards the research. Theoretical Coherence to integrate the analytical findings with the theoretical framework of this research. Lastly, Transparency on interpretation is needed to have a clear explanation on how the research findings is interpreted in this research.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Due to the data collected in this research is done by using already available reactions, comments, and thoughts by people on the TikTok platform without any effects done by this research beforehand, it complies with the ethical standards governing human subjects research depending on institutional requirements such as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee approval. Further measures are taking place for this research to keep the privacy and safety of commenters online by keeping the commenters anonymized and process similar comments made by multiple comments as one expression to give space and keeping things simple. Furthermore, the reason for excluding usernames from the dataset

was the data validity problem as most of the hate comments on TikTok are made by users with pseudonymous or fake accounts that can be changed or deleted at any time. Including usernames, it argued, would create unverifiable and possibly volatile data points that might undermine the reliability of the analysis.

With the nature of this research targeting its focus on hate comments, further ethical considerations are also taking place by doing harm justification, academic contribution, responsible reporting, and researcher wellbeing. This research also takes into account the vulnerable groups that can be targeted by doing respectful treatment, avoiding victim blaming, and recognizing a systematic dimension.

### **3.5.1 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity**

In this qualitative research, it is a must that the researcher acknowledges the social position of the researcher. Theoretical assumptions, values, and interpretive frameworks shape and create an analytical process. Instead of trying to eliminate subjectivity, researchers in this research practice reflexivity in order to find critical reflection on how positionality influences this research. This includes several relations between the researchers and the contents of the research (Relationship of the researchers to the platform and to the topic of hate comments).

### **3.6 Limitations of Methodological Approach**

The limitations found in this methodological approach to answering the questions of this research are as follows, interpretive subjectivity, non generalizable sample, data volatility, platform constraints, and contextual incompleteness of the

material. Although this research has its own weaknesses. The data can be interpreted with validity and non-biased.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of a study examining hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This analysis is organised into two main sections corresponding to the two research questions set out in Chapter 1. The first section discusses the linguistic features representing hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content, analysed through Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level CDA framework, focusing on four analytical dimensions: lexical choice, syntactic patterns, semantic structure, and rhetorical strategies. This second section examines how the discursive strategies operate in hate comments across James Charles's TikTok content, which were analysed using the discourse strategies proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001): nomination, predication, argumentation, and perspectivisation. The data consists of 25 comments selected from five TikTok videos uploaded by James Charles between March 2024 and June 2025. Each video was chosen based on how relevant it was to the research criteria outlined in Chapter 3.

#### **4.1 Findings and Analysis**

This section addresses the first research question: "What are the linguistic features that constitute hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content?" This analysis applies Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level CDA framework to examine how specific linguistic choices in the selected comments construct and reinforce hate comments directed at James Charles. Each comment is analysed according to four micro-level dimensions: lexical choice, syntactic patterns, semantic structure, and

rhetorical strategies. The findings are presented on a video-by-video basis, with each subsection providing contextual information about the video, followed by analysis of each comment in two paragraphs: the first addressing linguistic features through Van Dijk's (2015) framework, and the second examining how the video content shapes commenters' discursive strategies through Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) framework. Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) framework focuses on four discursive strategies: nomination, which examines how targets are linguistically designated; predication, which identifies what negative attributes are assigned to the target; argumentation, which analyzes how hostility is linguistically justified; and perspectivization, which examines the point of view from which the target is constructed.

#### ***4.1.1 Video 1: "How I'm Arriving to London GB" (September 26, 2024)***

**Video Context:** In this video, James Charles is seen walking through central London in the rain whilst dragging a suitcase. The video caption says, "This is how I arrived in London GB." The video was light-hearted and non-controversial, but it still got 6,862 comments. Most of the comments were unkind and negative about James Charles being in London. The video had no explicit, controversial content, but it still received a lot of hostile responses. This shows that a creator's reputation for controversy affects how their audience reacts to a video, no matter what the content is.

#### ***Table 4.0.1 Comment Data Video 1***

| Code | Comment                                                                                                                                          | Date       |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| V1C1 | <i>"JAMES LEAVE LONDON RN"</i>                                                                                                                   | 2024-09-28 |
| V1C2 | <i>"London is officially more ruined lads we might have to call spurs or gunners fans at this point called England fans on him #safeenglsnd"</i> | 2024-10-30 |
| V1C3 | <i>"NO GET IT AWAY FROM ME"</i>                                                                                                                  | 2024-09-26 |
| V1C4 | <i>"we need to HIDE"</i>                                                                                                                         | 2024-09-27 |
| V1C5 | <i>"Good, he deserves them."</i>                                                                                                                 | 2024-09-29 |

### ***Analysis***

#### **V1C1 “JAMES LEAVE LONDON RN”**

The use of a direct and forceful imperative verb, namely “LEAVE,” indicates anger. The command sounds more urgent and aggressive when using the abbreviation “RN” (right now). The subjectless construction strips politeness and signals dominance over the target. The use of capitalised typography functions as a rhetorical and stylistic intensifier, mimicking shouted comments and reinforcing the emotional force of the command. At the semantic level, the comment implies that James Charles’s presence in London is fundamentally unwelcome or harmful, an assumption that encodes a negative characterisation without explicitly stating it.

These linguistic features, particularly the aggressive imperative construction and the semantic presupposition of unwanted presence, directly shape the discursive strategies deployed in this comment. The content represented in video

1 shows James Charles' arrival in London without any other context sparks pre-existing hostility in the comment section which is shown by imperative commands such as "JAMES CHARLES." analyzing the comment with naming strategies, James Charles is addressed by his full name in all capital letters, implying an aggressive form of naming that eliminates any form of a respectful relation. The content of the video, which shows James Charles in a public place, directly triggers this naming strategy. The command "LEAVE LONDON RN" is thus a perspectivization strategy in which London is constructed as a space from which James Charles is categorically excluded a positioning directly enabled by the content's depiction of his presence there.

#### **V1C2 *"London is officially more ruined lads..."***

The word "ruined" is used to talk about London's decline after James Charles's arrival, and implies a negative cause-and-effect relationship without saying it directly. The word "officially" is used in a mocking way to copy the formal language used by official institutions, in order to make fun of and say that James Charles should not be there. The sentence "London is officially more ruined" uses a stative verb combined with a comparative adjective. This makes the negativity seem like it is an ongoing and worsening condition, rather than a one-time event. The comment in question implies that the arrival of James Charles is a bad event for the whole city. This is made more clearly by the #safeengland hashtag, implying that England needs protection from James Charles. The comment uses exaggeration to make things seem more intense.

These lexical and syntactic choices directly enable the argumentation and perspectivization strategies in this comment. Video 1 shows James Charles arriving in London. The video cheerfully frames his arrival without mentioning his controversial reputation, creating a discursive gap that commentators fill with hostile argumentation. The commenter uses argumentation by constructing a causal claim: James Charles' arrival has made London "more ruined," and this is presented as an obvious fact that doesn't need explaining. The content in the video sparks the debate by showing James Charles arriving in London where it creates negative feedback. The creation and usage of the hashtag #safeengland shows that commenters who participate are a part of a group that sees James Charles as a threat to the country of England.

### **V1C3 “NO GET IT AWAY FROM ME”**

This comment stands out from the dataset at a linguistics level. In it, James Charles is referred to as “it” rather than “him.” Directly dehumanizing James Charles by replacing “him”, a human subject as “it”, a non-human pronoun where it correlates to the lexical level. This constitutes dehumanization through pronoun substitution, one of the most direct linguistic mechanisms used by comments that convey hatred in order to strip its target of humanity. Whereas in the syntactic level, the quoted phrase “GET IT AWAY FROM ME” creates a suggestion that the commenter is a victim who needs protection, while simultaneously framing James Charles as a threat or a malicious entity. Finally on the semantic level, this comment implies that James Charles is dangerous. This instance is expressed with the diction of “it” and the imperative phrase that distances him with “away from me.” This

comment exactly represents an example of lexical choice that degrade humanity in this dataset.

The dehumanizing pronominal substitution identified above directly enables the nomination strategy in this comment by replacing “him” with “it”, the commenter performs the most complete form of nomination denial, refusing to acknowledge James Charles as a human subject. The fact that the content shown in video 1 is lighthearted and non-confrontationally makes the present hostility in the comment section makes the comment-naming strategy even stronger by referring to James Charles as “it” which dehumanizes him as a person. It shows James Charles presenting himself visually where it triggers commenters to dehumanize him. The commenter positions themselves as a threatened party ("far from me"). This creates a situation where James Charles's visual presence in the video is seen as something that is not welcome.

#### **V1C4 “*we need to HIDE*”**

The capitalized verb “HIDE” functions as a rhetorical intensifier. It makes stand out amongst the rest of the sentence by creating a sense of urgency. It frames James Charles to seem like a threat that needs to be hidden from. The usage of the inclusive pronoun “we” is a very important part of the structure. This pronoun creates a group of people who are against James Charles. It also makes it seem normal to be against him by showing that everyone feels this way. At the level of meaning, the comment suggests that James Charles's presence is a threat that must be hidden. This aligns with the observation that hate comments often operate

through implication rather than what is explicitly stated. The phrase "we need to" also makes this unkind response seem like something that must be done, further entrenching the negative characterization of James Charles.

The collective syntactic construction identified in this comment directly triggers a perspectivization strategy. The inclusive pronoun "we" constructs a shared in-group united in hostility toward James Charles, a stance made possible by the video's depiction of his physical presence in public space. This comment shows how video content can bring about a shared way of thinking. The word "we", when used in this way, suggests that everyone agrees with this negative way of thinking. It implies that James Charles's presence in the video is reason enough for everyone to avoid him. There is also a naming strategy in place: James Charles is not named or addressed, but he is implied as the only person being referred to when it comes to hiding. This makes him seem like a person who is known everywhere as a threat without needing to give his name.

#### **V1C5 "*Good, he deserves them.*"**

This comment, posted in response to James Charles stepping over three streams which are considered bad luck in English folklore, is linguistically compact but analytically significant. At the word level, the positive adjective "Good" expresses satisfaction at another's bad luck. The verb "deserves" at the semantic level is a moral judgment. It implies that James Charles has committed a serious enough error to warrant punishment. At the structure level, the use of a stative verb ("deserves") rather than an action verb makes this moral judgement seem like a

fixed and permanent characteristic, rather than a response to a specific action. This short comment makes the condemnation seem final and obvious, as if it doesn't need to be explained.

The evaluative lexical choice and stative verb construction identified above directly enable a predication strategy the commenter attributes a fixed moral characteristic of unworthiness to James Charles, using the video's incidental bad luck as the occasion for a permanent moral judgement. This comment shows how video content can make people think about what is right and wrong without using explicit statements. A video of James Charles stepping on three water channels is the main story that people are commenting on. In English folklore, stepping on water channels is an action that is thought to bring bad luck. When people say "he deserves it," they are associating James Charles with the idea that he is undeserving, which is something that can only be judged based on the content of the video. Without the video as context, the commenter's moral judgement would have no discursive anchor. This shows an important finding about how TikTok content works: even content that seems neutral or funny can be used by commenters to express and strengthen their existing negative opinions of the creator. That this negative moral judgement doesn't need to be explained because it is thought to be common knowledge among the unfriendly audience.

#### ***4.1.2 Video 2: "it's my f\*\*\*in birthday (May 24, 2025)***

**Video Context:** James Charles celebrated his 26th birthday with a sunset party outside, blowing out the candles on his birthday cake. The content was all

about him celebrating himself and was a bit rude and this led to a lot of people commenting in a negative way and ruining the fun of the video.

**Table 4.0.2 Comment Data Video 2**

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Comment</b>                                       | <b>Date</b> |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| V2C1        | "Unhappiest birthday !!!"                            | 2025-05-24  |
| V2C2        | "let's not celebrate it"                             | 2025-05-24  |
| V2C3        | "didn't miss u"                                      | 2025-05-25  |
| V2C4        | "The fact that you're still getting likes is crazy." | 2025-05-25  |
| V2C5        | "It sucks having the same birthday as him"           | 2025-05-30  |

### ***Analysis***

#### **V2C1 “*Unhappiest birthday!!!*”**

The superlative construction “unhappiest” at the word level operates in direct opposition to the usual happy words used in birthday greetings, thereby turning a positive event into an expression of hostility. The use of the superlative form (“unhappy” versus “unhappiest”) instead of the comparative form indicates that negativity is conceptualized in terms of an absolute and total, rather than partial, quality. The comment deliberately reverses the structure of a birthday greeting ("Happy birthday" -> "Unhappiest birthday"). The triple exclamation mark makes the point louder and more strongly. At the semantic level, this comment uses irony to make fun of the idea that there are special birthday greetings, and it does this by

actually saying something that is not a greeting, which makes the hostility in the message clear.

This ironic lexical inversion is directly enabled by the celebratory framing of Video 2, which portrays James Charles's celebration as joyful and worthy of attention. This celebratory framing creates the discursive condition for the commenter's perspectivization strategy positioning James Charles's birthday as unworthy of acknowledgment. By doing this, the commenter gives a different opinion to the one in the content, and says that James Charles's birthday is not a good day to celebrate.

#### **V2C2 *“let’s not celebrate it”***

At the lexical level, the use of the pronoun “it” to refer to James Charles constitutes a form of dehumanization through pronoun substitution, which strips the target of their human status. The verb phrase “let’s not celebrate” employs an inclusive negative construction that triggers collective rejection. At the syntactic level, the hortative construction “let’s not” is highly significant this construction positions the commenter as the initiator of collective action, forming an inner group united in refusing to acknowledge James Charles's birthday. This syntactic choice transforms individual hostility into a collective directive. At the semantic level, the comment operates through an argument by way of omission by calling for a refusal to celebrate, the comment implies that James Charles is unworthy of celebration without stating the reason, treating this negative judgment as self-evident and

requiring no justification. Rhetorically, the use of lowercase letters and a calm tone reinforces the hostility through deliberately emphasized statements.

These dehumanizing lexical and syntactic choices directly trigger the nomination strategy in this comment the use of “it” rather than “him” is directly triggered by the video’s celebratory premise, which commenters reject by refusing to acknowledge even James Charles’s basic human status. The celebratory content of Video 2 makes the point in this comment clear. The video suggests that James Charles should be celebrated on his birthday, but others disagree and say that it is better not to celebrate.

### **V2C3 “*didn’t miss u*”**

The negative form of the verb “miss” (“didn’t miss”) is very important at the word level. Saying you miss someone is a sign that you like them and that you are close. But saying the opposite means you dislike them and you’re not close. Informal pronouns like “u” can make people more relaxed, but also more aggressive. Omitting the subject “I” makes for a short, direct sentence that sounds final. This makes the rejection is more powerful by having as few words as possible. At the semantic level, it implies that the time James Charles is away from Tiktok and the public spotlight. It also explicitly states that his absence is preferred which creates a negative predication of worthlessness. It is shown that its brevity functions as a stylistic rejection; the brevity itself shows that James Charles himself is not worth more than just a few words.

This predication of worthlessness is directly shaped by the content of Video 2, which James Charles's birthday as a return to public attention a framing the commenter sabotages by explicitly stating that his absence was preferable to his presence.

**V2C4 *"The fact that you're still getting likes is crazy."***

The word "crazy" in the comment is used by the comments to speak about James Charles' internet success negatively. Furthermore, the phrase "still getting likes" underlining the word "still" creates a suggestion that James Charles is an outdated character and should be left in the past with no attention. In another instance, a comment which uses the phrase "the fact that..." is used to frame the commenters subjective thought and opinions as an objective fact where it creates a more believable judgement than it already is. In this level of semantics, the comment conveys itself as an implicit argument; it does not state why James Charles is undeserving of his social status and fame but instead assumes that the reader of the comment already has the knowledge on why it is like that. Rhetorically, this comment uses a pseudo-rational tone in which it presents itself as a reasonable observation of the situation rather than an explicit attack on James Charles' character. Which is a linguistic strategy for indirectly encoding hate comments.

This pseudo rational argumentation is directly enabled by the video's high engagement its likes, views, and interactions provide the commenter with concrete evidence to construct the argument that James Charles no longer deserves platform

success. This backs up the commenter's claim that James Charles should not be thriving on the platform anymore. The visibility and engagement of the content directly enable this argument, as the commenter uses the video's performance itself as evidence against James Charles's legitimacy.

#### **V2C5 *"It sucks having the same birthday as him"***

The word "suck" in the comment is used to mean something really bad. It creates an impression in which the birthday is a bad thing where you shouldn't want it. At a syntactic level, the impersonal construction "it sucks" avoids directly addressing the situation, negating the negative evaluation and making it sound more like a general truth rather than a personal attack. This is a syntactic device that is used to normalize hostile feelings in which it is shown in the comment where it stigmatizes James Charles by association, meaning that he is so notorious that having the same birthday as him is an embarrassing thing to have. The notion of 'semantic contamination', in which the negativity of the target is seen as contagious, affecting those who are merely connected to it.

This mechanism of semantic contamination is directly triggered by the birthday video's explicit focus on James Charles's date of birth as a celebratory anchor, enabling commenters to construct his birth date itself as a source of stigma. It shows that somehow, something personal and celebratory which is made into content by a creator can be perceived as bad by a certain group. The video provides 23rd of May as the date in which James Charles' birthday is celebrated. The date is

then turned into a sign of something harmful due to the association of James Charles' birthday.

#### ***4.1.3 Video 3: "Home from Coachella" (April 2025)***

**Video Context:** James Charles filmed himself lying in bed, laughing, and waving at the camera after returning from the Coachella festival; the video's caption read, "Got home from Coachella late last night, instead of being stuck in traffic for 7 hours today." The laid-back, carefree demeanor in the video which shows James Charles appearing relaxed and unfazed despite his controversial reputation sparked negative reactions that directly undermined the lighthearted tone presented in the video.

***Table 4.0.3 Comment Data Video 3***

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Comment</b>                          | <b>Date</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
| V3C1        | "waking up pretending ur a good person" | 2025-05-03  |
| V3C2        | "you'll never change"                   | 2025-04-16  |
| V3C3        | "Count ur days"                         | 2025-05-04  |
| V3C4        | "This is was his last Coachella"        | 2025-05-06  |
| V3C5        | "james..."                              | 2025-04-19  |

#### ***Analysis***

##### ***V3C1 "waking up pretending ur a good person"***

This is the richest comment in language in the dataset to date. At the lexical level, the word "pretending" should be focused on analytically. It gives a suggestion

that James Charles is a deliberate deceiver where his self-presentation shown on the internet is false and performative. “A good person” is a moral category understood by most people, and so the accusation towards him is easily understood and is widely condemned by most. Syntactically, the gerund placed in “waking up pretending” is important to note as it connects the act of waking up with pretending. This gives an impression where the deception shown is automatic, habitual, and embedded in the daily routine of James Charles rather than an occasional act on the camera. This encodes the deception as a core element of James Charles’s character rather than an occasional action. Semantically, the comment is built on an ironic juxtaposition where the banal act of waking up is juxtaposed with the moral act of pretending. This produces a semantic tension which highlights the condemnation. Lastly, for style, the comment being in lower case conveys a conversational tone where it is an understatement in this context: a severe moral indictment is couched in a casual observation. The international tonal discord increases the effect of the comment.

These linguistics features particularly the gerund construction encoding habitual deception directly enable the predication strategy in this comment the video’s intimate domestic setting becomes the occasion for attributing deliberate inauthenticity to James Charles. This speculation was directly sparked by Video 3, which shows James Charles laughing and waving after spending the night at Coachella. The comment about “waking up” is directly from the video’s setting at home, suggesting that the content’s intimacy makes people think the worse of James Charles. The closer James Charles gets to the audience, the more negatively

commentators think about that closeness. The commenters' strategy is to show that they can see through the video's cheerful appearance to what they claim is its hidden deception.

### **V3C2 “*you’ll never change*”**

On the lexical level, the modal verb ‘never’ is an absolute negation of time, i.e., the negative features of James Charles are permanent and will not change. The strategy of universal quantification in which absolute language is employed. It implies that the subject’s negative characteristics cannot be changed. At the syntactic level, the comment “you’ll never change” has a deeper meaning than it already is. Whilst commenting on the present, it also gives a statement on the future of James Charles and how it frames him as someone who is unable to redeem himself by extending the negative predicate over time. It is also enhanced by the commenter using a second-person perspective while addressing James Charles as “you.” creating the illusion of direct confrontation. Semantically, the commenter creates the assumption that James Charles has shown his inability or unwillingness to change for the better, this assumption treats his negative reputation online as recurring and is a common knowledge. Furthermore, the declarative certainty of the comment persuades itself with a nature of authoritative dismissal, presenting a complex moral judgement as a simple and clear truth.

The temporal language and declarative finality identified above directly enable the argumentation strategy in this comment the video’s unbothered self presentation serves as the discursive trigger for the commenter’s claim that James

Charles is permanently unchanged. The video's relaxed and carefree presentation style directly supports the argumentative strategy at play here. By portraying himself as relaxed and happy without addressing the controversies surrounding him, the content conveys the implicit argument that James Charles considers himself unchanged and unremorseful a point explicitly confirmed by the commenter through statements phrased in the future tense.

### **V3C3 “*Count ur days*”**

On a lexical level, the comment “count your days” presents itself as an idiomatic threat where it implies James Charles' time in the public eye in this case, is running out. The implicit threat the idiom contains implies having consequences without mentioning anything specific, holding authority over James Charles's fate. The informal spelling “ur” for “your” creates a tonal contrast between a casual register and threatening content, functioning as a rhetorical strategy of normalized aggression the threat is delivered as casually as a text message. At the semantic level, this comment operates through implicature the phrase does not specify who is counting, for what purpose the days are being counted, or what will happen when the days run out; yet the threatening meaning is fully conveyed through shared cultural knowledge of the idiom. This deliberate ambiguity also functions as a strategy to evade moderation.

The idiomatic threat construction and normalized aggression identified above directly trigger the perspectivization strategy in this comment the commenter positions themselves as holding privileged knowledge of James Charles's imminent

disappearance from public life. The video content showing James Charles having fun in public at a major cultural event served as a discursive trigger for this strategy of perspectivization. The commentator positioned themselves as someone with special knowledge about James Charles's future, refuting the video's implication regarding the continuation of his public presence with the prediction that his career would soon come to an end. This perspectivization is directly triggered by the display of content showing the continued success of James Charles's platform; the fact that he is still attending Coachella and posting content about it serves as a trigger for a threatening response. This argumentative strategy is implicit the threat presupposes a shared understanding of why James Charles's days are numbered, treating this negative assessment as something that requires no further explanation.

#### **V3C4 “*This is was his last Coachella*”**

"....last Coachella" means that James Charles will never go to the festival again and that this was his last time. This suggests that his public life or career is likely to come to an end soon. The word “last” is a negative prediction, meaning that James Charles' future will be over, but without any explanation or reason. The typo “is was” on the level of the sentence (a mixing of present and past tense) is interesting in terms of time: it makes James Charles' Coachella attendance seem both current and past, which makes us think he won't be around for much longer. Semantically, the comment employs a form of argumentation that is akin to prophecy. The commenter positions themselves as someone who can predict and

declare the end of James Charles' career. Presented in the form of facts (not opinions) but as something which is definitely going to happen.

The predictive lexical choice and temporal ambiguity identified above directly enable the argumentation strategy in this comment the video's depiction of James Charles at Coachella becomes the final data point in a prophetic claim about the end of his public presence. The specific reference in the video to Coachella as a recent experience directly supports the predictive strategy in these comments. By providing a factual basis in the form of his presence at Coachella, the content gives commenters a specific opportunity to predict the end of James Charles's public life. A perspectivization strategy portrays commenters as prophets of James Charles's downfall, a position directly enabled by the content's portrayal of his ongoing public success.

### **V3C5 "James..."**

The only word used to refer to him is "James." Using only his first name, without any other information, makes it feel familiar, yet the lack of information actually makes it feel strange. The ellipsis (...) is the key element we notice when analyzing it at the semantic level: it indicates disapproval and suggests that James Charles's actions or even his very presence are so bad that words cannot describe them. This is similar to what Van Dijk (2015) states, namely that what people do not say in a conversation can be just as important as what they do say. The comment in question does not use the basic structure for a sentence. In it, there is no verb, predicate, and complement. It indicates that James Charles does not fit the category

of how a normal person should function and cannot follow through with conventional language rules. . the comment employs a strategy called ‘performative speechlessness,’ when someone is so shocked at something that they cannot find the right words to say. This makes the commenter appear as though they are unable to speak because they are so upset by the negative aspects associated with James Charles.

This performative speechlessness directly enables the nomination strategy in this comment the video’s intimate self presentation triggers a response that acknowledge James Charles’s existence while simultaneously refusing him any further engagement. The intimate self-portrayal in the video in which James Charles films himself in bed, in a private room at home directly triggers the naming strategy in this comment. By presenting himself in an unpretentious, personal moment, James Charles implicitly invites a personal response from his audience. The commenter responds using only his first name, without any relational warmth, employing a naming strategy to acknowledge his presence while simultaneously refusing further engagement with him. The addition of the ellipsis transforms the comment into a strategy of perspectivization by creating a pause after mentioning the name of James Charles, it positions itself as strongly disagreeing without further explaining on why. It implies that merely mentioning his name is enough to communicate to others the negative judgement his name holds. The intimacy of the content then backfires discursively; the more intimately James Charles presents himself, the more the naming strategy is used as a weapon to attack him.

#### ***4.1.4 Video 4: "If I had a dollar for every time I've fallen down these stairs..."***

***(Juni 2025)***

**Video Context:** James Charles posted a still image of the stairs in his home with the caption “for everyone asking for the full video,” implying that he had previously fallen down the stairs and that this video was a response to public demand for the footage. The self-deprecating nature of the content, combined with James Charles’s controversial reputation, sparked a flood of hostile comments in the comments section, with users using his physical accident as a pretext to launch moral attacks.

***Table 4.0.4 Comment Data Video 4***

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Comment</b>                                              | <b>Date</b> |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| V4C1        | "the fact this isn't the first time"                        | 2025-06-04  |
| V4C2        | "the way you stood up and just acted like nothing happened" | 2025-06-04  |
| V4C3        | "Oh so everyone disregarded his actions"                    | 2025-06-04  |
| V4C4        | "brings a smile to my face"                                 | 2025-06-04  |
| V4C5        | "I hope the stairs are okay xx"                             | 2025-06-04  |

#### ***Analysis***

##### ***V4C1 "the fact this isn't the first time"***

The phrase "the fact" is used to make a comment seem true. It makes the comment seem more than just an opinion or interpretation, so the listener believes

it is objective. The phrase "isn't the first time" suggests that what James Charles experienced was a pattern of behaviour, not just a one-time thing. This sentence is a group of words that tells us something about the structure of the language. It is a type of clause that doesn't have a verb. Because it doesn't have a verb, it is not complete. It is like a statement that is waiting for something to be added to it. This statement implies something, but it doesn't say it directly. What is left unsaid in hate comments can be just as powerful as what is explicitly stated. At the level of meaning, the comment uses hidden meaning; the phrase "falling repeatedly" suggests something more than just physical action, and hints at a pattern of carelessness or failure to do the right thing. The use of lowercase letters and a casual way of writing makes it seem like a small thing, which makes the moral judgement seem harsher.

The truth claiming device and suspended nominal construction identified above directly enable the argumentation strategy in this comment the video's self referential admission of repeated falls becomes the factual anchor for a claim about James Charles's recurring negative patterns. The video content on the stairs, which indirectly acknowledges repeated physical accidents, is the factual basis for the argument here in a direct sense. The story is told in a way that makes it seem like the person writing it is aware of the incident of falling, and then uses that to say James Charles is always acting in a negative manner. The content admits to being repetitive ("every time I fall") and then proceeds to make a case about James Charles' character.

#### **V4C2 *"the way you stood up and just acted like nothing happened"***

The phrase "acting as if nothing had happened" is the most important part of the analysis. The verb "acting" suggests that James Charles was being insincere and was putting on a show. This means that his calm response to his fall was not natural, but was a fake. This fits with the general idea that James Charles is not genuine. The way you... is a way of expressing strong emotion, typically disbelief or condemnation, without saying it directly. This way of arranging words gives the impression of being neutral, but actually includes a hidden judgement. At the semantic level, the comment operates through an implicit negative predication James Charles is not directly called dishonest, but the portrayal of his calmness as "acting" establishes insincerity as his defining characteristic. Rhetorically, the comment employs an ironic observation that presents what appears to be a description of physical behavior as a vehicle for moral condemnation.

The predication of inauthenticity encoded through the verb "acting" directly shapes the perspectivization strategy in this comment the video's composed self presentation becomes evidence of deliberate deception rather than natural resilience. The commentator thinks this is a sign that he is not being real. This choice of editorial then leads to a negative interpretation; the commentator sees James Charles's calm behaviour in the video as proof that he is putting on a show. This strategy of perspectivization positions the commentator as the party who sees through James Charles's calm self-presentation, all the way to the alleged deception behind it.

### **V4C3 *"Oh so everyone disregarded his actions"***

In its simplest form, the verb “disregarded” implies that James Charles’s audience was morally negligent. This implies that his previous deeds were significant enough to be still open to criticism and that his fans who keep watching his work are aiding to forget these errors. It’s got a lot of meaning behind the vague noun “actions.” The word purposely doesn’t specify what James Charles did, and thus people assume the target audience already knows what he did wrong. Rhetorically, the "Oh so..." question is sarcastic and suggests that the conclusion (that everyone has forgiven James Charles) is untrue. It does this by implying that the conclusion is one which it is surprised at, and which is morally unacceptable. The comment uses an argument based on morals, creating a discussion where it is wrong to continue to support James Charles, on the level of meaning. The exclamation "Oh" is used to show disbelief, which makes the moral judgment even more sarcastic.

The sarcastic argumentation and moral appeal identified above are directly enabled by the video’s casual self deprecating tone, which implicitly invites normalization an invitation the commenter explicitly rejects. The casual and self-deprecating tone of the video content, which treats the fall as something funny, directly triggers the argumentative strategy at play here. By posting entertaining content about the fall, James Charles implicitly invites viewers to forget about it and interact with him as usual an approach that the commenter then refutes with the argument that such normalization is morally unacceptable. The perspectivization

strategy portrays the commenter as a moral guardian who refuses to participate in the normalization implicitly encouraged by the video content. The entertainment framework of the content thus becomes a discursive opportunity for that argument.

#### **V4C4 "*brings a smile to my face*"**

The phrase "brings a smile to my face" is usually a positive expression. But when we apply it to the time James Charles fell down the stairs, it shows that we are pleased about his misfortune. This normally positive vocabulary is actually an ironic way of saying the opposite, using positive words to hide negative feelings. When you use the subjectless construction "brings" instead of "it brings", you get a shorter and more casual way of expressing things. It makes it seem like it's obvious that someone else's suffering is happening, rather than needing to explain why it is. At the semantic level, the comment is about making fun of James Charles by talking about his physical injury. This makes him seem like a joke rather than a person who deserves attention. The brevity of the comment and its positive vocabulary constitute a form of normalized aggression of showing aggression, using the language of joy to convey hostility.

The ironic lexical inversion and normalized aggression identified above directly enable the perspectivization strategy in this comment the video's depiction of James Charles's physical misfortune becomes an occasion for expressing pleasure rather than concern. Video content depicting the physical consequences of James Charles's fall directly supports a strategy of perspectivization in this context. This content provides the commentator with an opportunity to establish a position

in which James Charles's misfortune becomes a source of amusement, by portraying the fall as something deserved rather than something regrettable. A predication strategy is also present simultaneously through expressions of delight at James Charles's fall; the commentator implicitly attributes to him the characteristic that he deserves to face danger, a predication made possible by the depiction of his physical vulnerability in the content. The self-deprecating video frame, which initially invited sympathy, is thus turned into an opportunity for hostile perspectivization.

#### **V4C5 *"I hope the stairs are okay xx"***

On a lexical level, Expressing concern for the staircase rather than for James Charles represents an ironic shift of sympathy where it deprives him of humane treatment by pivoting towards an inanimate object. The closing symbols "xx" representing kisses reinforces this irony by disguising the sympathy as warm and sincere whilst denying James Charles the same treatment. At the syntactic level, the structure of the comment is similar to an everyday conversational question that expresses concern such as "I hope you're okay," in this context the word "you" is substituted as "the stairs" and shown as deliberate and hostile. Finally, on the semantic level, this particular comment functions through dehumanization by removing James Charles from the structure of the sentence. Implying that an inanimate object deserves more concern than James Charles himself. Rhetorically, this comment represents the most sophisticated mechanism of hate comments in

this dataset the total absence of James Charles in a comment about his own fall constitutes the most profound form of rejection.

The ironic displacement of sympathy and dehumanization by omission identified above are directly enabled by the video's exclusive visual focus on the staircase, which provides the discursive occasion for redirecting concern toward an inanimate object rather than James Charles himself. The video's exclusive focus on the stairs where James Charles actually filmed the stairs rather than himself unwittingly provided the perfect discursive opportunity for the strategy of designation in this comment. By placing the staircase at the visual center, the content allows the commenter to shift attention toward the staircase rather than James Charles, thereby implementing a strategy of designation in which the staircase is treated more humanely than James Charles himself. This perspectivization strategy positions the commenter as someone whose concern for an inanimate object exceeds their concern for James Charles, a perspectivization that constitutes one of the most complete discursive rejections of James Charles' humanity across all five videos.

#### ***4.1.5 Video 5: "Fruit Pastries Review" (May 30, 2025)***

**Video Context:** James Charles tries five fruit-shaped desserts from Aurora bakery in Los Angeles. Desserts ranged from \$92 to \$110. -It is shown in the video that James Charles tries out each dessert and speaks his mind on them. His approach to the review does not mix well with the ongoing controversial status online. Instead

of focusing on his sincere remarks in the review, the comment section uses the food review video as a forum to argue about his constant presence in public.

***Table 4.0.5 Comment Data Video 5***

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Comment</b>                                                  | <b>Date</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| V5C1        | "yall are moving on too fast"                                   | 2025-05-30  |
| V5C2        | "so everyone just for giving him for what he did?"              | 2025-05-30  |
| V5C3        | "what did he NOT do"                                            | 2025-05-31  |
| V5C4        | "'I already feel gross' you had 3 bites"                        | 2025-05-30  |
| V5C5        | "'He's so unbothered' what else should he do<br>pleaaassee??!!" | 2025-05-30  |

### ***Analysis***

#### ***V5C1 "yall are moving on too fast"***

On the lexical level, one comment mentions “moving on too fast,” conveying a moral urgency. The usage of the word “too” functions as a normative judgement which implies a correct and slower pace to process a situation. Implying that James Charles has violated what should be the norm. At the syntactic level, the second person plural address “y’all” constructs a collective audience positioned as morally negligent, shifting the hostile judgment from James Charles to his viewers as the implicated party. In the context of semantics, the comment implies an argument where it is assumed that James Charles has done something that requires public accountability. This treats the premise as something mutually agreed upon

by everyone. It should also be mentioned that the comment deploys moral oversight as a linguistic strategy that gives the commenter a moral high ground in the context of having appropriate collective behaviour in relation to James Charles.

The moral urgency encoded through normative judgment directly enables the argumentation strategy in this comment the video's ordinary lifestyle framing becomes a discursive provocation against which the commenter positions themselves as a moral guardian. A completely ordinary and uncontroversial fruit cake review video in which James Charles tastes the dessert and offers his assessment directly triggers the argumentative strategy at play here. By posting ordinary lifestyle content, James Charles implicitly positions himself as a figure who has moved beyond his past controversies, which is then challenged by the commenter with the argument that the audience's acceptance of this normalization is still premature. The very nature of such content becomes a discursive provocation: the more normal the content appears, the more it sparks debate over whether such normalization is appropriate. This strategy of perspectivization positions the commenter as a moral guardian opposing the normalization implicitly promoted by the video content.

**V5C2 *"so everyone just for giving him for what he did?"***

On a lexical level, the comment "for giving," a direct misspelling of forgiving, carries a moral condemnation which portrays further relation with James Charles as an unwarranted and premature act of forgiveness. It is also strengthened with the vague statement "what he did" serving as a prefix of prejudice. It assumes

that James Charles has done some wrong doing without explicitly specifying it, thereby treating the occurring negative judgement as commonly shared knowledge. Taking into account the syntactic context of the comment, the rhetorical question is structured to encode a sarcastic argument where it is used to express moral disbelief in an audience's continued support instead of a sincere question. Semantically, the comment uses moral appeal to portray continued support for James Charles as an ethical failure. Rhetorically, it presents the condemnation as a clear conclusion needing no further explanation.

The presuppositional trigger and sarcastic rhetorical question identified above directly enable the argumentation strategy in this comment the video's casual food review format implicitly invites normalization that the commenter refuses to accept. The casual, everyday style of video content presentation in this simple food review directly supports the argumentative strategy employed here. By presenting himself as an ordinary content creator making a food review, James Charles implicitly invites the audience to interact with him within that context an invitation rejected by the commentator through the argument that such normalization constitutes a form of unaccountable condoning. The perspectivization strategy portrays the commenter as someone who rejects the video's implicit invitation to normalize James Charles's public presence, while maintaining a critical stance toward the content's unremarkable narrative framework.

**V5C3 *"what did he NOT do"***

At the lexical level, the emphatic word “NOT,” written in capital letters, functions as a rhetorical intensifier, reinforcing the implication that James Charles has done everything wrong. The structure shown in the rhetorical question implies a hyperbolic argument by asking what James Charles has not done. Implying that the mistakes made by James Charles are so extensive it is difficult to list them one at a time. On the syntactic level, the comment has no subject to the rhetorical question “WHAT DID HE NOT DO” rather than “what has James Charles not done?” assumes shared referential knowledge that treats James Charles as a person famous for their transgressions and is treated as common knowledge. At the semantic level, the comment operates through universal negative quantification, encoding James Charles’s negative characteristics as something total and all-encompassing. Rhetorically, the comment employs an ironically dismissive statement through a hyperbolic question, presenting a comprehensive condemnation in four words.

The hyperbolic rhetorical question and universal negative identified above are directly triggered by the video’s attempt at ordinary self presentation, which the commenter counters by constructing James Charles’s wrongdoing as total and all encompassing. The video’s attempt at ordinary self presentation directly triggers the hyperbolic counter argument in this comment. This argument is based on a rhetorical question: the content is made to seem normal so that the argument can be made that James Charles's positive self-presentation doesn't match his true character.

#### V5C4 "*I already feel gross' you had 3 bites*"

The direct quote from James Charles' statement in the video ("I'm already feeling disgusted") is very important at the basic level. The commenter is using James Charles to demonstrate that he is being hypocritical or dishonest. The answer "you only took three bites" seems to suggest that James Charles is lying, because he looks more disgusted than he actually is. Structurally, the quoted statement and the counter-evidence are placed side by side. This produces an unstated argument structure : premise (James Charles says he feels disgusted ) + counter-evidence (he only took three bites) = conclusion (James Charles is dishonest or exaggerating). The comment discredits his credibility at the semantic level, by using the content of the video itself as evidence of James Charles' lack of reliability in narrating his own experience.

The evidential argumentation structure identified above is uniquely enabled by the video content itself James Charles's own words from the review are directly weaponized as proof of his inauthenticity. The video content directly provides linguistic material for this commenter's argumentative strategy; the commenter uses James Charles's own words from the video as evidence to attack him. This is the most direct form of hate comments triggered by content among the five videos: the content itself serves as the basis for the hostile argument. This predication strategy links dishonesty and exaggeration as fixed characteristics of James Charles, with the video transcript itself serving as the evidence. Thus, the content becomes

self-incriminating evidence; James Charles's efforts to be honest and relatable are instead exploited as proof of his inauthenticity.

**V5C5 *"'He's so unbothered' what else should he do pleaaassee??!!"***

At the lexical level, the elongated spelling "pleaaassee" functions as a phonological intensifier, expressing irritation and a dismissive attitude through the graphic representation of the drawn-out utterance. The quoted phrase "He's so unbothered" adopts the language of another commentator, thereby creating a meta-discursive argument that the commentator is not only responding to James Charles, but also to other commentators defending him. At the syntactic level, the rhetorical question "what else should he do" encodes a defensive argument on behalf of James Charles's critics; this implies that expectations of James Charles are unreasonable, while simultaneously encoding the premise that he fundamentally has flaws. At the semantic level, the comment uses perspectivization via quotation by citing and other commenter's defending James Charles. It establishes a discursive battlefield where James Charles' legitimacy is debated between two parties with differing views on the situation. Noting that the double exclamation marks (??!!) portrays an emotional intensifier that amplifies the sense of irritation that words cannot portray.

The discursive argumentation and perspectivization by quotation identified above are directly triggered by the video's deliberately casual and unbothered tone, which becomes the discursive occasion for a debate about whether James Charles's composure is acceptable. The deliberate casual and seemingly indifferent tone of the video in which James Charles calmly samples a dessert and offers his

assessment without directly addressing the controversy surrounding him directly triggers a strategy of perspectivization in this comment. The commenter adopts another viewer's observation ("He's so relaxed") and transforms it into a discursive debate over whether James Charles's composure is acceptable. The casual tone of the content then becomes an opportunity for a meta-argumentative strategy in which the legitimacy of James Charles's continued public presence is debated through conflicting perspectives. The unremarkable professionalism in the video in which James Charles is simply performing his duties as a content creator paradoxically reinforces the hostile perspectivization by demonstrating his sustained and unapologetic public presence.

## 4.2 Discussion

Table below summarizes the dominant linguistic features and their corresponding discursive strategies identified across the 25 analyzed comment. The following discussion elaborates on the most significant patterns emerging from this analysis.

**Table 4.6**

| <b>Linguistic Feature</b>                            | <b>Comments</b> | <b>Discursive Strategy (Reisigl &amp; Wodak, 2001)</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Pronominal substitution ("it" replacing "him")       | V1C3,<br>V2C2   | Nomination                                             |
| Imperative command with capitalization               | V1C1,<br>V1C4   | Perspectivization                                      |
| Stative verb encoding permanent negative predication | V1C5,<br>V3C2   | Predication                                            |
| Causal attribution through comparative adjective     | V1C2            | Argumentation                                          |
| Ironic lexical inversion (schadenfreude)             | V2C1,<br>V4C4   | Perspectivization                                      |

|                                                     |            |                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Collective rejection through hortative construction | V2C2       | Nomination        |
| Brevity as stylistic rejection                      | V2C3       | Predication       |
| Pseudo-rational framing ("the fact that...")        | V2C4, V4C1 | Argumentation     |
| Semantic contamination through association          | V2C5       | Predication       |
| Gerund construction encoding habitual deception     | V3C1       | Predication       |
| Absolute temporal negation ("never")                | V3C2       | Predication       |
| Idiomatic threat through implicature                | V3C3       | Perspectivization |
| Predictive lexical choice encoding career erasure   | V3C4       | Argumentation     |
| Performative speechlessness through ellipsis        | V3C5       | Nomination        |
| Implicit negative predication through verb "acting" | V4C2       | Predication       |
| Sarcastic moral argumentation ("Oh so...")          | V4C3       | Argumentation     |
| Ironic displacement of sympathy                     | V4C5       | Perspectivization |
| Normative moral judgment ("too fast")               | V5C1       | Argumentation     |
| Presuppositional trigger ("what he did")            | V5C2, V5C3 | Argumentation     |
| Evidential argumentation using video content        | V5C4       | Argumentation     |
| Perspectivization via quotation                     | V5C5       | Perspectivization |

This study's findings demonstrate a number of salient patterns of the linguistic construction of hate comments in the TikTok content of James Charles. This section presents the results of both research questions, discusses them in terms of the theoretical frameworks of Van Dijk (2015) and Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and links them up with the wider body of previous research.

Pronominal substitution was one of the most direct linguistic mechanisms used to construct hate comments directed at James Charles in the comments

analyzed from five TikTok videos, dehumanizing him. A strong example of this is during V1C3 commenting “NO GET IT AWAY FROM ME” and V2C2 “let’s not celebrate it” where James Charles pronoun as a male that uses “he/him” is substituted as “it,” stripping him of his humanity with a single lexical choice. This observation that lexical choice functions as a fundamental mechanism used by hate comments to encode negative identities, and extends it to the specific digital environment of TikTok comment discourse where such substitutions circulate without direct moderation.

On top of dehumanization, the use of negative commentary through the use of temporal language is a recurring instance in the database. Clearly shown in V3C2 “you will never change” and V4C1 “the fact that this isn’t the first time.” Commenters of both comments imply that James Charles as having a fixed negative characteristic that cannot be changed at all. This represents Van Dijk’s (2015) concept of semantic structure where it treats past events as characteristics of a person. This mechanism is crucial to eliminate the possibility of a character redemption from James Charles. This creates an implication of hostility towards him.

Another pattern worth pointing out is the occurrence of *schadenfreude* as an instance of hate towards James Charles by expression of joy towards his misfortune which is evident in V4C4 “brings a smile to my face” and V2C1 “unhappiest birthday!!!”. Both comments use lexical construction that is conventionally positive or neutral which is used as a reverse reaction to portray hostility, a strategy which is in Maata and Vernet’s (2023) identification of irony and sarcasm as linguistic

evasion strategies in online hate speech. The use of the construct in TikTok discourse targeting creators demonstrates how comments adapts to the platform's moderation environment by encoding aggression through positive emotional language.

A prominent trend across the analyzed comments is the implication of hostility through implicit arguments and biases, instead of explicit statements. Comments such as V5C2 ("so everyone just for giving him for what he did?") and V5C3 ("what did he NOT do") treat James Charles's mistakes as established, shared knowledge that requires no further explanation a strategy consistent with Van Dijk's (2015) observation that hate comments often operates through semantic implicatures rather than explicit statements. This finding confirms the observation by Mayagoitia-Soria et al. (2024) that hate comments on TikTok is mostly driven by implicit and veiled language, rather than overtly aggressive language, and shows how this pattern is particularly present in the discourse of comments directed at creators.

In relation to the second research question, the analysis reveals how the hate comments on James Charles's TikTok content reflect the commentators' pre existing hostile responses toward his content, manifested through recurring discursive strategies. A consistent pattern emerges in which content featuring James Charles engaging in ordinary, non-controversial activities such as videos of his arrival in London, his recovery at Coachella, and fruit cake reviews actually triggers the most intense debates and perspectivization. Commenters reject the normalization implicitly promoted by such ordinary content, indicating that for a

creator with a controversial reputation like James Charles, neutral content does not neutralize hostility but rather reinforces it by creating a discursive gap between the content's ordinary framework and the commenters' pre-existing hostile attitudes. This finding expands upon the demonstration by González Esteban et al. (2024) on how TikTok's algorithmic structure reinforces divisive language and how creator content acts as a discursive trigger regardless of explicit controversy.

The occurrence of content-driven responses can be shown in video 5 as a significant example. It shows that James Charles' own statement and remarks on reviewing fruit cake is cited in a comment in V5C4 as evidence of inauthenticity. This mechanism in which the content posted provides linguistic material to create a hostile argument for commenters. This similarly happens in the birthday celebration in video 2 where it shows a pattern of nomination and predication strategies that directly subvert the celebratory framework of the content which is consistent with Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) observation that discursive strategies are systematically shaped by the context in which they are applied.

Within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) these discursive patterns are not merely stylistic but show a deeper ideological structure. The mob-like construction of James Charles as permanently unworthy, morally irredeemable, and worthy of hostility, reveals an ideological framework in which public figures who fall outside of perceived social norms are denied their right to rehabilitation in the eyes of the online public. This reflects a unique power dynamic on creator-centric platforms: anonymous commenters collectively wield discursive power over the creator's public identity, constructing and reinforcing negative representations that leave the

creator with a very limited linguistic space to refute them within the comment section itself. This crowd-sourced moral policing, which operates through the implicit and veiled linguistic strategies that this analysis has uncovered, is an example of a form of ideological reproduction that normalizes and circulates hostility as common sense rather than as a structured form of discourse.

In sum, this analysis shows that dehumanization, permanent negative predication, schadenfreude and implicit prejudice jointly characterize the linguistic construction of hate comments in this dataset, acting via a sophisticated repertoire of implicit, veiled and ironic linguistic strategies that mirror and reproduce broader social hostility. These findings are further discussed in the concluding chapter that synthesizes the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study aims to examine the hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content using the Critical Discourse Analysis approach, with two research questions as follows: what are the linguistic features that represent hate comments in James Charles's TikTok content and how discursive strategies operate in hate comments across his TikTok content. The analysis was conducted on 25 comments purposively selected from five TikTok videos posted between March 2024 and June 2025, applying Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level Critical Discourse Analysis framework to address the first research question, and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) discourse strategies to address the second. The findings of this study yield substantive conclusions regarding the linguistic mechanisms of hate comments directed at creators on TikTok, as well as a formal contribution to the theoretical development of Critical Discourse Analysis in a digital context.

In response to the first research question, this study identified several dominant linguistic features that underpin the formation of hate comments directed at James Charles in the analyzed comments. The most direct of these is dehumanization through pronominal substitution, in which the personal pronoun "he" is replaced by the object pronoun "it," as seen in V1C3 ("NO GET IT AWAY FROM ME") and V2C2 ("let's not celebrate it"). This mechanism dehumanizes James Charles through the choice of a single lexeme, and is one of the most fundamental ways in which hate comments encode a dehumanization. According

to Van Dijk (2015), lexical choice is the major tool to construct negative identities in hate comments discourse. This paper extends this observation to the case of TikTok comment sections, showing how dehumanizing pronominal choices are circulated and perpetuated in digital environment without direct mediation by moderators.

A second major linguistic feature is the use of permanent negative predication through absolute temporal language, most apparent in V3C2 (“you will never change”) and V4C1 (“the fact that this isn’t the first time”). Commenters frame James Charles’s negative traits as fixed, unforgivable and, by definition, permanent rather than context-dependent: they use universal quantification, absolute negation and stative verbs. This is consistent with Van Dijk’s (2015) concepts of universal quantification and generalization, whereby generic statements are employed to treat specific events as representations of lasting characteristics, thus effectively erasing the discursive possibility of change or redemption from the identity constructed for the target. This permanent negative construction is ideologically loaded: not only does it describe James Charles, but it reproduces a social framework in which the discursive exclusion of certain individuals from the possibility of redemption is realized, demonstrating the way in which language functions as a site of power in digital public discourse. The fact that this feature is present in different videos means that permanence is a fundamental ideological element of the hate comments against the creator; the target is not only denounced for specific deeds, but is also constructed as a figure that fundamentally and irreparably has flaws.

The third key feature is the encoding of *schadenfreude* as a mechanism of hate comments that is, the expression of joy at the target's misfortune as seen in V4C4 ("brings a smile to my face") and V2C1 ("Unhappiest birthday!!!"). Lexical constructions that are conventionally positive or celebratory where it strategically inverts itself as a form of hostility is present in both examples. This pattern is consistent with Maata and Vernet's (2023) Identification of irony and sarcasm as a primary linguistic evasion strategies in online hate speech. It is underlined in its evasive nature where it hides aggression through positive emotional languages. The comments that use this linguistic structure are able to circulate without filtering and moderation issues due to its positive nature, demonstrating how hate comments adapt to platform restrictions.

The fourth and most frequent characteristic in the dataset is argumentation through prejudice. It occurs when hostile judgement is written in through what is assumed instead of what it is explicitly stated. Two examples of this are portrayed in comments V5C2 "so everyone justifies his actions? And V5C3 "what did he NOT do" creates an assumption where it is common knowledge that James Charles has done some wrongdoings without giving it further explanation and keeping it vague. This method is consistent with Van Dijk's (2015) finding that hate comments function with semantic implications and supports Mayagoitia-Soria et al.'s (2024) finding that the majority of hate comments on TikTok operate using hidden and implicit language instead of direct and aggressive language. What is important to note is that this feature is present in all five videos. The absence of

explicit controversy in their diction and structure suggests the implicit and hidden nature of the hate comment can thrive and target content creators on TikTok.

Answering the second research question, this study shows that discursive strategies are systematically used in hateful comments on James Charles's TikTok content, with each strategy playing a distinct role in the linguistic construction of hostility. The naming strategy dehumanizes James Charles through the pronoun substitution, as illustrated in V1C3 and V2C2, and negates any basic recognition of his humanity. In V3C2 and V4C1 the predication strategy functions to portray his negative traits as permanent and irreparable by using absolute temporal language and stative verbs. The argument strategy serves to rationalize hostility as morally rational and collectively grounded by treating the alleged mistakes committed by James Charles as clear common knowledge that requires no further explanation, most clearly seen in V5C2 and V5C3. The perspectivization strategy is to position the commenters as moral authorities who have the right to condemn and exclude James Charles from public legitimacy (V1C2, V3C3, V4C4 and V4C5). Most importantly, these four strategies do not work in isolation but rather form a coordinated discursive system, within which a consistent identity of hostility is collectively constructed and maintained across different video contexts. This finding builds on the work of González Esteban et al. (2024) in showing that hate comment strategies on TikTok are not random but systematically ordered, adapting their specific linguistic forms to the discursive contexts created by each video but consistently reproducing the same underlying hostility towards the creator.

This is clearly shown in Video 5, in which the content to response dynamic reveals that James Charles' statement "I already feel gross" from reviewing fruit pastry can be appropriated by a commenter shown in V5C4 as linguistic evidence of James Charles being inauthentic. This mechanism, where the contents of the video itself is the material used for hostile arguments against creators, reveals a distinct discursive vulnerability for creators who have controversial reputations online. Likewise, the birthday celebration of Video 2 creates a tight cluster of nomination and predication strategies that systematically invert the celebratory premise of the content; the more explicitly James Charles frames his content as worthy of celebration, the more intensely commentators employ strategies to deny that worthiness. Taken together, these patterns show that for a controversial reputation such as James Charles', the hostile discursive stance comes before the content and dictates how any content will be received and responded to linguistically, irrespective of the explicit subject matter or tone of the content.

Together these results fill the research gap identified in Chapter 1, and confirm the study's overall argument: hate comments targeting James Charles on TikTok is not an arbitrary or isolated phenomenon, but a linguistically structured and socially reinforced type of discourse. The identified features dehumanization, permanent negative predication, schadenfreude, and implicit presupposition form a coherent repertoire of linguistic strategies through which hostility is systematically constructed and communicated, while the patterns of discursive strategies that are identified as functional show that this hostility is mediated by the specific discursive contexts that are created by James Charles's content. In formal terms, this study

contributes to the theoretical development of Critical Discourse Analysis in digital contexts by demonstrating a productive integration between Van Dijk's (2015) micro-level framework and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) discursive strategies when analyzing creator-targeted hate comments on TikTok a domain that has been largely absent from existing CDA scholarship. In the final analysis this study confirms the central tenet of CDA that language is never neutral: the hate comments examined here are not random expressions of individual opinion, but structured ideological acts through which collective power is exercised, social norms enforced, and the discursive identity of a public figure systematically constructed and maintained.

Based on the findings, some suggestions are made to relevant stakeholders. The results show to TikTok and platform governance institutions that existing keyword-based mechanisms for content moderation are not sufficient to detect the implicit, coded, and ironic forms of hate comments common to comment sections directed at creators. As opposed to explicit swearing or use of aggressive language, true hostility is expressed through presupposition, pronominal substitution and ironic lexical reversal. Surface-level moderation systems miss the most toxic comments in this dataset. Thus, platform governance policies should invest in the development of context-sensitive moderation approaches that can detect hate comments at the level of semantic implicature and discursive strategy, rather than explicit lexical content. The finding that neutral, mundane content is as likely to be targeted as overtly controversial content challenges the assumption that content strategy can protect against hate comments for those who teach digital literacy and create content. Digital literacy programs should deal with the specific mechanisms

of online hate comments which work implicitly, so that creators and audiences alike can recognize and critically encounter coded hostility in its non-explicit forms.

It also provides some promising avenues for future researchers. While the dataset of 25 comments from five videos is rich in analytic value, it represents a limited sample. Future research should examine larger datasets across longer time periods to assess the stability of the identified patterns across James Charles' content history. As Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) observe, research on hate speech and social media remains disproportionately focused on Twitter and Western contexts. This study contributes to addressing that gap by examining TikTok, though future research should examine larger datasets across longer time periods to assess the stability of the identified patterns across James Charles' content history. The study also opens up an avenue for future research on the dynamics of multilingual hate comments in creator-targeted TikTok discourse, given that the present study only examined English-language comments. Finally, the prominence of memes, stickers and reaction images in the dataset (all of which were excluded from the present analysis because of its focus on textual data) suggests that multimodal analysis including visual elements alongside linguistic features is a particularly fruitful direction for future research in this domain.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE



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