

Multimodal Deconstruction of the French Official and Media 'Grudge Narrative' on Algeria: A Case Study of Emeline Becuwe's Sarcastic TikTok Discourse



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Summary:

The current study examines the strategic deployment of multimodal political sarcasm as a counter hegemonic tool against the “Grudge Narrative” in French media and political discourse on Algeria. Through Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) of three TikTok videos by French content creator Emeline Becuwe—“Vol pour l’Algérie”, “Envahisseurs Algériens”, and “L’Algérie expulse la France”—the analysis shows how her satirical interventions challenge and seek to dismantle official narratives. Becuwe mobilizes a convergence of linguistic irony, mocking auditory cues, and exaggerated visual performance to expose the French establishment’s reliance on pre-determined, anti-Algerian conclusions. The three case studies highlight escalating mechanisms: Hyperbolic Inevitability, Ironic Trivialization, and Sovereignty Inversion. The findings suggest that Becuwe’s multimodal sarcasm functions not merely as entertainment but can operate as a deliberate instrument of narrative inversion, offering resonant counter discourse to digital audiences and contributing to debates on digital political satire, post-colonial media, and multimodal resistance.

Keywords: multimodal discourse analysis; political sarcasm; grudge narrative; narrative inversion; post-colonial media.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between France and Algeria remains one of the most complex and emotionally charged in contemporary geopolitics, perpetually shaped by the enduring legacy of colonialism and the Algerian War of Independence (Stora, 2001). This historical weight manifests in the

public sphere as a persistent, often hostile, media and political discourse that frames Algeria not as a sovereign partner, but as a source of perpetual threat, blame, or resentment. This phenomenon is conceptualized as the "**Grudge Narrative**": a hegemonic discourse that consistently connects domestic French problems to Algerian influence, therefore maintaining a post-colonial power dynamic through narrative control (Van Dijk, 1993). The "Grudge Narrative" is characterized by a reliance on pre-determined conclusions, historical grievances, and the immediate designation of Algerians as the "ideal culprit" for various social and political ills.

1.1 The Enduring Legacy of the Grudge Narrative

The "Grudge Narrative" is a central concern within Critical Discourse Analysis, rooted deeply in France's unresolved colonial trauma (Stora, 2001). This narrative reconfigures France's collective memory by projecting domestic crises—ranging from economic downturns to social unrest—onto Algeria and its diaspora. By doing so, it operates as a deliberate political and media strategy of "othering" (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001). Ultimately, this discourse sustains a perceived threat to national identity as a means to divert public attention from internal structural failures (Fairclough, 1995).

1.2 The Digital Shift and the Rise of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse

Recently, this narrative has moved onto digital platforms, where short-form video and social media challenge the traditional gatekeeping power of legacy media. The viral affordances of these platforms enable rapid circulation of counter-discourses that circumvent editorial filters, fostering new forms of political critique. Within this environment, French content creator Emeline Becuwe and her TikTok series *Journal de Personne* deploy sarcasm to push the Grudge Narrative to absurd extremes and expose its logic. Her status as a non-Algerian French commentator is crucial, as her sarcasm functions as an internal critique of French official discourse rather than an external "Algerian" attack.

1.3 Research Focus and Contribution

This article analyses the digital counter-discourse crafted by Emeline Becuwe through three TikTok episodes—"Vol pour l'Algérie," "Envahisseurs Algériens," and "L'Algérie expulse la France." These episodes are critical case studies because they directly address three interrelated facets of the Grudge Narrative: the media's immediate designation of blame, exemplified by the 2025 Louvre heist; the political establishment's fear-mongering rhetoric, and post-colonial sovereignty and power reversal. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), the study examines how Becuwe's multimodal sarcasm—in linguistic, visual, and auditory coordination—

systematically inverts dominant narratives. By analysing the rhetorical shift from the official claim to the satirical counter-claim, this research seeks to answer the following question:

How does the multimodal analysis of Emeline Becuwe's episodes reveal a consistent, strategic use of sarcasm to deconstruct the "Grudge Narrative" in French official and media discourse concerning Algeria?

2. Literature Review

The study draws on three interconnected domains: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the "Grudge Narrative," the pragmatics of multimodal sarcasm, and digital political satire.

2.1 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), rooted in systemic functional linguistics, was significantly developed by Kress and van Leeuwen, who proposed Visual Grammar to show how images and other semiotic resources work with language to construct meaning. Barthes's semiotics of the image and later work by O'Toole, Martinec, and O'Halloran extended these insights to a range of multimodal contexts. With the rise of digital media, MDA has focused on how text, image, sound, and interaction combine in platforms such as social media, advertising, education, and health communication, emphasizing how different modes converge to produce socially and culturally situated meanings.

2.2 CDA, Hegemony, and the Grudge Narrative

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) posits that language is not merely a means for communication, but a social practice that actively constructs and sustains asymmetrical power relations (Fairclough, 1995; Halliday, 1978). Within Franco-Algerian relations, this manifests as a hegemonic discourse that instrumentalizes historical trauma as a mechanism of social control. By doing so, dominant political and media actors mobilize nationalist resentment, effectively **displacing** accountability for internal structural crises onto an externalized Algerian "other" (Wehail & Igaab, 2023).

2.3 Multimodal Sarcasm and pragmatic Models

Sarcasm—verbal irony employed to mock or convey contempt—represents a complex pragmatic act (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022). Within the apparatus of digital video, analysis must be inherently multimodal, as meaning is synthesized through the simultaneous orchestration of linguistic, visual, and auditory modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This semiotic convergence of language, gesture, facial

expression, and prosody is particularly salient in political discourse, where sarcasm functions as an "overtly aggressive irony" against ideological targets (Wehail & Igaab, 2023). This multimodal mechanism is evident in Becuwe's TikTok content, where eye-rolls, mocking prosody, and exaggerated gestures serve as "sarcastic markers" that decouple the literal utterance from its critical, underlying meaning. To analyse this, scholarship highlights two key theories:

1. **Pretence Theory:** The speaker adopts a persona to prompt an inferred critique (Filik & Turcan, 2016). Becuwe "masks" herself in the Grudge Narrative, using hyperbolic solemnity to expose its absurdity through over-identification.
2. **Echoic Mention Theory:** Sarcasm arises by echoing a proposition while signalling dissociation (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022). Becuwe repeats political tropes, inviting the audience to recognize and reject the original flawed logic.

2.3 Digital Satire, Narrative Inversion, and Strategic Solidarity

Short-form video platforms have fundamentally reshaped political satire, prioritizing performativity and emotional resonance. This environment facilitates narrative inversion, where the satirist weaponizes an opponent's argument against them (Wehail & Igaab, 2023) through two primary strategies: Hyperbolic Inevitability (mocking pre-determined media conclusions) and Ironic Trivialization (reducing grand political claims to mundane absurdities). Notably, Becuwe's position as a non-Algerian French creator adds a layer of strategic solidarity. By utilizing a French voice to reject official narratives, her sarcasm functions as a potent internal critique, rendering her counter-hegemonic discourse significantly harder for the establishment to dismiss.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Rationale

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive case study approach to analyse the multimodal deconstruction of the French "grudge narrative" on Algeria, as articulated through the sarcastic TikTok discourse of Emeline Becuwe. The research adopts a single-case, in-depth design centred on a rich instance of counter-hegemonic political communication. This approach is justified, first, by the contextual specificity of the phenomenon: sarcasm on TikTok used to contest entrenched post-colonial narratives is highly context-dependent, and a case study enables nuanced analysis of Becuwe's rhetorical and semiotic strategies that a broader quantitative design would obscure. Second, the multimodal complexity of the data—interactions of text, sound, and image—requires qualitative tools,

making a case-study framework, grounded in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Semiotics, particularly appropriate for detailed interpretive work.

3.2 Corpus Selection and Preparation

The research corpus comprises three TikTok videos by French content creator Emeline Becuwe (@le.journal.de.personne). All three videos are publicly available on TikTok, and the creator granted explicit written permission for their use in this study (see Appendix D for the consent email).

Table 1: Overview of the TikTok Corpus and Analytical Focus

Video Title/Theme	Grudge Narrative Element Addressed	Analytical Focus
Response to Eric Zemmour	Political claims of "invasion" and demographic threat.	Rhetoric of Absurdity and Pathologization.
"Vol pour l'Algérie"	Media's reflexive scapegoating and attribution of blame.	Semiotics of Scapegoating and Intellectual Justification.
"L'Algérie expulse la France"	Geopolitical anxiety over sovereignty and power reversal.	Multimodal Coding of Sovereignty and Political Impotence.

3.3. Analytical Framework

This study uses a hybrid framework combining three qualitative methods.

3.3.1 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), MDA examines how linguistic (script), visual (body language, setting), and auditory (music, sound effects) modes are orchestrated to construct the message. The focus is on how non-linguistic elements amplify, contradict, or reinforce textual sarcasm.

3.3.2 Semiotic Analysis

A semiotic approach, following Barthes (1977), is used to decode the signs and codes in Becuwe's performance. It identifies signifiers (e.g., the sound of a bell) and signifieds (e.g., economic cost or finality) to interpret the cultural and political connotations of specific signs.

3.3.3 Rhetorical Analysis

Classical rhetorical analysis is applied to the linguistic mode to trace persuasive techniques used to deconstruct the "grudge narrative." Key devices examined include sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, and paralogism

3.4. Procedure

The analysis followed a systematic three-stage procedure. First, each video was segmented into rhetorical units and coded for primary themes (e.g.,

sovereignty, humiliation) and rhetorical devices (e.g., sarcasm, metaphor). Second, linguistic codes were mapped onto non-linguistic auditory and visual signs to trace how meanings were multimodally amplified (for example, linking references to “cost” with the cash-register sound). Finally, findings from Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Semiotic analysis were synthesised to show how Becuwe’s TikTok discourse operates as counter-hegemonic political satire, moving beyond surface description toward a deeper account of its political and cultural significance.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) of Emeline Becuwe’s three TikTok videos reveals a systematically organized counter-hegemonic strategy aimed at deconstructing the French Grudge Narrative about Algeria. As theorized by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), meaning in digital media emerges through the interplay of multiple semiotic modes—linguistic, visual, and auditory—that together produce layered critique. The findings show that Becuwe’s discourse operates through three interconnected mechanisms: (1) employing rhetorical strategies to challenge the narrative’s foundational premises, (2) mobilizing multimodal semiotic resources to intensify critique, and (3) subverting post-colonial power dynamics through targeted linguistic and performative choices. Grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) principles (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993), the study argues that Becuwe’s sarcasm functions not merely as humorous commentary but as a potent act of ideological resistance.

4.1 Case Study 1: Vol pour l'Algérie—Exposing Media Irrationality

The "Vol pour l'Algérie" episode critiques French media's systematic tendency to designate Algerians as the ideal culprit through pre-determined, irrational logic. Van Dijk's (1993) concept of ideological presupposition in media discourse is central to understanding this case study—conclusions are predetermined by underlying bias rather than evidence. Here, Becuwe weaponizes linguistic ambiguity and hyperbolic reasoning to expose the media's epistemic failures. Visually, the episode opens with a plane taking off directly toward the viewer (visually confirmed from 00:00–00:05), immediately foregrounding the ‘flight’ meaning of vol and framing the narrative as a journey ‘toward Algeria’ before the lexical ambiguity is even verbalised.

4.1.2 Narrative Inversion: Hyperbolic Inevitability and Metalinguistic Sarcasm

Becuwe critiques the "Grudge Narrative" by constructing a chain of absurdly exaggerated causality: "On cherche, et on trouve un Algérien... pour une porte qui s'ouvre mal... forcément derrière, un Algérien."

This illustrates Hyperbolic Inevitability, a rhetorical device suggesting that within certain media discourses, the suspect is often predetermined. The phrase "forcément derrière" (necessarily behind) reveals an ideological presupposition (Van Dijk, 1993) where conclusions appear to precede evidence.

This reliance on "linguistic opportunism" is further exposed in *Vol pour l'Algérie*. Becuwe utilizes a metalinguistic pivot by exploiting the homophony of *vol* (flight/theft). Upon saying "un vol pour l'Algérie," she pauses to theatrically ask, "Attendez là, qu'est-ce que je viens de dire?" This creates metalinguistic sarcasm, signalling how lexical coincidences can be seized upon as "evidence" to link events like the Louvre heist to the diaspora.

From a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), Becuwe employs tonal juxtaposition, shifting from a playful tone to a flat, deadpan delivery (00:30–00:49) to highlight the dissonance in this reasoning. This performance aligns with Pretence Theory (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022) by adopting a "serious commentator" persona to mimic and mock official logic. Visual and auditory cues reinforce this critique:

Gestural Icons: A hand-washing gesture (00:09) symbolizes the evasion of responsibility, while a pointed index finger (00:18) materializes the act of blaming.

Sarcastic Markers: Subtle eye-rolls (01:02) and dismissive movements invite a non-literal, critical reading.

Echoic Mention: The repetition of "Bien sûr de chez bien sûr" (01:25) functions as an Echoic Mention (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022), echoing the presumptive certainty of the media to signal ironic distance and reject the embedded "Grudge Narrative."

4.1.3 Semiotic Inversion: From Linguistic Play to Post-Colonial Critique

Becuwe concludes by satirizing the intellectual justifications for bias, framing the media's logic as a "déduction transcendante"—an enigma solved by designating the "coupable idéal" (ideal culprit). By invoking philosophical terminology, she suggests that this prejudice operates not as a mere error, but as a flawed foundational framework.

Applying Barthes's (1977) semiotic framework, a semiotic inversion occurs: the signifier (philosophical deduction) and the signified (rational logic) are decoupled, revealing the underlying reality of irrational prejudice masquerading as reason. Furthermore, the phrase "l'ancien vassal, le nouveau rival" (former vassal, new rival) explicitly identifies the colonial wound animating the Grudge Narrative.

Within Fairclough's (1995) CDA framework, this discourse serves an ideological function: maintaining post-colonial power hierarchies by framing Algeria's transition from colonized subject to geopolitical competitor as a threat to French nationalist identity.

4.2 Case Study 2: Envahisseurs Algériens—Deflating Hysteria

This episode targets Eric Zemmour's rhetoric regarding an Algerian "invasion," a framing that exemplifies the securitization of discourse (Fairclough, 1995)—transforming social issues into existential threats. Becuwe counters this through Ironic Trivialization and Ad Hominem Sarcasm, neutralizing xenophobic claims by reducing them to the mundane.

4.2.1 Source Delegitimization and the Mechanism of Trivialization

Becuwe begins by attacking the claimant's credibility, labelling Zemmour a "malade mental" (mentally ill person). This arguably serves as a strategic manoeuvre to remove the discourse from rational debate, suggesting the claims emerge from pathology rather than analysis. Utilizing Pretence Theory (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022), she adopts a mock-therapeutic tone throughout the episode to "reassure" him, while the repetitive "comment" mimics stammering disbelief. Intermittent laughter punctuates this sequence, reinforcing the feigned reassurance as ridicule rather than empathy and cueing the audience to a non-literal, humorous reading of the "invasion" scenario.

The core deconstruction employs absurdist reduction: "L'Algérie est-elle en train d'envahir la France? Oui, mais en bus pas en train..." By accepting the premise before deflating it with bathetic details—logistics of budget travel and baggage fees—she transforms a "military operation" into consumer behaviour. This shift utilizes a linguistic pivot on "en train" (both the vehicle and the progressive aspect "in the process of"), mirroring the homophonic play seen in Case Study 1.

From a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), Becuwe's performance integrates specific kinesic signs:

The "Steeple" Gesture: From 00:02–00:03 and 00:17–00:23, her fingertips meet in a steeple, indexing a mock-expert stance of epistemic authority (Mittelberg & Hinnell, 2021).

Ocular Cues: Exaggerated eye-rolling (00:07, 00:18) and brief eye closure (00:19) guide the audience toward an ironic reading, signalling that the "invasion" is ridiculous rather than alarming (Brône, 2021).

4.2.2 Semiotic Symmetry and De-securitization

Becuwe shifts the narrative from political threat to universal fate evoking the Islamic principle "inna lillahi wa inna illahi raji'un" (To God we belong and to Him

we will return.) through the phrase: "c'est à Dieu que tout revient." This theological framing functions to de-securitize the claim, replacing nationalist anxiety with spiritual solidarity.

The episode culminates in Echoic Mention (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022) and aggressive symmetry: "pendant que la France christianise ses crétins, l'Algérie islamise ses chrétiens." This creates a parallel structure (Barthes, 1977) that suggests a moral equivalence between the two nations' identity politics. By concluding with the Christian idiom "la messe soit dite" (the die is cast) to describe Islamization, she employs semiotic hybridity. This suggests that the cultural tools in conflict are already shared, effectively inverting the narrative (Wehail & Igaab, 2023) to expose the arbitrary nature of xenophobic anxiety.

4.3 Case Study 3: *L'Algérie expulse la France*—Inverting Power Dynamics

In This episode, Becuwe employs rhetorical and multimodal registers to reverse colonial power relations. It demonstrates a complete application of narrative inversion (Wehail & Igaab, 2023).

4.3.1 Rhetorical Inversion: Sovereignty and Dependency

Becuwe opens with a theatrical meta-question: "*Qui joue le rôle de la puissance humiliante... et l'impuissance humiliée?*" By framing these roles as performative, she suggests that power hierarchies are constructed scripts rather than inevitable realities (Fairclough, 1995). She positions Algeria as "*la plus souveraine des deux nations*," grounding this in the sacrifice of having "*saigné pour gagner*."

Conversely, Becuwe contests the French sovereignty by cataloguing its dependencies (NATO, EU, US), concluding that France is "*sous tutelle*" (under guardianship). Applying a term historically reserved for colonized territories to France itself constitutes an ideological reversal (Van Dijk, 1993). She reframes the relationship as one of Algerian dominance—"C'est l'Algérie qui mène la danse"—where transgressions meet calculated economic consequences: "*Tu touches un orteil, tu payes*."

4.3.2 Multimodal Performance: Signifying Power and Economic Law

Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) MDA framework, the visual and auditory modes amplify the verbal critique:

Physicality: The video opens with Becuwe swaying to music (00:00–00:06), interrupted by a sharp "Ah!" (00:07) regarding a "*question épineuse*" (thorny question). This performed physical discomfort acts as a signifier for the "raw"

colonial wound (Barthes, 1977). Her rapid shift to intellectual command enacts her argument: Algeria has moved from colonial victimhood to unshakeable agency.

Auditory Design: A mechanical cash register bell (00:43–00:46) follows the line "*ça vous fera douce cercueil*" (a comfortable coffin). This sound transforms an existential threat into a calculated commercial event, validating the "Accountant" persona Becuwe adopts to signify a "settling of historical accounts."

Soundscape: Music breaks (00:33–00:35) provide dramatic weight, while a short music tag of Raï music (02:21–02:24) sonically anchors the finale in Algerian popular culture, extending the episode's sovereignty inversion from verbal claims ('L'Algérie mène la danse') to the very soundscape that accompanies the last image. The video symbolically recentres Algeria as the cultural as well as political reference point of the scene, reinforcing the shift from colonial dependency to Algerian-led agency.

4.4 Synthesis: Consistent Strategy of Multimodal Narrative Inversion

Across the three episodes—*Vol pour l'Algérie*, *Envahisseurs Algériens*, and *L'Algérie expulse la France*—Becuwe's multimodal sarcasm displays a coherent yet escalating pattern: it moves from exposing media irrationality (Hyperbolic Inevitability), through deflating political "invasion" narratives (Ironic Trivialization), to reimagining post-colonial power relations in terms of Algerian sovereign leverage (Sovereignty Inversion). This progression suggests that the same repertoire of metalinguistic play, visual performance, and auditory cues is repeatedly mobilized at least at the level of multimodal design.

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated how Emeline Becuwe's TikTok videos employ multimodal sarcasm to deconstruct the Grudge Narrative in French official and media discourse concerning Algeria. Through systematic analysis of three sample episodes. The research identifies a sophisticated, escalating strategy of what we term weaponizing irony: the multimodal deployment of multimodal sarcasm as an intended ideological intervention aimed at contesting hegemonic post-colonial narratives at the level of textual and performative encoding.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

5.1.1 Multimodal Sarcasm as Counter-Hegemonic Praxis

The findings indicate that Becuwe recurrently draws on consistent mechanisms across cases—Hyperbolic Inevitability, Ironic Trivialization, Metalinguistic Sarcasm, and Sovereignty Inversion—all amplified through systematic coordination of verbal, auditory, and visual semiotic resources. This coordination is consistent with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) framework, which posits that meaning in contemporary communication is constructed through the convergence of multiple semiotic

modes. As Chubaryan and Danielyan (2022) demonstrate, sarcastic messages are carried by the convergence of linguistic, visual, and gestural modes, where the linguistic mode alone is insufficient. Becuwe's practice can be interpreted as a specific application of Pretence Theory (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022): she pretends to adopt the official French discourse's serious stance to allow audiences to discover the intended critique through contextual cues. The visual markers and auditory cues function as what Chubaryan and Danielyan (2022) term sarcastic markers—semiotic cues that, in this case, are available to disambiguate the literal text from the intended critical meaning, even though their actual uptake by viewers is beyond the scope of this study.

5.1.2 The Grudge Narrative as Hegemonic Discourse

The analysis suggests that the Grudge Narrative operates through what Van Dijk (1993) identifies as ideological presupposition—conclusions predetermined by underlying bias rather than evidence. Becuwe's critique in Case Study 1 reveals that the media's investigative process is actually a confirmation ritual: the investigation exists to validate a conclusion already reached. The "vol" (flight/theft) ambiguity crystallizes this bias with stark clarity—a simple homonym becomes sufficient evidence to construct an international conspiracy theory. This reveals two critical insights about hegemonic discourse:

1. The narrative sounds relatively impervious to counter-evidence: linguistic accident suffices where substantive proof would normally be required.
2. The narrative possesses self-perpetuating logic: any event involving Algeria can be interpreted as confirming French victimhood, creating an unfalsifiable system.

Following Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis framework, we conceptualize the Grudge Narrative as a form of ideological discourse that can contribute to the maintenance of post-colonial power hierarchies, while recognizing that our small qualitative corpus does not allow us to measure these broader social effects. The narrative operates through specific discursive mechanisms: topicalization (placing Algeria at the centre of negative news cycles), lexical choice (using terms like "threat," "invasion"), and presupposition (assuming the audience already accepts the premise of Algerian culpability).

5.1.3 Semiotic Inversion and Narrative Reversal

Following Barthes's (1977) semiotic framework, Becuwe's strategy operates through systematic inversion of signifier-signified relationships. For example, the signifier "déduction transcendantale" should signify rational philosophical reasoning, but Becuwe's usage conveys the opposite—irrational prejudice masquerading as logic. Similarly, the cash register sound (signifier) transforms death/retribution (signified) into commercial transaction, reframing political consequences as economic rationality. This semiotic pattern can be linked to what Wehail and Igaab (2023) identify as narrative inversion, in which the satirist takes

the opponent's argument and turns it against them, a lens that illuminates how these TikTok episodes rework official tropes at the level of representation.

5.2 Empirical Insights

5.2.1 Progressive Strategic Escalation

The progression across the three episodes demonstrates increasing rhetorical aggression at the level of textual and performative design. This escalation potentially functions as a rhetorical device for trust-building; however, it is important to note that the present study focuses on textual analysis and does not empirically measure viewer reception.

- Case Study 1 (Moderate aggression): exposes media irrationality through epistemic critique, revealing flawed investigative processes.
- Case Study 2 (High aggression): delegitimizes political sources through ad hominem attacks and absurdist reduction.
- Case Study 3 (Maximum aggression): asserts a reversal of power relations, foregrounding Algerian sovereignty and framing France in the position of dependency and subordination.

This escalation may be read as a structured progression rather than spontaneous response. Becuwe seeks credibility through relatively accessible media critique before advancing more provocative claims about state-level power relations, but possible production intentions and audience uptake remain outside the empirical scope of this study.

5.2.2 Linguistic Ambiguity as Political Exposure

All three episodes exploit linguistic ambiguity to expose flawed reasoning:

- "Vol" (flight/theft) reveals media bias as linguistic rather than evidential
- "En train" (by train / in the process of) trivializes invasion rhetoric through wordplay
- "Messe" (mass/die is cast) employs Christian idiom for Islamic discourse, exposing cultural hybridity
- "Sans sel" and "Sansal (without salt/ Sansal) produces deliberate ambiguity a censored name, referencing Boualem Sansal (an Algerian-French writer whose imprisonment in Algeria prompted French official calls for his release, using his name as a shorthand for Franco-Algerian tensions).

5.2.3 Multimodal Density as Persuasive Force

This semiotic density, in line with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) account of multimodal convergence, concentrates a high volume of cues into 60–90 seconds, thereby intensifying the salience and potential readability of the sarcastic stance. Rather than measuring persuasion, the analysis shows how verbal irony, visual performance, auditory cues, text overlays, and music are densely layered within TikTok's time constraints. The platform affordances of TikTok enable:

- Affective immediacy: The rapid, visceral delivery of critique is designed to produce immediate emotional impact.

- Multimodal convergence: Multiple semiotic modes work simultaneously to ensure a high degree of interpretive clarity.
- Algorithmic circulation: TikTok's distribution mechanisms enable counter-hegemonic discourse to bypass traditional gatekeepers (mainstream media, editorial control).

5.3 Practical Implications

5.3.1 For Digital Political Communication

The study illustrates how short-form video can be structured as vehicle for sophisticated ideological critique. Becuwe's approach suggests that political counter-discourse need not sacrifice complexity for accessibility—dense multimodal content can achieve both viral circulation and substantive intervention. As Wehail and Igaab (2023) note, sarcasm in political discourse serves key social functions, including social control and humorous aggression. Becuwe's work encodes this aggression through systematic mechanisms that orchestrate to construct narrative inversion.

5.3.2 For Post-Colonial Media Studies

For scholars of post-colonial relations, the findings suggest that contemporary struggles over colonial legacy increasingly unfold in digital spaces where traditional gatekeepers exercise less control. Understanding these emergent forms of counter-hegemonic discourse is likely to be increasingly essential for grasping post-colonial politics, even though the present article offers only a small-scale, exploratory case study. The Grudge Narrative, as analysed through CDA (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993), represents a persistent form of discursive othering that maintains colonial power hierarchies in the present.

5.3.3 For Multimodal Discourse Analysis Methodology

The study develops a replicable MDA framework for digital political satire that integrates:

1. Tripartite modal analysis (linguistic, visual, auditory)
2. Sarcasm mechanism taxonomy (Pretence Theory, Echoic Mention Theory)
3. Pragmatic goal mapping (epistemic critique, source delegitimization, power inversion)
4. Platform affordance consideration (time constraints, algorithmic distribution)

This methodological contribution, grounded in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) foundational MDA work and Barthes's (1977) semiotics, provides scholars with systematic tools to analyse ephemeral, affect-driven digital content that resists traditional discourse analysis.

5.4 Limitations and Future Directions

This study focuses on textual and multimodal design, leaving audience reception and persuasive impact unexplored. Future research should utilize

experimental or interview-based methods to investigate how different segments—specifically diaspora versus non-diaspora viewers—interpret Becuwe’s sarcasm, and how variables like class and ideology shape these effects. A second limitation is the selective nature of the semiotic analysis. While key cues like eye-rolling and sound effects were identified, the discussion remains exemplar-based. A more exhaustive inventory and quantification of visual and auditory resources would further refine the analysis. Furthermore, the scope was limited to three episodes from a single creator. Future studies should pursue:

Comparative Analysis: Examining multiple creators across platforms (TikTok, YouTube, X) to determine if these strategies are individual innovations or a shared counter-hegemonic repertoire.

Longitudinal Research: Tracking the evolution of discourse over time and monitoring potential platform moderation challenges.

Political Impact: Investigating whether these digital interventions influence mainstream French media discourse or broader political debates.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how Emeline Becuwe’s TikTok videos are crafted to use multimodal sarcasm to contest the French Grudge Narrative on Algeria, identifying consistent mechanisms—Hyperbolic Inevitability, Ironic Trivialization, Metalinguistic Sarcasm, and Sovereignty Inversion—coordinated across verbal, visual, and auditory modes in line with Multimodal Discourse Analysis. It advances scholarship by demonstrating how Pretence and Echoic Mention theories operate in digital political satire, exposing the Grudge Narrative as hegemonic post-colonial discourse and framing semiotic inversion and narrative reversal as counter-hegemonic tools. Across three episodes, escalating aggression—from media critique to source attack to sovereign inversion—suggests strategic trust-building, while recurring lexical ambiguity foregrounds language as a battlefield where colonial power relations are represented and symbolically contested. Overall, the study contributes to work on digital political satire, post-colonial media, and multimodal semiotics, offering a methodological framework that integrates MDA, CDA, sarcasm pragmatics, and semiotics for analysing affect-driven, ephemeral content, while pointing to the need for future audience-reception research to test whether these strategies form part of a wider repertoire of digital resistance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Video Transcripts

Appendix A1: "Vol pour l'Algérie" (Flight/Theft to Algeria)

Date: October 27, 2025

Source: TikTok video, le.journal.de.personne

URL: <https://www.tiktok.com/@le.journal.de.personne/video/7565953750595063062>

Original French Transcript:

On cherche, et on trouve un Algérien pour se laver les mains, pour une porte qui s'ouvre mal, une fenêtre qui ne ferme pas bien, forcément derrière, un Algérien avec un nez en l'air comme ça à l'intérieur du musée du Louvre. Et ça c'est la brigade du banditisme qui le découvre le samedi d'après à l'aéroport de Roissy. Ça prétend prendre un vol pour l'Algérie. Attendez là, qu'est-ce que je viens de dire ? Vol pour l'Algérie ? Bien sûr de chez bien sûr. Ah, les maigrets pèsent le pour et le contre en déduisant que c'est pour l'Algérie que le vol du Louvre a été commis. Mais bien sûr de chez

bien sûr, c'est l'Algérie qui humilie ou cherche à humilier son voisin de palier. En clair, l'Algérie est présumée commanditaire. C'est ce qu'on appelle en philosophie une déduction transcendante. L'énigme que l'on résout sans mal en désignant ipso facto le coupable idéal. L'ancien vassal, le nouveau rival, le mal algérien avec un accent circonflexe qui le rend suspect et avec lequel l'intelligentsia française n'a nulle envie de faire la paix. Vol pour l'Algérie, en deux mots tout est dit, au rage, au désespoir, aux jeunesse ennemies, celles qui se servent du sol français pour servir le soleil de l'Algérie. Là, les bijoux sont peut-être déjà dans une boîte à chaussures à Annaba en guise de bras d'honneur à la paranoïa de la France et de ses médias.

English Translation:

We search, then we find an Algerian scapegoat to wash our hands of the matter, for a door that doesn't open properly, a window that doesn't close properly, inevitably, there's an Algerian with a smug look like that inside the Louvre Museum. And that's the gang that discovers him the following Saturday at Roissy airport. He claims to be taking a flight to Algeria. Wait a minute, what did I just say? A flight to Algeria? Of course, of course. Ah, the detectives are weighing the pros and cons, concluding that the Louvre robbery was committed for Algeria. But of course, of course, it's Algeria that's humiliating or trying to humiliate its neighbour. In short, Algeria is presumed to be behind it. That's what they call in philosophy a transcendental deduction, the enigma that's easily solved by ipso facto designating the perfect culprit. The former vassal, the new rival, the Algerian evil with a circumflex accent that makes it suspect and with which the French intelligentsia has no desire to make peace. Theft for Algeria, in two words everything is said, to the rage, to the despair, to the enemy youth, those who use French soil to serve the sun of Algeria. There, the jewels may already be in a shoebox in Annaba as a defiant gesture to the paranoia of France and its media.

Appendix A2: "Envahisseurs Algériens" (Algerian Invaders) /Date: October 29, 2025

Source: TikTok video, le.journal.de.personne

URL: <https://www.tiktok.com/@le.journal.de.personne/video/7566686767055686934>

Original French Transcript:

[Eric Zemmour's claim]: "Je vais vous dire ce qu'ils font les dirigeants algériens..."

Comment, comment comment comment rassurer ce malade mental qui a l'art et la manière de nous saper le moral ? Peut-être avec des réponses naïves à des questions malades. Premièrement, l'Algérie est-elle en train d'envahir la France? Oui, mais en bus ! Pas en train à cause du prix du voyage et des excès de bagages. Deux, dans quel but et pour quelle fin ? Eh bien, pour partager le même destin, celui qui dit que c'est à Dieu que tout revient. Et pendant que la France christianise ses crétins, l'Algérie islamise ses chrétiens pour qu'enfin la messe soit dite.

[Eric Zemmour's claim]: "Je vais vous dire ce qu'ils font les dirigeants algériens. Ils affrètent des bus pour mettre des jeunes gens dans les bus et pour les mettre sur des embarcations pour qu'ils aillent sur des bateaux, aller sur les côtes d'Espagne et que d'Espagne ils aillent en France. Moi j'appelle ça une invasion et en plus organisée par l'État algérien."

English Translation:

[Eric Zemmour's claim]: "I'll tell you what the Algerian leaders are doing..."

How, how, how, how can we reassure this mentally ill person who has the knack of sapping our spirit? Perhaps with naive answers to morbid questions. First, is Algeria invading France? Yes, but by bus! Not by train because of the cost of travel and excess baggage. Second, to what end? Well, to share the same destiny, the one that says everything comes back to God. And while France is Christianizing its idiots, Algeria is Islamizing its Christians so that the die is cast.

[Eric Zemmour's claim]: "I'll tell you what the Algerian leaders are doing. They're chartering buses to put young people on buses and then on boats to take them to the coast of Spain and from Spain to France. I call that an invasion, and what's more, organized by the Algerian state."

Appendix A3: "L'Algérie expulse la France" (Algeria Expels France) /Date: April 15, 2025

Source: TikTok video, le.journal.de.personne

URL: <https://www.tiktok.com/@le.journal.de.personne/video/7493534685629304086>

Original French Transcript:

Ah, question épineuse. Entre la France et l'Algérie, qui joue le rôle de la puissance humiliante et qui joue le rôle de l'impuissance humiliée ? Réponse lumineuse, la plus souveraine des deux nations semble faire beaucoup de peine à la moins souveraine. Autrement dit, entre l'Algérie et la France... [music break] Je pense que c'est l'Algérie qui mène la danse. C'est simple, tu touches un orteil, tu payes. Pour trois orteils... [sound of mechanical cash register bell] ça vous fera douce cercueil. Eh oui, il faut payer les factures, règle de trois, pour détrôner tous ceux qui se prennent pour des rois. Pose-toi la question de savoir ce qui dépend et ce qui ne dépend pas de toi. L'Algérie ne dépend que de l'Algérie. Elle a saigné pour gagner et garder son indépendance. Alors que la France a perdu depuis belle lurette toute sa tête. Elle dépend de l'Europe, elle dépend des États-Unis, elle dépend d'Israël. Elle est sous tutelle. Et quand elle dit que c'est elle, ce n'est pas elle. Son soutien au Maroc révèle jusqu'à quel point sa politique est faite de briques et de brocs. Sans ciel et sans sel. J'évite de prononcer le nom de Sansal pour ne pas remuer le couteau là où ça fait le plus mal. Mais il faut être fou pour croire comme Retailleau qu'il faut être plus extrême que les extrêmes si on ne veut pas mourir idiot. Il n'a toujours pas compris Retailleau que ce sont des gens comme lui qui posent problème en compensant leur insuffisance avec de l'arrogance. S'il veut être un peu plus ferme... [music] j'ai cherché une solution pour lui. En fait, je crois qu'il faut qu'il la ferme une bonne fois pour toutes parce que l'Algérie poursuivra sa route quoi qu'il en coûte... [music break]

English Translation:

Ah, a thorny question. Between France and Algeria, who plays the role of the humiliating power and who plays the role of the humiliated powerlessness? The answer is clear: the more sovereign of the two nations seems to cause a great deal of pain to the less sovereign one. In other words, between Algeria and France... [music break] I think Algeria is calling the shots. It's simple: you touch one toe, you pay. For three toes... [sound of mechanical cash register bell] it'll be a comfortable coffin. Yes, you have to pay the bills, the rule of three, to dethrone all those who think they're kings. Ask yourself what depends on you and what doesn't. Algeria depends only on itself. It bled to gain and maintain its independence. Whereas France lost its head a long time ago. It depends on Europe, it depends on the United States, it depends on Israel. It's under guardianship. And when they say it's them, it's not them. Their support for Morocco reveals just how cobbled together their policy is. Utterly devoid of spirit and merit (without sky and without salt). I'm avoiding the name Sansal to avoid rubbing salt in the wound. But you have to be a complete idiot to believe, like Retailleau, that you have to be more extreme than the extremes if you don't want to die a fool. Retailleau still hasn't grasped that it's people like him who cause problems by compensating for their shortcomings with arrogance. If he wants to be a bit firmer... [music] I've looked for a solution for him. In fact, I think he needs to shut up once and for all because Algeria will continue on its path no matter the cost... [music break]

Appendix B: Multimodal Analysis Framework

Table B1: Sarcastic Markers Across Three Episodes Following Chubaryan and Danielyan's (2022) framework for multimodal sarcasm analysis, the following table maps sarcastic markers across linguistic, visual, and auditory modes:

Mode	Vol vers l'Algérie	Envahisseurs Algériens	L'Algérie expulse la France
Linguistic	_Hyperbolic inevitability: Lexical pun "vol" (flight/theft) Ironic echoic affirmation "bien sûr de chez bien sûr"	_Ad hominem "malade mental" _ Bathos "en bus pas en train" _Lexical pun <i>en train</i> (by train / in the process of)	_ Hierarchical inversion: the sovereignty question. _Discursive retribution "ancien vassal / nouveau rival"; "sous tutelle"
Visual	_Hand-washing (00:09) (Evasion of responsibility) _pointing (00:18) (scapegoating) _Eye-rolls (00:09–00:25, ...) (exposing absurdity)	Steepling (00:02–00:03 ,00:17–00:23) (Mock expert authority) Exaggerated rolls (00:07, 00:18), (Rejection of framing) eye closure (00:19) (contemptuous distancing)	_Swaying with theme music (00:00–00:06); (Enacting "leading the dance") _ Sting gesture (00:07); (Performing colonial wound)
Auditory	Deadpan delivery (00:30–00:49) (mock seriousness to expose dissonance in reasoning)	_Stammering "comment!" (Enacting disbelief) . - Mock-therapeutic tone (feigned reassurance) _Intermittent laughter (00:05, 00:26, ...) (delegitimation, disbelief)	- Cash register bell (00:43–00:46) (retribution as a rational economic consequence) _Music breaks (00:33–00:35) (cinematic gravitas) _Raï music tag (02:21–02:24) (soundscape of sovereignty)

Appendix D: Consent Email from Emeline Becuwe

The following email is reproduced with the sender's permission as documentary evidence of informed consent to analyse and quote from her TikTok videos in this article.

From: lejournaldepersonne@lejournaldepersonne.com

To: mehidi387@gmail.com

Date: 10 Jan 2026, 17:05

Subject: Accord de principe-Utilisation de contenu TikTok à fin de recherche académique

Bonjour Monsieur,

Je vous remercie pour votre message ainsi que pour l'intérêt que vous portez à mon travail sur TikTok dans le cadre de votre recherche doctorale.

Je vous confirme par la présente mon accord pour la citation et l'analyse des trois vidéos suivantes issues de mon compte :

- « Vol pour l'Algérie »
- « Envahisseurs Algériens »
- « L'Algérie expulse la France »

Je suis sensible à la rigueur éthique de votre démarche et à la claret de votre projet de recherche, qui aborde des enjeux contemporains importants relatifs aux discours médiatiques, à la satire politique et aux relations franco-algériennes. Je considère que l'analyse académique de ces formes de discours satirique participe utilement au débat scientifique et public.

Vous êtes naturellement autorisé à mentionner mon nom et mon compte conformément aux normes académiques en vigueur. Je vous remercie également de veiller à contextualiser ces contenus dans leur intention satirique et critique.

Je reste à votre disposition si vous souhaitez me transmettre votre article une fois finalisé ou si vous avez besoin de précisions complémentaires.

Je vous souhaite pleine réussite dans vos travaux de recherche.

Bien cordialement,

Emeline Becuwe

Créatrice de contenu – TikTok