

## Chapter 10

### Analyzing Online Videos: A Multi-perspective Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis

#### 1. Introduction

Over the years, there has been an increasing amount of academic interest in the opportunities that new media technology has afforded us, including areas of education, self-branding, promotion, and information dissemination. Possibly the medium that has aroused most curiosity is YouTube, which gives power to the consumer in a participatory space that emphasizes user-created content, and in which creativity is depicted as a practice rather than an attribute (Burgess and Green, 2009). As such, Burgess and Green (2009: 103) argue that it is best to view YouTube as a platform negotiated by “amateur participants,” social interaction between a wide community of users, and “the site of possibility or conflict for the promotional desires of large media companies.” As a result, there currently exists considerable research, employing various analytical approaches including content and visual analysis, traditional and cyberethnography, on mediated identity and self-performance, particularly in terms of gender (Taylor, 2006; Gajjala and Rybas, 2008; Gao, 2012) and in more general terms (Griffith and Papcharissi, 2010; Raun, 2012). Anarbaeva’s (2016) research, for instance, examines race and gender representation in ‘How-to and DIY’ videos to discover how content creators, in this case ordinary women, perform difference on YouTube, concluding that often underrepresented women find a better sense of community and belonging online. Similarly, Nunez et al. (2015) investigate female subjectivities in the context of feminist YouTube channels related to violence against women, using multimodal analysis to discover “how the victim-subject is configured in terms of agency and activism... studying the sign complexes of the videos as semiotic artifacts that produce meaning” (319). Extending identity performance beyond gender to the context of politics, Way (2015) focuses on cultural conflict in YouTube videos, analyzing the role of social media in general, and YouTube in particular, as a site for populist politics in the context of Turkey’s 2013 anti-government protests, whereby both the video and associated user comments reflected efforts by users to frame events and allegiances. But going beyond the interesting array of issues and topics explored

in the context of new media communication generally, and YouTube specifically, it seems more crucial for us to clarify how scholars should regard these online platforms, especially video-based ones, as communicative products. As Bouvier (2015) explains, this world is one of

algorithms where our contacts and relationships with friends become the engine for commercial activities... our past behaviours will be converted to likely future behaviours. It is a world where we are continually being told what is already the most successful comment, idea, picture or story. Algorithms themselves become realisers of discourse, of forms of social relations, signalling up what your user community values, and signalling what kinds of ideas and attitudes are common across the section of connectivity. (153)

To better analyze online videos, we need to first push expectations of traditional forms of talk and written interaction/dialogue to consider virtual forms which could, especially in a post-COVID world, if not supplant, at least equal conventional face to face interaction and written text. Although it is argued that the following could be applicable to various video-sharing platforms e.g., IGTV (Instagram TV), TikTok, Vimeo, Sina Weibo etc., I focus specifically on YouTube as the most popular and commonly used video-based online platform. In this regard, Benson (2015) argues for the treatment of YouTube as a *text* based on the fundamental notions that YouTube employs 1) *multiple semiotic modes* which present an interplay of still and moving visuals, sound, written words, hyperlinks etc.; 2) a combination of *multiple authorship* generated through algorithms, users, advertisers etc. expressed, again, through multiple semiotic forms; and 3) pages that are *highly dynamic*, constantly changing and updating. For these reasons, Benson believes that multimodal discourse analysis whereby YouTube pages are treated “as a form of social media... [as well as] products of mediated social interaction” (84) is the most relevant method of analysis. Thus, Benson proposes analyzing YouTube videos “as an interactional turn, which begins a process of multimodal social interaction in which users ‘respond’ to the ‘initiation’ of the video using a variety of semiotic modes” (85).

Kavada (2012) takes this notion further to explain that web-based platforms should be examined both as “‘site’ and ‘surface’ of bonding and group identity,” and feature analysis can be

employed to involve a focus on “types of information available on the website, types of links, interactive features such as opinion polls, as well as types of action that users can undertake on a website, such as signing petitions” (51-52). Thus, in her study of collaborative bonding and identity construction in transnational activism on social media platform, including Facebook and YouTube, Kavada implements feature analysis which allows for a “comprehensive image of the interaction dynamics on the platform – its ‘site’ characteristics... analysis also included categories about the ‘audiences’ and ‘communicators’ for each feature, as well as the types of communication that they tended to generate (one-way/reciprocal, private/public etc.)” (52). In doing so, she is able to provide evidence for the very fluid roles of participants on such platforms, whereby they are simultaneously creators, communicators and audiences for one another.

Taking a different tack, Patterson (2017) explores the expression of biracial identity on YouTube by employing a symbolic interactionist-based methodology, firstly collating data (scouring for relevant data) and then inspecting the data using Critical Discourse Analysis. Patterson argues for the use of symbolic interactionism as it frames culture within the context of human interaction, generated through symbols (i.e., words, sounds, gestures etc.) and is relevant to the study of social media because it treats use of these symbols for self-expression as a result of interaction, negotiation between a sender and receiver, rather than a “naturally occurring phenomenon” (107). Within this framework and inspired by Gee’s (2005) tools of critical inquiry for “considering the relationship between digitally narrated biracial identities and the broad context of multicultural education” (109), Patterson is able to establish that bi-racial YouTubers co-construct a digital space that draws on a common discourse based on both online and offline experiences. These users are further able to curate how they represent themselves online through thoughtful negotiation of symbols that allow them to be heard or perceived in ways that they prefer.

Also focusing on culture and self-expression, but exploring the novel genre of televangelism through YouTube, Naggar (2018) draws on the discourse-historical approach to critical discourse studies and visual grammar to analyze the multimodal and discursive strategies of YouTubers who preach religion online. Naggar reflects that such a genre operates successfully on a medium such as YouTube due to its “multi-modal landscape” (307) allowing for various identity performances.

Naggar analyzes videos by popular American Muslim YouTuber Baba Ali to explore contemporary social life of Muslim youth in the West by focusing on how “ broader socio-political and historical contexts intertwine with (religious) discourse, with a broader view on discourse (i.e. language in use) as a multi-semiotic entity that encompasses not only speech or writing but also other modes such as image and colour” (304). YouTube in this instance blurs the boundaries between traditional genres to create “an interesting case of ‘religio-tainment’ which necessitates “a closer investigation of the discursive and multi-modal features that characterize Ali’s videos as a genre which can allow insights into this new media phenomenon” (304).

Similarly, Bhatia’s (2019) study on ethnicity representation online explores the discursive construction of ethnic identity on YouTube by focusing on how successful beauty vloggers, through their language, construct ‘Indian-ness’ within more mainstream beauty discourse on YouTube. The study integrates aspects of van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, which emphasizes that the relationship between discourse and society is “cognitively mediated”, and thus “social interaction, social situations and social structures can only influence text and talk through people’s interpretations of such social environments” (van Dijk, 2015: 64), and aspects of Gee and Green’s (1998) M(aterial) A(ctivity) S(emi)otic S(ociocultural) System which lays out different aspects of discourse that transform it into social practice. Bhatia concludes her study by establishing that women of color on YouTube construct their ethnicity through materiality; through references to pop culture that situate regional traditional practices in the context of wider Indian culture; and through references to Indian heritage, where the construction of diaspora identity is most prominent, and the notion of heritage emphasized through it.

Shifting focus to more capitalistic directions, several studies have also sought to explore the growing trends of microcelebrity and prosumerism on YouTube. For example, Jorge et al. (2018) reveal through their work the “integration of branded content within youth digital culture, where participatory possibilities for self-expression are more and more entwined with consumer culture” (076). Platforms like YouTube encourage “self-commodification as an integrated part of self-representation on the platform” (078), resulting in hybrid discourses that illustrate successful self-branding as integral to effective online socialization. As Jorge et al. further explain, the cultivation of

*influencers* emphasizes the relationship of microcelebrities with their audiences which is “highly dependent on the credibility and reliability with which the vlogger presents the products, becoming a cultural, social, and economic capital” (080).

Gibson (2020) takes this line of scholarship further by studying sensory communication in YouTube reviews, specifically the manner in which “users produce objectified ‘symbolisations’ (Streeck, 1996) of products through descriptions that articulate/construct sensorial experience” (384). Drawing on interactionist studies of the senses, Gibson explores how interactants on YouTube negotiate various multimodalities to convey their sense experiences to audiences in an effort to create authentic reviews for a variety of products. In this way, reviewers “construct the ‘performance’ of their sensorial experiences in ways that are specific to the broader interactional context, using talk, gestures, gaze, posture and objects to turn their ‘private’ experience into something communicable and *situated within the action at hand*” (385).

These research studies, amongst several others not mentioned here, have furthered understanding about the value of platforms such as YouTube in the construction of identity online, what motivates this construction, and the relationships it establishes. However, one area of identity formation, which has received relatively less attention, is the discursive construction of professional identity, particularly in YouTube videos, including the accompanying comment threads by subscribers that Jeffries (2011) refers to as “an ethnographic goldmine” (60). Jeffries’ own study makes a significant contribution to better understanding how interlocution by viewers provides insights into a key component of identity performance by young people, including formation of a limited speech community. However, comparatively little work has been done on the discursive practices of YouTubers claiming professional expertise, with the notable exceptions of Tolson (2010) who compares makeup tutorials and traditional forms of broadcast talk, illustrating how the “pedagogical monologue” YouTubers draw on replaces more “formal instruction traditionally associated with expertise” (282); and Riboni’s (2017) work on makeup gurus that explores the linguistic representation of makeup gurus and a resulting “‘persona’ (or ‘edited self’) [that] discursively stems from an ongoing negotiation between professionalism and amateurship” (117). To conduct study, Riboni employs a mixed-methodological approach through which vlogs are analyzed based on 1)

professional metadiscourse to demonstrate speaker's attempt to create a professional image; 2) genre's rhetorical organization to reveal typical moves and patterns of beauty tutorials to strategically manipulate impressions of expertise and amateurship; and finally, 3) analysis of the tutorials' textual and syntactic features. As a result, Riboni's analysis reveals the "ongoing negotiation between professionalism and amateurship in makeup gurus' self-representation" (129), and the blurring of key boundaries between different interactional purposes, of appearing both convincingly professional and authentically amateurish in the pursuit of microcelebrity online. In fact, in this chapter, it is this line of thought that I would like to expand on further, by focusing on how amateur experts engage in "hybrid forms of talk" (Tolson, 2010: 283), or what I regard as interdiscursive performance, including colloquial talk to curate an authentic and real self; and jargon and formal instructional talk to curate an expert self in the construction of professional expertise online.

## **2. Case Study: Discourse Analysis of YouTube Make-up Tutorials**

In this case study, I take a closer look at how the teaching classroom has shifted online and in the hands of what I refer to as amateur experts, who build a community of subscribers, or in effect learners, creating an environment of informal learning. In this sense, participatory culture can be defined as "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices" (Jenkins, et al., 2009: xi). This kind of participatory culture encourages the performance of multiple identities and social roles, including those of creator, mentor, critic, follower, fan, friend, teacher, learner, subscriber. Thus, I focus on the interdiscursive performance of successful content creators and prosumers, who eventually acquire an 'expert' reputation through a large subscriber base, brand endorsements, and increased online revenue.

### **2.1 Method**

My research considers video-blogs to be 'visual texts', which combine sounded speech, bodily performance, writing in the form of comments published (and written/verbal responses to them) to relay specific meanings. Furthermore, I consider the discourse of beauty vlogs to be a complex and multidimensional form of communication. As an emerging social genre, it is hybrid in nature and

combines textual and visual forms to establish conventions of what is popularly known as video-blogs (vlogs). A proper exploration of such intricate discourse, I believe, requires an in-depth analysis of language features apparent in the data, which can account for the manner in which discursive events share a mutually constitutive relationship with the sociocultural contexts within which they take place (cf. Fairclough 1989). Further, this practice of discourse arises from both the production and interpretation of text, where “the production shapes (and leaves ‘traces’ in) the text, and the interpretative process operates upon the ‘cues’ in the text” (Fairclough, 1993: 136). Thus, discourse becomes the means through which participants construct self, society, and system of knowledge, both on part of the sender and receiver. In this way, any study of discourse must explore in tandem the relationship between society, culture, cognition, discourse and language (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Deriving from this Critical Discourse Analytical-based school of thought, I propose in this chapter a multi-dimensional approach to the analysis and understandings of ‘interdiscursive identity performance’.

As such, I propose an integrative approach to the critical analysis of vlogs, more specially the emerging genre of how-to-tutorials, which explores discourse in terms of:

1. *Socio-cognition*- borrowing from van Dijk’s (2015) socio-cognitive model, analysis from this perspective focuses on the manner in which participants rely on their mental models, ideologies, knowledge, attitude to interpret text and talk in further understanding of social situations. Cognitive structures crucial in the production and interpretation of discourse include: memory of socially shared experiences, attitudes and beliefs; mental models of settings, participants (and their identities, roles and relations), actions/events, and goals; and social cognition in the form of generic knowledge of world (van Dijk, 2015) shared by members of the same communities of practice. Interdiscursivity from this stance reflects on how content creators and users of YouTube shift fluidly between various social roles in an attempt to create a common discourse, which incorporates both online and offline experiences, and a social community by negotiating multiple modalities and semiotic resources.

2. Genre- borrowing from Bhatia's (2017) Critical Genre Analysis framework, analysis from this perspective will focus on "demystification of professional practice", focusing equally on genre, professional practice, on what is stated explicitly and implicitly, and often suppressed within genres, as well as "on socially recognized communicative purposes as on 'private intentions'... [as] professional communication in the age of computer-mediated communication... [sees] overwhelming power and influence of technology in professional life" (Bhatia, 2017: 8-9). Analysis here focuses on how YouTubers discursively establish expertise and competence in their tutorials by negotiating "discursive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge, in the context of professional practice" (206) and often through exploitation and appropriation of expected or traditionally perceived generic, discursive, professional and cultural space. Interdiscursivity from this stance reflects on the how content creators and users of YouTube shift fluidly between professional and counterpart roles as new emerging forms of professional communication on social media dissolve the boundaries between experts and laypersons in the discursive construction of expertise through informal tutorializing, leading to "pedagogic democratization" (Kellner and Kim, 2010:14).
3. Language- analysis here will include a closer focus on the micro features of language including the lexico-syntactical and semantic-pragmatic resources that realize the 'ideological structures of discourse' (van Dijk, 2015), such as technical jargon, hyperbole, identity markers (labels and names), repetition, categorization, modals and instructives about group activities, norms and values (statements of evaluation and judgement), genre conventions, framing, agenda-setting, cultural models and myths.

In this way, I argue that a multi-methodological approach to the critical analysis of YouTube vlogs can allow for a more nuanced analysis of interdiscursive discourses in the joint creation of identity. In the following section, I present a short analytical case study based on popular YouTuber Jaclyn Hill with over five million followers and specifically focus on Makeup Tutorials (tutorials on how to achieve specific make up looks). This chapter derives from a larger study of mine on Identity-Construction in Digital Professions, within which I also analyze in detail comments threads that subscribers post below published videos; however, due to this chapter's word limitations, here I will

focus primarily on Hill's discourse.

Before I begin the analysis, it seems important to point out that although I have chosen to focus primarily on language for this case study, analysis of various other multimodal features of the tutorials are also critical in creating meaning and representing the vlogger's identity. Vlogs combine sounded speech, bodily performance, writing in the form of text stamps and subtitling, music, lighting, styling of background set, props, and physical location in order to relay particular meanings. Thus, I often also focus on how YouTubers construct identity through what Gee and Green (1998) refer to as the material component of any situation (i.e. actors, places, time, objects present or referred to) and semiotic components, in addition to language, like gestures, images and facial expressions, all of which van Dijk (2015) considers to be ideological structures of discourse. An in-depth analysis of YouTube tutorials that goes beyond language should also consider these material components that can help provide clues to how various aspects of identity, including authenticity, ethnicity, sexuality and gender are communicated on a digital platform and in lieu of face to face interaction. For example, references to or use of ethnic objects by South Asian beauty gurus in conjunction with commonly used jargon indicates a cultural specificity within mainstream beauty discourse, creating a more "racialized beauty grammar" (Chang, 2014: 8) (see Figure 1 in Appendix; cf. Bhatia, 2018). Or the juxtaposition between a male beauty guru's clothing or background and the use of cosmetics in the occupation of a typically feminine consumption space can help illustrate how influencers often combine masculine and feminine characteristics to challenge gender stereotypes and preconceived notions of beauty (see Figure 2 in Appendix). Similarly, unedited interruptions by family pets or cozy bedroom backdrops can help represent authenticity (see Figure 3 in Appendix) or a strategically curated space can denote a vlogger's happiness "present in the material goods that saturate their lives and in turn their viewers' lives, such as the same luxury makeup brands... or the omnipresent flowers and clean, neat curated private spheres they disclose to the world" (Hill, 2019: 340-1; see Figure 4 in Appendix). In all these instances, material variables become signifiers of different aspects of identity, transforming YouTube into what Bhatt (2008: 178) refers to as a third space, or "a semiotic space between competing cultural collectives... where cultural identity across differences of class... gender

roles... and cultural values (traditional/local-modern/global) is negotiated, setting up new structures of socio-linguistic authority and new socio-political initiatives.”

## 2.2 Analysis

For this chapter, I keep my analysis focused by conducting an analysis of one tutorial by Jaclyn Hill (‘Affordable Back To School Makeup Tutorial’<sup>1</sup>); however, research for my larger project on Identity-Construction in Digital Professions reveals that this video, and Jaclyn Hill in general, was quite a representative example of interdiscursive performance by YouTube beauty gurus. To conduct the analysis, I watched the video twice in order to a) understand the full meaning of the video, and then b) conduct a broad, manual transcription of the monological content. Here I focus primarily on language use, although in the larger project I also look at written comments and non-verbal cues. Analysis of the video revealed an effective interdiscursive performance on part of Hill, as both a skilled user of YouTube and a beauty expert, manipulating language to perform multiple roles, including the use of social discourse to curate an authentic self, and professional discourse to curate an expert self.

## 2.3 Curation of an authentic self

Hill’s tutorial is in the form of an informal dialogue with her viewers, who in turn respond through posted comments under the published video. In this way, use of *tutorial* both in the video’s title and Hill’s narrative is evidence of the manner in which people, in particular younger ones, use the platform for entertainment, social engagement and informal learning, recreating traditional speech genres of expertise and teaching (Tolson, 2010). Hill, in keeping with the informal nature of YouTube as a discourse community, demonstrates significant skill in being able to shift between multiple communicative goals and identities, including a friend who is sincere and genuine, a teacher who is knowledgeable and informative, and a professional YouTuber who displays ample expertise in how to use the platform and of the beauty industry. In fact, as user-generated content has become increasingly more trustworthy in the eyes of consumers, influencers on YouTube have ramped up efforts to

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<sup>1</sup> Affordable Back to School Makeup Tutorial posted on 31 August 2016-  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOaXihv377k&list=PLGGUnSYrz5V5RyMgytDZN2S4JA4jdLOV&index=24>

reinforce their own credibility and authenticity. Consider the following examples from Hill's video:

*...everything I do use can be purchased online... and is all very affordable... One thing I did cheat on, and I was going to go ahead and call myself out right now is the Anastasia Brow Definer, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm not going sit here and try to fake it for your guys... this is how I do my brows, it's genuine....*

*...for this back to school look, I definitely had older girls in mind, like high school college age girls... I wanted to keep it more realistic though, I didn't do any false lashes or do anything smokey or a harsh contour...*

*very simple, very easy to achieve, and if you're exhausted in the morning and your eyes are barely opening you can still do this with one eye closed....*

*just wanted to say before I do the video, you do not need to wear makeup to go to school to have fun and meet new friends and fit in and feel beautiful and be beautiful ... like who cares you don't need to wear makeup ok... for all the young girls in school right now do not feel like you need to do anything in order to fit in, you're beautiful the way you are, I love you....*

*this stuff smells like a tropical vacation, every time I open it up I'm like 'yes please, give me my pina colada cabana boy, where are you?'*

*I'm using a Japoneque brush to apply this bronzer and I'm going to be honest, it's a little scratchy on my face, I was really excited to try it cause I saw good reviews but I didn't love the way it applied my bronzer....*

*...I will put everything brushes products everything down in the description box down*

*below. Kathleenlights was the one who recommended this to me, so thank you so much*

*Kathleen....*

*go ahead and warn your classmates now to wear some UV protection and sunglasses*

*because this highlighter shines so bright it is guaranteed to blind them....*

In the extracts above, we see Hill create trust at two key levels- as a friend and as an expert. Hill demonstrates her social relationship with viewers/subscribers through intimate endearments, including *you guys, I love you, you're beautiful the way you are*, insinuating a close relationship which goes beyond a YouTuber-audience relationship to one of a mentor and big sister, evident in the advice that Hill feels comfortable to convey (*you do not need to wear makeup to go to school to have fun and meet new friends and fit in and feel beautiful*). This closeness is reiterated in viewer comments posted below the video<sup>2</sup>: *you give me life Jaclyn, love watching you, Loved the video and loved the message it came with. Love you, You are everything, keep SLAYING, Jaclyn I love you so much I have been a fan for forever*. Both Hill and her viewers frequently draw on what Holmes (1995) refers to as empty compliments, as acceptable social means of passing social judgment and encouragement. The use of hyperbole and superlatives in this case also challenges traditional expert-laymen speech expectations, while modelling beauty discourse on YouTube as being characteristically young and feminine. Hill's tutorial aimed at *older girls, like high school college age*, her motivational pep talk aimed at *young school girls*, reference to *affordable* products, as well as use of slang, elevated pitch and tone, humor (*give me my pina colada cabana boy, still do this with one eye closed, warn your classmates now to wear some UV protection and sunglasses*) expressed verbally, through facial expressions, digitally animated voices and sounds, seem to also confirm the feminine and youthful nature of the beauty speech community on YouTube. Hill also solicits trust in her expertise and recommendations by reiterating her honesty (*I'm not going sit here and try to fake it for you guys, it's genuine, go ahead and call myself out right now, I'm going to be honest*), showing empathy (*if you're exhausted in the*

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<sup>2</sup> These are not the focus of the chapter, but a few representative and anonymized comments have been included to illustrate the close presenter-viewer relationship.

*morning, like who cares you don't need to wear makeup*), and demonstrating her knowledge of beauty-specific jargon (*any false lashes or do anything smokey or a harsh contour, I'm using a Japoneque brush*) giving the impression that her advice results from both knowledge of the industry and from care and concern for her viewers. Hill also illustrates her expertise as a platform user by following expected rules of social practice, which include putting *brushes products everything down in the description box down below* (rules for publishing videos and related information) and interacting with other users, not just through replies to written comments by viewers, but also other YouTubers (*Kathleenlights was the one who recommended this to me, so thank you so much Kathleen*), as successful participant dynamics are the result of a reciprocal process, therefore, vloggers are both subscribed to and subscribers. In this way, effective socialization and engagement on YouTube involves not just maintaining one's own channel but offering the same audience to fellow users.

#### **2.4 Curation of an expert self**

Amongst the most interesting aspects of YouTube is the hybrid nature of discourses resulting from the multiple roles that participants play, particularly the skilled interweaving of socializing, entertainment with informal instruction, and in doing so, "appropriating or exploiting established conventions (or in this case expectations)... operating within and across generic boundaries... [generating innovative] forms of expression to their 'private intentions' within socially accepted communicative practices" (Bhatia, 2017: 35-6).

*I just take my brush, push it right into the cushion and begin applying it all over my skin....*

*I'm going take that same powder and slap it over my entire face with a huge fat powder brush, this is going to mattify my skin but we will go in with some highlighter to bring some life back....*

*I'm going to stick strictly to the outer corner of the eye, main reason I'm sticking to the outer corner is because when you're getting ready in the early morning you might feel like*

*you're looking tired... when you bring shadows all the way into the corner it can kind of weigh down the eye, make it look heavy... make you look more sleepy....*

*I am now taking the darkest matte brown on a pencil brush and outer edge of my upper lash line this is kind of going to mimic eyeliner by giving us more dimension....*

*...the L'oreal Lumi Cushion foundation, this is definitely my favourite foundation from the drugstore, I've tried several of them and this one just gives such a beautiful glow while still looking natural....*

*If you are dry, and you feel powders dry you out, I would highly suggest using this one, it's the only translucent powder that doesn't make my undereye look like a pancake....*

*These shadows remind me a lot of Morphe shadows, like the price point is kind of similar, they're affordable palettes and the pigmentation is very similar in the way they blend out....*

In the preceding extracts, we see how Hill constantly shifts between informal instruction and colloquial dialogue, managing different communicative goals, including socializing, teaching, promoting her expertise and entertaining. Between frequent use of humor, endearments and colloquialisms, Hill more conventionally demonstrates her expertise through use of jargon, specific instruction on application, and explanation for actions, emphasizing what Bhatia (2017) refers to as 'discursive competence.' Hill's use of single, extended teacher turns that incorporate explanations and instructions (Walsh, 2003) (*push it right into the cushion and begin applying it, this is going to mattify my skin, some highlighter to bring some life back, main reason I'm sticking to the outer corner, mimic eyeliner by giving us more dimension*) see her transition from friend, mentor, elder sister to a participant of the "managerial classroom mode" (Walsh, 2003). Hill's confident use of beauty jargon (*Anastasia Brow Definer, false lashes, smokey, harsh contour, highlighter, Japonese brush, mattify, eyeliner, pencil brush, L'oreal Lumi Cushion Foundation, Morphe Shadows*) establishes beauty on

YouTube as a distinct discourse community, allowing Hill to draw on existing professional terminology to display her expertise (Gordon and Luke, 2012), and these terms are often used without any offered definition, implying a degree of knowledge on part of the audience, gained through observation of community practice and engagement with community members. In addition, Hill also demonstrates her “knowledge of the discipline” (Bhatia, 2017: 205) through relevant recommendations about different products, giving informed impressions and making suggestions for specific issues: *L’oreal Lumi Cushion foundation, this is definitely my favourite foundation, I’ve tried several of them, gives such a beautiful glow while still looking natural, If you are dry... I would highly suggest using this one, price point is kind of similar, pigmentation is very similar in the way they blend out.* Hill’s demonstration of disciplinary knowledge and discursive competence to establish professional expertise, combined with her projection of an authentic and credible influencer not only indicate the multiple identity roles she plays but also address the different communicative goals of each identity - to create a friendly rapport, to promote one’s channel and knowledge as an industry expert, and to informally tutorialize in a casual online learning context.

## **2.5 Conclusions**

In Hill’s YouTube tutorial, we observe the demonstration of effective interdiscursive performance which derives from the multiple identity roles and communicative goals that a YouTuber often carries out. In this regard, the chapter attempted to demonstrate how new technologies and evolving social media platforms challenge traditional genres of learning and teaching, as well as conventional notions of expertise, social behavior and entertainment. Beauty vlogs allow us to observe the effective interdiscursive performance of individuals well-versed in the general requirements and expectations of successful participant behavior in a dynamic and constantly evolving community like YouTube. But we also see the multimodal construction of expertise which needs to be played out strategically between the multiple roles that participants on YouTube execute, including expert, friend, mentor, subscriber, and teacher.

Furthermore, an exploration of how YouTubers discursively construct their online identity in online tutorials can be a step towards better understanding the digital world young individuals live and thrive in today, as well as some of the measures of success and effect in online communication.

Research in this area would allow a better understanding of how young adults perform either as informal teachers or learners, as YouTubers exploit the boundaries between experts and laypersons in the discursive construction of expertise through informal tutorializing. More particularly, tools of new media technology such as social networking sites like YouTube, “can support and encourage informal conversation, dialogue, collaborative content generation, and knowledge sharing, giving learners access to a wide range of ideas and representations” (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008).

### **3. Suggestions for Research**

New media communication has afforded us many exciting opportunities for research and collaboration, and while I enjoy doing research in this area, as a fairly new and dynamic space for data and research, the rules of use and understanding are constantly changing. I, therefore, list below some of my own personal challenges to online research and some possible solutions.

#### **3.1 Data collection and context**

Within this area my key challenge has been negotiating with the sheer volume of data available and, depending on the length of the project, resources afforded to me, available assistance, the difficulty in collecting all of the data on a particular issue or topic in its entirety. For my own project on Identity Construction in Digital Professions, I have collected hundreds of hours’ worth of videos from different YouTubers over five years, and it has taken an immense amount of time to scour through all the playlists, watch all the videos, and even if using an external software to generate a transcript, having to closely go over each transcript and video to ensure accuracy in a manual fashion. For a long-term project, this data collection process is on-going, whereby collecting data becomes part of a weekly routine. In fact, my interest in YouTube started from my personal enjoyment of this platform as a social user, which ultimately converted into an academic endeavor. I watched and subscribed to a number of channels, which led to my curiosity about the arising discourses and social interaction etc. Thus, collecting data, gaining an understanding of who was popular, different videos genres, rules of engagement and socialization and so forth, all came through an understanding of YouTube that grew organically from a personal interest. I may not have my own channel, but I have enjoyed YouTube both as an educational resource, search engine, and for entertainment for several years, enabling data and context familiarization. I believe that the best understanding of social media comes from personal

experience of the platform(s) and prevents one from analyzing data at a superficial level or making presumptions about participant use and behaviors. In the case of this project, I made sure that I was not only following a variety of content creators (for the sake of comparison and contrasting) on YouTube but also related social media channels (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat etc.) to kept abreast of their sociocultural developments that informed my analysis of video content as well as comments and micro-dialogue published by users/subscribers/followers that recontextualized conversations from other platforms. As such, my most key advice to any researcher in this area is to pick an area of study in which they hold a personal interest because only then do we allow ourselves to fully immerse in the context to better understand participant dynamics, intentions, motivations and goals.

### **3.2 Challenging conventional notions and methods of analysis**

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, in analyzing online communication, we are dealing with new and unprecedented forms of communication, which are fast becoming our go-to means of expressing ourselves, socializing, learning and entertainment. For someone who spent a large part of her early career working with written texts in the area of political discourse, it was a fascinating lesson in realignment and reorientation, whereby I was now exploring informal discourses that drew on various multimodalities and semiotic resources, but which could still be regarded as texts that were published online. For instance, I was now looking not just at written words but also at how and when they would appear on the screen, were they flashing, blinking, hyperlinks, made coherent through the use of emojis, being updated etc. I continue my work in political discourse, where the hierarchy of participation is clearer cut, the discourse itself more ritualistic, and rules of engagement somewhat more predictable: as such it is easier to apply various critical discourse analytical methods to written forms of discourse because that, in some sense, is what we typically expect from critical discourse analysts, but this often preconceived notion is also what we must push beyond. My second challenge was being able to treat YouTube videos and the relevant published comments (including all the bells and whistles that accompany the posts in the form of video descriptions, hyperlinks, associated channels and social media pages etc.), as a *whole* text. I have always advocated for a multi-

perspective approach to any form of critical analysis, but this took on new meaning for data deriving from social media. This also meant challenging my own preconceived notions of politeness, expertise, boasting, humor, socializing, reciprocating, educating, advocating, learning etc., which have all taken on new meaning in different forms of online communication, including renegotiating acceptable and non-acceptable forms of behavior.

## **Glossary**

*Content creators:* users of YouTube or other social media platforms who create and post videos on their channel/pages. Also commonly referred to as influencers or YouTubers.

*Interdiscursivity:* mixing of genres, voices and discourses

*Microcelebrity:* social media users who become well-known/popular amongst a niche group of people

*Prosumerism:* the act of producing and consuming something, in the case of social media, content in the form of videos, memes, updates etc.

*Subscriber:* YouTube users who subscribe to specific channels created by other YouTubers/users.

Viewers are considered general audiences who may or may not be subscribed to channels.

*Vlogs:* Video-blogs, videos of varying lengths posted online that could include lifestyle tips, tutorials, how-to/DIY tips etc.

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