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Explorations in Linguistics

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“Well, Okay, Be Sure to Watch!”: An Examination of Closings in Talk Show Interviews

Nicole DeMarco, Georgetown University

Nicole DeMarco is currently a first year Master’s student at Georgetown University where she is pursuing an M.S. in Sociolinguistics. She enjoys independent films and crossword puzzles. She hopes to pursue work in editing or lexicography in the future and to travel to Scandinavia.

Abstract

Given that the ways in which talk-show interviews come to a conclusion is already well-established, i.e., by means of pre-closing and terminal components, the following work seeks to further elaborate on specific discourse markers and other utterances that may be used to preface the concluding remarks of conversational interactions of this sort. Building upon previous research about the functions and implications of particular discourse makers, such as “oh,” this paper examines how these and other lexical items operate within the particular contextual restraints of the talk-show interview. The scope of this research includes 12 total samples; four female interviewees that each appear on the same three late-night television talk shows.

Introduction

In the context of ordinary conversations, interlocutors are equipped with intrinsic pragmatic knowledge concerning the ways in which interactions may be brought to a close. Very little thought is typically given to how oral speech comes to be disengaged, much less to the ways in which institutional constraints may affect who is able to initiate the conclusion of a discussion. However, upon closer inspection, one begins to notice stark contrasts in the ways ordinary discourse is closed and the manner in which more institutionally bound interactions conclude. The following work seeks to determine specific discourse markers used most frequently by interviewers to signal the end of an interview and how specific lexical choices may be perceived. While some of the discourse markers chosen to end interviews go largely unnoticed and are therefore both innocuous and neutral, others may convey unintentional, yet cogent connotations to which listeners may react.

Previous Research

Since the task of disengaging conversational exchanges is very much a speech act, linguists have strived to meaningfully categorize the ways in which

these interactions occur. Given the ubiquitous nature of speech acts, closings should be looked at from a more generalized perspective before delving into more specific contexts. Broadly speaking, once a conversational exchange has commenced, speakers are faced with the issue of bringing the interaction to a close or recognizing instances wherein a lapse in turn-taking implicates the need for a conclusion to be reached (Szymanski, Vinkhuyzen, Paul, & Woodruff, 2003). Closing sequences allow for interlocutors to raise any issues not yet mentioned or reiterate any previously discussed points (Szymanski, et al., 2003). In the event that no topic is raised, the decision to bring the conversation to a close is mutually agreed upon.

Schegloff and Sacks (1974) make it a point to distinguish closing segments from gaps or lapses in conversations. Since not all lulls or silences are synonymous with completeness where conversation is concerned, “a last utterance must suspend the speaker-change mechanism, so that the participants do not hear the silence following this last utterance as a gap—a silence belonging to one of the participants” (Szymanski, 1999, p. 2). Szymanski (1999) further builds on Schegloff and Sacks’ (1974) analysis by noting that disengagement of conversation relies on the organization of sequences of action. The antithesis of sequences meant to reengage conversation, those aimed at disengagement, produce “sequence-completing actions” that do not elicit a next action, thus precluding the chance that a next action be produced. For instance, silence can be taken to mean that a conversation has merely reached a lull, while acts of physically leaving the proximity of one’s conversational partner make it quite clear that a discussion has ended. Additionally, questions are not effective in disengaging conversation because they initiate new conversational question-and-answer sequences (Szymanski, 1999). So that completions are not mistaken for silences, termination is customarily accomplished by an exchange of “good-byes” that indicate the participants’ orientation to the completion of the speech encounter (Martinez, 2003, p. 283).

Conversational participants utilize what are referred to by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) as “topic bounding” techniques. These discourse tools are such that topics previously discussed in conversation are commented upon for the sake of drawing the entire encounter to a close. This may be done in a comedic manner by employing humorous references back to previously discussed material. However, closings needn’t be funny. It is implicitly obvious that these topic-bounding techniques are meant to disengage conversation. By offering a conversational recap, interviewers are able to bring conversations between hosts and guests full circle, and therefore, “summarizing utterances are closing-relevant and serve a pre-closing function” (Szymanski, 1999, p. 13-4). Because it is the interviewer who has the sole authority to bring conversations in this context to their ultimate conclusions, pre-closings help to ensure that an interlocutor’s rights to initiate further conversation are not encroached upon. Martinez comments that “Even though the pre-closing phase consists minimally of an exchange of passing turns, it is often extensive” (, 2003, p. 284). These pre-closings can include expressions of gratitude or phrases that enact future-oriented arrangements, e.g., invitations or directives (to return to the show, to be well, etc.).

Moving into the conversation marked by a specific context, some information has already been established about the ways in which talk shows

and news interviews come to a close. Like ordinary conversations, such as those between friends or significant others, this specific speech act constitutes a ritualistic event in the context of television talk shows. Unlike closings in ordinary conversations, however, the ritualistic speech act of the television interview closing is “contingent on the general constraints that the institutional context dictates for the whole speech event” (Martinez, 2003, p. 284). This context dictates certain restrictions on the interlocutors, specifically interviewees, in terms of what they are able to say and when they do not apply in the realm of ordinary conversation.

Essentially, disengaging speech in talk shows is comprised of two elements. The first is a pre-closing component, which “in its simplest form may be a single boundary marker separating off the many body of the interview” (Martinez, 2003, p. 289-290). For example:

8 INT: → <OKAY. WELL. (STAY THERE). + (turns to AUD) THANK YOU VERY
9 MUCH. (hand movement towards TB) TONY BENN MP. + (INAUD.)>

Both “okay” and “well” act as boundary markers. The boundary markers that signal the pre-closing component of the talk show interview often include these basic lexical items, as well as “right.” These boundary markers, however, do not typically act as the sole pre-closing device. This portion of the closing “includes further elements, such as well-wishes, invitations to future shows, interpersonal tokens related to the interaction, references to prior talk, and even brief re-openings of talk commonly related to some aspect mentioned in the main body of the interview” (Martinez, 2003, p. 290).

The second element involved with disengaging speech in talk shows is the terminal component. At a superficial glance, the terminal component is merely a thanksgiving act uttered by the interviewer, but upon closer inspection one sees that the terminal component is indeed more complex. Expressions of gratitude may also be made by the interviewee in response to the well wishes and invitations to future shows offered in the pre-closing segment of the interview. Additionally, interviewers may terminate interviews by announcing the guest’s name. Here, the terminal component is not addressed *to* the interviewee, as he or she is well aware of his or her name. Rather, the point is to provoke audience members to recognize the host’s guest in some way, while simultaneously signaling to that guest that their interview is nearing its end. Thus, “the issuance of the guest’s full name...functions as an applause-eliciting device” (Martinez, 2003, p. 288). Through pragmatic awareness, the audience members are able to recognize that announcing the name of the interviewee is supposed to be met with applause. An interviewer would be committing an egregious faux pas if he or she were to say something explicit like, “Please clap for the guest now.”

Here it becomes important to make mention of an additional conversational participant in this context, namely, the actual audience. The importance of the audience’s presence is demonstrated by physical gestures on the part of the interviewer, for instance, the extension of an arm in the direction of the interviewee so as to invite applause. That these instances wherein the name of the guest is announced and audience-oriented is further evidenced by the fact that the interviewer addresses the audience explicitly as “ladies and gentlemen.”

The audience is again acknowledged as a third party participant as the talk show interview concludes. Furthermore, they are “(in)directly requested to shift from their silent role of eavesdroppers on a private conversation to an active participating role, by showing gratitude to the guest for his/her presence of the show” (Martinez, 2003, p. 289). Given the setting, their gratitude is often expressed by means of applause, sometimes cheering depending on the actual show, for the interviewee. Though the audience is indeed an important third party conversational participant in the television talk show setting, their communicative acts are fairly limited to non-verbal displays of thanksgiving.

Two other observations that have been made about the nature of talk show closings are as follows. First, the closing portion of these interviews is initiated by the interviewer (Martinez, 2003). The capacity to do so is derived from the institutional authority inextricably linked to this more contrived conversational setting. And second, the specific closing structure of these various interviews will vary in style and content in a genre specific way (Martinez, 2003). This is to say that because talk show closings vary from those of common interlocutors, one is less likely to be familiar with these rituals. Given that this is the case, the following work seeks to elaborate on these differences in an effort to make conversationalists more aware. Specifically, it is the goal of this study to determine which specific discourse markers are used most frequently by interviewers to signal the end of an interview and how specific lexical choices may be perceived.

Context

For the purposes of this study, twelve closings were examined and analyzed in the context of late night talk show interviews. The five specific talk shows included in this analysis were *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* on the television network NBC, and *The Late Show with David Letterman*, produced by CBS. The interviews conducted by the third and final interviewer in this study, Conan O’Brien, featured O’Brien on three different prime time talk shows: *Late Night with Conan O’Brien* (NBC), *The Tonight Show with Conan O’Brien* (NBC), and an interview that appeared on the eponymous *Conan* (TBS).

Participants

The participants in this study are four well-known female actresses and entertainers: Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Meryl Streep, and Emma Stone. Their interviews on the aforementioned late night talk shows were selected and viewed by the researcher. Because of the nature of this specific analysis, they may not be thought of as “participants” in the ordinary sense in that they did not willingly interact with the conductor of this study. However, because their televised interviews are a matter of public record, they *can* be described as contributors and therefore participants in the corpus of existing and ever-expanding talk show records.

The age of these participants ranges from 63 (Streep) to 24 (Stone). Fey and Poehler are considerably closer in age, at 42 and 41, respectively. These latter two can more accurately be described as both television and film actresses, comedienne, sketch and comedy writers, and producers. Additionally, Fey and Poehler are friends in real life (this is noted since a few of the projects that are referenced in this study’s interviews are those on which the two collaborated,

though they do not appear together in the interview). Streep has acted in theatre, television, and film and is regarded as one of the most talented actresses in the modern era. Stone, the youngest of the four, is an actress who has appeared almost exclusively in film.

The accomplishments and specific occupational titles of the interviewee participants are noted so that one may consider their reception by interviewers in light of the fame surrounding each of these women. Additionally, since it is the interviewers that initiate closing segments of interviews, they also ought to be included as participants. In fact, all conclusions and discussions about what discourse markers are used most commonly to transition from interview to closing are analyses of their words, not the words of the interviewees. Therefore, Conan O'Brien, David Letterman, and Jay Leno are also considered participants in this study, as they are the three interviewers. For greater ease on the part of the reader, he or she is invited to refer to Table I below.

Table 1: Research Participants

Excerpt	Interviewer	Interviewee
Excerpt A	Conan O'Brien	Tina Fey
Excerpt B	David Letterman	Tina Fey
Excerpt C	Jay Leno	Tina Fey
Excerpt D	Conan O'Brien	Amy Poehler
Excerpt E	David Letterman	Amy Poehler
Excerpt F	Jay Leno	Amy Poehler
Excerpt G	Conan O'Brien	Meryl Streep
Excerpt H	David Letterman	Meryl Streep
Excerpt I	Jay Leno	Meryl Streep
Excerpt J	Conan O'Brien	Emma Stone
Excerpt K	David Letterman	Emma Stone
Excerpt L	Jay Leno	Emma Stone

Method

The method for collecting data for the purposes of this study was primarily centered on the practice of self-recorded transcriptions taken by hand. Interviews from each of the three different late night talk shows were listened to in their entirety, with a specific focus on each interview's closing segment and the verbal and relevant nonverbal interactions that took place therein. It is from these interview transcriptions that any and all new conclusions were drawn.

Interviewees were observed participating and engaging with each of the three hosts for the purpose of conducting a talk show interview. In many instances, participants, in doing so, promoted various upcoming projects. Additional speech acts, including thanksgiving utterances and well wishes were also observed.

Data

The data include closing segments from a total of 12 interviews (four interviewees each appearing on three different television talk shows). Essentially,

there are seven total participants, but 12 instances of closing from which to make conclusions regarding the research topic at hand. The interviews themselves are videos located by the researcher on the Internet on websites open to the public (e.g., YouTube and Hulu, see Appendix II); they were not recorded originally by the conductor of this study nor were any of the interviews seen live. Essentially, the data are comprised of 12 transcriptions.

The transcriptions, secondary records from the primary (and sole) source, used for the purposes of this project are standardized more orthographically than phonetically. This was done mainly to ensure a sense of universal intelligibility, since transcriptions of oral speech written phonetically (informally speaking) can be more stigmatized than their standardized versions. However, exceptions to this are the phonetic versions of highly common words deemed by the conductor of this study to be widely, if not universally, recognizable and therefore intelligible. Most notably “ya” for “you,” “gonna” for “going to,” and “wanna,” for “want to.”

Transcriptions also follow left-to-right and top-to-bottom conventions, further adhering to the standardized rules of transcription. Parenthetical asides are used in order to document any significant non-verbal behavior that actively contributes to the interpersonal communication between interlocutors (in this case, interviewer and interviewee) like pats on the back or handshakes.

Data Analysis

The approach in analyzing the data was qualitative and quantitative: quantitative in the sense that conclusions are based on specific numerical data and the actual frequency of various items, but qualitative in the sense that these specific items were analyzed in depth in order to reflect the implications of the results in a meaningful way. The categories utilized were relatively broad, and determined post-analysis. In other words, data were not assigned to previously determined categories. Rather, data were analyzed once the transcription process was complete and categorized according to results produced organically from the interviews themselves, not contrived from the mind of the researcher.

Findings

At this point, it may warrant repeating that the focus of this examination ultimately rests in determining what specific discourse markers are most commonly used in talk show interviews to signal that the conversation between the conversational participants involved is coming to a close. These findings are reported in an effort to elucidate the ways in which talk-show conclusions vary from those of more everyday conversations, not bound by the same restrictions of an institutional context. Findings are organized according to specific phrases used to preface pre-closing and closing segments, as subheadings suggest. The reader is once again invited to consult Table I under Figures (see Section XII) of this study for additional clarification on each interview setting.

A. “Listen”

The first finding unique to this analysis is the repeated and consistent tendency of interviewer David Letterman to preface pre-closings with “listen.” The first line in Excerpts B, H, and K (See Appendix I for Excerpt transcriptions)

show various collocated pairs that include “listen,” such as “Listen, um,” (Excerpt B) “Now, listen,” (Excerpt H) and “Alright listen” (Excerpt K).

The way in which the interview between David Letterman and Meryl Streep concludes in Excerpt H is a bit of an anomaly, because the reason Letterman says, “Now listen, uh, race right on home, take care of yourself” is due to the fact Streep had a bronchial infection at the time the interview was conducted. During the actual interview, a clip from an upcoming movie release of Streep’s was played and discussed, as were various other topics. Imploring his guest to rest and take care of herself is done as a sincere gesture to bring the interview full circle. In doing so, Letterman has employed the topic-bounding techniques discussed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973). However, if Streep had not been ill, it is likely, practically certain, that the interview between the two would have concluded differently. This is further evidenced by the fact that were she not sick, Streep would have no reason (at least no reason permitted by etiquette) to reject Letterman’s physical initiation for a handshake (Line 3-4) before eventually accepting the gesture (Line 7). One could even say Letterman’s insistence on handshaking is an effort to maintain standard practices of politeness, to which handshaking certainly belongs. Even so, Letterman is the only of the three interviewer-hosts to use “listen” in this way, i.e., to preface closing statements. For this reason, it can safely be concluded that “listen” is an idiolectal tendency of Letterman.

B. “Uh”

“Uh” was used a total of three times to transition from the main body of the interview to the terminal exchanges. Excerpts A, G, and J all begin with “uh.” It is worth noting, that these excerpts are those interviews conducted by Conan O’Brien. Indeed, it seems that it is his idiolectal tendency to begin interview closings in this way. It is likely that this tendency to use “uh” as a way of transitioning from interview to closing is not unique or exclusive to this particular topical shift, but to conversational shifts in general. However, it is only the case in Excerpt J that O’Brien follows this verbal pre-closing act with the non-verbal gesture of physically extending his arm for a handshake. Therefore, one cannot say that a pairing of spoken and unspoken gestures is the tendency of O’Brien, at least not based on these data.

C. “Well”

Appearing once in conjunction with “uh” (Excerpt J) and twice as the initially uttered discourse marker (Excerpts C and L), “well” appears as a specific discourse marker used to make the transition from interview body to closing component. The latter two instances are both interviews hosted by Jay Leno, with Tina Fey and Emma Stone as the interviewees, respectively. In Excerpt L, “well” is collocated with “anyway,” before moving toward a promotional utterance, which are to be discussed thoroughly in the proceeding section.

D. Promotional Utterances

The richest finding of this study concerns the use of promotional utterances to signal that the interview is coming to a close. Also initiated by the interviewer, there are several instances wherein explicit mention of the interviewee’s upcoming project or projects is used in the place of a discourse

marker to designate the transition to the terminal portion of the interview. Excerpts C (following “well” in line 1), D, E, F, G, J, and L all contain a mention of an upcoming project of the interviewee in the first line of the closing component of the interview. For example, in Excerpt D (line1-2), *Conan* host Conan O’Brien signals that his interview with Amy Poehler is reaching its conclusion by addressing the audience with, “and *Saturday Night Live* returns live May 10th...so watch that.” The viewers, as well as the audience members themselves, are able to determine to whom this address is directed because Conan physically looks out toward the audience. Additionally, from a logical perspective, it is clear that this utterance is not intended for the interviewee, because as a writer and cast member, Poehler would already know when *Saturday Night Live* was returning.

In Excerpt G, Conan O’Brien is once again observed using a promotional utterance to bring an interview to a close, this time the interview between him and Meryl Streep. O’Brien begins (or rather ends), “Uh...*Julie and Julia* opens August 7th, you should see it, it’s a fantastic film.” (Line 1). For the same reasons discussed in the immediately preceding example, this announcement is clearly addressed to the audience. An additional similarity of interest between these two excerpts is the use of a recommendation on behalf of the upcoming projects, i.e. Poehler’s television show return and Streep’s movie. Both “So watch that” (Excerpt D, line 2) and “you should see it,” (Excerpt G, line 1) cast the interviewee’s projects in a positive light. Further, one may even feel that because these recommendations are those of well-known television personalities that they carry more weight. There are instances in which projects of interviews are lauded and implicitly recommended by the interviewer, too. Jay Leno describes Tina Fey’s movie *Mean Girls* as “very funny,” (Excerpt C, line 1), Amy Poehler’s show *Parks and Recreation* as “one of the best shows on TV,” (Excerpt F, line 2), and Emma Stone’s movie *Easy A* as “good.” (Excerpt L, line 1). One could even make the assertion that simply by virtue of using promotional utterances as a way to bring interviews to a close, an interviewer’s seal of approval is granted; since it seems unlikely they would advertise something they did not believe to be quality work.

Excerpt E, a segment of the interview between host David Letterman and guest Amy Poehler, includes a reference to content of the show in which the interviewee is involved: “This is, uh, Amy Poehler from uh, Pawnee, Indiana. *Parks and Recreation* Thursday nights 9:30 NBC.” (Excerpt E, lines 1-3). Pawnee, Indiana is the fictional town in which *Parks and Recreation* takes place. Therefore, the host is not only indirectly recommending the show to viewers, but also demonstrating actual knowledge *about* the project being promoted.

In these examples, the focus is not so much on a specific word, like a discourse marker, that designates the beginning of the end. Rather, it is the observation that a phrase, characterized by particular content, marks this same transition. To put it more straightforwardly, the focus is on the fact that interviewees understand a mention of their projects in a promotional fashion to mean that the interviewer wishes to end the interview.

Discussion, Conclusions, and Limitations

The lattermost finding described in the previous section offers an interesting challenge to an assertion made by Martinez (2003). Martinez states,

“It appears to be rather unpopular among talk show hosts to project the nearing end of the interview by means of overt announcements...” (Martinez, 2003, p. 293). While Martinez states that only 22 percent of interviews contained overt announcements, more than half of the interviews analyzed in this study contain such promotional announcements. Obviously, the scope of this study is limited, but it is nevertheless interesting that there should be such a disparity between Martinez’s findings and the ones of this study. This is perhaps the most notable of the conclusions gathered from this study.

It is obvious that it is a concern of both interviewer and interviewee that an air of politeness be maintained, as evidenced by ritualistic exchanges of thanksgiving. In fact, gratitude is mutually expressed in every recorded excerpt. However, some transitional discourse markers seem to have connotative effects that are more polite than others. For instance, while “well” and “uh” are rather innocuous, neutral even, “listen” has undertones that are subtly yet distinctly imperative. In issuing a command, even a polite one, the interviewer has appealed to his institutionally (as described by Martinez, 2003) issued authority. For an interviewee to say, “listen” to an interviewer would be an anomaly.

As alluded to in previous sections, the discourse markers used specifically in these interviews are not exclusive to transitions of this sort. Although Heritage (1998) outlines other functions of the discourse marker “oh” (namely that it may be used to register noticing, acknowledge new information or reluctance on the part of one interlocutor to advance a particular topic introduced by a question or statement from his or her conversational partner), one can conclusively surmise that this and other discourse markers are inherently transitional. Unique to this context, however, is the use of promotional utterances to signal that the interviewer wishes to bring the interview to a conclusion. It would be extremely unusual and even inappropriate in ordinary conversation and other contexts for one to simply exclaim the title of a thesis or film project their conversational partner had worked on so as to indicate that he or she was preparing to terminate their discussion.

It is also interesting that in none of these interviews, and in talk shows in general, there are no instances where the interviewer explicitly says something about it being the end of the interview. In other words, one wouldn’t expect an interviewer to say, “Okay, well, the interview is ending now.” In fact, such an utterance would be perceived as socially and pragmatically inept.

There is the implication that pragmatic knowledge affords one the capacity to recognize conversational transitions even in the absence of an explicit mention of topical change. Additionally, it is implied that the conversational participants in this context, both interviewer and interviewee, abide by the constraints and rituals established for this unique discourse context. Because they deviate away from the norms associated with ordinary discourse (Greatbatch, 1988) like casual conversations between friends, participants in a television talk show may not be actively aware of the rituals unique to this context until they’ve violated them.

What Martinez (2003) says about the role of the audience as conversational participants in the context of television talk shows is confirmed by these data. Indeed, the promotional utterances that comprise the most significant finding of this study would be largely pointless if not for the audience as receptors of information. While Martinez (2003) illustrates the role of audience

members through examples wherein explicit instruction is delivered to thank the show's guest, audience involvement is signaled in the data of this study more implicitly, through nonverbal means like eye contact and pragmatic logic.

An obvious limitation of this study is that it is by no means exhaustive, or entirely conclusive, although it is a response to the call made by Greatbatch (1988) for studies of news interviews aired in countries outside of Great Britain. Nevertheless, it is not and should not act as the final word on closing components both in talk show contexts and in general. Although the sample size is appropriate for a study of this magnitude, the breadth of data could easily be, and should be, expanded for more definitive generalizations concerning the use of discourse markers to signal the end of a talk show interview. The transcription used those recorded by a novice, and so there is plenty more linguistic and paralinguistic information that could be conveyed using more thorough application of more advanced transcription conventions.

Additionally, while the fact that all the interviewees in this study are females having been interviewed by males, more conclusive remarks may be made after having analyzed males interviewed by males, by females, and females interviewed by females to see if transitional tendencies are impacted by this change in dynamic.

Implications of Study and Areas for Future Research

As a means of rectifying a limitation specific to this study, further research could be done that includes the aforementioned gender variations between interviewer-host and interviewee. Additionally, this study looked at talk shows that air exclusively during the late-night time slot. No data was collected from talk shows that appear on daytime television. While this may not affect the terminal portions, it plausibly could, and so for the sake of being thorough some analysis could be done here.

Given the repeated tendency of television talk show hosts (discussed in Section VIII under subheading D) to recommend the upcoming projects of their interviewees, perhaps more research could be done to examine the speech act of recommending itself. From these examples alone, one already knows that recommendations can be made explicitly or implicitly. However, one could analyze the tendency of recommenders to elaborate on why they endorse something, the things most likely to be recommended (books, movies, television shows), if the sociolinguistic factor of age affects these tendencies, etc.

The implications of this study are inextricably linked with a primary goal of linguistics in general, i.e., to examine the ways in which language works to convey meaning to speakers and listeners. The overriding implication is that people in general use language to communicate meaning, and the ways in which this is accomplished are as varied as the people communicating. By contributing even just a modicum of insight to this corpus of knowledge, language users are better able to communicate meaningfully.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Transcriptions

Tina Fey on Conan O'Brien (Excerpt A)

- 1 Conan: Uh, alright, well...uh, two things the new season of *30 Rock* premieres
2 this Thursday night at 9:30
3 Tina: Mhm <confirmation by interviewee makes it so this announcement is
4 addressed to audience and interviewee>
5 Conan: on NBC **and the Season 2 DVD, uh, all hilarious stuff, is now**
6 **available, so go out and get that.**** Tina Fey, such a pleasure.
7 Congratulations on every(.)thing=
8 Tina: =Thanks
9 Conan: Continued two successful years...

Tina Fey on David Letterman (Excerpt B)

- 1 Letterman: Listen, um, I wanna thank you very much for being here
2 It's always a treat
3 Tina: My pleasure
4 Letterman: **and the show premieres January 12th 8PM NBC**
5 **the lovely Tina Fey**
6 ((extends arm to shake hands))
7 God bless you my dear, thank you very much

Tina Fey on Jay Leno (Excerpt C)

<movie clip concludes>

- 1 Leno: Well, it's very funny. *Mean Girls* and it opens, uh, April 30th.
2 Tina: [April 30th]
3 Leno: [Tina Fey],

4 thank you ((shakes Tina's hand)),
5 Tina

Amy Poehler on Conan O'Brien (Excerpt D)

1 Conan: **and *Saturday Night Live* returns live May 10th with host Shia LaBeouf**
2 **and musical guest "My Morning Jacket," [so watch that].**
3 Amy: ((nodding)) [Yeah]
4 Conan: You're very busy
5 You're doing great
6 Amy: <quietly> thank you
7 Conan: [Thanks so much]
8 Amy: [Thanks, Conan]
9 Conan: for stopping by
10 Amy: My pleasure
11 Conan: **Amy Poehler!**
12 Amy: Thank you for having me
13 Conan: You're the best
14 **We'll be right back**

Amy Poehler on David Letterman (Excerpt E)

1 Letterman: **This is, uh, Amy Poehler from, uh, Pawnee, Indiana. *Parks and***
2 ***Recreation***
3 **Thursday Nights 9:30 NBC.**
4 Good to see ya ((shakes hand))
5 Amy: Thank you
6 Letterman: ((kisses hand)) God bless ya
7 Amy: Thank you
8 Letterman: Good luck with those kids!
9 Amy: Thank you very much

Amy Poehler on Jay Leno (Excerpt F)
<preview clip concludes>

1 Leno: Very cool! **Tomorrow night at 9:30 mid-premier of *Parks and Recreation***
2 **One of the best shows on TV**
3 ((extends arm to shake hands))
4 Amy: Thank you
5 Leno: Thank you very much, Amy

Meryl Streep on Conan O'Brien (Excerpt G)

1 Conan: **Uh...*Julie & Julia* opens August 7th, you should see it, it's a fantastic**
2 **film. Uh...one of, uh, just a fantastic honor and thrill to have you here.**
3 Meryl: Well thanks for having me
4 Conan: Thank you so much, it's meant so much to us.
5 **Meryl Streep**
6 **We'll be right back**

Meryl Streep on David Letterman (Excerpt H)

- 1 Letterman: Now listen, uh, race right on home, take care of yourself.
- 2 Meryl: ((laughing)) Okay.
- 3 Letterman: and God bless ya ((extends hand))
- 4 Meryl: Well thank you ((recoils))—don't touch me! ((laughs))
- 5 Letterman: ((dramatically applies hand sanitizer))
- 6 Meryl: Thanks a lot, Dave
- 7 Letterman: Thank you very much ((shakes hand, laughs))
- 8 **The lovely Meryl Streep!**

Meryl Streep on Jay Leno (Excerpt I)

- 1 Leno: Meryl Streep, **everybody**, just great having you
- 2 Thanks so much for being here
- 3 Meryl: Thank you, Jay
- 4 Leno: **Meryl Streep!**
- 5 ((extends arm for a handshake))
- 6 **We'll have more for ya when we return**

Emma Stone on Conan O'Brien (Excerpt J)

- 1 Conan: **Uh, well, *Crazy Stupid Love* opens Friday, and *The Help* opens**
- 2 **August 10th.** Emma, [a] real thrill having you on the show ((extends
arm for a handshake))
- 3 Emma: Thank you so much for having me
- 4 Conan: Thanks a lot, you're hilarious.
- 5 **Emma Stone**

Emma Stone on David Letterman (Excerpt K)

- 1 Letterman: Alright, listen Emma, it was nice to see you again,
- 2 [Will you come back?]
- 3 Emma: [It was good to see you]
- 4 I would love to
- 5 Letterman: [Alright, go home,]
- 6 get some rest
- 7 Emma: [Thank you for having me]
- 8 Letterman: **Emma Stone, ladies and gentlemen**

Emma Stone on Jay Leno (Excerpt L)

- 1 Leno: **Well anyway, the movie is good, if you haven't seen *Easy A* it's on**
- 2 **regular DVD and it's on, uh, the other one as well.**
- 3 **We have a clip, too...let's take a look...**
- <clip plays and concludes>
- 4 Leno: **Emma Stone, *Easy A* is the picture out on DVD—we'll be right back—**
- 5 Emma,

6 thank you, Merry Christmas
7 Emma: Thank you

****Bold font is used to designate utterances directed at audience members**

Appendix II: Video URLs

Tina Fey:

Conan O'Brien: <http://vimeo.com/17209399> (Excerpt A)

David Letterman: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIk2V1uTitk> (Excerpt B)

Jay Leno: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7Fpqpzpzx8> (Excerpt C)

Amy Poehler:

Conan O'Brien: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlqliri_W74 (Excerpt D)

David Letterman: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcBohqzJCeU> (Excerpt E)

Jay Leno: <http://www.hulu.com/watch/402966> (Excerpt F)

Meryl Streep:

Conan O'Brien: <http://www.video.simplystreepmedia.com/view/519/the-tonight-show-with-conan-obrien-2009-1/> (Excerpt G)

David Letterman: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuF7KUplCDA&feature=endscreen> (Excerpt H)

Jay Leno: <http://www.video.simplystreepmedia.com/view/119/the-tonight-show-with-jay-leno-1998/> (Excerpt I)

Emma Stone:

Conan O'Brien: <http://blogs.indiewire.com/carynjames/emmastoneconan> (Excerpt J)

David Letterman: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eW7hLLudFqc> (Excerpt K)

Jay Leno: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lfoL_cwdpw (Excerpt L)

Hello Internet!: An Analysis of YouTuber Greetings

Dana Mingione, Saint Joseph's University

Dana Mingione is currently a junior at Saint Joseph's University where she studies Italian, English, and Linguistics. She spends her spare time scrolling *Tumblr*, exploring Philadelphia, and participating in impromptu poetry readings. She hopes to attend graduate school and pursue a career in language education.

Abstract

The greeting is a fundamental part of discourse that has been examined in many different contexts such as phone calls, social visits, and service interactions. The online video sharing community of YouTube, however, is one discourse context that has been neglected by researchers investigating the form and function of greetings. YouTube is an ever-changing community that is created and recreated by its users, making it difficult for researchers to make definitive claims about how YouTubers greet their audiences. Instead of searching for universal rules that govern how YouTubers greet, this study focuses on general trends that surface among YouTubers' greetings. This study examines a sampling of some of the most popular YouTubers and analyzes what their greeting styles say about their relationships with their viewers. While the present study does delve into a relatively unexamined context for linguistic research, the intriguing community of YouTube holds much more potential for research beyond what is examined here.

Introduction

Since its founding in February, 2005, YouTube has grown into one of the most popular websites in the world ("About YouTube," n.d.). While YouTube may be perceived by some as nothing more than a platform for viral videos, Internet fads and footage of cats, in reality it is "a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe" ("About YouTube," n.d.). With millions of users, YouTube is very much a community where users upload original content to share with other creators and viewers. Some viewers feel a personal connection to the users to whom they are subscribed and many YouTubers make efforts to interact with their audiences. One powerful way that users reach out to their viewers is through their use of language. By closely examining the ways in which a user communicates with his/her viewers, one can gain a greater understanding of the unique rapport existing between each user and his/her viewers. This study examines the manifestation of the relationship between YouTube users and viewers by analyzing the manner in

which users greet their respective audiences at the beginning of their videos. The present research is focused specifically on video bloggers, also referred to as vloggers. The aim of this study is to reveal whether greetings executed on this online platform follow the standard conventions of face-to-face interaction, whether vloggers follow a specific, consistent format in their greetings, and what greetings reveal about the relationship that exists between a vlogger and his/her audience.

Previous Research

To date, there has been relatively little published on YouTuber speech. One study (Duman & Locher, 2008), although it did not discuss greetings or openings, did shed some light on the ways in which YouTube can be utilized as a means of establishing a bond through conversation. Duman and Locher (2008) analyzed two videos uploaded to YouTube, one featuring then-Senator Barack Obama and the other featuring Hillary Clinton. These videos served as announcements of their intentions to run for president. These videos also marked the first time presidential candidates made use of YouTube as a medium of communication with the country. Duman and Locher (2008) focused on the candidates' use of a 'VIDEO EXCHANGE IS CONVERSATION' metaphor, meaning that they strove to emphasize their uploading of these videos as the first step in a conversation that would take place between themselves and the citizens of the United States. While this new type of interaction may be a completely different type of interaction than is typified by vloggers – whose work is usually informative or entertaining – the fact that these politicians implicitly invite reactions to their assertions suggests that they are striving to form a community of sorts. Despite intentions of the politicians to create a sense of closeness with their viewers, neither Obama nor Clinton greeted their audiences. They simply began their announcements as follows:

Obama: As many of you know over the last few months I've been thinking hard about my plans for two thousand and eight.
(BarackObamadotcom – “Barack Obama: My Plans for 2008”)

Clinton: I announced today that I'm forming a presidential exploratory committee.
(hillaryclintondotcom – “I'm In”)

Obama does refer to his audience as “you” in his opening, which can be seen as a step towards establishing a rapport. However, neither of these candidates introduced themselves to their audiences or even uttered a typical conversational greeting such as “hello.”

Other studies, (Beal & Traverso, 2010; Ferguson, 1976; Lindstrom, 1994; Nilsen, 1984; Partridge, 2011) although they do not deal at all with YouTube, do shed some light on why vloggers might greet their audiences in particular ways. What makes the YouTube context difficult to relate to a real-time interaction (such as a telephone call or a social visit) is the simple fact that interlocutors on YouTube are often separated by a significant amount of space and time. A viewer might live thousands of miles away from a vlogger and watch her videos days after she first uploads them. Many YouTubers with strong community

followings encourage their viewers to respond to their videos with comments or videos of their own, but many viewers do not reciprocate. Replying with a comment or video response takes more time, energy, and resources than simply enjoying a creator's videos. But in a face-to-face interaction, the conversation is occurring in the present moment, rendering a response much easier to establish. A YouTube relationship is often a mutual one: the creator produces content which the viewer willingly and happily consumes. Still, the immediacy of a face-to-face interaction makes those types of interactions quite different from interactions on YouTube.

Many recent studies have dealt with the presence of phatic communications within greetings. A phatic communication is one that does not facilitate the exchange of information, but instead solely accomplishes a social task (Coupland, Coupland, & Robinson, 1992). For example, Beal and Traverso (2010) explored the ways in which Australian and French friends greet one another at the front door of a social gathering. They found that Australian individuals regard "hello" and "how are you?" as interchangeable speech acts that are largely phatic communications. In Australian English, the question "how are you?" is more often seen as a means of accomplishing a social task than a means of seeking information. In the same way, a vlogger might ask his/her audience how they are doing, as one popular YouTuber, AmazingPhil, does here:

Phil: Hey guys! ((*wave*)) How's it going, good? Bad? I'll give both reactions just in case. Aww brilliant ((*thumbs up*)) Aww, I'm sorry. (AmazingPhil – "Why I was a weird kid 2!")

Here, Phil does not expect a real, immediate answer. Instead, the question of "how's it going?" functions more as a greeting than as an inquiry into one's well-being. Partridge (2011) also references phatic greetings, saying that they "indicate recognition of the existence of the other participant(s) in a discourse," something that a YouTuber would definitely try to accomplish in their greetings. But Phil goes beyond simply acknowledging the existence of his viewers and chooses to joke with them in this tongue-in-cheek manner. He asks this question fully aware of his viewers' inability to respond and pokes fun at his own question, creating a friendly, lighthearted environment that welcomes his viewers.

On the other hand, many YouTubers choose not to greet their viewers at all, a phenomenon to be explored later. Ferguson (1976) cited Goffman (1971) who claimed that "students of modern society" treat "politeness formulas" like phatic greetings "as part of the dust of social activity, empty and trivial" (137). Young YouTube vloggers could certainly be considered "students of modern society," thanks to their trailblazing in the field of social media. They very well might consider greetings to be "empty and trivial" and choose to omit them entirely from their videos.

Nilsen (1984) analyzed the forms of greeting used by 75 applicants in their "letters of application for an academic position at a large southwestern university" (245). She found that a majority of the applicants, 47 of them, demonstrated in their sex-neutral greetings awareness that addressing an "unknown person or group with a masculine greeting" (245) such as 'Dear sir' could be potentially problematic. Of course, the context of a video blog is much different than the high-stakes situation of a job application, but YouTubers must

be aware of the same kinds of issues regarding the gender of their audience. YouTubers do possess tools to see the breakdown of their viewers by gender, but picking a gender-specific greeting might be risky, as it would most likely alienate a percentage of their viewers. Instead, vloggers who choose to address their audiences by a certain name, as will be seen in the greetings of several vloggers examined in the present study, may do so by using sex-neutral terms like 'nation' or 'everyone'.

Lindström (1984) addresses interesting points regarding the function of identification within greetings. She examined the preferences of different cultures toward either (1) explicit self-identification or (2) other-recognition when speaking on the telephone. Of course, self-identification is more important in the telephone call context than it is in the YouTube context; a telephone may be equipped with digital caller-identification, but that still does not guarantee that the name on the screen matches the identity of the caller. In a YouTube video, viewers have a visual to rely on for identification purposes. Still, many vloggers choose to self-identify in their videos, perhaps to welcome new, first time viewers into the community.

The current study seeks to examine how greetings in these other contexts can potentially relate to the YouTube context. Issues of phatic communication, sex-neutral greetings, and speaker identification surface and are quite important to YouTube greetings, as this analysis will explore.

Context

The present study examines 140 YouTube videos; the 7 most recent videos from each of 20 different vloggers as of April 9, 2013. The upload dates of the videos span from December 28, 2012 to April 9, 2013. Most of the videos contain one person, the vlogger, speaking to the camera. Others contain the vlogger and one other person, or the vlogger and a small group of people.

No two vloggers' style is exactly the same. Some vlogs come unscripted from the mouth of a vlogger sitting in front of a camera in his basement and others are the result of much planning and scripting, with elaborate lighting and editing. Some are educational or informative, others purely entertaining or comedic. But at their basic level, vlogs are videos in which vloggers speak about what is on their mind. Due to the personal nature of this format, vloggers are typically among the YouTubers with the strongest ties to their communities, making their greetings to their viewers particularly interesting.

The greeting patterns of 20 different vloggers were examined, 10 of whom are American and 10 of whom are British (see Table A below). A sampling including both Americans and British vloggers in even numbers represents more accurately the range of the most popular vloggers. However, including male and female vloggers in equal numbers would not hold true to the distribution of popularity within YouTube. This study examines 12 males and 8 females, due to the fact that many of the most popular YouTubers are male. In a list compiled by the Guardian, a national British daily newspaper, of 20 of the UK's "most popular online video bloggers," 13 of the 20 vloggers listed were male (Lewis, Fox, & Michael, 2013). Of course, YouTube popularity is a very difficult thing to quantify accurately due to the different variables in play such as the number of subscribers, the number of views per video, the number of 'likes', the number of comments, and many others. Table A contains additional data regarding the

participants, all of which was collected from each individual participant's YouTube channel.

TABLE A: Vlogger Information

Participant's Username	Nation	Gender	Subscribers as of 4/2013	Age	Start	Name
vlobrothers	Amer	Male	1,089,529	35/ 32	2007	John & Hank Green
zefrank1	Amer	Male	262,684	41	2006	Hosea Jan Frank
sxephil	Amer	Male	2,505,066	27	2006	Philip Franchini
tyleroakley	Amer	Male	754,326	25	2007	Tyler Oakley
wheezywaiter	Amer	Male	432,660		2007	Craig Benzine
michaelarandaa	Amer	Male	239,062	27	2007	Michael Aranda
BryarlyBishop	Amer	Female	138,201		2012	Bryarly Bishop
JennaMarbles	Amer	Female	8,252,033	26	2006	Jenna Mourey
DailyGrace	Amer	Female	1,038,020	27	2007	Grace Helbig
meekakitty	Amer	Female	912,823	23	2007	Tessa Violet
charlieissocoollike	Brit	Male	1,975,414	22	2007	Charlie Mc Donnell
nerimon	Brit	Male	679,709	24	2006	Alex Day
danisnotonfire	Brit	Male	1,488,644	21	2009	Dan Howell
amazingphil	Brit	Male	797,777	26	2006	Phil Lester
Blade376	Brit	Male	37,774	26	2006	Myles Dyer
MarcusButlerTV	Brit	Male	755,043		2010	Marcus Butler
itswaypastmybedtime	Brit	Female	287,104		2011	Carrie Flectcher
ChewingSand	Brit	Female	26,760		2012	Hazel Hayes
emmablackery	Brit	Female	184,467	21	2012	Emma Blackery
zoella280390	Brit	Female	957,582		2009	Zoe Sugg

Method of Data Collection

The data in this study were collected via the transcription of the greetings used by each vlogger. These transcriptions appear throughout the study and are accompanied by the username of the vlogger and the title of the video. The greeting segment was seen to terminate at the point in which the vlogger started to communicate the content of the video, thus setting the boundaries for what is considered to be the greeting. In this example from danisnotonfire, Dan moves quickly from his greeting (“Hey, internet”) into the content of his video.

Dan: Hey, internet. So I decided it would be a good idea to let you guys take control of my videos, I let you vote on what you wanted me to make...
(danisnotonfire – “APARTMENT TOUR!!!”)

The ellipses at the end of this transcription serve to illustrate how the vlogger continued on into the content of the video. Markers for intonation or pauses (other than ellipses in the middle of sentences for long, drawn out pauses) were not included, because the focus of this study was on the discursive content of the vloggers’ greetings rather than prosodic content. Descriptions of non-verbal events happening in the videos are represented in italics within a double set of parenthesis. The transcription only includes the greeting given by the vlogger – if one is given – as well as some content for the video. In the cases where the vlogger gives no greeting, there is a brief description of the beginning of the video.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a qualitative approach. The aim of this study is not to make definitive, generalizable claims about how greetings function in YouTube as a whole. This conclusion would be difficult to arrive at given the lack of clarity in defining a “typical” greeting and the small sample size of the present study. Rather, a selected group of YouTubers, specifically vloggers, were examined to see what, if any, patterns arose.

The data were not approached with any pre-established categories in mind. After watching and transcribing all videos, several patterns became evident which were then used as a basis to divide videos into categories. These categories include (1) those vloggers who make use of an opening screen, (2) those who make use of a preset verbal greeting, (3) those who make reference to his/her viewers by a specific name, and (4) those who exhibit none of these features. Some vloggers, like zefrank1, represent more than one category. Thus the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Participants were included in the opening screen category if they used some sort of prerecorded video clip, written text, music, or combination of these elements to open their videos. These opening screens can be the very first thing seen in the video, or they can follow some sort of verbal introduction from the vlogger. Within this category, there exist two sub-categories: opening screens used in every video and opening screens used in only certain series on a vlogger’s channel. Those who make use of the screens for only certain series have a variety of videos on their channel, but implement the opening screen only on a particular collection (series) of videos.

Vloggers who make use of a preset verbal greeting implement some sort of spoken greeting in each of their videos. Within this category, there are three sub-categories. Vloggers in the always identical sub-category say the same exact thing to greet their audiences in each video, vloggers in the minimal variation category follow a specific framework in their greetings and allow for some minor changes, and vloggers who use relaxed variation always greet their audiences in some way, although their greeting style varies greatly.

The next category is made up of vloggers who refer to their audiences by specific names. They have created a term that they use on a regular basis to name their audience.

The final category is composed of vloggers who exhibit none of the previous features. That is, these vloggers do not display a regular method for greeting their audiences.

Findings

Categorization

Table B, located below, shows which vloggers fall into which categories. The key below explains what each symbol means in terms of the sub-categories.

TABLE B: Vlogger Greeting Styles

Participant's Username	Opening Screen	Preset Verbal Greeting	Reference to Community
vlobrothers		l	
zefrank1	n	n	
sxephil	n	l	ü
tyleroakley		l	ü
wheezywaiter	ü		t
michaelarandaa	t		
BryarlyBishop			
JennaMarbles	ü		
DailyGrace	ü		
meeakitty			
charlieissocoollike	t		
nerimon			
danisnotonfire		m	
amazingphil		ü	
Blade376		m	
MarcusButlerTV		ü	
itswaypastmybedtime			t
ChewingSand	n	n	
emmablackery			
zoella280390		m	ü

KEY

Symbol	Sub-category	Explanation
ü	<i>always identical</i>	Consistent, identical use of the feature in each video
n	<i>series</i>	Consistent, identical use of the feature in a certain series of videos
l	<i>minimal variation</i>	Consistent use of feature in each video with only minimal changes
m	<i>relaxed variation</i>	Consistent use of feature in each video with great degree of variation
t	<i>one-time use</i>	Use of the feature in only one video

Opening screen – always identical

Three vloggers, wheezywaiter, DailyGrace, and JennaMarbles, utilized the exact same opening screen during each of their videos. Below are two examples from wheezywaiter's videos.

((pre-recorded clip plays, with drawing of a beard and words "Wheezy Waiter" flying in from sides. voiceover reads "Wheezy Waiter" aloud, while music plays in the background))

Craig: Alright, I got my camera and my headphones, I'm gonna just walk around the city listening to beats, and, uh, rhyme stuff. *((shakes head))* I'm an idiot.

(wheezywaiter – "Rap City Rhapsody")

Craig: *((very close to camera))* Ugh, look at that huge gap in my teeth, I better cover that up. *((places tongue behind gap))* There we go.

((pre-recorded clip plays, with drawing of a beard and words "Wheezy Waiter" flying in from sides. voiceover reads "Wheezy Waiter" aloud, while music plays in the background))

(wheezywaiter – "Why We Need Critics")

Wheezywaiter's opening screen – his pre-recorded clip complete with images, music, and voiceover – is present at the beginning of each video. Sometimes, however, it is the first screen presented in a video, as in "Rap City Rhapsody." Other times the vlogger would come on screen first and open the video with a joke or funny comment, as in "Why We Need Critics." In fact, this opening screen was the only consistent feature of his greeting; he offers no other consistency in his openings. This opening let the viewer know exactly who it was that they were about to watch, serving as a kind of introduction. There was one instance, in his video "Coffee-Powered Car?" in which he opened by saying

Craig: Hi, I'm Craig. I would also go by Wheezywaiter. (wheezywaiter – "Coffee-Powered Car?")

which served as a more traditional form of greeting. Nonetheless, this was the only such instance within the wheezywaiter videos where he diverged from his typical greeting.

DailyGrace's "My Damn Channel" opening screen functions in the same way as wheezywaiter's, appearing at various points of her opening but always functioning as a form of introduction. JennaMarbles' videos were more consistent in regard to using an opening screen, which occurred invariably at the beginning of each video.

((opening screen, with squeaking noises. written: Jenna Marbles Blogger and Entertainer))

Jenna: So today needs to be a real life video coming straight from my actual life.

(JennaMarbles- "Junk Food Confessions")

This screen contained an introduction of sorts, as wheezywaiter's did, as it contains the text "Jenna Marbles Blogger and Entertainer," which explains Jenna's occupations.

Opening screen – series

There is one common method of opening vlogs. This method utilizes a particular opening screen which is used to introduce a video series that is recurring on a vlogger's channel. Zefrank1 makes use of the same opening screen for each of the videos in his True Facts series.

((opening text overlay reading: "True Facts The Naked Mole Rat"))

Ze: Here are true facts about the naked mole rat.

(Zefrank - "True Facts About The Naked Mole Rat")

These opening text overlays are Zefrank1's form of an opening screen that only includes text. They serve to introduce the True Facts videos as separate from any of zefrank1's other projects and present it as the next in an ongoing series.

Other examples include Sxephil who makes use of the same type of screens for his videos. This opening screen serves to label his videos as either part of the Movie Club series or the Philip Defranco Show (PDS) series. ChewingSand implements her own special screen for her Unnecessary Otter videos. For each of the aforementioned vloggers who use the opening screens for a particular series of videos – Zefrank1, Sxephil, and ChewingSand – the data shows multiple instances of the use of one of these screens. For example, out of the seven Zefrank1 videos examined in this study, three of them are True Facts videos which make use of the same opening screen. For other vloggers examined, like Charlieissocoollike and michaelaranda, only one example of a series-specific opening screen exists out of their seven videos. However, we can still infer that Charlieissocoollike's Fun Science videos and michaelaranda's Deleted Scenes videos are part of a larger series due to the presence of the specific opening screens.

Dailygrace is somewhat unusual in that, in addition to her consistent use of her "My Damn Channel" opening screen in every video, she also has special introductions for her various types of videos.

((shot of Grace dancing, music in background))

Grace: This is happening ((*cut to intro screen. written: my damn channel*))

Hi guys it is Tuesday here on Daily Grace and you what that means!

((*voiceover*)) “look at her go, just commenting on comments, commenting, commenting, commenting!”

(dailygrace – “YOU’RE MAKING ME FEEL THINGS”)

This excerpt demonstrates how Grace provides an introduction to her videos in general, in the form of the opening screen with “My Damn Channel” written on it. and additionally, it highlights how she provides an opening screen for her Tuesday “Commenting on Comments” video series through the use of the “commenting on comments” voiceover. The opening screen with “My Damn Channel” written on it is present in each of Grace’s videos, while the “commenting on comments” voiceover is only present in the “Commenting on Comments” video series.

Preset verbal greeting – always identical

Another popular opening feature used by many vloggers is a kind of preset verbal greeting spoken at the beginning of each video. Some vloggers, like AmazingPhil and Marcus ButlerTV make use of this kind of formulaic greeting.

Phil: Hey guys! ((*wave*)) So I’m in America, do I have a tan yet? No, I still pretty much look like Voldemort, don’t I.

(AmazingPhil – “LOST AT THE MALL!”)

Marcus: ((*sipping tea*)) ((*sighs*)) Oh, hi...Oh, sorry. Halloooooo!

(MarcusButlerTv – “My Expectations vs Reality”)

These two vloggers use very simple greetings; AmazingPhil saying “Hey guys!”, usually accompanied by a wave, and MarcusButlerTV uttering his elongated, exaggerated, trademark “Halloooooo!”. Even though these greetings may be added to, the trademark greetings themselves are always present in each of their videos.

ChewingSand also makes use of a formulaic greeting, but only in her Unnecessary Otter series.

((*opening sequence plays, with theme music in background and ‘The Unnecessary Otter’ text written over*))

Chorus of voices off camera: Good morning, Hazel!

Hazel: Good morning, everybody! Good morning, Otter!

(ChewingSand – “April Fools Otter!”)

Hazel does not make use of this formulaic exchange of “Good morning” in any of her videos besides her Unnecessary Otter videos.

Preset verbal greeting – minimal variation

The most popular form of greeting amongst the vloggers examined is a preset verbal greeting that is executed with a slight variety across the videos, but

is built off of the same framework. Vloggers who make use of this form include vlogbrothers, sxephil, and tyleroakley, all of whom have very distinct ways of greeting their viewers. John and Hank Green of the vlogbrothers have one of the most recognizable greetings on YouTube: each video begins with “Good morning, Hank” or “Good morning, John.” They began their channel with a verbal exchange in which each brother uploads videos to the other. This exchange acts as a way for the brothers to share their lives and strengthen their relationships.

Hank: Good morning, John. We’re at the food farm and we are here acquiring supplies for the second annual hungry games.
(Vlogbrothers – “Caviar Brownies – The Second Annual Hungry Games”)

John: Good morning, Hank. It’s Tuesday, March 26 2013, also known as spring!
(Vlogbrothers – “A Poem for Spring”)

John tends to follow this statement up with a declaration of what day of the week it is, while Hank usually leaves this second part of the greeting out.

Sxephil has one of the longest and most complex greetings of all the vloggers in these data. The basic components of sxephil’s verbal greeting for his Philip Defranco Show series (PDS) are (1) a direct greeting to his fan base, which he names, (2) a statement of the day of the week on which the video was created (in the case of the example below, a Tuesday) and uploaded accompanied by a well-wish, (3) a self-identification, and (4) a statement regarding the purpose of the PDS.

((prerecorded clip plays, with music playing. voiceover says ‘This is a news show’ followed by chimp noise))

Phil: ‘Sup, nation! Hope you’re having an awesome Tuesday. If you do not know, my name is Philip Defranco and this is where I talk about newsy type stuff and things that matter to me today.
(sxephil – “EMMA WATSON’S DIRTY SIDE & FAT-TAX BEGINS”)

Phil’s direct greeting to his fans (“‘Sup, nation!”) is followed by well wish and a statement of the day of the week (“Hope you’re having an awesome Tuesday”). Then, he self-identifies (“my name is Philip Defranco”) and states the purpose of the PDS (“this is where I talk about newsy type stuff and things that matter to me today”). Phil frequently makes small changes in his greeting, such as initially greeting his fans only with “Nation,” or by simply saying “My name is Philip Defranco” and omitting the “if you do not know.”

Tyleroakley is another vlogger who only makes small changes to his greeting ritual:

Tyler: Well, hello everyone! My name is Tyler and I finally have a new background, yaaaaa!
(tyleroakley – “I’ve Officially Gone Insane”)

Tyler always greets his audience (“everyone”), with some sort of “hello” or “hey”, and then introduces himself (“My name is Tyler”) before plunging into some story from his life or introducing a guest in his video.

Preset verbal greeting – relaxed variation

Danisnotonfire, Blade376, and zoella280390 are three vloggers who almost always greet their audience but have a very loose way of going about it. They all switch back and forth between the greetings “hey”, “hello”, and “hi”. Danisnotonfire sometimes refers to his viewers as “internet” while Blade376 and zoella280390 make use of “everyone” or “everybody”. Occasionally, they will introduce themselves as well.

References to community

One of the most fascinating aspects of vlogger greetings is the way in which some refer to their audiences by specific names, giving a title to their community. Some vloggers like tyleroakley and zoella280390 do address their audiences, but with general terms like “everyone”.

Here, wheezywaiter refers to his audience by a specific name when he says,

Craig: “Hey, beardlovers, what’s up?”
(wheezywaiter – “Magic Air Violin”)

This seems to be a somewhat narcissistic and definitely comical name, implying that all people who watch wheezywaiter’s videos are lovers of his beard, or perhaps beards in general. Itswaypastmybedtime also makes one reference to a potential name for her viewers when she calls them “leapers,” to imply that her viewers take leaps into the unknown by taking exciting chances.

Carrie: (((saluting with fingers))) Hello, Leapers, it’s your captain speaking and I’ve been hearing a lot of exciting plans that people have in mind and plenty of people are leaping into the unknown recently.
(ItsWayPastMyBedtime – “Leaping into the Unknown”)

Then there is sxephil, who greets his viewers as the “nation” in each one of his videos. This seems to be a play on how a president may greet an entire country. This sort of playful usage puts Phil at the head of this little country of his own – his community of viewers.

None of the above

The final category examined in this study is the group of vloggers who do not usually make use of any sort of consistent method of greeting, such as BryarlyBishop, meekakitty, nerimon, itswaypastmybedtime, and emmablackery. For the most part, these vloggers launch right into the content they wish to discuss for the day, as BryarlyBishop does here:

Bryarly: On food patrol, again, this morning, and probably for most of today. I haven't showered. Just ignore that. Uh, here we go. (bryarlybishop – "Two Days Left!")

However, there is some variation as these vloggers sometimes will greet their audiences, as emmablackery does here.

Emma: ((*waving*)) Hey, guys. So, recently I was tagged in the 7 facts about me YouTube video tag thing that's been going around so... (emmablackery – "NO ONE CARES")

While there is no set pattern of greeting among these vloggers, there does seem to be a trend toward very personal videos, detailing the events of the vlogger's life. Nerimon, for example, frequently discusses everyday occurrences in his life as well as his past memories with his viewers:

Alex: I'm going for a haircut and for once I thought I'd bring you with me. I thought I'd let you inside ((*grunt*)) what it's like when Nerimon gets a haircut. (nerimon – "Haircut Party")

Alex: I read this philosophy book in A level philosophy by Friedrich Nietzsche, it's called *Beyond Good and Evil* and it's split into two sections... (nerimon – "Epigrams and Interludes")

Although Nerimon usually does not greet his audience, he does discuss very personal things with them, reminiscent of how one would converse with a close friend. This sort of sharing implies that Nerimon feels that his viewers are friends who feel comfortable with one another and don't feel the need to jump through the additional hoop of a formal greeting ritual.

Discussion/Conclusions and Limitations

One of the big questions that stems from an examination of this specific discourse context is whether or not these greetings follow the standard conventions of face-to-face interaction. The obvious answer would be "no" due to the fact that, normally, a greeting is a conversational ritual involving two interlocutors where one initiates the greeting and the other responds (Ferguson, 1976). In the case of YouTube, there may be millions of people watching a given video; however, none of these people are true interlocutors who can immediately respond to the vlogger. That being said, vlogger greetings appear to be phatic in nature. They fulfill the social expectation of greeting while not conveying any overtly content-oriented information. Vlogger greetings also demonstrate that the vloggers recognize "the existence of the other participant(s) in the discourse", i.e., the viewer (Partridge, 2011, 40). A vlogger may be alone in their room with their camera when they are recording a video. However, once the video has been uploaded, the audience becomes a new interlocutor for the vlogger, who often acknowledges them through a greeting.

As different as YouTube greetings are from greetings in everyday contexts, there are some important issues that arise between both, such as the question of identification. In Lindström's (1994) telephone study, speakers either explicitly self-identified or let their interlocutor identify them. Vloggers must make a similar choice whether or not to self-identify in each of their videos. As the data showed, many vloggers such as tyleroakley chose to self-identify in each video while others like zefrank1 did not. By self-identifying, vloggers like Tyler may be trying to welcome new viewers to their channel to make them feel like a part of the community. Others may choose not to self-identify for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they feel that a simple "hello" suffices without the need to make an introduction. Maybe they have opening screens before each of their videos, as JennaMarbles does, where their name is already written. Finally, some may feel that self-identification is too formal, and prefer to dive right into their story or skit with no introduction.

Another aspect of vlogger greetings that is particularly welcoming and points to the fostering of community is the use of a specific term for a particular audience. Sxephil is one such vlogger who names his audience using the term "nation.". This term suggests a vast group of people while simultaneously uniting them all under a common name. Phil's use of "nation" also demonstrates awareness that his audience is neither exclusively female nor exclusively male; the term can apply to a group of mixed gender individuals. Nilsen's study (1984) found that "the writers who used the sex-neutral greetings were the better qualified candidates" (245). A connection can be made here between successful individuals and sensitivity to issues of gender-equality and inclusion, especially when one considers Phil's impressively vast community of over 2.5 million viewers.

So, if vloggers who greet their respective audiences seem to be cultivating tight-knit communities, are the vloggers who choose not to greet not surrounded by similarly strong communities? Not necessarily. On the contrary, vloggers like nerimon, who launched straight into their videos recounting their trips to the hairdresser or explaining their personal experiences with Nietzsche, may have incredibly close communities. These vloggers might feel so comfortable sharing their lives or ideas with viewers that they do not feel that a formal greeting ritual is necessary. They are the embodiment of the sentiment expressed by Ferguson (1976) that such rituals are empty and somewhat meaningless in certain contexts and are therefore unnecessary.

This examination of greetings used by vloggers has demonstrated that while YouTube greetings may not exactly mimic those given in real-world, face-to-face interaction, the wide variety of different greeting styles is indicative of the wide variety of relationships that exists on YouTube. Not all community relations manifest themselves in the same way, but examinations of the ways that vloggers greet their audiences shed light onto how various YouTube communities function. Some communities, like sxephil's "nation" of over 2.5 million, are built around videos with a fair amount of structure, as shown in sxephil's methodical greetings. 2.5 million people is by no means a small audience. Sxephil may feel the need to formally greet and introduce himself to an audience this large so that everyone is on the same page. Other communities, such as BryarlyBishop's comparatively small 138,201 subscribers, come together for an informal conversation. Frequently, she will jump into whatever she wants

to discuss right away without any greeting. This sort of behavior is reminiscent of someone returning home and launching immediately into discourse with a roommate without a greeting. Vloggers like BryarlyBishop may feel so comfortable with sharing with their audiences that they forego anything that seems to be formal.

Limitations for this study include the number of videos utilized as well as researcher bias. While no official statistics exist on how many vlogs there are on YouTube in total, only 140 were examined. One single YouTuber can easily have 140 vlogs uploaded to her channel, and there are hundreds (if not thousands) of vloggers on YouTube. Had more videos been included in the analysis, even more greeting styles may have surfaced. And, of course, a more complete view of vlogger's greeting styles might be evident if more than 20 videos by each vlogger had been included. In terms of researcher bias, I am an avid fan of certain channels featured in this study, so I have a more intimate understanding of the vloggers' style as well as how the communities function. Had I chosen vloggers whom I had never watched before, I could remove some of this bias; however, I would have had to remove some of the most famous vloggers, thus giving a less accurate representation of YouTube as a whole. And, speaking more generally, my familiarity with YouTube and its interactive norms contributes to researcher bias. Someone who had never watched YouTube before and had not experienced the feeling of community that I have when watching videos would have had a more outside perspective that would have lessened this bias.

Implications of Study/Areas for Future Research

Eight years ago, YouTube did not exist. Today, "more than a million creators from over 30 countries around the world [are] earning money from their YouTube videos" ("Statistics," n.d.). YouTube is a global phenomenon that touches millions of people every day, so naturally, complex communities are sure to develop within this already hugely complex one. By looking at one tiny piece of the discourse from one group of creators on this site, we can get some insight on how some of these communities and relationships function.

As mentioned previously, very little research exists that deals with YouTube as a social context for linguistic study. YouTube, however, is a gold mine of untapped linguistic research potential. This study sampled data from American and British, as well as male and female vloggers, but it did not explore how differences in nationality or gender impact greeting styles. The way in which vloggers close their videos would be another fascinating area for research. One could examine if the vloggers conclude with a "goodbye" to their viewers, whether they mention any sponsors for their videos, whether they request that viewers "like" their videos, post comments, or subscribe to their channels, among many other things.

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E-Mail: Spoken or Written Discourse?

Carlo Cinaglia, Saint Joseph's University

Carlo Cinaglia is currently a senior at Saint Joseph's University where he studies Linguistics and Spanish. He likes to travel and bicycle in his free time. He plans to pursue graduate work in TESOL and hopes to hike the Camino de Santiago in the future.

When I first discovered e-mail around age ten, I was fascinated at how quickly and easily I could send a message to someone. Now, as a college student in the 21st century, I've found that e-mail has become a part of my everyday life. Yet despite my familiarity with this almost instant form of communication, e-mail continues to surprise me with its stylistic variation and the different opinions held by its many "senders" regarding style and formality. If e-mail is in fact *electronic mail*, should it abide by the same parameters of formal letter writing? Or can senders instead simply write as if they were speaking?

One can identify an e-mail's style by looking at its greeting and its closing, where the sender has the option of addressing the recipient and signing off in a variety of ways. For example, one of my professors always uses a conversational tone when e-mailing, writing "Hi..." to open the e-mail and closing with "See you soon!" Another professor of mine, with a more formal style, begins her e-mails with "Dear..." and always signs off with "Regards, Dr. Smith." The word *Hi*, the phrase *See you soon* and the absence of a signature in the first greeting-closing pair all suggest an informal style, which is common in a face-to-face conversation or a phone call with a friend. In the second greeting-closing pair, the words *Dear*, *Regards*, and the sender's signature are markers of a formal style, which is likely to be used when writing a formal letter.

Stylistic variation also exists in how the sender decides to present the actual message of the e-mail to the recipient. Does the sender simply begin with the message right away, or is there a way to introduce the main idea of the e-mail first?

I will forever remember my boss' reaction to an e-mail I sent to a committee trying to schedule a group meeting. In my message, I had included a link to an online poll asking each person their availability with a brief sentence explaining how the poll worked and then sent the e-mail with my boss copied on it. Less than thirty seconds later I was called into his office and told, "Here in *this* office, we don't just send e-mails that say that! In *this* office, we address colleagues and superiors with their *full* titles and include as *much* courtesy as possible!" His style was apparently much more formal than mine, and I suppose he expected to see a more respectful and thoughtfully written message with greater content instead of my quick two-line e-mail.

I have a co-worker (or *superior*, as my boss might say), who uses a less formal style when e-mailing. Perhaps due to the nature of her job—working with university students on a regular basis outside of a formal "academic" setting—

she insists that I call her by her first name, despite her having a terminal degree in her field of expertise. She regularly begins her e-mails by writing "hey..." and closes them with "thanks!!!!"

I couldn't help but ask her about her e-mail style one day. She laughed and told me, "You know, I'm the worst model of professional communication. Everyone in the office makes fun of me because I have three degrees but I don't use any capital letters and all my e-mails have typos!" She explained that since most of her e-mails travel to and from other offices on campus and are usually sent to other university staff members, she chooses to bypass the formality and get straight to the point.

While there is much stylistic variation among e-mail correspondence, it seems that whether e-mail more closely resembles spoken or written discourse depends on the relationship between sender and receiver. A sender might write informally to establish or reinforce a level of familiarity or solidarity with the recipient, or a formally-crafted style might be used to convey respect and politeness. I suppose that after working with both my boss and my co-worker I have developed a better sense of knowing when to style-shift between formal and informal registers depending on my e-interlocutor.

Phonology and Its Role in the Classroom

Kristin Edwards, Rider University

Kristin Edwards graduated from Rider University in the spring of 2013 with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Elementary Education and minors in Special Education and ESL. She currently teaches 4th Grade. Kristin will begin pursuing her graduate studies, where she hopes to gain a Masters of Arts Degree in Teaching.

Linguistic principles can be utilized during instruction in any classroom and can be particularly helpful to English Language Learners (ELLs). In an article written by Freeman and Freeman (2004), phonological awareness is described as the ability to distinguish larger units of speech, such as words and syllables. This is an extremely important ability for ELLs to develop. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear sounds that make up words in spoken languages. For example, if a student can identify whether a word contains [ɪ] or [i], they have developed phonological awareness for that particular sound pattern and can distinguish words such as "hit" from "heat." Therefore, when providing instruction for young ELLs, it is important to develop a keen sense of phonological awareness.

There are many ways teachers can support ELLs in the classroom. In order to determine what sounds are giving an ELL the most difficulty, various pieces of writing need to be collected and analyzed. For example, if a student is consistently misspelling words that contain [i] then the teacher can deduce that the student is having difficulty with this particular sound pattern. It is not uncommon for ELLs to experience difficulty with English language pronunciation, especially with vowels (Seeff-Gabriel, 2003). Once a student's areas of need have been identified, teachers can use strategies to address them.

It is imperative to develop instruction in order to teach the student how to identify sound patterns when writing or reading. There are certain pedagogical practices that have been found effective when providing phonological instruction. Students can learn to analyze minimal pairs to better distinguish sounds. A minimal pair consists of two words with different meanings that are identical except for one sound segment that occurs in the same place in each word (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011). For example, the words "hit" and "heat" are minimal pairs because the vowel sounds are different yet the consonant sounds remain the same. Analyzing minimal pairs can help ELL students distinguish sound patterns.

Research also shows that when students are exposed to sounds, vocabulary or grammar, the learning process should be done in authentic contexts to help students develop proficiency in the language (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). Essentially, when providing phonological instruction, it is important to do so in context, so that students are connecting the phonological skills they are learning to authentic language. For instance, reading a text and asking students to identify different sound patterns as they read may help them

develop better phonological awareness. In order for students to fully develop phonological awareness, they need to not only read words, but also write words containing that sound. Therefore, dictating sentences containing the taught sound from a student-read text will allow the student to practice encoding words orthographically. Through these instructional practices, students are learning to decode, encode and distinguish specific sound patterns.

Finally, students should make their learning explicit. It is important for students to be able to transfer the sound patterns learned. Students can be asked, 'How can we teach this sound pattern to others?' or 'How can we remember this sound pattern?' to enable them to display metacognition, which is the understanding of one's own thought processes. For example, one student might show his metacognitive awareness by stating that he could write the word "hole" with several 'O's' in the middle (i.e., ho000ole) to show others that the vowel sound is long as opposed to short. This student associates the long 'O' sound with the long strand of 'O's' written in the example. Future writing samples can then be assessed to determine if learning was transferred and metacognition was used.

Through the use of metacognition, minimal pairs, instruction in context, and dictation, there is a greater opportunity for phonological awareness to be better developed. The development of phonological awareness is critical for ELLs to decode and encode effectively. Therefore, through the implementation of the described instructional strategies, ELLs will have the ability to effectively develop a phonological awareness of sound patterns.

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Gender and the Romanian Language

Alisa Frunza, Moldova State University

Alisa Frunza is a current senior at the Moldova State University, Eastern Europe, where she studies English Language and Literature. She hopes to found a gender center in Chisinau, the capital of Moldova in the future. She also hopes to travel to all the capital cities of Europe.

Each language is a unique living phenomenon that can be studied from different points of view. For me, it has always been interesting to work with the gender aspects of language. There have been numerous studies in this field in regard to English, French, and German, while the Romanian language has remained somehow a 'mystery' in the scope of language gender roles.

To start with, Romanian is a language with a dominant masculine gender role. For instance, if one did not know who they were addressing, one would use a masculine gender pronoun (*el* – he, *ei* – they [masc]), which is also considered a neutral pronoun in such situations. If one is referring to ten women and only one man, one would use a masculine gender pronoun as well, e.g. *Acolo au fost zece fete și un baiat, ei s-au dus în cinema* (There were ten girls and one boy; they [masc, pl] went to watch a movie).

As for Romanian vocabulary, it has plenty of amusing examples of dominant gender roles. On the one hand, such words as *prefect* (prefect), *comisar* (commissioner), and *primar* (mayor), are used only in the masculine gender in Romanian and simply do not have a feminine form. I can assume that these words, being originally masculine, were not considered as women's occupations, suggesting that it was impossible for a woman to be a town's mayor or a city police commissioner. On the other hand, there are certain words in Romanian that have only feminine gender, for example, *bonă* (nurse), *soră de caritate* (medical attendant), or *moașă* (birth attendant). Just looking into the words, one can draw a picture of how occupational roles were divided between men and women. Moreover, words show expectations toward people and who has to do what. Very often we do not pay attention to such language aspects; however, it shows how deeply our way of living is linguistically biased.

In relation to education, all the high-ranking positions in universities have only masculine gender versions: *decan* (dean), *prodecan* (vice-dean), *prorector* (vice-principal), *adjunct* (deputy), *rector* (principal), *lector superior* (senior lecturer), *lector* (lecturer), *docent* (assistant professor), *doctor* (doctor). Anecdotally, I asked some female professors how they would like to be addressed. They answered that they would like to be addressed with a masculine gender because it enhances their status. For example, if a woman is head of a department, she would like to be called *șef catedră* (masc.), but not *șefă catedră* (fem). It is interesting that if a person calls a woman *doctoră* (doctor, fem), that woman may feel offended because there is a negative connotation that she is not an adequate doctor.

The next important issue is the way women are addressed in Romanian. In general, it is quite similar to English: *Domnul* (Mister), *Doamnă* (Missis), *Domnișoară* (Miss). What is remarkable about Romanian is that there is also a form of address for unmarried men— *domnișor*. But a person would never say to a young man *domnișor*, unless s\he had the intention to offend or humiliate the young man. So, the form exists, but nobody uses it.

Sometimes I think that women avoid feminine forms because they fear that these forms would jeopardize their degree of professionalism or social status. Over the years the one and only feminine role was to run the family's home and care for the children; that is why today women associate the words of feminine gender with these 'traditional' occupations, while words of masculine gender are related to freedom, power, status, and extensive abilities. I think this way of thinking happens unconsciously, and our 'past' is the one to blame.

Many women in Moldova – where Romanian is the official language – do not pay attention to these aspects. Most probably they do not see the connection of language to life itself. However, women should not be afraid of using feminine forms in language and there is nothing to be ashamed of; otherwise, it would be the same as denying one's own identity. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Use what language you will, you can never say anything but what you are." I agree entirely with the expression, because language is not just a set of words, it is much more than that. Dominant masculine gender roles in Romanian demonstrate the idea that language reflects stereotypical role patterns in Moldova.

The Biology Report

Julia Maltz, Saint Joseph's University

Julia Maltz is currently a sophomore at Saint Joseph's University where she studies Communications and Spanish. She likes to read, explore big cities, and take her dog on long walks. She hopes to move to New York City in the future and pursue a career in linguistics, marketing, or public relations.

Carly: I'm sorry, but I'm handing in this lab report a day late.

Teacher: I'm going to require that you write why on the top of the paper.

Carly: [*Looks confused.*] Okay.

Carly: [*Writes a "Y" on the top of the paper.*]

Conversations are a gold mine for miscommunication. In biology class, I witnessed my friend, Carly, fall victim to a hilarious incident. For the rest of the year, she was teased relentlessly for justifying a tardy paper with a "Y" rather than the actual explanation as to *why* she turned it in late. Though it is a comical scenario, a linguistic analysis sheds light on the errors of this interaction.

Language, especially oral communication, has the ability to be ambiguous. Within discourse, the meaning originally intended by the speaker may not be perceived as such by the listener. In this conversation a communication failure took place because Carly wrongly interpreted the teacher's instruction on a phonetic level. The pronunciation of the word "why" points to referents that individual speakers may perceive differently based on context. Carly matched the sounds produced by her teacher with the letter "y" as opposed to the word "why." A careful analysis of their interaction demonstrates why she made this understandable mistake. Such an error does not call into question Carly's linguistic competence. Rather this mistake highlights the potential ambiguity of language in interaction.

This interaction demonstrates how language often needs clarification, particularly in oral contexts. The meaning of a statement is often more easily interpreted in written form versus spoken form. For example, in the process of learning a foreign language, people often prefer writing to speaking. As a student who is studying Spanish, I can attest to this statement. When a word enters the individual lexicon in written form instead of oral form, the visual representation often makes it easier for the reader to determine its meaning. Had our biology teacher expressed her instructions in writing, Carly would have known exactly what to do. "Y" and "why" are phonetically similar but orthographically different. The first sound in the letter "y" is pronounced [w] while the first sound in the word "why" may be pronounced [hw]. While they are phonetically similar, they are not phonetically identical for all speakers. The way speakers distinguish pronunciation varies and can consequently result in different interpretations. In this interaction, Carly perceived the teacher's "why" as having a [w] sound, while the teacher intended for the word to have the

meaning sometimes associated with the [hw] sound. The ability to mentally compartmentalize specific sounds varies with individuals, but written language certainly helps to eliminate ambiguity.

Context also plays a salient role in understanding language. A different interactional context would have affected Carly's interpretation. For instance, if the teacher's instructions had been worded more specifically – perhaps if it had read “You need to provide an explanation for your tardiness so I'm going to require that you write *why* at the top of the page” – the outcome might have been different. This additional information would have contextualized the teacher's request and might not have resulted in the same miscommunication. Due to the ambiguity of the statement, Carly was probably distressed in the moment due to the circumstances. This likely heightened her inability to interpret the intended message.

All in all, it was not a good morning for Carly!

Explorations in Linguistics

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