Journal QR

Article:	**Roasting Videos: A YouTube-based Vernacular Discourse**
Author(s):	Umaira Bibi Hashmi, Sidra Shaikh, Saman Afzaal
Affiliation:	Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan
Article DOI:	https://doi.org/10.32350/jcct.31.02

Article QR

Saheed Oyeniran

Indexing

ROAD

World Catalogue of Scientific Journals

EuroPub

BASE

A publication of the
Institute of Liberal Arts ,
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Roasting Videos: A YouTube-based Vernacular Discourse

Umaira Bibi Hashmi, Sidra Shaikh[*] and Saman Afzaal

Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Abstract

This research endeavors to investigate the impact of a novel genre, that is, roasting. It also aims to know how this YouTube discourse finds its way into the vernacular discourse in the Pakistani context. The researchers selected two highly subscribed Pakistani YouTube channels, that is, KhujLee Family and CBA-Arslan Naseer. Using the purposive sampling technique two videos from each channel were selected, which made a total of four videos selected as sample. The researchers meticulously observed the trending section of YouTube with the purpose to select far reaching roasting videos of the aforementioned channels. This phenomenological research employed the Interactive Alignment Model as its theoretical framework. The conclusions suggested that conversation designs are the outcomes of addressee feedback and penetrate the vernacular discourse (Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012), casting a deep impact on its viewers particularly in terms of desensitization. The findings further explicated that desensitization has amplified because of the consumption and reciprocation of such content by the receivers, courtesy of the participatory culture of YouTube. This allows the viewers to not only enjoy roasting videos but also to imitate the abusive vocabulary used as punch line, mostly in Punjabi. The participation of viewers was observed through the comment section of the selected videos, advocating the consequent desensitization of the vernacular discourse. Subsequently, the study implies that the creation and dissemination of the roasting content can be achieved in a responsible manner by decreasing the use of curse words.

Keywords: CBA-Arslan Naseer channel, desensitization, Interactive Alignment Model, Khujlee Family channel, participatory culture, roasting videos, trending section, vernacular discourse, YouTube

[*]Corresponding Author: doctor.sidra.shaikh@gmail.com

Introduction

Advancement in technology has brought changes in the realm of social media, especially YouTube, providing easy access and making its interface user friendly (Blazeski, Lowenthal, Wang, Teuben, Zhu, Gerecht, Tomaselli, & Leslie Tung, 2019). Additionally, it is progressing rapidly because it offers the audience content akin to almost every arena and issue, accessed easily through videos' URLs (Gann, 2006). So, it is due to the type of interface which YouTube provides that users easily become engaged in the production and consumption of videos. There are three key features which actually made YouTube popular (Kafai, & Peppler, 2011). These are: a) video recommendations via the 'related videos' list, b) an email link set to enable video sharing and comments (and other social networking functionalities) and c) an embeddable video player (Gann, 2012).

These characteristics of YouTube enabled the users to indulge into a participatory culture defined by Jenkins (2006, p.7) as the one:

1. With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement.
2. With strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others.
3. With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.
4. Where members believe that their contributions matter.
5. Where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). Not every member must contribute, but all must believe that they are free to contribute when they are ready and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued.

This shared content created by the common people is also meant for them and it influences them in a significant way (Jenkins, 2006). This content aids the nourishment of a particular discourse termed as the 'vernacular discourse' by (Ono & Sloop, 1995). Vernacular discourse shares some common characteristics with the participatory culture. It is not just the historically published speeches, rather it "is also culture: the music, art, criticism, dance, and architecture of local communities" (Ono & Sloop, 1995). They further argued that as critics, we should not

focus only on the mainstream media. Rather, we should "look at discourse that resonates within and from historically oppressed communities" (Ono & Sloop, 1995).

This discourse is articulated in the society through YouTube videos, created by the YouTube bloggers and vloggers and appraised by the viewers (Merchant, 2009). For a better understanding of these videos and also of the relationship between the viewers and the video makers, we need to explore the participatory cultures, features of the vernacular discourse, and the means of its articulation.

Participatory Culture

Jenkin (2006) highlighted some significant characteristics of the participatory culture. He defined it as a culture which supports creativity as well as sharing one's creativity with others. This process of sharing helps the users cherish and nurture creativity (Molyneaux, O'Donnell, Gibson, & Singer, 2008). The above-mentioned author scrutinized this phenomenon in his study by exploring the role of the online available stories and their improvised versions in the education of the children. He advocated it as an influential medium, yet he expressed some reservations regarding the popular and participatory culture (Goldberg, 2006). He argued that "technology and economic change are conspiring to create a new cultural elite and a new cultural under class" (Jenkins, 2006, p.61).

Broadcast Yourself in Popular Culture

Burgess and Green (2018) provided a brief account of the development of YouTube since its beginning. In their study, they stated that YouTube is no more just a platform to share and watch videos, rather it provides an interface through which you can 'broadcast yourself' (Williams, 2008). It implies that it enables the users to experiment with their own creativity and use YouTube as a medium to show off their creation (Ellington, 2014). They further added that a significant aspect of this broadcast is the public's perception, "use of YouTube to distribute broadcast media content that captured public's imagination" (Burgess & Green, 2018).

YouTube-based Vernacular Discourse

Guo and Lee (2013) presented the synthesized model of analyzing the vernacular discourse. For that matter, it is essential to define what is vernacular discourse and how do we analyze it? According to Ono and Sloop (1995), vernacular discourse has the following two characteristics:

Cultural syncretism: Ono and Sloop (1995) argued that vernacular discourse not only exists as a counter hegemonic discourse but also as an affirmative discourse, articulating a sense of community that does not function solely as oppositional to the dominant ideology. Here, its main feature is 'articulating a sense of community' which is also a key feature of YouTube discourse (Guo & Lee, 2013).

Pastiche: Pastiche is the process of fixing a fracture, which brings different cultural fragments together to give them a concrete form. "Pastiche fractures culture in the process of appropriating it through imaginative reconstructing surgery" (Ono & Sloop, 1995). For example, the conversational vlogs that we have opted for the analysis are made as social critique. The vloggers claim to be *influencers* (Ohiagu, & Okorie, 2014).

They desensitize slang language, satirical comments, and abusive culture in the society. They do not only desensitize them, rather they reinforce them by using them in a natural and influencing way because "pastiche is an embodied practice that is ever-changing, active and constantly motivated by a concern for local conditions and social problems." (Ono & Sloop, 1995).

Ono and Sloop (1995) further attempted to stratify the realm of vernacular discourse by providing the two dimensions of its analysis: a) analysis of the discourse of localized communities, they suggested that it should not be completely ignored b) The discourse of oppressed communities, which demands extra attention and which is engaging in everyday discussion, conversations at homes, restaurants, and at every corner (Ono & Sloop, 1995).

Guo and Lee (2013) called their synthesized model *hybrid vernacular discourse* through which they analyzed the discourse of Asian American YouTubers. For the current study, we are concerned with the first two steps of this model: a) identifying the discourse as

vernacular discourse b) analysing the content of the discourse which is always structured. For this purpose, videos for the analysis were collected randomly from YouTube's trending section where we looked for the videos created to criticize any given phenomenon. We came across two channels namely CBA-Comics by Arslan and Khujlee Vines in the trending section during our quest for videos. We selected five videos from CBA and seven videos from Khujlee Vines for the analysis of their content. To investigate the importance of addressee feedback, we selected 500 comments on these videos in which the audience either appreciated the content creators or imitated their content. We took screenshots of these comments and noted some key features of the video design in order to use them as evidence in our study.

Audience Design

Audience design is the structure of the conversation in which speakers prepare their talk keeping in view their addressees, "it is useful to look at the audience design as a form of expert performance in which speakers draw upon a large database of stored examples which they can consult and modify to suit their current needs" (Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012), Speakers design their conversation using different strategies, the one which caters the best is the Interactive Alignment Model by (Pickering & Garrod, 2004; Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012). The key characteristics of this model include making logical connections with pre-existing knowledge, formation of language to develop such connections, referring to other conversations and talks and using them in the ongoing conversation to be more relatable (Pickering & Garrod, 2004). It further gives way to another aspect of this design which is addressee feedback and which goes hand in hand with the conversation. It comprises the acceptance or rejection of the addressees of the content conversed to them. Scholars argued that addressee feedback actually provides the infrastructure for a conversation (Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012).

Problem Statement

The participatory nature of YouTube has turned the spotlight on content creators with their unique styles, peculiar verbal and non-verbal gestures and distinctive ways of presentation. The competition of content creation has led the audience to witness the popularity of a

specific type of genre, which is trending more than the content of the mainstream media on YouTube. In this competition, content creators are utilizing every means to become popular among the audience without caring about the consequences. This phenomenon may summon some repercussions despite its popularity in the society.

To address these repercussions, the current study is looking forward to:

- Spot the essence of vernacular discourse in the content of the videos trending on YouTube in Pakistan.
- Pinpoint the distinguishing elements of the content and structure of the trending videos.
- Locate the influence of these videos on the viewers.

Analytical Framework

It is a phenomenological research in which the researchers attempted to explore the phenomenon of YouTube based vernacular discourse through the critical lens of Vernacular Discourse Analysis (VDA). VDA proposes that the form of discourse and the medium of its articulation should be looked upon critically (Guo & Lee, 2013). So, the form and content of discourse were analyzed through the Interactive Alignment Model which suggests that conversation designs are the outcomes of addressee feedback (Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012).

For the current analysis, following questions were asked:

- How is the subject matter of videos trending on YouTube structured in Pakistan?
- How the content of these YouTube videos is different from the content of the mainstream media?
- How do the viewers respond to these videos?

Data Collection

The videos used for the analysis were collected randomly from YouTube's trending section. We looked for the videos meant for criticism and in this regard, we came across two channels CBA-Comics by Arslan and Khujlee Vines. We selected five videos from CBA and seven videos from Khujlee Vines for the analysis of their content. To find out the importance of addressee feedback, we selected 500 comments on these videos in which the audience either appreciated the

content creators or imitated their content. We took screenshots of these comments and noted some key features of the video design in order to use them as evidence in our study.

Data Analysis

The selected videos from the channels, CBA-Arslan Naseer and KhujLee Vines, were meant for the analysis of their content, and the comments on the same videos are taken into consideration for analyzing the Addressee feedback as proposed by (Chiarello, 2012; Clark, 2012).
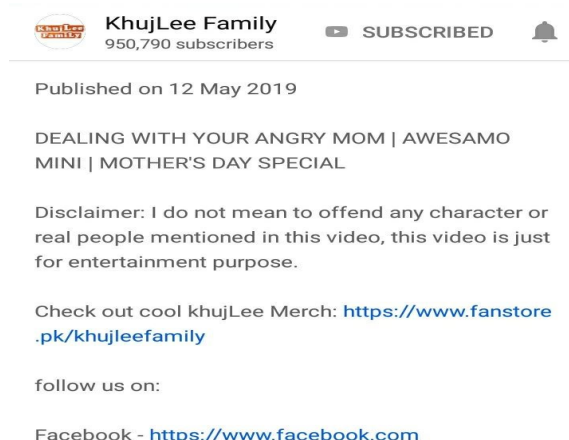
Keeping in view the argument that the discourse of these videos is vernacular discourse, two major characteristics of vernacular discourse should be recalled. Ono and Sloop (1995) asserted that vernacular discourse emerges in synchronization with cultural norms. Its aim is not to oppose or rebel against any existing discourse; rather, it becomes popular in the society because it is close to the hearts of the common people. It is highlighted by the viewers from within the society with whom the receptors of the discourse can relate. Similarly, content creators of the selected YouTube videos had the same socioeconomic status as that of their viewers. They highlighted the social issues which a common person faces on a daily basis. Their way of talking, their vocabulary and other intercultural references are familiar to the viewers. For example, the selected videos of CBA-Comics by Arslan, which are the reviews of the Pakistani TV commercials, criticize the reinforcement of patriarchal norms, the presentation of commodities as basic necessities of life and the decaying morals of the society. These are the dilemmas faced by a common person and the viewers take these reviews as a sort of catharsis because they address their opinions and thoughts. Such availability of the desired and relatable content which attends to the consideration of the viewers is what is termed as *Cultural Syncretism* by Ono and Sloop (1995). They further explicated another characteristic of the vernacular discourse named *Pastiche*. According to them, it is an effort to fix the fracture, although it ends up damaging the bone instead of fixing it. This is what we observe in the video titled *"CBA review of BRITE TVC"* posted on the channel on *September 17, 2017.* It has 16,347 views. It opens with the keynote that the people who have been following this channel since 2011 may know that the videos are meant to convey a message to the advertisers that Pakistani people are not as foolish as perceived by them. They understand the strategy of

the advertisement industry. In order to bring forth this aspect of these commercials, the creator of the video has used a lot of punch lines as his trademark and a lot of improvisation has been done on the request of the viewers of his videos. It is ironic that he criticizes the capitalist approach of the advertisers. Since, in doing so he uses the same strategy to grab more views. Similarly, the presenter on the other channel Khujlee Vines claims to be an 'influencer'. He admits that he is addressing the audience as an 'influencer' in a video titled "Let's talk about Ducky Sham War" posted on the channel on April 27, 2019. It has 1M views. In this video, he tries to convince the viewers that two famous YouTubers, who are indulged in a controversy and blame game with each other, should end this war because it is inappropriate for the upcoming content creators. The newcomers will follow the same pattern to earn more views which will consequently create more controversies. In doing so, he uses curse words for one of his colleagues and calls him names. In the same manner, he mimics and defames Sham Idrees, a contemporary content creator, who is actively indulged in this controversy. This is called *Pastiche*, instead of reforming the moral decadence they are actively reinforcing it by using it as a tool to attract their viewers. Since roasting videos have the two basic characteristics of vernacular discourse suggested by Ono and Sloop (1995), we can claim that this is the sort of discourse which is currently promoted by YouTube. The disclaimers of these channels are attached herewith for clarification:

Figure 1

Disclaimer by the Creator of Khujlee Family Channel

KhujLee Family
950,790 subscribers
▶ SUBSCRIBED 🔔

Published on 12 May 2019

DEALING WITH YOUR ANGRY MOM | AWESAMO MINI | MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Disclaimer: I do not mean to offend any character or real people mentioned in this video, this video is just for entertainment purpose.

Check out cool khujLee Merch: https://www.fanstore .pk/khujleefamily

follow us on:

Facebook - https://www.facebook.com

Figure 2

Disclaimer by the Creator of CBA Channel

Published on 5 Sep 2018

Hi guys, here is my latest TVC Review of Shan
Masala TVC. All done in good humour I mean no
disrespect to the creators of the TVC. It takes a lot of
effort to produce creative content and I respect that.
Moreover, I would never be able to create anything
creative enough so I surely know my worth :)

Bushwick Tarantella by Kevin MacLeod is licensed
under a Creative Commons Attribution license
(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/...)
Source: http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-...
Artist: http://incompetech.com/

Category   Comedy

Figure 3

The Content Creator Shows the Purpose of The Video in Each Video

DISCLAIMER

This content is meant to be a lighthearted funny
video.
The comments expressed, in this video are not
meant to hurt the sentiments of any actor(s),
organisation etc.
All opinions expressed are independent views and
does not reflect the views of any brand or
sponsors neither do the sponsors endorse or
support the views and opinion of the artist.

CBA

Content Analysis

These videos share some common characteristics which
distinguishes them from other types of vlogs. All the videos of both the
channels are designed based on a particular structure. The Interactive

Alignment Model suggests that "participants in dialogue build up a series of routines based on what they have said and heard previously" (Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012). According to the model, the speakers bind the thread of the ongoing conversation with the previous ones in order to be more logical and acceptable by the addressees. Similarly, in language use, they automatically use particular vocabulary items repeatedly to develop the course of their conversation (Chiarello, 2012; Clark 2012).

These are some of the aspects that can easily be detected in the design of these videos. Starting with language use, both the speakers use some curse words as their trademark. They use these words and phrases again and again to create the climax or to make the climax of their speech more intense. For example, the speaker of the Khujlee Family uses the phrase *Baou Rami Raja Ji Bhains Chor,* while displaying the pictures of the literal meaning of these words frequently in his content. This is his trademark and viewers appreciate it the most. Similarly, making hilarious sounds and making constipated faces is considered as the signature humour of CBA. Adopting these gestures in their each and every video in a new context with some improvisation is what makes it more creative. Viewers enjoy the unpredictability of the usage of these words, which adds more to the climax. For better understanding, some of the pictures taken from the ongoing videos are illustrated below:

Figure 4

Signature Features of The Creators as Analysed by The Content Analysis

Figure 5

Curse Words as The Signature Style of The Creator

Another key feature of these video designs is the repeated reference to the pre-existing video clips and internet memes. They edit the relevant pictures and videos in their ongoing commentary which makes it funnier and more attractive for the viewers. Sometimes, they make illustrations on based on their own commentary and then use these visuals to make it spicier. Some of the instances are as follows:

Figure 6

Obscenity and Swear Words as The Trademark of The Creator

Figure 7

Curse Words as The Trademark for Humour

Figure 9

Creators Make Illustration Based on Their Own Commentary

Figure 8

Creators Make Illustrations Based on Their Own Commentary

Addressee Feedback

These features of design trigger addressee feedback which is directly proportional to the Interactive Alignment Model as argued by (Chiarello, 2012; Clark, 2012). Addressee feedback is either the acceptance or rejection of the addressees for anything conversed to them. Theorists have argued that addressee feedback actually provides the infrastructure for conversation design and both conversation design and addressee feedback go hand in hand. This is what we observed in the videos and their comments. The viewers do not praise only the content or the creativity of the speakers; rather, they demand to see more alike videos. Similarly, they appreciate and imitate the innovative slang used by these speakers. On the other hand, both the speakers encourage their viewers to follow and subscribe to their respective channels and give their feedback by fulfilling their demands and suggestions. In one of the videos titled "Cola Next TVC" by CBA, the speaker confesses that he is making this video on the demand of the public in his comment box. We can have a glimpse of addressee feedback in the following comments on the videos sampled for the analysis. In these comments, appraisal and appreciation for the content and content creators, demand for more such content and imitation of the slangs is visible.

Figure 10

Addressee Feedback Reflecting Appreciation for The Content and Content Creators

The above-mentioned figure show that the design of the videos has deep impact on the viewers. The impact leads the viewers to talk about these videos and the content creator. They start to appreciate the intellectual ability. Through these comments they reveal that how much the liked these videos.

Figure 11

Comments Showing Addressee Feedback Reflecting Appreciation
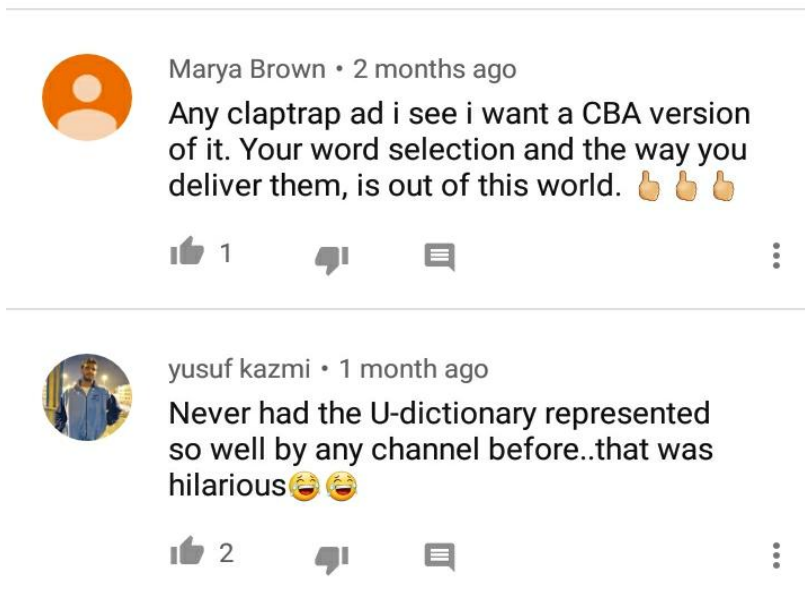
The above- illustrated figure shows the interest of the views. These videos cast an impact on them which also leads them to and use special terms that created humour. Such as in figure no 11 the guy is appreciating the content creator for using U- dictionary in a humorous way.

Similarly figure 12 and 13 shows that the content of the video is designed based on a particular structure helpful in creating an effective conversation as suggested by the Interactive Alignment Model (Pickering & Garrod, 2004). The success of the design structure is reflected by the appreciation received through addressee feedback as argued by (Chiarello, 2012; Clark, 2012).

Figure 12

Comments Showing Addressee Feedback Reflecting the Demand for More

Figure 13

Addressee Feedback Showing Encouraging Remarks for The Creator

Findings and Discussion

The videos that make up the data set are trending in Pakistan and are labelled as 'roasting videos' by their creators. We have argued that the content of these videos and their popularity indicate an emerging genre which is an improvised form of satire. The audience approve and demand this new version of a satirical one-man show in which the speaker is not present in front of the audience physically but is only a click away from them. The viewers do not only praise the speaker and enjoy the content; rather, they imitate the abusive vocabulary used as punch line by the speaker in their day-to-day life. It is an indication of the desensitization of such discourse which can be further explored in future studies. Another observation is that Punjabi is the highly employed language in these videos. It is used in order to create fun, satire and humor. Punjabi proverbs and curse words were used many times by both the speakers. We cannot ignore the fact that the speaker who runs the channel "Khujlee Vines" belongs to Sindh and is not a native Punjabi speaker. Still, he employs this language in his content to create fun and satire. This phenomenon, with particular reference to the Punjabi language and use of Punjabi curse words for roasting, can also be explored separately.

Conclusion

Vernacular discourse, as argued by Guo and Lee (2013), helps to build a new community with its own specifications. Similarly, we observed a strong bond between the viewers and the speakers of these videos, which indicates that a virtual community made up mostly of youth is being influenced by these videos. This influential content aids in the emergence of a discourse which is highly desensitized for slang language and which promotes the idea of stigmatizing someone's language, culture, beliefs, and ideologies in the name of reformation. Moreover, it encourages its followers to slander someone for the sake of criticism, which is not the prescribed way of dealing with social issues in a society. The creators of this content have acquired the status of celebrities and their viewers and fans praise them and express their desire of becoming more like them. A new cultural elite and a new cultural underclass are arising due to technology and economic change. Therefore, content creators should be careful while disseminating their content.

References

Blazeski, A., Lowenthal, J., Wang, Y., Teuben, R., Zhu, R., Gerecht, S., Tomaselli, G., & Tung, L. J. (2019). Engineered heart slice model of arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy using plakophilin-2 mutant myocytes. *Tissue Engineering Part A*, *25*(9-10), 725−735. https://doi.org/10.1089/ten.tea.2018.0272

Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2018). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture*. John Wiley & Sons.

Chiarello, C. (2012). *Right hemisphere contributions to lexical semantics*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Clark, J. (2012). *Language, sex and social structure: Analyzing discourses of sexuality.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Ellington, T. N. (2014). Bloggers, vloggers, and virtual sorority: A means of support for African American women wearing natural hair. *Journalism and Mass Communication*, *4*(9), 552−564.

Gann, T. M. (2012). *Toward a comprehensive theory of audience design* (Doctoral dissertation, UC Riverside). Timothy Matthew Gann.

Goldberg, A. E. (2006). *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford University Press.

Guo, L., & Lee, L. (2013). The critique of YouTube-based vernacular discourse: A case study of YouTube's Asian community. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *30*(5), 391−406. https://doi.org/10.1080/ 15295036.2012.755048

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century* (p. 145). The MIT Press.

Kafai, Y. B., & Peppler, K. A. (2011). Youth, technology, and DIY: Developing participatory competencies in creative media production. *Review of Research in Education*, *35*(1), 89−119. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X10383211

Merchant, G. (2009). Web 2.0, new literacies, and the idea of learning through participation. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *8*(3), 107−122.

Molyneaux, H., O'Donnell, S., Gibson, K., & Singer, J. (2008). Exploring the gender divide on YouTube: An analysis of the creation and reception of vlogs. *American Communication Journal*, *10*(2), 1−14.

Ohiagu, O. P., & Okorie, V. O. (2014). Social media: Shaping and transmitting popular culture. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, *2*(1), 93−108.

Ono, K. A., & Sloop, J. M. (1995). The critique of vernacular discourse. *Communications Monographs*, *62*(1), 19−46. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759509376346

Pickering, M. J., & Garrod, S. (2004). The interactive-alignment model: Developments and refinements. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *27*(2), 212-2015.

Williams, B. (2008). "What South Park character are you? popular culture, literacy, and online performances of identity. *Computers and Composition*, *25*(1), 24−39. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2007.09.005