THE YOUTUBE MAKEUP TUTORIAL VIDEO
A preliminary linguistic analysis
of the language of "makeup gurus"

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Abstract – Due to its video sharing policy which freely allows users to communicate all over the world, YouTube has become one of the preferred Web platforms used by the digital community of makeup lovers. As a matter of fact, YouTube seems particularly suited to host announcements of new makeup collections, products' reviews as well as video tutorials. Both cosmetic brands and single users have opened channels on the platform, but makeup discourse on YouTube is arguably dominated by the latter. Differentiating between unaffiliated amateurs and YouTubers who more or less openly work for makeup companies as digital influencers is difficult. Recent studies on communicative practices on YouTube, however, stress that in order to understand the complex nature of the famous video sharing website, the professional/non-professional dichotomy is not particularly relevant, whereas other dynamics are more research worthy. One of them is the "guru" phenomenon. "Gurus" are content creators who are particularly authoritative in a specific field, have a considerable follower base thanks to their expertise and are often paid by brands in order to promote their products. The makeup domain too has witnessed the emergence of a group of popular and influential users who are typically referred to as "makeup gurus". Their ability to stand out from the multiplicity of similar channels arguably depends not only on their knowledge of the field, but also on their communication skills and specifically on their successful use of the makeup video genre. Against this backdrop, this study sets out to codify the relatively new genre of the makeup tutorial providing it with adequate categories which at the moment appear to be lacking. Adopting the analytical framework provided by discourse analysis, it examines the generic, rhetorical and linguistic practices of makeup gurus and sheds light on the ways gurus discursively construct their identity as well as represent the idea of beauty and makeup.

Keywords: Web 2.0; makeup discourse; YouTube; makeup tutorials; web genres.

1. Introduction

Over the last few years, Web 2.0 genres have contributed to radically revolutionising the ways in which brands market their products online as well as the ways in which consumers discover and purchase them (cf., among others, De Bruyn, Lilien 2008; Kaplan, Haenlein 2011a, 2011b; Kwon, Sung 2011; Mata, Quesada 2013; Watkins, Lewis 2013; Ferrari 2015).

One of the new media platforms on which advertising discourse has been flourishing is YouTube. First launched in 2005 and acquired by Google Inc. in 2006, YouTube is currently the second of the world's most visited websites[1] and defines itself as a consumer media company which *"provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content*

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[1] Data collected in April 2016 from Alexa (alexa.com), an Internet company which provides information about web traffic and ranking.

creators and advertisers large and small" (https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/). Drawing on previous research work carried out by Foot *et al.* (2009) and Lilleker *et al.* (2011) which confirms the dissemination and advertising potential the company attributes itself on its own "About Page", Vesnic-Alujevic and van Bauwel (2014) contend that video-based social media and YouTube in particular can realize four communicative functions - i.e. informing, interacting, engaging and mobilizing - which are suited for promotional discourses, including the increasingly more important discourse of cosmetics and makeup. The widespread adoption of YouTube, whose reliance on images makes it particularly appropriate for cosmetic communication, has contributed to the creation of a very dynamic digital community of makeup lovers. Members participate by sharing information and tips, doing products' reviews, announcing new collections, tutorials and *how-to's* (Kedveš 2013).

The makeup tutorial, which represents the main object of this study, is a hybrid genre which blends the how-to video with a distinctive vlogging element.[2] The convergence of electronic word of mouth (cf., among others, Phelps *et al.* 2004; Jansen *et al.* 2009), personal narrative (Lange 2008; Pace 2008), and audience engagement (cf., among others, Adami 2009; Dynel 2014) which characterizes these online profiles results in entertaining as well as informative content which may receive a remarkable number of visits. In particular, the vlogging component confers makeup tutorials the liveness, immediacy and conversationality typical of interpersonal face-to-face communication (Burgess, Green 2009, p. 54). As a matter of fact, unlike television content, YouTube vlogs continuous address to the viewers inherently invites their feedback, thus guaranteeing conversational and inter-creative participation (Burgess, Green 2009). That is why Boyd argues that YouTube promotes a new type of communication, for which he coined the term "self-mediated quasi-interaction" (2008, p. 39), and Dynel defines vlogging as a form of "mass-mediated monologue", stressing that monologues performed on the platform have to be regarded as an instance of (one-to-many) interaction because, unlike self-talk, vloggers' speeches are necessarily meant to be heard by hearers (2014, p. 41).

Even though makeup companies have realized the advertising potential of tutorials and have started producing them relatively quickly, most users bypass their YouTube accounts as they find those of amateurs more appealing and trustworthy. However, distinguishing between amateurish and corporate content is not always possible: users and media commentators have recently been questioning the extent to which some videos are covert advertisements albeit produced and circulated by allegedly unaffiliated content-creators (Blackshaw 2006). As they are perceived as "virtual friends" whom, differently from corporations, the audience can trust, brands have increasingly co-opted makeup tutorial makers to promote their products: even though this is not always official, some of the most popular ones are often either paid to mention this kind of cosmetics online or sent them for free, so that they can give excellent reviews and influence their audience to purchase them.

Nonetheless, however crucial authenticity and transparency can be to YouTube users (Freeman, Chapman 2007, p. 209), scholars and researchers do not need to draw sharp distinctions between professional and amateur production, or between commercial and community practices in order to be able to understand YouTube's culture (Burgess,

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[2] A "vlog" is a blend word introduced to indicate a blog relying on the video medium. Even though makeup gurus post both tutorials and vlogs (cf. García-Rapp 2016), a dichotomous view of these kinds of video would probably be misleading, as the former also typically include some vlogging.

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Green 2009, p. 57). What is important to notice is that amateur discourse, either genuine or forged, seems to dominate the YouTube makeup domain (cf. Pixability Report *Beauty on YouTube 2015*).[3] A group of makeup lovers have become so well-known and influential that the expression "makeup gurus" has been coined to designate them. According to the traditional definition, "gurus" are people gifted with wisdom as well as leadership abilities who consequently emerge as spiritual guides to be trusted. On YouTube a guru is someone who has a "guru account" with numerous followers and posts videos to educate people about something (YouTube 2010).

These users invest a significant amount of time and resources in producing their videos so that the latter will become extremely popular, thus providing public recognition to their creators (Spyer 2013). Such celebrity and visibility are not simply due to the guru's knowledge about makeup, but they are the result of "an intense process of engaging in conversations and building relationships" (Spyer 2013). The existence of gurus who stand out thanks to, among various factors, their ability to utilize the genre, seems to suggest that different YouTube users are able to establish a virtual rapport with their audience to different degrees. Consequently, it can be hypothesized that those videos which receive the most hits and enjoy the widest circulation are likely to be the most representative of the genre while, at the same time, proving more likely to affect it.

2. Aim, material and method

Makeup tutorials have been extremely popular for quite some time now, but they have hardly been investigated from an academic perspective, especially from a linguistic one.[4] Acknowledging the existence of a gap in the relevant literature, this study sets out to codify this relatively new genre providing it with adequate categories which at the moment appear to be lacking. Specifically, it aims at investigating the linguistic practices of online amateur makeup lovers by focussing its analysis on the language of the so-called "makeup gurus", who, as previously highlighted, arguably determine and influence the genre much more than other users.

The discussion is informed by the various linguistic approaches to the definition of genre, which has evolved over time (Boyd 2008; Wodak 2008). Genre studies first dealt primarily with inherent textual and linguistic features, then adopted a functional approach privileging communicative purpose over formal characteristics, to finally acknowledge the crucial role of social practices, conventions and rules governing genre creation and usage.

As it has been demonstrated that none of these approaches produces satisfactory results on its own (cf., among others, Askehave, Swales 2001; Garzone 2007; Devitt 2009), this research examines all three analytical levels in order to provide a preliminary codification of the makeup tutorial: as a matter of fact, the textual, rhetoric-discursive and social dimensions are simultaneously activated in any genre realisation. As a consequence,

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[3] Pixability is a software company that works with major brands to increase their YouTube impact on target audiences (www.pixability.com). In 2014 and 2015 it analyzed the YouTube beauty ecosystem and the online behavior of brands and beauty creators and issued reports on the data collected.

[4] The analyses carried out by Tolson (2010), Spyer (2013) and Reichert (2014) are noteworthy exceptions.

in this chapter the study of the linguistic traits of this type of video is embedded in a rhetorical as well as a social perspective.[5]

A hybrid methodological toolkit is needed which makes it possible to describe the various levels of investigation: this study therefore mainly draws upon Fairclough's three-dimensional model for the examination of communicative events (1992). Such model takes into account the textual, discursive and social aspects of any language act and is arguably suited for the investigation of genre realisations (such as, in the case at hand, makeup tutorials). However, Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis is here carried out relying on a set of models: Werlich's (1976), Hatim's (1984), and Hatim and Mason's (1990) categories are utilized to explore the textual/linguistic level of makeup tutorials (i.e. for the examination of "*vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure*"; Fairclough 1992, p. 75).

As regards the discursive level of analysis, that is to say the level which describes "*processes of text production, distribution and comsumption*" (Fairclough 1992, p. 78), Swales's (1990) and Bhatia's (1993) models are adopted, as they are arguably apt to investigate rhetorical structure (including moves and steps) of YouTube makeup videos. Finally, the "social practice" dimension of makeup tutorials (i.e. the institutional and organizational contexts within which makeup discourse is created and either maintained or challenged) is studied drawing upon the seminal work of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) and the methodological contribution of Critical Discourse Analysis. According to this approach, texts are the results of social processes and discourse is both socially conditioned and socially constitutive and therefore participates in "the social construction of reality".

Given the huge popularity of their videos, makeup gurus have the power to construct ideologies through discursive practices and to provide a significant contribution to the dominant discourse on makeup and beauty; as a consequence, CDA appears to be an adequate investigation tool to analyse their videos.

This methodological toolkit has been applied to a corpus consisting of fifteen videos posted on the three of the most subscribed YouTube *How to & Style* channels (which interestingly also rank within the top 300 most subscribed channels of the whole YouTube platform).[6] More specifically, makeup tutorials realized by the makeup gurus Michelle Phan (USA), Tanya Burr (England), and Lauren Curtis (Australia)[7] have been collected over the course of seven months (cf. references) and examined in order to identify their prevailing linguistic, generic and discursive features.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows: after describing the rhetorical structure of makeup tutorials (par. §3), I move on to examine the linguistic features typically associated with the main moves of the genre (par. §4) and finally focus on the discursive construction of makeup and beauty as well as of makeup gurus' identity (par. § 5).

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[5] This analysis only focuses on the video monological component of the examined videos: while I acknowledge the importance other semiotic resources and their interaction, my main interest here is to systematize the makeup tutorial from a linguistic, generic and discursive perspective.

[6] Data collected in May 2015.

[7] Michelle Phan is an American thirty-year old who, thanks to the huge popularity of her videos (which have been watched more than a billion times), has been able to launch her own makeup line and to publish a non-fiction beauty guide and autobiography. She has more than 8.5 million subscribers and in 2013 Lancôme made her their official video makeup artist. Tanya Burr is an English makeup guru specialized in "celebrity looks". She has 3.5 million subscribers. She is also 30 and launched her own makeup line in 2014 and published a non-fiction beauty guide and autobiography in 2015. Lauren Curtis is an Australian twenty-three-year old who has almost 3.5 million subscribers (data collected in April 2016).

3. The rhetorical structure of makeup tutorials

Drawing on the assumption that genres are multifunctional and that communicative purposes may be "*more evasive, multiple, and complex than originally envisaged*" (Askehave, Swales 2001, p. 197), especially when it comes to Web 2.0 genres (Garzone 2007, pp. 18-19), this study acknowledges that establishing the communicative purpose of makeup tutorials may not be straightforward.

As the expression "tutorial" itself suggests, these videos are primarily meant to be received by the audience as informative/instructional texts which aim at teaching how to realize a certain makeup look. However, although it may seem as if YouTube makeup content creators simply decide "*to share their passion with others by turning on their webcam and performing their favourite routines*" (Spyer 2013), their main underlying purpose for posting tutorials is arguably not the instruction of the viewers but self-promotion and, possibly, the paid sponsorship of beauty products.[8]

Whereas a clear identification of the principal communicative purpose of makeup tutorials is arduous and maybe not even desirable, the description of their rhetorical structure appears less problematic. More in particular, by limiting its analysis to the sole monologues performed by makeup gurus in front of their cameras, this study deals with texts which, although embedded in a Web 2.0 genre and distributed in the digital environment, do not display the loss of linearity and fragmentation typical of Internet genres (Bolter 1991; Landow 1992).[9] This means that even though users can go back and forth, select how much and which parts of the video they want to watch (Boyd 2008, p. 37), the rhetorical moves and steps of makeup tutorials are realized by YouTubers in a fixed, recognizable sequence.

The analysis of the corpus of makeup gurus' tutorials highlights the presence of four obligatory moves and a final, optional one. The first move corresponds to the greeting/welcoming of the viewer and the second provides him or her with a summary that anticipates the content of the video (cf. Spyer 2013). Greetings and Introductions are crucial for the overall success of the tutorial, as the first 15 seconds of the videos are where the audience is most likely to drop off (Conet, Saxena 2014). That is why vloggers start the introductory section with an "abstract" (Chou *et al.* 2011) which aims at confirming viewers that the video they are watching is exactly the one they wanted to watch.[10] Since video titles can sometimes be generic or even misleading (occasionally even deliberately so), YouTubers need to reinforce the message that first brought the audience to the video by summarizing its content.

This seems to account for the unusual position of the summary move, which normally occurs towards the end of a text and not at the beginning. In the case of makeup tutorials, "summary expressions" are to be found in the introductory part and not towards the end, as vloggers need to retain their audience's attention till the very end and they do not to want give the impression of having already finished before the video is really over. In order to keep their viewers engaged, makeup gurus also typically include a personal,

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[8] Cf. par. §1.

[9] However, if the whole makeup tutorial (including viewers' comments and the various paratexts posted by the vlogger) and not just the video component is considered, such loss of linearity and fragmentation does appear.

[10] Conet and Saxena contend that a content creator typically has 8 seconds to confirm the audience that the video they are watching matches their expectations.

diaristic element in their introductions: they often explain what event or situation has inspired them to create the look they are about to describe.

The introduction is followed by the makeup application part of the video, which corresponds to the main move of the subgenre and contains an explanation of what to do in order to achieve the desired look, and is followed by the leave-taking section. This last section often contains a call to action, that is to say a request for the viewer to do something such as subscribing to the channel, liking or commenting on the video. The call to action may be considered as the natural conclusion of the video, as makeup content creators' main aim is to generate interest on the platform, engaging with the audience so as to induce them to give positive feedback and improve their popularity by liking/sharing/subscribing. Even though all YouTubers aspire at increasing the number of subscribers as well as likes and sharings, not all of them opt for making an oral call to action: some limit themselves to displaying the words "subscribe"/"like"/"share" in one of the last video frames before showing their contact information, logo, social media addresses and so forth on the screen.[11]

Some tutorials also include a coda which is to be treated as a different text, as it may deal with non-makeup related topics and does not add any information that is strictly necessary or relevant to the tutorial.[12] As previously stated, the natural conclusion of the makeup tutorial is an (explicit or implicit) call to action, which means that, whenever a video contains a coda, the call to action is performed at the end of the coda and not in the leave-taking move.

4. Linguistic features of makeup tutorials

The analysis of the rhetorical moves, which represents the discursive level of the investigation of makeup tutorials, is further enriched in this paragraph with the examination of the textual level, that is to say by the description of the most important linguistic features defining gurus' monologues. As suggested below, the main characteristics of this type of videos are the presence of formulaic expressions and engagement markers, as well as the combined use of different person pronouns, modes and text types in the makeup application section of the tutorials.

4.1. Formulaic expressions

One of the most immediately identifiable linguistic feature of makeup videos is the presence of formulaic expressions. The adoption of formulas which are repeated in all tutorials seems to suggest that, in order to promote their channel, popular beauty vloggers

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[11] It is interesting to notice that call to actions, either oral or otherwise, are performed as on-record-face-threatening acts (cf. Brown, Levison 1987): this is rather common in the digital environment, as users are not physically present and, unlike in face-to-face interaction, they can simply ignore requests. As a consequence, YouTubers do not need to mitigate their FTAs and opt for a low level of indirectness.

[12] Michelle Phan's short list of instructions on how to recreate a DYI succulent (which corresponds to the final part of her "*Butterfly Kisses*" tutorial) is a representative example of coda. The only discursive link which connects this final part to the rest of the video is represented by the idea of nature. According to the words of the makeup guru, "*Butterfly Kisses*" is a makeup look which celebrates the arrival of spring and the rebirth of nature. Recreating a DYI succulent to decorate one's house or flat is also presented in the video as a way of welcoming the new season and the natural changes it brings along.

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aim at making their videos easily distinguishable from the plentiful similar ones featured on YouTube, by (among other means) using language strategically. Repeated formulaic expressions acquire the status of a linguistic trademark or signature which makes the video and the online identity of its makeup guru immediately recognizable. The main function of these expressions is metadiscursive (cf. Hyland 2010), as they provide cohesion to the monologue and realize the transition from one move to the other, while emphasizing the distinctive style of each vlogger.

Formulas mainly occur at the beginning and at the end of the video, which, as already pointed out, are key elements of the monologues, but can also be found in the instructional, central part. Makeup gurus typically use the same expressions to address their viewers in the Greetings section: Michelle Phan normally welcomes her audience by saying "*Hey gorgeous*", whereas Tanya Burr prefers a more neutral "*Hey guys*" and Lauren Curtis opts for a more inclusive "*Hi everyone*".

In the makeup application move of tutorials formulas are rarer, but present nonetheless. Their function is mainly to confer coherence to the list of actions described and performed by the guru in order to obtain the desired makeup look while making the style of the video easily recognizable.

1. I'm gonna zoom in...... / I'm gonna zoom out and finish up (TB).
2. And voilà, we're done (MP).
3. And that is my finished look (TB).

As regards the leave-taking section, formulaic expressions are often exploited to give prominence to the final call to action, making it more memorable through repetition:

4. Let me know what you think [about this look] (LC).
5. Please give this video a "thumbs up" if you'd like more makeup looks like this (TB).

Moreover, formulas are used to signal that the video is coming to an end:

6. Thank you so much for watching (LC).
7. *I love you* and I will see you in my next video (LC).
8. *Good luck* (MP).

As example 7 and 8 suggest, gurus may also decide to repeat expressions which allow them to reinforce their emotional attachment to their virtual viewership, possibly in order to "*artificially engineer the appearance of something genuine and spontaneous*" (Spyer 2013). In this regard, engagement markers probably represent the linguistic category which best performs this function.

4.2. Engagement Markers

Engagement markers are massively present in the monologues which makeup gurus present to their virtual audience. Hyland (2010) defines them as "*metadiscursive elements which explicitly address readers, either by selectively focusing their attention or by including them as participants in the text*" (cf. also Hyland 2001). Engagement markers arguably represent an efficient language device which allows beauty vloggers to discursively construct their viewership, thus dealing with the "audience dilemma" (Wensch 2008): while being alone and addressing the camera, gurus attempt to anticipate the context they will be speaking to, even though this context is uncertain (Spyer 2013).

The analysis of the videos selected for this study has highlighted that the most frequently occurring engagement markers to be found in makeup tutorials are conversational features, questions and directives, evaluative items, and finally deictic expressions which are typical of face-to-face interaction.

As regards conversational features, their presence in the videos is rather predictable, considering that two of the moves, Greetings and Leave-taking, are conversational in nature:

> 9. *Welcome back* to my channel (LC) Greetings.
> 10. *Mmh mmh* (affirmative sound), everyone looks good with a winged eyeliner (MP) Instruction.
> 11 Yes, *honey*, I know .... (MP) Instruction.
> 12. Lots of love guys. *Bye*! (TB) Leave-taking.

Questions and directives also abound, as they elicit some sort of response from the viewer, thus confirming the overall impression that the interaction between the latter and the vlogger is an ongoing conversation and not an asynchronous exchange:

> 13. I have no idea why I've got this colour in the middle of blues and greens. *Don't ask!* (TB).
> 14. *Trust me* on this one (MP).
> 15. Does it happen to anyone else ...... or *is it just me*? (TB).

Evaluative devices are fairly common, too, and they represent a typical language strategy which enables makeup content creators to build rapport with the audience. Evaluation tends to take the form of evaluative adjectives, as suggested by the examples below:

> 16. It's not *super creamy*, which is good because it means it doesn't crease (TB).
> 17. This will give it *a more natural* finish (MP).

Finally, the use of deixis typical of face-to-face interaction also contributes to discursively creating a common spatio-temporal context which reinforces the impression that a synchronous conversation among friends is taking place:

> 18. [...] so go ahead and sketch *that* line out (MP).
> 19. It's time to curl *them* lashes (MP).
> 20. *Now you guys* are going to freak out when [...] (TB).

Whereas the first two examples above contain indexicals indicating spatial proximity (*"that"* and *"them"* respectively), example 19 expresses a relation of proximity in time (*"now"*) as well as a direct appeal to the viewers (*"you guys"*).

As highlighted in the following section, choice of person pronouns and modes also belongs to the strategies utilized by makeup gurus in order to make their monologues more engaging and appealing.

4.3. Combined use of different person pronouns, modes and text types

As already pointed out, audience retention plays a crucial role in the overall success of a tutorial. The part of the video which seems the most likely to prove boring for viewers is the makeup application move, as it mainly consists of a list of cosmetics to use and steps to take in order to achieve the look presented by the vlogger. In order to avoid the risk of being tedious, thus alienating their audience, makeup gurus try to make this part of the text more varied by alternating different modes and personal pronouns.

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It is to be noticed that in most of the videos analyzed, the makeup application move is not realized as a series of instructions, but rather as a narration of the process of makeup application. By and large, it can be observed that certain person pronouns/modes combinations prevail in tutorials containing voiceovers, whereas others are preferred when vloggers opt for real time recording. Videos with voiceovers represent makeup gurus' least favourite option but they are present in the corpus collected nonetheless: they are easier (although possibly more time consuming) to realize if the look is particularly arduous (therefore applying makeup and talking at the same time might be particularly difficult), they can be shot in extremely noisy environments (provided the voiceover is recorded afterwards), and, more in general, they can provide a good alternative to recording live should practical problems arise. Voiceovers typically belong to the instructional text type (cf. Werlich 1976; Hatim 1984; Hatim, Mason 1990) and focus on what they viewer should do to recreate the look rather than on what the makeup guru does when applying makeup. In this kind of video the imperative mode predominates (cf. examples 21, 22, and 23), often in combination with expressions containing either a modal (cf. example 24) or instructions in the indicative mode (cf. example 25):

21. *Press them on* to minimize shine (MP).
22. *Try to focus* around the T-zone area because this is where you're gonna see a lot of shine (MP).
23. *Curl* your lashes from root to tip, *making sure* to flick the wand out at the ends (MP).
24. *Now you can take* a pastel blue colour (MP).
25. *What you want to do is…..* (TB).

Real time recordings may feature suggestions in the imperative mode (oftentimes either preceded or followed by an *if-clause* in the indicative mode), as suggested by the following examples:

26. *If you get* lash glue on your eyeshadow *don't worry* because it dries clear (TB).
27. *If you have* oily skin *use* a powder highlighter (MP).

However, this type of sentence represents the exception rather than the norm: the first person pronoun (mainly singular) and the indicative mode are the preferred option in real time recordings and the structure *if second-person pronoun indicative (simple present) + imperative mode* is mainly used by vloggers to intersperse their otherwise possibly monotonous explanation with short tips.[13] Beauty gurus usually describe their viewers what they are doing, what products they are using, how they are applying them etc. employing the "going to" form, but other structures are also to be found: examples 30-31 respectively contain a simple present ("*we are giving*") and the contracted form of a semi-modal ("*wanna*").

28. *I'm just going to* add a little bit of corduroy (TB).
29. So *I'm going to try and do* this (LC).
30. For the eyes, *we are giving* them a sweet pastel pop of colour (MP).
31. I *wanna* go from here all the way to the inner corner [of my eye] (LC).

This combination of tenses and structures seems the favourite choice in videos recorded live (and edited afterwards) as it focuses on the unfolding of the makeup application process in the same way as the guru experiences it. In this regard, Hatim and Mason's

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[13] Brief personal anecdotes in the indicative mode are also inserted as a means to retain audience attention.

model (1990) arguably represents the most suited analytical tool to account for the makeup application move: unlike Werlich's (1976), which makes a distinction between expository and narrative text types, Hatim and Mason contend that the latter represent a category of exposition since, just like conceptual exposition and description, they focus on the constitutive analysis of entities. In their framework, narrative text types distinguish themselves from the other expository texts type because they focus on actions and events and their relations in time. While putting on makeup, gurus, on the one hand, describe the process they are carrying out (thus exposing and explaining its steps); on the other, they arrange such steps into a temporal sequence: this seems to suggest that the narrative and the expository component are strictly interrelated in the makeup application move and can be best described by a model (such as Hatim and Mason's) which does not juxtapose such dimensions.

5. The discursive construction of makeup gurus' identity, makeup and beauty

After pointing out that the individuality of the makeup guru manifests itself in the text in various ways including the prevailing use of the first person and the use of formulaic expressions which represent a virtual signature of the vlogger, I can now move on to investigate the way this subjectivity is constructed at the discursive level so that the "social practice" dimension of makeup tutorials can be investigated.

Besides providing their videos with a distinctive diaristic component and interspersing them with short anecdotes, vloggers tend to refer to themselves, especially when they are applying makeup, to mention their flaws:

> 32. I'm terrible at applying eyeliner on camera (LC).
> 33. I'm going to create a wing. This can be hard for some people and trust me I've been there. Sometimes I'm still there (LC).

Makeup application flaws are revealed by makeup gurus as another strategy to build rapport with the audience, to show that they can be self-ironic and also to minimize the risk of losing viewers: as a matter of fact, many watch makeup tutorials because they want to reproduce the looks they see in the videos and, if the latter appear too difficult to recreate, they may lose interest in the video or even in the channel.

Physical flaws are also mentioned and they also represent an engagement device: both viewer and guru are constructed as having blemishes and as sharing the same insecurity about their physical appearance (in spite of the fact that the three popular gurus whose videos are analyzed in this study are undoubtedly good-looking, which may not necessarily be the case of the audience):

> 34. With the pencil you just want to lengthen your brows a bit if they need it, *mine do really need it* (TB).
> 35. …if you're lacking in the lash department *as myself here* (MP).
> 36. This little spot came out just in time for the video. It was like "Lauren I got you!" [laughter] (LC).

The emphasis on physical flaws permeates media and advertising discourse which typically depict women's bodies (and, as of late, men's bodies too) as a series of 'problems' that need 'fixing' (Ringrow 2012). Consequently, their bodies require a lot of 'work' (Ringrow 2012) which not only justifies the use but also stresses the need for

cosmetics (Kaur *et al.* 2013, p. 69). The latter thus become confidence boosters for both female and male consumers. As examples 37, 38, and 39 underline, such a representation of makeup and beauty products seems to have colonized the discourse of makeup tutorials:

> 37. *It's like stilettos* for your lashes (MP).
> 38. That's *the power* of makeup (LC).
> 39. …take a deep breath… because we have concealer *to the rescue* (MP).

Makeup is also portrayed as an enhancer. In this regard, its discursive representation is rather paradoxical: it is constructed as concealing physical flaws and revealing true personality and beauty but, by doing so, it almost disappears. It's makeup that reveals people's souls, yet, at the same time, appearances, which makeup enhances, are not important (cf. example 40):

> 40. I believe that souls recognize each other by vibes, not by appearances (MP).
> 41. Orange look says that you're fun and you're comfortable in your skin (MP).

In example 41 the makeup guru contends that it is the orange makeup look that reveals that a person is comfortable in their skin, although it can be objected that someone who is comfortable in their skin does not need to rely on a makeup look, orange or otherwise, to prove it. These examples as well as the previous ones confirm the impression that, if bodies and faces need enhancing or even 'fixing', beauty does not exist per se but it is the end product of a makeup application process.

This also further corroborates the hypothesis that interdiscursivity (cf., among others, Foucault 1969; Fairclough 2003) plays a crucial role in gurus' videos. Elements are imported from media discourse and specifically from advertising discourse, but the representation of makeup is often interrelated with other discourses, too: for example, in her tutorial "*Glowing Skin Look ✧ Ethereal Aura*", Michelle Phan makes a multiplicity of references to the semantic domain of the dream, as she portrays makeup as something that provides the necessary confidence to dare to realize one's dreams. The vlogger is particularly keen on this representation of makeup, as suggested by the fact that she always ends her videos wishing "*good luck*" to her viewers: a lexical choice which would be difficult to interpret otherwise.

The fact that makeup gurus tend to hybridize online makeup with other discourses, such as that of personal development and dream, and to represent cosmetics as products which can help improve not only users' physical appearance but also their quality of life further attests to the blending of corporate and marketing discourse, which tends to add symbolic values to products, and online makeup discourse (Phakdeephasook 2009; Kaur *et al.* 2013).

However, this significant interdiscursive element may not simply stem from the fact that gurus are arguably sponsored by cosmetic companies and have therefore incorporated beauty marketing discourse in their tutorials. The recontextualization of advertising discourse into makeup videos may also be a strategy aimed at the promotion of popular vloggers' own personas and channels: drawing on the assumption that makeup can improve viewers' life quality, the latter tend to implicitly present themselves not just as makeup gurus but as life gurus, providing general suggestions and setting the example for their acolytes to follow and not limiting themselves to simple beauty tips:

> 42. No pain no gain (MP).
> 43. There is definitely beauty in simplicity (MP).

44. Any man that you see a future with should appreciate and like and love how you look with and without makeup (LC).

The widespread use of maxims, quotations and pieces of life advice seems to confirm the emergence of this aspect of gurus' online identity, an identity which, as already hinted at, is multifaceted as well as complex and balances the desire of projecting an accomplished self-image with the wish of building rapport with the audience by mentioning one's flaws and imperfections.

6. Concluding remarks

Drawing on the acknowledgement that Web 2.0 media and the YouTube platform in particular are playing an increasingly more crucial role in the vehiculation of cosmetic discourse, this study has provided a preliminary investigation of gurus' makeup tutorials from a linguistic perspective.

The analysis has highlighted the presence of some elements which are specific of this subgenre together with other elements which are typical of Web 2.0 genres in general. Among the latter we can find the language strategies which aim to build rapport with the audience as well as the linguistic devices which emphasize the personality of the vlogger and his/her subjective filter on the topic under examination.

Beauty gurus arguably owe their success not only to their knowledge of makeup application, but also to their ability of personalizing their channels so that their videos are easily distinguishable from the many others that are posted daily on the platform.

However, unlike other genres such as blogging, of which vlogging is a video variant and evolution, makeup tutorials are extremely formulaic at the textual level and present a rather fixed move structure at the rhetorical level. As regards the social practice level, the dominant discursive construction depicts makeup as something which is necessary: both gurus' and viewers' faces have imperfections and blemishes that need to be hidden or 'fixed'. Makeup can represent the solution to the problem as it conceals the physical flaws that hide the true beauty and personality of a person.

In beauty vloggers' discourse, whenever people are authentically themselves, their life quality improves and they have the confidence to do what it takes to make their dreams come true. The discursive construction of makeup which emerges from the analysis of the tutorials collected seems blended with other discourses, such as media discourse and beauty advertising discourse. This might account for the fact that vloggers portray makeup and life quality as strictly interrelated and present themselves as all round gurus who can guide their audience to success and not simply provide cosmetic knowledge.

To conclude, this introductory investigation of makeup tutorials has shown that, as ephemeral as it may appear, beauty and cosmetic discourse situates itself at the crossroads of important, dominant discourses, such as consumerism, commodification of body image and identity, etc. That is why makeup tutorials can be said to represent an interesting as well as complex object of study and, hopefully, more future research will be carried out which further explores the genre and addresses the issues dealt with in this chapter.

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