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The Pope of YouTube

A case study of dynamic metaphor use in asynchronous Internet communication

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7 September 2009
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DATE OF SUBMISSION: 9 SEP^T 2009

DATE OF AWARD: 1 DEC 2009

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Abstract

Research into computer-mediated communication has recently focused on large quantitative analysis of CMC text rather than close analysis of full discourse acts in online environments. Using a discourse dynamics, metaphor-led analysis, this dissertation investigates the dynamic use of metaphor in three YouTube videos made by two American YouTube users: one a fundamentalist Christian and one an atheist. The focus of the analysis was on how metaphor was produced dynamically in the interaction between the users and how the use of metaphor could be seen at different levels of the YouTube video page, including in the title of the videos, the video, the description boxes, the comments, and subsequent video responses. Analysis showed that metaphor was used at every level of the discourse event and that dynamic production of metaphor in response to other users was seen, especially in discussing the positions and roles of the users in relation to each other and the larger YouTube 'community.' Analysis also showed that metaphor was used to not only position other users, but that understanding of specific metaphors seemed to differ depending on who was producing and interpreting a given metaphor.

Keywords: discourse dynamics, metaphor-led discourse analysis, computer-mediated communication, YouTube.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to:

洋子と治美と明へ ありがとう、愛してる。

Prof Lynne Cameron and Dr Daniel Allington, for their careful and always constructive comments.

The YouTube users *theamazingatheist*, *togetherforpeace*, *cimbolic*, and *thewoodsofjordan* (formally *jordoods2*), for their insight on the YouTube community and thoughts on atheist-Christian dialogue.

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Internet is increasingly becoming the hub of much communication that occurs over distance. Different mediums of Internet communication—from e-mail to blogging to social networking sites—have also given rise to different forms of discourse. This dissertation will investigate one aspect of computer-mediated communication (CMC): metaphor use in asynchronous communication that occurs on YouTube.

YouTube is a video-hosting website wherein content relating to a myriad of subjects is created by users. The website allows for content to be attached to individual videos in the form of text comments and video responses. Users watch videos and can react to them in several ways: by rating them, commenting on the video page, or saving them to a 'favourites' list. The viewer takes an active role in the life of a video whether by simply rating it or by being involved through re-editing parts of it in a response video. When more than one video is posted in response to another, a video 'thread' is formed, linking users back to the original video and forward to additional responses.

As investigation into the use of metaphor in Internet discourse remains an underdeveloped area of research, dynamic interaction of users in the YouTube context potentially provides a unique opportunity for analysis based on a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor research. This approach focuses not on the cognitive aspects of metaphor processing, but metaphor as a phenomenon that emerges out of complex systems of dynamic interaction. If YouTube discourse is fundamentally built around collaboration, dynamic interaction in the production of metaphor may also be observable in the interaction between users.

The objective of this dissertation is to describe and analyse the use of metaphor in one YouTube video thread, with the goal of providing some suggestions at the end of the text about how patterns of metaphor use emerge in the thread and how metaphor and patterns of metaphor use are shaped by the dynamic interaction of users. Understanding patterns of metaphor use could potentially provide insight into the nature of YouTube discourse as a unique form of CMC. As a secondary objective, this dissertation will also present an exemplar case study of metaphor-led discourse analysis of asynchronous Internet discourse for use in large-scale research on YouTube.

The dissertation will be structured as follows: Chapter Two will review the current literature on research into CMC and metaphor studies. Chapter Three will provide a

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description of the methods of data collection and analysis used in this case study. Chapter Four will include a description of the data to be analysed. Chapter Five will include the analysis of the data and findings. Finally, Chapter Six will include a discussion of the findings, potential areas for future research, and the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review current research in the fields of metaphor studies and CMC research, by focusing on contrasting approaches in both research fields: interdisciplinary approaches to CMC (which employ diverse types of data surrounding websites [including demographic data, statistics, etc.]) vs. a discourse analytic approach (which focuses primarily on discourse occurring on a website); and cognitive approaches vs. a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor studies. I will argue, first, that research into CMC can usefully apply a discourse analytic approach to complete discourse events (in this case, all of the elements of the YouTube video page), rather than only working with extracts of discourse events; and second, that research is needed into metaphor use in asynchronous Internet communication, particularly research which investigates the dynamic interaction between users in complete discourse events rather than the cognitive aspects of metaphor processing. Based on this framework, I will propose research questions to be investigated in the YouTube environment.

2.1 YouTube in Context

Up to this point, CMC research has been broadly interdisciplinary (Herring, 2001), and research questions have tended to focus, as Herring states, on the novelty of CMC and the role of CMC mediums in shaping social behaviour (Herring, 2004). Deep discourse analysis of CMC discourse which treats the communication occurring on the website or through the medium as primary evidence in the study, however, remains rare, especially in mediums like YouTube which feature many modes of communication, such as spoken and written language, video, and rating functions. In general, CMC research tends to employ mixed methods for investigating CMC mediums, focuses on mediums that are gaining in popularity at the time of the research, and investigates particular mediums as social phenomenon. Although this strengthens research projects by taking into account different elements of CMC mediums, it is a different approach from discourse analysis of online communication.

In recent years, this top down approach to CMC could be seen in research surrounding the blog, where research has tended to focus on the social impact and practice of blogging. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods with the goal of understanding the blog as a social phenomenon can be seen, for example, in Minshe and Glance's corpus research, which employs both quantitative analysis of large amounts of corpus data (40.6 million

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words) and some qualitative discourse analysis (Minshe & Glance, 2006). Using a similar data set, Herring et al.'s (2006) longitudinal study of blog writing analysed large amounts of textual data (457 blog entries with average word counts between 203–300 words per entry) from random weblogs to make general claims about blog writing and commenting and sought to understand how blogging practices change over time and are affected by external events. In both of these studies, the discourse event was treated as one part of the social phenomenon that is blogging and researchers in both cases employed discourse analysis as just one part of understanding CMC mediums, producing compelling evidence from their analysis. However, by not analysing complete discourse events (including full blog posts in the context of the blog page with all the comments), it seems possible that the research could have excluded valuable information about the nature of blog writing.

Similar to the frameworks employed in both of these studies, the current literature on CMC reveals two tendencies towards collecting and analysing data. First, with some notable exceptions (cf. Panyametheekul & Herring, 2003; Paulus, 2004), recent CMC research has mainly focused on understanding how users adopt technology and engage others socially (e.g., Byrne, 2008), but close discourse analysis of CMC data—especially multi-modal data—is less common. Although there is potentially strength in analysing different kinds of data, the researcher must remember that research into the social phenomenon of CMC and discourse analysis of CMC data are quite different. Herring draws a useful distinction between CMC and computer mediated discourse (CMD), stating that research into the later is a specialisation within the field of CMC research ‘focus[ed] on *language and language use...*’ (italics in original) (Herring, 2001: 1). Although the two are clearly related and both arguably have the goal of understanding communication on the Internet, CMD places discourse data as the central focus of analysis.

While some CMC research adopts a top down approach to studying interaction on the Internet (using discourse in the medium as one element of many to understand online interactions), CMD research uses discourse as the primary data for analysis. The difference might be best understood as approaching the Internet from macro vs. micro perspectives. CMC research into YouTube, for example, may use demographic statistics, new user rates, and content of videos as data to describe what occurs on YouTube. CMD research, however, would take a much closer look at the use of language in videos and specific interactions between users. The value of CMD research is the deep understanding of the discourse context it affords, something which is difficult to accomplish when analysing

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statistics about use. If, for example, the basic element of YouTube is the videos that are being made and posted, a close reading of the videos must be done to understand the broader implications of what is occurring on the website. The discourse of the videos (and, indeed, the whole video page) must be of primary importance to the researcher because they *are* the interaction.

A second tendency of CMC research has been a focus on written text. As early as 2000, Charles Soukup argued that there was a need to engage mediums of CMC that were not text-based (Soukup, 2000). Soukup cited video and hyperlinking as evidence of the Internet's 'three dimensional space' which was more than 'visually presented language (Herring, 2001: 612). This does not invalidate the value of Herring's discussion of misguided assumptions about CMC (i.e., CMC as an impoverished, non-standard written discourse), especially when considering early CMC mediums in which users overcame technological limitations to produce interactions analogous to offline, face-to-face conversation (Herring, 2001). It is, however, less applicable to the contemporary Internet context, where something close to face-to-face, real-time interaction is now possible through applications like Skype or websites like Stickam.com. Although these technologies still do not provide the physical proximity of face-to-face communication, they seem much closer to offline, face-to-face, real-time communication than, for example, text messaging.

Because of the drastic improvements in technology, a shift in thinking is necessary. Rather than understanding CMC as overcoming limitations to produce something close to face-to-face communication, perhaps it is now more accurate to view CMC technologies as offering different affordances which users adapt and exploit to create new forms of discourse. A Twitter post, for example, is limited to 140 characters not because of technological constraints, but because the simplicity it affords in contrast to other available technologies (Twitter, n.d.). Unlike older CMC mediums, it is desirable *because* of its limitations, not in spite of them. Moreover, given the diversity of mediums available and the new discourses emerging within them, understanding CMC as computerized offline communication may be misguided (Soukup, 2000). Rather than seek to understand YouTube videos in light of an analogous offline counterpart, this dissertation will treat the YouTube video as offering new affordances for communication, not simply as computerized, asynchronous conversation.

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The video blog (or 'vlog') has appeared as a new medium of CMD, and therefore, a new area of research. Vlogs generally consist of an individual speaking directly to a camera about their thoughts and opinions. Video bloggers ('vloggers') post videos on public video-hosting websites like YouTube and other users can comment on the videos or post their own videos as responses. Researchers have investigated YouTube in several contexts, including the educational potential of YouTube (Snelson, 2008), the role of YouTube in social networking (Lange, 2008), copyright issues on YouTube (Hilderbrand, 2007; O'Brien & Fitzgerald, 2006), and the effect of YouTube on the US political process (Burgess & Green, 2008b). Like research into text-based CMC, these studies focused on YouTube as a social phenomenon, or have investigated YouTube as a tool in a socio-political or historical context (e.g., the US Presidential election of 2004). More importantly, none of these studies looked at transcripts of YouTube videos, but rather dealt with the research question by using other forms of data including demographic and other statistical measures. No close analysis of YouTube discourse has been done to date.

Discourse analysis of CMD begins with close reading of complete discourse events, with the goal of understanding the discourse event in the context of the medium in which it occurs. The starting point of CMD research is the actual discourse event. The benefit of a bottom-up, discourse analytic approach to YouTube is the possibility to see how it compares on a discourse level to other mediums of CMD as well as different forms of offline discourse. By using a discourse analytic approach, the researcher can perhaps avoid cursory assumptions about CMD which could come from a patchwork of data and expose true differences and similarities between mediums.

2.2 The Role of Metaphor in Discourse

How to approach metaphor in discourse is a key issue for this study, as substantially different frameworks are available. In the past thirty years, Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* has played a key role in motivating much research into metaphor, particularly by introducing conceptual metaphor theory. Conceptual metaphor theory posits that humans map conceptual source domains to conceptual target domains, and that these mappings result in conceptual metaphors like ARGUMENT IS WAR (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; 1999). Conceptual metaphor theory continues to inspire contemporary metaphor research, particularly research into the cognitive aspects of metaphor processing. Conceptual metaphor theorists may, for example, view the prevalent linguistic metaphor that occurs in this dissertation's data 'the pope of YouTube' as evidence of an underlying

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conceptual metaphor about the nature of the YouTube 'community.' While the veracity of the specific claims of conceptual metaphor theory have been debated (e.g., Glucksberg & McGlone, 2001; Goddard, 2000; as mentioned in Steen, 2007), key elements of conceptual metaphor theory have remained influential, including an understanding of metaphor as 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another' (Steen, 2007: 5).

Two elements of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, however, may limit the value of this approach to research on dynamic interaction on YouTube: first, conceptual metaphor theory suggests that metaphor begins at the cognitive level and is produced from conceptual structures. Regardless of whether or not this is accurate, it is important to distinguish research into metaphor in cognition and metaphor in language in use. Steen argues that the two research areas are motivated by fundamentally different research questions and that careless application of evidence from one area to another can lead to unreliable results (2007). To avoid this, researchers must clearly delineate between cognitive or language in use frameworks. As seen above, research into CMD must begin with data from complete discourse events. Therefore, it seems ideal to employ an approach which focuses on language in use rather than a cognitive approach. Second, when conceptual metaphor theory is applied to language in use, the focus is on how conceptual metaphor shapes language. In a dynamic environment like YouTube, focusing on fixed cognitive structures is unlikely to uncover the dynamic elements of metaphor use. As conceptual metaphors are not seen as dynamic, but as fixed concepts exerting influence on the production of metaphor, how metaphor might emerge or change in the course of a discourse event is not the subject of cognitive investigation. Because dynamic interaction is the focus of this research, beginning with conceptual metaphor structures seems less appropriate given the constraints of the theory.

Rather than begin with investigation into cognition, some metaphor researchers have chosen to focus on a dynamic approach to discourse (Cameron, 2003; 2007b; Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Gibbs, 2008; Gibbs & Cameron, 2008). A discourse dynamics approach to metaphor studies begins with the notions of complex systems theory which focus on change and how change occurs (Cameron, Maslen, Maule, Stratton, & Stanley, 2009). From a complex systems theory perspective, metaphor is not 'a static, fixed mapping, but a temporary stability emerging from the activity of interconnecting systems of socially-situated language use and cognitive activity' (Cameron et al., 2009: 64). It engages

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metaphor as a phenomenon that emerges out of the complex system of language—something that develops naturally in the course of language being used (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). In particular, it can be used to investigate how metaphor use emerges and how particular metaphor use or systems of metaphor use can develop and change in sections of discourse or whole discourse events. This approach is particularly appropriate for researchers interested in how language is organised in speech communities, not in conscious, prescribed ways, but as naturally occurring from the interactions of the speakers. In the context of asynchronous Internet text where videos exist in a dynamic environment with responses and comments being produced by different users, mapping the dynamic interactions may possibly be used to describe how metaphorical language emerges from use.

The discourse dynamics approach to metaphor research can be seen in several studies (Cameron, 2003; Cameron, 2007b; Cameron et al., 2009) and an edited volume (Zanotto, Cameron, & Cavalcanti, 2008). The work has produced empirical evidence supporting the claims that metaphorical language emerges from language in use. This research has analysed academic and reconciliation discourse, as well as discourse about the perceived threat of terrorism, and has included as data transcripts of one-to-one conversation as well as focus group discussions, but has almost exclusively used transcripts of spoken conversation. How the method might be applied to language that occurs between speakers who are separated by distance and time (as in the case of much CMD; but particularly asynchronous YouTube discourse) has still not been explored. This dissertation will test the value of this approach to metaphor research in different kinds of discourse which allow for dynamic interaction between communicators, but do not occur in real-time.

Although the definition of metaphor has been debated, this dissertation understands metaphor in terms of transfer of meaning; metaphor is ‘seeing something in terms of something else’ (Burke, 1945: 503, cited in Cameron and Low, 1999). Metaphor begins with a ‘focus term or vehicle’ in the text which is incongruous with the surrounding text and context, and in which the incongruity can be understood by some ‘transfer of meaning’ between the vehicle and the topic (Cameron, 2003). For example, in the data used in this study, the term ‘pope’ is used to describe a user: pope is the vehicle and the user is the topic. Obviously, the word is not intended to be literally understood, but something about the role or identity of the pope is being transferred to the YouTube user. Although this transfer of meaning can be described in different ways (conceptual metaphor theorists, for

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example, use the terms 'target domain' and 'source domain' rather than 'topic' and 'vehicle'), it is generally considered the essential element of metaphor.

In addition to understanding diversity in approaches to metaphor research, it is equally important to recognise diversity in metaphorical language. As Cameron et al. state, 'The discourse dynamics approach holds that metaphoricality depends on the evolving discourse context, and that we can only understand metaphor in discourse by examining how it works in the flow of talk (or text)' (Cameron et al., 2009: 71). Classification of metaphor must include many different types: process metaphor, linguistic metaphor, metaphor cluster, primary metaphor, metaphorem, conventionalized metaphor, and etymological metaphor (Cameron, n. d.) as metaphor is bound to the context in which it is occurring and emerging. In this dissertation, two types of metaphor will be specifically investigated: linguistic and conventionalised. Linguistic metaphor is 'a stretch of language that has the potential to be interpreted metaphorically...' and 'evidence for its identification is lexical and textual rather than neurological or empirical' (Cameron, n.d.). Conventionalised metaphors are metaphors that were at one time novel, '...but are no longer new for most members of the speech community, although they may not be familiar to some members because of age or other reasons' (Cameron, n.d.).

It is also important to recognise that metaphors, like literal lexis, exhibit indeterminacy; that is, they can exhibit polysemic, ambiguous, or vague readings (Pragglejaz group, 2007; Zanotto & Palma, 2008). This is particularly important when analysing language in use on the Internet, where a metaphor may be difficult to categorize in a 'source domain-target domain' framework. The analyst must be careful when identifying metaphor, particularly as it relates to neologism (e.g., blog, Twitter, and Internet) and the context in which it is appearing, especially in language surrounding computer functions. For example, the use of the word 'channel' on YouTube to refer to one's YouTube page and all the functions of it. Although the word has a basic, nautical meaning, it is likely to be used on YouTube with the source domain of the 'television channel.' At what point the word 'channel' moves from being a metaphor to a polysemic meaning of 'television channel' or 'YouTube webpage' (or, indeed, if it ever can) is debatable and likely to come up repeatedly in discussions of Internet language which is largely borrowed from the offline world.

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2.3 Research Questions

In this study, YouTube will be considered as a gathering of speakers from diverse speech communities, with users dynamically creating content in response to other users. Rather than focus on YouTube as a novel CMC medium, I will focus on the discourse that occurs on YouTube as arising from the affordances offered by its asynchronous, multi-modal structure. If metaphor is prevalent in language, as metaphor research has shown, and if phenomena emerge out of the activity of complex systems, as complex systems theory suggests, it may be possible to see the emergence of patterns of metaphor use in interactions on YouTube, and these patterns may give us a window into the nature of YouTube discourse. The research will, therefore, seek to answer the following questions:

- How do YouTube users engaging in dialogue employ metaphor? This will include:
 - Which metaphors are most frequently used?
 - Do metaphors, employed by users, show evidence of patterns and systematicity?
- Do users produce metaphor dynamically in response to other users?

Producing metaphor dynamically may be evidenced in several ways: first, one user employing the same metaphor another user has previously used; for example, one user employing the metaphor of ‘waving a flag’ and another user (in a video or comment) employing the same metaphor. Or second, one user employing a metaphor related to a previous metaphor produced by another user; for example, one user referring to YouTube interaction in terms of a duel (‘I’m calling you out’) and another user also referring to the interaction in terms of a duel, but with a different metaphor vehicle (‘Our swords are drawn!’). By identifying specific metaphors and tracing their use throughout the thread, dynamism should be observable.

2.4 Conclusion

To fully understand interactions between users, research into discourse on YouTube must begin with close reading of the actual interaction of users in the context in which it was produced without ignoring any element of the discourse that occurred. A review of the CMC literature has shown that close discourse analysis of CMD remains to be done on asynchronous Internet communication. A discourse dynamics approach to metaphor

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research offers this possibility, by carefully analysing how metaphor is produced in interaction. This approach to metaphor analysis provides a chance to observe how discourse is influenced through interaction over a single series of interactions. To fully utilise the value of a contextual study of YouTube interaction, the next chapter will explore how to determine the boundaries of a single 'context' on YouTube as an appropriate unit of discourse.

METHODS

3 METHODS

This chapter outlines the research design for this study, focusing on the methods for collecting data on YouTube, transcription of video data, use of Cameron's vehicle identification procedure (Cameron, 2003) to identify metaphor use in transcripts, and coding of metaphor using a discourse dynamics approach (Cameron et al., 2009). Methods focus on including all elements of the YouTube video page for analysis and drawing conclusions from identifying patterns and systematicity in coded metaphors in the data (Cameron et al., 2009).

3.1 Data Collection and Transcription

The video thread analysed in this dissertation comprises nine videos made over the course of three weeks in December 2008 and which remained online throughout my analysis. A full description of the data can be found in Chapter Four. Data collection began with identifying potential videos for analysis from YouTube's 'Most Viewed List' and 'Top Rated List.' Using these lists as a starting point, users who frequently received video responses were identified and a database of users who subscribed to or made video responses to one initial user was made. As one of the first users identified was an outspoken atheist, users who responded to his videos (and subsequently included in my database) were mostly Christians and atheists engaged in religious discussions. Random sampling of users was considered, but rejected because of the importance placed on understanding the context in which the discourse event took place. From the database of users, potential video threads for analysis were identified based on two criteria: the thread was stable (that is, users were not in the habit of taking down videos after they had been posted) and included one primary video and at least one response. One thread was initially chosen for analysis, but was abandoned when one user unexpectedly deleted his account before transcription could be completed.

Because YouTube video pages are multi-modal, the complete YouTube video page (including video titles, text comments, descriptions, tags, ratings, and responses) was included for analysis. An Excel spreadsheet was made for each video and represented all elements of the discourse event in text, including descriptions of scenes and the speakers (see Appendix for sample transcription). The spoken language of the video was transcribed using intonation units (Chafe, 1994), a full description of which can be seen in Stelma and Cameron (2007). Intonation unit provided two advantages to the study. First, although

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intonation units are arguably subjectively constructed by the researcher, transcription of intonation units has been shown to be replicable (Stelma & Cameron, 2007), and second, they provided short, simple units for coding. One column was committed to intonation units and these units were used for coding metaphor and metaphor vehicles (discussed below). Although pauses and stress were transcribed, due to the focus of the research questions, closer transcription of intonation was not needed. In addition to the spoken language, each transcript began with a description of the scene of the video and any changes that occurred throughout the video. Actions were also transcribed, including gestures, changes in lighting or action, and video editing techniques, as all of these elements could play a potentially important role in the discourse event. For each intonation unit, a description of the action of the scene was included (primarily the gestures of the speaker) in an adjacent column. Because of the project focus, potential metaphorical or metonymical gesture was not coded.

3.2 Analysis

Analysing the dynamic interaction does not focus on finding fixed conceptual metaphors instantiated in the text. Instead, it focuses on the interaction between speakers as ‘...an interactive and recursive process that keeps moving between evidence in the transcribed talk and the bigger picture’ (Cameron et al., 2009: 70). Understanding the ‘bigger picture’ of the discourse event of the individual YouTube video page (including all of its elements) requires seeing the event as one level in a nested hierarchy where one video is nested in a video thread and the video thread is nested in the YouTube site. Moreover, the ‘bigger picture’ could also include further nested levels of offline realities in which users belong to political, religious, or social groups. The study will focus on the ‘bigger picture’ to the extent that the elements of the YouTube discourse event are understood in the context of other elements of the page, the video thread, and the particular YouTube community subgroup that the users belong. Possible implications of the findings in a bigger ‘bigger picture’ will be discussed in the conclusion.

Metaphor was identified in the transcript using Cameron’s vehicle identification procedure which involves systematic approach to identifying metaphor in discourse (Cameron, 2003). The procedure involves looking for words or phrases which are incongruous in the context of the speech and deciphering whether or not they can be understood in comparison or contrast to a more basic meaning (determined, in this research, by consulting both the Merriam-Webster and Oxford English dictionaries) of the identified word. This procedure

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was repeated several times by the researcher. Application of metaphor identification procedures are not without problems and this research had difficulty especially in cases of borderline metaphor. One notable example was the continued use of the word 'fundamental' in relation to religious belief. Although the basic meaning of the word relates to an 'original or generating source' (Merriam-Webster, 2009), it is not clear whether the basic meaning of the word (as relating to a physical foundation) is still understood in comparison to the abstract sense of religious or spiritual foundation. The vehicle identification procedure will be used in part to answer the first research question regarding how YouTube users employed metaphor. After metaphors were identified, following the method proposed by Cameron et al. (2009), the transcript was coded for several linguistic features including topic and metaphor vehicle groupings. Metaphors were gathered into interpretive groups as systems of metaphor use were identified in the discourse (Cameron et al., 2009). Unlike the vehicle identification procedure, the process of grouping metaphors is much more fluid and involves taking into account the context of the metaphor use and how systems of use may possibly be emerging in the text. For example, all metaphors related to 'physical conflict' (e.g., 'my comments page was bombed,' 'you pulled me in,' and 'everybody just wants to drag me into this') were gathered together into one group.

Metaphors relating to the same vehicle grouping were then compared not only within the transcription of the spoken language in an individual video, but with all elements (including text comments) of the discourse event. Although the vehicle identification procedure was not applied to all the comments because of their volume, keyword searches with the Excel program were used to investigate recurrent metaphor use in the comments section. Metaphors were then analysed, particularly whether or not the same metaphors were recurrent across the whole thread, whether or not the same metaphors appeared in talk from both users, and whether or not metaphors activated by one user were also drawn upon in subsequent video responses made by other users.

To search for patterns and systematicity and explore the dynamic use of metaphor across the discourse events, the context in which metaphors were used in the initial instance was compared with subsequent uses to discover whether or not the use of the metaphor had changed. For example, if the metaphor of 'pope' originally belonged to the grouping of 'religious leader,' did recurrent uses of 'pope' either by the initial user or other users continue to use it to mean 'religious leader' or was the same 'pope' metaphor used in a

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different sense? The potential of metaphors in one vehicle grouping activating different metaphors in the same grouping was also analysed. For example, when a 'pope' metaphor was used, did different metaphors relating to the church (i.e., 'cardinal' or 'priest') follow from the initial user or respondent? Although nine videos were transcribed and metaphor vehicles were identified in all transcripts, vehicle identification, vehicle grouping, and close analysis was only done on the three final videos of the thread. The initial six videos were kept for context, but given the limitations of the dissertation length, no analysis of metaphor use will be done on the transcripts. The interaction between the creators of the three videos was the primary focus, although analysis of the other dimensions (specifically the text comments) was also included.

3.3 Ethics

In doing online research, the issue of whether a researcher is dealing with copyrighted text or research participants can be a difficult issue. The concern hinges on what is private and what is public on the Internet and a desire to protect private information. The consensus seems to be that public texts are, in general, free to use without consent and private texts require consent (Frankel & Siang, 1999; Herring, 1996; King, 1996; Morris, 2004; Walther, 2002). The present research will follow the British Association of Applied Linguistics guidelines on good practice for using Internet texts which state: 'Published guidelines suggest that, in reaching a decision on consent, researchers need to consider the venue being researched, and any site policy on research and informants' expectations. In the case of an open-access site, where contributions are publically archived, and informants might reasonably be expected to regard their contributions as public, individual consent may not be required' (British Association of Applied Linguistics, n.d.: 7).

On YouTube, there are two options for users posting a video: one to keep a video private and only viewable to subscribers, and one to publish the video openly on the site, allowing for access by anyone at any time. By choosing this second option, YouTube expects that the author of the text understands and accepts the copyright law and YouTube rules that allow for posting on the site. YouTube states explicitly in their user policy, 'Any videos that you submit to the YouTube Sites may be redistributed through the internet and other media channels, and may be viewed by the general public' (YouTube, 2008). YouTube also explicitly states copyright policy: 'When you create something original, you own the copyright for it. Likewise, when other people create content, they may have a copyright to it. As a creative community, its essential that everyone on YouTube respect the copyrights

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of others' (YouTube, 2008). It is clear that video published on YouTube is public and subject to copyright law and is, therefore, fair to then assume (because the producer has explicitly agreed to these terms of use) that users understand their video is publicly available, copyrighted material and, therefore, does not require informed consent for use in this research context.

DESCRIPTION OF DATA

4 DESCRIPTION OF DATA

As YouTube is a unique Internet environment compared to sites which do not feature video dialogue, it is important to understand how users interact on the website and how the video thread used in this study developed, the interaction between the users, and the background of the context. This chapter briefly describes the nature of the data collected for analysis and will include descriptions of the YouTube context, users in the video thread, and the video thread itself.

4.1 Description of Context

YouTube functions as a social network for a small portion of its users who contribute to the social core of YouTube, and these users are often more likely than other users of the website to make videos and comment on videos (Burgess & Green, 2008a). The core users could also be further reduced to the sub-communities or groups that are nested within the larger YouTube community. The videos in this thread are drawn from users who align (by showing support either in videos or text comments) loosely with other users who are mainly atheists (in the case of the first user, *fakesagan*) and Christians (in the case of the second user, *jezuzfreak777*). It is, however, difficult to clearly define these groups as there is no 'group' function on YouTube as on other sites. Although subscriptions and a 'friend' feature allow users to know who is being notified of their videos after they are made, this should not be understood as alliance to other users as many people are subscribed to users they explicitly oppose and ridicule in their videos. It is possible, however, to see groups emerging as users often speak about the 'Christian community' or the 'atheist community' on YouTube, although these groups also tend to splinter over time, often around interpersonal disagreements that occur within the community.

The YouTube discourse context invites response much more than other mediums (Burgess & Green, 2008a), and therefore, often leads to back-and-forth debates between users, especially when popular users of the core YouTube community are involved. Often, controversial subjects (such as religion or politics) lead to drama (or 'flame wars'), a phenomenon 'that emerge[s] when a flurry of video posts clusters around an internal "controversy" or antagonistic debate between one or more YouTubers' (Burgess & Green, 2008a: 13). In these cases, serious disagreements often become tangled with interpersonal 'drama.' This 'drama' plays a key role in the YouTube community by giving users subject matters for videos, encouraging creative ways to insult and 'p'wn' (or completely

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dominate, as in an online game) other users, and providing a chance for users to form groups either supporting or opposing other users. YouTube 'drama' plays a particularly important role in the subject matter of the video thread discussed in this dissertation.

It is also important to understand that a YouTube user's popularity is generally determined by how many subscribers they have. Although some users publically reject this idea of judging popularity, both users in this thread are known for actively seeking subscribers. To attract subscribers, users may participate in over-the-top behaviour or create videos that explicitly favour entertainment value over content. As with many videos, this thread contains videos that could be seen as having both elements: clearly entertaining at times and meant to provoke others into subscribing and content-driven at other times.

On YouTube, videos are a part of a hierarchy as seen in the following figure:

Figure 1: The nested hierarchy of the YouTube video

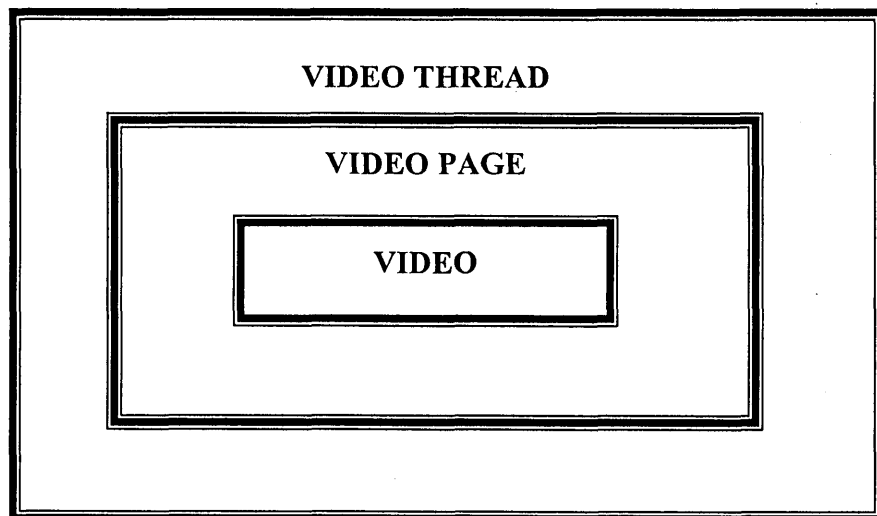


Figure 1 shows the nested structure of the YouTube thread. The video is at the lowest level of the hierarchy and it exists within the video page. The video page, in turn, exists within a video thread. The most basic element is the YouTube video. This hierarchy could be further expanded to include the YouTube homepage at the next level of the hierarchy, but for the purpose of this study only these three levels are of importance.

4.2 Description of Users

The video thread in this study consists of a back-and-forth response series from two users: *fakesagan* and *jezuzfreek777*. *fakesagan* is an American male in his late-twenties from the

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American northwest. His videos tend to address issues of atheism, YouTube ‘drama,’ and anarchy and libertarian politics. *fakesagan* has had several YouTube accounts and at the time of this writing is currently suspended from YouTube. *jezuzfreek777* is an American in his thirties from the American Midwest. He is an outspoken Christian and makes videos addressing his own faith, atheism, evolution, and, less frequently, politics. Both users had several thousand subscribers at the time of the analysis and had many fans and detractors as evidenced in the comments attached to the videos. Both had been quite active in the atheist/ Christian communities of YouTube as well as frequently commenting on and making video responses to videos made by other users.

Caution must be exercised in labelling users ‘fundamentalist Christians’ and ‘atheists.’ Broadly, the term ‘fundamentalist Christian’ is used in this dissertation (and often in the YouTube dialogues) as someone who believes in the literal truth of the complete Protestant Bible. The term ‘atheist’ is similarly broad, but is generally used to identify someone who rejects the concept of god or gods, either in the Christian conceptualisation, or in any other form. A ‘moderate’ Christian in this dialogue seems to mean a Christian who, although they profess the Christian faith, does not feel it necessary to accept the complete Bible as literal truth and would be willing to accept, for example, the theory of evolution as not opposed to their faith.

Figure 2: Images of *jezuzfreek777* and *fakesagan*

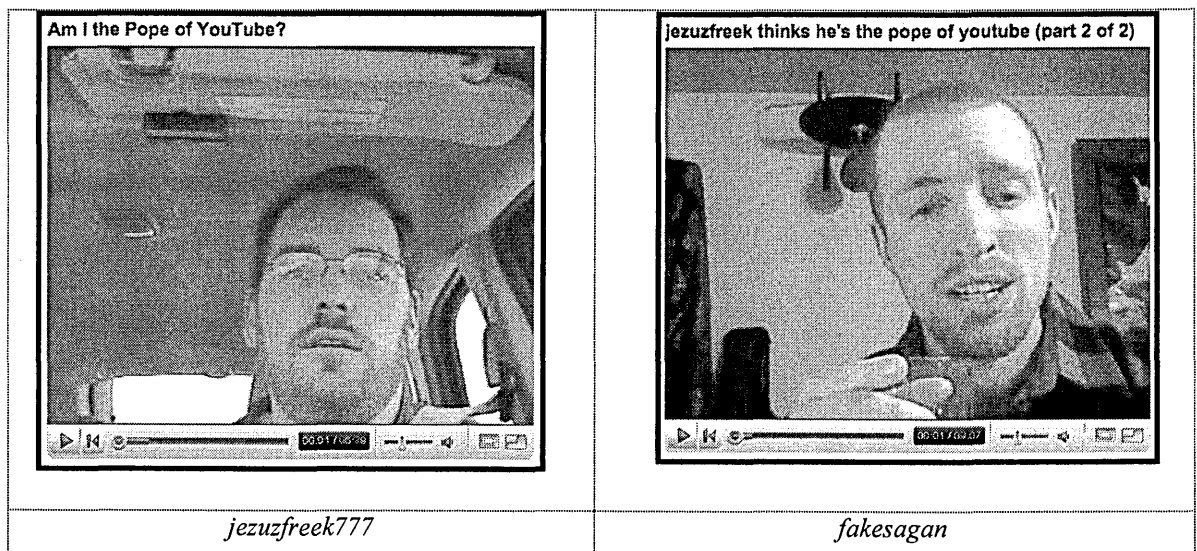


Figure 2 shows screenshots from two of the videos in the thread, one from a *jezuzfreek777* video and one from a *fakesagan* video.

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4.3 Description of Videos

The video thread began on 2 December 2007 with *fakesagan*'s posting of 'fake hips and hippy Christians (part 1 of 3)' which was a three part video asking two moderate Christian users who frequently commented and responded to his videos for their opinions on stem cell research. *jezuzfreek777*, who was not mentioned in the first three videos, made a response video addressing the issue of stem cell research. *fakesagan*'s response, 'moderate* christian stem cell responses - jezuzfreek777,' did not deal specifically with the issue of stem cell research, and subsequent videos dealt with issues of interpersonal conflict between the two users rather than the initial issue. The thread terminated on 1 January 2008 with *jezuzfreek777*'s posting of 'Am I the Pope of YouTube.'

The videos were transcribed and analysed in early 2009. Although *jezuzfreek777*'s videos remain accessible, due to *fakesagan*'s suspension, his videos have been taken down. The numbers of views, responses, and text comments were taken in late November 2008. The numbers of video responses and text comments can be altered if users take down their responses, but the view count cannot be changed. Table 1 shows relevant information related to each video.

Table 1: List of videos in thread

Title	User	Length (min:secs)	View count	Text Comments	Video Responses
Fake hips and hippy christians (part 1 of3)	<i>fakesagan</i>	9:13	3,200 (26-11-08)	67 (26-11-08)	1
Fake hips and hippy christians (part 2 of3)	<i>fakesagan</i>	8:03	2,800 (26-11-08)	65 (26-11-08)	1
Fake hips and hippy christians (part 3 of3)	<i>fakesagan</i>	10:05	6,524 (26-11-08)	118 (26-11-08)	2
Is stem cell research wrong	<i>jezuzfreek777</i>	3:07	4,291 (26-11-08)	268 (26-11-08)	2
moderate* christian stem cell responses- jezuzfreek777	<i>fakesagan</i>	8:38	5,109 (26-11-08)	179 (26-11-08)	1
Missing jezuzfreek777 video	<i>jezuzfreek777</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
jezuzfreek thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 1 of2)	<i>fakesagan</i>	10:05	6,007 (20-11-08)	174 (20-11-08)	1
jezuzfreek thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 2 of2)	<i>fakesagan</i>	9:07	6,524 (26-11-08)	118 (26-11-08)	2
Am I the Pope of YouTube?	<i>jezuzfreek777</i>	6:40	4,593 (24-11-08)	524 (24-11-08)	5

Note: Internet addresses for all videos can be found under the screenname of the user in the references.

In the first two columns, the title of the video and the name of the user appear. The third column shows the length of the video in minutes and seconds. The fourth column shows the view count (e.g., the number of times the video was accessed from the time it was

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posted). Videos can be viewed repeatedly by individual users, so view counts do not correlate to the number of users that accessed the video, only the total number of times it has been accessed. The next two columns include the number of text comments and video responses. Both text comments and video responses can be deleted by users once they have been posted, so these numbers do not necessarily reflect the total numbers for each category, simply the number that was visible on the given day they were accessed.

One video (presumably a response video to 'moderate* christian stem cell responses-jezuzfreek777') was taken down before analysis of this thread was undertaken. *fakesagan* mentions the content of this video in his 'jezuzfreek thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 1 of 2),' specifically to an analogy that *jezuzfreek777* draws between himself and a police officer. Another user, *godusesamac*, who the initial videos were addressed to, deleted his account and all videos, leaving only his text comments on other users' videos. He subsequently re-instated his account, but deleted all his earlier content. These issues (and indeed, *fakesagan*'s ultimate suspension) highlight the trouble with using CMC texts for analysis. The publication of the video is at the discretion of the user and the site administrators who may take down the video at any time. Although the issue of stability was present in this study, as transcription and analysis were able to take place before the majority of the videos were taken down, it ultimately had only a small effect on the study.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter includes analysis and findings related to the stated research questions by presenting: first, specific metaphors within individual videos and video pages and across the entire video thread; and second, groupings of metaphor vehicles and their recurrence within individual videos and video pages, as well as across the video thread. Findings show that metaphor was used on all nested levels of the video thread and that users engaged with one another's metaphors in both video responses and text comments, interpreting and reinterpreting metaphors within the context of their own videos and comments.

5.1 Specific Metaphors

Table 2 shows the statistics of the final three videos of the thread.

Table 2: Metaphor analysis of three videos

Title	User	Length (min:sec)	Number of Intonation Units	Word count	Number of Metaphors	Metaphor Density
jezuzfreak thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 1 of 2)	<i>fakesagan</i>	10:05	325	1295	88	68
jezuzfreak thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 2 of 2)	<i>fakesagan</i>	9:07	269	1306	94	72
Am I the pope of YouTube	<i>jezuzfreak777</i>	6:40	265	1040	90	87

Note: All URLs can be found in the reference section.

In the first two columns, the title of the video and the name of the user appear. The third column shows the length of the videos in minutes and seconds, which differed significantly from 6:40 to 10:05. The fourth column contains the number of intonation units for each video (325, 269, and 265, respectively). Instances where action occurred without any spoken words were counted as one intonation unit and changes in scene (which occurred only in the final video) were not counted as lines of transcript. The fourth and fifth columns show the word count of each video and the number of metaphors in each video with 88, 94, and 90 metaphors occurring in the respective videos. Instances of metonymy were not included in the metaphor count. Finally, metaphor density appears in the final column. Metaphor density was calculated as number of metaphors per 1000 words of transcript (see Cameron, 2003). Metaphor density was 68, 72, and 87 metaphors per 1000

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words, respectively. As the vehicle identification procedure was only done by the researcher and the sample size is quite small, one must be cautious in considering the reliability of the results as they could potentially differ between individuals or given larger amounts of text. Still, the figures are useful to consider in contrast to research done by Cameron on educational talk where the metaphor density was between 14 and 27 (Cameron, 2003) and doctor and patient talk where the density was 55 (Cameron, 2007a). The figures are closer to the density found in reconciliation talk with a density of 90.3 (Cameron, 2007b).

As stated in Chapter 3, metaphor was identified as phrases rather than individual lexical units. Therefore, phrases like 'breaking my heart' were counted as one metaphor, as the two components 'breaking' and 'heart' could not be understood metaphorically except in relation to each other. This rule also applied to phrases employing expletive, such as 'fucking crybabies.' In this case, 'fucking' was used as an intensifier and could not be understood except in relation to 'crybabies.' In instances where expletives were used as intensifiers with non-metaphorical words (as in the case of 'fucking videos'), the word 'fucking' was marked as metaphorical, but 'videos' was not. Several exceptions were noted, however, including the phrase 'fundamentalist jackass' which was marked as two separate metaphors as the two components, though related, conveyed separate meanings.

One instance of extended analogy (in which *fakesagan* recounts an analogy presumably used by *jezuzfreek777* in the missing video) occurred in the first video. The metaphorical components of the analogy were marked as metaphor, following the same principles as the rest of the transcript. In an additional shorter analogy, *fakesagan* mockingly invokes the image of Harriet Tubman (although it seems he meant to refer to Rosa Parks, an African American famous for civil disobedience), in discussing the idea of civil disobedience on YouTube. He says to fellow atheists complaining about YouTube censorship, 'You're not sitting on the back of the bus Harriet Tubman' (*fakesagan*, 2007e). This instance was also marked as metaphor following the same principles as the rest of the transcript. In cases where metaphor within the analogy occurred in the same phrase (e.g., 'sitting on the back of the bus'), the phrase was marked as one metaphor.

It is also important to note decisions made to mark several of *jezuzfreek777*'s phrases as metaphor or not. In one example, *jezuzfreek777* addresses *fakesagan*, saying, 'I believe you are leading people away from god down a surefire path to hell' (*jezuzfreek777*, 2008a). In

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this case, *jezuzfreak777*'s use of the word 'save [people]' to describe what he claims to be intending to do on YouTube was marked as metaphorical, but it could be argued that in some contexts *jezuzfreak777*'s use of the word is to be understood as actually saving someone from harm insofar as *jezuzfreak777* (as a fundamentalist Christian who likely believes in hell as an actual place) understands the soul to be an actual thing. The word was marked as metaphorical because, given the context, it is not clear whether save is meant in a purely spiritual sense or whether it might include 'protecting' other users on YouTube from harm. In contrast, I have not marked *jezuzfreak777*'s use of the word 'hell' as metaphor because it seems clear that *jezuzfreak777* expects this to be understood by his audience as a real place to which a person could be sent and it is not meant to be understood in comparison or contrast to something more basic.

The specific use of metaphor at each nested level and discussion follows:

5.1.1 *Within individual videos*

In the first video (made by *fakesagan*), 65 unique metaphors were identified and variations in form of the words 'make' and 'fundamentalist' were the most frequently used, with 6 and 4 occurrences, respectively. This, in part, reflects a decision to mark the word 'make' metaphorical when it was used to mean 'recording of a video' (as in 'I made a video'), and it seems that it may be an important conventionalised metaphor (this will be further discussed below). In the second video also made by *fakesagan*, 68 different metaphors were identified and forms of the expletives 'fuck' and 'shit' were the most frequently occurring, with 11 and 8 occurrences, respectively. In the third video, *jezuzfreak777* uses 59 unique metaphors, 'father' and 'pope' occurring the most frequently with 7 and 6 occurrences, respectively.

The recurrence of 'fundamental' in the first two videos seems to occur because the topic of the video is *jezuzfreak777*'s fundamental faith. The metaphor only appears within the context of this limited topic. A relationship to topic, however, cannot be argued about *fakesagan*'s use of expletives (and their prevalence in the second video), which seems to be related to creating a particular voice, especially in contrast to *jezuzfreak777* who uses neither of the most frequently used expletives employed by *fakesagan*. The prevalence of 'pope' and 'father' in the final video also seem to be related to the topic of the video; namely, that *jezuzfreak777* is arguing that he is not a 'self-appointed pope' and that the 'heavenly father' provides a positive alternative to *fakesagan*'s 'surefire path to hell.'

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5.1.2 *Within video pages*

In the first video, the most frequent metaphors ‘make’ and ‘fundamental’ both appear in the comments section. ‘Make,’ however, is only used three times with the object ‘video’ in the sixteen comment occurrences. Different forms of ‘fundamental’ occur eight times in the channel comments. Although the word ‘pope’ does not occur in the transcript of the video, it does appear in the title and 4 times in the comments section. In the second video, the expletives ‘fuck’ and ‘bullshit’ appear in their various forms 19 and 4 times, respectively, throughout the comments section. As with the first video, although the word ‘pope’ does not appear in the video transcript, it appears again in the title and occurs two times in the comment section. In the last video, the most frequent ‘pope’ metaphor occurred in the title of the video, and 20 times in the comments section.

The recurring use of ‘fundamental’ and ‘pope’ within the given video pages seems to indicate that the metaphors used in the video have some influence on users producing the same metaphors in the text comments, namely because of the topic of the video. ‘Fundamental’ occurs regularly in both of *fakesagan*’s videos and subsequently the comments that follow, but does not occur in *jezuzfreak777*’s video or the comments section. Whether or not this absence is meaningful is difficult to deduce, but it might suggest that commenters on *jezuzfreak777*’s video were not immediately aware of the content of *fakesagan*’s videos. If the commenters only watched *jezuzfreak777*’s video apart from the other two videos or watched them after or in a different sequence, this may explain why the ‘fundamental’ metaphor related to the main topic of the previous videos is noticeably absent in the final video and comments section, but the ‘pope’ metaphor related to the topic of the video on which they are commenting is recurrent.

The use of expletive in the thread, especially by *fakesagan* and many commenters, deserves attention because of its frequency. Unlike the use of the other frequent words (such as, ‘make,’ ‘fundamental,’ and ‘pope’), the use of expletive seems to be related mostly to creating a certain voice and seems to be present regardless of the topic of the video or the part of the video in which they appear. To explore the use of expletive in this thread (as well as its potential metonymy) would likely lead away from the research questions (related to systematicity and emergent metaphor) towards the role of metaphor in expletive, not simply Internet language. Because of this, the discussion of expletive will be limited to how it possibly relates to the research questions.

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5.1.3 Across the video thread

Of the most used metaphors, the metaphor 'make' with the object of 'video' occurred at least once in all the videos and in the comments of all three of the videos. The word 'pope' also appears across the thread, although it is absent from the transcripts of both of *fakesagan's* videos. Expletives were also frequent in the comments of all the videos and the transcripts of both of *fakesagan's* videos. The most frequently occurring two, as mentioned above, are absent from the transcript of *jezuzfreak777's* 'Am I the pope of youtube,' although they are present in the comments. Forms of 'fundamental' appear in the video transcripts and comments of both of *fakesagan's* videos, but do not reoccur in either the video transcript or the comment sections of *jezuzfreak777's* video.

The phrase 'making a video' seems to be prevalent in the thread and there was no instance of someone using another verb (such as 'record') to denote this action. Although this may suggest that the use of the word 'make' is an accepted way to talk about recording a YouTube video, the case study only provides a small sample as evidence and a larger corpus of data would be needed to test this hypothesis. If it can be shown that 'make' is an accepted or conventionalised metaphor, the importance of 'make' rather than 'record' could be evidence that making a video on YouTube metaphorically involves some construction on the part of the user and perception that a YouTube video is an entity that exists apart from the user, rather than simply a recording of the user's opinions.

The frequency of 'pope,' however, cannot be explained as accepted use in the YouTube community, and it draws attention given its novelty and frequency in the thread. The frequency seems to occur not only in the sense that the term is repeated, but that the presence of the metaphor simply in the title of *fakesagan's* video has a strong impact on the topic *jezuzfreak777* addresses in his video, as questions of fundamentalism are completely eclipsed by the 'pope' metaphor. The 'pope' metaphor also seems to evoke strong reactions in the comments, particularly the final video in which *jezuzfreak777* repeatedly refers to it. The metaphor seems to offer an affordance to the commenters to creatively interact with the metaphor, as in the case of two negative comments that were made on the final video: 'Your the Pope of Youtube??? *kneels* Bless me Father lol' and 'maybe not the pope of youtube...but SURELY the poop of youtube!' For these commenters (and the few comments on the earlier videos), the phrase the 'pope of YouTube' seems creatively compelling in a way that 'fundamentalist' is not and shows the

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potential of creative play previously investigated in offline conversation as well as CMC environments (cf., North, 2007).

The 'pope' metaphor and subsequent repeating of it by commenters may highlight that some viewers did not actually watch the video, but rather read only the title before commenting. This can be seen in the negative comment: 'You and Pope? We Catholics find that more offending than the "F" Word which you demonize...' to which *jezuzfreak777* responds, 'did you even watch this video' and receives the response, 'It's actually a general comment on the title.' This comment highlights two issues: First, that there are different levels of groups that may also be nested hierarchies. Here, the commenter identifies himself in the phrase 'we Catholics,' presumably drawing a distinction between himself as a Catholic Christian and *jezuzfreak777* as a protestant. Second, not watching a complete video or only commenting on one aspect seems to be a recurring issue in this thread as the same might be said of *jezuzfreak777*'s video response which does not address the main topic of *fakesagan*'s first two videos (i.e., what it means to be a 'fundamentalist'), but rather the 'pope' metaphor in the title. A potential explanation for the reaction of *jezuzfreak777* to the title of the first two videos and the interest of commenters in it may be found in the following discussion of metaphor vehicle groupings.

5.2 Metaphor Vehicle Groupings

Vehicles were coded in the Excel spreadsheet using the method outlined in Cameron et al. (2009) in which metaphor vehicles are grouped together based on their semantic content. Vehicle grouping codes were assigned based the contextual meaning of the metaphor allowing for the possibility that one metaphor might be coded differently depending on the context. This happened most notably with the 'pope' metaphor which will be discussed below. The use of Excel as a tool to format the transcripts limited the ability to effectively apply and sort more than one code to a single metaphor. For example, *jezuzfreak777* speaks at one point of hoping to 'make YouTube a better place.' This phrase ideally would be coded for both construction and location. Given the relatively small amount of data, these cases did not negatively affect the analysis because, at any point, referring back to the text could be easily done.

The process of grouping metaphors is arguably more subjective than metaphor identification as a clear procedure has not been (and likely could not be) established to group metaphors as the process relies heavily on the context in which they are being

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produced. As Cameron et al. state, ‘Because of the hermeneutic nature of coding, particularly vehicle groupings, it would not be appropriate to use complicated statistics on the data’ (Cameron et al., 2009: 76). Keeping in mind this perspective of grouping vehicles, care was taken to constantly refer back to the context of the video and also allow for the possibility that metaphor vehicles could belong to more than one group or to avoid forcing a grouping where no group is emerging. That said, the process of vehicle grouping aids the researcher in identifying patterns and systematicity because it allows the researcher to organise the metaphor vehicles and test how different metaphors are being employed to produce a larger picture of the talk in which they are occurring. As with any coding exercise, the value is found in the process of coding, not necessarily the codes themselves.

5.2.1 *Within individual videos*

Table 3 shows the vehicle groupings for each of the three analysed videos.

Table 3: Frequent vehicle groupings in the three videos

Titles	Groupings
jezuzfreak thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 1 of 2)	Animal, Body, Book, Chemistry, Comedy, Construction, Containment, Depth, Destruction, Discovery, Expletive, Government, Guidance, Job, Leading, Literature, Linking, Location, Logging, Mental Illness, Merchandise, Money, Movement, Nautical, Path, Physical conflict, Plant, Prostitution, Spatial, Sport, Traffic, Writing
jezuzfreak thinks he's the pope of youtube (part 2 of 2)	Animal, Appearance, Body, Children, Cleaning, Clothing, Construction, Destruction, Documents, Expletive, Flags, Iconic action, Imaginary stories, Journey, Magic, Math, Movement, Money, Performance, Physical Conflict, Plant, Public figures, Punishment, Religious groups, Spatial, Sport, Transparency, Virus, Water, Writing
Am I the pope of YouTube	Authority Figure, Body, Brightness, Change, Construction, Depth, Discovery, Expletive/ Animal, Family, Government, Guidance, Location, Movement, Nautical, Object, Physical conflict, Popular culture, Relationship, Rescue, Road, Sensation, Sewage, Spatial, Theatre, Weight, Work

Table 3 shows the title of the video and the vehicle groupings identified. The ‘spatial’ grouping was consistently high and was seen to be related to ‘depth’ and ‘containment’ metaphors in that all three related abstract concepts to the physical, three dimensional world. Examples from these groupings included ‘deeper’ implications (depth), being ‘on’ YouTube (containment), and argument ‘points’ (spatial). These groupings were also closely related to other vehicles relating to roads, paths, and journeys, as well as location and movement vehicles, which were also observed in the data. The expletive coding could be further reduced to expletives relating to the body or physical actions, but as mentioned

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above, seemed to be related to the voice of the users and did not tend to contain semantic content. In general, the most frequently used metaphor groupings seem to correlate with the most frequent metaphor vehicle. Notably, the groupings of ‘conflict’ (e.g., ad hominem ‘attacks’ and ‘forcing’ an opinion on someone) and ‘construction’ (e.g., ‘make’ a video response and ‘make’ a big deal out of something), although not as frequent, also appeared in all the videos. Although there were a wide variety of metaphors used in the videos and comments, as the focus of the research is on tracing dynamic metaphor use, we will focus on metaphors and metaphor groupings which were recurrent in the videos and comments.

5.2.2 *Within video pages*

As identification of metaphor or vehicle groups in the video comments was not undertaken, it is not possible to evaluate vehicle groupings in the comments beyond using keyword searches for specific metaphors and evaluating the vehicle grouping in the specific instances of use. Channel comments are also much shorter (limited to 300 words) so the topic of the comment tends to be limited to only one subject. For example, on *jezuzfreak777*'s video one commenter observes: ‘I have yet to see anyone call jezuzfreak [sic] "The Holy Father" or "His Holiness". I have never seen anyone kiss his ring, or grovel at his feet. If he is the youtube pope, he has a lot of work to do. Convincing Protestants to go back to the old days of Roman Catholocism [sic] will be tough.’ In this case, the metaphor of ‘YouTube pope’ seems to mean ‘leader of religious group’ which is evident in the metaphors ‘kiss his ring’ and ‘grovel at his feet.’ In this case, the comment is several thoughts related to one topic.

There were also differences between the vehicle groupings for metaphors used within the video, and the same metaphors being used in the comments, but related to different groupings. For example, one channel commenter on *fakesagan*'s first video which included an analogy of *jezuzfreak777* as a ‘cop’ (or police officer) on YouTube responds sarcastically, ‘He's not a cop.... but you know he WANTS to be.... God's Gestapo....’ In this case, the ‘cop’ which, given the context in the video, was grouped with other ‘government’ vehicles, perhaps should be grouped as ‘police authority figures’ or ‘Nazi’ in this case. The same could be said of commenters on *jezuzfreak777*'s final video in which I have grouped his use of ‘pope’ as ‘authority figure,’ but subsequent comments seem to treat the vehicle of ‘pope’ differently. One commenter notes, ‘True, JF. You're not the Pope of Youtube. You're an e-celebrity whore’ which seems to contrast ‘pope’ as an extreme positive against an extreme negative (‘e-celebrity whore’). Also, in the example

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noted above where the commenter invokes the image of users kissing *jezuzfreak777*'s ring or grovelling at his feet, this image seems quite different from *jezuzfreak777*'s repeated reference to being the 'self-appointed pope' of YouTube, which he relates to another user (*renetto*) appointing himself the 'king of YouTube.' For *jezuzfreak777*, 'pope' does not seem to relate to 'religious leader,' but rather 'authority figure' or 'dictator.'

This difference in vehicle groupings is clearer at the video thread level.

5.2.3 Across the video thread

As mentioned above, the groupings of 'spatial' vehicles (including those relating to 'depth,' and 'containment') appeared the most consistently across the video thread, reflecting in some cases conventionalised metaphor that was not specifically related to Internet language as in the case of 'deep down in' to refer to one's deep emotions or self or 'not your place' when referring to social role. Although other uses reflected specific spatial reference to aspects of the YouTube video page (for example, 'in channel comments' or 'on a most viewed list'), these were less common. The grouping of 'physical conflict' occurred in all three videos, especially in regard to arguing on YouTube. *fakesagan* refers to being 'called out' by other users and being 'dragged into' a discussion, and *jezuzfreak777* refers several times to 'forcing' opinions 'down your throat.' These groupings could be further parsed from the larger grouping of 'physical conflict' to more specific groupings that might shed more light on the specific use. For example, 'call out' might be more accurately described as a 'duel' source, creating the metaphor *YOUTUBE DIALOGUE IS DUELLING* or in the case of 'my channel comments were bombed' could be *VIDEO PAGES ARE TERRITORIES TO DEFEND*.

The recurrence of the 'pope' vehicle and the various groupings with which it appeared may be the clearest evidence of dynamics in the video transcript as well as the channel comments and titles of videos. As stated above, the first appearance of the vehicle 'pope' is in the title of *fakesagan*'s first video, and there is no reference to it in the video transcript. Understanding what *fakesagan* has meant by 'pope' in the title of the video requires understanding the whole of the video. The clearest hint for the intention of the 'pope' metaphor seems to be in *fakesagan*'s rejection of the cop metaphor, when he states, 'You're not a cop... you're a pious asshole.' For *fakesagan*, it appears that the 'pope' vehicle is taking as a meaning 'pious or self-righteous people.'

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jezuzfreak777, on the other hand, seems to relate ‘pope’ to being ‘self-appointed’ or being like a king. By looking carefully at *jezuzfreak777*’s use of the word in his video, it seems that he perceives the problem not being one of piety, but of being perceived to take authority unjustly. He counters this explicitly by saying, ‘Am I the pope of YouTube? Nah, I’m just a Christian, trying to make YouTube a better place.’ Although it seems clear that *jezuzfreak777* rejects the labelling of ‘pope,’ why he is rejecting it is less clear. *jezuzfreak777* says, ‘You know I can say this concerning piety. It’s not usually that the person is acting holier than thou that bothers people. It’s not really the fact that the person clings to their faith that bothers people.’ *jezuzfreak777*, it seems, holds a much more positive view of piety, and this perhaps affects his interpretation of the pope metaphor. If he rightfully understands it as an insult, the metaphor must have a different implication to be truly insulting being called a pious or self-righteous person does not accomplish this. It seems *jezuzfreak777*’s interpretation of ‘pope’ is more in line with ‘self-appointed authority figures.’ Whether knowingly or not, it seems he has subtly shifted *fakesagan*’s use of the metaphor to fit his understanding of the word and create an acceptable interpretation.

Ultimately, *fakesagan*’s use of the metaphor ‘pope’ to insult *jezuzfreak777* seems to be successful in that *jezuzfreak777* understands it as an insult and attempts to reject it. The reason it is insulting, however, seems to be unresolved at the end of the thread and perhaps is evidence for why the two users appear to have difficulty communicating with one another. The commenters on the video also understand the vehicle to be insulting, but as can be seen in the examples posted, what they understand ‘pope’ to be is also quite varied. Additionally, it seems that the simple use of the metaphor offers a creative affordance to both *jezuzfreak777* in his response and the commenters as they create responses to the videos. The metaphor allows them to speak creatively about the situation that unfolds and, in the case of some of the commenters, insert their own interpretation of the metaphor into the discussion.

5.3 Conclusion

As we have seen, the use of metaphor is frequent in the videos in this thread. Both *fakesagan* and *jezuzfreak777* (as well as the commenters) employ metaphor to talk about their positions, the YouTube environment, and the community roles of other individuals on the website. Metaphor was not only frequently used in the transcripts of the videos, but the same metaphors were observed in both the comments on the video and subsequent videos

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and channel comments, and there is evidence that metaphor emerged across all levels of the video thread. Moreover, based on analysis of vehicle groupings two things have been noted: first, that conventionalised metaphor relating to the process of making a video and use of spatial metaphors was observed at all levels of the video thread; and second, that metaphor was processed and used dynamically across all levels of the video thread.

DISCUSSION

6 DISCUSSION

In the earlier chapter, I briefly discussed the findings related to the specific use of metaphor and the vehicle groupings. In this chapter, I will discuss in greater detail the implications of these findings, related not just to the transcript of the video and the text of the comments, but the context of YouTube and this video thread within it. Specifically, I will discuss the possible implications of conventionalised metaphors that seem to be accepted as standard ways of talking about YouTube videos ('making' a video as well as 'spatial' and 'location' vehicles relating to YouTube as a place) and the activity surrounding the 'pope' metaphor and possible implications this might have in helping us understand how users perceive the 'community' of YouTube.

6.1 Metaphor Use

This dissertation sought to answer the following research questions:

- How do YouTube users engaging in dialogue employ metaphor? This will include:
 - Which metaphors and vehicle groupings are most frequently used?
 - Do metaphors employed by users show evidence of patterns and systematicity?
- Do users produce metaphor dynamically in response to other users?

The data showed that, indeed, metaphor appeared throughout the video thread, at every level, from the video title to the video transcript to the comments to response videos and comments. Frequent metaphor vehicles included the words 'fundamental' as well as several expletives. The grouping of 'spatial' vehicles was found to be quite frequent in the data. Patterns and systematicity were observed in several conventionalised metaphors, including the use of 'make' when referring to recording a video. Speaking about YouTube and argumentation in terms of physical conflict was also seen to be systematic in the data.

Potential conventionalised metaphor, as we have observed in the phrase 'make a video' and metaphors relating to YouTube as a place, might show that users talk about the video as a constructed object and YouTube as a physical location. If these were shown to be prevalent in a larger corpus-based study of YouTube language, it might be possible to show how user interactions with both videos and others on the website might relate to

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actions in the 'real world.' Although the data provided by this case study is quite small, it does seem to suggest that there is potential for systematic ways of talking about YouTube as a physical location or community. What kind of place YouTube is and how users understand themselves and others in relation to this place could be a potential area of research not only for YouTube as a website, but for the Internet in general.

Dynamic use of metaphor was observed most clearly in the use of the 'pope' metaphor which was recurrent throughout the thread. The different uses that were observed, specifically as it related to the context of the video or comment that it appeared in, showed that the metaphor offered a creative affordance to the commenters and video respondents. Grouping of the metaphor vehicle also showed that the way in which the 'pope' vehicle was being used differed between the users. *fakesagan*'s initial assertion that *jezuzfreak777* thought he was the pope of YouTube seemed to imply that *jezuzfreak777* was a rude, pious person while *jezuzfreak777*'s use of the word seemed to imply that he was not a self-appointed dictator. How both of them understood the metaphor seemed to play a key role in how the topic of their videos developed.

6.2 Positioning on YouTube

The issue of role or position of users on the YouTube seems to be central to the topics in this video thread. How the users understand their position seems to be processed at least partially with metaphor. Within the video thread, there is mention of popes, kings, cleaners, garbage men, and cops as possible roles to be played by users. The extent to which the affordance of the website offers an environment in which users must create meaning for their presence on the site and the extent to which they appeal to the 'real-world' to understand this metaphorically is an important question that this dissertation has only begun to investigate. What we can see, however, is that users in this thread do not exist in isolation and that their understanding of how they should behave on the website is open to the scrutiny of others, both in their specific actions and how they speak about what they do.

Two issues have so far been overlooked, but could have likely contributed to the production of metaphor and how the meaning of the metaphor developed in the thread: first, the users were engaged in a 'drama' dialogue which may have contributed to more performative attitudes towards the other users and may have encouraged novel use of metaphor and analogy; and second, the users both self-identify from opposing worldviews (*fakesagan* as an atheist and *jezuzfreak777* as a Christian) which likely had a strong impact

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on the way in which they produced metaphor and understood the meaning of the other user. By neglecting these issues in the discussion, perhaps one influence on the interaction has been ignored.

Although the 'drama' content of the videos seems to have had an impact on how users engaged one another (and, admittedly, it is important to keep in mind that both users are eagerly seeking video views), the performative element of the videos does not necessarily invalidate the results. Both users were unaware of how the other would respond and, therefore, the emergent element of the metaphor production is still quite interesting. The fact that YouTube dialogue occurs in front of a virtual audience perhaps limits the findings to YouTube videos, but given that much Internet discourse is performed in front of an audience, the findings are likely not unduly affected by this. Similarly, the opposing viewpoints held by the users (although perhaps exaggerated by the nature of the YouTube video and the desire to be entertaining) are fundamental to interaction on YouTube. Although their opposing viewpoints may have led to misunderstanding, how this misunderstanding occurs and at what points the misunderstanding took place is still a valid area of research and, as we have seen in this study, could at least in part be investigated using metaphor-led discourse analysis.

6.3 Using a Discourse Dynamics Approach to Metaphor in CMD

This dissertation began with a criticism of two tendencies in current research into CMC and metaphor use: first, that CMC research tended to focus on discourse as one source of data in research rather than the primary source; and second, that conceptual metaphor theory overlooked the dynamic element of metaphor production and was therefore ill-suited for application in dynamic environments. The success of the two steps taken to overcome these perceived weaknesses (using a discourse dynamic approach on only one video thread) is worth considering.

By looking specifically at discourse in YouTube videos, there was a clear advantage to understanding the context in which the dialogue occurred, although since this was accomplished by informally watching other videos by the users in the thread and community, it was a subjective understanding limited to and by my perception of the videos. It did, however, reduce potential misunderstanding as topics and the personalities of the users were understood before the analysis of the videos. By randomly selecting a video thread, analysis would likely suffer from a lack of depth as the contextual meaning

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of the discourse would likely be lost. Including elements of CMC research (including perhaps interviewing the users) would likely have uncovered more useful contextual information and possibly added another layer of complexity to the analysis. The choice to focus on discourse does not preclude the use of other methods in understanding the context, and additional data would likely have benefited the study.

The use of the vehicle identification procedure was clearly effective in identifying metaphor, although for the results to be more rigorously tested, the procedure would need to be done by a second researcher (or more) to test the reliability of my findings. Using the procedure uncovered several facts that would not have been immediately clear; namely, that the borderline metaphor 'fundamental' was so prevalent in the first two videos and that expletive was used pervasively. A discourse dynamic approach to metaphor (in particular, the grouping of metaphor vehicles) in part helped to uncover the misunderstanding between the users, although it is debatable whether this might have been identified another way as the key to this analysis seemed to be in *jezuzfreak777*'s use of the modifier 'self-appointed' before 'pope.' The grouping of metaphor vehicles, however, did facilitate this process. In other cases, the identification of vehicle groupings only mirrored the most frequently used metaphors and added little information. This is likely the result of analysing a small amount of data, although it could be related to the fact that the videos were produced asynchronously and perhaps less dynamically than in real-time, face-to-face communication.

FINAL CONCLUSION

7 FINAL CONCLUSION

As we have seen, metaphor in the analysed YouTube thread was prevalent and seemed to be used not only in conventionalised ways, but also in novel ways to talk about YouTube as a place or community in which users may have a specific social position or role to play. This case study involved only a small amount of data, limited to one video thread in one context on YouTube, but potentially shows several areas that should be further investigated.

First, it seems that the concept of 'community' plays an important role on YouTube. This community also seems to be sub-divided, as *fakesagan* refers specifically to the 'atheist community' on YouTube (*fakesagan*, 2007e). This study has only briefly discussed the potential of what the YouTube 'community' might entail for roles of users and how these roles are negotiated. To further investigate the notion of the YouTube 'community' and how users understand their role in that community, research similar to this case study (beginning with the discourse of the videos) could potentially offer insights into the understandings of online 'community' by investigating how users talk metaphorically about their roles and positions online. Additionally, use of demographic data, interviews, and other measures could be useful in helping researchers understand how YouTube and Internet users come to understand online 'communities' as real places in which they function.

Second, this case study has been limited to asynchronous videos and seems to have shown that one element of the asynchronous affordance is some lack of continuity between topics in videos and that this lack of continuity may create the possibility for misunderstanding (as evidenced in the topics of the three videos discussed here and the confusion surrounding the meaning of the 'pope' metaphor). To fully investigate whether this is truly an affordance of asynchronous communication or whether it might better be explained by other factors (geography, age, class, or race), research needs to be done on synchronous Internet discussions between users focusing on how themes and topics develop and whether or not continuity is maintained better between users who self-identify from the same social groups and consider each other friends. As synchronous discussions occur frequently on other websites often between the same users, it could potentially be valuable to record these discussions and analyse them in tandem with asynchronous videos.

YouTube is only one site in the much larger complex, dynamic Internet environment in which multi-dimensional, multi-modal contexts continue to make it difficult to fully

FINAL CONCLUSION

understand how discourse develops over time. Data which constantly appears and disappears, updates, and changes is difficult to collect and analyse in an environment where information very quickly becomes obsolete. This challenge, though daunting, is not likely to subside as the Internet and other forms of technology become more pervasive in the lives of humans all around the world, and CMC and CMD research is not likely to become obsolete in the foreseeable future. In spite of all the changes, developments, and dynamic landscapes of the Internet, the researcher must not lose sight of single discourse events and understanding these events in their unique online contexts.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Blog:** A website where a user or group of users can post entries of text, pictures, or video in reverse-chronological order.
- CMC:** Computer-mediated communication
- CMD:** Computer-mediated discourse
- Channel Page:** The homepage for each user. Includes links to the user's own content and friends list, and can also feature videos by other users chosen by the channel owner.
- Drama:** A video subject which deals explicitly with inter-personal issues between users.
- Friend:** A function in which two users can share information actively with other users.
- Screename:** An identifier used on a website which usually includes words and (or) numbers chosen by a user that serves as their name on YouTube. Screennames often contain some semantic value related to the user's online persona.
- Subscriber:** A user who chooses to be notified of new videos posted by another user. The number of subscribers a user often correlates with their popularity.
- User:** An individual person who accesses YouTube to watch, comment on, or make videos.
- Vlog:** A video-blog. Rather than writing one's thoughts or ideas, an individual will speak to the camera as if not an audience.
- Video Page:** A webpage that contains the YouTube video; title, description, and tags; comments; rating and view count; and links to video responses.
- Video Thread:** A string of videos and responses linked together by way of a response feature on the YouTube video page. Links to video responses appear beneath a video on the video page.

APPENDIX

Sample Transcript

A	B	C	D	E	J	L	M	N	O
Time	U	Transcript	Tone	Action	Metaphor	Metaphor	Metaphor Grouping	Metaphor	Metaphor Grouping
0:02	1	an organized militant evangelical movement	(still reusing definition from previous video)	Still holding glass.					
0:12	2	originating in the united states		Looks down while reusing.	movement	X	Movement		
	3	in the late 18th and 20th century							
	4	in opposition to protestant liberalism							
	5	and secularism							
	6	7 insisting on the inerrancy							
0:18	8	of scripture							
	9	and that's							
0:21	10	an overused word I think		Looks at camera on 'inerrancy'.	object	X	Effect		
	11	the inerrancy		Push down glass off-camera. Points at camera with right hand					
	12	of scripture							
0:23	13	fundamentalist is a criterion		Gestures with left hand on 'isnt' and lifts both hands to	fundamentalist	X	Construction		
	14	who believes that every							
	15	dash dot and scribble							
	16	in the bible is true							
0:42	17	so I think I'll still the bar		Bings hands together on 'bar' and then waves them together and apart.	off the bar	X	Sport		
	18	but you know							
	19	by its merriest definition							
	20	we're dealing with a person who's							
	21	not to be a little bit conflicted.			little bit conflicted	X	Conflict		
	22	since the bible contradicts itself							
	23	in so many instances							
	24	but you know		Leans back and lifts up both hands on 'if'. Makes air quotes on 'if'.					
0:53	25	but you know							
	26	I'm reluctant to use the word 'silly'			'silly'	X	Body		
	27	'cause that's 'uh							
	28	a little bit too much like the bullfight that			bullfight	X	Explosive		
	29	but you know there's gotta be some cognitive dissonance join on		Makes rolling motion with both hands on 'cognitive dissonance'. And then waves both hands at camera and leans back on 'every word of this is true'.	spoons	X	Plant		
1:00	30	with anybody who says							
	31	well if you know		Points at camera with right hand on 'you' and then 'together to possess' and 'possesses same'.					
1:12	32	I don't really see							
	33	uh							
	34	how you can say							
	35	that 'together to possess' and 'possesses same'							
	36	by this definition			Fundamentalist	X	Construction		
	37	by the definition		Lifts right hand up on 'this definition' and points with both hands on 'the definition'.					
1:13	38	the correct definition							
	39	when uh if you know as you mentioned in your video		Gestures toward camera with right hand on 'you' and lifts up right hand on 'dissemination'.	in	X	Spatial		
1:25	40								
	41								
	42								
	43								