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**Participatory Culture between Producer, Co-  
Producers and Community on YouTube Channel  
Easy Languages**

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## **Abstract**

Easy Languages is a channel on YouTube that focuses on language learning through street interviews. The channel is the result of dynamic participatory culture on the Web 2.0 and it has a main producer and several co-producers who constantly upload language-learning videos on the channel. Participatory culture is the main theme of this thesis. This thesis investigates the motivations behind the participation of the producer and the co-producers on the video production and the reason behind the community support towards the works of the producer and the co-producers within the Easy Languages channel. To investigate participatory culture on the Easy Languages channel, semi-structured interview was used as the method of data collection. This thesis begins with a discussion on the motivation behind the involvement of the producer and co-producers on the channel. This highlights the process of participation on the YouTube channel by the producer and co-producers. The following analysis investigates the motivation, driving factors and challenges during video production. In this analysis, self-motivation and driven motivations are the primary factors that influence participation in video production. The notion of amateur works is discussed in the next chapter, which highlights the results of amateur work and how the producer and co-producers perceive their work as an amateur. The last analysis of this thesis provides a discussion on the role of the community within the Easy languages channel. There are three important findings that support a continuation of participatory culture within the Easy Languages channel. Firstly, feedback plays an important role in motivating the producer and co-producers to produce more videos. Secondly, YouTube is the right platform for amateur workers to publish and distribute their videos publicly. Thirdly, the community is essential in creating sustainability for the Easy Languages project. Finally, the continuous exchange of communication and information created mutual benefits for producer, co-producers and the community within the Easy Languages channel.

**Keywords:** Easy Languages, YouTube, producer, co-producer, participatory culture, amateur, community

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## 1. Introduction

YouTube is an online video website within the realm of Web 2.0, where people can share and watch videos. The Web 2.0 has given freedom to people to participate by allowing them to share and create user-generated content (UGC) in several forms, such as blogs, texts and videos on the Internet (Courtois et al. 2012). YouTube has developed into a user-friendlier platform since its creation in 2005 (van Dijk, 2013). One of YouTube's aims is to lower the barriers of the video sharing online with the use of UGC (Potts et al., 2008:470). With its interactive features, millions of available videos and its simplicity to participate makes it the second most visited website in the world (Alexa, 2017). YouTube has created such a huge transformation in the way people enjoy and consume the media in the digital age. YouTube "has become the market leader in online video" (Shao, 2009:8). Because of its popularity, people started to participate on YouTube by creating amateur videos, uploading television shows or remixing existing videos from mainstream media into their own versions. This participation in the creating of ideas through video production and sharing them is part of the culture in the era of Web 2.0 which known as "participatory culture" (Jenkins et al., 2016).

The YouTube channel of Easy Languages, which is owned by fulltime German YouTuber Carina Schmid, is the result of dynamic participatory culture on the Web 2.0. Easy Languages is a YouTube channel that focuses on language learning. The channel has its slogan "Learn languages from the streets!", giving the audience the experience of listening and learning languages from street interviews from around the world (Easy Languages, 2017). The channel has several co-producers from several countries. They produce the street interview videos on a weekly and monthly basis for the Easy Languages channel. Carina, as the main producer, has developed her own channel Easy German, the result of the development of street interviews in German on the Easy Languages channel.

The very first video on the Easy Languages channel is an amateur video with the title "Boy get's heavily beaten", a video parody about a guy who is beaten because he could not join his friend to go to Poland (Easy Languages, 2006). This video shows an ordinary situation that happened among students in the school about students beating another student. The situation above is an example of participatory culture in the digital age, where ordinary aspects of human life is being brought to the Internet (Jenkins et al., 2016:2). After years of development and improvement of its contents, the Easy Languages channel had more than 347,000 subscribers in April 2017 with more than 65 million views in total. The channel has been

developing towards a more professional direction of video production. In this case the traditional media world is facing challenges from information distribution and creation by the amateurs. Moreover, the dominating account describing by the web 2.0 and social media are the “techno-deterministic approaches”, which assumes that the rise of these technologies have resulted in a more democratic society when the representatives of this approach is “participatory social media” (Fuchs, 2013:26).

On YouTube, audience or viewers are the consumers of the platform and anyone can produce their own videos in unlimited qualities. Moreover, the openness of YouTube for everyone to watch the videos on it without first registering to watch videos makes the information widely accessible. It means that the production of the information is made and then spread by the consumers to be accessed by the audience of the network (Bruns, 2008). The emergence of amateurs into the new media world has challenged professional workers. Furthermore, the circulation of media content on several media platforms that heavily depend on the consumers’ active participation is challenging professionals not only because professionals can produce the media that catches the attention of a broader audience, but amateur productions also can have the same, even greater results (Jenkins, 2006). This causes a lot of debates on how to regulate the emergence of the amateurism in the new media age.

Interestingly, amateur work in the Web 2.0 sphere is also connected with the term “exploited digital labour”, which sparks debates on how one should appreciate the work of amateurs. Critical perspectives on the use of creative users are often proposed and explored in terms of labour and work (Deuze and Banks, 2009:423). Nevertheless, discussing labour and work, one should see the motive behind it. As in the Easy Languages channel, the co-producers are within the framework of the amateur users working for the main user in the channel. The co-producers get rewarded for their work, but the idea of exploited labour cannot simply fade when discussing users working for another user within a YouTube channel. Allen (2008), argues that the kind of participatory culture happening in Web 2.0 sphere validates advanced, promotional entrepreneurial capitalism that binds users to profit-making service providers via the exploitation of those users’ immaterial labour’ (Deuze and Banks, 2009:423).

### **1.1. Aims of the Thesis**

In the light of content production work, YouTube as an online platform provides a huge opportunity for users to produce, create, and spread contents with their creativity. The idea of

YouTube where everyone can participate to create their own content and publish it has shaped the reformation of the media production circulation, challenging the professional and traditional way of media production. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to explore the participatory culture between the producer, co-producers and the community on the YouTube channel Easy Languages. In this study, participatory culture is addressed from the very beginning and more in an academic review along with the related concepts such as amateur work, content creation and community that will be followed by in-depth analysis of data obtained from interviews with producers active on the Easy languages channel.

## **1.2. Research Objective and Research Questions**

This research is based on the theoretical framework of participatory culture within the sphere of YouTube as the Web 2.0 platform. The research objective of this research is to find the reasons behind their participation on the video production and to discover the motivations behind the community support towards the works of producer and co-producers within the Easy Languages channel. Therefore, three research questions are raised:

1. What are the driving factors, motivations and the challenges for the main producer and the co-producers participating in the video productions of Easy Languages?
2. How do the producer and co-producers perceive their work on video production on the Easy Languages channel related to the amateur work?
3. How does the participatory culture within the Easy Languages community play the role in supporting the producer and co-producers?

## **1.3. Important Terms**

In the beginning of this thesis, it is important to explain some important terms that are part of participatory culture on the channel. The explanation is necessary in order to avoid ambiguity and to give the clear definition to the readers. The terms are:

1. *The Easy Languages Channel.* The channel that became a platform for participatory culture. In this channel, videos for several languages are uploaded. It has one main producer (Carina) and several co-producers. Carina produces Easy German and the co-producers produce language videos based on their native languages, for example: Easy French, Easy Russian, and Easy Polish. In this channel, all language videos come together. In the later development of the channel, Carina created Easy German channel separate from Easy Languages channel after the episode reached 107

episodes. The Easy German channel started its first German video in episode 108, continuing from the previous videos on Easy Languages.

2. *Producer (Main Producer)*. The owner of the channel (Carina). Her main focus for video production is German (Easy German) and her husband is assisting in the production of the videos. She is the face of the Easy German videos.
3. *Co-Producers*. The producers of language programs beside German. Before their involvement as co-producers in Easy Languages, they were viewers of Easy Languages channel.
4. *Community*. It refers to the viewers (audiences) who regularly watch the channel, the subscribers, the commentators, and the donators of the Easy Languages channel.
5. *Patreon*. A crowdfunding site for Easy Languages and Easy German. Several language programs on Easy Languages such as Easy French, Easy Russian, Easy Spanish and Easy Polish are supported by the donators through Patreon.



## **2. Backgrounds of the Study**

In this section, the concept of participatory culture, user generated content, amateur work, and crowdfunding and their connection with the community on YouTube will be discussed. The discussion will be highlighted by the participatory culture theory connected with the research in this study by the end of this chapter. The discussion of these topics is important in strengthening the aims and purpose of the aforementioned research questions in the light of already existing research and theories. Another important part of the discussion is to develop the theoretical point of departure from which I have conducted the analysis from the interviews. At this point, participatory culture acts as the most important theoretical framework covering the subjects that will be discussed in the following discussion.

### **2.1. Participatory Culture**

Participatory culture is described as the activity of creating and sharing contents on the Internet with its strong support of informal mentorship and each member is bound by social connection and each of their contributions to the community matters (Jenkins et al., 2009:5-6). Jenkins (1992) describes, “my initial use of “participatory culture” to refer to fandom relied on a not fully conscious blurring between forms of cultural production and forms of social exchange; fans understood fandom to be an “informal” community defined around notions of equality, reciprocity, sociality, and diversity” (Jenkins et al., 2016:2). Benkler (2006:2) claimed that the changes of several aspects in human life such as technologies, technological organization and social practices of production has led into new practices of participation where individuals are free to take more active roles, more individual freedom, more platforms for better democratic participation and the information dependent of global economy as a mechanism to improve human developments. Participatory culture enables the individual to freely create contents on the Internet and other can reuse the content to create other creative content. Participatory culture embraces the value of diversity and democracy through every aspect of human interactions with each other, thus enabling people to have the capability to express in the different forms and practices (Jenkins et al., 2016:2).

The emergence of participatory culture created the idea of democratic participation of equality and freedom expression. Benkler emphasized that the core of freedom in society is shaped by the way of how we produce and get the information and the way of how we talk to other people and how other people talk to us (Benkler, 2006:7). In the era of a networked information economy, individuals are having a larger capacity to do more by themselves. For

example, they have the ability to do more in formal organizations that operate outside market sphere (Benkler, 2006:8). Moreover, by the development of technology in the networked era, individuals have more capacity to produce contents independently from traditional way of media mass production. The people who are used to be consumers in the past nowadays have the access to the Internet, participating in the production of the content on the Internet by creating and recirculating the new media in more powerful ways in response of technological advancement (Jenkins et al., 2009:9). In the networked information economy, anyone who wants to make something that requires human creativity, a computer, and a network connection, can do so—alone, or in cooperation with others in which the results have come to occupy the highest-valued roles (Benkler, 2006:6). In the past, the traditional media production was handled by specific people who have the power to do massive production but nowadays, average people can create their own media production as amateurs through blogs, wikis, or videos on YouTube. The shift of production from professionals to amateurs shows the progressive media development of amateur works that is becoming the norm in the digital world (Cayari, 2015). Although participatory culture embraces the idea of how media circulation has shifted from professionals to amateurs in the digital society, it also promotes the idea of sharing the content creativity and how society can benefit from the circulation of said content.

The development of the production from traditional models to the way where users or customers can be the producers in the networked technology has been discussed by Bruns (2008). In traditional models of production, the manufacturers developed the product in a closed way where patents and copyrights are implemented in order to prevent people imitating their products and in this case the user's role is to only get the necessary product from the manufacturers (Bruns, 2008:10). Although consumers or users who have limited access to the production, are never purely passive (Bruns, 2008:11). As consumers gained more access to the production, they could be selective in their consumption, making the manufacturers producing products based on market demands. In conjunction with this case, the consumers have the power to select which products they need. This lead into what it is called “prosumer” a term coined by Toffler, where the consumers have more advanced skills in consuming products (Bruns: 2008). Toffler (1980) described the ‘prosumer’ as “projected shift from a passive consumer society to one in which many more people will prefer to provide home-grown services to themselves and others, selectively producing and consuming depending on their interests and expertise” (Bird, 2011:506). In producer and consumer

capitalism, corporations are likely to exert great control over the production and/or consumption of content (goods and services) but in prosumer capitalism, companies are more likely to stand back and to meddle less with the prosumers who are producing and consuming content (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010:31). Under the network paradigm, by contrast, producers and users of media content are both simply nodes in a neutral network and communicate with one another on an equal level (Bruns 2008:14).

However, with the development of the technology and media information, old media will be replaced by the new emerging circulation of new media, where people can be their own media producers. The site of participatory culture is the convergence of old and new media with the complex relationship between producers and consumers. Jenkins is being critical in explaining the notion of participatory culture, where the complex relationship between producers and consumers are blurred and where the notion of equality is difficult to reach because nowadays media corporations still hold the power over the consumers (Jenkins, 2006:3). On the other hand, some consumers have greater abilities to participate in this emerging culture than others (Jenkins, 2006:3). In this case, YouTube can set a perfect example of the new media platform where it replaces the idea of the old traditional media in the way media is being produced. Since YouTube is both a platform and a company, its business model and copyrights regulation for media circulation has evolved and developed in ways where the boundaries between the professional and amateurs are blurred and shifted in particular ways (Burgess, 2013:53).

One of the purposes of YouTube is to be seen and draw the audience (Strangelove, 2010:127). In order to reach the purpose, YouTube provides simple access and give the access to anyone to express themselves on YouTube by producing any contents on the platform. YouTube provides the new way of media broadcasting for everyone to have equal access to the platform and can produce any kinds of media content as long as it does not violate the YouTube regulations of content creation. With the notion of equal access, it evokes debates regarding whether or not the users really have equal access on YouTube. While this notion is one of the key concepts of participatory culture, it engages the community to have democratic participation and equality in freedom of expression.

## **2.2. User Generated Content on YouTube**

The Internet is a virtual world where it has massive amount of data and among the data on the Internet is the User Generated Content (UGC). According to Moens et al., UGC is the data on the Internet where it is public to anyone or public to certain community, it has the creative content, and it is created either in a semi-professional or amateur way (2014:7-8). The OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), in its report entitled “Participative Web: User-Created Content”, defines user-generated content as content that (1) is made publicly available online, (2) reflects some creative effort on the part of the user, and (3) is created outside professional practices (Tuten, 2008:4). Kaplan and Hanlein described that UGC as the summary of what people created online by utilizing social media and usually the content is created by end-users and can be accessed publicly (2010:61). The forms of UGC on the Internet are varied, for example in the shape of texts, wikis, forums, blogs, status updates or videos on the Internet. Video platform websites such as YouTube is the example of the UGC site specializing on video creation by its users. YouTube is heavily dependent on its User Generated Content (UGC) to keep its business running well. The UGC has entered the mainstream online media around 2005 and the production of UGC has been steadily increasing from year to year (Moens et al., 2014).

Since the usage of UGC is based on individual preferences, the circulation of UGC especially on YouTube is unlimited. The importance of posting UGC is that the users have the possibilities to connect with their peers by sharing creative contents from a local to a global scale (Moens et al., 2014). Anybody can produce and consume the contents without restriction or having to pay to enjoy its circulation mechanism. On YouTube, individuals can go easily to the site without any difficulties and search any videos they want to seek for information. YouTube is the intersection or the convergence of the entertainment for music, film and television. Therefore, the user-generated media such as YouTube has been influencing the concept of “searching” in order for the individuals to seek for information to increase their awareness (Shao, 2009:10). The individuals who then become the users on YouTube have the control to wider extent in terms of time, place or the video contents they want to search because of the “easy to control” feature. This is also known as customization of the UGC where the individuals are not limited only into doing searching but also customize their profile once they become the users. In this case of user-generated sites, the ability of controlling is considered an important factor that increase people’s satisfactory to interact more on YouTube (Shao, 2009).

YouTube is a great platform for the users to get direct feedback on their works. The measurement of success can be seen from how many likes and positive comments a video can get. The audience or informally the members of the community believe that their comments are read by the channel owner and their ideas are being implemented in the upcoming videos. The members of the community have a sense of belonging because of efforts from the producer in hearing their opinion. An example is a YouTube star who acts as a community itself and embracing its members to contribute towards with feedback (Gauntlett, 2011). The happiness is the result of creating valuable programs or projects from the discussion between the producers and the audience members on YouTube that involves some forms of “sharing, cooperation and contribution to other people's well-being”. (Gauntlett, 2011:126). The way of giving feedback to supports the creations on YouTube is the form of reinforcement, where the producers who received responses from other users keep posting new contents that will give positive development for the community and encourage producers to create the dynamic content (Shao, 2009:13). The produced content is attracting many consumers, which provides essential information for the consumers. By the participation from the consumers in the form of feedback, like and sharing the content, the producers of the content are encouraged to produce more interactive content for their consumers. Quoting Shao, in addition of participation, it can contribute to people’s consuming for example: “posting comments” can help consumers further their understanding of certain content; “rating” can help people easily find the most popular videos, music, or blogs; and “sharing with others” directly brings certain contents to someone for his/her consumption. On the other hand, consumers may become participants, thus helping enlarge the participating population and develop virtual communities” (2009:16).

However, the popularity of user-generated content, which allows the users to express their creativity through content production on the Internet, does not always come with the expected result from the virtual community. User-generated content creates some problematic concerns on the virtual community where the users’ personal data are being collected by big corporations without the consent of the users for the sake of corporations’ profit. “Users are the producers, but the profit, or at least the potential for profit, still belongs to corporations” (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010:26). Fuchs states that the rise of user-generated content on the Web 2.0 has created the big data information on the Internet in which the data is being mined by big corporations and this data is known as audience commodity which is sold to the advertisers (2013:32). It is no wonder that sometimes when we sign in on YouTube, the videos that appear on our YouTube page are based on our taste, which can be traced from our

history of watched videos. The moment we first sign up and agree to the terms and condition on the Internet, we have to realize that our personal data and activities can be mined and used for the interests of corporations. Corporations work together with third party advertising clients, monitoring our personal data and online activities, conducting surveillances on us. In the end, they can manipulate us via targeted advertisements based on the provided data that they took from our history of activities on the Internet (Fuchs, 2013:33). The price of expressing creativity on the Internet is corporations taking advantage of our activities on the Internet. We have become free labour on the Internet, producing benefits for corporations, as Fuchs argued that users as the Internet prosumers commodity are unpaid and exploited, that all the data we produced on the Internet becomes the commodity that is transformed into money capital (2013:35).

Regardless of how the companies take benefits from the users' activities on the Internet, there is also the trending opinion about amateur production of UGC on the Internet which claimed can possibly harm the industry of professionals (Hetcher, 2013). The amateur nature of the content production on the Internet has resulted in the blurred distinction between the professional and amateur as mentioned in the discussion on the concept of participatory culture. Amateur-created content is valuable because of its amateur nature, and this is the reason why corporations take actions by making profits out of it (Hetcher, 2013).

### **2.3. Amateur Works**

Amateur works are words that are commons nowadays in the digital environment, especially in the area of content creation or user-generated content. "The rise of amateur creative digital content ('ACDC') has been characterized in high-minded terms, such as with the claim that it promotes democratic values by means of creating a more participatory culture" (Jenkins in Hetcher, 2013:35). The notions of user, producer, platform, participation and community have been gained its place in the digital environment since the emergence of the Internet. User becoming producer and creating content is something common on an online platform such as YouTube. The work of the individual is no longer limited by the traditional media production, where only professional and capital owner can produce and circulate media content because of the networked era gives the possibility for anyone to produce their own contents. "The fact that every such effort is available to anyone connected to the network, from anywhere, has led to the emergence of coordinate effects, where the aggregate effect of individual action, even when it is not self-consciously cooperative, produces the coordinate effect of a new and rich

information environment” (Benkler, 2006:4-5). Since then, amateur works have flooded the Internet, causing changes in the media environment and circulation. This is what is called “the convergent media”, which transformed the traditional ‘audience’ experience to be their own producers by utilizing several media platforms to enhance their media practices and convergence happens when media hybridizes and recombines and when people can listen the radio through a computer which connects to the Internet (Bird, 2011; Bell, 2009).

Amateur works do not mean that the works are not comparable with professional work. Its amateur origin does not mean a reduction in content quality, instead by the driven process of communal creation, amateur works are able to generate quality content (Bruns, 2008:117). The constant feedback gives individuals the trigger to enhance the quality of the produced content. On YouTube, the amateur content production is institutionalized, formalized and professionalized as the platform itself has developed and involved big corporations and amateurs to work together (Burgess, 2013). The influence of amateur works was big enough to make big corporation such as Google to develop YouTube, making it part of its business and changed the direction of YouTube finally into more mature and professional way, challenging the idea of how television works by providing online video contents which can be accessed anytime, anywhere and by anyone (Van Dijk, 2013). “As global news medium, YouTube offers, first and foremost, a platform for many different news channels, types of content, and audiences” (Sumiala and Tikka, 2013:321). While amateurism is appreciated on YouTube and can develop into professional way by the time the amateur works develop, it also causes professional content workers to become anxious that their jobs will be contested by amateur, which in turn can result in the domination of amateur work. As in YouTube itself, the work between the amateur and the professional has been contested by the appearance of viral videos from amateurs and some professional videos from several professional media companies such as television and music channels.

The emergence of amateurism has created debates on the Internet. Keen in his book “The Cult of Amateur” heavily criticized the amateur work on the Internet. He described those amateur people as “monkey” because of what they have done on the Internet is being considered as simple works compared to that of the professional (Keen, 2007). The cult of the amateur is inevitable and by this time, the development of the Internet and user-generated content have created the convergence, as discussed in the previous chapter where the media audiences changed their behaviour, seeking new means of entertainment in the new platform (Jenkins,



2006). YouTube attracts many audiences like a strong magnet because any kinds of information can be found there from personal life of someone in the form of Vlogs to the professional music entertainment and news from big media corporations. This is the platform where the amateur and professional work together, blurring the lines between them and that is the price of the technology development in the networked era.

Criticizing Keen on his harsh criticism towards amateurism, Lessig argued that one should also be very critical in reading and understanding the work of Keen which considers amateur as “monkey” (Hetcher 2013). Lessig stated:

[W]hat is puzzling about this book is that it purports to be a book attacking the sloppiness, error and ignorance of the Internet, yet it itself is shot through with sloppiness, error and ignorance. It tells us that without institutions, and standards, to signal what we can trust (like the institution (Doubleday) that decided to print his book), we won't know what's true and what's false. But the book itself is riddled with falsity – from simple errors of fact, to gross misreadings of arguments, to the most basic errors of economics ... The lesson he teaches is one we should all learn – to read and think critically, whether reading the product of the ‘monkeys’ (as Keen likens contributors to the Internet to be) or books published by presses such as Doubleday. (Lessig, 2007 in Hetcher, 2013:39)

Based on the argument stated above, amateur works should not be treated as a low class works because of its emergence, people are connected to the networked community which hardly happened in the past. In the community, people keep pursuing and crafting their works into perfection by help others through feedback and continuation of the works constantly. People are participating to create something creative, contributing to the development to the Internet communities.

#### **2.4. Crowdfunding in the Era of Web 2.0**

Crowdfunding is a term that gained popularity since the appearance of Web 2.0. It is a method to collect funds in the shape of money through online platforms to finance or capitalize popular enterprises or asking help from people through internet platforms for donations that provide start-up capital for new ventures (Steinberg and DeMaria, 2012; Freedman and Nutting, 2015). It is defined as “the collective cooperation by people who pool their funds, usually via the Internet, to support efforts initiated by other people or organizations” (Dresner, 2014). Web 2.0 reshaped the new media technologies by advancing the relationship between people and organizations on the Internet with the notion of participatory culture (Brabham, 2013). Thus, crowdfunding flourishes the Internet because of the advancement of how people



connect with organizations and the capital providers. Non-profit organizations and start-ups are usually the groups that utilize the crowdfunding. Moreover, the utilization of crowdfunding has developed further into professional creative workers, artists and YouTubers as the people who provide the creative works for their audience.

Before the era of the Internet, crowdfunding had been done by Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian-American newspaper publisher who utilized the power of the press. He conducted the campaign to the New Yorkers to finance the construction of the Statue of Liberty in 1885 (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:2). Although during that time the word “crowdfunding” didn’t exist yet, the idea of collecting the fund from the society to support a project has happened as in the example of Joseph Pulitzer. As a reward for the donors of the construction of the Statue of Liberty, the New York World newspaper published their names, regardless the amount of dollars they have donated and this reward actually boosted the newspaper’s circulation (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:3). The idea of crowdfunding nowadays is very similar to Pulitzer’s version. It is the medium of the technology that makes it different. In Pulitzer’s era, the newspaper was the medium to spread awareness to society about the importance of each penny from the New Yorkers to help build the Statue of Liberty as the pride of New York City. Nowadays, the Internet has become the medium used to spread awareness to society to fund important project. The similarities between both versions are the involvement of emotional appeal to the supporters who contribute to the donation, which mostly consist of ordinary citizen rather than wealthy ones and the satisfaction of giving the donation to worthy projects (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:3). Crowdfunding nowadays allows people to pitch creative ideas on the Internet that contain good values and utilize online reputations and experience to create the idea that has the best chance of success (Dresner, 2014:3).

Currently, Kickstarter is the biggest reward-based crowdfunding website in the world in terms of visitor traffic (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:5). The site has succeeded in hosting more than 180,000 funding campaigns, where 40 per cent of the funding campaigns were successful and the 70,923 campaigns succeeded in raising a total of \$1.335 billion from more than 7.1 million backers from its launch in 2009 to September 2014 (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:5). Another popular site where the creative workers got paid by the idea of crowdfunding is Patreon. On its main page, Patreon has its catch phrase “Creators, come get paid (Patreon, 2017), indicating that the website is a platform to help creative workers on the Internet to get income. An example of a person using crowdfunding on Patreon by utilizing a YouTube

platform is Steve Keen, an employee of Kingston University who utilizes the Patreon website to pay his salary because universities “no longer provide the time and freedom they once gave to original thinkers” (Mezzofiore, 2017). Keen utilizes Patreon, an online platform for online content creators to get a sustainable income through selling their creativity.

Because of the rise of crowdfunding on the Internet, the argument about frauds in crowdfunding popped up and created some debates on the Internet. Companies might think that giving hundreds or thousands of dollars to bunch of start-ups in exchange of a product that has not been marketed would result in a fraud (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:8). However, the fraud rate appears to be quite low because the continuous presence of the crowd and its highly social nature serve as a kind of prevention against possible abuses (Freedman and Nutting, 2015:8-9). Thus, crowdfunding is one of the best ways to access a network of potential investors since the expectation from the crowd will be quite high (Dresner, 2014:17).

## **2.5. Participatory Culture as the Primary Theoretical Framework for this Thesis**

As explained in this literature review chapter, participatory culture will be the main theory to analyse the data of this research project. Participatory culture has deep connection with the emergence of the media in the digital world, as people of early adopters of digital media have experimented with the networked community and started to produce their own content because of the affordability of the digital technologies (Jenkins et al., 2016:181). The Easy Languages channel fits the criteria to be a site of participatory culture, where the main producer of this channel started the channel in June 2006 as an amateur channel for video production. After years of development, Easy Languages has several co-producers as the result of collaboration with the audience of Easy Languages. This is the advantage of the Web 2.0, which gives the opportunity to users to produce content collaboratively with other users (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). This was the idea of Easy Languages' productions, where Carina as the main producer collaborated with other people from different countries to produce videos for her channel. After years of content production, the Easy Languages channel has its own community and this community of Easy Languages has significant and important role in the existence of the channel as well as the video production itself. From this point of departure, I will continue to analyse deeper into the participatory culture within Easy Languages channel.

Previous research on participatory culture and engagement on YouTube became the source of inspiration for my research topic and the choice of the main theory for my thesis. The master thesis which was done by Mueller (2014) with the title “Participatory culture on YouTube: a case study of the multichannel network Machinima” investigates the participatory culture between the executives and partner employed by the YouTube multichannel network (MCN) Machinima. Mueller uses case study involving in-depth interview and document analysis for his research. He claims that by allowing the amateur producers to pursue professional career in the media industry, it provides good structure for YouTube to enable more effective monetization. Another previous research that is connected to the audience engagement and participation on YouTube is the master thesis by Savage (2015) with the title “Understanding and Engaging YouTube Communities”. Her thesis explores the creativity of the creators developing the content to engage the audiences and how the audiences respond to the content on YouTube. In the end, I took different approach for my thesis research in order to give more perspective towards the participatory culture on a YouTube channel through video production. Exploring the motivations of the producers on the participation through video production, the amateur works and the role of the community support on the channel are the focus of my thesis and it is expected to contribute to the research focusing on participatory culture.

### **3. Methodology**

People conduct social research to learn something new about the social world by combining theories with facts, planning research carefully, treating people in a study in ethical and moral ways and fully understand the research and communicate the results of the study to others (Neuman, 2007:2). Social research is the shape of the curiosity of the author towards the phenomena in society that is known as social reality. Social reality may be understood as the result of meanings and contexts that are jointly created in social interaction (Flick et al., 2004:6). Two common methodologies for the social research are quantitative and qualitative research. While quantitative research focuses on the measurement of the variables of the hypotheses across many cases, qualitative research focuses on the case oriented approach by examining a wide variety of aspects of one or a few cases (Neuman, 2007:90). To reach the goals of the research, the author must decide which methods are more appropriate for the research questions (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012). If the author concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be favoured (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008:9). Qualitative research puts a greater emphasize on interpreting the data (Neuman, 2007:89). The choice of using qualitative research as the methodology for some topics depends on what kind of goals the author wants to reach. For example, Karyn McKinney suggests that her qualitative research was a better fit for the types of questions she was asking, providing the answers that she wishes to get by using the "how" questions rather than using "how many" questions (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008:33). In this thesis, I use a qualitative research approach with interviews as a method in analysing participatory culture within the YouTube channel Easy Languages because the topic is related with the activity of the producers on the Easy Languages channel.

Several authors in the field of social science analysing YouTube and its elements have conducted qualitative research involving interviews as the main method of choice or as a part of several methods for the research. The journal that was done by Vonderau (2010) in understanding a famous YouTuber Maria Orlova used the interview method to complete his research. His research is mainly about understanding the means of being a producer and production studies in the digital media. Vonderau stated about the usefulness of the interview method on his journal:

"The interview I then conducted with Marina and the research preceding it once again challenged my conception of a "producer" in the YouTube economy and also, on a methodological level, the usefulness of doing interviews with media producers generally" (2010:3)

Lange (2008) conducted her research on social networking on YouTube discussing the publicly private and privately public. She chose the method of ethnographic investigation into young people's engagement with online video sharing on YouTube, which included semi-structured interviews, field notes on observations conducted several times a week over the course of one year on YouTube, analyses of posted videos and comments, and examination of subscription and friending practices (Lange, 2008:365). Her method helps her to find a conclusion on how the dynamics of social networks influence the negotiation of YouTube participants. Westenberg (2016), a postgraduate from the University of Twente wrote her thesis master about the influence of YouTubers on teenagers, exploring teenagers' behaviour based on their idols on YouTube by using the method of semi-structured interviews. The interview method gives her more perspective in exploring and finding the attitude of the teenagers based on whom they admire and follow on YouTube.

### **3.1. Semi-Structured Interview as the Method of Data Collection**

Communication is important in qualitative research and it takes a predominant role, which means that the data collection strategies have a communicative dialog character (Flick et al., 2004:7). The interview is one of the strategies to collect data through communication with the individuals that the author wishes to get the data from. Moreover, qualitative interviews are planned carefully and staged in order to reach the goal of producing knowledge (Brinkmann, 2013). The basic assumption of the interviewing technique is being interested in others and it requires objectivity from the interviewer, throwing all doubts and treating the stories of others are important (Seidman, 2006:9). According to Harrel and Bradley, interviews are discussions between two people (interviewer and interviewee) whose goal is to collect important data from the interviewee and it can be conducted in person or over the phone (2009:6). The conversation between two people is crucial and treated as the central tool to gain knowledge about others (Brinkmann, 2013:13). Thus, the interview is used to collect the primary data information from individuals about their beliefs, practices, opinion, behaviour in the past and present, and their experiences (Harrel and Bradley, 2009:24).

Before I decided that interview was chosen for the data collection, I did an internship on the Easy Languages channel for 5 months. During the internship, I experienced the work of a producer on the Easy Languages channel such as producing videos (shooting), editing, transcribing, translating and uploading the videos on the YouTube channel. Thus, I am confident that I am able to gain richer data by conducting interviews with the producer and

co-producers. The interview that is chosen as a method to analyse the participatory culture on the Easy Languages YouTube channel is a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews allow the author to gain more freedom in following up the information from the interviewees as the part of knowledge production (Brinkmann, 2013:21). The producers of the contents on the Easy Languages channel are the source of the information in this research. The interview data gained from the producers are the empirical data that will be analysed and interpreted further by using the theory of participatory culture. Furthermore, since the semi-structured interview is a staged interview, it will provide the interviewer with an opportunity to have a visible influence on the interview and the knowledge produced during said process (Brinkmann, 2013). This means that I do not need to be hidden during the interview, which is usually the case when authors do ethnographic observations where the topics of the research are very sensitive among the participants. This situation of the visible author during interviews will also create a good atmosphere between the interviewer and interviewee, because a familiar situation will create a good data flow from the interview. Moreover, the goal of doing interview studies is to get the descriptions from the interviewees rather than reflections or theorizations (Brinkmann, 2013:22).

### **3.2. Pre-Interview Preparation**

Preparation before the interview is an important step to ensure the readiness of the author in obtaining empirical data from the interviewees. The preparation can also help the author to avoid unnecessary problems during interview. One thing that should be clear during the preparation of interview is to make a clear goal regarding what the author wants to achieve from the study (Brinkmann, 2013:47). In this case, the participatory culture on a YouTube channel is the main focus of the interview. I came up with the idea of making interview questions regarding the connection between the content creation on YouTube by Easy Languages producers and participatory culture on the Web 2.0. The previous reading on the material around participatory culture helped me to structure the interview questions into semi-structured interviews. This kind of interview collects detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational. Semi-structured interviews are often used “when the author wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided” (Harrel and Bradley, 2009:27). Therefore, I can dig and explore more data if necessary.

Selecting the participants for the interviews is a very important aspect because they are the source of data for the research. In selecting the participants, one should consider that the

participants play an important role in the topic of the research. Selection refers to the general decisions concerning who should be in focus in the study (Brinkmann, 2013:57). In this research of participatory culture on a YouTube channel, the most suitable candidates for the participants are the producers of the videos on the Easy Languages channel. The decision of selecting the participants were also based on sampling. However, because in-depth analyses are also an important part in qualitative studies, the researcher often utilizes other sampling strategies (Brinkmann, 2013:57). The most suitable sampling strategies for this research is the “information-oriented” selection. For qualitative research, the information-oriented selection is more suitable because it can maximize the “utility of the information from small sample and cases” (Brinkmann, 2013:47).

The utilization of information-oriented selection gives the hint to the next step of “how many people should be interviewed?”. As the nature of this selection is maximizing the in-depth data from “small sample and cases”, the author can decide the number of participants based on the topic and what is going to be researched. There are two criteria for how many participants that are needed; the first is a sufficient number of participants and the second is the saturation of information (Seidman, 2006:55). This means that those two criteria should compete with each other in the decision of choosing the number of participants. For the qualitative interview research, fewer participants are favourable as long as the empirical data provides a rich material (Brinkmann, 2013). However, if the number of the participant is less than ten people, the data saturation should be varied. Still, the qualitative interview has a unique feature in that can go deeper into digging information out of the participants about their life story or experience not by including a big number of participants because the aim of qualitative research is not to present statistical results, but instead to see the rich experience of the participants in seeing their world (Brinkmann, 2013:59). Finally, enough is enough when the data collection is reaching the saturation point, the author is not learning anything new, and the process of interview is becoming more laborious rather than pleasurable (Bertaux, 1981 in Seidman, 2006:56). Thus, I decided to interview 7 producers on the channel. The saturation of information is considered enough because the 7 producers are the most active producers who upload the videos regularly on the channel.

In reaching the target participants, I utilized the network from the previous internship place. Since the YouTube channel of the research topic is the channel that I did the internship with, I proposed Carina Schmid, the owner and the main producer of Easy Languages channel should



be interviewed as a participant in this study. To reach other producers (also known as co-producers) for the Easy Languages channel, I obtained the contact information from Carina. I chose the participants by myself and Carina only helped me contacting the participants.

### **3.3. Interview Process and Data Analysis Method**

Interview process is the most important part of this study because during this process, the empirical material was collected and this material will become the main data of this project. Several steps before the interview process such as deciding the topic, reading several books to have more understanding of the topic and selecting the participants were done before the interview process as mentioned in the previous discussion. The interviews are divided into two parts: the real face-to-face interview and the Skype video call interviews, which is the virtual version of the face-to-face interview. The real face-to-face interview was done with Carina as the main producer of the Easy Languages channel, while the rest of the interviews were done via Skype. The reason of doing a face-to-face interview with Carina was because it was possible for me to reach her without geographical restriction, while the Skype interviews with the other participants were conducted due to geographical restrictions and time differences. The advantage of the real face-to-face interview is both the interviewer and the interviewee are there together, both are engaged in the conversation and I could see the facial expression, body language, and gestures, which enabled me to collect richer empirical data. The idea of virtual interviews via Skype video call is the same as the real face-to-face interview, although a slow Internet connection became a hindrance in collecting the data. The issue with bad Internet connections during the interviews between me and participants rarely happened. If a bad Internet connection happened during the interview processes with the participants and caused a disturbance during Skype video calls, I would always follow up until the expected empirical material was collected.

The interview questions are structured based on the theme participatory culture. The interview process for each participant took about 40 to 50 minutes. The interviews are divided into two parts: the first part is for the main producer and the second part is for the co-producers. The questions around the involvement on YouTube and the content creation were asked to find the motives behind their participation on the Easy Languages channel as content creators. All interviews were recorded by using a smartphone and then the data was transcribed and coded. After the coding process, it was then used in the data analysis.



The data from the interview transcription was analysed and coded by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a systemic approach to identify the meaning of the data, coding and classifying the data through a process of systemic observation and classification (Mills, 2010). Coding helps the author to interpret the data, especially when the author codes full interview transcriptions, as the author might then find important data that might otherwise have gone unnoticed (Charmaz, 2006:70). By following this process, the themes can be described and identified in an organized progression. Finally, the result of the analysis is the data that can be shared with the broader range of people. For instance, the ones who studied the topic or the ones who are unfamiliar with the data and in this level of communicating the result of the research, “the author's translates his own understanding in a way that facilitates communication with people who are more distant from the original source and it represents a third-order representation” (Neuman, 2007:90-91).

### **3.4. Limitations**

There are several limitations that occurred during the data collection. Compared to the face-to-face interview, Skype video call interviews have several disadvantages. For example, as mentioned before a bad Internet connection sometimes caused disturbances between interviewer and interviewee. For instance, valuable information was lost when a disturbance in the Internet connection rendered the interview unable to adequately perceive the interviewee, forcing the interviewer to repeat the relevant question. Language barriers also caused some difficulties, as in some instances the interviewer and interviewee lacked a common language in which both had an advanced proficiency. This was remedied by employing a simpler register in a common language that both the interviewer and interviewee could communicate in.

Although there are more than ten co-producers of the Easy Languages channel, I chose less than ten because those selected participants have been involved in the project for about one to three years. Therefore, the more experience they had of producing videos for the Easy Languages channel, the more data could be produced for this research project. Another reason was that those producers are active producers who produce videos on a weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or bi- months basis. By only including participants that regularly produce videos for the channel, this research will be made more relevant when discussing the topic of participatory culture on digital media, especially in video production.

#### **4. Analysis**

In this chapter, the analysis begins investigating the reason behind the participation on the Easy Languages channel. This part explains the involvement of Carina as the main producer as well the involvement of co-producers on the Easy Languages channel. The second part of this analysis investigates the motivations, challenges and rewards from the production. The third part of the chapter analyses the work of amateur on Easy Languages channel. In the last part of this analysis, the discussion around community and crowdfunding sheds light on how the community plays a big part in the mechanisms of participatory culture on the Easy Languages YouTube channel.

##### **4.1. Channelling the Interests through Participation and Engagement on YouTube**

People from different backgrounds utilize YouTube as a new media platform to produce their own videos. Producing the video based on individual interests and broadcasting it to the public was barely possible before the appearance of YouTube because this kind of activity was only done by big corporation. As it allows its users to upload videos, each video on YouTube has different a purpose based on the owners' interests. Many of the videos that appeared on YouTube became official channels that have particular purposes towards specific audiences. YouTube only has its maximum potential when it is treated as something that people utilize in their daily life (Burgess and Green, 2009:47).

As the language learning channel, Easy Languages helps people to learn foreign languages from native speakers of each language which presents on the channel. The channel has one main producer and several co-producers. The main producer is Carina, who is currently producing Easy German and Super Easy German on the channel. The co-producers are producing language videos based on their native languages. For example, the co-producer from France produces Easy French videos and the co-producer from Brazil produces Easy Brazilian Portuguese videos. The work on a YouTube channel by several producers can be seen as the work of collaboration. Each producer is participating on the collaboration in the Easy Languages channel, giving the audience on YouTube the sense of how a foreign language is spoken. The producers on Easy Languages channel are also the participants of YouTube, the participants who regularly produce useful contents for their audiences. It can be said that the way they produce content on YouTube is a kind of engagement in a new form of publication, where they communicate based on their personal experience (Burgess and Green, 2009).

The new forms of engagement by YouTube attracted those producers to participate in creating videos based on their personal interests. For example, Carina's past experience was the reason behind the creation of Easy Languages and her interests in media production. She states:

I already kind of went into video production when I was young like the age of 14, 15, 16, I get an internship in a TV station and it was at that time it was like my dream to become like a not necessarily a producer but like, do anything with media.

Based on her past experience, Carina needed to be in a professional environment such as TV station in order for her to do media work. Her dream to do something with media could be realized because of her internship experience in a professional environment, which took place before YouTube appeared online. For her, it was difficult to produce her own media project because of the absence of a platform that allows her to broadcast her own video production. Thus, when YouTube made its first appearance in 2005, Carina utilized it and she started to upload videos related to German language. She launched her first German episode video with the title "Saying Hello in Germany | Easy German 1" in December 2006 (Easy Languages, 2006). The idea of this video was to show the audience how to say hello in German. Carina also added German subtitles to make the pronunciations of the words clearer. During the interview, she talks about her initial experience with YouTube:

So, we produce the video for several reasons, but then there was one video that we produce for 2 girls in Vietnam that learn German, and we thought it would be funny to go out to the streets and just talk to the people in German language to see how German sounds. And it was really simple. We just said "Hello", "How are you" and checked how people reacted and this video we put on website called YouTube that we didn't really know at that time. It was very new in 2006 and we just thought, ah it's a nice way to put our videos and then we can send the link somewhere else, so it's like a... very direct way you know. And it turned out that YouTube is much more than online archive for yourself, but random people from all over the world watched the video and we got a lot of feedback and it took a whole long time almost 7 years for us to realize that this is a potential we can continue.

YouTube is an online platform that has more functions than just online video sharing. It also serves the purpose of connecting people through visual imagery, as shown by Carina's statement, suggesting that the first episode of Easy German was created because of two Vietnamese girls. It is fascinating that an ordinary video on YouTube can become a huge potential for the continuation of an idea and creativity production through video sharing. This is the most interesting part of YouTube, because all aspects of human life, no matter how simple it is, can become acceptable and interesting content for YouTube viewers (Van Dijk,

2013:129). YouTube gives the people the chance to experiment and create their own video content on the digital media. YouTube's mantra is "Broadcast Yourself", which emphasizes the rights of expression of each individual and its focus is on individual participation through viewing not through listening (Jenkins et al., 2016:26). Furthermore, Carina's interest in video production was accommodated by YouTube. As an individual who has an interest in showing the audience the German language, YouTube is a platform to channel her interest. She can produce her own content without the need of television media to release and broadcast her content. She only needs the Internet, basic video shooting equipment and the YouTube platform. As a new media online platform, YouTube provides the affordable services to its users. It can be said that from its establishment, YouTube has been serving the purpose as an alternative to television (Van Dijk 2013:112). This means that YouTube provides Carina with the chance to be her own producer on her channel Easy Languages, which attracted many viewers to engage more with her channel.

The development of the Easy Languages channel gave Carina the idea to create more language learning videos, beside those focusing on German, by allowing for people to be co-producers for the Easy Languages channel as she states on the interview:

We also openly did a call for producers, so we started in our videos to tell people "Hey if you also want to do this in your language just send us a message!".

In the community of Easy Languages, everyone is free to contribute towards the video productions. In a participatory culture, every contribution will be valued and each member of the community is free to contribute towards the content production (Jenkins et al., 2009:6). During the interview with the co-producers, it was revealed that Anna, Anthony, and Kristina were involved in the production because of seeing the videos on the Easy Languages channel. They were only audiences in the Easy Languages community before their involvement in the video production. For example, the involvement of being a co-producer by giving comment on Carina's video is explained by Anna:

Actually about 2 years ago, I started to learn German language, so I found Easy German and somebody in a comment wrote, "Well, will be any Easy Russian?" and then Easy Languages asked that person that "We are looking for people who can make Easy Russian. If you know somebody, we will be happy to know". So, I read it and I wrote and it's how I became part of it.

The action that was done by Anna is an example of active participation and engagement within the community of Easy Languages. She was interested in contributing to the video production because someone commented and asked about a similar concept for Russian.

These activities for user's engagement such as commenting on and responding to video clips are important parts to the community operation (Chau, 2010:67). It is a unique way in responding the comment by involving in the core activity of Easy Languages channel. Moreover, participatory culture is not about creating a "particular state of society", it is rather about being "engaged" in an inspirational project that gives the opportunity for others to have meaningful participation (Jenkins et al., 2016:182). As Anna joined the team of co-producer on Easy Languages channel, she received the opportunity to channel her interests in video production. She was presented with the opportunity because she contacted Carina after reading the comment from one of the audiences on the channel. It shows that the comment section on YouTube is the vital part for the interaction and connectivity to happen within the community.

Another part that influences the involvement of the participation in the video production on the channel is the willingness from the co-producer to continue the previous video project. Anthony, the French co-producer describes his involvement with Easy Languages channel:

I was learning and watching Easy German and there was already the first episode of Easy French and there was no other episode than this number one and I thought it would be interesting to continue this. So, that's it! Just the way to help people while discovering things at the same time.

Anthony is clearly engaged in the production on Easy languages and involved in "produsage". Produsage is "the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement" (Bruns, 2008:21). The existence of the Easy French video prior to his involvement is a sign that the production of the video was the first product that needs to be continued and improved. As a French native speaker, Anthony is interested in continuing the first episode of Easy French and in further improving in making of Easy French videos, while at the same time helping learners of French to get more insight into the language. Production happens because there is collaborative works from a wide range of participants to improve the existing content (Bruns 2008). Kristina from Brazil had the same idea as Anthony about her involvement in the Easy Language video production. She watched previous episodes of Easy Brazilian Portuguese and she would like to continue the video production. She says: "There are two video productions of Easy Brazilian Portuguese which stopped producing, so I am going to produce anyway because I really saw the benefit to have more natural approach towards language".

The production participation by Anthony and Kristina clearly shows that the previous video productions need more continuation and development. Lange, (2007:368) states that “making the video created the connections that did not exist prior to the mediated event”. Before the involvement of Anthony and Kristina in the channel, there were only 1 Easy French and 2 Easy Brazilian Portuguese videos. After their involvement on Easy Languages channel, Easy French currently has 69 videos and Easy Brazilian Portuguese has 32 videos (updated June 2017). Easy Languages created more connection to people that Carina never knew before. By creating more language videos, she engaged and attracted more viewers, some of which even began to participate in the production, not only viewing, commenting or sharing the videos. Furthermore, “YouTube (the company and the website infrastructure it provides) can be understood as occupying an institutional function – operating as a coordinating mechanism between individual and collective creativity and meaning production; and as a mediator between various audience- or user-oriented ones” (Burgess and Green, 2009:37). The platform connects people from different backgrounds to channel their interests to create a bigger community and Easy Languages is the example of that community. These explanations of the first analysis support the claim that participatory culture embraces the value of diversity. Carina as a German producer invited several people from different countries to involve in her project. Moreover, those co-producers received the opportunity to channel their interests related to the video production through Easy Languages channel. This is aligned with the statement of Jenkins (2009) on the participatory culture, where the consumers who have the access to the Internet participating in content creation and spreading it online in more powerful way.

## **4.2. The Production Works of Easy Languages Channel**

### **4.2.1. Motivations for the Video Production**

The production of Easy Languages videos is motivated by several reasons. The motivations of each person who is involved in the production of Easy Languages videos are varied. The most common motivation that was founded during the interviews was to help the audience learning a language. For example, as the video producer Carina explained:

I am a video producer, I mean it's because of the success of the project (Easy Languages project) that I became a video producer and not necessarily because I wanted to. I know that what I create can have a huge impact, so I want to focus more on creating stuff. We tried to help people who think they can, or who might think about being a video producer to encourage them to share their cultures.

While her explanation seems to contradict with her statement “not necessarily because I wanted to”, but the success of the project and her willingness to help others to share their cultures motivated her to do more productions. Similar with Carina’s statement, Kristina also answered the question of the motivation behind doing Easy Brazilian Portuguese that “It’s teaching. That’s what I wanted. Teach people something”. These motivations are also reflected by the statement from Courtois et al. (2013:613) that “by sharing a video on YouTube, uploaders contribute as individuals to the benefit of a collective entity”, which means that the notion of video production and sharing on YouTube helps other people who do not have access to certain materials to gain access the necessary material that is provided by the uploader. By sharing videos, the uploader also will gain more subscribers, views and feedbacks, which in turn will help the improvement and the development of the future productions.

The collaborative system on YouTube provides an opportunity for people to create conversations that become an interaction among users (Uricchio, 2009). For example, Juan stated that his motivation is to communicate an important message to society for a particular issue, which sparked debates and conversations among the users. He describes:

I am working in things that from a long time I want to do like videos and filming and being creative and having like this, like something to say, something to communicate and also this other part that I talked about before about the international community, I think this is a very specific project because you literally speak to people from all over the world... we just recently made a video about the “Trump wall” because we thought it was important for us as Mexicans to give our opinion and more than just talking about it to understand what’s going on and try to ask the Mexicans in the street like consolation, what do they think is better.

He clearly stated that he would like to do something different and creative through the channel of Easy Languages. He wants to deliver his message to wider audience through this channel. When he spoke about the wall that will be built by Trump, he and his friend went around Mexico City to interview people about related topic (Easy Languages, 2017). This video about the wall that will be built by Trump sparks a lot of discussion on the channel and this is what Juan expected from the video he and his friend produced. Juan tried to produce something that he thought would create an exchange of ideas and discussions. In the comment section of the “Trump Wall-Easy Spanish 52” video, discussion and exchanges of thoughts occurred. Conversations on the topic resulted in discussions on its advantages and disadvantages. This was expected from choosing such a controversial topic. Since he also talked about the importance of providing the Mexican people an opportunity and a platform to



state their opinions, it gives the idea that YouTube provides the individual with the opportunity to voice or communicate the opinions of many people through its platform. It acts as an alternative media to communicate a message from the society to the public sphere, in this case the audience of YouTube.

The comments and feedback are available in every video of Easy Languages channel. The result from the people's feedback on the channel is the continuation of the video production, which keeps motivating the producer and co-producers of the channel. Feedback is powerful elements to keep the motivation of participation in the video production. Miller (in Duncum, 2014:33) added that when humans work as a swarm, they tend to give better results than working individually, which means that the production of Easy Languages videos will be improved upon with the help of comments and feedbacks from the people who watch and follow the channel. Interviewee Justyna from Poland said that she was inspired to do the Easy Polish production because of the feedback she had gotten on her videos, as she explained:

Once we started doing it and we saw that it works a lot and there actually people learn with us, which were very surprising for us because you know, Polish is not that popular language. So, when we saw the feedback from other people, those now are my motivation to keep it up because I see that there are some regular viewers who commented on our episode and who said that it's very helpful and that they want more and more, so this is now the main motivation.

She found out that through this channel, she can spread the Polish language to the virtual world and being known globally, since the Polish language itself is not popular. Giving feedback to a video on YouTube is part of the participatory culture that is done by the viewers within the community. This is a feature of YouTube that has low barriers to civic engagement. The viewers can watch, comment and respond the videos. The participation of the viewers towards the video is crucial because the feedback interactions creates the form of "engagement" that can motivate the users to create more videos to be circulated within the community (Chau, 2010:67). The explanation from Justyna also revealed that the digital media has developed further into the audience that was hardly reachable in the past. Thus, YouTube has succeeded in reaching a hardly reachable audience that the old media could barely succeeded in doing in the past.

The statement of Justyna is aligned with Manifold (2009:260) in her paper about how students have the motivation to take up the challenges of continuing their artwork after getting



recognition and praise. During these challenges, they will compete against their peers and they will continue in pursuing arts when the students receive support from teachers and their peers. Then the students will consider that it is their possible career in the future and will seriously look for work based on their interests in art (Manifold, 2009:260). The next answer from Justyna about working as Easy Languages co-producer and speaking about making the videos as her real job in the future is predictable. She says “Well actually in the future we would like to make our project like financially sustainable. I mean, you know like the biggest dream somewhere faraway in the future is to actually make working on Easy Polish a job, instead of working some anything else and doing this just an additional thing”. It means, the positive feedback from YouTube comments boost the confidence of the co-producer to produce better contents, even giving hope for the co-producer to pursue the same career in the future.

Carina realized that YouTube has a potential to create impact through video and helping others to become co-producers. The co-producers also have the same intention of utilizing YouTube to help others learning the languages and continuing the previous production. YouTube is suitable “tool” for participatory communities to sharing and exchange their cultural productions with each other (Jenkins et al., 2016:12). Thus, the motivations of participation on the channel are the intention of helping others by sharing the language knowledge through the video and the willing to develop the video content on Easy Languages channel.

#### **4.2.2. Rewards and Challenges**

The producer and co-producers on the Easy Languages channel work together to create language videos in their native languages. Each of video producers get rewards for their video production based on the ad revenue that is generated on YouTube. Because everybody works together on one channel, Carina as the main producer manages everything and shares the revenue from the video production. She says:

They (co-producers) upload the videos on our channel, and they will get 70% revenue, so this is part of the model. This encourages people to earn their own money, so we don't want to buy videos from them or don't want to exploit people obviously, but we tried to encourage people to earn the money themselves and at the same time we would be motivated to teach them and do all the stuff for the because we will still get a 30% share.

Revenue sharing is a good way to encourage the co-producers to produce video regularly. Postigo states that “one may argue that the true reason YouTube exists is to make money since that is what the designers intended but that discounts the myriad other reasons YouTubers would give for being part of the site” (2014:336-337). It is true that YouTube is an alternative for the digital artist or video producer to earn money from their contribution of work on the platform. Whether the money comes from the ad revenue of individual or collective works, YouTube provides the mechanisms for the producers to earn money through the platform. Producing videos is a lot of work. At first the producers need to conduct street interviews. Then they do the editing, translating from their native languages to English and putting the subtitle on the video. It requires much work and time, thus sharing the revenue is a good way that the Easy Languages channel can appreciate the work of its co-producers.

However, the work of co-producers is challenged by some difficulties. As explained before, doing video production requires much work. Most of the difficulties that the co-producers are faced with are resource and time management. Moreover, the main producer and co-producers have differences in terms of the workload and how they receive the income after they uploaded their work on YouTube. For example, for Carina, doing video production on the Easy Languages channel is her main job as she says “Now since this 3 years I actually shifted my job more and more by being Project Manager in the NGO to become a full-time Video Producer”. As the main producer, Carina took the whole responsibility of the video production and it is assumed that her heavy workload is balanced with her earnings from YouTube ad revenue and Patreon<sup>1</sup> (it will be explained in the last part of the analysis). While the co-producer from France, Anthony, talks about his workload and the earnings he received from the work:

I work alone. I mean I am doing all the stuff on my own. You need someone to shoot the video but after, what do I do, I do everything alone. Like who is going to help me do this? No one you know.

If I don't do it, there will be no videos at all. I earn let say less than okay money.

Being the only person responsible for the Easy French videos and his statement about the money he earned after the video production shows the imbalance between how hard he works for the Easy Languages channel and the reward he earns after his works. Moreover, since Anthony works alone, the video productions depend on him because without his contribution on Easy Languages channel, the regularity of the French language video uploading on the

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<sup>1</sup> How Carina earns from Patreon will be explained in the last part of the analysis.

channel will be disturbed. Anthony's statement is supported by Juan's statement, which reports similar challenge for the video production:

Sometimes it's too much work because I usually do everything. I filmed, I edited the videos and I translated them from Spanish to English, so I think it's, I mean I can handle it but it should be better if I have another, another person helping me besides Baruch.

Both claim that the struggle of the production is caused by a lack of resources on their sides. To shoot a street interview, it is necessary to have the interviewer and the videographer or a minimum of two people working together. It was also not an easy task to simply ask people on the street to be interviewed. While, Juan has his friend Baruch who helps him in doing video productions, Anthony has irregular people who help him doing the video productions. During the interview about the video production, Anthony explains that the one who helped him film was his friends or sometimes strangers that he finds reliable. Apart from the struggle during the video production, Anthony gave another method of coping with the small income and he appreciates the money he earned as a co-producer:

Thanks to Patreon because I can make some amount of money. I can spend it in traveling but also in traveling for the videos. So, I can go to France to travel there and work on making the videos too you know.

Although he stated that he earned less than he expected, Anthony is still being positive about the amount of money he received from Patreon, which helps him to produce Easy French videos for the Easy language channel. When Anthony is being asked further about the driving factors that make him continue his video production even though he does it alone, he says: "I wanted to help the people. That's all. Help them to learn French from this content".

Aligned with the statement from Anthony and Juan, Justyna said that she had issues with time management with the production of Easy Polish videos. She called it as her biggest challenge as she states:

I think that the biggest challenge, like personal challenge is the time management to organize everything in order to be able to make one episode per week, because it really a lot of works when I have like a fulltime college and some in organizations. Our main challenge is to communicate more about our project then to like actually reach the people who really learn the Polish language.

The fact that she is a college student and has to work with the video production means that she has two responsibilities to handle at the same time. Her statement shows the big difference between her work and Carina's work. While Carina is producing videos independently and treating it as her main job, Justyna must divide her time between producing videos and her college studies. She also states that reaching people who would like to learn

Polish and producing videos is not an easy task. She also talks about the rewards for the Easy Polish video production and provided an interesting account:

Well, actually I don't get that much but you know the point is that, you don't do Easy Languages for money. You do it for passion and for the people and just the joy of working on it and that's how I see it. I honestly don't calculate the money.

Passion and people are the driving factor for her to keep producing videos, although she earned little money. Based on her explanation, she took the work of being co-producer seriously and treated it as the hobby that she enjoys. Surprisingly, when it comes to the driving factors to keep on working despite many challenges, Juan has the similar explanation to overcome said challenges:

I might say that the biggest challenge like having to do all that work on our own but I mean I enjoy it. That's why I keep doing it [...] the people tell you that your videos are working for them to learn the language, that's one of the best feedback you can have from your work.

Although Juan doesn't say anything about money, he claims that it is the feedback he gets from the viewers that keeps motivated to produce videos as a co-producer. It has similar pattern from Justina's explanation about working with joy and "for the people" or for the viewers of Easy Languages.

While most of the video production challenges for the co-producers are resources and time management, Omar, the co-producer from Egypt has different challenge. The challenge he faces is the challenge that is related to the culture in Egypt. He says:

The challenges that, you have to have a question that like corresponds or confirms to the Egyptian culture. Like you can't ask about anything, you can't ask about the same question that Easy German asked or just Easy Polish asked, so it's really quite different. You have to convince people. Some people are actually sceptic.

The statement from Omar shows that not all co-producers have the equality in terms of choosing the topic for the video production. Omar always careful in choosing the topic for Easy Egyptian Arabic. Not only he has to adapt the topic into the culture of Egyptian people, but also he must avoid the downtown of Cairo which is supposed to be one of the best place to find people to be interviewed for the video production. He explains, "We don't shoot in the downtown Cairo because is very crowded and it has security issues". Having those difficulties, it is however interesting to see the driving factor behind Omar's participation in video production. Omar says about his motivation of doing video production:

Actually, just because I really have fun and whenever we go down the street and because recently I have not like Eman or Ashraf and I have not met in regular based so sometimes we only meet for Easy Arabic and I really like, I really like meeting with them and chatting and talking and so on... Just doing something new, doing something different from what I do regularly in my life and also because I want to have a very good profile, professional profile. So, this is actually what keeps me going.

Omar also adds that he wants to do something different from what he does in his daily life and he wants to have professional profile for his involvement on being co-producers. From his explanation about the motives, it is concluded that human interaction is a vital part in participatory culture as well as the recognition. Omar wants to become professional in his future by utilizing his involvement in the channel, which means that he hopes that his works on Easy Languages channel is being recognized by professionals. In fact, YouTube provides the opportunity for Omar to develop his creativity by producing videos.

The work of video production by the co-producers of Easy Languages channel is counted as digital labour, where the commodities (e.g. software, video, websites) are available freely on the Internet. This phenomenon of digital labour is known as free labour (also sometimes not totally free but labour with low earnings) and it is something common in the age of digital economy. These people work on the Internet, creating something for society but not getting paid or only getting small earning for their creations. Terranova (2000:37) states that “Free labour is the moment where this knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited”. Those labourers enjoy expressing their creativity on the Internet because of the joy they get from working in developing their creations while getting more appreciation from society, even though they are actually unaware of the fact that they are “shamelessly exploited”. Moreover, the more appreciation and useful their commodity is to society, the more work they will put into the commodity because it means that their product is acknowledged by wider audience, especially in the digital era, where everything spreads quickly. This might be the case with the co-producers on Easy Languages channel where they work with little earnings while claiming that they do it for the people and because they enjoy doing it. The question is, are they exploited?

The answers lie on some statements above from Carina and some co-producers. Firstly, Carina says that she does not want to exploit them, she encourages co-producers and she is

willing to teach them skills related to video production. This is the work of the community within Easy Languages, where they support their peers to gain more skills and better development for video production. Sharing more percentages with the co-producers on the ad revenue also will give the co-producers the motivation they need, because the more the video gets viewed, the more revenue they can generate. It means that the better the quality of the videos in terms of resolution and content, the more views they can get. Secondly, the statements from Anthony, Justyna and Juan have the same patterns, helping people to learn languages. They do it in order to provide viewers with knowledge. They also will get the benefit of being rewarded with positive comments and critics, which will give them good feedback to improve their videos. As it explained before, feedback is the driving factors that the producer and co-producers enjoy doing their job. Besides, being recognized because of the work on the channel is also one of the driving factors behind the involvement of the co-producer and it is Omar in this case.

Terranova, however emphasizes that “free labour is not necessarily exploited labour, because in the age of digital era where the virtual communities are growing, labour are not compensated with the great financial rewards, but the labour do their job to do something which makes them happy by exchanging information within communities” (2000:48). Therefore, there is not forced participation in the Easy Language video productions. Instead, all their work is compensated with the opportunity for the producers to channel their hobbies, getting positive feedback for their works, ad revenue from YouTube and donations from their community in Patreon. For them, rewards in the shape of money only matters a little bit, as long as they enjoy their work. Thus, the participatory culture between the producers and its community embraced in a way that they can support each other by a useful exchange of information.

### **4.3. Amateur Works on Easy Languages Channel**

The notion of amateurs producing contents on YouTube has been discussed constantly by Jenkins. As the open networked platform, YouTube has been supporting the spreading of media productions that are created by amateurs (Jenkins et al., 2016). By spreading the contents on YouTube, amateurs can attract people to create their own community, because the YouTube interface is simple and accessible for everyone. The community is created because of the interactions that happen during the circulation videos. It took several years for Easy Languages channel to become a huge language learning community. It also took years for

Carina, as the main producer for Easy Languages channel, to transform the amateur work into more professional work. She refined her work into better quality and style to attract a wider audience. When the video on YouTube earned feedbacks from other users or viewers, the potential of the video in a particular channel can be improved. In this regard, YouTube is a reflection of “participatory culture” that is not only creating virtual communities but also giving the opportunity for viewers to create their own content (producer) (Creeber, 2009:19).

Carina started her amateur work by uploading her first video on July 2006 with the title “Boy get’s heavily beaten” (Easy Languages 2006). The quality of the video is low and the editing is simple. Although it was 10 years ago, her first video has only gotten 1,346 views (June 2017). The video title even has a grammatical mistake. However, apart from her first amateur work, it was revealed during the interview that she was not a complete amateur during the video production. She had knowledge of professional media production even before she started her YouTube channel, as she had worked for a television program. The revelation of Carina’s background shows that YouTube is a video-sharing platform for anybody, no matter the quality of ones videos, YouTube provides the opportunity. Any videos can be uploaded on YouTube, regardless of the quality of the video, but YouTube takes action against copyright infringements and vulgarity (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). Yochai Benkler (2007) described the YouTube platform as the hybrid of media environment where media producers from amateur to semi-professional and further to professional with diverse intentions and backgrounds, work on the same platform and learn from each other’s work (Jenkins et al., 2016:18). The success of the content on YouTube depends on the topic of the content, quality and information. Carina’s videos are a mix between amateur work and semi-professional to nearly professional work because she used to have an information channel in 2006 that was called Solar Net News (Easy Languages 2006).

Carina uploaded her very first episode of Easy German on December 2006, which was dedicated to two Vietnamese girls who requested her to produce a German video. Surprisingly, her first video of Easy German is the second most viewed video on her channel with more than 1,7 million views (Easy Languages 2006). Most probably the huge amount of views was caused by the popularity of the German language in the international community. The popularity of the German language gives Carina advantages to develop her channel, although she didn’t have the slightest idea with what to do with her channel until she realized that the YouTube platform has given her the potential to develop her channel. She explained:



It is something that 3 years ago, YouTube contacted us and you know, you have a great project with a lot of potentials. So, maybe you should, you know you should become professional YouTubers and do more of it. At that point I didn't know what YouTubers were.

It explains that a user on YouTube has the possibility to get a professional recognition after a good amount of dedications producing creative contents. In this regard, YouTube is viewed as the company who invites talented people to create videos on its channel, although the users never have the intention of making videos to impress YouTube, but only for individual pleasure or channelling personal interest. By inviting talented users, YouTube has more good quality videos on its platform. It attracts more advertisers to advertise their products on YouTube and with this system, YouTube shares the ad revenue with the users. This business model is what makes YouTube survives for more than decades after its creation. As YouTube has matured as a commercial platform built on both amateur and professional content and supported by advertising, "YouTube has been the site of another development – the professionalisation and formalisation of amateur media production" (Burgess, 2013:54). Therefore, the claim of UGC is killing off the industries it feeds on doesn't apply on YouTube (Hetcher, 2013:40).

Users are also viewers who consume videos for their own purposes. On YouTube, some consumers are not only consuming videos, but also interacting within the community and producing much content. They become "active users and participants in the creation as well as the usage of the media and culture" (Bruns, 2008:16). The users producing something are known as "produser" (Bruns, 2006) and the produser phenomenon particularly occurs in the Web 2.0 world, where the content of production is continuously being improved upon by collaboration within the community of the producers (Bird, 2011:503). Therefore, the Easy Languages channel is the result of non-stop development of participatory culture, which means that Carina as the main producer constantly gets feedbacks from her viewers on how to improve her channel to be more professional. Furthermore YouTube, which acts as the corporate company, contacted her to be more professional YouTube and gave her suggestion to focus on specific topics on her channel.

However, since the Easy Languages channel is developing to become more professional, the collaboration with other co-producer raised another concern about amateur works within the community of Easy Languages. This raised questions such as "If Easy Languages is a professional YouTube channel, should the co-producers become professionals as well?" or



“Were they amateurs or professionals during the recruitment as co-producers?”. To answer these questions, we must take a look at the perspective of Carina as the main producer. She explained:

I think most people who work with us yet interesting because it’s kind of depends. Some people who come to us who say like “I already know everything about video productions, so it will be for me so easy to start”, but I feel like those people who are mostly encouraged become co-producers are those ones who know nothing, so they will learn everything through us and this is for them, this will be a benefit or a reason why to participate in our program is to learn this and be part of something.

It is important for Carina that a potential co-producer has little knowledge about video production, since it will give her a chance to teach them about video production and motivate them to do produce better videos. Carina helps the co-producer to produce videos for her channel, which enables Carina to reach audiences beyond German learners and the co-producers benefit by getting knowledge of video production and having the opportunity to create video portfolios on a channel with more than 300,000 subscribers.

It was revealed from the interviews that all of the co-producers of Easy Languages were amateurs. Kristina, a co-producer for Easy Brazilian Portuguese said that her amateur talent actually encourages her to produce video in better quality. She said:

So, I thought “Okay, don’t worry! I should have objective of being perfect” you know and then I found someone who would cut my videos and sometimes my husband helped me filming or friend and this is how it goes. So, we are all amateurs.

Kristina teamed up with her friend and husband to produce the video. She shows that the amateurs do not have to worry about producing content on YouTube. The way of how the co-producers produce the video is to try their best during the video production. They are all amateurs but the regular video production and the constant feedbacks from the audience will improve their work. While it is good to continue working as an amateur on YouTube, it appears that the work of amateurs endangers the community of professional work in a digital society. For example, Keen has criticized the work of amateurs as “troublesome” because it blurred the line between the creators and consumers, authors and audiences, experts and amateurs (Courtois et al., 2012:133). The amateur work was a joke, poor in content quality and it creates mediocre products (Keen, 2007). The negative effect of the amateurism is somewhat true in the sense of low quality production, although not every amateur production will spell disaster for the future of professional work. Instead, the successful of media

production relies on the cooperation between professionals and amateurs (creative citizen consumers), not one taking over the other (Deuze and Banks, 2009:422).

As the development YouTube, the company improves its business model into creating more stable engagement and relation among right holders, uploaders, advertisers and audiences by institutionalized and professionalized amateur video production (Burgess, 2013:53-54). Therefore, it is important for Carina to improve the quality of the Easy Languages channel into more a professional channel through collaboration with amateurs. Amateur works are not always disadvantageous, because what Carina has started on her channel was an amateur video but nowadays most of her videos are more professional and produced with the high-quality camera video. Finally, the discussion on amateur works proves that the claim from Keen, the author who heavily criticized amateur works is totally inaccurate. On his book, Keen states:

“The free, user-generated content spawned and extolled by the Web 2.0 revolution is decimating the ranks of our cultural gatekeepers, as professional critics, journalists, editors, musicians, moviemakers, and other purveyors of expert information are being replaced by amateur bloggers, hack reviewers, homespun moviemakers, and attic recording artists. Meanwhile, the radically new business models based on user-generated material suck the economic value out of traditional media and cultural content” (2007:16).

The YouTube way of attracting amateurs from around the world is the best way to find hidden talent, creating a participatory culture within the YouTube community that provides an abundance of information to its users and producers, amateurs and professionals alike. YouTube is the platform where amateurs and professionals collaborate to create the new emergence of business model, creating more opportunities in the Web 2.0 for the spreadable of useful content in the digital age.

#### **4.4. From Community to Crowdfunding**

The community is an important element within participatory culture. It consists of people who constantly participate within the Easy Languages channel. The people in the community of the Easy Languages channel can be from the co-producers, subscribers, commenters, and the audience of the channel. There is the feeling of “belonging” in the community. Jenkins explained, that a shared ethic about participation in “their” community is stronger than regular group of people, but that a group of people are strongly networked, formed based on goals

and values, and working together towards those goals (2016:28). The community building within the Easy Languages channel is quite strong because Carina has built it for years. Through her channel, hundred thousand or even millions of people have learned foreign languages such as German, Spanish, French and Russian. They commented on the videos, suggested improvements, or requested interesting topic for future episodes on the channel, and finally they became Easy Languages fans. They became Easy Languages fans because they feel that the channel helped them to learn the languages they want to master or simply because they want to see people and culture through the videos because of the uniqueness of the content, where the audience can see different language videos produced in different countries. This uniqueness, which exist beside just a mere channel for language learning, is the kind of YouTube channel that is worth to be subscribed, liked and supported. From the video learning itself, the community feel the benefit of learning languages through the channel.

The community is a valuable asset for the channel with hundreds of thousands of subscribers, as Easy Languages has more than 380,000 subscribers. As explained in the introduction, Carina created Easy German channel separately as the result from the development of the Easy Languages channel. During the interview, Carina said that the Easy German channel has around 90.000 subscribers. Some of her subscribers are supporting her works through the Patreon website. The idea of how valuable her community is explained by her statement:

Right now, we earn about 2500 dollars with this per month which is only through 350 supporters, so you can imagine we only convince like 350 out of 90.000 subscribers to support us regularly, so if we can convince more people, this will be our independent future you know, like the whole growth of our project and our personal careers will kind of depend on that.

The reason behind the donation of the community lies on the benefit learning the language through Easy Languages channel. Most of the funding come through a website called Patreon. For example, in the Patreon page of Easy German<sup>2</sup>, Carina needs 1000 US dollars per video she makes. Currently now she has 919 US dollars per video from 540 patrons. Each patron who donates the money for the project will get more benefit such as the feature of unlocking German lesson only for patrons. It means that Carina offers more benefit to her patrons and the patrons feel the benefit of learning more German lesson by funding Carina's project on Easy German. Because originally the YouTube content is professional or semi-professional, the independent media-makers are looking for the support of their work to be paid in order to

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<sup>2</sup> Easy German on Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/easygerman>

maintain sustainability for the future production (Jenkins et al., 2016:138). This income has not been counted together with the income from YouTube. Thus, becoming a YouTuber is currently her main job and responsibility as she has a regular monthly income. The plan of getting more subscribers to help her do her project while also enjoying the benefit of being paid (via donations) by the subscribers is her future plan to become more independent. Her big responsibility as the main producer is being compensated by a sustainable income, thus she can work full-time on her both her projects Easy Languages and Easy German.

When the community is asked by Carina to help her to fund her projects, several people from her community were willing to help. In 2016, Carina had a project about teaching German in a formal education institution such as in high schools and universities in the United States. Since she planned to visit several high schools and universities, she needed to be in the United States for a month. A trip from Germany to the United States as well as the costs of living there for a month is not cheap. Therefore, Carina began to promote her project on August 2016 with the title “Easy German goes USA: Be part of our trip!” on her Easy German YouTube channel (Easy German, 2016). In the end of the video, she told her fans that they could be the part of their US trip by supporting her trip and her crew by donating money through Indiegogo. On the Indiegogo<sup>3</sup> site in the page Easy German goes USA, Carina achieved more funding than the original target. She has raised \$3,542 USD, compared to the original target of \$2,500 USD. During the interview, she stated:

We did another tour through the US where we visited schools and universities, and we asked people from our community to donate money for us to make this trip happened and it worked surprisingly well. They donated over 3000 euro, and we went to the US and visited schools.

This means that the YouTube platform can be utilized to promote YouTubers' projects and to get funding from the community by using funding sites such as Indiegogo. This method of collecting fund to support ideas or projects through platforms such as Indiegogo or Kickstarter or other funding sites on the Internet is known as crowdfunding (Herther, 2016). As discussed in the literature review, the act of giving funds to a big project by having the source of fund from society was done in the process of building the Liberty Statue in New York. Nowadays people are experimenting with what so-called sharing economy and crowdfunding, where the people also can raise the money without the mediation of the massive markets because they have their own community already (Jenkins et al., 2016:140). People who are raising funds are trying to involve the community to be the part of their

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<sup>3</sup> Indiegogo: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/easy-german-goes-usa-be-part-of-our-trip#/>

project while the community or the people who are providing funds expect that they can get benefits from what they have invested their funds into (Assenova et al., 2016:128). Crowdfunding is “changing the way in which even many traditional nonprofits expand their reach and their base of supporters, including higher education and research” (Herther, 2016:30).

Within the community of the Easy Languages channel, crowdfunding has helped the co-producers to finance their own project. The way of how Patreon works is explained by Juan:

The videos will be always free but since we want to keep making videos, with Patreon, people subscribe to us and they pay to us and we send them extra content, so we send them the videos without subtitles and the transcriptions.

The money that is donated by the people through Patreon is used to give the co-producers more capability in doing video production. For example, on the Patreon site of Easy Spanish<sup>4</sup>, it costs 100 US dollars to create one video production. The Easy Spanish Patreon currently is currently funded by 38 patrons with the total amount of 90 US dollars per video. Although the amount of the money hasn't reached the goal, it gives Juan enough motivation to continue producing the video. What is interesting from crowdfunding is the normalization of monetizing some of what historically non-monetized (Jenkins et al., 2016:140). The co-producers produce the video and then upload it on YouTube channel. People start to like the video and they want more. Of course, the video of Easy Languages will be always free. If the audience want the exercise from each video, extra work from co-producers are necessary and to reward that extra work, the audience donate the money through Patreon to get more materials from co-producers and the materials are exclusive only to patrons.

Crowdfunding also has helped one of the co-producers who could not afford to finance something due to critical condition. Anna, the co-producer of Easy Russian once had a serious illness and needed intensive care in the hospital. However, she and her family did not have the means to finance her medication in the hospital. Carina, as the main producer of Easy Languages, made a campaign on Easy Languages channel to the fans of Easy Languages channel and especially Easy Russian videos to help Anna finance her medication cost through Indiegogo (Easy Languages, 2015). On the Indiegogo<sup>5</sup> site, it's written that Carina succeeded in collecting \$2,203 USD from the total goal of \$3,000 USD. Although the fund was only

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<sup>4</sup> Easy Spanish: <https://www.patreon.com/easyspanish>

<sup>5</sup> Indiegogo: <https://www.generosity.com/medical-fundraising/urgent-medical-support-for-anna-from-easy-russian>

collected 73%, Anna felt that people were way too generous and the money has helped her more than enough to finance her medication cost. She explained during the interview:

We produced Easy Russian just about 6 months yeah it was just like nothing and then I entered the hospital. It was really hard and I spent more than a month in hospital. So, I missed all my exam to university and the hospital fee is really expensive and Carina made a campaign video “We need help for Anna”. I was crying because it touched me really a lot because I just, I don’t know. It’s actually amazing and the people gave plenty of money and it covered all my medicines (medical expenses).

This statement by Anna proves the claim that online participatory culture that the social connectedness is clearly visible among the members of the online community. One of the example of social connectedness is on the online comic creation site, Pixton community where the members supported their online friend in serious illness (Henderson, 2013:276). It means that when humans form communities online, the support towards other members will be as strong as in real-world communities as long as they have similar interests and communication between members occur constantly. Finally, Easy Languages channel is a channel that connects people around the world through communication and feedbacks on the channel, where the result of the activities is the strong support towards the sustainability of the Easy Languages project.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the participatory culture between the producer, co-producers and the community on the YouTube channel Easy Languages. The purpose of this study was to find the reasons behind their participation on the video production and to discover the motivations behind the community support towards the works of producer and co-producers within the Easy Languages channel. The main theory for the analysis of this study is participatory culture by Jenkins (2009; 2016). One of the most interesting parts about participation is that it “refers to properties of the culture, where groups collectively and individually make decisions that have an impact on their shared experiences” (Jenkins et al., 2016:12). By participating in something, people share their experiences with others and the way of sharing and participating creates mutual benefits for all of them. Within this idea, participatory culture on the YouTube channel Easy Languages is unique, because there are several producers within one channel. In analyzing this study, I conducted seven interviews, consisting of interviews with 1 main producer and 6 co-producers. The reason for choosing these seven participants to be interviewed in this study was the fact that they are the most active producers on the channel so the data collected will be much relevant for this study.

In the analysis, it was revealed that the first research question about driving factors, motivations and challenges was answered by two factors, self-motivation and driven motivation. For example, Carina has had a passion for video production since the age of 14 years old. She decided to take an internship at a TV station to channel her interest in video production. With the appearance of YouTube as a platform to upload videos online, Carina decided to upload a simple video which was of low quality with the title “Boy get’s heavily beaten”, trying to impress the audience with her video production knowledge from her internship experience. Carina’s participation on YouTube was caused by self-motivation that came from her passion. Not long after she uploaded her video, she decided to post the first video of Easy German with the title “Hello”, following a request from two Vietnamese girls to show them German through street interviews. In this regard, Carina was driven by a request from others to produce a video that led into the continuous production in the German language. This made her realize that her video production on YouTube had more potential if she collaborates with others, thus she opened an invitation for people around the world to join her in producing street interviews in different languages. The co-producers, for example Juan, wants to communicate something to society through the channel, while Justyna has motivation because of the feedback she received from her video production. Those are



examples of self-motivation and driven motivation of participating in video production. Interestingly, feedback and helping others to learn languages are the most common driven motivation after the interviewees being asked about the challenges of video production. While the challenges are mostly financial, but also relating to resources and time management, feedback is revealed to be a factor that can ease the feeling of having a heavy workload during video production. In this analysis, it was revealed that most of the co-producers earn less money for their work. Again, this challenge seems to matter little because of the appreciation of their work or the feeling of being appreciated by feedback after videos are uploaded onto the channel. In this case, the discussion about free or unpaid labour was sparked in the analysis. Terranova states that “free labour, however, is not necessarily exploited labour because they are doing something willingly in exchange for the pleasures of communication and exchange within their community” (2000:48). Other than this reason, passion also becomes the driving factor behind participation because they can channel their hobby of video production into a more professional way through the Easy Languages channel.

The second research question is about “How do the producer and co-producers perceive their work on video production on the Easy Languages channel related to the amateur work?”. To answer this question, I tried to elaborate upon the notion of amateur works on YouTube. Based on the interview with Carina, there are two important points regarding the notion of amateur works on the Easy Languages channel. Firstly, it takes years of works to achieve the level of professionalism in doing video production on YouTube. She was contacted by YouTube to focus more on her channel after she created many videos containing street interviews in German. Secondly, since YouTube is a platform for everyone to upload videos, no matter the quality of the video production, the amateurs need to keep on going on the work on YouTube without necessary being very professional at first. Carina said, “the people who are mostly encouraged to become co-producers are those ones who know nothing”. The reason why Carina said this was because by having amateurs, she can teach them how to do video production and will be more willing to participate in the video production and be part of the project. Thus, to get involved in her video production team, the co-producers do not need to be professional during the initial involvement as long as they have the intention to learn more and work more professionally. While YouTube provides opportunities for amateurs to upload their videos, some criticises amateur work. Keen, who is known as the author who heavily criticised “the cult of amateur”, strongly opposed the idea of amateur works on the Web 2.0 because this can lead into the normalization of a culture of mediocrity. Theoretically,



everyone can upload videos on YouTube, everyone has equal access on YouTube and this phenomenon only results in too many videos with different qualities in terms of content, which makes it hard to differentiate between those who are skilled uploaders and who are not skilled uploaders (Courtois et al., 2012:133). Although there is some truth to Keen's claims, they are inaccurate with regards to the amateur works on the Easy Languages channel. The equal access that YouTube created for society is actually one way for big corporations to find talent. For example, Carina's work was recognized by YouTube after several years of video production. From the discussion, it was revealed that the producer and co-producers perceived their work as the amateur work that will constantly develop to professional work after regular involvement in video production.

The third research question is answered by the means of crowdfunding within the Easy Languages community. The community feels that they get many benefits from learning languages through the Easy Languages channel. Thus, they feel motivated to support the project. For example, when Carina announced her trip to the USA and she needed funding for her trip, she received funds from fans of Easy Languages because her fans felt that by donating money for her project trip to the USA, the quality of the project will be good and she is doing the project in the sake of producing videos in a different area, in this case in the USA. Jenkins describes this as normalization of monetizing something that was historically non-monetized (Jenkins et al., 2016:140). Even when the community was asked to help Anna (one of the co-producers) to cover her medical expenses because she was unable to pay for them herself, the community surprisingly helped her in covering said medical expenses. They expect Anna to recover soon and to continue in producing Easy Russian videos. Thus, the sense of belonging within Easy Languages community is strong because the exchange of information and the continuous development of the video contents of Easy Languages give benefits to both the community and the producers of Easy Languages.

This study has explored the notion of participatory culture between the producer, co-producers and the community within the Easy Languages channel. It is revealed that constant feedback is one of the main driving factors and motivations for video production. Without feedback from the community, the producers will have difficulties in producing videos. Moreover, the benefits that the community get from videos being uploaded on YouTube give them motivation to fund the project. This is what the strong sense of belonging looks like within the community of Easy Languages. The producers provide good quality contents and

the consumers (audience) get the benefits of consuming the contents. In conclusion, the producers and the community of Easy Languages channel have a mutually beneficial relationship, thus, creating a chain of sustainability for the project.

Suggestions for the further research are to focus on investigating the impact of the comments, likes and dislikes on specific videos on the Easy Languages channel. This research is interesting because a comment on the video can spark huge discussions. Discussions in comment sections of YouTube are part of participatory culture. By seeing comments, likes and dislikes, the research will probably lead into more findings about whether the future video production is impacted or not because of the results from the comments, likes and dislikes. Furthermore, the future research also can add the element of “haters” because haters usually influence the emotion of producer which will usually affect the future video production. It is also interesting to see in which direction the producer will take for the future video production when hate comments appear on one of the videos on the channel.

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## 6.1. Online Sources from Easy Languages Channel

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1. Appendix 1: Interview Questions

#### **Carina (The Owner and the Main Producer of Easy Languages YouTube channel)**

- Why becoming a producer on YouTube?
- What was your background so you want to produce videos? did you have any prior experience in video production? how did you learn to create a video?
- How did your Easy Languages channel created? what is your mission during that time? is it changing now or keep the same mission?
- What is your target audience?
- Can you describe the life as YouTubers? How different it is from the regular life of working people?
- Can you tell me how many projects involved in your Easy Languages channel and please describe what is it about?
- How did the other producers found you and why are they interested to be part of the producers?
- What kind of platform you use to connect with co-producers? How the knowledge sharing happened?
- How many videos you produce and/or manage per week (For Easy German and other languages)?
- How many people are involved in one video production (for easy German and other languages)?
- What are the challenges you faced as a YouTuber?
- Do you think video production and editing are easy or difficult?
- What are the requirements for the new video producers to join the team on your YouTube channel? Are all your team consisting of amateurs and professionals? and which one of them more in your team than the other?
- Did you give the coaching to all of them how to edit and produce the video to the amateurs and professional?
- How often? What are the challenges you faced during giving them coaching?
- How did you get the ideas or inspirations of producing hundreds of videos? Do you allow other producers to copy your ideas? why?
- As a YouTuber, how do you sustain your production for example how to cover your cost, offices, etc.? would you elaborate that (if I found interesting findings on the question)?
- How do you share the revenue from YouTube with other producers?
- As a YouTuber, you have fans and supporters as well, how do you maintain the relationship with them? How do you communicate mainly with them?
- As a YouTuber, you do a lot of collaborations, can you elaborate more about that, I mean with whom and how it usually works?
- On your YouTube videos, I saw several new people along with you doing street interviews, are they your fans and how did they find you or manage to do the street interviews with you?
- How do you find your video views count on YouTube? are you satisfied with your achievements?
- How do you see the comments?
- Do you sometimes take the comments as the source of inspirations to create the videos? how often?
- How did you deal with the haters? Do their comments affect your subscribers and views?
- What kind of videos can trigger more haters and how you deal as well with that?



- In the end, what is your expectation for your channel in the future? or how do you see it in the future?

### **Co-Producers**

- What are your motivations of becoming a co-producer?
- What was your background so you want to produce videos? did you have any prior experience in video production? how did you learn to create a video?
- Do you consider yourself an amateur or professional? why?
- Do you see any quality difference on the video production compared to the first video you produced?
- What kind of benefits did you get by becoming a co-producer?
- What kind of platform you use to connect with Carina and other producers? How the knowledge sharing happened?
- Did you get any coaching on video production and editing from Carina? if yes how did you do it?
- How did you find Easy Languages channel? How did you reach Carina and become a co-producer?
- How long have you been involved in the video production outside and inside this channel?
- How often the video production occurs and how did you find inspirations to produce the video?
- What are the challenges during the video production for example the cost of production etc.? Like how do you cover your cost? are there any supporters?
- How to sustain the video production itself?
- Do you have video any video collaborations? how do you manage to do collaboration (if you have any)?
- Do you have fans for your language program on Easy Languages? how do you interact with them? how do you keep your fans being loyal?
- How do you find your video views count on YouTube? are you satisfied with your achievements?
- How do you see the comments?
- Do you sometimes take the comments as the source of inspirations to create the videos? how often?
- How did you deal with the haters? Do their comments affect your subscribers and views?
- What kind of videos can trigger more haters and how you deal as well with that?
- In the end, what is your expectation for your language program on Easy Languages channel in the future? or how do you see it in the future?

## 7.2. Appendix 2: Sample of Interviews

### Sample of Interview Transcript with Carina (Main Producer)

A: So, I would like to ask you what do you think by being a producer and what is your background?

C: My background was, I already kind of went into video production when I was young like the age of 14, 15, 16 I get an internship in a TV station and it was at that time it was like my dream to become like a not necessarily a producer but like, do anything with media. I also work in a local TV station and it was like self-made TV station and I was a host and I had my own music show and it was great. But then I kind of shifted my focus to my study and I build this NGO. But in the NGO, we kept on working videos and that's actually when we also work with the students in video production. I didn't do this on myself, but Janusz did this mostly and the first Easy German videos were result of this video workshops that we did. So, we produce the video for several reasons, but then there was one video that we produce for 2 girls in Vietnam that learn German, and we thought it would be funny to go out to the streets and just talk to the people in German language to see how German sounds. And it was really simple we just said "Hello", "How are you" and checked how people reacted and this video we put on website called YouTube that we didn't really know at that time. It was very new in 2006 and we just thought, ah it's a nice way to put our videos and then we can send the link somewhere else, so it's like a... very direct way you know. And it turned out that YouTube is much more than online archive for yourself, but random people from all over the world watched the video and we got lots of feedback and it took a whole long time almost 7 years for us to realize that this is a potential we can continue, you know. So, actually only 3 years ago we started to become like real producers so to say to take our job serious as producers and consider us as producers, because before we just did this occasionally and now since this 3 years I actually shifted my job more and more by being Project Manager in the NGO to become a full time Video Producer and it's interesting because I didn't study it and I kind of didn't think I still would do it at some point but now I am like, I am a Video Producer I mean it's because of the success of the project that became a video producer. And not necessarily because I wanted to. I know that, what I create can have a huge impact, so I want to focus more on creating stuff.

A: What do you think as a YouTuber? Like the meaning for you itself "Life of a YouTuber" connecting to the daily life? And also, if you have projects, other projects which still connected to the Easy Languages or collaboration with other people or YouTubers or whoever is that?

C: Well I think that the interesting thing that we never considered as YouTubers as classically YouTubers and still don't do you know. So, it's something that 3 years ago, YouTube contacted us and you know you have a great project with a lot of potentials, so maybe you should, you know you should become professional YouTubers and do more of it. At that point I didn't know what YouTubers were. I kind of knew that some people who professionally produce video on YouTube only but it was kind of new to me and I learn it more and more first from our contact person at YouTube, but then also taught myself and started watching others channel and also to get some inspiration and ideas. But generally, I think YouTubers...it's like a whole diverse range of people you know. You can't really compare them or put them all into one place.

A: But for you itself, what does it mean for you being a YouTuber?

C: for me it means like to be, it's actually crazy because it's like the best thing you can do is like creating something on your own that you want and no one else is telling you what to do and like, creating something that has an impact to the people and this is, I think the most amazing thing you can do because everything that makes a difference from like doing nothing and having a huge impact is all in your head you know. So, it just depends on me, myself and my ideas. And obviously, the technical skills but I think the technical skills are really, they are part of it but not the biggest part. Many people think that you have to really learn how to produce videos and then do it like people do it on TV but you don't have to do it and you can see on YouTube that lots of people who got popular and who built really great channel, they actually formed their own technics and they brought in their own styles and this is really interesting because in that way, like, it's like kind of new production style and also YouTube itself and YouTubers they influence the way other people produce videos, for example on TV now. I think it has like, influences from both sides like people who started to become YouTubers, they wanted maybe to be like, TV Host and because it was like easy to like broadcast your own videos on your own YouTube channel, it's like something everyone can do, but maybe they took like classical TV as their role model at first, then developed their own stuff and their own styles and know the whole YouTube scene has an influence on the classical media too, so it's like a new genre and it influences, it has influences on both sides. For example, one thing is that is what YouTube taught us and 100% works. The only thing that YouTube really, ahm... does like following the traditional rule of traditional media is the regular show. And this is really interesting because the most amazing thing about YouTube is that you can watch videos anytime you want, but still if you have a regular show at the certain hour per week, people like that. And we see that on our channel on the day when we post our video it's always on Sunday at 7(pm) like we have thousands of viewers in the first few hours. And then it drops and then there is still a lot of people who watch it during the next week or the next month, but still like most of the views and most of the engaged community they come at this specific hour to watch the video, like a TV show you know. And this is really interesting because we really see this when we don't finish the video and we post it later, we don't have this impact. It's crazy because you see like, something from classical TV that YouTube doesn't have, it still works on YouTube and so interesting.

A: Interesting and how is your daily life if you would like to say like, "Oh my daily life as a YouTuber is like this". Just a brief!

C: My daily life as a YouTuber is a mess somehow, because I am just like...it everything depends on myself and I am kind of used to have my own working schedule but it takes a time to get used to it. I think people are different you know. Some people are very discipline. I know from other YouTubers that they try to make fixed daily life for themselves like every morning from 10-11 I answer question from my community, then I start developing script and then I start shooting, but with us is not like that. It's very different. Sometimes we produced like 5 videos a week and sometimes we do not produce any videos and sometimes I spent a lot of time answering questions from the community, and sometimes I am just like tired of connecting to so many people and I will not answer emails or YouTube comments for like 5 days. I know that this is not ideal, but it something, it's like, I am very free. This freedom is actually one of the best thing I value most about being a YouTuber and my daily life is kind of a result of this freedom.

### **Sample of Interview Transcript with Justyna (Co-Producer)**

A: I will start with the first question. So, I would like to ask what does it mean for you by being a co-producer? For Easy Languages?

J: Actually, it means for me that, you know I can give back something that I've received in the past because, you know I do watch Easy German a lot because I studied the German language since I was 10 or something like this. So, you know when they started producing those videos, it was very helpful for me, so you know when I get the chance do the Easy Polish I always thought about it that, you know even though it is like volunteering for an... it was volunteering until now until we launched better, I was always thinking about it like, Okay I received so much from Carina and Janusz with their hard work that now is my chance to give back to the people who start, who try to Learn Polish and I can help them in this way. So, you know it's like giving the good deed I received in the past.

A: And why you want to be a producer. I am asking about your motivation?

J: That's actually hard to say. I mean because of course it was different at the beginning that than it is now. At the beginning it was just because I knew how much Janusz cares about Easy Languages and how much he loves it and how much it has him that there is no Easy Polish because he is in Germany and he can't do that and they saw that he always tried to do something that he could do on his own like basic phrases on those episodes, so when I had the chance to do that I thought, okay he will be happy, because you know he has been my friend for long time. So I knew he is going to be very happy he is like, regular Easy Polish there. But then you know, once we started doing it and we saw that it works a lot and there actually people learn with us, which were very surprising for us because you know, Polish is not that popular language. So when we saw the feedback from other people, those now are my motivation to keep it up because I see that there are some regular viewers who commented on our episode and who said that it's very helpful and that they want more and more, so this is now the main motivation. So you know it changed over the course of producing Easy Polish.

A: Great! And how can you tell me that, how did you become involved in this co-production if you can tell me?

J: What do you mean by inverse?

A: Involved

J: Aaa involved.

A: Ya ya, how did you involved in this co-producer things?

J: Well actually I've known people from the Global Experience for longer time because when I was in high school, Aga... this if you remember her was my teacher and you know, she knew Carina and Janusz and they were... organizing some exchanges for us, I was in Münster few times in my middle school and my high school, which was very nice and I really loved it and then in the middle of my high school, I guess Ben came to Katowice to make some kinds of Erasmus program that the part of it was to create this courses and Aga just asked what it is and who contact him was that because of that he needs a host for that and at that one I didn't really think that I am going to make it like regular basis but then I knew he needs some helps for this for the beginning, so I was like, why not I could help him.

A: Okay and what is your background, so just would like to is it connected with what you are doing right now or it's just because you just want to do it. Yeah, I would like to ask your background before you produce, before becoming a co-producer?

J: But what do you mean by background?

A: Background is like, ahm do you have previous experience or you really just want to produce the video or is it connected?

J: Well, I am saying that many people asked about like what did I do before, like I started doing Easy Languages but the fact is that I actually started doing it very early, because you know like other co-producers are older than me, and I was just 17 years old when I started it, so I was still a student from high school, so my only previous background was the fact that in my middle school I was taking part in some media classes that Aga organized in our school, like you know there were like an additional club or something for students who wanted to learn about something taking pictures and making videos at that day but it was still very very amateur and I only had, you know the background from what I learned from Janusz and Carina when I was taking part I some workshops that they organized for students from our school. That the only background I've ever had and when I started I was just a high school student, so not...and I am still a first-year student, so not much experience there.

A: Okay, nice. And now I am going to a second topic. It's about working as a co-producer. So, I would like to know how is the production is going, like how many times you produce a month and how is the production from the start until it goes online?

J: So how, what does the whole process look like you mean?

A: Exactly!

J: Ahmm, yeah so when it comes to how often we produce, it's like we really try to keep producing weekly so like one episode per week. And we already do our best to make it regular because we see that, you know when we produce regularly, there is a higher involvement and when we are out for even a week, there is like you know quite a notice about job in zero sense, in order...those kinds of things and you know when I... because I am a person who checks that regularly, so I see when we have break there, less people watching us. And when it comes to the process of production of course at first, we have to meet to shoot an episode. In our beginning, it just takes longer time at least two hours for an episode, but now it's fine when we go to the street for just 1 hour and talk to like 10 people, it makes a really really good episode. And after that basically the rest of the production is on me, because right now I am producing only with Aga and she doesn't have that much to help more. After we are done with shooting, I have to, you know like first, aahm just aah transport the files from the SD card and from the Dictaphone to my computer and synchronize the voice with the audio. It takes some time and then like take first look through all of what we've recorded and through the good answers from that video from our footage to the episode and then to organize those good answers into something that would make an interesting episode. After I have the answers and starting to making their transcription, and then when the transcription is done I am translating it and sending it to Ben, so that he can, you know corrected it and make sure that everything is correct in English and that is understandable then he sends back to me then I am synchronizing the subtitles and putting the subtitles on the episode, synchronizing it, making some finishing touches like you know, the music, the auth..... the intro, the author

and character name. Exporting it, sending to Ben, he is publishing it, we are publishing on our fan page and the episode is there.

A: Okay, great! Do you have another project which is connected to the Easy Languages, I mean like project collaboration with others or don't have? Like currently?

J: But what do you mean by others?

A: Yeah, I mean like project outside the Easy Languages but still connected. Like for example Carina they have Life Back Home for example. I don't know Easy Polish collaborated with some others or you just collaborate sometimes with Carina to make video together?

J: Well, actually right now we are collaborating with Miasto Ogrodow, I am sure you don't know what that is but it's like a cultural institution in Katowice, that takes care about some cultural project. About some cultural projects going on here and they decided to support us and they did, like also financially to help us buy some better equipment and aaa... thanks to this cooperation we are able to go to some interesting events and shoot episodes there and we have like more various topics to talk about in our episode, but it still all within the Easy Polish project. It's just something next to it but very connected not something like Carina's like Life Back Home or something.

### 7.3. Appendix 3: Coding Sample

Theme	Subtheme	Coding
Channeling the interests	Reason of involvement in video production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carina: I already kind of went into video production when I was young like the age of 14, 15, 16 I get an internship in a TV station and it was at that time it was like my dream to become like a not necessarily a producer but like, do anything with media.</li>   <li>- Anthony: So, I have been doing languages at university, so Italian and English and I like languages in general so I was learning and watching Easy German and there was already the first episode of Easy French. And there was no other episode than this number one and I thought it would be interesting to continue this. So, that's it just the way to help people while discovering things at the same time.</li>   <li>- Anna: Actually about 2 years ago, I started to learn German language, so I found Easy German and somebody in a comment wrote, "Well, will be any Easy Russian?" and then Easy Languages asked that person that "We are looking for people who can make Easy Russian. If you know somebody, we will be happy to know". So, I read</li> </ul>



		it and I wrote and it's how I became part of it.
Production of the videos on the channel	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carina: I am a video producer, I mean it's because of the success of the project (Easy Languages project) that I became a video producer and not necessarily because I wanted to. I know that what I create can have a huge impact, so I want to focus more on creating stuff. We tried to help people who think they can, or who might think about being a video producer to encourage them to share their cultures.</li>   <li>- Justyna: Once we started doing it and we saw that it works a lot and there actually people learn with us, which were very surprising for us because you know, Polish is not that popular language. So, when we saw the feedback from other people, those now are my motivation to keep it up because I see that there are some regular viewers who commented on our episode and who said that it's very helpful and that they want more and more, so this is now the main motivation.</li> </ul>
Production of the videos on the channel	Challenges during video production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anthony: I work alone. I mean I am doing all the stuff on my own. You need someone to shoot the video but</li> </ul>



		<p>after, what do I do, I do everything alone. Like who is going to help me do this? No one you know. If I don't do it, there will be no videos at all. I earn let say less than okay money.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Juan: Sometimes it's too much work because I usually do everything. I filmed, I edited the videos and I translated them from Spanish to English, so I think it's, I mean I can handle it but it should be better if I have another, another person helping me besides Baruch.</li><li>- Justyna: I think that the biggest challenge, like personal challenge is the time management to organize everything in order to be able to make one episode per week, because it really a lot of works when I have like a fulltime college and some in organizations. Our main challenge is to communicate more about our project then to like actually reach the people who really learn the Polish language.</li><li>- Omar: The challenges that, you have to have a question that like corresponds or confirms to the Egyptian culture. Like you can't ask about anything, you can't ask about</li></ul>
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		<p>the same question that Easy German asked or just Easy Polish asked, so it's really quite different. You have to convince people. Some people are actually sceptic.</p>
<p>Production of the videos on the channel</p>	<p>Rewards from the video production</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carina: They (co-producers) upload the videos on our channel, and they will get 70% revenue, so this is part of the model. This encourages people to earn their own money, so we don't want to buy videos from them or don't want to exploit people obviously, but we tried to encourage people to earn the money themselves and at the same time we would be motivated to teach them and do all the stuff for the because we will still get a 30% share.</li>   <li>- Anthony: Thanks to Patreon because I can make some amount of money. I can spend it in traveling but also in traveling for the videos. So, I can go to France to travel there and work on making the videos too you know.</li>   <li>- Justyna: Well, actually I don't get that much but you know the point is that, you don't do Easy Languages for money. You do it for passion and for the people and just the joy of working on it and that's how I see it. I honestly don't calculate the money.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Juan: I might say that the biggest challenge like having to do all that work on our own but I mean I enjoy it. That's why I keep doing it [...] the people tell you that your videos are working for them to learn the language, that's one of the best feedback you can have from your work.</li> </ul>
Amateur works	Participation through Amateur Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carina: I think most people who work with us yet interesting because it's kind of depends. Some people who come to us who say like "I already know everything about video productions, so it will be for me so easy to start", but I feel like those people who are mostly encouraged become co-producers are those ones who know nothing, so they will learn everything through us and this is for them, this will be a benefit or a reason why to participate in our program is to learn this and be part of something.</li> <li>- Kristina: So, I thought "Okay, don't worry! I should have objective of being perfect" you know and then I found someone who would cut my videos and sometimes my husband helped me filming or friend and this is how it goes. So, we are all amateurs.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>

Crowdfunding	From Community to Crowdfunding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carina: Right now, we earn about 2500 dollars with this per month which is only through 350 supporters, so you can imagine we only convince like 350 out of 90.000 subscribers to support us regularly, so if we can convince more people, this will be our independent future you know, like the whole growth of our project and our personal careers will kind of depend on that.</li>   <li>- Juan: The videos will be always free but since we want to keep making videos, with Patreon, people subscribe to us and they pay to us and we send them extra content, so we send them the videos without subtitles and the transcriptions.</li>   <li>- Anna: We produced Easy Russian just about 6 months yeah it was just like nothing and then I entered the hospital. It was really hard and I spent more than a month in hospital. So, I missed all my exam to university and the hospital fee is really expensive and Carina made a campaign video “We need help for Anna”. I was crying because it touched me really a lot because I just, I don’t know. It’s actually amazing and the people gave plenty of money and it covered all my medicines (medical expenses).</li> </ul>
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