One striking aspect of the popular video sharing platform YouTube is that it appears to allow for a great number of repetitive content to co-exist and still enjoy a high viewer count. The author of the present article, by looking at selected gaming videos on YouTube in three languages, namely American English, Italian and Polish, attempts to demonstrate that this repetitiveness is in fact creative recontextualization which brings into prominence the personality of the YouTuber, their idiolect included. While the videos share a number of similarities at the linguistic and extralinguistic level across the three cultures of interest, the creation of what the author calls personal storylines is the most salient distinguishing factor in the videos of particular vloggers. The present article will contribute to the developing area of research dedicated to spoken language on the Internet, and will constitute one of the few attempts, to date, to examine the phenomenon in three different languages and across three different cultures.

**Keywords**: YouTube, spoken discourse, English, Polish, Italian

**Słowa kluczowe**: YouTube, dyskurs mówiony, język angielski, język polski, język włoski

1. **Introduction**

At a first glance, YouTube appears to be a perfectly global, homogenizing platform which promotes endlessly repetitive content. However, oftentimes rich diversification can be discovered underneath the apparent repetitiveness, since Rymes (2010: 215) suggests that “the more widely circulated and mass produced a message is, the more highly diverse the interactions with it will be.” The hidden diversification of YouTube videos calls for an in-depth analysis of the underlying
phenomena. The present article deals with a type of YouTube video which is, indeed, only seemingly mass produced and recycled throughout the globe – namely, gaming videos. Selected American, Italian and Polish videos representing the genre will be analyzed. My analysis lies primarily within the framework of multimodal discourse analysis in that along with linguistic considerations, it also looks at extralinguistic features through which meaning is conveyed.

Despite the fact that gamers of these three different nationalities choose exactly the same games to play, it seems that their videos are not repetitive, homogenized reproductions, but indeed different takes on the same subject, or recontextualizations. If this is the case, then one wonders about the linguistic and extralinguistic features which such videos might share or in which they might differ at interlinguistic and cross-cultural levels. In the present article, I carry out an analysis in an attempt to identify such similarities and differences. The term ‘recontextualization’ is employed in accordance with Bernstein’s description of the recontextualizing principle as that which “[…] selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses, and relates other discourses to constitute its own order and orderings (2003: 159).” In addition, the simple dictionary definition by Oxford Dictionary also concurs with the understanding of the term. The dictionary states that ‘to recontextualize’ means to “[p]lace or consider in a new or different context;” the selected videos in which American vloggers play games and react to them have been placed in a necessarily new context because the same games have then been used by Italian and Polish vloggers.

Gaming videos are videos in which vloggers play a video game and then upload it to YouTube. Normally, most of the screen is occupied by the game itself, whereas the gamer is visible in a smaller, square frame in a corner. Sometimes only the gamer’s voice can be heard and no image is available, and sometimes there is more than just one player. In the gaming videos selected for analysis there is only one gamer and their image is visible in a square frame throughout the video. Normally, videos by American vloggers appear first and they become an inspiration for vloggers of other nationalities, including Italians and Poles.

2. Studies on YouTube videos

A growing body of work on the YouTube phenomenon is available, tackling the issue from many different perspectives, although it is still relatively smaller in comparison to research dedicated to other phenomena such as studies on the written language of the Internet. Vernallis (2013: 130) points out that, as of 2013, “[s]cholars have attempted to map YouTube, but they only provide a glimmer of what YouTube entails and how it works.” In order to look into the matter in a more systematic fashion, she proposes the following features as characteristic of YouTube aesthetics:

(1) pulse and reiteration; (2) graphic values; (3) a sense of scale that matches the medium; (4) irreality and weightlessness ([…] the “digital swerve”); (5) reanimation; (6) unusual causal
The aesthetics appears to have been successful since the popularity of YouTube videos is immense. Sidoni (2013: 173) states that the famous YouTube slogan *Broadcast yourself* “gives a clue about the phenomenon which, in the last few years, has been generating a huge mediated and participative culture, based on sharing texts whose extremely complex socio-semiotic nature is unprecedented within the global mediascape (G. Jones and Schieffelin 2009)” but also remarks that “[s]tudies on these texts and socio-semiotic affordances of video sharing communities, of which YouTube is probably the best-known example, are still in their infancy.” Amateur, user-generated videos are becoming serious competition for regular, traditional television shows and the format is becoming increasingly popular, which is also shown in numbers – presently “the most significant amount of video production is […] user-generated” (Sidoni 2013: 173). All the videos used for the analysis were created by amateurs who presumably had no prior television or movie experience and who enjoy high popularity among viewers. Werner (2012: ii) proposes four sources that could directly account for the popularity of vlogs:

1. their conversational mode of address, which invites ongoing dialogue with viewers;
2. their ability to relay emotion, especially emotion displayed bodily through facial, vocal, and gestural expression;
3. their ability to broadly spread information of public interest that is being overlooked or ignored by old media;
4. their many and complex speeds, which afford both immediate public expression and indefinite public archiving.

Although Werner focused primarily on four different types of video – the confession video, the reaction video, the rant video, and the witness video – the four features can also be applied to gaming videos. Indeed, there is an ongoing dialogue with viewers, but it has special characteristics. The creators of gaming videos, as most vloggers who film on their own and do not physically have a video partner with whom they could hold a conversation, have to imagine their target audience. Vloggers, called by Sidoni *self-representers* “[…] do not have a visible audience, but aspire to reach out to far-away people and places in a permanent dialectic dynamics, where the exhibition of the self creates a looking-glass effect” (2013: 177). Thus, what vloggers do is design their audience in monologues. Frobenius (2014) presents an insightful analysis of the methods vloggers use to involve their viewers, which leads to “[…] an asynchronous, mediated monologue tailored to a non-present audience” (2014: 59). She states that vloggers employ “multimodal elements that are regularly part of spoken interaction, such as gaze shifts, shifts in posture, shifts in facial expression, shifts in voice quality and pitch and also pointing” (2014: 59). Again, Frobenius does not include gaming videos in her analysis, but her claims, similarly to Werner’s features, also apply to them, as will be seen in the analysis.
Scholars have also made claims about the role of recontextualization on the world-famous video hosting website. Rymes (2010) focuses on direct recontextualizations of such elements present in original videos as “catchy phrases, […] Yankee’s caps, gold lamé push-up bras, aviator glasses, huge diamond jewelry, a melody, a beat, and a set of rhymes” (2010: 214-215). In the present article, the basic units which are recontextualized are the specific video games played by American, Italian and Polish vloggers. Rymes goes on to claim that “[…] select recontextualizations become recognized as having a certain common communicative value within a social grouping” and discusses such instances further on. In the present article the focus is different. In the analyzed material, the game and the medium remain the same, but the gamers change, bringing along their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Differences arise in the linguistic and non-linguistic behavior of particular vloggers. These differences in style allow different vloggers to reach celebrity status. The focus, thus, shifts from the content itself to the way that content is presented by a particular YouTuber. Nayar (2009: 4) defines celebrity culture as “[…] the consequence of a public recognition of some qualities that a person possesses or is deemed to possess.” I will now look into these different qualities and characteristics of the vloggers selected for analysis.

3.1 The analysis of American, Italian and Polish gaming videos

For the purpose of the present paper, twelve gaming videos were analyzed: six videos in American English, six videos in Italian, and six videos in Polish. The analyzed time of each video was that of approximately 10 minutes, which gives a total of approximately two hours of video material. The recordings were then transcribed, yielding approximately 15,000 words. Two games were taken into consideration, with two videos in one of the three languages of interest analyzed for each game. The analyzed games were: *Five Nights At Freddy’s* (versions 1 & 2) and *Slender: The Arrival*. Both games fall into the category of horror games. According to Wikipedia, *Five Nights at Freddy’s* is an “indie point-and-click survival horror video game […]” which “[…] centers on a fictional pizza restaurant called ‘Freddy Fazbear’s Pizza,’ where the player must act as a night security guard, defending themselves from the malfunctioning animatronic animal characters by tracking their movement through the facility using security cameras.” In the second game, *Slender: the Arrival* the player roams the house of an in-game character named Kate, who went missing, as well as the area surrounding the house, trying to avoid a tall, dark-suited faceless man called the Slenderman. A different vlogger was selected for each video for diversification. All the vloggers were male, aged from about 18 to about 30, had at least around one million subscribers, and were native speakers of American English, Italian, and Polish, respectively (the full list of vloggers and references to the videos used in the analysis can be found in the bibliography.) Potentially, these texts could be examples of an emerging genre of gaming video discourse inasmuch they can be defined, in the words of Martin (1984: 25), as “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture.” In the videos, vloggers address their projected audience, comment on the
happenings in the game by reacting to the unfolding plot, and interact with objects. In-game texts, written and spoken, also appear. Each vlogger (and thus, each video) has been given the following separate code for reference. The original spelling of the vloggers’ names has been preserved.

Table 1 – the analyzed videos categorized by: the game played (*italics*), the country of origin (*underlined*) and the names of the vloggers (regular font). The codes have been *bolded*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Five Nights at Freddy’s</th>
<th>Slender: The Arrival</th>
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<td><strong>American videos</strong></td>
<td>Captain Sparklez</td>
<td>Popular MMOs</td>
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<td>Markiplier</td>
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<td>EN3</td>
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<td><strong>Italian videos</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Polish videos</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
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The data and analysis presented below constitute a preliminary study which is by no means an exhaustive account of all the phenomena encountered in the material. Due to limited space only selected issues, namely modes of address, questions, register and personal storylines, are discussed in order to present the most salient features. In addition, the study does not claim any statistical validity since a greater number of videos would have to be taken into account for that purpose.

### 3.2.1 Modes of address – data

Modes of address, including audience design – relating to, as mentioned earlier, for a different set of vlogs by Frobenius (2014) – are some of the most salient linguistic features of the language of the analyzed vlogs across the three cultures. Frobenius points out that receiving a monologue is not “merely a passive act” and adds that in the case of vlogging, when “[…] vloggers (re)assign participant roles, the audience is actively involved” (2014: 60). In the analyzed gaming videos, viewers were assigned the role of participants of the gameplay, though this status seems to have constantly shifted. The vloggers in all languages begin their video by greeting the audience (for more on opening sequences in vlogs see Frobenius 2011)\(^1\). What follows in the analyzed gaming videos is an informative segment in which vloggers inform their viewers about the game they are going to play by saying its exact title. This occurred in all the videos with the exception of IT1 (no mention of the title) and PL4 (only a part of the title mentioned). What all the vloggers in the videos did, to a greater

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\(^1\) Additionally see Frobenius (2014b) for more on the topic of interaction in vlogs.
or lesser extent, was constantly shift between grammatical persons and the addressees of their utterances. The vloggers employed the following:

1. Speaking in the first person plural;
2. Speaking in the first person singular;
3. Addressing the audience;
4. Addressing characters in the game;
5. Addressing the game/in-game objects;

The first two were the most common structures throughout the videos. The use of the two forms was subject to constant shifting and did not follow a regular pattern. Frobenius (2014: 63-64) provides an excerpt from a vlog in which the vlogger employs the first person singular, addresses their audience, talks about the audience in the third person plural, and finally also uses the first person plural. In her study, the switching appears to be less intense and it serves the purpose of distinguishing the vlogger’s ‘older’ and ‘newer’ viewers, unlike the switching identified in the material collected in the present article. A number of examples now follow to illustrate the phenomenon, and a general discussion is offered afterwards.

The following examples show how the vlogger use the first person plural. The forms in question have been marked in bold. The following excerpt comes from video EN1:

```
allright so now we have background // OK // so-ho / apparently / we look a little bit too much / like a / an animatronic thing that doesn't have its suit on so / endoskeleton did he say //
```

The same pattern can be found in IT1:

```
sarà una vita che parliamo di creare una rubrica horror qui di video e non l'abbiamo mai fatto quindi / beh / direi che è giunto il momento probabilmente //
```

And in PL1

```
Ciekawy jestem czy nam się uda wygrać czy też nie // miejmy nadzieję że tak/ miejmy nadzieję że tak //
```

In EN1, the vlogger uses the plural form to create the impression that the vlogger and his audience are in the game together. Also in PL1 the vlogger says “I wonder if we can win this.” The vlogger in IT1 goes even further by suggesting that the audience takes an active part in the creation of his YouTube channel itself – he says “we have talked about a horror game section and we have never done it.”

As mentioned before, the plural form is constantly intertwined with the first person singular, which is illustrated by the following examples. The vlogger in EN4 first talks about how he feels, and then projects his behavior onto his audience to involve them further:
this is making me a little dizzy // I don’t know if I like this // alright // so what’s the point // […]
tell me / are we still on the path […] // we’re gonna go our own way // ‘cause that’s just how we
do //

A similar situation can be found in IT4, where the vlogger shifts between what he and the
viewers are going to do next and what he alone did moments before.

mi sa che dic / no, qua torniamo indietro / perfetto / allora facciamo// c’erano già sti disegni /
non c’ho fatto caso prima / comunque sì / sì / c’è lo Slender li // merda / qua ci sono già stato //

In PL3, the shifting is also present:

nie patrzcie się tak na mnie / serio // mam swoje dojścia // OK / bauszymy rozkosznie po lesie /
przed siebie / na razie odważnie / no / OK // nie mam latarki // zobaczzymy / co to będzie //

Two of the examples (EN4 and PL3) contained elements of direct address to the audience,
which can be further illustrated by the following examples. The first one comes from video EN2:

look at the intro screen guys / look at the intro screen like really carefully / it moves a bit // I’m
not lying / serious-seriously // you / look at that // it moved // I don’t like it / I’m scared already /
you guys requested it-sid //

Direct address can also be found in Italian videos (IT3):

c’è / sappiatelo / il mio prossimo compleanno lo faccio qui // Tutti invitati siete / tutti //

And in Polish videos (PL4):

jak zwykle to mówiłem / e tam / nie będę grał w Slendera / nie będę nagrywał żadnych strasznych
gier / nie / nie / nie / bo ja się tego boję / to jest straszne / to jest niefajne / wiecie jaki ja jestem
[…] yy / więc od razu wam mówię //

Nominal forms of address are consequently employed in by the Italians. All the Italian videos
contain the noun ragazzi. Additionally, in IT1, IT2 and IT4, the shorter version, ragà, is used. Finally,
in IT1 another short version, regà, appears. Only in one American video (EN2) the vlogger uses the
form (you) guys. In the other American videos and in all of the Polish videos such forms are
practically non-existent. More on forms of address can be found in the aforementioned article
Frobenius (2011), as well as in my article on the stylistics of American, Italian and Polish challenge
vlogs (in review).

The vloggers also address the characters and the objects they interact with in the game. The
following examples illustrate this. The vlogger in EN3 roams an abandoned house.

let’s go upstairs see what’s going on here// I like the decor of your house maaadam // hello //
As with previous examples, these forms are also found in the Italian (IT2) and Polish (PL2) videos. IT2 abounds in such forms. The vlogger even assigns imaginary names to the characters present in the game.

chi cazzo è che ride da mezz’o // Alan? // cosa cazzo stai facendo?! // ti sei dato al rock and roll, fammi capi // c’è / Alan / guardai / io lo capisco che stare in compagnia […] //

Similarly to IT2, the Polish vlogger in PL2 also gives the same characters his own names and addresses them:

O / hej Mariusz / jednak przyszłeś // znudziłeś się siedząc tam sam tak? / spoko / wybaczam ci / jesteś jednym z najlepszych miśków na tej planszy //

Finally, vloggers also address the objects in the game with which they want to interact or of which they expected a particular action. This was the rarest type of interaction. EN4, IT4 and PL2 illustrate.

The vlogger in EN4 opens all the windows in a room.

Uh / open all these windows too // open all the windows / let a nice breeze in //

IT4 gets annoyed because he is unable to open a door.

apriti! // se già sono in difficoltà ad aprire una porta / regà / io non osò immaginare // Ooh! // ti vuoi aprire?? //

PL2 is nervously trying to turn on a flashlight:

OK / coś mi tutaj już kamery / nie– / nie działa flashlight na– / na środek // dawaj / działaj działaj działaj! //

3.2.2 Questions

Another salient feature of all the analyzed videos are questions. Again, vloggers may address questions to the characters in the game, to the audience, as well as themselves. In the case of addressing characters, the questions are straightforward and often serve a comic purpose. In EN1, the vlogger addresses a character which is immobile at that moment but may suddenly move:

he’s still there // you gonna / you gonna be staying there or you gonna be? / staying there// OK / just /okay / just stay there, it’ll be all good //

IT1 criticizes the in-game character for moving:

eccolo // tu perché sei già qua? / non va bene / eh? Non va bene, Bunny!
PL1 asks a character questions about why the character is sitting in one place:

cześć Bonnie // jeszcze siedzisz? // cały czas siedzisz? // dobrze / weź sobie pójdź proszę //
Bonnie / dlaczego tak długo siedzisz? //

In the latter case, the questions may be a direct address to the audience in which they vlogger asks them about their opinions. However, the questions are often only seemingly directed at the audience, and the vlogger often employs them as a form of externalization of their internal thought process by asking control questions about what actions to undertake in the game and what the affordances of the game are:

EN3 wonders what is the point of the ability of the player to open windows inside a house he is roaming:

uh! // well / what's the point of that? // just something a little extra added to the game to give it a little more environment interactivity? //

IT3 is looking for a key to open a door:

dentro lo zainetto ci può essere la chiave? // no // dove trovo la chiave? //

PL4 isn’t sure where he is and where he should go:

co to jest za miejsce? // ciekawie // bo tam / tam mam iść? / to jest daleko //

3.3 Modes of address and questions – discussion

All of the forms of address illustrated above enhance the dynamicity of the videos and are a way of involving viewers. Vloggers seem to willingly use the first person plural to give their viewers a feeling of interaction and participation in the decision-making process in the game. It appears that when vloggers recall a single action they performed prior to the utterance or the utterance is related to vloggers’ personal feelings and impressions, they use the first person singular. If they have a message to the audience, they naturally address them directly. The constant switching does not appear to negatively affect the flow of the monologue. No sense of confusion seems to arise when vloggers keep switching between addressing the audience and addressing characters in the game or in-game objects. This may be due to the fact that when the vlogger addresses a character in the game, they normally focus the in-game view on the character and consistently continue to talk to it for several instances. Otherwise their attention is not focused on anything in particular and they just roam the world. This is a signal to the audience that any form of address that appears is probably directed at them. A more salient signal for the audience is when the vlogger gazes at the recording camera. In the case of the Italian videos, the nominal form of address ragazzi and/or its derivatives ragà/regà constitutes an even clearer signal for the viewers. The pretended interaction with in-game characters enriches the
gameplay and the video itself by allowing the vloggers to enact an ongoing dialogue in what is otherwise a classic monologue. By asking questions, vloggers ascertain that theirs is the right course of action in the game. The questions also add dynamicity to the entire video and are a way of bonding with the audience, allowing the latter to try to find answers to the questions along with the vlogger.

In the case of the analyzed video games, the different forms discussed above may serve another purpose. Namely, the vloggers may feel the need to talk a great deal in order to diminish tension and fear evoked by the horror games they engage in. By projecting conversation partners in the viewers they may feel less lonely; by doing that with in-game characters they may humanize them and thus make them less frightening.

3.4 Informal register

As I stated before, due to limited space, this section will demonstrate only some of the features identified in the analyzed videos. The language employed in all the videos is consistently informal, similarly to the language of so-called challenge videos in my other study (Kurpiel – in review). Strategies and features well known to be characteristic of spoken discourse, such as repetitions, hedges, hesitation and repairs, are naturally also found in the analyzed vlogs. Across the videos, there are many deictic expressions, which is a typical feature of spoken discourse. Such elements as this one, and its Italian and Polish equivalents, questo and ten, respectively, often refer to the objects in the game which are clearly visible to the viewers because they see what the gamer sees thanks to the in-game camera focus. The texts abound in discourse markers, including fillers. For example, in EN1 so appears at the beginning of an utterance but it is not connected with the previous phrase:

twelve a.m. / first night // so everyone told me that I made a big mistake by not listening to the message […] //

In most of the Italian videos the form cè, a contraction of cioè, is often employed in the sense of I mean, that is, or it does not have any particular function. The following example from IT2 contains the form:

cè / Alan / guarda / io lo capisco che stare in compagnia di questi coglioni non è proprio il massimo della / però mio Dio / cè //

In the Polish videos, the word dobra is often employed in the meaning of OK, alright. The following example comes from PL3:

To dobra, to zjedzmy coś.

All the videos contain a number of exclamations which appear when the highly emotional horror game storyline intensified. An interesting difference occurs in terms of the use of native
swearwords, which occurs abundantly in the Italian videos and marginally in the American and the Polish videos. If the Polish vloggers swear, they often resort to English².

3.5 Themes and topics in the monologues – personal storylines

The previous sections dealt with selected linguistic features of the analyzed videos. The present section looks at the thematic construction of the vlogs and personal styles of the vloggers. Here, videos are categorized according to the game played. Thus, as shown in Table 1, in videos number 1 and 2 the vloggers play the game *Five Nights at Freddy’s*, whereas in videos number 3 and 4 they play the game *Slender: the Arrival*. The following descriptions contain the dominant themes elaborated and pursued by a given vlogger throughout the video. These themes draw, naturally, on the original themes of the games presented at the beginning of the article, though not exclusively so.

**EN1** maintains frequent eye contact with the camera. He listens carefully to the in-game voice message at the beginning of the game. He only inserts a few comments throughout the voice message. His facial expressions are vivid and he makes minor hand gestures. He addresses the animatronics in order to discourage them from stuffing him into an animatronic suit if they fail to recognize him as a human being. He jokingly uses careful wording to negotiate with the animatronics and keep them away. His tone is generally friendly and calm, but he changes it into a darker and more threatening voice when he senses danger. The vlogger sticks to the idea that the animatronics may not recognize him as a human being and makes it the main idea behind his storyline in the video.

**EN2** maintains little eye contact with the camera, focusing more on the game. He does not follow any personal storyline and he sporadically addresses the animatronics. He makes frequent reference to the animatronic mask which keeps him safe.

**IT1** starts his video with cheerful background music of his choosing that is unrelated to the game. When the vlogger starts the game, the music changes into the in-game horror-style one. He maintains eye contact with the camera. At the beginning of the game he describes everything that he notices about the environment in detail. He appears to ignore the voice message. He is very vocal and involved – he keeps highlighting that he is very scared. He often raises his voice significantly. He assigns the animatronics with names in English, such as Bunny, Teddy and Ducky, based on the looks of the creatures. In the middle of the gameplay he jokingly calls his girlfriend and describes to her what he is doing.

**IT2** starts his video with drinking a cup of coffee or tea while he is observing how his viewers ask him to play *Five Nights at Freddy’s*. He gets really annoyed and screams *basta*, which means *enough*. The following scene is a standard introductory segment. He maintains relatively little eye

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² A study on exclamations, including swearing, in selected Italian and Polish gaming videos may be found in my other article (Kurpiel – in review).
contact with the camera while playing, but in the segments where he stops playing he looks directly at it. He ignores the voice message by talking over it and pretending someone on the phone wants to order pizza and then he mutes the message. He describes the place and states that he does not like it. At a certain point he addresses the audience requesting that they buy him one of the animatronics for Christmas. He picks one animatronic that he says he likes the most and assigns the name Alan to it although he does not give names to the other animatronics. He will use the character to talk to throughout the video, focusing on the idea that Alan does not like the company of the other characters. He sees Alan with a guitar and draws on the idea that he is not cut out for rock music.

**PL1** says in the beginning that he is going to have to focus on the gameplay but wants to address an issue. He criticizes his audience for posting comments asking him to play *Five Nights at Freddy’s* under his every video, after which he continues with the topic into the gameplay. He has the feel of a connoisseur of the game. He uses the original names of the animatronics. The atmosphere is calm and so is his voice, with occasional rising tones, though he talks relatively little in comparison to the other vloggers. At the end of the video the tension rises as the in-game camera battery is running low, prompting the vlogger to ask his viewers to comment whether he will make it. In general, the vlogger makes many references to his viewers and the comment section.

**PL2** starts the game immediately. He calls the animatronics Andrzej, Mariusz and Łukasz, which are considered very Polish names. It gives the whole gameplay a homegrown, Polish sensation. He vlogger uses his own, rather cheerful background music, which makes the game less frightening. The music only stops in moments of tension. The vlogger maintains relatively little eye contact while playing and looks at the camera when he stops. He addresses one of the animatronics which is immobile and makes up a story about how the animatronic will receive a low pension because *pensions in Poland are low*. Later on he sings a very popular, old Polish song *Daj mi tę noc* – *Give me that night*. He proposes that he and the animatronics sing together. These cultural references, along with the Polish names of the animatronics, create a very familiar atmosphere for the audience.

The vlogger in **EN3** includes some commercial and technical commentary in his video. He talks about the price of the game and the previous installments. He comments on the game engine and the graphics. He has a soothing voice which reminds one of radio auditions. He maintains eye contact with the camera. He reads all the in-game texts and messages thoroughly. He also makes comments about the house he is roaming.

**EN4** modulates his voice to sound scary at the very beginning of the game. He comments on the items in the game, making relatively little eye contact. When he reads the first in-game note he modulates his voice to sound like a person from the south of the United States. He ignores the in-game voice message. He reads the second note with the voice and accent of a stereotypical American *valley girl*. The accent modulation creates a comical effect. He also creates a storyline with the main
character, Kate, who went missing. He makes humorous remarks about the lack of cleanliness in the house he is roaming. During the exploration of the house he comes across what appear to be shopping bags and purses. He draws on the idea that Kate is a very rich person and jokes about it.

**IT3** maintains eye contact in the introductory part. Once he comes across an in-game phone number belonging to the character Kate, he pretends to call the number on his phone and to have a violent conversation full of misunderstandings. He pretends Kate shouts at him and therefore he is unable to finalize the purchase of her house. When he comes across a vehicle, he pretends there are children trapped in it and the main antagonist, the Slenderman, is taking advantage of them. These additions enrich the plot while the vlogger is roaming a forest, thus when the game does not yet offer any more intense experiences. Just like EN4, he points out that the house looks expensive and calls both Kate and the Slenderman rich. He misinterprets some of the in-game texts which appear in English. At one point he also inserts a funny short footage of another Italian YouTuber, Giuseppe Simone.

**IT4** starts his video by saying that he is going to play the game because he has seen the new release, as well as videos of other two YouTubers. He roams the forest and calmly makes general comments. He creates a calm atmosphere. He reports on any sounds which he can hear and items which he can see. He is focused on the gameplay and makes little eye contact. The low tone of his voice does not change to a significant extent throughout the video.

**PL3** presents the video as part of a horror game series on his YouTube channel. He goes on to configure the technical parameters of the game. He comments on the fact that the new version of the game is better than the previous installments and compliments the graphics. His speaks in a very calm voice to suddenly burst out with a word or two in a very loud voice to add to the frightening atmosphere of the game. He sometimes resorts to funny rhymes and elegant, almost poetic language. There are longer stretches of silence when the vlogger explores the surroundings. He reads the in-game message partially in a very high-pitched voice and partially in a very low, demonic voice. The second text is read in a mocking American accent, partially with unintelligible words. He explores the house in detail, playing with different items.

**PL4** points out in the beginning of the video that he will be very scared playing the game and that normally he does not play horror games. He invites his viewers to listen to the soundtrack in order to enter the atmosphere of the game. He focuses on the task suggested in the game menu. There are longer moments of silence. This may be partially because the vlogger wants to concentrate, and partially to further involve himself and his audience in the gameplay: he even tells the viewers to be quiet. He comments on the unrealistic features of the game’s lighting. When he plays the in-game radio he starts singing in a humorous way. When he sees the Slenderman he starts shouting.
The following tables sum up the dominant features or storylines described above.

Table 2 – dominant features/storylines elaborated by the vloggers; game: *Five Nights at Freddy’s*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Feature/storyline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>Tries to avoid getting stuffed into a suit by an animatronic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>Uses the animatronic mask to protect himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT1</td>
<td>Plays very emotionally and focuses on the scary interaction with the animatronics to which he has assigned names in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT2</td>
<td>Assigns only one animatronic with the English name Alan and focuses on Alan’s relationship with himself and with the other animatronics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1</td>
<td>Uses the official names of the animatronics, plays like a connoisseur, creates a rather calm atmosphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2</td>
<td>Assigns made-up Polish names to the animatronics, evokes associations with Poland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 – dominant features/storylines elaborated by the vloggers; game: *Slender: the Arrival*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Feature/storyline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>Makes references to the quality of the game, to its affordances, to other installments, makes technical commentary, reads the note messages in the game carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>Focuses on the owner of the house, Kate, and creates descriptions of her habits and her past while roaming the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT3</td>
<td>Focuses on the owner of the house, Kate, and how he is irritated with her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT4</td>
<td>Creates a rather calm atmosphere, speaks in a constantly low tone of voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL3</td>
<td>Uses creative, humorous language; sometimes speaks eloquently and coherently, other times acts in a silly way, jokes heavily and makes sexual references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL4</td>
<td>Focuses on the fact that he may be unpleasantly scared (refers to the so-called jump-scares).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above descriptions show how despite playing the same games, the vloggers’ videos are highly diversified. Naturally, because the vloggers have different personalities, their linguistic and non-linguistic responses to the game are different. However, what is worth noting is the different ways
in which the vloggers create the atmosphere, as well as adapt and/or invent storylines to match their personality, their coherent YouTube persona. One can speculate that a given vlogger’s popularity stems from the appreciation that their audience has for their linguistic and non-linguistic style of playing a video game. The vloggers’ creative recontextualizations of the games they play make it possible for the same viewer to watch a number of seemingly repetitive videos by the same YouTubers and still enjoy the content. Thanks to the phenomena discussed above each video can have a different reception and the atmosphere created during gameplay is often diverse and original. In this sense, the YouTube experience is not homogenizing, but triggers creative recontextualizations.

4. Conclusion

The present article has revealed that on a linguistic level, the analyzed American, Italian and Polish videos exhibit more similarities than differences. The vloggers are especially consistent in employing switching between the first person singular and the first person plural, as well as the three forms of address directed at the audience, at in-game characters and at the game itself or in-game objects. The vloggers constantly re-assign roles in their videos, a feature identified by Frobenius (2014). The vloggers also make use of questions to in-game characters or to the audience. In the latter case they do it either to elicit information from the viewers or to externalize their internal decision-making process. The language is consequently informal and displays features typically found in spoken discourse.

What is different are the atmosphere and the storylines that are created and/or influenced by the personality of particular vloggers. Vloggers often create a dominant theme for their gameplay video and a personal style they employ throughout. Arguably, this is the most significant factor which allows the vloggers to reach celebrity status. This, in turn, allows for a number of vloggers to play the same games and enjoy high popularity. What distinguishes the videos in the analyzed material are the individual differences in the construction of the storyline and theme regardless of the nationality of the vloggers, whereas few interlingual and cross-cultural differences were identified. The creative recontextualizations of gaming videos are a manifestation of the realization of the local, and especially the individual, as part of a more extensive, global phenomenon of celebrity culture on the Internet. Time will show what course the characteristics of YouTube videos will take in the future, but one aspect is already apparent: these characteristics have had a significant impact on the entertainment industry, and it seems it will continue to do so in the future, constantly shifting the way we understand what it really means to tune in.
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Sidoni M. G. (2013). *Spoken and Written Discourse in Online Interactions. A Multimodal str. 16*


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YouTube channels used in the analysis

American videos:

CaptainSparklez, Joey Graceffa, Markiplier, Popular MMOs

Italian videos:

GaBBoDSQ, FavijTV™, ilvostrocaroDexter, St3pNy

Polish videos:

JDubrowsky, Mandzio, reZigiusz, ROJSON