

Lexical hypercohesion on YouTube

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This paper explores lexical cohesion on a YouTube channel. The aim is to investigate how lexical cohesive devices establish links between the video clips and the comments written by users as well as between the comments themselves. Following Schubert (2017), I call cohesion occurring in a multimodal YouTube context *hypercohesion*; this term draws attention to the fact that cohesion in social media exists not only within and between verbal contributions but also across modes.

The YouTube channel analysed in the present study is The Hydraulic Press Channel (HPC), which publishes videos of various objects being crushed in a hydraulic press. The objects range from Lego toys and gummy bears to a bowling ball and a Nokia 3310 mobile phone. Created and operated by a Finnish couple, Lauri and Anni Vuohensilta, the channel functions in English: all videos include commentary in English by Lauri Vuohensilta in his very distinctive Finnish accent, and most of the users' comments are also in English. The channel has been in existence since 2015, and it currently has over two million subscribers and around 300 million total views (Wikipedia, HPC).

The paper argues that lexical cohesive devices used in the comments contribute to coherence by establishing links between the comments and between the video clip and the comments. Both reiteration and collocation relations are analysed, with the former dominating the hypercohesive profile of the multimodal platform. Cohesive ties mostly exist between the clip and the individual comments, as users express their reactions to what they have seen. At the same time, however, links are created between the comments, for instance through reiterations. Occasionally users create a more dialogical discussion within their polylogue, directly addressing or answering another user. Special attention is paid to cohesive ties between such comments. The findings from the analysis are compared with earlier research (e.g. Hoffmann 2012 on weblogs and Tanskanen 2006 on mailing-list discussions).

References

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