

Facework Analysis: Confessional YouTube Videos of Female and Male Content Creators

Leonie Dewes, Michelle Kollross, Loris Manke, Karl Tovar

University of Mainz

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the role of facework in connection with gender differences in confessional YouTube videos. The relationship between content creators and viewers constitutes a parasocial relationship. In these relationships, one or both parties imagine a personal relationship which does not truly exist. As Dekavalla (2022) notes, the relationship between influencers and their audience seems to denote a new kind of parasocial relationship. While in classic parasocial relationships only the viewer or the fan imagines a relationship, Dekavalla (2022) shows that influencers also imagine a relationship with their audience. They make use of facework to pre-emptively respond to imagined viewer reactions.

Dekavalla (2022) analyses confessional videos as a purely feminine phenomenon. In this paper we aim to expand on her research and plan to compare facework strategies in confessional videos of both female and male YouTube influencers. Facework is based on the politeness theory first established by Brown and Levinson (1987). The theory describes how linguistic strategies are employed to manage potentially damaging situations. They postulate that the speaker and the hearer both try to communicate in a manner which lets both parties “save face”, meaning that neither the autonomy nor the self-image of either party is infringed upon.

We compare six videos, three by male and three by female creators. The videos were obtained by using predefined search strings in the YouTube-internal search. To keep the focus on the confessional element of the videos, we transcribed three minutes from each video around the moment of confession. These transcripts were then analysed for different facework strategies.

The findings of this study will expand on previous research and provide insights into the dynamics of online communication and the role of gender in parasocial relationships in the digital age.

References: • Brown, Penelope & Levinson, Stephen C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. • Dekavalla, Marina (2022). “Facework in Confessional Videos by YouTube Content Creators.” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 28(3), 854-866.