

Broadcasting Your Variety: Namibian English(es) on YouTube

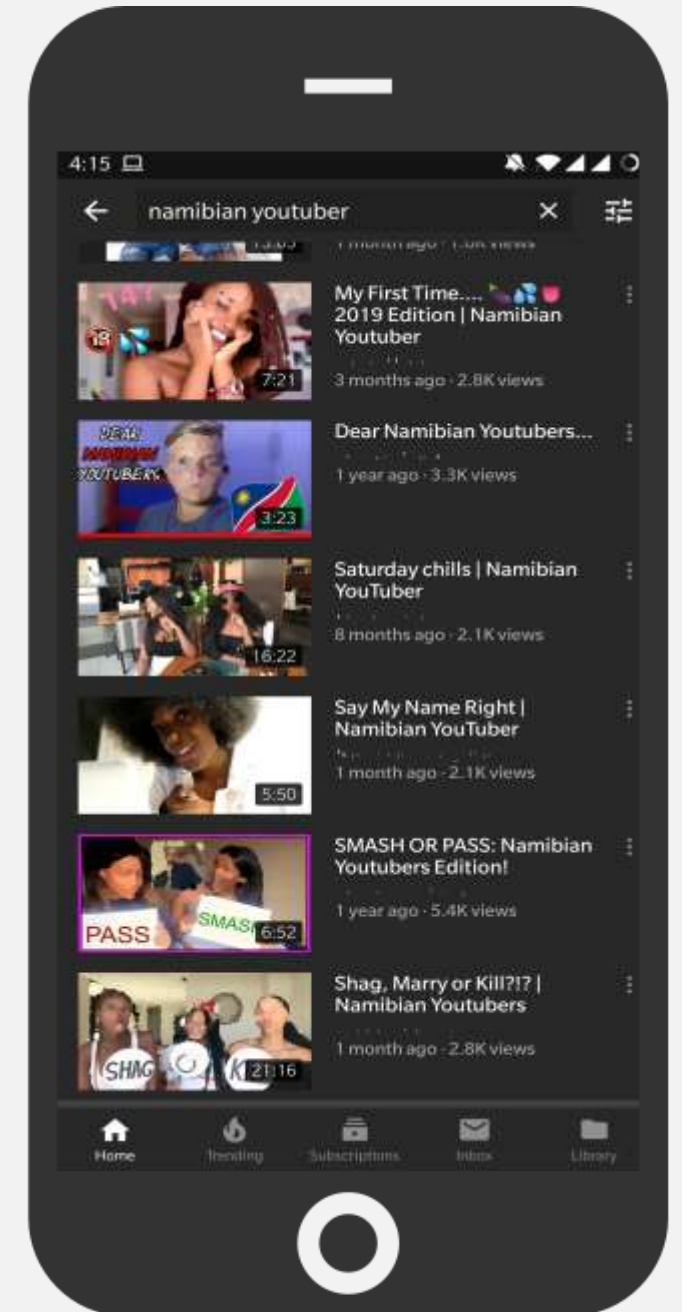
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World Englishes: Peripheries and Centres
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Outline

- 1) World Englishes & YouTube
- 2) Case Study: Namibian YouTubers
- 3) Making YouTube Accessible for Research
- 4) Conclusion & Outlook



World Englishes & YouTube

- Relatively little academic attention has been paid to YouTube – not just regarding World Englishes!
- When tapping into digital sources, the focus has lain predominantly on textual data (cf., e.g., Friedrich & Diniz de Figueiredo 2016; Kautzsch 2019; Moll 2015; Sand 2014; Squires 2016).
- Mair: “unfortunately, [the] wealth of audiovisual data tends to elude linguists who search the Internet for written forms.” (fc.: 3)

World Englishes & YouTube

- A notable exception to this is **Schneider (2016)**, who evaluates YouTube as a potential treasure trove with limitations and proposes a “basic typology of linguistically interesting YouTube clips” (262):

a) Metalinguistic clips – Characterized by creator’s awareness of certain linguistic variants / variety

- e.g. ‘amateur’ pronunciation or dialect guides

b) Natural clips – Characterized by creator’s unconscious use of their own variety

- e.g. news programs, documentaries, movies, TV serials, etc.

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World Englishes & YouTube

- There is, of course, little doubt that amateur YouTube videos do have a performative component (cf. also Androutsopoulos 2013; Frobenius 2011, 2014)
- Lee (2017) conducted a study on style-shifting in different types of YouTube video formats produced by the same speaker (viz. solo vlogs, collaborative vlogs, gaming videos, live streams):
 - The video formats involve varying degrees of spontaneity and, thus, varying degrees of attention being paid to speech, which leads to more instances of dialect leveling in the scripted contexts

World Englishes & YouTube

- Methodological issues of YouTube (Schneider 2016: 275f.):
 - Technically: retrieval limitations, e.g. through lack of useful search filters
 - Content-wise: insufficient (sociolinguistic) contextual information on videos / content creators
- **Makeshift solution:** Develop appropriate search terms and “click oneself through” suggestions (276)
 - Rather unsatisfactory as YouTube’s algorithm is a blackbox (cf. Rieder et al. 2018)

World Englishes & YouTube

- Thus, YouTube at this stage in World Englishes / variational linguistics research is uncharted territory, especially regarding:
 - a) **Conceptual issues** – e.g. which type of YT data exists and how can it be classified?
 - b) **Methodological difficulties** – e.g. how can data be reliably and transparently retrieved?
 - c) **Ethical deliberations** – e.g. can I just compile the publicly available data and analyze it?
(cf. Pihlaja 2015)

Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- **Namibia** 
 - Population of about 2.6 million
 - One of the least densely populated countries in the world
 - Since 1990, English has been the sole official language
 - Further Languages in contact:
 - Two Indo-European Languages (Afrikaans, German)
 - Bantu languages (e.g. Oshiwambo, Otjiherero)
 - Khoekhoe languages (e.g. Nama, Damara)
 - One might dare to say: Namibia has been living in South Africa's shadow



Case Study: Namibian YouTubers



<https://youtu.be/OWLkrSgr0IY>

“If you’re a Namibian YouTuber [...] and if you are a creator [and] you think we are not as fortunate as all the other creators in other places like Europe or America or Australia, where we don’t think, like, we don’t get as much advantage or take much, uhm, out of the YouTube society, make sure to watch this video [...].”
(*DewaldBlack*, 26/01/2018)

Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- General Internet penetration rate in Southern Africa: 51%
(according to <https://www.slideshare.net/wearesocial/digital-in-2018-in-southern-africa-86865907>)
- Namibia's Internet penetration rate: 31%
- Small, but growing (urban) amateur YouTuber community/network

YouTube'ing It!

Features | 2015-09-04



by Hildegard Titus

It's hard to believe that the video sharing website YouTube has only been around for a few years, but the website has grown to be one of the most popular in the world.

It has allowed users from all across the globe upload and share video clips, and launch successful careers, cue Justin Bieber, Soulja Boy, Bo Burnham – just to name a few. Even in Namibia, our very own talented duo StarDust started their career on YouTube following of fans who comment, like and share their videos.

So with its billion users worldwide, over 300 hours of video being uploaded every year, it's quite clear to see that marketing yourself on YouTube could be just what you need to reach a wider audience. Whether it is to promote fitness and health like, Michael Gino's fashion channel Fashion Fiend which showcases the local fashion scene by attending fashion trends and more, YouTube has given those in Namibia a chance to expand their horizons. With all these local YouTube channels popping up, you might be tempted to jump on the bandwagon and start your own channel.

The Vlogger Nation

Features | 2017-07-21



by Netumbo Nekomba

YouTube became a phenomenon when people started documenting their lives onscreen, and many have become multimillionaires thanks to their views and hilarious comments. We've watched them all rise to fame (aka Superwoman), Ryan Higa, Jenna Marbles... They may be all international, but Namibia is no exception.

Monick Brendell

From smokey eyes to winged eyeliners, Monick Brendell has got the face beat recipe and she has a YouTube channel. Brendell is pretty skilled with a make-up brush as she dabs away at her face, transforming into a different look with every make-up tutorial.

Vlogging It

On Screen | 2018-04-27

Page no: 8



by Netumbo Nekomba

VLOGGING has become an incredible source of entertainment over the years thanks to platforms like YouTube opening a door to people who want to share their lives with the world. Not everyone lands a reality television show, but because YouTube is free, it is a great way to show everyone what you're made of, and make friends from all over the world.

The Weekender found Namibian content creators on YouTube and this is what they had to say about their journey in the vlogging sphere.

YouTube'ing It!

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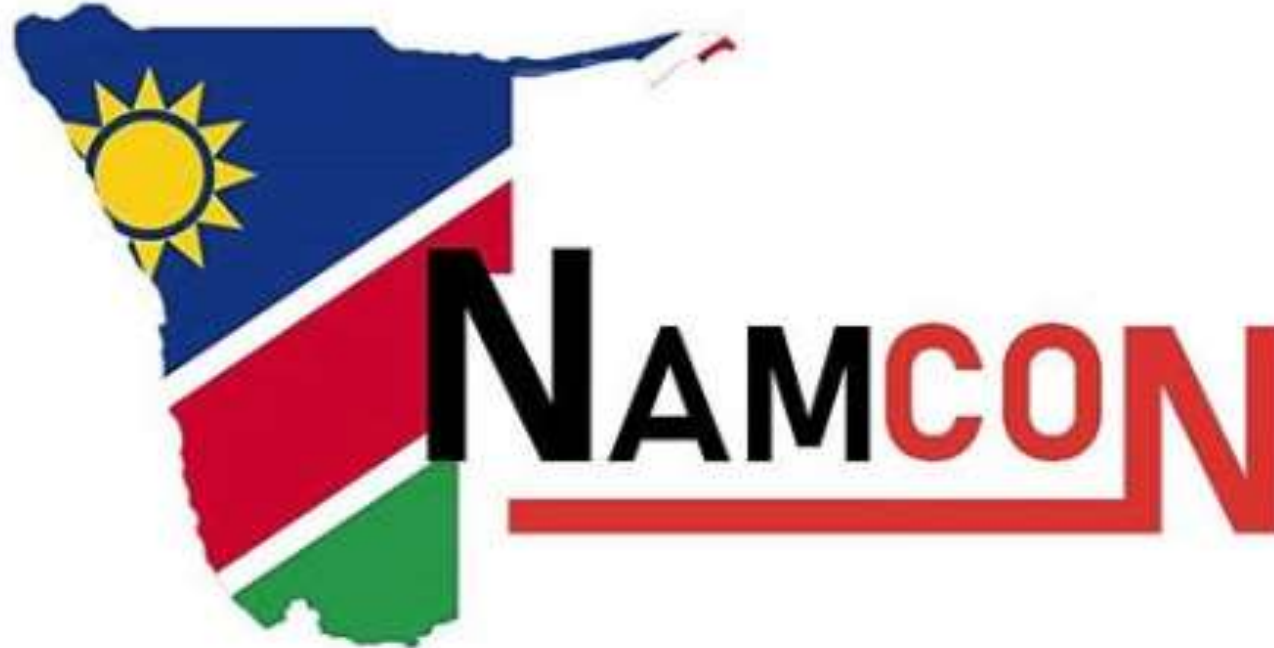
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It has allowed users from all across the globe upload and share their videos. Successful careers, cue Justin Bieber, Soulja Boy, Bo Burnham – just to name a few. Even in Namibia, our very own talented duo StarDust started their careers on YouTube, thanks to a following of fans who comment, like and share their videos.

So with its billion users worldwide, over 300 hours of video being uploaded every day, it's quite clear to see that marketing yourself on YouTube could be just what you need to reach a wider audience. Whether it is to promote fitness and health like, Michael Gino's fitness channel, fashion channel Fashion Fiend which showcases the local fashion scene by attending fashion trends and more, YouTube has given those in Namibia a chance to expand their horizons. With all these local YouTube channels popping up, you might be tempted to jump on the bandwagon and start your own channel.

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Over the years thanks to platforms like YouTube opening a lot of doors, not everyone lands a reality television show, but because YouTube is free, it is a great way to show everyone what you're made of, and make friends from all over the world.

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Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- Availability of amateur “natural” clips
- Professional “natural” clips also available
 - e.g. *Namibian Broadcasting Corporation*
- A few “metalinguistic” clips can also be found with search queries like “Namibian accent tag”




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Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- Metadata (via *YTDT*) for search term “Namibian YouTuber” in 2018:
 - 292 results from 79 unique Namibian YouTubers (after clean-up) 
 - (Already 240 results from 110 YouTubers for 2019 as of June 12)
 - 51 hours of audiovisual material; 10.5 mins average duration per video
- Used for digital ethnographic purposes, but also for acoustic analysis (Zähres fc.)

Category	Count
Comedy	13
Entertainment	43
Film & Animation	2
Gaming	37
Howto & Style	11
People & Blogs	183
Travel & Events	3
Total	292

Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- Professional “natural” clips: *Namibian Broadcasting Corporation* (NBC)
 - Active YouTube channel since 2015
 - Over 13,000 videos in total (as of June 12, 2019)
 - ~5-15 videos uploaded daily
 - Video content: usually news reports that are also broadcasted on national TV
- ➔ Thousands of videos in good quality representing reading style available



Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- The amount of “natural” YouTube videos is a valuable resource for an under-researched variety like the English spoken in Namibia, especially regarding content created by amateurs:
 - Relatively homogenous group regarding factors like age and location
 - Age: predominantly *free-borns* (cf. also Buschfeld & Kautzsch 2014: 128; Schröder fc.)
 - Diverse regarding ethnic and linguistic background, but also video contents / potential styles
- Except for rare instances of code-switching, **English seems to be used exclusively**

Case Study: Namibian YouTubers

- “Natural” Namibian YT clips:

a) Professionally created (NBC):



b) Amateur YouTuber (Manu Shapopi):



Making YouTube Accessible for Research

- YouTube videos and channels (potentially) contain a lot of metadata including:
 - Title, length, video description, video category, etc.
 - (Dis-)likes, view count, comments, etc.
 - More linguistically relevant: video language & location
- However, with YouTube's regular interface/functionality (including both official app and website), efficient filtering of this type of information is not possible
 - YouTube's API seems to offer more potential here
- Still, some metadata is optional and YouTubers enter it manually when uploading videos...

Making YouTube Accessible for Research

- This self-reporting procedure for generating parts of YouTube's metadata can lead to misidentification when consulting social media statistics & analytics platforms like socialblade.com.
- Thus, relying on metadata alone does not seem like a satisfying approach either

Making YouTube Accessible for Research

- An alternative that combines both approaches (i.e. manually searching & looking for metadata) is offered by *YouTube Data Tools (YTDT)* (cf. Rieder 2015)
 - *YTDT* quickly scrapes and exports large amounts of metadata based on either:
 - Search terms,
 - Playlists,
 - Channel names,
 - or video suggestions.
 - *YTDT* can also visualize networks of channels and video suggestions

Making YouTube Accessible for Research

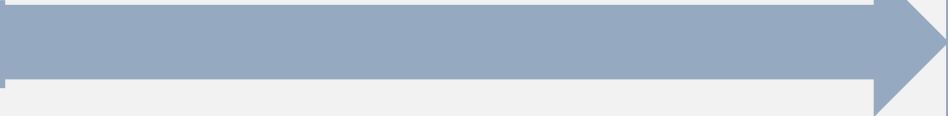
YTD Results:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	
	positio	channelId	channelTitle	videoid	publishedA	publishedAtSQL	videoTitle	videoDescription	videoCategoryId	videoCategoryLi	duration	durationS	dimens	definit	caption	license	viewCo	lik
1	70	UC6y8NctZerJU	Miss Success	Y5ekr5yQFsY	2018-01-01T20	2018-01-01 20:47	Healing before reaching out //Namibian Youtub	Be empowered before e	22	People & Blogs	PT1M15	61	2d	sd	FALSE		41	
2	71	UCIEDTiy2Hn9f	Lorna Mabuku	mzA28-IF6A	2018-01-04T23	2018-01-04 23:09	DESTINY spoken word poetry Namibian YouT	2018. ready or not - here	22	People & Blogs	PT2M50S	170	2d	hd	FALSE		155	
3	72	UC6y8NctZerJU	Miss Success	It7aLc0z3o4	2018-01-05T13	2018-01-05 13:57	Advice on what to do in the season of being single	//Namibian Youtuber	22	People & Blogs	PT1M8S	68	2d	hd	FALSE		38	
4	73	UCqJ-2Gw-FNII	CASSIJE JESSICA	WCJj20JnlTM	2018-01-06T23	2018-01-06 23:20	Dont judge too quickly, see what happens vini	This is what happens wh	23	Comedy	PT49S	49	2d	hd	FALSE	1	11695	
5	74	UCqJ-2Gw-FNII	CASSIJE JESSICA	whWHSak4t	2018-01-06T23	2018-01-06 23:56	Different type of sleepers How different peop	I bring to you different t	23	Comedy	PT1M20S	80	2d	hd	FALSE	1	11147	
6	75	UCKU1wLC_nnr	H.R Dynasty	Qds899-Q1b	2018-01-07T16	2018-01-07 16:01	25 FACTS ABOUT ME TAG! I NAMIBIAN YOUTUBE	Hey H.R gang gang! Than	22	People & Blogs	PT5M47S	347	2d	hd	FALSE		2060	
7	76	UCvdhWIFq0yx	GrandRK	_EBGnkGyBP	2018-01-10T13	2018-01-10 13:15	Meeting up with a big youtuber??øY±øY±øY±	It was great meeting up i	24	Entertainment	PT10M45S	645	2d	hd	FALSE		208	
8	77	UCqJ-2Gw-FNII	CASSIJE JESSICA	lpg88_wJkG4	2018-01-11T11	2018-01-11 11:51	get your smart glasses become smart in school	get your smart glasses ar	23	Comedy	PT1M3S	63	2d	hd	FALSE	1	9780	
9	79	UCKU1wLC_nnr	H.R Dynasty	HI3fD6s2Mw	2018-01-14T19	2018-01-14 19:17	Q&A Session with Tjimee (PERSONAL) I NAMIBI	Welcome back to our chi	22	People & Blogs	PT4M54S	294	2d	hd	FALSE		1750	
10	80	UCCTH1e62w	Manu Shapopi	XpUO_NUN	2018-01-15T04	2018-01-15 4:29	People react to being called Beautiful	So I told my friends that	22	People & Blogs	PT5M29S	329	2d	hd	FALSE	1	6644	
11	81	UCE6BDcTsOjct	Ilona 's world	uNoNtnssKA	2018-01-17T17	2018-01-17 17:42	What's in my backpack 2018//Namibian youtube	First Video of 2018 yeee	22	People & Blogs	PT6M22S	382	2d	hd	FALSE		159	
12	82	UCqJ-2Gw-FNII	CASSIJE JESSICA	l_EU8tUgF4	2018-01-22T12	2018-01-22 12:51	Tricking my younger sister, see what happens n	As a kid I was always tric	23	Comedy	PT1M15S	75	2d	hd	FALSE	1	25517	
13	83	UC32vWlrEBH5	Hilya Iikuyu	IuRZTm-bYaf	2018-01-26T02	2018-01-26 2:30	Get To Know Me Hilya Iikuyu Namibian Yo	*Watch in HD* Hello guy	22	People & Blogs	PT7M24S	444	2d	hd	FALSE		1670	
14	84	UC2vOgve5Ovt	Dewald Black	OWLkrSgr0iY	2018-01-27T06	2018-01-27 6:50	Dear Namibian Youtubers...	I really need your help o	23	Comedy	PT3M23S	203	2d	hd	FALSE	1	2445	
15	85	UCqJ-2Gw-FNII	CASSIJE JESSICA	gdyAugQxj0	2018-02-01T13	2018-02-01 13:56	parents on report day Namibian Youtuber cass	This is how namibian par	23	Comedy	PT40S	40	2d	sd	FALSE		11741	
16	86	UC32vWlrEBH5	Hilya Iikuyu	5jFXdce3wal	2018-02-02T23	2018-02-02 23:31	Summer Playlist Vibes Namibian YouTube	I had so much fun shooti	22	People & Blogs	PT17M49S	1069	2d	hd	FALSE		280	
17	87	UCuWpXzhakO	OnlineWith Elma	cfF1-qVOTJU	2018-02-05T20	2018-02-05 20:45	SMASH OR PASS: Namibian Youtubers Edition!	SMASH OR PASS NAMIBI	24	Entertainment	PT6M52S	412	2d	hd	FALSE		4305	
18	88	UCf5_9MIMzfr	NONOYULO KAVARI	YmBokscFDt	2018-02-07T16	2018-02-07 16:49	â—My YouTube Tag Namibian Youtuberâ—	Thanks for watching my	22	People & Blogs	PT10M11S	611	2d	sd	FALSE		192	
19	89	UC32vWlrEBH5	Hilya Iikuyu	5WhFckScGG	2018-02-09T02	2018-02-09 2:43	Super Hot Chili Challenge Namibian YouTube	Hey lovelies, welcome b	22	People & Blogs	PT7M50S	470	2d	hd	FALSE		618	
20	90	UCkT-p7j9EHY	King Oweezy	FUIS2n3rWtk	2018-02-09T06	2018-02-09 6:40	Have I Have I Not Challenge f.t Small Cousin Nar	NOTE:I am doing this vid	24	Entertainment	PT20M58S	1258	2d	hd	FALSE		151	
21	91	UCmi2mjC4u8j	graysbygrace	FKwwAORkf	2018-02-17T14	2018-02-17 14:40	All About me Video Namibian Youtuber Artsy	Social Media Instagram:	22	People & Blogs	PT10M52S	652	2d	hd	FALSE		48	
22	92	UC2vOgve5Ovt	Dewald Black	APqUW7nj23	2018-02-21T18	2018-02-21 18:22	Dear Namibian Youtubers Namcon 2018	Dear Namibian Youtuber	19	Travel & Events	PT1M54S	114	2d	hd	FALSE		329	
23	93	UCJFVeZQqaGs	klementina	G3d80NHnYU	2018-02-21T22	2018-02-21 22:23	My Failed YouTube Intro Videos Namibian You	Tuber	22	People & Blogs	PT9M34S	574	2d	sd	FALSE		442	
24	94	UCgH0USCM_u	Black Velvet	05TUjx6dL3s	2018-02-22T15	2018-02-22 15:29	My 2000â€™s playlist Namibian Youtuber	Hey loves thank you for	22	People & Blogs	PT14M10S	850	2d	hd	FALSE		892	
25	95	UC32vWlrEBH5	Hilya Iikuyu	pHqZl_RfnfY	2018-02-23T05	2018-02-23 5:36	Back To School UCT AFROCENTRIX Nami	Hey lovelies, welcome b	22	People & Blogs	PT9M24S	564	2d	hd	FALSE		1316	
26	96	UCmi2mjC4u8j	graysbygrace	dqSu0ftdQp	2018-02-24T11	2018-02-24 11:46	I tried following Mark Crilley Tutorial!!! Namib	Whats up sassy Taco it's	22	People & Blogs	PT13M52S	832	2d	hd	FALSE		41	
27	97	UC32vWlrEBH5	Hilya Iikuyu	IYi2PDpFsM	2018-03-02T14	2018-03-02 14:52	I Tried Sushi For The First Time Namibian You	Hello beautiful people!	22	People & Blogs	PT10M33S	633	2d	hd	FALSE		374	
28	98	UCmi2mjC4u8j	graysbygrace	c0Wx2hLwKt	2018-03-03T09	2018-03-03 9:58	Random Productive Week Namibian Youtuber	um yeah!!! #sassytacocr	22	People & Blogs	PT10M49S	649	2d	hd	FALSE		19	
29	99	UCJFVeZQqaGs	klementina	PBl1f9mjMN	2018-03-05T04	2018-03-05 4:05	RESPONDING 2 comments about my channel Namibian	YouTube	22	People & Blogs	PT5M51S	351	2d	sd	FALSE		242	

Making YouTube Accessible for Research

- What is not included in YTDI results:

- Audiovisual data,
- Text from the comment section,
- Subtitles / Captions



Automated captions by YouTube /
Google speech recognition =
automated orthographic transcripts of
the videos

- However, using YTDI can save a considerable amount of time clicking oneself through a vast number of *randomly* suggested videos and assists in assembling relatively quick text-based corpora (containing video titles and descriptions)

Making YouTube Accessible for Research

- Suggested workflow:
 - 1) Developing relevant search terms for the desired type of data
 - e.g. “x accent tag” or “x English” for “metalinguistic” clips
 - 2) Entering the search query into *YTDT* to receive a list of results
 - 3) Narrowing down the first list of results by searching video titles and descriptions for *false positives*
 - 4) Extracting automatically generated captions (and revise them)
 - 5) Watching YouTube
 - 6) Conduct Analyses

Conclusion & Outlook

- The classification by Schneider (2016) should, at least, be extended by the following dimensions / gradual continua to achieve a more adequate categorization of contents found on YouTube:
 - a) Professionally-created vs. amateur-created clips**
 - b) Spontaneous vs. scripted clips**
- YouTube offers a broad variety of styles that could be used to complement already available data:
 - From styles known from conventional (professional) mass media (e.g. news reports) to potentially YouTube-exclusive styles (e.g. different types of vlogs, live streaming, etc.) uploaded by amateur content creators

Conclusion & Outlook

- Westphal: “Rather than rejecting media talk as inauthentic sociolinguists need to turn to the unique opportunities to study how and which existing linguistic resources (e.g. conversational styles or vernacular variants) are used in performances and how mediated stylistic variation connects to higher level variation.” (2017: 10)

Conclusion & Outlook

- **YouTube is a neglected, but valuable resource for variational linguistics!** (cf. also Schneider 2016: 278f.)
 - When taking into account amateur “natural” clips, the data might give insights into:
 - Multi-modal linguistic behavior and performance, especially pragmatics
 - Synchronic & diachronic variation on various descriptive levels
 - YouTube-exclusive (?) text types / styles & style shifting
- Combined expertise of digital ethnographers, media linguists, and sociolinguists required

Conclusion & Outlook

- **YouTube is a neglected, but valuable resource for variational linguistics!**
 - The voices for including further types of data (apart from e.g. lab data) are becoming louder, not just in variational linguistics (cf. e.g. Mair *fc.*; Wagner et al. 2015)
- Watching YouTube videos still takes time, but finding the desired contents is made easier through methodologies offered by external tools like *YouTube Data Tools*

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Thank you for your attention!

Any questions, comments, and other type of feedback are much appreciated.



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