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BROADCASTING LEGAL DISCOURSE: THE POPULARIZATION OF FAMILY LAW THROUGH YOUTUBE

Silvia Cavalieri

Abstract

New media and Web 2.0 are having a significant impact on science and technology for the communication of specialized topics from experts to non-experts (Garzone 2007). However, only few studies have focused on the popularization of legal discourse (Anesa 2012; Williams 2013) and even fewer on the impact of web genres on its dissemination (Chierichetti 2006; Garzone 2014; Engberg/Luttermann 2014). Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, no empirical research has been conducted on the use of broadcast platforms, i.e. YouTube, to popularize legal topics. The purpose of this paper is thus to analyze the strategies employed for the popularization of legal discourse (i.e. definitions, denominations, reformulations, exemplifications, cf. Calsamiglia/van Dijk 2004) on Youtube, focusing in particular on the specific branch of Family Law, as one of the most relevant and close to lay-people. The analysis is carried out on a corpus of video clips gathered from the Youtube channel of the well-known British lawyer Marilyn Stowe, the *Stowe Family Law* YouTube channel. Each video deals with a different topic on Family Law. Textual data is retrieved from the broadcast. From a methodological perspective, recourse to corpus linguistics and discourse analytical tools shall enable us to investigate the popularizing strategies involved (Calsamiglia/van Dijk 2004; Garzone 2006) and the metadiscourse (Hyland 2005a, 2005b) used to guide the non-expert receivers of the video (textual metadiscourse) through legal issues, and to let the audience take part in knowledge construction (interpersonal metadiscourse).

I. Introduction

The popularization of ESP (English for Special Purposes) has recently become the center of increasing scholarly interest in the field of discourse analysis.[1] Discourse-analytic research has focused on the linguistic strategies enacted to disseminate and recontextualize scientific knowledge for a lay-audience through different genres, such as scientific magazines, books published for a wide readership, television documentaries and specialized articles in newspapers (Gotti 2013: 10). As Gotti (ibid.: 11)

[1] See, among others, Calsamiglia/van Dijk (2004), Garzone (2006, 2007), Gotti (2013).

points out, differences have been highlighted at various levels: textual form, sentence subjects, grammatical voice, verb choices, modality and hedging, and rhetorical structure (Myers 1990, 1991, 1994; Calsamiglia 2003). Some of the popularization strategies investigated by scholars have included metaphors (Gülich 2003) as well as specific rhetorical devices such as denomination, description, exemplification, generalization, paraphrase and reformulation. However, the relevant literature has laid the main emphasis almost exclusively on scientific popularization. Only few studies have focused on the popularization of legal discourse (Bhatia 1983, 1997; Fonséen 2008; Anesa 2012; Williams 2013) and very few on the impact of web genres on its dissemination (Chierichetti 2006; Garzone 2014; Engberg/Luttermann 2014; Turnbull 2014).

According to Williams (2013: 42), this paucity of studies on the dissemination of legal discourse is due to the fact that science is studied at school and it is perceived as an 'everyday' subject that must be popularized for socioeconomic reasons, whereas law is not part of formal education and it is seen as something 'distant', which does not permeate everyday life.

As far as popularization in the digital era is concerned, it is possible to state that the spread of new technologies has determined far-reaching changes in communication in general, including in the dissemination of knowledge. In fact, according to Garzone (2007), in the digital era we have assisted to the *migration* of previously existing genres to the web, to the evolution of previously existing genres into new genres in the web-mediated environment, and to the emergence of radically new genres, native to the web. This last category includes YouTube videos, whose specificities will be outlined in the present analysis.

Furthermore, the shift to Web 2.0 has had a significant role in the popularization of specialized knowledge because it has come with a larger footprint, i.e. wider reach, than traditional genres. There has been an extension in the participation framework of knowledge (Askehave/Nielsen 2005): this *global reach* has seen the involvement of a specific audience, as well as that of a potentially infinite number of Internet surfers as ratified participants.

Another important aspect brought about by Web 2.0 is represented by *interactivity*, which enables experts to involve the lay-public in the co-construction of knowledge. We have moved out of the Information Age, in which experts gave pre-constructed knowledge to lay-people, into what

Myers (2010) terms the *Relationship Age*, with a highly participatory framework in which knowledge can be built by experts in collaboration with lay-people.

A number of studies have considered the importance of blogs in this communicative development.[2] However, to date only few scholars have considered YouTube (Dynel 2014; Adami 2008, 2009, 2010) from a linguistic point of view, mainly focusing on the sociological and economic impact of this social media (Burgess/Green 2009; Pace 2008; Vesnic-Alujevic/van Bauwel 2014). Moreover, to the best of our knowledge no empirical research has been conducted on the use of broadcast platforms such as YouTube to popularize science, nor for the dissemination of legal issues.

Against this background, the present paper aims at describing features of YouTube videos used in order to make information cognitively accessible to lay people in expert-lay communication (Turnbull 2014). To this purpose, we shall analyze the popularization strategies enacted in legal discourse to bridge the knowledge asymmetry between expert and layman, in the transfer of specialised knowledge from one to the other, and we shall also investigate how metadiscourse contributes to achieve this objective. Specifically, the study will focus on *interactive metadiscourse* (Hyland 2005a), i.e. language elements used to guide the non-expert receivers of the video through legal issues, and on *interactional metadiscourse* (ibid.), i.e. devices employed to make the audience participate to the construction of knowledge. At the same time, the paper will study lexical verbs that collocate with self-mentions and engagement markers to show the role of the expert and the way in which knowledge is co-constructed through interaction with lay-people.

The chapter has been structured as follows: in section II, a description of the materials analyzed is given and the methodological procedures are provided. In section III, features of YouTube videos are outlined. Data analysis and discussion are the subject of section IV. Finally, in section V we draw some concluding remarks.

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[2] See, among others, Krishnamurthy (2002), Herring/Scheidt/Wright/Bonus (2005), Miller/Shepherd (2004, 2009), Grieve/Biber/Friginal/Nekrasova (2010), Garzone (2014), Mahrt/Puschmann (2014), Puschmann (2015).

II. Materials and methods

The data for the study consists of a small electronic corpus of 12 videos gathered from the *Stowe Family Law* YouTube channel. The Stowe Family Law is the UK's largest specialist family law firm. It was founded over 30 years ago by senior partner Marilyn Stowe who is the main character of the videos and is now one of the best-known divorce lawyers in Great Britain. The firm has earned an enviable international reputation; it is well-known for its excellence and exploits different social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, and YouTube) to communicate and to create a relationship with the audience of potential clients. The corpus is composed of all the videos about divorce matters that deal with "carefully selected topics […], or issues that crop up time and again in consultations with clients".[3] The textual data used for the analysis was manually transcribed and amounts to a total of 2,565 tokens (approx. 214 tokens per clip). Topics and the duration of each video are highlighted in Table 1.

Clip	***Time***
Adultery & Marriage	1:48
Finance & Adultery	1:12
Finance & Establishing Needs	2:04
Establishing a Clean Break & Spousal Maintenance	1:30
Paying Maintenance	1:40
Spousal Maintenance	2:12
Maintenance Orders	1:56
Bankruptcy	1:29
Decree Absolute	2:08
Living Overseas & Living in Spain	1:22
Third Parties	0:56
Third Parties & Finance	1:21

Table 1. *Topics and durations of the selected video clips about Divorce Advice*

As for methodology, the study integrates corpus and discourse analysis with a data driven perspective so as to focus on three main points.

a. The strategies employed for the popularization of legal discourse. That is, definitions, denominations, reformulations, exemplifications

[3] Cf. *Divorce Advice Section*: http://www.marilynstowe.co.uk/divorce-advice-videos/.

(Calsamiglia/van Dijk 2004), scenarios (Gülich 2003; Turnbull 2014). Discourse analytical tools are used at this stage.

b. The use of metadiscourse (Hyland 2005a) in shaping the structure of the video and the legal topic presented (interactive metadiscourse) and in representing the author of the video while at the same time involving the receiver and soliciting a response (interactional metadiscourse). The analysis here is carried out making recourse to Lawrence Anthony's freeware *AntConc 3.2.1* and the corpus analytical tools that it offers for the study of wordlists, concordances and collocations.

c. The presence of lexical verbs associated to self-mentions and engagement markers (Garzone 2014). Concordances and collocations are analyzed using AntConc 3.2.1.

As far as the first point is concerned, we adopted Calsamiglia and van Dijk's (2004) categorization, to which we added an extra category, *scenarios*, from Gülich (2003: 244). For purposes of this analysis, we also distinguish between exemplification proper and exemplification through scenarios. Accordingly, the following strategies will come under investigation at subsequent points:

- *denomination*, which introduces new objects, events or terms;
- *definition*, or conceptual delimitation by a brief description of the thing the term refers to;
- *reformulation*, that is, an easier paraphrase of a selected discourse fragment;
- *analogy*, or comparison with an area or objects known to the layman or easier to understand;
- *generalization*: a proposition that extends the validity of a proposition to all or most members of a set;
- *exemplification*: *exemplification proper*, or one or more propositions that are instantiations of a more general proposition; *exemplification through scenarios*, which create a hypothetical situation;
- *explication*, whereby the reader is offered information that enriches his/her knowledge on the subject matter treated, thus increasing artificially the degree of shared knowledge;
- *scenarios*, which guide the viewer through the subject matter. E.g., through the use of questions which could raise the interest of the receiver.

As regards metadiscourse in the videos, we bank on Hyland (2005a; 2005b; 2007: 269-270). More specifically, we decided to focus our attention on those metadiscursive devices that could be related to the popularizing strategies mentioned above. Therefore, we selected *transitions*, *reformulators*, and *exemplificators* for *interactive metadiscourse*, and *engagement markers*, *questions*, and *directives* when dealing with *interactional metadiscourse*.

Turning to *interactive metadiscourse*, it helps to guide the reader through the text and, in our case study, will turn out to shape the structure of the video and the legal topic presented. Specifically, *transitions* express relations between main clauses (*in addition*, *but*, *thus*, *and*); *reformulators* are items used to introduce a rephrasing of a previous discourse unit (*in other words*, *that is*); *exemplificators* serve the purpose of elaborating the meaning of a statement by using examples (*such as*, *for example*, *for instance*).

On the other hand, *interactional metadiscourse* is concerned with "the readers' involvement in the text" (Hyland 2005a: 49) and "the writer's efforts to control the level of personality in a text and establish a suitable relationship to his or her data, arguments, and audience" (Hyland 2004: 139). When dealing with YouTube videos, this metadiscursive dimension concerns the self-representation of the author of the video as well as the involvement of the receiver, whose interaction is intended to encourage his/her response. The category comprises:

- *hedges*, or devices whereby "the writer withholds full commitment to a proposition; employed as an index to recognize the alternative voices, viewpoints, and possibilities" (Hyland 2005a: 52);
- *boosters*, which express certainty and highlight the force of propositions (Hyland 2004);
- *attitude markers*, which represent "the writer's attitude and judgment of the propositional content" (ibid.: 53);
- *engagement markers*, which address the readers explicitly, "either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants" (ibid.) through second person pronouns (ibid.);
- *self-mentions*, used to indicate the degree of explicit author presence and attendance in the text represented through the first person pronouns and possessive adjectives (Hyland 2004; Hyland 2005a: 53);

- *questions*, which create a dialogue with the receiver (*What do these have in common? The answer is …*) (Hyland 2007: 269);
- *directives*, which invite the direct response of the receiver through (i) physical acts (*Go* and other action verbs); (ii) cognitive acts (*Think* and other verbs of cognition); (iii) textual acts (*consult*, *See table*, and other metadiscursive verbs) (Hyland 2005b).

The third point of our analysis considered lexical verbs associated to self-mentions (*I*, *we*) and engagement markers (*you*, *they*, *people*). Our question is, which actions associate with the video's persona? Which actions are the receiver's? To address this point, we followed the framework proposed by Garzone (2014) and we searched for these items by using corpus analytical tools (i.e. wordlists, concordances and collocations). Garzone identifies five main categories of lexical verbs: *verbs of cognition* (*believe*, *think*, *doubt*, *hope*, *worry*); *attitudinal verbs* (*assume*, *claim*, *suggest*, *know*); *metadiscursive verbs* (*explain*, *note*, *wonder*); *verbs of doing* (*do*, *go*); *behavioural and physiological verbs* (*live*, *be*).

III. *Divorce Advice* YouTube videos: peripheral features

In this section, a preliminary overview of the peripheral features of *Divorce Advice* YouTube videos will be presented. To outline their characteristics, we based our observation on Adami's (2010: 38ff) work on YouTube videos.

Figure 1 was taken from the introductory video of the divorce section of *Stowe Family Law* YouTube channel. As can be seen from the screenshot in Figure 1, these videos can be considered as videoblogs**,** in which the Youtuber (in this case the lawyer herself) appears facing the camera and directly talking to viewers.

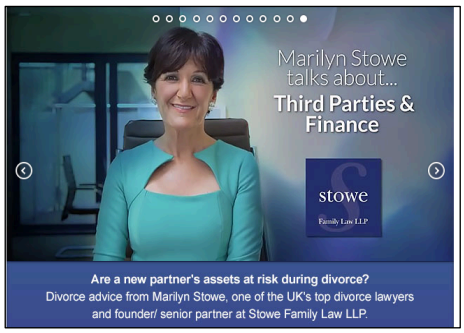


Figure 1. *Screenshot from* 3rd Parties and Finance

A second feature that can be noticed is the presence of *embodied modes* only. That is, the body is used to convey a message (Adami 2010:38). Indeed, Marilyn Stowe, the protagonist of all the videos, uses a mixture of spoken language, body movements, facial expressions, gestures and gaze to mediate all the notions and issues about divorce to the viewers.

The videos are characterized by spatial determination since they are all shot in the Stowe Family Law LPP, but the time of the shooting is undetermined. The videos seem to have been shot all at the same time of the day because of the artificial atmosphere they are surrounded by.

In this artificial setting, the image of Marilyn Stowe, or the Youtuber's persona, is predominant. This is instrumental in focusing on the message conveyed and on the authority of the producer of the message. This is also reflected by the type of communication that is unidirectional. A unidirectional communicative exchange is typical of expert-lay communication and it is usually the type of interaction that takes place in TV broadcasts.

According to Adami (2010), YouTube videos are characterized by a heterogeneous interaction, i.e. the receivers of the video may respond or interact with the producer by using different modes of communications. In divorce advice videos, this feature is respected and the response is usually in the form of written text, thus belonging to a different genre. Figure 2 provides an example of this heterogenous interaction.



Figure 2. *Heterogenous interaction (*Maintenance Orders*)*

While the video is the prompt that starts the interaction with the audience, the exchanges that follow belong to a different communicative mode (e.g., written text). As it shown in Figure 2, Marilyn Stowe directly replies to the people interested in the topic and asking for advice on their personal situations by also using the written mode (cf. *3. Comments*). The video thus may solicit two different acts from the receiver: (i) a *cognitive act* (Hyland 2005b: 185), i.e. understanding Family Law and specifically divorce matters often relating them to their personal experience; and (ii) a *physical act*, or going to the Stowe Family Law LTT to solve their problems. Therefore, it is possible to say that these topical videos create a discourse community around a shared interest, i.e. divorce.

As regards the time of production of videos and their time of reception, they do not coincide so they are characterized by asynchronicity.

Third, divorce advice videos show some instances of intertextual references by citing from time to time the Stowe Family Law blog and Marilyn Stowe's 2013 best seller *Divorce & Splitting Up: Advice from a Top Divorce Lawyer*.

IV. Popularizing strategies and metadiscourse

This section is divided into three parts: the first part will give results of the analysis of the strategies used in the videos to popularize legal discourse; the second part will take into account the metadiscursive expressions related to the popularizing strategies highlighted; the third part will

provide the outcomes of the analysis of lexical verbs associated to self-mentions and engagement markers in the corpus.

1. Popularizing strategies

If we now turn to the quantitative presence of popularizing strategies in the corpus, the most frequent strategy is *exemplification* (12x). It was also observed that two main types of exemplifications can be identified: *exemplification through scenarios* (10x), and *exemplification proper* (2x). Examples (1) and (2) illustrate.

(1) *If* your spouse has known about the adultery for six months or more and hasn't done anything about it, then they can be taken to have condoned it. (*Adultery and Marriage*)

(2) [Y]ou might lose out on automatic benefits that you would have got had you still been married. *For example: a widow or widower's pension*. (*Decree Absolute*)

In the first example, through the introduction of a hypothetical situation (*If…*), the lawyer makes use of a scenario to create a vivid image, easy to be understood, by describing a possible situation in which the lay person could find him/herself. In the second example, on the other hand, a general proposition is presented (*benefit*) and subsequently instantiations of it are given preceded by the expression *for example*, as in *For example: a widow or widower's pension*.

The second most frequent popularizing strategy in the corpus is *definition* (10x), immediately followed by *denomination* (7x); sometimes they can be found in combination. The lawyer employs these strategies to introduce new legal terms and to give a brief description of their conceptual meaning, as shown in examples (3) and (4).

(3) *Decree absolute* is one of the most popular topics on my blog. *When you apply for decree absolute you will be formally dissolving your marriage*. (*Decree Absolute)*

(4) It may be possible to *'capitalise maintenance'*, *which is to pay a lump sum instead of continuing maintenance* (*Paying Maintenance*)

In (3) the term *decree absolute*, which is a typical instance of an English legal word derived from French (Oxford English Dictionary: OED: *decree absolute*), is presented and its definition is provided; in this case, the definition is a *when*-definition or *scenario* directly involving the receiver

(*when you apply for decree absolute*). In the subsequent example, at first the legal concept is presented and then its definition is given. In a slightly different manner, in (4) *to capitalize maintenance* is followed by a definition, introduced by the relational expression *which is*.

Reformulation (6x) is another common strategy used to enhance the comprehension of the lay receiver. A representative example is given in (5).

(5) [Spousal maintenance] It's a *form of compensation.* It is *a way of meeting need*. After a long marriage, *income is meant to help you meet your future needs go forward (Spousal Maintenance*)

As can be seen, the lawyer at first defines what spousal maintenance stands for (very broadly, *a form of compensation*) and then move on to rephrase the statement in two different subsequent reformulations. The first reformulation has an impersonal structure (e.g., *it is a way of meeting needs*), whereas the second is introduced by means of a *scenario* involving the receiver (e.g., *you* and *your* in *income is meant to help you meet your future needs go forward*).

Other strategies are *explication* (2x) and *scenarios* (3x). *Explications* offer information which enriches the knowledge of the lay-audience on the subject matter treated (e.g., numbers, figures, etc.), as highlighted in example (6).

(6) The fact that a marriage has broken down is not surprising. There are *60 million people* in this country and not every marriage is going to work. As we know, lots of marriages break down. 42 per cent of marriages break down. (*Adultery and Marriage*)

Scenarios, on the other hand, can be considered as possible *question-answer pairs* typical of lawyer-client consultations. They are used to introduce new aspects on a topic and to increase the interest of the receiver. As shown by example (7), they are usually in the form of *direct quotations.*

(7) Sometimes people think: *"If I go bankrupt I can get out of my obligations on divorce". No, you can't.* (*Bankruptcy*)

2. Metadiscourse related to the popularizing strategies

In this section, results concerning the presence of metadiscursive items related to the popularizing strategies highlighted in the previous sections, are presented.

As regards interactional metadiscourse, observing the wordlist, we found 255 items belonging to this first category. The following table shows the quantitative presence of each interactional metadiscursive class in the corpus.

Category	***Examples***	***Total***
Hedges	*might* (9), *may* (4), *possible* (4), *would* (4), *quite* (3), *should* (3), *suggest* (3), *probably* (2)	56 (22%)
Boosters	*actually* (4), *in actual fact* (1), *in fact* (1)	6 (2%)
Attitude markers	*-ly* (8), *far the easier* (1), *far the better* (1)	10 (4%)
Self-mentions	*I* (5), *my* (5), inclusive *we* (2); exclusive *we* (3), exclusive *us* (2), *me* (1),	18 (7%)
Engagement markers	*you* (68), *your* (31), *people* (18), *they* (13)	130 (51%)
Questions	Dialogic acts: *What do these have in common? The answer is* (26)	26 (10%)
Directives	- Physical acts (6): *put*, *give*, *be*, *take*, *go*, *sort* - Cognitive acts (3): *ignore*, *allow*, *think* - Textual acts: X	9 (4%)

Table 2. *Interactional metadiscourse*

As can be seen, the most frequent items are those dealing with an engagement function, thus receiver-oriented (i.e. hedges, engagement markers, questions, and directives). The presence of the author of the video is less marked as shown by the scarce use of self-mentions, boosters and attitude markers.

Engagement markers are the dominant interactional metadiscursive device used in the videos and they serve the purpose of involving the receiver in the explanation. In fact, they are frequently found in *exemplifications through scenarios*, where the lawyer presents hypothetical situations that could be of concern for a person who decides to divorce. Instances of this use of engagement markers can be found in the example below.

(8) If *you* think that there are very serious financial issues, and it's fair to say that coming out of recession more people do tend to go bump than during one, then *you* must take legal advice straight away to discuss *your* own situation.
It makes sense to get in first and get *your* finances resolved if the marriage has broken down. (*Spousal Maintenance*)

Other metadiscursive devices with engagement functions are *questions*. In our YouTube corpus, questions mainly perform a dialogic function in that they create a hypothetical interaction with the receiver. By using the

form of direct quotations, they create *scenarios* depicting a speculative lawyer-client consultation in which various issues concerning divorce are dealt with. Example 9 shows a representative instance from the corpus.

(9) The million dollar question is: *"how much will I get out of my divorce?"* Every case is different and the law is designed to adapt to every case. The way the law works is this: […] (*Spousal Maintenance*)

Finally, a last interactional item of metadiscourse that frequently occurs in the corpus is *directives*. They are generally exhortative imperatives in the second person singular, trying to encourage the receiver to perform physical acts (*come*, *see*) or cognitive acts (*think about*) (Hyland 2007), as in examples (10) and (11), respectively.

(10) *Come* and *see* us because we're only too happy to help. (*Establishing a Clean Break*; *Spousal Maintenance*)

(11) *Think about* what you want to do, what your needs are going forward, and how those needs are going to be met. (*Maintenance Orders*)

Moving on to interactive metadiscourse and focusing on those items that help to guide the receiver through the video and to give a structure to the legal topic presented, we found 126 expressions in this category. The most interesting results concern *transitions* (e.g., *in addition*, *but*, *thus*, *and*); *reformulators* (e.g., *in other words*, *that is*), and *exemplificators* (e.g., *such as*, *for example*, *for instance*), which are the most frequent in the corpus and clearly related to the popularizing strategies described in section 4.1. Table 3 shows the frequency of each item found for each of the classes previously mentioned. Examples of the most frequent items for each class are also provided.

Category	***Examples***	***Total***
Transitions (example 12)	*and* (53), *if* (22), *but* (15), *so* (5), *however* (4), *therefore* (1), *thereafter* (1), *similarly* (1), *equally* (1)	103 (81%)
Reformulators (example 13)	*that is* (7), *that means in other words* (5)	12 (10%)
Exemplificators (example 14)	*for example* (7)	7 (6%)

Table 3. *Interactive metadiscourse*

(12) Spousal maintenance is available for people who need income going forward *but*, in cases of wealthier parties, it's possible to arrive at a clean break.

Well, *if* you simply stop paying maintenance then your wife, or husband, can go to court and enforce it. (*Spousal Maintenance*)

(13) There's much more Draconian ways of getting maintenance paid. By issuing a judgment summons *that is* if the judge is satisfied that you can pay but you aren't paying he can send you to prison instead. (*Maintenance Orders*)

(14) What factors might impact on a settlement? *For example***,** disability, the ability to earn more money than they are at the moment. (*Paying Maintenance*)

Importantly, example (12) shows that *transitions* can serve different purposes, such as introducing variables or specific cases (e.g., *but* in *[...] but, in cases of wealthier parties, it's possible to arrive at a clean break [...]*), or introducing an exemplification through a scenario (e.g., *if* in *[...], if you simply stop paying maintenance then your wife, or husband, can go to court [...]*).

On the other hand, *reformulators* are always evidence of a subsequent rephrase of a statement. That is, they signal a *reformulation* (e.g., *that is* in *[...] that is if the judge is satisfied that you can pay but you aren't paying he can send you to prison instead*).

Lastly, *exemplificators* are items used to introduce one or more propositions that are instantiations of a more general one. Take *for example* in (14), which introduces the substitution of the hyperonym *factors* with hyponyms such as *disability, the ability to earn more money than they are at the moment*.

3. Lexical verbs associated to self-mentions and engagement markers

If we have a look at the collocations of lexical verbs with self-mentions and engagement markers, a first interesting point is that self-mentions (e.g., *I*, *we*) tend to collocate with attitudinal verbs (e.g., *suggest*, *give advice*) and with verbs of doing (e.g., *act*), as shown below.

Self-mentions + verb class	***Examples***	***Total***
I + attitudinal verb	I would *suggest* you/people … (2), The *advice* I *would give* … (2)	4
we + attitudinal verb +verbs of doing	 we *know* (1) we *help* (1), we *act* (2)	4

Table 4. *Lexical verbs associated with self-mentions*

As suggested by the verbs associated with self-mentions, the author represents herself as the expert who shares her knowledge with the lay-public (e.g., *I would suggest*, where *I* stands for Marilyn Stowe, the expert in family law and divorce) and, at the same time, can perform actions in favour of lay-people seeking for her help through the Stowe Family Law LPP. For example, *we help* or *we act*, where *we* stands for lawyers working at Stowe Family Law LPP, including Marilyn Stowe herself.

On the other hand, engagement markers (*you*, *people*, *they*) tend to collocate with behavioural verbs, verbs of cognition, and verbs of doing, as shown below.

Engagement marker + verb class	***Examples***	***Total***
You + behavioural verb + verb of cognition	you *are* (5), you *need* (4), you *want* (2) you *think* (3), you *intend* (2)	16
people + behavioural verbs + verb of cognition + verb of doing	people *want* (1) people *seem* (1), people *think* (1), people *worry* (1) people *look* (1), people *write* (1)	6
they + behavioural verb	they *are* (1), they *feel* (1), they *need* (1)	3

Table 5. *Lexical verbs associated with engagement markers*

As demonstrated by the verbs used in association with engagement markers, the receiver is represented as a person with some needs who has to process and re-elaborate the knowledge brought about by the lawyer (i.e. the expert). He/she can then also perform an action in order to get in touch with the expert (e.g., *write*).

V. Conclusions

The spread of new technologies has determined far-reaching changes in communication in general, including the dissemination of knowledge. In fact, in an era strongly influenced by computers, lay-people tend to search the Internet for information regarding specialized fields of concern in their lives. Furthermore, there has been an extension in the participation framework of knowledge achieving a global reach, and lay-people

are more and more involved by experts in the co-construction of knowledge thanks to the interactive interface and the affordances of Web 2.0, YouTube included.

The legal field represents a good example of this trend, especially when dealing with issues that have a bearing on the lives of thousands of people. One such issue is divorce. Generally speaking, access to legal information is not always easy due to the highly technical content that is frequently conveyed through a specialized register. This jargon, also known as *legalese*, has often been criticised for its obscurity and complexity by lay-people who find it difficult to access information that directly involve them as interested parties. However, the manifold linguistic process of making legal information cognitively accessible for non-experts has been underway for some time. As shown by the analysis, as a Web 2.0 platform YouTube provides good tools to perform this task thanks to its versatility. In the case of divorce advice videos, legal information is disseminated using different modes of communications: the legal expert (Marylin Stowe) produces and conveys her message not only using words, but also through embodied modes (Adami 2010: 38) such as body movements, facial expressions, gestures and gaze, so as to render the information as clear as possible and to encourage the active involvement of the viewer in the construction of knowledge.

The present study gives preliminary insights into the presence of popularizing strategies in Stowe's Divorce Advice YouTube videos. The videos analyzed show a high presence of popularization strategies. Interestingly, they help introduce new legal concepts to lay-receivers and mediate the legal information about divorce by depicting through language a set of experiences that could be shared by lay-people involved in a divorce situation (i.e. by using exemplification through scenarios and scenarios depicting hypothetical interactions).

Moreover, the analysis also suggests a high degree of interactivity. As a matter of fact, in the videos we could observe a massive presence of metadiscursive devices such as engagement markers, questions, directives (Hyland 2005b). This indicates systematic interaction with the lay-receiver in the construction of knowledge. The focus is on liaising with the audience rather than on structuring the content of the text (video), thus the interactional dimension prevails on the interactive one. Importantly, the dialogic framework in the construction of knowledge is al-

so shown by the lexical verbs associated to self-mentions and engagement markers. The expert expresses her opinion about the topics presented and proposes an action (attitude verbs and verbs of doing), on the other hand the lay-receiver has to elaborate/think about them (verbs of cognition) and take action in the situation (behavioural verbs, verbs of doing).

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