Discourse
Research in
the MALAYSIAN
CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

Advancements in communication and technology have made it progressively practical and simple for Internet users to publish their thoughts online. One of the most popular ways of doing this is to create and maintain a video blog or vlog. Vlogs are short recorded videos on a variety of real-life, personal or professional topics and areas that are recorded spontaneously or scripted which are later uploaded on to popular social media platforms like YouTube or Facebook (Lange, 2007). The rise of video content creators or YouTubers creates opportunities to share video content with the viewers. The down-to-earth sharing to users by the vloggers is probably the reason behind their popularity, which leads to a kind of bond for both parties (Sykes, 2014; Saitkasimova, 2015). A good example of this is the latest trend of beauty vlogs in the form of make-up tutorials by 'gurus' or experts (Riboni, 2017a). These vloggers give uncomplicated and direct information or tutorials, explanation and review of a cosmetic product. Statista.com reported that there were more than 169 billion views of YouTube beauty vloggers' videos on tutorials and DIY postings and reviews in 2018 (Clement, 2019).

Such growth has made it possible for the development of 'digital professions' in which "vloggers create and market profitable channels, offering an informal learning environment which has given rise to an emerging professional genre of 'how-to-tutorials'" (Bhatia, 2017, p. 106). Make-up tutorial vlogs is understood as a professional or specialized genre (Ledbetter, 2018), with a purpose that is understood by people belonging to the professional discourse community in which it is intended for (Swales, 1990). Such user-generated tutorial videos also have pedagogic potential

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INTRODUCTION

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for technical communication students to learn to make videos as students often subscribe or refer to YouTube to supplement their learning (Morain and Swarts, 2012). These vloggers, also act as social media influencers as they can amass a large number of followers or subscribers due to their active involvement online (Forbes, 2016; Georgia, 2015). Viewers value the assessment and judgement of these influencers about anything, from their opinions on brands to the latest fad. This means that beauty influencers can determine a product or a trend's future (Georgia, 2015). Inadvertently, these influencers become excellent adhoc online informants, reviewers, marketers or promoters for many types of beauty products using social media platforms like YouTube (Bundeskartellamt, 2018).

What this seems to indicate is that tutorial vlogs in general have a function in communicating what they need to convey, either to persuade, promote, or inform, which serve the audience or discourse community who consistently access, watch and follow them (Werner, 2012). Vlogging activities are monologues presented to the masses, which is different from self-talk as the content of the video is mostly intended to be watched and heard by the public (Dynel, 2014). According to Vesnic-Alujevic & van Bauwel (2014), vlogs serve four communicative purposes i.e. to inform, to interact, to engage and to mobilize. These functions are consistent with promotional genres, which includes the makeup tutorial genre (Riboni, 2017a).

The notion of genre and its communicative purpose lead us to many studies employing genre analysis as a research tool. For the past decades, interest in genre analysis research has largely been in the domains of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with Swales (1990, 2004) pioneering the field with his genre analysis and CARS models to study research article introductions. Bhatia (1993) followed suit and extended the model to address genre as a professional communication e.g. promotional genre of business letters (Flowerdew & Wan 2010). Through genre analysis, a text can be analysed at the macro and micro level. The macrostructure or format can be discerned via the text's rhetorical or move structure. The move can then be broken down to a sub-move' or 'step' that has a communicative purpose (Swales, 1990, p.142).

Over the years, a number of genre analysis studies on academic and non-academic written genres have investigated the communicative purposes of the moves and steps of various texts (for example, see studies

by Swales, 1990; Kathpalia, 1992; Salager-Meyer, 1992; Loudermilk, 2007; Pho, 2008; Gardner, 2012; Bonyadi, 2012; Skalicky, 2013; Zekrati, 2015; Lam, 2016; Lee, 2016; Riboni, 2017; Alali, et al., 2019; Kurniawan, et al., 2019). As for the spoken discourse, the genre analysis studies tend to focus mainly on academic genres like student oral presentations, seminars, academic lectures, dissertation defences and three minutes thesis or 3MT presentation (see studies by Thompson, 1994; Aguilar, 2004; Swales, 2004; Cheng, 2012; Yaakob, 2013; Hu & Liu, 2018; Kuldip Kaur, et al., 2019). These studies, however, are restricted to synchronous communication which is in contrast with the asynchronous nature of vlog genre, that prohibits vloggers and viewers to interact concurrently. In addition to that, in a review of move analysis studies on spoken genre, Kuldip Kaur et al. (2019) found that oral presentations, speeches, conference presentations have different levels of formality within the genre, real-time audience/ listener-orientation, academically-oriented purpose and analysed only one section of the genre. Previous studies have not investigated the vlog genre although they belong to a similar discourse family.

Nonetheless, in a recent pioneering research to examine makeup vlogs, Riboni (2017a) adopted the analytical framework by Fairclough (1992), Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) to look into the linguistic features, rhetorical structure as well as the social perspective of fifteen makeup video tutorials by selected makeup 'gurus' on YouTube. The study found five types of rhetorical structures, namely: M1- Greetings, M2- Summary of content (abstract), M3- Makeup application, M4- Leave taking and finally M5- Coda, in the genre which fit the communicative purpose of vlogs, that is to instruct. There is only one sub-move indicated under M4 - Call to action (Riboni, 2017b) that requires viewers to take a certain action like 'to subscribe'. While the finding helps shed light on the conventions of makeup vlog genre, the paper makes basic attempts to account for the move structure of promotional genre. In investigating rhetorical work of YouTube beauty community, Ledbetter (2018) argues that rhetorical moves create dynamic relationship of continuity and credibility with the audience on the part of the vlogger who must 'sell' themselves online. The development of digital professions like vloggers calls for the need for more studies on this discourse type as these vloggers have a purpose

About the Authors

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Discourse Research in the MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

This book presents current research on discourse within the Malaysian context. It covers research in discourse from various perspectives including pragmatics, critical discourse analysis and genre analysis.

The chapters comprise of topics that range from the use of social media as in Twitter by politicians in reaching out to the public at a personal level and an online university's confession page on Facebook to analyzing tender notices, introductory chapters of doctoral thesis and beauty vlogs through the use of moves and sub-moves. Further, the issue of climate change from a CDA perspective helps to create awareness on the representation of frames and power relations in context. This book will be a resource to students and academicians who are interested to find out the latest research on discourse in Malaysia.