

## COMMENTING TO LEARN: EVIDENCE OF LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING IN COMMENTS ON YOUTUBE VIDEOS

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It is often observed that the globalization of social media has opened up new opportunities for informal intercultural communication and foreign language learning. This study aims to go beyond this general observation through a case study that explores how discourse analysis tools might be used to uncover evidence of language and intercultural learning in comments on YouTube videos involving Chinese-English translanguaging. Analysis of exchange structure—interactional acts involving information exchange and stance marking—suggests that translanguaging triggers interactionally-rich comments that are oriented towards information exchange and negotiation for meaning on topics of language and culture. It is argued that the methodologies used have good potential for use in studies that aim to investigate learning in online settings, both at the environmental level, in macroanalysis of large data sets, and at the individual/situational level, in microanalysis of shorter interactional sequences.

**Language(s) Learned in this Study:** Cantonese, English, Mandarin Chinese

**Key words:** Computer-mediated Communication, Discourse Analysis, Learner Autonomy, Video

**APA Citation:** Benson, P. (2015). Commenting to learn: Evidence of language and intercultural learning in comments on YouTube videos. *Language Learning & Technology* 19(3), 88–105. Retrieved from <http://llt.msu.edu/issues/october2015/benson.pdf>

**Received:** July 1, 2014; **Accepted:** February 1, 2015; **Published:** October 1, 2015

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### INTRODUCTION

Writing in *Language Learning and Technology* a little over a decade ago, Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou (2004, p. 83) described the Internet as a “worldwide literacy practice environment” that also functions as “an informal learning environment for English as a second/foreign language”. More recently, Kramsch (2014) has argued that “globalization has changed the conditions under which FL [foreign languages] are taught, learned and used” (p. 302) and highlighted four important developments with strong implications for current research on Internet-based language learning. First, everyday use of online social media is now the norm for wealthier regions of the world. Second, while English remains the dominant language, social media are increasingly supportive of multilingualism. Third, the globalization of communications media is blurring distinctions among languages and destabilizing taken-for-granted codes, norms and conventions. Last, online communication increasingly takes place in multimodal environments, such as YouTube. A further development can be summed up in Thorne’s (2010) perspective on language learning as being “actualized through processes of communicative engagement in *intercultural* settings, in both on- and offline contexts” (p. 139), which accords with the view that language is, when used in contexts of communication, “bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3). In sum, language learning on the Internet can no longer be conceptualized simply in terms of access to native speakers of English and English language texts; it is now much more a matter of everyday immersion in communicatively complex environments, involving multilingualism and language exchange, in which language learning and intercultural learning are often intertwined.

While it can, perhaps, safely be assumed that the Internet now constitutes a rich environment for language

and intercultural learning, we currently lack evidence on how exactly this learning takes place in specific Internet settings. The aim of this exploratory study is to go beyond this assumption by exploring evidence of language and intercultural learning in comments on YouTube videos. Adopting an interactional perspective on learning, the study is methodologically oriented and mainly concerned with how tools for the analysis of interactional discourse can be employed to dig out evidence of learning in this context.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is based on three assumptions. First, if evidence of learning is to be found among YouTube comments, it is likely to be evidence of interactional learning. Second, the relationships between YouTube videos and comments, and among comments, are interactional relationships. Third, translanguaging in YouTube videos, a product of media globalization, acts as a trigger for language and intercultural learning in comments.

### Learning and Interaction

The idea that learning is allied to interaction is central to a range of perspectives on language learning, which have variously been termed *constructivist*, *sociocultural*, *learner-centred*, *communicative*, *collaborative*, *cooperative*, and *dialogic*. These perspectives share the view that the cognitive processes involved in learning are stimulated and supported by communicative interaction and, in stronger versions, that cognition is embodied in interaction (Edwards, 2006; Potter & Molder, 2005). Heritage (2005), for example, examines how various uses of the particle *oh* signal that a speaker “has undergone some kind of change of state in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness” (p.188). For Heritage, this change-of-state token does not simply express a cognitive change that precedes it; instead, the change is embedded in and inseparable from the utterance in which it is embedded.

For Jenks (2010), language learning is also a “social-interactional accomplishment” (p.160). One strand of research that has pursued this line of argument has used discourse analysis tools to target “learners’ active negotiation for meaning in the process of communication as a vehicle for L2 learning” (Mackey, 2007, p. 2). These studies have focused largely on opportunities for learning in repair, corrective feedback and focus on form episodes, arguing that acquisition of new language occurs when learners negotiate problems in communication. Another strand of research has used conversation analysis in microanalyses of interaction, often collected in classrooms, in which speakers display positive evidence of learning (Seedhouse & Walsh, 2010). These studies have focused on the acquisition of language forms, interactional and pragmatic development, and the development of social practices.

Seedhouse (2005) observed that technology-based interaction was a likely growth area for conversation analysis research on language teaching and learning, but questioned how far conversation analysis principles could be applied in this area. Jenks (2014) has pursued this line of inquiry in a study of voice chat interaction, while several studies of online chat have applied discourse and conversation analysis methodologies to investigate learning in online text chat (Tudini, 2007). Tudini’s work is especially interesting in this context, because it points to a broader view of negotiation for meaning in online interactions that involves both language and culture. Noting that most negotiation for meaning studies have focused on acquisition of linguistic forms in repair sequences, Tudini examined how broader intercultural issues act as negotiation triggers in online chat between learners and native speakers of Italian. Her analysis identified, for example, negotiation for meaning episodes that were prompted by gaps in vocabulary knowledge, which could be recoded as negotiations over intercultural knowledge. Moreover, these episodes often occurred outside the context of interactional repair.

As Larsen-Freeman (2004) has observed in a commentary on conversation analysis research on language learning: “Saying that something has been learned, saying what has been learned, when it has been learned, and the reason it has been learned are big challenges for all SLA researchers” (p. 606). Interaction can be seen as one way in which learning is brought into “public view” (Kasper, 2009, p. 11).

Most discourse and conversation analysis studies to date have taken one of two routes leading from observable interaction to learning: either using microanalysis to identify moments of cognition in short interactional sequences (Heritage 2005), or by tracking, over time, the development of linguistic knowledge and skills over a series of interactional episodes (Markee, 2008). In both cases, there appears to be an assumption that learning involves a change of cognitive state, in which a specific individual learns something specific at a specific moment in time. However, if we assume that interactional learning processes also take place below the level of observation in discourse, there may well be value in approaches that evaluate broader orientations toward learning in larger data sets.

An earlier study of YouTube comments on a fan-subbed video of a Chinese song with English subtitles written by the uploader (Benson & Chan, 2010), for example, identified four prominent topics in the comments: (a) accuracy of translations, (b) correct language forms, (c) cultural connotations of language, and (d) language learning and teaching. While it was difficult to say exactly who had learned exactly what, there was, nevertheless, a clear orientation toward learning in the data as a whole. In a later section of this paper, I hope to show how microanalysis can be valuable in demonstrating how learning takes place in a short sequence of YouTube comments. The framework proposed in the next section, however, is designed more to evaluate the likelihood that learning is taking place in a particular set of online data. From this perspective, learning is viewed as a process that potentially occurs in the context of information exchange and negotiation for meaning. The proposed framework is based on exchange structure (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), interactional acts involving information exchange (Stenström, 1994), and stance taking (Jaffe, 2009). It is selected in order to allow coding of an entire data set, which can provide a context for microanalysis of interactional episodes within the data.

### **YouTube and Interaction**

One trajectory in computer-mediated communication research has involved investigating how online written discourse is both similar to and different from spoken discourse (Herring, 1999; Jenks, 2014). The similarities lie mainly in the sequential organisation of turns and exchanges. These similarities allow researchers to use tools designed for the analysis of spoken interaction to investigate the differences, which lie mainly in disruptions to the turn-taking system caused by asynchronous sequences of interaction. Studies of this kind have been carried out in two broad contexts: (a) asynchronous messaging systems, in which messages are, in principle, displayed in the sequences in which they are posted, and (b) newsgroup or discussion forum systems in which messages are arranged in the form of topically related threads. While text-messaging systems are designed to emulate the turn-taking system of spoken interaction, however imperfectly, newsgroup systems are not designed for this purpose, although several recent studies have described them as “conversational” (Marcoccia, 2004; Paolillo, 2011).

YouTube is an online service, officially launched in late 2005, which allows registered users to upload video clips for viewing by the general population of Internet users. Each video is displayed on its own page, which contains a number of elements including a space below the video in which registered users can enter written comments. Registered users can also reply to other users’ comments. At first sight, the patterns observed in YouTube comments appear to differ considerably from spoken interaction. Herring (2013) has described them as being “prompt-focused”, in that they “respond to an initial prompt, such as a news story, a photo, or a video, more often than to other users’ responses” (p. 13). In an analysis of YouTube comments, Herring found that responses to other users’ comments were infrequent, which meant that the extended “step-wise” (p. 13) (step by step) patterns of digression away from an initiated topic that were observed in online chat were largely absent. Other studies, however, have found YouTube comments to be more interactional. Bou-Franch, Lorenzo-Dus, and Blitvich (2012) found underlying patterns of turn-design carried over from face-to-face conversation in their data and argued that, “YouTube polylogues are sufficiently connected so as to constitute a space for online interaction rather than a series of disconnected comments” (p. 515). Boyd (2014) also found that most YouTube comments were part of “multi-participant, asynchronous ‘conversations’ with other YouTube users” (p. 47).

The analytical frameworks used in these studies are all broadly compatible with Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) understanding of exchange structure as being minimally constituted by a first turn containing an Initiation (I) move and a second turn containing a Response (R) move. One of the questions that arises from them, however, concerns the position of the YouTube video in the interactional scheme of things. Should it be considered as external to any interaction that takes place within the comments, such that comments would only be considered interactional if they respond to other comments? Or should the video be treated as an I move that begins a series of interactions, such that comments would be interactional if they respond either to other comments or to the video? While Herring's (2013) approach appears to assume the former, Adami (2009, p. 395) makes a move in the latter direction, when she suggests that text comments, like video responses, emerge from "participants' interest-driven exploitation of the prompts offered by the initial video". Sindoni (2013) adopts a similar view by positing a "multimodal relevance maxim" (p. 205) for YouTube comments, which states that comments need to be "consistent with the main communicative focus of multimodal interaction and the most salient semiotic resource: the foregrounded video" (p. 180). Both of these approaches suggest that YouTube comments are not simply *comments on*, but *responses to* YouTube videos.

### Media Globalization and Translanguaging

Combined with an interactional view of learning, an interactional view of YouTube helps explain how YouTube comments can involve learning. The idea of translanguaging is the third element in the theoretical framework for this study, which, together with the idea of media globalization, helps explain how YouTube comments come to involve *language and intercultural* learning. Media globalization refers to the commercial and social practices through which mass media products and services are increasingly designed for global distribution and operation. Over the past decade, this has been especially apparent in the development of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In the case of YouTube it takes the forms of an ideology of global community (YouTube describes itself as "a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe." YouTube, 2014a) and a localization strategy, initiated when YouTube was taken over by Google in 2006. This strategy involves the development of multiple language interfaces and locally-based services around the world (Hollis, 2008), which means that YouTube is now able to claim that it is localized in 61 countries and across 61 languages and that 80% of its traffic comes from outside the US (YouTube, 2014b). The rapid global expansion of YouTube has undoubtedly contributed much to the spread of English-language media, such as news services, television shows, and popular music, but media globalization is a multi-directional process that also makes media in languages other than English more widely available. One important effect of the global expansion of YouTube has been the development of video genres involving translanguaging that exploit the fluidity with which YouTube now handles communication across language and cultural divides.

Translanguaging is a recent term that is both difficult to define and difficult to separate from competing terms such as translanguaging practice (Canagarajah, 2013) and polylinguaging (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen & Møller, 2011). García and Li Wei (2014) define translanguaging as an approach to bilingualism that treats bilinguals' languages "not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages" (p. 2). The term is used here to cover a range of practices that involve moving between or across languages, including code-switching, multi-party conversations in which more than one language is used, activities such as watching a subtitled movie, and various kinds of multilingual language play (García, 2009).

In this study, videos involve translanguaging when both Chinese and English are used or when the use of English or Chinese as a second language becomes a focus of attention. In earlier YouTube-based studies translanguaging was identified in a Chinese music video that had been fansubbed in English (Benson & Chan, 2010) and in English language performances by singers who were better known for performing in Thai and Japanese (Benson, 2013). In both cases, translanguaging in the video appeared to trigger

comments that addressed issues of language and culture. High frequencies of comments on language and culture have also been observed in comments on Eurovision song contest entries (Ivković, 2013) and on a video of a speech made in English at a UNESCO meeting by a high-level Nepali minister (Sharma, 2014). Translanguaging in YouTube appears to attract speakers and learners of the languages concerned, from locations around the world, to spaces in which comment on relevant issues of language and culture is the order of the day.

The notions of translanguaging and media globalization are, thus, important to this study in helping to explain how communication is directed toward topics of language and culture within the interactional framework of the YouTube video and its comments, and potentially toward language and intercultural learning. The aim of this study is to understand how this process works in practice, through a more systematic analysis of comments on videos involving Cantonese-English and Mandarin Chinese-English translanguaging.

## METHODOLOGY

The study reported in this paper is both exploratory and methodologically oriented. It sets out to explore evidence of language and intercultural learning in comments on media-sharing web sites and is especially concerned with the role of discourse analysis tools in such investigations. There are two basic options for exploring learning in online settings: either to track the behaviour of individuals longitudinally [e.g., Black's (2008) study of a Chinese English language learner's activity on a fan fiction web site], or to examine records of activity on web sites cross-sectionally [e.g., Benson & Chan's (2010) study of comments on a single YouTube video]. The longitudinal aspect of the former approach means that it is an apt approach for showing evidence of learning within individuals. A cross-sectional approach is valuable, therefore, mainly in showing the degree to which particular kinds of online discourses are likely to involve interactional learning and, through microanalysis, the processes that might be involved in particular instances.

### Data Collection

The aim of data collection was to build a data set of videos involving a variety of forms of Chinese-English translanguaging. The languages involved were limited to Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese and English translanguaging in accordance with the location of the study in Hong Kong and the language competencies of the researcher and research assistant. An extensive search was conducted, beginning with videos that were well known in Hong Kong and then, following a snowball sampling procedure, working through related/suggested videos displayed on the right-hand side of the YouTube page. Kavoori (2011) refers to distinctive YouTube video genres, or "relatively stable forms of storytelling" (p. 11), corresponding to the genres of film and television. These genres orient viewers to the kind of television show or film they are watching, and, in the context of YouTube, the kinds of comments that are expected. While translanguaging videos could be thought of as a genre, we also found it helpful to categorize the videos in the data set into 10 distinct genres of translanguaging. In each genre, the videos that had attracted the most comments were retained for analysis: a single video if the number of comments was 500 or above, or several videos with a combined total of 500 comments or above (Appendix A). The total number of comments was 8,850. The aim of this procedure was to construct a data set that would be large enough for patterns to emerge, but not too large for manual coding. By selecting videos from different genres, we hoped to avoid bias from one particular genre.

### Data Analysis

The first step in the data analysis was to extract comments that were related to issues of language or culture raised by the video from the total of 8,850, which left 2,840 comments for more detailed analysis. The discarded comments were mainly those that simply praised or criticized the video (e.g. "cool video!", "LOLZ", "this sucks!") and those that included comments that referred to the personal appearance or

qualities of participants in the videos, the quality of the video production, and so on. These 2,840 comments were then coded according to Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) exchange structure framework and Stenström's (1994) taxonomy of interactional acts (for more detailed discussion of the use of these tools in analysis of YouTube data, see Benson, 2015) and three categories of stance marking (DuBois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009; Myers, 2010). Finally, a number of microanalyses of short interactional episodes in which evidence of learning was apparent were carried out, one of which is discussed in detail in the final section of the findings. In each phase, the author and the project research assistant, Ada Fong, carried out coding independently of each other with inter-rater reliability coefficients of 95% or greater. More details of the procedures involved in these phases of analysis are provided in the sections that follow.

## FINDINGS

### Language and Culture-related Comments

The 2,840 language-and-culture-related comments that we analyzed represent 32% of the total number of comments in the data (8,850), ranging from 18 to 58% across the 10 genres. This suggests that genre may have an impact on the proportion of language-and-culture-related comments, although this influence seems to be compounded by factors particular to individual videos. The genre with the lowest proportion, *Chinese speaker singing in English*, is represented by a single video by a popular female Cantonese singer. The large quantity of comments on the singer herself largely explains the low proportion of language-and-culture-related comments on this video, which were, nevertheless, frequent (the fourth highest in the data). Nevertheless, the more general observation can be made that translanguaging in videos does trigger comments on language and cultural issues. Such comments are infrequent, for example, on videos in which the same artist sings in Cantonese and there is no translanguaging. The frequency of language-and-culture-related comments in this data set, therefore, provides initial evidence that a proportion of commenters orient towards these videos as texts that have something to say about language and culture that is worth responding to.

In this context, it is worth noting that it may not be immediately obvious that all of the genres in the data were, in fact, transparently language-and-culture-related. For example, in three of the genres, Chinese-speaking celebrities simply speak or sing in English. But by commenting on language competence and the cultural implications of a Chinese-speaker using English or Chinese in a particular situation, commenters highlight the sense in which the video involves translanguaging, which becomes an emerging property of YouTube pages as language-and-culture-related comments accumulate.

#### Extract 1. Tang Wei in Cannes

- A: To be honest she's speaking neither British nor American accent. It's still very PRC-ish, but it's great enough. There's no need to imitate any accent just to make yourself sound professional.
- B: I can't agree more, accent does not matter, Elegance matters

An English-language interview with Chinese actress Tang Wei at the Cannes Film Festival, for example, may not appear to be an example of translanguaging at first viewing, but it becomes so through comments, such as those in [Extract 1](#), that focus on her language use and its appropriateness to her social and cultural status.

### Exchange Structure

Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) framework identifies a hierarchy of nested units—transaction, exchange, move, and act—in the organization of spoken interaction. An exchange minimally consists of two moves, an Initiation (I) and a Response (R). Furthermore, exchanges can either be prolonged by intervening moves (Stenström, 1994) or chained together in topically related sequences. In this study, exchange

structure coding preceded coding of interactional acts, which stand below moves in the exchange structure hierarchy. While stronger evidence of an orientation to learning arises from coding of interactional acts, some brief comments can also be made on exchange structure.

As noted earlier, in this analysis a YouTube video can be considered as a complex I move. This means that first comments (i.e. those that are not posted in response to another comment) can realize four move types. [Table 1](#) illustrates these with comments related to an English language interview with the four members of the Taiwanese pop group F4.

**Table 1.** *Move Types in First Comments (F4 CNN Interview Talkasia)*

Move	Example	Frequency
R	dang! he got good english!!	1561 (79%)
R/I	dont those other 2 member of f4 know english?	
R+I	really? jerry can speak english now? thats great. this vid is really awesome..	408 (21%)
I	Yep Jerry should learn english I would like hearing him speaking english	

[Table 1](#) shows that most first comments in the data (79%) are R moves that respond to a video and terminate the exchange. However, first comments may also include an I move that prospects a response in one of three ways: (a) R/I is a single move that both responds to the video and initiates a new exchange (Coulthard, 1985, p. 135); (b) R+I consists of an R move followed by an I move; (c) I is a move that is usually topically related to the video but not a direct response to it. Comments that contained I moves constituted 21% of first comments in the data. Most of these comments were followed by R, R/I, or R+I moves, producing a sequence of two exchanges that included the video and two comments. These exchange sequences could be extended by further R/I or R+I moves or terminated by an R move. Exchange sequences could also be developed by multiple responses to a single I move. The data included 408 exchange sequences beginning with the video and containing two or more comments, which accounted for 1,279 comments, or 45% of the total number analyzed. The average number of comments in these sequences was approximately three.

Although exchange structure analysis provides little or no evidence of learning as such, the presence of exchange sequences does give some indication of the richness of the interactional environment (Herring, 2013). Prolonged exchange sequences point to negotiation for meaning, while a prevalence of simple I (video) R (comment) exchanges, points to more superficial engagement. It also points to two interactional contexts in which evidence for learning might be found: one related to what viewers learn from the video (i.e. IR exchanges), and the other related to negotiation for meaning among commenters (i.e. exchange sequences). One observation that can be made is that the data in this study appear to exemplify the “stepwise” topic development that Herring (2013) failed to find in YouTube comments, and to support studies that have argued for their interactional character (Bou-Franch et al., 2012; Boyd, 2014). It can also be noted that there were very few exchange sequences among the comments that were unrelated to language or culture. It may well be the case that the interactional character of YouTube comments emerges more strongly when analysis is limited to comments that engage with the substantive content of the video they are commenting on.

### **Interactional Analysis: Acts**

A move may consist of one or more acts, which signal(s) “what the speaker intends, what s/he wants to communicate” (Stenström, 1994, p. 30). Discussing the meaning of an “act” of speaking as an “exchange”, Halliday (1994) constructs a two-by-two matrix based on two distinctions: “speech role” (giving or receiving) and the “commodity exchanged (goods and services or information)” (pp. 68–9).

According to Halliday, all acts fundamentally involve giving or receiving either goods and services or information. It is reasonable to assume that interactions that involve learning will primarily involve information exchange, where information is broadly understood as something that is told.

Stenström's (1994) taxonomy of interactional acts identifies primary, secondary and complementary acts. Primary acts can realize moves on their own, while secondary and complementary acts usually accompany primary acts. Some primary acts encode Halliday's (1994) distinction between exchange of information and exchange of goods and services. Question and Answer, for example, are clearly identifiable with information exchange, while Request and Accept/Reject are clearly identifiable with exchange of goods and services. In a relatively small number of cases, primary acts realize both types of exchanges (e.g., Thank). Some secondary/complementary acts are also associated with information exchange either directly (e.g., Uptake) or indirectly when they accompany an informational primary act (e.g., Expand and Justify following Evaluate, Opine or Inform).

As a means of exploring evidence for learning in the data, we decided to code exchanges for acts involving information exchange. More than 98% of the acts in the data were coded using a sub-set of 21 informational primary acts and 11 secondary/complementary acts involving information ([Appendix B](#)). As the coded comments had already been identified as language-and-culture-related, this signified a prevalence of acts that realized information exchange on issues of language and culture. [Table 2](#) lists the most frequent primary and secondary/complementary acts, on which several comments can be made.

**Table 2.** *Frequency of Primary and Secondary/Complementary Informational Acts*

Primary acts	Frequency	Secondary/Complementary Acts	Frequency
Opine	778	Expand	606
Evaluate	626	React (uptake)	216
Challenge	325	Uptake	163
Question	207	Qualify	113
Agree	184	Justify	100
Inform	167	Quote	98
Answer	148		
Query	137		
Object	100		
Disagree	78		

Evaluate (626) is the second most frequent act in the data and especially frequent in R moves that praise or criticize a video. While this is the archetypal YouTube comment (an expanded form of using the *like* or *dislike* buttons), Evaluates that respond to language-and-culture-related aspects of a video give an indication of what commenters orient toward and, perhaps, learn from videos. They are also often involved in R/I and R+I moves that lead to counter-evaluations and negotiation for meaning sequences. This is illustrated in [Extract 2](#), where A's Evaluate in response to singer Jacky Cheung's use of English in a CNN interview potentially terminates the exchange, but becomes an R/I move when it receives a response.

**Extract 2.** *Jacky Cheung CNN TalkAsia Interview 2004-11-20*

A:	his english is so bad lol	R/I	Evaluate
B:	Actually it is pretty good, considering how seldom he speaks English. He articulates the words quite clearly (no subtitles required) and uses some nice expressions. I think he probably needs a little more time to think in Cantonese, then translate the thoughts into English, and hence the ums and ahs. That's the way it is with those who do not use the language daily. At least I empathise with him. I'll fare much worse if I were asked to attend an interview in Cantonese.	R+I	Object + Justify Opine + Expand  Opine + Expand

Opine is the most frequent act (728) in the data, and is similar to Inform (167) in that it adds information to an interaction. Unless they respond to a Question or Query, these acts realize I moves and in first comments they are usually found in R/I and R+I moves, where the R is an Evaluate. Opine/Inform acts largely account for the new information that commenters add to a page, which potentially becomes available as a resource for learning. In this sense, Evaluate + Opine/Inform comments drive interaction beyond simple I (video) R (comment) exchanges into more complex interactional territory.

Question (207), Challenge (325), Agree (184), Answer (148), Query (137), Object (100), and Disagree (78) acts are highly interactional and are largely found in second comments (e.g., the Object that begins B's comment in [Extract 2](#)), although some also realize R/I and R+I moves in first comment responses to videos such as the R/I [Question] move in [Table 1](#), "dont those other 2 member of f4 know english?". The frequency of these acts is indicative of the degree to which Opine/Inform acts lead to further interaction. Collectively, they are more frequent than the Opine/Inform acts, which points to an orientation to negotiation for meaning in the data.

Expand (606), Qualify (113) and Justify (100) mainly elaborate on Evaluate, Opine and Inform moves as shown in the [Justify](#) that follows B's Object and the [first](#) and [second](#) Expands that follow the Opines in [Extract 2](#). The presence of these acts shows how commenters substantiate, account for and modulate knowledge claims and their frequency provides some evidence of depth of engagement in negotiation for meaning episodes.

The frequency of Uptake (163), React (uptake) (216), and Quote (98) provides evidence of commenters explicitly linking comments to information from a video or preceding comment. Uptake is used in a similar way to its description in Stenström's (1994) taxonomy ("Accepts what was said and leads on"), but React (uptake) and Quote call for some explanation. React signals an emotional attitude and usually takes the form of exclamations, emoticons, or expressive punctuation placed at the end of a move. React (uptake) refers to a subset of React acts that are typically placed at the beginning of a comment and signal uptake (e.g. "dang! he got good english!!", as in [Table 1](#)). Quote also signals uptake, in that the commenter either refers to a time code on a video, quotes something from the video, or copies words from a preceding comment. The frequency of these acts again provides evidence of an orientation to negotiation for meaning.

### Stance Taking

Jaffe (2009, p. 1) defines stance taking as "taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance", which for Myers (2010) "does not just involve having an opinion on a topic; it involves using that opinion to align with or disalign with someone else" (p. 264). Stance taking is, in this sense, a public interactional act (DuBois, 2007) that signals orientation to a speaker's or a hearer's cognitive state. In his study of stance taking in blog posts, Myers (2010) examined three main markers of stance: (a)

cognitive verbs (*I think, I feel, it seems*, etc.), (b) adverbs (*definitely, really, actually*, etc.), and (c) conversational particles (*hey, uhm, huh*, etc.).

In this study, stance refers to the use of language and discourse markers to signal three kinds of orientation toward one's own or others' interactional acts, which are related to (a) cognitive activity, (b) status of knowledge, and (c) sources of evidence. Cognitive activity is signalled mainly through the use of cognitive verbs but also through references to something having been *learned, explained, taught*, etc. Status of knowledge is signalled by adverbs such as *definitely, really* and *actually*, and also by adverbials such as *to be honest* or *if I am not mistaken*, and phrases such as *you are right/wrong*. Sources of evidence are signalled by references to the YouTube video or earlier comments, as hearsay (something that the commenter has *read, heard* or *been told*), or by reference to first or third person experience. Conversational particles (Myers, 2010) were not coded as stance-taking markers in this study as they had already been coded as Uptake acts. Coding for stance, thus, captured interactional aspects of the data that were not directly realized as moves or acts.

**Table 3.** Frequency of stance markers

Markers	Frequency
Cognitive activity	835
Status of knowledge	330
Sources of evidence	64

**Table 3** lists the frequency of the three types of stance-taking markers, which are especially frequent in longer comments. In **Extract 2**, for example, A's short comment "his english is so bad lol" contains no stance markers (which might in itself indicate a stance of certainty), while B's longer comment includes four: ("Actually", "I think", "probably", and "At least") (see also the frequency of stance markers in **Extract 3**). Lack of space precludes a fuller discussion of this aspect of the data. In brief, frequency of stance markers signals the degree to which commenters orient to commenting as a cognitive activity, in which information is a negotiable commodity. In this data set, commenters frequently make reference to cognitive activity as well as to the status of their knowledge and often modulate their claims. References to sources of evidence, on the other hand, are much less frequent, which may reflect the on-the-fly character of commenting, which presumably takes place most often during, or in the few seconds after, watching a video.

### **MICROANALYSIS: A WORKED EXAMPLE**

The findings reported so far suggest that YouTube videos that involve translanguaging create environments for comment on language and culture that are rich in terms of information exchange and negotiation of meaning. Macroanalysis of a data set at this level points to the likelihood that learning is taking place. Identifying evidence of learning and learning processes, however, depends on close examination, or microanalysis, of particular interactional sequences. **Extract 3** draws together the three types of coding discussed in this paper (exchange structure, interactional acts, and stance marking) in a microanalysis of one sequence of comments on an English-fansubbed music video of a Mandarin Chinese song *Fa Ru Xue* (Hair Like Snow) by the popular Taiwanese artist Jay Chou. Like many commenters on this video, A refers to the difficulty of understanding both the song, with its allusions to classical Chinese literature, and the English translation of it. Translanguaging in the video takes the form of the display of English subtitles in time with the song and in parallel with the Chinese subtitles on the original video. **Extract 3** illustrates how this translanguaging creates a context in which comments on language and culture emerge. It also shows clear evidence of A's learning across the sequence of comments.

Extract 3. Jay Chou - *Fa Ru Xue* [Snow-Like Hair] (English Subtitles)

	Stance markers*	Moves	Acts
1	<b>A:</b> <b>Honestly</b> <i>can someone tell me the meaning</i> of this song. The English subtitles is no help bc <b>it makes no sense at all</b> . Great video n music singing, but <b>i am so confuse</b> of the music video n the lyrics. (=)	I	Preface + <b>Question</b> <b>Evaluate</b> + Expand + React
2	<b>B:</b> <i>i think</i> this song is represented of eternal love since then most of the lyrics talk about being with the person	R/I	<b>Answer</b> + Justify
3	<b>C:</b> well, going through all these comments <b>helped a little</b> . But thanks too. (=)	R+I	Uptake + <b>Acknowledge</b> + React <b>Thank</b> + React
4	<b>A:</b> well, <i>that explains a little</i> . Thanks!	R+I	Uptake + <b>Acknowledge</b> <b>Thank</b> + React
5	<b>D:</b> <b>I'm not really sure</b> but <i>i think</i> he's trying to say that he'll love her even if she turns old and her hair is white as snow. like eternal love	R/I	Preface + <b>Object</b> + Expand
6	<b>A:</b> <b>Now that sounds a little better</b> ; <i>it explains</i> about her hair like snow. Lol Thanks	R+I	Uptake + <b>Acknowledge</b> + Expand React + Thank

Note: \**Italicized font* = cognitive activity; **bolded font** = status of knowledge; underlined = sources of knowledge

The coding for interactional structure and acts shows that A's **first comment** is an I move that poses a Question to other commenters that is topically related to translanguaging in the video. This is followed by B's **Answer**, which is coded as R/I because it responds to A's Question and contributes new information, which receives **a response from A** and also from new participants, C and D. A and C Acknowledge B's Answer and offer Thanks (R+I). A fourth commenter, D, then enters with an R/I move that casts doubt on B's explanation (Query) and proposes an alternative (Object). Lastly, A's **third comment** (R+I) Acknowledges D's comment and offers Thanks. At this level of analysis it is notable that the interaction is relatively complex, with four commenters contributing six comments, each one containing an I move. This structure drives the interaction forward, initially through A's Question, but also by the three Thank acts, which receive no direct response, but nevertheless encourage further contributions. This is also evident in the analysis of secondary/complementary acts. In Comments 3, 4, and 6 there is explicit evidence of Uptake of information from previous turns, which is also implicit in the Query that begins **Comment 5**. The Expand and Justify acts in Comments 1, 2, 5, and 6 signal cognitive engagement, while the Reacts in Comments 1, 3, 4, and 6 signal affective engagement.

The coding for stance shows, first, that stance markers are frequent: 13 in six comments. Reflecting the pattern in the data set as a whole, five references to cognitive activity and six to status of knowledge are more frequent than references to two sources of evidence. The markers of cognitive activity refer to the commenters' own cognition (B and D both use *i think*), but markers in A's comments also request cognitive activity from others (*can someone tell me the meaning*) and acknowledge receipt of information (*that explains, it explains*). Also interesting in A's comments is the combining of status of knowledge markers with markers of cognitive activity. In **Comment 1**, A refers to status of knowledge no less than three times (**Honestly, it makes no sense at all, I am so confuse**) in an appeal for explanation. In **Comment 4**, we see that B's response *explains a little*, and, lastly, in **Comment 6**, that D's comment

**sounds a little better** because *it explains* specifically about “hair like snow”, which is the key to the meaning of the song.

In this sequence of comments, there is clear evidence of A’s learning, in so far as such evidence can be inferred from records of interaction. Comments 1, 4, and 6 document A’s movement from a state of confusion, to understanding a little, to understanding a little bit more. Yet this transition is not only a matter of stance markers encoding A’s changing cognitive state. We can also see how multiple aspects of the sequence of exchanges are conducive to interactional engagement and negotiation for meaning. Translanguaging in the video, here, creates an interactional context in which questions about the language and cultural references of the song and its translation can be asked and answered. Moreover, A does not just *learn* in this sequence. A is *taught* by B and D, who are invited to participate in this process of interactional learning by the structuring of A’s comments.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to attempt to move beyond general statements about the affordances of the present-day Internet for intercultural communication and foreign language learning by exploring how evidence of language and intercultural learning might be gathered in the specific online context of comments on YouTube videos. To summarize the findings, I would argue that the study has provided some evidence that translanguaging in YouTube videos (which can be considered an effect of media globalization and, specifically, the globalization strategies of YouTube) creates contexts in which commenters are apt to comment on issues of language and culture raised by the video. When comments on language and culture are analyzed separately from the comments as a whole, they are shown to be interactionally rich, and oriented towards negotiation exchange and information of meaning. This suggests that videos that involve translanguaging create environments in which interactional language and intercultural learning are likely to be observed. Direct evidence of such learning is more difficult to generate, just as it is in interactional analysis more generally, though I would argue that the microanalysis in the previous section comes as close to generating this kind of evidence as we are likely to come.

One of the main limitations of this paper lies in its reliance on quantifying the frequency of interactional features that point to evidence of learning in a set of comments. The significance of the various frequencies is difficult to interpret, and especially so without reference to comparable data sets of the kinds that have been used in studies of the features of online discourse by, for example, Myers (2010) and Ivković (2013). Having acknowledged this limitation, I would want to re-emphasize that this study is both exploratory and methodologically oriented. If its findings have value, it is in pointing towards ways of using discourse analysis tools to evaluate evidence of language and intercultural learning in online discourse, rather than in demonstrating evidence of learning in the particular context of the YouTube videos and comments that have been analyzed. In this respect, the significance of the study probably lies in (a) pointing to translanguaging in videos, or media content on media-sharing sites more generally, as a stimulus to interactional learning around topics of language and culture, and (b) the potential for systematic analysis of exchange structure, interactional acts and stance marking to point to evidence of learning, both at the environmental level, in macroanalysis of large data sets, and at the individual/situational level, in microanalysis of shorter interactional sequences.

This study points to a variety of areas for further research. These include the application of discourse analysis frameworks to uncover evidence of language and intercultural learning in other social media contexts: video-sharing services with different characteristics to YouTube, such as Vimeo and Vine, image sharing services such as Flickr and Instagram, and social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter. Areas that have been observed to be potentially significant in the YouTube data, which have only been touched on in this paper, include relationships between language and intercultural learning, translanguaging in the comments themselves, the importance of multimodality in the discourse as a whole, and the roles of pedagogy and informality in learning. A particularly important question concerns

the wider learning of those who read YouTube comments, but do not actively contribute texts of their own. While this question goes beyond the scope of the present study, research clearly needs to go beyond the learning of the participants in online interaction to consider those who might participate vicariously by reading their comments. The point that I want to conclude on, however, is that the impact of the globalization of social media on language and intercultural learning is something that we are just beginning to understand; if it is to prove a productive area for research, it is important that debate continues on methodologies for understanding interactional learning processes in a wide variety of online settings.

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### APPENDIX A. Genres of videos involving English-Chinese translanguaging

Genre	Videos
Chinese speaker interviewed in English	汤唯戛纳英語訪談 [Tang Wei in Cannes] <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMJHT3t4Pc4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMJHT3t4Pc4</a> Zhang Ziyi MSN interview <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycy1pxYLxdQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycy1pxYLxdQ</a> Jacky Cheung CNN TalkAsia Interview 2004-11-20 <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivYEi_1Avls">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivYEi_1Avls</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv_aeXpe-3g">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv_aeXpe-3g</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db036fmfD-0">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db036fmfD-0</a> F4 CNN interview talkasia <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyBr2NlcMh4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyBr2NlcMh4</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NhVL1CXtJA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NhVL1CXtJA</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiXRQS0-G-U">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiXRQS0-G-U</a>
English speaker speaking Chinese	White Norwegian Cantonese speaker <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs5CWBXm-JA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs5CWBXm-JA</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC2E5t_08Gs">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC2E5t_08Gs</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_Qi4svs5bE">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_Qi4svs5bE</a> 2 White guys talking Cantonese in a supermarket <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afVp65cAqEk">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afVp65cAqEk</a>
Chinese speaker teaching English	英國人怎樣說「擦鞋仔」? [What do the British call 'shoe shiners'?] <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chQ7YiOWIH8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chQ7YiOWIH8</a>
English speaker teaching Chinese	CHOK 樣 - Cantonese Word of the Week! <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-CfO16o6T0">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-CfO16o6T0</a> This is 屈機! - Cantonese Word of the Week! <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXORo5fPk2U">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXORo5fPk2U</a>
Chinese speaker singing in English	連詩雅 Shiga - I'm still loving you (喜愛夜蒲電影主題曲) <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfXGo_1CiS4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfXGo_1CiS4</a>

English speaker singing in Chinese	<p>美国人翻唱王力宏《你不知道的事》 [American covers Leehom Wang's "Something you don't know"]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=retS9qhsUx4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=retS9qhsUx4</a></p> <p>British guy singing Mandarin Song [Qi Li Xiang]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6iAc6v5z90">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6iAc6v5z90</a></p> <p>我不會喜歡你 陳柏霖翻唱 ~克麗絲叮          [Christine covers Bo-Lin Chen's "I will not like you"]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKceNd3WOw4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKceNd3WOw4</a></p>
English speaker talking about Chinese culture	<p>Sexy Beijing: Lost in translation  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3U5u3D2L9Q">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3U5u3D2L9Q</a></p> <p>Language and Chinese rap  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsZPFAjWysA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsZPFAjWysA</a></p>
English fansubbed song	<p>Jay Chou - Fa Ru Xue [Snow-Like Hair] (English Subtitles)  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSZf4gxlXw">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSZf4gxlXw</a></p> <p>S.H.E's Zhong Guo Hua [removed]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ceQcoeuA-8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ceQcoeuA-8</a></p> <p>Jay Chou: Qian Li Zhi Wai/Faraway [English Subtitles]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIhLHMhIGGU">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIhLHMhIGGU</a></p>
Chinese speaker making a mistake in English on TV	<p>鄧麗欣英文程度連小學雞都不如：I am very thanks them          [Stephy Tang's English is not primary school level]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m511yqXe1qQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m511yqXe1qQ</a></p> <p>陳克勤: er...er...er...try our BREAST Gary Chan  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQIhW4b5zSM">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQIhW4b5zSM</a></p>
Chinese speaker interviewed in English with interpreter	<p>Faye in CNN  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fR6RG9_2XmE">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fR6RG9_2XmE</a>  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VstEI_stCNcandfeature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VstEI_stCNcandfeature=relmfu</a>  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwIY7RmpM0k">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwIY7RmpM0k</a></p> <p>蔡依林英文访谈 [Jolin Tsai English interview]  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-4YAifQ9Y4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-4YAifQ9Y4</a></p>

## APPENDIX B. Taxonomy of informational acts used in data analysis (adapted from Stenström, 1994)

### Primary acts

1.	Acknowledge	Signals receipt of information
2.	Agree	Expresses agreement
3.	Alert	Calls the addressee's attention
4.	Answer	Responds to a questions with information
5.	Challenge*	Challenges the addressee
6.	Check (clarify)**	Asks for clarification
7.	Check (confirm)**	Asks for confirmation
8.	Clarify**	Responds to a request for clarification

9.	Confirm**	Responds to a request for confirmation
10.	Correct*	Corrects the addressee's statement
11.	Disagree	Expresses disagreement
12.	Evaluate	Judges what the previous speaker said
13.	Inform	Provides information
14.	Object	Signals a different opinion
15.	Opine	Gives one's personal opinion
16.	Praise*	Praises the addressee
17.	Query	Expresses doubt or strong surprise
18.	Question	Asks for information
19.	Self-correct*	Corrects own previous statement
20.	Suggest	Puts forward an idea or a plan
21.	Thank	Expresses gratitude
<hr/>		
Secondary/complementary acts		
<hr/>		
22.	Clue	Follows a primary act and gives a hint
23.	Emphasize	Underlines the primary act
24.	Expand	Gives complementary information
25.	Identify*	Identifies the commenter
26.	Justify	Defends or explains the primary act
27.	Metacomment	Comments on a current talk
28.	Preface	Introduces a primary act
29.	Qualify*	Qualifies the primary act
30.	Quote*	Quotes from a previous turn
31.	React***	Expresses attitude and strong feelings
32.	Uptake	Accepts what was said and leads on

*Notes: \* Challenge, Correct, Praise, Self-correct, Identify, Qualify, and Quote were added to the taxonomy in the course of the study; \*\* Stenström includes only Check (Asks for clarification) and Confirm (Responds to a request for confirmation); \*\*\* Stenström lists React as a primary act. In this study it is reclassified as a secondary act and refers mainly to exclamations (e.g., Wow!, Cool!), abbreviations and emoticons (e.g., LOLZ, ^^), and multiple punctuation marks (e.g., !!!!!, ?????). When these occur at the beginning of a comment, they often signal uptake of information and are coded as React (uptake).*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is based on a project funded by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council General Research Fund, entitled *Informal Language Learning in Social Media Environments: A YouTube-based Study* (Ref. No. 840211). I am grateful to Ada Fong for her invaluable assistance in collecting and analyzing data for this project. I am also grateful to David Barton and Carmen Lee for directing me to a section in Barton and Lee (2013) on stance taking, when I presented an earlier version of this paper at a conference they attended.

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