

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten - ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Emilia Laurila	
Työn nimi – Title ”It’s how gay people communicate, basically”– Verbal expressions of femininity in Tyler Oakley’s videos	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Kandidaatin tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Tammikuu 2017	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 25
Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>Median muutoksen mukana homoseksuaalisuus on saanut lisää näkyvyyttä. Enää ei ole harvinaista esimerkiksi nähdä televisiosarjoissa homoseksuaaleja hahmoja tai seksuaalivähemmistöihin liittyvien aiheiden käsittelyä. Vähemmistöjen rooli toimii kahteen suuntaan; koska seksuaalisuutta ei enää nähdä tabuna, oman seksuaali-identiteetin ilmaiseminen on helpompaa ja koska kyseisen identiteetin ilmaiseminen on helpompaa, se ei ole enää tabu.</p> <p>Tyler Oakley on yhdysvaltalainen avoimesti homoseksuaali mediapersoona, joka nousi suosioon YouTube-videoidensa kautta, joita on nyt katsottu yhteensä yli 600 miljoonaa kertaa. YouTuben lisäksi Oakley on saanut tunnustusta omaelämäkertansa ja dokumenttinsa kautta sekä työstänsä HLBT- (homo-, lesbo-, biseksuaali- ja trans-) yhteisön kanssa.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus tähtäsi selvittämään feminiinisiä ja homoseksuaalisia lingvistisiä piirteitä Tyler Oakleyn YouTube-videoissa. Tutkimuksen pohjana toimi Howsonin teoria hegemonisesta maskuliinisuudesta, jonka mukaan kaikki hegemonisesta maskuliinisuudesta poikkeava on johonkin pisteeseen asti feminiinistä tai homoseksuaalista. Lingvististen piirteiden analysoimiseen käytettiin Lakoffin teoriaa naisten kielestä. Teoria käsittää erilaisia feminiiniseksi miellettyjä kielellisiä aspekteja, joita on havaittavissa myös feminiinisten homoseksuaalien puheessa. Tällaisia piirteitä ovat esimerkiksi ”tyhjät” adjektiivit, täytesanat ja tietyt feminiinisiksi mielletyt sanavalinnat.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokseni esittivät, että Tyler Oakleyn ja feminiinisen kielenkäytön välillä on yhteys. Tutkimukseni paljasti esimerkiksi, kuinka käyttämällä ”tyhjiä” adjektiiveja, puhumalla feminiinisiksi mielletyistä aiheista kuten meikkaustutorialeista tai muiden youtubettajien suutelemisesta, tai käyttämällä täytesanoja, Oakley rakensi feminiinistä identiteettiä.</p> <p>Näiden löytöjen pohjalta voidaan tehdä johtopäätöksiä Tyler Oakleyn kielenkäytön ja seksuaalisen identiteetin rakentumisen yhteydestä. Vaikka tutkimus oli osittain rajallinen, se tarjoaa kuitenkin läpileikkauksen seksuaali-identiteetin kielellisestä rakentumisesta ja pohjaa jatkotutkimuksille.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Discourse analysis, YouTube, media, homosexuality, feminine language use, women’s language	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

”It’s how gay people communicate, basically”
- Verbal expressions of femininity in Tyler Oakley’s videos

Emilia Laurila
Bachelor’s thesis

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Language and Communication Studies
English
January 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of contents	
1 INTRODUCTION	3-4
2 IDENTITY	4
2.1 Language and identity	5
2.2 Language and sexual identity	5-6
2.3 Hegemonic masculinity	6-8
2.4 Identity representations	8-10
3 YOUTUBE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION	11
3.1 YouTube and identity	11-12
3.2 YouTube and sexual identity	12
4 THE PRESENT STUDY	13
4.1 The aim and the research questions	13
4.2 The data	13-14
4.2.1 The videos	14
4.3 Methods of analysis	15
5 ANALYSIS	15
5.1 Women's language	16
5.1.1 Vocabulary and topics	16-17
5.1.2 "Empty" adjectives	17
5.1.3 Hedges	17-18
5.1.4 Emphasized "so"	18-19
5.1.5 Hypercorrect grammar	19
5.1.6 Superpolite forms	19-20
5.3 Features of speech	20
5.3.1 Pitch and lisping	21-22
6 CONCLUSION	22-23
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	23
7.1 Primary sources	23-24
7.2. Secondary sources	24-25

1 INTRODUCTION

Through the evolution of media, homosexuality has gained more visibility. It is no longer uncommon for television shows or advertisements to have gay couples, storylines that involve homosexual characters or political stances that endorse homosexuality. The American sit-com, *Modern Family*, is an example of a popular television show that has incorporated a homosexual family amongst the traditionally viewed heterosexual couples. Through media, coming out and vocally acknowledging the expression of one's sexuality seems to have become easier, or at the very least it has gained popularity. New possibilities for self-expression, such as YouTube, have formed into a way for different minorities to find each other and form new social identities.

Through this formation of new social identities, a need for new research on the topic has risen. Homosexuality and language use have been researched before, especially in recent history. However, attention has not been paid nearly as much to the relation of femininity and homosexuality in language use. In this thesis, I used the ideas of masculinity and homosexuality as its opposing stance to analyze linguistic features of femininity in the YouTube videos of a homosexual media persona. Both of these concepts rely heavily on identity construction, in terms of both personal identity as well as social identity.

Howson (2006) studied the idea of hegemonic masculinity and its opposing, or challenging, factors. He suggested that hegemonic masculinity is in fact a dominant part of this world, that men feel inclined to make decisions that will take them closer to this ideal masculinity, and everything that falls short of that ideal is, in fact to some extent, feminine. Lakoff (2004) proposed the idea that language can be especially feminine at times. She based her theory on multiplicity of categories that all portray language as particularly feminine. She stated that it is not solely women who use this kind of language, but effeminate homosexuals as well. This "women's language" is what I base my analysis on through the categories that Lakoff provided. The base of this thesis is on Howson's work entitled "Challenging hegemonic masculinity" (2006), because of its clear and explicit explanations on the topic of masculinity and its relation to homosexuality.

Even though research has been conducted on these ideas and topics before, a gap appears between femininity, homosexuality and language use, as stated before. This gap is important to fill in order

to gain more knowledge on how sexuality is perceived and on the role of the relationship between sexuality, masculinity and language use.

This study aims to explore the relation between masculinity, femininity and sexuality in language use. It aims to observe what features are used in feminine language use and how these methods construct homosexual identities. On a larger scale, the aim is to study the ways in which language can be used in expressing one's identity.

For the main subject in this study, I chose Tyler Oakley, who is an American YouTuber. Oakley uploaded his first video to YouTube in 2007 and has since been an active member of the YouTube community. He produces videos ranging from Q&A's (question and answer -videos) to collaborations with his friends, who are often also YouTubers. Since his rise to YouTube fame he has written a book, had a documentary made about him, and performed as a spokesperson for the Trevor Project, an American organization that provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bi, transgender and other sexual minorities) youth. I chose Oakley as the subject of this study because of his openness about his homosexuality, his colorful personality and his close relation to the LGBT+ community.

2 IDENTITY

In this section, I will discuss the theoretical background for the thesis. I will examine the concept of identity and its relation to language and sexuality. Moreover, identity representations will be discussed. My analysis will be based on the theory that hegemonic masculinity as an identity is the counterpart of homosexuality based on its nature as a strongly heterosexual ideology. I will support this claim with the help of women's language as an indicator of homosexuality.

Identity is important when analyzing sexuality as it is the basis of who one is. In this sense, sexuality is an outlet for one's identity. According to Groebner (2004, as cited by Edwards 2009:16), identity can refer to a person's subjective sense of self, personal "markers" that seem important to oneself and others or markers that define group memberships. In my thesis, I will use the term "identity" to refer to the words, gestures and other means of communication that can be seen as characteristic of a person.

2.1 Language and identity

Identity can be defined broadly as something that makes one oneself. Identity is divided into personal identity and social identity. "Personal identity is a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways" (Fearon 1999:10), whereas social identity is a social category, so a group of people who share the same label, for example, "Muslim", "homosexual" or "mother" (Fearon 1999:11). Joseph (2004, as cited by Edwards 2009:20) pointed out that language and identity are 'ultimately inseparable'. Language use can be one of the most powerful ways of examining identity. Word choices, gestures and other multimodal aspects can be seen as representative of one's identity. Identity is represented, for example, through categorizing language users through gender or stereotypes. People of certain groups, for example gay men, are stereotypically thought to be using language in a more feminine way. Intonation, nuances and word choices are thought to be connecting the users to certain categories, in this case homosexual men.

Language use is based on linguistic choices, which the users keep making and therefore create their identities. Stylistic variations construct the speaker's identity (Llamas and Watt 2010:40). Therefore, whatever one says and however one uses language defines one and creates one's identity. Verbal and nonverbal means of communication are the main constructing elements in identity building.

2.2 Language and sexual identity

As with other kinds of identities, language gives basis for the expression of sexuality. Cameron and Kulick (2003:1) define sex, sexuality and gender as different phenomena. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of "men" and "women", sex to biological factors that determine whether one is a "male" or a "female", and sexuality to erotic desire or practice. In this sense Cameron and Kulick (2003:1) define sexuality, much like gender, to be a socially constructed idea rather than something purely biological. It is about being a part of a community. Sexuality in this sense refers to one's sexual orientation and identity rather than his or her desires, fears, fantasies or repressions (Cameron and Kulick 2003:78).

Sexuality in language use and gender are closely connected. It is said that homosexual men have tendencies to use more feminine language just as lesbians are thought to have more masculine qualities in language use. Although the idea of a "gay identity" has shifted throughout time, a discussion, for example, on a sort of gay lingo has been continuing (Cameron and Kulick 2003:77). Heteronormativity shaded the gay lingo, which today has a more accepted and public status. The use of female gender pronouns when discussing and addressing other gay men is an example of such speak.

As time went on and the need to understand sexualities grew, it became apparent that the idea that sexual identities are not natural or biological, but instead social and political constructs is in fact accurate (Mottier 2008:47). With every verbal and nonverbal linguistic action as well as other multimodal modes of expression, identities are constructed.

2.3 Hegemonic masculinity

One way to view homosexual identity construction is to distance one's self from the traditional ways of constructing identity. Hegemonic masculinity represents the ideal masculinity, and as homosexuality is often placed as the opposition of the ideals of masculinity, it is highly beneficial to view homosexual identity construction through hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is a socially constructed idea of what characteristics an ideal man beholds. The idea of masculinity as a multiplicity provides the grounds for hegemonic masculinity. With the idea of multiple masculinities, there rises the need for one, ideal type of masculinity, i.e. a hegemonic one. Hegemonic masculinity is the culturally idealized form that is the goal of manhood (Howson 2006:3). Donaldson (1993) regards masculinity as a dark entity that includes many socially obtrusive concepts:

It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent. It is pseudo-neutral, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich and socially sustained, (Donaldson 1993:645-646 as quoted by Howson 2006:3).

Donaldson (1993) by referencing Waters and Hochschild introduces the reason behind the changing role of masculinity as both external and internal pressure to adjust to the changing society. The decline of purchasing power of the male wage and the rise in "female jobs" in the service sector are two examples of this kind of pressure. This can be explained with the pressure for men to hold to male norms such as:

...courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body. (Sexton as cited by Donaldson 1993).

These concepts have only recently been linked to the concept of hegemony. For the world to achieve a status in which hegemonic masculinity is highly valued, it involves persuasion of population through means such as the media and the organization of social institutions in a manner that causes hegemony to appear as ordinary and normal (Donaldson 1993). This can be achieved through the influence of particular social groups. The social groups that are considered to generally produce this kind of ideology the most are priests, journalists, advertisers, film makers, actors, activists and academics, to name a few (Donaldson 1993). The power to influence how genders are perceived is therefore in the hands of many powerful and highly visible social groups.

As Schipper (2007:37) states, the key feature of hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual and closely tied to marriage. It is constructed in relation to women and subordinate masculinities which key feature is homosexuality. Donaldson (1993) also states that the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality and homophobia. The understanding of hegemonic masculinity is based on a feminist idea that the relationship between men and women is oppressive. As the basis of hegemonic masculinity is, indeed, masculinity, it is seen that women exist as potential objects of sexual desire for men, whereas men are negated as sexual objects for other men. This idea raises a competitive stance between heterosexual males for sexual validation which they receive from women. And as this kind of competitiveness does not appear amongst homosexual men, they are considered as less masculine.

Howson (2006:62) suggests the focus on heterosexuality to be based on femininity whereas in homosexuality the focus is on masculinity. This is not the only genderized aspect in sexuality, however. Howson (2006) also discusses how the hegemonic conception of homosexuality is to

emphasize the gender differences more than the difference in orientation. He brings up such examples as dress sense, speech and demeanor as well as overt sexuality. These aspects contain characteristics such as expressiveness and emotiveness, passivity and domesticity, weakness and lack of authority that are all very strong aspects against hegemonic masculinity. These are values and ideas that can be seen as part of everyday life, so they can easily be seen as features that shape one's personal and social identities.

In relation to hegemonic masculinity, a concept of protest masculinity also exists. This ideology protests the idea of men needing to follow a certain manner of speech, dressing or life choices such as women caring for children or the way equality between the sexes is perceived (Howson 2006:65).

To conclude, hegemonic masculinity is the idea of what a man should ideally be. It is the "father" of all masculinities and is used to guide towards true masculinity. The key point of hegemonic masculinity is its heterosexual nature and its closely tied relation with marriage. According to Donaldson (1993), in hegemonic masculinity the relationship between men and women is oppressive in nature and as women are seen as sexual objects, they also perform as a source of masculine validation for heterosexual men. As this need does not arise for homosexual men, they are not seen as hegemonically masculine.

2.4 Identity representations

As stated earlier, identity is a collection of features that makes one oneself. Identity can be divided into two groups based on whether the identity appears on an individual or group-level. Personal identity is a set of characteristics, beliefs etc. that distinguishes a person from other individuals (Fearon 1999:10). The things we see as producing our personal identities are things such as "... physical attributes, membership in social categories, person-specific beliefs, goals, desires, moral principles, or matters of personal style." (Fearon 1999:23). These attributes must also be ones that the individual is aware of (Fearon 1999:23). So one cannot state that a part of one's identity is being a princess, when in fact one has no regal relations.

Social identity on the other hand is a social category to which an individual belongs. A social category is a set of people who all share the same label (Fearon 1999:13). According to Fearon (1999:13), social categories are defined by two features. First, they are defined by rules and secondly they are a group of people who share a similar characteristic or characteristics such as beliefs, desires of physical attributes.

In this thesis, I will be focusing mainly on Tyler Oakley's personal identity and how it is portrayed in his YouTube videos. However, the importance of social identity will not be disregarded, because a lot of my findings will rely on factors of social identity, such as the characteristics of the LGBTQ+ community's social identity. According to the Social Identity Theory (Benwell and Stokoe 2006:25), social identity is defined by individual identification with a group. It constructs from the reflexive knowledge of a group membership as well as the emotional attachment to that belonging.

According to Edwards (2009:19), the personal identity (personality) is a summary of all one's individual traits, characteristics and dispositions. However, the uniqueness of a person does not come through psychological elements that are not found in anyone else, but instead through a unique combination of universal qualities. That is why identifying with another person is probable.

An important aspect of identity construction is language. In this instance, it is beneficial to look into the linguistic differences between the social identities of heterosexual and homosexual social groups. Robin Lakoff introduced the concept of "women's language" which is also used by other social groups as well, such as effeminate homosexuals (Lakoff and Bucholtz 2004:173). Differences between women's language and that of men's can be found in linguistic features such as lexical items, particles, adjectives and usage of tags in statements (Lakoff and Bucholtz 2004:43-51). To be more specific, Lakoff (2004:78-81) divides her theory into smaller parts:

1. First, she mentions a vocabulary that is related to women's specific interests. This can be seen through colors, for example. While men tend to use broader names such as blue, red and green, when describing colors, women tend to be more specific, using words such as *mauve*, *lavender* and *beige*. These are not necessarily words that are actively in a woman's vocabulary, but they appear even less frequently in a man's. While these are vocabulary items, I believe they also

represent the topics and ideas behind them. I see that the vocabulary items are connected to topics, in women's language this could mean such a topic as sewing, for example.

2. Another difference in the language use of men and women is the use of "empty" adjectives, such as *divine*, *charming* and *cute*. Adjectives can therefore be divided into neutral and feminine. Neutral adjectives, ones that can be used by men or women, are words such as *great*, *terrific*, *cool* and *neat*, whereas adjectives that are reserved for feminine language use are terms like *adorable*, *charming* and *lovely*.
3. Question intonation in the place of a declarative is also seen as a part of women's language as is rising intonation in statements. A tag question is a midway between a statement and a yes/no question, an example of such a question is "You drank my wine, *didn't you?*".
4. The usage of hedges, such as *well*, *you know* and *I guess* etc. is also indicative of women's language.
5. Emphasizing the word "so" in contexts, such as *I like him so much* or *it's so good* is also seen as a feature of the differences between woman's language and that of a man's.
6. Women's language also uses hypercorrect grammar and steers clear from "rougher" language.
7. Superpolite forms are expressed through euphemisms and expletives are avoided. It is thought that women's language needs to be more socially acceptable and polite. Men also tend to use more expletives and rougher language such as "shit" or "hell" whereas women use softer expressions, for example oh dear, *fudge* or *dear me*.
8. Women do not tell jokes, because women can be seen as not having a sense of humor.
9. It is also characteristic of women's written language to use italics, because of the need to strengthen and underline their words in order to be taken seriously.

Indicators of femininity in speech are also a wide pitch range, breathiness, lengthening of fricative sounds and affrication of plosives (Cameron and Kulick 2003:90). This way of speech is called 'the voice' and it is considered a culturally known phenomenon. As Cameron and Kulick (2003:76) bring forth, there is also a long history of connecting lisp in a man speech to homosexuality. However, as Cameron and Kulick (2003:90) also note, there is no perfect fit between being gay and sounding gay, meaning that all gay men do not necessarily use the language that has been described as gay.

3 YOUTUBE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

YouTube was created by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim in 2005 (Burgess and Green 2013:1) and bought by Google in 2006. Since then, it has grown into a video sharing service that over a billion people use. Today, YouTube works as a platform for content creators. Through it, creators have the possibility of reaching the people, who watch millions of hours of videos every day. YouTube is an inexpensive and relatively effortless way of gaining visibility, sharing topics that one finds interesting or meeting other people with the same interests.

YouTube is a constantly growing platform for self-expression. YouTube's growth in watch time has been up at least 50% every year for the last three years (YouTube, n.d.). Its growing popularity as a mode of interacting enables different social groups to interact and form communities through finding relatable identities in the form of YouTubers.

In YouTube, identity representations are highly present. YouTubers are media personalities, whose success depends upon their personalities and their relatableness. Because of this, I will discuss YouTube as a phenomenon, a platform for content producers as well as YouTube as a means of communicating one's identity and especially sexual identity. It has given members of the LGBT+ community a place to express their authentic selves. This can be seen through coming out-videos, where the main focus of a video is to express one's sexual identity and often offer support for people, especially young people, who are struggling with the same issues.

3.1 YouTube and identity

As in other modes of self-expression, also in YouTube the expression of one's identity is relevant. As a viewer, it is nearly impossible to say if the identity of a content producer in YouTube is actually his or her actual, genuine identity. For the sake of relevance, I will discuss only the YouTubers YouTube-personalities and identities and refer to them as their own genuine ones.

As Burgess, Green, Jenkins and Hartley (2013:24) stated, there are YouTube 'stars' (called "YouTubers" in this study), who are making a living through advertising revenues. This is what

makes the identity a YouTuber presents important. He or she will get paid for every time that his or her video is watched. The identity needs to be relatable, up-to-date and charismatic, just like in traditional media. YouTubers are not necessarily celebrities or famous people, but in certain communities they are very well known.

3.2 YouTube and sexual identity

Coming out-videos are one of the most visible ways in which sexuality can be discussed on YouTube. As Pullen and Cooper (2010:378) state, searching YouTube for coming out-videos will result in thousands of videos with more or less the same theme.

It has been observed that people have had the possibility to explore different identities and sexualities online, before trying them out in the real world (Pullen and Cooper 2010:42). This is also relevant when viewing and analyzing Tyler Oakley's videos in the sense that they are aimed to offer an authentic and safe place to explore one's authentic self. Said channel and content producer can be seen as breaking heteronormative patterns with his videos.

YouTube is not only a place for identities to roam free, but also for viewers to gain information and tolerability (Burgess and Green 2013:130). Australian YouTuber Troye Sivan has come out openly gay in a coming out video and has since occasionally posted videos where he talks about safe sex amongst gay men. This is a kind of example on how YouTube can be used as a platform for entertainment as well as informational value.

The main benefit in coming out videos appears to be to create a feeling of community. When a YouTuber uploads a coming out video and posts it, it has the possibility to reach a wide audience. The people who search for coming out-videos are usually the ones in need of inclusion, which creates a community. Discussing their own experiences in the comment-section of the video is an indication of community building. This kind of sense of community is visible in many different genres of YouTube videos, including sexual minorities.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

4.1 The aim and the research questions

The aim of this study is to discuss the ways in which sexuality is expressed through Tyler Oakley's YouTube videos. Through Lakoff's theory on women's speech, I will study how femininity and sexuality are perceived linguistically. My research questions are as follows:

1. How is femininity expressed in Tyler Oakley's identity in these videos through Lakoff's categories of women's language?
2. How is femininity expressed in Tyler Oakley's speech in these videos?

I assume, I will find evidence of different aspects of Lakoff's theory, especially in terms of syntax and vocabulary choices. I assume the video will also entail nonverbal features of homosexuality, which will, however, not be analyzed.

I think it is also important to point out that the type of sexuality represented and the reasons for its representation are not in the focus of the present study. Sexuality and gender are broad categories and cannot be limited to the analysis of some verbal and non-verbal features.

4.2. The data

The data consists of three videos from Tyler Oakley's YouTube channel called "KILL YOUR BABIES" (22.1.2014, duration 9:39, views 1 333 540), "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE" (19.6.2015, duration 4:42, views 1 459 508) and "An Honest Conversation About "Fame"" (19.11.2016, duration 5:00, views 225 124).

I chose these videos based on their content. I observed that these videos could include the most beneficial material for my analysis in terms of content because of the large variance in topics. I also expected the videos to be related to topics that might further feminine language use.

The results will reveal some of the features of homosexual language use as the opposing side of hegemonic masculinity. I will focus on the verbal features of femininity and homosexuality that are apparent in the video. However, I would like to point out that as Howson (2006:63) also states, one does not need to be homosexual to challenge hegemonic masculinity.

4.2.1 The videos

In this section I will briefly introduce each video individually and explain their nature.

”KILL YOUR BABIES” is a question and answer-video (a Q&A) in which Oakley answers questions addressed to him. Usually the questions for these kinds of videos are gathered through means of social media, such as Twitter. However, in this video Oakley states in the very beginning that these questions were submitted through his fundraiser for the Trevor Project. In said fundraiser, if a person were to donate a certain sum, he or she would be able to have their question answered in a video. The video features 17 questions in total, the topics of which range from positivity to other YouTubers.

”TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE” is a video in which Oakley tells a story from his life. In it, he is sitting in front of the camera and describes his trip to Chipotle, an American chain restaurant. He was visiting the establishment with his friend and as they exited, Oakley’s friend, who was named ”Lucian”, takes notice of a cockroach that is on Oakley’s shirt. Oakley proceeds telling the story in a rather drama-filled manner.

”An Honest Conversation About ”Fame”” is another question and answer-video. This video follows the more traditional way of acquiring the questions through social media, in this case Twitter. The video has eight questions that have topics ranging from fame to Thanksgiving.

In the question and answer-videos I will only focus on the answers as they represent Oakley’s own thoughts and ideas rather than those of the people asking the questions.

4.3. Methods of analysis

I will analyze the data I gathered through discourse analysis by focusing on identity building via the verbal aspects of the YouTuber's speech. The findings will be interpreted from the point of view of femininity and sexuality as these are the most relevant theories when considering the data that will be collected. I will base my analysis especially on Lakoff's (2004) theory on women's language as well as Cameron and Kulick's (2003) work on sexual identity, and Howson's theory (2006) on hegemonic masculinity.

Indicators of femininity in language use are, according to Lakoff (2004:43-51), vocabulary, use of "empty" adjectives, question intonation, hedges, emphasizing "so", hypercorrect grammar, superpolite forms, lack of humor and use of italics. In this thesis, I will not be focusing on all of the aforementioned characteristics, but will instead choose the first six characteristics to base my analysis on.

Indicators of femininity in speech are characteristics of 'the voice', i.e. a wide pitch range, breathiness and lengthening of fricative sounds to name a few (Cameron and Kulick 2003:90). As Cameron and Kulick (2003:76) bring forth, connections between a lisp in a man speech to and homosexuality have been found. In this study, I will not, however, focus on all of the indicators of 'the voice', because of the extensive research they would require.

5 ANALYSIS

I will begin the analysis by analyzing the linguistic features of feminine language use. I will divide my analysis into subcategories based on Lakoff's (2004) categories of women's language that can also be seen as homosexual through their effeminate nature. I will also briefly discuss the vocal aspects of identity construction from the point of view of pitch and lisping.

5.1 Women's language

In this section I will analyze the characteristics of women's language that contribute to the analysis of Oakley's sexuality. Such features include female-specific vocabulary, "empty" adjectives, hedges, emphasized *so*, hypercorrect grammar and superpolite forms. In this part, I will omit Lakoff's category on intonation as I will be analyzing intonation and the way of using language in section 5.2. I will also omit Lakoff's category on humor, because I believe humor to be a broader topic that needs to be discussed in a more extensive manner than there is room for in this thesis.

5.1.1 Vocabulary and topics

In the video "KILL YOUR BABIES", Oakley uses vocabulary that is generally thought of as feminine. For example, he speaks of watching makeup tutorials, but then states that he is not the demographic for them. Another example of a topic that is stereotypical of women, is when he is asked whether he would choose the British diver Tom Daley or actor Channing Tatum and he moves on to discuss the topic that is generally seen as a feminine one through its close relation to the idea of "girl talk", as it comes naturally to him.

The fear of the cockroach in "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE" contributes to the idea that females are weaker and therefore frightened by such things as insects, whereas men are stronger and braver. Through this apparent disgust and trauma (which is stated in the title) Oakley's identity is built into a more feminine direction.

Another highly feminine vocabulary item is in "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE", when Oakley is telling his story and uses the verb *gasp* multiple times as an action he and his friend "Lucian" took part in. He also states that: "it's how gay people communicate, basically". The irony and connecting this feminine gesture to homosexuality himself is an important finding. This explicitly indicates that he is aware of this feminine behavior and does not seem disrupted by it.

Oakley is asked whether he has kissed any other YouTubers in "An Honest Conversation About 'Fame'" (3:07). His response to this question is rather feminine. He giggles and makes an expression that it is a given that he has kissed other YouTubers, even though this is a response and

not a vocabulary item, I do believe his reaction contributes to the topic in question. This is similar to the stereotypical idea of "girl talk", where boys are discussed over a cup of coffee.

5.1.2 "Empty" adjectives

Empty adjectives, which do not contribute to the sentences or topics, but are instead used to emphasize points, such as *super* and *cute*, are present in Oakley's speech. In "KILL YOUR BABIES" the empty adjective *super* is used in regard to how Oakley is feeling: "I'm *super* excited..." (1:52). Another instance of an empty adjective is the word *cute* that is used in "I'll be looking real *cute*..." (3:19) and "I have been working on some *cute* new phonecases..." (9:07).

I believe the idea that Lakoff stated in the case of "meaningless" particles about them not really being "meaningless" at all, but instead ways of defining the social context of an utterance as well as the relationship the speaker feels he has with his audience is also relevant when considering "empty" adjectives. I see the vocabulary a speaker chooses as a reflection of the social situation as well as the relationship between him and his audience. For example, Oakley feels comfortable enough to use adjectives such as *cute* and *super* in front of his audience, which reflects not only how he views himself, but also his relationship between himself and the people watching his videos.

5.1.3 Hedges

"KILL YOU BABIES" offers a great example of the usage of hedges, such as "*I think* we can get like ten thousand in one day, *I think* you guys can do it" (1:17). In addition to portraying the use of hedges in women's language, these clauses also present a way in which a sense of community is built. Lakoff (2004:70) stated that the reason behind hedges in women's language is politeness. Women tend to use more polite language due to the fear of sounding too assertive. The similar kind of idea can be seen in this instance of Oakley's speech. He is asking his community to do something for him, which puts him in an uncertain position and therefore uses hedges in his speech that are similar to what is used in women's language to express, explicitly or implicitly, uncertainty. A different kind of usage of *I think* is also apparent when Oakley discusses the YouTubers he likes to watch: "*I think*, there are lots of different types of people in YouTube" (2:34) and later in that same

sentence: "But *I think* at the core, I'm attracted to personalities..." (2:44). In this instance, the usage of a hedge is more relatable to women's language because of its representation of uncertainty.

The use of fillers in Oakley's speech is rather vast. Examples of the usage of fillers is the usage of the word *like*, which occurs especially when Oakley's speech can be analyzed as excited. In "KILL YOUR BABIES" this comes especially through in one instance. "I am *like* dying, I'm so excited. Artpop slay me, I'm *like* ready to sing every single lyric..." (1:57) is a sentence Oakley utters when describing his excitement about going to a Lady Gaga concert later that evening. In addition to other lexical items that are fruitful to analyze, the aforementioned clauses include two instances of the usage of the filler word *like*. The word also appears in Oakley's other videos. "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE", for instance, has the word in different contexts such as "...and I was *like*..." (0:54) and "... but I'm just *like*, I gotta go" (2:43).

In "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE", Oakley also uses a vast amount of filler words such as the aforementioned *like*. One of the most notable fillers in this video is the word *okay* that appears 13 times in the video. The contexts vary from "he saw something, *okay*, it was not..." (0:56) to "...this is their fault, *okay*, they lured me in..." (3:19).

5.1.4 Emphasized *so*

In addition to intonation, Oakley uses the highlighted *so* in his speech to emphasize his points. In "KILL YOUR BABIES", the usage of *so* can be seen on a few occasions. For example, when challenging the viewers to take part in a campaign, Oakley aims to sell the idea by stating how it is "*so* quick" and "*so* simple" (1:11). The emphasis being rather strongly on the word *so* in both instances. The emphasis in this part of the video can be explained through the fact that he is asking his viewers for something. As discussed above with hedges, where Oakley used more polite language to ask his community for a favor, the similar kind of reasoning can be witnessed here. He emphasizes how easy and fast it is to sign a petition in order to make the audience more favorable to go and sign it. The femininity aspect in this comes through the chosen *so* to emphasize his point. Were the language more masculine, *so* could have been replaced with *very*, for instance. Instead, the feminine and somewhat uncertain manner of asking for things still remains in this scenario.

"KILL YOUR BABIES" also introduces another instance of the emphasized *so*. "If I'm talking about the entire world, I think there are *so* many problems that could be fixed..." (1:35), which could have been replaced with *a lot* or *a great amount of* or any other more neutral expression. Other instances of *so* in this video are "I'm *so* excited" (1:58), "It is *so* simple" (4:53) and "If I could turn back time, I would spend *so* much less time worrying..." (4:56). In "An Honest Conversation About "Fame"", the word "so" is used to emphasize the pretentiousness of fame: "... it's *so* fake. It's *so* weird, it's *so* stupid and *so*, like, produced" (0:39). It is apparent that Oakley resolves to using the emphasis quite a lot.

5.1.5 Hypercorrect grammar

In "KILL YOUR BABIES", many features of hypercorrect grammar are visible. The choice of words brings forth the idea of correct grammar. An example of such an instance is "... I had certain levels of rewards that you could redeem upon donating" (0:13). The words *redeem* and *upon* are not seen as general speech, but instead highly correct use of language.

Other instances of correct grammar that can be seen from the same video are "...with that, I find myself watching people that do makeup tutorials..." (2:48). A more masculine way of stating the same idea, regardless of the fact that makeup tutorials in themselves are generally considered feminine, would be, for example "That's why I watch people that do makeup tutorials...". So instead of going straight to the point and stating the idea, more eloquent language is used.

In "An Honest Conversation About "Fame"", Oakley chooses to use many words that could be replaced with more masculine ones. An instance of such a word is *encapsulates* (0:34) which has a feminine touch to it. Words like *sums up* could have been used to create a more masculine clause.

5.1.6 Superpolite forms

Oakley presents an example of politeness in "KILL YOUR BABIES" by thanking people who sent a question asking him how he was doing. "...Joseph and Lorreina, *thank you* for asking..." (1:49) indicates the need to practice politeness, which is characteristic of women's language.

Politeness is also visible in the ends of these videos. For example in "An Honest Conversation About "Fame"", he ends the video by saying: "I hope you're taking care of yourselves" (4:45). The same kind of gesture is made in "KILL YOUR BABIES" as well, as he ends the video by saying: "I hope you guys enjoyed it" (8:45). However, it is customary for YouTubers to end their videos by thanking the viewers and expressing hope that they enjoyed it. It is therefore not sensible to fully acknowledge this aspect as an indicator of femininity.

Even though indicators of politeness are apparent in Oakley's speech, in some ways he does not shy away from the generally masculine ways of speaking. An example of this is the usage of curse words in his speech. "Which I'm still *fucking* pissed about" (KILL YOUR BABIES, 4:35) is a good example of this kind of speech as it is not solely the word being uttered but the emphasis on it as well as the camera zooming in on him when that clause is uttered. Another example of swearwords in the same video is "everybody that you admire has *shitty* days" (7:51), where the usage of the word *shit* steers Oakley away from femininity as does the usage of *assholes* in "...do you want to hang out with lazy *assholes* or do you want to hang out with positive, productive, amazing humans?" (8:10).

The appearance of swearwords in Oakley's speech is not only in that one specific video, but in others as well. In "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE", Oakley uses the word *shit* as a verb to indicate that that is what people do in the streets of Los Angeles: "...people pee in the streets, people *shit* in the streets..." (1:39). "I've stepped in human *shit* on the street, okay?" (1:46) is also another instance of the usage of the word *shit* in this video. The video also has a stronger swear word appearing in "...if one of you doesn't *fucking* help, I'm unfollowing you on Twitter" (2:36).

5.3 Features of speech

In this section, I will briefly discuss the ways of speech that are connected to femininity and homosexuality. I will base this section on Gaudio's theory (1994 as cited by Cameron and Kulick 2003:90) on the concept of 'the voice', which is the characteristics of voice that have been studied to build a homosexual identity. Based on these characteristics, I will study in this section the appearance of pitch and lisping.

5.3.1 Pitch and lisping

Oakley has a varying pitch in his voice. Fluctuation can be seen through all of his videos. There does not seem to be consistency between the fluctuations, but instead they are sporadic. I deduced that the fluctuation is correlating to his level of excitement and emotion in his words. In "TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE" Oakley's voice is high nearly throughout the entire video, but in the sections of his story that he seems to be most uncomfortable, his voice rises to a higher pitch whereas in his question and answer-videos his voice remains fairly stable, of course depending on the topic of discussion at any particular time.

Occasionally in some words, Oakley's pitch gets momentarily higher based on the emphasis he places on the words. Such is the case with "Now *I* could kind of explain this story to you guys..." (4:26) as well as "I would *probably* have to say Zac Efron" (6:41) in "KILL YOUR BABIES". His voice gets quickly higher and then lowers back to what it was before. In "An Honest Conversation About "Fame"", pitching is also visible in many instances, for example in "I *hope* that doesn't come across like I don't like it" (1:34).

Lisps have not been connected to femininity, but I find it relevant for the purposes of this study to mention it, because they have been long thought of as being a part of homosexual language. In Oakley's speech lisping is apparent, for example in his usage of the word *so* (0:22, TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE). In his speech, some of his s-sounds form in a manner that they softly sound like "th" with a hint of "s".

The videos proved to be good examples of Oakley's identity construction. I could detect and identify features and resources he used to explicitly or implicitly construct his identity. I found that many of the attributes that have been connected to women's language are also apparent in Oakley's language use. Material for the analysis was found in all of Lakoff's (2004) categories: vocabulary, "empty" adjectives, hedges, emphasized *so*, hypercorrect grammar and super polite forms. Gaudio's (1994) concept of "the voice" was only briefly discussed, but still offered many fruitful points to analyze.

Most of the feminine linguistic features were found in vocabulary and hedges, where, for example, a vast amount of fillers were discussed. The emphasis on the word *so* was also a successful analysis, because of the amount of material. The most surprising finding was the controversy between the polite manner of, for example, addressing Oakley's fans and the amount of curse words used. This finding could be researched further from the point of view of politeness and femininity.

6 CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on identity construction through language use. Identity is a twofold concept that can be divided into concepts of personal and social identities. According to Fearon (1999:10), personal identity is a group of characteristics that separates a person from other individuals. Personal identity is created, for example, through beliefs, goals, morals and personal style (Fearon 1999:23). Social identity on the other hand, is a set of people who all share the same label, for example "homosexual" or "Muslim" etc.

My analysis was based on the theory that hegemonic masculinity as an identity is the counterpart of homosexuality based on its nature as a strongly heterosexual ideology. Hegemonic masculinity represents a socially constructed idea of the characteristics of the ideal man. Because masculinity is a multiplicity of masculinities, it leaves room for an ideal type of masculinity, a sort of emphasized form. The key feature of this hegemonic masculinity is its strongly heterosexual nature (Schipper 2007:37). This supports the idea that the relationship between men and women is oppressive (Donaldson 1993), making women potential objects of sexual desire for men, as men are negated as sexual objects for other men.

Because of this idea of hegemonic masculinity as the opposition of homosexuality, I used the characteristics of femininity to detect indicators of sexuality in my analysis. The differentiating factors between male and female language use are divided into categories by Lakoff (2004). These categories are vocabulary, "empty" adjectives, hedges, emphasis on the word *so*, superpolite forms, hypercorrect grammar, lack of humor and usage of italics. In my analysis, I focused on the first six categories mentioned.

For a platform of identity representation, YouTube has gained popularity. The website has given the members of the LGBT+ community a place for authentic self-expression, for example, in the form of coming-out videos. These kinds of videos offer support for other members of the minorities as well as neutralize the concept of, for example, homosexuality. It is also a way for the viewers to gain a feeling of community through fanbases. In YouTube, one's identity is highly relevant, because the viewers buy into the identities they witness and can change channels at any time.

In my analysis, I could identify a large number of features of women's language. I made the most findings on vocabulary, empty adjectives and emphasis on *so*. The most interesting finding, however, was found through analyzing superpolite forms. This category refers to the ways in which women use polite language, and in Oakley's speech, indicators of, both, politeness and harshness were found. He expressed politeness through thanking people who sent a question asking him how he was doing and by stating how he hopes the viewers enjoyed watching his video. The counterpart of his politeness is the number of curse words he uses in his videos.

This research could be continued through analyzing a wider collection of materials from different sources. I do, however, believe it would be beneficial to continue studying the relation of masculinity, homosexuality and language use. This is an area of research that I find to be lacking in theory and analysis. I also think it is sensible to research the verbal and nonverbal characteristics that make up feminine and masculine speech. It would also be important to place more emphasis to the phonetic differences between masculinity, femininity and sexuality.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

7.1 Primary sources

Oakley, T. (2014). KILL YOUR BABIES. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKIcmFHwY0U>. (6 December, 2016).

Oakley, T. (2015). TRAUMA at CHIPOTLE. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYltn0JhfxM>. (6 December, 2016).

Oakley, T. (2016). An Honest Conversation About "Fame". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2AbGdNXgOw>. (6 December, 2016).

7.2 Secondary sources

Baker, P. (2008). *Sexed Texts: Language, Gender and Sexuality*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Benwell, B. and Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Edinburgh University Press.

Burgess, J. Green, J. Jenkins, H. and Hartley, J. (2013). *YouTube: online video and participatory culture*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Cameron, D. and Kulick, D. (2003). *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Charlebois, J. (2011). *Gender and the Construction of Hegemonic and Oppositional Femininities*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Donaldson, M. (1993). *What is Hegemonic Masculinity?* University of Wollongong. Theory and Society, Special Issue: Masculinities, October 1993, 22(5), 643-657.

Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and Identity*. Key topics in sociolinguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fearon, J. (1999). *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?* Draft. Stanford University. [online] <https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf>. (19.1.2017).

Howson, R. (2006). *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lakoff, R. and Bucholtz, M. (2004). *Studies in Language, Gender and Sexuality: Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Llamas, C. and Watt, D. (2010). *Language and identities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mottier, V. (2008). *Sexuality: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pullen, C. and Cooper, M. (2010). *LGBT identity and online new media*. New York: Routledge.

Schipper, W. C. (2007). *PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE. Masculinity, Spirituality, and Sexuality: The interpreted, lived experience of the traditional age college male*. Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Psychology and a specialization in Men's Studies. Stanford.

YouTube (n.d.). <https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/>. 20.11.2016.