TALKING ABOUT EXAMS. DISCURSIVE IDENTITIES
OF ROMANIAN YOUTUBERS

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ABSTRACT. *Talking about Exams. Discursive Identities of Romanian Youtubers.* The main objective of the present study is to analyse the construction of discursive identity on YouTube in young youtubers' talks about preparing for the A-level exam. Its theoretical framework is based on the socio-communicative model described by Patrick Charaudeau (1992, 1993, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2006), using specifically the description of the construction of the speaker's identity. Thus, a model of analysis of Romanian youtubers' identities was developed. This model brings together in the discursive construction of the speaker's identity both the social identity and the discursive identity. With regard to the discursive identity, its components "credibility" and "gaining attention" were also analysed. Within each component, their specific attitudes were also analysed (Charaudeau 2009). The present research has been successful in outlining the way in which the speaker's identity is constructed within a specific communication situation.

Keywords: discourse analysis, socio-communicational model of discourse, discursive identity, social networks, discursive organisation

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REZUMAT. *Discuții despre examene. Identități discursive ale youtuberilor români.* Obiectivul principal al acestui studiu îl reprezintă analiza construcțiilor discursive ale identității în discuțiile tinerilor despre examenul de Bac, pe rețeaua socială YouTube. Cadrul teoretic ales se bazează pe modelul socio-comunicativ de analiză a discursului descris de Patrick Charaudeau (1992, 1993, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2006), punând accent, mai ales, pe descrierea construcției identității vorbitorului. Acest cadru a permis elaborarea unui model de analiză care să permită observarea modului în care se construiesc și se dezvoltă identitățile discursive ale youtuberilor români. Identitatea vorbitorului este analizată ținându-se cont de două componente de bază ale acesteia, identitatea socială și identitatea discursivă. De asemenea, atitudinea fiecărui vorbitor analizat s-a realizat în funcție de parametri precum „credibilitatea" și capacitatea de „atragere a atenției" (Charaudeau 2009). Chiar dacă analiza se bazează pe un corpus relativ restrâns, ea reușește să descrie și să analizeze cu acuratețe identitatea youtuberilor români în contextul unei situații de comunicare date.

Cuvinte-cheie: analiza discursului, modelul socio-comunicațional al discursului, identitate discursivă, rețele sociale, organizare discursivă

1. Introduction

Social networks are virtual environments where users engage in conversations about any topic. Some of them are perceived in everyday life as being uninteresting or tiresome issues, for instance studying for exams. However, some social media influencers attract hundreds of users on social networks such as YouTube eager to watch them talk about the topic and their videos get tens of thousands of views and thousands of likes. Bearing this in mind, it's worth questioning the reasons why a topic of low priority in everyday life gets so much attention on social media.

In this paper we will start from the assumption that the popularity of exam preparation related communications is due to a change of perception of this topic. What makes people interested in talking about school and studying on social media is the speaker. Thus, unlike teacher or parental discourse, which can bore or annoy, this discourse is received very positively by younger generations. Based on this hypothesis, the objective of our research is to answer the following questions: a) how does the Romanian youtuber construct his/her identity through discourse? b) what discursive strategies does the Romanian youtuber use in order to get the attention of other users? c) what are the different discursive identities displayed by those who discuss about examinations on YouTube?

For this purpose, we will use the *Socio-Communicative Model of Discourse Analysis*[2] and start from the idea that "each speech-act is the result of the combination of a situation, a discursive organisation and a certain use of forms" (Charaudeau 2002). Thus, in the communicative situation of talking about preparing for A-level exams on YouTube, the locutor acts as a knowledge/experience holder who wants to transmit it to other users. The analysis of the identities assumed discursively by Romanian youtubers in their discourse about preparing for exams is based on a small but carefully selected corpus of videos from YouTube, all of which sharing the same subject of discussion.

The present research will aim to provide through discourse analysis a deeper understanding of how the speaker constructs his discursive identity and what discursive strategies he/she uses to make him/herself seem credible and to get the attention of the collocutor. This analysis of the identity of the speaker in a specific context can provide a starting point for analysing the construction of the identity of Romanian youtubers in other communicative contexts.

2. Constructing Speaker's Identity. Theoretical framework

The identity of the speaker in discourse analysis is a complex issue that has been analysed from different theoretical perspectives. Several scholars (Amossy 2010, Charaudeau 2005, Maingueneau 1999, 2000), who belong to the French school of discourse analysis, use the concept of *ethos* when referring to the analysis of speaker identity. In their perspective, identity is discursively constructed through the speaker's discourse and its main purpose is to be credible (Amossy 2010, 25):

> L'ethos est l'image que l'orateur construit de lui-même dans son discours afin de se rendre credible.[3]

Furthermore, discourse analysis studies highlight the existence of different types of speaker identities, such as *prediscursive ethos, told ethos*, and *shown ethos* (Maingueneau 2014, 34-35) *social identity* and *discursive identity* (Charaudeau 2009), *digital identity* (Perea 2010, 10) or *declarative identity, acting identity*, and *calculated identity* (Georges 2009, 179). All these terms represent identity

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2   We would like to point out that the *Socio-Communicative Model of Discourse Analysis* described by Patrick Charaudeau (1992, 1993, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2009) is conceptually different from the *Critical Discourse Analysis* and that our research will not fall into this paradigm.

3   Ethos is the image that the speaker constructs of himself in his discourse in order to make himself credible. (my translation)

as a discursive construct of the speaker about himself and approach Amossy's (2010, 25) definition of *ethos*.

The theoretical framework of reference for our research is represented by *the socio-communicative model of discourse* (Charaudeau 1992), a perspective which places the speaker at the centre of the situation of communication, as the initiator of the communicative act that establishes a communicative interaction with an interlocutor:

> Il faut se représenter l'acte de communication comme un dispositif au cœur duquel se trouve le sujet parlant (le locuteur, qu'il parle ou écrive), en relation avec un autre partenaire (l'interlocuteur).[4]
> (Charaudeau 1992, 634)

Charaudeau (2000) places the communicative act in the context of the situation of communication, which fundamentally determines it. According to the author, the situations of communication fall into two categories: *monolocutive situations of communication* and *interlocutive situations of communication*. Based on this distinction, the situations of communication involving the speaker on the social network YouTube fall into the *monolocutive* category, as the speaker does not share the same physical space with the other participants to the situation of communication. Thus, the locutor is a relatively master of the *space of thematization*; he can control it as best he can regardless of the reactions of the other parties involved in the communication situation.

Within this theoretical framework, the locutor may construct his/her identity in several ways:

> [...] on parle (ou écrit) en organisant son discours en fonction de sa propre identité, de l'image que l'on a de son interlocuteur, et de ce qui a été déjà dit.[5] (Charaudeau 1992, 643)

Thus, depending on the assumed identity, the speaker will express him/herself in a certain way, will present him/herself in accordance with the assumed identity and will refer in a specific manner to the topic of communication. By means of what he/she says, the speaker constructs his/her own discursive identity and establishes a specific relational connection with the interlocutor.

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[4] It is necessary to imagine the act of communication as a device in the core of which stands the speaking subject (the locutor, whether he/she speaks or writes), in relation with another partner (the interlocutor). (my translation)

[5] [...] one speaks (or writes) by organizing his or her discourse according to his or her own identity, the image that one has of the interlocutor, and of what has already been said. (my translation)

Analysing the concept of identity, Patrick Charaudeau (2009) distinguishes between a general concept of identity, as described by modern philosophy and based on the consciousness of self, *a social identity*, and *a discursive identity*. In his view, it is the *social identity* that legitimates the speaker's discourse in a communicative situation. This is what enables the speaker to organise his discourse in a certain way, assuming a legitimate communicative position. Based on a mechanism of recognition of the social position assumed by the speaker, it is precisely this social identity that makes the other participants in the communicative situation to accept the speaker (Charaudeau 2009):

> La légitimité est une notion qui n'est pas exclusive du domaine politique. D'une façon générale, elle désigne l'état ou la qualité de qui est fondé à agir comme il agit. [...] Le mécanisme par lequel on est légitimé est un mécanisme de reconnaissance d'un sujet par d'autres sujets, au nom d'une valeur qui est acceptée par tous, ...[6]

Discursive identity is constructed and assumed completely by the speaker through his/her discourse and it involves elements such as *credibility* and *gaining attention* (Charaudeau 2009). The *credibility* of the speaker is an important component of his/her discursive identity since in the situation of communication the speaker intends to be listened to and to be trusted by the other social media users. For this purpose, the speaker will construct a credible discursive identity with the help of various discursive strategies such as: *neutrality, objectivity, involvement*, and *demonstrative attitude* (Charaudeau 2009).

Gaining attention is a further component of discursive identity that comes into play when the interaction between locutor and collocutor is not one of authority, of power. Under such circumstances, the speaker resorts to different discursive strategies in order to be able to persuade the interlocutor to engage in the situation of communication, or in order to convince him/her to perform in a determined manner. Thus, among the *persuasion strategies* we mention: *polemical attitude, seductive attitude* and *dramatic attitude* (Charaudeau 2009). For example, in the context of a discourse concerning exams issues in Romania, a *polemical attitude* is the one that challenges the educational model, the teachers' competences and even goes as far as challenging the usefulness of schooling, an attitude that is quite common in Romanian traditional media. In the same context, a *seductive attitude* is the one in which the speaker comes helping the interlocutor whom he wants to give him support with the exams, to

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[6] The concept of legitimacy is not exclusive to the political domain. Broadly speaking, it refers to the state or the quality of being entitled to act as one does. [...] The mechanism by which one is legitimated is a recognition mechanism of a subject by other subjects, in the name of a value that is accepted by all, ... (my translation)

get knowledge, and to obtain optimal exam results without much effort. An attitude that occurs very often in social media communication. The *dramatic attitude* is the one in which the speaker appeals to life stories, to the staging of a situation, to emotional involvement of the interlocutor. In this category fall all the school tales passed down from generation to generation.

Taking into consideration the components of the speaker's identity, we can say that identity is constructed in a complementary way and that both social identity and discursive identity participate in its construction. Thus, when the speaker takes the floor, he assumes a social position that gives him the legitimacy to speak and through what he says he discursively constructs his identity so as to be credible and to draw the attention of the other users of the social network to the subject he wishes to debate.

3. Methodology of Work

In order to be able to analyse the characteristic features of the speaker's identity within the communication on YouTube, a working methodology has been established, structured in several working phases, each phase being based on the empirical data provided by the preceding phase. These are the following: *establishing the theoretical framework, creating a multimedia corpus in Romanian, setting up a protocol for discourse analysis*, and *analysis and interpretation of data*.

3.1. Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework of the current research is the socio-communicative model of discourse analysis developed by Patrick Charaudeau. We consider this theoretical framework to be very useful due to the fact that it focuses on the speaker in the communicative situation and describes social and discursive identity and their components in detail. Thus, the theoretical framework presents the advantage that it situates the speaker in a more general conceptual system of discourse analysis that includes: *the situation of communication* (Charaudeau 2002), *the communicative contract* (Charaudeau 1993, 1994), and *the discursive genre*. This allows to further develop the research initiated with the analysis of speaker's identity and to continue it for a better understanding of communication on social networks in Romanian.

3.2. Multimedia Corpus

The multimedia materials in Romanian analysed in this article have been organised in the form of a reduced corpus of multimedia texts. To create it, the principles that underlie the creation of a corpus were followed: *representativeness,*

balance, thematic, size and *homogeneity* (L'Homme 2004; Sinclair 2004). Thus, to begin with, a simple thematic search was carried out for videos in Romanian on the social network YouTube. In order to respect the *thematic principle*, it was established that, given the importance accorded to the A-level exam in schools, searches on this topic would be carried out. With the materials obtained, an initial list of 100 videos was made, of which only 10 were retained in the corpus of analysis (see annex *Corpus online sources*). Therefore, from the initial list were excluded those videos that were not linguistically *representative*, all videos in which a different language than Romanian from Romania is spoken were excluded. Furthermore, given the aim of the research, all videos in which the speaker does not appear on camera were excluded. These are videos with animations and slideshows, in which there is a narrative voice of an indeterminate speaker. Observing the *principle of balance*, the selected videos all fall into the category of short videos, none of them exceeding 30 minutes. In terms of *homogeneity*, in selecting the videos, the period in which they were published on the social network YouTube was taken into account; the corpus covers a time span of 5 years (2016-2021). Moreover, in terms of language, *discursive homogeneity* was taken into consideration, as all videos displayed an informal linguistic register.

The size of the corpus was determined according to the aims of the current research and according to the number of videos found in Romanian on the selected topic. Thus, given the limited extent of the present research and also the limited number of videos corresponding to the criteria of the corpus building, we consider that the 10 selected videos are representative in order to outline the identity profile of the Romanian speaker on YouTube talking about preparing exams.

3.3. Protocol for the Analysis of the Identity of Romanian Youtubers

The protocol of analysis for the identity construction on the social network YouTube was established, according to the theoretical framework described previously, embracing the distinction *discursive identity - social identity* of the speaker. Furthermore, for each identity, the discursive strategies used by the speaker were analysed.

Taking into consideration the objectives of the research, the videos have been transcribed plainly due to the fact that no suprasegmental elements have been involved in the analysis. The transcription has been followed by a sequential analysis of the transcribed discourses. From each discourse, only the discourse sequences referring to the speaker's identity were selected. This analysis was carried out according to the following protocol:

	Speaker identity	Discourse strategies/attitudes	
1	*social identity*	*profession/occupation/status*	
		values	
		experience	
		knowledge	
2	*discursive identity*	credibility	*neutrality*
			objectivity
			involvement
			demonstrative attitude
		gaining attention	*polemical attitude*
			seductive attitude
			dramatic attitude

In order to systematise the analysis and not to infringe the rights of the authors, the name of the authors of the videos are not mentioned. Each video is numbered from 1 to 10, and this number has been assigned to the speaker in this research. For each video, both *social identity*, which legitimates communication, and *discursive identity* with its *credibility* and *gaining attention* components were taken into account. In addition, for each component of discursive identity, specific attitudes have been analysed.

4. Construction of the speaker's identity on YouTube

YouTube is a social network where participants interact in monolocutive situations of communication. Thus, the locutor does not share the discursive space with the collocutor and does not have to negotiate its discursive space according to the collocutor or the audience. This allows him/her more freedom in the choice of discursive strategies through which he/she constructs his/her discursive identity.

4.1. Construction of social identity on YouTube

The speaker's identity is formed from the very beginning of the utterance with the opening sequence of the situation of communication. It can be observed that most locutors use the opening discourse sequence to first construct the *social identity* consisting of *first name/last name* and/or *profession/occupation*. Thus, locutors 4, 6 and 10 start the construction of their identity by mentioning their first and last name, while locutors 1, 2 and 7 mention only their first name. Locutors 1, 2, 7 and 10 additionally include a greeting sequence in their initial statement. It is an informal greeting (hey, hello, hello), conveying the idea of

somebody approachable and communicative. Locutors 2, 4 and 6 also add their occupation to the social identity (*I'm a second-year law student, I'm a teacher, first year student at the University of the Arts in London*) which legitimises the speaker as being qualified to talk about the topic of communication.

> *1. Hei salut sunt <prenume> / Hey hi I'm <first name>[7]*
> *2. Salutare lume, eu sunt <prenume> și bine ați venit la un nou vlog. /*
> *Hi everyone, I'm <first name> and welcome to a new vlog.*
> *4. sunt profesor <nume prenume> / i'm a teacher <first name>*
> *6. Eu sunt <nume prenume> / I am <first name>*
> *7. Bună, eu sunt <prenume>, bine ați venit pe canalul meu /*
> *Hi, I'm <first name>, welcome to my channel.*
> *10. Salutare! Bine te-am regăsit, sunt <nume prenume>și mă bucur că ai venit din nou la acest videoclip / Hello! Welcome back, I'm <firstname> and I'm glad you came back to this video.*

Four of the youtubers registered in the analysis corpus (3, 5, 8, 9) do not construct their social identity on the basis of their name, which is not mentioned in their discourse.

Social identity, which legitimises the speaker's speech in a given communicative situation, can also be constructed on the basis of the assumption of an experience/know-how. In the context of talks about the A-level exam, YouTube users invoke their previous experience that qualifies them to talk about the topic. There are different expressions of the speaker's experience, one of the most recurrent being that they have also taken the exam. For example, locutor 1 and 2 mention only that they have taken the exam, without adding further details:

> *1. Am fost și eu student și mi-a fost greu să învăț pentru examene /*
> *I was also a student and found it hard to study for exams.*
> *2. dar pentru a ajunge aici a trebuit să dau și eu bacul / but to get here I had to take the A-level exam myself.*

Other locutors include an additional element such as the emotional element of their experience (4), the fact that they did not try too hard to learn (5) or, on the contrary, they argue that they got the highest mark in the exam (9):

> *4. am pășit și eu prin prin proba aceasta și am trecut de examenele de clasa a VIII-a, de clasa a XII-a. Mi-aduc aminte, erau emoții puternice, erau temeri, dar la final, au venit succesele. / I also went through this test and*

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[7] A translation of the Romanian discursive sequences is provided after each example. The translation was realized by the author of the article.

passed my 8th grade exams, 12th grade exams. I remember, there were strong emotions, there were fears, but in the end, success came.

5. Eu unul, după ce am terminat liceul şi am dat examenul de bacalaureat, pe care nu l-am luat chiar cu note foarte mari, dar nici n-am fost la coadă, de leneş ce-am fost, de fapt. / Me, after I finished high school and took the A-level exam, I didn't really get very high marks for, but I was not between the last students, I was lazy.

6. ...sper să îmi amintesc ce notă am luat, că [...] deci la română, am luat inițial 9.60, am depus contestație, am luat 9.45, dramă. La istorie am luat 10, iar la geografie am luat 9,80. Targetul meu era să iau 10 la toate, dar nu le putem avea pe toate, aşa că cu asta defilăm momentan, am avut o medie inițială de 9,80, după aceea a scăzut la 9,75 / ...I hope I remember what grade I got, that [...] so in Romanian, I initially got 9.60, I appealed, I got 9.45, drama. In history I got 10, and in geography I got 9.80. My target was to get 10 in all of them, but we can't get them all, so that's what I have at the moment, I had an initial average of 9.80, then it dropped to 9.75.

9. am dat examenul de bac la cele 3 materii orale

Am luat, pentru că sigur o să fie întrebări de cât am luat la bac, am luat 10. [...] Media generală fiind 10. / My A-level exam consisted in 3 oral subjects

I got, because I' m sure there will be questions of what I got in the bac, I got 10. [...] The overall average being 10.

One' s own example can also be used as a strategy to legitimate communication about the A-level exam. Through this experience the speaker can make appropriate recommendations based on their own knowledge:

5. O să vă zic ce-am făcut eu ca să trec acest examen... / I'll tell you what I did to pass this exam...

7. Eu pot să vă spun ce făceam eu, nu ştiu ce faceți voi mai departe. Nu trebuie să vă panicați să stați în continuu cu nasul în carte. / I can tell you what I did, I don't know what you do next. You don't have to panic to keep your nose in the book.

3. eu am învățat vreo 3 zile pentru bac. Fără caterincă. Bine. Am mai repetat eu pe drum, câte ceva şi o să vă explic cum am reuşit eu să învăț şi să iau bacul în trei zile / I studied for the exam for 3 days. No joke. Ok. I've repeated a few things along the way and I'll explain how I managed to study and take the A-levels in three days.

There are also expressions of legitimation that individualise the identity of the speaker. This is the case of the locutor 10 who claims his expertise online as a trainer in webinars and emphasises the assertion that what he says is true:

> *10. Vreau să spun sincer că am organizat multe webinarii în ultima perioadă. / I want to frankly say that I have organised many webinars lately.*

The assumed discursive identity of an autodidact (6), the emphasis on self-effort, and learning capacity constitute also aspects of speaker legitimation:

> *6. sunt autodidactă de fel. Deci, m-am descurcat.*
> *Nu am luat meditaţii la absolut nimic, este exclusiv munca mea şi efortul meu / I am an autodidact by nature. So, I've handled the situation.*
> *I didn't take classes on anything at all, all it's exclusively my own work and effort.*

We also have spotted one youtuber (8) who mentions no experience and does not seem to think it is necessary by any means to legitimise his speech.

Therefore, it can be stated that the *social identity* of Romanian youtubers who talk about the A-level exam is that of: *students, teachers* or *trainers* who want to be trusted by other users of social networks, which is why they legitimate their discourse by mentioning: *the exam experience, their own example, their experience as a trainer* or *their own struggle*.

4.2. The Construction of Discursive Identity

The construction of the speaker's discursive identity comprises two major components, credibility and gaining attention, both of which are essential for the speaker to get the message across and make other social media users pay attention.

Credibility implies that what the speaker says is accepted as a content having value as truth. From among the discursive strategies identified in the corpus of analysis as being used to construct a credible identity are: *involvement, demonstrative attitude*, and *objectivity* (Charaudeau 2009). Moreover, it can be observed that the most used strategy by the Romanian youtubers is the *involvement*. This entails that the speaker, is concerned about other users and considers helping them with their preparation for the A-level exam.

To show involvement, the speaker engages discursively and *transmits* knowledge/know-how. The speaker assumes the identity of a holder of a knowledge which is missing for those who have not had the examination. He/she offers to pass on to the others the knowledge of which he/she disposes. Through involvement, the speaker supports the other youtubers. Different types of assistance can be provided to others, such as explaining methods and techniques to help preparing for the exam:

1. ... foloseam o tehnică pe care sunt gata să ți-o prezint, să o împărtășesc cu tine, ... / 1. ... I was using a technique that I'm ready to reveal to you, to share with you, ...

Other locutors (4, 6, 7, 8) provide advice based on their own exam experience and it can be noticed that their advice does not differ at all from that of teachers at school or parents at home. The recurrent advice is to learn:

4. vreau să vă ofer aceste sfaturi ca să vă ajute să luați o notă cât mai bună. / I want to give you this advice to help you get the best grade possible.
6. dacă aveți nevoie de un sfat pe care aș putea să încerc să vi-l dau, sunt aici. / if you need advice that I can try to give you, I am here.
7. Așa că vreau împărtășesc cu voi ceea ce făceam eu și sfaturile pe care mi-aș fi dorit să le știu și eu de la început atunci când am dat bacul. / So I want to share with you what I used to do and the advice I wish I had known when I first took my A level exam.
8. ...chiar vă sfătuiesc să învățați cât mai rămâne din perioada asta pentru bac. / ...I strongly recommend that you study while there is still time left for the A-level exam.

Suggesting motivational (1) and mobilising (6) exercises to prepare the collocutors for the exam is a strategy perceived in the corpus of analysis, with the speaker presenting these exercises as solutions for preparing for the A-level exam:

1. ...fă acest exercițiu pentru că o să te ajute. / ...do this exercise because it will help you.
6. Ideea stă cam așa: trebuie să vă puneți pe treabă... / The idea goes like this: you need to get to work...

It can be noticed that one locutor (10) considers that the preparation for the A-level exam relies on some secrets, which he wishes to reveal to his YouTube followers. This is a way of gaining attention and stimulating users' curiosity.

10. Astăzi o să îți arăt care sunt cele mai mari secrete pentru bacul de la română. / Today I'm going to show you the biggest secrets for the Romanian language A-level exam.

The transfer of know-how (9, 10) can also be achieved by providing tips and tricks that can improve exam results:

9. niște tips and tricks pe care vreau să vi le spun și vouă acuma ca să vă crească un pic media și să nu uitați niște lucruri care poate sunt destul de normale și de elementare / some tips and tricks that I want to tell you now to raise your average a bit and not to forget some things that are perhaps quite normal and elementary
10. ...care sunt cele mai, care sunt acele tips and tricks-uri care îți pot câștiga puncta / ...what are the most, what are those tips and tricks that can earn you points.

Besides specific advice, recommendations and exercises, some speakers (2, 3) also want to transmit materials that they have used in preparing for the A-level exam to those interested in the subject. These materials consist of summaries, systematizations of the lessons or even videos:

2. Vreau să împărtășesc cu voi materialele pe care le am, care sunt structurate destul de bine zic eu, [...] eu le-am făcut cât să învăț ... Deci, vreau să vă dau și vouă această materie, celor care sunteți în clasa a XII-a, și urmează să dați bacul. / I want to share with you the materials I have, which are structured quite well I say, [...] I made them enough to learn ... So, I want to give you also this subject, those of you who are in the 12th grade, and you are about to take the exam.
3. Băi, clipul ăsta îl fac exact cum am mai făcut un clip Cum să săbești, ca să ajut unele persoane, să le scap de anumite chestii. / Hey, I'm doing this video just like I did a How to Sauté video before, to help some people, to get them out of certain things.
3. fac clipul ăsta să vină în ajutorul vostru... / I'm doing this video to help you...

A unique situation is that of the locutor 4 who not only makes it clear that he wants to be of service and wants to be considered as a source of information to those who are taking the A-level exam but assumes an identity of a friend. This is a situation of unique emotional involvement, the other locutors merely transmitting advice and materials.

4. Vreau să vă fiu de folos. Considerați-mă un prieten și, de ce nu, o resursă la care să apelați atunci când aveți nevoie. / I want to help you. Consider me a friend and, why not, a useful resource to consult when you need it.

An attitude which is the opposite of that discussed but which also contributes to the construction of a credible identity of the speaker is *objectivity*. It is a detached attitude towards the subject of discussion, emotionless and uninvolved, which is usually assimilated to the attitude of an expert.

In the attitude of the Romanian youtuber, objectivity is less evident in the construction of the discursive identity, within the context of the transmission of knowledge/know-how. This attitude concerns particularly the discursive sequences of knowledge transmission. After the introductory sequence, the speaker mentions the pressure felt by those preparing for exams and suggests to continue the discussion on the topic of the exams. Some of the speakers (9) are more efficient than others and proceed directly to the transfer of knowledge, while others, those whose content falls into the category of deceiving content continue to digress on different topics (5).

> 5. Acum să trecem exact la motivul pentru care sunteți aici! Se apropie perioada examenelor de bacalaureat și ești destul de stresat în legătură cu asta, nu? / Now let's get to exactly why you are here! The A-level exams are approaching and you're pretty stressed about it, right?
> 9. Dacă tot mai este puțin timp până când vine examenul de bacalaureat, să vorbesc despre bac. Și, mai important, să vorbesc despre cum să ne organizăm timpul înainte de un examen super important, cum să ne planificăm materia și ce să învățăm, pe ce să punem accentul, atunci când avem foarte mult de recapitulat și vrem să luăm notă cât mai mare. / While there is still a little time until the A-level exams are coming up, let's talk about the A-levels. And more importantly, let's talk about how to organize our time before a super important exam, how to plan our material and what to study, what to focus on, when we have a lot of revision to do and we want to get the highest grade.

The identity of locutor 5 is a *deceiving identity*[8], based on a false content. This can be noticed when, the discursive sequence corresponding to the objective attitude contradicts the entire videoclip. The speaker announces already from the title of the video that the content of the videoclip is "How to take the A-levels exam easily and without stress". However, the content he provides completely cancels out the previously constructed discursive sequences. Basically, the speaker states that it is not possible to take the A-levels exam easily and effortlessly, contradicting himself.

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[8] In this article we will refer to *deceiving identities* as to those discursive identities assumed in the virtual environment that deviate from the originally assumed identity and discourse. Thus, the locutor instead of providing knowledge and information about the A-level exam, gets lost in trivialities without offering any information. The term is inspired by current practices on social networks called *identity deception* (Janczewski&Colarik 2008, 93) and/or *faking identity* (Scott 2015, 205-236) a complex phenomenon associated with forgery and fraud.

> *5. ...vreți să luați examenul de bacalaureat cu ușurință, da? Ei bine, surpriza e că nu prea ai cum să iei bacul fără să treci cu ușurință pentru că trebuie să muncești pentru tot ce-ți dorești în viață, nu o să capeți nimic de valoare și de durată dacă ai făcut în grabă, fără cap și, cel mai important foarte ușor. / ...you want to take the A-levels with ease, right? Well, the surprise is that you can't really take the A-levels easily because you have to work for everything you want in life, you won't gain anything of value and lasting if you did it in a hurry, thoughtlessly and easily.*

The discourse closes by clarifying that the videoclip created is just "a dose of motivation" for the audience in order to start learning, but without transmitting any knowledge (ideas, methods or materials).

> *5. Ei, cred că ți-ai luat doza de motivație ca să te apuci de învățat pentru examenul care îți va schimba viața. / Well, I think you've had your dose of motivation to start learning for your life-changing exam.*

We consider such discursive fractures to be an unsuccessful attempt to construct a credible identity.

The demonstrative attitude is required to construct a credible identity; however, this attitude is the least frequent in youtubers' discussions about the A-levels exam. A demonstrative attitude is illustrated by the situation in which the speaker aims to convince the other participants to the situation of communication that what he or she claims is true and provides evidence in favour of what he/she claims. Even though several youtubers in the corpus of analysis mention their exam grades, only one (2) provides evidence to prove the truth of what they state.

> *2. Înainte de toate o să pun aici probabil un screenshot cu notele mele de la bacalaureat și cu codul meu dacă vreți să-l verificați și nu mă credeți. / First of all, I'll probably put here a screenshot of my A-level exams grades and my code if you want to check it and don't believe me.*

On the other hand, the poor prevalence of this demonstrative attitude is also due to the informal communication setting, which does not require the speaker to demonstrate credibility.

Attention-getting is the component of the speaker's identity that enables utterances to be perceived by the other participants in the situation of communication. In order to gain attention, the speaker has to display different attitudes during the utterance of his/her speech. These include: *polemical, seductive or dramatic attitudes.*

The polemical attitude is rather controversial and therefore seldom used, especially in the school context, which is already a very controversial and contested field in Romania. The corpus analysis suggests that only speakers 5 and 8 display a polemical attitude in their discourse. Regarding the speaker 5, we have already noticed the *deceiving content* of his discourse. Thus, speaker 5 continues to construct a *deceiving identity* and he discursively represents himself as an unreliable source of knowledge because of his polemical attitude. He fails to gain attention from the audience.

> 5. școala nu a făcut nimic altceva decât să-mi umple capul cu prostii. Bine, e mult spus să-mi umple capul, că eu nu prea îmi umpleam capul cu nimic din ceea ce privea școala. Eu învățam doar ca să nu rămân repetent, deci cam asta era ideea. Și uitam imediat to ceea ce învățam. / school has done nothing but fill my head with nonsense. Well, that's saying too much, because I didn't really fill my head with anything school related. I was just studying so I wouldn't fall behind, so that was pretty much the point. And forgot everything I learned.

The polemical attitude of speaker 8 is not so extreme, but it can be noticed that the speaker gives a lot of room in his discourse to other issues instead of focusing on the transfer of knowledge. It can also be noticed that the topic of the speech is addressed ironically in a manner which is not appropriate in this context.

> 8. Poate nu ar chiar ieși foarte bine dacă nu ai învățat deloc. Deci, un pic acolo, trebuie totuși să înveți. Asta-i pentru părinții care se uită la videoclip. / Maybe it wouldn't really turn out very well if you didn't study at all. So, a bit there, you still have to learn. That's for parents watching the video.
>
> 8. ...ai nevoie de un coleg de treabă și conștiincios, care să îți trimită cursurile, adică paginile care s-au scris la școală când tu erai „bolnav" și nu te-ai dus. / ...you need a nice, hard-working, thoughtful classmate who will send you your coursework, i.e. the pages that were written in school when you were "sick" and didn't go.

In the closing of his discourse, the speaker admits that the videoclip falls short of its stated communicative purpose but he believes that the manner of putting forward the ideas in the discourse is "very funny". Therefore, the fact that the speaker fails to gain the attention of the other YouTube users is due to the shift in the communicative purpose of the discourse. By doing this, the speaker constructs a *deceiving discursive identity*.

> *8. Nu a fost un video prea serios, sau mă rog, lucrurile pe care le-am spus în acest video să zicem că au puțină dreptate doar că au fost reprezentate într-o manieră foarte amuzantă. / This wasn't a very serious video, or whatever, the things I said in this video, let's just say that they were a little bit right, only that they were said in a very funny way.*

The two polemical attitudes suggest that, due to the fact that the discursive identity of the speaker (5, 8) is not consistently and credibly constructed, communicative content diminishes in relevance.

The seductive attitude is the one most often used in youtubers' communication about the Romanian A-level exam. Therefore, in order to gain attention, the Romanian youtuber adopts a friendly, informal, relaxed attitude, in an attempt to be popular and well accepted by other youtubers. A seductive discursive attitude adopted by the speaker (1) consists in inviting the collocutor to a discussion on a topic of importance to the latter, namely the A-level exam.

> *1. ... și hai să vorbim de un subiect foarte important în perioada asta. Cum să-mi iau bacul / examenele / ... and let's talk about a very important topic at this time. How to pass my A-levels/exams*

Other seductive gaining attention attitude consists of a warm greeting and a friendly tone, typical of teachers who know how to involve students in the teaching process.

> *4. Dragi elevi, mai bine zis prieteni, nu-i așa? / Dear students, or should I say friends?*

In the same context of gaining attention, the locutor (9) constructs a very friendly identity and treats the other YouTube users as if they were very close friends (*Bună dragilor*) and claims that she "missed" them.

> *9. Bună dragilor, bine ați venit pe canalul meu de YouTube, sincer să fiu, mi-a fost dor de voi. / Hi darlings, welcome to my YouTube channel, to be honest I've missed you.*

The seductive attitude may be used when the speaker has no authority over the collocutor and, by this attitude, he/she tries to make him act according to his intentions. This way, sometimes a speaker (10) intentionally adopts the role of a person who needs the help of the others and incites the audience to establish a communicative interaction with him. Also, the closing sequence of the speech is one intended to engage young YouTube users, being a typical encouragement characteristic of their language:

10. ...ajută-mă, motivează-mă şi tu. Lasă-mi un comentariu şi lasă-mi poate idei ... [...] dă un mare share [...]. Poţi să mă urmăreşti şi pe celelalte reţele de socializare [...] Şi dacă ai întrebări poţi să-mi scrii. Aşa că, până data viitoare, să-i spargem la bac! / ...help me, and motivate me. Leave me a comment and leave me ideas... [...] give a big share [...]. You can also follow me on other social networks [...] And if you have any questions you can also write to me. So, until next time, let's smash the A-level exams!

Dramatic attitude is used by the speaker to gain the attention of the audience in different ways. Thus, a first discursive strategy identified in the corpus of analysis is the inclusion in the speaker's discourse a story describing how he helped a friend to pass his exam (1).

Another dramatic attitude is the speaker's inclusion in his discourse of a story about how he prepared for the A-level exam. This type of interpreted narrative succeeds in gaining attention because it insists on the fact that the speaker did not prepare at all for the exam and yet managed to score enough to pass it. The first-person narrative emphasises that the narrator did not study, did not make any effort preparing for the exam and knew nothing until very shortly before the exam. Basically, the gaining of attention strategy within this discourse (2, 3) is based on the speaker statement that he/she was able to prepare quickly and effortlessly for the exam. Simultaneously, one can observe the construction of the speaker's identity as a student with no interest in studying.

2. M-am pus eu să învăţ ... chiar deloc. Adică, vă daţi seama că am fost într-o vacanţă practic de 3 luni în care n-am avut chef să fac nimic. Şi m-am trezit pe data de 1 iunie [...] şi zic: „Bă, mai sunt trei săptămâni şi vine bacul." Şi eu nu am depus efortul ... necesar pentru un elev silitor. [...] atunci aveam un minim de cunoştinţe, dar eu nu depusesem efort să stau eu să-mi scriu comentarii sau să stau să le învăţ, nu. Învăţam înainte de testul ăla [...] / I put myself to study ... really at all. I mean, you realize that I was on basically a 3-month vacation where I didn't feel like doing anything. And then I found myself on the 1st of June [...] and I said: "Well, three weeks to go and the exams are coming up." And I didn't make the necessary ... effort for a diligent student. [...] at that time I had a minimum of knowledge, but I hadn't made the effort to sit and write literature comments or to sit and study them, no. I was studying before the test [...].
3. ...câte o zi pentru fiecare materie [...] Bă, n-am deschis o carte, n-am citit un eseu, nimic. Nimic. Eu ieşeam pe-afară n-aveam treabă că e bac. Ce-i dacă e bac? Mai am eu timp hă! hă! Până vine bacul pă 25. [...] rămân 3 zile pân la bac. Şi eu nu mai aveam timp [...] nu mai ştiam nimic despre logică. Ce-am făcut? Băi! E un om extraordinar pe YouTube aicea. [...] face, teoretic meditaţii la logică fără să-l plăteşti. [...] La română [...] l-am găsit

pe un om de făcea clipuri despre cum să înveți la română... / ...one day for each subject [...] Well, I didn't open a book, I didn't read an essay, nothing. Nothing. I was going out, I didn't have any work to do because it was the A-levels. What if it's the A-levels? I still got time. Till the exam comes on the 25th. [...] I got three days until the exam. And I didn't have time [...] I didn't know anything about logic. What did I do? Hey! There's a great man on YouTube here. [...] he does, theoretically, logic tutoring without paying him. [...] For Romanian language and literature [...] I found a man who made videos on how to learn Romanian language and literature...

There are also speakers (6, 7) whose discourse displays no gaining attention attitude. These are discourses that pay more attention to the objective description of the work steps required to prepare for the exam, these are discourses in which the transfer of knowledge comes to the fore.

As far as can be noticed, when talking online about exams, Romanian youtubers use all types of strategies to gain the attention of their peers. It can also be noticed that, quite often, youtubers aim to gain attention without conveying the knowledge they promise, leading to deceiving content.

5. Conclusions

As a conclusion, we would like to point out that through the analysis of the discourses performed by Romanian youtubers we have been able to outline several main aspects of the construction of locutor's identity within the context of their talks about the A-level exam. Therefore, they are young people who, in the majority, would like to be known by their real name and surname, only a few considering this aspect of their identity not important. The identity they all assume is that of a keeper of knowledge, methods, techniques and materials for preparing the A-level exam. Most Romanian youtubers promise efficient, fast, stress-free preparation methods with optimal exam results.

From the analysis carried out, it can be stated that the identity assumed by Romanian youtubers when they talk about exams is, from a social point of view, a legitimate one. All youtubers assume a social identity that allows the collocutor to validate the fact that they are qualified to communicate on this topic being a student, trainer or teacher. Furthermore, in order to reinforce the credibility of the speaker's identity, most of the youtubers bring as an argument the fact that they have taken the exam, while some mention the marks they took in the A-level exam and some others mention their experience in the teaching process.

When it comes to the construction of a credible discursive identity, Romanian youtubers mostly display an attitude of subjective involvement, all of them showing their eagerness to help, to advise or to share their knowledge and experience with other youtubers. This knowledge takes the form of methods, words of advice, tips and tricks, exercises, materials and videos. So far as can be noticed, the constructed identities which only remain at the level of involvement can generate deceiving content. Youtubers who also assume an objective or demonstrative attitude are the ones who generate a most suited content to the situation of communication and to the expectations of the collocutor. These locutors are also those who, in terms of YouTube statistics, have the highest number of visitors and likes.

The need to gain the attention on social media makes locutors reveal more of their discursive identity. Therefore, the attitude which is most influential in online communication in Romanian is the seductive attitude, which makes the speaker approachable, friendly and empathetic. To this also contributes the informal register adopted by all Romanian youtubers without exception. Less successful attitudes for gaining attention are the polemic attitude and the dramatic attitude that are characteristic of speakers susceptible to digressions and detours from the main topic of communication, that can also generate deceiving content.

To conclude, it can be stated that young people are more attracted to talking about exams on social media by the fact that the speaker is charismatic and proves experience in the field, the language is familiar and informal and the speaker assumes an identity that proves concern for the others and gains attention through his/her personality.

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3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qxM4-VSiu4&t=2s
4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp1dodorEnI
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7. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79-LgqA6S70&t=3s
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