

# **Popularizing diversity for children in videos on YouTube**

Judith Turnbull

*University of Modena and Reggio Emilia*

## **ABSTRACT**

The study analyzes how information about diversity is conveyed to young people. It is a question that children, even from an early age, will most likely come face to face with either personally or indirectly, at school or in their neighbourhood. As members of society, albeit currently “junior” members, children need to understand and embrace diversity to become responsible citizens now and in the future. The analysis is based on a corpus of videos from YouTube and adopts an eclectic, qualitative approach to capture the various facets of popularization for children, in both its cognitive and communicative dimensions, also in view of the fact that communication with children needs to be age-appropriate, thus requiring different communicative strategies for different age groups (Kolucki – Lemish 2011). The study also briefly takes into consideration the multimodal elements of the videos that are used to enhance the presentation and understanding of information.

Keywords: popularization, children, diversity, videos, cognitive strategies, communicative strategies.

## **1. Introduction**

Popularization involves the rewriting of specialized knowledge to make it comprehensible and accessible to lay persons. It not only transfers information to broaden the addressee’s general knowledge, but it may also aim to empower them, as in the case of medical or legal knowledge. Among the potential addressees we should include children who as members of society, albeit currently “junior” members, need to understand the world

about them. This principle is underlined in the UNICEF publication *Communicating with Children* (Kolucki – Lemish 2011: 3), which describes children as:

[...] the major “social capital” of every society concerned with change for a better today and for the future of its members: Their education promises the chance of improving economic and social conditions; their positive socialization for conflict resolution can help manage social clashes [...]; their health and good nutrition can promote longevity, lower social costs and lead to a better quality of life; and their psychological well-being has the promise of a more resilient and culturally rich society.

This paper explores how important ideas can be communicated to children through videos on YouTube. The videos analyzed in the study deal with diversity, a topic that has become a fundamental talking point, especially in the light of recent, often tragic, events and needs to be understood and appreciated by children in order for them to become responsible citizens now and in the future.

Research in popularization has focused mainly on the dissemination of specialized knowledge for adults (Myers 2003; Kermas – Christiansen 2013, Caliendo – Bongo 2014), but more recently attention has also been directed towards popularization for children in a range of domains, as for example history, tourism, medicine, law and economics, and also in a variety of genres, such as printed books, newspaper articles, websites (Turnbull 2015a, 2015b; Diani 2018; Bruti – Manca 2019; Cappelli – Masi 2019; Diani – Sezzi 2019; Cesiri 2020). The dissemination of knowledge to children for their empowerment could appear to fall into the area of education and schooling. However, nowadays children have access to many online resources in their free time, so opportunities for ‘learning’ are infinite and not limited to the classroom or formal educational contexts.

Diversity is a question that children will come face to face within their lives, at school or in their neighbourhood, even at an early age, either personally or indirectly. It concerns the recognition, acceptance and valuing of individuals’ differences based on their ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disabilities and sexual orientation. Beyond the immediately visible differences of skin, hair, clothes and so on, diversity also has many social, economic and political implications and ramifications that may not be so immediately evident. Acceptance of differences should lead to equality and

social inclusion. Diversity is not a specialized “technical” topic in itself, but of such fundamental importance for society today that it is worthy of being “popularized”. But how can this sensitive topic be presented to children effectively and in a comprehensible way?

Calsamiglia (2003: 140) cites six basic questions that lie at the core of popularization:

1. What needs to be said?
2. How should it be said?
3. How to explain it?
4. How to motivate?
5. Via what channels?
6. With what intention?

These questions are especially relevant when children are the target audience, because, as Kolucki and Lemish stress in the UNICEF publication *Communicating with Children* (2011), communication with children needs to be age-appropriate and suitable according to the level of conceptual difficulty, but also to the child’s stage of behavioural, social and communicative development. The last two of the questions above have already been answered as the channel is videos on YouTube and all the videos in the study aim to raise awareness about diversity and its importance for a better world. The other questions will be answered in the course of the analysis. The paper aims to gain insight into children’s videos and explore and describe how diversity, a social and, in many ways, an abstract concept is conveyed to young people. It will investigate whether or how they respond to Calsamiglia’s questions looking at both the cognitive and communicative strategies adopted to disseminate this knowledge.

## 2. Corpus

The small corpus is made up of 28 videos (total number of words 21,578) available on the American and social media platform YouTube which appeared in response to a google search for “diversity for kids/children YouTube” (see Table 1 for the list of videos).<sup>1</sup> They discuss the question of diversity, mostly from a general point of view, though five specifically

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<sup>1</sup> There were not as many videos available at the time of selection on YouTube as might be expected. However, a few were excluded because a book was presented in more than one Readalong or because the video did not deal strictly with diversity but referred to it in a broader context.

focus on racism (N, A, Q, U,  $\alpha$ ) and one on gender (Z). No clear indication is given for the age of the target audience of the videos, but it is possible to gauge roughly the age from the approach to the topic. Most would seem to address very young and young children (aged 5-11), whilst three target slightly older children (aged 12-14) and four would appear to aim at a teenager audience.

For very young viewers, physical, social and cultural differences between people are presented and explained, whereas for slightly older children the emphasis is that we all share the same feelings, hopes and joys regardless of our differences. Videos dealing with racism aim at children of varying ages and with different perspectives. An historical view of the question is given for younger school-age children, whereas the ideas of (in) equality and social inclusion are developed in other videos. The length of the videos varies greatly, ranging from 1.35 minutes to 23.42 minutes, with an average of approximately six minutes. There is also great variety in the format of the videos, as will be discussed in the analysis below.

Table 1. Video corpus (all videos last accessed September 2021)

For very young children		Length (mins.)
A	Sesame Street explain Black Lives Matter	5.01
B	What makes us unique	6.49
C	What is diversity? Circle Time Khan Academy Kids	23.42
D	We're all amazing! Diversity and Equality.	3.08
E	It's OK to be different by Sharon Purtill	5.06
F	I am brown. Kids' books that celebrate diversity inclusions	10.39
For young children		Length (mins.)
G	Diversity and equality for kids	3.50
H	What does diversity mean?	3.56
I	What is diversity Educate Kids awesome	3.29
J	Leadership video for kids: What is diversity	1.40
K	The world's family (An Embracing Culture Story)	1.35
L	Being different is beautiful by LittleSikhs.com	2.16
M	Diversity and Inclusion: Animated stories for kids	7.44
N	Black Lives Matter Protest	9.19
O	Diversity and Social Inclusion for Kids	3.24
P	Small talk. Differences CBC Kids	2.58

Q	Let's talk about race by Julius Lester	7.28
R	A kids book about racism by Jelani Memory	3.58
S	The skin you live in Readalong by Michael Tyler	4.25
T	Whoever you are by MemFox	2.57
U	Something happened in our town	9.24
For older children		Length (mins.)
V	Diversity and Inclusion: Lessons in friendship and love	6.33
W	Kids talk about diversity	2.31
X	What is inequality and social justice?	2.00
For teens		Length (mins.)
Y	Teens talk about diversity	5.42
Z	Why media diversity matters: A Female Teenagers Perspective	20.45
$\alpha$	Systemic racism explained	4.23
$\beta$	Embracing diversity	3.33

A very frequent format used in the videos is the Read Aloud composition, where a book is read, either with the author or reader visually on screen or as a voiceover but showing the pages of the book as they are being read. Eight of the videos are actually Read Alouds, perhaps because of the young age of viewers and because they are considered important for developing reading skills and vocabulary. "Children can listen on a higher language level than they can read, so reading aloud makes complex ideas more accessible and exposes children to vocabulary and language patterns that are not part of everyday speech." (Gold – Gibson 2001). Sometimes the adult reader of the book interacts directly with the audiences and these occasions have been included in the analysis.

Although the videos in the corpus are fairly heterogeneous as far as the age of the target audience and the focus of the topic are concerned, videos as a channel of communication were chosen as the subject of the study because they have acquired particular relevance in the life of young children today. A survey carried out in March 2020 in the United States (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1150571/share-us-parents-young-child-watch-youtube-videos/>) revealed that 89 percent of parents with children aged 5 to 11 years say their child had watched a video on YouTube. Additionally, 57% of parents reported that their children aged up to two years had also watched a video on YouTube. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by U.S. children's museums in 2019, young children believe YouTube videos

are better for learning than TV shows and they also view people in YouTube videos to be more real than those on TV (<https://news.osu.edu/kids-think-youtube-is-better-for-learning-than-other-types-of-video/>).

Videos have a good potential to support learning (Salmerón et al. 2020: 3). The numerous affordances available can create a variety of opportunities for creativity and originality, in order to present information in an appealing manner. The visual helps to contextualize information and it also creates bigger memory import, and better information retention. This type of Internet video expressly aimed at children can be described as “‘edutainment’, ‘a hybrid mix of education and entertainment that relies heavily on visual material, on narrative or game-like formats, and on more informal, less didactic styles of address’” (Buckingham – Scanlon 2005: 46). However, there is so much available on the Internet nowadays that most interactions with digital media last brief moments and are mostly for entertainment, with the risk of videos being ‘shallowly’ processed by viewers (Salmerón et al. 2020: 9). There is, therefore, an urgent need to engage viewers, increase curiosity, make the content relevant, and to explain concepts effectively.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The study has followed an eclectic, qualitative approach to capture the various facets of popularization in videos for children and uses a theoretical framework that has been adopted in previous studies on knowledge dissemination by the author to identify the cognitive and communicative strategies used in the transfer of information both for adults and for young people (Turnbull 2015a, 2018). This framework draws on work in a variety of areas, including popularization, academic discourse and communication in healthcare, that provide insights into the mechanisms, strategies and devices that can be adopted in the transfer of knowledge.

The cognitive dimension involves how the information is actually transmitted and the strategies adopted to facilitate this knowledge transfer. They can be classified under the broad categories of illustration and reformulation (Ciapuscio 2003; Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004). The first includes denomination, definition, exemplification, scenario and metaphorical language. Denomination is the introduction of new terms, whilst definition refers to the explanation of the new terms or the description of the object or phenomenon and the two are closely connected,

usually appearing together in the text. The other three, exemplification, scenario and metaphorical language, are all forms of concretization, which concerns the presentation and reworking of abstract information in a non-abstract manner. Exemplification obviously means giving specific examples of general phenomena, whilst scenarios present possible, but imaginary situations. Metaphorical language uses semantic means to establish links between two domains of experience, meaning or knowledge and includes analogies, metaphors and comparisons. The second category, reformulation, involves paraphrasing or repetition, that is, a notion is presented and then followed, or preceded, by an explanatory phrase.

The communicative dimension comprises the ways authors use language to negotiate the social relationship with their audience and refers to the rhetorical devices and strategies that can be adopted to create a positive and trusting relationship. Hyland (2010) and Giannoni (2008) looked at the “proximity” and “popularizing” features in writing in academic and professional contexts and identified, among others, personalization, questions, humour, modality, anecdotes, marked lexis and metaphors, but obviously in a context far removed from children’s videos. Bearing in mind that communication “must always adapt to the appropriateness conditions and other constraints of the media and communicative events” (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 37), the analysis will consider whether some of these strategies and/or other kinds of strategies are adopted in the videos.

The UNICEF publication *Communicating with Children* (Kolucki – Lemish 2011) mentioned above indicates some of the relevant conditions and constraints. It stresses the need for communication with children to be age-appropriate. It outlines the developmental characteristics of children and suggests different types of interactive communication strategies for age groups 0-6, 7-11 and 12-14 years. However, some basic principles underpinning these strategies are relevant to communication with children of all ages. Firstly, the communication must use child-centred stories referring to everyday experiences and for an older audience also introduce issues that may cause concern for them, such as bullying or discrimination. Furthermore, the characters portrayed must be confident and positive, show high self-esteem, especially if they are girls, children from ethnic minorities and children with disabilities, whilst adults must be seen as loving and caring to represent positive parent or adult-child relationships for all ages. The general atmosphere of the communication should be friendly, possibly with the use of humour. The contextualization of the information plays a fundamental role in

order to establish contact with the young reader, who can then identify with the information provided. Children learn best when deeply engaged in what they are doing, when they are genuinely involved and interested.

Although the focus of this study is on the linguistic elements utilized in the transfer of knowledge, the channel of communication in which the texts appear must be taken into consideration. Videos are multimodal artefacts combining semiotic resources of images, sound, captions and speech, among others, in original and varied ways. Each mode has the potential to contribute to meaning-making in relation to the other resources and the context (Bezemer – Jewitt 2010). Therefore, the selection, mixture and blending of these resources in a video play a significant role in making the communication effective and creating a positive relationship with the young viewers.

Table 2 shows some of the various kinds of resources available, classified broadly into two groups, the visual and the auditory (Pauwels 2012: 250).

Table 2. Multimodal elements

Visual		Auditory	
presenters	people – adults/peers animated characters puppets	speech	on screen voice over
images	live action animations static pictures/photos gestures facial expressions figures, tables, graphs, charts written text	music	background songs

Bearing in mind we are dealing with young people, sometimes very young children, the figure of the presenter of the information is particularly important. Peers can establish contact immediately and effectively, especially in the case of teenagers, but a friendly, smiling adult can be a reassuring as well as authoritative figure. The presence of people physically visible on screen provides information about them through gestures, facial expressions, smiles and simulates face-to-face communication. In contrast, animations open up an array of opportunities; they fulfil an affective function by attracting and capturing the attention of viewers with novelty,



as well as serving a cognitive function in that they can represent abstract or dynamic concepts more easily (Lowe 2004). They can also present a variety of situations in which to contextualize the information. The use of puppets in young children's videos would appear to be a natural choice, as they are part of children's play and can represent anyone or anything they want, a best friend, a sibling, teacher or pet (Belfiore 2021). As far as images are concerned, videos provide a wide range of affordances, where colour, layout, tables, graphs can facilitate the representation of information. Obviously written text can also appear on the screen.

Moving on to the auditory elements, even though the speaker is not visible, voiceovers can nevertheless convey information about their age, gender, social and geographical origins, as well as their attitude, mood and temperament. They can transmit emotions like enthusiasm, anger or reassurance through the tone of the voice and the speed of delivery. Background music may also create and reinforce the mood that the video wants to convey, whether it be serious or jovial. On the other hand, songs bearing the text of the message capture the attention of viewers with their melodies and can easily be memorable.

According to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML) both the auditory and visual channels are used at the same time and the learner connects the information from each channel and mentally cross-references it in working memory, thus improving learning (Mayer 2005). Multimodality is a very complex phenomenon and can give insights into the meaning-making of texts. However, the analysis here will be limited to a discussion of the format of the videos.

## **4. Analysis**

The analysis will start with a brief discussion of the multimodal characteristics of the videos in order to contextualize the analysis of the information transfer strategies that will follow.

### **4.1 Multimodal**

Even on the basis of the visual and auditory categories outlined in the theoretical section, it is impossible to classify in any simple way the 28 videos in the corpus. The great variety of affordances available leads to numerous combinations, as a few examples will illustrate.

The role of presenter in the videos is filled by a variety of figures in a number of settings. In (P)<sup>2</sup> an adult presenter interviews children in rural locations, in a barn, sitting on a bale of hay on a farm or under a tree in the countryside, asking them in what way they are different, and is accompanied by background music. Another video shows two adults talking about diversity in a setting that could suggest a classroom as it has children's drawings on the wall (C), whilst other videos have children actually presenting, as for example in (Y) teenagers giving their definition of diversity, but it is not clear where they are as the background is out of focus. Puppets are also used in two videos, (H) and (A), to discuss the topic.

There are a number of animations, once again taking on different approaches. Sometimes the characters themselves in the videos talk and discuss diversity, whilst others have an adult or child voiceover narrating. The images in the animations either depict a story as it unfolds or illustrate graphically the concepts and ideas that are being explained. For example, in (J) two boys in the park are talking about how diverse but, at the same time, how alike we all are.

- (1) If we were shopping at the store and wanted to buy eggs, we could either buy a dozen of white or brown eggs. If you take a white and brown egg out of the carton, even though they are different colors, when you open them up they are the same on the inside. (J)

A picture of a shopping trolley appears on the screen, followed by a box of white eggs and a box of brown eggs, and then in the next image a picture of an egg from each box cracked open, thus visually representing exactly what is being said. However, images in the videos, both the live action and animations, are usually used to depict differences between people (their height, age, hair skin, clothes) and/or the contexts in which diversity exists, such as at school, in the park or at home. Rarely are diagrams and graphs used to present factual information.

Although music is occasionally present in videos as background music, there are two in which the whole video consists in a song. One (D) is for very young, pre-school children which has just one static image with three figures representing differences, a white boy who is in a wheelchair, an Asian girl and an African girl, and the words appear on the screen as the song is being sung.

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<sup>2</sup> The letters in brackets refer to the video as listed in Table 1.

- (2) My eyes are blue. My eyes are green. My eyes are brown. They're part of me. I speak English: I speak Urdu. I speak in Yoruba. (D)

Even though the message of the videos is conveyed through spoken text, it is, in fact, worth noting how some videos, apart from the Read Alouds, put either key words, quotations or definitions actually on the screen, as if to mark out or highlight the take-home message of the video. For example, whilst the words in (3) are being spoken, the viewer can see images illustrating how it is much easier for white people to get on in life with 'structural racism' written in the top left of the screen. The animation shows a black and a white figure running side by side, but the white figure moves much faster as it is helped along by a conveyer belt.

- (3) But the protests we're seeing today aren't really about that sort of thing. They're about structural racism in our society- a built-in system of bias that makes life easier for white people and more difficult for Black people and other people of color. It puts them at greater risk for poverty, unemployment, and disease. Structural racism is a factor in some disturbing trends. (N)

## 4.2 Cognitive strategies

In the popularization of specialized knowledge, technical terms can be problematic, and texts often adopt the strategies of denomination and definition to inform, but also to familiarize the addressee with the context. Diversity and racism are not strictly "specialized knowledge", but in view of the young age of viewers, some terms may be new or difficult, so it becomes a question of vocabulary building, as in (4) with an example of denomination:

- (4) So if you see someone being treated badly, made fun of, excluded from playing, or looked down on because of their skin color... call it racism. (R)

Definitions are used for all age groups to explain the meaning of more difficult, "technical" words, such as 'systemic racism', 'structural racism' and 'redlining' for older children, but also simple words like 'racism', 'protest' and 'stand up' for young children.

- (5) A big part of systemic racism is implicit bias. These are prejudices in society that people are not aware that they have. (α)

- (6) Elmo: Racism? What's that?

Dad: Racism is when people treat other people unfairly because of the way they look, of the color of their skin. (A)

- (7) What's a protest?

A protest is when people come together to show they are upset and disagree about something. They want to make others aware of the problem. Through protesting people are able to share their feelings and work together to make things better. (A)

The most frequently defined word is 'diversity', with definitions ranging from the very simple to more detailed and elaborate ones.

- (8) Diversity means that there are a lot of different things or people. (J)

- (9) Diversity means to allow for people of all ethnicities, races, backgrounds, abilities, genders and ages to come as one and to respect each other and to power empower one another. (W)

Almost all of the definitions of 'diversity' in the videos are given by children and teenagers, as in the examples above. They express their idea of what diversity is, and put it in relation to their life and experiences, with different emphases or perspectives on the concept. But perhaps more importantly they are given by the viewers' peers, making them more "interesting" or pertinent.

We can also find some unusual, perhaps unexpected, words defined in the videos, such as 'melanin' and 'CP'. The first appears in a song, making it even more surprising, whilst the second is a very specialized term and necessary to explain the diversity of the character.

- (10) We all have different colored skin, but why is that? It's easy to understand and here are some facts. Every different shade of color in all human skin is caused by a natural skin pigment called melanin. (G)

- (11) *Mark*: I bet you can also tell that I use a wheelchair but I'd like to call this my cruiser, yeah, I use this because I have CP.

*Salima*: Oh right, right, right. You've got CP, CP. Hhmm, Mark, what in the world is CP?

*Mark*: CP stands for cerebral palsy. And that's something I was born with and it means that the muscles in my legs and in my mouth are really stiff so I don't walk and I talk a little different too. (H)

Exemplification is used for all ages, but it was the most frequent device in the videos aimed at a younger audience. In most cases the examples are not introduced explicitly by the phrase 'for example' or 'for instance', but rather just given in a description of diversity to explain what being different actually consists in, as can be seen in the following example:

- (12) People are different or unique in many ways: Some of these differences are things we can see on the outside.  
People have different eye colors, they have different hair colors, they have different skin colors. [...] People also move, learn and communicate in different ways. Some people use a wheelchair to get around. Some people need a guide dog to be their eyes and ears. Some people talk to each other using sign language. (B)

This is because of the need to concretize the concept of diversity, relate differences of whatever kind to real, visible features. This is even more important when the differences are not visible or immediately obvious, such as those of culture:

- (13) In France friends welcome each other with kisses;  
in Zimbabwe girls curtsy just like little misses;  
to greet in Japan, just bend in a bow,  
but when you're in England a handshake is how. (K)

Exemplification is also used in such a way as to bring out individual characteristics, implying that everybody has their own distinctive set. An elderly man is telling the story of his life and declares his own peculiar qualities and preferences, which are most probably very different from those of the young viewers:

- (14) My story and yours have many elements, such as Favorite food: Mine is fish.  
Hobbies: I like to do crossword puzzles, take photographs and cook.  
Favorite color: Red. Or maybe green. But I like orange and purple, too  
I think my favorite color is all of them.  
Religion: I'm Jewish.  
Nationality: I'm from the United States.  
Favorite time of day: Night. (Q)

It is also used to draw attention to the advantages and positive consequences of diversity:

- (15) Because being different means we have so much MORE to offer each other.

Things like... help, ideas, strength, skills, creativity, life, patience, respect, community, love, knowledge, experience, perspective, insight, diversity, wisdom, empathy and originality. (R)

When the focus is on racism, exemplification is used to highlight various aspects of the issue. From a historical perspective, those who have stood up to racism or been victims of racism are mentioned (16) to inform and perhaps to stimulate curiosity. From a more personal, individual point of view, examples of how racism manifests itself (17) and how we as individuals can try to fight it (18) are given.

- (16) We learn about brave leaders like Fannie Lou Hamer, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin

Luther King Jr. [...] It seems like forever ago, and it's tough to even imagine some of the scenes: ordinary Americans, throwing trash at the first Black Major League Baseball player...Harassing a little girl named Ruby Bridges for attending a white school...

Attacking people simply for eating lunch at a segregated counter. (N)

- (17) And it happens all the time. Not just in BIG ways, but sometimes it shows up in small ways, ways that are almost invisible. Like a look, a comment, a question, a thought, a joke, a word or a belief. (R)

- (18) His mother added: "And you can change people's hearts by sticking up for someone who is not treated fairly."

"Like how Malcolm sticks up for me when the kids tease me about my glasses?" Josh asked. "He tells them to step off!" (U)

The scenario strategy is not used frequently in the videos. In the following example a hypothetical situation is presented to Emma by her mother to help her understand racism:

- (19) "Suppose you had a birthday party and invited everyone in your class except the Black kids," her mother said. "How would the Black kids feel?"

"They would be sad," Emma said. "Or mad."

"And you would be missing out, because you never know who is going to be your best friend," said Liz. (U)

The scenario represents a situation with which Emma can identify, but the conditional tense is used to introduce the hypothetical situation that is purely imaginary, and we can suppose it is not a situation she has actually experienced herself.

There are two other examples of scenarios in the videos. In *Why media diversity matters: A female teenager's perspective*, which focuses on gender, the speaker opens her talk for teenagers by presenting a scenario:

- (20) I would like you all to imagine a hypothetical situation about a girl. When the girl is six, she dreams of becoming an astronaut... (Z)

She continues tracing year by year the difficulties, disappointments and negative experiences of the girl:

- (21) When she is ten, she has started to engage in dieting behavior, despite the fact that she is at a medically considered healthy weight. [...] And by the time she is 18 she has four friends who have been raped, two friends who have been in abusive relationships, and many more that have been sexually harassed. (Z)

At the end of the scenario she confesses:

- (22) As you can probably guess at this point, this isn't a hypothetical situation, though I certainly wish it was. Unfortunately, this is a very real reality for thousands of females across America and around the world. (Z)

Here the strategy of a scenario, a hypothetical situation, is used for a dramatic effect, to disturb the audience by revealing the harsh truth about the shocking state of young women in the US. The other scenario ( $\alpha$ ) narrates the story of two boys, one white and one black, with similar education and abilities, but whose opportunities are conditioned by the colour of their skin to illustrate systemic racism. It is interesting to note that in these last two cases the scenarios are a narration of events where the present tense is used, because the characters are imaginary, but the situations portrayed are very real-life.

Analogy and metaphors are very useful devices to help the transfer of information as it uses language to refer to something in terms of something else; it describes something from the perspective of some other thing. It has been shown that even quite young children are able to make relational links and can deal with abstract as well as concrete metaphors (Cameron 1996: 54). Indeed, a rather elegant metaphor is provided by the 8-year-old speaker

in video (V), suggesting how we all, in our own particular ways, play a fundamental part in forming a whole:

(23) I see that we're each a piece in the puzzle of humanity. (V)

Other analogies in the videos draw on comparisons with everyday objects, like flowers and fruit (24), which are interestingly in a video for pre-school age.

(24) Naomi: Friends, diversity means being different, having a lot of variety in things, something that I think about and I want you to think about and you at home to think about is a bowl of fruit. And imagine that there is a banana in there, there's strawberries, some apples, some oranges, some pears, maybe some peaches. Are they all the same or do they all sound different?

Noah: They all sound different.

Naomi: They all sounded different. That's diversity. Isn't that fun? (C)

Comparisons are made obviously to emphasize the positiveness and beauty of differences, as in the case of a rainbow or a box of crayons:

(25) In nature a rainbow is made beautiful by its different colors and just like that rainbow the world is made beautiful because it's filled with many different kinds of people. (B)

(26) Imagine the teacher gives you a crayon box and you open it up to find only one color inside. That would make it harder if you want to draw a pretty colorful picture. But if you have crayons of all kinds of different colors, the picture can be much more bright and beautiful. This applies to people too. Having people who differ in many ways, means that everyone is unique and that's a different color to the world. (O)

Another interesting and particularly appropriate analogy is with a box of eggs, as described in (1). It does not just consider differences, but also highlights the fundamental idea of everybody being the same inside.

### 4.3 Communicative strategies

Videos clearly encourage an interactive approach and the use, albeit virtual, of a direct dialogue with the audience, as shown by a very frequent use of 1st and 2nd person pronouns:



• 'I'	381 occurrences	1.7657%
• 'we'	281 occurrences	1.3025%
• 'you'	385 occurrences	1.7842%

This interaction also involves questions, which may have different functions. They can be used to introduce the topic:

(27) What makes us different?

People are different or unique in many ways: Some of these differences are things we can see on the outside. (B)

(28) Wouldn't it be a boring world if we all look the same?

Can you picture if everybody in school had the same color hair, the same color of eyes, same clothes and they all ate the same lunch? (O)

They are also a very effective way of attracting or keeping the audience's attention, especially if the viewers are very young. In (29) the presenter is reading the book *I am Brown* by Ashok Banker about all the different things people can be, do or like, whilst showing the illustrations in the book for each characteristic, activity or interest. After each theme/topic she asks the audience who 'they' are, what 'they' do or like, to keep their attention and to make them think how they fit in with the world.

(29) I live in... a mansion, a cottage, a house, an apartment, a hut, a bungalow, a riverboat, a cabin. Where do you live? (F)

Questions may not be addressed directly to the viewers, because they are part of a conversation taking place between the presenters or characters featured in an animation. However, they stimulate curiosity and engage with the viewer who may try to answer them.

(30) – Hey, bro. Where have you been?

– At the library finishing up my diversity for kids paper.

– Diversity for kids. What is diversity?

– Diversity means that there are a lot of different things or people. (J)

As to be expected with a young audience the language in the videos is simple and informal. There is a very frequent use of evaluative lexis suggesting very positive associations with diversity and differences. Positive words in connection with differences are 'harmony', 'beauty', 'shine bright' and 'fun' and adjectives include 'special', 'awesome', 'beautiful', 'unique', 'precious', 'amazing', 'cool' and 'healthy'.

- (31) Thankfully there are lots of different types of people in the world to keep it interesting and fun. (O)
- (32) Look, we are all different and that's what makes us special. (I)
- (33) From those friendships, I learned that diversity is a healthy thing in relationships. (M)

Other noticeable linguistic features are rhyme and repetition which are strategies which once again can be used to attract and hold attention. Apart from the rhyme, the repetition of 'we' + verb gives rhythm to the following text.

- (34) Around the world we're different, it's true,  
but there are many ways I'm just like you:  
we smile, we laugh, we love who we are,  
we're nice to all people who live near or far. (K)

The chorus in songs obviously provides the opportunity to repeat and therefore reinforce the message of the video.

- (35) We want diversity, that's what we want to see. We all belong to this earth and we need equality, diversity. We need variety, let's fight racial inequality universally (G)
- (36) We're all amazing, all these parts of me. We're all amazing, all these parts of you.  
We are different, each of us. It's what makes us precious, so love yourself.  
We're all amazing. (D)

Although a friendly and cheery atmosphere is created in the videos by smiling presenters, the tone of voice and the colourful images on screen, the manner of the videos is fairly serious. In fact, there are only a few instances of humour. The following examples are taken from the video where the characters are actually puppets and exhibit high self-esteem:

- (37) Well, diversity just means how we're all different. Some differences you can see on the outside, like I bet you can tell just by looking at me, that I'm one good-looking kid.  
I bet you can also tell that I use a wheelchair but I'd like to call this my cruiser, yeah, I use this because I have CP. (H)

The humour in (38) is created by the use of marked lexis, the very informal, rather old-fashioned word 'noodle caboodle' to refer to his brain:

- (38) – But sometimes they make fun of the way that I talk and they might think just because I talk a little different that I'm not very smart. You know like there's not much going on in the old noodle caboodle.  
 – Oh  
 – But that's not true, I'm a really smart kid. You just have to get to know me, that's all. You know, then, maybe we could be friends. (H)

However, perhaps the key communicative strategy generally adopted in the videos is personalization in the form personal stories, narratives and experiences that are told to convey the meaning of diversity. Narrative is a structure we are all familiar with from childhood onwards and has been described as "one of the world's most powerful and pervasive ways of communicating ideas" (Millar – Osborne 1998: 2013, cited in Norris et al. 2005: 536). A story creates "emotional connections in the listeners and is a powerful way to share information as well as explore ideas, concepts, and emotions" (Lyle 2017: 229).

Whilst short narratives in the texts give information about people that define their diversity, as can be seen in (37 and 38) or (14), three longer stories are of particular interest. The first is told by an eight-year-old girl standing on stage in front of a live audience telling a personal story in a Labov style (Labov 1997). She is faced with a problem when she invites a girl to play with her in the park:

- (39) Once I went to the girl, asking her if she would like to play with me, she looked at me with her eyes wide open. Suddenly, she seemed confused and stared at me like I was an alien. I stared at her back. Then she said with a foreign accent, "Why are you dressed that way? You look weird." I felt sad because she was judging me on what I was wearing. So, I said to her, "And why are you talking in a weird way?" (V)

They talk to each other, find out their backgrounds, and begin to understand why one is dressed in a particular way and the other talks in a weird way, and thus overcome their initial animosity. The resolution of the problem is "followed by an evaluation of the story:

- (40) Please, now, for everyone listening to me, I hope you got the idea: we all have to start fighting ignorance with knowledge. Stop picking on each other, overcome our differences. (V)

The second story of interest is an animation in which Jason talks about his childhood growing up in a rural neighbourhood and making best friends with a white girl, Alex, and later with Tay, a black boy. The story points out all their differences, physical, cultural, character, but also narrates their life after school and how they have remained friends through college and after. Unlike in the previous story, diversity here does not create problems, rather quite the opposite, as the speaker celebrates the advantages of diversity:

- (41) I felt like my friends and their ideas and perspectives fed and increased my ideas and perspectives. Diversity as a child made me into a healthier adult. It also made me a kinder and happier one. I feel lucky to have learned that lesson at such an early age. (M)

The last story, which is presented as a Readalong, actually narrates two parallel stories which then come together in the final part. A black man has been shot in the town where Emma who is white and Josh who is black live. Each talks to their respective family about the episode, blaming racism and unfair treatment as the cause. At school the next day a new boy from a foreign country is not chosen by the other children to join either of the football teams in the playground. Emma and Josh both invite him to join their team, putting into practice the advice they had received from their families.

- (42) "We have enough kids on our team," Daniel said. "We don't need him". But Josh was ready. "Step off," he said. "He's playing": "Yeah," said Emma. "We don't want to miss out." (U)

## 5. Discussion

This study has given an overview of the strategies adopted in the popularization of diversity for children. It has shown the variety of formats used in a small corpus of videos, as well as identified the specific cognitive and communicative strategies most frequently implemented. In future research it will be interesting to develop the multimodal analysis to investigate the relationship between the auditory and visual elements, the text and images.

However, at this point it is appropriate to return to Calsamiglia's (2003) four questions that remain unanswered, Firstly, what needs to be said when popularizing a topic? In the videos the information load is calibrated and distributed according to the age group. Although it is difficult to specify

a clear age for the target audience, the content of the videos gives a general indication. For the very young viewers, diversity is explained in terms of our many physical and cultural differences, but some also emphasize that we are all the same. Videos with a focus on racism target even young children, as for example in the famous Sesame Street programme (A). They start by referring to the protests about George Floyd's death, which the children may have heard about and seen on TV. Definitions are given to explain what it is about, as we saw in (6) and (7), though also with a humorous approach to lighten the atmosphere.

- (42) – Hi Big Bird! welcome to our town hall on standing up to racism.  
 – Oh that's right, count me in. We all need to stand up. There we go. That's me standing up to racism. Now how do we stop it?  
 – Big Bird, Big Bird, well, maybe come down where we can see you.  
 – Yeah Big Bird, alright. When we say standing up, we mean actually coming together to make changes happen. (A)

In contrast, for slightly older children racism is discussed from a historical perspective, but also in terms of discrimination and social inclusion.

The questions about how the information should be expressed and clarified are answered by the analysis of the communicative and cognitive strategies adopted. All five cognitive strategies of illustration can be found in the corpus of videos, but there is a different use according to the probable target age of viewers. Concretization appears to be the key element, especially for the very young children. Exemplification is the most frequent, so that the young viewers can clearly understand and identify with the phenomenon and relevant situations. The examples come from real everyday life, what people look like and what they do, in contexts that are very familiar but which young children may never have considered in terms of diversity and what that means. However, exemplification also serves other purposes. When facts about racism are being given, examples of people who have been involved, either as leaders of protest movements or as victims of racism are presented in order to inform, but also to stimulate the curiosity of children to find out more. A number of metaphors and analogies are used for younger children, but surprisingly not in the case of older children. When the videos deal with the more specific topic of racism and Black Lives Matter, usually but not always targeting a slightly older audience, definition and denomination are used to explain phenomena and give them a name, once again in a way concretizing what may seem abstract concepts to children. However, scenarios are not used frequently and not for young children. The reason

could be that the videos want to ground the information and knowledge they are transferring in real, everyday life. Diversity is not a possibility; it is all around us and they want to raise awareness about it.

The communicative strategies should help motivate the audience by engaging their attention and aiding recall of information. The asymmetry of interlocutors inherent in popularizing discourse between expert and layperson clearly takes on a different form here. The expert is often “replaced” by a friendly and caring adult figure in the case of young children and/or peers, especially in the case of teenagers, regardless of whether the videos are live action or animations. Although adults appear as presenters more frequently than children, as might be expected, the presence of peers from young children up to teenagers in the videos is very important, as it will help children to identify with what is being said.

A friendly, at times jovial, atmosphere is created by simple, informal language that aims to engage with the viewers directly through the use of 2nd person pronouns and questions. The narration of personal stories and experiences, especially those told by or about children, makes use of a structure and form familiar to children. The stories become in their own right exemplifications of behaviour and the protagonists role models for viewers. In this way they can motivate children, make them more aware of diversity and what they, as individuals, can do. In other words, empowering them now and for the future.

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Address: JUDITH ANNE TURNBULL, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali, Via Sant'Eufemia, 19, 41121 Modena, Italy.

ORCID code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1651-4922>