

The linguistic representation of food

Locality and sustainability
in the digital era

edited by
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è il marchio editoriale dell'Università di Genova



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Introduction

by Marco Bagli and Sara Corrizzato

In recent decades, the study of food has emerged as an articulate lens through which scholars aim to explore culture, identity, and other fields, such as linguistics, anthropology and ecology, considering food's presence as a crucial component of everyday life and personal experience (Mintz, 1995; Ochs & Shoet, 2006; Counihan, 2013; Anderson, 2014). Eating does not merely deal with sustenance; food is a symbol of heritage and cultural identity, mirroring the traditions, values, and histories of people worldwide (Guzzo & Balirano, 2019). In fact, through shared meals and culinary practices, human beings show and celebrate their cultural backgrounds, creating spaces where people from different socio-cultural panoramas can connect and share their experiences in formal as well as in informal contexts. Food thus becomes a universal means of communication, through which human beings can convey both the uniqueness and commonality of their human experience, as a continuum between past and present. In addition to that, food practices can also be considered as a dynamic space in which international influences melt with local traditions, as more recent global culinary trends adapt to, and are reshaped by, local ingredients and practices. This powerful cooperation between the global and the local mirrors both the ever-changing nature of cultural heritage and the constant evolution of food as a mirror for identification, interdependence, and mutual comprehension (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2012; Crowther, 2018).

Food and linguistics merge at multiple levels, as each encapsulates cultural identity, social habits, and historical references. Not only does language frame how people discuss and think about food and culinary experiences, but it also (implicitly) shows cultural connotations, traditions, and values embedded in food-related practices. From the origins of food terms and culinary lexicons, the regional and dialectal variations in how foods are named to the way(s) in which local food is labelled in an international context, linguistics helps investigate how eating habits and culinary practices change and evolve according to their context. In fact, the agricultural traditions meet more recent culinary trends, which provide a holistic experience spiced up with more extravagance and novelty. Additionally, food-related metaphors, idioms, translation choices and specialized lexicon contribute to understanding more general social beliefs towards nutrition and identity (Monti, 2019; Bagli, 2021). Examining the linguistic elements of food across languages and cultures thus sheds light on how culinary practices are codified, resisted, and transformed, reflecting a dynamic relationship between language, sustenance, and social life (Garzone *et al.*, 2017; Riley & Paugh, 2018; Corrizzato, 2019; Cesiri, 2020).

While food plays a vital role in the creation, hybridization, and reinforcement of social and cultural practices, the sustainability of its production and consumption is often at the centre of heated debates. Consumers are increasingly aware of their environmental impact, and the number of people eager to understand the processes and modes of food production is on the rise. This growing desire to shorten production chains and reduce humanity's carbon footprint has led to various outcomes: values like locality and sustainability have been appropriated by the tourism industry, while at the same time, these values are held so highly by some that they encourage individuals to overcome cultural biases.

As argued by scholars in ecological linguistics, the loss of biodiversity is inextricably tied to the loss of cultural diversity (Harmon, 1996). Food practices, therefore, extend beyond mere sustenance and con-

sumption; they are also part of broader conversations about social and cultural sustainability. The multilingual and translanguaging practices in the discourse of food reviewed in this book can serve as powerful tools to give regional or minority languages greater visibility, ensuring their resilience in the face of cultural homogenization.

The present volume includes seven contributions from scholars across the field of linguistics, each analysing the interconnections between language and food culture, explaining how linguistic choices, specifically lexicon, and discursive traits shape and are shaped by culinary habits, cultural identity, and social relationships. The methodologies adopted by the different authors vary from corpus analysis to eco-stylistics, but each paper maintains a strong usage-based perspective. The theoretical approaches are also multifaceted, as the specific topics under discussion. The variety of approaches and different perspectives that the authors of *The Linguistic Representation of Food: Locality and Sustainability in the digital era* reflect the multiplicity of voices that shape contemporary arenas of social interactions. This is particularly true in the case of social media and, more generally, digitally mediated exchanges, which represent a challenge and an opportunity for the representation of locality and sustainability. Despite the multiplicity of voices and takes on the subject, each chapter of the book contributes to the contemporary debate on food, culture and sustainability by answering the following research questions:

- How is locality and its relation to cultural identity communicated in digital and online contexts?
- How does sustainability play a role in the equation?

The first chapter, ‘Elegant, racy and classy’: describing wines through personification in *Wine Spectator*», explores the way(s) in which wine is depicted in *Wine Spectator* magazine, analysing how human characteristics are frequently mapped onto wines through the use of figurative language. Using a corpus of about 400 articles published from 1994 to

2022, Silvia Cavalieri and Valeria Franceschi adopt Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and corpus linguistics to identify patterns of anthropomorphic descriptors used to describe wine. Findings demonstrate that wines are compared to human beings, having physical traits, personalities and aesthetic qualities. Additionally, the study suggests that the use of figurative language not only enriches wine descriptions but also reflects broader cultural and linguistic tendencies in metaphorical language.

Silvia Monti, in «You just healed my hand with an *arepa con queso*». The figurative power of L3 food terms in shaping ethnically diverse identities in American multilingual animated films and their Italian dubbed version», investigates how ethnic food terms in American animated films contribute to shaping ethnically diverse identities, focusing on films that describe minority cultures with languages other than English (L3s) in addition to English and their Italian dubbed versions. Examining 32 films released between 1991 and 2023, the paper explores how L3 food terms, primarily referring to traditional dishes, help convey the sociocultural backgrounds of characters. These terms appear in dialogue, song lyrics, and visual elements, adding authenticity to characters' cultural identities. Monti clarifies that food references help offer a wide perspective: they reflect ethnic identity, strengthen in-group relationships, convey emotions, and foster connections among characters.

Marco Bagli's contribution focuses on the Anglo-Saxon context, exploring the ecosophy, or ecological philosophy, guiding the British Association of Foragers (AoF). The study investigates the linguistic choices in the *Principles of Practice*, a document which regulates the activities of the association. Through an ecostylistic approach, which combines ecolinguistics and stylistics, the study reveals the values and practices of the AoF community in their sustainable and respectful approach to foraging. The AoF's principles promote an ecocentric worldview that emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans, wild species, and their habitats. Foragers are encouraged to observe and respect

ecological impacts, adapt methods that reduce harm, and prioritize biodiversity. The document also highlights the concepts of inclusivity, respect for diversity and the importance of sharing knowledge within the community. The results show that the AoF fosters a sustainable and relationship-oriented approach to foraging that emphasizes ecological harmony and cultural respect to minimize human impact on ecosystems.

The chapter «When Italy is ‘like a big kitchen where healthy flavours and pleasures are created’: figurative meaning and Made-in-Italy agri-food products» by Sara Corrizzato, invites readers to leave the Anglo-Saxon world to enter the Italian context by exploring how Italian agri-food products use metaphors and similes in promotional material to reinforce the concept of Made-in-Italy worldwide. Adopting both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, Corrizzato analyses content from over 600 Italian food and beverage websites, examining how figurative language emphasises values such as authenticity, family tradition, and artisanal craftsmanship. Through these linguistic strategies, the marketing not only conveys the quality of Italian products but also creates an emotional connection, depicting Italian agri-food products as a symbol of cultural identity and tradition for the international costumers.

Thanks to Fabio Ciambella’s contribution, the analytical lens shifts from websites to social media, as the linguistic analysis delves into the audiovisual translation (AVT) strategies used in translating the Roman dialect and culinary terminology of Chef Max Mariola’s social media video recipes, subtitled in English. Mariola’s choice of using Roman dialect and cultural references aims to highlight Italian authenticity and «Roman-ness», while the English subtitles are useful to share his content with the international interactants. The study investigates how effectively subtitles convey the typical characteristics of Mariola’s dialect and local expressions, concluding that Mariola’s skillful use of Digital English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) helps foster a multilingual community on the web. Ciambella also suggests further quantitative

analysis could improve the understanding of dialect and identity in AVT within digital food communication.

The chapter «Endangered species or traditional delicacy? Discursive perspectives on Po Delta eels», written by Dora Renna, investigates the conflicting representations of the Po Delta eel as both a traditional delicacy and an endangered species. Focussing on the promotional online discourse addressing this specific Italian area (Po Delta), the study combines corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to examine how the eel is linguistically presented across English and Italian online sources. Key themes include environmental conservation, local identity, and cultural heritage. The study concludes that the descriptive passages reflect broader challenges in balancing ecological sustainability with cultural preservation in food tourism. Renna indeed suggests further research into public attitudes toward endangered foods to support sustainable policy decisions in culturally significant regions like the Po Delta.

Francesca Poli, author of the last chapter entitled «The flavours of Verona: a multimodal analysis of food-related tourist promotion language», provides a multimodal analysis of food-related tourist promotion on websites, focusing on how the city of Verona (Italy) is marketed through text and images. Poli investigates how both institutional and non-institutional websites use language and visuals to attract tourists, especially highlighting food tourism. The study combines linguistic analysis with visual content assessment, examining the way(s) in which images complement food-related keywords in promotional texts. In conclusion, the paper advocates for a more strategic and coherent use of multimodal elements in tourism promotion, especially in online contexts where both text and visuals are critical in shaping destination image and tourist expectations.

Together, the chapters in this volume chart new territory in food studies by illuminating the role of food in shaping identities, sustaining traditions, and forging connections across linguistic and cultural boundaries. As readers journey through these studies, they will en-

counter the diversity of perspectives that make food a promising area of inquiry – one that offers interesting insights into the human everyday experience while offering eye-opening reflections on the way in which language and food always intersect with identity and culture.

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‘Elegant, racy and classy’: describing wines through personification in *Wine Spectator*

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1. Introduction¹

While wine consumption across the world may be declining overall, wine itself remains a «cultural icon» (Caballero, 2009, p. 73) for both industry professionals and aficionados. Industry processes of wine making and drinking are coded into a complex and articulated discourse that characterizes specialized texts about grapevine and wine, among which wine reviews and tasting notes are particularly prominent. The role of wine reviews and tasting notes is not inherently promotional, as people may consume these texts without partaking in the product reviewed; however, these genres tend to have a stronger link to customer behaviour than other types of reviews (Hommenberg, 2011, p. 35). Indeed, «[p]rofessionals have an essential role in influencing the sales of wine by means of their reviews and rating» (Bianchi *et al.*, 2022, p. 2). The world of wine tasting is characterized

¹ The authors would like to clarify that, although the research and this resulting paper originates from their continuous collaboration, Sections 1, 2, 4.1, 5, 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4 have been written by Valeria Franceschi and sections 3, 4.2, 5.1.1, 5.2, 5.5 and 6 have been written by Silvia Cavalieri.

by a distinctive terminology employed to describe the qualities of individual wines in their multiple aspects, known as ‘winespeak’, that is not, however, always clear to consumers outside the wine industry. In winespeak evocative metaphors are especially crucial in the communication of a wine’s sensorial experience (taste, mouthfeel, appearance, aroma) to the public (Manca, 2020; Suárez-Toste, 2007). Among these metaphors, an «inescapable schema» (Suárez-Toste, 2007, p. 54) is personification, which is frequently applied to the many facets of the wine tasting experience. This study aims to explore in detail the metaphors comparing wine and its attributes to humans by identifying and categorizing sub-metaphors of A WINE IS A PERSON, which is in turn a sub-metaphor of WINES ARE DISCRETE LIVING ORGANISMS. To this purpose, a corpus of American wine industry magazine *Wine Spectator* articles was created and analyzed from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. The study indeed employs a corpus-assisted approach to extract relevant terminology that may be used in a metaphorical sense, combined with Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT). The first section introduces the specialized language of winespeak, used by industry professionals to describe wines and the multiple facets of their characteristics, highlighting the role metaphorical and synesthetic language plays in wine description. The second section introduces the theoretical tenets of CMT and the method of identification of conceptual metaphors. The process of corpus design and compilation is then detailed, followed by a description of the methodological approach and steps in the analysis. The following sections present and discuss the results of the analysis and suggest further research directions.

2. Winespeak

The articulate terminology and figurative language employed by professionals in wine description is not limited to the wine industry, but it is also found in language used in connection with other agri-food

products such as chocolate, coffee, oil, cheese, and spirits other than wine, although academic interest has focused mainly on the peculiarities of winespeak. In such texts, «analytical smell- and taste-centric evaluations» are employed, alongside nuanced descriptors for smell and flavour (Wang *et al.*, 2024) and metaphors that may not be easily understood by laypeople looking for their next purchase. Wine description indeed involves more than the mere sense of taste: vision, smell, taste, and feel (texture) all play a role in the wine tasting experience, and an articulate vocabulary has developed to build a detailed imagery of wines and vintages based on the sensory perceptions of wine tasting professionals (Hommenberg & Don, 2015, p. 163). Expertise in applying this vocabulary to the product requires extensive training, however: despite the existence of dedicated glossaries, dictionaries, ‘aroma wheels’ (cf. Noble *et al.*, 1984), institutions, standardized courses and certifications, the attribution of descriptors has been shown to be inconsistent and often perceived as hard to interpret and not useful by non-experts (cf. e.g., Bianchi *et al.*, 2022; Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2010; Isani, 2017; Lehrer, 2009; Quandt, 2007; Shesgreen, 2003), who may interpret terms differently than intended by wine tasting professionals (e.g., Bianchi *et al.*, 2021). There is indeed an aura of ‘mystique’ (Hommenberg & Don, 2015, p. 163) surrounding winespeak, and studies have shown that expertise is a discriminating factor in the ability to recognize wine qualities, remembering wines they have already experienced, and their proficiency in winespeak (Bianchi *et al.*, 2022, p. 2).

Among the recurring features of winespeak we can ascribe a tendency to describe and evaluate wine by means of opposite terms (e.g., ‘young-old’; ‘harsh-smooth’) or on scales with two polar opposites at the extremes (e.g., the dichotomy ‘bright-cloudy’ for the dimension of clarity). This may be applied to all sensory dimensions of wine description bar smell, in which dichotomic labels consist of a specific feature and its simple negation (e.g., ‘fruity-not fruity’) (Bianchi *et al.*, 2022, p. 2).

Winespeak is also characterised by the use of terms borrowed from semantic fields unrelated to the senses at play, such as social class (e.g.,

«great distinction and breed»), gender (e.g., «the manliest wine»), and fruits and vegetables (e.g., «a garden of southern Italian flavours, from sun-baked black plums and fresh, fuzzy figs to almonds, fennel and cherries») (Shesgreen, 2003). Often the terminology employed has a metaphorical or synesthetic quality (Caballero, 2009; Isani, 2017). This is due to a degree to a scarcity of words in the English language to describe smell and flavour (Paradis & Eeg-Olofsson, 2013, p. 1), as well as to the oversimplification of the wine tasting experience, which grossly subsumes under the umbrella term ‘taste’ a range of sensory stimuli relating to «temperature [...] volume, weight, mouthfeel, and length» (Suárez-Toste, 2007, p. 54; cf. also Creed, 2013; Isani, 2017, p. 72). Studies have indeed shown that «crossmodal correspondences», that is, associations between different senses can be consistent and exist within the domain of wine tasting (Wang *et al.*, 2019; cf. also Paradis & Hommenberg, 2016), as individual senses may not be isolated in a wine tasting experience: «[t]he complex metaphoric construct of wine descriptors derives from the wine writer’s dilemma of having to transform the ephemeral sensorial perceptions of sight, smell, taste and touch into words» (Isani, 2017, p. 5). This results in the frequent use of synesthetic metaphors whereby the qualities of a specific sensory aspect of wine are described through another. Studies on metaphor and synesthesia in wine discourse have allowed insight into the underlying metaphorical processes in winespeak: figurative language is widely employed, either to refer to wine as a product, but also in the description of its specific aspects (e.g., tannins in red wine) (Suárez-Toste, 2007). A prominent study by Caballero and Suárez-Toste (2010) has identified three main common metaphoric frames following Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory: WINE AS LIVING ORGANISMS (including humans); WINE AS THREE-DIMENSIONAL ARTEFACTS; WINE AS MANUFACTURED ENTITIES (especially textiles). Suárez-Toste (2007) claims that in the wide range of metaphors employed to describe wines, personification (WINE IS A PERSON) is ubiquitous, however «[t]he diversity of terms used to express (attributed) personality

traits of wine is impossible to predict by the layman, and much of the farfetchedness of the genre lies precisely here» (p. 59). Personification is a very common metaphor that may be found across promotional genres; it draws on anthropomorphism, which may be defined as a cognitive bias that leads people to project human characteristics on objects and which facilitates emotional responses (Delbaere *et al.*, 2011, p. 121). Personification is «one of the most common and instinctive metaphorical expressions because the shared and basic experience of humanness provides an opportunity to express many different ideas by comparing things to living entities» (Delbaere *et al.*, 2011, p. 122). Human characteristics mapped onto products call on multiple aspects of human life (physical, psychological and social), as will be seen. The next section will clarify how personification is processed metaphorically, adopting a cognitive approach well-established in winespeak literature, i.e., Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) CMT framework.

3. Conceptual Metaphor Theory: an overview

The cognitive perspective on metaphor adopted here was initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who are recognised as the pioneers of CMT. Though there have been some significant criticisms of the theory (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1986), and there are differing opinions regarding its most novel conclusions, cognitive linguists generally agree on its tenets. These include the following: as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) noted, language in general and metaphorical meaning in particular arise from our sensory experience of the outside world. Metaphor is therefore not only a poetic and literary device; rather, it is an essential tool of our cognition – one that we need to make sense of and discuss the reality within and around us.

According to CMT, language metaphors – also known as linguistic metaphors – realize or instantiate metaphors in cognition, which are known as conceptual metaphors (hence the theory’s name). Sentences like «[o]ur relationship has hit a *dead-end street*», «We may have to *go our*

separate ways», and «[o]ur relationship is *off the track*», for example, make us *think of* relationships as a journey (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 189).

A metaphor conveys certain aspects of one domain of experience – the source domain (e.g., JOURNEY) – to another, the target domain (e.g., RELATIONSHIP). Compared to target domains, which are typically much more poorly defined, more abstract, and intersubjectively inaccessible or personal, source domains are typically more tangible or perceptible, intersubjectively accessible, and image rich (Winter, 2019). Conventionally, the relationship between a source domain and a target domain is expressed as follows: TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN (e.g., RELATIONSHIP IS JOURNEY). While source and target domains and the mappings that connect them are (possibly more realistically) regarded as «a construct of the researcher, not necessarily of the participants» (Cameron *et al.*, 2010, p. 128), a more cautious interpretation, such as the Discourse Dynamics Framework (DDF) (Cameron *et al.*, 2010; Cameron, 2010), holds that these formulae are real and exist in the minds of the speakers. In DDF, the terms ‘vehicle’ and ‘topic’, which were initially employed by Richards (1965, p. 65) to denote the meaning-bearing word and the entity meant, respectively, are used to refer to metaphorical words in an utterance. In DDF, these are written in italicised small caps, i.e., *RELATIONSHIP* and *JOURNEY*, to differentiate them from the source and target domains, respectively.

Multiple interpretations are possible for target domains (Semino *et al.*, 2018). Analogue to how a frame works with an image bigger than the frame itself, a metaphor highlights some characteristics of a target domain while hiding others. In a comparable manner, Entman defined ‘to frame’ as «choosing some aspects of a perceived reality and emphasising them in a communicating text, in order to promote a specific problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral assessment, and/or recommended course of action for the item described» (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Thus, it is widely believed that metaphor frames ideas, making it difficult for people to think of something in a different way while encouraging them to think of it in one (Semino, 2020, p. 51).

In our study, we focused on the metaphors related to wine, specifically on the metaphor wine is a person, thus through the lens of anthropomorphism (also referred to personification) of wine, where the target domain is wine, whereas the source domain is living entities, or more specifically humans. As highlighted by Creed and McIlven (2019), personification in wine discourse is used to «convey meaning and facilitate understanding of wine components and characteristics» (p. 6).

4. Data collection and methodology

4.1 Corpus collection

The data for this study was collected from the online version of the influential American industry magazine *Wine Spectator*² (henceforth WS). One article included in the *features* section of the magazine was selected for each issue published between 1994 and 2022, for a total of 391 texts. Criteria for the selection of the articles dictated that articles had to focus on wine: articles on WS that focused on travel, restaurants, or other agri-food products (e.g., coffee, oil) were not included in the corpus in order to avoid skewing data with terminology unrelated to winespeak. No articles were included from issues that did not have a «feature» section or any articles dedicated to wine within that section. Articles longer than 5,000 words were not included to maintain balance in text length and to avoid outliers, with the exception of an article that went over the limit only due to a list of wine labels and prices. The articles’ content is primarily about vintners and wines rather than individual labels; while tasting notes may be embedded in the articles, especially those concerned with wine reviews and annual ranking lists, articles in the «tasting notes» section of the magazine were not selected. This was a deliberate choice as many studies investigating winespeak focus on wine tasting notes (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2010;

² <https://www.winespectator.com> Last accessed 24.04.2024

Caballero *et al.*, 2019; Manca, 2020; *inter alia*). The total wordcount of the corpus equals 879136 words.

4.2 Methodology

Drawing on Corpus Linguistics and CMT, the study adopted a mixed-method approach and data were investigated drawing on corpus-assisted discourse analysis. In the first phase of the study, the corpus tool SketchEngine (Kilgarrieff *et al.*, 2014) was used to extract the Wordlists of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. We chose to take into consideration only items with a frequency scoring higher than 50 occurrences in the corpus to make output analysis manageable. Of the resulting output, we further filtered words to exclude extremely general verbs such as «be», «have», «do», «make» or items that, applied to wine, would not result in personification.

As a second step, the selected items were scrutinized to pinpoint those nouns, verbs, and adjectives referring to the metaphorical pattern WINE IS A PERSON (i.e., anthropomorphism, or personification). To this aim, the analysis of the concordance lines of the extracted terms was performed to ascertain their metaphorical use in the context and to see how they could be related to various aspects of humanity such as life stages, appearance, personality, and others.

Each selected item was then searched in the Oxford English Dictionary³ (OED), which provided a reference for identifying any sub-metaphors in the domain wine as a person. This process enabled us to group the predominant anthropomorphic uses of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives into categories for the subsequent qualitative analysis of how such conceptual metaphors are used as part of wine discourse. The groups identified are the following: 1) WINE HAS A BODY; 2) WINE HAS PERSONALITY TRAITS; 3) WINE PERFORMS ACTIONS; 4) WINE HAS A LIFE CYCLE; 5) WINE HAS RELATIONSHIPS.

³ <https://www.oed.com/?tl=true>. Last accessed 22.04.2024

Results of our analysis will be presented in the following section, starting with the overview of the nouns, verbs and adjectives contributing to the anthropomorphising of wine in the corpus and their division into the sub-metaphor categories highlighted above. Then, examples will be discussed to show their contextual use. In order to better highlight the pervasiveness of personification in the sample, all items realizing the metaphor in its multiple facets will be marked in bold in the examples, even if not included in the table.

5. Results and discussion

The analysis of the concordance lines of the selected terms resulted in the identification of instances of wine personification in the corpus. Considering the WINE IS A PERSON conceptual metaphor as an umbrella metaphor, we further categorized metaphorical uses in sub-metaphors involving physical, psychological, and social aspects of human life. Table 1 below shows the extracted terms after concordance analysis, grouped according to the conceptual metaphor they are framed within. The terms reported in the table are not exhaustive, as only terms with a minimum frequency of 50 were included in the analysis, but they help demonstrate the pervasiveness of wine personification in a consolidated industry publication. However, concordance analysis showed that the vocabulary employed in wine personification was much wider, as it will be seen in corpus examples.

Wine has a body and wine has aesthetic attributes		Wine has personality traits		Wine performs actions		Wine has a life cycle		Wine has relationships	
Wine has a body									
Backbone	79	Appealing	170	Boast	40	Age/ ageing	233	Family	2
Full Body	55	Assertive	24	Come	163	Die	3	Marry	16

Fleshy	43	Austere	66	Display	42	Grow	6		
Full-bodied	531	Character	680	Domi- nate	14	Life/ lives	9		
Medium body	40	Charming	74	Drink	14	Mature (vb.)	89		
Medium to full body	11	Classy	53	Express	15	Mature (adj.)	34		
Medium- to full-bodied	39	Easygoing	17	Gain	30	Old	88		
Medium- bodied	170	Elegance	151	Go	23	Young	240		
Muscular	59	Elegant	539	Improve	107	Youthful	35		
Nose	78	Energy	17	Lose	23				
Opulent	98	Exciting	134	Need	52				
Palate	107	Expressive	88	Offer	383				
Supple	222	Fine	139	Show	584				
Weak	15	Focused	92	Suffer	8				
Wine has aes- thetic attributes		Generous	237						
Attractive	64	Grace	55						
Beautiful	67	Graceful	72						
Gorgeous	74	Lively	416						
Pretty	209	Lovely	212						
Smooth	331	Seductive	110						
Velvety	173	Serious	58						
		Tough	58						
		Warm	95						
		Wild	9						
2465		3566		1498		737		18	

Table 1. Categorization of items by conceptual metaphor.

It should also be noted that even though wine personification is ubiquitous to wine description, the examples commented below may also include other conceptual metaphors not object of scrutiny in this paper. The coexistence of different metaphorical schemas has been attested in the literature: indeed, «two or more metaphorical schemas are not mutually exclusive, to the point that it is common to see several of them coexisting peacefully» (Suárez-Toste, 2007, p. 56).

5.1 Wine has a body

The second most common sub-metaphor in the sample, with 2465 instances, is realized through 14 adjectives and 6 nouns and pertains to anatomy and aesthetic traits pertaining to appearance. In winespeak «the combination – as perceived in the mouth – of alcohol, acids and tannin in a red wine is commonly labelled as its body» (Suárez-Toste, 2007, p. 58): indeed, expressions like medium-bodied and full-bodied are amongst the most frequently used in the sample, with full-bodied employed 531 times. Full (55) and medium (40) are also frequently found, alongside other anatomical terms used to describe the structure of wines, as may be seen in the examples below:

1. Beneath their **velvety** thickness is a **firm, muscular backbone**—a sign that these wines have the stuffing and structure to **age for decades**. (15 Nov. 2000)

In the first half of the example the backbone of the wine, that is, the «structure of a wine, referring to balanced acidity, alcohol and, in red wines, tannin»⁴, is defined as *firm* and *muscular*, suggesting a structured wine. The metaphor adds an extra layer of meaning by using the adjective *velvety* to evaluate the mouthfeel: this term fits well within an

⁴ *Backbone*, from Wine Spectator’s Glossary. <https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/backbone> Last accessed 09.05.2024.

anatomic perspective, as *velvety* may be used to describe the skin covering the muscles of the backbone. In addition, it may also fit a WINE AS MANUFACTURED ENTITIES metaphor, with *velvety* representing the tactile feel of a textile. The second part of the sentence continues the personification metaphor, this time ascribable to WINE HAS A LIFE CYCLE. Wines are indeed often described as going through life like living organisms and people, changing as they age. While a person's appearance and temperament may change, it is a wine's flavour, aroma and mouthfeel that evolve and sometimes improve with time.

2. Lemon meringue, honeysuckle, hazelnut, fig, smoke and apricot, turning **fat** and **fleshy**, with a long, rich aftertaste. (31 Jul. 2004).

In example 2, the wine is again described in anatomic terms, with *fat* indicating a full-bodied wine with high alcohol content⁵, and *fleshy* indicating the mouthfeel of biting into a fleshy piece of fruit⁶. The description also builds on synesthesia, another frequent figurative language strategy found in winespeak, by assigning a taste dimension to smoke.

3. **Beautiful, sparkling with life. Medium- to full-bodied, silky yet firm**, it plays on contrasts and leaves you enraptured. (31 May 1997).

Example 3 also combines the anatomic metaphor, outlining the wine's attractiveness, the solidity of its body and the synesthetic mapping of the tactile feel of its skin onto its mouthfeel, with a more psychological type of personification, evaluating the wine's character. We may notice

⁵ *Fat*, from Wine Spectator's Glossary. <https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/fat> Last accessed 09.05.2024.

⁶ *Fleshy*, from Wine Spectator's Glossary. <https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/fleshy> Last accessed 09.05.2024.

in this example that in both emanations of the personification metaphor, the terminology used may be ascribed to a more feminine character, as if a young, beautiful woman was being described rather than a consumable product. This sub-metaphor may be realized through the metonymical use of body parts to express aspects of a wine’s characteristics. In the sample under investigation, we find the terms *nose* and *palate*, which in winespeak refer respectively to «[t]he character of a wine as determined by the olfactory sense»⁷ and «[t]he flavour or taste of a wine; also referred to as different sections of taste in the mouth»⁸.

4. **Pretty nose** of orange peels, lilacs and berries. (31 Dec. 2000)

5. Racy, firm tannins, **full body**, long **palate**. (15 May 1997)

5.1.1 Wine has aesthetic attributes

This sub-metaphor may be ascribed to the umbrella metaphor of WINE HAS A BODY, as the items in this category provide an evaluation that is based on the aesthetic assessment of a human body. A wine may therefore be described as *attractive* (64), *gorgeous* (74), or *pretty* (209), as if possessing a body that may catch people’s eyes. In example 6, the red wine is depicted as *attractive* (64) and capable of evoking passion, suggesting a magnetic quality that draws one in emotionally. The wine has the intrinsic quality of attractiveness, and its charm seems capable of igniting passion in those who appreciate it.

6. But what makes [...] so **attractive** is that it brings out one’s passion. (29 Feb. 1996).

⁷ *Nose*, from Wine Spectator’s Glossary. <https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/nose> Last accessed 30.09.2024.

⁸ *Palate*, from Wine Spectator’s Glossary. <https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/palate> Last accessed 30.09.2024.

Similarly, the pink wine is described in example 7 as *elegant* and *pretty*, attributing qualities typically associated with beauty and refinement to the wine.

7. I love pink [...] and always return to [...], as it is so, so delicious, **elegant** and **pretty**. (30 Nov. 2019)

As may be seen from Table 1, this sub-metaphor is realized exclusively through adjectives. The attribution of aesthetic features to wines helps enrich the experience of tasting beyond mere sensory pleasure.

5.2 Wine has personality traits

This sub-metaphor is realized through a wide range of lexical items, mainly adjectives (3360), describing wine as *having a character* that is multifaceted according to the different kind of wine tasted. It is also the most common type of personification identified in the sample, with 3566 instances. The following examples beautifully illustrate the art of personifying wine, imbuing it with human-like qualities that evoke vivid sensory experiences beyond taste.

8. [...] This **exuberant**, **full-bodied** wine **jumps** out of the glass, **generous** with its exotic fruit **character** and full tannins, then holds on for a long, smooth finish. (15 May 1997)

In the case of the wine described in example 8, it is depicted as exuberant and generous, «jumping out of the glass» with its character. This personification enhances the sensory perception, making the wine feel alive and dynamic. Moreover, the metaphorical use of adjectives like *generous* and the expression «holding on for a long, smooth finish» further anthropomorphizes the wine, implying a sense of generosity and resilience. Similarly, in example 9, the description of the white wine portrays it as *fresh*, *lively*, and *expressive*, almost as if it possesses its own personality, adding depth to the wine's character.

9. Peach and quince flavours are backed by saline minerality in this fresh, **lively** and **expressive** white. (31 Dec. 2018)

Moreover, white wines are also often associated with the idea of being *refined* and *classy* thus evoking an elegant and sophisticated personality as shown in example 10.

10. **Refined** and **classy**, ripe and **delicate** (31 Aug. 1996)

Finally, the comparison of two wines in example 11 below suggests distinct personalities – the former is «remarkably silky and graceful», while the latter is described as having «brambly energy», showcasing how different winemaking styles can imbue wines with unique humanized traits.

11. [...] was remarkably **silky** and **graceful**, while [...] still had a bit more brambly **energy**, demonstrating how two wines of equal quality can reflect markedly different winemaking styles. (28 Feb. 2019)

Finally, example 12 personifies the wine as *charming*, and *seductive*, with «sweet, silky tannins», evoking an image of sophistication and allure. Those adjectives are usually reserved to white and rosé wines and may recall feminine associations, attributing qualities of elegance traditionally related to femininity. Moreover, phrases like «sweet, silky tannins» further enhance the feminine imagery often given to white and rosé wines, retrieving the ideas of softness and smoothness, akin to the gentle touch of silk against the skin.

12. Ripe, vibrant, **charming** and **seductive**; sweet, silky tannins (31 May 1997)

These personifications deepen the descriptions, encouraging readers to connect with the wines on an emotional level and grasp the essence of their charm. Altogether, they add richness, inviting the audience into a more intimate experience with each wine. This touch of anthropomorphism brings the wines to life, making them feel vivid and relatable.

5.3 Wine performs actions

This sub-metaphor is more elusive than the others identified in the sample. As many verbs are traditionally used for both humans and inanimate objects, it was not always easy to determine whether individual verb uses may be ascribed to a metaphorical use. In the end, 14 verbs out of those that appeared over 50 times in the corpus were identified, for a total of 1498 instances. Not all extracted verbs realized this sub-metaphor: many frequent verbs in the corpus did not refer to wines at all or they referred to other aspects of winemaking. Others, such as *to suffer*, were employed occasionally to personify wine, but preeminently referred to vines, which are a living organism (e.g., «The Pinot vineyards **suffered** from uneven ripeness and rot» [31 Oct. 2008]).

The most common human verbs mapped onto wines is *show* (584). *Show*, in particular, appears in two different meanings in the sample. The most common meaning may not be strictly a personification, as the verb *show* in its definition of «to display (a quality, condition, feeling, etc.) by one's actions or behaviour; to give proof of possessing or being affected by; to demonstrate, evince». (OED, *show*, v., IV.23.a.ii) found with an object describing the quality may be applied to things other than humans; however, the object of the verb may be followed by a human characteristic, such as in the example below:

13. But in general, the soft 1997 whites didn't **show** the laser-sharp focus of the '96 whites. (15 Dec. 1999)

The second meaning of *show* refers specifically to wine, namely «to come across *well*, *better*, etc.; to make a good impression when tasted» (OED, *show*, v., IV.29.b).

14. Since last year’s report, we’ve tasted more than 150 new releases, and many wines that **showed well** in our tastings cost less than \$10 per bottle. (31 Aug 1997)

Wines are also described as exhibiting their qualities to drinkers through verbs such as *offer* (383), *express* (15), and *display* (42):

15. This Zin is **supple** and **sleek**, **offering** polished, multilayered fruit. (31 Dec. 2020)
16. The wines **express** power with refinement. (15 Oct. 2014)
17. Others lack harmony, **displaying** bitter flavors and astringent textures. (31 Aug. 2001)

In the next examples, a wine is described as having the ability to improve, as if through effort of its own rather than of the winemakers (18-19), to the point of dominating other wines (20).

18. In the past handful of vintages, the wine has **improved** progressively, culminating in the classic-scoring 2018 vintage (31 Oct 2022)
19. [...] **Needs** some time to **gain** finesse (31 May 1997)
20. Super Tuscan reds such as [...] **dominate** the premium wine scene in Tuscany this year, as usual. (15 Nov 2001)

Wines therefore appear to acquire agency and can perform deliberate actions, also suggesting change and evolution over time. The capability

for evolution of wine over time as through an effort of its own is linked to the next sub-metaphor, which maps a human life cycle onto wine.

5.4 Wine has a life cycle

As could already be seen in some of the previous examples, «wine is a mutable substance» (Suárez-Toste, 2007, p. 57) that changes its qualities and may improve over time. This schema is often found alongside other aspects of personification, as exemplified in the excerpt below:

21. In comparison, the [wine label name]⁹ are more overt in **character**, yet they have the **muscle** and **class** for a **long, long life** (30 Mar. 1999)

Here, the wines are described as having the potential for a long life, but the reason for their longevity appears to reside in other human characteristics, both temperamental – «overt in character» / *class* – and physical – *muscle*.

22. Northeast Italy's Pinot Grigio, which tends to be **youthful** and light and is definitely **not for aging** (15 May 1998)

23. Deep gold in color and beautifully **mature** (31 Dec. 1998)

In examples 22 and 23, the life cycle metaphor partly overlaps with the personality metaphor, as the definition of wines as youthful and mature both imply a change in the characteristics of wine over time as well as entail assumptions on their characters based on their level of maturity.

⁹ Winery and wine label names have been omitted from the examples.

5.5 Wine has relationships

The final category of sub-metaphor has fewer realizations in the corpus. However, the following examples illustrate the personification of wine through the lens of relationships, portraying wine as having connections and associations akin to those found within families.

Example 24, for instance, describes the white wine under examination as entailing a marriage with its flavours and notes thus implying a harmonious relationship between different elements to create the idea of a cohesive whole.

24. This **generous** white **marries** ripe apple and pear flavours with vanilla and toasty oak notes in a full-bodied, slightly blowy structure. (30 June 2003)

Example 25, on the other hand, likens the *vini da tavola* described in the article to members of an extended family, attributing familial connections to those wines. This personification evokes a sense of lineage and shared identity among these wines, suggesting a familial bond rooted in tradition and heritage.

25. Three are [...] *vino da tavolas* from **three members of an extended family**: [...]. (31 Oct 1996)

Finally, in example 26 rosé is personified with the relationship *family of wines* emphasizing the diverse range of styles and expressions within the category. By framing rosé in terms of familial relationships, the statement encourages a shift in perspective, advocating for a deeper appreciation and understanding of the nuanced characteristics that distinguish different rosé wines.

26. The problem is, we continue to treat rosé not as a **family** of wines, but as one wine. (31 July 2021)

Overall, these examples showcase how personification can enrich our understanding of wine by highlighting its connections and associations with other elements, whether they be flavour components, wine varieties, or broader categories.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the metaphorical portrayal of wine as a person is pervasive in the corpus examined, in line with the previous literature on the topic. Wine personification appears to cover multiple aspects of human life, from physical and temperamental characteristics to social relationships and different stages of life. However, the sub-metaphors identified are not equally frequent in wine descriptions: the most common terms mapped onto wine belong predominantly to personality and body descriptions, with family relations and agentivity of actions as the rarest type of personalization in our sample. It should be noted, however, that personification is not a prerogative of winespeak: mapping human characteristics on to objects is a common practice due to the cognitive bias of anthropocentrism, that is, «seeing the human in non-human forms» (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007, p. 468). It is therefore not uncommon to see objects personified in promotional genres such as advertising, where products, services, and even tourism destinations are overtly or subtly personified in order to build brand personality or foster an emotional connection on the consumers' part (e.g., Delbaere *et al.*, 2011; Reavey *et al.*, 2018; Letheren *et al.*, 2017).

Indeed, even though wine reviews do not have an explicit advertising function, they may still affect consumer behaviour. Evaluative language with underlying promotional tones is therefore found in winespeak within a personification framework that describes wines as performing actions for the benefit of the consumer – show, offer, display, express – or that highlight its quality – dominate, gain, boast – and that describe quality wines in appealing terms, mapping them onto aesthetically appealing bodies or onto pleasing personality traits. Moreover, while some terms may not be frequently used or even direct-

ly personify wine, they often evoke anthropomorphic interpretations, adding layers of complexity to the descriptions. For instance, terms like *rustic* imply a sense of personality or character attributed to the wine. While focusing on the description of wines themselves, the analysis also revealed that personifications appear to be frequent in other aspects of winemaking as well as specific elements of a wine. Vines, varietals, vintages are also often described in anthropomorphic terms, and so are wine constituents such as tannins, flavours, notes, the finish (e.g., «stunning tannins», «graceful finish», «lively plum flavours»).

Concordance analysis for this study also appears to have unveiled two tendencies that, while outside the scope of this study, may be worth testing in future research on winespeak. As the corpus covers 30 years' worth of wine descriptions, it may be interesting to investigate the shift in personification patterns over the years, in order to determine which trends may have disappeared or declined over time. Additionally, concordance analysis appears to suggest that specific attributes are more frequently associated to certain types of wine, ascribing feminine traits to white and rosé wines and masculine traits to reds. This observation opens avenues for continued research to explore the underlying reasons and implications of such gendered associations in wine descriptions. Overall, understanding the metaphorical language used in describing wine not only enriches our appreciation of the beverage but also sheds light on broader cultural and linguistic phenomena.

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«You just healed my hand with an *arepa con queso*».

**The figurative power of L3 food terms
in shaping ethnically diverse identities
in American multilingual animated films
and their Italian dubbed version**

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1. Introduction

In today's world, increasingly marked by the coexistence of diverse cultures and languages, giving visibility to linguacultural difference has become a priority also in the cinematic field, extensively exploring multiethnic/multilingual contexts of interaction and often casting a special light on non-mainstream societies considered as 'worlds apart' for their distinctive historical, sociocultural, religious, and linguistic background. In particular, since the 1990s, ethnolinguistic *otherness* has assumed a prominent position in a series of animated films offering deep sociolinguistic insights into minority cultures and populations that had rarely been given voice in animation before (e.g., Asian, African, Mexican, Colombian, Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Nordic, Russian, French, to cite just a few), and whose ethnocultural richness is effectively displayed on the screen by their native languages (defined, from a translational perspective, as L3s, i.e., languages different from both the language of the original film and the language of a dubbed version; cf. Corrius & Zabalbeascoa, 2011, 2019) used to refer to their culture-bound specificities, that play an increasingly crucial role in

audiovisual products as key means of intercultural mediation (Guillot & Pavesi, 2019). Among these, traditional ethnic food and drinks are assigned crucial functions as linguistic markers of the characters' identity as they are recurrently mentioned with their original names, acting as 'linguistic charms' in making the audiences 'taste' the authentic 'flavours' of the minority culture at stake. What is interesting to notice, in these films, is that L3 food references are included both in the verbal-acoustic code, i.e., dialogues and songs' lyrics, and in the verbal-visual code, i.e., written visual elements (Delabastita, 1989; Chaume, 2020, 2004), the two semiotic codes mostly characterizing the realm of animation in conveying information and proving to be likewise crucial in representing the linguacultural distinctiveness of the ethnically diverse populations multilingual films revolve around.

Starting from these observations and exploring the interlinking concepts of food, language, cultural identity and translation, this study sets out to investigate the main sociolinguistic functions that L3 ethnic food terms serve as symbolic actors in defining the characters' Otherness in both the original version and the Italian dubbed version of thirty-two American multilingual animated films, focusing on non-dominant cultures and released between 1991 and 2023.

The thirty-two American animated films making up our corpus are the following ones: *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991); *Aladdin* (Clements & Musker, 1992); *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994); *Pocahontas* (Goldberg & Gabriel, 1995); *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Trousdale & Wise, 1996); *Aladdin and the King of Thieves* (Stones, 1996); *Beauty and the Beast. The Enchanted Christmas* (Knight, 1997); *Anastasia* (Bluth & Goldman, 1998); *Mulan* (Bancroft & Cook, 1998); *The Emperor's New Groove* (Dindal, 2000); *Lilo & Stitch* (Sanders & De Blois, 2002); *The Hunchback of Notre Dame II* (Raymond, 2002); *Brother Bear* (Walker & Blaise, 2003); *Ratatouille* (Bird, 2007); *The Princess and the Frog* (Musker & Clements, 2009); *Puss in Boots* (Miller, 2011); *Rio* (Saldanha, 2011); *Brave* (Andrews & Chapman, 2012); *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* (Darnell, McGrath & Ver-

non, 2012); *Frozen* (Buck & Lee, 2013); *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014); *Moana* (Clements & Musker, 2016); *Ferdinand* (Saldanha, 2017); *Coco* (Unkrich & Molina, 2017); *Klaus* (Pablos, 2019); *Frozen 2* (Buck & Lee, 2019); *Spies in Disguise* (Bruno & Quane, 2019); *Raya and the Last Dragon* (Lopez Estrada & Hall, 2021); *Encanto* (Howard & Bush, 2021); *Turning Red* (Shi, 2022), *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish* (Crawford, 2022); *Wish* (Buck & Veerasunthorn, 2023).

The films under study have been selected according to specific criteria: they use English as the base language for communication but they are set in countries where English is not the official language and the characters extensively speak their mother tongue throughout the dialogues; they are provided with a significant degree of sociocultural relevance in their bringing ethnic food and local products to the fore as powerful markers of the characters' ethnic belonging; they were released within a specific time span, i.e., 1991-2023, something that allows to verify whether, in the last three decades, possible changes have occurred as far as the presence of food as a key linguacultural identifier in multilingual, multicultural animated films is concerned.

The empiric contrastive investigation is based on a wide selection of excerpts from the films' post-production scripts, entailing 236 instances of L3 terms relevant to food and its semantic field (165 items in dialogues, 23 items in songs' lyrics, 47 items in written visual elements). Each excerpt is presented in tables including: the name of the character speaking (column 1), the orthographic transcription of the original dialogue (column 2), the transcription of the dubbed Italian dialogue (column 3), the literal back translation of the L2 in the dubbed Italian dialogue (column 4). Any word/phrase/sentence in the L3 is indicated in italics, and information relevant to paralinguistic behaviour associated with a specific speaker are annotated in round brackets.

The films' scripts will be analyzed, contrastively and diachronically, focusing on the scenes where the characters' lives are 'seasoned' with L3 references to traditional ethnic food, with the main aims to: illustrate how L3 food terms in the films' original version act as key signifiers in

highlighting the ethnic characters' self and sociocultural dimension; verify to what extent the L3 food names are either retained unaltered or manipulated in dubbing in the Italian dubbed version, thus pointing out what can be achieved by audiovisual translation in terms of intercultural/interlingual transmission when autochthonous cultures and their culinary traditions are represented in a cinematographic genre rich with linguistic, semiotic, pragmatic and didactic specificities as that of animated films.

2. Multilingual animation and the linguistic power of ethnic food

Animated films, long celebrated for their ability to enthrall viewers with imaginative storytelling, extraordinary images, and captivating characters, are also traditionally meant to be powerful vehicles of authentic representations of the world, given the important educational role they play (especially) for children, intended as their primary audience (Minutella, 2021; Monti, 2023). This has led important American animation production companies such as Walt Disney Pictures, Pixar Animation Studios, DreamWorks Animation (among others) to focus their attention on non-mainstream cultures, often far apart in space and time and deep-rooted in their culture-bound traditions, with the main aim of emphasizing Otherness, promoting inclusion and developing intercultural understandings, thus allowing (not only) children to discover new worlds and learn through them cultural norms different from their own (González-Vera, 2015).

One of the main cultural identifiers these films celebrate to thoroughly represent their characters' ethnocultural *diversity* is ethnic food. Generally speaking, food is a rich and complex cultural domain (Szatrowski, 2014; Faber, Claramonte & Carmen-África, 2017; Riley & Paugh, 2018) that identifies people geographically in specific cultural spaces (Padolsky, 2005), and that is inextricably intertwined with language (Gerhardt, 2013): as a fact, in all societies and cultures

worldwide, food terminology is imbued with a wide array of meanings conveying specific historical, ethnographic and social patterns.

This is clearly to be observed in the animated films under study where the minority cultures' foodways not only play the role of identity builders but also crucially contribute to establishing specific in-group relationships: indeed, through cooking, eating as well as through simply mentioning their traditional dishes in their discourse practices, the characters constantly perform rituals of sociocultural belonging. The key thread interlinking these films and highlighting the importance they recurrently assign to food is that ethnic culinary specialties, always visually represented as gluttonous and mouthwatering in their precise shapes and vivid colours, are rendered even more inviting from the linguistic point of view by their being referred to, mainly in instances of intrasentential code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013), with their original L3 names: these are used as winks both to set in motion «thoughts on national identity» (Fellner, 2013, p. 241) and to further plunge the audience into the films' non-dominant cultural systems, thus also adding depth and authenticity to the cinematic locations and fulfilling different narrative and pragmatic functions as far as setting definition, plot construction and characters' portrayal are concerned.

What is worthwhile underlining is that they are included in two of the semiotic codes most crucially contributing to the architecture of most audiovisual products (Delabastita, 1989), and of animated films in particular, i.e., the verbal-acoustic (e.g., monologues, dialogues, songs), and the verbal-visual (e.g., letters or signs), the latter being also defined as a fictional linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), outlining the presence and visibility of language in particular scenic environments made up of written elements convenient to tell the audience something more about the sociocultural context represented on the screen.

As language shapes the perception, understanding and tasting of food in all cultural systems (Temmerman & Dubois, 2017), the on-screen visibility of L3 cultural/culinary references as identity icons of

the films' ethnically diverse characters should be preserved also when the films are translated to be distributed abroad. Conveying the ethnocultural associations that L3 food references, and L3 culture-bound realistic references (Ranzato, 2010, 2016) in general, entail though results to be challenging for audiovisual translators (Castro Paniagua, 2000; González-Vera, 2015; de los Reyes Lozano, 2017), who often face a series of translational hurdles due to the sociocultural asymmetries between two different linguacultural communities and therefore need to identify a series of translation, or non-translation, strategies liable to be adopted to adequately convey L3 cultural specifics in the target language cultural system (Newmark, 1988, 2010; Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007; Chaume, 2012; Ranzato, 2010, 2016; Guillot, 2016; Ranzato & Zanotti, 2018, 2019; Guillot & Pavesi, 2019; Božovic, 2019; Corrius, Espasa & Zabalbeascoa, 2022). Starting from this, our contrastive analysis of the films' original version and of their Italian dubbed version will place the translation techniques adopted for L3 food terms in the films' Italian dubbed version on a translational scale that entails, on the one hand, the faithful rendering of the films' original linguistic-culinary flavours through L3s retention, and, on the other hand, their loss through L3s neutralization and domestication; this will also highlight an in-between foreignizing procedure consisting in the addition, in the Italian dubbed version only, of L3 food terms not included in the original version (see subsections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4), in the attempt to assign also to the target text peculiar exotic ethnolinguistic scents.

3. Preserving the tastes of culinary Otherness in the Italian cinematic dishes

From a translational perspective, the first important aspect our comparative study highlights is that most occurrences of the original L3 culinary references are left unaltered in the films' Italian dubbed version, both in the verbal-acoustic code and in the verbal-visual code, fol-

lowing the non-translation strategy variously defined by many scholars as retention (Pedersen, 2005), that preserves the different pragmatic and narrative roles L3 food terms play in the original versions and safeguards the ethnolinguistic and culinary flavours of the minority cultures represented on the screen.

3.1 «We have a very nice *Foie Gras*».

L3 food terms flavouring the scenes

One of the key functions fulfilled by L3 food terms in most films under study is to render the ethnically diverse cinematic location immediately recognizable and appealing to the audience, thus also guaranteeing authenticity in the representation of the food customs distinctive of the daily life of the minorities at stake. This is to be observed, for instance, in *Coco*, set in Mexico and revolving around the Mexican celebration of *Día de los Muertos*, where Mexican food is recurrently put at centre stage as a crucial symbol of historical, social, and family traditions. Indeed, many scenes are interspersed with L3 references to typical Mexican specialities such as *tamales*, i.e., made of seasoned meat and maize flour steamed or baked in maize husks and considered a staple at each family meal, as can be observed when Miguel's *Abuelita* insists he fills up on plenty of *tamales* at dinner (Table 1).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Abuelita	I asked if you would like more <i>tamales</i> .	Ti ho chiesto se vuoi un altro po' di <i>tamales</i> .	I asked if you want some more <i>tamales</i> .

Table 1. *Coco*, 00:03:37

In the same film another meaningful culinary reference is made to *churros*, i.e., a traditional pastry consisting of deep-fried unsweetened dough and sprinkled with sugar, mentioned by a dead character on his return to the Land of the Dead from the Land of the Living and significantly echoing the fact that, in Mexico, *churros* are typically offered

to the deceased members of one's family to welcome their coming back on *Día de los Muertos* (Table 2).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Clerk	Anything to declare?	Qualcosa da dichiarare?	Anything to declare?
Dead man	Some <i>churros</i> from my family.	Dei <i>churros</i> dalla mia famiglia.	Dei <i>churros</i> dalla mia famiglia.

Table 2. *Coco*, 00:25:20

The integral part food has in family life as a commodity strictly connected to sociocultural and family traditions is highlighted also in *Brave*, set in Medieval Scotland, where traditional Scottish food is always, linguistically and visually, brought to the fore, as we can see when, during a family dinner, Elinor, Merida's mother, reproaches her triplets for playing with their *haggis*, i.e., a pudding containing sheep's pluck minced with onion, oatmeal, spices and salt and officially recognized as Scotland national dish (Table 3).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Elinor	Boys, you're naughty! Don't just play with your <i>haggis</i> .	Bambini! Non giocherellate con il vostro <i>haggis</i> !	Boys! Don't play with your <i>haggis</i> !

Table 3. *Brave*, 00:10:49

An interesting aspect Table 1 and Table 3, in particular, highlight is that when family traditions are at stake and L3 ethnic food terms are evoked in the course of family conversations, they are referred to especially by women, often portrayed as matriarchal figures devoting themselves to the family's emotional needs through the food they prepare, thus playing the role of primary guardians and conveyors of culinary traditions from one generation to another in both the familial and the social structure (Monti, 2018, 2019).

Food acts as a key sociocultural identity tool also in *Ratatouille*, authentically plunging the audience in the world of French food; throughout the whole film, almost entirely set in the kitchen of Gusteau’s refined restaurant in Paris and telling the story of the food-loving mouse Remy guiding the garbage boy Linguini while cooking, recurrent L3 references to French food contribute to faithfully recreate the typical sophisticated atmosphere of *haute cuisine* French restaurants. We can therefore notice the presence of both visual and linguistic celebrations of renowned French wines such as *Château Latour* (Table 4) and *Cheval Blanc* (Table 5), of famous French specialties such as *foie gras*, i.e., made up with the liver of a goose or duck fattened by force-feeding (Table 6), *consommé*, i.e., a strong soup made by clarifying ordinary broth and in France usually served as a starter (Table 7), «*sole meunière*», i.e., a classic French fish dish consisting of floured and fried sole served with hot melted butter, lemon juice and parsley (Table 7), «*mimolette* cheese», i.e., a type of cheese traditionally produced around the city of Lille (Table 7), as well as of French dressings such as *vinaigrette*, i.e., a salad dressing made of oil, vinegar and seasonings (Table 7). A special light is obviously cast on *ratatouille*, i.e., a French Provençal peasant dish of stewed vegetables (Table 8), that gives the film its title, featuring a play on words with the name of the dish while including the word ‘rat’ referencing the film’s main character.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Skinner (to Linguini)	[...] But you would have to be an idiot of elephantine proportions not to appreciate this '61 <i>Château Latour</i> .	[...] Ma bisognerebbe essere degli idioti di proporzioni elefantache per non apprezzare questo <i>Château Latour</i> del 61.	[...] But you would have to be some idiots of elephantine proportions not to appreciate this '61 <i>Château Latour</i> .

Table 4. *Ratatouille*, 00:54:10

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Ego	[...] which would go nicely with a bottle of <i>Cheval Blanc</i> 1947.	[...] il tutto accompagnato da un <i>Cheval Blanc</i> del '47.	[...] all accompanied by a '47 <i>Cheval Blanc</i> .

Table 5. *Ratatouille*, 00:26:43

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Waiter	We have a very nice <i>Foie Gras</i> .	Abbiamo dell'ottimo <i>Foie Gras</i> .	We have an excellent <i>Foie Gras</i> .

Table 6. *Ratatouille*, 00:47:29

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Remy	Easy with that sole <i>meunière</i> ! [...] Only use the <i>mimolette</i> cheese. [...] Not too much <i>vinaigrette</i> [...] don't boil the <i>consommé</i> [...].	Piano con quella sogliola alla <i>meunière</i> ! [...] Usa solo formaggio <i>mimolette</i> . [...] Non esagerare con la <i>vinaigrette</i> [...] il <i>consommé</i> non deve bollire [...].	Easy with that sole <i>meunière</i> ! [...] Use only <i>mimolette</i> cheese. [...] Don't overdo the <i>vinaigrette</i> [...] the <i>consommé</i> must not boil [...].

Table 7. *Ratatouille*, 01:34:32

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Colette	<i>Ratatouille</i> ? It's a peasant dish.	<i>Ratatouille</i> ? È un piatto povero.	<i>Ratatouille</i> ? It's a poor dish.

Table 8. *Ratatouille*, 01:35:17

In *Beauty and the Beast*, set in a XVII century French village, French food is celebrated in the verbal-acoustic code since the beginning with the main aim of disclosing to the audience the film location, as can

be recognized when the term *baguette*, i.e., the iconic French bread characterized by its long, thin shape and crispy crust, is mentioned by a baker asking one of his workers, Marie, to bring him some (Table 9).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Baker	Marie! The <i>ba-guettes</i> ! Hurry up!	Marie! Le <i>baguettes</i> ! Sbrigati, avanti!	Marie! The <i>ba-guettes</i> ! Hurry up, come on!

Table 9. *Beauty and the Beast*, 00:04:28

Furthermore, L3 food specialties are often evoked to express a sense of community-belonging as well as to strengthen interpersonal relationships. In *Frozen*, set in Norway, Prince Hans opens the doors of Arendelle castle to the villagers and offers them some *Glögg*, i.e., a traditional Scandinavian hot, spiced wine, typically served during public events, to show them they are all part of the same community, something that also provides a key teaching for children in promoting the overcoming of social barriers (Table 10).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Hans	The castle is open. There's soup and hot <i>glögg</i> in the Great Hall.	Il castello è aperto. C'è zuppa e <i>glögg</i> caldo nel grande salone.	The castle is open. There's soup and hot <i>glögg</i> in the Great Hall.

Table 10. *Frozen*, 00:49:51

Similarly, Oaken, the friendly and humble owner of Wandering Oaken's Trading Post and Sauna, apologizes to Princess Anna for the aggressive behaviour he has just had towards Kristoff offering her *lutefisk*, i.e., a renowned seafood dish consisting of dried whitefish, traditionally part of the Christmas feast in several Nordic countries and considered as a means of further uniting family and community members (Table 11).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Oaken	I'm sorry about this violence. I will add a quart of <i>lutefisk</i> , so we'll have good feelings.	Mi scuso per tanta violenza. Aggiungerò un quarto di <i>lutefisk</i> e addio senza rancore.	I'm sorry for such violence. I will add a quart of <i>lutefisk</i> and goodbye without resentment.

Table 11. *Frozen*, 00:38:30

In *Encanto*, set in Colombia, typical Colombian food is even assigned healing properties as Julieta, Mirabel's mother, cures people through homemade dishes such as *buñuelo*, i.e., a sweet fried dough fritter, and *arepa con queso*, i.e., a white cornbread with cheese, as we can see when she heals Mirabel's wounded hand with one of these (Table 12), here also figuratively acting as the symbol of the therapeutic power of maternal love.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Mirabel	Mm-hm. You just healed my hand with an <i>arepa con queso</i> .	E tu hai guarito la mia mano con una <i>arepa con queso</i> .	And you have healed my hand with an <i>arepa con queso</i> .

Table 12. *Encanto*, 00:28:13

The relevance L3 ethnic food terms have in marking the characters' ethnically diverse identities and background traditions is further proved by their being included, and mostly retained unaltered, also in songs' lyrics and in written visual elements on the screen.

With regard to L3 food references in songs' lines, in *Aladdin*, set in the legendary Middle Eastern town of Agrabah, mainly inspired by Baghdad, the Turkish term *baklava* is used in a song sung by the Genie when offering Aladdin this typical Turkish sweet pastry, to highlight the film exotic location (Table 13).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Genie	How about a little more <i>baklava</i> ?	Gradisce ancora un po' di <i>baklava</i> ?	Do you like a little more <i>baklava</i> ?

Table 13. *Aladdin*, 00:36:40

Likewise, in *Beauty and the Beast*, the butler-chandelier Lumière, while singing the song entitled *Culinary Cabaret*, offers Belle such dishes as *soupe du jour*, i.e., soup of the day; «beef *ragoût*», i.e., meat sauce, «cheese *soufflé*», i.e., a light and puffy cake, either savoury or sweet, served in France both as appetizer and main course, «pudding *en flambé*», i.e., a type of sweet prepared according to the cooking procedure in which alcohol is poured over hot food and fire is set to it during cooking (Table 14), all of them mentioned, both in the original version and in the Italian dubbed version, with their original French names that seem to render them even more inviting.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Lumière	[...] <i>soupe du jour</i> [...] beef <i>ragoût</i> [...] cheese <i>soufflé</i> , pie and pudding <i>en flambé</i> ...	[...] <i>soupe du jour</i> [...] <i>che ragoût</i> [...] <i>che soufflé</i> , torte e caramel <i>flambé</i> ...	[...] <i>soupe du jour</i> [...] what a <i>ragoût</i> [...] what a <i>soufflé</i> , pies and caramel <i>flambé</i> ...

Table 14. *Beauty and the Beast*, 00:38:09

What is worthwhile noticing in Table 14 is that the two compounds «beef *ragoût*» and «cheese *soufflé*», combining an English and a French word, are rendered in the Italian dubbed version as general exclamations with the French term preceded by the particle *che*, i.e., «what a», emphasizing the deliciousness of the dishes referred to though depriving the target audience of their original savour.

As far as the verbal-visual code is concerned, L3 food terms are frequently included, in both versions, in on-screen written elements to celebrate, both visually and linguistically, the non-mainstream cul-

tures' culinary traditions. This can be observed, for instance, in *Ratatouille*, where most scenes are interspersed with French writings relevant to such food items as *citrons*, i.e., lemons, on some wood boxes containing these fruits; *fromage*, i.e., cheese, on a big wheel of French cheese; *oignons*, i.e., onions, on some boxes full of fresh mushrooms; *huile d'olive*, i.e., olive oil, and *vierge Extra*, i.e., extra virgin olive oil, on some olive oil bottles; *cumin*, i.e., cumin, *poivre*, i.e., pepper, *delicieux poudre*, i.e., delicious powder, on some spices' containers; *foie gras d'oie*, on some cans of the most expensive type of the renowned French goose liver; *caviar*, i.e., fish roe, on boxes containing this popular French delicacy; *crème liquid*, i.e., on a packet of cooking cream used in different food preparations. Similarly in *Ferdinand*, set in Spain, the Spanish shop sign *chocolateria* is clearly visible on the entrance door of a chocolate shop; in *Beauty and the Beast*, food shops' signboards are always maintained in French, as *boucherie*, i.e., butcher's shop, *boulangerie*, i.e., bakery, *café*, i.e., café, and *le jambon*, i.e., the ham; in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the sign *boulangier*, i.e., baker, is to be recognized on a little building from which a baker is going out with a plate full of *baguettes*; in *Coco*, the name of the mexican speciality *pan dulce*, i.e., sweet bread made with a crispy topping, is written on a street food stand Miguel passes by in one of the first scenes, further indicating that a specific culture can be effectively recognized by means of its food specialities.

3.2 «Who cooked that *ratatouille*?». L3 food references evoking and nurturing interpersonal relationships

In the films under study, ethnic food is also recurrently used as a vehicle of emotional manifestations, as L3 food references often metaphorically represent a form of nourishment for both body and soul, bringing to light deep ties connecting the characters both to family/community members with whom they share their daily life and to the souls of their loved ones who are no longer with them but live on in every ingredient (Monti, 2018, 2019). From a general perspective, the

fact that food serves as shorthand for affective and emotional matters is well-established (Chakravarti, 2004), as feelings are often kneaded into food and passions often find shape in culinary creations.

This can be observed, for instance, in *The Princess and the Frog*, exploring African American ethnocultural traditions in the French colony of New Orleans in the mid-1920s. In this film, L3 references to Cajun and Creole dishes become the thread of the action and are always imbued with affectionate connotations, pointing out the importance they have for the African protagonist, Tiana, a hardworking waitress whose dream is to open her own restaurant thus fulfilling the desire of her late father James. The key role that food plays in Tiana's life is proved by the fact that she is constantly portrayed while either cooking or simply talking about specialities that her father taught her to prepare when she was a child. One of these is *jambalaya*, i.e., a Creole and Cajun rice dish of French, African, and Spanish influence, that Tiana mentions when making a list of the dishes she will serve at her restaurant (Table 15).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Tiana	<i>Jambalaya</i> . [...] It's going to have it all.	<i>Jambalaya</i> . [...] Ci sarà qualunque cosa.	<i>Jambalaya</i> . [...] There will be everything.

Table 15. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:14:37

The affective importance of this dish is displayed also in the verbal-visual code, as the term *jambalaya* is written on a menu in a scene featuring Tiana singing a song while daydreaming about her future eating place. As far as the emotional power of food is concerned, one of the most moving moments relevant to eating/mentioning typical ethnic culinary specialities is to be recognized in *Ratatouille*, when the notoriously harsh food critic Anton Ego flashes back to his mother's special cooking in his childhood kitchen while tasting Remy's *ratatouille* (Table 16).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Anton Ego	Who cooked that <i>ratatouille</i> ? I demand to know!	Chi prepara la <i>ratatouille</i> ? Io esigo saperlo!	Who cooks the <i>ratatouille</i> ? I demand to know!

Table 16. *Ratatouille*, 01:36:50

Both Table 15 and Table 16 clearly illustrate how ethnic food has the power of nostalgically bringing back to life memories of the heart, nurturing the characters' souls to such an extent that food itself results to be a proper language always strictly associated with love feelings.

Also in *Raya and the Last Dragon* food proves to be a proper act of love just as much as it is in the Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Laos, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore) to which the film location, i.e., the fantasy land of Kumandra, is inspired. Here Southeast Asian food is extensively celebrated as a powerful metaphor for trust, unity, and friendship: it is endowed with a special power to bring people together, to facilitate communication, to establish and reinforce mutual connections. Most importantly, it becomes the tool to track the emotional journey undergone by its protagonist, Raya, to find the last existing dragon, Sisudatu, and ask her to stop the evil Druun from transforming the inhabitants of Kumandra into stones, thus saving her land. Whereas, during the first part of her quest, Raya's stubborn decision to stand on her own and eat only her unpopular jerky, i.e., meat cut into long thin strips and dried, represents her distrust of others, her starting to share meals and eat Southeast Asian dishes again implies that she is gradually opening to humankind and trusting people again. The key role ethnic food plays in this film in creating and strengthening interpersonal relationships can be observed, for instance, when Raya and Sisudatu first meet street-savvy entrepreneur Boun at his boat restaurant, The Shrimporium, and, to conquer their esteem and friendship, he offers them *congee*, i.e., a thick rice porridge popular in East Asian countries and consid-

ered as the classic comfort food to be consumed together with family members and friends (Table 17).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Boun	We got shrimp. We got <i>congee</i> . We got a shrimp <i>congee</i> that won't quit.	Abbiamo gamberi. Abbiamo <i>congee</i> . Abbiamo un <i>congee</i> di gamberi da favola.	We have shrimps. We have <i>congee</i> . We have a delicious shrimp <i>congee</i> .

Table 17. *Raya and the Last Dragon*, 00:36:12

Congee is also used as a sort of reward when Raya promises Noi, the con-baby, and her little gang of Ongis accompanying her in her journey, to pay them all the *congee* they can eat just to keep them quiet (Table 18), thus further highlighting how much this dish, deeply rooted in ancient Tamil culture, is, in all contexts, cherished as a mouthwatering delicacy.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Raya	Yeah, I sorta promised to buy them all the <i>congee</i> they could eat.	Già, gli ho promesso di pagare tutto il <i>congee</i> che mangeranno.	Yeah, I promised them to pay all the <i>congee</i> they will eat.

Table 18. *Raya and the Last Dragon*, 00:50:45

3.3 «His only passion now is the *borscht*».

L3 food terms as linguistic identity cards

In most films under study, ethnic food results to be strictly intertwined with personal identities, both at an individual and at a societal level. In particular, L3 food terms are frequently used as linguistic and visual icons to identify specific characters, recurrently associated with either their favourite dishes or the dishes they prefer to cook. For instance, in *Puss in Boots* and *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, both set in Mexico, the booted cat is presented as being particularly greedy for *gazpacho*, i.e., a tra-

ditional Spanish and Mexican cold soup made of raw, blended vegetables, mentioned in various contexts to fulfil different pragmatic and narrative functions as far as the character's depiction is concerned. In *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, for instance, Puss first approaches a beautiful girl offering her *gazpacho*, here acting as a proper vehicle of self-representation (Table 19); later on in the film, in discovering he has only one life left to live, Puss asks the doctor when he can find some *gazpacho*, in this case intended as 'the' comfort food in emotionally difficult situations (Table 20).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Puss	<i>Hola, señorita. Do you like gazpacho?</i>	<i>Hola, señorita. Un bel gazpacho?</i>	<i>Hola, señorita. A good gazpacho?</i>

Table 19. *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, 00:10:30

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Puss	Now, you know some good place to get some <i>gazpacho</i> ?	Piuttosto, sai dirmi dove posso trovare un buon <i>gazpacho</i> , per favore?	By the way, can you tell me where I can find some good <i>gazpacho</i> , please?

Table 20. *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, 00:09:54

L3 references to *gazpacho* are also sometimes used ironically to underline the cat's obsession with this dish, as we can see when, in the Cave of Lost Souls, different images of Puss personifying his past lives appear in front of him and one of them sarcastically tempts him with a bowl of *gazpacho* implying that, as he is probably going to die, he will never have the chance to taste his favourite dish any more (Table 21).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Old Puss	<i>Gazpacho?</i>	<i>Gazpacho?</i>	<i>Gazpacho?</i>

Table 21. *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, 01:08:38

In these two films, the Spanish name of the cat's favourite drink, *leche*, i.e., milk, is linguistically put on display, and maintained unaltered in the Italian dubbed versions, especially in the verbal-visual code: in *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, for instance, this term is written on some barrels in the pub where the *fiesta* to celebrate the cat's return is being held.

The fact that L3 food terms are used to identify specific characters can be clearly recognized also in *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*: here the Russian tiger Vitaly, an ex-superstar of the travelling Circus Zaragoza who was formerly famous for his jumping through flaming rings of fire but then lost his courage after getting burned, is initially depicted as totally uncaring about the circus and typified by his eating only the Slavic soup *borscht*, i.e., a hearty beet soup of beef and a variety of vegetables, that seems to have become his unique reason of life (Tables 22-23), here used also to highlight his Siberian origins.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Stefano (indicating Vitaly)	[...] His only passion now is the <i>borscht</i> .	[...] e ora la sua unica passione è il <i>borscht</i> .	[...] and now his only passion is <i>borscht</i> .

Table 22. *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*, 00:45:28

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Alex (to Vitaly)	Are you just going to turn your back on them, and eat <i>borscht</i> the rest of your life?	Vuoi voltare loro le spalle e startene lì a mangiare <i>borscht</i> per tutta la vita?	Do you want to turn your back on them and sit and eat <i>borscht</i> the rest of your life?

Table 23. *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*, 00:59:49

In *The Princess and the Frog*, Tiana is famous for her delicious *beignets*, i.e., a beloved New Orleans dessert consisting of doughnut-like triangles topped with powdered sugar. Two of the main protagonists,

Mr. La Bouff and his daughter Charlotte, Tiana's best friend, seem to be particularly gluttonous for this sweet delicacy, usually eaten on special occasions (Table 24), sometimes even assigned magic powers to attract people, and in particular to seduce men (Table 25), and presented by Tiana herself as the main speciality that will be served at her restaurant (Table 26), as if it acted for her as a sort of culinary identity card.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Mr. La Bouff	Now, how about I celebrate with...	Allora, sarebbe bello festeggiare con...	Now, it would be great to celebrate with...
Tiana	... <i>beignets</i> ! Got a fresh batch just waiting for you.	... <i>beignets</i> ! Appena sfornati, aspettavo voi.	... <i>beignets</i> ! Just baked, they were waiting for you.

Table 24. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:10:40

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Charlotte (to Tiana)	[...] I'm going to need about 500 of your man-catching <i>beignets</i> for my ball tonight.	[...] Mi serviranno 500 dei tuoi <i>beignets</i> acchiappa-uomini per il mio ballo di stasera.	[...] I'm going to need 500 of your man-catching <i>beignets</i> for my ball tonight.

Table 25. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:11:35

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Mr. Fenner	Fine-smelling <i>beignets</i> !	Che buon profumo di <i>beignets</i> !	What a fine smell of <i>beignets</i> !
Tiana	Going to be the house speciality [...].	Saranno la specialità della casa [...].	They will be the house speciality [...].

Table 26. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:24:14

3.4 «Hey, it's *Chorizo!*».

The figurative power of L3 food names

In our corpus of films, the characters' ethnically diverse self is often figuratively moulded by L3 food terms used metaphorically to describe some distinctive aspects of either their life or their personality. In *Encanto*, Isabela sarcastically refers to *empanada*, i.e., a baked or fried pastry turnover popular in Latin American cultures, when saying that her bulky sister Luisa, after losing her power to lift heavy weights, can't now even pick up one of these very light pasties any more, thus assigning the scene a humorous connotation, and, at the same time, putting this Colombian speciality further on display (Table 27).

Character	Original version	Italia dubbed version	Back translation
Isabela	[...] Luisa can't lift an <i>empanada</i> . [...]	[...] Luisa non solleva un' <i>empanada</i> [...]	[...] Luisa doesn't lift an <i>empanada</i> . [...]

Table 27. *Encanto*, 01:07:05

In *Coco*, the term *chorizo* and its diminutive form *choricito*, i.e., a Mexican spicy pork sausage, are sardonically uttered by some musicians in the Land of the Dead as an address form to mock Héctor, as it is believed he choked while eating one of them (Table 28).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Musicians	Hey, it's <i>Chorizo!</i> <i>Choricito!</i>	Hey, it's <i>Chorizo!</i> <i>Choricito!</i>	Hey, it's <i>Chorizo!</i> <i>Choricito!</i>

Table 28. *Coco*, 00:38:56

Similarly, in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame II*, L3 food terms are in some cases used sarcastically as pet names to express a negative opinion on another character, as can be seen when Saroush addresses Madeline with the French term *bonbon*, i.e., candy, feigning a loving attitude

towards her while offending the girl in his considering her not particularly clever (Table 29).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Saroush	Thinking? Not your strong suit, is it, my little <i>bonbon</i> ?	Pensare? Pensare non è il tuo forte, lo sai, mio piccolo <i>bonbon</i> .	Thinking? Thinking is not your strong suit, you know, my little <i>bonbon</i> .

Table 29. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame II*, 00:10:04

As Tables 27, 28 and 29 show, the symbolical meanings assigned to ethnic food as a marker of distinctive traits of the films' protagonists also crucially contribute to enhance the audience amusement and involvement in the cinematic scenario, according to the principle of edutainment that seems to be at the basis of most multilingual/multicultural animated audiovisual products.

4. Assigning L3 food references different flavours in dubbing

Though, as observed so far, most L3 culinary references are preserved unaltered in the Italian dubbed versions, few instances of L3 food names, used especially in the verbal-acoustic code, are domesticated (Pavesi, 2005; Pedersen, 2005; Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007; Pavesi, Zanotti & Chaume, 2021) in the Italian dubbed version according to such translation strategies as: generalization through hypernyms; substitution with L2 equivalents; sociocultural adaptation, replacing the original L3 food term with another L3 food lexeme more familiar to the Italian audience (Voellmer & Zabalbeascoa, 2014; Baker 2018; Ranzato & Zanotti, 2019; Bogucki & Deckert, 2020; Chaume, 2020). All these strategies aim at making the source text more accessible to the target viewers though silencing the original films' ethnolinguis-

tically diverse culinary essence. This is, instead, in some way recreated according to a different procedure, prevalently adopted in songs' lyrics, that compensates the linguacultural/culinary losses due to L3 food terms' neutralization and consists in including, only in the Italian dubbed version, L3 food terms not to be found in the original version, thus also connoting the Italian scene with foreign culinary zests.

4.1 Covering L3 exotic tastes with Italian savours

Erasing the visibility of ethnic culinary traditions through domestication and generalization of L3 food names can be observed, for instance, in *Lilo & Stitch*, set in the fictional Hawaiian town of Kokaua, on the island of Kaua'i, where the L3/Hawaiian reference to *poi*, i.e., a staple food in Polynesian diet made from fermented *taro* root and starchy vegetables but unlikely to be known by the Italian viewers, is replaced, for the sake of audience comprehension, by the name of a very common food in Italian cuisine, *riso*, i.e., rice, homogenizing the original multilingual speech pattern and consequently depriving the target audience of the sociocultural connotations the original term implies (Table 30).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Nani	That kid at table three is throwing <i>poi</i> again.	Il bambino del tre sta lanciando di nuovo il riso.	The kid at three is throwing rice again.

Table 30. *Lilo & Stitch*, 00:32:16

Likewise, in *The Princess and the Frog*, generalization is applied to the L3 names of such specialities of Cajun cuisine as *gumbo*, *étoufféé*, and *muffuletta*s. The Bantu term *gumbo*, i.e., a strongly flavoured soup-stew distinctive of the Creole cuisine of South Louisiana, is translated in different ways according to the communicative and pragmatic context within which it is mentioned. In one of the first scenes, flashing back on Tiana's childhood and presenting her father congratulating her lit-

the daughter on her preparing a delicious *gumbo*, the term is generalized with the Italian hypernym *zuppa*, i.e., soup (Table 31).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
James (to little Tiana)	Well, sweetheart, this is the best <i>gumbo</i> I've ever tasted!	Beh, tesoro, questa è la zuppa più buona che ho mai mangiato!	Well, honey, this is the best soup I've ever eaten!

Table 31. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:04:24

Later on in the film, featuring Tiana as a young woman long after her beloved father's death, the term *gumbo* is instead assigned more specific connotations and is translated with such pragmatic equivalents as *zuppa speciale*, i.e., special soup, expressing the sentimental value this dish has for Tiana in reminding her of the infancy spent with her father (Table 32), and *zuppa di palude*, i.e., swamp soup, offered by Tiana to Prince Naveen when in the *bayou* swamp (Table 33), highlighting one of the film's main locations, i.e., the *bayou*, a slow-moving creek or a swampy section of a river or a lake commonly to be found in the southern part of the United States and, in particular, in the Mississippi River Delta where the film is set.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Tiana	Hey, everybody, I made <i>gumbo</i> !	Hey, gente, ho fatto la zuppa speciale!	Hey, people, I made the special soup!

Table 32. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:04:44

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Tiana	How about some swamp <i>gumbo</i> ?	Che ne diresti di una zuppa di palude?	What about a swamp soup?

Table 33. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:56:43

As Tables 31, 32 and 33 illustrate, the Italian version does not convey either the ethnic significance the term *gumbo* implies or the extra cultural values it connotes, as *gumbo* is originally intended as a metaphor for the mix of African, Native American, French, and Spanish culinary practices and cultural traditions distinctive of southern Louisiana, particularly associated with Tiana’s working-class African community, as evidenced in many scenes representing Tiana, her parents and their working-class neighbours consuming *gumbo* together.

Similarly, *étouffée*, i.e., a Cajun/Creole spicy stew typically served with shellfish over rice, and *muffulettas*, i.e., a popular sandwich with cured meat, *provolone* cheese, olive dressing and sesame bread that originated among Italian immigrants in New Orleans, are rendered with Italian pragmatic equivalents, i.e., *stufato di gamberi*, i.e., shrimp stew, and *panini ripieni*, i.e., stuffed buns, erasing these dishes’ original cultural, historical, and symbolical implications (Table 34).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Louis	Now, this restaurant of yours, is it going to have <i>étouffée</i> ? [...] I’ve always wanted to try [...] <i>muffulettas</i> ...	Nel tuo ristorante ci sarà lo stufato di gamberi? [...] Ho sempre voluto assaggiare [...] panini ripieni...	Is shrimp stew going to be in your restaurant [...] I’ve always wanted to try [...] stuffed buns...

Table 34. *The Princess and the Frog*, 00:55:00

L3 food terms’ domestication in the Italian dubbed version can be recognized also in *Puss in Boots* and *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish* when applied to the Spanish term *leche*, the booted cat’s favourite drink, usually replaced in the verbal-acoustic code by its Italian equivalent, *latte*, i.e., milk (whereas, as already discussed in Subsection 2.3, it is prevalently maintained unaltered in the verbal-visual code). This can be seen, for instance, in *Puss in Boots*, when Puss asks the bartender «one *leche*», i.e., a glass of milk, using an expression similar to the one

generally adopted when asking for an alcoholic drink, with the name of the drink preceded by the indefinite article (Table 35), something that ironically implies that the cat is sort of addicted to this beverage.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Puss	One <i>leche</i> , please.	Un latte, per favore.	One milk, please.

Table 35. *Puss in Boots*, 00:04:10

Similarly, in *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, Puss defines himself as «the *Leche* Whisperer», rendered in Italian as *il sommelier del latte*, i.e., the milk *sommelier*, a translation choice that elevates the cat's status in appointing him with the title usually assigned to expert connoisseurs of renowned wines (Table 36).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Puss	He was known across the land by many names [...] the <i>Leche</i> Whisperer...	Era conosciuto in ogni dove con molti nomi [...] il sommelier del latte...	He was known everywhere by many names [...] the sommelier of milk...

Table 36. *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, 00:17:47

As far as sociocultural adaptation is concerned, in many films L3 food terms are often included in figurative fixed phrases to fulfil specific conversational functions; this is to be observed, for instance, in *Puss in Boots* (Table 37) and *Puss in Boots. The Last Wish*, where the Spanish made-up rhyming expression «Holy *frijoles*», i.e., holy moly beans, generally used to express amazement and surprise, is rendered, in the Italian dubbed version of both films, as «Santa *tortilla*», i.e., holy *tortilla*, with the Spanish term *tortilla* referring to a Mexican speciality well-known to the Italian audience (Table 37).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Puss	Holy frijoles! They do exist!	Oh santa tortilla! Allora esistono!	Oh holy tortilla! So they exist!

Table 37. *Puss in Boots*, 00:05:59

Likewise, in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame II*, Saroush addresses Made-line comparing her to an *éclair*, i.e., a typical French pastry made with choux dough filled with a cream and topped with a flavoured icing, here adopted as a pet name, and replaced in the Italian dubbed version by *beignet*, i.e., a fritter or doughnut popular also in Italy (Table 38).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Saroush	And so you shall, my little <i>éclair</i> .	E lo farai, mio piccolo <i>beignet</i> .	And you'll do it, my little <i>beignet</i> .

Table 38. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame II*, 00:09:30

Regarding songs' lyrics, domestication of L3 food terms is to be recognized in *Encanto* in the song *La familia Madrigal*, where the term *arepa* is generalized in Italian as *cibo*, i.e., food, as a sort of countertendency to the fact that, as already observed in Subsection 2.1, the reference to this Colombian speciality is retained unaltered when mentioned throughout the dialogues (Table 39).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Mirabel	My mom Julieta, can make you feel better with just one <i>arepa</i> .	Mia mamma Julieta ti fa stare bene, guarisce con il cibo.	My mom Julieta can make you feel good, she heals with food.

Table 39. *Encanto*, 00:06:06

Similarly, in *Beauty and the Beast*, when Lumière offers Belle some French delicacies while singing the song *Culinary Cabaret*, the French

expression *hors d'oeuvres* is localized and rendered with its Italian equivalent *antipasti*, i.e., appetizers (Table 40).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Lumière	... hot <i>hors d'oeuvres</i> , why we only live to serve!	...antipasti, noi viviamo per servir!	...appetizers, we only live to serve!

Table 40. *Beauty and the Beast*, 00:39:18

As far as the neutralization of L3 food terms in songs' lyrics in the Italian dubbed versions is concerned, in few cases the Italian audiovisual translator opts for a complete change of the original utterance, deleting any reference to food. For instance, in *Moana*, set on an ancient Polynesian island of the South Pacific, when Moana's father sings a song describing their village's main traditions, the L3/Polynesian reference to *taro*, i.e., a root vegetable and a food staple in Oceanic cultures, is deleted in the Italian dubbed version, where the original sentence is replaced by a general one expressing the man's praise of the island with no hint to any food item (Table 41).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Moana's father	Don't trip on the <i>taro</i> root.	Le cose che contano le abbiamo qui.	The things that matter we have them here.

Table 41. *Moana*, 00:08:20

4.2. Adding L3 seasonings on the Italian linguistic plates

As already mentioned, when L3 food terms in dialogues and songs' lines are at stake, it is possible to recognize a foreignising strategy used, though in few cases, in the Italian dubbed version and consisting in the addition, only in the Italian version, of extra L3 terms relevant to food and its semantic field not to be found in the films' original version; this peculiar procedure is possibly due to the Italian translator's

attempt to deal with the loss of meaning, emotional force or stylistic effect occurring in the few cases in which L3 food references are neutralized and translated into Italian (see subsection 3.1).

One interesting example of foreignization/compensation (Baker, 2018) adopted in the films' dialogues is to be observed in *Puss in Boots*, when the cat describes himself as «the Furry Lover», rendered in Italian as *El Amante Picante*, i.e., The Hot Lover, with the Spanish adjective *picante*, i.e., hot, generally adopted to define a very spicy food and here used figuratively to present the cat as particularly passionate (Table 42).

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Puss	I've also been known as... the Furry Lover!	Sono anche conosciuto come... <i>El Amante Picante</i> !	I am also known as... <i>El Amante Picante</i> !

Table 42. *Puss in Boots*, 00:53:31

With regard to the inclusion of L3 food terms in the songs performed in the Italian dubbed versions, it is interesting to notice that, in the original version of *Beauty and the Beast*, a town woman sings a song emphasizing Belle's beauty without using any L3 reference to food, whereas the Italian version changes the original lines and compares Belle to a *crème caramel*, i.e., a typical French dessert known worldwide for its very sweet taste (Table 43), thus figuratively underlining the girl's sweet personality instead of her beauty (as in the original film) through an unusual but effective culinary simile.

Character	Original version	Italian dubbed version	Back translation
Town woman	Now it's no wonder that her name means 'beauty', her looks have got no parallel!	Anche il suo nome esprime la dolcezza, più dolce di un <i>crème caramel</i> !	Also her name expresses sweetness, sweeter than a <i>crème caramel</i> !

Table 43. *Beauty and the Beast*, 00:06:17

Both Table 42 and Table 43 clearly show that Italian audiovisual translators sometimes adopt foreignizing translation procedures in the attempt to preserve the ethnolinguistic alterity distinctive of the original films, thus also satisfying audiences' expectations concerning 'other' languages, cultures, societies, and their gastronomic practices.

5. Conclusion

What first emerges from the empiric investigation of the original versions of the thirty-two films under study is that the L3 terms relevant to the non-mainstream cultures' culinary specialities are recurrently put on display as key linguacultural icons. Instances of L3 food names can be recognized both in the verbal-acoustic code – with 70% of the total L3 food terms included in dialogues and 10% included in songs' lyrics – and in the verbal-visual code – with 20% of the total occurrences used in written visual elements, adding further realism to the scene.

The comparative analysis of the films' original version and their Italian dubbed version highlights that retention results to be the prevailing transfer mode for most L3 food names in both diegetic codes at stake (covering 95% of the total occurrences), with a low percentage of L3 food references being neutralized (4% of the total occurrences), and an even a lower percentage of L3 culinary terms being included in the Italian dubbed version (only 1%).

From a diachronic perspective, regarding whether and how the approach in translating L3 food terms in multilingual animated films has changed over the last three decades, i.e., 1991-2023, retention proves to be the prevailing strategy independently to the films' release date. This highlights a dubbing policy that goes against the one traditionally adopted in Italy until the early 1990s adhering to norms of monolingualism and local standardization (Pavesi, 2005; Pedersen, 2005; Bleichenbacher, 2008; Heiss, 2014, among others), and that faithfully recreates the original films' linguacultural-culinary *otherness*.

We could therefore conclude by saying that the audiovisual representation and/non-translation of L3 ethnic food names in multilingual animation focusing on minority cultures plays crucial roles in terms of translingual/transcultural transmission: it reinforces the relevance ethnic foodways have in effectively depicting specific ethnolinguistic systems, offering both audiences thoroughly immersive experiences in the ‘differently tasty’ realms of the non-dominant cultures portrayed on the screen, thus further highlighting the strict ties linking the concepts of food, language, ethnicity and identity worldwide.

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The ecosophy of the British Association of Foragers: evidence from linguistic practices

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1. Introduction

The practice of foraging is becoming more popular and fashionable in the UK. Gourmet restaurants propose wild food on their menus; TV shows, podcasts and books on the topic are produced, and professional foragers are offering courses and workshops to recognise wild food commodities across the country (Lee, 2012). The practice of harvesting wild foods is deeply rooted in human history, and it still represents a valid resource to either compensate food scarcity or integrate nutrients in standard diets (Łuczaj *et al.*, 2021; Muller & Almeldom, 2008). In Europe, the practice of foraging occupies a central spot in the economies of rural communities. Traditionally, foraged goods are labelled as a «fall-back» or «famine» food by anthropologists, thus suggesting that people living in a rural environment would rely on wild food exclusively during periods of food insecurity or shortage (Muller & Almeldom, 2008). Closer investigations instead reveal that wild food represents a valuable commodity also in periods of standard food provision. In the European Union, almost a quarter of households have a member who is an expert forager, with a consequent relevant impact on socio-economic systems across the continent (Grivins, 2021; Vidale *et al.*, 2015). The species selected for harvesting include animals, plants, and mushrooms. According to recent estimates, approximately 20-30% of the

plants living on the planet, and up to 50% of fungal species have been eaten or considered palatable or edible by a community around the globe at least partially (Turner *et al.*, 2011). The species consumed vary greatly, and the selection depends on both environmental and cultural factors. On one hand, differences in habitats of wildlife represent key factors that dictate the availability of food across groups. On the other hand, this biological factor is not sufficient to explain the variability of wild food choices: groups of people who are exposed to the same range of habitats and therefore have access to the same range of species often operate different choices, based on their set of cultural beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Turner *et al.*, 2011).

Foraging requires a set of skills that typically develop over centuries through experimentation, and it is embedded in place-based knowledge systems (Teixidor-Toneu *et al.*, 2022). The type of information required does not exclusively concern the variety of available and edible species in a given environment, but it also includes recipes to turn foraged species into food, detailed knowledge of the environment and the land through recognition of preferred spots of growth, and it may even involve considerations about environmental change, sustainable management practices and biodiversity (Anderson, 2005; Bridges & McClatchey, 2009; Brown, 2019; Ford, 2011; Minnis, 2000). Ethnobotanical studies in Europe show a gradual loss of local and traditional knowledge and practices associated with wild food (Łuczaj *et al.*, 2012; Tardío *et al.*, 2006). Factors for the erosion of this local knowledge include, but are not limited to, changes in lifestyle, progressive urbanization, professional and large-scale farming, and a general loss of contact with nature and wild areas (Łuczaj *et al.*, 2021).

In the UK, although some wild foods have been consumed until recent pre-war times, (Hartley, 1954; Mabey, 1972; Phillips, 1983; Vickery, 1995; in Łuczaj *et al.*, 2021), the practice of foraging has suffered greatly from the massive industrialization and consequent urbanization of the country in the 19th century. Local foraging traditions probably eroded more consistently than in other European countries,

with estimates that suggest that the foraging population declined to approximately 1% by 1800 (Morris, 2015). The practice of mushroom picking is a case in point: anthropologists, sociologists and ethnobiologists traditionally describe the UK as mycophobic (Wasson & Wasson, 1957; Comandini & Rinaldi, 2020), as opposed to mycophilic, a term used for countries that gladly forage wild mushrooms, such as Italy or France. Brits do not traditionally harvest wild mushrooms. One of the most obvious linguistic consequences is the dearth of vernacular names for wild species of mushrooms in English (Bagli, 2024).

Despite the absence of a pressing need for diet-integration with wild food, the practice of foraging has become a popular past time in the UK, as testified by the growing number of books, websites, and social-media profiles that specifically deal with the topic (Lee, 2012). Many British foragers keep blogs and regularly update their webpages with educational and informative content as part of a community effort to promote sustainable and safe foraging practices. The success of this activity seems to derive from an interest in alternative foodways, an attention to localism and the concept of «terroir» as sponsored by the Slow Food Movement and the Nordic Cuisine (Redzepi, 2010), as well as an increasingly positive evaluation of more sustainable sources of food paired with a willingness to engage more directly with nature and the environment (Łuczaj *et al.*, 2021, p. 4).

The practice of foraging has also attracted a lot of criticism, especially regarding its sustainability and its impact on the environment. According to the critics, the excessive activity of wild food harvesting may represent a threat to wildlife, especially if it is carried out intensively and commercially to supply the increasing demand of high-end British restaurants (see for instance Horton, 2023). The matter is further complicated by legal issues regarding the legitimacy of the practice. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) declares that digging underground organs of any wild species is illegal. Furthermore, foragers who collect areal parts of plants in England may be charged with theft under The Theft Act (1968), because of the

increasing amount of land that is under the control of quasi-governmental organisations and their byelaws (Lee, 2012). The situation is different in Scotland, where foraging is not discouraged, and in fact both the local government and landowning bodies reach out to foragers to instruct them and to create a well-informed and environmentally aware group of people who are interested in wild foods. For instance, in 2010, the Scottish government released a guide to the Scottish Mushroom Code in both English and Polish (Łuczaj *et al.*, 2021, p. 17). Furthermore, the website of the agency NatureScot actively promotes foraging in Scotland with a collection of posts dedicated to the matter, and they also advertise the Scottish Wild Food festival. People who forage actively and consistently in the UK have recently coalesced into an official association, named the Association of Foragers (henceforth AoF). The aim of this organisation is to create a network to share knowledge, to foster a coherent set of practices among members, and to regulate the foraging activities.

The objective of the present paper is to unravel the ecosophy (i.e., ecological philosophy) that guides the practices of members of the AoF through a linguistic analysis of the *Principles of Practice* that regulate the activity of foragers who join the AoF. The theoretical and methodological framework of reference for the analysis is that of ecostylistics (Virdis, 2022), a branch of linguistics devoted to bridging ecolinguistics and stylistics, which is discussed in the next section. After a brief presentation of the Methodology and Data (section 3), I report the ecostylistic analysis of the Principles of Practice, before moving on to the Discussion of the ecosophy emerging from the text (section 4). The final section (5) contains the Conclusion of the study.

2. Theoretical linguistic background

The theoretical background against which the analysis is drawn is that of ecostylistics (Virdis, 2022). This approach to the study of language arises from the application of the theories and methods of stylistics

to contemporary discourses about ecological issues. The relationship between language and the environment is at the core of ecolinguistics, a branch of linguistics whose proponents are concerned with the study of how linguistic and natural and/or ecological systems interact. Fill and Penz (2018) identify three main lines of research in this discipline. The first line is also referred to as «ecology of language», and it is devoted to the study of the interrelation between languages and their social, cultural, and individual environments. Scholars in this approach are concerned with the sustainability of different languages in a globalised world, and the key topics of discussion include linguistic minorities, linguistic policies, bilingualism, and multilingualism, to name but a few. Particular attention is given to the relationship between linguistic and biological diversity in a specific environment. As Skutnabb-Kangas and Harmon (2018) argue, the loss of linguistic diversity often correlates with a loss of biodiversity.

The second line of research is sometimes referred to as «ecological linguistics» more proper. It investigates the role played by language in communicating and disseminating ecological values, more specifically the discursive construction of the natural world and its framing in (un) ecological ways. It is further distinguished into two main sub-fields. The first promotes «green grammars» and critiques the «language system» as a whole (Viridis, 2022, p. 32). The other instead scrutinises actual linguistic usage to identify communicative strategies that may be either beneficial or detrimental to the environment and to ecological awareness.

Finally, a third line of research concentrates on the connection between philosophical issues and human ecology. In this view, ecolinguistics is an integrated and holistic ideology that concentrates on the «consciousness that our human world and the more-than-human world are interconnected and in harmony with each other» (Viridis, 2022, p. 33).

The second set of theories that contributed to the birth of ecostylistics is, as evidenced by the label of the discipline, stylistics. Scholars adopting this approach focus on the language used in the construction

of a specific text or discourse, applying a diverse and eclectic range of theories of language to the evaluation and critique of the object of the study. In so doing, stylisticians tend to underpin the narratives, ideologies and cultural values that may be concealed in a discursive practice, as evidenced through linguistic choices of the author(s) of a selected text. The main concern of stylistics is to explore the ways in which meaning is created through language in use. Although the original focus of this discipline was the analysis of style in literature, the range of texts that scholars engage with currently includes also non-fictional genres, such as advertising, news reports, and academic writings (Nørgard, Montoro & Busse, 2010, p. 1). The critical potential of stylistics to underpin the dynamics of meaning from a literary text are complemented with theories belonging to the wide spectrum of cognitive linguistics, particularly cognitive semantics (see, for instance, Kövecses, 2001, 2020). The lexical and syntactic choices deployed in the text are discussed with a particular attention to the construal, the conceptual frames and the cognitive scenarios they evoke, with the aim of uncovering the ecosophy of the Association of Foragers, and the conceptualisation of this activity emerging from the text.

A final remark before moving to the analysis of the data needs to be made about the notion of ecosophy. This label was proposed by American philosopher Naess (1973) to refer to the interface between philosophy and ecology, thus describing a set of philosophical principles that have ecological considerations. In his own words:

By an *ecosophy* I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony [...] openly normative, it contains *both* norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements *and* hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. [...] The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities (p. 99, emphasis in the original).

Ecosophies are varied and each organisation, association, social group or even analyst may have and/or develop their own, based on their personal beliefs and values towards the environment, ecology, and social justice. Stibbe (2015, p. 12) identifies three main spectra along which ecosophies may run. The first spectrum extends from anthropocentric (more human centred) to ecocentric (where all lives, including humans, are at the centre). The second spectrum runs from neoliberalism at one pole to either socialism, localism, or even anarchism at the other. Finally, the third spectrum is identified from optimistic to pessimistic. The three spectra are often aligned with each other, so that neoliberal positions tend to be more optimistic and anthropocentric, while more localist or socialist positions tend to be more pessimistic and ecocentric. Many philosophical perspectives adopted by intellectuals, activists, and organisations are positioned along these spectra. For instance, the philosophical current of *cornucopianism* aligns with the most conservative end of the spectrum and considers nature as a resource to be exploited, in the attempt to overcome environmental and resource issues through a continuous industrial development, for the sake of human benefits (e.g., Lomborg, 2001; Ridley, 2010; in Stibbe, 2015, p. 12). Towards the other end of the spectrum, The Dark Mountain Project is a collective of writers, artists and intellectuals who regularly publishes stories, essays, photographs from new, emergent creators with the aim of uncovering ways of surviving times of ecological and economical collapse. Their ecosophy is to see humans as part of the natural world and not as conquerors (Kingsnorth & Hine, 2009). Somewhere in the middle between these two poles, the Deep Ecology Movement (e.g., Drenegson & Inoue, 1995) recognises the worth of both biological and non-biological entities that constitute the environment, thus placing value on humans, animals, plants, but also ecosystems and habitats beyond their value for the subsistence of human beings (Stibbe, 2015, p. 13). Thus, the recognition of the value of ecosystems may encourage other human beings to support and protect all life forms, including humans.

3. Methodology and data

The *Principles of Practice* (PoP) is a collection of rules that regulate the activity of foragers who join the AoF. It is organised as a numbered list of brief sentences, which constitutes the text under analysis. The text is publicly available online on the AoF webpage in a dedicated section. In keeping with the methods of ecostylistic analysis, I operated a close reading of the text, with the aim of analysing the linguistic choices, both at a lexical and syntactic level. The relevant aspects that are discussed in the current analysis arise from a comparison with previous findings in ecolinguistic and ecostylistic literature, as well as from cognitive linguistic theories. Although the text is rather short (987 words), it collects the guidelines that regulate the practice of foragers. While in other areas of the world, for instance, Italy and France, the activity of foraging is regulated by the law, British foragers have organised themselves independently to develop their own set of rules of practice, by which members abide upon joining the association. This offers a valuable opportunity for the researcher to evaluate their attitudes towards the environment in a bottom-up approach, and to describe the internal point of view of members of the Association on their activities, which are not regulated by external and/or state institutions, rather by the members themselves. The analysis based on linguistic choices are complemented by information retrieved through unstructured interviews in the form of emails with Mark Williams, one of the leading figures for the British foraging movement, and current president of the AoF. The integration of this type of data shed light on the writing process of the PoP, and on the cultural context in which this developed. Another source of data was the online blog *Galloway Wild Foods*, written and directed by Mark Williams. Data coming from this source were used to illustrate some of the points of the PoP.

4. Principles of Practice

The text analysed in the chapter was accessed online in April 2024. It was updated in March 2019, but as stated in the text itself, it is likely that future versions will be published. Williams explains that the first impetus towards the writing of the PoPs emerged from close collaboration between foragers Mark Williams and Monica Wilde, with input from Miles Irving (who however would not intervene in the wording of the PoP). This process was motivated by a need to counter negative media portrayals of foraging and proposed foraging bans. Initial drafts were informed by informal discussions within a small community of foragers, mainly through social media. Although Wilde drafted the PoPs, Williams revised them to ensure they aligned with the diverse views of the group. Currently, the PoPs continue to evolve and serve as a foundational guide for responsible foraging practices and community engagement (Williams, personal communication, 15 October 2024). The diverse nature of the original input in the drafting process may motivate the multifaceted characteristics of the text, such as pronoun-shifting and changes in style.

The text consists of five main sections, each of which is further divided into points. The five sections are titled «Principles», «Towards Best Foraging Practice», «Safety», «Legality and Compliance», and «Considerate Foraging». The discussion follows this division. Each section is divided into subsections, and each principle is numbered individually. For instance, the section «Principles» contains five subsections: 1.1, 1.2, etc., each corresponding to a different Principle. In the following paragraphs I report relevant excerpts of text as numbered examples following an independent numbering sequence. However, within the example I report the original numbering system between [square brackets] for the sake of completion.

4.1 Principles

In the first section of the document, the AoF describes the general Principles that should be followed by its members. The first point reports:

1. [1.1] The Association of Foragers sees foraging playing an increasing important role supporting, promoting and defending the health of all plants, fungi, algae, animals (including humans) and the habitats/environments in which they exist.

The activity of foraging is conceptualised as having a positive impact on the health of different life forms. This is achieved by focusing on the positive consequences that this activity has on the health of wildlife species and their habitats. The two Noun Phrases that function as object of the preposition *of* are coordinated by the conjunction *and*, which allows a reading in which both the biological species mentioned and their ecological niches have equal importance. The stacking of VPs *supporting, promoting and defending* strengthens the idea of the positive impact of the activity on the environment, using a tripartite structure that suggests diverse but coordinated actions. The inclusion of *humans* as a subset of *animals* evokes an ecocentric perspective and a biocentric construal of the world. Moreover, this specification occurs within brackets, thus using the syntax of the sentence to signal a secondary role. The order of mention of wildlife in the list reverses the traditional conceptual order based on the Great Chain of Beings (Kövecses, 2001, p. 156), in which humans are on top of animals and plants. The inclusion of fungi in the list is noteworthy, and arguably motivated by the importance that the species in this kingdom of life have in the array of foraged goods. Fungi are often neglected and not mentioned in the list of wildlife that needs protection (Busby, 2023; Martin 2024). The urge for inclusion of mushrooms among endangered wildlife has pushed a group of mycologists to propose the term *Funga* to be used alongside *Flora* and *Fauna* (Kuhar *et al.*, 2018). The point lists *algae* separately from *plants*. Although algae are biologically

part of the kingdom of Plants, they are mentioned separately in the list because they represent an important asset for foragers who live by the Ocean (Łuczaj *et al.*, 2021, p. 8).

The second point of the first section (2) states that:

2. [1.2] The Association of Foragers recognises the ecological interconnectivity of all species [...]

A key element in the ecocentric and biocentric construal of all species reported in (2) is the instantiation of the LIFE IS A WEB metaphor by the lexical item *interconnectivity*. This conceptual metaphor construes all species living on earth as an entangled whole resembling a web, thus evoking a horizontal image schema. This view is in stark contrast with the frame evoked by the Great Chain of Being, which revolves around a vertical and hierarchical structure in which some life forms dominate the others. The web metaphor is frequently deployed to represent fungal ecology, as these organisms create an interconnected web in the soil of forests credited with fostering communication among trees. This notion has captured the interest of broad audiences as the Wood Wide Web (see Bagli, 2023; but see Karst *et al.* 2023 for a critical evaluation).

The second point of the first section (3) continues by listing the practical aims of the AoF:

3. [1.2] [...] and seeks to spread knowledge, understanding and best foraging practice in a move towards more diverse and resilient food systems and land use.

The AoF aims to educate the public regarding the activity of foraging, with the goal of changing the current state of affairs in food systems and environment use. The Prepositional Phrase *in a move*, followed by the adverb *towards* instantiates the entrenched metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION. It showcases the necessity of change, and it conceptualises the result of the change as a destination to be reached. Thus, the usage of

the construction *in a move towards* represents an example of fictive motion (Talmy, 2018). The goal is syntactically realised as two coordinated Noun Phrases, which highlight the equal importance of wild species and the land. In this point, the AoF takes a more anthropocentric view, as the goal of the change is the creation of *food systems* and *land use*, both of which presuppose the benefits of humans. At the same time however, the pre-modifying adjectives *more diverse and resilient* also suggest an interest towards the environment and foraged species in a more ecocentric perspective: arguably, the goal that the AoF wishes to achieve is also profitable for the environment. The conceptualisation of *food* as a *system* (as opposed to *resources*) reinforces the interconnectivity of the parties and entities involved in the production and consumption of food. It superimposes an image schema of an entangled whole, in which food is created through the interaction of different actors. The adjective *diverse* construes foraging as a valid alternative to traditional ways of accessing food.

The adjective *resilient* also contributes to an ecocentric conceptualisation. The first meaning provided by the OED for the adjective *resilient* is marked as currently obsolete, but it is revealing of the meaning that it has in this context: «Rebounding, recoiling, returning to the original position» (OED, *resilient*, adj. † 1.a). This lexical item is a borrowing from Latin, and it originally referred to the property of an object to acquire its shape after having undergone a certain amount of physical stress. In its metaphorical, extended use, it came to mean «Of a person, the mind, etc.: tending to recover quickly or easily from misfortune, shock, illness, or the like; buoyant, irrepressible; adaptable, robust, hardy» (OED, *resilient*, 3), and even «resistant, not susceptible to» (OED, *resilient*, 4). This adjective has become frequent in the last decades especially in ecological discourses to describe the property of ecosystems to undergo environmental stress without major damage for their survival (De Montis *et al.*, 2019).

The third point of the first section (4) states the view of the AoF about humans and their role in ecology, and it clearly addresses the issue of anthropocentrism:

4. [1.3] Members see humans as ‘a part of nature’ rather than ‘apart from nature’, and believe that is only through engaging with nature in practical and meaningful ways that we can truly support it.

The usage of the pun «a part»/«apart» attracts the attention of the reader, and it discloses the ecocentric view that members of the AoF promote. Although the conceptualisation of humans as belonging to the natural world was hinted at in the first point (with the usage of the parenthetical PP headed by *including*), this perspective becomes explicit in the third point: humans entertain a relationship of continuity with the natural world. In the second part of the third point, the AoF suggests that the only way of supporting nature is through an active engagement with the environment in practical and meaningful ways. The lexical items *engaging with* evoke a relational frame between nature and the members, which are later conceptualised as a general *we*. The choice of the first-person plural pronoun construes the readers as a bounded whole belonging to the category of humans, and it creates empathy with the reader, who is automatically conceptualised as being part of that group. The repeated usage of the verb *to support* creates a parallelism between this point and the first (see ex. 1), thus suggesting that *foraging* helps engage with nature in *practical and meaningful* ways. The choice of this couple of adjectives is a further reference to the activity of foraging, which is *practical* because it is a real past time and activity carried out by members, and it is *meaningful* because it fosters deep knowledge to reach a specific purpose. Thus, the practice of *foraging* contributes to the restoration of the relationship between humans and nature, and foragers see themselves as *part of nature* and not severed from it. This strong commitment to the natural world highlights the ecocentric perspective that the AoF maintains.

The fourth point of the first section (5) defines the position of the AoF regarding its members, and it states that

5. [1.4] The Association of Foragers is an inclusive members organisation, opposed to discrimination and prejudice, not least because

it divides rather than unites. All people, whether members of the Association or members of the general public, have a right to be treated with respect for their diversity and to participate in activities that do not discriminate against them on grounds of age, disability, neurodiversity, ethnicity, nationality, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender or gender reassignment. The Association of Foragers does not regard prejudicial language or comments about people on the grounds of age, disability, neurodiversity, ethnicity, nationality, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender or gender reassignment, as acceptable behaviour among its members.

Members of the AoF define themselves as inclusive and anti-discriminatory, and value unity instead of division. The point enumerates the categories of people with Protected Characteristics as listed by the Equality and Human Rights commission, and it includes *neurodiversity* as one of the Protected Characteristics by the Association. In so doing, the AoF explicitly shows their support and commitment to social justice, and fight against social inequality. Notably, the list is repeated twice, thus creating a foregrounding effect of its elements through parallelism (Nørgard, Montoro & Busse, 2010, p. 95). Crucially, these principles apply not only to its members, but also to members of the public who may take part in the activities of the AoF.

The final point of the first section (6) clarifies that:

6. [1.5] Members of the Association of Foragers sign up to these Principles of Practice when joining the organisation. Abiding by these Principles is a condition of continued membership.

Therefore, the above principles should be considered as valid for each member of the AoF, except for the attitudes expressed in the fourth point (ex. 5), which instead apply also to the everyone, and not just the AoF's members.

4.2 Towards Best Foraging Practice

The second section of the document is entitled «Towards Best Foraging Practice», and it contains five points. The preposition *towards* in the title of the paragraph reinforces the idea that the set of practices listed in the text is a goal to be attained in the future. The points in this section contain the first person plural pronoun *we*, which contributes to the construal of the members of the AoF as a community of people. The first point states:

7. [2.1] The Association of Foragers share the same objective of Article 1 of the internationally ratified Convention on Biodiversity (1992): «The conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources».

The Convention on Biodiversity is a document developed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and signed by 150 government leaders and which is aimed at protecting wildlife globally, through a strategy of «sustainable development». The quotation from the Convention on Biodiversity gives social and political credit to the AoF and strengthens their commitment to the conservation of biodiversity. The choice of lexical items operated by the authors of the original text represents a considerable change of perspective from the points expressed so far by foragers. The conceptualisation of nature and the environment that emerges from (7) is strongly anthropocentric, as evidenced by lexical items such as *use of its components*, *benefits*, *utilisation*, *resources*. These conceptualisation strategies are typically retrieved in texts that construe nature as an economic resource, in which plants and animals are seen as goods that exist for the unique benefit of humans and do not have a right to exist outside exploitative dynamics. Therefore, although the intention of the text is to promote sustainability and the conservation of biodiversity, the underlying frame that emerges from the lexical items mentioned suggests ideals of unlimited economic growth, consumerism, and ex-

ploitation for human benefits (Dregson & Inoue, 1995, p. xix). The activity of foraging, despite being framed as a sustainable and positive activity, may be inherently anthropocentric: the main focus of traditional foraging practices is that of obtaining sustenance directly from natural systems. Yet, the text of the PoP consistently deploys linguistic structures aimed at framing the activity of foraging as beneficial for the environment, thus highlighting its positive impact while moving the focus away from the negative ones. The emergence of a different perspective in point [2.1] (ex. 7) instantiates a case of foregrounding via deviation: the point of view expressed here deviates from the general point of view of the text, thus making this principle more salient than the others. Nevertheless, the anthropocentric perspective is mitigated by more positive adjectives such as *sustainable*, *fair*, and *equitable*.

The second point advocates for the creation of a relational network between all the parties involved in the practice of foraging:

8. [2.2] In so doing, we work safely and within the law to develop knowledge and relationships between all interested parties to find best foraging practice through shared experience, research and collaboration.

This point addresses the legal limits and the goals of the AoF's activities. The use of the first person plural pronoun contributes to the creation of a communal identity. The reference to safety and the law is vague and underspecified: the legal status of foraging is ambiguous in the UK, as there are no straightforward and all-encompassing laws across the country that explicitly regulate this activity. The text reinforces the aims of the AoF (see point [1.2], ex. 3), while adding a reference to *shared experience, research and collaboration* between its members and all interested parties. The lexical items *shared* and *collaboration* evoke a construal that highlights a communicative network based on the exchange of information. Arguably, the sharing of different experiences among members of the AoF contributes to the creation of a favourable

cultural milieu for the development of a sound tradition of wild food knowledge that has been lost in the UK over the centuries.

The point [2.3] reported in (9) further elaborates on the regulations for foraging:

9. [2.3] We recognise each individual species that is foraged and each location in which foraging takes place requires its own set of skills. In this respect it is impractical and undesirable to impose a comprehensive set of rules.

The AoF recognises that it is impossible to define an all-encompassing list of rules to regulate foraging, as these may vary not only on legal grounds, but they also depend on the specificity of the foraged species. The use of the adjective *each*, paired with *individual* and repeated to qualify *location* encourages the recognition of the dignity of wild species, which are conceptualised individually and not as a general whole. The syntactic coordination between *species* and *location* is achieved through the repetition of *each* and through the conjunction *and*, and it buttresses the importance of the connection between life forms and their habitats, and the need to respect and protect both. The choice of the lexical item *rules* (as opposed to *law* mentioned in the previous point) suggests that the focus here is not on legality, rather on practical rules of conduct on how to harvest individual species. For instance, Williams (2011) addresses the issue of mushroom picking vs. cutting from the ground in one of his blog posts.

The fourth point of the second section (10) introduces the notion of *observation* of wild species, thus connecting the activity of foraging to an active engagement in preservation and conservation:

10. [2.4] We undertake to observe how species respond to harvesting methods. Where a harvesting method is beneficial or neutral to a species and/or location we will share that knowledge among interested parties and other foragers. Similarly, in the event of a

particular harvesting technique proving detrimental to a species and/or location, we will alter our practice accordingly and share that knowledge among interested parties and other foragers.

Observing the reaction of different species to foraging highlights the commitment to sustainability undertaken by the AoF. In this point, the ecocentric perspective is realised through the double coordinator *and/or*, which establishes equal importance both to species and the land. Notably, the AoF recognises that their activities may damage the environment as severely as wild species, thus evoking a frame in which habitats are necessary for survival. The point distinguishes harvesting methods according to their impact: *beneficial* or *neutral* methods shall be shared across the community, while *detrimental* methods shall be modified. An example of a beneficial method for harvesting wild mushrooms is suggested by Williams (2011) in his blog, and reported in (11):

11. Collect mushrooms into a basket or porous cloth bag that will allow spores to disperse as you move – not a plastic bag.

Neutral methods of harvesting consist in picking species that are very abundant and/or detrimental to other species, such as *honey fungus*, or non-native species like *Japanese knotweed* (Williams, 2021).

The final point of the second section (12) clarifies the evolving nature of the document:

12. [2.5] As our understanding of best practice with regard to species and locations is constantly evolving, so will this document. We welcome constructive, evidence-based discussion and dialogue on general principles, specific species and distinct locations with all interested parties.

The AoF is committed to review and evaluate the set of practices adopted by its members, keeping in mind the importance of species-spec-

ificity and individual locations. The use of the modal verb *will* in the clause *so will this document* testifies to the voluntary nature of the statement, thus imposing a construal of fluidity and growth on the practice of foraging. The text juxtaposes the adjective *general* to the couple of its antonyms *specific/distinct* in a tripartite structure in which the elements follow the same syntactic combination [Adj+N]. Arguably, the repetition of the same sequence [Adj+N], coupled with the alliteration at a phonetic level (in *specific species*) foregrounds the structure both syntactically and phonetically, thus being more likely to attract the attention of the reader. Finally, the coordinated structure highlights the attention given to both living entities and their habitats, and it suggests that the AoF can take care of individual species while modifying general principles of practice.

4.3 Safety

The third section of the PoP is concerned with Safety measures. In this series of points, the AoF stresses the importance of recognition of the foraged species, so to avoid misidentification and potential risks for the health and safety of the consumer. The focus of this section is on humans and their health. The first point (13) is concerned with the correct identification of species:

13. [3.1] Members teach that it is essential to be 100% confident of identification before eating any species. If we are not sure ourselves, we are not afraid to admit it honestly and err on the side of safety.

Identification of the species may be tricky, and it is essential to be sure before consumption to avoid major damage to human health. The risk of poisoning and/or intoxication due to incorrect identification of the species is common, especially for species that are sometimes distinguished only by minor details. This is particularly evident in the kingdom of mushrooms, some of which are notorious for containing

poisonous and often fatal toxins. As noted by one of the reviewers, the main subject of the two sentences shifts from the third person plural (*members*) to first person plural (*we*). While the syntactic shift in the choice of the pronouns may be tied to the multifaceted development of the original text, I argue that it may have a stylistic validity. The first-person pronoun construes the members of the Association as a community and shifts the point of view from external to internal, thus contributing to the creation of a friendly and trustworthy authorial voice from a peer member of the Association, as opposed to an authoritative, external voice.

The second point (14) addresses issues of edibility and allergies:

14. [3.2] Teachers and suppliers will take reasonable measures to understand and pass on relevant information on species edibility and allergy advice, [sic] to interested parties.

According to Williams (2014), *edibility* should be thought of as a spectrum, and foraged species may be distributed on a cline from *toxic* to *tasty*. Thus, for instance, some species are deadly (e.g., *hemlock*, *death cap*), some species are inedible but good for medicinal uses (e.g., *turkeytail*), some species are edible only at specific stages of growth (e.g., *lesser celandine*), other species are edible only after cooking (e.g., *blusher*), others may react with alcohol (e.g., *common inkcap*), others may cause adverse reactions in some people despite being usually described as perfectly edible and tasty (e.g., *wood blewits*). Members of the AoF should be aware of these differences and adjust their suggestions accordingly.

The third point of the section is reported in (15):

15. [3.2] [sic] Members who pick commercially will never supply anything that they are not 100% confident is correctly identified and, [sic] is regarded within current research, [sic] as safe to consume.

This point addresses members that make a profit out of foraging, so to avoid major inconveniences in the growing market of wild-food commodities. The respect of these Principles encourages buyers (such as restaurants) to rely on professional foragers who are members of the AoF, who will abide by these principles. Foragers, in turn, are encouraged to subscribe to the AoF, as the principles of safety may represent an asset in the market of foraged goods. The reference to «current research» encourages foragers to be always up to date with new scientific discoveries and insights that may change their practice. The repeated numbering and the grammar mistakes suggest that this point was added later to the list, and that it may be one of the points that awaits revision.

The final point (16) expands on the need of updated scientific information:

16. [3.3] Members will do their best to be well informed on current best practice and any peer reviewed science relating to our activities, and welcome research and experience-based opinion.

Interestingly, this point equals official peer-reviewed findings with personal research and experience-based opinions, thus reinforcing the need for shared practices and a relational network of people who regularly forage. The equation of these two points highlights the bottom-up approach to knowledge sponsored by the association, while safeguarding the health and safety of members. The use of the verb *welcome* suggests the openness of the members to discussion and exchange of experiences.

4.4 Legality and Compliance

The fourth section is concerned with the legal aspects of the practice. It consists of four points, which do not explicitly refer to ecology but regulate the social aspect of the activity, thus stressing the importance of the human experience of foraging.

The first point [4.1] in 17 is written using the first-person plural pronoun, thus marking another syntactic shift in the main subject of the sentences that constitute the points of the PoP¹. It addresses issues of legality:

17. [4.1] We uphold the laws of the land that we forage in regardless of which country we are in and all members undertake to know and abide by the relevant laws of the country they are foraging in.

The legal status of foraging changes from country to country, and each member is responsible for their activities and for complying with the current law while harvesting. The guidelines and legislation that regulate foraging change greatly across countries, as exemplified by the variety of different laws across Europe for mushroom picking (Peintner *et al.*, 2013).

The following points [4.2], [4.3], and [4.4] address general issues related to food processing and organisation of events, encouraging members to have appropriate insurance, first aid and food hygiene certifications. The final point [4.4] extends these concerns also to products made from foraged species. Considering the focus of the chapter on the ecosophy of the AoF, these points are not discussed in detail.

4.5 Considerate Foraging

The final section of the document explicitly addresses issues of food sustainability. The usage of the adjective *considerate* imposes a frame in which humans are called to consider the different aspects of the activity, thus suggesting that decisions on what is appropriate to forage

¹ The shift of syntactic subjects across the points of the text may be related to the multiple authors that contributed to its development.

cannot be judged once and forever, rather it is a matter of continuous assessment and judgement.

The first point of the final section (18) reports:

18. [5.1] We teach that the interests of foragers and the species that they forage are aligned, and that foraging should always be carried out in ways that do not compromise future species populations or the biological communities of which they are part.

The first lexical item of this point is the pronoun *we*, which functions as subject of the verb *teach*. The image schema of linear path motivates the use of the past participle *aligned*, which suggests that the interests of both humans and wild species are not in conflict, as they run towards the same direction. The ecocentric view of the AoF emerges clearly from this point, which stresses the importance of safeguarding the interests of wild species. The coordinating syntactic structure reinforces the interconnected nature of the two poles of the relationship. The coordinated lexical items *populations* and *communities* construe biological entities as human beings, thus reinforcing the crucial importance of ecology in considerate harvesting.

In the second point (19), the AoF extends the consideration for other species to humans:

19. [5.2] Further to ecological considerations, when foraging or teaching about foraging, we also consider other interested parties (including other foragers) that may value a species/location. Where possible we seek to open dialogue, collaborate and advance our understanding of species/locations, with a view to finding best practice.

The inclusion of other human beings in the list of considerate foraging practice is a crucial turning point in the conceptualisation of foraging, and it highlights the aim of creating a community of people who are

interested in the same practice. The coordination of the verb phrases *open dialogue*, *collaborate* and *advance our understanding* reinforces the equal status of distinct entities interested in reaching the same objective. The progression of the verbs follows the expected progression of the social act of cooperation through dialogue, collaboration, and communal understanding.

In the third point, the AoF welcomes the development of *site-specific management plans* and *harvesting rotations*, i.e., the selective harvesting of species based on their availability and past harvesting practice. This rotation in the collection of wild food can only be attained through an attentive observation and consequent knowledge of the environment.

The fourth point (20) provides general principles to regulate the techniques of harvesting:

20. [5.4] We undertake that all species will be harvested using techniques that do not cause permanent or irrevocable damage to them, their future survival and the environments in which they exist [sic.]

The syntactic strategy deployed is that of coordination, which highlights the equal importance of wild species, their survival in the future, and the safeguarding of environments. The following point further elaborates on the need for respect already expressed in the second point (see 19), but it extends even further:

21. [5.5] Members will be respectful, encouraging and supportive of other members and anyone practising foraging.

The explicit mention of «anyone» who practices foraging as worthy of respect blurs the implicit difference between members of the Association and other foragers, thus evoking a universal construal of the practice and promoting openness, dialogue, and discussion with everybody.

In the sixth point, the AoF calls for attention towards harmful foraging practices and encourages discussion and dialogue with the aim of challenging that behaviour. In the final point of the PoP, the value of respect is discussed in terms of other members of the AoF. In particular, it discusses the regulation of overlapping interests in specific zones:

22. [5.7] [...] Where we share a common public space, our activities many [sic] bring us into competition with each other, and where we overlap, we will do so with consideration for one another's livelihoods.

The inclusion of this final call for respect in face of competition plays an ambivalent role. On one hand, it encourages mutual understanding (but not cooperation) in the face of likely competition among members over «a common public space». On the other hand, the final point misses to mention the interest of wildlife and foraged species. Although the interconnectivity of these two poles of the relationship has been made evident throughout the text, the final point makes explicit reference only to the interests of humans, thus implicitly suggesting that in case of overlapping interest among members, the aspects that prevail are those relevant for humans.

5. Discussion

The text that I analysed in this paper contains a list of Principles of Practice that members of the Association of Foragers abide by when joining the Association. It aims at regulating the correct behaviour of a forager and establishes the values of the members. This list of principles was developed by the same people who are going to respect them, and it is not imposed on the members from an external institution (such as the state or other forms of legal organisations). The document is likely to change in the future, following scientific breakthroughs and usage-based experiences from the members. The changing nature of

the text reflects the evolving and multifaceted experience of foraging, based on open discussion among its members and communities, and on attentive observation of the effects that foraging may have on the environment. Thus, the construal that emerges from the text is that of an active, dynamic, and evolving relationship between humans, wild species, and the environment in which they exist, guided by respect for both fellow human beings and other-than-human entities.

Although foraging is the practice of obtaining sustenance and food from natural and wild resources, the impact that this activity has on the environment is not necessarily negative or detrimental. The ecosophy that emerges from the text analysed is largely ecocentric, and it always takes into consideration the needs of wild species and the land. From a syntactic point of view, this is mainly achieved through coordination with the conjunction *and*, but it is sometimes realised by the double conjunction *and/or* (10). The text alternates between the first and the third person plural pronoun, thus making the point of view shift from internal to external. The first-person pronoun usually fosters empathy between the writer and the reader, and it may prove more beneficial towards the creation of a community and a network of people. Crucially, the ecosophy of the association does not only promote respect for wild species and their habitats, but also for other foragers who may or may not be part of the association. The specific mentioning of other people contributes to the creation of a friendly and open relational network, to which foragers may feel they belong, thus fostering the development and restoration of a bulk of traditional knowledge that has been lost in the UK.

The role of human beings in nature is traditionally conceptualised as hierarchical. The conceptualisation that emerges from the text instead is mainly horizontal, as evidenced by the use of metaphors and image schemas that evoke this dimension. For instance, the choice of the web metaphor of life in (2) or the linear path schema instantiated by *aligned* in (18) suggest that humans and wild species are equally important. This is explicitly stated in the third point of the first section

(4), where members position themselves as «a part of nature» and not «apart from» it.

The points reported in (7) and (22) instantiate an anthropocentric perspective according to which wildlife and wild habitats are conceptualised for human benefit. Notably, point [2.1] in (7) contains a direct quote from another, independent document, thus it does not necessarily reflect the spirit and intentions of the association. Duly, this is one of the points that is currently being rewritten, and it will likely change (Williams, personal communication, 15 October 2024).

6. Conclusion

The present paper has presented and discussed the emerging linguistic conceptualisation of foraging, a practice that bridges the need for more sustainable food systems with spending time outdoors. This activity is gaining momentum in the UK, and it has also attracted criticism related to its ecological sustainability and safety. British foragers have constituted an association that regulates their behaviour and activities, so to address major issues and allegations from the public. The theoretical and methodological approach that I adopted is that of ecostylistics, a recent branch of linguistics that combines ecolinguistics and stylistics, with the aim of analysing and critiquing the stance of a text towards the environment.

The ecostylistic analysis of the Principles of Practice that I carried out has highlighted the strong commitment of the Association towards the environment and the lives of all individuals on the planet. This includes populations of wild species and their habitats, but also human beings who live and dwell in the same environment, and who will rely on these species for their survival, trying to achieve a harmonious and eco-friendly relationship. This relationship is sometimes construed as beneficial for the species foraged: for instance, humans may help disperse the spore of mushrooms, or contain the populations of non-native species that may become invasive in a new environment.

The activity of foraging is framed as a way of connecting with nature, thus restoring a relationship that has been severed in heavily industrialised countries such as the UK. This is particularly evident in the commitment to an attentive observation of the health of the species foraged, and to the evolution and changing of the principles and rules of harvesting in case any of these methods should prove detrimental for the species foraged.

Overall, the attitude that emerges from the Principles of Practice places the environment at the centre of their attention, while maintaining the importance of respect for all life forms, including humans, in a mutually beneficial relationship of continuous observation and care. Although the activity of harvesting wild food may seem detrimental for the environment, the principles listed in the document explicitly sponsor a sustainable way of living on natural means, thus bypassing industrial food systems and subsequent threats to biodiversity and habitat loss. Thus, the activities of foragers are inspired and moved by an ecocentric ecosophy, and do not seem to represent a threat to the well-being of nature and the land. The evolution of the movement, including the number of people involved in this endeavour, represent a critical variable for establishing the real sustainability and impact on the environment.

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- Busby 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/30/flora-fauna-and-funga-un-backs-new-term-for-conservation-discussions>

Horton 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/may/13/excessive-foraging-for-wild-garlic-and-mushrooms-in-uk-a-risk-to-wildlife>

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Online resources

Association of Foragers website, <https://foragers-association.org>

Association of Foragers Principle of Practice, <https://foragers-association.org/principles>

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When Italy is «like a big kitchen where healthy flavours and pleasures are created»: figurative meaning and Made-in-Italy agrifood products

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1. Introduction

The concept of Made in Italy encapsulates a multifaceted phenomenon that extends far beyond the objective geographical aspect, as it embodies a complex interplay of craftsmanship, industrial production, and national identity. Originating in post-World War II Italy, this idea has evolved into an unmistakable symbol of quality, tradition, and craftsmanship, influencing not only consumer preferences but also shaping global perceptions of Italy and its culture (Fortis, 1998; Beccattini, 2007; Bucci, Codeluppi & Ferraresi, 2011; Bertoli & Resciniti, 2013a, 2013b). From a non-Italian customer's perspective, the concepts embedded in the expression Made-in-Italy revolve around the idea that Italian production is a sign of uniqueness, perfection and tradition, recognising the product not only as a mere commodity but as a perfect fusion of 'Italianicity' (De Nisco & Mainolfi, 2016).

Hence, the four areas of Italian production which have obtained even greater attention in the international arena recently are generally summarized with the Italian expression '4A': Alimentari-vini (agri-food products), Abbigliamento-moda (fashion industry), Arredamento-casa (furniture and design) and Automazione-meccanica (factory automation). As shown by the data, Italy is the world's leader in the manufac-

turing of a huge number of goods, so that Italian exports have rapidly increased throughout the years (Carbone, Henke & Pozzolo, 2015).

Drawing attention to the first area, agri-food products, the promotion of Italian products worldwide has increased during the recent decades¹, thanks to producers' intentions to export products and to the spread of digital communication (Carbone & Henke, 2023). In this sense, even small- and medium-sized companies have felt the need to enter new markets and make their products famous around the world. As a consequence, local brands that were only considered by Italian customers have started to become popular with non-Italian audiences, who have recognised their quality and uniqueness².

In line with these premises, the primary objective of the project supporting the present article, which started in 2018, was to better understand how linguistic and sociocultural elements function in the promotional discourse of Italian agri-food products marketed internationally, focusing on the way in which Italian producers advertise, and thus promote, their products worldwide. The analysis conducted so far on a corpus consisting of approximately 600 websites producing and selling Italian typical food and beverages internationally (i.e., wine, vinegar, beer, oil, pasta, grains, coffee, meat, dairy products, fruit and

¹ Solazzo, R., Borsotto, P., Castellotti, T., De Maria, F. & Romeo Lironcurti, S., 2024. Il commercio con l'estero dei prodotti agroalimentari. CREA. <https://www.crea.gov.it/web/politiche-e-bioeconomie/-/rapporto-commercio-estero-prodotti-agroalimentari>

² This is based on the results obtained during the second part of the project in which 30 Italian producers were interviewed by the author of this contribution. The producers, who made themselves available to be interviewed, confirmed that even small- and medium-sized companies have also recognized the international market as an excellent opportunity to expand their sales. Addressing a less aware public than the Italian one, producers have decided to emphasize the qualities of the products and where they come from.

vegetables, chocolate and confectionery products)³, has demonstrated that promotional strategies have mainly emphasized prominence to two complex concepts: Made in Italy and Country-of-Origin Effect (De Filippis, 2012; Bertoli & Resciniti, 2013a; Kelly-Holmes, 2016).

In the first phase of the study, the linguistic analysis, supported by both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, has allowed us to identify the most frequent terms used in the corpus and the linguistic patterns in which they frequently occur. In the second stage, data have been interpreted and contextualized to investigate the way in which these words appear to enhance the ideas related to Made in Italy and the Country-of-Origin Effect, and thus positively influence prospective non-Italian customers. Findings demonstrate that the skilful use of lexical choices emphasizing Italian typical characteristics and different linguistic strategies used to make storytelling effectively contribute to highlighting the ‘Italianicity’ of the agrifood products, which are not only chosen for their outstanding quality, but are also chosen because they embody a set of Italian identity characteristics, which blend cultural, historical, climatic, and family culinary traditions.

The analysis of the descriptive passages shows that the narrative underlying the promotion of the agri-food products aims to give prominence to the key ideas promoted by Made-in-Italy, i.e., a) authenticity, which matches with the sets of Italian tradition which include beliefs, values, and customs that belong to Italian people, b) quality, which casts a spotlight on the Italian drive for excellence, and c) handcrafted manufacturing, which contributes to describing the experts’ devotion to their work.

³ With 269,546 tokens, the Agri-Food-Pro Corpus includes the English version of the descriptive sections of 629 Italian agri-food products websites, i.e., passages entitled ‘history’, ‘family’, ‘(our) company’ and similar explanatory sections.

An examination of lexical choices and their linguistic context in use has revealed that the promotional narrative of the website calls customers' attention to the uncontaminated, natural, Italian landscapes and the magnificence of historical treasures, representing Italy as a place of spiritual rebirth where the anxieties of the hectic present give way to a regenerating bucolic past, in which the agricultural tradition complements everyday life. Within this framework the family-owned firms sell products, which are not just 'produced', but they are the perfect result of production processes carefully improved throughout decades and transmitted from generation to generation. Thanks to the quality of raw materials and producers' devotion to their work, Italian products are presented as unique items (Corrizzato, 2018, 2019).

In addition to these aspects aiming at reinforcing the ideas underneath Made-in-Italy, the analysis of the corpus has revealed a number of recurring storytelling strategies which contribute to telling the biography of Italian families' members. The founders of the companies are always called by their proper names, as they were the well-known protagonists of a popular story, depicted as heroes whose role has been to create a productive microcosmos in which everyone, even strangers can find relief and feel at home. Even in this case, the notion of time, which always tends to echo a perfect past in which people lived a bucolic life, is used to share the founders' experiences and their strong dedication to their activity (Bettiol, 2015; Corrizzato, 2021).

Considering that the aforementioned studies have focused on the non-figurative linguistic dimensions, e.g., lexical patterns, concordances, and use of adjectives, the present study aims to build on to previous research investigating the role figurative language has within the promotion of agri-food products around the world, to understand how it, specifically metaphors and similes, contributes to promoting concepts related to Made in Italy and its products, and how metaphors and similes can convince prospective customers to choose Italian products (Morgan & Reichert, 1999; Ambler & Tellis, 2007; Abuczki, 2009; Septianto, Pontes & Tjiptono, 2021).

2. The study

2.1 Theoretical framework

Figurative language, specifically metaphors and similes, is a pervasive and powerful element of human language and thought, extending far beyond its traditional role in poetry and literature. At its core, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, suggesting a resemblance or analogy (Honeck & Hoffman, 1980; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This linguistic mechanism allows individuals to comprehend and articulate complex ideas and experiences by relating them to more familiar concepts (Thibodeau, Matlock & Flusberg, 2019).

The study of metaphors has gained significant attention across various academic disciplines, including linguistics, cognitive science, psychology, and communication studies. Central to this interest is the understanding that metaphors are not merely decorative language tools but fundamental to cognitive processes and communication practices. Metaphors, indeed, function on multiple levels: they simplify complex concepts, making them more accessible and understandable; they influence attitudes and behaviours by framing issues in specific ways; and they reflect and propagate cultural norms and values.

Moreover, metaphors play a critical role in persuasive communication (Ottati & Renstrom, 2010). Political rhetoric, advertising, and everyday discourse often employ metaphors to sway opinions and evoke emotional responses (Charteris-Black, 2011). By framing an argument metaphorically, speakers can align abstract ideas with the audience's pre-existing knowledge and experiences, thereby enhancing the argument's impact and memorability.

The cognitive dimension of metaphors underscores their importance in learning and knowledge transfer. Educational research indicates that metaphors can facilitate comprehension and retention of new information by linking it to familiar schemas. This pedagogical

utility of metaphors highlights their relevance in instructional design and teaching methodologies (Cameron, 2003).

In addition to their cognitive and communicative functions, metaphors are deeply embedded in cultural contexts. They encapsulate shared beliefs, values, and historical experiences, offering insights into the collective psyche of a society. Comparative studies of metaphor usage across different languages and cultures reveal both universal patterns and unique cultural variations, contributing to our understanding of intercultural communication and translation.

In linguistics, metaphor analysis focuses on the ways in which abstract concepts are comprehended through more concrete experiences, as evidenced by the pervasive use of metaphorical language in everyday communication. For instance, the metaphor 'time is money' encapsulates the conceptualization of time as a valuable commodity, reflecting how human beings manage, save, and invest their time as they do with financial resources. This metaphorical mapping between the source domain of economics and the target domain of time reveals cultural values and cognitive patterns that prioritize efficiency and productivity. By examining such metaphors, linguists can uncover underlying cognitive structures and cultural attitudes, shedding light on how language shapes and reflects people's understanding of the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). Metaphor analysis thus becomes a critical tool in exploring the interplay between language, thought, and culture.

The analysis of metaphors in linguistics is underpinned by several influential theories, each offering unique insights into the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphorical language. Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), posits that metaphors are fundamental to human thought, structuring abstract concepts through concrete experiences via systematic mappings between source and target domains. Blending Theory, proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), extends this idea by focusing on the mental spaces and blending processes that generate new meanings and metaphors. Relevance Theory, introduced by Sperber and Wilson (1995), explores how metaphorical lan-

guage achieves communicative effectiveness by maximizing relevance through implicature. In addition to these ground-breaking theories, Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), influenced by Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, examines the ideological and power dimensions of metaphor usage in discourse, revealing how metaphors shape and reflect social structures and power relations (Charteris-Black, 2004).

In conclusion, figurative language serves as a powerful tool in both literature and everyday communication, enhancing the expressiveness and depth of the text. By employing metaphors, similes, personification, and other figures of speech, people can convey complex ideas, evoke vivid imagery, and elicit emotional responses from their audience. This use of imaginative language not only enriches the interlocutor's experience but also allows for a more profound connection to the material. Understanding and appreciating the nuances of figurative language is crucial for any reader or writer, as it opens up new dimensions of interpretation and meaning, ultimately contributing to the richness and diversity of linguistic expression.

2.2 Methodology

For the purpose of the present study, the analysis involves both a quantitative and qualitative approach, drawing on Corpus Linguistics and Discourse Analysis.

As anticipated in footnote 3, the corpus, which includes selected portions from 629 Italian agri-food product websites, comprises 269,546 tokens. The companies included are small- and medium-sized Italian enterprises, the majority of which are family-owned. From each website, specific introductory sections that would be relevant to the Made-in-Italy notion and the Country-of-Origin Effect were selected; for example, the corpus contained descriptive passages with the titles 'history', 'family' or '(our) company', and similar explanatory passages. In addition to being categorized by the company for whom they were written, the texts were also arranged based on the areas of expertise of each company. As a result, 11 sub-corpora – beer, coffee, dairy, fruit,

grocery, meat, olive oil, pasta, sweet, vinegar, and wine – were created and given names according to what was included in each one.

The sizes of the sub-corpora are summarized in the following table, together with the number of tokens and the proportion of tokens overall.

Sub-corpus	Tokens	Overall percentages
Wine	30,753	11.409
Vinegar	28,605	10.612
Coffee	27,585	10.234
Sweet	26,999	10.016
Grocery	25,990	9.642
Olive oil	25,130	9.323
Beer	23,677	8.784
Dairy	23,449	8.699
Pasta	21,837	8.101
Meat	18,492	6.860
Fruit	16,730	6.207

Table 1. Composition of the corpus

Even though it is commonly known that certain geographic regions play a unique role in the production of particular products, and that even fewer regions contribute to their distinctiveness, the Italian agri-food producers chosen for this study encompass the entire peninsula, which helps to provide a national analytical viewpoint.

Each text in the corpus has a code that includes the first three consonants of the company's name along with the macro-category of the products it offers (e.g., W stands for wine and P for pasta). History is represented by the hypernym H, which is used to denote the introductory classes that are under examination. This classification proved to be quite helpful given the volume of texts, since it allowed for the quick identification of both the product and the producer.

The study of the metaphors and similes included in the corpus involves three steps: in the first phase, the identification of linguistic patterns including figurative paths (Neuman *et al.*, 2013) was realized through the CQL function of the software for linguistic analysis Sketch Engine, as Table 2 shows:

Figure of speech	Grammatical patterns
Metaphors including the verb 'to be' (e.g., Beer is an art)	[tag='N.*'][tag='VB.'][tag='DT.*'] [tag='N.*']
Metaphors including other verbs (e.g., Brewery became the heartbeat of the company)	[tag='N.*'][tag='V.*'][tag='N.*']
Similes (e.g., Coffee grows like an art)	[tag='N.*'][tag='V.*']([lemma='like'] [tag='DT.*'])[tag='N.*']
Figurative associations with adjectives + nouns (e.g., Magical mountains)	[tag='J.*'][tag='N.*'] [tag='J.*']([lemma='and'] [tag='J.*'])[tag='N.*']

Table 2. Grammatical patterns identified through Sketch Engine

Drawing on the MIPVU procedure⁴ (Steen *et al.*, 2010), the data were manually filtered to identify the figurative associations portrayed within the corpus. As a result, similar grammatical patterns not sharing any metaphorical representation have been excluded from the second part of the analysis; likewise, metaphoric patterns not related to the representation of Italy, Italian producers, and their products have not been counted in the quantitative findings. In line with this perspective, commonly accepted collocations (e.g., *sweet home* or *strong taste*) have not been considered relevant to the purpose of the present study.

⁴ MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure VU Vrije Universiteit) is a systematic and transparent procedure for identifying linguistic metaphor. For a detailed explanation see Steen *et al.* (2010).

During the last phase of the project, the identification of the pre-dominant themes portrayed through the use of figurative language has been used as a starting point for the interpretation and contextualization of the metaphorical representations, investigating how they can contribute to the strengthening of the Country-of-Origin Effect or the modification of the image non-Italian customers have both of Italy and of Made-in-Italy products.

3. Results

Results reveal that figures of speech are frequently present within the descriptive sections of the websites, as Table 3 illustrates:

Grammatical pattern	Total occurrences	Occurrences including figurative language
Noun + verb 'to be' + (det.) noun	462	40
Noun + verb + (det.) noun	620	27
Adjective + noun	15770	14
Noun + verb + like + (det.) noun	12	7
Adjective + and + adjective + noun	613	1

Table 3. Occurrences of figurative language in the corpus

Within the corpus, it is possible to identify 40 metaphors constructed with the verb *to be*, as well as 27 metaphors in which different verbs appear. As the data show, the number of similes is significantly lower, with only 7 occurrences within the texts included in the analysis. As far as the pattern adjective + noun is concerned, the corpus shows a tendency towards descriptive adjectives, leaving less room for metaphorical paths, which appear 14 times, with only one occurrence of the pattern adjective + and + adjective + noun.

Considering the content of figurative representations, the metaphors and similes identified were subsequently subdivided according

to the types of analogies created; such a classification has allowed us to discover three different thematic areas: the comparison with art, the connection with tradition, expressed in the concept of family, and the experience as a journey.

3.1 Agri-food production as a creative form of art

The first thematic area that emerges from the reported data is that which associates production processes with a form of creative art. The description of agri-food product production explicitly evokes art and its secrets, as the following examples show:

1. **Blending is art** that Milani practices with dedication and craftsmanship. (CMLIH⁵)
2. **Olive cultivation is the expression of an art.** (OVDBH)
3. **Beer is an art.** (BMRNH)
4. **Roasting is an art** so this delicate process is monitored very closely because the roaster's skill can make all the difference. (CQAUH)

As the extracts demonstrate, the comparison with art is explicit, as the production of coffee, olive oil, and beer is portrayed as a form of art in which the process of making is visible and part of the work.

⁵ The examples have been categorised in the following way: the first letter stands for the product produced by the company (i.e., Wine (W), Vinegar (V), Coffee (C), Sweet (S), Grocery (G), Olive oil (O), Beer (B), Dairy (D), Pasta (P), Meat (M) and Fruit (F), the second three letters summarise the name of the Italian company and the final letter H identifies the section under consideration (in the case of this study, 'history' stands for the sections dedicated to the history of the company and the family).

What is worth noting is that, along with this, Italian producers are also compared to artists, who are able to mould raw material and create a unique and inimitable product.

5. Just **like a talented artist**, its beer master craftsman carves features and unique aromas, ingredient by ingredient, particule by particule. (BDLEH)

The natural talent of Italian producers echoes one of the key concepts of Made-in-Italy, which tends to emphasize the crucial function of the family, an environment in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation, and the secrets of the great-great-grandparents are jealously preserved to ensure that the products respect tradition. The producers' know-how, which dates back to the past, is also reflected in the renown products and recipes known worldwide; as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation highlights «Italy's legendary culinary culture dates back to antiquity and continues to inspire gastronomical trends around the world»⁶. This value is emphasized in the descriptive passages of the websites, as the following examples show:

6. The ability to recognise products of the highest quality **is an art** that has been handed down each generation in the Fapanni family. (FFPNH)
7. The tradition of the Acetaia in our family was and still is a lifestyle, **like a gene** which is transmitted from generation to generation. (VDGRH)

⁶ Agri-food. (n.d.). [madeinItaly.gov.it](https://madeinitaly.gov.it) by ITA. <https://madeinitaly.gov.it/agrifood/>.

8. Milk is then taken to the casello's tubs, where it will be transformed into Parmigiano Reggiano by the expert and knowledgeable hands of the Master Cheesemaker, **custodian of an ancient art** that has been handed from generation to generation for centuries. (DCSTH)

In this regard, producers describe the production steps as a creative act, so much so that the corpus contains frequent references to their role in the process, as in the case of this passage where the first person pronoun is used:

9. When people ask me where the boundary between work and art is, I answer **it is the last centimetre of skin on the little finger which stays attached to the ground.** (BBLDH)

This example contains an easily understandable metaphorical path, which aims to rework the more traditional conception of the figure of the artist in a general sense. Artists, traditionally detached from the responsibilities more related to the duties of everyday life, tend to lose their connection with reality. Keeping a fingertip to the floor means being able to strike a balance between artistic talent and work responsibilities.

3.2 Production and family ties

The indissoluble link with the past calls into play the second key concept of Made-in-Italy: family ties. The relationships among the members of the family are frequently represented within the corpus, and this helps readers immediately understand that family strength is one of the main elements from which Made-in-Italy products originate. The descriptive passages, indeed, highlight the fact that relationship qualities contribute to the emotional health and well-being of the family members, who turn their happiness into their passion for work. Interest-

ingly, figurative language within this context is used to describe products as part of the Italian family, as the following example demonstrates:

10. In short, it [coffee] is something familiar, **like a much-loved family member** whom we just cannot do without. (CZNTH)

In example 10, the simile transforms coffee into a human family member, of which the other members take care. It is worth noticing that personification is often used to describe products, which are seen as children.

11. We **take a lot of care of our grains**. (BSGRH)
12. We leave the house at the crack of dawn **to take care of our olive groves**. (OTRCH)
13. Italo begins **taking care of those vineyards** again, and thanks to its grapes he still continues to have an extraordinary cooked must. (VBTMH)
14. Grandfather Arturo, at the beginning of XX century, started **taking lovely care of wooden barrels** in which he produced. (VBNOH)
15. We consider our cheeses as **our living creatures**, and as such **we rear them** during their maturation phase, enhancing their great qualities with exquisite ageing methods. (DPRNH)
16. Teo has no hesitation in scrapping the 200 labels from his menu and only offer **his new creatures**. (BBLDH)

As examples 11-14 show, raw materials, such as grains, olives, and grapes, are considered by producers as living organisms that need to be helped to grow. This idea is strengthened in examples 15-17, in which

dairy products and beers are depicted as creatures. Such a concept brings up the producer as an artist metaphor once more, which holds that agri-food products are artworks.

Parallel to this, producers' effort in looking after their creatures is highlighted, as in the following example:

17. That's why our products, in all their expressions, keep the organoleptic balance unaltered, the authentic flavour pleasing even the most refined palates – such scenario repays us of every effort, sacrifice, just **like a warm hug**. (OTRCH)

As in the previous cases, the metaphorical path aims at echoing the affective sphere, in which the excellence of the olive oil makes producers forget all the effort put in the production process.

It is also worth noting that the metaphorical «inanimate thing/living creature» path also involves the opposite process, as humans become an integral part of the production process. As the following examples show, the term «ingredient» frequently occurs with metaphors:

18. **Andrea, Fabio and Lucia are the first three real ingredients** in every Laica chocolate. And like ingredients, each of them brings his or her own distinctive and exclusive flavour. (SLCAH)

More generally, even concepts typically associated with Made-in-Italy are understood as major elements for the production:

19. **Tradition and passion for fruit: ingredients** of a well-established experience. (FFRAH)
20. These were the heady years of post-war reconstruction in Italy in which **enthusiasm and dedication to one's craft were the real ingredients of success**. (MSLPH)

21. **Three generations, an undying passion and a home region** that combines natural beauty, culture and hard work: these **are the ingredients** underlying the secret of the superb quality of Gabrielloni olive oil. (OGBRH)
22. **Genuine passion, daily work and patient waiting are the base ingredients** of the peerless goodness that features our «Coratina» extra virgin oil. (OTRCH)

Geographical area also plays a key role in the production process, as it is essential to obtain a top-quality product.

23. **Climate is one of the indispensable ingredients** for excellence. (DDDCH)
24. **These 1,000 square kilometres of land** enclosed between the regions of Emilia Romagna, Piedmont and Liguria, **represent the fundamental ingredient of our unique, top quality product**. (GVGHH)

Hence, the Italian territory is given a great emphasis in the descriptive passages, highlighting the uniqueness of the natural resources and the quality of the raw materials. In this regard, a frequent use of personification is observed, as if nature is another active member of a big family, together with human beings and their products.

25. **The changing seasons paint a picture** of our orchards together with the incessant work of all our staff. (FFRTH)
26. Here, where **the sun meets the Sonnino hills**, a wonderful cultivation of olives grows. (OCLTH)

27. [oil] **Its golden color tells the value** of that culture of sincere exchange with nature. (OPCCH)
28. The «Coratina» olive grows in a land, upon which splendid karst stones rest, **kissed by a sun** of ancient memory. (OBLVH)
29. As the leaf receives the sunlight and transforms it, the vine-stalks transmits perceptions and savours, as **the land jealously guards** the water and the minerals in its terracings. (WMNFH)
30. The heart and soul of Zenato lies in the ancient morainic lands of Lugana and Valpolicella, with their mild climate and **unrivalled charm**, that overlook the Veneto shore of Lake Garda. (WZNTH)

3.3 Choosing the Italian product is like a journey

As mentioned above, travelling represents the third thematic area. The strategy behind the narration in fact aims to involve (future) customers in a story that meets the main characters; readers get to know them, and with them embark on a journey that leads them to experience the geographical area and the Italian product (Corrizzato, 2021). The representation of this journey is of crucial importance within the corpus, as it takes customers into an idyllic dimension in which experience is the key component.

31. After an encounter with the great photographer Sebastião Salgado comes **a journey into the paradise of coffee**. (CLLIH)
32. Over a hundred years of history are **a journey** that brings an inestimable legacy of joys, hopes, knowledge, successes with it together with a passion. (MLVNH)

33. **The art of winemaking is a journey** that offers unique sensations, taking you to timeless places. (WBNNH)

As examples 31-33 explain, foreign customers are asked to immerse themselves in the world of Italian producers to better understand the way in which products come to life. Likewise, buying and tasting a product has not only to be seen as a mere action, but it has to be perceived as an experience, through which customers' palates and bodies can live a different life. According to this perspective, it is not enough to taste products, e.g., coffee, wine, olive oil or cheese, future clients have to understand the culture where they originate and the places where they are produced. The connection with the Italian peninsula and its treasures is always mentioned, as terms such as «paradise» and «art» appear to describe the uniqueness of the products. In addition to that, it is worth noting that the idea of time portrayed in the illustrative passages does not match with what customers expect, as it seems that time stands still in a vaguely near past where everything was untouched. The ticking of the clock seems to stop, offering an endless journey through flavours, smells, and culinary traditions.

34. Coffee is **a world we will never stop exploring**. (CLLLH)

35. The Geraci Brothers are children of this land and interpret their tradition with particular care, with technological innovation and total dedication, so that **every bottle of their oils** can be a unique experience, **a journey of taste in Sicily**. (OLVLH)

36. From the grapes to the wine, this is the **prodigious journey**. (WMNFH)

The timelessness is also strengthened by the presence of magic, which is metaphorically all along the way. Costumers, indeed, can easily feel magic, as the examples show:

37. **magical mountains** at the foot of which extend ancient forests and green valleys rich in pastures. (DPVIH)
38. It's a small world that turns around a **magic product**: chocolate. (SSTRH)
39. We too, couldn't resist the **magic tastes and scents** of Gragnano pasta. (PGRGH)
40. My grandmother was very jealous of this **magical world** and nobody was allowed to enter her kingdom made of river stones and linen cloths to close the barrels, a world of scents that had our heads spin. (VDBGH)
41. Entering this **magical place** you will access an enchanted and fantastic world. (SRZZH)

Reality also leaves room for «the magic of that old original oven» (SCRIH), «the magic of that ancient bakery» (SCRIH), or «a magic place that hangs suspended in time» (WMRSH).

4. Conclusion

The analysis has demonstrated that the descriptive passages within the English version of the Italian agri-food companies websites make frequent use of figures of speech, specifically metaphors and similes. In fact, as anticipated in the introductory section, figurative language can help the target audience grasp the message through mental associations, which allow them to fully understand the idea behind the words (Morris & Waldman, 2011). In this regard, figures of speech within promotional discourse contribute to strengthening the relationship with the audience, activating emotional responses from (un)conscious foreign customers (Sternkopf, 2010; Septianto, Pontes & Tjiptono, 2021).

The data from our corpus show that metaphoric representations are used to enhance the Made-in-Italy concepts, which are represented by the link with the past and the producers' traditions: products' authenticity is given by the family-run business, as the production secrets are carefully transmitted from generation to generation. In this sense, producers are portrayed as artists, whose passion and genius allow them to create their top-quality products. Therefore, the Italian producer is described as *deus ex machina*, who has dedicated his entire life to working and finding solutions to apparently insoluble difficulties in the production processes. Together with human beings, the Italian climate, and territory play a fundamental role within the picture, as they are active protagonists within the story. Personifications are indeed very frequent within the Agri-Food Pro Corpus, as the fruitful cooperation between family members and the geographical area contribute to creating the perfect product, which is popular around the world. Thus, metaphoric images are generally linked to agricultural areas, where natural elements are protagonists and producers find the strength to produce unique products. The connection between the 'italianicity' of the products and the foreign costumers is also given by the narrative strategies, which invite future customers to undertake a journey through the secrets of the local area and the culinary habits.

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**«Ando vai s'aa cipolla nun ce ll'hai?»:
translating food-related Romanesco items
in chef Max Mariola's social media subtitles**

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1. Introduction: food discourse, social media, and AVT

Massimiliano Mariola (aka Max Mariola, born 11 April 1969) is a well-known Roman chef, TV presenter and food influencer. He began teaching at both professional and amatorial levels after finishing some specialized courses and is now Executive Chef and Quality Level Supervisor, in Italy and Europe, of catering at hotels in the Boscolo chain, Consulting Chef for AIA food and Gruppo Veronesi and *chef de partie* of two restaurants, Park Royal Hotel and Symposium, in Cartoceto (province of Pesaro-Urbino in the Marche region). So far, he has published two recipe books, *Lo chef in tasca. Ricette per l'estate* ('The pocket chef: Summer recipes', Bari, Laterza, 2013) and *I panini li fa Max* ('It is Max that makes panini', Rome, Il Gambero Rosso, 2015), took part in numerous TV shows on the RaiSat Gambero Rosso channel from 1999 to 2021, and starred in a documentary on Amazon Prime (*Max Mare*, 2022), as part of what he himself defines as the «Chef & showman» experience (<https://maxmariola.com/chi-sono-chef-max-mariola/>). In 2023, he opened his first restaurant, The Sound of Love, in Milan.

For a few years now, chef Mariola has been very active on social media: he has a LinkedIn page, a YouTube channel, and Facebook

(henceforth FB), Instagram (IG) and TikTok (TT) accounts, where he very often posts video recipes using his typically strong Roman accent and sometimes dialectal expressions¹. Three of the four accounts, FB, IG and TT, are synchronized, meaning that all video recipes are simultaneously uploaded on all three of them, with the exception of the LinkedIn page and YouTube channel, which are more structured and divided into different sections – much more like webpages – and, more importantly for the purposes of this article, have no English subtitles for the recipes. In terms of AVT strategies, since the end of 2022, Mariola has gradually begun to add English subtitles in his video recipes so that non-Italian speakers may recognize his ingredients and understand his procedures – although, as will be seen below, the multimodal nature of Mariola's products already helps social media users who do not understand Italian. To quote from Dore (2017), «food in audiovisual works 'travels' and is perceived across languages» (p. 26), and in this essay Mariola is considered an exemplar of this cross-linguistic journey.

This chapter will explore Mariola's video recipes from two different perspectives, that is, they will be analyzed as AVT products, on the one hand, and non-Italian speakers' reception will be investigated, on the other. Therefore, the following research questions will be

¹ Definitions abound in the field. First, some scholars distinguish between Roman accent/dialect, Romanesco/Romanesque and Romanaccio (see Leone-Pizzighella, p. 2014). Moreover, other experts, following De Mauro (2011, p. 150), distinguish between dialect and Italian *dialetti*, since «the Italian *dialetti* are substantially different linguistic realities than, for example, the dialects of the anglophone areas, Italian dialects being not properly variants of the national language but completely autonomous linguistic formations and derivations of the various ways in which Latin was superimposed on the non-Latin spoken varieties of ancient Italy» (Bruti and Ranzato, 2019, p. 343. See also Leone-Pizzighella, 2014). In this paper I will use Roman accent or Romanesco (borrowing from Bruti and Ranzato 2019) when referring to the phonological features of Mariola's video recipes and *dialetto* when referring to lexical, morpho-syntactic, pragmatic, and spelling variations.

answered: 1) Is the Roman accent/*dialetto* rendered in subtitles, and if so, how? 2) Judging from comments to posts, reels, and videos, do the subtitles help non-Italian speakers understanding the ingredients and procedures?

In order to answer these two general research questions, a qualitative lexico-pragmatic analysis will be conducted, considering food appetite and consumption as the common denominator. In fact, on the one hand, the chef's communicative intention is that of appetizing his followers², while his followers' communicative intention is that of confirming (or denying) their eagerness to prepare and consume the dishes Mariola proposes. Although studies on food talk and social media products abound in such fields as anthropology, marketing, sociology, and statistics (see, among others, the market analyses by Barklamb *et al.*, 2020; Zinko *et al.*, 2021), to my knowledge interest by linguists remains very limited³.

As anticipated above, this study will not be quantitative, given the small number of tokens that constitutes the corpus of Mariola's video recipes with English subtitles, and given the multimodal nature of the object of analysis itself, which cannot be accounted for properly using a corpus-based statistical approach. Therefore, a qualitative – «synoptic», to borrow from Bruti and Ranzato (2019, p. 360) – lexico-pragmatic analysis will be carried out on some of the most interesting 2023 video recipes from a linguistic and AVT perspective. Although there is no difference between FB, IG, and TT videos per se, all three social media will be considered when analyzing non-Italian followers' com-

² To do this, as seen later in this essay, he 'linguistically tempts' his Italian followers through his strong Roman accent/*dialetto*, which is synonymous with authenticity and veracity, and his non-Italian followers with English subs.

³ See, among others, Chiaro (2013) on food talk in some British TV channels, Ciambella (2022) on Gino D'Acampo's Italian phonological and prosodic features in UK food shows, and Molenaar *et al.* (2023a, 2023b) on sentiment and emotion analysis of food talk on social media.

ments. The multimodal nature of the case studies examined will be considered, this aspect being one of the limits of the few contemporary studies about culinary linguistics and audiovisual products, as stated by Raffi (2022): «the research conducted so far is often limited to the analysis of the monomodal and textual dimensions of communication, overlooking the fact that the communication processes of audiovisual products are multi-modal by nature» (p. 1).

2. Framework(s) and methodology

2.1 Italian *dialetti* and Romanesco in AV products

Italian scholars lament the limited number of analyses focused on how to render – or not to render – Italian *dialetti* in AV products – movies and TV series in particular – although they affirm that it has always been an «attractive area of research» (Bruti & Ranzato, 2019, p. 345). As noted by Parini (2022), «the number of studies focusing on the English subtitles of Italian products are rather scant, considering the relatively exiguous number of films or TV series available to analyze. As far as studies investigating the strategies used to subtitle Italian dialects, this could even be considered as a niche within the niche» (p. 387).

Generally speaking, dialect in AV products is used for specific reasons and has specific effects on audiences. Referring to movies, Cordisco and De Meo (2022) state that

[a] dialect can be used as a mimetic tool to shape characters in relation to their social context, to add texture to their interpersonal relations and interactional naturalness [...], to produce a more realistic effect in relation to the situation and place of the story [...]. Nonetheless, most productions aim to reproduce a limited impression of dialects/accents, merely for stereotypical or humorous purposes [...], rather than to accomplish a realistic experience of a non-standard language variety. (p. 127)

In particular, it is worth underlining the reference to the «interactional naturalness» and «more realistic effect» that dialect adds in movies and TV series, something that Pérez-González (2014) calls «spontaneous-sounding interaction» (p. 2), although it is clear that in AV products it is «oralidad prefabricada» ('prefabricated orality'), to use the expression of Chaume (2004, p. 168); in other words, it is a conscious act by directors and screenwriters to create dialogues which sound more natural due to the use of dialect. In the case of Mariola's video recipes, however, the notion of prefabricated orality cannot be applied, since social media products are «form[s] of non-traditional real-time data» (Molenaar *et al.*, 2023b), and thus tend to be more spontaneous, or, at least, less prefabricated. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the use of dialect in AV products contributes to what Agha (2003) calls characterological discourse, that is, the set of peculiarities and features which shape a character – in this case a professional figure and food influencer – from a linguistic perspective. As argued by Ramos Pinto (2017), «the creative use of non-standard varieties in audiovisual products functions as a mimetic resource [...] for the indirect depiction of the characters» (p. 4).

Therefore, these «unorthodox language use[s]» (Leone-Pizzighella, 2014, p. 86) also contribute to the creation of certain stereotypes⁴, although it also «lends narratives an undisputed quality of authenticity» (Bruti & Ranzato, 2019, p. 341. Which is why Cordisco & De Meo [2022, p. 126] call this phenomenon «dialect authenticity»). I would argue that it is exactly the notion of dialect authenticity that makes Mariola's video recipes so interesting from a linguistic standpoint. As

⁴ «Language, in fact, tends to be manipulated in order to convey characters' social, regional or ethnic origins, and to evoke in the audience the expectations related to the stereotypes connected to those specific origins. Such connotations can be conveyed through different linguistic devices, specifically by the use of identifiable accents, lexical variation and marked morphosyntactic constructions» (Parini, 2022, p. 387).

a matter of fact, I believe that there is a direct correspondence between the chef's use of Roman dialect and the success of his Roman recipes, in that the dialect reinforces the 'Romanness' of his dishes, or, in general, the authenticity and localness of the ingredients used in his non-Roman recipes. As a matter of fact, Mariola himself underlines the bond between being Roman and being authentic in his own website biography: «[s]ono nato a Roma, una delle città più belle del mondo per la sua storia, la sua cultura e i suoi sapori autentici» ('I was born in Rome, one of the most beautiful cities in the world for its history, its culture, and its authentic flavours') (maxmariola.com). Similar conclusions have been reached, for example, by scholars observing customers' reaction to restaurant menus when the names of the dishes are written in the local language and explained in English, instead of being directly translated (Graziano, 2017; Choi *et al.*, 2017).

So far, I have dealt with the general use of dialect in AV products and only hinted at the Romanesco spoken by Max Mariola, which is the focus of this essay. It goes without saying that, given its name, the Roman variety is diatopically located in the centre of Italy. Its main phonetic and lexical features are summarized by Bruti and Ranzato (2019) as follows:

Phonetic features relative to the centre-Italian Roman variety [...] include the pronunciation of intervocalic /k/ as /g/ (for instance *grego* for *greco*, 'Greek'); the doubling of voiced occlusives in intervocalic position (for instance *mobbile* for *mobile*, 'piece of furniture'); the loss of double /r/ (for instance *tera* for *terra*, 'land, earth'; *fero* for *ferro*, 'iron'); the assimilation of *nd* to *nn* (for instance *monno* for *mondo*, 'world'). Colourful lexical items are also a prerogative of the Roman dialect and can be heard in films of any era as well as in contemporary TV shows: expressions such as *caciara*, 'racket', *pappone*, 'pimp', *pupo*, 'baby', *sbafare*, 'to gobble up and to scrounge', *sganassone*, 'slap in the face', *menare*, 'to hit', *tombarolo*, 'someone who steals from graves', are

examples of lexical items instantly associated with the Roman dialect.
(p. 344. Emphases in the original)

In the last decade, despite struggling with the «constant negotiation of its validity with/against those who claim that it is ‘coarse’, ‘vulgar’, or otherwise illegitimate» (Leone-Pizzighella, 2014, p. 101), Romanesco has gained scholarly momentum thanks to the international success of such TV series as *Romanzo criminale* (‘criminal novel’, 2008-2010), and *Suburra* (‘Suburra: Blood on Rome’, 2017-2020), among others, or the viral case (Leone-Pizzighella, 2014) of the famous interview of two Roman girls, Debora and Romina – later known as *Le calippe* – at Ostia beach in 2010, known to dialectologists as *Bira e calippo* (‘beer and Calippo’, i.e., the famous cylindrical frozen dessert produced by Walls since 1982).

Therefore, Roman dialect has been variously associated with vulgarity, on the one hand, and authenticity, on the other. Mariola uses Romanesco for a few reasons: first of all, if, as the proverb says, «you can remove a Roman from Rome, but you can never remove Rome from a Roman», the chef’s accent is also clearly perceivable when he is interviewed by national broadcasting channels and tries to speak standard Italian in a controlled manner. It is obvious that using Romanesco makes him more at ease in different communicative situations, and he deliberately decides not to mask his accent/*dialetto* on social media. Secondly, as noted above, the Roman variety is synonymous with authenticity; hence the chef wants to reinforce the sense of genuineness of his dishes even from a linguistic perspective. Lastly, Romanesco is often associated with masculinity (see, for instance, Guschwan, 2011), something Mariola is quite keen on and makes no effort to hide, and which contributes to the characterization of his mediatic persona.

Nevertheless, what has been said so far contains a series of culture-specific elements which are quite understandable by most Italians, but which are probably unknown to non-Italian speakers. Therefore, how can a foreigner possibly associate Roman dialect with the authenticity of the recipes Mariola makes if they do does not perceive/under-

stand Romanesco? The next section illustrates how *dialetti* are translated in AV products via subtitles. Nevertheless, as argued above, the multimodal nature of Mariola's video recipes helps a lot non-Italian speakers appreciate the chef's dishes.

2.2 Italian *dialetti* in AVT: a focus on English subtitles

Since the end of 2022, chef Mariola has been adding burnt-in English subtitles to his video recipes to attract non-Italian followers, sometimes with interesting results both from the translation and reception viewpoints. If it is true that, generally speaking, subs have time and space constraints due to their being «written to be spoken as if not written» (Taylor, 2006, p. 49), in the case of video recipes time and space are even more reduced. In terms of space, unlike movies or TV series, most of the times the videos Mariola uploads on social media are vertical (format 4:5, 2:3 or 9:16) so they may be easily watched on mobile phone screens. This of course reduces the space for subtitles, which are usually located in the middle of the screen, between the chef's face and his preparation and cooking table. In terms of time, social media stories, reels, etc. must be very short, given the settings of FB, IG and TT, and the users' increasing tendency to watch short-form video contents online. According to García-León and Teichert (2023) online food talk is an example of eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth), defined as «web-mediated exchange of information which occurs when one person tells another about their experience with a service or product» (Zinko *et al.*, 2021, p. 526). Specifically, Bartelmeß and Godemann (2022) call it Digital Food Communication (hereafter DFC) with new players or new actors:

Before the digital turn, it was primarily professionalized food communication actors who were attributed interpretative power over food and nutrition issues. With social media platforms, today it is especially everyday actors who make food-related content and patterns of interpretation publicly accessible and available with their digital food

communication and thus achieve a high level of attention. Ordinary people become experts on ‘good’ nutrition and food-related choices by routinely revealing their experiences with food, expressing their opinions, and sharing them on these platforms. Once they reach a certain level of appeal, they can become so-called ‘food influencers’, depending on the number of people they reach and who follow them. Consequently, traditional hierarchical instances of food communication are challenged and compete with new actors, and forms of public knowledge transfer that now define ‘good food’.

Bearing the above premises in mind, in our case study it must be noted that subtitles do not translate a ‘standard’ variety into another ‘standard’ variety – without considering the complex idea of standard language when dealing with Italian and English – but an L1 dialect, i.e., Romanesco, into an L2 standard, i.e., English, with perhaps the inevitable consequence of losing the cosy, authentic flavour of the Italian *dialetto*. Nevertheless, one must consider that if such a loss can be clearly perceived by an Italian speaker who also understands English, a non-Italian speaker might not perceive Mariola’s Roman accent and hence will likely understand the English subs as a traditional service translation from Italian into English, judging from their comments to the chef’s video recipes on social media.

Translating dialect in AVT is always challenging. Most scholars agree that the general tendency is to neutralize dialectal features in the target text (Bonsignori, 2011, 2012; Bruti & Ranzato, 2019; De Meo, 2010, 2020; Dore, 2017; Hargan, 2006; Parini, 2022; Petillo, 2012; Raffi, 2017, 2021), a process that, according to Cordisco and De Meo, «rais[es] cultural and linguistic neutralization and standardization by levelling out non-mainstream identities» (2022, p. 126). Some scholars, however, have noticed that translators sometimes attempt to transform the L1 dialectal features into pragmatically equivalent L2 non-standard or substandard characteristics. According to Parini, for instance, «subtitling can only act on the lexical and grammatical levels, but not on

a phonological one (which is something that dubbing can do), leaving out any potential characterization that relies on the characters' accents»; however, she also adds that «code-mixing and substandard markers of orality» (2022, p. 390) are sometimes used. Similarly, Raffi (2022) affirms that to convey dialectal features from L1 to L2, translators can add «typical features of oral speech [...] such as the absence of subject-verb inversion in questions, ellipses in questions and answers, and discursive cues including interjections». In fact, «thanks to the addition of spoken English and colloquial traits as well as non-standard grammatical forms in subtitles, dialect can be signalled in translation» (Raffi, 2022).

In this essay, I adopt Cordisco and De Meo's theoretical framework to translate an L1 dialect to L2 in subtitles, which consists in integrating Pedersen (2005) and his six transfer (macro-) strategies with Perego's (2003) and Díaz Cintas and Remael's (2009) micro-strategies of AVT:

1. Retention (an SL element is used in the TL as a loan word);
2. Explication (Perego, 2003) with the micro-strategy of specification (the SL element remains untranslated but adds information previously absent);
3. Direct translation (possibly in the form of calque or shifted terms);
4. Reduction (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2009) with two micro-strategies: *a.* generalization (the substitution of an element with a more general one, often as a hypernym) and *b.* sentence condensation (Perego, 2003);
5. Substitution (the item is substituted by a different item often in the form of paraphrase);
6. Omission (Cordisco & De Meo, 2022, p. 130).

3. Analysis and discussion of the results

As previously noted, a qualitative analysis was carried out at two different moments and from two different perspectives. First, Mariola's video recipes are investigated from a translation viewpoint, examining the strategies used in the English subtitles to convey or not to convey the dialectal nuances of the source texts. As most of the videos were uploaded at the same time on FB, IG, and TT, in this phase I will not distinguish among the media used. Next, comments by the chef's followers are considered, with particular emphasis on their reactions to English subs and to the chef's codeswitching, distinguishing between Italian and non-Italian users and focusing especially on IG, which appears to be the most interesting and rich source of information for the type of investigation proposed.

3.1 From Macaronic English... or 'A close look at subs'

Anyone reading the English translation of Mariola's video recipes will notice that the chef's subs are very approximate, or, stated otherwise, they are sometimes so basic and translated so literally – I would say source oriented in a way – that they are far from sounding native-like. This raises the question of who prepares and adds the subtitles to the videos: is it Mariola himself, with the help of an automatic translator? Is it his social media manager? Do they pay a translator? In any case, it is clear that those responsible for the English subtitles have no advanced linguistic competence in English, and that their interlanguage – to borrow from Second Language Acquisition theories – is still in its initial stages, although the use of colloquialisms and markers of orality, as will be seen later, can indicate a better knowledge of the language and a strategic use of a kind of broken English.

The examples below (Table 1), chosen randomly, clearly show the level of English in the subs:

(Dialectal) source text	Explanation	English target text (subs)	Recipe
Co' 'e vongole, ma no c'aa sabbia	With clams, but not with sand	Clams yes, sand no	<i>Pasta with clams, squash blossoms, and bottarga</i>
190 gradi venti- lato	Bake it in a convection oven at 190°C	190 degrees in a convection oven	<i>Cordon Bleu</i>
E poi lui, il re d'aa fiera: 'l tartufo	Now let's add the main ingredient of this recipe: the truffle	And now for him... the king of the festival... the truffle	<i>Panuzzo with baccalà and black truffle</i>

Table 1. Examples of approximate level of English in the subs of Mariola's video recipes.

Nevertheless, a great deal of vocabulary pertaining to the culinary ESP is present in the target text (e.g., grease, nonstick pan, squash blossoms, to dunk, to rinse, to rub, to sear, to shuck/shell, etc.), underlining that the most evident non-native-like expressions are at a morphosyntactic and phraseological level, rather than at a lexical one. As for pronunciation, obviously subtitles cannot provide any information, although the followers' reactions to Mariola's codeswitching and video recipes in a strong Italian-accented English will be considered in the next section. Two different hypotheses can be advanced about the fact that English subtitles are far from sounding native-like. Firstly, judging from the comments by non-Italian followers, the poor linguistic competence of the translator does not prevent communication, thus showing that, even if linguistic competence is not so advanced, communicative competence is developed enough to let non-Italians understand and appreciate the subtitles. Perhaps the multimodal nature of the video recipes should receive most of the credit: when Mariola's non-Italian followers do not understand subs, i.e., the linguistic/alphabetic mode, to quote from the multimodal theory of the New London Group (1996), they can always resort to other modes, such as the visual and the gestural.

Secondly, although the neutralization of the Romanesco dialectal features is evident in the English subs⁵, the very basic, approximate, sometimes informal translation can be also understood as a strategy to render the non-standard *dialetto* used by the Roman chef in a non-standard way – in the broader sense of «customary, usual, expected, widely used» (*OED*, adj.I.1.b) – although I personally believe that the first hypothesis above is more convincing. This second hypothesis, however, seems to be reinforced by the fact that the English subtitles often resort to informal markers of orality, as observed by scholars in other case studies about AVT and *dialetti* (see Parini, 2022; Raffi, 2022 above). Subtitles abound in contractions, such as questions with no auxiliary verbs (e.g., *'A vòì?* = You want it?, *L'ajo e 'a cipolla te piaciono?* = You like garlic and onion?, *'A vedi tutta sudata?* = See how it's sweaty?) and colloquialisms (e.g., *Lasciaje la pelle che è bbona* = Leave the skin on 'cause it's so good, *Deve fa questo. Deve fa quella cosa che non finisce mai, eterna* = It's gotta do this. It's gotta go on and on, into eternity).

As for the AVT strategies adopted to translate the Roman *dialetto* and some Italian culinary jargon, chef Mariola seems to use them all, albeit in different frequencies. For example:

1. Retention: This happens especially with dish names (e.g., *pasta alla gricia*, *pasta alla pecorara*, *pomodori coll/con riso*, etc.)⁶ or with some ingredients which cannot be translated unless explicated (e.g., *baccalà*, *caciocavallo*, *guanciale*, *mortadella*, *panuozzo*, *parmigiano*⁷, etc.), as seen in the next point.

⁵ Here are a few examples: *Adesso 'o devi toje* = Now you can remove it, *Nun c'oo mette tutto sto grasso* = I'm not going to use all this fat, *Te deve venì voja da magnattello* = You can't wait to eat them.

⁶ This strategy is also typical of bilingual menus in Italy, as observed by Graziano (2017, 2019).

⁷ The chef never uses the more common English term 'parmesan (cheese)'.

2. Explication: In this case some ingredients or preparations typical of Italian cuisine are explained very briefly in the subtitles, due to obvious time and space constraints: *bottarga* = bottarga (cured fish roe), *fiordilatte* = cow milk mozzarella, *carpaccio di manzo* = carpaccio (raw beef).
3. Direct translation: Pedersen affirms that direct translation «may appear exotic [or odd] to the TT audience» (2005, p. 5), as happens in examples from Mariola's corpus of video recipes: *Co' 'sta callaccia* = With this heat, *Quanno ce vo, ce vo* = When it's right, it's right, *Melanzane alla parmigiana* = Eggplant parmigiana (this example is half direct translation, half retention), *Pomodorsa, mozzarellosa, parmigianosa* = Tomato-ey, mozzarella-ey, parmigiano-ey, *Tanta robba* = So much stuff.
4. Reduction: Sentence reduction in particular (Perego, 2003) is present in the corpus for at least two reasons: 1) when some Italian or dialectal expressions are untranslatable and unnecessary for communicative purposes, and 2) when using other strategies would contravene time and space constraints (e.g., *Belli! Guardate che so belli!* = So beautiful, *E poi t'accucci, te metti da 'na parte e dormi* = And then you take a nap, *Mo fatte 'sta bella passeggiata* = now enjoy, *N'aspettate nemmanco 'n minuto* = don't wait, *Un po' de sale mettilo* = some salt).
5. Substitution: Contrary to direct translations, some dialectal or substandard idioms in Mariola's videorecipes are paraphrased or substituted by L2 equivalents. Although in this case the neutralization of the *dialetto* is more evident, as in *Ce sta da paura* = It's fantastic, *É 'na bomba* = It's amazing, *Tutta 'a vita proprio* = You bet, at least the target audience does not perceive the translation as exotic or odd as in the examples at point 3 above.

6. Omission: This strategy is adopted with most dialectal interjections or exclamations, such as *che tristezza*, *(ed)daje*, *mamma mia*, and *tiè*.

In addition to these strategies, Mariola has very recently begun to record video recipes resorting to frequent codeswitching (e.g., *'A vogliamo juicy 'a sarciccia all'interno, no?*; *Du' cucchiaji de riso pe' tomato*; *Movi the cream*; *Now, 'n po' d'ajo bbono*), or directly in English. Moreover, he adds a dual-language recipe presentation and list of ingredients text in the caption/ description below the videos, as in the following example (Table 2):

Monolingual recipe of pizza, puntarelle, ricotta and mayonnaise (21 January 2023).	Bilingual recipe of pomodori con il riso (11 August 2023).
<p>chefmaxmariola Oggi voglio mandarvi in estasi, voglio farvi volare su un altro pianeta e scoprire una vera bontà ❤️👉 😊 Pronti per questa pizza bianca con puntarelle, ricotta e maionese di alici? Già dal primo morso verrete travolti dal gusto autentico e avvolgente della cucina romana. Volete prepararlo anche voi?</p> <p>INGREDIENTI 👉 Pizza bianca Puntarelle Ritagli di Alici sott'olio di @magnoluxuryfood Ricotta di pecora fresca Peperoncino Aceto Olio e.v.o [sic] Aglio Sale</p>	<p>chefmaxmariola Direttamente dalla tradizione culinaria di Casa Mariola vi porto in tavola la ricetta dei pomodori con il riso 🍅 Questi me li faceva sempre Mamma Fiorella, vi assicuro che sono da urlo 🤩 Rifateli anche voi e ditemi come sono venuti 🗣️</p> <p>Directly from the culinary tradition of Casa Mariola I bring to the table the recipe of tomatoes with rice 🍅 Mamma Fiorella always used to make these for me, I assure you that these are dreamy 🤩 Do them again and tell me how they came 🗣️</p> <p>INGREDIENTI 👉 Spaghetti Polipo – Octopus Menta – Mint Pecorino – Pecorino cheese Olio buono – Good oil Pepe nero – Black pepper</p>

Table 2. Two examples of monolingual and bilingual recipe captions the chef has been adding to his most recent videos.

Such decisions divide his followers into supporters and opponents, although it must be noted that the use of codeswitching or L2-only video recipes seems to have shifted the focus of the audience's comments from food to language, as seen in the next section.

3.2 ...to Digital English as a Lingua Franca, or 'Exploring followers' comments and reactions'

Mariola's followers' comments and reactions to English subtitles, codeswitching, and L2-only video recipes add an interesting perspective to the study of Digital Food Communication in English.

3.2.1 Reaction to English subs

Most of the chef's Italian and non-Italian followers really appreciated the addition of English subtitles, and understood it as Mariola's willingness to obtain more international followers, as examples 1-6 demonstrate⁸:

1. Sei un grande, pure in inglese 😊😊😊 E come lo traduci daje? 😊
2. Thank you for the English translation.
3. Oh thank you for the English captions 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🔥 Now I can actually make the recipe ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️🙌
4. Yessss!!! I love this English subtitles. I love watching you cook and your recipes.
5. English translation 😍😍
6. Thanks for the subtitles. ❤️❤️love it!!!

⁸ As stated above, most of these comments are from IG, as there are far more English comments on IG than on FB or TT.

The comments above are not by native speakers of English, given their typos and mistakes. Followers in fact say that they are from Brazil, Poland, Spain, and other countries worldwide. This is of particular interest because it underlines that social media «allow one to identify and speculate about broad trends and to draw inferences about particular states of affairs» (Christiansen, 2015, p. 137) within the well-known realm of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)⁹. Although other languages are used online, «English continues to hold a special status as an online *lingua franca*» (Tagg, 2020, p. 573), so much so that such scholars as Taronna (2023) calls it Digital ELF¹⁰, a variety – or multiple varieties – of English characterized by rather informal online interactions among multilingual communities who share expertise or interest in a particular field, as in the case of Mariola's community. Therefore, when Italian followers make fun of the chef's subtitles or his strongly accented pronunciation, it is clear that they completely ignore the potentials of Digital ELF.

3.2.2 Codeswitching and English-only recipes

Since introducing English subtitles, chef Mariola has gradually increased the presence of English in his video recipes also through other strategies, such as codeswitching and monolingual English communication, in order to increase his worldwide following. It must be noted, however, that English expressions, phrases, and sentences have always been part of his multimedia contents as loanwords. The most famous

⁹ Definitions and features of (Digital) ELF are beyond the scope of this essay. See, among others, Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; Jenkins, 2012; Christiansen, 2015; Gotti, 2017; Tagg, 2020; Pineda & Bosso, 2023; Taronna, 2023, on the relationship between ELF and social media.

¹⁰ Pineda and Bosso (2023) propose a very similar definition, that is Virtual ELF.

is certainly Mariola's motto 'The sound of love'¹¹, a synesthetic expression he often repeats, with a strong Italian/Roman accent, when letting his audience listen to, for instance, some particularly creamy and juicy dish, or when he cuts/bites crunchy food. Here are a few reactions to his 'The sound of love' motto:

7. Io ti darei 3 stelle Michelin solo per il 'SAUND OFF LOV'. Simpatia e bravura. Piatti semplici e buoni, super Max!
8. New recipe I can now make. And New vocab to add, after tear of the gods ecc. 'the sound of love' when you mix it...so true
9. The sound of love! 🍴 Max the best in town!
10. The sound & the taste of pure love ❤️👨🍳

Gumperz (1982, pp. 60-61) classifies codeswitching in two different types: situational and metaphorical. Situational codeswitching occurs when speakers change setting, activities, and interlocutors, while metaphorical codeswitching is more typical of bilinguals, and it occurs almost automatically according to communicative intentions. Mariola's codeswitching is situational, and it is due to the chef's willingness to address multilingual international followers, rather than only a monolingual Italian audience.

Reactions to situational codeswitching and English-only recipes are very similar but vary in nature. What is important to notice is that since the chef began using codeswitching and recording monolingual English recipes, the focus of the comments has shifted from food to language, as if the quality of his recipes were undeniable, while

¹¹ His motto also inspired the name of his first restaurant, as hinted at in the introduction.

the fluency and accuracy of his language were not. In general, Italian speakers are quite conservative and do not appreciate Mariola's love of English; hence, they complain about or make fun of him, as if perceiving English as a kind of threat to the Italian language (see also Gheno, 2019 for further details):

11. Mi padre che parla l'inglese
12. Ti prego stiamo in Italia parla in italiano o meglio ancora Romanesco come me.... Che ce frega dall'inglese!!!!!!
13. Max basta con l'inglese !!!
14. Parla italiano romano ma non parla in inglese

On the other hand, many followers appear quite aware of the globalized society we live in, and of the advantages to Mariola of having more and more English in his videos:

15. Aooo open your mind minchia 🙏
16. Tutti quelli che scrivono 'Noooooo non in inglese' oppure 'perché in inglese' probabilmente non capiscono cosa significa raggiungere un audience più ampia.
17. Esatto! In piu' essendo instagram mondiale viene seguito ovunque 🙌🌍! E poi non ti piace come parla o perchè parla Inglese !?!? Vai a guardarti altri profili che ti fanno 'felice' invece di vomitare insulti!
18. Sono cresciuto in Italia e non ci vivo. Credetemi il suo inglese è da rimorchio. Molto apprezzato dalle mie amiche.

19. Non cagate il cazzo, italioti medi frustrati. L'egregio chef parla la lingua che desidera nei suoi video
20. Comunque boh me sembrate mo tutti professoroni. Io non penso di parlare assolutamente meglio di lui e quando sono stato all'estero mi hanno sempre capito. Quindi non dite che non lo capiscono, perché non avrà la pronuncia perfetta ma è chiarissimo quando parla e le parole scelte sono corrette, quindi vi attaccate veramente solo ad una pronuncia che scommetto da più fastidio a voi che agli inglesi.

In particular, the last comment introduces the non-Italians' perspective, which is absolutely positive, on Mariola's foreign English accent:

21. I love your Italian accent when you speak English 😊👍
22. Very good English Max. As much as we like your native Italian, the English is still appreciated!
23. I only speak some Italian. Thanks for speaking English 🙌👀
24. I'm a big fan of your account! You represent everything I love about Italy it 😊
25. So so happy to finally get a video in English! I love your recipes 🥰🥰🥰
26. Thank you for doing an English version! 🍷

Codeswitching and English-only recipes also led Mariola's followers to have at least three other reactions: firstly, some Italian followers began to codeswitch in turn:

27. Ormai sono addicted

28. Abbattimento time?

29. Io amo teeeee e camera woman 🥰❤

30. ‘Hot Is Better....scrocchiarello’ Ma che ne sanno gli strangers👁👁 😊

Secondly, other followers (mainly Italians) began to correct what they believed to be errors, as in Table 3:

Followers’ comments	OED explanation
That is chilli (peperoncino) not red pepper (che sarebbe peperone) 😊	Actually, according to the <i>OED</i> , red pepper can be «a hot, pungent spice prepared from chili peppers, the red, elongated, ripe fruits of the <i>Capsicum annum</i> Longum group (also <i>figurative</i>); the fruit itself».
Fat – grasso culinare e corporeo; grease per il capelli e i motori!	Even in this case, according to the <i>OED</i> , grease can indicate «the melted or rendered fat of animals» (n.2.a).

Table 3. Some comments by Italians correcting what they believe are Mariola’s English mistakes.

Lastly, non-Italians, perhaps impressed by the chef’s efforts to speak English, switch to Italian – not always with brilliant results – or affirm they are learning some Italian to better understand Mariola’s recipes examples 31-34:

31. Nooooo per favore, no ingleseeeee 🙏 io studio italiano per te.... per favore ❤

32. Because of you, I’m going to learn to speak Italian so when I visit Italy, you and I can speak to each other!!

33. Non se mette I pomodorini nell'insalats Cesare

34. Squisito insalata estiva fresco 😊

4. Conclusion

The above qualitative analysis has tried to offer a varied spectrum of linguistic insights into a case study of food talk on social media, i.e., chef Max Mariola's video recipes on FB, IG, and TT. First, English subtitles have been analyzed, in order to understand what AVT techniques are used when the chef's Roman *dialetto* or Italian food jargon must be rendered into English. As we have seen, although neutralization appears to be the most common solution when translating dialect, informal markers of orality and a basic, approximate, almost broken English might be seen as conscious strategies adopted by the subtitler(s) to add a 'dialectal flavour' to the AVT. What is important to underline is that even if the translator's linguistic competence is not advanced, Mariola's communicative intent is affected only partially, and the chef's non-Italian followers benefit significantly from English subtitles – also recurring to the multimodal nature of the contents uploaded on social media.

The second part of the essay examined the chef's followers' comments and reactions to understand whether the techniques analyzed earlier were successful or not, and to verify if English subtitles, codeswitching, and monolingual English recipes actually provoke positive reactions in non-Italians, thus increasing the number of followers. The analysis showed that, while Italian followers are sometimes conservative and perceive English as a threat to the Italian language and Romanesco, international social media users appreciate Max Mariola's efforts, especially in terms of codeswitching and monolingual English recipes which also require fluency and phonetic/phonological skills, so much that they declare their intention to learn some Italian in order

to better understand how to prepare Roman and non-Roman dishes. Thus, the chef's online community proves to be the perfect example of Digital ELF (Taronna, 2023), an international, multilingual community that shares interest in food and uses English as a medium to communicate and express opinions.

Further research, especially from a quantitative perspective, could inform this field of study. Corpus linguistics, for instance, could systematize the analytic framework and the results obtained, in order to determine if there are recurring translation patterns from Romanesco to English, or if some comments/reactions by followers are statistically more significant than others. In the latter case, sentiment analysis could implement the results obtained using corpus linguistics tools.

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Endangered species or traditional delicacy? Discursive perspectives on Po Delta eels

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1. Introduction

The Po Delta, a sprawling wetland region in northern Italy, is home to the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), a species of ray-finned fish that is mostly found across Europe and in northern Africa (FAO 2006). A catadromous and carnivorous species, this fascinating creature embarks on a remarkable life journey, traversing vast distances between freshwater habitats and the Sargasso Sea for spawning (Tesch, 2003). The Po Delta eel holds a special significance in the region, especially in the Comacchio Valleys, whose «shallow, interconnected brackish lagoons» (Giari *et al.*, 2020, p. 68) constitute the ideal habitat for this fish. For centuries, it has been a cherished culinary delicacy, featuring prominently in local cuisine and serving as a symbol of the Delta's rich cultural heritage, so much so it was included among the Slow Food Presidia (Slow Food Foundation, n.d.). Dishes like *Anguilla in umido* (braised eel) and *Risotto con l'anguilla* (eel risotto) are just a few examples of the eel's deep connection to the Delta's culinary identity (Albarella, n.d.). However, like the Slow Food Presidium admits, the eel's ecological status paints a contrasting picture. It is classified as critically endangered by the European Commission due to a variety of factors, from (over)fishing to pollution (European Commission 2021, n.p.). This has prompted urgent conservation efforts to ensure the survival of this iconic species, including the Marine Action

Plan (part of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030), whose aim is to bring and maintain fish stocks to a sustainable level while protecting their habitats (European Commission, 2023).

In the light of such a complex interplay of opposing factors, this paper investigates the multifaceted portrayals of the Po Delta eel that can be found through web search, an immense source of information readily available to internet users worldwide that can contribute to shape perceptions and behaviours (Singh *et al.*, 2024). The role of online discourse in the way eel is constructed and presented to prospective visitors and consumers has not yet been explored and, given the current critical status of this fish, shedding some light on this matter could contribute to policymaking in the difficult task of striking a balance between territorial promotion and protection.

By examining a corpus of online texts in both English and Italian, the study aims to trace the prevailing English and Italian narratives surrounding this species, suspended between its ecological fragility and deep-rooted cultural significance. First, the conflicting discourses around animals as food and wildlife and their relationships with humans are outlined to provide the necessary context. Following, the article offers an overview of materials and methods of the analysis, carried out intersecting bilingual corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. The results are then discussed with some examples to offer an intercultural perspective on the eel and its online discursive construction.

2. Theoretical background

As seen in the introduction, the European eel populating the Po Delta has an ambiguous status, as it is both dangerously close to extinction and at the core of the local culinary tradition.

In terms of culinary tradition, the Po Delta makes no mystery of the eel being one of its finest delicacies, often marketed as part of the tourist experience. For example, the tourist website podelta.eu/delta-delpo.eu features in its section *What to do* a whole page dedicated to

food and wine that reserves a special place to the eel: «the Comacchio eel *reigns supreme* in a cuisine that dates back thousands of years and brings with it ancient culture and traditions» (podelta.eu Food and Wine, emphasis added). A whole paragraph is also dedicated to it in the Slow Food Presidia subsection, exploring its role in the economic development of the area, its life cycle, its fishing and marinating (with an emphasis on the typicality of long-standing traditional techniques), and the secrets for enjoying it like a local, i.e., using artisanal salt from the nearby Cervia salt-works (<https://podelta.eu/en/14-14-slow-food-presidia>). The paragraph is accompanied by an image (Figure 1) of the typical eel tin that can be found everywhere in local deli shops, but also in the form of souvenirs (magnets, postcards, etc.).



Figure 1. A typical can of marinated eel from the Comacchio Valleys (podelta.eu)¹

Furthermore, the eel is the protagonist of a festival that regularly takes place in Comacchio, the *Sagra dell'Anguilla*. Its 2023 edition lasted for three weekends between September and October, and featured what the dedicated website describes as «a timetable filled with typical gastronomy, masterclasses, show-cooking, shows, exhibitions, meetings

¹ Images from the podelta.eu/deltadelpo.eu website are used with permission by the Gruppo di Azione Locale GAL Delta 2000, owners of the website and of its rights.

and conferences, carousels and entertainment for children. Experiences of taste and beauty in Comacchio, the capital of the Po Delta Park»². The festival is promoted by the Municipality of Comacchio, and its very existence bears testimony of how the eel plays a pivotal role in the local identity and its presentation to outsiders.

As for its current environmental status, as can be seen in Figure 2, since 2018 the International Union for Conservation of Nature has added it to its IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, with the highest level of alarm before extinction in the wild, i.e., critically endangered:

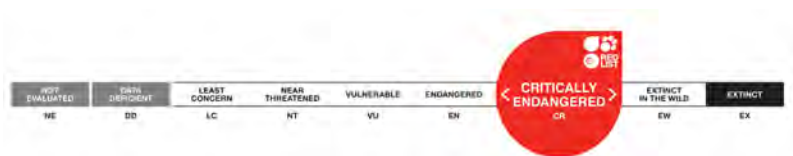


Figure 2. The position of European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Pike *et al.*, 2020).

Its current population is decreasing with a continuing decline of mature individuals. The IUCN also offers a detailed list of the main threats to the eel's existence. Among these, overfishing, invasive non-native/ alien species/diseases, use of herbicides and pesticides in agriculture and aquaculture, and climate change (in particular droughts and floods) are identified as the deadliest for the European eel. The ways eels are terminated can also raise doubts about the animals' wellbeing. As some local fishermen explained to a reporter for a piece on local Christmas traditions, the eels are captured with a complex system of nets and traps across the Comacchio canals right when they reach sexual maturity and would be ready to head to the Sargasso Sea for

²The citation from the website is translated into English by the author, as the website only features content in Italian (<https://www.sagradellanguilla.it/>).

spawning (Amadori, 2020). They are fished and placed in containers while still alive (in the video they are seen moving in the buckets) and sent to the market or to the food processing factories where, as the reporter explains with some unease while what sounds like a Christmas song plays in the background, «they are skinned and slaughtered – we spare you the most brutal details» (Amadori, 2020, min. 2:43-2:48). Another interviewee remembers that eels used to be exported to the United States, but this is no longer possible because the eel «has become a protected species and so quantities are considerably reduced» (Amadori, 2020, min. 1:48-2:01)³. While some may argue that, in his words, the logical cause-consequence relationship between numerical reduction and protection of the species seems inverted, at least there was an acknowledgement of the current eel status. Indeed, even a brief, light-hearted report on the eel as a Christmas delicacy cannot ignore the darker sides of its consumption. So, if the impending threat on the local eel is widely recognised, why is it still fished and eaten? While specific research on the psychology of eel eating is still missing, scholars have already investigated the broader issue of meat eating vis-à-vis the care for animals. In fact, it has been noted that, while meat consumption per capita is still large, people seem to care more about animals now than they did in the past (Loughnan *et al.*, 2014). This psychological ‘incoherence’ between valuing animal welfare and consuming animal products has been defined as «meat paradox»:

The Western world has witnessed a growing surge of interest in the moral status and treatment of nonhuman animals, and this interest has been followed by detailed rational arguments concerning how we, as human beings, ought to relate to other animals. [...] Yet, the contemporary era is witnessing an intriguing phenomenon: individuals, who have been convinced by the moral and factual reasons, are none-

³ All citations from the reportage are translated into English by the author.

theless often persuaded to maintain the status quo, and to carry on those consumptive habits, which exist in a stark conflict with their values. Indeed, it has been empirically manifested that many omnivores struggle with what in literature is termed «the meat paradox» within which one both loves and eats animals. (Aaltola, 2019, pp. 1-2)

The meat paradox relies on a cognitive dissonance that allows holding contrasting beliefs at the same time. This is done by dissociating the meat from the animal behind it, so that the eaters can reduce their empathy towards the animal and the disgust towards its sacrifice (Aaltola, 2019). Strategic ignorance is a key support to dissonance and dissociation, as the eater can ignore «beliefs that one deems as threatening to one's choices» and information on «animal minds, suffering or welfare issues» (Aaltola, 2019, p. 3). In particular, research has isolated attitudes towards the three parts of animal eating, namely the eater, the eaten, and the eating, which seem to favour the functioning of this paradox. The eater who is most likely to consume meat is the one with a higher acceptance of authoritarianism and endorsement of social hierarchy and inequality (Loughnan *et al.*, 2014). In addition, meat is often linked to identity, and in particular male identity is often culturally tied to red meat (Loughnan *et al.*, 2014). This suggests that also geographical belonging to a certain area or social group may favour tying certain foods to one's sense of identity – which could be the case for Po Delta's eel eaters. As for the eaten, it seems that it is easier for people to eat animals that are seen as distant from humans, especially in terms of capability of suffering (Bentham, 1789 [1907]; Plous, 1993). It is this perceived closeness to people that triggers human empathy, therefore making an animal more difficult to eat. While «eating a more 'mindful' animal was also judged as more morally wrong and more subjectively unpleasant», research has shown that simple framing activated different levels of empathy, as those classed as «'food animals' were judged less capable of suffering and less deserving of moral concern» (Loughnan *et al.*, 2014, p. 2). These mental processes work even

more powerfully when the humans expect to eat or have recently eaten meat, so that they can enjoy its taste – reported as one of the main reasons to remain omnivore (Piazza *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, with its snake-like appearance and its aesthetic distance from more cherished animals like dogs and cats, the eel may not qualify for inspiring the sense of nurturing that makes other species «too cute to kill» (Wolfensohn, 2020, p. 1).

The rationalisation of meat consumption can be summarised by 4Ns (Joy, 2009; Piazza *et al.*, 2015): justifying eating meat because it is *natural*, *normal*, *necessary*, and *nice*, and these reasons are by many deemed sufficient to live with the meat paradox, even while being fundamentally not proud of one's own food choices. These conflicting views merge into the inclusion of the Po Delta eel among the aforementioned Slow Food Presidia, the aim of Slow Food Foundation being condensed in their website's call to action: «the challenge to save biodiversity is not just any challenge. At stake is the future of the planet and the human race» (Slow Food Foundation). The very existence of Slow Food Presidia could be pictured as an attempt to come to terms with the meat paradox, as the Foundation's mission is to «give value back to food and protect the environment» (Donate Slowfood). By encouraging a more 'mindful' food consumption, attentive to local cultures and to the environment, the concept of slow food could be seen as an attempt to compromise between eating (animals) as a form of identity affirmation and the eater's pursuing of a moral positioning.

This need to find another, more mindful way of consumption without giving up on certain foods could also be explained through the intertwining of local identity with tourism, whereby a certain place becomes a tourist destination by virtue of the gastronomic experiences it offers. Much has been written about food tourism, which has been conceptualised as «visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production region are the primary motivating factor for travel» (Hall & Sharples, 2003,

p. 10). Food tourism, however, also has a strong cultural significance, both for the host and for the guest. As for the guest, Horng and Tsai (2010) suggest that what they call «culinary tourism» involves engaging with different cultures through food-related activities, promoting cultural understanding and knowledge exchange about the destination and its inhabitants. In this context, food serves as a conduit for cultural experiences. Thus, such tourism encompasses not only the participation in food activities and the ensuing cultural immersion, but also the motivations driving individuals to partake in such experiences (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Silkes *et al.*, 2013; Smith & Xiao, 2008). From a more host-centred perspective, food also has a crucial role in the culture of the host, it is integral to its lifestyle and society. In this sense, gastronomy, intended as «the selection, preparation, presentation and participation with culinary and gastronomic aspects of food» transcends mere sustenance and assumes «status, ritualistic and aesthetic purposes» (Hegarty & O'Mahoney, 2013, p. 25). The relationship between tourism and food is embedded in culture, as «food tourism is about cultural anthropology through understanding the interactions of tourists with place through the medium of food» (Ellis *et al.*, 2018, p. 261). Thus, food acts as a cultural experience, and this underscores the importance of (perceived) authenticity, which is inherently linked to the heritage of a destination. If food tourism showcases the history and essence of a place, the role of the eel as a tourist attraction becomes even more obvious, as this fish has been integral to the economy and tradition of the Po Delta for centuries (Slow Food Foundation). A type of food that is so intertwined with the territory is often object of «quasi-cultic veneration» (Dann, 1996, p. 237), and its recipes must come from the local tradition, in order to provide the visitor with authentic experiences.

On the other hand, tourism in this river mouth area has recently also become environment-centred, with the park becoming a destination for visitors attracted to its unique landscape and exceptional biodiversity (UNESCO 2019). A tourism based on these premises may

seem in contrast with one based on consumption, as «an influx of tourists to a destination likely requires an excessive volume of food consumption which impacts on local food supply systems» (Ellis *et al.*, 2018, p. 261). Ideally, eco-tourism «should be linked to local conservation programmes» (Dann, 1996, p. 240) and foster research and financial support for natural resource management. Still, just like food, environment can «become a fantasy commodity for post-modern seekers of authenticity» (Dann, 1996, p. 241), who can choose to visit these barely charted territories to experience nature first-hand with their own eyes (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 157). In this sense, the contrast between food tourism and eco-tourism reflects and echoes the meat paradox, whereby the eel is in between divergent interests of consumption and preservation and, as far as tourism is concerned, there may not be an easy solution. The efforts of this research are directed towards understanding how these contradictions are played out across online discourse.

3. Methodology

An apparently mundane act like sitting at the dinner table hides a complex discourse construction that determines our decisions. The relationship between human and other-than-human is at stake at all times, with every bite and every sip. Relationships of hierarchy and power are at the heart of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and this also applies when not all participants are human (Stibbe, 2001). In fact, CDA investigates the way discourse constructs, maintains, and challenges power relations within social contexts, and is particularly concerned with how language contributes to the dominance of certain groups over others and how societal power structures are represented and reinforced through language (Fairclough, 1992). Long excluded from discussions about linguistic construction of power because they themselves are not «participants in their own social construction through language» (Stibbe, 2001, p. 146), animals actually fully qual-

ify for it, as discourse around them represents and signifies them, and attributes them meaning (Fairclough, 1992).

For this reason, the present research intersects the tools of corpus linguistics with a critical discourse analysis approach, in order to understand the ways in which the discourse around the Po Delta eel is socially constructed through online language. In particular, the aim is to answer three main questions: 1) how is the Po Delta eel represented online? Is it seen as food or as wildlife? 2) does this change when extending the research to eel in general? 3) are there any differences between the ways eels are represented in English and in Italian?

In order to find answers, two pairs of small corpora were built using LancsBox X (Brezina *et al.*, 2015). Since the main interest of this paper was to understand the online discourse available to those who look up information online, the URLs added to the corpora were extracted from Google searches⁴ of relevant keywords. Links to videos, social media pages, and Google books were excluded to have a more balanced and textual outcome, and only the links from the first page of results were considered. The first small corpus was created using as keywords «PO DELTA EEL» in English, the second «ANGUILLA PO DELTA» in Italian. The third and fourth small corpora were compiled using as keywords «EEL, EUROPEAN EEL» and «ANGUILLA, ANGUILLA EUROPEA» respectively for English and Italian, so as to broaden the research to the whole subspecies. The corpora were then queried and compared to understand the dominant discourses, which are analysed from a CDA perspective, bearing in mind the aforementioned duality of the eel in relation with humans. After outlining the quantitative results, some meaningful examples were selected and analysed for a more detailed comprehension of the issue at hand.

⁴The web searches were all carried out on May 28th, before the spread of AI-generated replies atop web searches, 2024.

This methodology has some important advantages, starting from an interdisciplinary perspective that intersect corpus tools with CDA, thus offering a solid basis for broader speculation on power dynamics. Data coming from a web-search-based corpus could also simulate the experience of a person looking up information online. As was seen in the previous section, the way an animal is depicted by discourse can significantly influence the decision of whether eating it is acceptable or even desirable, and this makes search results particularly relevant. The comparative approach that looks at Italian, the local language, and English, the lingua franca of communication (used in science as well as in tourism) can also bring forward conflicting intercultural perspectives on the matter. At the same time, the comparison between the general discourse on the species and the more specific one on the Delta inhabitants can show whether local traditions have an impact on discourse.

The careful selection of keywords was key to avoid corpus bias and ensure a more balanced and representative analysis while enhancing validity and reliability, and the in-depth exploration of some examples can help understand the ways in which power dynamics work in context. Finally, by revealing how discourse outlines attitudes and behaviours towards the eel, this research can ultimately support stakeholders in developing more effective strategies for this animal's protection and sustainable use.

4. Results and discussion

The web search results from different types of websites added into LancsBox X, with a limit of 100 pages and a depth of 2, were tagged both grammatically and semantically. More specifically, the web search gave 53 results for «PO DELTA EEL» (henceforth PDE), 52 results for «ANGUILLA DELTA PO» (henceforth ADP), 58 results for «EEL, EUROPEAN EEL» (henceforth EEE), and 45 for «ANGUILLA, ANGUILLA EUROPEA» (henceforth AAE), for a total of 208 web pages added to the corpora. While these numbers do not necessarily repre-

sent the totality of webpages and words dedicated to the topic, their interest lies in the fact that they can reflect the experience of looking for information online, and finding results that can shape perception and therefore behaviour towards the eel.

The stacked bar chart in Figure 3 below shows the main topics of the webpages, which already provide useful insights on the discourse around eels and Po Delta eels in English and Italian.

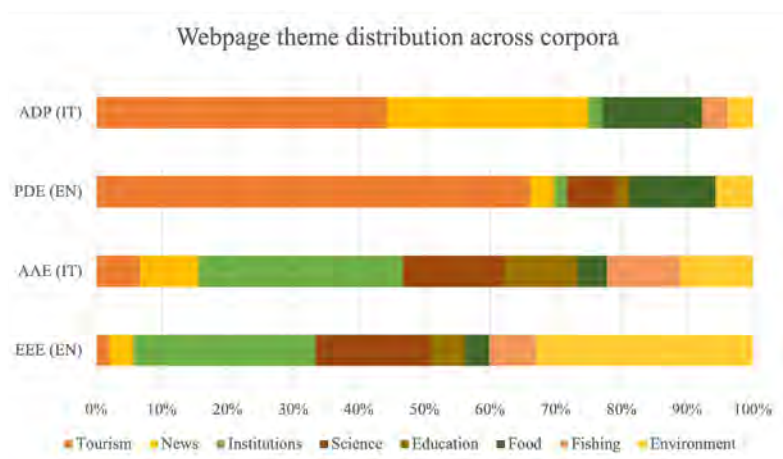


Figure 3. Webpage theme distribution across corpora.

The main themes identified across the webpages were the following:

- Tourism: tourist-related websites, blogs, and magazines;
- News: local, national and international news outlets;
- Institutions: local, national, and international websites of public institutions;
- Specialised science: from websites of research groups to specialised scientific texts;
- Education: online encyclopaedia entries and other forms of popularised information;
- Food: websites, blogs, and news outlets specialising in gastronomy;
- Fishing: websites or news outlet dedicated to fishing and aquaculture;

- Environment: websites, magazines, charity webpages and other websites openly advocating for the defence of animal rights and environment.

As for their distribution, a first glance already shows notable differences and some similarities. A cross-comparison between ADP and PDE shows that both corpora have a dominant focus on tourism, with ADP having approximately 45% of its content related to tourism, a percentage that raises beyond 65% for PDE. News webpages are also found in both, but their presence is definitely more prominent in ADP (over 30%) compared to PDE (less than 4%). The representation of institutional websites is minimal in both corpora, less than 2%. Science content is absent in ADP but accounts for just over 7% in PDE. Not recorded in ADP, education is also barely present in PDE, with less than 2%. Both corpora have a similar presence of food-related content (around 15%), while fishing does not score significant presence in either, but is slightly more present in ADP with a 4% occurrence. Environment-related content is moderately more prominent in PDE than in ADP but, with percentages around 6% and 3% respectively, it does not seem to be a central theme neither in English nor in Italian.

As for EEE and AAE, the former has a notable focus on the environment (33%), closely followed by institutional website presence (around 28%), whereas AAE has a more balanced distribution across themes, with institutional websites scoring the highest (over 30%). Both small corpora have a much lower presence of tourism-focused websites, with AAE having some more tourist pages (in both cases with less than 10%, with EEE having the absolute lowest frequency in tourism, less than 2% occurrence). News content remains below 5% in EEE and around 10% in AAE. Science is represented by approximately 15% in both corpora, but slightly more frequent in EEE. Education is more frequent in AAE, with just above 10% frequency, while EEE only has about 5% of popularised educational content. Food accounts for about

less than 5% in both corpora. Fishing websites are more present in this corpus pair, with just below 10% in EEE and over 10% in AAE.

When comparing AAE and EEE with ADP and PDE, a key observation is the greater thematic diversity in AAE and EEE. ADP and PDE are heavily skewed towards tourism and, in the case of ADP, towards news. On the other hand, AAE and EEE provide a broader range of themes, but with a strong focus on institutional and environmental content (the latter especially in EEE), which are less prominent in ADP and PDE. This suggests that the specific reference to the eel from Po Delta immediately shifts the focus towards its value as a tourist attraction. A closer look at the results will show whether this attraction is a natural or a gastronomic one.

In terms of words included in the small corpora, ADP contains an estimated total of 49,000 words, PDE features about 52,000 words, while AAE and EEE are larger, with 166,000 and 127,000 words respectively, for a combined total of approximately 394,000 words. The following table shows the most recurrent lexical words (50 or more occurrences for the smaller ADP and PDE, 100 or more occurrences for the larger AAE and EEE) across the four corpora:

ADP		PDE		AAE		EEE	
word	freq.	word	freq.	word	freq.	word	freq.
anguill* (eel*)	410	delta	334	anguill* (eel*)	1623	eel*	1873
delta	279	po	307	mar* (sea*)	480	european	547
po	240	comacchio	228	acqu* (water*)	412	species	399
pesca (fishing)	225	eel*	202	anni (years)	265	fish	360
comacchio	169	ferrara	140	città (city)	264	anguilla	335
specie (species)	107	ravenna	125	pesca (fishing)	264	sea	310
progetto (project)	103	emilia	120	specie (species)	259	conservation	247
europea (european)	101	area	117	europa (europe)	257	fishing	245

Endangered Species or Traditional Delicacy?

anni (years)	93	italy	115	fium* (river*)	254	project*	227
parco (park)	89	natur*	115	parte (part*)	244	diversity	207
attività (activity)	88	romagna	102	molto (very, much)	231	marine	199
valli (valleys)	87	river	98	kaup	225	animal	199
settore (sector)	78	sea	95	pisa	202	aquaculture	190
albarella	73	park	92	europa (european)	184	information	178
mare (sea)	73	town	87	isola (island)	178	shrimp	175
acqua (water)	66	fishing	85	secolo (cen- tury)	172	years	172
essere (to be, being)	65	visit	83	nord (north)	168	migration	167
ostric* (oyster*)	65	water	81	mediterra- neo (medi- terranean)	168	glass	165
blu (blue)	59	fish	79	progetti (projects)	161	ocean	162
commissione (commission)	58	experience	79	sardegna (sardinia)	153	data	155
sostenibile (sustainable)	58	event*	75	navigazione (navigation)	149	nature	155
pesce (fish)	56	place	73	islanda (iceland)	132	fisheries	152
granchio (crab)	54	italian	70	danubio (danube)	132	sargasso	148
viagg* (travel*)	53	resort	64	migrazione (migraton)	131	new	148
allevament* (breeding farm*)	53	boat	64	pesci (fish)	128	salmon	142
event* (event*)	52	tourism	64	periodo (period)	127	europe	138
ittic* (fish-related)	52	venice	63	stati (states)	124	time	137
conservazione (conservation)	51	time	63	secondo (second)	123	global	132
gusto (taste)	50	species	59	vulgaris	121	water	127

	sense	59	solo (lonely, only)	120	use	127
	technical	58	lungo (long)	120	spawning	126
	museum	56	atlantico (atlantic)	119	atlantic	122
	world	53	sud (south)	118	research	122
	discover	51	viareggio	114	functional	120
	see	51	lingue (languages)	113	areas	116
	day	50	territorio (territory)	110	sustainable	110
	find	50	popolazione (population)	109	freshwater	110
	small	50	paesi (countries, towns)	108	support	110
			centro (centre)	107	high	109
			arno	106	silver	108
			natale (christmas)	106	manage-ment	107
					protection	103
					depth	102

Table 1. most recurrent words across corpora (50 or more occurrences for ADP and PDE, 100 or more for AAE and EEE).

The most frequent words across Table 1 are largely in line with the main themes of the websites. First, looking at the specific corpora ADP and PDE, the words linked to the eel location are among the most recurrent⁵ (in ADP: *delta* [279], *po* [240], *comacchio* [169], *parco* [89], *valli* [87]; in PDE: *delta* [334], *po* [307], *comacchio* [228], *ferrara* [140], *ravenna* [125]). In the case of PDE, some toponyms are even more present than the name of the animal itself, which appears 410 times in ADP and 202 times in PDE. This strengthens the impression

⁵ The numbers between brackets following corpus words and collocates represent their absolute frequency.

of a strong tourist promotion orientation but also, as seen above, the identification of this animal with the territory and with the rituals attached to it. Some of the main activities involving eel consumption appear repeatedly: more specifically, *pescia* (fishing) is repeated 225 times (among the most recurrent terms of the ADP corpus), followed by the word *allevamento* (breeding farm) and *gusto* (taste), which occur 53 and 50 times respectively. The reference to fishing is less frequent in PDE, but nonetheless present, as the word *fishing* was found 85 times. There is also a reference to the Po Delta Park, a tourist attraction that has received two UNESCO awards (i.e., the inclusion in the lists of World Heritage Sites since 1999 and of UNESCO MAB Biosphere Reserves since 2015⁶) but remains a lesser-known tourist destination (Renna, forthcoming). The presence of this theme is evident in ADP with words like *parco* (park), *attività* (activity), *viagg** (travel*), and *event**, which are repeated 89, 88, 53, and 52 times respectively. PDE features even more words explicitly related to tourist activities: *park* (92), *experience* (79), *event** (75), *resort* (64), *tourism* (64), *museum* (56), *discover* (51), *see* (51). Other words are related to the eel's habitat and life, and can be found in both corpora, albeit with different frequencies: *specie* (107) and *species* (50); *acqua* (66) and *water* (81), *mare* (73) and *sea* (95). Interestingly, the reference to the word *river* (98) only appears in PDE. It is important to note that ADP also features references to the environmental issues, with words like: *progetto* (103), *commissione* (58), mostly referred to the projects launched for the eel's protection and the European Commission (featured as promoter of environmental initiatives), and *sostenibile* (sustainable), which also occurs 58 times. The word *conservazione* (51) is a peculiar case, as can be used both in the sense of *protection* of the species and of *tinning*, i.e., the process of preserving the meat for delayed consumption.

⁶ As reported on the Po Delta website: <https://podelta.eu/en/4-unesco-mab-biosphere-reserves>

Here, too, the comparison with the corpora AAE and EEE confirms the different orientation of the general online discourse around the eel. Here, the animal's name appears with a striking frequency, with the Italian *anguilla* repeated 1,623 times in AAE and the English *eel* recurring 1,873 times. AAE also stands out for several references to specific locations, usually where the eel is typically found – and eaten. Another important aspect to note in this respect is the absence of references to words like *po* and *delta* in this corpus, as the most mentioned locations (excluding water mass names) were: *pisa* (202), *sardegna* (153), *islanda* (132), *viareggio* (132). In all these places the eel is traditionally fished and eaten, and the link is reinforced by the reference to Christmas (*natale*, 106), which is a period of both fishing and consumption. On the other hand, a more scientific and technical orientation is evident in the most recurrent words featured in EEE, for example in the specific reference to the eel with its scientific name *Anguilla anguilla* (the single word *anguilla* recurring 335 times), to specific attributes like *glass* (165) or *silver* (108), or to animal activities like *migration* (167) or *spawning* (126). Typical words linked to the research and institutional worlds also have relatively high frequency, e.g., *information* (178) or *data* (155). Some of the most repeated words are specifically referred to the environmental aspects of the discourse around this fish. Among these, some notable examples may be *conservation* (247, potentially subject to the same contradiction as its Italian equivalent *conservazione*), *protection* (103), *project* (227), *diversity* (207), *sustainable* (110), and *management* (107).

To understand more about the way these words combine into a broader discourse, it is worth looking at collocates in the four corpora. Following, Figures 4-7 show the GraphColls generated by Lancsbox for the four small corpora, where collocates were filtered depending on whether they were lexical words appearing at least 5, 10, or 20 times (based on how many collocates could be found) within a five-word context left and right around the words *anguilla* in the Italian corpora and *eel* in the English ones.

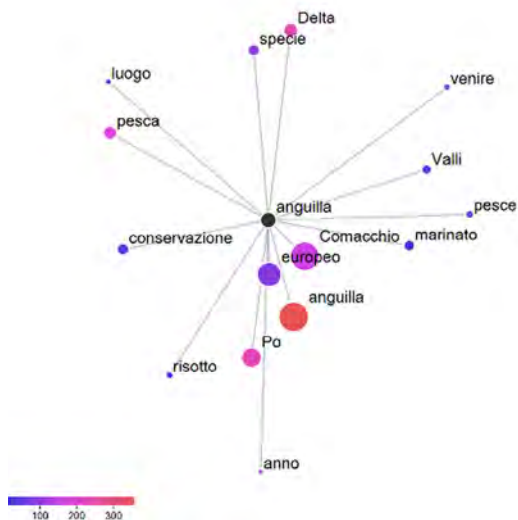


Figure 4. 'Anguilla' GraphColl for ADP (at least ten times).

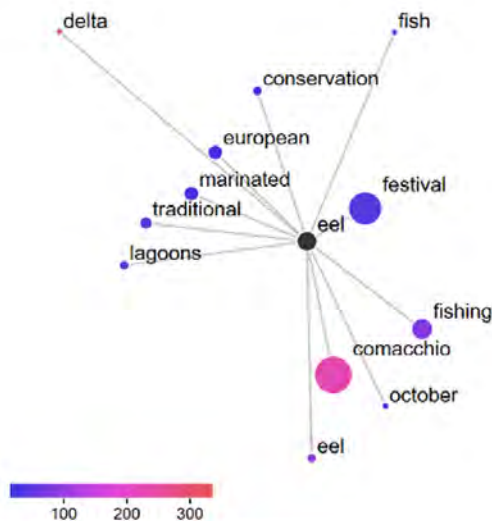


Figure 5. 'Eel' GraphColl for PDE (at least five times).

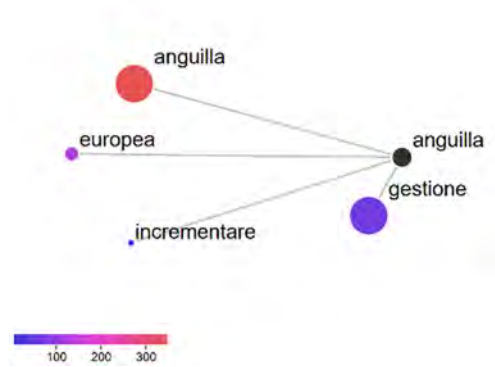


Figure 6. ‘Anguilla’ GraphColl for AAE (at least five times).

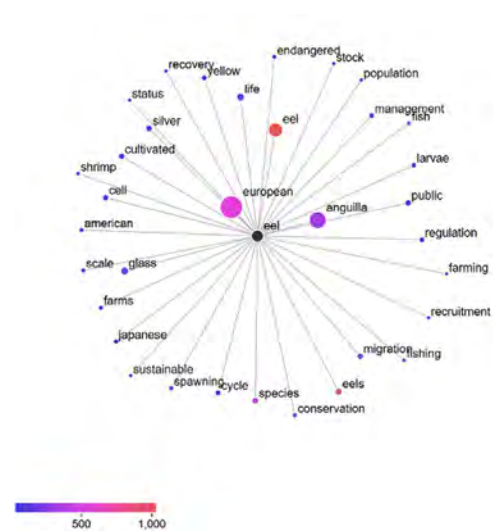


Figure 7. ‘Eel’ GraphColl for EEE (at least twenty times).

The ADP corpus did not have an especially fragmented series of collocates, so it was possible to generate a graph with collocates appearing ten times or more. As shown in Figure 4, the most recurrent word next to *anguilla* in ADP is *anguilla* (44), both because of the scientific name of the animal, *Anguilla anguilla*, as in example 1, and because the word

often appears more times at a close distance in common texts like recipes and dish descriptions (featured in both food websites and tourist websites), ingredient lists of processed foods, as in example 3, and news articles. The adjective *europeo* (European) is also very common, as it appears as a collocate 34 times. It distinguishes the type of eel from others (e.g., *Anguilla japonica*).

1. salvaguardare e a sfruttare in modo sostenibile la specie europea denominata «*Anguilla anguilla*», dal 2013 inserita [...] nella lista rossa della IUCN, l'Unione Mondiale per la Conservazione della Natura (parcodeltapo.it). [safeguard and exploit sustainably the European species called «*Anguilla anguilla*», since 2013 [...] red-listed by the IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature]
2. Manifattura dei Marinati, che a Comacchio era il centro più importante di questa lavorazione, e ora lavora le anguille secondo la più autentica tecnica tradizionale. Le anguille vengono posizionate in lunghi spiedi e cotte in girarrosti, davanti al fuoco a legna di grandi camini (deltadelpo.eu). [Manifattura dei Marinati (marinated fish factory), which in Comacchio was the most important centre for this food processing, and nowadays processes eels following the most authentic traditional technique. Eels are placed across long skewers and spit roasted, in front of wood-burning fires in large fireplaces]
3. INGREDIENTI[:] ANGUILLA selvatica (*Anguilla anguilla*), aceto di vino bianco, sale marino integrale di Cervia (valsana.it). [ingredients: wild eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), white wine vinegar, whole-grain seasalt from Cervia]

The scientific denomination is used broadly, for purposes that vary from more sustainability-centred discourse to technical texts like in-

gredient lists of processed foods. It is important to note that both examples 1 and 2 come from tourist websites, which constitute a large part of the ADP corpus. Tourist discourse seems to show the presence of the meat paradox, as it promotes a sustainable exploitation of the eel as a resource, as in example 1, but it also indulges in what clearly aims to be a mouth-watering description of traditional food processing techniques, as in example 2, showing how niceness of the eaten is a key element justifying its consumption. While one may argue that eels can be consumed consciously and with limitation to avoid species extinction, it is also easy to see how using it as a key tourist attraction can go against the most earnest food mindfulness intentions.

Geographical location remains key in ADP collocates, as the words denoting it are rather common: *comacchio* (42), *po* (27), *delta* (19), *valli* (valleys, 14). This should not come as a surprise, since the corpus is based on a localised web search which included local news outlets, as in example 4, as well as tourist and institutional websites. With its reference to the specific fishing time, example 5 (which also features the adjective *marinato*, marinated) undoubtedly provides technical information, but also hints at authenticity by explaining when the eel is ‘supposed’ to be eaten, and empowers the potential tourist with insider knowledge (Katan, 2012):

4. liberati storioni e anguille nel Delta del Po. [...] Splendido incontro con la natura e la biodiversità nel parco del Delta del Po. (corriereromagna.it). [Po Delta sturgeon and eels are freed. [...] beautiful encounter with nature and biodiversity in the Po Delta park]
5. L'anguilla «marinata del Delta del Po» è un prodotto tipico delle ricorrenze natalizie, si trova dunque facilmente in commercio nel periodo autunno-invernale (venetoagricoltura.org). [the «marinated Po Delta» eel is a typical Christmas product, and is easily found in shops during fall and winter seasons]

Some rather frequent collocates are directly linked to the eel's function as a source of nourishment, like the nouns *pesca* (fishing, 20) and *risotto* (11), and the adjective *marinato* (marinated, 14). The aforementioned word *conservazione*, of particular interest for its double meaning, appears 16 times as a collocate, both in the sense of species protection as in example 6 and in reference to food processing and conservation as in example 7:

6. LIFEEL è il primo progetto di conservazione dell'Anguilla europea concepito a scala dell'intero bacino del Fiume Po. Finalizzato a mantenere ed incrementare lo stock naturale di *Anguilla anguilla*, esso risponde alle grandi minacce che affliggono la specie (lifeel.eu). [LIFEEL is the first project of European eel protection conceived to cover the whole Po river basin. Aimed to preserve and increment the natural stock of *Anguilla anguilla*, it responds to the compelling threats endangering the species]

7. un'attività economica sostenibile della Biosfera del Po: la pesca, lavorazione e conservazione dell'anguilla, espressione dell'eccellenza gastronomica locale e di una tradizione che merita di essere custodita (parcodeltapo.it). [a sustainable economic activity in the Po Biosphere: eel fishing, processing and conservation, which is expression of a local gastronomic excellence and of a tradition that deserves safeguarding]

Example 6 comes from the website of the LIFEEL project, which also involves the University of Ferrara and is funded by the EU LIFE Programme, supporting environmental and climate action since 1992 (LIFEEL), and this purpose is shown without ambiguity in the extract. Example 7, on the other hand, comes from a tourist website aimed at promoting the Po Delta Park, which is also the source of example 1. The promotion of the park is strongly centred on its exceptional environment and the awareness that it needs protection, which echoes the rhetoric of eco-tourism, but at the same time does not ignore the importance of eel

processing industry for the local stakeholders. In fact, this particular extract comes from the announcement of a recurring, symbolic event: the freeing of some eels that were previously fished in the Delta. There are more events linked to the eel and its life cycle, as previously shown with the *Sagra dell'Anguilla*. Example 8 of the collocate *pesca* (fishing, 20) features a festival announcement from the national Italian newspaper *Il Sole 24 ore*, and shows how proposing activities that satisfy host-centred rituals and guest-centred authenticity experience further fosters eel fishing and eating despite its current critical condition:

8. un programma ricco di degustazioni, escursioni tra i canali e la natura rigogliosa di specchi d'acqua ed uccelli rari del Delta del Po, attività dimostrative di pesca dell'anguilla e tante gustose ricette attendono i buongustai per 3 weekend d'autunno (ilsole24ore.com). [a timetable filled with tasting, excursions across the canals and the lush nature of ponds and rare birds of the Po Delta, fishing demonstrations and plenty of recipes await foodies during three fall weekends]

Moving on to Figure 5, it must be noted that the collocates were so fragmented that it was necessary to include words appearing at least five times in order to generate a meaningful graph. Here, the most common collocate was *comacchio* with 21 occurrences. Comacchio is a historic lagoon town of the Po Delta area, famous for its bond with the park and its fishing tradition. It is also the place where the ancient eel and big-scale sand smelt (in Italian *acquadella* or *latterino*) processing factory called *Manifattura dei Marinati* is located. Now only active for specific months as a factory, it hosts the Eel Museum (*Museo dell'Anguilla*), a symbol of the long-standing tradition that intertwines the town with the destiny of this fish. Particularly representative, example 9 comes from a travel blog by a British author who visited Comacchio and the Delta during the Festival. It should be noted that the example also features the recurrent collocates *festival* (18) and *october* (5):

9. While I'm discussing the delights of the sea, I can't skip Comacchio's beloved eel. The first time I visited the town expecting calm canals, I was greeted with crowds on every corner: the Comacchio Eel Festival (in September or October) was in full swing, and everyone was here to celebrate. With abundant slippery creatures found nearby – they move between the lagoon and sea when the temperatures change – it's become a staple on almost every restaurant's menu (danflyingsolo.com)

The description of Comacchio as a usually relaxed town that becomes a lively and crowded place of celebration underscores the importance of the Festival. The blogger also talks about eels as «abundant slippery creatures» that are «a staple» in most local restaurants, which could suggest that the Festival does not place its main emphasis on eel safeguarding and endangerment, but rather conveys an idea of wealthy supplies of this fish – at least to a visiting outsider⁷. In this sense, the Comacchio Eel Festival seems to promote what Dann (1996) defined as «infracton of taboo» in tourism, whereby a visitor can indulge in «unlimited consumption of food» (p. 207), violating any rule they would otherwise scrupulously observe back home.

Two collocates have almost the same frequency, and they often appear together: *traditional* (7) and *marinated* (8). They are mostly used as attributes of the eel in both tourist and food websites. The word *fish-ing* also appears quite often (11), sometimes also accompanied by the aforementioned collocate *traditional*, and mainly on tourist websites, like in example 10 (which also features the collocate *lagoons*, repeated 6 times in total), but not only, as shown in example 11:

⁷ A more detailed analysis of the blog seems to suggest that the author was uninterested in the environmental aspects of the Delta, and mainly visited towns and historical museums.

10. stroll in the fog through shallow brackish lagoons, and small fishing villages linked to clam and eel fishing (Goro and Comacchio) (emiliaromagnaturismo.it)
11. the Po Delta [...] is one of the most important habitats for European eels and the longtime heartland of eel fishing, a practice that is now slowly fading (news.mongabay.com)

Example 10 comes from a short presentation of the Po Delta on a regional tourist website, which suggests that the area is tied to the eel beyond the immediate surroundings of Comacchio. On the other hand, example 11 comes from an environmentalist news website, which underlines that the century-long eel-fishing tradition is currently in real danger, as it is reported in the same article that over the last 40 years «the European eel population has declined dramatically, by 97%» (Lozza, 2023, n.p.), mainly due to anthropogenic causes, including climate change and illegal fishing.

Other collocates are more often used with mentioning of the eel's current endangered status: *european* and *conservation*, recurring 8 and 6 times respectively:

12. Today the main attraction is eels served in various preparations at every canal side restaurant or cafe, but that era too will presumably come to an end with the classification of the European eel as a critically endangered species (italiannotes.com)
13. The General Objective (GO) of LIFEEL is to assure a concrete support for the long-term conservation of the eel population of the Adriatic stock (unife.it)

Example 12 comes from another travel blog dedicated to Italy, and here the author seems more aware of the condition that is behind the

already mentioned LIFEEL project, which is also featured on the website of the University of Ferrara in example 13.

While the eel from Po Delta is the main interest of this paper, it is also worth looking at the examples from the general corpora AAE and EEE in order to show how eels can be discussed in different ways based on their geographical context (or lack thereof). Figure 6 shows that the AAE corpus collocates are extremely scattered, to the point that even a minimum of 5 repetitions generated a rather minimalist GraphColl. Nonetheless, the words that do appear in the graph confirm the mainly institutional nature of the websites appeared in the web search. The most frequent AAE collocates are the words *anguilla* and *gestione* (management), both repeated 10 times, followed by the word *europea* (European, 6). Just like in ADP, the repetition of the word *anguilla* (as well as the reference to the European provenance of the species) shows a recurring use of the eel's scientific name, as well as a tendency to write repetitive, technical texts, like the one in example 14:

14. La pesca dell'anguilla europea (*Anguilla anguilla*), giusto il disposto del D.M. 25 luglio 2019 n. 403, è vietata in tutte le regioni italiane dal 1° gennaio al 31 marzo di ogni anno (as-soittica.it. [European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) fishing, following the Ministerial Decree n. 403 of July 25th 2019, is forbidden in all Italian regions from January 1st to March 31st of each year]

The text is an extract from the Italian fishery association (Assoittica) website, which reports the ministerial decision to limit eel fishing activities across the whole nation in 2019.

Finally, the EEE corpus is the one with the richest collection of collocates to the point that, even having twenty repetitions as the inclusion criterion, the EEE GraphColl is still the most crowded. Once again, the Latin name *Anguilla anguilla* and the adjective *European*, which signal a formal discussion around the fish, are the most common collocates (223 and 386 occurrences respectively). Repetitive texts

are also common, with the word *eel* being another frequent collocate (156). At a first glance, most – if not all – common collocates seem to point towards a discourse that, in confirmation with the website theme analysis (Figure 3), is mostly institutional, environmental, and scientific. Some of the collocates identify the subtype of eel: apart from the aforementioned *European*, *Japanese* and *American* appear 25 and 26 times. The collocates *larvae* (29), *glass* (54), *yellow* (31), and *silver* (40) identify stages of the eel's life from younger to mature, just like the words *migration* (38), *spawning* (33), and *cycle* (28) indicate the growth and reproduction process. These terms are especially common in scientific and environmental texts:

15. Glass eel landings show a sharp decline from 2,000 t in 1980 to around 59 t for the 2014 to 2018 period (ICES, 2020b). Commercial yellow and silver eel landings have declined from around 2,000 to 3,500 t in 2009 to around 2,691 t for the 2014 to 2018 period (ICES, 2020b) (oap.ospar.org)
16. As an adult, the European eel undertakes the longest spawning migration of all anguillid eels, a distance of 5,000 to 10,000 km across the Atlantic Ocean to the Sargasso Sea (nature.com)

The passage in example 15 comes from the OAP assessment portal by OSPAR, the mechanism by which fifteen Governments and the EU cooperate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. The report cites scholarly sources with an environmentalist aim. More explicitly scientific is the extract in example 16, which comes from an article published on Nature and dedicated to the tracking of the eels' journey to the Sargasso Sea.

Other common collocates are more explicitly oriented towards environmental(ist) discourse and to the current status of the eel, but also to the institutional approach attempting to combine eel fishing and preservation: *status* (22), *endangered* (25), *stock* (21), *population* (22),

conservation (27), *public* (37), *regulation* (31), *farms* (28), *cultivated* (35), *fishing* (23), *sustainable* (22), and *recovery* (21):

17. A lack of public awareness of the eel trade also contributes to the problem, as a survey of 130 people by WWF's One Planet Youth programme's 'Eel-Pro-Road' project revealed (Lam & Wong, 2020) (medium.com)
18. The EU Eel Regulation provides a framework for the recovery of the European eel and the sustainable use of the stock (oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu)

Example 17 quotes an article written by WWF staff for the online magazine Medium. As could be easily expected, the article explains the current status of the eel and advocates for increased awareness and reduced consumption. On the other hand, example 18 comes from a European Commission website dedicated to Oceans and Fisheries, and in particular from a page explaining the EU Eel regulation aimed at the preservation of this fish by allowing mature eels to reach the Sargasso Sea to spawn (they are usually fished before they could embark on this journey) and younger eels to reach their freshwater habitats across Europe.

5. Conclusion

This paper stemmed from the need to fill a gap in knowledge for what concerns the online discourse around the eel, with specific reference to the variety that is autochthonous of the Italian Po Delta. Since information found on the internet can nowadays heavily influence people's attitudes and behaviours, the analysis focused on online discourse by combining the tools of corpus linguistics with the approach that is typical of CDA, aiming to understand the power relations between humans and this threatened fish.

Overall, this research has opened a window on a topic that has yet not been explored in depth, and it provided insights that could be added to the ongoing discourse on sustainability of human activities in general and fishing in particular, with a specific perspective on tourism, which immediately emerged in the results as a key factor in the destiny of the Po Delta eel and its habitat. In fact, all results (webpage analysis, frequency, and collocates) show quite clearly that adding the specific location of Po Delta to a web search on the eel completely shifts the results towards tourist discourse, where the combination between the unique fishing tradition and the current endangered status of the eel echoes the meat paradox. The Po Delta eel is object of symbolic preservation acts like their periodical freeing, but also the protagonist of a festival centred on its abundant consumption. There are some differences between the English and Italian results about this specific eel, where the latter are even more oriented towards food and the former show some more attention to the endangered status of the eel. The discourse moves more evidently towards institutional and environmental arguments when removing the specific reference to the Po Delta location, both in Italian and English. The Italian general discourse on eel is most often institutional, while the English one also features more recurrent environmental(ist) references.

While this paper had a rather top-down approach, as it focused on content generated by stakeholders and news outlets, further research may use different types of online texts (e.g., social media) and approaches (e.g., sentimental analysis) to understand the views of the general public on the matter. A broader corpus could also provide more detailed results, and the expansion of analysed texts could involve other eels (e.g., Japanese, American) or other endangered species that humans are «eating into extinction» (Berning Sawa, 2019).

In all cases, it is certainly worth looking into this subject, as it combines current and compelling themes like tourism and sustainability, and can provide concrete information for policymakers to act upon in order to (re)direct their efforts in the Po Delta and beyond. Finding a

solution that could preserve local biosphere(s) and local traditions is certainly an extremely hard task, which would benefit from the aid of information coming from the intersection of various disciplines and joint research efforts.

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The flavours of Verona: a multimodal analysis of food-related tourist promotion language

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of tourism 4.0, the fusion of textual content and visual elements stands out as a compelling force that shapes perceptions (Held, 2004), influences decision-making, and engages audiences. Within the domain of tourism websites, where the objective is not only to inform but also to persuade and invite the prospective tourists to action (i.e., visit the destination), the harmonious interplay between text and images holds unparalleled significance (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This contribution sets out on a multimodal analysis of a corpus of institutional and non-institutional websites promoting the city of Verona as a tourist destination. In particular, the analysis focuses on the city's food tourism perspective and explores whether both types of institutional and non-institutional websites promoting the city of Verona exploit the power of images in order to attract the attention of their readers when it comes to gastronomy.

The evolving dynamics between destination attraction and its food and wine supply reflect several emerging tourist trends. Firstly, there is a growing visitor demand for a holistic experience encompassing recreation, culture, customs, traditions, and immersion in the daily life of the local population. Secondly, urban destinations are witnessing an increased demand for well-being, health, genuineness, and authen-

ticity. Thirdly, the destination branding process, which constructs a distinctive tourist experience, is becoming more widespread and employed significantly by stakeholders. Lastly, agro-food businesses are actively seeking novel ways to communicate their connection with the territory. Tourism benchmarks are no longer just providers of experiences; they are becoming integral names, images, or symbols in the branding and labelling process that shapes the consumer's experience, aligning with their experiential, cognitive, and emotional expectations (Capitello *et al.*, 2013).

With this perspective, the present work takes into consideration another element, that of multimodality (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), to aid the analysis and delve deeper into the patterns of tourist promotion through language. In tourism discourse, the integration of language and visual elements on tourism websites shapes specific discourses that influence tourist perceptions and satisfaction (Choi *et al.*, 2017; Francesconi, 2014; Rim *et al.*, 2015). The tourist gaze (Urry, 2002) is instrumental in decoding new images through carefully planned filters, and the interplay of text and images (Hiipala, 2015) constructs narratives influencing prospective tourists (Maci, 2007; Urry, 2002). Research in marketing and advertising has also shown that motive visual imagery, subject to varying perspectives on its persuasive role, impacts both affect and cognition, with factors such as colour, image quality, and the congruency between image and text content influencing user engagement (Amit *et al.*, 2009; Heckler & Childers, 1992; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Pieters & Wedel, 2004). As far as this contribution is concerned, multimodality is exploited to understand the interconnectiveness of linguistic and visual elements, what Hiippala (2015) would define as «multimodal cohesion» (p. 18), creating a holistic experience for audiences that shapes their perceptions and engagement. The analysis of these language-image relations aims to unravel the visual-verbal coherence that gives multimodal text its texture (Royce, 2007).

The study develops within a systematic framework, starting with the use of WMatrix (Rayson, 2008) to identify and assess the fre-

quency of food-related keywords within a corpus of texts dedicated to Verona. Following this linguistic exploration, a search within the Verona Corpus is conducted to gauge the prevalence of food-related discussions compared to other thematic elements. The focus of the work is a qualitative evaluation of how seamlessly textual descriptions align with the visual narrative – a critical factor in shaping the perceptions and decisions of prospective tourists.

The second section is dedicated to the literature on the developing field of food tourism and is followed by a third section on multimodality; the fourth section presents the materials and methods used for the analysis; the last section delves deeper into the analysis and results of the study and is followed by the conclusions.

2. Food tourism

The exploration of food tourism has been a prominent focus in tourism research over the past three decades. However, its notable surge in attention within the tourism literature is particularly discernible in recent years (Ellis *et al.*, 2018).

A fundamental understanding of food tourism is articulated by Hall and Sharples (2003, p. 10), who explain it as

visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivating factor for travel.

Notably, food tourism, as posited by Horng and Tsai (2010), captures the experience of the «other» through food-related activities, fostering cultural learning and knowledge transfer. In this context, food becomes a medium for cultural experiences, and «culinary tourism» is delineated by the amalgamation of food activities, cultural consump-

tion, and individual motivations (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Silkes *et al.*, 2013; Smith & Xiao, 2008).

The significance of food and wine in shaping travel destination choices (Croce & Perri, 2017) can also be found in modern tourists' profound fascination with local lifestyles and cultures, manifested in their desire to partake in indigenous culinary experiences (Meluzzi & Balsamo, 2021, p. 3). Italy, in particular, is synonymous with a quality of life encompassing natural beauty, historical heritage, and, most importantly, food and cookery (Meluzzi & Balsamo, 2021). Some noteworthy patterns among Italian and international enogastronomic tourists are being identified through renowned food guides such as *Gambero Rosso*. The prototypical enogastronomic tourist, typically a couple, demonstrates a keen interest in visiting farms, wineries, and sampling local products, with specific Italian regions, including Tuscany, Piedmont, Sicily, and Emilia-Romagna, emerging as preferred destinations. This culinary exploration extends across generations, involving the X-Generation, Y-Generation, and Millennials (Meluzzi & Balsamo, 2021).

Furthermore, the food experience is conceptualised as either a «peak experience or as the extension of the ontological comfort of home» (Quan & Wang, 2004, p. 301). In the former dimension, food serves as the primary motivator for travel, creating a memorable departure from routine. In the latter, a market-driven, consumerist perspective positions food as an extension of home comfort in a novel environment. This multidimensional model aptly captures the integration of food into the tourist experience, elucidating diverse motivations among prospective tourists (Turra, 2020, pp. 4-5).

Analysing enogastronomic tourism through Dann's (1996) perspectives suggests an alignment primarily with the authenticity and strangerhood approaches (Corrizzato & Cavalieri, 2022, p. 285). The authenticity perspective, as explained by Dann (1996, pp. 7-11), resonates with MacCannell's (1989) argument that tourists are primarily motivated by the quest for authenticity (Corrizzato & Cavalieri, 2022, p. 285). This quest is fostered by the language of tourism, rife with

explicit expressions emphasising the typical native house, the original manuscript, and the authentic road. Conversely, the strangerhood perspective underscores the allure of unfamiliarity and novel experiences, reflecting in the language of tourism through descriptions of places and people (Dann, 1996, pp. 12-17).

For example, agri-food tours presented on Italian producers' websites offer guests an immersive journey, facilitating a taste of the familiar and traditional while transporting them into a realm divergent from their customary habits (Quan & Wang, 2004, p. 301). This experiential encounter epitomises both the authenticity and strangerhood dimensions, encapsulating the essence of enogastronomic tourism.

In the digital era, the information-seeking behaviour of travellers influences their decision-making process, with the quality of information, often accessed through smartphones, playing a pivotal role. Tour operators and industry entities, aware of this paradigm shift, leverage the internet for informative and alluring purposes, thereby revolutionising touristic management and shaping the language of tourism on the web (Meluzzi & Balsamo, 2021).

3. Multimodality, mental imagery, and tourist promotional texts

In comparison to terms like 'intermediality' (Elleström, 2010) and 'multisensoriality' (Classen, 1993), multimodality emphasises its inherently semiotic essence, as it encompasses the integrated use of diverse resources, such as language, images, sound, and music, in texts and communicative events. As Kress (2010) notes, it is not merely a method but a field to be theorised (p. 54), where the importance of each of its components needs to be both singled out and taken into account as a whole.

Linguists have also recognised the inherently multimodal nature of communication, which requires them to delve beyond the simple study of isolated sentences and texts. This is clear in spoken language, for example, which requires the consideration of non-verbal elements. As

far as contemporary written language is concerned, this demands the analysis of images, layout, typography, and colour for a comprehensive understanding (Hiippala, 2015; Kress, 2010).

As regards the multimodality of texts, research has highlighted that audiences engage with mass media advertisements through mental imagery, often described as «seeing with the mind's eye» (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Mental imagery is a quasi-perceptual experience (Ha *et al.*, 2019), allowing individuals to feel as though they are experiencing an environment without external stimuli (Argyriou, 2012). This ability is crucial in various domains, including online marketing, print, radio, and mobile advertisements (cf. Argyriou, 2012; Bone & Ellen, 1992; Gavilan *et al.*, 2014), and, as I argue in this contribution, in tourism promotion.

Individual differences, such as imagery abilities, processing style, user involvement, intuition, and transportability, play a significant role in mental imagery's impact on information processing and persuasion (Ha *et al.*, 2019). For example, transportability, an under-investigated trait, refers to one's tendency to visually simulate a story, contributing to the persuasive impact of messages (Appel & Richter, 2010; Ha *et al.*, 2019; van Laer *et al.*, 2014).

Thus, mental imagery can be defined as the process of stimulating consumers to imagine themselves in a mediated environment to enhance the perception of being present (Argyriou, 2012). This quasi-perceptual process activates concrete sensory representations, influencing various outcomes such as attention, memory, cognitive and affective responses, and behavioural intentions (Argyriou, 2012; Feiereisen *et al.*, 2008; Yoo & Kim, 2014).

The significance of mental imagery can be extended to tourism discourse, where destination promotion texts strategically use images to make the intangible tangible (Dann, 1993; Ferreira, 2007; Held, 2004; Maci, 2007, 2020; Manca, 2016). The tourist gaze, as defined by Urry (2002), shapes perception by decoding new images through carefully planned filters. The interplay of text and images on tourism websites constructs specific discourses that shape the destination's

portrayal, influencing prospective tourists (Francesconi, 2014; Urry, 2002; Maci, 2007). Indeed, «tourist consumption is primarily visual» (Jenkins, 2003, p. 309). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 154) too state that we tend to attach more meaning to images than text, and, as I put forward, this is especially the case in tourism discourse.

In advertising, emotive visual imagery is subject to varying perspectives on its persuasive role, influencing both affect and cognition (Amit *et al.*, 2009). Visual elements, including colour, image quality, and the presence of human faces, impact engagement on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram (Pieters & Wedel, 2004; Xiao & Ding, 2014). In addition, the interplay between modality markers, as defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), also adds to the naturalism of the photograph perceived by the viewers. The fit between image content and text content also influences user engagement, with relevant images contributing to more favourable attitudes (Heckler & Childers, 1992). This is extremely relevant for the field of tourism.

In addition, the congruency principle suggests that pictures should align with close psychological distance¹, while words align with far psychological distance (Trope *et al.*, 2007). This principle is reflected in the word-distance/picture-proximity connection, where individuals prefer pictures for communication with near others and words for communication with distant others (Amit *et al.*, 2013).

¹ This was proved by Amit's (2006) experiments: items were presented in either pictorial or verbal formats, with varying spatial, temporal, or social distances. For spatial distance, participants saw items either close or far within background images that created a depth illusion. Results showed faster responses to pictures of objects when they appeared spatially near, but faster responses to words when the objects were spatially distant. Similar patterns were observed for temporal (modern vs. ancient) and social (domestic vs. foreign) distances. Processing was most efficient when the psychological distance of an object matched its presentation medium (e.g., pictures for near objects, words for distant ones).

This can be particularly relevant for tourism websites which serve as crucial tools for tourists to gather information about destinations, emphasising the effectiveness of language and visual elements in shaping tourist perceptions (Maci, 2020; Manca, 2016; Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010). The integration of text and images in these websites constructs specific discourses that contribute to portraying tourist attractions and products, influencing users' satisfaction (Choi *et al.*, 2017; Rim *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the use of images can indeed close the gap between the psychological distance that may be created in the promotion of a foreign and far-away destination.

The multimodal turn in linguistics further corroborates this by incorporating multimodal interaction analysis and social semiotics and viewing meaning as an interplay between linguistic and non-linguistic modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Norris, 2004). The analysis of language-image relations aims to understand the visual-verbal coherence that gives multimodal text its texture (Royce, 2007, p. 63; cf. Hiippala, 2015).

In conclusion, multimodality in tourism discourse involves the integrated use of language and images, impacting mental imagery, engagement on social media, and the portrayal of destinations on tourism websites. The interconnectedness of linguistic and visual elements creates a holistic experience for audiences, shaping their perceptions and influencing their engagement, which is why it should be taken into account as a whole in our analysis below.

4. Data and methods

As mentioned in the Introduction, the present research relies on the Verona Corpus, which is a corpus of English-language institutional and non-institutional tourist websites texts promoting the city of Verona. The corpus was compiled within the wider project «4. Digital, Industry, Aerospace», promoted by the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan «Ecosystems of Innovation (Mission 4 Education and Research - Component 2 From Research to Enterprise, Investment

1.5» and funded by the European Union through NextGenerationEU. Specifically, the research programme contributes to Research Theme 4 (RT4): New Narratives and Communication Strategies.

Within this project, another corpus of tourist discourse was also compiled: the Dolomites Corpus. The Dolomites Corpus collects English-language institutional and non-institutional tourist website texts promoting the Veneto Dolomites.

4.1 The Verona Corpus

The Verona Corpus is a specialised discourse corpus of 207,151 tokens consisting of 234 texts² collected from the internet through the aid of BootCaT (Baroni & Bernardini, 2004). The texts were collected between July 2023 and September 2023; each text contains information regarding the type of website (institutional vs non-institutional) and a unique identification code. The information is provided in the XML code preamble. The texts were automatically downloaded by BootCaT³ after providing the following seeds: *attractions, do, eat, food, monuments, museums, see, things, tour, verona, visit, visiting, what, where*.

The seeds were collected after a survey was administered to five researchers who participated in the present study. The survey enquired how the researchers would go about if they were tourists looking for information about a trip to Verona. The prompt given is as follows:

² Out of 234 texts, 191 (81.6%) are non-institutional, while the remaining 93 (18.4%) are institutional.

³ BootCaT is a free programme that allows the users to automate the process of finding texts on the web and collating them into a corpus. There are different levels of settings; first, the users provide a list of single- or multi-word terms (seeds) which will be used in combination (tuple) to run the search on the chosen search engine. This will return a list of relevant URLs, which the user can inspect and decide to filter. Then, the actual webpages are retrieved automatically, converted into plain text, and saved as .txt files.

You're an English-speaking tourist looking to spend your holidays in Italy. You will be spending some time touring the country and you have heard so many nice things about the city of Verona. However, you don't know much except that it was the city of Romeo and Juliet. You decide to take it to Google to find out more about Verona – what you can see, what you can do, what you can eat – so that you can better organise your trip. Think about as many words/sentences/phrases/questions as possible that you could use in Google to find out whatever you need to know to plan your trip in the city.

Ex.: I want to find out more about Japanese cuisine. I'm going to Google: Japanese cuisine; best recipes in Japanese cuisine; Japanese cuisine sushi; what do Japanese people eat?; is Japanese cooking difficult?; etc...

Please use one line for each prompt (word/phrases/sentences/questions).

The choice of the survey stemmed from the desire of not influencing the choice of seeds in any possible way and, since the author had already performed several searches on the search engine in order to explore the available online tourist material on the city of Verona, the survey proved to be the most unbiased way of proceeding with the search.

The seeds collected from the participants were then fed into BootCaT and the following selections and parameters were applied: a Simple Query was launched to generate the corpus, the maximum tuple length was set to 3 and the number of tuples was set to the maximum number available, that is, 364. PDF documents were excluded from the crawl and the maximum number of URLs to return for each tuple was set to 50. The extraction yielded a total of 317 texts which were then manually cleaned and sorted, excluding texts which were not relevant to the topic or which came from personal blogs, social media, or reviews.

In addition to the texts, 1,478 images overall were also collected. For each website whose text was downloaded, the image(s) was also

downloaded and embedded into the .txt files via an XML string which provides a description of the image. The XML tags chosen for the description of the images are based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design and Dann's (1996) Language of Tourism and adapted according to the research needs. A breakdown of the tags is provided in the diagrams below:

Tracking Tags for Images

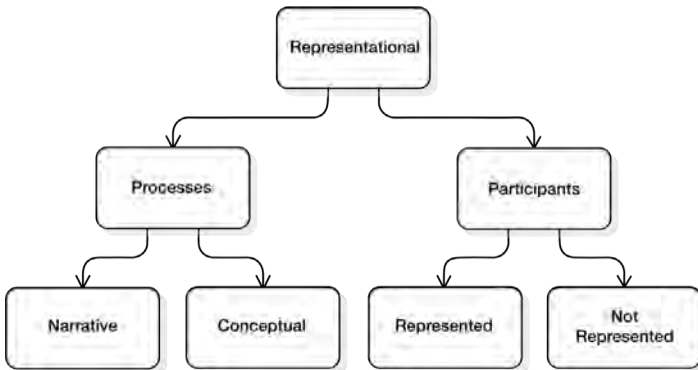


Figure 1. First part of the tracking tags diagram for the corpus images

Tracking Tags for Images

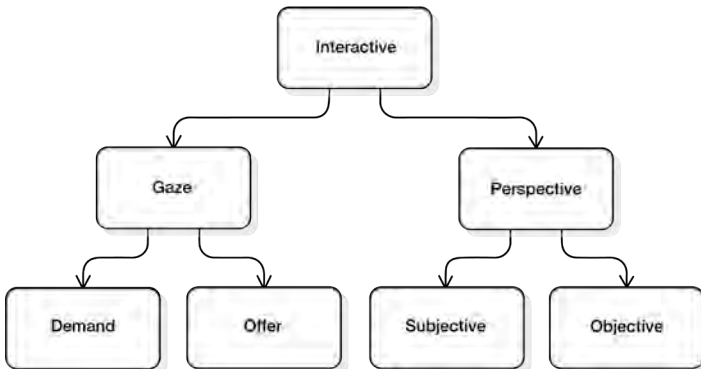


Figure 2. Second part of the tracking tags diagram for the corpus images



Figure 3. Third part of the tracking tags diagram for the corpus images.

The diagram has been divided into three parts in order to better show the single sections; the first two parts of the diagram are related to the metafunctions (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) of the images; the third metafunction (compositional) according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has been discarded as it was not relevant to the present study and it was replaced instead by «tourist perspective». The tags related to the first metafunction (representational) summarise the processes (narrative or conceptual) and the participants (represented or not represented); while, the «circumstances» present in the original scheme devised by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) were not included. The second part of the diagram define the interactive metafunction and include two sub-levels which were coined from Dann (2006) and replaced the original contact, social distance, subjectivity: gaze and perspective. The gaze aims to define whether the image is conveying a demand or an offer, while the perspective defines whether the image adopts a subjective or objective point of view. Lastly, the third part, which is the one that was mostly exploited for the present work, the tourist perspective (abbreviated in XML to *tourpersp*) defines the actual subject contained in the image. This was vital in identifying the images that were related to the contents of the texts, i.e., food. An example of an XML tagged image is provided below:

```

<image id='003' category1='representational' process='narrative' participants='represented' category2='interactive' gaze='offer' perspective='objective' tourpersp='city'/>
    
```

As can be seen in the string, the representational metafunction of the image is a narrative process where the participants are represented and,

as regards the interactive one, the image is conveying an offer from an objective perspective representing an urban subject.



Figure 4. Example of an image collected from a website promoting the city of Verona as a tourist

The texts were then uploaded to the SketchEngine corpus query system (Kilgariff *et al.*, 2014).

4.2 The extraction

In my approach to analysing the images, I relied on the key semantic domains generated by WMatrix (Rayson, 2008). Key semantic domains are a type of word list generated by the software based on semantic field tags automatically assigned to the text through the USAS tagger (Rayson *et al.*, 2004). The advantages of a semantic analysis rather than words or POS tags are that the comparison requires a smaller number of key domains compared to the number of keywords and «overall trends are easier to identify» (Rayson, 2008, p. 542). In the present contribution, I scrutinised key semantic domains selected by WMatrix which assigned them importance based on specific scores (frequency, relative frequency, and LogLikelihood). My focus centred on the tag *FI*, which encompasses all food-related keywords and was the second highest ranking semantic tag of the corpus (LogLikelihood =

4836.20, LogRatio = 2.65) compared to the written sample of the BNC which I selected as the reference corpus. I restricted my consideration to words with a relative frequency exceeding 10 occurrences, starting from the 11th occurrence. This criterion yielded approximately 70 keywords, of which I only considered the initial 15 due to space constraints. In addition, the plurals of the keywords were merged into a single lemma.

Following on from this, I ran a search of the keywords into the corpus and extracted all the texts which contained them; a table was compiled to include the name of the corpus file and all the keywords it contained. However, since my main focus in the present contribution is multimodality and, specifically, images, I also verified whether these texts included any images, and if so, how many and whether they were relevant to the keywords or the overall topic of the text. In order to better analyse these images, I opted to add another layer of annotation on top of the original XML descriptions described in section 4.1. This focused on assessing whether the images aligned with the food-related topics of the texts, examining aspects such as the subjects of the images, the presence or absence of superimposed text, the clarity of the image, and whether it could be described as artificial or authentic. The distinction between artificial and authentic images was based on Dann's (1996) view of authenticity and the idea that images attract attention. Indeed, although support to this argument has only been found in the literature on social media communication states that «professionally shot pictures consistently lead to higher engagement» (Li & Xie, 2020, p. 2), I believe this can also be extended to tourism, where it is essential to connect with potential tourists' desire for authenticity.

In addition, I followed Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework on modality which posits that the degree of certain visual cues (called «modality markers») helps render the image more or less naturalistic. These some of these visual cues are colour saturation, contextualisation, representation, depth, illumination, and brightness; they can be either present at full scale or absent. The degree to which they are present in the picture helps the viewer perceive the photograph as

naturalistic. The more the picture is naturalistic, the more viewer will be inclined to «believe» it and thus interpret it as their own reality. This is part of the «naturalistic coding orientation» (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 165) which is the coding orientation all members of a culture share as individuals, much like their general knowledge of a language. However, in the case of tourism discourse, especially food tourism, the viewers may also be affected by the «sensory coding orientation» (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 165) which is used in contexts where the main communicative aim is pleasure. Thus, colour plays a dominant role as it affects meaning conveying high modality⁴.

Thus, I believe that images perceived as overly artificial may inadvertently diminish the authenticity associated with the destination. In contrast, authentic images may contribute to a more genuine and appealing portrayal. As regards the quality of images (*clear* vs *blurry*), «high-level image content and style, such as image quality [...], has also been shown to affect viewers' evaluation of products and product sales» (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008; Zhang *et al.*, 2017). The new subject layer was designed as thus:

Food subject(s) of the image: *aperitivo, bread, cake, cheese, coffee, croissant, dessert, drinks, other food, gourmet food, gourmet pasta, grapes, hams, homemade food, homemade pasta, ice-cream, meat, pizza, vegetables, wine.*

Other subject(s) of the image: *canteen, city, counter, hands, landscape, people, plate, restaurant, shop, table*

The tags broadly encompass all the subjects that I was able to identify in the pictures. Some are rather straightforward, such as *bread, cake*, and *cheese*, while others like *aperitivo* were chosen to describe the overall scene. In the case of *aperitivo* this includes all images showing a selection

⁴ For more on coding orientations, see Kress & van Leeuwen (2006).

of nibbles and snacks served with a glass of wine or the local *spritz* drink. In the case of other subjects, *counter* refers to all those pictures which include images of a shop counter or bar counter, while *landscape* describes the presence of a natural or city background to the picture.

All these levels of annotation contributed to the creation of an effectiveness scale of communication to evaluate and assess the communicative power of the text/image interconnectedness. The scale is a very simple 3-point scale that ranges from *not effective*, *somewhat effective* and *very effective*. The idea of the scale stems from the desire to provide a bird's-eye-view of the multimodality of these texts and, on the basis of the literature, whether the use is often well-realised or not. The labels were assigned on the basis of the following combinations:

Not effective:

- food keywords + pictures not containing food-related subjects
- food keywords + no picture

Somewhat effective:

- Food keywords + pictures containing food-related subjects but not matching the keywords
- Food keywords + pictures containing food-related subjects matching the keywords + blurry
- Food keywords + pictures containing food-related subjects matching the keywords + artificial
- Food keywords + pictures containing food-related subject matching the keywords + artificial + superimposed text
- Food keywords + any combinations above

Very effective:

- Food keywords + pictures containing food-related subjects matching the keywords

Lastly, I compared the means of the three groups of texts which were classified according to the effectiveness of communication scale (*not effective, somewhat effective, very effective*) in order to verify whether the classification was linked to the mean number of keywords. A Shapiro-Wilk test was run on the data to verify whether they were normally distributed and, following on from the results, a Kruskal-Wallis test was computed, followed by focused comparison of the mean ranks.

5. Analysis

With this framework in mind, I proceeded with the analysis. The identified keywords and their respective relative frequencies are displayed in Table 1:

Keyword	Frequency	Normalised frequency (pmw)
Piazza	342	1,891.63
Food	252	1,393.84
Restaurant(s)	209	1,156
Cheese(s)	104	575.23
Meat	89	492.27
Cuisine	88	486.74
Pasta	73	403.77
Dessert(s)	63	348.46
Eat	62	342.93
Rice	48	265.49
Culinary	44	243.37
Pizza	44	243.37
Lunch	41	226.77
Menu	36	199.12
Bread	35	193.59
Pearà	31	171.46

Table 1. WMatrix Keywords identified through the analysis

Piazza was discarded from the analysis as a technical error of the software which wrongly categorised it as food rather than belonging to the M7 domain (*Places*). Subsequently, I conducted a search in the Verona Corpus for these 15 words and their variations, including plurals. Out of the 234 texts in the Verona Corpus, 118 texts contained food-related words, comprising 50.43% of the corpus. This indicates a prevalence of texts discussing food in relation to Verona compared to other topics. It is noteworthy that my primary objective was not to quantify the proportion of texts dedicated to food but rather to assess the alignment between textual content and corresponding images. Notably, around 50% of the texts in the corpus touch upon food-related themes, with some texts exclusively delving into food descriptions while others incorporating food descriptions alongside other topics. My emphasis lies in determining if the language in the texts corresponds with and is substantiated by the accompanying images since, as mentioned in Section 2, the interconnectedness of text and images on tourism websites can shape the destination's portrayal and impact prospective tourists (Maci, 2007; Urry, 2002).

5.1 Multimodality

Turning our attention to the images, I found that 52 texts (out of 118) included images, constituting approximately 44% of this subset. This finding underscores the relevance of images in texts discussing food-related content. This observation is also intriguing, considering the contemporary charisma of food topics. One might expect a higher prevalence of images, given their effectiveness in capturing prospective tourists' attention (Jenkins, 2003, p. 309). Particularly in the realm of gastronomy, I believe images exert a substantial influence. It is noteworthy that only almost half of the texts dig into this visual aspect. To probe deeper into the analysis of images, I selected a subset of 176 images from the texts, accounting for instances where multiple images were present. These images were chosen based on the XML string that

annotated the image's subject. Specifically, I focused on those containing the keyword *food* (see Section 3.1).

I cross-referenced the textual content with the images, aiming to evaluate how well they align and interconnect. For space constraints and copyright reasons, the pictures are not shown in the present work; however, the results of the analysis are displayed in Table 2. The table shows all the different combinations of texts containing food-related keywords (as extracted by WMatrix) while cross-checking the presence of food-related images or images containing other subjects.

The images have been classified into three groups according to their effectiveness scale. The first group consists of 22 files identified as *very effective* due to their successful integration of combined images and food-related descriptions. The second group includes 25 files assessed as *somewhat effective*, as they either misused images or presented a mismatch between the text and the visuals. The third group contains 58 documents labelled as *not effective* because, despite featuring food-related images, the accompanying texts failed to effectively interweave the communication in a multimodal manner (3) or did not include any food-related images (55). Lastly, 13 documents describe food-related topics but contain no images at all.

File name	Keywords	Image subject	Effectiveness scale
V014	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; culinary; lunch; bread; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V018	<i>Eat; bread; dessert</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V021	<i>Food; meat; cheese; eat; rice; menu; dessert</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V056	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; rice; culinary; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V060	<i>Food; cheese; culinary; bread</i>	Food-related	Very effective

V070	<i>Food; cheese</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V071	<i>Food; cheese; pasta; rice</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V079	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; pasta; pizza</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V088	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V095	<i>Food; cheese; culinary</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V108	<i>Food; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; lunch; bread; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V116	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine; cheese; culinary; lunch; dessert</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V130	<i>Food; restaurant; pizza; lunch; menu; bread; dessert</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V162	<i>Food; cuisine; eat</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V167	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cheese; pasta; eat; lunch; dessert</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V175	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; culinary; lunch; menu; bread; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V181	<i>Restaurant</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V187	<i>Food; cheese</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V196	<i>Food; restaurant; cheese; pasta; culinary; lunch; dessert</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V217	<i>Restaurant</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V223	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; menu</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V232	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; pasta</i>	Food-related	Very effective
V046	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine; eat</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective

V047	<i>Food; meat; cuisine; pasta; eat; rice; dessert</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V057	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; culinary; pizza; menu; bread</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V066	<i>Food; restaurant; eat; menu</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V068	<i>Food; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V083	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine; pasta; rice; pizza; bread</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V087	<i>Food; cuisine; pasta; pizza</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V089	<i>Food; restaurant; cheese; pasta; eat; lunch; dessert</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V090	<i>Food; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V105	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V119	<i>Food; cheese; bread</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V129	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cheese; pasta; rice; culinary; dessert</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V135	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cheese; pasta; eat; pizza; menu; bread; dessert</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V136	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; pasta; culinary; bread; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V140	<i>Restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; rice; lunch; dessert</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V155	<i>Food; restaurant; cheese; eat; culinary</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V156	<i>Food; restaurant; lunch; menu</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V158	<i>Food; meat; cuisine; pasta; culinary</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V159	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; culinary; bread; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective

V173	<i>Food; cuisine; eat; lunch</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V188	<i>Lunch</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V189	<i>Cuisine; cheese; eat; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V204	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine; cheese; lunch; dessert</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V222	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; menu; dessert; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V230	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; pasta; eat; rice; menu; bread</i>	Food-related	Somewhat effective
V064	<i>Food; restaurant; lunch; menu</i>	Food-related	Not effective
V084	<i>Food; eat; lunch; menu; bread</i>	Food-related	Not effective
V091	<i>Restaurant; meat; rice; Pearà</i>	Food-related	Not effective
V001	<i>Restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; culinary; dessert; Pearà</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V003	<i>Food; restaurant; cheese; pasta; rice</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V016	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V017	<i>Food; restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V020	<i>Restaurant; pasta; eat; bread</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V023	<i>Food; restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V024	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V035	<i>Lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective

V038	<i>Restaurant; pasta; eat</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V041	<i>Food; restaurant; eat; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V043	<i>Restaurant; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V044	<i>Restaurant; eat</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V045	<i>Restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; lunch; dessert; Pearà</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V049	<i>Food; eat; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V059	<i>Pizza</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V061	<i>Cuisine</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V065	<i>Restaurant; culinary</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V075	<i>Food; cheese; pizza</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V080	<i>Food; restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V082	<i>Meat; cheese</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V085	<i>Restaurant; eat; pizza</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V092	<i>Food; restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V097	<i>Food; meat; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; dessert; Pearà</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V106	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V107	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V112	<i>Food; restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective

V115	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V117	<i>Food; restaurant; eat; pizza; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V118	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V121	<i>Food; meat; cheese; eat</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V128	<i>Food</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V131	<i>Food; pasta; eat; culinary; dessert</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V138	<i>Food; restaurant; culinary; lunch; menu</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V139	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V144	<i>Food</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V148	<i>Restaurant; eat</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V149	<i>Restaurant; cuisine; eat</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V153	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V154	<i>Food; restaurant; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V160	<i>Food; cheese</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V164	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V165	<i>Food; cheese; rice</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V176	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; eat; culinary; bread; dessert; Pearà</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V179	<i>Food; restaurant; eat</i>	Other subject	Not effective

V191	<i>Food; restaurant; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V193	<i>Food; restaurant; cuisine; culinary</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V194	<i>Food; pasta; rice; culinary</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V195	<i>Food</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V197	<i>Food; restaurant; eat; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V198	<i>Food; restaurant; eat; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V201	<i>Food; lunch</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V207	<i>restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V213	<i>Eat; rice</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V215	<i>Food; restaurant; meat; cuisine; cheese; eat; culinary; lunch; menu; dessert</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V220	<i>Restaurant</i>	Other subject	Not effective
V069	<i>Food; meat; pasta; culinary; bread</i>	No picture	Not effective
V073	<i>Cuisine</i>	No picture	Not effective
V109	<i>Food</i>	No picture	Not effective
V111	<i>Meat; cheese; bread; Pearà</i>	No picture	Not effective
V114	<i>Food; restaurant; pizza; lunch</i>	No picture	Not effective
V137	<i>Food; meat; cuisine; cheese; pasta; eat; rice; bread; Pearà</i>	No picture	Not effective
V177	<i>Food</i>	No picture	Not effective

V186	<i>Food; restaurant; cheese; rice; pizza; dessert</i>	No picture	Not effective
V199	<i>Food</i>	No picture	Not effective
V202	<i>Food; meat; cuisine; pasta; eat; rice; culinary; bread; dessert; Pearà</i>	No picture	Not effective
V209	<i>Food; cuisine; cheese</i>	No picture	Not effective
V210	<i>Food; cheese; culinary</i>	No picture	Not effective
V212	<i>Food</i>	No picture	Not effective

Table 2. Rating of keywords and images

The data from Table 2 shows that 18.64% of texts containing food-related keywords and pictures can be assessed as *very effective* from the point of view of the interconnectedness between text and images. As mentioned in Section 3, this label is assigned when the text contains food-related keywords with matching picture(s) which is not blurry or considered artificial (i.e., professionally shot or edited in a very explicit manner). For example, from the first batch of texts, text V018, despite mentioning only three keywords – *eat*, *bread*, and *dessert* – is complemented by an authentic image of cake. This limited textual reference to food is aptly augmented by a relevant image. Similarly, text V021, featuring seven keywords (*food*, *meat*, *cheese*, *eat*, *rice*, *menu*, *dessert*, in order of frequency), is complemented by an authentic image of home-made food. The association between the textual content and the image works effectively, providing a coherent representation.

The *somewhat effective* texts account for 21.19% of the food-related sub-corpus and have been evaluated as such since they do employ images, but they are either not food-related, blurry, artificially taken or edited, contain flashy superimposed text, or a combination of the above. For example, text V046, despite containing keywords related to food and restaurants (*food*, *restaurant*, *cuisine*, *eat*), is accompanied by

two artificial images of wine and homemade pasta. While the association is somewhat effective, there is room for improvement to offer a more authentic perspective. Similarly, text V047, mentioning food-related keywords (*food, meat, cuisine, pasta, eat, rice, dessert*), is accompanied by an artificial banner image, serving as the background of the website. The artificiality of the image detracts from its effectiveness in engaging prospective tourists.

More interestingly, the majority of texts, 60.17%, have been evaluated as *not effective* due to their inability to effectively interweave the texts with the multimodal elements. For example, text V064 (*food, restaurant, lunch, menu*) contains four images, but they are artificial and blurry images of drinks, meat, and pizza. The lack of clarity and artificial setting compromises the effectiveness of this representation. In a similar fashion, texts V066 (*food, restaurant, eat, menu*) and V068 (*food, Pearà*), each featuring a single image, present artificial representations of gourmet food, homemade food, and cheese, respectively. While these images may work depending on the target audience, the artificiality of the images might impact their appeal. Lastly, text V087 (*food, cuisine, pasta, pizza*) is accompanied by two images of gourmet pasta and coffee, both appearing artificial. The mismatch between the textual content and images suggests a need for improved text-image coordination. Indeed, the inclusion of a picture of coffee is deemed less pertinent given the actual keywords and the images ooze their artificial quality. This incongruence creates a sense of displacement and contradiction, potentially hindering the text's intended effect.

5.2 Frequency Keywords Impact

In order to conclude the analysis, I observed the three groups in terms of effectiveness of communication (*very effective, somewhat effective, not effective*) in relation to the average number of keywords present in each text. The number of keywords in each group was plotted in Figure 5.

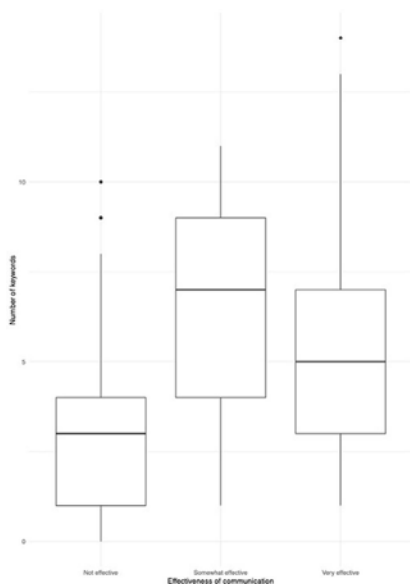


Figure 5. Boxplots of effectiveness of communication

The boxplots show that the lowest number of keywords is found in the *not effective* group, while the other two groups share a similar lower number of keywords. In terms of highest number of keywords, this is found in the *very effective* group. As regards the lower quartile of the groups, the higher degree of variability in these scores is found in the *somewhat effective* group, followed by the *very effective* one. The inter-quartile range looks relatively similar in the *somewhat effective* and *not effective* groups, but smaller in the *not effective*. The median is higher in the *somewhat effective* group, followed by the *very effective* and lastly the *not effective*. Lastly, upper quartile shows a great degree of range in both the *not effective* and *very effective* groups. The whiskers visually inform us that the data is probably skewed and thus not normally distributed.

The Shapiro-Wilk test performed on the three groups indicates that two of these are indeed not normally distributed (*not effective* and *very effective*): *Not effective*: $W = 0.83$, $p < 0.0001$; *Very effective*: $W = 0.91$, $p = 0.046$; while the *somewhat effective* group is normally distributed:

$W = 0.95$, $p = 0.26$. Given the lack of assumptions, I proceeded with a non-parametric test (Kruskal-Wallis) to verify whether there is statistical difference between the average number of keywords of each group.

The results reveal that there is significant difference between the number of keywords of the groups categorised according to the effectiveness scale: $H(2) = 26.91$, $p < 0.0001$. Focused comparisons of the mean ranks between the groups were performed and showed that the number of keywords between the *somewhat effective* and *very effective* groups was not significantly different. In this case, the critical difference ($\alpha = 0.05$) was 24.10. However, as regards the other two comparisons, *not effective* vs *somewhat effective* and *not effective* vs *very effective*, the tests show that there is statistical difference between the mean ranks of these groups (the critical difference is 19.47 and 19.78 respectively).

In conclusion, the initial visual inspection of the data was confirmed by the Kruskal-Wallis test and the categorisation based on the effectiveness of communication scale differs significantly in terms of number of keywords. The *not effective* group contains a statistically lower number of keywords, suggesting that a lower number of keywords can result in an inefficient use of multimodality too. The higher number of keywords instead can both lead to *somewhat effective* or *very effective* results in terms of multimodality.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study undertook a comprehensive analysis of the alignment between textual content and accompanying images in the context of tourism websites, with a specific focus on food-related themes. The use of a multimodal approach, combining linguistic analysis and visual content assessment, provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of communication strategies employed by destination promoters as regards the destination of Verona.

The findings revealed a notable prevalence of food-related keywords in the textual content of the Verona Corpus, indicating the significance

of food themes in the portrayal of the destination. Approximately 50% of the corpus was dedicated to food-related discussions or descriptions, highlighting the importance of understanding the interplay between textual narratives and visual representations in shaping the overall destination image.

The examination of images in the subset of texts containing food-related keywords unveiled intriguing patterns. While one might anticipate a higher prevalence of images, considering their potential to capture the attention of prospective tourists, only 44% of the subset included visual content. This observation underscores the need for a more strategic integration of images, especially in the context of gastronomy, where visuals play a crucial role. The detailed analysis of these 176 images based on their alignment with textual content revealed varying degrees of effectiveness. Approximately 18.64% of the texts were classified as very effective, demonstrating a seamless integration of food-related keywords and corresponding images. On the other hand, a substantial portion (60.17%) was deemed not effective, indicating a disconnect between textual descriptions and the visual elements.

Further investigation into the impact of the number of keywords on the effectiveness of communication yielded significant insights. The *not effective* group consistently exhibited a lower average number of keywords, suggesting a correlation between the richness of textual content and the effectiveness of multimodal communication. The *somewhat effective* and *very effective* groups, while sharing similarities in the lower quartile, demonstrated variations in the upper quartile, indicating nuances in the relationship between text length and effectiveness.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the realm of tourism promotion, emphasising the importance of a coherent and strategic integration of text and images in any communicative context. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on multimodality and destination marketing, offering practical insights for tourism professionals, content creators, and researchers alike. In conclusion, this research sheds light on the intricate dynamics of textual-visual

alignment in tourism communication, paving the way for future explorations into the optimal strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of multimodal content in the digital era.

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Food is never just food. It carries stories, identities, and ideologies. This volume explores how language frames food in contexts where locality and sustainability meet global trends and digital communication. Through seven chapters grounded in linguistics, the book reveals how words about food shape cultural heritage, promote environmental awareness, and foster cross-cultural dialogue in the digital age.

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