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Stefania M. Maci
& Michele Sala (eds.)

REPRESENTING AND REDEFINING SPECIALISED KNOWLEDGE: VARIETY IN LSP

8

Università degli Studi di Bergamo

CERLIS Series

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CERLIS Series
Volume 8

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2019
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CERLIS SERIES Vol. 8

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University of Bergamo
www.unibg.it/cerlis

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Editors: Stefania M. Maci, Michele Sala
ISBN 978-88-97253-03-7
ISSN 2532-2559 – CERLIS series [Online]
Url: http://hdl.handle.net/10446/155776
Doi: 10.6092/10446_978-88-97253-03-7

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MICHELE SALA

Representing and Redefining Specialised Knowledge. Managing Discourse Appropriateness and Adequacy in LSP*

Specialised knowledge is the epistemological outcome of a process of selection, organisation (perspectivisation, framing, structuring, etc.) or even construal of information meant to make sense of segments or reality for very specific pragmatic purposes, either professional and task-oriented or speculative and cognition-based. It is a way of organising experience so as to favour its understanding and comprehension, of finding solid explanations and justifications to given phenomena so as to control them (for instance, minimising what is critical and problematic, maximising what is beneficial and allowing its replicability), of testing hypotheses in order to corroborate, refine or even discard given views with respect to others. In other words, analysing, discussing and understanding specialised contents is a way of making reality readily manageable in cognitive terms, potentially useful in operative terms, and factively usable in practical terms, so as to facilitate activities, solve problems and bypass obstacles, not just in specialised domains but also in everyday life. For this reason, the codification and transfer of this type of knowledge is an instance of strategic communication:

> As ‘strategic’ it is deliberately goal-oriented, that goal being the mediation of understanding across knowledge asymmetries. As ‘communication’ it is participative (interactive) and the communicative ‘positions’ converge on the co-construction of (specialized) knowledge. (Kastberg 2007: 8)

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* This chapter and this volume are part of a national research project on ‘Knowledge Dissemination across media in English: Continuity and change in discourse strategies, ideologies, and epistemologies’ financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (PRIN 2015TJ8ZAS).

As a consequence, both knowledge and the knowledge-making practices reflect and corroborate specific epistemologies and understandings of the world, in that "knowledge is made and given shape in representation [and] the process of representation is identical to the shaping of knowledge. Makers of representations are shapers of knowledge" (Kress 2010: 27).

For these reasons, the mechanisms of knowledge construction and dissemination have been under scrutiny for several decades and from a variety of perspectives, ranging from Discourse and Genre Analysis (Widdowson 1979, Bazerman 1988, Swales 1990, 2004, Myers 1992, 2010, Gotti 2003, Hyland 2004), to Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992, 2001, 2003), Critical Genre Analysis (Bathia 2010, 2017), Social Semiotics and Multimodality approaches (Kress / van Leeuwen 2001, Lemke 2002, Bateman 2008, 2009, Kress 2010), which have focussed upon and identified the main commonalities between the different realisation of specialised communication and the most relevant trends of variation (both diachronically and synchronically) due to changing audiences and purposes, the changing medium or communicative practices (channel), the complexification or, even, the popularisation of specific disciplinary domains.

All these approaches, and their interplay, have provided insights to the understanding of specialised communication.

Discourse analytical approaches (Gotti 2003, Hyland 2004, Myers 2010) have pointed out how specialised communication resorts to features which are already inherent in everyday language – i.e. accuracy and perlocutionary effectiveness (Shannon/Weaver 1949) – and makes them stylistically and rhetorically noticeable. In particular, in these settings, effectiveness is attained through a language that is concise, precise and appropriate, by which:

> the amount and type of cognitive effort involved in a speech act […] influences the presuppositions that can be made about prior knowledge […] and the assumptions that can be made about the correct interpretation of the intention of text forms. (Sager *et al.* 1980: 323)

On purely linguistic grounds, expert and professional communication, even in very different disciplinary domains, is shown to share some core characteristics (Gotti 2003) at various levels, namely: the pragmatic level, where the set of possible communicative functions is restricted to a limited range which typically includes the informative, the argumentative, the pedagogical, the normative and the instructional one; the textual level, where both verbal and non-verbal or multisemiotic codes – formulae, flow-charts, tables, etc. (Widdowson 1979) – coexist to enhance clarity and comprehensibility; the syntactic and lexical level, which provide a technical and domain-specific vocabulary and, in general, a language that displays emotive detachment, lack of bias and impersonality, on the one hand, and informative density, brevity and unambiguity, on the other, and which – in cognitive terms – is characterised by generalisation, systematisation, schematisation and abstraction (Hoffman 1984).

Genre Analysis (Swales 1990, Bhatia 1993, 2004) has evidenced the conventions behind the structuring of specialised texts, pointing to the relationship between information and pragmatic purposes, and showing how the latter influences the organisation of the former in recognisable moves and steps for given contents to be easily codified and, at the same time, to facilitate their recognition, understanding and assimilation. Critical Genre Analysis (Bhatia 2010, 2012, 2017) goes even further in this direction by shifting the focus from genre as textual product – i.e. the result of rhetorical and discursive choices – to genre as textual action – i.e. as a critical site of engagement and interaction (Scollon 2001) – carried out by means of intertextual and interdiscursive contamination, and forms of hybridisation and blending between different genres meant to effectively achieve professional objectives and perform relevant disciplinary practices.

Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992, 2001, 2003) has offered parameters to understand how, within a discipline, knowledge is established and controlled, how asymmetries (either cognitive, disciplinary or relational) are represented and justified – for instance, as the necessary basis for knowledge advancement – how given epistemological frames of reference are reinforced, and how certain meanings are represented as accepted and shared while others as marginal or deviant. CDA explains why (specialised) disciplines are perceived the way they are, or, more specifically, why given ideologies or forms of bias are recognised as normal or conventional rather than arbitrary, and why specific roles and functions are accepted and taken for granted rather than questioned, countered or dismissed.

Social Semiotics, combining concerns (such as perlocutionary effectiveness) and foci (such as interdiscursivity and intertextuality) which are in common with (Critical) Discourse Analysis and (Critical) Genre Theories, evidences how the communication of specialised contents can be made more impactful and convincing not only by establishing frameworks, attributing rhetorical roles or presupposing shared assumptions and understandings, but also by strategically resorting to the full range of semiotic codes of communication – notably the visual ones (i.e. numerical, graphical, figurative, cf. Rowley-Jolivet 2000, 2002, Bateman 2008, 2009) besides the verbal/scriptural one – which are available to expert writers, but also accessible to non-expert users, in order to codify and understand disciplinary meanings. Especially in the digital era, where social media and networking have transformed the mechanisms of knowledge construction and negotiation, the focus on multimodality (Kress / van Leeuwen 2001, Kress 2010) and hypermodality (Lemke 2002) has provided tools to measure how specialised communication is gradually accepting among its practices forms of meaning representations which are openly meant to facilitate comprehension, maximise inclusion and minimise gate-keeping. This phenomenon is generally referred to as ‘popularisation’, and has been a major focus of academic research in the past decades (Calsamiglia 2003, Gotti 2013, Salvi / Bowker 2015). In the context of digital networking and Web-mediated communication, and in consideration of the mass of information in any domain which can be easily available through the affordances of these channels (Tognini-Bonelli / Del Lungo Camiciotti 2005, Hyland 2009, Campagna *et al.* 2012), “knowledge can no longer be hemmed in by neatly-packed and restricted communicative products [since] today’s globalized and digital environment has increasingly destructured the élitarian fence of knowledge communication” (Bondi 2015: 7). The main consequence of this is the expansion of the reading public, consisting of both experts and lay users, or competent and simply curious readers. Popularisation is a form of knowledge dissemination which is meant to facilitate the transmission of specialised contents by making them both comprehensible and appealing to lay audiences (through re-contextualisation, explanation, exemplification, etc.), and easily manageable, effective and to the point, for expert readers. In fact, the literature on this phenomenon has shown that popularisation is not necessarily a top-down process of simplification (Bondi 2015), but may also be meant for the scientific community (Shinn / Whitley 1985, Abbott 1995), for expert writers "to reach a vast number of colleagues rapidly by sending them 'coded messages' without having to conform to the times and constraints of specialist communication" (Bucchi 1998: 12).

All these approaches and their different methodological perspectives provide the theoretical ground for the present volume, which discusses the representation and redefinition of specialised knowledge.

As a matter of fact, the codification of specialised contents has as its main goal the transfer, the dissemination, the sharing of this body of knowledge to/with the community or reference – that is a discourse community or a community of practice whose members know exactly 'what to do with it'. Specialised communication is thus,

> the intentional and decision-based communication of specialised knowledge in professional settings (among experts as well as between experts and non-experts) with a focus upon the interplay between knowledge and expertise of individuals, on the one hand, and knowledge as a social phenomenon, on the other, as well as the coping with knowledge asymmetries, i.e., the communicative consequences of differences between individual knowledge in depth as well as breadth. (Engberg 2016: 37)

For these reasons, readability, comprehensibility, clarity and, ultimately, perlocutionary effectiveness are the main concerns of expert knowledge dissemination. However, these concerns need to be interpreted in relation to different factors, the most prominent of which is the purpose of this type of communication. As a matter of fact, specialised communication may be intended for, at least, four distinctively different settings and (sets of) purposes. Firstly, it may be designed for professional settings and transactional purposes (Gunnarsson 2009), in that it is "aimed at getting things done and achieving outcomes" (Schnurr 2013: 9). The goal-oriented and practical nature of this form of communication is distinctive of workplace interactions and operative contexts, typically between peers or users with the same (or comparable) level of domain-related competence, who are expected to unambiguously decode and understand meanings, and turn linguistic acts into actions and activities.

Secondly, specialised communication may have a speculative purpose, when it is intended to broaden, deepen or even revise knowledge within a specific domain. This is the case of academic and scientific research settings, which are primarily meant for the understanding (i.e. definition, explanation, classification, comparison, measuring, etc.) of disciplinary relevant knowledge objects for them to become useful cognitive tools or give access to epistemological parameters for interpreting and comprehending reality. Since this is an inter-subjective, collegial and participative activity, it requires to be based on shared, accepted codes and discursive practices for representing and negotiating meanings.

The third purpose of specialised communication is educational (Gotti 2003, Pérez-Llantada 2020), when it is meant to introduce (rather than extend or expand) disciplinary meanings to novices as future experts, in order for them to understand and assimilate not only contents and notions, but also codes and conventions which are typical of specific disciplinary discourses. This enables both experts and learners to effectively deal with such contents and learners to ultimately become experts in their turn.

The fourth level is represented by institutional settings, where meanings are exchanged "between an expert representing some authority and a layman" (Gunnarsson *et al.* 1997: 7) with the aim of pursuing practical goals in professional and organisational contexts which presuppose specific roles, identities and constraints to be respected and core goal tasks and procedures to be carried out (as in job interviews, medical consultation, meetings, etc., Drew/Heritage 1992).

In all these settings, for all said purposes, the position (or imposition) of new meanings establishes asymmetries, either in cognitive, relational or interpersonal terms (i.e. those who have access to new, advanced and updated knowledge vs. those who share established and standard knowledge; those who are discursively more competent vs. those who are less competent; experts vs. non-experts, etc.), and such asymmetries may be face-threatening, hence potentially hindering or interfering with the correct interpretation of new information.

The effectiveness of specialised communication can be guaranteed by using resources strategically at the three levels of discourse, namely, the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual (Halliday 1985). At the ideational level, for example, specialised knowledge dissemination benefits from resorting to conceptualisations, cognitive categories and structures by which phenomena and notions are framed through paradigms which are clearly established and, as such, function as recognisable epistemological bases and interpretive models within a given domain. Through such lenses, referential representations acquire intelligibility, meanings become understandable and their comprehension is assured.

The interpersonal level is the one at which asymmetries acquire justification and where rhetorical or relational roles are made acceptable. Users in a disciplinary community attribute to both themselves and readers identities and functions which correspond to those inherent in – even necessary for – the disciplinary epistemology (i.e. expert, novice, researcher, peer, scholar, lay reader, etc.) and such a relational framing, far from being an expression of gate-keeping, constitutes a facilitator for the process of meaning construction and negotiation.

The textual level accounts for all the discursive resources – terminology, registers, styles, genres, formats, semiotic codes, etc. – by which domain-specific contents find their way and place within a domain. Through such discourse-based affordances, which are usually highly normalised, standardised and conventionalised, meanings are made clear, coherent and unambiguous, their presentation or discussion appealing and compelling, and, as a consequence, their interpretation unproblematic.

By using resources made available to them at these three levels, experts/knowers manage to "galvanise support, express collegiality, resolve difficulties and avoid disagreement in ways which most closely correspond to the community's assumption, theories, methods and bodies of knowledge" (Hyland 2004: 13). Effective ways of attaining these purposes are by accounting for reader's needs and expectations and the writer's trustworthiness – at the relational level – and, at the same time, for the clarity and appropriateness of the text – at the ideational and textual level. These concerns correspond to what Hyland

(2004) labels as, respectively, the acceptability and adequacy conditions.

The first principle stems from the fact that, in order to be effective, (the content of) a text needs to sound authoritative and reliable, and this impression can be reflected in and corroborated by the idea of themselves that writers construct in the act of writing. The type of identity that they attribute to their persona, in fact, is not just (or necessarily) for self-promotion, but for such identity to be easily associated to a specific rhetorical role or pragmatic function, thus contributing to boosting the perceived worth of the author's text. Self-representation can be performed explicitly, through the narrative of self that we may find in 'personal' genres (Giannoni 2006) like acknowledgements, bionotes, authorial profiles, etc. Given the mass of texts readers can pick from, being able to identify an author and recognise his/her relationship with a domain, institution, school of thought, organisation, etc. can influence text selection. Since knowledge dissemination is indeed a form of social interaction, knowing whom we are dealing with, in personal, disciplinary and institutional terms, is not only useful, but in some context even necessary. As some of the chapters in this volume will point out, bios, CVs, notes on contributors have become a common feature in most platforms and are often used to accompany (anticipate or follow) knowledge-producing texts. Forms of self-presentation are also a requirement when submitting book or paper proposal,[1] and they serve as a guarantee of the author's scientific worth not only for knowledge brokers (editors, publishing organisations, etc.), but also for prospect readers.

Besides these personal genres, writers can establish their authorial identity also in crafting their knowledge-producing texts, by creating their textual persona as an 'acceptable' member of the community of reference, that is someone who knows how to appropriately deal with contents and, notably, with the intended audience. In other words,

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[1] In many cases, the type and amount of personal and institutional information to be provided by authors is specifically prescribed by editors, publishers or organisations.

> this means representing one's self in a text in a way that demonstrates one's flawless disciplinary credentials; showing yourself as a reasonable, intelligent, co-player in the community's efforts to construct knowledge and well versed in its tribal lore. (Hyland 2004: 13)

This can be attained by resorting to conventional discursive practices which can be used to combine confidence and caution, to balance modesty, self-assurance and assertiveness in ways which are contextually appropriate and accepted by the disciplinary community.

The adequacy condition, instead, concerns authorial trustworthiness and authoritativeness as an inherent linguistic property, that is, as implicit in the way authors use language to present contents and craft their text, which stems from how they conceptualise reality, in ideational terms, and represent it, in textual terms. New meanings may acquire disciplinary legitimation on the basis of the competence shown by writers in mastering and handling the discursive tools, the practices and processes by which information can be turned into science or disciplinary knowledge. By resorting to linguistic, stylistic and generic standards, or argumentative, expository and even normative models which are highly conventionalised, most recognisable and hence contextually salient, expert writers can – unlike lay writers – depict reality and, at the same time, make it cognitively manageable and easily measurable with respect to the *doxa*. In this way they are in a position to posit meanings, control interpretation and prove their expertise. As we will see in some of the chapters in this volume, adequacy and meaning construction are particularly relevant in asymmetrical popularising contexts, where meanings are to be transmitted to audiences lacking specialised competences (i.e. students in pedagogical contexts, young pupils in educational or infotainment settings, children as the intended audience of forms of institutional communication, etc.) without them losing any of their characteristic referential precision and specificity. In such scenarios, experts should be able to re-work the adequacy condition, that is, re-contextualise meanings and adjust the language so as to make it suit the content, the linguistic/stylistic etiquette of the domain of reference, and the discursive and cognitive competence of the reading public. It is precisely by how they handle adequacy that writers prove they are expert in both understanding reality phenomena, on the one hand, and in skilfully managing the language needed to construe and foster such understandings.

The chapters in this volume will be distinguished into two main sections which are intended to reflect the two conditions illustrated above and the parameters which are strictly related to them. Therefore, the first section will deal with the notions of appropriateness, meaning negotiation and self-representation, while the second will discuss the principles of adequacy, meaning construction and discursive conventions.

Appropriateness, meaning negotiation and self-representation

The first section of this volume opens with a chapter, co-authored by GIUSEPPE BALIRANO and MARGARET RASULO, which discusses the notion of personal branding and aims to asses its impact on the processes of disciplinary knowledge dissemination, on the one hand, and the social construction of an academic online identity, on the other. On the basis of the fact that involvement in networking practices and the construction of a social presence are conditions which cannot be neglected in the context of Web-mediated communication, and also of the fact scholars are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of personal branding tools for both individual advancement and knowledge dissemination, the study explores a corpus of online academic bionotes written by scholars in the Humanities and Science, and selected from the *Academia.edu* platform. Combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis – namely, the qualitative framework provided by Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and the principles of Genre Theory – the investigation evidences how language in these sites is devised and packaged by academics to intensify scholars' visibility and enhance their academic identity, hence corroborating their reliability and ultimately facilitating knowledge dissemination.

The second chapter points out how acceptability may be a concern not just for scholars but also for publishing groups or journals, which may need disciplinary legitimation to established their role within a domain and be recognised as reliable sources for knowledge dissemination. This most notably applies to newly-established publications, for obvious reasons, but also to those publications conflating interests and discourses stemming from different domains, for their scientific identity to acquire epistemological grounding and disciplinary relevance. This is the case of the military academic journals examined by ROXANNE BARBARA DOERR, where military and scientific discourses, purposes, audiences and roles, overlap. By first outlining the main differences between military and civilian cultures in the USA so as to identify the core features of the former, the investigation examines a selection of online military journals – covering different branches of the military domain, for the sake of completeness, and for the most part affiliated with military colleges and universities – and identifies specific acceptability-enhancing practices which are realised in term of genre-related features, textual and multimodal content, and very specific stylistic requirements (which are often clearly prescribed in regulatory stylistic guidelines).

The next chapter points out how identity building and self-representation can indeed be strategic interpersonal resources in view to facilitating the transmission of problematic or openly negative meanings. More specifically the analyses carried out by WALTER GIORDANO, investigates how, within the context of the 2015 scandal concerning Volkswagen diesel engine emissions, the company managed to control and (re)build its image through its main institutional communication tool, that is, the 2015 and 2016 Letter to Shareholders, written by Volkswagen CEO Mathias Müller. Scanning the text of the two letters through the lenses of three different models for crisis management discourse – namely, the Image Restoration, Trust-repair and Impression Management model – this study outlines the discursive strategies used by the CEO to concede the existence of a problem and express the intention to repair it, thus controlling the company's identity and managing the reconstruction and consolidation of its broken image, as a result of which the company was perceived, only one year after the scandal burst off, as a serious and honest organisation, and a reliable competitor in the car market.

Along the same lines, the next chapter examines how an impression of reliability or, even more drastically, forms of persuasion and manipulation can be instantiated and enforced upon the reading public by the way contents are presented, and how their textualisation is designed. In fact, propaganda can be made to appear as knowledge on the basis of the discursive competence shown by writers in the process of meaning construal and, as a consequence, of the degree of authoritativeness that can be associated to the source of information. The investigation carried out by MARGARET RASULO provides evidence as to how mechanisms of identity-making, identity attribution and, in general, elements of popular media culture are exploited by organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS in writing online magazines with the aim of indoctrinating – rather than informing – and recruiting young men in their war against infidels and the Western world. Based on a corpus of visual and verbal resources from two popular digital magazines, the analysis shows how mediatised radicalisation discourse is persuasively construed the competent handling of narrative frames, design features and popularising strategies (i.e. tactics of relevance, frequency and accessibility) which are typical of Western-like reporting style.

The last chapter of this section deals with the way organisations, in general, find ways to express their institutional identity and engage with users even in the act of codifying and representing participative policies, as is for instance the case of the handling and expression of language policies in UK higher education websites. As a matter of fact, communicating with prospective undergraduates in a range of languages can assist students in navigating academia more effectively – in fact, the degree of sensitivity shown to the needs of non-Anglophone students plays a key role in their choice of course – and, at the same time, may help universities and colleges establish themselves as both internationalised institutions and interculturally welcoming sites. The study by DAVIDE SIMONE GIANNONI looks at efforts made by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to engage with international undergraduate applicants in their home language by analysing data collected from institutional websites (covering the time span 2008-2018), mainly consisting of a range of 'International guides' offered in major international languages as well as small national ones (e.g. Lithuanian and Norwegian) – a choice that reflects evolving students' demographics, as well as and their needs.

Adequacy, meaning construction and discursive conventions

The second section of this volume investigates how phenomena are conferred cognitive shape and meaning and are made disciplinarily, epistemologically and culturally relevant through discursive practices which are very often highly domain-specific and – within specific settings – totally transparent. This is the focus of the first chapter, by STEFANIA CONSONNI, which discusses the way Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has acquired scientific profile and credit through language. More specifically, the analysis evidences that the awareness of such a condition and the related dangers developed not only as a consequence of medical and scientific research (and, notably, the introduction of the Evidence Based Medicine paradigm) but also on the basis of specific linguistic resources made available to represent it. Within a discourse-analytical framework, the study analyses the key syntactical and textual coordinates in a corpus of digital research articles titles, with a view to investigating the ideological and communicative impact of the EBM innovative methodology on specialised medical language. The discursive evolution of HIV research is reconstructed across competing specialties, representing different steps forward in the clinical history of this pathology, such as public/environmental health, biochemistry, molecular biology, immunology and infectious diseases.

The following pair of chapters assess the communication of specialised contents to lay audiences and, more specifically, to young readers, notably children, considering popularisation strategies employed to make given meanings accessible to them by avoiding banalising references or disposing such contents of their discursive domain-specificity. The chapter by GIULIANA DIANI and ANNALISA SEZZI examines the communication of institutional information about the European Union focussing on how said information is organised and re-contextualised in order for it to be both comprehensible and precise and/or appealing to readers with little or no competence in the matter (given their stage of cognitive development and their limited background knowledge). In the light of the impact that knowledge re-contextualisation has on several aspects of communication, which range from lexico-syntactic patterns to different discourse strategies, this chapter aims to disclose the discursive resources employed to disseminate the concept of the EU in two official websites, Kids' Corner and Euro Kids' Corner, both launched by the Commission in 2011 as part of their educational communication expressly addressed to children.

The focus of the next chapter, by DANILA CESIRI, is on children-oriented forms of popularisation in educational settings, where they do not have the mere function of entertaining the reader, but are indeed instances of scientific knowledge dissemination. Given that paleontology is a very popular subject among laypeople, especially children (as demonstrated by the quantity and range of merchandise, publications, and media products of all sorts), while at the same time being a fully-fledged academic domain, this study analyses how scientific knowledge regarding dinosaurs is disseminated to pre-school children. To do so, a sample episode of the animated series *Dinosaur Train* is investigated. This series typically contains animated sequences and live action segments in which a real paleontologist describes the main features, the behaviour and the natural habitat of the dinosaurs seen in each episode. By using the framework of Discourse Analysis for the study of linguistic materials and the tools of Multimedia Analysis for the investigation of visual materials, the chapter identifies the main and typical verbal and visual strategies that are used to transmit scientific contents to young children.

The following chapter, by SOLE ALBA ZOLLO, discusses the notion of discourse adequacy as a tool for teaching/learning in pedagogical settings, and observes how the tracing of the discursive and semiotic features which make specialised communication effective (in this case media and advertising discourse) may be very useful for learners, and could conveniently be integrated among possible class activities for students to acquire awareness of such resources, of their function and contextual use, and also for them to be able to exploit such strategies in communicative situations in order to corroborate meanings, make their representation appealing and facilitate interpretation. Based on a four-month experiment with undergraduate students at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" (Italy), the study indicates that the use of popular social platforms, in this case Instagram, does indeed affect students' learning processes and improve their critical skills concerning both specialised knowledge and discourse. The study shows that, most noticeably, this happens because, being authentic, engaging, and public channels, the social media allow real-time feedback from users, thus proving effective pedagogical tools in order to understand and apply the theoretical concepts discussed in class.

The last chapter, which is written in Spanish, closes this section on discourse adequacy and meaning construction by discussing a very peculiar and impactful form of meaning representation. Metaphors are linguistic phenomena by which two different items are conceptually connected and one of them is understood in terms of the other: through these phraseological forms, the actual (target) referent is conferred parts of the meaning and the relevant connotations associated to the (vehicle) term used to represent it. VIRGINIA SCIUTTO studies the set of floristic phraseological units (where the vehicle term relates to plants, fruits, vegetables, etc.) found in Argentinean Spanish. Given their peculiarity – since they display exclusive semantic and formal features which distinguish and connote them, generating a particular man-nature anthropocentric relationship based on senses (physical and sensory) – this analysis sets out to see what is their place and function in Argentinian Spanish by first identifying and collecting them as they are listed in the *Diccionario fraseológico del habla argentina,* and, then, by checking their use in speech through the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) and through web-searches via Google.

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Appropriateness, meaning negotiation and self-representation

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'You're only as good as your last tweet…': Academic Self-branding and Knowledge Dissemination

1. Introduction

This study is part of an ongoing investigation into what we would like to identify as a unique, and so far underexplored, form of knowledge dissemination by means of online academic bionotes. By focusing on academic online identity construction, we intend to highlight the core discursive mechanisms underlying such a practice as well as differentiate specific features from more familiar ones characterising general social networking public profiles (Fitzpatrick 2015). Although a relatively new convention in the academic workplace, the practice of scholars crafting their own academic identity through online personal branding has been gaining momentum during the past decade. This is mainly due to the rapidly changing world of work and the proliferation of online social networking sites (SNS) which have blurred the boundaries between work and personal lives (Garzone 2015; Duffy/Pooley 2017). With the Web becoming a workplace, where involvement in networking practices and the construction of a social presence are no longer a choice, scholars are now seriously reflecting on the importance of defining personal branding tools for the dual

1 The authors discussed and conceived the article together. In particular, Giuseppe Balirano is responsible for parts 4, 6 and 7; Margaret Rasulo is responsible for parts 1, 2, 3 and 5.

purpose of individual advancement and knowledge dissemination.

Consequently, by exploring scholarly knowledge sharing practices occurring on academic SNSs, the main aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which the social construction of academic identity overlaps and interdiscursively blends together with previously investigated and more traditional processes of disciplinary knowledge dissemination (KD) (Hyland 2012a, 2015). This study, in fact, is taking a broader approach to KD by using Hyland's own perspective as a starting point, especially when he argues that:

> In pursuing their professional goals and constructing knowledge, academics engage with others, and because of this, discourses carry assumptions about knowledge, relationships and how this should be structured and negotiated. (Hyland 2012a: 175)

Hence, our approach explores these renegotiated discourses as enacted by renewed digital knowledge sharing practices such as those occurring in dynamic Web 3.0 environments. To this end, the investigation is based on the analysis of a multimodal corpus comprising a collection of profiles crafted by university scholars and posted on the academic social networking site (ASNS) known as *Acadmia.edu.*[2] This platform, which is not an educationally affiliated organization, foregrounds the entrepreneurial mission of "accelerating the world's research"[3] as it is essentially designed for academics whose main intention is to share research papers and interests as well as other general information concerning affiliation and academic engagements. Also part of *Academia.edu*'s mission is to afford scholars the opportunity to monitor the impact of their research through deep analytics (Price 2012) while tracking the work of other academics they choose to follow (Thelwall/Kousha 2014). Established in 2008 in San Francisco by Richard Price as part of the Open Science movement, to date, *Academia.edu* is reported having nearly 31,000,000 registered account-

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2 <https://www.academia.edu/>. Retrieved 2 April, 2018.
3 <https://twitter.com/richardprice100. Retrieved 8 August, 2019.

holders contributing over 20 million papers and attracting nearly 26 million unique visitors a month.[4]

Against this backdrop, it is quite evident that data collected from ASNSs are of major interest for linguistic exploration, mainly owing to the impact that the above-mentioned academic social networking practices may have on how language is devised and packaged in order to facilitate knowledge dissemination. For the purpose of shedding light on this still grey area of language innovation, the online profiles collected from the *Academia.edu* site are the object of this study as they comprise multimodal instantiations of both knowledge dissemination and self-branding resources.

2. Academic self-branding practices

In recent years, as mentioned previously, ASNSs that offer information sharing and communication tools for professional purposes have arisen alongside the more general SNSs, and *Academia.edu* is among the most popular ones. By offering opportunities for interrelations to occur among scholars, these sites may not only influence but also encourage self-branding processes of the research community. The word *self* within the context of this study specifically refers to the management and diffusion of one's own products, or 'measurable deliverables' (Luka *et al*. 2015) by making them available to fellow account holders. As for the more general concept of branding, the underlying social trigger that seems to encourage this practice is to be traced to the world of corporate management. For the past 20 years now, as marketplace logics have increasingly infiltrated nearly all realms of social and professional life, information sharing and online persona management have become essential commodification practices related to the creation of an identity that is personally and socially gratifying (Ko/Cho/Roberts 2005. This means that as individuals are encouraged to think of the *self* as a commodity (Hearn 2008; Gandini 2016; Gehl 2011), crafting a

4 <https://www.academia.edu/about>. Retrieved 2 April, 2018.

digital identity takes place mainly through branding practices which not only facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and support collaboration, but also encourage product impact monitoring and control of the perception that others have of our achievements (Ovadia 2014).

Self-branding practices also leverage other corporate strategies such as self-marketing and advertising. While these refer to activities undertaken by individuals or businesses to put themselves on the market, self-branding activities take the branding concept a step further to include the strategic and intentional management of identity over time. In point of fact, a brand can stand for who you are professionally as it refers to the values, abilities and actions that others associate with you; a brand is indeed designed to influence perception. Thus, self-branding is the process of creating a recognizable professional name and reputation for oneself or one's company or business.

Upon reflection, one may ask what this has to do with the academic world. Hyland (2012c) clearly explains that the individuality of academics today is being increasingly marginalized in favour of university branding, which consists in downplaying a multidimensional view of the scholar to better showcase the institutions as they are intent on becoming measurable deliverables themselves. This means that some universities are likely to present academics according to a model that is ideologically suited to promote the institution; a corporate choice which often leaves academics with very little autonomy in constructing their own online persona (Thoms/Thelwell 2005).

The resulting predicament, however, is that academics have been experiencing a parallel pressure induced by their institutions to engage in self-promotional practices as these same institutions have become progressively more market-driven. Scholars have therefore been called on, at the same time, to 'create a brand' (Meyers 2012) and 'curate a digital identity' (Marshall 2015) as they produce knowledge, able to stand the test of benchmark quality standards. This is to say that papers, volumes, lectures, monographs and research projects are now being referred to as research output, and the process of knowledge dissemination has now become a process through which measurable deliverables are provided. More specifically, academic self-branding practices serve a twofold purpose: firstly, they are the conduit towards the creation of a more effective system of disseminating scholarly achievements, owing to the meaning-making immediacy of the Web; secondly, they promote a more persuasive image of the academic persona.

3. Searching for a hybrid genre

Drawing on the above discussion, we would like to argue that the integration of more general social-networking elements within the context of professional profiling for academic networking requisites has generated a likewise aggregation of codes and conventions (Eggins/Martin 1997; Bhatia 2000; Swales 2004). This process is generally known as 'hybridization of genre' (Bhatia 2004), and refers to the blurring of boundaries between discourses that appear to be especially prominent in the domain of contemporary media (Fairclough 2003). Hybridization as applied to new forms of academic social networking practices is construed by and through *ad hoc* multimodal devices, which, we posit, will eventually change the perception of the academic world in line with the communicative immediacy of the new media.

It is useful to briefly mention here Hyland's (2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2015) extensive work on the more traditional bios which he states is perceived to be a 'peripheral genre'. Defined as 'naturally occurring texts' that accompany a research article (Hyland 2012b), these short statements are quite revealing in terms of how academic identity is ultimately constructed. Hyland explains that identity work is a process which is not achieved in isolation, but is forged by interacting with others, and consequently requiring feedback and recognition from others. However, he affirms that placing emphasis on the social nature of identity construction does not mean neglecting the role of individual agency as expressed through preferences and choices, nor does it imply forgetting the context in which they are enacted. Hence, it is through this triangulation of perspectives involving context-specific conventions, personal agency and interaction with others that self-branding occurs also within ASNSs such as *Academia.edu*.

Returning to the discussion on hybridization, when bios migrated from their position accompanying a research article onto ASNSs, in our view, a novel genre was created, one that blends together conventional genre moves with more revealing medium-induced multimodal features. One possible purpose of this congenial blend is the importance of establishing and maintaining credibility as a successful academic through novel ways of disseminating knowledge.

4. Corpus and methodology

The creation of a multimodal corpus that could be somehow representative of the semiotic mechanisms employed for academic online self-branding was carried out in two main phases: the design of the corpus and the collection of the required multimodal texts. These two interrelated phases have been procedurally guided by the following overarching research-questions, postulated as an initial query before our effective corpus collection:

1. How is academic social presence construed in terms of linguistic choices and multimodal co-deployments?
2. How does the medium work to shape and remediate typically established genre-specific moves?
3. To what extent can media-based self-branding strategies forge a professional identity within existing academic communities via interdiscursive strategies?
4. How can a 'multimodal critical discourse' approach shed light on the self-branding practices devised and packaged by academics for the purpose of self-promotion?

Hence, in order to critically explore, and possibly answer, the issues raised by these investigative queries, it was necessary to collect a corpus of online academic profiles through which scholars can easily construct and socialize their professional identity without the limitation of space and content provided by more traditional institutional Web pages. All SNSs are websites that have a public or semi-public profile page, including dating sites, fan sites and so on. Moreover, each SNS has its own different rules for establishing online connections; a social networking site is, in fact, also known as a social website because it helps people socialize and exchange viewpoints. While more general SNSs, like *Facebook* and *Twitter*, straddle the line between private and professional engagement, the ASNS *Academia.edu* seemed the best choice for our data collection.

From a compositional point of view, *Academia.edu* profile page presents the user’s personal picture, which, just like on every other SNS, is placed on the left-hand side of the page. On its right, we find the name of the user immediately followed, on a different line, by the scholar’s academic affiliation and their academic interests. The third line presents the user’s academic bionote. Directly under it, since also the academic world requires legitimation, a series of force feedbacks may be seen as the recipients of power relation and legitimation of the role of a scholar. As a matter of fact, we have an immediate feedback on where the scholar is standing within their online community by means of reference-boxes reporting:

1. the number of their followers;
2. the number of profiles of other academics they follow;
3. the number of the co-authors who have participated in the elaboration of some of the ‘measurable deliverables’ they have put on display;
4. the total number of views they have obtained so far;
5. the position they have reached as academics on the website, based on the total number of visits their profile has received and the number of papers, books or material downloaded by their followers.

Immediately below this category, we find a series of other SNS icons through which it is possible to exchange information about the user. These icons are important intersemiotic strategies to connect *Academia.edu* to other SNSs by reinforcing the type of social environment which *Academia.edu* belongs to.

The last line, which is possibly the most important one of the whole webpage, hosts links to the solid products the scholar wants to share with their online academic community. This line is central since it works to differentiate *Academia.edu* from any other SNS. Here, by simply clicking on a link, we can automatically download articles, books, conference papers and the several other ‘measurable deliverables’ the user has decided to upload for public knowledge dissemination and to underpin their position within the academic world.

Our corpus, exclusively drawn from the *Academia.edu* platform, was created by selecting, by means of the *BootCat* front-end,[5] only those webpages which presented both the scholars’ written bionotes and a visual prompt, such as a personal picture. For this preliminary work, we decided to concentrate only on the profiles posted by scholars working within the top-ranking universities in the UK, but our next step will also include academic self-branding webpages from other countries in order to find out whether academics use different semiotic strategies to represent themselves and their work in different linguistic landscapes.

From a procedural viewpoint, we collected a total amount of 5,445 profiles and began our investigation by dividing our corpus (SELF-BRANDING BIONOTES_Corpus) into two main sub-corpora: 1. a linguistic one, comprehending the scholars’ self-branding written bionotes (30,226 tokens); and, 2. a semiotic one, including the scholars’ visual prompt (487 pictures). Moreover, each subcorpus was further subdivided into two main groups representing the distinction between contemporary sciences: HUMANITIES on the one hand, gathering profiles of scholars working in the field of Linguistics, Art, History, etc., and SCIENCES on the other, incorporating profiles from scholars involved in scientific disciplines such as Science, Technology, etc. These two groups were further distributed into two other sub-categories, namely JUNIOR scholars and SENIOR scholars, according to the represented participants’ academic age (rather than to their

[5] *BootCaT* front-end is a graphical interface for the *BootCaT toolkit* (Baroni/Bernardini 2004) which automates the process of finding reference texts on the Web and collating them in a single corpus.

biological one), and finally each single sub-group was categorised according to gender.

Owing to the composite multimodal nature of the texts under scrutiny, the investigation of our corpus could only yield significant results if based on a hybrid approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Specifically, the quantitative tool employed here, and described in detail further on, pertains to and supports the semiotic analysis of the profiles conducted within the qualitative framework provided by Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Kress/van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Martin 2004; O'Halloran 2010; van Leeuwen 2013).

In addition, the Web-based academic bionote is the result of genre hybridization therefore requiring, in our view, the support of a qualitative analysis based on the principles of Genre Theory. This analysis, we find, is effective in revealing how today's academics refer back to the functional conventions and hallmarks of the traditional genre of bios in order to create a new and effective genre whose rhetorical moves and processes are opportunely re-formulated to fit the purpose of the context (Devitt 2004; Martin/Rose 2008; Martin 2013).

Regarding our linguistic analysis, the investigation of the corpus was substantiated by cross-analyzing the results obtained from the implementation of the aforementioned methods with the tools drawn from Critical Discourse Analysis, with the purpose of exploring the interpersonal/interactive metafunction of represented participants (i.e. their positioning, self-critical attitude, stance, appraisal, etc.).

As mentioned above, the examination of the semiotic resources employed for the construction of the academic profiles collected in the corpus was largely undertaken from a Multimodal Critical Discourse perspective. For several linguists, MCDA is concerned with accounting for the communication of meaning within texts, and the issues arising from the consideration of semiotic resources other than language in interaction with each other and with language. Current research in multimodality is evolving around some interconnected theoretical assumptions, which tackle meaning as it is created through the situated configurations of image, gaze, gesture, body posture and movement, music, sound, speech, etc. (Jewitt 2014). From a multimodal perspective, semiotic resources such as the image, the voice, the action and so on are referred to as modes of communication and representation since they employ an array of meaning-enhancing modes. Such modes of communication are frequently seen as socially produced over time since they convey the social and/or individual features of different communities in specific social contexts.

Our multimodal analysis was aided by the ATLAS/ti software (Version 7.1.8), which offers quantitative tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and re-assemble meaningful visual pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible, and systematic ways. The semiotic resources taken under scrutiny in this study are essentially the photographs/images selected and uploaded by scholars to their *Academia.edu* profiles to complement their online academic identity. The represented participants in our corpus are all the entities that are present in the visual corpus, whether animate or inanimate. They represent the situation 'at stake', its current worldview or states of being in the world. The interactive participants, one being the producer (the academic, in our corpus) and the other the viewer (their followers), interrelate with each other in the act of encoding and decoding a visual. Noticeably, the three main elements in Kress and van Leeuwen's theoretical notion of metafunctions stem directly from Halliday's (1994) functional grammar and its system of metafunctions simultaneously operating within a text.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) visual grammar, reading or viewing a picture or any other form of visual imagery entails the decoding of a coherent arrangement of three main factors which connect and establish semiotic relations: the represented participants, the interactive participants, and all the coherent structural elements of a visual. Both multimodal codes, i.e. the linguistic and the semiotic code of images, "have their own quite particular means of realising what in the end are perhaps quite similar semantic relations" (Kress/van Leeuwen 1996: 44). The investigated visual process types we concentrated upon are those pertaining primarily to symbolic and attributive processes, Gaze, Mood and Modality.

5. The Move Identification Pattern

Drawing once again from Hyland's (2011, 2012b) seminal work on identity construction through bionotes, we identified a set of moves similar to the ones he previously reported. These moves, along with a set of criteria (Hyland 2011), reveal how academics construct their identities in terms of what they say and how they say it, and therefore correspond to genre expectations. Our data analysis led to the identification of three distinct moves coded into a Move Identification Pattern (MIP) that we adopted for the investigation of both the linguistic corpus and the selected images in the multimodal corpus.

We subsequently turned to Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics to explore how these moves were encoded in the material, mental and relational process type categories. Although Halliday includes verbal, behavioural and existential process types as part of his transitivity analysis, it was our decision to exclude these from our own analysis of the corpus data at this stage of the study. This choice was based on the nature of the experience as expressed in bionotes which we believe is best represented by the events and the states of the actors whose academic life we attempt to narrate.

Each move was then assigned a keyword identifier which was useful, especially in terms of co-referencing the constituent parts of each move, to shift from the linguistic to the multimodal analysis (cf. Section 6) and from junior to senior linguistic and semiotic instantiations. The framework in Table 1 is a graphic representation of each of the three moves, indicating the general aim of each move, the keyword identifier along with a brief explanation, and the prevalent process types.

Move 1: Developing a value proposition; Keyword: positioning (stating who we are, employment, education); Relational processes.
Move 2: Reinforcing proposition; Keyword: consistency (highlighting research, what we do, what we are interested in); Material processes.
Move 3: Relating to audience through engagement processes; Keyword: authenticity (expanding on the above two moves); Combination of three processes.

Table 1. Move Identification Pattern (MIP).

Move 1 of our MIP, whose keyword is *positioning*, describes how scholars represent themselves in what are usually opening statements and how they attempt to establish an immediate impression of who they are and their general background. This move is mainly realized by relational processes as they express the state of 'being' and indicate attribution. Within Move 2, realized by material processes, scholars expand on their positioning act by providing proof, and therefore show *consistency* of behaviour. Move 3 is the most complex one as it is realized by resorting to all three-process type categories (i.e. material, mental and relational). This move rests on the keyword *authenticity*, which means that the information about who one is and what is presented corresponds to a true image of the person. There is engagement in this move, especially in terms of relating to the target audience which, in itself, is an identifying feature of authenticity (De Sousa 2007).

6. Linguistic analysis

This section presents findings from the linguistic analysis of each of the three moves. The selection of examples from the data regarding junior academics will be followed by the data from the senior academics.

6.1. Move 1. Value proposition; positioning

Within this move, juniors seem to position themselves by frequently mentioning academic titles as illustrated in the examples below (italics added).

(1) *I studied* music and musicology at *King's College London* (*PhD, BMus, MMus*).

(2) *Helen S. is a PhD candidate* at *King's College London*, working with a *large group of researchers* on the role and representation of fashion in the work of James Joyce.

(3) *I completed my PhD* in Philosophy of cognitive Sciences at the *University of Bristol*. *I have recently started* as a research associate in the *Department of Cognitive Science,* and together with *my research group* we will be exploring […].

Either by using the first person pronoun or their full name, a choice which largely depends on the level of personal involvement with the work they are conducting (Hyland 2012b), the Juniors' foregrounding of their academic titles seems to make up for the fewer measurable deliverables that they have or do not have compared to the Seniors. Also, in the same examples, the Juniors often mention their involvement in group-conducted research work, possibly to strengthen their position in the academic world. In examples 4-6, what is additionally highlighted is the modifying devices used to add emphasis on their experiences.

(4) *I am a self-funded PhD student* in the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Bristol. My current research is focused on the impact of […].

(5) Peter S. completed a PhD at Cambridge on […]. He had an *early career* in the field of Palaeography at the Department of Anglo-Saxon Norse.

(6) Margaret W., *MA (Cantab.) MClfA*. Having received a *classical education,* my archeological work conducted with others is based in the North of England.

For senior scholars, on the other hand, owing to their established position in academia, institutional affiliation or specialization are priority mentions, as we can see from the examples 7-9 below.

(7) As *a professor of* International Development in the Department of International Development at *King's College* London, I have conducted extensive research.

(8) I have conducted research as *professor of Archeology* in the *Andes of South America*, and in the *Himalayas of Northeast India* […].

(9) *Member of* the TOPOI Excellence Cluster.

Also, as Seniors are usually well-equipped with measurable achievements, they often describe their experiences in terms of research places they have worked in, as shown in the examples below.

(10) I have conducted research *as professor of Archeology in the Andes of South America*, and in the *Himalayas of Northeast India* […].

(11) My research focused on social and political movements both in *South India and Scotland* […].

Mentioning a time reference also seems to highlight their professional authority, as in the following examples.

(12) My research and writing *over 25 + years* has focused on […].

(13) I have a *long-standing interest* in histories of child-care […].

6.2. Move 2. Reinforcing propositions

Junior scholars in Move 2 seem to reinforce their position by consistently referring to group participation:

(14) I have actively *collaborated* on a range of pedagogic research with *a number of colleagues* […]. We performed various filed experiments on a population of […].

(15) I am currently working and conducting experiments *with a number of other people* as network facilitator on an international project.

(16) *I am part of* a well-funded *community* research project […].

Their experience is also represented as an active one, implying that they are doers rather than passive recipients. In fact, as can be seen in the examples below, this move is mainly realized by material processes.

(17) I am *experimenting with* various methods and *trying out* a number of other tools in this new archeological research expedition.

(18) A large part of my research project *is doing research* in robotics […].

Seniors appear to be consistent in counting on their measurable achievements and they do so in exact numbers:

(19) *Two further* books build on the primary thesis […].

(20) His *10 authored books* are listed on his site. He has co-authored or co-edited *23 other books* and special issues […].

At times they also opt for approximate quantity as shown below:

(21) […] *a series of* essays edited jointly *in 2014*.

(22) In *all my professional career*, I have edited *a number of volumes* in my area of research, and co-edited *many more* of international interest.

As in Move 1, Seniors insist on mentioning a time span which seems to strengthen their position as successful academics:

(23) I have authored or co-authored *various other books over the years* […].

(24) Through a *forthcoming book* and *several articles* […].

(25) He has *published extensively* […] and has *15 years'* international research experience […].

6.3. Move 3. Relating to audience through engagement processes

As mentioned previously, our Move 3 refers to audience engagement processes; this is where the openness comes in and where *authenticity* plays a major role. Juniors seem to express their authenticity by directly involving their readers, and by using the inclusive *we*, as in the following example:

(26) *I ask you*: can we, and should we, educate for good questioning?

There are also many instances in the corpus where Juniors make room for emotions that express a system of attitude through the semantic area of affect (Martin/White 2005). Some of these are shown in the following examples.

(27) I am *very excited* since I have acted as a sort of *happy* qualitative/quantitative researcher so far.

(28) My *main preoccupation* is to see publication of many UK excavations […].

(29) I've *been hoping* to work with […].

Senior scholars seem to express their authenticity by using their measurable achievements once again and they do so in numbers as shown below.

(30) I have supervised *14 doctoral* students and *9 masters* students, and taught *many more*.

They also seem to count on their various roles in order to boost credibility of their academic standing. In examples 31 and 32 they are keepers and leaders.

(31) I am *keeper of* the museum as well as a member of the academic community.

(32) I am a *supportive and critical leader* […].

Indeed, strongly supported by their dissemination potential, they also see themselves as celebrities.

(33) He has appeared on both the BBC radio 4 and 5 discussing childhood wellbeing […].

(34) His research has been *cited by* non-governmental organizations (NGOs) […].

It is also just as important to them to increase their visibility by inviting people to download their measurables as expressed in the example below.

(35) Open access papers can be *downloaded* from this site, with an active research portfolio […].

Generally speaking, along the lines of Hyland's (2012b) own findings in the similar area of research, our findings indicate that junior scholars, owing to their often limited experience in academia and probably with fewer measurable deliverables, tend to represent themselves by mentioning their present and past positions, projects and educational experiences. They also strengthen their positions by relating their work to audience appeal through emotional involvement. Seniors on the other hand, establish who they are, who they are affiliated with and expose their long-standing experience by drawing on the solidity of their work. They are strong on knowledge dissemination potential and it is through this that they relate to their audience.

7. Multimodal analysis

Genre analysis is frequently discussed by multimodal scholars for a variety of different reasons, such as the description of multimodal phenomena and/or their properties (Held 2005; Tan 2010; Bateman 2011). Tan (2010: 93), in particular, applies genre theory to illustrate the multimodal features and the semiotic potential of websites as digital media, clarifying that a website can be considered as:

> an innately hybridic genre that generates a multitude of intertextual possibilities by assembling texts from various modes and discourses (e.g. verbiage, image, sound, activity) that are then represented in multiple relations to one another.

However, the major reservation concerning the application of genre theory to extremely diverse multimodal instantiations without specific constraints and criteria is still an unresolved issue. This section seeks to tentatively explore the application of genre analysis by simply amplifying the three distinct genre moves identified and presented in the previous two sections. The main idea here is to adapt the MIP to the constraints of the semiotic self-(re)presentation as constructed and publicly displayed within the selected academic social actors' profiles on *Academia.edu*. Each semiotic move corresponds to a move analyzed in the previous section; thus, instead of an unviable linear analysis of semiotic moves within a given text (i.e. a single photograph), we proceed to combine the scholars' personal choices of representing themselves through pictures to one or more moves in the written bionotes analyzed in Sections 4 and 5.

The semiotic moves in our MIP model work to disclose the way academics intentionally craft an image of their online persona in terms of professional self-representation via the picture they choose to identify themselves with and/or their professional involvement in the academic community. Although selecting and posting a personal picture cannot immediately suggest a subjective act of intentional creation, it epitomizes unavoidably a meaningful act of identity construction, or of subjective agency, since scholars autonomously decide upon which picture best describes their public persona. Needless to say, the layout structure of the ASNS is never arbitrary but functionally motivated. As said, in *Academia.edu* on the left-hand side of the website page, we have a photograph which fully participates in reinforcing the value proposition of the matching bionote. Indeed, the combination of visual and verbal texts, their joint structure and spatial proximity in the layout, require that both linguistic and semiotic texts should be interpreted together.

We employed the same keyword identifiers used for co-referencing the constituent parts of each linguistic move in order to bring our general analysis to a coherent level of investigation. Table 2 shows a graphic representation of each of the three semiotic moves designating their main aims, their specific keyword identifiers along with the leading process types taken under scrutiny.

Semiotic Move 1: Developing a value representation; Keyword: Positioning; Narrative processes: Non-transactional reactions.
Semiotic Move 2: Reinforcing bionote Move 1; Keyword: Consistency; Conceptual processes: Symbolic processes.
Semiotic Move 3: Engagement; Keyword: Authenticity; Combination of processes.

Table 2. The semiotic moves.

Semiotic Move 1 is mainly realized through the representational metafunction, that is, the semiotic function of construing the representation of what is going on in the world. In particular, all the photographs corresponding to Semiotic Move 1 are narrative processes illustrating how academics represent themselves as doing something for one another. All pictures describe Non-Transactional reactions since only the Reacter (i.e. the represented scholar) comes forth in the image. Such condition gives the viewers the opportunity to imagine what the represented academic may be looking at while interacting with them, being at the same level.

Semiotic Move 2, following the bionote Move 2, in which the academics develop on their positioning move by providing some evidence, is equally identified by the keyword *consistency*. It is realized mainly through conceptual processes whereby the represented participants are portrayed as 'being and having', that is, the scholar's image is construed as a 'thing', an action or an event (Existential) or in terms of the scholar's attributes (Relational). This move explicates the connection between the academics and their research or personal interests by often enacting a symbolic process by means of the representation of places, props or scientific objects that are interdiscursively associated to the scholar's work.

Semiotic Move 3 is activated by the keyword *authenticity*, so this is the move where openness comes in. Move 3 needs the other two semiotic moves and processes to be realized and analyzed. In almost all pictures belonging to this category, the engagement with the viewer is enacted by the welcoming and smiling faces of the represented participants.

This section discusses the findings of the multimodal study. The discussion is presented in three parts corresponding to the three semiotic modes identified above.

7.1. Semiotic Move 1: The Face Act

Figure 1. *The Face Act*: positioning.

As shown in the Figure above, Semiotic Move 1 presents all close-up shots of academics. In this move, the *Gaze* is fundamentally used to interpret the positioning of the represented participants or the reacters. Their gaze is always frontal facing and therefore directed at the viewers. In this particular case, it is to be noted that although the phenomenon which corresponds to the object of their gaze is not displayed before the viewers, these scholars show their attitude and expect to communicate with their peers. The direction of their gaze represents the vector which sets off a 'Non-transactional reaction'. In Kress and van Leeuwen's terms (1996), the image mood of Move 1 may be defined as a 'demand' since the represented participants are directly engaging their viewers by asking them to interact. Moreover, since social (intimate, or impersonal) distance and intimacy in a picture is realised by the size of frame, varying from very-close-shot to very-long-shot, the distance between the represented academics and their viewers is determined by a very close shot, where such a short proximity positions the viewers and the represented participants on the same social level. They do belong to the same community in a peer-to-peer type of positioning. In that sense, each photograph works to create a strong sense of empathy between the represented participants and their viewers.

Move 1 re-semiotizes the pragmatic 'perlocutionary force' of the utterance – its effect being persuading, convincing, or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not (Austin 1962) – through what we would like to define a visual 'Face Act'. Face Acts serve to create inclusivity and familiarity by means of the visual 'demand' encoded in the image. Salience is given to the position of the eyes and the mouth of the represented participants who are directly engaging the viewer's thoughts, emotions or even their physical response. All these pictures are in high modality strengthening the relationship between the undefined space of the online world and the actual real life.

Figure 2 shows the alignment between the eyes and the mouth of the represented participant who is engaging his viewers through a demanding Face Act.

Figure 2. *The Face Act*: gaze, smile, salience, modality.

Both gaze and smile seem to demand the viewer to enter a relation of social affinity and identification. On the other hand, since there is no ‘gaze’ contact between represented participants in the image, gaze and smile depict the represented participants impersonally as items of information or objects for contemplation. It is important to highlight that the perlocutionary choice of a *Face Act* can suggest different relations among participants, such as engagement or even detachment. However, all images in this move suggest an engagement relation, parallel positioning, and familiarity.

7.2. Semiotic Move 2: The Interdiscursive Act

This move includes pictures which reinforce the value proposition of the written bionotes in Move 1. The represented scholars in semiotic Move 2 show their personal connection with the research they are carrying out by means of symbolic processes. Such processes correspond to what a participant is or means. In symbolic attributive processes, there are two participants: (a) the Carrier whose meaning and identity is revealed by (b) the Symbolic attribute (i.e. the other participant). In Symbolic suggestive processes, instead, there is only one participant, the Carrier, and its symbolic meaning is displayed by other elaborations, for example other visual descriptions in the background. In all the pictures in Move 2, in fact, the represented participants (or rather, the Carriers) are portrayed together with an element or a prop symbolizing their job as scholars. In some pictures only a scientific object, a background place or an academic prop such as a blackboard or a book are representatives of a symbolic suggestive process. Such types of representations are to be intended as forms of visual dissemination which by means of a symbolic process enact an interdiscursive connection between the academics and their professional interests.

Figure 3 reports a selection of images classified in semiotic Move 2 which covers different representations of academic self-branding strategies ranging from symbolic attributive processes to symbolic suggestive processes.

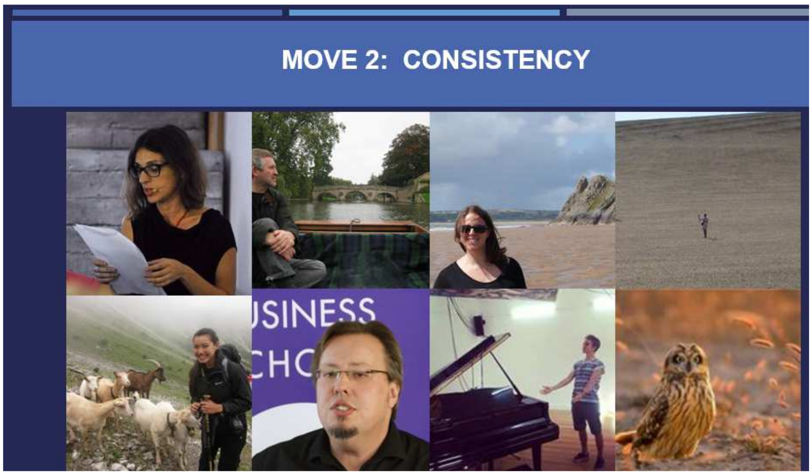

Figure 3. Move 2: *Consistency.*

The semiotic *Interdiscursive Act* is a highly performative act, which implies a symbolic process whereby the represented participants communicate to their viewers their position in the academic community by connecting their own image to the one of an object representing their job, academic field or interest as scholars (i.e. the scholars and the notes she is reading, the scholar and a piano, the scholar and a group of animals, etc.) . This *Interdiscursive Act* creates consistency by expanding the scholar's positioning move in the written bionote providing visual proof.

7.3. Semiotic Move 3: The Smile Act

Semiotic Move 3 refers to audience engagement and encompasses Move 1 and Move 2 discussed in the linguistic analysis of the bionotes by activating all the previously analyzed multimodal processes simultaneously. In terms of Mood, Move 3 may express both 'demand' and 'offer', connecting with the former two semiotic moves. Authenticity is provided here by a very close proximity between the scholars and their followers. As far as social distance is concerned, it is influenced by different sizes of frame, namely close-up, medium or long shots. Therefore, since the size of all frames in Semiotic Move 3 is a close-up shot, this indicates little social distance which involves the participants in an informal relation, typical between friends. As in Move 1, the gaze of the represented participant in Semiotic Move 3 is in fact monovectorial, which implies a direct engagement with the audience. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 117) consider this particular visual configuration as relating to two different functions: first, it establishes a visual form of direct address, which serves to acknowledge the viewer explicitly, as if they were being told: "Hey – you [out there]!"; secondly, it constitutes an Image Act when, ultimately, the image-producer "uses the image to do something to the viewer"; hence, the reason for it being labeled a 'demand' image. Essentially, it is the participant's gaze, and potentially their gesture (such as smiling) which demands some form of action from the viewer and thus compels the viewer to enter an imaginary relationship with the participant. It is typically the facial expression of the represented participant which signifies exactly what type of relationship is established between both parties. A smile from the represented participants will probably induce the viewer to enter a state of 'social affinity' with them (Kress/van Leeuwen 1996). As for Move 2, the represented participants' gaze does not engage the viewers directly, but academics are depicted in the act of looking somewhere else suggesting an 'offer' rather than a 'demand'. This is because the viewers are offered the images as information available for their perusal (Machin 2007). Understanding the agency of the viewer as articulated through their gaze challenges a shift of analytical emphasis away from the image/text towards the social identities and experiences of the viewer. This necessarily connects with the context of viewing as part of the meaning-making process.

We need to distinguish between the represented participant's gaze and the viewer's assumed gaze in order to understand different positions and points of view. If the represented participant's gaze indicates a modality of demand or offer, it is the viewer's gaze – the viewer's personal reading of an image – which enacts a simultaneous process of decoding and re-encoding. When one decodes a message, he/she is extracting the meaning of that message into terms that are easy to understand. Without using words the decoding behaviour would be suggested by means of a gesture such as observing a picture, or simply by body language such as smiling (Figure 4). Smiling is a subcategory of facial expressions in non-verbal communication. As a matter of fact, the smile is one of the simplest means of connecting with others. An individual who smiles while communicating with others is often perceived as confident, honest, and trustworthy.

Figure 4. Move 3: Engagement

The human smile, with its structural and nonverbal features, is the most important cue in interpersonal communication processes (Figure 5). Positive emotions expressed by smiling may lead to more positive interpersonal judgments (Dion *et al.* 1972) and make people attribute higher degrees of attractiveness and social competence as well as less dominance as compared to non-smiling people (Reis *et al.* 1990). However, although the mechanisms through which people perceive different types of smiles and judge their authenticity remain unclear, it is evident here that the performative *Smile Act* has the power to directly engage the audience. In particular, the scholars' act of smiling on their bionote pictures is a clear self-branding strategy which affects two fundamental dimensions of social judgments: warmth and competence. Self-branding authenticity is thus gained via a non-verbal cue in Move 3, which is not so far from what is taking place in consumer behavior research and managerial practice.

Figure 5. *The Smile Act.*

Table 3 summarizes our multimodal findings. As we can easily infer, multimodal construction is widely carried out by the Humanities scholars (H), while Science scholars (S) tend to be very similar in their semiotic self-branding representations by means of mainly symbolic processes across gender. Quite surprisingly, Senior scholars (S) tend to represent themselves by means of a casual attire as opposed to their more formal appearing Junior (J) counterparts. On the other hand, Humanities scholars tend to shift between symbolic and analytical processes. It is interesting to note that Male (M) Senior scholars behave similarly to Female (F) Junior scholars in the choice of the oblique angular positioning which is an evident stance of power relation.

GENDER and RANKS	
S-J-M = Low modality, symbolic process, vestimics > old-fashioned/elegant attire;	H-J-M = High modality, symbolic and analytical processes, vestimics > casual attire;
S-S-M = High modality, symbolic process, vestimics > casual attire;	H-S-M = High/Middle modality, analytical process, vestimics > from casual to elegant, oblique angle, half-smile engagement;
S-J-F= High modality, symbolic process, smiling attitude;	H-J-F= High modality, symbolic process, smiling attitude, oblique angle;
S-S-F= High modality, symbolic process, smiling attitude.	H-S-F= High modality, analytical process; smiling attitude.

Table 3. Gender and ranks across the corpus.

8. Conclusion

The sentence '*You're only as good as your last tweet…*' (Lauren 2013) in the introductory part of the title of this chapter is a clear call to all academics to connect with the online world in order to have more visibility. Today, developing a webpage, crafting social media profiles, and interacting with followers and clients across networks must be considered compulsory practices which necessarily enmesh also the academic world. The ASNS *Academia.edu* created for academic users, in particular, mirrors all the main social media conventions, from follower counts to activity notifications, so that academic profiles with photographs and other common features are similar to those appearing on *Twitter* and *Facebook*.

This chapter has highlighted the way *Academia.edu*, from a purely discursive viewpoint, succeeds in hybridizing the bionote genre by accentuating new forms of academic social presence construed by and through specific multimodal devices. Such discursive strategies, we posit, will eventually change the perception of the academic world in line with the fast-communicative immediacy of the new media. Our analysis has identified three multimodal moves leading to the assumption that *Academia.edu* infrastructure of scholarly communication and relative affordances can only intensify academic visibility (interactivity, feedback and analytics) through linguistic and multimodal self-branding interdiscursive strategies. As a result, the expected development might be the creation of networked intellectuals characterized by a strong media presence together with the subsequent facilitation of knowledge dissemination codified through academic self-branding strategies, which are implemented by scholars across disciplines. Moreover, measurability of output via the convergence between academia practices and knowledge corporation strategies (such as posting, following, bookmarking, recommending) is slowly becoming a viable practice. Therefore, while social media, on the one hand, impact the way academics discursively disseminate knowledge through self-branding multimodal strategies, on the other, they reinforce community power relations through conventional academic discursive practices, through the so-called measurable deliverables. Ultimately, this study has identified new hybrid genre moves which have been detected as interdiscursively deployed in both our linguistic and semiotic analyses.

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ROXANNE BARBARA DOERR

The Scholarly Soldier: Distinguishing Features of Online Military Academic Journals

1. The divergence and convergence of soldier and academic

The relation between civilian academia and the military in the United States has been tense for two reasons: firstly, because of a common misconception that the American military community is simply a particular and specialized profession anchored in American personal and communication cultural dimensions, and secondly due to the fact that civilians are uninformed on the workings of the military community but must still depend on it for security (Brick 2015). In truth, the military community is a "specialized society within society as a whole" (Fidell 2016: 2) therefore to be separated from the civilian community although it works for and with it. Such preconceptions are fuelled by the fact that the academics who published on military strategy in the past were civilians because of the 'military man's' being limited by the profession due to its "hierarchy of strategic planning organization and the military discipline of subordination to higher authority […] Even when the military man combines both the opportunity and inclination to write for publication, he finds himself more severely constrained by rules of military security and government policy review" (Ginsburgh 1964: 261).

This led military service members to have less of a say in their own professional matters and hindered the dissemination of expertise among different service branches and institutions. Today, the military discourse community increasingly seeks to turn the tables by appropriating the discourse and instruments of academic genres while sustaining and enforcing military professional ethics and values.

Another significant factor behind these past and present preconceptions, as well as the distinguishing characteristics of this process of re-appropriation, lies in the evident difference between American military and civilian cultural dimensions. It is generally assumed that the American military community acts and interacts in accordance with general American cultural standards. However, the hierarchical nature of the organization and the ever-changing missions and locations and positions that service members need to adapt to have resulted in their creation of a separate culture that is at the service of the nation but follows its own professional and cultural values. This may be explained by using Geert Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions of the United States as "a conceptual framework for analyzing a nation's culture in order to construct an effective inter-cultural communications plan" (Wilbur 2013). Although Hofstede's model started from business organizations, it has gradually been expanded to encompass cultures and it is claimed that "we believe that the fact that organizational cultures can be meaningfully described by a number of practice dimensions is probably universally true. Also, it is likely that such dimensions will generally resemble, and partly overlap, the six described in this chapter" (Hofstede/ Hofstede/Minkov 2010: 370). The work often mentions the military community as an organization, and this has led to numerous studies by military scholars that have put this in practice (Hoppa/Gray-Briggs 1999; Febbraro 2008; McKee/Febbraro/Riedel 2008; Wilbur 2013; Hardy 2016). Moreover, the original cultural dimensions have been increased from four to six, namely, power-distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs short-term normative orientation, and indulgence vs restraint. The indexes of these cultural dimensions in relation to civilian US culture and their comparison with military culture are described below.

In terms of power distance, the US general culture rates 40[1], indicating that "hierarchy is established for convenience, superiors are

[1] The numbers of the cultural dimensions are those of the "country comparison" tool on the *Hofstede Insights* website as they represent the most updated data. This may be found at https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/the-usa/ (last accessed in May 2018).

accessible and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise" and that "communication is informal, direct and participative to a degree" (Hofstede Insights website). In contrast, military leaders rely on their team but there is a chain of command based on ranks and responsibility that follow a specific order and determined procedures; this emerges in linguistic and multimodal communicative choices reflecting significant respect and formality towards superiors and the military institution.

As concerns individualism, the United States rates 91, making it "one of the most individualist cultures in the world" (Hofstede Insights website) and this appears to be in stark contrast with the military community. The latter is very tight-knit and aims at ensuring the safety and support of service members and dependants in all stages of their careers. Such support is provided by authorities and other online (Maguire 2015) and offline communities. This results in a significant preference for images of people in groups in the act of helping one another or interacting with each other (Würtz 2005). From a linguistic perspective, this collectivism results in the use of collectivizing pronouns and noun phrases, and in the progression of slogans and mottos from individual- to team-oriented (Tyson 2006).

Uncertainty avoidance rates 46 in the United States, which indicates it sufficient, albeit unremarkable, tolerance for innovation and unforeseen circumstances. In contrast, the US military culture is necessarily characterized by a significantly higher degree of uncertainty avoidance, especially in online communication, due to the fear of sensitive information falling into the hands of potentially threatening subjects. This leads to tight monitoring on the part of authorities, and therefore very direct and concrete lexis, deontic modality and strongly preformulated and standardized workplace communication and genres that reach the point of repetition.

When measuring normative orientation, the number was very low, scoring 26 in American culture, where organizations and businesses generally "measure their performance on a short-term basis" (Hofstede Insights website). Although it is important for all levels of military professionals to reach their short-term goals, these must be inserted within and adjusted based on long-term goals that are supervised in view of the above-mentioned high degree of uncertainty avoidance and the desire for stability and security.

Finally, the United States reveals itself to be high in indulgence, as it rates 68, meaning that the American population's tendency to control their impulses is not strong. Indulgence in the military, on the other hand, is limited and reflected both in the obligations of military subjects to follow the values and ethos of their branch, and in the difficulty to express themselves freely while representing their profession in general and in the academic context.

As the present study will point out, such differences, which are based on the military's "collectivism, hierarchy, structure, authority and control to deal with the uncertainty of war" (Maguire 2015: 20), are mirrored in military discourse, leading to differences in communication patterns and 'horizons of expectation' (Swales 2016). Nevertheless, there has been a gradual filling of the gap between professionals and civilians in military studies, also thanks to the rise in military students who are enrolled in colleges, universities and online higher education programs (Hinton 2013; Fain 2016), and are therefore familiar with academic writing and reasoning.

In truth, while they appear to be two separate contexts, the military community has much in common with academia:

> the military isn't the only closed-shop monopolistic institution prone to defensive responses, riddled with inefficiencies that aren't often identified as such and even more rarely dealt with. Another is academia. The power structure of academia isn't so centralized as the military – there are lots of colleges and universities. But people in academia have the same vision of themselves as pursuing morally purer undertakings than those outside, protecting their own, and providing the same personal structure as the military […] The military and academia, in many ways, seem to be brothers under the skin. (Fleming 2010: 65)

This is due to the exclusive and excluding nature of both communities in the eyes of the general public; indeed, they convey specialized information through specific professional discourse and are therefore accused of elitism and mental, as well as linguistic, closure. This traditional tendency to separate members from outsiders is increasingly being addressed to avoid further misunderstanding because the public's mistrust would “undermine military recruitment, retention, funding or otherwise interfere with the mission of the military” (Mehlman 2015: 411).

The present study therefore attempts to debunk such myths by focusing on an intersection between the fields of military and academic discourse, i.e. online military academic journals and their use of multimodal, textual and linguistic means to disseminate professional knowledge and ethics in an open online context. Online military journals seek to foster information sharing and discussions on theories and procedures through the combination of established literature and contemporary reflections based on professional and personal military experience. Military academia could therefore be categorized as a ‘folocal’ discourse community, i.e. a hybrid community “whose members have a double – and sometimes split – allegiance, as they are confronted by internal and external challenges and pressures” (Swales 2016: 13). Military operations and training are particularly influenced by new forms of information and knowledge transmission due to the constant de-location of re-location of its members. The feedback that is provided from military professionals during combat and in times of peace is of vital importance and must be ‘translated’ into theoretical knowledge and concrete proposals that are disseminated throughout a worldwide community of geographically dislocated experts and practitioners in more or less scholarly forms and contexts. For this reason, military scholarly journals have embraced online channels of diffusion and intercommunication, also in view of the military’s close and historical connection with the Internet (Kaltenbach 2000; Moreno 2006). However, military scholars must also face practical difficulties such as operational security, complexities linked to the divergence between individual and representational opinion in their community, and the persistence of ever-changing knowledge gaps and changes in a variety of crucial matters.

Having underlined the profession’s cultural differences, the study will focus on three levels of a selection of online military academic journals: their overall textual and multimedia content; subgenres concerning legal accountability (legal disclaimers and copyright permissions); and self-presentations and prescriptive regulatory stylistic guidelines in order to verify online military academic journals' adherence – or lack thereof – to standard academic language, discursive framing and to legal requirements. It will also question whether the peculiarities of military communication and culture contribute to enhancing knowledge dissemination within an evolving professional community and an innovative channel of information transmission. The methodology consists in a combination of multimodal and qualitative critical discourse analyses. The dataset consists in the above mentioned self-defining and regulatory sections that may be found in the websites and the issues of joint-oriented and specialized online military journals that are affiliated with military operational and scholarly institutions and centers. The choice of these academic and online subgenres is based on the fact that they are those in which the self-identification and aims of the academic military branch are outlined most clearly and in which the sought-out academic style of writing, publication and dissemination is explicitly presented as a standard according to which submissions are evaluated and reviewed.

2. Aims and scope

After presenting the dataset and methodology in the next section, the study will carry out a multifaceted analysis of online academic military journals with the intent of answering the following research question: *RQ1: How do military academic journals and reviews differ from civilian academic journals from multimodal and text organization perspectives?* This point will be dealt with in Section 4 by considering the peculiarities of military academic journals' textual organization, sections and use of multimodal resources.

Following that, Section 5 will focus on the legal challenges that the military scholar must face by analyzing the journal's legal disclaimers and copyright licences through the second research question: *RQ2: Compared to the civilian academic community, are there any particular legal or institutional requirements involved in contributing to military academic journals?*

The sixth Section will build upon Hyland's (2010) theory of proximity in the journals' online self-presentations and author/submission guidelines to address the following question: *RQ3: How do military academic journals frame their intent to disseminate specific professional knowledge and guide others to do the same?* The final section will present the study's conclusions on the blending of military and academic discourse in these journals and the impact that they could have on knowledge dissemination and sharing, especially given military studies' reputation of being secretive and exclusive.

3. Dataset and methodology

The study takes into consideration a 10-year period of publications (2008-2018) from a variety of online military academic journals that are affiliated with military colleges and universities. They were chosen from different branches to ensure that all armed forced were represented, except in the case of the American Coast Guard, whose journals are not affiliated to a military college/university, and the National Defense University, which represents a joint force institution focused on national security. The journals all have the explicit intent of gathering, discussing and disseminating knowledge on past and ongoing military operations, as well as developing strategies and technologies. The journals and reviews are almost always recent but despite this – or perhaps precisely because of this – there is evident interest in publications from and about the past as a manner of creating a repertoire representing the institution's academic tradition while promoting present and future research. The dataset is composed as follows:

Name of journal	**Armed forces**	**Affiliation**	**issues**	**tokens**	**types**
Air & Space Power Journal (*ASPJ*)	Air Force	Air University	40	2,186,531	47,504
Marine Corps University Journal (*MCUJ*)	Marines	Marine Corps University	12	584,836	29,704
Naval War College Review (*NWCR*):	Navy	Naval War College	35	2,732,705	54,065
Parameters (*PA*)	Army	Army War College	31	1,936,657	44,829
Prism (*PR*)	Joint force (security)	National Defense University	27	2,172,215	46,135

Table 1: Details about the journals in the dataset.

The journals' self-presentations ('About' sections) and other relevant sections of the journals' websites (e.g. author/submission guidelines) were also taken into consideration in order to address *RQ3*.

The study adopted a multifaceted methodological and analytical framework (Bhatia/Gotti 2006; Bhatia 2012) that is typical of applied linguistic research and discourse analysis to underline the variety of semiotic, semantic, and pragmatic levels at which the dissemination of specific knowledge is at work. It started from genre analysis (Swales 1990, 2016; Hyland 2010) due to its suitability for specialized language descriptions (Bhatia 2012), and was integrated with insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995; Chouliaraki/Fairclough 1999; Schiffrin/Tannen/Hamilton 2001; van Dijk 2003) whose interest in negotiation and (im)balances of power is particularly significant when dealing with a community featuring such distinguishing cultural values that impact on the textual organization, lexical choices and text-external resources of its academic writing.

4. Hybridity and multimodality for knowledge dissemination

In comparison with reviews pertaining to more consolidated academic fields, military academic journals feature a hybrid appearance and structure that unites the specialization of professional academic discourse with the popularizing attractiveness of magazine writing and online language. In this sense and in the dataset, this emerging genre includes some of the most notable and innovative semiotic, participatory strategies and textual subgenre:

- Large, glossy magazine-like images and pictures of locations and groups of people, which hint at the military's communitarianism, as well as official photographs of the authors and the institution's leaders in uniform — alluding to high power distance — and images of machinery and transportation that convey a sense of military efficiency and power.
- Interviews with important professional figures in or in connection with the military community, as well as academic debates in 'commentary' and 'replies' sections, thus confirming high power distance.
- Letter type and font that are typical of popularizing magazines but featuring the footnotes, references and bibliographical information that are typical of academic writing.
- Contests and awards, in some journals, to engage amateur readers and students and encourage them to actively propose starting points for discussions. This insertion, along with other inclusive and participatory strategies, deviates from the military's traditional high power distance and is a result of the influence of popular magazines and online forum discussions.
- Diverse, and sometimes unconventional presence and use of abstracts that do not follow the IMRaD format (Stotesbury 2006) ranging from being full-fledged academic abstracts with a Background-Purpose-Method-Implications structure (*MCUJ*), to a short summary at the beginning of the research article (*Parameters*) to a one-sentence summary in the table of contents like in a magazine (*NWCR*).

- Significant amount of book reviews and review essays to gather contemporary and past academic literature written about, for and by the military and provide theoretical and historical background to support ongoing military experiments and theories.
- Sections on ‘views’ and ‘reflections on reading’ to conclude the issue and provide quotes, sources and encouragement to service members as professionals and individuals, enhancing their education in military knowledge and professional ethics.

The intent of these journals is to convey the impression that knowledge sharing and dissemination in military studies is not as secretive or exclusive as is commonly considered. The fact that this happens in a global online context (Fairclough 2003) which is accessible to new audiences has the additional benefit of fostering civilians’ understanding and appreciation of the military community and its traditions and endeavours. This is accomplished by cutting across genres and disciplines (Fairclough 2003; Bhatia 2004) and integrating traditional academic knowledge and writing — as would be expected from a hierarchical and established institution like the military — with popularizing visual, textual and interactive means that co-occur with increasing changes of organizational life in military academia and culture in general. Therefore, the answer to *RQ1: How do military academic journals and reviews differ from civilian academic journals from multimodal and text organization perspectives?* may be seen precisely in such an attempt to go beyond mere hybridization (a tendency which is found in academic writing in general) by not only involving but also encouraging newcomers to the discourse community while providing insight into military practices and culture. In this sense, it differs from civilian academic journals which are generally addressed to members of the discourse community and have no or little interest in engaging outsiders.

5. Distinguishing legal and institutional requirements

The second research question *RQ2: Compared to the civilian academic community, are there any particular legal or institutional requirements involved in contributing to military academic journals?* touches upon a delicate matter for this approach to knowledge sharing within the military community, which is characterized by a strong sense of responsibility and accountability. In fact, despite the ongoing changes mentioned above, military academic texts continue to value clarity and unambiguity, for "military discipline also calls for the development of uniformity in interpreting and reconstructing reality. One of the traits of every military institution is its interest in creating and reproducing its own views and interpretation of the world" (Gouveia 1997: 163). This has led to issues concerning the military scholar's twofold legal accountability as an individual and a member of the military institution in cases in which innovative but diverging ideas, experience and expertise may clash with the need to protect the military community's integrity and credibility. In this sense, the military's varied and ever-changing circumstances and contingencies have thus resulted in its professionals being subjected to legitimate questions, mentioned also by Bhatia (2004), concerning the integrity of genres and their degree of freedom that professional writers have when choosing to bend generic norms and conventions. The attempt to answer the question has led to alternative solutions regarding the discourse and even legal impact of the language and subgenres that are present in online communication, such as disclaimers and copyright permission boilerplates. These constitute the object of analysis of this section, as well as the key to answering *RQ2*, and not only inform but also respond to the divergence of soldier and academic that was expounded in the introduction of the present study and unite military collectivism and the scholar's freedom to express opinions even if they diverge from that of the military. These disclaimers are present in all of the journals but in different positions and formats to make them more or less prominent. Moreover, the disclaimers convey differing levels of freedom to contributors, as may be seen from their comparison:

(1) The thoughts and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the U.S, government, the U.S. Navy Department, or the Naval War College. (*NWCR*)

(2) Articles and reviews published in *Parameters* are unofficial expressions of opinion. The views and opinions expressed in *Parameters* are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army, the US Army War College, or any other agency of the US government. (*PA*)

(3) The views expressed in the articles and reviews in this journal are solely those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the organizations for which they work […]. (*MCUJ*)

(4) The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of DOD or any other agency of the Federal Government, or any other organization associated with this publication. (*PR*)

(5) The views and opinions expressed or implied in the Journal are those of the authors and should not be construed as carrying the official sanction of the Department of Defense, Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, Air University, or other agencies or departments of the US government. (*ASPJ*)

There are some expressions – such as "are those of the authors/contributors" – that are present in all disclaimers to clearly identify the subject of liability in case of inaccurate or controversial statements. This is especially important in this discipline because the authors often write about matters that are subject to experimentation or trials and therefore may change after the article's publication. Such distance is enforced by the use of *solely* in example (3), which comes from the *Marine Corps University Journal*, a recent publication that focuses on 'contemporary issues' that may present a high degree of uncertainty. Another recurring word is *(not) necessarily*, a hedging expression used to mitigate the rest of the disclaimer and underline that it is just as possible for the writer to be representing the armed service's causes and interests through their research, confirming what has been observed by Gouveia (1997: 170), i.e. that the use of this adverb entails a degree of modalization that concedes that these texts may not express the view of the Army and the Ministry of Defence, The verb *reflect* in the *Marine Corps University Journal* and *Prism* highlights the indirect relation between the journals' content and the editors' awareness of the shifting nature of their publications and of the need to place full responsibility on but also trust in the authors, thus favoring innovation over the repetition of consolidated values.

The divergences in the disclaimers are perhaps more significant: for instance, the most innovative journal in terms of its structure and modification of traditional elements of academic writing, the *Navy War College Review*, mentions "thoughts and opinions", which are vague but open to interpretation and informal compared to the term "views", which is more commonly used in the disclaimers. The "conclusions and recommendations" mentioned in *Prism* recall relevant sections of academic research papers; in fact this journal and the *Air & Space Power Journal* are the most cautious, for they specify not only "expressed" but also "implied" opinions, thus encompassing any pragmatic content of the article. The *Air & Space Power Journal* further enforces the legal tone of its disclaimer by using the passive form (Gotti 2005; Garzone/Salvi 2007) in "should not be construed" and referring to an "official sanction". This reminds readers that there is a hierarchy and an authority behind the journal and therefore upholds military high power distance. An overall cross-examination of multimodal and legal content sheds light on a preliminary correspondence between the innovative use of the former and a more flexible disclaimer (which is always present for legal purposes) and vice versa. Such a finding confirms that there is a diverse degree of hybridity within the genre of online military academic journals and a range between those in favour of open change and those that seek to consolidate and disseminate professional knowledge and values in a more controlled manner.

A similar discursive analysis may be carried out on the journals' licenses and permissions in relation to their use and references to other sources. These may be positioned either in the editorial section of the journal or, in the case of the *Air & Space Power Journal*, at the beginning of every article:

(6) This article <u>may be reproduced in whole or in part</u> without permission. If it is reproduced, the *Air and Space Power Journal* <u>requests a courtesy line</u>. (*ASPJ*)

(7) To obtain permission to reproduce material bearing a copyright notice, or to reproduce any material for commercial purposes, contact the editor for each use. Material not bearing a copyright notice may be freely reproduced for academic or other non-commercial use; however, it is requested that the author and *Naval War College Review* be credited and that the editor be informed. (*NWCR*)

(8) Document sources as footnotes. Indicate all quoted material by quotation marks or indentation. Reduce the number of footnotes to the minimum consistent with honest acknowledgement of indebtedness, consolidating notes where possible. (*Parameters*)

(9) This is the authoritative, official U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) edition of *PRISM*. Any copyrighted portions of this journal may not be reproduced or extracted without permission of the copyright proprietors. *PRISM* should be acknowledged whenever material is quoted from or based on its content. (*Prism*)

The examples range from the most flexible and open to the most traditional and formal in terms of register, coercive force and deontic modality. In fact, example (6) uses the modal *may*, which has the least predictive and obligatory force, in combination with a "request for a courtesy line" rather than a requirement or obligation, implying a high degree of politeness and negative face preservation. The passive form in examples (7) and (9), on the contrary, are associated with legal English and the impersonal status of an authoritative subject that must be addressed, therefore representing high power distance. Example (8) is particularly interesting, in that it presents a series of imperative tenses that recall instructions not only in written regulations but also in military language. Furthermore, the expression "honest acknowledgement and indebtedness" recalls that military law "aims to maintain order and discipline within its boundaries, including adherence to a host of requirements and prohibitions that have no counterpart in civilian society" (Fidell 2016: 2) by connecting values of integrity, obedience and honesty to both military ethics and military legal regulations. Finally, example (9) can be considered as the most traditional and forceful by clearly establishing that the present edition is "authoritative" and "official", thereby endowing the journal with a certain legal and representative quality. It then specifies, as opposed to the other journals, that certain portions may be copyrighted and are therefore subjected to obligations towards another legal subject, i.e. “copyright proprietors”, and reiterates that the journal is to be mentioned through a coercive ‘*should* + passive’ construction.

The analysis of these two academic and legal subgenres, i.e. disclaimers and permission boilerplates, therefore seems to confirm the initial premises of the present study, i.e. that the previously mentioned emerging hybridity within military academic discourse reflects the ongoing changes in military culture from being very traditional, and its academic and/or popularized discursive counterpart.

6. Creation and dissemination of common knowledge

The final issue that points to the fact that military academic journals represent an emerging and innovative genre concerns their evolution in ways in which members of this ‘folocal’ discourse community are directly addressed and engaged. In fact, while the conveyed knowledge is also open to civilians, the journals exclusively appeal to members of the community because military scholars have finally acquired power over their own academic discourse and “[s]oldiers instinctively trust their fellow service members in ways that they do not trust civilians, however well-intended, primarily because soldiers know that their comrades-in-arms understand their unique problems and will not lead them astray” (Dunlap 2003: 488). The choice of the research article genre is emblematic in this sense, as it is the most prominent form of academic discourse and knowledge exchange.

From a linguistic and discursive perspective, such a need to involve other members of the military discourse community including students and amateurs is conveyed through interpersonality and various forms of proximity (Hyland 2010, 2015). For instance, proximity membership is implicated in the journals’ frequent and explicit encouragements to send in contributions in their online self-presentations, which entails ‘making an identity claim’ (Hyland 2015:

36) and may be interpreted as a form of 'reader engagement' (Turnbull 2013: 24):

(10) It [the review] serves as a forum for discussion of public policy matters of interest to the maritime services. The candid views of the authors are presented for the professional education of the readers. Articles are drawn from a wide variety of sources to inform, stimulate, and challenge readers, and to serve as a catalyst for new ideas. (*NWCR* Self-presentation)

(11) *Parameters* welcomes unsolicited article submissions. Manuscripts should reflect mature thought on topics of current interest to senior Army officers and the defense community. Our focus is on the art and science of land warfare, national and international security affairs, military strategy, senior leadership, ethics, and military history with contemporary relevance. (*PA* Submission guidelines)

(12) The *Air & Space Power Journal* (ISSN 1554-2505), Air Force Recurring Publication 10-1, published quarterly, is the professional journal of the United States Air Force. It is designed to serve as an open forum for the presentation and stimulation of innovative thinking on military doctrine, strategy, force structure, readiness, and other matters of national defense. (*ASPJ* About section)

(13) Established in 2008, Marine Corps University Press (MCUP) recognizes the importance of an open dialogue between scholars, policy makers, analysts, and military leaders and of crossing civilian-military boundaries to advance knowledge and solve problems. To that end, MCUP launched the *Marine Corps University Journal* (MCU Journal) in 2010 to provide a forum for interdisciplinary discussion of national security and international relations issues. (*MCUJ* Self-presentation)

(14) *PRISM* is a security studies journal chartered to inform members of U.S. Federal Agencies, Allies, and other partners on complex and integrated national security operations; reconstruction and nation building; relevant policy and strategy; lessons learned; and developments in training and education to transform America's security and development apparatus to meet tomorrow's challenges better while promoting freedom today. (Prism Self-presentation)

Another fundamental aspect reflecting the hybridity of online military academic journals consists in their instructions in relation to what is considered appropriate or acceptable academic writing in the military. They are also significant because they represent an open identification and presentation of the evolving rules of military academic discourse and the group's norms. In fact, as opposed to submission guidelines in other disciplines, which focus on topic, structure and relevance, these instructions also indicate the specific writing style that a scholar must adopt in order to conform to the needs and expectations of the journal and to the image it wishes to project within and outside of the military community. However, as opposed to what is commonly expected from a specialized journal, the submission guidelines do not request – or even desire – the language of the article to make extensive use of the discipline's specialized jargon or abbreviations; on the other hand though, they also oppose pure academic writing, with its long and complex syntactic and discursive structures:

(15a) We value clarity and direct, lively writing; avoid military jargon and dull prose. Longer, specialized papers should be converted to an article written for generalist readers before submission. (*PA* Submission guidelines)

(15b) Write clearly and simply. Clarity, directness, and economy of expression are the main traits of professional writing, and they should never be sacrificed in a misguided effort to appear scholarly. Avoid especially Pentagonese and bureaucratic jargon. Humdrum dullness of style is not synonymous with learnedness; readers appreciate writing that is lively and engaging. (*PA* Author guide)

(16) Authors are encouraged to use clear, persuasive prose and avoid the use of technical or military jargon and hackneyed phrases. (*PR* Submission guidelines)

(17) Keep the title short, and avoid irony when developing your title (search engines do not understand semantics—yet). […] Use short, precise, simple keywords that facilitate Internet searches, and avoid jargon or highly specialized terms that only a few people might use in a search. (*ASPJ* Author Guide)

The excerpts above demonstrate that more than one of the journals advocate for a hybrid style that unites the directness of military discourse with the planned, argumentative construction of academic writing. In examples (15a), (15b) and (16), the goal is to make the content of the journal more approachable and interesting for editors and readers, while the *Air & Space Power Journal* adds the more practical component of making it easier to find in an online search. In fact, the journals are in search of papers that are relevant to and innovative for an extensive and diverse online community. Therefore, the use of excessively specialized and incomprehensible jargon and language would prevent knowledge from being spread and – as a result – would possibly cause the refusal of submitted papers. Another manner of guiding readers' expectations is to clearly delimit the journal's fields and topics like in the previous examples (11), (12) and (14). Moreover, the words *clear*, *direct*, *lively* and *engaging* implicate that the writers' views, opinions and thoughts must be worded in a secure and straightforward manner and therefore with very limited hedging because it introduces vagueness or lack of absolute commitment in evaluative research writing (Hyland 1994; Crompton 1997). Rather, the scholars base their arguments on solid facts, data and personal experience in order to truly foster an 'open forum' by presenting feasible and concrete proposals and promoting values within a community that is strongly traditional but also able to adapt to a changing world.

The answer to *RQ3: How do military academic journals frame their intent to disseminate specific professional knowledge and guide others to do the same?* is therefore twofold: on the one hand, military academic journals, perhaps even more so than their civilian counterparts due to their perceived necessity to enhance knowledge sharing and the (academic) discourse community, openly encourages submissions. In order to better do so on the other hand, they propose clear stylistic guidelines that reflect the military community and the genre's need for clarity even to the point of openly refusing the linguistic style that characterizes general academic language.

7. Concluding remarks

By means of a multifaceted inquiry into its various communicative levels, the present analysis has been able to confirm that in military journals

> both the writers and the readers […] are actually producing orderly or accountable worlds on the basis of shared common-sense procedures that are specific to the military institution. We would argue then, echoing Fairclough (cf. 1992: 72), that in so producing their worlds, writers and readers' practices are shaped by institutional structures, relations of power and the nature of the discursive practice they are engaged in. (Gouveia 1997: 170-171)

While much remains to be studied, since both military discourse and its online academic genres are understudied, some preliminary conclusions and starting points for future research may nevertheless be drawn.

As far as *RQ1* is concerned, i.e. *"How do military academic journals and reviews differ from civilian academic journals from multimodal and text organization perspectives?"*, the multimodal analysis of the journals has highlighted a range of hybrid structures that feature elements that are typical of both academic reviews and popularized magazines (e.g. *Military Times, Army Magazine, U.S. Veterans Magazine, Army Recognition, National Defense*), as well as the modification of determined standard components of academic reviews (e.g., journal covers, images, abstracts).

RQ2 "Compared to the civilian academic community, are there any particular legal or institutional requirements involved in contributing to military academic journals?" addressed a specific issue that is relevant for an online genre whose regulation is still characterized by a certain degree of flexibility and vagueness, i.e., authors' and journals' liability. The discursive analysis of disclaimers and licences has led to the conclusion that there are legal requirements for these scholars because of the shifting nature of their academic discourse and media of transmission.

The answer to *RQ3: "How do military academic journals frame their intent to disseminate specific professional knowledge and guide others to do the same?"* may be found both in the explicit encouragement to contribute to these 'open forums' through interpersonal discursive strategies and proximity, and in the promotion of a hybrid specialized language blending military and academic discourse characterized by specialized lexis and the discursive clarity of opinions and proposals.

Thus, military academic journals represent a productive way for the military to re-appropriate and control the academic discourse of their community according to their cultural roles and communication patterns. Furthermore, the emerging and evolving online versions of military academic journals allow the military community to popularize and disseminate their ideology and projects within the community and among non-military audiences. Such an evolution is significant, for it reflects ongoing changes within American military culture and specialized, as well as academic, online discourse in general.

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MARGARET RASULO

Contagion and Tactical Diffusion of Radicalization Discourse

The time has come for someone to say, Stop it.
Stop sensationalizing the violence.
Stop triggering violent behaviors now.
(Coleman 2004)[1]

1. Introduction

In recent years, the terrorist groups Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have demonstrated remarkable ability in effectively exploiting digital media to recruit and radicalize young Muslim and non-Muslim men from around the world. Online materials containing terrorist propaganda narratives have garnered attention from researchers (Michael 2013) who have focused their investigations on the role of modern technology of all forms, the Internet in general, and digital magazines in particular, in facilitating the radicalization process at a time when both extremist groups have begun to progressively lose their territorial strongholds along with their direct control of recruitment activities (McFarlane 2010). Specifically concerning the general aim of this study, the starting point is to unravel the narratives that are embedded in the visual and verbal meaning-making resources (Kress/van Leeuwen 2006) of *Inspire* and *Rumiyah*, the two English-language digital magazines

1 Coleman 2004. <http://www.lorencoleman.com/copycateffect/recommendations.htm>. Retrieved March 2017.

published respectively by AQAP and ISIS. At a more granular level, the study explores how the pre-existing beliefs of potential recruits are expertly steered into echo chambers[2] with the purpose of amplifying *jihadi* ideology and its extremist messages.[3] The *jihad* concept underpins this investigation as it is the principal instigator of the terrorist activity described herein; for this reason, it is to be understood not in its original spiritual meaning in Islam, but as the violent-based ideological distortion of the word operated at the hands of the militant groups who have aligned the military and offensive aspects of *jihad* with its more religious conceptualizations.

The groundwork necessary for the realization of this study, whose core issues are centered around the concept of ‘contagion through persuasion’, was prepared by conducting a close scrutiny of two mainstream news media tenets: guaranteeing the ‘telling of the truth’ (Rendall 2018),[4] and the conceptualization of knowledge as a way of getting at a ‘justified true belief” (Plato in Boghossian 2006). The word ‘belief’ in the context of this study is a construct that refers to a sustainably true proposition of some kind that comes across as a fact occurring in reality (Dorsch 2016). The editors of *Inspire* and *Rumiyah* know only too well how to harbor a belief, turn it into a necessary truth, and spread it as necessary knowledge in the radicalization process.

Closely linked to the intricate process of the dissemination of truth is the concept of persuasion as it feeds on one of the main qualities of truth: credibility. Leveraging discursive features that appear to be credible, persuasion attempts to get people to act, and persuaders seek,

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[2] <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/us/americans-attracted-to-isis-find-an-echo-chamber-on-social-media.html>. Retrieved May 3rd, 2017.

[3] By advocating the removal of *kafir* (those who disbelieve in Allah), *jihad* has two distinct typologies. The Greater *jihad* is a personal struggle to fulfill what is right. On account of human pride, selfishness, and sinfulness, believers must continually wrestle with themselves and accomplish what is right and good. The lesser *jihad* refers to the external, physical effort to defend Islam (including terrorism) when the Muslim community is under attack: <https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/.../51172_ch_1.pdf>. Retrieved January 24th, 2018.

[4] Rendall 2018. <https://fair.org/home/you-have-to-have-journalists-who-are-committed-to-getting-at-the-truth/>. Retrieved February 7th, 2018.

for whatever purpose, to bring about change[5]. Indeed, terrorist groups are expert users of the art of persuasion to trigger contagious behavior, transmissible across countries and across cultures (Mozaffari 2007; Jowett/O'Donnell 2012: 7; Samuel-Azran *et al*. 2015) for radicalization purposes.

1.1. (Self)-radicalization and discourse

Radicalization is a layered concept and a problematic one to define due to its many different processes and manifestations. This is especially true of online radicalization, or self-radicalization, which is defined by the significantly diverse experiences each individual has with the virtual world. McCauley and Moskalenko provide a useful way to approach a broad definition of the phenomenon which best fits the context of this study. They (2008: 416) state that:

> radicalization means change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the group.

Self-radicalization conducted in the so-called *jihadispheres* (Conway 2012; Ducol 2012) requires accessibility to materials that display a particular kind of discourse which focuses heavily on legitimization processes in order to normalize a certain view of the world and pass it on as the truth. Radicalization discourse contained in the visual and verbal resources of this study's terrorist digital magazines is replete with indoctrination processes and condemnation of Western countries (crusaders) and their non-Western allies (infidels) (Anti-defamation League, 2014).[6]

However, initiating a process of radicalization does not necessarily lead to successful adherence to group values and ideology. It is this study's view that young potential recruits are guided towards full understanding and participation by means of popularization of

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5 <http://pathosethoslogos.com/>. Retrieved January 2018.

6 <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/myths-and-facts-about-muslim-people-and-islam>. Retrieved January 5th, 2018.

contextual resources (Ciapuscio 2003; Calsamiglia/Van Dijk 2004; Gotti 2014; Bondi 2015). By leveraging strategies of relevance, frequency and accessibility (Chong/Druckman 2007) of resources, this process affords recruits the opportunity to familiarize with the rules, regulations, customs, and symbolism of this particular context thus ensuring full participation and commitment to the cause.

1.3 Research questions

The study is guided by an overarching research question which aims to investigate the extent to which media are responsible in provoking contagion processes. From this more general concern, the study focuses on how radicalization discourse is persuasively construed and disseminated in digital magazines through Western-like reporting style and design features.

Related to the role of narratives that are embedded in these features, the study also questions the extent to which popularization processes, involving the tactics of relevance, frequency and accessibility, transform these narratives into carriers of contagion. The importance of pursuing this research focus stems from the evidence that most radicalization activities are now being conducted away from terrorist territory (Kohlmann 2008; Venhaus 2010)[7], implying that the endurance of these groups and their *jihad* ideology (Kohlmann 2008) heavily relies on the recruitment potential of indirect contact.

2. Contagion and learnable behaviors

Justification of what is perceived as the truth motivates the young recruit to the point of adhering to the teachings of the terrorist narratives

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[7] Venhaus 2010. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR236Venhaus.pdf>. Retrieved January 3rd, 2018.

fabricated as the perennial cosmic struggle of the *jihad* against the infidels.

The persuasive element that triggers contagion is woven into the pages of terrorist digital magazines by following two tactical steps: firstly, violent terrorist information is embedded within other seemingly less extreme narratives that are designed to legitimize, justify and inspire engagement in violence; secondly, encouragement to take action, especially following lone-wolf attacks or suicide bombings, is strongly reinforced. If follows that the ultimate aim is to induce copycat behavior and possibly copycat events (Nacos 2009).

2.1 Inspirational contagion and media responsibility

The media have a responsibility towards what they present to their audiences; they can shape reality and mold attitudes towards certain issues. This general view on media accountability, however, has been strongly debated throughout the decades,[8] especially regarding the reporting of terrorism, which has attracted strong arguments and counter-arguments about the possible connections between media content and contagion. Some experts sustain that media outlets are carriers tout-court of contagion-inducing messages (Nacos 2009), and strongly uphold that susceptible individuals and groups imitate violence that they consider to be particularly heroic (Sageman 2009).[9] Conversely, there are other experts who acknowledge a certain amount of media responsibility, but also hold that there is insufficient evidence to support any direct relation between media and contagious behavior, also owing to the fact that mitigating factors are often adopted in reports to restrain or dampen possible effects of contagion (Coleman 2004).

There are two contagion mechanisms that shed light on the role of the media in the reporting of terrorism; the first is known as copycat contagion, and the second is inspirational contagion (Sedgwick 2007; Nacos 2009; Kathman 2011). The former is described as being a

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8 <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/terry-newell/a-citizens-view-the-respo_b_8855328.html>. Retrieved February 4th, 2018.

9 Sageman 2009. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/08/the-next-generation-of-terror/>. Retrieved February 4th, 2018.

cause and effect event provoked by mimicking a particular terrorist technique or a general terrorist strategy that has already been put into action. In fact, this type of contagion is thought to be mainly media inspired as it involves a high volume of news coverage about terrorist attacks (Picard 1991; Gunter 2008; Weimann/Winn 1994). The latter, originating from the establishment of Al-Qaeda and ISIS (Sedgwick 2007; Sageman 2008), is not only the most alarming as it has the power to manipulate thought processes, but it is also the most homegrown, or less confined to territorial spaces, thus more conducive to the formation of new groups and cells away from the direct control of the mother organization. This study focuses on this second and more dangerous type that relies on inspiration as agent provocateur of contagion.

3. Dissemination of narratives and recruitment drive

As mentioned in the introduction, for radicalization to occur, the 'truths' embedded in this kind of discourse must be accepted and interiorized by the recruits. This occurs by rendering the narratives accessible through a process of dissemination, which occurs through a process that is similar to the popularization of discourse-specific concepts to non-experts who have expressed a proclivity in becoming part of a community (Calsamiglia/Van Dijk, 2004). The process of popularization has often been described as a reformulation process "modeled to suit a new target audience" (Gotti 2014:19), so that the great popularizer becomes the liaison between what is hidden and complex, and what should be understood (Gotti 2014; Bondi 2015). Applying these important general popularization concepts to radicalization discourse construction implies re-contextualizing (Gotti 2014) the perceived needs of potential recruits in such a way that they become comprehensible versions of that religious ideology and symbolism that terrorist groups foreground for recruitment purposes. Thus, various strategies or semantic means that are used in other contexts for the transformation of specialized knowledge into 'everyday' or 'lay' knowledge – such as explanations, reformulations, paraphrasing and definitions – are communicated through visual and verbal resources in the composition of images, and in the storytelling functions of their narratives.

But how does this actually happen? How is this knowledge reformulated, re-contextualized and actualized? By drawing on Chong and Drukman's theory of frames in news reporting (2007) and Entman's work on the persuasive force of frames (1993), this study posits that the credibility of terrorist narratives is tied to three main variables, considered in this context as dissemination facilitators: frequency, or the use of recurrent images and recurrent structures; accessibility, or the facilitation of message comprehensibility; relevance, or the perceived closeness to recruits' motivational interests and goals (Chong/Drukman 2007). These three tactics construct a sort of apprenticeship model (Lave/Wenger 1991) which leads the recruit from peripheral (lay person) to full participation (expert). In this process, the reader becomes progressively engaged (Hyland 2005) by a language that is replete with sayings and pronouncements of the Prophet Muhammad, followed by dichotomies, word play, figures of speech, repetitions, analogies, puns and religious connotations which are put to play within captivating characterizations and narrative frameworks whose intricacies conceal contagion strategies (Rasulo 2018).

3.1 "Terrorists are made, they are not born"[10]

A full comprehension of how these magazines successfully disseminate their content must be backed by an understanding of the motivational drives or radicalization catalysts that induce potential recruits to embrace the *jihad* cause. The ones presented in this study fall into three broad categories:

1. Ideological: acquiring an ideal status compared to the current damaged status;

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[10] Moghaddam 2006. https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/> . Retrieved September 2018.

2. Personal: adhering to the common quest for significance (Kruglanski/Orehek 2011) as a means of self-actualization (Connell 1987; Connell/Messerschmidt 2005);
3. Social: conforming to duty and group obligations.

Radicalization discourse capitalizes on these causes by embedding them into *jihad* narratives which, according to Halverson *et al*. (2011: 14), are

> coherent systems of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of [their] literary and rhetorical form.

The narratives contained in this study's magazines listed in Table 1 have been developed by the author of this paper. They perform different functions involving both tragic and apocalyptic elements (Smith 2005) used to frame Muslim suffering, invasion and destruction of Muslim lands, resulting in the representation of the world as two opposing factions: jihadism against the West; the former fighting through the mighty mujahideen[11] to establish the worldwide Khilafah (Caliphate); the latter waging an unjust war on Islam, led by crusader nations supported Muslim apostates (tawaghit[12]).

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11 The plural form of *mujahid*; holy knights of Allah who are willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Allah (cf. <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-mujahideen-of-afghanistan195373>. Retrieved January 8th, 2018.

12 "People who rule by other than what Allah or His Messenger rule" (cf. <https://salafmanhaj.wordpress.com/tag/tawaghit/> Retrieved January 8th, 2018).

The crusader/infidel narrative: destruction, revenge, hate, ridicule, shame, emasculation. *Accessibility of concept*	Historical injustice due to the violence inflicted upon the forefathers in the name of Christianity. Unworthiness of those who either do not identify with Muslims or do not support or conform to ISIS's *jihad* ideology.
The superhero narrative: kill, avenge, claim, punish, instigate, threaten , vs. protect, rule by example, inspire, believe. *Frequency of character-building features*	Role of the warriors and perpetrators of extreme violence and sacrifice in the name of Allah: - protectors of the faith, women and children - curators of superhero qualities - good heartedness, compassion, empathy, righteousness - lone-wolf: unbending, avenger, martyr
The brotherhood narrative: belongingness, (media)indoctrination, training, victory, dominance, power. *Frequency of behaviors*	Familial patriarchal behavior in welcoming all brothers in *jihad*, in faith, in violence: - utopian representation of reality - self-celebratory actions
The quest for significance narrative: identity, status re-appropriation, responsibility, accountability. *Relevance of motivational drives*	Re-appropriation of a downgraded identity at the hands of the Western world: - satisfying the powerful self-actualization drive - bearers of change: - info-shrewdness that safeguards tradition while including modernity

Table 1. Narrative frames.

The narratives in Table 1 are compelling stories of the world according to the terrorist groups. Hence, the choice of describing them as frames which explicate functions that are similar to those found in news reporting as they are relatable and memorable in their explanations of ideas and conditions, exemplified in the manipulation of Islamic religious and historical sources. Each narrative listed in the left column is explained by using a set of verbs and nouns that best describe the narrative actions, emotions and behaviors, and further identified with the primary dissemination tactic that best expresses its function. The column on the right further expands on each narrative by revealing embedded meanings, values and beliefs.

4. The corpus

The corpus of this study ,described in Table 2, comprises a collection of 300 photographs selected from *Inspire* and *Rumiyah*. To facilitate the coding process as well as data readability, the images from both magazines were first grouped together as image sets according to the narrative frames and popularization tactics listed in Table 1, further referenced in footnotes in terms of magazine title, issue and page number.

Inspire: 16 issues Affiliation: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) - *Al-Malahem Foundation* - publication date: June 2010 to November 2016;	*Rumiyah:* 13 issues Affiliation: the Islamic State - *Al-Hayat Media Centre* - publication date: September 2016 to September 2017.

Table 2. The corpus: Issues of *Inspire* and *Rumiyah*.[13]

[13] <https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/mediagroups.html>. Retrieved December 12th, 2017.

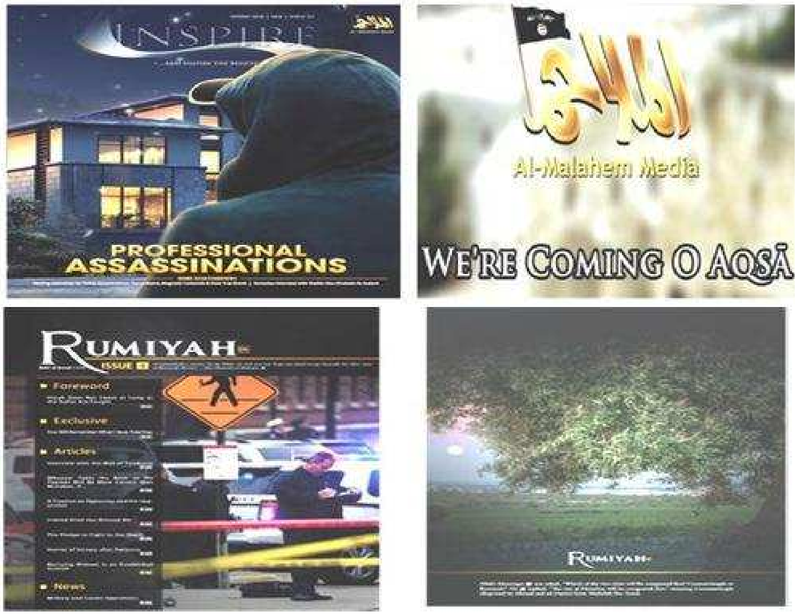

Figure 1. *Inspire* (Issue15) front and signature back cover; *Rumiyah* (Issue 4) front and signature back cover.

Inspire first came out in 2010 (Figure 1 - top). The magazine's language was English in order to reach out to the young Muslim men who were either born or living in the Western world. Created by members of AQAP, the purpose of the magazine is defined in the first few pages, where they quote a verse from the *Qur'an*: "Allah says: 'And inspire the believers to fight' (*al Anfal*: 65). It is from this verse that we derive the name of our new magazine" (*Inspire*, Issue 1, p. 2). With its Koran-style commentary and crude Al-Qaeda propaganda, as well as a slick strikingly-Western production (Atwan 2015), the magazine seems to be specifically concentrated on driving new recruits to action by emphasizing a do-it-yourself ethos which provides advice on bomb-making, encryption, manufacturing poisons or conducting surveillance, regularly published in each issue in the '*Open source Jihad*' section (Lemieux 2016).[14]

Rumiyah (Figure 1 - bottom) is the second official ISIS magazine published after the more famous *Dabiq*, both produced by the *al-Hayat Media Centre*. The name means 'Rome' in ancient Arabic, but they claim that this name is a reference to the entire "Christian" West, although the militant group has long been striving to conquer the Eternal City as it represents the continuation of the ancient civilization early Muslims fought against.[15] *Rumiyah*'s aim is to disseminate to a greater extent the group's ideology by making use of the same recruiting propaganda of the earlier magazines, while emphasizing the importance of increasing terrorist attacks, including the lone-wolf assaults recommended in *Inspire*.[16]

5. Methodological framework and procedure

As aforementioned, the study's methodological model relies heavily on Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis (Kress/ van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; van Leeuwen 2005; Kress 2010) which draws on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1985) with its ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Kress and van Leeuwen aligned Halliday's metafunctions to their own representational, interactional and compositional model and applied it to the analysis of visual images. The interest in Multimodality has progressively included the core issues of other multidisciplinary approaches such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk 2003; van Leeuwen 2008; Wodak/Meyer 2009; Fairclough 2010), making it

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14 <http://www.psychologytoday.comblog/dangerous-minds/2012016/inspire-magazine-and-the-rise-the-do-it-yourself-jihadist>. October 9th, 2017.

15 <https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine>. Retrieved September 9th, 2017.

16 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-propaganda-terror-group-lossessyria-iraq-a7228286.html>. Retrieved September 9th, 2017.

possible to move beyond the describable aspects of multimodal discourse in order to raise awareness of the relationship between verbal and visual texts (van Leeuwen 2008, 2013). The result of this multidisciplinary perspective is the approach of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) which identifies how images, photographs, diagrams and graphics work to create meaning through specific choices made by the author of the visual or verbal texts (Machin/Mayr 2012; van Leeuwen 2008, 2013;). To this regard, it is important to clarify that this study's critique is not extended to the discussion of specific political, religious or ideological interpretations that may be inferred from the findings; these issues alone deserve an extensive discussion in the complex area of terrorism.

The multidisciplinary analysis tool employed is a three-dimensional framework (Figure 2) which comprises the features of Kress and van Leeuwen's metafunctions and the verbal resources provided by features of informative and imaginative language.

VISUAL	**Representational**	**Interactional**	**Compositional**
	Identity and action: participants, actors, goals, carriers	**Vectors:** eyeline, gaze distance/ **Status:** frame shots	**Information value:** given/new ideal/real Salience Framing Modality
VERBAL	**Informative language:** represents conveying ideas in a rational fashion, a call to action based on convincing arguments: religious sayings, pronouncements, connotations, jihadist terms; **Imaginative language** represents emotional drivers of motivation; deviates rationality; word play figures of speech, puns, hate terms;		

Figure 2. Visual and Verbal Resources Framework (From Rayson *et al* 2002).

Concerning the visual analysis, the representational resources will allow us to identify what is happening in the pictures in terms of actions, participants and structural functions embedded in both narrative and conceptual processes; the interactional resources illustrate the triptych relationship of image-viewer-producer on the basis of vectors of contact and status positioning; the compositional metafunction represents the image as a whole whereby aspects of truth, credibility, influence and perspective are revealed. As for the analysis of the verbal resources, which are part and parcel of the structural elements of the image itself, the starting point is the repertoire of semiotic resources related to the metafunctions, supported by a more specific focus on the informative and imaginative functions of language as these resources afford the possibility to move towards a more specialized and critical interpretation of the data.

6. Findings and discussion

A full multimodal analysis on image sets such as the ones presented in this corpus requires space which is limited in this paper. Images do not structure and order the world in the same way as language does, which means that certain aspects of the image are made salient through semiotic choices such as gaze, light, and color as well as other contextual features of the situation. Therefore, by choosing the most significant and exemplary features of an image set, the underlying concept or idea is brought to light. In truth, analyzing every single feature, including the ones that do not add to that concept's understanding, would probably distract the reader from the intended focus.

6.1 Us vs. Them (Crusader/Infidel)

The image sets 1 and 2 in Figure 3 represent the intention of the terrorist groups to subjugate and shame the Crusaders of the West for what they perceive as an unjust domination of the rest of the world. The main element in set 1 is how the actors are pictured: they are characterized as helpless individuals captured in awkward situations; scratching their head or looking angry or puzzled, as in the case of Obama. The second element draws on the resource of imaginative language with word play and puns. President Netanyahu becomes 'Rottnyahu', Anthony Weiner's last name is ridiculed for its double meaning in English, while Obama is attributed the 'Humpty Dumpty' nursery rhyme, with a clear reference to a king who is about to fall and break. The masked instigation in this last image is strengthened by the high value in terms of 'credibility'. Indeed, it is placed in the lower half of the frame compared to the others in the set whose proposition occupies the 'ideal' or propositional top half.

Set 2 images portray the 'wicked' crusaders and the infidels (*kuffar*), the hypocrites who betrayed their own people. In the last picture, the two world leaders, whose handshake occurs 'outside' the frame, are labeled as '*sahwat*', which is a city in Syria, but used here to mean apostate.[17] ISIS often uses discursive terms for shaping the world according to their own view and with the presentation of history through a unique lens.

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17 Sahwa means awakening. It carries numerous meanings but currently it references the Sunni tribes of Anbar rising up against al-Qaeda in Iraq. It is also used as a derogatory term referring to Muslims (especially Sunni) who side against the jihadists. It can also refer to the major Salafi political block in Saudi Arabia that was heavily repressed by the Saudi government in the 1990s: <https://historyxisis.com/tag/sahwat/>. Retrieved September 10th, 2017.

Figure 3. Crusaders and Infidels.[18]

The third set of images emphasizes the anti-*murtad* (apostate) narrative (Figure 4). The conspiring gaze of the two political leaders, who are looking away from the viewer and from each other, indicates a sort of machination. These images, set against blurred backgrounds, focus on metonymic enactments using symbolic props. The broken cross indicates a long-gone struggle, while the flag and the gun in the hands of the lone-wolf warriors promise resolute action; the former, completely covered by the ISIS flag, is promising an Islamic State; the latter, whose silhouette is set against a fiery sky, is more of a utopian promise of regaining power at all costs: *We exterminate the*

[18] Set 1: *Inspire*, 10(9); 3(12); 7(14); 13(24). Set 2: *Rumiyah*, 3(8); 4(20); 4(6); 5(2).

Mushrikin,[19] *or Die Trying*. In reference to accessibility of message significance, image sets 1-3 in Figures 3 and 4 reiterate the crusader narrative whose annihilation can only be achieved at the hands of determined and convinced warriors.

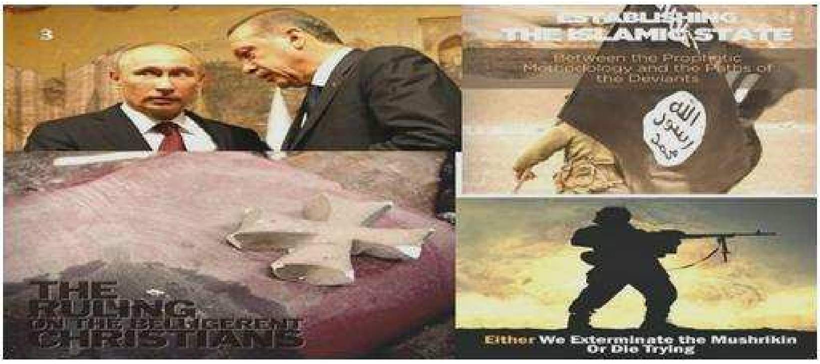

Figure 4. Destroying the crusaders and the infidels.[20]

Set 1 of Figure 5 is a selection of images in which references to America are in abundance. The fixation with the USA and the strong will to destroy its over incumbent culture is attributed, to a greater extent, to Al-Qaeda's ideology, and thus more frequently portrayed in *Inspire* magazine. However, these references can also be found in ISIS's *Rumiyah*. The images in set 1 contain the element of threat emphasized by the large red number reporting lone-wolf attacks as well as by the warning expressed by *Ideas do not need VISAS* image. The texts '*Did you know that…*', and '*I am proud to be a traitor to America'*, the latter written on a suitcase, highlight the '*us vs. them*' polarization.

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[19] *Mushrikin*. One who associates, invokes or worships beings other than or with Allah: <http://www.islamhelpline.net/node/534>. Retrieved September 10th, 2017.

[20] Set 3: *Rumiyah*: 6(19); 7(6); 9(1); 10(4). Set 4: *Rumiyah*: 9(11); 11(60).

Figure 5. *Us vs. Them* polarization.[21]

6.2 The Superhero Narrative

The superhero narrative is one of the most popular in both magazines. It is repeatedly proposed in *Inspire*, but continued in *Rumiyah*, to highlight the superiority of the warrior who is endowed with special powers and qualities. The images in Figures 6-8 are mostly close-up shots that reveal a compassionate, joyful yet fearless warrior-hero who is against *kufr*[22] acts.

In images set 1 (Figure 6), the close-up shot of the young child behind bars establishes a dialogue with the viewer although the gaze is turned away and focused on some other object or even a thought. This disposition indicates an association with the word *Palestine*, placed in the bottom panel where credible information is placed. On the whole, this is a symbolic conceptual structure which further explores the political nature of the image as a sort of instigation against the infidels,

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[21] Set 1: *Inspire*, 15(19); 15(22); 15(4); 2(45); 1(54). Set 3: *Rumiyah*: 6(19); 7(6); 9(1); 10(4). Set 4: *Rumiyah*: 9(11); 11(60).

[22] *Kufr* in Arabic means covering and concealing something, but in the context of *sharia* law terminology it means “not believing in Allah and His Messenger”. Cf. <http://www.islamicity.org/7691/understanding-kufr/>. Retrieved September 8th, 2017.

strengthened by the use of the polarization of the pronouns *your* and *our*. The participants in set 2 (Figure 6) illustrate the relevance of the role of the *jihadi* superhero who is fearless and ready to die; his only guide is Allah, hence, the cry of the Islamic principle "*La Ilaha Illallah*", which translates as '*there is no God but Allah'*[23]. In these pictures the use of vectors, which define the kind of proposition that is intended between the actors and the action, supports warrior identity; indeed, the actor in the '*stand and die'* image is set against the ISIS flag in the background whose blackness marks the realism of the proposition of sacrifice. The superheroes in the other images of the same set are portrayed using two similar vectors: a gun and the emblematic one-finger, both pointing to the sky, a gesture which means there is only one God who is Allah.[24] A different perspective is given in image of the praying soldier. The book in his hands emphasizes the more peaceful nature of faith which needs no weapons or intermediaries. By sitting sideways, the soldier deliberately becomes a mere object of contemplation, and faith becomes the actor.

23 Definition of *La Illah Illallah*. <http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/30463 Retrieved September 8th, 2017.

24 Crowcroft 2015. This salute is common in ISIS propaganda, both on the battlefield and in the final minutes before martyrdom. It refers to the first half of the *shahada*, the affirmation of Muslim faith that is recited before every prayer. The reference passage defines the Muslim faith in saying that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet: <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-what-story-behind-islamic-state-one-fingered-salute-1506249>. Retrieved September 8th, 2017.

Figure 6. Superhero qualities: compassion, righteousness, sacrifice. [25]

Set 3 images of Figure 7 are yet another representation of the superhero as the protector of women and children. As color intensity draws attention to a specific feature in the image, this is the first element of modality to consider in the text that mentions women. The color scheme presents natural and soft shades of pink in naturalistic backgrounds. The image of the Book is placed in the top panel or what is usually presented as 'new' information in terms of proposition, which in this image is the renewal of life through faith. The picture with the plant in the background highlights the caretaking role of women, which consists in being *slaves* in the house of Allah and *shepherds* that tend to their flock.

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25 Set 1: *Inspire*, 8(13); 9(back cover); 9(36). Set 2: *Rumiyah*, 1(1); 3(14); 7(12); 7(22).

The caretaking role is also extended to the warrior as declared in the *Widows* fuchsia-colored picture.

Children are very often the favorite subjects of many images in both digital magazines; they are seen as potential recruits who need training and indoctrination, as shown in the pictures with the gun and the one-finger salute. Once again, the repetition of the symbolic gestures begins at a very young age, as a sort of protection measure against the ‘other’ culture. This is reinforced in the toddler-with-a-gun image, which reiterates the conceptual structure that children must be taught to walk in the path of the *Tawhid*, Islam’s oneness concept of monotheism, and must do so as their duty towards their elders. They evidently do this willingly as their gaze in this image set demands attention from the viewer.

Figure 7. The Superhero qualities: protectors of women and children.[26]

Perhaps the most notably infamous narrative of the superhero is its lone-wolf representation (Figure 8). The frequent and repetitive portrayal of this actor is its mysterious and cryptic identity; the lone-wolf’s identity

[26] Set 3: *Rumiyah*, 12(35); 9(20); 9(18); 8(31); 4(32); 2(16).

must remain undisclosed so that lone attacks remain undetected. The gaze, when not hidden behind a hoodie, is never directed at the viewer, which generally indicates defiance, but it is turned away in sign of imminent threat. The actors in set 3 images (Figure 8) are dressed in Western-looking attire which allows them to blend in with the general public. They are *urban*, either businessmen or similar to hooded rap idols, and they are networked. Their environment is the large metropolis, as shown in the background of the *Jihad* picture. Backs turned, heads covered, eyes behind sunglasses: this is their communication strategy no one must know until they are ready to act.

Figure 8. The Superhero character: the lone wolf.[27]

6.3 The Brotherhood Narrative

Violence is an assertion of power and is historically situated, “informed by material constraints and incentives” (Schmidt/Schröder 2001: 3) or instrumental retribution. The performance of violence is not just an act of barbarity devoid of meaning, but rather a changing form of “meaningful interaction through which actors construct social reality

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27 Set 1: *Inspire*, 9(38); 10(25); 11(14); 15(22).

based on available cultural templates (Juris 2005: 415). Violence, as pictured in image set 1 of Figure 9, is something to boast and brag about, and it comes in numbers and places. The result of violence is victory, symbolized by the use of props: the gun, the flag and the SUV truck. Set 2 images are taken from those magazine pages that are consistently part of the contents, and which talk about training tactics, terrorist strategies and advice. Set 3 images represent the many pages dedicated to the *how-to* techniques of making weapons and derailing trains. These are matter-of-fact illustrations that are similar to those featured in any Western-style magazine pages about making tree houses or planting flowers. To facilitate understanding, the images contain a concept map, notes and instructions accompanied by figures. It is in these pages that visual and verbal resources are expertly combined to achieve the desired effect: imitate - initiate - act.

Figure 9. Brotherhood in victory numbers and tactics.[28]

[28] Set 1: *Rumiyah*, 1(27); 2(18); 3(45); 2(26); 4(15); 3(41). Set 2: *Rumiyah*, 2(12); 4(19); 4(8).

Figure 10. Brotherhood: how-to expectations. [29]

6.4 The Quest for Significance Narrative

Inspire and *Rumiyah* magazines take great pains in drawing attention to the young Muslim men's personal cause which consists in the search for a re-appropriation of a lost role, a diminished status or a displaced identity. This narrative, known as the *quest for significance* (Kruglanski/Orehek 2011), represents the ideal of self-actualization and is indeed the leitmotiv running across the pages of the propaganda magazines. This quest is pictured in two different ways: as the continuation of tradition, as shown in image sets 1 and 2 (Figure 11), and the struggle towards modernity, represented in images set 3 (Figure 12). Traditional ideology is rooted in Islam, represented by the ISIS flag (set 2) and in *jihad* (set 1), away from materialism (set 1); if you enter *jihad*, you make a *pledge to fight to the death*, and you abide by the

29 Set 3: *Inspire*, 1(18); 2(119; 5(1); 4(25).

Holy Book (set 1). The stories that are told by the *Shuhada*,[30] or the martyrs, are *stories of victory and patience* (set 1), and form the future *Leaders* (set 2) who travel on the path of the endless *hijrah*[31] (set 2), or the holy voyage, also a symbol of the passage from childhood to manhood. All of the images in this set are placed in scenarios that are either naturalistic, with props placed in the foreground (guns, flags, horses, SUVs), or more symbolic, such as the ones representing a voyage (*hijrah*) or the acquisition of religious knowledge (the books). The one image which stands out from the rest is very similar to a child's pastel-colored drawing of a fairytale-like world, where the sun rises behind what looks like the Mecca. The quotation cited in the middle of the page, which reinforces the promise of a renewed Islamic dominance, is taken from the *Surah* of the Koran by *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow) and states: "*O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer – Indeed, Allah is with the patient*".[32]

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30 *Shuhada:*<http://hadithanswers.com/the-different-types-of-shuhada-martyrs/>. Retrieved August 9th, 2017.

31 *Hijrah*, or *jihad* by emigration is the migration or journey of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Yathrib, later renamed by him to Medina, in the year622 CE: <http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/260019/hijrah-europe-robert-spencer>. Retrieved August 9th, 2017.

32 *Surah Al-Baqarah* (2). This is chapter 2 of the Noble Quran (153): <https://quran.com/2/153>. Retrieved August 9th, 2017.

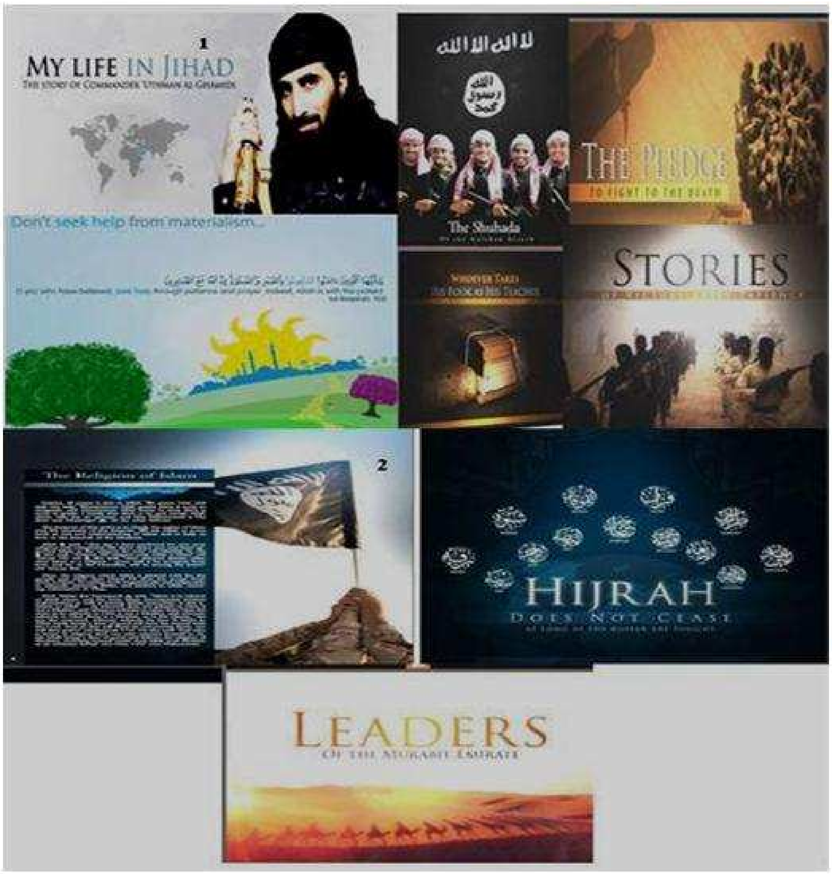

Figure 11. The quest for significance: tradition.[33]

The final image set 3 (Figure 12) represents the effort of the terrorists to convey the idea that they are a modern organization, networking with the rest of the world and contributing to the cause with the use of technology, which corresponds to the truth, as argued previously. *Open Source Jihad* is the most famous page in *Inspire*, with its many featured networked materials available online such as magazines, videos,

33 Set 1: *Inspire*, 2(11); 5(1); *Rumiyah*, 2(8); 4(24); 4(16); 4(28). Set 2: *Rumiyah*, 1(2); 4(2); 4(16).

podcasts and dedicated apps; the pages advertising the videos and mobile phone apps are *Rumiyah*'s digital favorites. Technological savvy is the protagonist in this image set: hooded lone-wolves are intent on planning attacks over breakfast as part of their daily routine; leaflets are distributed to families, videos are advertised like films or games; captivating cartoon-like apps motivate children towards religious indoctrination and education.

Figure 12. The quest for significance: modernity. [34]

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34 Set 3: *Rumiyah*, 13(42); 6(2); 5(24). *Inspire*, 1(31); 13(4); 14(9); 16(12).

6.5 Relevance, Frequency, Accessibility

In this section, the findings presented above are re-contextualized within the popularization concepts of accessibility, frequency and relevance.

By far the most useful concept and tactic is accessibility as it draws on both relevance and frequency. The narratives (Table 1) that are expertly packaged by the savvy editors of the digital magazines reinforce accessibility of religious and historical concepts so as to strengthen the resentment against 'the other', whether infidels, apostates or crusaders. This complex process involves the impactful reiteration of visual resources that trigger a consequential *image-meaning* association often connoted by verbal resources. In fact, each image resemiotizes some of the information through informative and imaginative language devices often containing religious sayings and jihadist proclamations that facilitate the cementation of radicalization discourse.

The quantitative notion of frequency in images is measured by the recurrence of the actions deployed in the visual resources. As images are 'read' in particular ways, depending on the semiotic choices which are made within the image and the context, frequency of these choices is indeed the thrust of the popularization process which sparks radicalization drives. In the representation of the *superhero narrative*, for example, the contrasting nature of the warrior is exhibited by the multiple and at times contrasting representation of warrior roles, consisting in protective and extreme violent behaviors.

The *brotherhood* and the *quest for significance narratives* are both conduits of relevance as they nurture processes of self-realization and self-worth. The ideals of brotherhood belongingness propose a renewed image of the individual, a new collocation within a community, and a challenging mission to accomplish. Similarly, the *quest for significance* narrative leverages the '*continuity of Islam*' argument in order to legitimize *jihad*. Significance or relevance in this context can only be found in the endless *hijrah* towards death and a life-after-death compensation.

7. Conclusion

In attempting to provide a general overview of this study's focus according to the research questions, it can be stated that the analysis and the ensuing discussion, to a good extent, draw attention to one of the study's initial expectations, that persuasion and contagion tactics as exploited in terrorist publications can spark tangible behavioral triggers that lead to committing terrorist attacks. In fact, the study has shown that in the hands of terrorist media outlets, these tactics can take on a multiplicity of slants, which is in itself an indication that it is nearly impossible to verify whether each attack or event is the actual result of copycat effect or based on inspirational contagion. Nevertheless, as conduits of contagion, these magazines and their appealing features are used to fabricate radicalization discourse which is then disseminated through strategies of frequency and repetitiveness to achieve accessibility of master narratives.

The study has also argued that the Islamist groups, who are more than readily aware of how to turn to their advantage the excessive and even obsessive coverage of terrorist attacks by mainstream media, mimic western-style modes of communication to disseminate their propaganda material which heavily contributes to the creation of a new generation of homegrown terrorist extremists. Indeed, not even the recent setbacks, such as the heavy loss of territory and the disaffection of many of their foreign fighters, has deterred the militant groups from exploiting the accessibility and practical use of online materials to continue their relentless training and recruitment activity in the hopes of regaining strength and credibility (Hoffman 2018). To this purpose, as argued in the findings section, the groups leverage the often underestimated personal *quest for significance* which is a lifetime endeavor for all individuals including the terrorist warriors, thus making the perils of virtual recruitment and self-radicalization a constant reality (Aly *et al.* 2016).

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WALTER GIORDANO

Communication Strategies and Crisis Management in 2015-2016 Volkswagen CEO Letters to Shareholders[1]

1. Introduction

In 2015, Volkswagen (VW), the German carmaker, had to admit that the emission tests had been cheated in the USA, as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered many VW vehicles sold in America equipped with a “defeat device" - or software - in diesel engines. This equipment was able to detect when the car was being tested, changing the outcome accordingly to deliver acceptable results under the regulation of emissions (Hotten 2015). The scandal reached Europe, too, and VW had to make up for the inconvenience recalling millions of cars worldwide to fix the device. The words spread on the markets too, causing a fall in sales, and a consequent quarterly loss reported in October 2015 (Cremer 2015), and a collapse in stock market price as well. Surprisingly, or maybe not, the following year, VW became the first world carmaker, in terms of sales (Topham, 2017). This unpredictable result was relevant in terms of communication as the company had initially to apologize and make up for the misconduct; but after the 2016 sales performance, Mathias Müller, VW’s CEO, was able

[1] This study contributes to the national research programme "Knowledge Dissemina-tion across media in English: continuity and change in discourse strategies, ideologies, and epistemologies", financed by the Italian Ministry for the University (nr.2015TJ8ZAS).

to address communicative strategies, supported by the positive response of the market.

This study explores the strategies used by the company to restore trust and manage the crisis. To this aim, the letters to shareholders, included in the 2015 and 2016 VW Annual Reports written by the Mathias Müller, were analyzed. The documents have been investigated both at a discursive level and at a cultural level. On the one hand, in fact, the linguistic devices, the communicative strategies and the tools adopted, have been identified. On the other hand, the analysis of the linguistic elements is intimately linked to the cultural background in which the events take place. Thus, the possible application of Hall's, Hofstede's and Lewis' theories, help explain the moves and the results of the strategies.

2. The corpus and the theoretical pillars

This study investigates the Letters to Shareholders, in the 2015 and 2016 Annul Reports of VW, written and signed by the CEO, Mathias Müller, with the purpose of demonstrating that the communication strategies employed by VW, in the person of its CEO, with the goal of restoring trust in the brand image of VW, are based upon two possible pillars; the image/trust repair models, and the cultural model theories.

The letters to Shareholders are included in a financial document called Annual Report. It is usually composed by a narrative part and a financial data section, where little text is contained. The narrative part includes: the Financial Summary, the Letter to the Shareholders and information on Company Operations. Annual Reports are considered as a hybrid genre (Yuthas et al. 2002; Garzone 2004; Zanola 2009; Bhatia 2010, 2011; Giordano et al. 2018) as the traditional financial information purposes coexist with the need to popularize the contents to a much wider readership, making them more appealing and readable to a "de-specialized" audience (Giordano et al. 2018; Ruiz-Garrido et al. 2005). In particular, many scholars have focused on the importance of the letters to Shareholders, as they are considered to be the first contact of the company with the readership, setting a first impression (Hyland, 1998; Crombie/Samuji, 1999; Smith/Taffler 2000; Garzone 2004; Breeze 2013; Palmer-Silveira/Ruiz Garrido, 2014). They convey a positive message: the language is simple and straight (Palmer-Silveira/Ruiz Garrido, 2014: 411). Garzone (2004: 322) defines the Letters as a "particularly interesting subgenre" as it has substantially adapted over time to the changing audience: from selected finance experts and investors to a number of non-specialised readers. She also identifies some functions of the Letters: mainly, they serve as a report on the company activities and performance and also have a promotional function, transmitting a positive image, explaining circumstances that led to the best possible policies undertaken, and conveying the idea of management reliability to investors. These letters may give an optimistic view about every aspect of the company life. This part of the Annual Reports, then, takes on a public relations function. Conversely, the more technical and adherent to reality description of the company performance, along with the general financial information, is contained in the auditors report, being their peculiar function (Breeze 2013: 87). The function of being an informational-promotional tool, useful to build trust, reputation and image, too, is commonly recognized in literature (Hyland, 1998; Garzone 2004; Rutherford 2005; Beattie et al. 2008; Breeze 2013; Dragsted 2014;). Rutherford (2005: 375) recognizes there are more positive words in the Letters to Shareholders than in other narrative sections of the Annual Reports, leaving room to the possible utilization of strategies like "impression management". Moreover, he noted that in more favorable and promising years, the company refers to itself neutrally, in the third person as a *company* (Rutherford 2005: 371). Conversely, addressing the discourse in the first person, adds a "personal touch", showing the human face of the company. Thus, the first person enhances the corporate image and makes the collective ethos stronger (Breeze 2013: 184). When the company has to deal with communicating negative issues, disasters, scandals, etc. corporate representatives try to justify themselves and safeguard their reputation. In doing so, the Letter to Shareholders plays an important role, because it represents a more "personal" and less aseptic way to communicate. The CEO is seen as the scapegoat and he/she tends to take on the responsibility of the wrongdoing (Breeze 2013: 109).

3. Method

The specific aim of this work is to analyze the communicative strategies utilized when the existence of the problem is admitted, and the intention is to repair, along with the cultural bias that affect the content and the way of communication. To do so, three models have been studied: Benoit's (1995) image restoration strategies, the trust-repair discourse by Fuoli/Paradis (2014), and the model of impression management, first conceptualized by Goffman (1959) and then further developed by several scholars, in particular Hoogeimstra (2000). These three models were specifically designed to illustrate the different communication strategies. The first identifies the recurring categories of communicative behaviors activated in presence of perceived wrongdoing. The second model points out the actual strategies undertaken when the wrongdoing is acknowledged. Finally, the third model presents in detail the strategies to convey a less negative/more positive perception of the wrongdoing. Even though these three models seem to overlap, my aim is giving an insight at multiple level of analysis, thus giving a higher grade of focus at each stage. In the next sections, the three models will be illustrated, so that it is made apparent that they allow for the analysis of the communicative strategy at different levels of generalization, and therefore, they are complementary rather than overlapping. The analysis will be then integrated, in the following paragraph, with the cultural theories, to demonstrate that cultural bias contributes remarkably to make the communicative strategy effective and complete.

3.1 Benoit's model of image restoration strategy

This is the first level of analysis, which deals with the fact of admitting the problem or not. Benoit (1995, 1997) draws a model with the typologies of image restoration, to explain what types of communication strategies are used to disclose companies' weaknesses and wrongdoings (Erickson et al. 2011: 211). Such typologies are outlined in Table 1, and they cover the possible misconducts, accidents or scandals that may happen in the business life of a company.

Categories	Strategy	Description/example
Denial	1. Simple denial	Refuting outright that the organization had any part in the event
	2. Shifting the blame	Asserting that someone else is responsible
Evasion of responsibility	3. Scapegoating	Blaming the event on the provocation of another
	4. Defeasibility	Not knowing what to do; lacking knowledge to act properly
	5. Accident	Claiming the event was "accidental"
	6. Good intentions	Claiming the company had good intentions
Reducing the offensive act	7. Image bolstering	Using puffery to build image
	8. Minimization	Stating the crisis is not bad
	9. Differentiation	Indicating that this crisis is different from more offensive crises
	10. Transcendence	Asserting good acts far outweigh the damage of this one crisis
	11. Reducing the credibility	Maintaining the accuser lacks credibility
	12. Compensation	Paying the victim; making restitution to set things to where they were before the event
Taking corrective action	13. Corrective action	Taking measures to prevent event from reoccurring
Mortification	14. Mortification	Admitting guilt and apologizing

Table 1. Benoit's (1995) image restoration strategies.

As we can see in the Table, Benoit identifies five categories that include 1) the dismissal of the misconduct (denial), 2) the facing of the crisis (evasion of responsibility, 3) reducing the offensive act, 4) the reparation (taking corrective acts) and 5) the admission of the wrongdoing (mortification). For the purpose of this work, the first category, will not be considered, because in denying the misconduct, there will not be any repair strategy.

3.2 Fuoli/Paradis model of trust-repair discourse

The following level of analysis, that is the actions and the strategies to be enforced once the wrongdoing is acknowledged, is the model to restore trust designed by Fuoli/Paradis (2014). In this model the actions are mainly meant to neutralize the negative and emphasize the positive. "The neutralize-the-negative strategy is realized through the linguistic resources for dialogic engagement […], the range of resources included in this category is broad, comprising epistemic modals (e.g. believe, think, be certain that), markers of evidentiality (e.g. see, hear. show that), expressions of attribution (e.g. say, claim, argue)" (Fuoli/Paradis 2014: 12). On the other hand,

> The emphasize-the-positive strategy is directly connected to the linguistic resources that speakers use to express evaluation [which]refers to the linguistic expression of positive or negative subjective assessments of people, objects or events. Although adjectives and adverbs are primarily associated with this language function, evaluation is not tied to any specific set of language forms, but it can be conveyed through an open-ended range of expression. (Fuoli/Paradis 2014: 14)

3.3 Impression management

The third level of analysis, that is the practical communication of the wrongdoing, refers to impression management strategies. Impression management is "how individuals present themselves to be perceived positively by others" (Hooghiemstra 2000: 60). The concept is applied in corporate reporting (Godfrey et al. 2003) in order to affect audience in their perception of a company's financial position, reputation on the market and reliability (Brennan/Merkl-Davies 2013: 110). The impression management strategies become evident in the corporate narratives where the message conveyed may correspond to an ostensible reality, amplifying positive aspects of the narration and at the same time, veiling less appealing aspects of the subject dealt with. In doing so, the readership perception might be altered (Brennan/Merkl-Davies 2013: 110). The concept of positive image refers to the reliability of the company in the industry it operates in, in the eyes of both the consumers and the investors. These impression management strategies may have good correspondence with the “neutralize-the-negative” and “emphasize-the-positive” actions in the Fuoli/Paradis model discussed above: as a matter of fact, they do not overlap, but the former is a further extent of the latter. Such strategies can play a pivotal role in restoring reputation, dented image in times of scandals, crisis or negative financial conjunctures. They are then used effectively to communicate not only the exceptional nature of the disaster, event or misconduct, but also that the corrective actions undertaken are effective and necessary (Brennan/Merkl-Davies, 2013: 112).

4. Analysis

4.1. Restore image models

One of the aims of corporate communication via Annual Reports, and particularly via CEO’s letters is maintaining a positive image of the company. In the event of damaged reputation, the company representatives have to tackle the problem of restoring the positive image in the perception of the stakeholders. In the VW scandal, the main problem for Müller was to apologize for the misconduct. Apologizing, the “speaker’s goal is to remedy an offense – and restore relational rights and privileges – by accepting responsibility” (Bisel/Messesmith 2012: 427).

The VW CEO Letter in the 2015 Annual Report, then, was focused on the strategy to admit, first, and apologize, afterwards, for the wrongdoing.

(1) ***we*** *find* ourselves in the midst of what is probably the greatest challenge in the history of our Company (2015)

(2) ***we*** *must* above all learn from past mistakes and draw the right consequences so that something like this can never happen at VW again (2015)

In the 2015 Letter, Müller speaks both in the first person singular and the first person plural. When he speaks in the first person singular, his aim is taking on personally the responsibility of the scandal.

(3) although *I* would have preferred to be addressing you in more auspicious circumstances (2015)

(4) *I* have great respect for the achievements and dedication of our employees. We are – *I* am – very grateful for that (2015)

(5) this year, *I* am asking above all for your continued loyalty to VW in spite of the present pressures (2015)

Conversely, he speaks in the first plural to address the commitment of the company to make up for the inconvenience, to work hard to regain trust, and to show a collective, united and sound stance of the company (my italics here and there)

(6) *Our Group* has qualities that did not vanish overnight, qualities on which **we** can also build for the future: strong brands and great vehicles (2015)

(7) *We are all aware that* the Volkswagen Group still has a long way to go(2016)

(8) *We also know* we asked a lot of you, our shareholders (2016)

In the 2015 Letter, Müller calls the problem "crisis". In six out of eight paragraphs of the Letter, the focus is on the "crisis", and on the efforts the company is doing\is going to do to solve the crisis. The words communicate undercover apologies. It is possible to fit Müller's strategy to the 12th (Compensation), 13th (Corrective action) and 14th (Mortification) typologies in the Benoit's model:

(9) *Everyone at Volkswagen is working most diligently and with great commitment to rebuild the high esteem this Group rightly enjoyed for so long* (2015) (Compensation)

(10) *We are doing everything we can to overcome this crisis: with effective technical solutions for our customers and trustful cooperation with all the responsible authorities in order to completely and transparently clarify what happened* (2015) (Corrective action)

(11) *On behalf of the Volkswagen Group I would like to apologize to you, our shareholders, that the trust you placed in Volkswagen has been broken.* (2015) (Mortification)

The speaker has then admitted the wrongdoing. The next level of investigation makes it possible to apply the Fuoli/Paradis model to the Letters, as they contain plenty of the markers that the two scholars identify as relevant in the model (see 3.2), as well as the strategies they outline ("neutralize-the-negative" and "emphasize-the-positive"). Instances of the use of markers can be observed below:

(12) *I realize* that this course sometimes puts a great strain on patience – both yours and ours (2015) (markers)

(13) *For me* it is important that *you know* there is much more to Volkswagen than this crisis (2015) (markers)

(14) From the outset, *I have believed* it is important we use this crisis as an opportunity (2015) (markers)

Examples of the other strategy are the following:

(15) But these figures also *contain another important message*: our operating business continues to be in excellent shape, our portfolio of twelve strong brands, unique in our industry (2015) (emphasize-the-positive)

(16) A Group that boldly seizes the future, attains sustainable growth *and opens up long-term perspectives* (2015) (emphasize-the-positive)

(17) I *am firmly convinced that*, with time, we will be able to say: no matter *how grave the crisis was, it also opened doors for us* (2015) (neutralize-the-negative)

The scenario surprisingly changed in 2016, as VW became the first automaker in the world, selling some 10.3m vehicles. An unexpected result after the diesel scandal in 2015. This gave Müller the opportunity to manage the communication wisely in his favor. In the 2016 Letter there is little reference to the "crisis" (2 paragraphs):

(18) Life sometimes has its ironic side. For years, Volkswagen seemed to be pursuing one overriding goal: to become the world's biggest carmaker. Then the diesel scandal broke in September 2015, marking a profound turning point.

And now – in spring 2017, when we are still coping with the consequences of the *crisis* and have long since defined new priorities for the future – the headlines read: "Volkswagen becomes the world's best-selling automaker" (2016) (neutralize-the-negative)

(19) At €7.1 billion, the operating profit, which had slipped into the red in the previous year due to the diesel *crisis*, was back in strongly positive territory (2016) (emphasize-the-positive)

In 2016, the intention of apologizing is still detectable (behind the thanks Müller gives in two different paragraphs). This message allows to file such a Letter as a document written to recognize the wrongdoing, even celebrating positive results that the market awarded them with.

(20) I would like to thank all colleagues in the Group for their personal commitment and hard work during last year (2016)

(21) On behalf of our employees and in my own name I would like to thank you for your loyalty and support during a difficult time for your company (2016)

Not surprisingly, these are the only two sentences in the 2016 Letter spoken in the first person singular. As a matter of fact, the communicative strategy of pronouns is in line with 2015: the CEO speaks in the first person singular any time he has to apologize or take responsibility. When it comes to share the merit, the positive aspects, the history and the image of the company, he speaks in the first person plural, involving staff, customers, investors, etc.

At a deeper level of analysis, it is possible to detect Müller's attempt to impress readership with the identification of the crisis as an opportunity. It leaves room to the utilization of some impression management techniques; the strategic use of promotional discourse aimed at offsetting the effects of the crisis, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

(22) Volkswagen Group has the firm resolve and the *strength* to master the difficult situation we find ourselves in with *its own resources*. From the outset, I have believed it is important we use this crisis as an opportunity: an opportunity to *realign the Group* in an automotive world that is facing *epoch-making change* (2015)

(23) The diesel issue has clearly overshadowed much in recent weeks. For me it is important that you know there is much more to Volkswagen than this crisis. Our Group has *qualities that did not vanish overnight*, qualities on which we can also *build for the future*: *strong brands and great vehicles, outstanding technological expertise and innovative strength, our global presence, millions of loyal customers* all over the world, and a *skilled team that is totally committed* to these customers. I have great respect for the *achievements and dedication of our employee* (2015)

In the 2016 Letter the background for using impression management techniques was even more favorable. The company came out of the scandal with excellent sales figures, becoming the first carmaker in the world. In the 2016 Letter, Müller did not miss the opportunity to consolidate the result and take advantage from it. It seems he conveyed the message that they really turned the *crisis* into an *opportunity* (excerpt 22).

The discourse is highly connoted by impression management:

a) There are many adjectives whose aim is enhancing the representation of the reality. This feature is in common with the Fuoli/Paradis model, notably in the strategy of *Emphasize-the-positive*:

(24) Volkswagen seemed to be pursuing one *overriding* goal (2016)

(25) we delivered a *record-breaking* 10.3 million vehicles last year (2016)

(26) *very successful* year for Volkswagen (2016)

(27) back in *strongly positive* territory (2016)

(28) we are making Volkswagen *faster, more focused and efficient* (2016)

b) Müller sets ambitious objectives, addressing and sharing them with staff, consumers and investors. Discourse is mainly on the acquisition of new technology and investment in the human resources (Painter/Martins 2017). The aim seems to be to make all of them feel a part of this innovation, of this step into the future, forgetting what happened in the previous year, and trying to regain business confidence and consumer trust:

(29) We are leading this great company whose brands and products have always stood for innovative strength, security, enduring value and emotional design into tomorrow's world. There is no question that we have set ourselves a challenging goal. But it is most definitely worth it (2016)

(30) Our future program, TOGETHER – Strategy 2025, maps out this change and underpins it with a *convincing* plan. We are working to transform Volkswagen into a *globally leading provider of sustainable mobility*. To that end, *we have forged new partnerships* and entered into new participations in recent months. With MOIA, we have established our own company for new mobility solutions. We *have set clear signs* regarding our ambitious plans for e-mobility. By decentralizing responsibility within the Group we are making *Volkswagen faster, more focused and efficient.* We are doing more in terms *of integrity and sustainability*, too, because a company's long-term success depends on *its authenticity in assuming responsibility* for the environment and society (2016)

The impression management technique reveals in the voluntary shift of the focus from the crisis to the new opportunities. The word crisis is found only twice, in two different paragraphs, and the reference to the difficulties is made only incidentally in excerpt (31). Moreover, the architecture of the Letter is clearly designed to make little reference to past negative events and to enlighten the future, convincing the readership (all the possible stakeholders) to join the company in the "journey". The strategy of speaking collectively, as a member of a group, is effective as Müller considers investors and customers as a part of the group and part of the success achieved.

(31) We also know we asked a lot of you, our shareholders, recently. On behalf of our employees and in my own name I would like to thank you for your loyalty and support during a difficult time for *your* company (2016)

Müller launches the metaphor of the "journey", present in the 2015 Letter as well, to head into the future, to light the way to new opportunities in the journey, which is now safe and wise.

(32) The Volkswagen Group is *on the move*. We *are leading this great company* whose brands and products have always stood for innovative strength, security, enduring value and emotional design into tomorrow's world. There is no question that we have set ourselves a challenging goal. But it is most definitely worth it. And we very much hope *you will remain at our side on this journey* (2016)

4.2 Cultural models theories

Culture is the fundamental basis of communication. It is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede 2010: 5). As a consequence, culture has a deep impact on mind, changing the way people see things, act and speak in a given context.

The strategies investigated so far, beyond the communicative architecture built to get the result, seem to show some cultural bias. The theoretical background to be considered for the purpose of this work may refer to the studies of Hall (1976), Hofstede (2010) and Lewis (1996). They all have deeply investigated the relationships existing among culture, language and behavior.

The first model that can be applied to the study of the Letters, is Hall's model (1976). On the basis of the analysis of the modalities of speaking among different nationalities, Hall (1976: 91) divides cultures in two groups:

- *Low context cultures*, characterized by verbal and explicit communication, with an emphasis on facts, direct information, and coherence. All the conversation goes straight to the point;
- *High context cultures*, characterized by non-verbal and implicit communication. The emphasis is on context, feelings, or the way the others understand what is said according to context. The conversation hardly/rarely goes straight to the point.

German culture is an example of a low context one (Djursaa 1994: 139; Hall 1990: 6; Lewis 1996: 107). Müller seems to confirm the parameters of such a model, as in his communication, he is direct, explicit, and concise, using the first person singular and getting straight to the point: the crisis, the consequences and future plans.

The second model that can be applied to my corpus is the *Six Dimensions of National Cultures* model theorized by Hofstede (2010). In his pioneering work the classification of cultures is pursuant to six dimensions, that are:

1. *Power distance index*: This index shows "the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people" (2010: 29-31). For

that reason, cultures can have large power distance, that means there is no equality between members (strong hierarchical order), and small power distance, in which people strive to have equality in the name of democracy.

2. *Individualism vs. collectivism*: People of individualist cultures are self-oriented, independent and goal-oriented. They take care of themselves and are judged for their qualities; collectivist cultures, on the contrary, rely on the group and they are oriented to the result of the collectivity (2010: 53-86).
3. *Masculinity vs. femininity*: Masculine cultures are competitive, heroic, and successful; conversely, feminine cultures, tend to be cooperative and modest (2010: 89-133).
4. *Uncertainty avoidance index*: This dimension refers to the relationship of cultures with the future. Cultures with a high index have rigid codes and behavior, meant to control future actions and events; on the contrary, a lower index relates to those cultures which have a more realistic and fatalistic approach to the future (2010: 135-184).
5. *Long term orientation vs. short term normative orientation*: If this index is low, societies view social changes with mistrust; instead, a higher index is instead typical of more pragmatic societies, where the efforts made in the present to prepare for the future are encouraged (2010: 187-194).
6. *Indulgence vs. restraint*: Indulgence societies have less regulation; restraint societies have strict social rules regulating their lives (2010: 235-259).

From the investigation of the Letters, these dimensions can be detected in some traits: the choice of taking on the responsibility for the wrongdoing, can be seen as an expression of leadership and hierarchy, strong individualism and heroic masculinity (dimensions 1, 2, 3). Furthermore, the choice of naming the problem 'crisis' and the focus on the future, considering the crisis as an opportunity (excerpt 22), seem to fit with the dimensions concerning uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation (dimensions 4, 5). The commitment to re-establish the dented image, the trust among shareholders, and in general, to the ethical and the market rules, recalls the notion of restraint in (in dimension 6). The correspondence is not surprising, as Mathias Müller is German, and German culture suits most of the first parameters for each pair (i.e. high-power distance, individualism, masculinity, high uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation) in Hofstede's dimensions (Endrass 2014: 35-38).

The third and last model is the one proposed by Lewis (1996) who, based on behavior, divides cultures into three groups (Lewis 1996: 33-34):

- linear-active, that are "cool, factual, decisive planners cultures, focused on rational thought";
- multi-active, that are "warm, emotional, loquacious and impulsive";
- reactive, that are "courteous, amiable, accommodating, compromiser and good listener".

Germany represents the extreme pole of the linear-active cultures (Lewis 1996:32-33). The 2015 and the 2016 Letters can be accredited in this theory, as the focus on the future, the VW CEO's plans and the absolute rationality by which he faces the crisis seem to fit in such a partition. Lewis' cultural markers do appear especially in the 2016 Letter, because Müller underlines the way himself, being the leader of the organization, was able to regain trust from the stakeholders, becoming the first carmaker in 2016. The implication is that VW is back again because of *their* (he claims the hard work of all the staff and patience of stakeholders) being rational, pragmatic, resolute, capable to solve problems successfully. That explains why the focus is more on the first person pronoun *we* instead of *I*, as if the CEO (all alone) was responsible for the guilty act and the 'group' lexicalized through the inclusive first person plural were those working hard to make up.

5. Other implications in the car industry

The crisis affected sales at VW, but also in the whole German car making industry. The marketing strategy changed both at VW and at some German competitors, indeed. Once the scandal burst off, the main

VW competitors as well lost ground on the markets: BMW lost 5% and Daimler 5 % (Ruddick 2015).

It can be reasonably inferred that the scandal affected not only the brand image of the company, but also the image of the German paradigm of reliability, strictness and control; in other words, the so-called 'country of origin' effect (COE), that is:

> the recognition, by consumers, of a country or geographical area to which the product belongs. Together with such recognition, a whole series of attributes connected to that geographical area and their population are consequently connected to the brand; this process creates associations in consumers. (Di Ferrante et al. 2016)

Thus, it was the whole reputation of the German leading quality in the car industry to be at stake: its perception, might be affected by this scandal (Chambers 2015). Consequently, one of the first moves by VW Marketing Department management, was to change the logo. The payoff DAS AUTO disappeared soon after. The new logo, then, reported no payoff, just the company name: VOLKSWAGEN. Other carmakers, maybe worried about a possible domino effect on the markets, decided to undertake other moves that could possibly safeguard their own brand image, and changed their slogans, campaigns and strategic communication.[2]

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[2] One of them, OPEL, changed the message in its commercials as it seemed they didn't want to be confused with the dented image of German cars in those months. In the Opel Karl commercial, broadcasted in Italy before the scandal, the message was:" *Opel Karl, il meglio della ingegneria tedesca* (translated: Opel Karl, the best of GERMAN engineering)" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cowllSpKkOQ retrieved on February 20th 2018); in the post-scandal commercial, the sentence was changed with "*Opel Karl, il meglio della ingegneria OPEL* (translated: Opel Karl, the best of OPEL engineering)" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UASnm4PYiBE retrieved on February 20th 2018). Another sentence, present in the OPEL pre-scandal commercial, referred to the value for money price of the car, was "*I tedeschi non scherzano mai* (translated: Germans never play games)". The sentence was replaced in the post-scandal commercial with the sentence "*Non è possible, ma è vero*" (translated: It is not possible, but it is true). Even though it cannot be proved that it is an established strategy (replacing the adjective "German" with a more general one), the coincidence with the scandal is quite striking and it is worth a note.

6. Final remarks

This study has tried to demonstrate that the architecture of the communication released after the 2015 VW diesel scandal – namely, the Letters to Shareholders addressed by the VW CEO Mathias Müller, included in the 2015 and 2016 VW Annual Reports – can be framed into models and strategies aimed at image restoration after a crisis, a negative event or a disaster, with the consideration of apparent cultural bias.

The commonly recognized promotional nature of the narrative parts in the Annual Reports helped Müller design his strategy to regain trust, credibility and positive image after the scandal. The methods proposed in this study seem to clarify, explain and help interpret Müller's communication.

On the one hand, the image/trust restoration models constituted a fundamental lens for the analysis of the communicative strategies chosen to address the mistakes and rebuild trust. The first model, Benoit's typology of image restoration after a crisis, was used to identify and examine the stance chosen by Müller. The second model, Fuoli/Paradis's (2014), was applied to identify the communicative strategy conveyed by the Letters, as it indicates the possible communicative actions to be taken: *neutralize-the-negative* and *emphasize-the-positive*. At a deeper level of investigation, the third model, namely the *impression management strategy*, helps explain how the CEO decided to mainly enhance the positive aspects, in the steam of the positive business results in 2016, in order to "turn the crisis into an opportunity" (excerpt 22).

On the other hand, the analysis is completed by the synergic and complementary cultural theories of Hall (1976), Lewis (1996) and Hofstede (2010). The cultural markers help understand the choice of the strategy architecture. The cultural traits drive Müller's words and moves, through a "journey" that surprisingly (or not) led VW out of the crisis, becoming in 2016 the first carmaker in the world.

The results can be summarized as follows:

- The strategy to admit, apologize and express future commitment in the 2015 Letter turns out to be successful, as it prepares the ground for the unexpected positive business result in 2016. The deeper the level of investigation, through the models of image/trust repair, the clearer the intention to enhance the representation of reality and impress the reader;
- The communicative strategy adopted is culturally biased, as the national cultural markers affect the communicative way, the content and the result obtained;
- The use of two complementary and synergic sets of models and theories is effective in the investigation of the Letters: it can be considered as a proposal of a possible analytical methodology, since limiting the analysis to the trust-repair models only would not allow to explain and highlight the communicative actions that are "national culture driven".

These results are not only relevant to understanding the mechanisms of repair strategies in crisis management contexts, but they may also be relevant to actually build communication campaigns aimed at affecting customers' attitudes toward brands and companies. Finally, the application of the three models complemented with the cultural approach to actual case studies, might be a powerful teaching tool in any Business English or English for Specific Purposes class, as they would empower students abilities to handle crisis-related communication issues as well as their awareness of the multitude of variables that contribute to (re)establish the reputation of a company.

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DAVIDE SIMONE GIANNONI

Reaching Out to Students at Home and Abroad: Multilingual Practices at UCAS

1. Introduction

As the world's leading economies become increasingly reliant upon each other, driven by the converging forces of deregulation and globalisation, a similar process is changing the face of higher education institutions across the planet. Normally referred to as *internationalisation*, it seeks to attract increasing numbers of overseas students and academic staff through initiatives such as "credit and degree mobility for students, academic exchange and the search for global talent, curriculum development and learning outcomes, franchise operations and branch campuses" (de Wit/Hunter 2015: 45).

Internationalisation has become a strategic factor in academic decision-making because it offers greater visibility and recognition, generates much-needed income to fund research and facilities, and increases cultural diversity among students and staff. The process also implies new challenges for academic administrators, who need to ensure equal recruitment practices and cohesion within their organisation. For example, there may be a mismatch between institutional claims and actual practices; according to Robson (2011: 625), "The rhetoric in most universities suggests a desire for transformative internationalization, though actual institutional engagement varies across the continuum".

Language policies are a key element of how new stakeholders are addressed and engaged, bearing in mind – as argued by Lomer (2014, 2018) – that institutional discourse can objectify and commodify international students, rather than present them as an active part of the academic community. At the same time, internationalisation challenges well-established cultural practices within host institutions, drawing attention to "extremely important issues about who shapes the culture of learning and intellectual HE spaces and who determines the norms of discourse within academic communities" (Turner/Robson 2008: 11).

One of the countries at the forefront of these developments is the UK, whose share of the global mobile student market is second only to the US, with the former attracting 11% and the latter 18% of the total in 2012 (UUK 2014). While the proportion of non-UK students – defined by country of domicile – studying in British universities has remained relatively stable over the last decade or so, rising from 14.2% in 2006 to 19.2% in 2015 (UUK 2017: 16), their geographical distribution has changed significantly.

The strongest relative growth (see UUK 2017) has come from outside the EU, namely the Middle East (+102%), China (+99%), other European countries (+56%) and South America (+42%). India, on the other hand, bucked the trend with a 23% contraction over the period considered. The picture that emerges from these figures is one of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity among the international student population.

Internationalisation also means that British universities are more likely to recruit staff from other parts of the world, with overseas academics accounting for around 30% of full-time staff in 2015 (Minocha *et al.* 2018). Their experience is described in a number of qualitative studies focusing on the cultural differences that complicate workplace communication and socialisation. University administrators are urged to acknowledge that the "pedagogical approaches and cultural values acquired by academics outside of the UK HE [higher education] context may not fully align with British values, both in academia and outside, and, indeed, with the expectations of both international and British students" (Minocha *et al.* 2018: 13).

A recent study warns that "in many British higher institutions the general attitude towards skilled migration has been one of assimilation by which international staff are expected to assimilate to the values and norms of the host country" (Gimenez/Morgan 2017: 88). What is needed instead is an environment where local and international staff gradually acquire skills that allow them to collaborate more effectively for the benefit of students and scholarship.

Language is also part of the problem for academics who come to the UK. Śliwa/Johansson complain that "little is known about the use of English by native speakers of other languages in workplaces based in English-speaking countries and where the majority of the employees are native English speakers" (2015: 78). The respondents interviewed by Jiang *et al.* (2010: 163) "felt that the English language could be an obstacle that possibly hindered their academic acculturation, including daily communication with colleagues and students, and the delivery of teaching to home or international students". Similarly, those interviewed by Gimenez/Morgan (2017: 83) suggest that "proficiency in English, or the lack of it, can act as a barrier to the allocation of resources and positions, even more strongly than the appropriate professional skills and qualifications".

A thematic survey of the literature on internationalisation in higher education (Yemini/Sagie 2016) shows a sharp rise in the number of studies over the last decade, with 'English as a lingua franca' topping the list of most frequent themes in 2007-2013, followed by 'Multicultural issues' and 'Student mobility'.

1.1. Diversity and multilingualism

There is a growing body of research that deals with the languages of higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world, especially in settings where English is the chosen medium of instruction (see, among others, Doiz *et al.* 2012a; Bolton/Botha 2015; Lau/Lin 2017). Specific policies regulate "institutional languages in use/language diversity (formally adopted and informal); languages employed in teaching programmes; language teaching volume and organization; English language programming/'local-language-as-a-foreign-language' provision" (Turner/Robson 2008: 13).

Running courses in EAL (English as an Additional Language) with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds offers clear advantages in terms of cognitive engagement and graduate career prospects, although it can be a hurdle for students, lecturers and administrators alike. At the same time, there is a fair amount of educational research on the international student experience in British universities (see Miller 2014).

What seems to be lacking is information on the use of languages other than English in Inner Circle HEIs, where English is not only a medium of instruction but also the host country's L1. A recent investigation of UK university websites (Giannoni 2015) suggests that only a third include any foreign language content – with Chinese offered as the main choice. The present study extends such research to the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) portal, used by the vast majority of undergraduates applying for a university place in the UK. The aim is to assess the presence/range of foreign language (FL) content and how it has varied in time.

The choice is not merely between a selection of languages (based on their utility and/or access to proficient drafters) but also between different degrees of *localisation*, i.e. of "linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and the locale of a foreign market" (Schäler 2010: 209). Nantel and Glaser's comparison of how users perceive websites in the original-language version as opposed to a translation (English/French and vice versa), indicates that "the perceived usability of multilingual websites depends not only on the quality of the translation but to a clearly measurable extent on whether the linguistic background of the Web designers matches that of the site users or not" (2008: 120-121). The user experience tends to be more engaging and enjoyable when a website is designed in a way that demonstrates compliance with "culturally determined metaphors, attitudes and preferences" (2008: 114). The localisation of content is particularly relevant in the case of promotional or argumentative texts, whose evaluation rests on non-objective criteria such a trust, familiarity and reliability.

Multilingual websites have become a standard feature in all domains of online communication. Den Os/Blavette (2001: 16) list five basic options: "1. Completely independent sites for each locale; 2. Parallel structure to the sites, but the information present on each page is completely different; 3. Parallel structure to the sites, but the information present on each page is slightly different; 4. Parallel sites, but where some pages have not been localised (e.g. due to cost); 5. Completely parallel sites with identical structure and information".

Diachronic developments in multilingual websites are a promising area of research, as they can shed light on alternative approaches implemented by the same organisation at different stages of its operations. The availability of digital repositories of online content is a major resource for retrospective investigations that may reach back to the mid-1990s. A recent example is Berezkina's (2018b) analysis of alternative language content in three Norwegian state websites between 1997 and 2014, complemented by interviews with institutional members of staff. The trend seems to favour English as the default lingua franca for international readers, while other foreign languages peaked around 2010 and have since decreased in number because, as highlighted in the paper's title, "language is a costly and complicating factor" (Berezkina 2018b: 55).

1.2. UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, whose origin dates from the early 1960s, is a non-profit organisation that manages the application process for admission to UK tertiary education. Its website (www.ucas.com) explains that in 2014 it handled applications from 700,000 students seeking places at 380 different universities and colleges, with a substantial proportion of applicants from the EU and other parts of the world.

A UCAS progress report entitled *International Admissions Review: Findings and Recommendations* notes that "during the last decade, the number of international and EU undergraduate students coming to the UK for HE has increased substantially, and numbers applying through UCAS have risen by 57%" (Westlake 2014: 6). We are also informed that in 2013 there were around 45,000 EU and 70,000 non-EU applications.

Although a breakdown of applicants by domicile and/or language is not apparently available, it is significant that EU and international students feature prominently in the organisation's website, with specific information on, and links to third-party UCAS-registered centres, i.e. "schools, colleges, education advisers and agents who help students into UK higher education" (UCAS 2015: 6).

It should finally be added that virtually all British universities reach out to prospective applicants through an international network of local representatives, recruitment officers, advisors and education fairs.

These country-specific contacts also provide their services in the candidates' home languages.

2. Material and methods

To assess the use of FLs, the UCAS portal's homepage and all of its sections (including videos) were inspected – as available online in early May 2018 – for the presence of content in languages other than English, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish. All of the 51 'tiles' linking the homepage to the sections were worded in English, with the exception of one in Welsh ("Astudio yn y Gymraeg" = Studying in Welsh). Special attention was given to the 'International and EU students' section and, though not directly relevant to the present investigation, the social media links at the bottom of the homepage were followed up to identify their language(s).

The only type of FL content found in the website was a series of international guides, whose list could be accessed by navigating four levels into the website: Homepage > International and EU students > UCAS Undergraduate: International and EU students > International guides. A link to the 'International guides' page also appeared in the Google+ page of UCAS. Finally, there was a link to an automatic translation resource ("Listen/translate with BrowseAloud") at the bottom of the homepage.

To gain further insights into UCAS's multilingual policy over the years, different versions of its website were explored using WaybackMachine (www.archive.org/web), which is a valuable source of information for retrospective investigations (cf. Hine 2015; Berezkina 2018b). Its database was found to contain Web captures of the UCAS domain covering a 20-year period, from December 1998 to June 2018.

Though not fully reliable, due to incomplete captures and inconsistencies in the dating of individual webpages, this digital archive is a unique source of longitudinal data comprising 345 billion webpages. The first capture for each year was inspected to see whether it contained any FL guides; if the relevant section was not available, a later date was chosen (meaning that the data collected refer to the earliest available capture for each year rather than to the entire year).

3. Results

A total of 13 pdf files named ‘Apply to study in the UK’ were listed in the ‘International guides’ page, followed by the name of the language used: Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish. While the files’ names were in English, the titles within the guides were in their respective languages: e.g. “申请在英国学习” (Chinese), “Postuler pour étudier au Royaume-Uni” (French), “Bewerbung für ein Studium in Großbritannien” (German), “ Studiuj w Wielkiej Brytanii” (Polish), “Подайте заявку на обучение в Великобритании” (Russian). There was also some evidence of localisation, as these titles differed in many ways from the longer, more detailed English guide (‘Applying to study an undergraduate qualification in the UK’) appearing at the top of the page.

The international guides are 4-page factsheets that outline the role of UCAS and various steps in the undergraduate application process. They are primarily addressed to applicants but incorporate a short end section for parents (whose backing is often crucial for international students paying full tuition fees). Unlike their children planning to study in an English-speaking country, parents may not be proficient in the language and will welcome information about UCAS in their L1 or in another L2 they happen to know.

There was also a smaller set of multilingual guides for musicians wanting to apply for post-secondary study, titled ‘Introduction to UCAS conservatoires’. These were located three levels into the website (Homepage > International and EU students > UCAS Conservatoires: International students) and consisted of nine-page factsheets detailing the role of conservatoires and the application process in English, Chinese, Italian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Japanese.

3.1. Variation in time

As shown in Table 1, the first FL undergraduate guides appeared online in 2008 (September) and the range of FLs changed four times: in 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2014. Only four languages (Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish) have been present throughout the period. In 2018 the range comprises both large international languages and small national ones (Lithuanian, Norwegian).

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Arabic	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bengali	x										
Bulgarian			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Chinese	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
French		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
German		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Greek		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hindi	x										
Italian							x	x	x	x	x
Japanese	x	x	x	x	x	x					
Korean			x	x	x	x					
Latvian					x	x					
Lithuanian			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Norwegian							x	x	x	x	x
Polish					x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Romanian			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Russian	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Spanish	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Urdu	x										

Table 1. Variation in FL content since 2008.

Grouped geographically (Table 2), the same results suggest a marked shift over time to EU languages, which accounted for only 12.5% of the FLs in 2008 but have risen to 69.2% since 2014. Of course, this classification is only roughly indicative of recent trends, as it includes at least two languages (French and Spanish) that are official currency also in non-EU countries.

	EU FLs	Non-EU FLs	Total
2008	1 (12.5%)	7 (87.5%)	8
2009	4 (50.0%)	4 (50.0%)	8
2010	7 (58.3%)	5 (41.7%)	12
2011	7 (58.3%)	5 (41.7%)	12
2012	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)	14
2013	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)	14
2014	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13
2015	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13
2016	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13
2017	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13
2018	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13

Table 2. Variation in language groups since 2008.

The conservatoire guides are not included in these tables because they are a recent addition to the UCAS website (dating from 2015) and their range of languages has remained unchanged, apart from the addition of Japanese in 2016. They arguably serve a different, smaller audience to that of the undergraduate guides and interestingly include two FLs (Korean and Japanese) that have not been available for the latter since 2014.

4. Discussion

The current prevalence of EU languages in the UCAS website is consistent with the Union's role as a source of UK applicants. According to recent statistics (UUK 2017), the EU accounted in 2015/16 for 29.1% of UK students, followed by China at 20.8%, other Asian countries (excluding India) at 19.1%, Africa at 7.7%, and the Middle East at 6.7%. However, the EU provided an even larger share (32.3%) back in 2006/07, which contrasts with the strengthening of EU languages over the period considered.

Furthermore, it is unclear why languages such as Hindi, Japanese and Korean were dropped and what motivated the preference for certain EU languages over others. Figures in UCAS (2017) show that Lithuania and Bulgaria are among the European countries with the highest percentage of young people entering UK universities – a reason that may explain the inclusion of their languages but does not apply in the case of Norwegian. Italy, on the other hand, is among the top European providers of first-year UK students, alongside Germany, France, Greece, Spain, Romania, Poland and Bulgaria (HESA 2018).

Beyond the EU (cf. HESA 2018, again), China is by far the leading country, with around 90,000 students in 2016/17 – which is consistent with the use of Chinese by UCAS; Saudi Arabia is also high in the list (in line with the use of Arabic). However, these statistics provide no obvious justification for the adoption of Russian or the omission of Hindi, Malay and Cantonese.

There are several points in these results that deserve consideration. First of all, it is obvious that international applicants to UK universities need to come equipped with EAL skills, given that their courses, reading material, classroom interactions and examinations will all be in English. It is also clear that UCAS is willing to make part of its information available in multilingual versions for the benefit of prospective students and their parents. Underscoring the importance of international applicants' parents, is a specific 20-page guide in English entitled *Parent Guide 2018: Everything You Need to Support Your Child with Their Higher Education Choices* that details the academic options and career paths available to students. The fact that the FL guides have been online for around a decade proves that they serve a real purpose.

Apart from these instances of FL content, the 'virtual linguistic landscape' (Ivkovic/Lotherington 2009) of the UCAS website is entirely monolingual. In some respects the finding is predictable, given that the UK is a major destination for internationally mobile students. Yet it contrasts with the increasing presence of English pages in the websites of non-Anglophone academic institutions across Europe and beyond (cf. Jenkins 2014). Non-English text occurred only in the pdf files themselves and without FL cues leading readers to such content – making it hard for someone with no knowledge of English (or of Latin script) to access the material.

The organisation's language policy is not stated by UCAS in its online reports, but there is mention of its importance when respondents signal the need for "information in different languages as well as 'country specific' pages" within recommendations to "Improve the information & advice available through UCAS for international and EU applicants" (Westlake 2014: 10). After all, the ultimate goal is to encourage as many suitable candidates as possible to benefit from UCAS's services.

Like large parts of the higher education industry (cf. Molesworth *et al.* 2011; Zhang/O'Halloran 2013; Giannoni 2018), the organisation appears to be run on managerial, customer-centred principles. Its current approach, as laid out recently in *UCAS' Strategy to 2020*, gauges success in terms of "market share of admissions (UK, EU, and international)" and "performance and resilience of the core admissions systems" (Smith/Marchant 2018: 7). To pursue its vision, UCAS recognises the need to develop "an end-to-end service ethos which reflects the voice of all of our customer groups" (2018: 4). Language is not explicitly named here, but serving the needs of international stakeholders is clearly a linguistically-sensitive goal. Time will tell whether this translates into a wider provision of multilingual content and FL services.

5. Conclusion

Mastering online communication in a multilingual environment is a challenge for those involved in website design and management. It complicates the process of updating pages and links, requires additional resources for translation/editing and inevitably favours some languages over others. A common mistake made by Web designers is to underestimate the importance of textual quality and there is evidence that "one dimension of service that influences the usability of a site considerably is the quality of its language" (Nantel/Glaser 2008: 114). This also applies to texts in the home language, whose wording can be easified to improve readability and reduce the need for translation (cf. Carroll 2010).

As noted in the case of UK universities (Giannoni 2015), understanding what choices drive an organisation to include FL pages in their websites is not easy for an outsider. Even when language policies are spelled out in official documents, their implementation may be complicated by "covert considerations inside the institutions [...], locally situated needs, beliefs, and experiences" (Berezkina 2018a: 113). It is frequently unclear to what extent decisions are taken in response to emerging demands and opportunities or as part of a coherent, well-thought out plan.

Given the limited amount of FL material identified in the present study, it is arguable that its presence largely serves a phatic rather than a strictly communicative purpose. It may be seen as a gesture, a considerate way to make international candidates (and/or their parents) feel more welcome within the UCAS application framework. It is also true, as pointed out by Lane (2016: 611), that reliance on online evidence alone is loosely indicative of the subject's behaviour and may "tend towards autoethnography rather than the ethnography of other people".

Albeit complex to reconstruct, the textual variations of online platforms over time deserve closer attention from language scholars because they flag underlying trends and help to contextualise synchronic data. The longitudinal evidence retrieved in this study points to a gradual stabilisation of FLs, which have remained unchanged since 2014. Viewed critically, the range of FLs offered is a reflection of their relative power in an unequal world: including specific languages in the virtual linguistic landscape contributes "to mark language status in expressed power relations among the coexisting linguistic choices" (Ivkovic/Lotherington 2009: 19).

It is important, however, not to overestimate the impact of financial considerations on the degree of institutional interest in certain nationalities and/or language groups. Similarly, "highlighting the monetisation of EMI [English-Medium Instruction] can lead us to an oversimplification of a very complex global trend" (Doiz *et al.* 2012b: 214). Finally, whatever the range of languages available, there is a risk of tokenism – a feature that Koskinen (2000, 2013) attributes to European Union institutional websites, where multiple versions pay lip service to equality by favouring the symbolic value of multilingualism over pragmatic considerations.

Further research – which would have to engage directly with insiders as respondents – may shed light on current language-related policies within UCAS. It could also show how likely readers are to access the FL guides and whether there is a need for further content of this type and, admittedly, might conclude that English alone is sufficient for the kind of audience targeted by UCAS. This would align with the general acceptance of English in academia noted by Lasagabaster (2015) and with that the observation that "if the rhetoric of maintaining linguistic diversity is to be a reality, solutions have to be found" (Phillipson 2015: 38) by higher education policy-makers.

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Adequacy, meaning construction and discursive conventions

STEFANIA CONSONNI

From Stigma to Statistics: A Study of US HIV Discourse in Digital Research Article Titles, 1986-2016[1]

1. Introduction

This chapter investigates Research Article Titles (RATs) published in medical journals worldwide from 1986 to 2016 and disseminating research on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus carried out in US health institutions and medical universities.

The clinical history of HIV in the US started in June 1981, when the deaths of five male homosexual patients in New York and Los Angeles from an unidentified syndrome, first labelled as ‘gay cancer’ or GRID (Gay-Related Immunodeficiency), were reported in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The following two years, research was massively funded in both Europe and the US in order to identify the cause of a life-threatening and socially sensitive pathology, immediately associated with such controversial factors as high-risk sexual activity and injection-drug abuse. In September 1982, the name AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was introduced, while illustrious casualties from the film, music and art industry attracted media speculation, thus casting an aura of stigma and scandal on social discourses about the disease. In May 1983, French virologists Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier at Institut Pasteur discovered LAV (Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus), the retrovirus responsible for

1 This study is part of a national research project on “Knowledge Dissemination across media in English: Continuity and change in discourse strategies, ideologies, and epistemologies”, financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (PRIN 2015TJ8ZAS).

AIDS; one year later, Robert Gallo's rival team at the National Cancer Institute announced the isolation of HTLV-III (Human T-Lymphotrophic Virus type III). In April 1985, the first World Health Organization conference on AIDS was held in Atlanta, Georgia; and in May 1986, HIV eventually entered the lexicon of pathology, as the International Committee on the Taxonomy of Viruses declared that the retrovirus triggering AIDS should be called HIV-1.

The present study investigates HIV research and discourse in the US – that is, the country with the world's highest funding for prevention and treatment programmes – along a time span of 30 years. Its purpose is to explore how and to what extent the language of expert-to-expert written medical communication has been changing with respect to two key epistemological factors:

1) The progressive advancement (and mutual influence), along the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, of four clinical specialties, representing complementary standpoints as well as different steps forward in the global study, surveillance and containment of HIV. For reasons that will be specified, Public health, Molecular biology, Immunology and Infectious diseases are here taken as crucial research areas within the disciplinary evolution inherent to scientific knowledge about HIV/AIDS;
2) The methodological development, particularly from the early 1990s onwards, of a completely new set of procedures and protocols in the life sciences. As a matter of fact, the history of HIV appears to be intertwined with the inception of today's leading paradigm for medical knowledge, i.e., Evidence Based Medicine (EBM). EBM promotes systematic statistical analysis derived from the epidemiological scrutiny of large population samples as the best evidence available and the only possible criterion for the diagnosis and management of individual pathologies, with the purpose of minimizing bias and boosting expected result accuracy in a global perspective (Sackett *et al.* 1996; Greenhalgh 2010).

From a discourse-analytical and socio-semiotic angle, both of these factors point to the ideologically non-neutral nature of written scientific discourse, whereby research eminently depends on the public dissemination of knowledge, a transactional phenomenon involving different actors and audiences, whose impact can hardly be distinguished from the scope and purposes of research itself (Bucchi 1998; Shinn/Whitley 1985). Knowledge validation is always negotiated among stratified audiences, including not only fellow- and training experts, but also parallel professional contexts, business and corporate audiences, and the lay public of popularization (Calsamiglia 2003; Calsamiglia/Van Dijk 2004; Garzone 2006; Gotti 2013; Myers 2003; Raffo 2016). Discursive feedback from all these strata contributes to science's legitimization, a process subtly impinging on the agendas of competing clinical methodologies and institutions, especially in the case of impactful pathologies such as HIV/AIDS. Even more so, the immense amplification brought about by the digital environment and by Web-based communication since the mid-1990s has been intensifying the influence of dissemination processes on scientific expository practices.

In this respect, the genre of medical RATs has evidenced itself as a crucial one. Influenced by media, advertising and entertainment discourse, and serving key audience-oriented purposes such as cognitive immediacy and emotional/aesthetic appeal (Hartley 2005, 2005b; Martin 1998; Straumann 1935), headlines have contributed to construing and legitimizing the institutional ideology of advanced industrial society, in both expert-to-expert and expert-to-layman contexts (Smith 2000; Soler 2007). Precisely depending on its conflation of pragmatic functions, the language of RATs has been deeply affecting the production and validation of scientific information (Garzone/Catenaccio 2008; Haggan 2004), from the conservative, gate-keeping formulations of traditional prose to more nuanced ones, placing emphasis on distinctively argumentative, persuasive and metadiscursive functions (Fortanet *et al.* 1998; Goodman / Thacker / Siegel 2001). The specialised contents of a medical RA (i.e., a text aimed at an expert audience and displaying the standard IMRD format, in order to convey the methods, hypotheses and results of experimental science) are in fact compressed and showcased in its title. A typically concise epitextual structure (Genette 1987), a RAT both synthetizes a corresponding article (in terms of informative content) and presents it in an efficient and appealing way, providing the reader with directions in regard to the text's type and pragmatics.

In medical communication, RATs carry out a number of functions, the first and foremost of which is informativity (Smith 2000): they perform a "straightforward presentation of information" (Haggan 2004: 313), often being concise, complete and transparent advanced textual organizers, revealing preview information from a later and more extended text (Kozminksy 1977). Secondly, titles enable the indexing and search optimization of RAs, guiding the "organization and retrieval of scholarly data" (Soler 2007: 91) and surrogating them in reference lists, bibliographies, databases or the Web (Yitzhaki 1997). Finally, they are designed as to be attractive and persuasive with respect to the ensuing article: RATs do attract readers' attention, thus conditioning articles' selection on the part of the scientific community and/or other social actors involved in the dissemination process (Hjørland/Nielsen 2001). On the basis of the above, this study focusses on two research questions:

1) How has the language of medical RATs changed in the last thirty years in regard to, and across, the research specialties that have shaped the disciplinary evolution of HIV discourse, i.e., Public health, Molecular biology, Immunology and Infectious diseases? How, in turn, has the scientific scope and purpose of each specialty contributed to shape the language in which RATs disseminate medical knowledge?
2) To what extent, and in what ways, has the language of medical RATs responded to the implementation of a new overarching clinical methodology, i.e., Evidence Based Medicine (EBM)? What changes in the pragmatic scope and methodological positioning of written medical discourse about HIV has EBM brought about?

The next section will therefore be devoted to setting out the parameters by which this study will address such questions.

2. Materials and method

For the purpose of this analysis, a corpus of 4,504 RATs has been assembled, covering the totality of RAs presenting HIV research carried out in the US, published from 1986 to 2016 in 423 medical journals currently indexed within the Web of Science (WoS) Citation Index-Expanded.[2] The search was performed via the WoS Sci-Expanded analytic tools, setting the following criteria: HIV (Title field), English (Language), Research Article (Document type) and US (Country – of research, not of publication). The search yielded a total of 24,452 items, to which two further parameters for selection were applied:

1) The present corpus concentrates on seven sample (or apex) years, on the basis of 5-year intervals. Thus, only RATs published in 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 were collected. This resized the corpus to a total of 5,781 RATs.
2) A further analysis by Research area was carried out within each of the seven sample years. This evidenced four top-ranking specialties as shared across all sample years, and therefore as analyzable along the selected time span: Public health (479 RATs, representing 8.3% of the corpus), Molecular biology (444 RATs, 7.7%), Immunology (1,722 RATs, 29.8%) and Infectious diseases (1,859 RATs, 32.2%). Other specialties, covering the remaining 22.1%, were excluded from the corpus. A total of 4,504 RATs from 423 specialised journals were thus obtained and downloaded. Table 1 shows the distribution of RATs in the corpus (henceforth, WoS corpus), per year and per clinical specialty.

[2] Data were retrieved on 3 October 2018.

	1986	*1991*	*1996*	*2001*	*2006*	*2011*	*2016*	*Tot.*
1. Public health	0 (0%)	18 (32.1%)	13 (5.9%)	30 (7.4%)	46 (5.4%)	156 (7.8%)	216 (9.5%)	479 (8.3%)
2. Molecular biology	0 (0%)	15 (26.7%)	64 (29.2%)	58 (14.3%)	73 (8.5%)	128 (6.4%)	106 (4.7%)	444 (7.7%)
3. Immunology	0 (0%)	2 (3.5%)	33 (15%)	143 (35.4%)	343 (40.4%)	553 (27.8%)	648 (28.6%)	1,722 (29.8%)
4. Infectious diseases	0 (0%)	1 (1.7%)	19 (8.6%)	116 (28.7%)	355 (41.8%)	613 (30.8%)	755 (33.4%)	1,859 (32.2%)
TOT. RATs	0 (0%)	36 (64%)	129 (58.7%)	347 (85.8%)	817 (96.1%)	1,450 (72.7%)	1,725 (76.2%)	4,504 (77.9%)

Table 1. No. of RATs in the WoS corpus, per year and per clinical specialty.

From within a discourse-analytical framework, and assuming that titles carry out key pragmatic functions in regard to the informativity, retrievability and attractiveness of research articles (White/Hernandez 1991; Eyrolle / Virbel / Le Marié 2008; Hartley 2005, 2007), this study will quantify and analyse the evolution and variation patterns in the syntactic and textual construction strategies of 4,504 RATs. In order to do so, a preliminary charting of HIV's clinical coverage will be carried out in terms of the abovementioned four specialties (i.e., Public health, Molecular biology, Immunology and Infectious diseases), in order to define the disciplinary matrix (Bazerman 1988) within which HIV discourse is situated. On the basis of this, linguistic analysis will follow, focusing on the way medical RATs are worded out and organized at structural and textual level, with the purpose of investigating the impact of said specialties, on the one hand, and of Evidence Based Medicine, on the other, on the development of specialised communication about HIV. The analysis will be conducted on two levels:

1) At structural level (Fortanet *et al.* 1998; Haggan 2004; Yitzhaki 1997; Swales 2003; Soler 2007; Jaime Sisó 2009; White/Hernandez 1991; Hjørland/Nielsen 2001), RATs will be distinguished into conclusive, interrogative, nominal and compound; the distribution of titling constructions will be studied within and across clinical specialties (research question 1).

2) At textual level, the use in RATs of expanded noun phrases bearing lexical reference to Evidence Based Medicine methodology (in particular in compound syntax) will be read as a metadiscursive strategy (Hyland 2005; Hartley 2007) textualizing EBM study design concerns, and evidencing changing attitudes towards the production and dissemination of medical knowledge in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s (research question 2).

Materials have been scanned using the WoS Sci-Expanded analytic tools, AntConc (Anthony 2016) and WordSmith Tools (Scott 2017) software.

3. Results

3.1 Clinical coverage: No. of RATs per year and per specialty

Graph 1 (see Appendix) shows the distribution of RATs per year and per specialty, thus visualizing the main trends in the clinical coverage of HIV across the corpus.

3.1.1 Public health RATs

Public health RATs present research on the AIDS pandemics, focussing on risk *vs*. protective factors in the aetiology of the disease, with a view to protecting the health of local and global communities by means of "researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to infectious diseases" (CDC 2017). As shown in Graph 1 (see Appendix), Public health is the topic of 32.1% of RATs published in 1991 (18 occurrences), while its frequency sharply decreases as of 1996 (13 occurrences, 5.9%), never to peak again (7.4% in 2001, 5.4% in 2006, 7.8% and 9.5% in 2011 and 2016).

This seems to indicate that the initial coverage of HIV was mainly concerned with emergency issues such as epidemics-charting surveys and disease-control methods. This appears to be confirmed by such events as the introduction, in May 1987, of a travel ban issued by the US Public Health Services, whereby HIV was listed among the reasons for immigration exclusion, and testing became mandatory for all visa applicants.[3]

The ban, not to be lifted until January 2010, mirrored the early 'HIV exceptionalism' attitude of medical and political institutions facing the epidemic (Frieden *et al.* 2005), and went in concert with the social marginalization cast by sensationalism in the news media.[4]
The international effort to chart the infection through surveillance, estimates and monitoring (WHO 2018; UNAIDS 2018) – particularly in regard to high-risk patient categories – is evidenced in the WoS corpus by RATs such as the following:

(1) Behavioural, health and psychosocial factors and risk for HIV-infection among sexually active homosexual mean: The multicentre AIDS cohort study [1991]

(2) Preventing HIV/AIDS among high-risk urban women: The cost-effectiveness of a behavioural group intervention [1991]

(3) HIV-infection, genital ulcer disease, and crack cocaine use among patients attending a clinic for sexually-transmitted diseases [1991]

As shown by these examples, AIDS (i.e., the third and final stage of HIV infection) began to circulate in medical and media discourse as an

3 The HIV/AIDS timelines used in this study were retrieved from HIV.gov (2016).

4 The early 1980s saw AIDS's first mention in national broadsheets and mainstream magazines: in July 1981, the *New York Times* published an article entitled "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals"; in August 1983, HIV became the leading story ("Gay America: Sex, Politics, and the Impact of AIDS") in the popular *Newsweek*. Only two years later did President Reagan publicly mention AIDS for the first time, tagging it as the country's top sanitary crisis. Only in the late 1980s and early 1990s did open signs of anti-stigmatization appear in the media, for instance when Diana, Princess of Wales, made headlines worldwide in April 1987 being photographed shaking hands with an HIV-positive patient in a London hospital; or when Tony Kushner's play about AIDS, *Angels in America*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for drama, in April 1993; and later that year, when the film *Philadelphia*, starring Tom Hanks, made an international case for HIV awareness.

aggressive pandemic, supposedly targeting only stigmatized social groups such as male homosexuals, male and female prostitutes and injection-drug users, while heterosexual, vertical (mother-child) and parenteral transmission (e.g. through blood transfusions, surgery etc.) remained substantially ignored until later in the decade.

3.1.2 Molecular biology RATs

Stemming from the functional study of cells at molecular level, this category of RATs presents experimental hypotheses mainly aimed at elucidating the biology (that is, the viral structure, and replication, transcription and translation processes) of HIV-1. As can be seen in Graph 1 (see Appendix), RATs in this specialty peak in 1991 and 1996, when they total, respectively, 26.7% and 29.2% (15 and 64 occurrences), while their frequency sharply decreases at the end of the 1990s, when they drop to 14.3% (2001), 8.5% (2006), 6.4% (2011) and 4.7% (2016). The descending trend may be due to the fact that these RATs tend to focus on two main top-priority topics in the 1990s, i.e., the pathogenesis and diagnosis of AIDS. On the one hand, the origination of the disease was at that time intensively studied: investigating the biochemical behaviour of its infectious agent was a prerogative for the understanding of the syndrome's biology.[5] On the other hand, early HIV diagnosis, the patenting of diagnostic tests and the screening of population samples was also a typical concern of 1980-90s Molecular biology research (CDC 1987).[6] Both issues are amply evidenced in the WoS corpus, as shown by the following examples:

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5 As mentioned earlier, biochemical research in 1980s US mainly aimed, in competition with Europe, at identifying AIDS's cause and transmission. The 1983 dispute between Institut Pasteur and the National Cancer Institute as to who first discovered HIV did not end until 1987, when Ronald Reagan and Jacques Chirac agreed that the two countries should share credit for the discovery. In October 2008, however, the Nobel Prize for Medicine was awarded to Barré-Sinoussi and Montagnier, with only a passing mention of Robert Gallo's lab's achievements.

6 In March 1985 the FDA licensed the first commercial blood test for HIV antibodies, followed in May 1992 by a 10-minute rapid test kit and in December 1994 by an oral test, the first to use fluids other than blood.

(4) Post-PCR sterilization: Development and application to an HIV-1 diagnostic assay [1991]

(5) Identification of an ion channel activity of the Vpu transmembrane domain and its involvement in the regulation of virus release from HIV-1-infected cells [1996]

(6) Long-term RNase P-mediated inhibition of HIV-1 replication and pathogenesis [2001]

We may therefore hypothesise a correlation between HIV pathogenesis (and the main diagnostic questions related to it) being fully clarified at the end of the 1990s, and the number of Molecular biology RAs significantly decreasing in the corpus from 2001 onwards.

3.1.3 Immunology RATs

Immunology RATs typically convey research on two main topics, both related to the reaction triggered in the organism by HIV infection. On the one hand, they study various types of response to the virus (Chinen/Shearer 2002), and the impairment undergone by the immune system, charting a taxonomy of dysfunctions in its various arms, whereby lymphocytes are invaded by the virus so that the body, progressively depleted, becomes subject to opportunistic infections and tumours (Makvandi-Nejad 2018). This topic is evidenced in the corpus by examples such as the following:

(7) The virological and immunological consequences of structured treatment interruptions in chronic HIV-1 infection [2001]

(8) HIV immunosuppression and antimalarial efficacy: Sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine for the treatment of uncomplicated malaria in HIV-infected adults in Siaya, Kenia [2006]

On the other hand, much of immunologists' agenda in the 1990s and 2000s was devoted to the experimental development and testing of candidate prophylactic (or therapeutic) HIV vaccines, which fact may be connected to the frequency of Immunology RATs in the corpus. As shown in Graph 1 (see Appendix), Immunology RATs are seldom published in the early years of the corpus (3.5% in 1991, 15% in 1996), but the trend is fully reversed in 2001, when they reach 35.4%, and later in the decade, with a peak in 2006 (343 RATs, 40.4%). Such a trend seems to be confirmed by the incidence, along the considered time span, of discourse about producing a vaccine against AIDS, as is testified in the corpus by the frequent occurrence of RATs along the lines of the following:

(9) Phase 1 safety and immunogenicity evaluation of a multiclase HIV-1 candidate vaccine delivered by a replication-defective recombinant adenovirus vector [2006]

(10) A randomized, partially blinded phase 2 trial of antiretroviral therapy, HIV-specific immunizations, and interleukin-2 cycles to promote efficient control of viral replication [2006]

The first mention of a vaccine being under study by Dr. Gallo at the NCI (supposedly to be produced within two years) occurred in April 1984; in 1993-94, AIDS being revealed as the leading cause of death in US patients aged 25-44, President Clinton established the National Office for AIDS policy at the White House, while Congress increased funding for research on candidate vaccines.[7] And while the 2004 G8 Summit advocated a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise (i.e., a consortium of government and private groups whose task was to boost efforts; HIV.gov 2016), two clinical trials conducted in 2003 and 2007 resulted in failure to confirm vaccines' efficacy (Sekaly 2008). We may hypothesise said circumstances to be be linked to the conspicuous decrease in the publication of Immunology RATs in the corpus as of 2011, when their frequency drops by 15% (553 items, 27.8% of RATs), although this is mere speculation. What is known for sure is that, in 2006, Immunology RATs represent 28.6% of written scientific discourse on HIV (648 out of 1,725 items), partially to the advantage of Infectious diseases RATs.

3.1.4 Infectious diseases RATs

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[7] In the 2000 State of the Union address, a Millennium Vaccine Initiative was launched as an incentive to further experimentation; 18 May 2001 was the first US HIV Vaccine Awareness Day.

Infectious diseases RATs are generally concerned with both the systematic management of individual HIV/AIDS cases through highly active antiretroviral (HAART) protocols designed to prolong and enhance the life expectancy of patients and, on the other, with epidemiological surveillance on a global scale through population-based monitoring and evaluation programmes. As can be observed in Graph 1 (see Appendix), Infectious diseases RATs follow a similar trend to Immunology, in that both categories start being published extensively only as of 2001 onwards. While subsidiary in 1996 (19 items, 8.6%), Infectious diseases titles increase by 20% in 2001 (116 items, 28.7%), and again by approximately 12% in 2006 (355 items). Infectious diseases RATs maintain a publication frequency of over 30% in 2011 and 2016.

These data appear to be coherent with the rapid development, in the late 1990s and 2000s, of HIV/AIDS therapeutic protocols, and the spreading use of several classes of antiretroviral medications that, if taken in combination, are able to slow down the virus and stop the disease's progression.[8] In 1997, as HAART set in as the new standard of HIV care, a 47% decline in deaths in the US was reported for the first time since the onset of the epidemics (Stolberg 1997). Unsurprisingly, the topic of finding and fine-tuning a cure for AIDS is amply exemplified in the corpus by RATs such as the following:

(11) The effect of highly active antiretroviral therapy on cervical cytologic changes associated with oncogenic HPV among HIV-infected women [2001]

(12) Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Antiretroviral Resistance: HIV Prevention at a Cost? [2011]

The first disease ever to be debated at a UN General Assembly (1987), AIDS was ranked in 1999 by WHO as the fourth biggest cause of death worldwide (14 million casualties, 33 million HIV-positive people) and

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8 The first successful antiretroviral drug (zidovudine AZT) became available in March 1987 (Hogg et. al 1998); in June 1994 the FDA approved the first HIV protease inhibitor (i.e., an agent preventing viral replication), which ushered in the era of Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy. Saquinavir was approved for prescription use in 1995, followed within four months by ritonavir and indinavir (Günthard *et al.* 2014).

as the number one killer in Africa (HIV.gov 2016).[9] It thus seems coherent that Infectious diseases RATs in the corpus (especially as of 2001 onwards) should extensively deal with HIV epidemiology, especially in Africa and developing countries, as is testified by titles such as the following:

(13) Immunologic Criteria Are Poor Predictors of Virologic Outcome: Implications for HIV Treatment Monitoring in Resource-Limited Settings [2011]

(14) Age-disparate sex and HIV risk for young women from 2002 to 2012 in South Africa [2016]

If, by the end of 1985, at least one case of HIV/AIDS had been reported in all regions of the world (UNAIDS 2006), the 1990s and 2000s saw the joint effort of countries worldwide in order to follow a common surveillance framework within their own epidemiological settings. As a matter of fact, in the whole WoS corpus, Infectious diseases RATs, together with Immunology RATs, account for as many as 62% (3,136 items) of the total titles.

3.2 Average sentence length

Table 2 (below) shows the average sentence length of RATs in the corpus, per year and per clinical specialty.

1986	
1. Public health	--
2. Molecular biology	--
3. Immunology	--
4. Infectious diseases	--
AVG 1986	--
1991	
1. Public health	12
2. Molecular biology	13.8

9 In 2002, UNAIDS reported that life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa was reduced from 62 to 47 years as a result of AIDS (UNAIDS 2002); in 2013, Africa had ca. 6.8 million HIV diagnoses, which made it the region with the highest infection rate in the world (UNAIDS 2013).

3. Immunology	12.5
4. Infectious diseases	10
AVG 1991	*12.1*
1996	
1. Public health	14.1
2. Molecular biology	15.8
3. Immunology	16.5
4. Infectious diseases	17.3
AVG 1996	*15.7*
2001	
1. Public health	15
2. Molecular biology	15.2
3. Immunology	15.2
4. Infectious diseases	15
AVG 2001	*15.1*
2006	
1. Public health	15.6
2. Molecular biology	15.6
3. Immunology	15.6
4. Infectious diseases	15.7
AVG 2006	*15.6*
2011	
1. Public health	17.2
2. Molecular biology	16.8
3. Immunology	19.3
4. Infectious diseases	19.7
AVG 2011	*18.3*
2016	
1. Public health	17.2
2. Molecular biology	17.1
3. Immunology	22.2
4. Infectious diseases	21.8
AVG 2016	*19.6*

Table 2. Average sentence length per year and per clinical specialty.

As can been seen in the Table, the average word number of RATs per year follows a steadily increasing trend, from 12.1 words (1991) to 15.6 (2006), 18.3 (2011) and 19.6 (2016). The average sentence length across clinical specialties appears – within the same year – to be quite uniform, with specialties substantially mirroring each other (e.g. 2001 and 2006), or in any case not showing dissimilar values (e.g. 1991, 1996, 2011), with the only possible exception of 2016, where Immunology and Infectious diseases RATs are 4-5 words longer than Public health and Molecular biology titles. As will be argued in Discussion, this seems coherent with the advancing status of medical research in Immunology and Infectious diseases, with respect to Public health and Molecular biology. As no regulations concerning title length are provided in the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)'s *Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*,[10] the increasing number of words can be interpreted as interdependent with the refinement of specialised knowledge about HIV.

3.3 Structural construction of RATs

On the basis of the above, RATs have been distinguished into four syntactic categories, according to different structural organizations of the material they provide, along a pragmatic continuum between information packaging and scientific attractiveness and persuasiveness (Consonni 2018; Sala/Consonni 2018; Wang/Bai 2007).

Conclusive RATs (or declarative/full-sentence) are syntactically independent structures, hinging on finite verb forms which specify the semantic relationship among the lexical items in the sentence, as in the following examples:

(15) Household water insecurity is associated with a range of negative consequences among pregnant Kenyan women of mixed HIV status [2016 public health]

(16) CDC42 and Rac1 are implicated in the activation of the Nef-associated kinase and replication of HIV-1 [1996 molecular biology]

Interrogative RATs are structured in the form of questions, codifying meanings interrogatively rather than declaratively. For this reason, they can be used to either point to a possible gap in knowledge about certain phenomena, which the ensuing RA will deal with, or cast doubts over

10 Retrieved from <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>.

previous research on the same topic, etc. Interrogative RATs typically formulate “queries in need of reply, interpretation and conclusion” (Soler 2007: 100), as is shown by the following examples:

(17) Can data for programs for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV be used for HIV surveillance in Kenya? [2006 public health]

(18) Do type and duration of antiretroviral therapy attenuate liver fibrosis in HIV-hepatitis C virus-coinfected patients? [2006 immunology]

Nominal RATs are particularly condensed structures, either consisting of a single verbless expression, or containing non-finite verbal forms (such as gerund, participle, *to* + infinite, etc.). Typically occurring in “block language” (Straumann 1935), ‘headlinese’ (Garts/Berstein 1963) or economy grammar (Halliday 1967), they are an optimal resource for the codification of meanings in contexts with significant space constraints, such as newspaper headlines, book titles, advertising slogans, etc. Nominal constructions have a general preference for the omission of auxiliary verbs (*be*, *have*, *do*) and articles (*a/an*, *the*), and for passive voice and nominalization, as is shown by examples such as the following:

(19) Inpatient morbidity among HIV-infected male soldiers prior to their diagnosis of HIV-infection [1991 public health]

(20) Impaired development of HIV-1 gp160-specific CD8(+) cytotonic T cells by a delayed switch from Th1 to Th2 cytokine phenotype in mice with Helicobacter pylori infection [2001 immunology]

Compound RATs (or colonic/hanging, Hartley 2005b) are composed of two semantically interrelated parts – which can be declarative, interrogative and nominal phrases, clauses or full sentences – typically joined by a colon, full stop, dash or other punctuation mark (Hartley 2007; 553). With reference to their thematic structure, they form theme-rheme clusters, where the former part of the RAT generally introduces the article’s topic, while the latter (usually an expanded noun phrase) details particular aspects of the topic that will be dealt with in the article, thus both pinpointing the title’s relevance, by framing it in ‘general’-

'specific', 'cause'-'effect', 'problem'-'solution', 'question'-'answer' sequences, and highlighting the article's weight in terms of informative content. This can be observed in the following examples:

(21) Structure and stability of RNA/RNA kissing complex: Application to HIV dimerization initiation signal [2011 molecular biology]

(22) Viability and effectiveness of large-scale HIV treatment initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa: Experience from Western Kenya [2006 immunology]

Table 3 shows the distribution of syntactic constructions per year and per clinical specialty.

	Conclusive	*Interrogative*	*Nominal*	*Compound*
1986				
1. Public health	0	0	0	0
2. Molecular biology	0	0	0	0
3. Immunology	0	0	0	0
4. Infectious diseases	0	0	0	0
SUBT. 1986: 1 (100%)	*0 (0%)*	*0 (0%)*	*0 (0%)*	*0 (0%)*
1991				
1. Public health	0	0	10	8
2. Molecular biology	1	0	11	3
3. Immunology	1	0	1	0
4. Infectious diseases	0	0	1	0
SUBT. 1991: 36 (100%)	*2 (5.6%)*	*0 (0%)*	*23 (63.9%)*	*11 (30.5%)*
1996				
1. Public health	0	1	8	4
2. Molecular biology	20	1	25	18
3. Immunology	6	1	24	2
4. Infectious diseases	3	1	13	2
SUBT. 1996: 129 100%)	*29 (22.5%)*	*4 (3.1%)*	*70 (54.2%)*	*26 (20.2%)*
2001				
1. Public health	0	2	15	13
2. Molecular biology	24	0	21	13
3. Immunology	34	1	84	24
4. Infectious diseases	16	0	65	35
SUBT. 2001: 347 100%)	*74 (21.3%)*	*3 (0.9%)*	*185 (53.3%)*	*85 (24.5%)*
2006				
1. Public health	0	4	17	25

2. Molecular biology	26	0	39	8
3. Immunology	65	1	197	80
4. Infectious diseases	58	3	201	93
SUBT. 2006: 817 100%)	*149 (18.2%)*	*8 (1%)*	*454 (55.6%)*	*206 (25.2%)*
2011				
1. Public health	0	6	88	62
2. Molecular biology	18	0	59	51
3. Immunology	102	7	240	204
4. Infectious diseases	88	12	346	167
SUBT. 2011: 1,450 (100%)	*208 (14.3%)*	*25 (1.7%)*	*733 (50.6%)*	*484 (33.4%)*
2016				
1. Public health	1	4	109	102
2. Molecular biology	21	3	50	32
3. Immunology	44	17	298	289
4. Infectious diseases	160	28	395	172
SUBT. 2016: 1,725 (100%)	*226 (13.1%)*	*52 (3%)*	*852 (49.4%)*	*595 (34.5%)*
TOTAL 1986-2006: 4,504 (100%)	688 (15.3%)	92 (3%)	2,317 (51.4%)	1,407 (31.2%)

Table 3. Distribution of syntactic constructions per year and per clinical specialty.

As can be seen in Table 3, the frequency of *conclusive* RATs in the WoS corpus gradually but steadily decreases from 1996 onwards: they go from 22.5% in 1996 (29 items) to 13.1% in 2016 (226 items). This seems to indicate that, as research on HIV develops in the late 1990s and 2000s, conclusive titles no longer appear to be a common choice for the structuring of RATs. On the one hand, full-sentence titles may in fact be associated to pragmatic necessities of scientific discourse such as the straightforward presentation of informative material and/or informative density/attractiveness, thus matching the author's need to rapidly inform readers and fellow experts about the contents of the article, while readers in turn need to "know as early as possible in the reading process whether or not the paper contains anything" of relevance (Haggan 2004: 296).

On the other hand, *conclusive* sentences may sound as confident assertions presenting hypotheses as "statements of fact", generally in the present tense, reproducing what has been tagged as the "block language" of newspaper headlines (Quirk/Greenbaum 1973; Straumann

1935). Furthermore, 100% of conclusive RATs in the WoS corpus are in the present tense, which may indicate an optimistic epistemological attitude on the part of the researcher, who may cast on his/her text the idea that what s/he is reporting “stands true for all time or is not simply a one-off occurrence”, or the belief that “the method, measurements, calculation etc. employed have yielded impregnable results (Haggan 2004: 297). Significantly, only 4 out of 688 conclusive titles in the corpus (1 in 1991 Molecular biology, 3 in 2006 Immunology) are accompanied by the use of hedges (Hyland 2005), and specifically by the modal verb *can*, while there is no use of such typical markers of reduced epistemicity in scientific discourse as the other central modals (for instance, *may*, *might* and *could*), semi-modal verbs (such as *ought to*, *need to*) or lexical-modal auxiliaries or idioms, such as *be due*, *bound*, *certain*, *likely* etc. (Hyland 1998).

As regards *interrogative* RATs, assuming them to be syntactic expressions of doubt, contradicting to some extent the status of scientific research as the formulation of exact answers to complex questions, it seems coherent that (as can be seen in Table 3) they are the least preferred strategy for codifying meanings in the corpus, totalling 92 occurrences (3%) from 1986 to 2016.

As can be seen in Table 3, *nominal* RATs are by far the preferred strategy across all clinical specialties, largely outnumbering all other constructions in all considered years and totalling 51.4% of structures (2,317 occurrences). A closer look at the data however reveals that, albeit the dominant category, nominal titles tend to follow a mildly decreasing trend, from 63.9% (1991) to 49.4% (2016), in correlation with an increasing trend of the last syntactic category, compound structures.

Compound RATs are the second preferred resource for title structuring in the corpus (see Table 3), with a regular tendency to increase over time, from 20.2% to 34.5% (2016). By looking at the relative incidence of nominal *vs*. compound syntax along the considered time span, it can moreover be noticed that the difference in percentage between the two categories tends to decrease, from 63.9% nominal *vs*. 30.5% compound (1991) to 49.4% nominal *vs*. 34.5% compound in 2016.

3.3.1 Structural constructions within and across specialties

Graphs 2-6 (see Appendix), calculated and drawn on the basis of Table 3, show the distribution of syntactic constructions in, respectively, the whole corpus, comprising RATs in all clinical specialties (Graph 2), and in Public health, Molecular biology, Immunology and Infectious diseases RATs (Graphs 3-6).

As evidenced in Graph 2 (see Appendix), by comparing syntactic constructions across specialties it appears that all four research areas privilege the use of nominal RATs, which range between 63.9% (1991) and 49.4% (2016). However, the proportion between nominal and compound structures eventually tends to become more evenly balanced, especially in 2011 and 2016, where an increasing preference for compound syntax can be observed, and the difference between the two categories decreases from ca. 50% to ca. 15%. It can also be noticed that interrogative structures are seldom used in the corpus, ranging between 0% and 3.1%, while the third preferred resource for titling constructions, conclusive syntax, has a tendency to decrease over time (22.5% in 1996 *vs*. 13.1% in 2016) to the advantage of compound syntax. In fact, the 15% increase in compound titles from 1996 to 2016 does not appear to be motivated by a significant decrease in nominal structures (going down by ca. 5% between 1996 and 2016), but by a 10% decrease in conclusive titles (21.3% in 1996 *vs*. 13.1% in 2016). By observing Graphs 3-6 (see Appendix) we can further compare the distribution of constructions within each specialty.

Never a viable choice in Public health, conclusive titles are the third preferred choice in Infectious diseases and Immunology RAs (with the only possible exception of 1991 Immunology), while only Molecular biology shows a preference for this type of construction, which, especially in 1996 (31.2%) and 2006 (35.6%), appears to be one of two preferred strategies (along with nominal titles). (We can also notice a peak in 2001 Molecular biology, where conclusive titles are the number one resource, i.e., 41.4%). Although they are the least frequent constructions in all categories, interrogative titles are the number three strategy in Public health RAs, ranging between 0% and 8.7% (2006), at the expense of conclusive titles, which are almost never used (0%-0,4%). As concerns the distribution of nominal *vs*. compound structures, the former by large appear as the preferred choice in Infectious diseases RAs, where they range from 33.9% (1991) to 49.4% (2016), and in Molecular biology, where they appear in 36.2%-73.3% of titles. But the trend is significantly different in Public health RAs, where nominal titles range between 37% and 61.5%, and – quite similarly – compound titles range between 30.8% and 54.3%, peaking in 2006, when they outnumber nominal titles (54.3% *vs*. 37%). In Immunology RATs, nominal structures generally prevail over compound structures, with the only exception of 2016, when the proportion is almost 1:1 (44.6% *vs*. 46%).

To sum up, it is possible to claim that the distribution of syntactic constructions within each specialty is not as homogeneous as it may appear from Graph 2. Graphs 3-6 show that, as we move from 1986 to 2016, different strategies are chosen within each specialty in order to structure meanings about HIV. Public health RATs tend to prefer nominal and compound constructions, never recurring to declarative syntax; Molecular biology RATs tend to privilege nominal and (to a lesser extent) compound and conclusive constructions, excluding interrogative structures; Immunology tends to privilege nominal structures, with a tendency, over time, to use more compounds and less declaratives; Infectious diseases RATs tend to use nominal structures much more frequently than the other categories, although with, in turn, a tendency to use more compounds and less conclusive structures as time goes by. Such preference for compound structures seems coherent with Immunology and Infectious diseases RATs having the highest average sentence length (see section 3.2).

3.4 Textualization of EBM methodology in RATs

Table 4 provides data on the frequency of a significant phenomenon deployed in the textualization strategies within syntactic constructions – and especially in compound RATs – in order to package and sequence information for readers. In particular, it shows the distribution, across titling constructions, of expanded nominal phrases (NPs) bearing lexical reference to Evidence Based Medicine study designs. Introduced in the early 1990s and officially codified later in the decade

(Sackett *et al*. 1996), EBM is based upon a ‘pyramid of evidence’ (see Figure 1), where seven ascending levels in experimental methodology – or study designs – are ranked according to increasing result reliability in statistical terms and decreasing (or minimized) bias from confounding variables (Greenhalgh 2010).

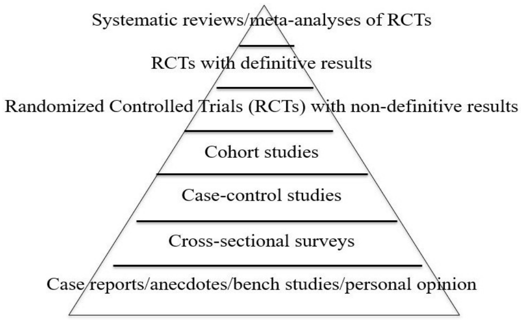

Figure 1. The EBM pyramid of evidence

Each of the seven levels represents the increasing epistemicity, in terms of the provided clinical evidence, of a study design (i.e., the methodology employed in research, as presented in the Methods section of the RA, in terms of participants, implements and procedures). The pinnacle is represented by the robust, generalizable evidence inherent to systematic reviews and meta-analyses of Randomized Controlled Trials, while at the bottom lies the anecdotal knowledge produced by case reports.

	Conclusive	*Interrogative*	*Nominal*	*Compound*	*Subt.*
1986	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)
1991	0	0	1	3	4 (11%)
1996	0	0	3	8	11 (8.5%)
2001	0	0	4	18	22 (6.3%)
2006	0	0	24	100	124 (15.2%)
2011	0	0	184	320	504 (34.6%)
2016	0	0	201	411	612 (35.5%)
TOT. (1,277)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	417 (32.6%)	860 (76%)	

Table 4. Distribution of expanded NPs indicating EBM study designs per year and per syntactic construction.

As shown in Table 4, in the WoS corpus nominal and compound structures particularly tend to rely on expanded NPs lexicalizing EBM study designs, as in the following examples (emphasis added):

(23) *Randomized, double-blind* comparison of two nelfinavir doses plus nucleosides in HIV-infected patients (Agouron study 511) [2001 immunology, nominal]

(24) The prevalence and correlates of HIV and undiagnosed infection among men who have sex with men in Hanoi, Vietnam: Findings from a *cross-sectional, biobehavioral study* [2016 public health, compound]

The frequency of EBM-related NPs steadily increases over time, from 11% (4 out of 36 items in 1991) to 15.2% (2006), 34.6% (2011) and 35.5% (2016). Of such NPs, 32.6% appear in nominal constructions (417 occurrences), while 67.4% in compounds (860 occurrences).

	Public health	*Molecular biology*	*Immunology*	*Infectious diseases*
1986	0	0	0	0
1991	3	0	0	0
1996	1	0	3	4
2001	3	0	10	5
2006	5	8	42	45
2011	40	27	113	140
2016	71	47	125	168

Table 5. Distribution of EBM-related NPs in compound structures per year and per clinical specialty

Table 5 (above) and Chart 1 (see Appendix) provide further data as to the specific frequency of such occurrences in compound constructions per year and per clinical specialty. As can be seen, the specialties that most showcase EBM methodology in compound constructions are Immunology and Infectious diseases, particularly from 2006 onwards. This seems coherent with the data on clinical coverage presented in sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.

Table 4 furthermore evidences that the most productive category with respect to the textual codification of EBM methodology is compound syntax. These data appear to be in line with the textual affordances offered by compound titling, in terms of information patterning strategies. While the thematic part of compound RATs mainly focusses on the article's topic, the extended NP following punctuation and occupying the rhematic position generally provides specifics as to *how* the topic is addressed in the article.

As of the mid-1990s onwards, as Table 4 shows, the rheme/filler slot tends to be occupied by NPs indicating the research's study design, thus immediately elucidating the article's ranking, in terms of scientific prestige, within the EBM hierarchy of knowledge. In such NPs, the lexicalisation of study design terminology functions as a cognitive cue to the reader, who is invited to assess the study's methodology by reading the appropriate IMRD section within the article. Moreover, the sequential theme/rheme, gap/filler information patterning – which textualizes the positioning of a piece of research within evidential knowledge – tends to coincide with the structure's patterning in terms of Information Unit. While the thematic/given part of the compound generally presents a specific clinical aspect of HIV/AIDS, the rhematic/new part of the structure/message tends to frame the research's ranking within the EBM paradigm. This seems compatible with both the increasing sentence length presented in section 3.2, and the tendency, analysed in section 3.3.1, of all clinical specialties (with the possible exception of Molecular biology) to significantly increase their use of compound syntax in the course of the 2000s, particularly at the expense of conclusive titles.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In 1986, as the name HIV entered the lexicon of physicians worldwide, scant knowledge was available on the cause, transmission, evolution and possible treatment of this pathology. Fatalism, scandal and marginalization were the first reactions of US industrialised society vis-à-vis a global epidemic. In the following years, research established a completely new field of knowledge, and a new type of discourse was implemented within specialised communication. From a discourse-analytical angle, this study aims at putting forward a functional and epistemological correlation between the disciplinary construction of specialised medical knowledge about HIV and the linguistic evolution and variation of expert-to-expert communication conveying such knowledge. Because of the semiotic affordances they offer (i.e., informativity, attractiveness, and the indexing of a research article's topic and methodological positioning), and the multifaceted pragmatic functions (i.e., argumentative, persuasive and metadiscursive) they serve, RATs are here assumed as a key genre for investigating both the disciplinary matrix and the communicative features of medical discourse about HIV.

From 1986 to 2016, the interaction among the scientific scopes and purposes of Public health, Molecular biology, Immunology and Infectious diseases has covered a whole cline of meanings in pathology, a spectrum of conceptual areas with which HIV/AIDS has progressively been associated in its history, and which are stratified in its contemporary perception. In the late 1980s, HIV was first framed by public health studies within the urgent framework of global pandemics and contagion alarm, in concert with political and news media stigmatizing discourse with respect to certain social categories first evidenced as being exposed to infection. In the following decade, HIV became the object of closer biological investigation, which, by bringing into focus the issues of its pathogenesis and diagnosis, shifted both experts' and the lay public's attention from social stigma towards the actual complexity of multiple aetiological factors. As of the late 1990s onwards – significantly, at one time with the standardisation of EBM as a shield against bias – immunology and infectious diseases became the dominant perspectives in HIV research, covering two thirds of specialised written discourse worldwide. A progressive amount of increasingly detailed and substantial knowledge about the disease and its biological and social impact, as well as about its potential control through candidate vaccines and antiretroviral treatment, thus became available, pointing – in the 2000s – in the direction of its global systematic monitoring, containment and treatment through massive statistics-based surveillance and therapy. Epidemics and contagion, pathogenesis and diagnosis, damage and immunity, therapy and epidemiology thus broadly seem to be the dichotomies structuring HIV research in the US from 1986 to 2016.

In the light of the above, sections 3.2 and 3.3 have analysed a corpus of 4,504 RATs, in order to quantify and interpret the structural and textual resources employed in regard to the codification and dissemination of both the disciplinary matrix of HIV discourse (research question 1) and the inception of Evidence Based Medicine (research question 2). Results can now be discussed with reference to both questions. As concerns the average title length (see section 3.2 and Table 2), the brevity of RATs in the earlier years of the corpus may stem from the communicative urgency of early research, when hypotheses and results needed to be quickly packaged and spread in "brief and succinct" form (Haggan 2004: 294). Conversely, the increasing length of structures over time may indicate a growth in the informative content of RAs, and, more specifically, an increase in the number of lexical items they contain. This occurrence may mirror a common 'time factor' trend in the length of scientific titles (Yitzhaki 1997), and may be interpreted as a twofold phenomenon. On the one hand, the more keywords a title contains, the more accurately it can showcase its results, and the more chances are that it will be retrieved from database or online queries, thus broadening the range of its diffusion, especially in the digital era.

On the other hand, the evolution of HIV research across different specialties may also have triggered an increase in RAT length, for as a field of knowledge becomes more articulate and reified, titles can reasonably be expected to become more complex, in order to mirror "the development, refinement and extension both of underlying theories and of more and more complex research methods and procedures" (White/Hernandez 1991: 731). This is particularly likely to happen in the hard sciences, traditionally having more informative titles than the popular sciences (Hjørland/Nielsen 2001), whereby increasing knowledge specialisation calls for "more words to express a given piece of research" (White/Hernandez 1991: 731), so that longer titles may function as vehicles to disseminate new achievements, also providing additional room for the presentation of a given piece of research's positioning within the EBM methodological framework.

In parallel, the patterns and variations among the four syntactic categories of RATs, presented in section 3.3 (see Table 3, and Graphs 2-6 in the Appendix), also evidence the functional and epistemological interdependence between specialised knowledge on HIV and the linguistic configuration of expert-to-expert written medical discourse. Such interconnection can be observed at various levels. The different frequency patterns of conclusive constructions among clinical specialties may suggest a conflation in RATs between scientific and promotional language, whereby 'headlinese' effects can be employed to encode some degree of epistemological certainty on the topic – especially in the case of Molecular biology RATs, which tend to promote the use of such constructions. In the WoS corpus, conclusive titles may thus be read as a typical strategy for the kick-off stage of HIV research, as the very complexity of the disease's biology and epidemiology was about to be taken into consideration. This hypothesis seems confirmed by a substantial decline in declarative syntax over time (see Graph 2), and may also apply to the low frequency of interrogative structures in the corpus, for little use of questions may reflect lesser need for the structural expression of scientific dilemma, especially as research developed in the 1980s and 1990s.

The high incidence of nominal structures across all specialties seems to deserve a more articulated interpretation. With their high capacity for highlighting a discipline's theoretical and experimental concerns, as well as its keywords, nominal constructions may be associated with science's constant need for maximally condensed lexicalisation strategies, whereby increasingly complex research on increasingly subtle topics calls for effective linguistic strategies for both encoding and emphasizing such complexity in a limited amount of space and time. The overall prevalence of nominal structures may thus be traced to the prototypical classificatory nature of biomedical discourse, which tends to handle its subject matter in taxonomical fashion (Soler 2007: 101), evidencing layer after layer of experimental knowledge through the piling up of lexical items in the construction of extended noun phrases. This view is also confirmed by Haggan (2004: 307), according to whom a NP, accompanied by one (or more than one) post-modifying prepositional phrases and/or elaborate pre-modification, is the most viable strategy for traditional scientific title-patterning, in that it provides RATs with both informative precision and explicitness as to their contents (especially through the use of post-modifiers) and block-language attractiveness, as attained by the effective use of shorter, and generally more evenly balanced, sets of pre-modifiers (Rush 1988).

The increasing frequency of compound titling structures in the corpus, noticeable within and across all specialties, especially as of 2001 onwards, seems in turn to mirror – through its typical theme/rheme, gap/filler, topic/method patterning – science's growing need for complementing traditional scientific informativity with attractiveness and persuasiveness (Haggan 2004; Hartley 2007; Bhatia 2004). Compound titles, as claimed by Hartley (2007: 558), both attract and inform readers by means of their information sequencing: the audience's curiosity is elicited by the thematic part of the cluster, which works as a gap (usually introducing a research question), while the filler slot presents insights as to possible answers and/or as to how the question will be dealt with (Haggan 2004: 302). In opposition to te traditional nominal structures, which present results synoptically (much in the fashion of conceptual maps to the article's findings), and immediately enable readers to grasp the essential input of the article, compound syntax works along sequential "add-on" theme/rheme protocols, pivoting on the opposite principle, that is, the presumption of the audience's ignorance (Haggan 2004: 203).

Such conflation of pragmatic purposes may suggest further research into medical RATs as a hybrid genre between scientific and promotional language, and possibly as an advanced textual resource within the hybridity traditionally inherent to the use of conclusive ('headlinese') RATs. The markedly standardised, hierarchic formulations of traditional medicine, as typified by nominal structures, meant for the selective skimming of information on the part of researchers before lay dissemination, are complemented in compound titles by more articulated and horizontal functional protocols, placing emphasis on argumentative, persuasive and metadiscursive functions. In the WoS corpus, the frequency of compound titles appears to significantly increase over the 2000s (see Graph 2 in the Appendix): this marks a watershed in the pragmatic and epistemological scope of specialised medical communication, from the gate-keeping, esoteric exchange of individual expertise (which, within the EBM hierarchy of knowledge, would rank quite low) to the peer-to-peer sharing of evidence-based knowledge. In their informative and persuasive functions, compound RATs seem to textualize scientific discourse as an arbitration process between hypotheses and phenomena, and as the social negotiation of methodologies and expectations (Kuhn 1962); they can also be interpreted as markers of a scientist's self-aware, discipline-mediated and socially negotiated positioning within the boundaries of a scientific system.

Like nominal titles, compound titles also contain a high number of lexical items, which boost the visibility of research in scientific databases (and online searches) and offer additional room for showcasing its experimental advancements and methodological reliability. No longer dependent from the full RA, a compound title is *per se* a semantically autonomous structure, performing key cognitive functions, i.e., facilitating the decoding of the article, directing "attentional focusing while reading", providing "text information by establishing relations between different elements", determining "the relative importance of information supplied in a text" and building readers' "cognitive representation" (Eyrolle / Virbel / Lemarié 2008: 242). But, as shown in section 3.4, the textualization strategy deployed in compound syntax appears to be more audience-oriented – in regard to today's Web-based and EBM-centred scientific paradigm – than the piling up of pre- and post-modifiers. The chain of knowledge transmission in compound syntax is sequential and horizontal, rather than synoptic and vertical: communication is centred on the reader's two-step appraisal (curiosity followed by cognition) rather than on the writer's authoritative configuration of contents. In the WoS corpus, such information packaging system increases in frequency as of 2001 onwards – in all clinical specialties – in concert with the textualization of EBM methodology (see Table 5, and Chart 1 in the Appendix), whereby a study's ranking within the pyramid of evidence is showcased in the rhematic part of the cluster. Such resource may be considered as a metadiscursive marker of evidentiality (Hyland 2005), i.e., a textual device indicating "the source of speakers' knowledge" (Johnstone 2009: 30) by attributing "information or opinion in a text to sources which may be animate or inanimate" (Hunston 2003: 181), such as evidence provided by empirical research (lab experiments, trials, etc). Embedded in the increasing use of such strategy is the growing need of scientists to engage in (and comply with) discourse legitimization issues in the EBM paradigm. Beside their typical pragmatic functions (i.e., informativity, attractiveness and retrievability of articles), RATs thus seem, as a genre, to have developed a crucial epistemological function.

To conclude, the phenomena quantified and interpreted in this study overall indicate that, along with research on HIV, the language of specialised written medical communication has undergone significant changes in the last three decades. In the context (and in the face) of a life-threatening global epidemic, and of the scientific efforts undertaken by institutions in industrialised Western countries – among which the US is the number one funder and beneficiary, as well as the number one discourse generator – the traditionally conservative language of medicine has shown signs of major changes within its syntactic and textual features. The trends identified point in the direction of changing functional conventions and shifting epistemological attitudes towards the production, validation and dissemination of medical knowledge. More than at producing conclusive results, however, this paper has aimed at suggesting that linguistic and communicative changes within the specialised knowledge system of HIV discourse should be investigated against the complex backdrop of the multi-disciplinary clinical paradigm established in order to identify, define, diagnose and combat this pathology, as well as of the worldwide implementation of Evidence Based methodology in the last decades.

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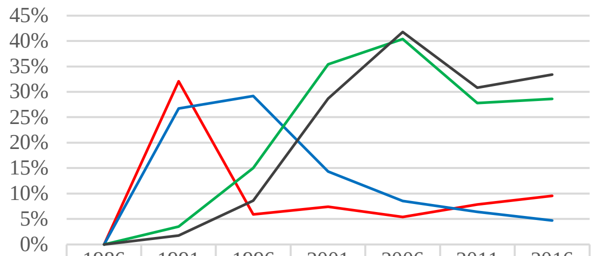
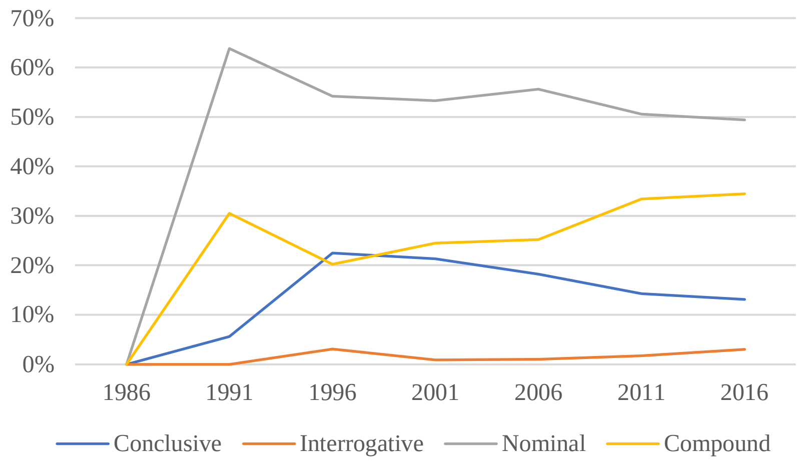
APPENDIX

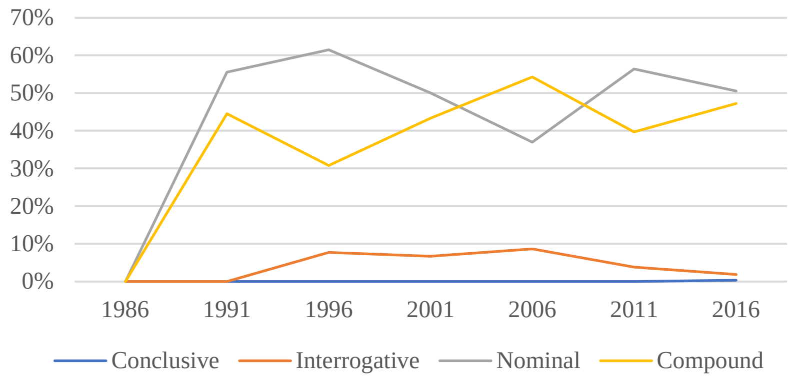


	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Public health	0%	32,10%	5,90%	7,40%	5,40%	7,80%	9,50%
Molecular biology	0%	26,70%	29,20%	14,30%	8,50%	6,40%	4,70%
Immunology	0%	3,50%	15%	35,40%	40,40%	27,80%	28,60%
Infectious diseases	0%	1,70%	8,60%	28,70%	41,80%	30,80%	33,40%

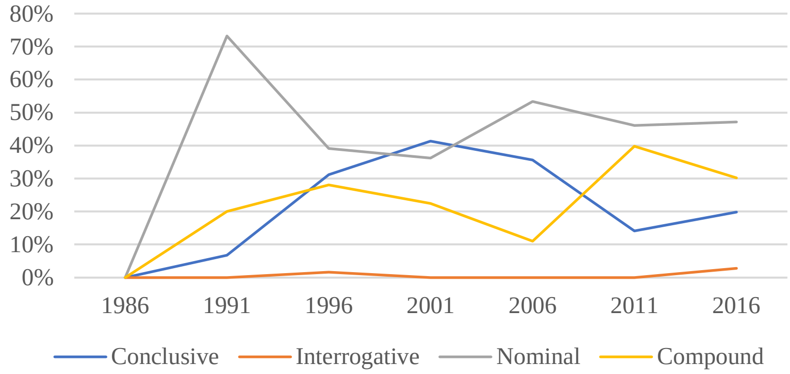
Graph. 1. No. of RATs per year and per clinical specialty.



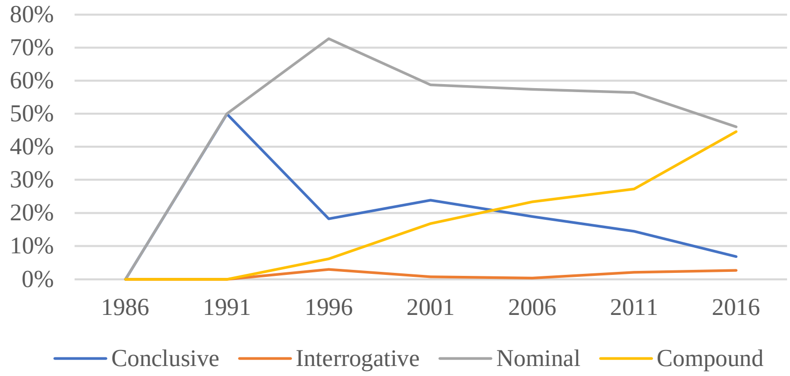
Graph 2. Distribution of syntactic constructions per year (all clinical specialties).



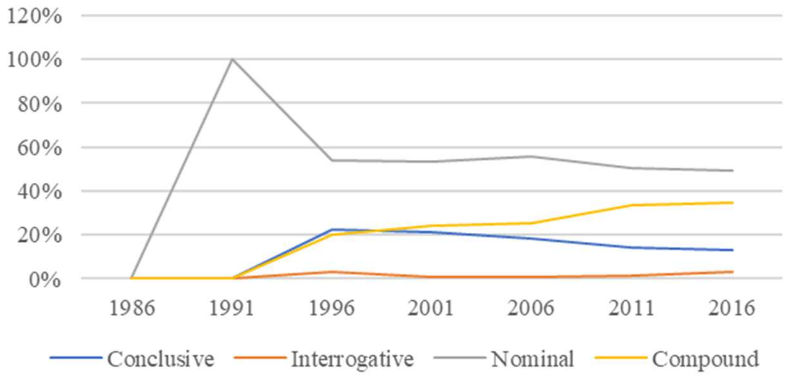
Graph 3. Distribution of syntactic constructions in Public health RATs.



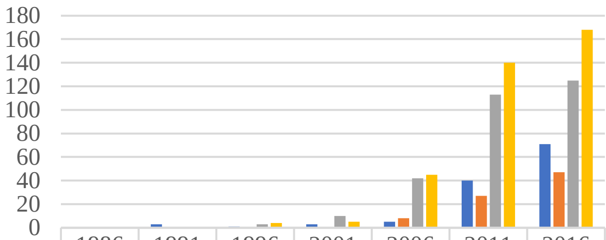
Graph 4. Distribution of syntactic constructions in Molecular biology RATs.



Graph 5. Distribution of syntactic constructions in Immunology RATs.



Graph 6. Distribution of syntactic constructions in Infectious diseases RATs.



	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Public health	0	3	1	3	5	40	71
Molecular biology	0	0	0	0	8	27	47
Immunology	0	0	3	10	42	113	125
Infectious diseases	0	0	4	5	45	140	168

Public health Molecular biology Immunology Infectious diseases

Chart 1. Distribution of EBM-related NPs in compound structures per clinical specialty.

GIULIANA DIANI, ANNALISA SEZZI[1]

The EU for Children: A Case of Web-mediated Knowledge Dissemination[2]

1. Introduction

The advent of the Internet has had a significant impact on the transmission of specialized communication between experts and non-experts (e.g. Garzone 2007; Caliendo 2014; Scotto di Carlo 2014; Anesa/Fage-Butler 2015; Bondi 2015). Blogs, articles in online newspapers, e-magazines, e-journals "provide an open space for specialized communication, where a diverse audience (with different degrees of expertise) may have access to information intended both for non-specialist readers and for experts" (Luzón 2013: 428).

The present study focuses on knowledge dissemination as a process of 'mediation' between experts and non-experts having a different stage of cognitive development, that is to say children. Within this approach, the aim of the present article is to analyse from a qualitative point of view the popularizing features associated with scientific communication (i.e. in this case, concerning the concept of European Union) in two official websites on EU addressed to children (namely, Kids' Corner and Euro Kids' Corner). If knowledge dissemination is a form of 'mediation', texts targeting children can be

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1 Sections 1, 3, and 5.2 are written by Giuliana Diani; sections 2; 4 and 5.1 by Annalisa Sezzi, while the conclusions were jointly written by both authors of the present essay.

2 This study is part of a National research project financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research: "Knowledge Dissemination across media in English: continuity and change in discourse strategies, ideologies, and epistemologies (PRIN 2015TJ8ZAS).

seen as an example of multi-layered mediation, in that in these cases the intended lay audience have limited cognitive skills and encyclopaedic knowledge.

The choice of children's websites is due to their specific status in the field of popularization discourse (Mallet 2004; Cristini 2014; Sezzi 2017). In these contexts, information is presented appealingly through multimodal strategies (e.g. Kress/van Leeuwen 2006; Unsworth 2007), to encourage involvement through entertainment, which can be regarded as an effective popularization strategy (Maci 2014; Cappelli/Masi 2019).

The choice of analysing the dissemination of the concept of the European Union targeted at children derives from a general and increasing interest in exploring the way children develop their understanding of the EU, its history and its countries.

Attention to knowledge dissemination addressing children remains, as far as we know, an under-explored area of inquiry in connection with popularization. From a linguistic perspective, only a few studies have focused on the dissemination of specialized knowledge targeted at children (Engberg/Luttermann 2014; Sorrentino 2014; Diani 2015, 2018) and even fewer are those dealing with knowledge dissemination intended for children from a pedagogic perspective (Ribovich 1979; Heisey/Kucan 2010; Fang/Pace 2013; Hoffman/Collins/Schickedanz 2015) and translational perspective (Reiss 1982; Puurtinen 1995; Sezzi 2017).

The next section provides an overview of recent literature on educational websites for children (Section 2). This is followed by a description of the theoretical framework adopted (Section 3) and the corpora used for the study (Section 4). The analysis will be presented in Section 5, followed by some concluding remarks in Section 6.

2. Children's edutainment websites

Websites expressly aimed at children can be described as "'edutainment' or 'infotainment' texts as they aim to both educate or inform and entertain their overt audience – children" (Djonov 2008: 217).

In particular, as Aksakal underlines (2015: 1232), it was a documentarian from American National Geographic Union, Bob Heyman, who first talked about "edutainment" to indicate a form of "marriage" between entertainment and education (Colace/De Santo/Pietrosanto 2006) devised to educate and amuse the audience. This expression "came into common use in the 1990s with the appearance of 'multimedia' personal computers" (Michael/Chen 2006: 24). Mainly associated with video games pursuing educational goals (Susi/Johannesson/Backlund 2007: 2), edutainment embraces nonetheless a plethora of products, from television programs, films, music, computer and video games, to websites and multimedia software (Colace/De Santo/Pietrosanto 2006), all hinging upon the exploitation of the visual code, of narratives and games, and of an informal language (Buckingham/Scanlon 2001, 2005).

Another common feature that characterizes these forms of entertainment and education for youngsters, like the other traditional informative and literary forms dedicated to this specific audience, is their dual addressee (Djonov 2008). Adults, be they teachers, parents, or educators, are their covert target audience. Indeed, they provide personal computers to their children or pupils for educational purposes, which is also the reason why they utilize the Internet and visit websites (see Buckingham/Scanlon 2004). Websites for children are in fact believed – by parents and educators – to develop children's competences in different disciplines leading to successful educational achievements (Okan 2003, 2011; Buckingham/Scanlon 2004).

Children's access to knowledge is then no longer limited to the classroom and to course or information books. It is disseminated through complex hypertexts to the new generations, who live in a pervasively digital and electronic world, "the multimodal hypertext environment" (Maier/Kampf/Kastberg 2007: 456), and who already have a multimodal and multimedial communicative competence, in that:

> [t]he multiliterate children can simultaneously process and monitor multiple displays of specialized knowledge on the computer screen. They can search for,

> retrieve and store specialized knowledge across several semiotic modes and media in a matter of seconds. (Maier/Kampf/Kastberg 2007: 455)

This new (home-based) way of disseminating knowledge among young people entails a more personalized, "constructivist" approach to learning (Okan 2003, 2011; Buckingham/Scanlon 2004).

As a matter of fact, according to Infante (1999), educational hypermedia for children subsume a new cognitive paradigm. They recreate the dynamics of the human brain, whereby different navigation paths can be taken and where the child obtains responses from the digital environment, hence triggering a primary way of learning, that is, learning through experiences (Infante 1999), in that experiential learning is therein put into place (Okan 2011). In particular, a one-to-one and active relationship between the medium and the user is established: it is a personalized, self-paced relationship where contents are presented in different modes in a motivating learning *milieu* (Okan 2011: 1081). Even though the many choices and the non-linear organization might be problematic for some children, another alleged advantage of hypermedia for children is motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, which is boosted by the use of games and the involvement of different senses (Okan 2011).

Educational websites for 21st century multiliterate children should be analysed considering different characteristics (Buckingham/Scanlon 2004). The first issue to be taken into account is multimodality (Kress/van Leeuwen 2001), a characteristic shared, to different degrees, with more traditional educational tools. Specifically, these websites simultaneously exploit different "forms of media, such as pictures, sound, animation, and video" (Turner/Handler 1997: 25). In some websites, for example, there can be speaking characters using a recorded voice or characters who use speech bubbles with no sounds (Buckingham/Scanlon 2004). Navigation is also fundamental: users face "multiple reading paths" (Kress/van Leeuwen 2006: 204) and choose according to their motivation or to the structure of the website (see also Lemke 2002; Baldry/Thibault 2006; Maier/Kampf/Kastberg 2007; Djonov 2008; Maier 2008; Stenglin/Djonov 2010). Interactivity is the third essential aspect to be considered: it can refer to "drill-and-practice" activities whose feedback is merely given by test scores or by more complex problem-solving and simulation activities (Buckingham/Scanlon 2004). Buckingham and Scanlon (2004: 272) point out, however, that "[a] great deal of the material available is unsuitable for younger children because of its linguistic difficulty and its level of specialist information". Consequently, this study will mainly focus on selected examples of the verbal popularization strategies adopted in the two official websites for children of the European Union[3] in order to determine if the specialized knowledge conveyed by the verbal text is *de facto* made accessible to children.

3. Theoretical framework

The primary theoretical framework of this study is Discourse analysis. To identify popularization strategies – that is those discursive practices that are used to facilitate layman's access to specialized scientific knowledge – we used Calsamiglia and van Dijk's (2004: 372) classification of the following five forms of "explanation", since such a classification can be effectively applied to different types of popularizing discourse (scientific, political, etc.).

- The first form of explanation is *denomination* or *designation*, which consists in introducing new terms to point to specific meanings.
- Closely linked to denomination is *definition*, which involves the explanation of unknown terms by listing some general and specific properties of the referent.
- Another procedure is *reformulation* or *paraphrase*, which can be realised by rephrasing a given meaning through a relative clause or an apposition or, alternatively, by replicating a given meaning in parentheses or between dashes, or by reformulating it in the form of a quote or a metalinguistic expression (e.g., *are called*).

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3 For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the verbal and the visual see Silletti 2017.

- A fourth procedure is *generalization*, which draws general conclusions from specific examples or cases.
- The last category is *exemplification*, which provides specific instantiations of general phenomena.

These discursive resources work on the lexical and syntactic level. There are other resources that, on the contrary, work on a cognitive level. They are classified under the label of *analogy* or *association* (Calsamiglia/van Dijk 2004: 376), and include linguistic similes and metaphors. In Lakoff and Johnson's words, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980: 5). The 'other' element is usually cognitively familiar to the reader, being part of his/her background knowledge. A simile, on the other hand, is a type of metaphor which is easily identifiable as it is accompanied by specific indicators such as *like*, *as*, *similar to*, *the same as*.

In addition to these resources, knowledge dissemination strategies also involve other elements associated with popularization. This is the case of forms of reader engagement (Hyland 2005), i.e. elements that selectively direct the reader's attention such as personal pronouns (*you*, *your*) or questions. As discussed in the literature (Sezzi 2015, 2017; Diani 2015, 2018), recourse to reader pronouns and questions is typical of information books and educational materials for children. This is also a recurrent strategy in the educational websites under examination.

In this study we will examine comparatively the popularizing strategies in two websites – namely, Kids' Corner and Euro Kids' Corner – in order to support the procedures established by Casamiglia and van Dijk and presented above.

4. The corpora

The educational websites under analysis, Kids' Corner and Euro Kids' Corner,[4] were both launched by the European Commission in 2011 as part of their educational communication. As explicitly stated in the websites, they are addressed to children aged from about six to sixteen years old. Specifically, Kids' Corner can be accessed from a link on the European Union portal while Euro Kids' Corner can be accessed from the EU website of economy and finance. They are available in all the other EU languages, but only their English versions are analysed in the present paper.

In general, both websites are very straightforward in their multimodal and hypertextual organization; they do employ limited animation, limited or no sound and have a merely "drill-and-practice" organization (Buckingham/Scanlon 2004). As Silletti (2017: 173) points out for Kids' Corner, the structure of the website is very simple, intuitive, with repetitive mechanisms so that children can easily use it. This can also be said for Euro Kids' Corner.

With regard to Kids' Corner, the informative section "The EU: what's it all about?" is introduced by a series of questions it aims at answering, thus stirring the audience's curiosity (see Silletti 2017). The access is granted by the links "Click here to find more about EU!" and by "Go" within a picture with a rocket sent into orbit and flying over Europe, stressing the idea of learning as a journey. When clicking on "Go", a map of Europe appears, which is a sort of clickable "grande légend" (Silletti 2017: 167), a big legend, with an introductory text on the left inserted in a sort of drop-down map or curtain. By moving the cursor on the nation that the child wants to have information about, a box appears explaining when the nation joined the European Union and other details on the relationship between the nation and the EU. By clicking on each nation, on the other hand, a big magnifying glass

4 http://europa.eu/kids-corner/ (last accessed December 2018); http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/netstartsearch/kids/ (last accessed December 2018)

appears, a visual metaphor for the process of discovery implied in the navigation of the website, together with the flag of the nation and an accompanying box telling when the nation joined the EU, its capital city and few geographical and political information. Simultaneously, a bigger box is visible on the left detailing cultural information as well as fun facts about the EU member state the user has chosen to read about. At the top of the box, there are two pictures representing two symbols (food and monuments) of the country.

The section "Learn more about the euro" of Euro Kids' Corner, instead, features a map of Europe at the top of the screen, a central panel with an introduction to the theme of the website with further links to three subsections together with a dialog box and an internal link to go back to the games. The three subsections deal with three different topics connected to the European currency: "All about euro", "The euro and you", "Life of a euro". They are all three characterized by different colours to favour children's comprehension.

The corresponding web pages are subsequently divided into paragraphs that the user can directly access through the links in the previous page and that deepen some aspects of the European currency. Pictures, but mainly photographs, are used in a symmetrical relationship with the verbal text. They do represent what is described by words.

In the following section, we will analyse the verbal text of the informative and more educational parts constituting the websites under examination in order to see which popularizing strategies are adopted.

5. Analysis: Focus on the popularizing strategies

5.1 Kids' Corner

The analysis of the popularizing strategies focuses on the section "The EU: what's it all about". The verbal texts examined are the introduction to the European Union and the texts centred on each member state. As Silletti (2017) notes, these texts have the same tripartite structure: the pictures with their respective captions introducing the nation, a second longer and exclusively verbal part divided into paragraphs describing the nation from various points of view, and the third part entitled “Five interesting facts” in which five curious facts or traditions of each country are presented with questions or exclamative sentences.

Moving on to the popularizing strategies, it can be observed that *definition* is the first strategy to be detected both in the English and in the Italian version (64 instances). It is mainly related to specific concepts such as the explanation of the “Single Market”, in the introductory text “The EU: what’s it all about?”, and of the “Democracy” in the text on Greece:

(1) The Single market *means* people, products and services move freely between EU countries.[5]

(2) Did you know that Greece is the birthplace of ‘democracy’, *which means* ‘government by the people’?

Another recurrent strategy is *denomination* (27 instances) used, for example, for giving children the name of some traditional food or national dishes, or for more complex notions (such as the Baltic countries in example (4)).

(3) There are many French cheeses, such as Brie and Camembert, which can be eaten with the famous traditional food *called* baguette.

(4) It borders the Baltic Sea and is one of a group of countries *called* the Baltic States.

Also *exemplification* (26 instances) is often found, usually introduced by the expression “such as”:

(5) Italy also has active volcanoes, *such as* Mount Vesuvius near Naples, and Mount Etna on the island of Sicily.

(6) There are many Italian artists, *such as* Michelangelo and Botticelli.

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5 In all examples, emphasis is added.

Similes (5 instances) are introduced by "like", often anchoring specific concepts to children's lives and experiences. Yet, they are not as frequent as the other popularizing strategies:

(7) *It's a bit like in a school class*. As in a good community, the stronger ones help the weaker ones. And as in a class where some children like maths and other prefer music, some EU countries have interests that are different to others.

Another frequent strategy is the use of questions, a characteristic also identified in information books for children (Sezzi 2015, 2017) and other educational materials for children (Diani 2015, 2018). In the website, there are two different types of questions with different purposes (Silletti 2017: 171). There are questions (107 instances) whose aim is to grasp children's attention. In particular, they do so by referring to children's background knowledge, culture and life, directly addressing them through the use of second-person pronoun and typically aimed at engaging the reader:

(8) *Have you heard* of the artists Salvador Dalì and Pablo Picasso? You should look up their work on the Internet.

(9) *Have you ever tried* Belgian chocolates? They are said to be the best in the world!

Similarly, there are also questions (79 instances) that, besides having an engaging function, already contain their answer. Consequently, they are vehicles of knowledge, being the information to be disseminated the heart of the question itself, and at the same time they involve the readers through their game-like structure similar to the fun-fact questions related to trivia and curious facts, as shown in the examples below. They all begin with the opening formula "Did you know…?":

(10) *Did you know* that the Pyrénées mark the border with France?

(11) *Did you know* that the Eurotunnel connects England and France?

(12) *Did you know* that, apart from Malta, it has the smallest population in the EU, with some 0,5 million?

(13) *Did you know* that Finland has nearly 190 000 lakes and 180 000 islands?

The website, therefore, takes advantage of four main popularizing strategies – namely, *definition*, *denomination*, *exemplification* and *analogy/simile* – and of the use of questions, trying to convey difficult or possibly unfamiliar concepts or facts to children.

5.2 Euro Kids' Corner

Some similarities in terms of popularization can be observed in the use of specialized terminology on both the websites under scrutiny here. Like in Kids' Corner, in Euro Kids' Corner, when specific terms are introduced, they are followed by a *definition* (11 instances), as illustrated in (14) or by a *denomination* (7 instances), which indicates the specialized name of new terms, as shown in (15), in which the new word is introduced by the expression "known as":

(14) What is money?
it is a medium of exchange for trade because it has a clear value that is trusted by everyone.

(15) […] the countries that decided to adopt the euro spent the following years preparing their economies – these preparations are *known as* 'economic convergence'.

Possible problematic terms or concepts are sometimes followed by a *paraphrase* (2 instances), aiming at explaining the meaning of the term/concept through simpler language, as exemplified in the following extract:

(16) […] the rules of EMU ensure that a country has a sustainable economy – *in other words*, it can pay its debts, and its pensions, in the future.

Other similarities can be observed in the use of second-person pronoun *you* in both websites. Like in Kids' Corner, in Euro Kids' Corner, directly addressing children as readers is a recurrent strategy (5 instances). This is illustrated in the following examples:

(17) As *you* will see […]

(18) If *you* look at the design, *you* can see […]

Both websites highlight the tendency to introduce children to new concepts through questions. Euro Kids' Corner tends to use *wh*- and *how*-questions (8 instances), as illustrated in the following extracts:

(19) *What* is money?

(20) What types of euro coins and banknotes exist, and what makes them?

(21) *How* was the euro introduced?

(22) *How* does the euro help us?

Recourse to *wh*- and *how*-questions, as shown above, suggests a didactic function reflecting the purpose the website is designed for, i.e. for children who need to learn the basic notions concerning the topic discussed. By using these types of question, the writer also tries to focus children's attention on the issue in order to arouse their interest and curiosity (Webber 1994). We may speculate about this strategy on the basis of the function *wh*-questions express: "an imbalance of knowledge between participants" (Hyland 2002: 530), which helps "to construct readers as learners, and learning as a one-way transfer of knowledge" (2002: 535) from expert to non-expert.

6. Conclusions

The analysis has shown that popularization aimed at a young audience involves recontextualisation of expert discourse for the lay audience, in the same way as popularization targeting adults (e.g. Garzone 2014; Gotti 2014; Mattiello 2014). However, given that its specific addressees have limited background knowledge and cognitive abilities, concepts need to be more simplified in popularization for children than in popularization for adults, but not to be dumbed down to trivialisation or banality (De Marchi 2007), as the frequent recourse to popularizing exemplification strategies resulting from our findings has revealed.

The results emerging from the study indicate that the websites under examination use similar strategies to communicate and recontextualise knowledge to children. In particular, as far as the content is concerned, the strategies identified involve adjusting information to children's knowledge through definitions, denominations, similes, and exemplification (Calsamiglia/van Djik 2004): the accuracy of information (or avoidance of trivialization) and comprehensibility are thus granted.

Another level of similarity can be observed in the use of linguistic features typical of dialogic interaction (i.e. *you*). This finding echoes Webber's (1994) and Hyland's (2005) views, according to which appeal to the reader is a strategy aiming at engaging the reader in the text and drawing him/her into the discourse. This strategy foregrounds the highly interactive, reader-oriented nature of the website for children, whose main purpose is both to include the readership and to create a rhetorical effect of "closeness and involvement", as described by Breeze (2015: 39), who suggests that "the level of familiarity associated with the second person serves to involve the reader in the story". The use of second-person pronoun *you* is often found (or implied) in questions as another form of reader engagement: this applies to the case of both *wh*- and *how*-questions, used to possibly simulate a classroom context, quiz-like questions, or questions on children's lives and experiences.

Interestingly, the data also indicate how the use of illustrations supports the popularization strategies identified. The images used help interpret the information transmitted. In both websites, they are exclusively cartoon-like drawings, often representing stereotypical elements of the nation they refer to. These clichéd representations are meant to mirror the verbal text (Silletti 2017), thus facilitating its interpretation. This aspect, associated with the popularizing strategies underlined, makes the websites particularly accessible and simple. Given its more specific content, focused on euro rather than more general issues, Euro Kids' Corner in addition to drawings also displays realistic photographs on specific details.

In conclusion, it can be observed that in these two official websites on EU, the necessity of popularizing knowledge is paralleled by the need to involve the addressees and this explains the interactive nature of these websites and the popularizing strategies adopted.

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DANIELA CESIRI

Knowledge Dissemination in Paleontology. A Case Study from the Animated Series *Dinosaur Train*

1. Introduction

Paleontology is defined as "the science of prehistoric life – of the fauna and flora of the geologic past" (Schindewolf 1993: 1), thus it presents itself as a complex, hybrid domain that combines methods of analysis from a wide range of disciplines, from the hard sciences in order to investigate ancient fossils, to the arts – and even computer science – in order to create realistic reconstructions of the aspect and living environment of dinosaurs, which are at the core of the discipline itself.

Paleontology is a domain that is also extremely popular among the general public, since "dinosaurs embody the drastic changes that life on Earth has undergone. Chasing after dinosaurs is really a quest to fill in part of our own backstory" (Switek 2014). This popularity creates specific expectations in the public, who wants to receive a reliable as well as enjoyable representation of their favorite prehistoric creatures. Children, in particular, are enthusiastic about dinosaurs as is demonstrated by merchandise of all sorts, dedicated exhibitions, children's narrative and syllabus books, movies, and TV programs. In cases such as these, dinosaurs are often anthropomorphized so that children can easily identify with them. The characterization of dinosaurs is thus the work of creative experts but, most importantly, of the actual paleontologists who dig out the fossils, reconstruct and study scientifically the aspect and the lives of these extinct animals, and who often work as consultants for the entertainment or the publishing industries. It is for this reason, then, that any product for children concerning dinosaurs is to be seen as a complex creation as well as a very peculiar kind of dissemination of scientific knowledge which, from the experts, is mediated to the young public through shows, books, and media in general.

The present study analyzes how specialist knowledge regarding dinosaurs is transmitted to preschool children. To do so, the animated series *Dinosaur Train* (aired by the American PBS) is investigated. One part of a representative episode is analyzed in order to identify the verbal and visual strategies that are used to communicate complex scientific knowledge to young children, making Paleontology engaging and educational at the same time. The visual aspects are investigated using Baldry/Thibault's (2006) tools for multimedia analysis, while the verbal features are examined in the context of already existing literature on knowledge dissemination (KD).

2. Knowledge dissemination to children

KD practices, especially when targeting lay audiences, consist in "a vast class of various types of communicative events or genres that involve the transformation of specialized knowledge into 'everyday' or 'lay' knowledge, as well as a recontextualization of scientific discourse" (Calsamiglia/Van Dijk 2004: 370). The recourse to those resources is also known as popularization. The process of popularizing scientific contents implies a certain degree of recontextualization and reformulation which stems from the very purpose that lies at the basis of popularizing texts themselves. KD might indeed have an informational purpose, when the audience is informed about certain scientific facts or is updated on new discoveries that change previous or common knowledge (e.g., in the case of newspaper/magazine articles, documentaries, etc.). Another purpose might be pedagogical, when the audience of non-experts is taught specialized knowledge, usually in formal teaching situations in all the stages of the education system. A certain degree of pedagogical implications is also present in

KD for informational purposes. In this case the main difference between the two communicative contexts lies in the way the non-experts will use the information provided in. In the case of KD for informational purposes, the facts conveyed are used to increase common knowledge in order to help people make sense of the world, of human behavior and society. In the case of KD for pedagogical purposes, scientific knowledge is used by pupils and students to build a whole set of cognitive tools through which to make sense of the world and be able to interpret specialized information.

Another element which is taken into account by KD is the targeted audience and their (presumed) knowledge of the topic/domain. This factor greatly influences the choices of the communicative strategies by which a scientific fact is popularized. Indeed, decisions in this case do not lie as much in the amount of knowledge to be popularized, but rather in how the popularization is carried out. Consider, for example, KD for adults and KD for children. Conveying complex, specialized concepts to adults involves a certain degree of knowledge that they are expected to possess because of their education, previous readings, or simply because of their experience of the real world. In the case of KD aimed at children, this previous knowledge cannot be expected, since children are at the early stages of their education and have limited experience of/in life. In the case of preschoolers, the category considered in this study, the amount of previous knowledge/experience is even more limited given their very young age.

The literature concerning KD aimed at children is relatively limited. While some studies have investigated the strategies employed to disseminate legal knowledge to young audiences (e.g., Engberg/Luttermann 2014; Sorrentino 2014; Diani 2015, 2018), existing literature chiefly addresses methods on how to teach the theoretical aspects of the hard sciences (such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and so forth) as well as their practical application to experiments and real life (Curtis 1998; Hong/Diamond 2012; Fusaro/Smith 2018). So far, no linguistic study – to the knowledge of the present author – has yet attempted at investigating the linguistic, discursive, or pragmatic features that characterize the popularization of scientific discourse to preschoolers or to children in primary school.

2.1. Educational TV shows and the use of dinosaurs

An approach similar to that described for formal teaching in the studies mentioned above is to be found in educational TV programs. In fact, according to Coccetta (2016: 66),

> these shows follow a similar format where TV characters have to deal with a problem and encourage the viewers to actively engage in its solution. Research (e.g. Kirkorian/Wartella/Anderson 2008; Tizard/Hughes 2008) has demonstrated that preschoolers benefit from these shows because the presentation of problem-solving situations and the direct interaction between the TV characters and the viewers stimulate the development of the latter's basic skills in literacy and mathematics as well as their social skills.

The actual educational impact of these programs has widely been debated among experts: on the one hand, we find those who have expressed criticism (Fisch 2005 mentions, for instance, John 1999; Kunkel 2001; Wilson *et al.* 1997); on the other hand, extensive literature has stressed the programs' positive effect on developing literacy skills and scientific thinking and problem-solving (cf. Fisch 2000: 63-64).

As regards the use of dinosaurs, despite their vast success among children of all ages, it must be said that the prehistoric beasts do not find a real place in research on the teaching of science. They are used in Poling/Evans (2004: 364) to measure "children's understanding of extinction and of death", while other studies use their 'anthropomorphized' or 'cartoonized' versions only as a means to teach children various skills not related to scientific KD, such as social and emotional competence (Joseph/Strain 2003; Webster-Stratton/Reid 2005). On the contrary, if we consider the plethora of TV programs, books, and documentaries for children, dinosaurs are among the major protagonists. For instance, an exploratory Wikipedia query produces 57 pages under the search string 'Television series about dinosaurs', which testifies the enormous interest that dinosaurs generate in the 'edutainment' business.

3. Material and methods of analysis

The analysis of the *Dinosaur Train* series is divided into two parts: first, the visual analysis starts from a multimodal transcription of one sample episode (chosen as representative for the series) in order to investigate patterns and strategies in terms of visual structure and graphic elements. Then, the verbal component is analyzed in order to identify the linguistic features that characterize scientific discourse in the series, and how they contribute to the popularity of the series, in the US and abroad, even though the episodes deal with such a complex discipline as Paleontology presented to preschoolers.

3.1. The Dinosaur Train *animated series*

The animated series *Dinosaur Train* is broadcast by PBS, the brand of the US Public Broadcasting Service dedicated to children's edutainment. The series, in particular, is produced by The Jim Henson Company, which is known worldwide for animated and non-animated entertainment programs, such as *The Muppets*, *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, and the iconic movies *The Dark Crystal* that features animatronic creatures (cf. <https://www.henson.com/>) and *Labyrinth* which combines animatronic creatures and real actors (such as actor and singer David Bowie). The series here investigated, *Dinosaur Train*, is unique in its own genre since it does not show the interaction between animated characters and real actors; it rather shows a combination of animated and live-action segments with a real paleontologist, Dr Scott Sampson (fieldwork paleontologist, and president and CEO of Science World British Columbia in Vancouver, BC).

The series was first aired in 2009 and has reached, today, its fourth season (cf. <http://www.pbs.org/parents/dinosaurtrain/>). The target public of the series are preschool children, aged three to six. In fact,

> *Dinosaur Train* embraces and celebrates the fascination that preschoolers have with both dinosaurs and trains, while encouraging basic scientific thinking skills as the audience learns about life science, natural history and paleontology. (http://www.pbs.org/parents/dinosaurtrain/about/)

The main plot tells the story of Buddy, a young Tyrannosaurus Rex of the same age as the target public, who is adopted by a family of Pteranodons. With its adopted parents and siblings Buddy travels in each episode to several prehistoric lands and eras, using a special train, the Dinosaur Train of the title, which

> is a colorful locomotive, customized to accommodate all kinds of dinosaurs. […] The Dinosaur Train has the ability to visit the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous worlds, while the Train's Conductor, a knowledgeable Troodon, provides passengers with cool facts about dinosaurs along the way. (http://www.pbs.org/parents/dinosaurtrain/about/)

The edutainment structure of the series is complex and is constructed to attract the young audience's attention since children can identify themselves with Buddy and his siblings as they have the same age and 'inquisitiveness' (Fusaro/Smith 2018). Children enjoy the reassuring presence of parental figures (the Pteranodon parents) as well as of teacher-like models in the Train Conductor and, above all, in Dr Scott Sampson. In addition, the series mixes fantasy and real facts since the train travels across eras and prehistorical continents, which are depicted and described realistically, while using funny characters and vivid colors, suitable for children of such a young age.

Different scientific aspects are developed in each season of the series: in fact, the series features Earth Science as a broad domain but each season explores different aspects related to prehistorical eras, fauna and flora, dealing with current issues such as biodiversity, extreme weather and climate change, the importance of eco-systems, geology, and so forth. The episodes also deal with topics familiar to the children's everyday lives (e.g. weekend activities with the family such as camping and picnics but also social diversity and acceptance, important steps in the process of growing-up, etc.). Finally, the series has a ‘companion’ website (<http://pbskids.org/dinosaurtrain/>) with specific, interactive sections designed for children, parents, and teachers.

Each season is composed of 89 episodes, each of which lasts around 30 minutes. The structure of each episode is the same in every season: two animated stories of eleven minutes each develop the main topic of the episode and are separated by a short live-action segment (lasting around one minute and 30 seconds) featuring Dr Scott Sampson who describes the aspect, behavior and natural habitat of the dinosaurs seen in each episode. Considering the repeating structure of the episodes, and for space constraints, the present chapter shows the results from the analysis of one episode, taken as representative of the whole season and, by extension, of the whole series.

4. Visual analysis

4.1. Methodology

The episode here investigated is taken from Season 1 of the series; the analysis focuses in particular on the short live-action segment, which is clearly identifiable as the moment in which specialist knowledge is explicitly popularized to children. The visual component of the segment was investigated using Baldry/Thibault’s (2006: 47) phasal analysis for the transcription of film texts, in which phases are defined as “text-analytical units in terms of which the text as a whole can be segmented and analyzed”. Consequently,

> phases are the basic strategic meaning-making units in a film text […]. A multimodal transcription of a film text reconstructs the way information is divided into block and the way these blocks relate to metafunctional organization and the constant changes in this metafunctional organization as the text flows in time […]. Transcription can thus help us identify many elements

> in a film text and suggest the way they integrate to make meaning. (Baldry/Thibault 2006: 49)

Phasal analysis, then, considers the synchronic as well as the diachronic dimension of the 'film text' investigated, and it "shows how *small-scale* units […] can be related to *larger-scale* textual units" (Baldry/Thibault 2006: 50, italics as in the original). In the present case, the phasal analysis facilitates the identification of specific units in the live-action segment that, alone, mark a specific moment in the description of the dinosaur and that, together, characterize the KD phase present in each episode of the series.

Phases	**Description of Phases**	**Macrophases**
Phase 1	Opening theme song with specific animation and opening credits.	Macrophase 1
Phase 2	The Train Conductor anticipates the topic of the episode.	
Phase 3	The family starts the day with some everyday event/activity. This prompts the journey in the episode.	
Phase 4	The family boards the train and the Train Conductor introduces their journey (essential information on era, species, etc.).	
Phase 5	First 11' animated story.	Macrophase 2
Phase 6	Dr Scott (with real children and animations) gives more detailed information on dinosaurs/eras/species evolution.	Macrophase 3
Phase 7	Second 11' animated story with funny conclusion of the episode	Macrophase 4
Phase 8	Closing theme song with end credits	Endphase

Table 1. Phasal Analysis.

The multimodal transcription started with a phasal analysis of the episode. Table 1 shows that the episodes in the series are generally composed of eight phases which, in turn, are part of four Macrophases and one Endphase. The live-action segment is positioned in Macrophase 3, Phase 6, approximately halfway through the entire episode, marking a division between the two animated stories. As already mentioned, this is the moment of real KD present in the episode and it is pivotal to explain children what they are actually watching, the aspect and behaviour of the dinosaurs in the episode, which are both functional to the development of the storyline of the episode itself. In addition, Phase 6 is also used to move on to the second part of the animated story and, most importantly, to contextualize the episode scientifically, thus teaching children since an early age what the scientific method of research consists in, and what actually lies behind every scientific discovery.

The multimodal transcription of the live-action segment was conducted adapting Baldry/Thibault's (2006) and Coccetta's (2016) multimodal transcription method. The elements considered for the segment are not only the individual frames grouped per phase but also the identification of participants and processes showed in the scene. Other elements included in the analysis of each frame and phase are the linguistic component of the script (investigated in greater detail in Section 5), the sounds and the soundtrack accompanying the script, as well as kinesic and proxemic elements, namely body movements and how participants use the space for communication between themselves and the viewers. Each of these elements was considered as a factor which could possibly influence meaning-making in each frame.

The tabular organization of the transcription allows the parallel breakdown of all the elements composing each frame. In the table used for the transcription, represented in Figure 1, the column named 'Sequence' indicates the sequence of frames that compose that particular part of the live-action segment. The column labeled 'Frames' shows the main frame representing the specific sequence, while 'Participants & Processes' describes what is depicted and what is represented in the frame. According to Halliday/Matthiessen (2004), in the Systemic-Functional model, the representation of reality consists of processes, participants, and circumstances. A process is the event or the state that is being observed, while participants are defined as all the ‘entities’ that are involved in the process. Circumstances specify when, where, why and how a process happens. All these elements were taken into consideration in the multimodal transcription of the segment. The column indicated as ‘Language’ contains the verbal transcription of what is being said in each frame, while ‘Sound’ provides information on the music and soundtrack that accompany the specific frame. Finally, the column ‘Kinesics and Proxemics’ contains information on the body movements of those who appear in each frame and how they contribute to the meaning-making of the sequence, along with sound, music, and language. For space constraints, it is not possible to show here the full transcription of the segment, however Figure 1 illustrates a sample of the methodology used.

SEQUENCE	FRAMES	PARTICIPANTS & PROCESSES	LANGUAGE	SOUND	KINESICS & PROXEMICS
1→6		Dr Scott looks at the kids with a picture of Velociraptor in the background. The kids look at different directions		Background tune	Dr Scott’s gaze directed at kids. He stands in a relaxed, friendly position. Kids stare at different directions. They stand distractedly.
7→14		Dr Scott turns to the public. Kids turn to Dr Scott except one.	Dr Scott: Hi!	↓	Dr Scott’s and one of the kids’ gaze is directed at viewers. The other kids stare at Dr Scott

Figure 1. Example of the multimodal transcription of the live-action segment.

4.2. The live-action segment

The multimodal transcription of the segment allowed the identification of a circular, recurrent structure, which characterizes also the other live-action segments in the series. First, Dr Scott Sampson appears standing on a white background, together with a small group of children who stand beside him, and a color picture of the dinosaur described in the segment. After a brief salutation which is the same in every episode (‘Hi! I’m Dr Scott, the paleontologist’), he immediately proceeds with the enunciation of facts on the specific dinosaur. In this frame (Figure 2) Dr Scott appears in full figure, alone or with the children, or in half-figure alone.

Figure 2. Dr Scott and the children.

The next sequence shows Dr Scott asking specific questions to the children, who eagerly reply. As illustrated in Figure 3, they are all shown in half-figure alone, separately (i.e., first the camera shows Dr Scott and then the children), their gazes are all directed at the viewers, with no real direct contact with each other. Then, more facts follow narrated by the paleontologist shown again alone in full or half-figure.

Figure 3. Dr Scott asks questions and a child replies.

The following sequence sees the entrance of a different character (Figure 4): a man dressed formally with a dark suit and a matching hat, showing a serious face. He enters through a computer-generated door, steps with a rigid posture into the space shared by Dr Scott and the children (who are not visible in the scene), raises one hand, uttering “Point of fact!”, and remarks a strictly scientific piece of information about the dinosaur that spoils the children’s enthusiasm for a funny, non-scientific remark told by Dr Scott a moment earlier.

Figure 4. Dr Scott and the Man with the Hat’s entrance.

Children react to the man’s serious remarks with exclamations of disappointment, while the man exits through the same door that disappears from the scene. The comic moment lies in the contrast with the informal and relaxed setting represented by Dr Scott and the children, and the very formal and serious attitude of the man with the hat. This allows Dr Scott to move on to the next sequence, in which he is shown alone in half or full figure, adding more funny facts that restore the informal atmosphere and the children’s enthusiasm.

Then, a real moment of direct interaction between Dr Scott and the children is shown: Dr Scott asks direct questions to the children, looking at them, and the children first look at Dr Scott (Figure 5) and then reply to his questions but gazing again at the viewer’s direction.

Figure 5. Dr Scott and the children interact.

The final sequence in the live-action segment (Figure 6) is a repetition of the initial sequence. Dr Scott is alone again, shown in half-figure against the white background with the static picture of the dinosaur close to his shoulder. He greets the public using the same formula in each episode ("Well, that's all for now. Keep watching for more dinosaur discoveries!"); in other segments from other episodes he also adds some remarks to remind the public to continue watching the series as well as to visit the series' website.

Figure 6. Dr Scott's closes the segment and greets the public.

4.3. Discussion

The analysis of the multimodal transcription sheds light on some interesting elements that, as already remarked about the general composition of the series, reveal a recurrent pattern and a circular structure in the episodes as well as in the live-action segments. For instance, the background in the segment is most of the time white except for the static drawing of a dinosaur. The picture of the dinosaur always appears in the background in vivid colors: it is a realistic representation but is drawn in a cartoon-like style that suits the public's young and impressionable age. The children always wear colorful shirts even though the group of children varies in each episode and they wear different clothes, while Dr Scott always wears the same plain, brownish button-up shirt with matching trousers, as shown in Figures 2 to 6.

The gazes of the humans are always directed at the viewer: while Dr Scott gazes at the children only at the beginning and at the end of the segment, the children gaze only occasionally at Dr Scott: they keep their gaze directed at the viewer even when they need to answer Dr Scott's direct questions. While he talks, Dr Scott gesticulates to remark his statements, which further stresses the importance given to body movements. The soundtrack is perceptible only in the background and is only occasionally used to stress a topical moment in the live-action segment. These acoustic elements (i.e., music and sounds) seem not to be complementary to Dr Scott's verbal narration as one would have expected. Indeed, this is an exception to what is usually found in shows aiming at preschoolers where the young children's natural attraction for audiovisual products rich in music and sounds is extensively exploited (cf. Porta/Herrera 2017). It could be hypothesized that the live-action segment is used to counterbalance the cartoon atmosphere of the animated parts, that are rich in music and sounds, and full of vivid colors. This is also confirmed by the linguistic features found in the verbal analysis of the script.

5. Verbal component

5.1. Literature review and methodology

KD of scientific discourse has long been of interest to linguists and discourse analysts who have investigated not only the elements that distinguish a strictly scientific text from a popularizing one but also the latter's intrinsic features as a genre. Gotti (2003, 2013) affirms that popularization is often compared to the process of translation since in both cases a source text is redrafted into a target text. Moreover, Calsamiglia/Van Dijk (2004) defines KD as recontextualization of scientific information into something which is made accessible to the lay public. In any case, KD includes a transformation of the source (specialist) into target (popularized) material. This transformation can be both intra- and intersemiotic in that it can involve the transformation of a text into another text as well as a change in the channel through which popularized knowledge is disseminated. For instance, the *Dinosaur Train* series transforms scientific knowledge usually communicated in written texts (research papers or monographs) into an audiovisual product that uses important visual choices to attract the young public's attention and to effectively convey reliable scientific information.

This section considers the verbal features typical of KD and analyzes how they are adapted in the series to suit the public of preschoolers. The script of the live-action segment was manually searched to identify its distinctive KD features using, for reference, the linguistic-discursive strategies typical of popularization as they have been indicated in the relevant literature (see Section 2 above and the present section).

5.2. Analysis

The linguistic analysis of the live-action segment reveals that the script contains most of the features typical of KD as they are identified by Gotti (2003, 2013). For instance, Dr Scott Sampson – who is a real paleontologist working in fieldwork research – does not make reference to individual scholars but to the general community of scientists, as in example (1):

(1) We used to think that dinosaurs were covered with scales.

The use of an 'inclusive *we*' communicates to the children that Dr Scott is included in the scientific community of paleontologists; thus he positions himself as an expert, a reliable source of information.

Moreover, tentative expressions (in italics in the examples below) can perform various functions: for instance, as exemplified in (2), they are used with a hedging function to lessen the force of a statement and to catch the children's attention, signaling that something new to them is being introduced. The tentative expression in examples (3) and (4), on the other hand, is used to transmit a certain degree of approximation, telling the children that, considering the evidence gathered by Paleontologists up to that moment, only one possible interpretation is provided by Dr Scott:

(2) *You may be surprised* to learn that some dinosaurs […].

(3) *It's possible that* Velociraptor and other dinosaurs also had colorful feathers that they used for show.

(4) Birds also use their feathers to stay warm and *it's possible that* Velociraptor did the same.

The choice of tentative expressions lies in the aim of any popularizing text, which is "informative rather than argumentative" (Gotti 2003: 304). The use of hedging expressions is thus a way of critically presenting the scientific information that is being popularized. These examples also show an important aspect that is present in the series, namely the intention of the creators to introduce children to scientific research and to the fact that it involves fieldwork, interpretation of data but also conveys the idea that results sometimes are tentative, especially when dealing with prehistoric creatures.

Another element typical of KD is the presence of figurative language, as is the case in the following example:

(5) Having a covering of feathers is a lot like having a warm coat to wear when it's cold outside.

Example (5) provides an analogy that the children can use to compare what they already know to the new information provided by Dr Scott. The use of figurative language is a feature also present in specialized discourse. However, the frequency of usage of figurative expressions in specialized discourse and in KD is quite different. While in specialized discourse metaphors and similes are used mainly to introduce new concepts and new terminology (catachresis), in KD figurative expressions (metaphors, similes, analogies, etc.) are used as in example (5), i.e. to convey abstract or complex concepts to a young audience with a limited experience of the natural world who can, thus, compare the features of the dinosaurs to what they have already experienced in their own everyday reality (Cameron 2003; Diani 2018). As regards terminology, the live-action segment uses a general vocabulary, typical of KD:

(6) Some dinosaurs, like Velociraptor, actually had feathers even though they couldn't fly.

(7) They use their wings to swim and catch food underwater.

(8) A lot of dinosaurs like Velociraptor did have cool-looking feathers.

(9) Birds also use their feathers to stay warm.

These examples show a great use of general categories of animals and approximations such as "some dinosaurs" (example 6), "a lot of dinosaurs" (example 8), "birds" (example 9). These expressions are frequently found in popularizing texts; they "show that the popularizer is aware of the semantic approximation inherent in the suggested periphrasis, which is perceived as an imperfect rendering of the original term" (Gotti 2003: 303). We also notice a preference for everyday terms and even colloquial expressions (as in example 8, "cool-looking feathers") that use a descriptive style that is close to the language that children hear at home or use themselves with family and friends, thus also increasing the possibility that preschoolers will easily remember what they have learned through the episode.

The linguistic choices that were identified in the script of the live-action segment are certainly influenced by the limited time of the segment itself, considering that complex information and facts about dinosaurs are to be provided in one minute and 30 seconds. In addition, limitations to the use of more complex explanations or descriptions are certainly due to the young age of the public as well as to the constraints typical of the medium of communication since TV shows must attract and engage the public's attention, as the educational element is secondary to the entertainment component.

6. Final remarks and further research

One of the starting questions for the present study was to ascertain the reasons why the animated series *Dinosaur Train*, aimed at a public of preschoolers, is so popular and how it manages to transmit specialist knowledge regarding Paleontology in an effective way, still keeping the show entertaining and engaging. The visual and verbal analyses conducted have revealed that KD for the Paleontology domain is achieved in the series using traditional, well-tested popularizing strategies as well as a real expert endowed with excellent communication skills to convey complex concepts. *Dinosaur Train*'s success can also be due to the use of a composite structure made of several phases, which make the series dynamic and, thus, suitable to young children's limited attention span, while it employs a simple and accessible language. The dinosaurs are quite realistic but not terrifying and the humans-dinosaurs indirect interaction makes the life of dinosaurs in ancient eras easier to understand because they are shown in situations that are similar to those children might experience in real life. In sum, the success of the series is achieved thanks to a careful mixture of entertaining, educational, and comic elements.

The analysis of the live-action segment has revealed that the series itself provides interesting material to further investigate 'KD for children'. In this regard, further research includes the comparison of other live-action segments, for instance if KD strategies differ when the dinosaur is well-known (as in the case of Velociraptors, Triceratops, etcetera) or when it is a less common type, or even if it belongs to a newly discovered species. In addition, the animated parts are also worth analyzing since they contain examples of KD spread throughout the story, so it would be interesting to see how KD in the animated parts differs, or is similar to, KD in the live-action segment, and if these differences and/or similarities vary according to the character that conveys them.

The live-action segments as well as the animated parts of the episodes will also be further investigated from a pedagogic standpoint, for instance by comparing their structure and multimodal features to methods in formal teaching (e.g., to the Montessori Method) in order to investigate if the specific choices of the authors of the series are determined by an intentional pedagogic aim. In addition, *Dinosaur Train* will be further investigated by comparing it to other similar edutainment shows in order to understand if the series is a peculiar case or if it follows a common pattern in edutainment products for preschoolers, thus ascertaining if it is unique or just one example of a specific multimodal genre.

Finally, it will be interesting to exploit possible applications of the live-action segments to teaching Paleontology to English as a foreign language (EFL) schoolers. In fact, the segment might be used by primary school teachers in EFL countries who use the CLIL methodology to teach their pupils science-related topics using English as a medium of instruction and who might thus use the segments as supplementary material during science lessons.

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SOLE ALBA ZOLLO

Instagram as a Pedagogical Tool to Enhance Undergraduate Students' Critical Thinking on Specialized Knowledge: A Qualitative Experiment[1]

1. Introduction: Using social media in the classroom

Social media practices have become part of our daily routines, bringing about a lot of changes in our lives and suggesting a new and stimulating perspective on the world (Onwuagboke / Singh 2016) Most students have mobile phones with different capabilities, and employing them for didactic objectives can be stimulating for students, given that it is becoming more and more difficult to engage them with traditional teaching techniques and methodologies.

Over the last ten years, the use of mobile devices in class as a new approach has been widely investigated by scholars (Blair 2013; Ducate / Lomicka 2013; Salomon 2013; Wang / Smith 2013; Bista 2015; Yadegarfar / Shahla 2016). Among all innovations and technologies, employing mobile phones and their various applications has been recognized in language teaching and learning as a new approach. Most students have mobile phones with several facilities that could be used for second language acquisition. The new generations, who have been using high-tech application since their childhood, are much less receptive to traditional teaching methods and materials, including blackboards and textbooks, demanding for greater integration of technologies in their learning experiences (Mirriahi / Alonzo 2015).

[1] I am grateful to all the students for their collaboration and enthusiasm in taking part in the project.

Barton and Lee (2013: 15) explain why studying social media can be important to understand languages. They identify the following ten main reasons:

1. The world is increasingly textually mediated and social media are an essential part of this textual mediation.
2. Basic linguistic concepts are changing in meaning – new sets of concepts are needed.
3. New multilingual encounters online shift the relations between languages.
4. Linguistic resources are drawn upon to assert identities and to represent the self in social media.
5. People combine semiotic resources in new ways and they invent new relations between language and other modes of meaning making.
6. Social media provide spaces for reflection upon language and communication.
7. Language is central to the constant learning in social media.
8. Vernacular language practices are becoming more public and circulated more widely.
9. Language is central to new forms of knowledge creation and enquiry.
10. New methods for researching language are made possible.

Lately, research has focused on the uses of social media in class for LSP courses (Blair 2013; Al-Bahrani / Patel 2015; Al-Bahrani et al. 2017). Since more and more companies and marketers use social media today, most empirical studies on social media and education occur in marketing courses (Rinaldo et al. 2011; Lowe / Laffey 2011; Barn 2016). But the use of social media as a pedagogical tool has also been investigated in other fields, such as medicine (Forgie et al. 2013), education (Lin et al. 2013) and general education courses (Halpin 2016). Recently this practice has been studied in economics education research, providing instructors more active learning opportunities for their students. Al-Bahrani et al. (2016) focus on the use of selfies in economics assignments, and Al-Bahrani and Patel (2015) offer ways to include popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and

Facebook in economics courses to improve students' understanding of economics beyond traditional lectures. Other scholars (Kassens 2014; George 2018) have investigated in particular the use and efficacy of Twitter in economics courses. Their empirical studies have showed that social media in class can help clarify course material (Kassens 2014) and increase knowledge retention (George 2018), apart from making classes more engaging and enjoyable for students.

There are some benefits when social media are used in a classroom. Firstly, thanks to the active process of producing short comments/tweets, students can retain information more easily and an active learning process facilitates understanding (Salemi 2002). Secondly, social media seem to increase students' engagement in a course, due to the fact that young generations use technological devices they are familiar with. Social media platforms play an important role in students' lives and are accessed daily. The popularity and frequent access to these networks by the young suggest that they may improve students' performance (Al-Bahrani et al. 2015).

1.1. Social semiotic studies of social media

Social semiotics (Hodge / Kress 1988) has been developing its methodological framework for three decades now. Scholars have been investigating this field focusing on the relationship between verbal and visual language. This interplay between different semiotic modes in a text or communicative event is referred to as multimodality, that is the combination of linguistic, graphic and spatial resources that creates the meaning of a message. All modes have been shaped through their cultural, historical and social uses to realize social functions as required by different communities, in fact: "People orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes. Thus the interaction between modes is significant for meaning making" (Jewitt 2012). Scholars have been exploring this field in a range of contexts, including workplaces, museum exhibitions, online environments, etc., across a range of genres and technologies. Martinec and van Leeuwen's (2008) research on the inter-semiotic interplay in new media texts suggests that word-image relations are re-negotiated through their reconfiguration in digital media. Significant theoretical investigation of the interaction between verbal and visual language has demonstrated that, thanks to technological developments, visuals are becoming increasingly central in communicative events (Jewitt 2008). Consequently, social semiotic practices are constantly transformed and remodeled. In this regard, Adami (2014: 224) affirms that "[d]igital technologies afford multimodal representation and re-use of previously existing texts in new contexts to an unprecedented extent and number of sign-makers. As a consequence, sign-making practices are being considerably reshaped. A changed media landscape necessarily affects sign-making practices".

Several multimodal studies have focused on how the different modes are organized on websites and other digital learning resources (Jones 2005; O'Halloran / Smith 2011; Norris 2012), and especially the role of on-line communities, as well as hypertexts which combine writing, image and other modes in digital technologies (Lemke 2002; Luke 2003).

1.2. Why Instagram?

According to some studies on the impact of social media on tourism industry (Wang / Alasuutari 2017; Smith 2018), potential travellers are more and more affected by reviews and feedbacks written by other travellers and by the photos uploaded. Online reviews can increase expectations in the users and be beneficial (or detrimental) for tourism practices (Manap / Adzharudin 2013). Users can recommend and suggest places, and they can participate in other users' feeds and constantly update information. The Internet has completely changed the tourism industry and social media, in particular, have changed consumers' behaviour as well as marketers' tourist destinations, in fact "the Internet is fundamentally changing the way of travel information search and the process of determining the travel destination" (Morosan / Jeong 2008: 1090).

Instagram is a relatively new form of communication where users can easily share photos/videos and comments. Since it was launched in 2010 it has grown rapidly with over 800 million active users. As the other social media, it can create a virtual community of students beyond classroom and, according to Yadegarfar and Simin (2016), it can be useful for language learning (the two scholars in fact conducted a study among Iranian undergraduate TEFL students to demonstrate the effects of using Instagram for learning grammatical accuracy of word classes and students' perceptions). Moreover, given the number of visual information it can offer, it has nowadays become one of the primary promotional sources for tourism market (Fatanti / Suyadnya 2015; Parsons 2017). As a matter of fact, while at the beginning Instagram was just another social device to share photos now it is effectively one of the most popular social networks to advertise and promote goods and services.

2. Scope of the study and research questions

This paper illustrates a qualitative experiment aimed at exploring how university students can improve their critical thinking on specialized knowledge via social media. An empirical study on the use of Instagram as a pedagogical tool was conducted in a class of undergraduate students for 4 months (from February to May 2017).

The study tried to answer the following research questions:

- How does the use of Instagram affect students' learning process and improve their critiques of specialized discourses?
- What are students' attitudes towards Instagram as a pedagogical tool?
- Can Instagram be used as an academic tool to apply the theoretical concepts discussed in class?

Pedagogical implications of including Instagram in undergraduate English language curricula are explored, and include suggestions for using social media to enhance skills in English and thematic development such as the language of advertising and tourism, apart from challenging learners creatively by using the theoretical frameworks studied in class. The purpose is to possibly fill in the knowledge gap regarding whether social media can be integrated with traditional pedagogical tools (Al Bahrani et al. 2017) to increase students' engagement and improve their learning process.

2.1. #Uniorscorner experiment: participants, design and procedure

The empirical study was conducted on 130 undergraduate students who decided to take part in this project during the module of "English Language for Advertising and Tourism". The course was addressed to second-year undergraduate students who were attending the three-year degree programme in "Linguistic and Cultural Mediation" at University of Naples "L'Orientale" (Italy). A minimum CEFR B2 level language knowledge of English was required to attend the module.

First of all, an Instagram account called "power_language" was created (Figure 1). All students could have access to the account and they could upload their works individually according to the deadlines given by the teacher. The students, who were invited to attend the lessons regularly, had to produce seven assignments, usually two assignments per month (the full list of assignments is available in the Appendix)[2]. For each assignment they had to focus on a different topic related to the language of advertising and tourism as specialized language explained in class during the semester and post some of the activities produced on the Instagram platform.

[2] Due to space constraints not all assignments will be mentioned in the discussion section.

Figure 1. Instagram page *power_language*

The course programme was divided into two main parts. The first part consisted of an introduction to two main discourse analysis approaches: Critical Discourse Analysis focusing on Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework, and Multimodal Discourse Analysis referring to Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) model of visual design. Faiclough's framework conceives discourse as text, discourse practice and social practice. In other words, this model investigates not only the grammatical, lexical and cohesive features of a texts, but also its production and interpretation in social contexts. Exploring a text as discourse practice means that the discourse analysts should pay attention to *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*, since they link texts to their contexts. The social practice dimension looks at the power relations and ideological processes that discourses (re)produce and challenge. Among the ideological processes identified by Fairclough, *conversationalization* and *commodification* are especially important.

Critical Discourse Analysis is mainly focused on linguistic patterns which produce social inequalities. In a more and more visual culture, images are used to communicate a multitude of concepts, ideas, emotions and actions, and in some cases they convey what words cannot express (Fairclough 2001). Similar to verbal texts, images are related to social conditions, and thus can influence the way a person responds to messages. Fairclough (1993) stresses the idea of visual language (e.g., videos, photographs, multimedia) being particularly effective in conjunction with written and spoken materials. Multimodal communication can also be ideological and shape and reshape people's viewpoints: "images are entirely within the realm of ideology, as means – always – for the emergence of ideological positions" (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 13).

Since people never communicate monomodally, but through the combination of different modes, some lessons were devoted to explain another approach, referred to as Multimodal Discourse Analysis. The teacher focused on the representation of social actors in images and how they relate to viewers and composition. By drawing on the Hallidayan notion of speech acts, Kress and van Leeuwen identify 'demand' and 'offer' images. In demand images the represented participant looks directly at the viewer entering in an imaginary relationship with him/her. The represented participant seems to ask for something suggesting that he/she is in a powerful position. When there is no eye contact with the viewer, the image is an 'offer'. The represented participant does not engage with viewers, nor invites them to share his/her experience. He/she becomes an object of contemplation. In images, distance – which reflects social relations – is given by the size of frame (close shot, medium shot, long shot), that is how close to the viewer a person is depicted in a text: a close shot suggests intimacy, while a long shot means an impersonal relationship.

In terms of composition, Kress and van Leeuwen recognize four types of page organisation: left and right/given and new; top and bottom/ideal and real. The right of the page often contains the key information ('New'), while the left something the reader already knows ('Given'). What is placed at the top of the page is more generalized and idealized ('Ideal'), while at the bottom we find more realistic factual information ('Real'). Then, modality was another parameter explained in class, which "refers to the way we communicate as *how true* or *as how real* a representation should be taken" (Machin 2007: 46). In linguistics levels of truths, or more precisely degrees of probability, are expressed by verbs such as *may*, *will*, *must* and adjectives such as *possible*, *certain*, *probable*. Similarly, images can be of high or low modality. High modality means that the represented participants in images seem realistic. Often adverts show low modality because they have been modified in terms of colour, saturation and brightness.

The second part of the course was based on the major theoretical and discursive aspects of the language of advertising and tourism. For the language of advertising we took into account Goddard's (2002) model on the language of advertising, which allows students to understand the principal aspects of advertising language and apply the concepts on practical activities trying to follow a Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach. Finally, the language of tourism was analysed from a sociolinguistic perspective focusing on Dann's (1996) and Gotti's (2006) models on the language of tourism.

In class, the teacher illustrated the most common verbal and visual strategies of tourism discourse, that is comparison, keywording, testimony, humour, languaging, and ego-targeting. Comparisons such as metaphors and similes are often employed as devices to reduce the effects of strangeness, make a place more familiar and change people's attitudes. Keywording is used to draw clients' attention on specific terms and meanings, stimulating their imagination. Testimony contributes to luring potential tourists to a place: often famous people are used in the advertising industry, but in the discourse of tourism it is the satisfied customer to become the testimony, because people can identify themselves with him/her. Humour, often employed through the use of puns, is frequently present to surprise the reader and make the message memorable. Languaging such as alliteration, repetition, and use of foreign words, are widely encountered and can be memory sustaining devices. Ego-targeting underpins the ideology of advertising language that the consumer is an individual, singling him/her out from the crowd. This is achieved by the use of pronouns such as *we* and *you*, or rhetorical questions. The potential customer becomes special and he/she has the feeling to be part of an intimate dialogue in search of his/her personal happiness. Van Leeuwen (2006: 139) claims that "[m]uch of the cohesive work that used to be done by language is now realized, not through linguistic resources, but through layout, colour and typography." Dann (1996), in fact, identifies several visual techniques such as colour, format, visual cliché and connotation procedures, since tourism promotional materials never speak through words alone.

The last lessons were devoted to illustrating the most common lexical, syntactical and textual features of the language of tourism (Gotti 2006). The main lexical features are: monoreferentiality, conciseness, use of emphatic language and metaphorisation. Monoreferentiality means that, although each term has not only one referent, in a specific context just one meaning is allowed. Consequently, the language of tourism has created new terms with a condensed semantic value so these terms cannot be substituted with synonyms but, if anything, explained through definition or paraphrased. Conciseness refers to the fact that concepts are expressed in the shortest possible form, for example through blending or abbreviations. Rhetorical emphasis, at the level of lexis, can be introduced through the use of evaluative adjectives or superlatives.

The main syntactic features are expressive conciseness and premodification. In tourist text-types conciseness is attained by avoiding relative clauses as much as possible and replacing them with affixed terms, and by privileging clauses with passive forms, thus omitting agent and auxiliary. Syntactic conciseness is also guaranteed by premodification and, more precisely, by nominal adjectivation or compounds.

Finally, in terms of textual features, tourism texts consist of standardized parts which are constitutive of the genres. The genres used in tourism are highly codified, and this increases semantic coherence and transparency, besides affecting linguistic choices. In class, the teacher illustrated the most typical genres in the world of tourism such as tourist guides, brochures and itineraries. In this last phase we had a more practical set of lessons where a variety of contemporary tourism and advertising genres were investigated from a linguistic and cultural perspective (see Assignment 7).

Apart from uploading the visual material and brief captions on Instagram and interacting through comments, the students had to send the teacher all the activities via mail as a Word document or in Pdf format, explaining for each assignment the reasons of their choices in more detail. This allowed the teacher to collect and store all the assignments in a systematic way for future feedbacks/discussions, to follow the class-related Instagram posts and comments more easily and supervise students' participation. At the end of the course students were asked four open-ended questions about the use of Instagram as an additional pedagogical instrument to gather more detailed information and feedback (see Appendix, assignment 7 - activity 3).

3. Students' outputs and discussion[3]

During the first week of class the teacher illustrated the main concepts of Critical Discourse Analysis focusing on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. Assignment 1 was an introductory activity which required the students to find any text-type containing an example of *intertextuality* and/or *interdiscursivity*, and an example of *conversationalization* and/or *commodification* and post them on Instagram. The purpose of this activity was to make sure that students understood the main concepts in Fairclough's model outlined in class, so as to ascertain that they would be able to use such resources during the most creative stages of our class experiment. Even if this activity seemed to be quite simple, interestingly, thanks to the information exchange and comments on Instagram, we immediately realized most students had misunderstood the concept of commodification of discourse. They uploaded on Instagram images of commercial advertisements where people, especially women, are considered as commodities. On the contrary, for Fairclough (1992: 207), the *commodification* or *marketization* of discourse is a "process whereby social domains and institutions, whose main concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption"[4]. This Instagram-based assignment provided the teacher with an immediate feedback and the opportunity to disambiguate the meaning of this concept in class so that the students could revise the assignment immediately. The possibility of sharing information on Instagram helped students to think critically about the topic giving them enough time to self-correct. Given the interactive nature of Instagram and its immediacy, students had the chance to realize their mistake even before the teacher provided them a clearer explanation of the theoretical concept.

3 The students have provided permission to use their material for research purposes.

4 For instance, this process has affected higher education institutions. Many universities' websites tend to 'sell' their courses borrowing persuasive techniques typical of the language of advertising.

One of the activities of Assignment 2 was titled *#selfie-promotion*. Students were asked to take a selfie, a kind of photographic self-portrait created with a smartphone, and imagine to be the testimonial of a product or organization and explain the reasons of their choice. The teacher decided to exploit the visual self-representation on Instagram, since sharing selfies on social media has become a popular way to exchange and negotiate relationships (Zappavigna 2016). In fact, the selfie, which is today a pervasive social practice, "seem to satisfy the criterion of being a social semiotic pattern with high levels of recurrence" (Zappavigna / Zhao 2017: 240). By posting the entire image or just parts of the body or a shadow or reflection, people can decide to share very personal experiences or commercial products. This apparently simple activity was intended to be then redeveloped in Assignment 3.2. In this stage, first (Assignment 2.2), the teacher explained the anatomy of advertisements (headline, body copy, signature, slogan and/or testimonial) and their main phonological (assonance, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, etc.), lexical/morphological (verb and noun phrases, adjectives, intertextuality, idiomatic constructions), syntactic (sentence structure such as parallelism and ellipsis) and semantic features (personification, metaphor, hyperbole, antithesis, etc.). Then (Assignments 2.3 and 3.1), after explaining Kress and van Leeuwen's idea of composition, focusing on image and gaze, size of frame, social distance and perspective, and, finally, the concept of modality, students were invited to work on the *#selfie-promotion* activity. In the light of the concepts outlined in the previous lessons they were asked to decide if they would change anything in the picture posted previously in order to create a more persuasive advert (Assignment 3.2). After this, they had to post the photo, including the product (if not included before), and add at least a headline, body copy and slogan. This was a strategy meant to help students familiarize with quite complex theoretical concepts and find a practical application. Students became themselves advertisers and found the activity enjoyable. The two activities were also a way to demonstrate that, like other genres, selfies can be recontextualised across contexts, from personal communication to public advertising, media (from social media to printed media) and social practices (such as travel blogging, sexting etc.).

Some students decided to change the photo in terms of composition, as we can see in Figures 2-3. While in the first selfie the student described the picture saying that her main intent was to stir the viewer's curiosity through an action, in Assignment 3.2 she admitted she had changed the photo following Kress and van Leeuwen's principles of composition and social actor representation. In fact, in the revised version we find a demand and subjective image in a decontextualised setting, a very close shot, and a horizontal angle in order to involve the viewer. Moreover, the student added a headline with typical phonological features of the language of advertising outlined in a previous lesson.

Figure 2. *#selfie-promotion*

Figure 3. *#selfie-promotion* revisited

Other students decided not to change the photo but only to add new elements, as in Figures 4-5, where the student concentrated on modality, changing the level of brightness and illumination, and according to the Given-New structure, decided to insert some text on the right side leaving the testimonial on the left.

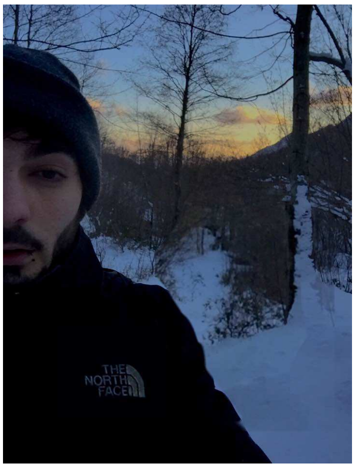

Figure 4. *#selfie-promotion*

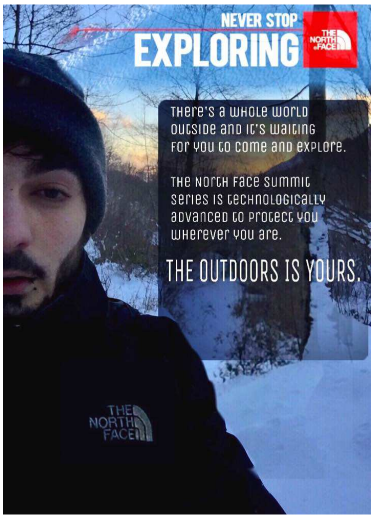

Figure 5. *#selfie-promotion* revisited

Similarly, the student in Figures 6-7 kept the original selfie in that she considered it to be an offer image that could be appropriate to advertise a holiday resort. She decided only to accentuate colour saturation.


Figure 6. *#selfie-promotion*

Figure 7. *#selfie-promotion* revisited

Other students decided to promote ideas rather than products, as in Figures 8-9. Here the student decided to endorse a non-profit organization that fights against homophobia. Interestingly, through class activity the student decided to engage with other students and raise awareness on a very sensitive issue. Instagram becomes, thus, a platform to spread important messages against discrimination among the student university community. In addition, he decided to revise his first version using a triptych compositional structure. For Social Semiotics, in centre and margin compositions, as in the triptych, it is the central element that gives meaning and coherence to the surrounding elements. In the written activity, the student stated that he had placed the most salient element in the centre of the composition to convey immediate symbolic meaning.

Figure 8. *#selfie-promotion*

Figure 9. *#selfie-promotion* revisited

For Assignment 3.1 students had to post on Instagram an advert created by themselves and write a short comment focusing on modality and composition. The results showed that most students had understood the main concepts concerning the functioning of modality. Some students, as in Figure 10, decided to create an advert concentrating only on modality as indicated in the Assignment; others, even if not required, chose to add also a headline and a body copy (Figure 11) showing that they felt confident enough to handle the resources of advertising discourse described in class at the beginning of the course and that they were willing to test their creativity. Others (Figure 12) provided a very detailed description of the advert combining all the techniques studied previously, thus demonstrating that they had acquired the skills to elaborate concepts and recontextualise them, when necessary.

Figure 10. *Pasta*

Figure 11. *We will take you…*

Figure 12. *Facial creams*

Assignment 6.1 was one of the most interactive since each student not only had to post his/her image on Instagram with a comment but he/she had to comment one of his/her colleagues' post. Students had to find an advert exploiting stereotypes and propose some changes in order to break clichés down. With respect to such an add as the one in Figure 13, based on gender stereotypes, two students suggested both visual and verbal changes. While a student suggested a verbal change only in the second part of the headline (from "that's what wives are for" to "that's what you have to do"), another student suggested a different caption for the headline "That's what all of you in the world are for". The second student pointed out that in order to fight against gender stereotypes it is necessary to change the body copy, too (from "I'm giving my wife a new Kenwood Chef" to "we're giving us a new Kenwood Chef"). Students seemed to benefit from this online exchange since they had the chance to discuss on a delicate matter in a familiar way and adjust their works without tension.

Figure 13. *Kenwood Chef*

Likewise, the case of the *Intel* advert (Figure 14) was perceived as being based on a very common discriminatory racist stereotype in advertising, that is, black people as muscular and physically talented but submissive and white people as less muscular but dominant because intellectually superior. The advert shows an un-athletic white manager standing in the middle of the office surrounded by six muscular black runners/employees bowing down and waiting for their boss's instructions. This advert overtly reaffirms the ideology of white supremacy reinforcing racist beliefs. While a student suggested a visual change (the black runners depicted standing and wearing suits) but, probably, without taking into account that also a verbal change was necessary not to lose effectiveness, another student seemed to be more aware of the entire commercial message and suggested a visual change that possibly could work better with the verbal text. He would substitute the black runners with white men and depict both a black and a white manager in the middle. Remarkably, this activity is also an example of how technological devices are not neutral at all (Poulsen 2015), since the second student clearly expresses stance and evaluation when he affirms “I think this advertisement is totally unacceptable”, contrasting her colleague’s more neutral attitude.

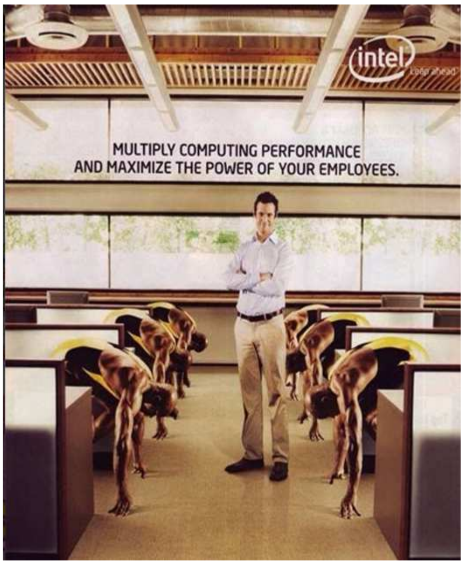

Figure 14. *Intel*

After devoting some lessons to the language of tourism and its most common verbal and visual features, in Assignment 7.1 students were invited to analyse a tourist text-type (brochure, leaflet, website page) focusing on the lexical, syntactical and textual features identified by Gotti (2006) and the visual and verbal techniques mentioned by Dann (1996). Assignment 7.2 was even more practical and more related to the job market. Since nowadays more and more companies/ organisations use Web influencers to promote goods or ideas, the students had to pretend they were Web influencers and design a promotional text-type to promote an unknown place/monument in their city/town. They had to choose at least two hashtags and explain the reasons of their choice. They had to pay attention to hashtags, because as stated by Zappavigna

(2015), beyond indicating the topic of a post, they have specific linguistic functions and they are considered important to build opinions in social media discourse.

Most students produced original works combining the verbal and visual techniques identified by Dann and Gotti and applying multimodal discourse analysis ideas. Figures 15-16 show to what extent students had committed to the entire course. In their last assignment they were able to sum up and apply the main topics studied theoretically in class during the semester. They showed they had internalized discourse analysts' ideas and theories on the language of tourism. In Figure 15 the student used some verbal and visual strategies to catch reader's attention. First of all, she chose an interrogative clause for the headline to establish a close relationship with the viewers and grab their attention. Moreover, she tried to make the verbal text very concise and short, emphasizing the mysterious atmosphere of Villa Porfidia. The language used is informative and persuasive, with a marked pragmatic function. She used key words ("unforgettable experience", "artistic uniqueness", "exciting journey") and the ego-targeting strategy, that is the imperative forms "live, love, discover" and the alliteration "live and love". Concerning visual techniques, the student assembled three images of Villa Porfidia, emphasizing the artistic uniqueness of the royal residence and the peaceful atmosphere of the garden. Similarly, in Figure 16 the student applied some promotional discursive features typical of tourist leaflets such as imperatives and superlatives.

Figure 15. *Villa Porfidia*

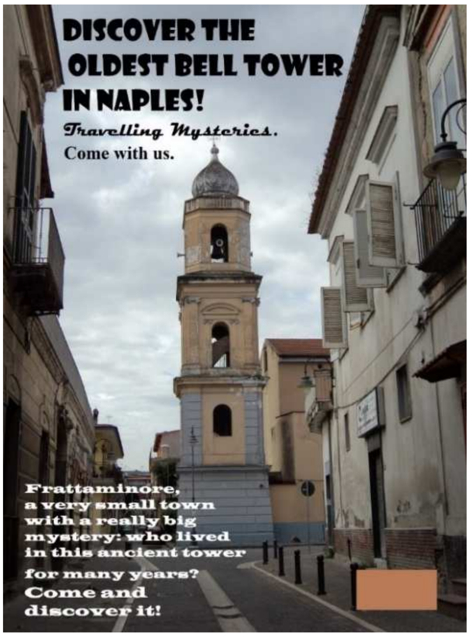

Figure 16. *Frattaminore*

The answers from the questionnaire (Assignment 7.3) showed that all students agreed that thanks to Instagram they had the chance to assimilate the topics step-by-step and share ideas and doubts with their colleagues. 90% of them found the platform an unexpected way to shorten the distance between teacher and student. They found the lessons more interesting and practical. Some students defined Instagram an effective tool to stimulate people's creativity and suggested allowing also "outsiders" (in particular professionals) to be part of this community to stimulate discussion.

The project has provided some practical implications in academic and professional environment. Concerning students' academic performance, 100 students decided to take the exam soon after the module between June and July 2017 passing it successfully. 20 students sat for their exam between September and November 2017 and 10 students sat between February and March 2018. On the contrary, during the 2015-2016 academic year the teaching method was more traditional and no Instagram-based activities were done in class. Between June and July 2016, 60 students passed the exam getting lower marks. Concerning the professional implications, two students had a job opportunity where they had the chance to implement what they had studied in class. For assignment 7.2 a student designed a brochure (Figure 17) to promote an ancient royal building of her town which today hosts military offices. After showing the leaflet to one of the armed forces' officers, she was asked permission to use the brochure for promotional purposes. Another student (Figure 18) had the opportunity to work for an electronic cigarette retailer and he was responsible for its promotion on Facebook. He admitted that thanks to the course he combined marketing strategies with some of the multimodal strategies learned during the course. Probably, the use of Instagram in class helped the students to enhance their critical thinking and perceive some practical implications of the course narrowing down the gap between academic knowledge and professional life.

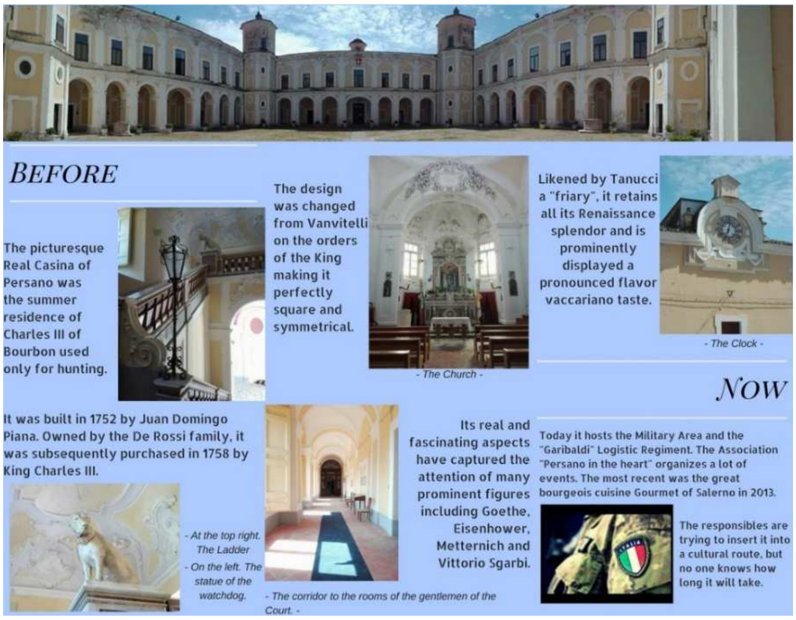

Figure 17. *Royal Casina di Persano*


vodafone IT 09:53 95%
No Smoking ByMed Cercola Promuovi
No Smoking ByMed Cercola ha aggiunto 2 nuove foto.
Pubblicato da Paolo Rizzi
30 giugno ·
Domanda: Come combattere questo caldo estivo?
Risposta: Ancora non li hai comprati?!?!?
THE MEDUSA JUICE
Visualizza l'anteprima della Pagina o modificala


vodafone IT 09:50 96%
No Smoking ByMed Cercola Promuovi
No Smoking ByMed Cercola ha aggiunto 3 nuove foto.
Pubblicato da Paolo Rizzi
1 settembre ·
Se non sai cosa scegliere, non preoccuparti ti aiutiamo noi a complicare la scelta
No Smoking ByMed Cercola
Visualizza l'anteprima della Pagina o modificala

Figure 18. *No smoking by Med Cercola*

4. Conclusions

Most students involved in this project showed enthusiastic engagement and reported a positive learning experience regarding the use of Instagram, and this impression is supported by the fact that, as mentioned in the previous section, a high percentage of students passed the exam successfully soon after the end of the module, between June and July 2017. Although this was their first experience with Instagram, they stated that it was a useful tool for applying what they had discussed theoretically during the lessons. Moreover, according to what we have observed, students' outputs suggest that Instagram-based activities in class can help clarify some theoretical and methodological concepts and enhance students' critical skills. Students also anticipated possible practical implications for using Instagram in their future professional lives, contributing to modifying and creating new social practices.

The experimental study has provided some advantages. All the students involved in the project kept attending classes regularly until the end of the semester. Most of them passed the exam successfully between July and October 2017. At the exam they appeared less stressed, more self-confident and aware of what they had studied compared to those who had not joined the project. Using Instagram helped both students and teacher to have immediate feedback and gradually clarify and understand unclear theoretical ideas. Since the Instagram-based assignments encouraged students to share information on the online platform, during the week they kept commenting on the topics discussed in class, therefore promoting informal learning. Nevertheless, there are some limitations to take into account. Social media are mostly used for personal communication so using them for pedagogical purposes can bring about privacy issues since students' works can be easily and publicly available. This is one of the reasons why the use of social media is not encouraged in educational contexts. In addition, even if Instagram can offer a great amount of visual information which can be suitable for a course on the language of advertising and tourism from a multimodal perspective, the interaction among the actors involved is limited compared to other social media such as Twitter or Facebook.

This study provides initial empirical evidence of the didactic benefits of using Instagram in university courses, but, given that the author recognizes some limits, this analysis might invite theoretical speculation into the field and offer the outline of a pedagogical approach that can be further explored by other scholars in similar educational contexts.

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APPENDIX

Assignment 1
1. Find or take a picture which contains an example of intertextuality and/or iterdiscursivity and post it on Instagram.
2. Find or take a picture which contains an example of *conversationalization* and/or *commodification* of discourse and post it on Instagram.

Assignment 2
1. *#selfie-promotion* - What kind of product/organization have you decided to be the testimonial of? Why have you chosen this photo?
2. Find an advert, identify the features of its design (headline, body copy, signature, slogan and/or testimonial) and identify its linguistic features (phonological, lexical/morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects).
3. Post on Instagram an advert and write a short comment focusing on the image and the gaze (demand/offer image), size of frame and social distance (close-up, medium shot, long shot) and perspective (objective/subjective image).

Assignment 3
1. Post on Instagram an advert and write a short comment focusing on Modality and Composition. You need to promote a product. Which modality markers would you employ? Why? Post the photo on Instagram with a very brief comment.

2. *#selfie-promotion* – Considering what we have studied up to now, would you change anything in the picture you posted last week in order to create a more persuasive advert? Why or why not? Take a new photo and post it on Instagram (this time include the product in the photo and add at least the headline, body copy and slogan).

Assignment 4 – activity 1

Try to find an example of an interesting use of typography in any print genre (poster, flyer, course books etc.). Write a brief comment and post it on Instagram.

Consider the following points:

- Van Leeuwen (2006: 139) claims that “much of the cohesive work that used to be done by language is now realised, not through linguistic resourses, but through layout, colour and typography”. Is this the case in your example text?
- Are there any instances of ‘typopictoriality’ (Stöckl 2005: 208) in your example? If so, what functions do they fulfil?

Assignment 4 – activity 2

Collect some adverts (at least 3) and try to classify them according to:

- what is being advertised – a product, an idea, an image?
- who is being addressed? (adapted from Goddard 2002: 6)

Assignment 5 – activity 1

Find an advert which uses startling images in order to get attention. Describe in detail how the images you have collected achieve their effect. Include consideration of the role of paralanguage, where appropriate. Also estimate the extent to which these images work in conjunction with any verbal text to convey messages. (adapted from Goddard 2002: 19)

Post your advert on Instagram WITHOUT the comment. Choose one of your colleagues’ advert and comment it on Instagram (DO NOT comment an image which has already been analysed). Send me also your colleague’s comment.

Assignment 5 – activity 2
Collect a couple of adverts that seem to you to have an identifiable narrative voice, and explain how that voice is constructed from the language used.
Look for the ways in which some adverts appear to make assumptions about who is being addressed and, again, explain how the language gives rise to those assumptions. (adapted from Goddard 2002: 30)

Assignment 5 – activity 3
Think of a charity you could write some material for, and write an advert which encourages readers to make donations. (adapted from Goddard 2002: 25)

Assignment 6 – activity 1
Find an advert which reinforces any stereotypes. How would you change it in order to break them down? Post the image with your comment on Instagram.
Read one of your colleagues' comment and analyse it. (send your analysis via mail too)

Assignment 6 – activity 2
Compare an advert with one for a similar product in another culture.
Modern multinational companies often market exactly the same product in a number of different countries, and it is very revealing to look at the different strategies they use.
If you want to go further than a comparison on a product basis, you could explore the presentation of particular ideas across a range of advertisements in different cultures or through time within the same culture. For example, how human bodies are presented in advertising varies across cultures, with different cultures having very different rules about what is acceptable and what is taboo. (adapted from Goddard 2002: 70)

Assignment 6 – activity 3
Go to the adbusters site (https://www.adbusters.org/spoofads/).
Choose one or two ads, then go to the real site of an advertiser selling goods of that kind. How are the adbusters texts playing on aspects of

the real advertising? Is there any equivalent of ‘adbusters’ outside of the Internet? (adapted from Goddard 2002: 96)

Assignment 7 – activity 1

Analyse a tourist text-type (brochure, leaflet, itinerary, travel book, travel guide, tourist magazine, website, travel blog) identifying the typical features of the language of tourism.

In particular, focus on:

- lexical, syntactical and textual features (Gotti 2006)
- verbal and visual techniques (Dann 1996)

Assignment 7 – activity 2

Imagine you are a Web influencer. You have been asked to promote an unknown place/monument of your city/town. Design a promotional picture and post it on Instagram.

On a worddoc/pdf/ppt explain the reasons of your choices.

Pay also attention to the hashtags. Apart from *#uniorscorner*, choose at least other 2 hashtags and explain why you selected them.

Assignment 7 – activity 3

1. Answer the following questions. Did you find Instagram useful in class as didactic instrument? Yes/No. Why?
2. Which are the potential advantages and disadvantages of using Instagram in class?
3. What would you suggest to improve its use? Do you suggest any other activities? Other social media?
4. What kind of practical consequences on society could we have if traditional teaching methods are integrated with social media such as Instagram?

VIRGINIA SCIUTTO

Fuiste alpiste y no me importa un comino. Las plantas en el repertorio lingüístico-fraseológico del español de Argentina

1. Introducción

Este trabajo se enmarca dentro de las investigaciones lingüístico-fraseológicas dedicadas al español hablado en Argentina que estamos llevando a cabo desde hace ya algunos años[1]. En particular, objeto de este estudio serán una serie de unidades fraseológicas[2] (UF) del español de Argentina que mencionan plantas (*estar en la parra, regar el helecho*) así como también los alimentos que derivan de ellas como las frutas *(¡chupate esa mandarina!, estar banana*), los cereales (*la paja no es como el trigo, ganarse la avena*) y las hortalizas (*dejar* [a alguien] *a la altura de un poroto, hacerse el zanahoria, ser muy lenteja*).

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1 En principio hemos estudiado los somatismos del español de Argentina desde el punto de vista morfosintáctico y semántico sobre la base de un corpus lingüístico creado *ad hoc* (Sciutto, 2006). Le siguieron otros trabajos de tipo contrastivo español-italiano (Sciutto, 2015a) e historiográfico donde se abordaron, específicamente, cuestiones relacionadas con las principales obras lexicográficas que anticiparon el nacimiento de la fraseología en Argentina (Sciutto, 2015b). Seguidamente, hemos analizado los fraseologismos referidos a los cuantificadores (Sciutto, 2017a), a los animales (Sciutto, 2018), a las locuciones denominativas (Sciutto, 2017b) a las plantas, y seguirán los dedicados a los lunfardismos, a la música, a los italianismos y a los colores.

2 Entendemos por unidad fraseológica combinaciones estables formadas por dos o más palabras y cuyo límite se sitúa en la oración compuesta. Tienen una frecuencia alta de aparición en la lengua y se caracterizan por la institucionalización, la estabilidad y la idiomaticidad (Corpas Pastor, 1996).

El trabajo consta de dos fases:

1. En la primera se presenta el subcorpus inicial creado *ad hoc* que recoge UF florísticas del español de Argentina, seguido de un análisis metafórico, cultural y experiencial que vincula plantas, flores y frutos a los seres humanos.
2. En la segunda fase del trabajo se intentará constatar la presencia de las UF del subcorpus inicial en grandes bancos de datos virtuales; en lo específico en el CREA de la Real Academia Española y en *Google*.

La primera fase del trabajo la hemos llevado a cabo a partir de la publicación del primer Diccionario fraseológico del habla argentina, editado por la Academia Argentina de Letras y Emecé (DiFHA)[3], elaborando una base de datos fraseológicos múltiples y extrayendo manualmente cada una de las expresiones con sus respectivas definiciones, para luego analizarlas bajo diferentes perspectivas. En concreto, se cotejaron seis grupos de UF: las referidas a los cuantificadores, a los animales, a las plantas, a los lunfardismos, a la música, a los italianismos y a los colores.

Como se observa en el Gráfico 1, del total de fraseologismos documentados (2.226), el campo semántico de las plantas -que es el que nos interesa para este estudio-, es el tercero en cuanto al número de unidades que lo componen. Cuenta precisamente con 246 unidades; el primer lugar lo ocupan los cuantificadores (930) y el segundo los que contienen en su estructura interna un zoónimo (694).

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3 Debido a la escasa contemplación de las UF del habla argentina en el material lexicográfico existente hasta la primera década del 2000, inicia a forjarse en Argentina la idea de compilar un diccionario que colmara dichas lagunas. Inicia, de esta manera, el proyecto para la realización de un *Diccionario Fraseológico del habla argentina* (DiFHA), dirigido por Pedro Luis Barcia y por María Gabriela Pauer; un “mataburros” -como se lo llamaría en Argentina- que se publicó en 2010 y que contiene alrededor de once mil artículos y unas quince mil acepciones. Para más detalles sobre este diccionario véase Sciutto (2015, pp. 299-300).

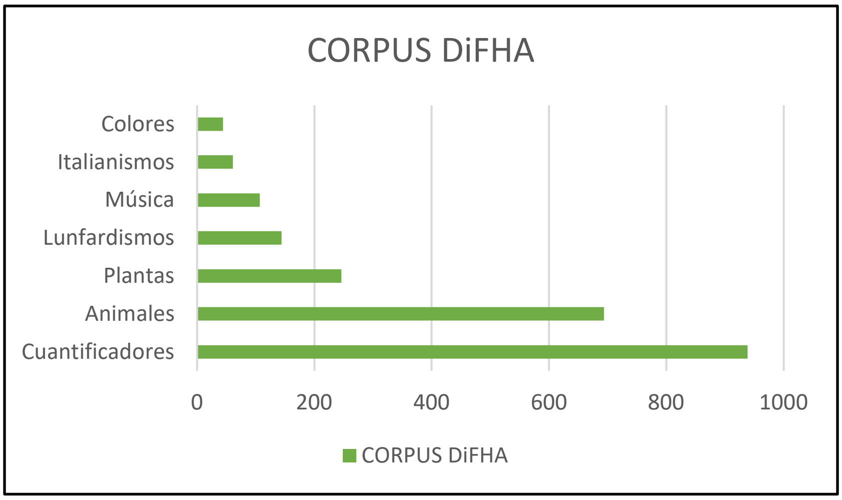

Gráfico 1. Corpus de UF del español de Argentina extraídos del DiFHA. (Datos y elaboración propios).

2. Criterios para la creación del corpus

Hemos establecido criterios precisos para la selección de los fraseologismos a estudiar. En principio, descartando las UF de uso en España y no en Argentina como: [Ser u.c.] *habas contadas*, [Ser u.p.] *un tonto del higo, de uvas a peras*; así como también las de uso común en España y en Argentina: [Estar u.p.] *colorada como un tomate*, [Ser u.p.] *la media naranja de alguien.* Por el contrario, hemos incorporado las de uso en Argentina y no en España: *chaucha y palito/s*, *dar vuelta la yerba*; las de idéntica acepción, pero con leves variantes formales como: Esp. *Pasarle una patata caliente* [a alguien], Arg. *Pasarle una papa caliente* [a alguien] y, por último, las de idéntica forma pero significado diferente[4].

[4] Es de notar que, en relación con este último criterio, no hemos hallado ejemplos de UF florísticas interrogando el corpus.

3. Consideraciones teóricas[5]

Como primera aproximación al análisis, observamos que del total del material fraseológico florístico contemplado en el corpus, más del 90% resulta ser metafórico y está caracterizado por expresar ciertos rasgos y comportamientos típicamente humanos. Este tipo de metáforas, llamadas metáforas cognitivas, pone de relieve el importante rol que cumplen los factores culturales y experienciales en la conceptualización de la realidad y en su expresión lingüística. Ejemplo de ello son las siguientes metáforas: *bajar* [a alguien] *de la higuera* (1. 'Despertar a la realidad, hacer reaccionar'/ 2. 'Sacar de una situación difícil'); *cargar con el choclo* ('Asumir o afrontar las consecuencias de algo a lo que se es ajeno'); *estar poniéndole demasiada yerba al mate* ('Excederse alguien en algo'), etc.

Si se tienen en consideración los diferentes tipos de motivación semántica, la metáfora y la metonimia resultan ser los mecanismos transpositores más significativos del material fraseológico cotejado. Sin embargo, tales mecanismos, que constituyen una de las características universales de la fraseología (Dobrovol'skij, 1988), emergen también en otros recursos expresivos como la sinécdoque (*dar pasto a las fieras*), la comparación (*derecho como tronco e' parra*[6]), el eufemismo (*enterrar la batata*), o la hipérbole (*dejar a la altura de un poroto*).

A pesar del rasgo universal de este tipo de unidades (Wotjak, 1993; Dobrovol'skiï 1998), consideramos fundamental reconocer que cada comunidad lingüística origina metáforas lexicalizadas que suelen presentar rasgos semánticos y formales peculiares. Esto se debe a que la dimensión corpórea y cotidiana de nuestra existencia está envuelta, en la producción lingüística, por valores y símbolos que pueden variar

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5 Cabe precisar que las Uf florísticas con sus respectivas definiciones citadas en este apartado, pertenecen al Corpus que hemos creado para la elaboración de la primera fase del presente trabajo. Véanse al respecto los apartados 1 y 2.

6 Nótese la elisión de /d/ en la preposición. Se trata de un rasgo fonológico que tuvo un gran desarrollo en el pasado y que ha retrocedido notablemente en el último siglo y medio. En la actualidad se encuentra reducido al habla rural y, en ciertos casos, a los niveles más bajos del habla urbana de la Argentina o ha desaparecido. Cfr. Fontanella de Weimberg (1987:152).

considerablemente de una lengua a otra, de una variedad diatópica a otra de la misma lengua y de una cultura a otra.

Para posicionarnos, por tanto, en el análisis de las unidades objeto de estudio, partimos de la teoría cognitivista de la metáfora planteada por Lakoff y Johnson (1980)[7] los cuales extendieron el estudio de la retórica de la metáfora hacia el uso cotidiano de la lengua. Conforme al razonamiento de los investigadores, nuestro sistema conceptual es de naturaleza metafórica debido a que cuando nos referimos a procesos, entidades o sucesos que pertenecen a experiencias propias, propendemos a utilizar enunciados que se relacionan con ámbitos diferentes; de manera que existe un dominio fuente (que en nuestro caso de estudio está representado por las plantas) y un dominio meta (constituido por las personas y sus comportamientos). Ambos dominios co-ocurren constantemente en las interacciones que se instauran con el entorno (Soriano, 2012: 89). Las metáforas empleadas al hablar desempeñan, por lo tanto, una función cognitiva esencial en la manera de conceptualizar las experiencias ya que – como especifican Lakoff y Johnson (2001 [1980]: 41) – “[…] la esencia de la metáfora es entender y experimentar un tipo de cosa en términos de otra”. En efecto, a través del lenguaje conceptualizamos metafóricamente y utilizamos constantemente este tipo de lenguaje para referirnos, por ejemplo, a las acciones (*pagar chauchas* ‘Pagar un dividendo reducido’, *prenderse como abrojo* ‘En un baile o reunión, cotejar a una mujer para lograr su simpatía o preferencia); a los estados (*estar banana* ‘Estar algo bien hecho’, *estar (hecho) uva* ‘Estar ebrio’, *ponerse hecho un ají* ‘Exasperarse, enojarse mucho’, *más pesado que collar de melones / zapallos* ‘Muy pesado’) y la mayoría de las veces se connotan por su creatividad transformándose y actualizándose en el tiempo. Se trata, en

[7] La lingüística cognitiva, revolucionó el tratamiento clásico de la metáfora considerada hasta entonces como un fenómeno lingüístico o una figura del lenguaje, para pasar a ser concebida como un fenómeno mental, es decir, se sostiene que los mecanismos que permiten explicar el funcionamiento lingüístico de la metáfora son de naturaleza psicológica y tienen que ver con la de los procesos mediante los cuales aprehendemos y organizamos nuestro conocimiento de la realidad.

definitiva, de un mecanismo conceptual que entra, de manera espontánea y natural a formar parte de nuestra vida cotidiana.

Según lo plantea Soriano (2012: 89-92), la aparición de las metáforas conceptuales responde, no solamente al aspecto experiencial del que dábamos cuenta anteriormente, sino también a lo que la autora denomina *percepción de un parecido entre dos lenguas* especificando que:

> El parecido puede ser real y objetivo (en la forma o la función de dos cosas – por ejemplo entre la forma de un ratón y la del accesorio informático con el mismo nombre), o simplemente "percibido" (en inglés *perceived similarity*). Un parecido percibido es un parecido que construimos entre dos entidades objetivamente diferentes porque las metáforas conceptuales que ya poseemos nos invitan a ver una similitud entre ellos (Soriano 2012: 90).

Por otro lado, Lakoff y Johnson hacen una distinción puntual entre lo que entienden por metáfora conceptual o *proyecciones*, es decir aquellos esquemas abstractos de pensamiento que llegan a manifestarse de diversas maneras (incluido el lenguaje) y en diferentes lenguas pero manteniendo la misma base conceptual, y lo que entienden por *expresión lingüística metafórica*, refiriéndose a aquellas expresiones individuales de las que emergen las metáforas conceptuales.

Al igual que los somatismos y los zoomorfismos[8], los nombres de plantas, flores y frutos resultan ocupar un lugar privilegiado en los procesos de conceptualización al pertenecer a un ámbito de la realidad muy familiar a las personas[9]. Por ello, es muy común que se tienda a

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8 Cfr. Sciutto (2006 y 2018).

9 Según la teoría aristotélica de la "Gran cadena del ser", existe un sistema de representación de la escala de la naturaleza jerarquizado ascendente, donde la naturaleza avanza lineal y progresivamente como los eslabones de una cadena o como los peldaños de una escalera, en donde cada eslabón o peldaño se corresponde con el *topos*, o lugar que debe ocupar cada ser. Aristóteles coloca en el primer escalón a los seres más simples e inertes, le siguen las plantas con sus atributos y comportamientos biológicos, luego los animales que son instintivos y el escalón más alto lo ocupa el ser humano por poseer una capacidad pensante. Lakoff y Turner (1989) ordenan las conceptualizaciones en base a este sistema que adjudica los atributos pertenecientes a la categoría inferior más uno distintivo, por lo tanto, puede describirse en términos de otro,

utilizar el conocimiento que los seres humanos tenemos de las demás formas de vida para referirnos a conceptos abstractos y menos intuibles. Sin embargo, este tipo de unidades, tan difundido en las diversas lenguas habladas en el mundo, no ha sido estudiado con profundidad[10].

4. Fraseología florística y metáfora

A partir de la indagación de nuestro corpus del español de Argentina, hemos comprobado que un 7% de las UF florísticas metafóricas describe de manera figurada aspectos que tienen una connotación positiva de la personalidad y del comportamiento humano, mientras que el restante 93% se refiere a connotaciones negativas. Del grupo de UF florísticas de carácter positivo, transcribimos aquí algunas de las frases halladas: por ejemplo, para describir a una persona muy bondadosa se suele recurrir a menudo a la frase *ser más bueno que una malva* o *ser más bueno que la ruda* -haciendo referencia a la malva y a la ruda que poseen propiedades benéficas-, para referirse a algo que se recibe con el sentido de 'no haber costado ningún trabajo' se emplea en Argentina *estar limpio de polvo y paja*[11], mientras que el fraseologismo *anotarse/apuntarse un poroto*, se usa con el sentido de 'lucirse o destacarse por una acción o acierto en cualquier actividad'.

situado en un nivel inferior. Por ello, cuando por ejemplo se caracteriza a una persona en términos de conducta vegetal se enfatizan las cualidades impropias de su especie.

10 Desde el punto de vista de la lingüística contrastiva español-italiano, destacamos el trabajo elaborado por Dal Maso y Navarro (2013), donde las autoras analizan los factores culturales y experienciales que intervienen en la conceptualización de la realidad y en su expresión lingüística, detectando congruencias y divergencias estructurales, léxicas y semánticas en las metáforas lexicalizadas del español y del italiano, distinguiendo distintos niveles de equivalencia entre los respectivos sistemas fraseológicos.

11 Cabe aclarar este fraseologismo aparece asentado también en el *Diccionario fraseológico del español moderno* (1994) pero en España se usa para referirse al dinero: 'Ganancia líquida, cantidad neta a percibir (una vez descontados gravámenes fiscales o gravámenes de cualquier tipo).

Esta significación proviene de los juegos de naipes donde, para anotarse los puntos ganados se utilizan porotos. Por otro lado, cuando una persona es ‘muy capaz o inteligente’ se dice que *tiene zapallo*, aludiendo metafóricamente a la cabeza.

A la expresión *caer de florcita*, en cambio, el DiFHA le asigna una doble acepción: la primera expresa el modo de llegar a un lugar una persona: ‘muy bien vestida, pulcra y elegante, especialmente con ánimo fiestero’; sin embargo, la segunda acepción que proporciona el diccionario adquiere una connotación negativa aludiendo a una persona que se incorpora a un grupo que trabaja en algo, sin ánimo de colaborar.

Las UF florísticas de carácter negativo son heterogéneas; entre otras, contamos con las referidas a características comportamentales físicas y psicológicas. Con respecto a las primeras tenemos: *estar hecho un chala,* ‘estar muy delgado’ como la hoja que envuelve la mazorca del maíz, o *más feo que mate de ruda*, es decir, muy feo, como la ruda que tiene un olor y sabor desagradable y amargo.

En cambio, para las UF metafóricas que describen psicológicamente a las personas proponemos, a su vez, hacer una subdivisión distinguiendo las sinónimas de las que aluden a las características psíquicas y/o comportamentales de las personas.

En cuanto a las UF sinónimas es muy común, por ejemplo, la expresión argentina *ser un opio*, utilizada para referirse a una persona aburrida, cansadora o fastidiosa; mientras que *ser un poroto*, significa ‘ser insignificante’ y *ser una sandía enterrada* ‘ser una persona necia e inútil’. Para aludir a alguien que se comporta como un niño travieso se emplea ser *una (buena) mandarina* y con el significado de inmaduro encontramos *ser medio durazno.* En cambio *ser un zapallo*, se dice en Argentina de una ‘persona sonsa o boba’ y para expresar que ‘alguien ha perdido su turno o su oportunidad’ *fuiste alpiste*. Es frecuente el uso de la frase *no importar un comino*[12] con referencia a ‘alguien que no le

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12 Nótese que en el DiFHA este fraseologismo aparece asentado en su forma negativa, mientras que en el Diccionario de Varela y Kubarth (1994) aparece como “*Importarle* u.c. *un comino a alguien*”. Aunque el fraseologismo en cuestión sea de idéntica acepción en España y en Argentina, posee una leve variante formal que justifica su presencia en nuestro corpus.
Según lo plantea Pérez Esain (2012), algunos estudiosos consideran que el origen medieval de esta expresión “permite relacionar el valor con la economía

importa nada, que se desinteresa o desprecia algo’, en este caso el valor del comino explica el desinterés que acarrea porque es una planta cuyos frutos (semillas) son muy comunes e irrisorios.

Por otro lado, entre las tantas expresiones que han trascendido el ámbito de la hípica popularizándose, extraemos, a modo de ejemplo, *ganarse la avena*, referido a un ‘caballo no muy bueno pero que gana lo suficiente en premios para equiparar los gastos de su manutención’ y *ser una bolsa de papas* que se refiere al jinete, es decir, ‘ser mediocre o torpe’.

A lo largo de nuestra investigación hemos registrado también UF florísticas referidas a la esfera sexual como *enterrar la batata/chaucha*, con el significado de ‘copular’ y *hacerse la pera* con el de ‘masturbarse’, en cambio según el DiFHA, referido al ‘padecimiento de inflamación testicular’, *tener los nísperos doloridos.*

Otro subgrupo fraseológico del reino vegetal que amerita ser analizado, está formado por unidades que poseen en su estructura el adverbio relativo *como* para indicar el modo o la manera de hacer las cosas. Estas estructuras, llamadas símiles o comparaciones proverbiales, son fundamentales en la descripción de las lenguas[13]. Según las investigaciones de Luque Durán (2005: 409) “[…] están próximas a los proverbios propiamente dichos, a las frases proverbiales y a los elementos que se conocen como modificadores convencionales”. Tal como lo plantean Dobrovol’skij y Piiranein (2005: 326) se distinguen de otros tipos de expresiones idiomáticas puesto que no muestran un cambio de significado real. Se basan en una comparación explícita y, en la mayoría de los casos, la parte derecha del símil, es

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de trueque con las que se realizaban las operaciones comerciales de manera cotidiana” y explica que las sociedades en las que surgió ésta (y otras expresiones equivalentes como *importar un rábano, pepino* o *bledo*) eran eminentemente rurales “por lo que no solo el escaso aprecio o valor de esos vegetales […] sino su cercanía cotidiana a todas ellas las hacían propicias para la creación de expresiones familiares que sirven para dar a conocer de forma inmediata y efectiva nuestro punto de vista sobre la realidad”. http://udep.edu.pe/castellanoactual/nos-importa-un-comino/ [Consulta: 25-06-2017].

[13] Esta estructura fraseológica fue estudiada también en relación con las metáforas zoomofas, en particular, las referidas a los comportamientos y/o actitudes animales proyectados a los seres humanos (Sciutto, 2018: 424).

decir, el comparando con las partículas ‘como’ o similares, expresa intensificación para ser interpretada semánticamente como ‘muy’, ‘mucho’ o ‘grande’[14]. Desde el punto de vista puramente lingüístico, este tipo de estructura es, sin duda, un elemento estilístico propio del habla diaria por lo que está muy difundido entre los hablantes que, además, lo renuevan con facilidad. Según Yongsheng y Luque Durán (2017: 207):

> Se ha calculado que los elementos de comparación, en las comparaciones estereotipadas tienen, aproximadamente, un origen natural en un 70% y un origen cultural en un 30% de los casos. Algunas comparaciones tienden a ser universales, ya que existen en muchas culturas y transmiten más o menos el mismo mensaje. Las expresiones: *rojo como un tomate y tan blanco como la nieve* son un ejemplo de ello. Las comparaciones de origen cultural proceden de distintos ámbitos y épocas. Estos modismos culturales aluden a hechos o sucesos que se han convertido en parte del patrimonio cultural de una sociedad, razón por la que se conocen también como 'signos culturales' o linguoculturemas.

Algunos de los ejemplos de símiles que se relacionan con el mundo circundante de las plantas en contexto argentino son: *achicharrado como pasa de uva*, ‘referido al rostro o al cuerpo quemado o arrugado’ de una persona; la expresión *bravo como un ají*, ‘muy bravo’; *como hongos, es decir,* ‘en abundancia’ o *como maíz frito*, para significar ‘desparramados, por uno y otro lado’ y *solo como un hongo*, es decir, ‘totalmente solo’.

Mención aparte merecen las comparaciones proverbiales de origen rural que aparecen abundantes en el corpus como la locución verbal referida a ‘cuando las personas están muy juntas en un lugar estrecho o en una reunión’: *amontonao*[15] *como perejil en maceta*; *como*

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14 “[…] the “right part” of the simile, i.e. the comparandum with the particles *as* or *like*, expresses intensification, to be interpreted semantically as ‘very’, ‘much’, or ‘big’” (Dobrovol’skij / Piiranein, 2005: 326).

15 La caída de /d/ intervocálica (como en *amontonao* en lugar de ‘amontonado’ o en *pesao* en lugar de ‘pesado’) o final y en palabras oxítonas (como en *‘e parra* en lugar de ‘de parra’) es, como ya aclarado anteriormente, un rasgo fonológico típico de la variedad rural rioplatense. Para profundizar al respecto, véase Fontanella de Weinberg (1987: 152).

abrojo sobre el lomo, frase que ‘suele aplicarse a amigos o familiares que dependen totalmente de alguien que, por su capacidad o posición, está en muy buena situación económica’; asimismo, en el ámbito de las jineteadas, es frecuente su empleo para referirse a los ‘domadores que prácticamente se pegan al lomo de los caballos y que, pese a los corcovos del animal, no son desmontados’; *derecho como tronco e' parra* es una locución rural referida a una persona; sin embargo, se connota por ser una expresión antifrástica ya que el tronco de la parra es torcido y no derecho como refiere la frase; *estar como ají picante,* en el campo significa estar muy enojado o malhumorado, para referir, en cambio, que una persona es muy pesada se utiliza *pesao como collar de melones* mientras que *ser amargo como zapallo de vizcachera,* es una expresión de origen campestre que alude a una persona cobarde o floja.

Destacamos, además, el uso de ciertas locuciones cuyo origen remonta a hechos y costumbres relacionados con la cultura gauchesca argentina como *valer chaucha y palito*, referido a ‘algo insignificante o desestimable’, lo mismo *pagar con chauchas*. En relación a esta última frase, Pauer (2012, 634) señala que:

> La ‘chaucha’ actúa como sinécdoque de verdura y el ‘palito’ alude a la yerba mate; ambos elementos eran imprescindibles para el gaucho, pero de escaso valor ya que la yerba se mercaba por nada y la verdura era algo poco valorado por preferirse una dieta carnívora.

Del mismo origen gauchesco es la frase *tener el cuerpo como un yuyo*, expresión que a través del adverbio relativo *como* compara el comportamiento o actitud de la planta (yuyo) proyectándola en los seres humanos; en este caso con el significado de ‘estar descalabrado’.

Junto con la gran migración interna que inició alrededor de 1930, migró también la fraseología en boca de gran cantidad de personas que del campo se trasladaron a la gran capital del Plata, haciendo retoñar expresiones florísticas tales como *salir como maíz frito* refiriéndose al maíz pisingallo[16] o “pororó”, es decir, ‘desparramarse en confusión y con estrépito’; o el fraseologismo *encajarle (a alguien) el choclo*,

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[16] En Argentina como en otros países de América, se denomina “maíz pisingallo” al maíz para palomitas.

utilizado para 'echarle la culpa a alguien de algo' o la frase *hacer en el trébol su cama* que quiere decir 'dormir en el suelo, teniendo el cielo por techo'.

Por su parte, en los siglos XIX y XX la inmigración europea contribuyó de manera determinante en la formación de la fraseología argentina. En particular la italiana, formada por una gran mayoría de agricultores, incrementó el caudal fraseológico florístico con expresiones como *agarrar para el lado de los tomates*, para 'dar a entender que una persona interpretó mal algo o que está yendo por el lado equivocado'; *estar del tomate*, es decir, 'estar loco' o *echar ajos y cebollas* con el significado de 'insultar'[17].

Portadoras de una memoria colectiva son las frases históricas como por ejemplo *hacer una mazamorra*: 'hacer una comida mala o de mal aspecto' o *ser* [algo] *una mazamorra*: ser una 'mezcla desordenada o caótica de varias especies'. La frase se refiere a uno de los postres más comunes y económicos en tiempos de la colonia, que consistía en un plato de maíz blanco partido, hervido en agua o en leche y azucarado. *No comer sino chancua*: 'estar muy pobre', siendo la chancua o "chanca" maíz molido para locro o mazamorra.

Otras expresiones reflejan un medio social, medioambiental o geográfico que no es propio de la Argentina. Es el caso, por ejemplo, de las frases relacionadas con países limítrofes como Paraguay: *llevar naranjas al Paraguay*, es decir, 'hacer algo inútilmente por estar ya hecho', o Brasil: *sudar fariña*, que puede significar, por un lado 'pasar mucho calor' y, por otro, 'esforzarse mucho' o 'pasar dificultades', *fariña* procede del vocablo portugués *farinha* (harina).

Existen, por otra parte, UF que tienen raíces culturales profundas y fuertes y que se fueron difundiendo en el habla cotidiana. Consignamos aquí solamente las que se refieren a la yerba mate[18] por ser la planta más representativa de la cultura popular del pueblo argentino, como la comparación *más fiero que mate de ruda*, es decir,

17 Remitimos al trabajo de Pauer (2012: 637) donde la autora examina, entre otros, algunos usos fraseológicos relacionados con la inmigración europea en Argentina.

18 La yerba mate es la hoja de esta planta, seca y molida, con la que se prepara el mate. El mate es una calabaza o cualquier tipo recipiente empleado para preparar, servir y tomar la infusión de yerba mediante una bombilla.

‘muy feo’; o *más tonto que mate cocido*, por ‘insípido’ o el refrán *Dios da mate al que no tiene yerba*, equivalente a “Dios da pan al que no tiene dientes”.

Abundan en el corpus frases donde uno de los componentes internos es una fruta, algunas muestras entre las más representativas son: *ser una buena mandarina*: ‘ser un niño travieso y revoltoso’, o *¡chupate esa mandarina!*: ‘fórmula jocosa utilizada para anunciar una victoria, un triunfo o un éxito inesperado’; *hacer la pera*: ‘dejar esperando o faltar a una cita’; *mandar fruta*: ‘mentir o decir una insensatez’; *inflar las guindas* o *inflar los quinotos*: ‘fastidiar, molestar en grado sumo’; *ser más agrio que un limón*; *no pasa naranja*: ‘no pasa nada’; *ser un banana*: ‘ser un creído, o un galán’; *ser el último orejón del tarro*: ‘ser la persona menos tenida en cuenta o la menos valorada’; *alimentar con leche de higo*: ‘hacer tonta a una persona’; *hablar para melones*: ‘hacer proyectos utópicos, prometer un beneficio que, de llegar, lo hará tardíamente’; *más pesado que collar de melones /sandías*: ‘para referirse a una persona densa, difícil de aguantar’; *ponerle la frutilla a la torta*: ‘dar un corolario, un buen cierre, a una situación o tarea’.

5. El uso de la web para la investigación fraseológica

A partir de los supuestos teóricos que acabamos de analizar, en esta segunda fase del trabajo, nuestro objetivo es constatar, en primer lugar, la presencia de los usos fraseológicos florísticos de la variedad argentina del español que hemos recopilado a través del vaciado del ya citado DiFHA en un banco de datos digital, a saber, el *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA)[19] organizado por la Real

[19] http://corpus.rae.es/. [Consulta: 18-04-2017].
Hemos optado por utilizar el Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (CREA) de la RAE y no el Corpus del Español del siglo XXI (CORPES) de la misma Academia porque en este último se incorporaron textos producidos recién a partir del 2001. Consideramos que el CREA, que se compone de textos escritos

Academia Española (RAE); en segundo lugar, indagar las ventajas y desventajas que presenta el uso de este específico medio de investigación y, en tercer lugar, tomaremos como punto de partida los conceptos de la Lingüística de Corpus para observar el uso de *Google*[20] como instrumento para las investigaciones fraseológicas y como base para la investigación científica.

Para ello, hemos considerado algunas expresiones idiomáticas argentinas de nuestro subcorpus inicial (*anotarse un poroto, ganar chauchas*), basándonos en la metodología de la Lingüística de Corpus (Berber Sardinha, 2000, 2004; Deignan, 2005), que nos ofrece una nueva visión de la fraseología. Concretamente, dicha visión considera que las palabras por sí mismas no tienen significado, sino que éste se ha propagado a aquellas palabras con las que se coloca o unidades fraseológicas en las que se inserta (Martín Herrero, 2009), metodología que revitaliza la afirmación de Wittgenstein en *Investigaciones filosóficas*: "el significado de una palabra es su empleo en el lenguaje" (Wittgenstein, 1988: 43).

Ahora bien; antes de abordar el estudio de las grandes bases de datos, resulta pertinente aclarar que mientras la Lingüística de Corpus se ocupa de los datos lingüísticos reales (es decir de la *parole*), la Lingüística Cognitiva, como hemos visto, parte de la idea de que vive, en cada individuo, un lenguaje universal interno empleado en las representaciones mentales de contenidos. En efecto, según los lingüistas cognitivos, es necesario codificar y traducir esa determinada representación mental para que la comunicación pueda tener lugar. En base a lo anteriormente expuesto, las probabilidades que hallaremos reflejarán, por tanto, lo que realmente hay pero no lo que puede haber.

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y orales a partir de 1975, reúne las características necesarias que nos permiten (potencialmente) acceder a ejemplos para determinar la frecuencia de las variantes, analizar el uso de la unidad fraseológica y llegar a obtener datos precisos.

20 La selección de un corpus es un asunto delicado, puesto que no hallaremos uno ideal que abarque todo lo que se ha escrito y dicho sobre algo. Para nuestro trabajo, hemos optado por tomar en consideración *Google* y no otras herramientas como *Bing* o *Yahoo!* porque *Google*, en comparación con las demás, destaca por su extensión, por su capacidad de almacenamiento, velocidad y facilidad de las búsquedas.

Otro aspecto que conviene recordar es que si bien el análisis de las unidades fraseológicas debe realizarse a través de textos, el problema es que los corpus están formados en su mayor parte por textos de producción escrita y no oral. Este hecho dificulta el avance de los estudios fraseológicos porque hace que se excluya gran cantidad de unidades y esquemas fraseológicos por no aparecer en el nivel escrito.

Sobre el uso de los corpus para los estudios lingüísticos fraseológicos, rescatamos el siguiente fragmento de Gloria Corpas Pastor (2014: 134-135) donde de manera sintética la autora expone un claro estado de la cuestión:

> A pesar de que el uso de corpus ha abierto nuevas puertas y proporcionado bases reales para la investigación, su uso en Lingüística (y, por ende, en Fraseología) no está exento de problemas. Para empezar, es un recurso caro de desarrollar y actualizar, y aún sigue presentando numerosos escollos para el lingüista o el fraseólogo que pretenda analizar UFs mediante grandes volúmenes de datos, estudiar sus patrones de uso, sus valores pragmáticos o bien detectar usos lingüísticos recientes, cambiantes o neológicos. Además, no todas las lenguas disponen de corpus estables de referencia lo suficientemente amplios o representativos como para poder realizar estudios fraseológicos con garantías. Incluso cuando estos existen, no siempre están a disposición de la comunidad académica, dado que suelen ser de acceso restringido o bien requieren suscripción o compra.

6. La consulta del CREA y de Google

Para este estudio hemos utilizado el Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (CREA)[21] de la RAE que, si bien es accesible a través de internet, no posee un sistema de gestión variable y flexible. El CREA

21 http://corpus.rae.es/. [Consulta: 23-07-2017]. El CREA cuenta, en su última versión (3.2, junio de 2008), con algo más de ciento sesenta millones de formas. Se compone de una amplia variedad de textos escritos y orales, producidos en todos los países de habla hispana desde 1975 hasta 2004.

permite el acceso a las concordancias ordenadas de la posición 1 a la 5, a la izquierda o a la derecha del nodo o pivote, pero no efectúa búsquedas truncadas mediante asteriscos o expresiones regulares, como ya referido por Corpas (2014: 139). Veamos lo que acabamos de afirmar en un ejemplo concreto: si buscamos en el corpus la frase *anotarse un poroto* obtendremos como resultado que no localiza automáticamente las formas flexivas de la secuencia [anotarse + un + poroto] por lo que nos obliga a localizar los ejemplos para esta unidad mediante el rastreo manual de las concordancias para ‘poroto’, alineadas, en este caso, a la izquierda. Lamentablemente hemos corroborado que tampoco de esta manera emergen ejemplos de uso de la UF en cuestión. Ahora bien, circunscribiendo el sondeo al nodo poroto de la variedad del español de Argentina, hemos obtenido como resultado 53 casos en 23 documentos, pero no se obtiene la secuencia de búsqueda ni aparece entre las agrupaciones (n-gramas) que el CREA rastrea para el nodo poroto, ordenados por frecuencia:

> 2-gramas: *un poroto / y poroto / de poroto / del poroto/ este poroto / a poroto / al poroto / como poroto*;
> 3-gramas: *anotó un poroto / algodón y poroto / cultivo de poroto / cosecha del poroto / de este poroto / gusto a poroto / remojar al poroto / : como poroto*;
> 4-gramas: *le anotó un poroto / granos, algodón y poroto / el cultivo de poroto / la cosecha del poroto / nutrientes de este poroto / tenga gusto a poroto / dejar remojar al poroto / formas: como poroto*;
> 5-gramas: *le anotó un poroto al / de granos, algodón y poroto / allí el cultivo de poroto / en la cosecha del poroto / los nutrientes de este poroto / no tenga gusto a poroto / de dejar remojar al poroto / diversas formas: como poroto*.

En la versión 3.2 del CREA, cerrada en junio de 2008, la parte escrita cuenta con casi 140.000 documentos y algo más de 154 millones de formas procedentes de textos de todos los países hispánicos y producidos entre 1975 y 2004. A nivel geográfico el 50% del material procede de España y el otro 50% de América. A su vez este último 50%

se distribuye en las zonas lingüísticas tradicionales[22]: la zona mexicana, que comprende México, Sudoeste de Estados Unidos, Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador (40%); la zona central, que comprende Nicaragua y Costa Rica (3%); la zona caribeña, que abarca Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panamá, Rep. Dominicana, Costas de Venezuela y Colombia y Nordeste de Estados Unidos (17%); la zona andina, que incluye el resto de Venezuela y Colombia, Ecuador, Perú y Bolivia; la zona chilena, que comprende Chile (6%) y la zona rioplatense, formada por Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay (14%). Sin embargo, a la hora de efectuar las consultas de los fraseologismos florísticos objeto de estudio, el corpus no ha encontrado casos para la mayor parte de los mismos. Esta constatación nos induce a afirmar que las indagaciones de tipo diatópico en el CREA no resultan siempre viables. Efectivamente, durante la elaboración del presente trabajo hemos comprobado que el corpus cuenta con un bajo porcentaje de documentos del español de Argentina lo cual impide una búsqueda fructífera y realista de los usos fraseológicos de dicho país, sin olvidar que la consulta resulta mucho menos automatizada de lo que cabría esperar, por lo cual lleva bastante tiempo.

Esto nos coloca frente a lo que ya afirmara Corpas Pastor respecto de la investigación fraseológica a través de los corpus actuales del español (2014: 135):

> Dado que la investigación en fraseología necesita de grandes volúmenes textuales para poder obtener resultados relevantes, las limitaciones prácticas de los corpus actuales han llevado a muchos investigadores a «surfear» la Red mundial en busca de ejemplos de uso.

Si analizamos el último estudio de Internet World Stat (Gráfico 2)[23], actualizado a 3 de junio de 2017, observamos que los documentos que

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22 Las zonas lingüísticas consideradas en el CREA aparecen explicitadas en el apartado A1.1 del Manual de consulta: http://corpus.rae.es/ayuda_c.htm. [Consulta: 18-10-2017].

23 http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm [consulta: 10-07-2017].

aparecen hoy en día en la red aumentan y seguirán aumentando cada vez más rápidamente.

De los 10 idiomas más utilizados en la red, se indica que el primero es el inglés con 984.703.501 usuarios (25,3% del total), le sigue el chino (19,8%), el español (8,0%), el árabe (4,8%), el portugués y el indonesio (4,1%), el japonés (3,0%), el ruso (2,8%) el francés (2,8%) y, por último, el alemán (2,2%). La lengua española, ocupa el tercer lugar sumando un total de 312.069.111 usuarios de Internet, a saber, el 8 % del total de usuarios en el mundo, con un aumento de su presencia en la red del 1.616,4% en los últimos 17 años (2000-2017), mientras que la lengua inglesa aumentó en el mismo período del 599,6%. En base a los datos que acabamos de exponer, podemos afirmar que para los estudios de corte lingüístico y, por ende fraseológicos, la red mundial ofrece el acceso libre a una cantidad enorme de información, que aumenta minuto a minuto y que se actualiza en continuación.

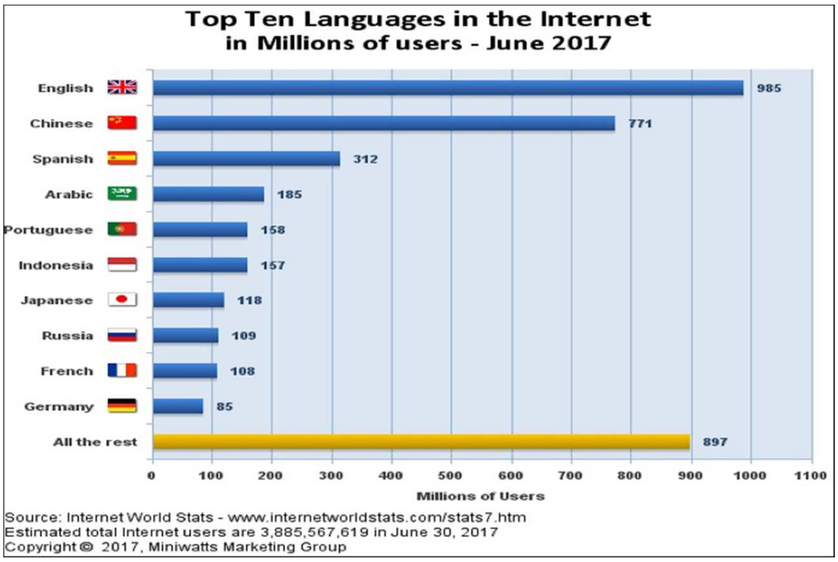

Gráfico 2. Internet World Stat, Junio de 2017.

Habiendo constatado que las indagaciones de tipo fraseológico utilizando el CREA no arrojan resultados que reflejan los usos fraseológicos del español hablado en Argentina, hemos decidido acudir a otro sistema de recuperación y gestión de la información (SRGI). Nos referimos a *Google* que, como veremos, permite realizar búsquedas simples y avanzadas de determinadas secuencias a través de las cuales, se logra obtener un número muy alto de resultados. *Google* es, por otra parte, uno de los sistemas de búsqueda más empleados en el mundo, puede utilizarse desde distintas perspectivas y para obtener diferentes objetivos; es un medio de búsqueda muy válido pero sobre todo una fuente de datos descomunal si los parámetros de búsqueda están bien delimitados.

Si buscamos en *Google* un fraseologismo florístico de nuestro subcorpus inicial escribiendo por ejemplo la secuencia [ganar + chauchas] y valiéndonos de la búsqueda avanzada, donde se restringe a documentos escritos en español y publicados en Argentina durante el último año, el sistema recupera 36 resultados en 0,34 segundos. Si le quitamos la restricción temporal, el buscador logra recuperar 672 resultados en 0,28 segundos. Proponemos aquí algunos de los ejemplos obtenidos para la unidad *Anotarse un poroto* (ya utilizada para la búsqueda en el CORDE):

En titulares:

- Con Echarri, Suar busca *anotarse un poroto* en su duelo con Tinelli.
- Ciurca, la reina, Santa Rosa y el intento de *anotarse un poroto.*
- Ramiro Solís se *anota un poroto.*
- Para *anotarse un poroto.*

En texto:

… Y el niño taura, que tal vez necesita *anotarse un poroto*, se levanta, mira hacia el banco y de la morocha y dice casi triunfal…

… el gobierno nacional puede *anotarse un poroto* más para lograr gobernabilidad

… Así, se dio el gusto de anotar un gol de penal y de *anotarse un poroto* más entre los hinchas...

… este equipo de Julio Velasco, diezmado por las ausencias de Facundo Conte y varios lesionados (como Bruno Lima y Nicolás Lazo), sacó pecho y logró *anotarse un poroto* en el historial…

… Quiero decirle que mientras usted se distrae en agasajos a deportistas que nos regalaron otro fracaso, le está haciendo el caldo gordo a la oposición, que quiere *anotarse un poroto* con los jubilados y llevarse nuestros votos…

Otra de las características de *Google* es que se pueden automatizar las consultas mediante operadores de búsqueda (también llamados operadores lógicos u operadores booleanos) sea en la búsqueda estándar que en la avanzada. Concretamente, una secuencia de búsqueda como [anoto OR anotás OR anota OR anotamos OR anotaron OR anotan AND poroto] da como resultado todas las formas flexivas del presente de indicativo de dicha secuencia (4.150) en tan solo 0,50 segundos. Se pueden hallar también otras formas flexivas de la UF en tiempos verbales diferentes en singular o plural como en los siguientes ejemplos:

… Como hincha de Boca, yo lo aviso ya, *anoten un poroto* a Gimnasia

… los móviles de la zona que vi del Comando OESTE eran las zonas 41/43 y 39 no *se anoten los porotos*, si fueron copiaron x radio…

… Lo que más lamento es que los verdaderos depredadores *se anoten un poroto.*

… *anotale un poroto* con que es creyente

… eesaaaaa papá…! *me anoté un poroto* de entrada, no?

… y *nos anotamos un poroto* cuando se escuchó por los parlantes que era retirado de la competencia…

… *Te anotaste un poroto* gratis?...

… Por fin *te anotaste un poroto* pirincho!!!

Hay que advertir que la búsqueda de UF a través de la web acarrea algunos inconvenientes relacionados con el tipo de información que se recupera. Se trata, por un lado de documentos realmente útiles a los fines de un determinado sondeo, como las páginas web, audios y vídeos y, por otro lado, de documentos del todo inútiles como las ocurrencias de secuencias literales homónimas que comprenden los vocablos de la búsqueda. Gloria Corpas Pastor (2014: 144) se refiere a este inconveniente afirmando que “[…] se consigue reducir el silencio documental, pero, como contrapartida, se aumenta considerablemente el ruido documental”[24] y más adelante afirma:

> […] la combinación de silencio más ruido documental, unida a la democratización de la red, puede resultar en una auténtica *infoxicación* o sobrecarga informativa (*information overload*) que resta capacidad de análisis al investigador, el cual se ve desbordado por la ingente cantidad de ejemplos encontrados, en los más diversos sitios y géneros web (2014: 145).

7. A modo de conclusión

Con la presente investigación hemos querido contribuir al avance de los estudios fraseológicos de la variedad argentina del español tomando como foco de análisis las metáforas florísticas. En principio corroboramos la tesis central de los lingüistas cognitivos en cuanto a que las metáforas no son solamente un recurso del lenguaje literario, sino el procedimiento más recurrente para comunicarnos y nombrar nuestro entorno. Dichos procedimientos están estrechamente relacionados con la observación directa de la realidad y con la cultura de una determinada comunidad lingüística que, en nuestro caso, es la argentina.

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24 La autora denomina *silencio documental* a “[…] aquella información que no ha sido encontrada por los motores de búsqueda, bien porque la estrategia de búsqueda que se ha definido resulta demasiado especifica o bien porque las palabras claves utilizadas no son las adecuadas” mientras que define el *ruido documental* a “[…] aquella información que sí ha sido encontrada por el buscador pero que no es relevante, como ocurre cuando la estrategia de búsqueda ha resultado ser demasiado genérica” (Corpas Pastor: 2014, 144).

En la primera fase del trabajo, a partir del reconocimiento de las metáforas florísticas y de la ordenación de las mismas en un corpus creado *ad hoc*, hemos demostrado que, en ciertos casos, no solo cumplen con una función referencial sino que tienen efectos interpersonales al definir los rasgos que caracterizan tanto al receptor como al emisor de la UF. Por otro lado, al comparar las metáforas florísticas con las zoosémicas estudiadas en un trabajo anterior (Sciutto: 2018), notamos que las primeras dieron un resultado menor de ocurrencias debido a que, según el criterio de la Gran cadena del ser, poseen rasgos de comportamiento o apariencias menos similares a las del ser humano respecto de los zoomorfismos.

En la variedad argentina del español, la fraseología que alude directa o indirectamente a las plantas y sus derivados tiene amplia difusión y gran riqueza expresiva, lo hemos demostrado a través de una cantidad ingente de ejemplificaciones de algunos procesos metafóricos específicos. En particular existe una extensa variedad florística a través de la cual se describen comportamientos, situaciones y actitudes pero también se asignan rasgos específicos de acuerdo a la percepción humana o a la realidad misma.

Concretamente, hemos verificado que un 7% de las UF florísticas de nuestro corpus describe de manera figurada aspectos que tienen una connotación positiva de la personalidad y del comportamiento humano (*tener zapallo*), mientras que el restante 93% se refiere a connotaciones negativas (*estar hecho un chala*).

A lo largo de este estudio hemos documentado además, UF florísticas que se usan como recurso lingüístico de la fraseología argentina y que están relacionadas con las carreras de caballos (*ser una bolsa de papas*), el sexo (*enterrar la batata*), lo rural (*salir como maíz frito*), lo gauchesco (*valer chaucha y palito*), con la migración interna (*encajarle* a alguien *el choclo)* y con la inmigración europea (*agarrar para el lado de los tomates*), con acontecimientos históricos (*hacer una mazamorra*), así como también expresiones que reflejan un medio social, medioambiental o geográfico (*llevar naranjas al Paraguay*). Significativas son también las relacionadas con las costumbres y tradiciones nacionales (*más tonto que mate cocido*) y, por último, con la fruta (*¡chupate esa mandarina!*).

En la segunda fase del trabajo, centrado en el uso de la web en función de la investigación fraseológica, hemos comprobado que los corpus de español disponibles en la actualidad son escasos y no muy exhaustivos como para poder proporcionar un número suficiente de concordancias que faciliten la descripción lingüística de una determinada unidad, sobre todo si se trata de UF de una determinada variedad del español. En nuestra indagación sobre los fraseologismos florísticos del español de Argentina realizada consultando el Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual de la RAE, hemos constatado que para la mayoría de las unidades fraseológicas el corpus no encuentra casos. Esto nos induce a afirmar que las indagaciones de tipo diatópico en el CREA no resultan en la actualidad del todo viables; en efecto el corpus cuenta con un bajo porcentaje de documentos del español de Argentina lo cual impide una búsqueda productiva que refleje los usos fraseológicos de dicho país; además la consulta resulta mucho menos automatizada de lo esperado. En cambio, el sistema de recuperación de información *Google*, resultó ser una herramienta mucho más efectiva para las búsquedas simples y avanzadas ya que nos permitió flexibilizar y adaptar las consultas según nuestras necesidades. Sin embargo, debemos admitir que este sistema de gestión web presenta diversos problemas relacionados, en particular, con la clase de información que se recupera. Por consiguiente concluimos que la combinación de diferentes tipos de recursos electrónicos, a la hora de obtener información fraseológica, podría ser por el momento una buena solución.

Para concluir, cabe señalar que este estudio constituye un punto de partida para delinear y fomentar nuevas investigaciones, especialmente desde una perspectiva de la lingüística de corpus a nivel diatópico. El avance de los estudios fraseológicos de los últimos años dan constancia de que el futuro de la fraseología está justamente en el análisis de corpus de grandes proporciones (*big data*) y en la sensibilidad a la variación lingüística.

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