



Centro di Ricerca sui Linguaggi Specialistici
Research Centre on Languages for Specific Purposes

Stefania M. Maci
& Michele Sala (eds.)

**REPRESENTING AND
REDEFINING SPECIALISED
KNOWLEDGE: VARIETY IN LSP**

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CERLIS Series
Volume 8

Stefania M. Maci & Michele Sala (eds.)

**Representing and Redefining Specialised
Knowledge: Variety in LSP**

2019
Università degli Studi di Bergamo

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CERLIS SERIES Vol. 8

CERLIS

Centro di Ricerca sui Linguaggi Specialistici

Research Centre on Languages for Specific Purposes

University of Bergamo

www.unibg.it/cerlis

REPRESENTING AND REDEFINING SPECIALISED KNOWLEDGE:
VARIETY IN LSP

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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SOLE ALBA ZOLLO

Instagram as a Pedagogical Tool to Enhance Undergraduate Students' Critical Thinking on Specialized Knowledge: A Qualitative Experiment¹

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 /

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

Alonzo 2015). 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. Fairclough'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 text, 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

advertises 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 discussion³

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

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.

immediacy, students had the chance to realize their mistake even before the teacher provided them a clearer explanation of the theoretical concept.

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*

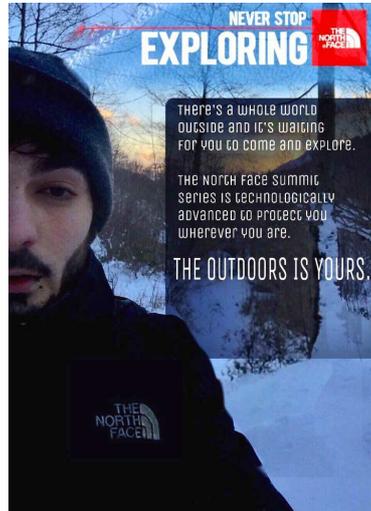


Figure 5. *#selfie-promotion* revisited

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

WE WILL TAKE YOU...

London

Barcelona

RYANAIR

Prague

Budapest

...WHEREVER YOUR HEART WANTS.

A promotional graphic for Ryanair featuring four photos of a person making a heart shape with their hands in front of different cityscapes: London (Big Ben), Barcelona (Gothic Cathedral), Prague (night view of the city), and Budapest (St. Stephen's Basilica). The Ryanair logo is centered between the photos. The text "WE WILL TAKE YOU..." is at the top and "...WHEREVER YOUR HEART WANTS." is at the bottom.

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.

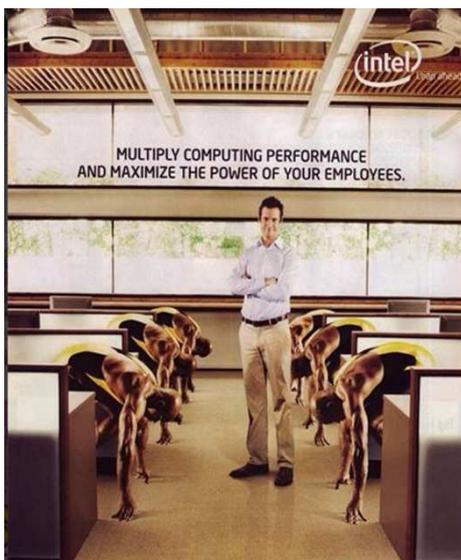


Figure 14. *Intel*

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

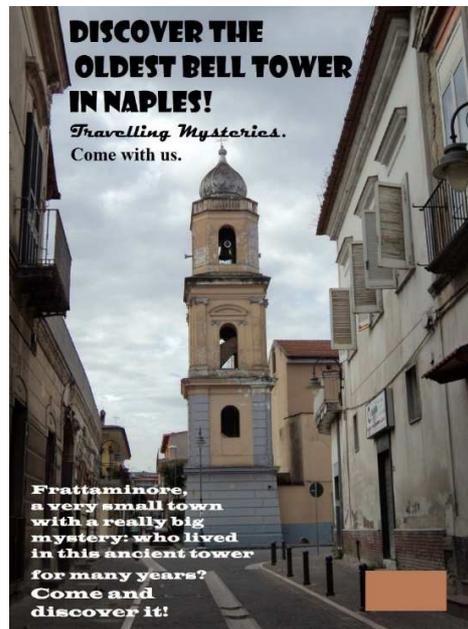


Figure 16. Frattaminore

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.

JOIN THE CULTURE!

IN PERSANO THE HISTORY STANDS AT ATTENTION



Real Casina di Persano



TO REACH PERSANO:

Motorway A3 Salerno - Reggio Calabria
Exit Eboli
Direction to Altavilla Silentina

COME TO VISIT US!

For information contact Lieutenant Ullurale



Designed by Carmen Piero
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Persano is an ancient district of the Italian municipality of Serre, in the province of Salerno. It is located along the banks of the river Sele and those of the Calore, bordering the municipalities of Eboli and Campagna, which mark the border with Altavilla Silentina. In the vicinity of the military area you can find the important Oasis of Persano with a diverse mosaic of vegetation and animal (whose symbol is the Otter) and the luxuriant Foce Sele - Tanagro Nature Reserve.



Helical spiral staircase self-supporting. VANVITELLI



BEFORE

The picturesque Real Casina of Persano was the summer residence of Charles III of Bourbon used only for hunting.



- At the top right. The Ladder -

- On the left. The statue of the watchdog.

It was built in 1752 by Juan Domingo Piana. Owned by the De Rossi family, it was subsequently purchased in 1758 by King Charles III.

The design was changed from Vanvitelli on the orders of the King making it perfectly square and symmetrical.



- The Church -

Likened by Tanucci a "friary", it retains all its Renaissance splendor and is prominently displayed a pronounced flavor vaccariano taste.



- The Clock -

NOW

Today it hosts the Military Area and the "Garibaldi" Logistic Regiment. The Association "Persano in the heart" organizes a lot of events. The most recent was the great bourgeois cuisine Gourmet of Salerno in 2013.



The responsables are trying to insert it into a cultural route, but no one knows how long it will take.

Its real and fascinating aspects have captured the attention of many prominent figures including Goethe, Eisenhower, Metternich and Vittorio Sgarbi.



- The corridor to the rooms of the gentlemen of the Court. -

Figure 17. Royal Casina di Persano





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 resources, 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?